CHAPTER 3
JK’S CONCEPT OF LOVE

‘Love’ is perhaps the most sought after and talked about word these days. That is evident if we look around us in literature, theatre, movies etc. But, such an engaging concept has not gained that prominent a place in philosophy as it has in the human mind right since ancient times. We do not find a philosophical discussion of the concept of love in the Indian or the western tradition except for Plato. Love is discussed in other fields like psychology to a great extent; philosophical enumeration of love is scarcely to be found. In the Indian tradition Karuna or compassion is discussed in Buddhism but love is absent.

JK talked on this topic frequently with the young generation and with the older generation. As is his style, he often raises the question of what love is and urges the listeners to ponder over it, try to understand the ‘meaning’ rather than the word. According to him, when there is love, there is freedom, peace of mind and there is meditation. All these go together. Before going further into JK’s understanding of love, let us first see the commonsense understanding of it.

Commonsense understanding of love- usually- like freedom- love is attached with/to something else; it is ‘love of’ or ‘love for’ someone or something, meaning love takes an object. There is the love for one’s spouse, child, nation; love for a particular art; love for various objects; and there is Love of God. In all these, there is attachment, involvement, belongingness, possession, great liking. There is expectation that if I love someone and therefore I expect him or her to behave in a particular way. More important, the idea of love is very closely associated with pleasure; especially pleasure of the senses. Literatures all over the world have great ‘love’ stories, for example, Heer and Ranza, Romeo and Juliet, Paris and Helen etc. But, there is also the concept of Platonic love or love sans the physical aspect; it is sometimes called as pure love. Overall it can be said that even in the commonsense understanding of love there is the idea of love as something beyond the senses or sensual pleasure. Love for all and for everything is also mentioned by various saints and thinkers. Now a days we see that the scope of love is not limited to humans only; these days we have various groups or institutions of animal lovers,
nature lovers etc. Love as a positive feeling is also supposed to be a great contributing factor in one’s wellbeing and even longevity of life.

**JK’s understanding of love**

JK goes beyond all these emotions and thoughts that usually go with the very word love. According to him, love is something that is necessarily all inclusive, not limited to a particular object, person, country, religion or God. Let us now try and understand what he means by love.

Raising questions and using the method of negation are noticed prominently in JK’s teachings. So he raises the question- ‘what is love?’ And, later on, by using the method of negation he tries to show the real meaning of love.

**Love and dependency**

He has pointed out that dependence is involved in what we generally call ‘love’. This dependency could be the result of the sense of attachment that comes from loneliness, insufficiency in oneself, not being able to stand alone therefore leaning on somebody. We also depend on the postman, milkman etc, but this dependence is of a different kind. JK calls it as ‘psychological dependence’ and this dependence comes with all the problems that go with it; there is the problem of image- of your own and of another- in relationship, the attachment to this image as well as denial and creation of new image. We call this together as love. There is also the love of God. God is an image, an idea, a symbol put together by hand and thought and this love is much easier to understand or to practice than finding out what love is in relationship. Then we depend on this image to help us solve our problems. We also talk of romantic or physical love which carries the feelings of possession, dominance, jealousy; people consider these to be quite naturally present in love and even justify these on the basis of love.
Love- identification- sentiments

We talk about the love of for one’s country for which you are willing to kill, maim, destroy yourself. JK says that out of a great/ noble sentiment of patriotism “we identify ourselves with national flag or some other symbol and kill each other and call it as love of your country”\(^1\). According to JK this identification is an emotional and sentimental factor and where sentiment and emotion come in, love is not. Because, according to him, emotion and sentiment breed the cruelty of like and dislike; for example I like my country therefore I kill others. This is cruelty in the name of my ‘love’ for my country. But he points out that actually there is no place for cruelty in love. But this kind of identification seems to be bringing around this kind of cruelty and therefore that cannot be love.

