

## Attachment: The Roots of Love

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### **Abstract:**

*The present study was planned to review the literature and explore the relationship between attachment and love. On the basis of the literature it was found that attachment lies at the roots of love. Basically four patterns of attachment were found namely secure, avoidant, ambivalent and disorganized attachment. The securely attached children grow into healthy, socially adept adults whereas remaining three type of attachments lead to behavioral and relationship problems. Through researches on love and attachment psychologists have learned about the cultivation and re-cultivation of love as love is a combination of emotions, cognitions and behaviors that often play a crucial role in intimate relationships. The theoretical approach of love describes love as Passionate love and Compassionate love whereas the Triangular theory of love describes eight types of love namely Non-Love, liking, infatuation, empty love, romantic love, compassionate love, fatuous love and consummate love. It was also found in the studies that re-cultivation of love among adults help people to reassure and bind together in secure relationships. Therefore it can be concluded that attachment and love are like two rail track lines on which the train of healthy life runs swiftly and smoothly.*

**Key words:** attachment, love, relationships.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Attachment is a reciprocal, enduring emotional tie between an infant and a caregiver that probably starts during the first moment of an infant's life. It is the emotional link that forms between a child and a caregiver each of whom contributes to the quality of the relationship and it physically binds people together over time (Ainsworth, Bell & Stayton, 1992). The child's tie to its caregiver is called the "attachment" and the caregiver's reciprocal tie is called the "care-giving bond". As the caregiver affects the infant, the child also affects the caregiver. Attachment is also viewed as central to the capacity of emotion regulation. The most important tenet of attachment theory is that a young child needs to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver for social and emotional development to occur normally (Rao & Madan, 2013).

Mary Ainsworth first studied attachment in the early 1950s with John Bowlby. Ainsworth devised the Strange Situation technique to assess attachment patterns between an infant and an adult. It consisted of a sequence of eight episodes and observed 1-year olds in the strange situation and at home. They found three main patterns of attachment: Secure, Avoidant and Ambivalent or Resistant. Securely Attached children showed the pattern of seeking and maintaining contact with their mother. Avoidant Children did not cry when their mother left and either ignored her or turned away upon her return. Ambivalent Children cried when their mother left but were not comforted when she returned (Ainsworth, Beehar, Waters & Wall, 1978).

Other research (Main & Solomon, 1986) identified a fourth pattern, Disorganized disoriented attachment. These babies often demonstrated inconsistent, contradictory behaviors,

such as greeted their mothers brightly when she returned but then turned away or approached without looking at her, seemed confused and afraid. This might be the least secure pattern and was most likely to occur in babies whose mothers were insensitive, intrusive or abusive (Carlson, 1998).

The key to attachment lies in the interplay between the quality of the relationship with the caregiver and the infant's emotional makeup. Supportive and affectionate mothers beget securely attached children. Critical and rejecting mothers produce avoidant or ambivalent infants. Depressed mothers may be emotionally unavailable to the child resulting in an avoidant child (Lowenstein & Field).

Security of attachment seems to affect emotional, social and cognitive competence (Van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1997). Secure attachment provides the safe environment in which children can take chances, engage in learning activities, initiate new relationships and grow into healthy, socially adept adults. Insecurely attached infants, by contrast, often have later problems such as inhibitions, negative emotions in toddlerhood, hostility toward other children at age 5, and dependency during the school years. Those with disorganized attachment tend to have behavioral problems at all levels of schooling & psychiatric disorders at age 17 (Carlson, 1998). Children with insecure attachment styles are seen to have elevated levels of anxiety symptoms and increased levels of worry (Muris et al, 2000; Rao & Madan, 2013).

Personal perspectives on attachment are carried through childhood and adolescence into the stages of adulthood in the form of an internal working model of self & others (Bowlby, 1988; Shaver, Hazan & Bradshaw, 1988).

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Early in their development, children integrate perceptions of their social competence, appeal and loyalty (the self model) with their expectations regarding accessibility, responsiveness and consistency of caregivers (the other model). The model is a “conscious mindful state” of generalized expectations and preferences regarding relationship intimacy that guide participants information processing of relationship experiences as well as their behavioral response patterns (Lopez, 2003). If people carry forward a secure mindful state, they see the world as safe and others as reliable. People who see the social world as unpredictable and other people as unreliable have difficulty overcoming their desires to keep others at a distance.

