

Divine Madness: Archetypes of Romantic Love

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Love-Play: Enabling Transcendence

Stories about romantic love reflect the reality we have all experienced of alternating union and separation. In seduction especially, where union is deliberately schemed for, a genuine separation is required. For only when I am fairly clear about who my beloved is, and not covering her with the masks of my projections, do I know her well enough to "lead her aside" from her habitual paths and into the garden of love. When we enter that garden we can still not afford to let go of the sword of separation. We think of it as a garden of unity, where lovers play. But the very image of *play* implies a give and take, a me-against-you for the sake of us. Rumi (1984) knows this very well:

Since we've seen each other, a game goes on.
Secretly I move, and you respond.
You're winning, you think it's funny.

But look up from the board now, look how
I've brought in furniture to this invisible place,
so we can live here (1984: Quatrain 1245).

In love-play, as Rumi notes, there are generally two processes going on. At the more surface level, there are "moves" being plotted, perpetrated, and reacted to -- amid much surprise, laughter, winning and losing. But at a deeper level a home is being prepared, a joint life. At one level my beloved and I are opponents while at another we are co-conspirators.

One man reported an encounter with his "reluctant mistress" this way. They were sitting at a restaurant table engaged in one of their frequent quiet but charged conversations bearing only indirect reference to their affair. She was hunched over her ginger ale, trying to make her body language say they were just good friends and not lovers, when he dropped a word which linked the conversation with their relationship. At once her eyes softened and, as he reported, "It was as if a golden rainbow arched out of her breast, over her right shoulder and cascaded directly through my chest like water." He felt the cascade as a bodily experience and said he had come as close as possible to *seeing* the rainbow with his bodily eyes. He believed their sense of unity at this moment was greater than anything they had achieved physically, while simultaneously they had an exquisite separateness which paradoxically seemed to add to their oneness. The initial body language and the apparently innocent conversation were the "moves" on the board-game of their love-play. His dropped "word" pointed out the invisible dwelling place; the golden rainbow confirmed that the word had brought them both into a deeper stratum of their friendship.

Love-play need not always be joyous and tender. Its two-dimensionality may also be experienced in our quarrels with our beloved. We find ourselves in the midst of a seemingly hopeless wrangle. We have disappointed or been disappointed by some of the most habitual traits of our partner: his boorish, blunt bull-headedness, her fastidious demands for fine-tuned emotion. Just as there seems no way out of it, our attention may shift to the other level where we are deeply immersed in one another, where we realize there could be no quarrel if we did not understand one another so deeply. We see the quarrel as a nonsensical game we play while bringing in furniture to the bedroom. Thus he says, "Why don't you just drop it and give me a hug?" Her shoulders relax and she asks him how he knew that was the right moment for such a boorish ploy? He does not know; he just saw the deeper level beneath the earnest game.

When a relationship loses its playfulness, its two levels collapse into one, and it becomes stuck and moribund. Thus in Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* Clara Dawes complains, "It seems as if you only loved me at night -- as if you didn't love me in the daytime." And Paul Morel answers: "The night is free to you. In the daytime I want to be by myself" (348). As in his relationship with Miriam, Paul is terrified of losing his identity. He compromises with an arbitrary division of the twenty-four-hour day, and spontaneity dies. As soon as we cling to an artificial structure like that, the imaginative stream stops flowing. It is at this point that Clara and Paul begin to make love at the edges of rivers and public paths for the sake of novelty and exciting danger. What they do not allow to emerge naturally, they try to manufacture; but the spontaneous and autonomous imagination cannot be led. Love-play occurs only when we learn to follow imagination's lead.

It is by imagination that we mask our beloved with rigid expectations; and it is by imagination, as well, that we bring our partner into focus. Imagination may be the glass through which we take snapshots, and it can also be a motion-picture lens through which we capture movement and change. Imagination is the faculty employed by anima and animus in both masking and clarifying activities. The general opinion in our culture is that imagination is precisely what is *not* real, that it is a wandering away from the factuality of the world into evanescent and disjointed whimsies. But this opinion has also no appreciation for the five-level structure of the soul and the "objectivity" of the archetypal dimensions of the psyche.

When we speak of imagination in the same breath as anima or animus, we refer to the possibility that the image-generating faculty of the unconscious can be as true and as objectively anchored as the Self-Self bond or as solipsistic as a masking projection. It is therefore by imagination that we focus on our beloved's soul and come to know realities that lie deeper than the ordinary reach of the sense organs and discursive thought. Because our imagination can be brought into harmony with our beloved's soul, it is directed by psychological facts that elude our more ego-centered faculties. When guided by the anima lens, imagination brings into focus who our beloved is, has been, and is becoming, as well. Through imagination's lens we can observe our beloved growing, showing us new aspects, realizing potentials. As our partner changes and we maintain our fidelity, ever more central chambers of intimacy, the love that binds us is transformed -- and so are we.