Then there are sentiments like jealousy and envy and love does not go with them. I envy you or am jealous of you because you have better passions, better job, better looks etc; you may not actually say that you are jealous but you compete with him/ her and that is a form of jealousy, envy. In such instances the driving force is not love, competition or comparison is the driving force. So they are not love and have to be wiped out “as the rain washes the dust of many days off a leaf.”\(^2\)

Love- pleasure- desire

Time and again JK has asked the question Is love pleasure? He says that our beliefs, faiths are all the result of the pursuit of pleasure. Usually I love something- be it an object, act, scene, emotion, relationship- because it gives me pleasure. He points out that consciously or unconsciously pleasure is what one is seeking while seeking love. Then it is a self-centered activity. But according to him there is no self-centeredness in love. “Our beliefs, our social structure… is the result of our pursuit of pleasure. And when we say, ‘I love somebody’, is it love? Love means: no division/separation, no domination, no self-centered activity. To find out what love is one must deny all this- deny it in the sense of seeing the falseness of it.”\(^3\) What is this ‘seeing falseness’? He explains. “… when you actually see that love is none of these things, feel it, observe it, chew it, live with it, are totally committed to it, then you will know what love
is...” In that you will understand that there is no place for self-centeredness in love. This understanding is ‘seeing the falseness’ and then that self-centeredness will drop. It means that the pursuit of pleasure will also drop. ‘Seeing the falseness’ is having clear perception. (This idea occurs repeatedly in his teachings.)

While discussing pleasure, sacrifice and love, JK has said this- “The word ‘love’ is a very heavily loaded word.” The word is uttered with varied emotions. We are also convinced that it is quite right to have all these loves in one’s life. JK calls this as an ‘encrustation’ of centuries that has gathered around the word ‘love’. Like I love my country, the book, the king, my spouse, a beautiful valley etc. Then he asks that can we free that word from all these ‘encrustations of centuries’? We can do that only when we go deeply into the question: Is love pleasure? Our conduct is based on the principle of pleasure; we behave in a particular way because it pleases us. So we must enquire whether I love because there is the feeling of pleasure involved in my love for whatever. JK says that even in sacrifice pleasure is involved. ‘I’ am happy to sacrifice for someone else, thus even in sacrifice the ‘I’ persists and gives pleasure. In love the ‘I’ is absent. Therefore sacrifice of this kind does not go with love. Thus pleasure is not love.

To understand this, we must first understand the nature and interconnection of pleasure and desire. Right from watching a beautiful scene to sexual enjoyment pleasure exists everywhere. And then the mind wants a repetition of that, I enjoyed the scene or the act yesterday, I want it today, tomorrow, day after and so on. This repetition is the beginning of desire; it is the looking for pleasure for tomorrow. Thought enters here and then ‘the pleasure of tomorrow’ gets built. Thought builds an image of the scene; thought is the memory of it all and there is the desire for repetition. This repetition is the continuity of desire strengthened by thought. Or, the product of thought is the continuity of desire as pleasure. “Thought has produced this pleasure by thinking about what was pleasurable yesterday, which I want repeated today.” Repetitive conduct breeds not only mechanical, repetitive relationship but it also breeds disorder due to the lack of freshness in it; then there is no love.
Love and thought

The question that arises here is – Is love a continuity of thought, or has thought nothing whatsoever to do with love? When you really understand the whole process of pleasure, desire, thought and time, then only you can authentically say that love has nothing whatsoever to do with pleasure.

According to JK desire and pleasure necessarily involve thought which is time; love is not limited or based on time. Has love roots in yesterday and tomorrow? JK says that thought –not love- has such roots because thought is the response of memory. Love is obviously not memory. I love someone because he/ she was nice to me yesterday, now I don’t love him/ her because he/ she is not nice to me today- this cannot be love. This is only a form of thought that accepts or denies.

JK also asks can there be love that has no emotion and no sentiment. He says, “It (love) is like a flower that has perfume; you can smell it or you can pass it by. That flower is for everybody and, for the one who takes trouble to breathe it deeply and look at it, a great delight.”

It means that the flower does not feel dejected by your neglect or elated by your attention. It is fresh and fragrant for all, in spite of neglect or attention. It does not say that it will not open up for a person because it hates that person. Or that it will open up for someone because it likes that person. Similarly, love is there for all, the same for all and therefore he says that love has no sentiment or emotion directed at something in particular/ someone in particular. Love is all encompassing.

Love and ending of ‘me’

“You will find out what love is; and what sorrow is, only when your mind has rejected all explanation and is no longer imagining, no longer seeking the cause, no longer indulging in words or going back in memory to its own pleasures and pains. Your mind must be completely quiet, without a word, without a symbol, without an idea. And then you will discover – there will come into being – that state in which what we have called love and what we have called
sorrow and what we have called death are all the same. There is no longer any division between love and sorrow and death; and there being no division, there is beauty. But to comprehend, to be in this state of ecstasy, there must be that passion that comes with the total abandonment of oneself.”