Numerous theorists have extended attachment theory across the life span into other adults as well as to the children for whom they will serve as caregivers. Mary Main and Colleagues (George, Kaplan & Main, 1985; Main & Goldwyn, 1984, 1998) developed the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) that asks adults to recall and interpret feelings and experiences related to their childhood attachments. They found that adult attachment could best be described by a four category system comprising secure/autonomous, dismissing, preoccupied & unresolved / disorganized. An analysis of eighteen studies using the AAI found that the clarity, coherence and consistency with which these early attachments are remembered and interpreted reliably predicts the security with which the respondent's own child will be attached to him/her (Van IZendoorn, 1995). Cindy Hazan and Philip Shaver (1987) studied attachment in the context of adult romantic relationship and found that the three category of Secure, Avoidant and Anxious effectively described the nature of adult attachment to a significant other. Barthelomew and Horowitz (1991) expanded the three categories of adult attachment to four categories by differentiating two types of avoidant attachment, dismissive and fearful. Brennan et al (1998) considered Barthelomew and Horowitz's system from a different perspective. They conceptualized attachment on the two dimensions of attachment, attachment-related avoidance and attachment-related anxiety.

There are several important similarities and differences between attachments that occur in childhood and adulthood. Shaver and Hazan (1989) point out six similarities between childhood and adult (and adolescent) attachments. First, is that the quality of the attachment is dependent upon the reciprocation, sensitivity and responsiveness of the attachment figure/ caregiver. Second, securely attached individuals (infants/adults) are generally happier and more adaptive than insecurely attached individuals. Third, the attachment mechanism of maintaining proximity to the attachment figure is displayed in both adult and infant attachment. Fourth, separation from an attachment figure causes extreme distress (separation distress), and the initiation of attachment behavior is an attempt to regain contact with the attachment figure. Fifth, in both adults and infants there is an “intense sensitivity” when displaying discoveries and achievements to the attachment figure for approval. And lastly, both attachments entail a certain degree of baby talk or motherese type communication. Whereas Feeney et al (1999) note that there are two important

differences between childhood attachment and adult attachment. The first is that childhood attachments are asymmetrical, meaning that the relationship is usually complimentary than reciprocal. Second, there is almost always a sexual component involved in adult attachment.

The formation of meaningful peer relationship is one of the developmental tasks of adolescents, which could possibly be the strongest theoretical links to attachment behavior. Peer relationships increase markedly in intensity during adolescence and in some cases may in themselves become attachment relationships.

Weiss (1973, 1989) believed secure adolescents attached high importance to both attachment and affiliation goals in friendship, anxious-ambivalent adolescence overemphasize attachment goals, and avoidant adolescence gave low importance to the two types of goals. In addition, whereas secure adolescents were responsive to affiliation and attachment contexts, insecure adolescents showed less responsiveness to these contexts and there habitual working models guided their responses (Marrio et al, 2001; Rao & Madan, 2013).

Is there no Hope for those of who had an insecure attachment style? Through researches on love and attachment, psychologists have learned something about the cultivation & re-cultivation of love among adults. Emotionally focused couples therapy is a well validated approach for troubled couples, which is based on attachment theory and teaches a more flexible approach to expression and satisfaction of needs (S.M. Johnson, 1996; S.M. Johnson, Hunsley, Greenberg & Schlinde, 1999). Partners learn to comfort, to reassure, to support one another, in short to open the doors to new emotional experiences, those that bind people together in secure relationships.

## II. LOVE: THE COLOR OF LIFE

Love in all its manifestations, whether for children, parents, friends or romantic partners, gives depth to human relationships. Love is definitely something more than a close friendship and something different from merely being romantically or sexually interested in another person. Robert J. Sternberg (1995) said that love is a story, lovers are its authors, and the kind of story they make up reflects their personalities and their feelings about their relationships. According to Baron and Byrne, love is a combination of emotions, cognitions and behaviors that often play a crucial role in intimate relationships.

