

Lovers Versus Rivals: The Manifestation of Jealousy in the Amorous Verse of Mirza Ghalib and John Donne

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ABSTRACT:

Mirza Ghalib and John Donne are regarded as prominent love poets of their respective languages. Their treatment of the theme of love, i.e., romantic love, is quite realistic and unconventional. Jealousy is an important aspect of the emotion of romantic love. The present study explores various sources of jealousy as they are experienced by the protagonists, the male lovers in the poetry of Donne and Ghalib. One of these sources of jealousy is the presence of the Rival. The study discusses the impact of the presence of the Rival on the love triangles of Donne and Ghalib and illustrates how lovers in them react to the power and influence of the Rival. The study takes insights from the social sciences, as for example the concept of sexual jealousy given by Berscheid & Regan (2005) and applies them to the love poetry of Donne and Ghalib. The present is a case study of comparative literature and analyses the various manifestations of the emotion of jealousy in the love poetry of Donne and Ghalib in order to determine how much these love poets from two different cultures and times resemble with or differ from each other.

Introduction:

The emotion of romantic love has attracted poets across cultures and times since the bond between man and woman is a vital aspect of the fundamental structure of any society. Usually, love is a source of positive

emotions; sometimes, however, love is made stronger by the presence of a meddling Rival and by a negative emotion like jealousy. John Donne and Mirza Ghalib are prominent love poets of the English and Urdu languages respectively. Donne (1572 - 1631) , the English poet, lived in the times of Queen Elizabeth and James I, and Ghalib (1797 - 1869) lived at a time when the Mughal rule in India had finally come to a tragic end after the crushing down of the 1857 rebellion, and the British rule had firmly been established. Donne and Ghalib share certain features as love poets. They are both quite unorthodox in their treatment of love; they rejected and mocked at the culture of love poetry of their respective ages. Their notions of love are quite earthly and they are in accordance with their own personal experiences. They have reflected love in all its complexity and diversity. As lovers, they have faced the force of the Rival, and experienced jealousy. The present study is an effort to explore what similarities and differences Donne and Ghalib exhibit in their response to the Rival and the emotion of jealousy.

Research Methodology:

The present is a case study of comparative literature. Insights have been taken from psychology i.e., Ellen Berscheid & Pamela Regan(*The Psychology of Interpersonal Relationships*), and from the evolutionary theory of sex differences in jealousy cited in Vicki Helgeson (*The Psychology of Gender*). These concepts are applied to the English verse of Donne(*Songs and Sonnets, Elegies*) as well as to the Urdu verse (ghazals) of Ghalib. According to Mohan Kumar (251), jealousy is the negative emotional reaction experienced when a relationship that is important to a person's self-concept is threatened by a real or imagined rival. Jealousy is a complex emotion. It is especially likely to happen in love and sexual relationships. R.G. Bringle (103-131) has found that high jealousy is associated with intense love among other factors. According to Will Durant (*The Pleasures of Philosophy* 118-9), man's jealousy, like his love, is more intense and less prolonged. The sense of possession is stronger in the male. Love, for him, is not only self-abandonment, but also an extension and triumph of the self. Jealousy can cause the decay of a relationship. Jealousy is caused by the fear of losing love, and in turn, it ruins that very love. Jealousy may lead to further rejection. Berscheid and Regan (389-90) observe that sexual jealousy is a pervasive human response to real, imagined, or implied infidelity. Both men and women experience jealousy when faced with their partner's real or imagined sexual or emotional infidelity. According to the evolutionary theory of sex differences in jealousy (D. M. Buss et al. ctd in Helgeson 407), men are extremely upset by sexual infidelity because it could endanger the chance

of their genes surviving. On the other hand, a man's sexual infidelity does not jeopardize a woman's link to her offspring. Women are more disturbed by their man falling in love with some other partner because it could lead the man to invest his resources with someone else. The study endeavors to find answers to the following research questions:

- i) What are the doubts and fears that torment the lovers in Donne and Ghalib?
- ii) What is the impact of the presence of the Rival and how do lovers in Donne and Ghalib react to him ?
- iii) What instances of sexual jealousy can be found in the male protagonists of Donne and Ghalib ?
- iv) In what ways the lovers in Donne and Ghalib resemble with or differ from each other in their response to jealousy and the Rival ?