In the above passage JK has pointed out that love is a state of ecstasy, it is actually a state where love, death, ending of sorrow all is on par; not just on par, there is no division in them at all. In order to understand- which is to experience actually, not verbally – this state, passion is necessary. And, he says, “There can be passion only when there is total self-abandonment. One is never passionate unless there is a complete absence of what we call thought.” Thus love is necessarily connected with the ending of ‘me’. The ‘me’ is made of thought and hence thought has to end for love to be.

But, JK also tells us that with such ending of me or thought sensitivity to everything around us must not be lost. A state where freedom, meditation, love and truth coexist cannot be a numb state. On the contrary in such a state you are extremely alert; there is total awareness of everything that is there. It is a peculiar state where there is no centre of awareness, there is only awareness; because there is no center as such there is total awareness.

Love is extraordinarily important for living. Without love all your activities become meaningless. JK says that if there is no love, do whatever you want to do- like seeking all the gods on the earth, social activities, helping the poor, trying to reform the poor, writing books, going into politics- you are missing out on the vastness of life because in all these the ‘I’ persists. Thus love is the essence of living, the meaning of life because it is through love that you realize the vastness of life.

**Love and the method of negation**

While talking about love JK employs the method of negation in order to uncover the meaning of love. He describes at length what love is not. Let us see in brief some of his negations.
He uses the method of negation by pointing out that love is something ‘in itself’ and not the opposite of hatred or jealousy; it is also not an end to these emotions. Love is closely connected with sorrow- ending of sorrow and death as well. This beautiful passage throws light on the connection between ending of sorrow, death, ecstasy, beauty and love-

“Love is not attachment, love is not the opposite of hate, love is not jealousy. And when one has finished with jealousy, with envy, with attachment, with all the conflicts and the agonies that one goes through, - thinking that one loves- when all that has come to an end , there still remains the question of what is love , and there still remains the question of what is sorrow.”

According to JK love is not something that can be cultivated or learnt or practiced. He points out that love cannot be divided into divine and physical, spiritual and profane. Love is only love without any adjective. Also it is not limited to only one or a few or many persons or things; love is all inclusive. Therefore, he says, the question ‘do you love all’ is absurd. “A flower that has perfume is not concerned with who comes to smell it, or who turns his back upon it.” Then, love is not memory; love is not a thing of the mind or intellect. Love is not something that can be imposed externally; it comes into being naturally as compassion. This happens when the whole problem of existence as fear, greed, envy, despair, hope has been understood and resolved. We have already seen that love is not pleasure.

JK says, “Out of the negation of what is not love, every moment of life, out of the putting aside of what is not love, comes the positive thing called love.” This clearly brings out the method of negation that he employed while discussing the nature of love. Often he said that love is not the word ‘love’; the desire to be loved and to love is not love. When it comes to understanding of love, one has to use logic and reason but has to go beyond them because logic is not love and reason is not love. Thus, love is something that you have to understand, experience, feel and this understanding lies beyond reason, beyond words. Love transcends these.
Love and ambition

He also holds that an ambitious man cannot love because with ambition comes comparison and then the struggle to achieve whatever your object of ambition is. The ‘I’ is very strong and functioning while fulfilling one’s ambition. This clearly leads to division i.e. the ‘I’ and the object of ambition. This is also an activity of thought because thought decides the ambition. There is no place for love on the thought level. Ambition may also arise out of attachment to family etc. A man who is attached to his family has no love because there is clearly the division between my family and others. Love cannot come into being under such conditions.

Love and suffering

Sometimes it is said that with love comes suffering or that suffering is a part of love.* JK does not agree with it. On the contrary, he says that where there is suffering you cannot possibly love, and that is a truth, a law. He explains why love and suffering cannot coexist. According to him the essence of suffering is the total expression, at that moment, of complete self-centered existence. It is the essence of the ‘me’- the essence of the ego, the limited, enclosed, existence, which is called the ‘me’. When the ‘me’ is awakened, it denies a complete understanding of the situation or incident. This ‘me’ or ‘I’ is the cause of suffering. He asks, “if there were no ‘me’ would there be suffering?” He means that in love the ‘me’ is absent and therefore there can be no suffering.