When, on the contrary, we arbitrarily isolate imagination from life and from love, there is nothing left for it but to retire into a kind of alienated dreaminess. This is exactly what

happens to Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. Evidently his imagination flowed spontaneously during his few years of childhood companionship with Catherine Earnshaw, but it certainly shut down during his single-minded obsession over uniting himself with her in death. During this latter period of his history, Emily Bronte personifies his imagination in young Cathy Linton, the daughter of Catherine and Edgar, whom Heathcliff keeps captive, intending to use her marriage to acquire the Linton family estate. Young Cathy does the house-work he requires in as minimal a fashion as possible and then retires to *carve birds and beasts out of turnip parings*. Her whimsical creations have the same dreamy repetitiveness and disposability of everything in the stultified world Heathcliff controls. The symbolism is too striking to be ignored. She has been so deadened by Heathcliff's obsession that the inborn releasing mechanisms, the denizens of the tiger pit, have been flattened into two-dimensional miniatures, lifeless and disposable. Her depression is so severe that she has lost her channel to the most important source of psychic energy, the instinct/archetypes. Imagination repeats like a trivial tape loop, adds nothing new, and has lost all creativity and vitality. Having been swept out of the center of life, imagination slumbers on the garbage heap with the turnip parings.

Imagination is the source of everything that is alive and changing and creative in romantic love. It is the "romantic" element in love, where psychological meaning and interpersonal possibility take precedence over dead facts. Primarily through imagination, does romantic love rise above the biological instinct for procreation and become something new and spiritually fertile. Bare instinct (the psychic level of instinct-archetype) knows only tension and release, pain and pleasure. Imagination fills the blind, empty striving of the instinct-archetypes with richness, variety, and novelty. It brings into love's union the more highly developed and differentiated strata of the psyche -- psychic levels where archetypal and personal imagery emerge. Imagination creates an opening for freedom and transcendence.

The practitioners of Sahajiya Tantra in Bengal are aware of how biological determinism is transcended and psychological freedom given scope through imagination's variety and novelty. They express the opposition between determinism and freedom as the difference between marital love and adultery:

Svakiya love (with one's legal wife) . . . is meaningful only when procreation is the end in view; it is worthless for emotional or religious purposes, while *parakiya* love (adultery) corresponds to the path of non-involvement in the world and contact with God, being solely for erotic purposes. Procreative, *svakiya* love, conventional love, produces immortality through progeny; erotic, *parakiya*, religious love, offers immortality through Release (O'Flaherty, 266).

Regardless of how literally the Bengali Tantrics may understand this doctrine, they are distinguishing two attitudes towards love. A couple need not be married to have their love-making dominated by the procreative urge; nor if they are married, need they be precluded from religious love. If in their relationship they are primarily preoccupied with social and economic security for themselves and achieving stability for their progeny, the transformative play of imagination may be largely missing. Denis de Rougemont's awareness of this psychological distinction underlay his contention that romantic love is incompatible with marriage. I think what he means is that romantic love is only possible as long as the lovers can continue to play. His assumption that play is incompatible with marital love, is not necessarily justified. Love-play is surely very often lost a short time after the

honey moon, but it need not be. We need not be so single-minded.

The Hindu mythology of Shiva, god of yoga and sexuality, reveals a great deal of the spiritual meaning of love-play. In this mythology, the retention of sperm and the postponement of or refusal to enjoy the release of orgasm are central. It is, indeed, the mytho-theological foundation of Tantrism, discussed in Chapter VI. The devotees of Shiva distinguish between procreative sexuality and love-play. The sexual act (*mahamaithuna*) involves intromission of sperm into vagina for the procreation of a child, while love-play (*rati* or *rati*) is something else (O'Flaherty, 263). Shiva, himself, engages only in love-play (*rati*) with his consort, usually Parvati, and generates such commotion and heat that the world seems in danger of destruction. (Shiva is also the god of destruction and of grave yards.) His love-play is extremely intense. One myth says he "swooned with lust merely from the touch of her body, and she was so ecstatic that she knew neither night nor day" (O'Flaherty, 269). In most of the myths, the other gods of the Hindu pantheon are eagerly awaiting the offspring of Shiva's love making, a child who will be more powerful than the earth can bear, a son to kill the demon Taraka. But Shiva's love-play is as concentrated and beyond distraction as his yogic meditation. The gods finally realize they will not acquire the hero they want unless they interrupt Shiva's *rati*. In doing so, they incur the wrath of both Shiva and Parvati. Parvati curses the other gods with infertility, and Shiva's seed is spilled where it gestates outside the body of Parvati -- often in the belly of the god Agni, who catches the ejaculation in his mouth.