It is interesting to note that Ghalib uses the word "rashk" to label his particular feelings in his verse. The word "rashk" (envy) has slightly different meanings from "hasad" (jealousy); while "rashk" is used in a positive sense in Urdu, "hasad" is usually regarded as a negative feeling. However, the evidence from several trusted dictionaries of the Urdu language shows that "rashk" and "hasad" can be used as synonyms. In this connection, for example, the references can be made to the Urdu dictionaries compiled by Maulvi Feroz-ud-Din (n.d., 569,711), Waris Sarhindi (1972, 648, 813), Sayyid Qaim Raza Nasim Amrohvi and Sayyid Murtaza Husain Fazil Lakhnawi(1996, 489, 627), and Khwaja Abdul-Majeed (2010, Vol I, 915, Vol II, 1125), etc. It may, therefore, be assumed that the use of the word "rashk" by Ghalib is just euphemism, the actual feeling involved is jealousy which the male protagonist feels when he finds his beloved in the company of the cunning and resourceful Rival. And it makes sense in the context of man-woman romantic relationships as pointed out by Kumar and Bringle (cited above).

It is important to point out here that the use of the word "love" is limited to romantic or erotic love in the context of man-woman relationships; it does not involve any other meaning of "love". Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* and elegies, while Ghalib's Urdu ghazals have been used as primary sources. The version of Donne's poems edited by A. J. Smith has been used; Ghalib's Urdu ghazals and their English translation have been taken from Yusuf Husain. The numbers given at the end of translated couplets of Ghalib refer to ghazal no and couplet no respectively in Yusuf's translation.

Discussion And Analyses:

Jealousy is one of the prominent themes of Ghalib's love poetry. Critics seem to hold quite different opinions on the subject of Ghalib's jealousy. Saraswati Saran (141) writes that the importance given to jealousy is a dark spot in Ghalib's love poetry. Ibadat Brailvey (191-2) expresses the opinion that Ghalib's jealousy is an expression of his morbid selfishness and mental perplexity. S. M. Ikram (*Hakeem-e-Farzana* 85), however, remarks that the couplets on jealousy are more an expression of his witty amusement than any real emotions. Ghalib's deep interest in the theme of jealousy is quite obvious. In the Hameedia version of his verse, there are no less than fifty couplets on this aspect of love. Ghalib acknowledges that he has been greatly afflicted by this feeling: "In love, the tyranny / Of the other's envy killed me" (51:4)

”عشق میں، پیداو رشک غیر نے مارا مجھے“ Ghalib's jealousy, destructive though it has been for him, is the proof of his pure, passionate love:

Even being in the esteem of love
Brings the destruction of one's house;
When the other sighs,
It is on me her anger turns. (25:2)

اعتبارِ عشق کی خانہ خرابی دیکھنا
غیر نے کی آہ، لیکن وہ خفاِ منجھ پر ہوا

The reasons for the lover's jealousy are obvious: (i) the beloved's flirtatious nature:

Envy says: "Alas, she is sincere
In her dealings with the other".
Reason replies: "This faithless one
Is not to anyone a friend". (21:1)

رشک کہتا ہے کہ اُس کا غیر سے اخلاص حیف
عقل کہتی ہے کہ وہ بے مہر کس کا آشنا

And, (ii) - the beloved's attentive inclination towards the rival. The lover notices with pain:

How often thy quick and intense glance
Rests on the face of the other,
While in pain I am pierced
By those long sharp eyelashes. (34:3)

Couplet Nos. 41:1, 127:9, 135:4, and 234:2 in Yusuf Husain's translation of Ghalib also refer to the beloved's insincerity. Apart from the girl's fickleness, the role played by the rival is also a matter of concern for the lover. Donne is also conscious of the efforts of "other men" in winning the heart of his beloved. Hence, his fears are justified:

But if in thy heart, since, there be or shall
 New love created be, by other men,
 Which have their stocks entire, and can in tears,
 In sighs, in oaths, and letters outbid me,
 This new love may beget new fears. ("Lovers' Infiniteness")

Ghalib's rival is a resourceful man. He is a potential threat as it seems likely that he has succeeded in having some sort of a sway over the girl:

The sweet-talk of the other
 Has proved effective;
 But of our tongueless love
 No hint has she received. (99)

ہوگئی ہے غیر کی شیریں بیانی ، کارگر
 عشق کا اُس کو گماں ہم بیزمانوں پر نہیں

and -

He stays constantly in the street
 Of the friend; if one does not say
 That this street is the home
 Of the enemy, then what to say? (227:3)

رہے ہیں گے وہ گے کہ کوئے دوست کو اب
 اگر نہ کہیے کہ دشمن کا گھر ہے ، کیا کہیے؟

The rival takes full advantage of the situation and takes delight in teasing the lover:

When I complain about
 The weakness of my head,
 He starts describing
 The perfumed tresses of the friend. (51:8)

جب کہ میں کرتا ہوں اپنا شکوہ ضعف دماغ

سر کرے ہے وہ حدیث زلفِ عنبر بار دوست

It is obvious that his rival is a powerful man that is why the lover is in "fear of the rival" (76:1). The rival's fear haunts the lover even in his moment of union with the beloved:

In union I am distracted
 By fear of the rival; but why
 Should'st thou suffer the twists and turns
 Of imaginary apprehensions? (109:7)

میں مضطرب ہوں وصل میں خوفِ رقیب سے
 ڈالا ہے تم کو وہم نے کس پیچ و تاب میں؟

Why the lover is so much conscious of the rival, is a valid point for further discussion. It may be that his relationship with the girl is immoral or inappropriate in some way. It may be that it is Ghalib's sense of sinfulness and guilt which Brailvey (178,198) has pointed out. The situation of the lover here in Ghalib may be contrasted with that of the lover in Donne whose ghost, after his death ("...by thy scorn, O murderess...") comes to the bed of his beloved, who is in another man's arms then, and frightens both the girl and her friend ("The Apparition").

Ghalib's hatred of the rival finds bitter expression. While criticizing, he does not spare the girl who, in Donne's words, is "in worse arms" ("The Apparition"):

The image of that sportive idol
In the arms of the rival -
Not Mani's brush, but the ugly foot
Of the peacock should be used to paint it. (147:1)

نقشِ نازِ بُتِ طئاز ، بہ آغوشِ رقیب
پائے طاؤس پے خامہ مانی مانگے

However, strangely enough, sometimes, in spite of all the hatred for the rival, Ghalib expresses sympathy for him. After all, the rival is an essential element of the triangle of love which consists of the lover, the beloved, and the rival. Jerry mouse would feel sad and bored if he did not find Tom cat around. The rival, in an unusual way, connects the lover with the beloved:

The wound that can be darned,
O God, apportion it, I pray
To the lot of the adversary. (193:1)

جس زخم کی ہو سکتی ہو تدبیرِ رفو کی
لکھ دیجیو ، یارب ، اُسے قسمت میں عدو کی

In Ghalib's poetry many instances of sexual jealousy can be found:

Tonight, it seems, thou must have slept
In the arms of my rival; else
For what reason, with those hidden smiles,
Did'st thou appear in my dream? (37:10)

بغل میں غیر کی ، آج آپ سوتے ہیں کہیں ، ورنہ
سبب کیا ، خواب میں آکر تبسم ہائے پنہاں کا؟

and, -

“How did the night pass
With the other?” When I asked this
She came and sat before me,
Angrily staring like this. (85:4)

”غیر سے رات کیا بنی“ یہ جو کہا ، تو دیکھیے
سامنے آن بیٹھنا ، اور یہ دیکھنا کہ یوں

and, –

Perhaps last night
She appeared in someone’s dream;
Today that delicate bodied one
Has aching feet. (122:7)

شب کو کسی کے خواب میں آیا نہ ہو کہیں!
دُکھتے ہیں آج اُس بُتِ نازکِ بدن کے پانو

Commenting on woman’s jealousy, Will Durant (*The Pleasures of Philosophy* 118-9) writes that though it lacks in intensity and depth, it extends far and wide. She can be jealous not only of her husband’s lovers, but of his friends, his pipe, his newspaper, and his books. Ghalib’s jealousy is womanlike in its wide range of sources. It is pervasive and infectious. If anything is somehow connected with the beloved, Ghalib can be jealous of it. He can, therefore, be jealous of anything, even of himself. Some of the factors arousing jealousy in him are given below:

- i) He is jealous of the messenger: in 227:1, and 140:7:

O Asad, I feel no joy in the message
From the friend; I am jealous
Of the messenger’s opportunity
For question and answer with the friend. (140:7)

گزرا اسد ، مسرتِ پیغام یار سے
قاصد پہ مجھ کو رشکِ سوال و جواب ہے

- ii) He is jealous of “The fragrant breath of the rose” since the spring invents it for his beloved (80:5).
iii) At the sight of his beloved embellishing her curls, he is “filled with apprehensions / Of the far and near” (69:2).
iv) He is jealous of the sword in her hand:

She comes to slay me,
But in my passionate jealousy,
I die when I but see
The sword held in her hand. (63:4)

آتا ہے میرے قتل کو ، پر جوشِ رشک سے
مرتاً ہوں ، اُس کے ہاتھ میں تلوار دیکھ کر

- v) He feels jealous of the sacred thread:

Why should I not die of envy
When that delicate body
Comes within the embracing, curling loop
Of the sacred thread? (206:7)

مر جاؤں نہ کیوں رشک سے ، جب وہ تنِ نازک
آغوشِ خمِ حلقہ زُتار میں آوے

The above couplet is also expressive of sexual jealousy.

- vi) He is jealous of "the glance of someone":

From her veil, see,
There is a thread sticking out,
And I am afraid
Lest it be the glance of someone. (123:4)

اُبھرا ہوا نقاب میں ہے اُن کے ایک تار
مرتا ہوں میں کہ یہ نہ کسی کی نگاہ ہو

- vii) He is jealous of general public; as in 111:2, and 212:2:

Do not bury me in thy street
After I have been slain;
Why should people, through my address,
Come across thy house? (212:2)

اپنی گلی میں مجھ کو نہ کر دفن، بعدِ قتل
میرے پتے سے خلق کو کیوں تیرا گھر ملے؟

- viii) Ghalib can feel envious even of himself, for instance, in 184:1, and 209:1:

Look at my fate! I feel envy
Even of myself, and although
I glance at her sometimes
How can I gaze at her? (184:1)

دیکھنا قسمت کہ آپ اپنے پہ رشک آجائے ہے
میں اُسے دیکھوں، بھلا کب مجھ سے دیکھا جائے ہے!

- ix) Rarely, jealousy is on the other side, that is, some other object is jealous of Ghalib, for instance, in 75:7, it is the burning candle that is jealous of Ghalib:

It burns with envy, seeing me
Reclining on the pillow of the friend;
On my heart why should there not lie
The scar of suspicion of the candle? (75:7)

جلے ہے دیکھ کے بالین یار پر مجھ کو
نہ کیوں ہو دل پہ مرے داغ بدگمانی شمع

While jealousy is a prominent factor in Ghalib's love, it is not so in the case of Donne. Donne's superiority as a lover and his confidence in the relationship allow little space for the thoughts of jealousy to prosper. Donne is, however, quite well aware that doubts and fears may mar the purity and beauty of a romantic relationship. While affirming his love, he frequently refers to fears. In "The Dream", Donne states: "That love is weak, where fear's as strong as he; / 'Tis not all spirit, pure, and brave, / If mixture it of fear, shame, honour, have." In "The Anniversary", the confident lover recommends: "True and false fears let us refrain". But, what are these fears? Donne has referred to some of these fears. "Song: Sweetest love" suggests at least two fears:

Sweetest love, I do not go,
For *weariness* of thee,
Nor in hope the world can show
A *fitter love* for me.
(Note: Italics are mine for emphasis)

"Woman's Constancy" refers to more fears. It lists certain excuses for terminating the relationship. It mentions the following fears:

- i) The fear that the lover may "antedate some new made vow".
- ii) The fear that "oaths made in reverential fear / Of love, and his wrath, any may forswear".
- iii) The fear that "lovers' contracts" "Bind but till sleep, death's image, them unloose".
- iv) The fear of having "no way but falsehood to be true".