Also, suffering as the expression of the ‘me’ can include self-pity, loneliness, an attempt to escape, trying to be with the other who is no more etc. This ‘me’ is an image and it is the knowledge, the remembrance of the past. So, how is this essence of me related to love? Or rather is there any relationship between love and suffering? There is not because love is not remembrance or the past. Another important point made by JK in this regard is- this me is put

*Here we are reminded of the great poet-thinker Khalil Gibran- who called JK as ‘God of Love’ when they met. In his famous poem ‘The Prophet’ Khalil Gibran says, ‘For even as love crowns you, so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth, so is he for your pruning. Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tender branches that quiver in the sun, so shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth.’
together by thought but love is not put together by thought. He says, “The memories of the
pains, the delights and the pursuit of pleasure-sexual and otherwise- of the pleasure of
possessing somebody and somebody liking to be possessed- all that is the structure of thought.
The ‘me’ with its name, form, its memory is put together by though.” 14Love is not put together
by thought; therefore suffering has no relationship with love.

**Love, suffering, thought and action**

JK says that you have to have an insight if you want to understand the place of thought in
relation to love and suffering. Having an insight means you are not escaping from the situation,
or wanting comfort, frightened to be lonely, isolated. Only such a mind is free and that which is
free is empty. If you have that emptiness you have an insight into suffering. Then suffering as
‘me’ disappears. When this happens, there is immediate action and that action is not from
thought, it is from love. Otherwise, action from suffering is the action from ‘me’, me is the
product of thought and that is why there is always conflict.

According to him thought is always fragmentary and limited. Thought cannot cultivate love
because, you make abstractions in thought and making such abstractions is moving away from
‘what is’. This movement of abstraction becomes a condition according to which one lives. This
is the way of thought; one will never know what love is, the enormous beauty, depth and
significance involved in love if one takes this path of thought.

**Love, religious mind, right action**

He connects love with religious mind as well. What is a religious mind? Here are some
indicators given by JK. He says, “A mind that is not in the state of love is not a truly religious
mind.”15 A religious mind does not divide life into the outer and the inner, it is without any
conflict like I am this- I want to become that, it is free of ideals, it is without any fear, it has an
extraordinary stillness and, JK says that only then love can come by. So actually love and being
truly religious go together. Freshness of mind, innocence are qualities of a religious mind and
they are there in love. Such a mind is able to meet every moment anew. Then the action is out of love and that according to JK is the right action.

**Importance of love**

JK brings out the importance of love in various ways. He says that love is something without which your problems will increase, multiply endlessly. “And with love, do what you will, there is no risk, there is no conflict.” 16 If you have no love do what you will your problems will increase.

JK points out that we tend to separate death from life and life from love, and love from time. 17 If we want to understand any one of these, we have to understand the rest, they are interconnected. Life is a whole unit; it is to be understood as a whole. We take a fragmentary view and then there is a problem because understanding a fragment is not understanding the whole. In order to understand this problem all your attention and passion are required. This passion comes out of the flame of sorrow. When you understand the depth and meaning of sorrow, you have the energy, vitality to investigate what love is.

Thus we find that JK’s concept of love is all inclusive in the sense that it is not limited to a particular person or object. It involves full sensitivity to everyone, everything. This love, like his concept of freedom, is outside the field of thought; it is love *per se*.

Next, we shall see what the very word love meant in ancient times. Then we shall go in to Plato’s views on love. Thereafter Mahatma Gandhi’s concept of love will be explored.
Concept of Love in ancient Greece
If we go back and track down the ancient Greek reference to love and the meaning of the very term as understood in those days we come upon some interesting information. With a view to understanding JK’s meaning of the concept of love, let us go into the meaning of the very term love and then see how Plato, a Greek stalwart of philosophy, has discussed this concept of love.

In Greek agapé, éros, philia and storge are the four words that are used for love. Each one has a different shade of meaning to it. This is how they differ from each other-

Agapé- seems to be a wide term. It refers to the ‘spiritual’ sense in love. Though it also refers to general affection it is also used in a deeper sense of ‘true unconditional love’. Unconditional in the sense that agapé involves only giving without any expectation of any kind of return. Thus there is a sense of sacrifice attached to agapé. It also denotes feelings for one’s spouse, children, being content or holding one in high regard. This word was used by the Christians to express the unconditional love of god.