There are casualties of love in the form of heartbreak and divorce, in the abuse of spouses and the neglect of children. Though not diagnostically labeled, loneliness lies near the center of such disorders as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, and substance abuse (Booth, 1983; McWhirter, 1990). When asked to describe bad events or things that have gone wrong in life, majority of people recounted relationships conflict or losses (Veroff, Douvan & Kukla, 1981). One of the ways that researchers legitimized the study of love was to highlight the problems ensuing from its absence and to identify factors helpful to avoid them. The capacity to love and to be loved is viewed by contemporary theorists as an inherently human tendency with powerful

effects on Well-Being from infancy through old age. Harris Reis and Shelly Gable (2003) conclude that good relations with others may be the single most important source of life satisfaction and emotional well-being, across different ages and cultures (Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Klinger, 1977). Aron and Aron (1956) were of the view that falling in love provides a sense of very rapid expansion of the boundaries of self and is therefore, a very pleasurable state of being.

### III. EVOLUTIONARY SIGNIFICANCE

The prolonged helplessness of infants requires love to be built deep within them and caregivers to ensure survival (Mellen, 1981). The ancestors needed not only the means to attract a mate for the purpose of procreation but also to create the bond between mates to guarantee that the child would be protected and raised. Survival required a high degree of infant nurturance and protection against predators. An emotional bond between breeding pairs of males and females might have enhanced offspring survival at least slightly. It was an advantage if they liked and trusted one another and if they could divide up tasks such as hunting and child care. Thus, the link of primitive emotional bonding to differential survival rates was the beginning of the evolution of love. According to Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) Attachment enhances survival by regulating an infant's relationship and proximity to his/her caregiver. The child continuously monitors the caregiver's whereabouts and plays contentedly as long as they are nearby. If the distance between them becomes too great the child will be upset and redirect his attention and effort toward re-establishing proximity. Irving Singer (194a, 1984b, 1987) distinguished four traditions of love, denoted by Greek terms—Eros, the search for the beautiful, it approaches love in terms of desire. *Philia*, the affection in friendship, it refers to love as friendship. *Nomos*, submission and obedience to the divine, it refers submission to God's will or obedience to the desire of a loved one. And *agape*, or the bestowal of love by the divine, it is the selfless love that approaches the divine.

Within western civilization, ideas about love have changed radically over centuries. In ancient Greece, homosexual love was prized above heterosexual relationships. In King Arthur's court loved involved a non sexual chivalry rather than intimacy. In Victorian England love was viewed as noble motion but sex was considered a necessary evil, required only for producing children. A more modern view is of loving a person for who he or she is.

An ongoing historical debate is whether romantic love even existed prior to the last few centuries (Simpson, Campbell & Berscheid, 1986). Marriage based on romantic love is a relatively modern intervention, dating only to the 18th century in the western world, and it is still not common in many parts of the world (Gadlin, 1977; Murstein, 1974). In much of the world, especially those with collectivist cultures, arranged marriages are the norm. Evidences show that marriages can be quite satisfying for the partners (Myers, Madathiles & Tingle, 2005). Peterson & Seligman are of the view that after all, arrange marriages are created by family members so, these may also be "love marriages" although the love is between parents and their children.

On the basis of biology, special attention has been given to the

hormone-like substance oxytocin, which is released in the brain in response to social contact, especially skin-to-skin touch (Insel, 1997). It has been called the cuddle hormone and it has been linked to the creation of a loving bond between two individuals and perhaps even to monogamy (Carter, 1998; Porges, 1998; Young, Wang & Insel, 1998). Oxytocin increases during pregnancy and its presence facilitates the production of milk and "maternal behavior". The oxytocin levels of a father also rise as well during pregnancy of his spouse and to the degree that he spends time with his infant, his oxytocin level continue to increase. Oxytocin is associated with the neurotransmitter 'dopamine' which is broadly responsible for reinforcement and pleasure. Neuro imaging studies of individuals show that their brains work differently when they are looking at a picture of their true love versus picture of good friends of the same age & gender (Bartels & Zeki, 2000). Researchers found that when mothers look at a picture of their own children, brain regions responsible for negative emotions and social comparison are deactivated (Bartels & Zeki, 2004). The focus is that love is also biology and the fact that the biological bodies are designed to draw people to one another is a strong argument that social relationships are neither arbitrary nor merely convenient ways to other things that matter like food, sex, power etc. According to Maslow love is one of the four basic human needs (physiological, safety, love and esteem). The love need must be satisfied before a person can act unselfishly. Maslow called these needs "deficiency needs". As long as one is motivated to satisfy these cravings, he would move toward growth and self-actualization. Maslow saw the satisfaction of needs as healthy (Gwynne, 1997; Sailor, 2013).