Donne has also referred to the rival, the other 'he', for instance, in "Love's Usury", "A Valediction: Of my Name in the Window", "The Apparition" ("he, whose thou art then"). In some cases, the plural form is used, for example, in "Elegy 5" ("If rival fools tax thee") and in "Elegy 16" ("...by the memory / Of hurts, which spies and rivals threatened me"). Seen in the perspective of their respective rivals, Donne's position is different from that of Ghalib. Ghalib is mostly in fear of his rival and seems to have suffered considerably because of his rival who is a socially powerful and resourceful man. Donne, on the contrary (though his rival is also a wealthy and intelligent man), is not intimidated by him, rather it is Donne who seems to have the upper hand.

That Donne as a lover is a strong competitor and possesses the necessary qualification to knock his rival down is illustrated in at least two poems. In "A Valediction: Of my Name in the Window", the rival is referred to as "one, whose wit or land, / New battery to thy heart may frame". The poet's name engraved in the window pane of his beloved's room is effective enough to drive away any such potential rival:

And when thy melted maid,
Corrupted by thy lover's gold, and page,
His letter at thy pillow hath laid,
Disputed it, and tamed thy rage,
And thou begin'st to thaw towards him, for this,
May my name step in, and hide his.

In "Love's Usury", according to his envisaged plan, the lover intercepts the letter from the lady to the rival and manipulates the situation deftly to get full advantage of it. After seducing her maid at nine, he goes on to benefit from the lady at midnight, explaining to her the reason for his delay:

Let me think any rival's letter mine,
And at next nine
Keep midnight's promise; mistake by the way
The maid, and tell the lady of that delay.

"Elegy 1: Jealousy" is a satire on the jealous husband as well as on his disloyal wife: "Fond woman, which wouldst have thy husband die, / And yet complain'st of his great jealousy". "If swoll'n with poison, he lay in his last bed", his wife, the poet's beloved, "wouldst not weep, but jolly, and frolic be, / As a slave, which tomorrow should be free." The jealous husband is portrayed as a disgusting creature. Surprisingly, Donne here expresses some kindness for him, as Ghalib sometimes does for his rival: "O give him many thanks, he is courteous, / That in suspecting kindly warneth us". Though, it is obvious, Donne's gratitude is quite ironic here.

Donne's love poetry also presents examples of sexual jealousy. The dead lover's ghost comes to his beloved's bed and finds her in "worse arms" ("The Apparition"). He scoffs at the inferior sexual ability of his rival:

And he, whose thou art then, being tired before,
Will, if thou stir, or pinch to wake him, think
Thou call'st for more,
And in false sleep will from thee shrink.

“Elegy 7” is the angry protest of a frustrated lover, who taught his beloved, “Nature’s lay idiot”, to love. She has betrothed herself to another man, who is now the poet’s rival. How intense sexual jealousy of the poet is, the following lines indicate clearly:

I planted knowledge and life’s tree in thee,
Which oh, shall strangers taste? Must I alas
Frame and enamel plate, and drink in glass?
Chafe wax for others’ seals? break a colt’s force
And leave him then, being made a ready horse?

Conclusion:

Both Donne and Ghalib have experienced various kinds of doubts and fears in love. They have felt the intimidating impact of the rival and have been victims to the pangs of jealousy. Compared with Donne’s, Ghalib’s jealousy is quite intense. Ghalib is almost womanlike in his pervasive jealousy. Ghalib and Donne are both quite well aware of the role and impact of the Rival, while Ghalib seems to be intimidated by the Rival, Donne seems to have the upper hand and laughs at the power of the Rival. However, Donne also, just like Ghalib, seems to be suffering from sexual jealousy, though Ghalib’s poetry offers more examples of it. While considering the expression of jealousy in Ghalib’s love poetry, two facts should be borne in mind. First, jealousy or envy was an important aspect of the theme of love in classical Persian and Urdu poetry. The ‘Rival’ is an important character in traditional Urdu poetry. Second, the presence of a rival in amorous affairs is quite in harmony with the social set-up of nineteenth century India. The beloved in the classical Urdu poetry is not a domestic lady. She is a prostitute or courtesan, and an amorous relationship with such a woman is bound to generate the feelings of jealousy since, by nature of her profession, she cannot give all her love exclusively to one man. In such a relationship, rivalry and competition among men are quite natural to happen. Many poets had strong attachments with courtesans in Ghalib’s days.

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