Éros- means the physical, passionate, romantic emotion where logic may not play any part. It is something more than a friendship as in philia. Plato says that at the initial stage éros functions but with contemplation it turns into an appreciation of the inner beauty of a person or even beauty itself. According to him the physical part in love was not a necessary part of love. Hence ‘Platonic love’ means love without the physical aspect. In Symposium he says that éros helps the soul to recall the knowledge of beauty and helps in understanding the spiritual truth or the ideal ‘form’ of beauty that gives rise to the erotic desire. Thus he means that finding the truth about sensual love leads to transcendence as it occurs with finding any truth. In other words Éros can be a means for seeking the truth.

Philia- It is a concept developed by Aristotle. It is a dispassionate, virtuous love. Loyalty to family and friends as well as the desire for enjoyment of an activity and love between two lovers- all these are denoted by the word philia.
**Storge**- means affection in general. It also expresses mere acceptance or putting up with a situation as in ‘loving’ the tyrant.

In literature various types of love between two individuals are described like conjugal and illicit love, normal and perverse love, sexual and idyllic love etc. Then there is the love of a person for himself or narcissism, love for one’s fellowmen, for one’s country. There is also love of god which is a great motivating factor for many in various religions.

And, not to forget, we also have ‘philosophy’ which means love for wisdom.

Whether history, poetry, literature or fiction, there are stories of love narrated or written in all times. Passion, affection, readiness to sacrifice, tenderness seem to be contained in ‘love’. Stories of Paris- Helen, Romeo- Juliet etc. exhibit this amply.

**Plato’s concept of love**

We are discussing love and it is befitting to see what a great philosopher like Plato has to say about it. He has discussed this concept using his famous dialogue method. In *Phaedrus* and especially in *Symposium* Plato put forth his views on love through dialogues between Socrates, Diotima and others.

In *Symposium* Aristophanes begins the discussion and says that everyone is only half in himself/herself and is looking for completion.* Though it begins with human love, Socrates takes it ahead from human to divine later on.

Then Agathon says, “Love, besides being in himself the loveliest and the best, is the author of virtues. Love brings peace upon the earth, the breathless calm that lulls the long tormented deep, rest to the winds, and that sweet balm and solace of our nature, sleep.” 18 With this, Agathon

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*The story is that gods punished us for our arrogance and divided us in two. Hence everyone is half so to say and looks for the other half for completion.*
points out the importance of love when he says that love has the quality of bringing peace to one’s life. Bringing rest to the winds can be taken to mean that love calms down the internal storms that go on in one’s mind. He says that love has the capacity to bring us sleep which is the solace and sweet balm to man.

Socrates carries forward what was said in *Phaedrus* and says in *Symposium* that love is desire – and desire takes an object-for the perpetual possession of the good. It means that when we love anything we desire for, the object of our desire is the goodness that is there in the thing or the person. According to him everyone and everything seems to be striving for acquiring this good and therefore the whole universe is in a constant state of love, in fact, love makes the world function, nothing can exist without love. This goodness that is sought by all is beauty. Here we must understand Plato’s view; for him the ultimate reality is Forms/ Ideas or essences. Everything in the world is a manifestation of the forms or essences. Also, he says that there is one, single world order and everything is a part of the order. Therefore there has to be a single good for which everything, everybody yearns. This is the highest Form, the Good or the Beautiful. Thus this good or beauty is present everywhere. A lover gets carried away in the beginning by the beauty of the beloved but true love brings the beauty that is there in everything to the fore of the mind. Thus true love is the un-concealment of the hidden harmony, beauty, essence present everywhere.

It seems that in Plato’s concept of love, though the beginning is the physical or material attraction, ultimately one transcends it and partakes of the one, single world order and experiences the good and the beauty. This is very close to JK’s concept of love. According to JK when there is love, beauty is also present there and to understand the compresense of them is to experience love. JK does not talk about the beginning of love or a step-by-step understanding of love like Plato but both seem to have the sense of all-inclusiveness and transcendence in love.

In the dialogues between Socrates and Diotima, Diotima says that to love is to bring forth upon the beautiful both in body and in soul. And, love is longing not for the beautiful itself but for the conception and generation that the beautiful effects.
Immortality and love

In the course of the dialogue this connection between immortality and love is also discussed. This refers to the common understanding of love i.e. man-woman love. Diotima tells Socrates that man longs for procreation and this is one ‘deathless and eternal’ element in our mortality. Thus man’s yearning for immortality is expressed through procreation, having children whereby even after his death something of him continues by way of his child and the process continues for ever. It is believed that man does not like to think of death as ‘the end’; that is how life after death, rebirth etc. are conceived by him. He is seeking immortality and, as per Diotima, having a child is being part of immortality. She points out that even animals and birds have this desire, they are fiercely protective of their young ones. She further explains that this actually indicates that ‘the mortal does all it can to put on immortality’. Also, the divine is the same and it remains the same throughout eternity; man is changing all the time and dies one day. Therefore he leaves behind his child as a form of himself.