Now the question arises that is infant attached to his/her mother because she feeds him/her? Or is social attachment significant in its own right? Harry Harlow (1974) conducted an experiment and found that infants are predisposed to form attachments with objects that are easy to cuddle, like the terry models and concluded that the need for love and affection exists strongly. In an important study, Johnson, Dziurawiec, Ellis and Morton (1991) showed that within first hour following birth, infants are more likely to track with their eyes a moving stimulus that looks like a face than they are to track similar but non-face like stimuli. It shows that the newborn is predisposed by evolution to attend to the most important aspects of the environment, the parent and the parent's attention in turn is drawn to responsiveness of the infant, forming the base for attachment.

Equity theory suggests that close relationships, friendships or romances persist to the degree that both people involved believe that what they are getting out of the relationship is proportional to what they are putting into it (Walster, Walster & Berschied, 1978). However equity theory has been challenged from various quarters. A relationship that is strictly a mutual exchange can only be thought of as a business deal. To prevent this, individuals in friendship or romance must sacrifice some of their own rewards for the good of their partners. Then the relationship can be interpreted as genuine. Equity theory fails most profoundly because it ignores the feelings that people bring to their relationships. People do not have friends and spouses because

they “think” their friends and spouse will benefit them. People have them because they love them. According to Erich Fromm (1956), immature love says, “I Love you because I need you.” whereas mature love says “I need you because I Love you.”

The theoretical approaches to romantic love classify love in following ways. According to the classical distinction, love was termed as passionate love and compassionate love. Passionate or romantic love was defined as a state of intense passionate absorption of two lovers with each other in which emotion is primary and there is likely to be anguish and ecstasy both in the relationship. Compassionate love is defined as simply the unshakable affection felt for each other by two people whose lives are deeply intertwined. Passionate love involves an intense and often unrealistic emotional reaction to another person. It usually begins as instant, overwhelming surging, all consuming positive reaction to another person, a reaction that feels as if it’s beyond one’s control. The implication is that love relationships begin in the heat of passionate love, but because they are based on strong emotion that cannot endure, over time passion cools into the quiet glow of compassionate love. Unlike passionate love, compassionate love is based on an extremely close friendship in which two people are attracted to each other, have a great deal in common, care about each other’s well-being and express mutual liking and respect (Caspi & Herbener, 1990). It is not exactly as exciting as passionate love but it is able to sustain a satisfying and lasting relationship. These two forms of love can occur simultaneously or intermittently rather than sequentially (from passionate to compassionate). Hatfield (1988) noted that most people “hope to combine the delights of passionate love with the security of compassionate love in their intimate relationships.” Likewise Walster and Walster (1978) noted that most passionate love affairs end in termination of the affairs. But if one is lucky, a passionate relationship can ripen into compassionate love. Couple who began as passionate lovers can evolve into good friends. Hendrick and Hendrick (1993) found that friendship type love was the most frequently mentioned account theme. In another study they found that nearly half of the college students named their romantic partners as their closest friends. Noller (1996) concluded that “this combination of passionate and compassionate love is likely to be related to the love that supports marriage and family.”

On the other hand, Sternberg (1986) proposed a triangular model of love. This formulation suggests that each love relationship is made up of three basic components that are present in varying degrees in different couples (Aron & Westbay, 1996).

1. Intimacy - The closeness two people feel and the strength of the bond that holds them together.
2. Passion - Based on romance, physical attraction and sexual drives.
3. Commitment (decision) - A decision to initiate and sustain a relationship.

The various possibilities of combination of the three components yield eight types of relationships including “Non Love” in which all the three components are absent.