The idea of an ascetic god who spends as much time in sexual play as in prayer and whose symbol is the erect phallus seems quite foreign to our Judaic and Christian expectations. Rumi, however, whose *Mathnawi* is referred to as the "Persian Quran," tells several stories of heroes interrupted in their love making. They rush off to battle and return without losing their erections. The erect phallus is, therefore, an image of powerful concentration. These knights have gone into battle without losing their loving concentration on their beloved, just as the lover of God goes about his daily affairs without losing his awareness of God's presence.

For Rumi, the erect phallus is an allegory; but Shiva, the phallic god, is too complex to be understood allegorically. One of today's most original and respected scholars of Indian mythology, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, has tackled this problem in her carefully argued and richly detailed book, *Siva: The Erotic Ascetic*.^[1]

Shiva may be the cause of lust, the enemy of lust, the death of lust, or all of these at once. His character is in *some* way connected with this force, and it is neither a contradiction nor a paradox to say that he is both the creator of Kama [the god of desire] and his enemy: "Shiva *vai* Kamah" -- there is something between them (34).

When he is doing yoga, Shiva requires a wife who is a female ascetic (*yogini*); and when he is ready for *rati*, he needs her to be a *kamini*, a lustful mistress. The connection between these two activities and these two states is the heat generated by Shiva's concentration. *Tapas* is the heat generated by the ascetic within his body as he meditates, a raging fire which may be either creative or destructive; and *kama* is the heat of desire (O'Flaherty, 35). Thus, whether engaged in yoga or love-play, Shiva is generating an intense heat -- enough to burn up the world.

The interchangeability of these two kinds of heat makes a great deal of sense in the context of romantic love. For we have seen repeatedly that the origin and goal of romantic love is to be found in the One, the divine spark. Hence, we may say that both in love making and in meditation, Shiva contemplates the One. He symbolizes the transcendent meaning of sexuality. He is an illustration from the mythic stratum of the psyche, showing us the sublimity of love-play and how it is a vehicle of transcendent union.

The stories about Shiva illustrate both levels in Rumi's poem on love-play. In the erotic sport, the 84,000,000 positions for sexual intercourse, the teasing, and the chase, he demonstrates the upper-level "moves" on Rumi's game-board. In his *kama/tapas* heat, he inhabits the lower level of love-play: Rumi's dwelling place, the central-most chamber of Intimacy's Castle, where the fire of divine love burns with eternal steadiness. It is to this that the lover points when he asks his beloved to drop the quarrel and embrace. It is the golden rainbow cascading through the lover's chest.

Although far less sublime and differentiated a figure, the Greek Zeus shares some of Shiva's erotic characteristics. There is nothing about seed-retaining asceticism in the stories of Zeus' love-play. Zeus is ignorant of *rati*, but he knows *parakiya*, adulterous love, very well, indeed. A propensity for the lusty romp is built into his office as god of the sky, whence he is to fecundate the earth. Few goddesses, nymphs, or women are able to resist his seductions, but most make an effort -- which is when the game begins in earnest.

Even with Hera, his wedded spouse and guardian of marital virtue, refusal gives rise to a spontaneous imaginative ploy on the part of Zeus. He changes himself into a half-frozen cuckoo to arouse Hera's pity. When she attempts to warm the bird against her breast, Zeus resumes his anthropomorphic form and ravishes her. Zeus, always too impatient for thousand-year-long dalliances, is more anxious to release his sexual tension than to follow its lead and explore its implications. What he misses in intensity and concentration, he compensates with promiscuity. His love-play is serial and episodic rather than eternal and contemplative.

Hera is repelled by Zeus' promiscuity and demands marriage in return for her favors. Thus the primary representatives in Greek mythology of marital and of adulterous love are brought together for an eternity of wrangling. Their contentious union represents every one of us, in our vacillation between social responsibility and the demands of romantic love. Hera and Zeus live in the souls of every individual. They represent the legitimate aims of persona and anima, express psyche's requirements, from the level of an individual's personal goals, through the level of mythic longings -- all the way to the instinct-archetypes, respectively, of procreation and the quest to find my foundations in the One.