This is as far as the body is concerned. But, Diotima says that besides this kind of procreancy, there is also procreancy of the spirit; conceiving and bearing things of the spirit. And these things are wisdom* and her ‘sister virtues’. With this we find that Plato has introduced a totally different element to the commonly understood notion of love. The wise one who has these virtues looks for a soul mate and shares his wisdom. It is like delivering the entire burden i.e. wisdom/knowledge when one discusses, imparts it with another who has the same kind of inclination, and that is how one’s wisdom does not die away. One’s existence is extended by way of sharing it with a soul mate; the soul mate shares it with someone else and so on. This is how a kind of perpetuity or immortality is brought in even in the context of one’s knowledge. Be it physical or spiritual/intellectual, this thought of immortality is quite special and interesting; it adds a different dimension to the concept of love as we understand it commonly. Here we see your own existence being carried ahead by others, merging with others. This perhaps is the ‘ending of me’ as JK calls it.

*It is further explained that this wisdom is the one that governs and orders the society. Meaning justice and moderation.
Love and beauty
One falls in love with the beauty of another body, which is a common phenomenon. From this one realizes that the beauty of one body is closely related to the beauty of another body and that, beauty of each body is the same. The next step is to understand that the beauties of the body are nothing to the beauty of the soul. Thus one encounters/ comes upon the beauty of the spirit or soul.

This understanding will reveal that the beauty of the soul is also the same in everyone. Thus one goes from the love of the body of one body to the love of the beauty of all bodies and souls. These are, in the words of Diotima, the ‘mysteries of love’. Once these are known, a wondrous vision bursts upon him and he sees ‘an everlasting loveliness which neither comes nor goes, neither flowers nor fades.\textsuperscript{21} This loveliness or beauty is the same everywhere, at all times, and to everyone- the universal beauty. This is how love and beauty are related.

If we think of Plato’s theory of love as the ladder of love it is beautifully summed up as, “Starting from the individual beauties, the quest for the universal beauty must find him ever mounting the heavenly ladder stepping from rung to rung, from one to two and from two to every lovely body, from bodily beauty to the beauty of the institutions to learning and from learning in general to the special love that pertains to nothing but the beautiful itself- until at last he comes to know what beauty is.”\textsuperscript{22}

Diotima further adds that man’s life becomes worth living only when he attains this vision. Thereafter one can never be lured by the charm of gold, of lovely bodies. Then he will know the perfect, true virtue and will become ‘the friend of god.’

The description that Diotima gives of this vision or revelation is quite similar to what JK has said about love and beauty and the experience of love. Throughout his teachings JK maintains that love is something beyond man-woman love or something beyond the common understanding of love as love ‘of” or ‘for’ something/ someone. While describing loveliness and beauty, he says that it is an experience beyond words. And, it is something that is not partial. Diotima says almost the same things- “it will be neither words nor knowledge nor something
that exists in something else, such as a living creature, or the earth, or the heavens or anything
that is- but subsists of itself and by itself in an eternal oneness while every lovely thing partakes
of it in such sort that however much the parts may wax and wane, it will neither be more nor
less, but still the same inviolable whole.” 23 Love means love for the whole; love cannot be
partial like love for one particular thing or person and not for others. JK seems to be airing the
same view when he says that there are no fragments or divisions in love per se.

**Importance of Mahatma Gandhi’s concept of love**

Mahatma Gandhi, a multifaceted personality- a great thinker, an epoch making person, a strict
follower of truth and non-violence and much more- believed in the strength of love. Though he
does not seem to have discussed love academically, the concept of love is quite prominent in his
philosophy. Therefore it is not out of place to delve into his meaning of love.

Gandhiji often quoted Napoleon who is believed to have said this- “Alexander, Charlemagne
and I founded great empires. We founded them on force, where are they today? Jesus founded
his on love and today millions would gladly die for him.” It means that force- which could be
military strength- does not make a solid foundation for one’s thoughts to reign over the hearts of
people. Love and only love will accomplish this.

Gandhiji said that when in despair he remembered that all through history the way of truth and
love has always won; there have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time they can seem
invincible, but in the end they always fall.