1. Non Love- describes most interpersonal relationship which is simply casual interaction.

2. Liking- There is closeness, understanding, emotional support, affection, bondedness and warmth.
3. Infatuation- “*Love at first sight*”, can flare up suddenly and die just as fast or given certain circumstances, can sometimes last for a long time.
4. Empty Love- Often found in long term relationships that have lost both intimacy & passion, or in arranged marriages.
5. Romantic Love- Romantic lovers are drawn to each other physically and bonded emotionally. They are not, however committed to each other.
6. Compassionate Love- Long-term committed friendship, often occurring in marriages in which physical attraction has died down but in which the partners feel close to each other and have made the decision to stay together.
7. Fatuous Love- Kind of love that leads to a whirlwind courtship, in which a couple makes a commitment on the basis of passion without allowing themselves the time to develop intimacy. This kind of love usually does not last despite the initial intent to commit.
8. Consummate Love- “Complete love” which many people strive for, especially in a romantic relationship. It is easier to achieve than to hold onto it. It consists of all three components (passion, intimacy, commitment) at high levels and in balance across both partners.

Sternberg linked his theory to other theories and discussed how the three primary love components might change over time within a relationship and between different relationships. Some of the researchers have focused on the predictive value of these three ingredients of love. In a study of 104 couples, both husbands’ & wives’ intimacy, followed by passion, predicted marital satisfaction (Silberman, 1995). Research on adults’ views about their relationships found that commitment was the best predictor of relationship satisfaction, especially for the long-term partnerships, (Acker & Davis, 1992)

Although love seems to be virtually universal (Goleman, 1992), its meaning and expression vary across time and space. According to Anne E. Beall and Robert Sternberg (1995), people in different cultures define love differently and the way they think about love affects what they feel. Love, is a social construction, a concept people create out of their culturally influenced perceptions of reality. This concept influences what is considered normal, acceptable, or ideal. Culture influences not only the definition of love, but the features considered desirable in choosing a beloved, the feelings & thoughts expected to accompany love and how lovers act toward each other. Social approval and support from family and friends reinforce satisfaction with and commitment to a relationship.

According to Chan et al, in independent cultures, couples are expected to have the final say in marriage. In contrast, in Asian Indian and other collectivistic cultures, arranged marriages are standard. Family approval and satisfaction are vital to marriages in Indian culture. Therefore, the emphasis on others’ opinions leads Indians in arranged marriages to be more prone to higher attachment anxiety levels. Furthermore, couples may need to restrain their personal wants and needs in order to appease the family, which can contribute to higher

levels of attachment avoidance. The findings suggest that culture plays an important role in the ways that individuals perceive and act in romantic relationships. Results revealed higher attachment avoidance in Asian Indians, regardless of marriage type. When observing marriage types, it was found a significant difference in both attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety. The couples in Indian arranged marriages reported the highest levels of attachment insecurity compared to those in U.S. marriages and Indian "love" marriages.

These findings imply that adherence to collectivistic values renders an individual more prone to attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety. Following this logic, those in Indian arranged marriages seem to be the most collectivistic among those in Indian "love" marriages and U.S. marriages. Highly collectivistic individuals may value emotional restraints and social harmony more than those who are less collectivistic, thus predisposing them to higher levels of attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety, respectively. Thus, there may be a relationship between degree of adherence to collectivistic values and attachment insecurity.

On the basis of the literature it was found that attachment lies at the roots of love. Basically four patterns of attachment were found namely secure, avoidant, ambivalent and disorganized attachment. The securely attached children grow into healthy, socially adept adults whereas remaining three type of attachments lead to behavioral and relationship problems. Through researches on love and attachment psychologists have learned about the cultivation and re-cultivation of love as love is a combination of emotions, cognitions and behaviors that often play a crucial role in intimate relationships. The theoretical approach of love describes love as passionate love and compassionate love whereas the Triangular theory of love describes eight types of love namely Non-Love, liking, infatuation, empty love, romantic love, compassionate love, fatuous love and consummate love. It was also found in the studies that re-cultivation of love among adults help people to reassure and bind together in secure relationships. Therefore it can be concluded that attachment and love are like two rail track lines on which the train of healthy life runs swiftly and smoothly.

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