**Mahatma Gandhi’s concept of love**

-Fear and love are contradictory terms. Love is reckless in giving away, oblivious as to what it
gets in return. Love wrestles with the world as with the self and ultimately gains mastery over
all other feelings.
-For Gandhiji love is like a natural law. Therefore he said that the law of love will work, just as the law of gravitation will work, whether we accept it or not. He goes a step ahead and says that just as a scientist will work wonders out of various applications of the law of nature, even so a man who applies the law of love with scientific precision can work greater wonders. He seems to be very practical about everyone following this law and says that he does not know whether humanity will consciously follow the law of love or not. But that need not cause disturbance because the law will work just as the law of gravitation works, whether we accept it or not.

Gandhiji talked about the ‘law of Love’ that rules mankind. According to him the man who discovered the law of love for us was a far greater scientist than any modern scientist. It is only because the law of love rules us that we are here. We would have been extinct long ago had violence and hatred ruled us. We fall short of realizing this and behave as if the basis of society were violence.

**Love and ahimsa**

According to Mahatma Gandhi, non-violence is love- and love is god. For him love and non-violence are not two separate things at all. For example, he says, “And when you want to find Truth as god, the only inevitable means is love, i.e. non-violence, and since I believe that means and end are convertible terms I should not hesitate to say that God is Love.”²⁴ For him truth, god, love and non-violence are all one, fused into one. He also equates God with truth, morality, ethics, fearlessness, source of light and life. So, actually, all these are not distinct from each other or unrelated to each other. There is a converging point and at that point they all are present; presence of one means the others are also present.

JK says something similar in that he holds that wherever there is freedom and truth, love and non-violence will also be there because inflicting pain on anyone is not there in love. And then one’s action will be the right action. Thus ethics also has a place there.

He thinks that we do not explore love deep or far enough and that is why not everyone sees its full workings. For Gandhiji himself, as he went deeper and deeper into the workings of love, he found more and more delight in life and in the scheme of this universe. Not only delight but, “It gives me a peace and a meaning of the mysteries of Nature that I have no power to describe.”²⁵ Thus peace too comes with love. He even goes to the extent of saying that an understanding of
Nature that reason cannot fathom is also possible because of love. This quote also shows that Gandhiji found love as something beyond words and it is an experience that brings peace to one.

Here we are reminded that in the *Symposium*, Agathon talks about love bringing peace and Diotima talks about the mysteries of love.

Gandhiji was very sure about the law of love governing us. So much so that he connected the Civil Disobedience movement with love. He has said, “Disobedience combined with love is the living water of life.”

Even while you are protesting or when you are in Satyagraha, love has to be there, that is what really makes the movement function. This is perhaps the reason why all his movements were non-violent because love and violence do not go together, be it your personal life or political life.

Thus, for Gandhiji, love is very much there for us to see but we do not understand this basic rule and go by the way of violence.

Gandhiji did not discuss the nature of love as such. JK talks about love as not being pleasure, sex, desire, possessiveness etc. Though JK does not say that the law of love rules us, he points out the importance of love in life in connection with freedom, meditation, truth.

Thus we find that Plato begins from the physical and takes love to the transcendental, that love is the governing force of the universe. Mahatma Gandhi says that love is like a law of nature that is there for all- for those who are aware of it and for those who are not aware of it.

A major point that is noticed in JK’s concept of love is the absence of ‘I’. In the various discussions of love, the existence of the ‘I’ is assumed and accepted but JK points out that love means the ending of the ‘I’. When he says this, it is clear that for him love is something that is beyond an ‘I’, love is something far more vast than the small, limited sphere of the ‘I’. But, characteristically, he points out that though this is the truth, love is not something that will always remain a mystery; it can and does come upon one in this very life. And as Ditoma says, that is a beautiful vision.
JK says that with freedom and meditation comes love. Then there is truth as well. In the next chapter we will go into JK’s concept of truth. Mahatma Gandhi’s concept of truth will also be studied in the next chapter.
References

2. Ibid, p 70
6. Ibid, 2005, p 71
7. Ibid, 2005, p 72
9. Ibid, p 114
10. Ibid, p 115-6
11. Ibid, p 123
17. *The First Step is the Last Step*, KFI, 2004, p 48
19. Ibid p 559
20. Ibid p 559
21. Ibid p 562
22. Ibid p 562-63
23. Ibid p 562
25. Ibid p 160
26. Ibid p 213