Zeus and Hera live not only in every one of us but in our relationships, as well. Every union of mortals replicates their Olympian struggle between the principles of familial stability and spiritual creativity. And, very much in the style of many human marriages, the divine couple has polarized itself, with each partner identifying with one of the opposites. As long as Hera is unable to recognize and accept her adulterous shadow and Zeus represses his family-man shadow, there is no hope of reconciliation. In such a marriage the partners have dug in their heels and will not allow the whisper of change in one another. Imagination dries up. *Rati's* drive toward transformation and transcendence begins to look outside the

marriage. The conventionality of the playless relationship becomes a dull boredom. Zeus' dissatisfaction extends even to the four offspring of his union with Hera: Hebe, Ares, Ilithyia, and Hephaestus. The bulk of his interest flows into his liaisons of *parakiya*, erotic, religious, adulterous love; and their offspring. One-night stands though they may have been, these affairs cannot have been trivial, for their progeny were highly significant gods, such as Athena, Hermes, Artemis, Apollo, Dionysus, and Persephone.

Psychologically speaking, the off-spring of a union symbolize the quality of the interpersonal play of heat and imagination. One can infer that the liason with Metis, goddess of Wisdom, must have been an extraordinary experience of aggression and philosophical transport to have produced the warrior goddess and intellectual powerhouse, Athena. In contrast, the Theban princess Semele coupled with Zeus in darkness and could only guess by the quality of the love-play that her partner was the king of the Olympians. Yet what transpired in that single night stretches the limits of conjecture, because its offspring was Dionysus, the god of fertility and of the vine, who liberates our emotions and fills us with joy and even frenzy. Like Christ and Osiris, he is a god of death and resurrection.

The power, variety, and profundity of Zeus' love-play may be gathered from these two liasons which produced Athena and Dionysus. The discovery and disclosure of Self which must have taken place in those ardent moments were god-making as well as soul-making. The gods exist -- not on some mountain top -- but in ourselves. They are images and narratives which proceed from the mythic stratum of the psyche, expressing experiences and potentials which exist within each of us. The escapades of Zeus, therefore, as well as the thousand-year-long dalliances of Shiva, hint at what is available to us in our love making.

Multidimensionality is the first characteristic of this adulterous/divine love-play. A middle-aged man describes an instance of *rati* about a year into his affair.

Our attention had shifted about as often as our bodily positions, as we rolled over, sat up, paused to talk for a while, and so on. But at the moment I am remembering, there were at least three seemingly separate realities equally present in our awareness at the same time. In the first place was our bodies, burning up with a heat which could not have come from vigorous exercise but only from our ardor. It couldn't have been more than forty degrees outside, and the window only inches from our heads was wide open, providing a continuous refreshing stream playing over our faces, shoulders, and hips. This delighted us so that we commented on it and marvelled at the heat. Of course we were aware, too, of our bodily parts and the delectable contact we were making with one another from our feet to our lips. But it was this sense of our being almost an exception to the laws of physics which arrested our bodily attention.

In a more personal or psychological sense, I was preeminently aware of gazing into her face, of the pink flush on her cheeks, of her extraordinarily relaxed attentiveness, and especially of the gray-green pools of her laughing eyes. I had the sense that I was peering into the deepest ocean and that I was seeing another universe with its own space and galaxies in eternal, timeless orbits. And somehow, inexplicably, this impersonal-seeming vision gave me the impression that I was coming to know the uniqueness of her soul. In one sense, I had known it all along, and yet in another I was seeing her gentleness, her generosity, her golden-heartedness for the very first time. Although in physical fact our bodies were barely moving, it seemed as I looked into those ocean pools that she was dancing a slow, elaborately choreographed dance which expressed the essence of her being; and I was dancing with her -- remembering the choreography as though I had learned it before I was born and never thought about it until that afternoon.

If you can believe it, there was still another level of awareness in that same moment. For lack of a better term, I think of it as a union of spirits. There was a very strong sense -- and this was a common experience with us which we had often discussed -- that the coupling bodies on the bed and the dancing souls in that alternate universe of whirling galaxies were less "real" than something else. It was as though we were not the main couple in the room; we were just a manifestation of or an analogy for a spirit-pair who were achieving the "real" union. We were off-center, not the focal point of the spirit union, but below it and alongside it. These spirit beings were huge. Their bodiless forms filled the entire room and expanded past the boundaries of the ceiling, walls, and floor. We were in awe of this greater union and felt privileged to witness it, but we also felt -- as we discussed later -- that we were somehow left out. That, as intense and fulfilling as "our" union was, it was only a shadow of what was happening beyond our personal or interpersonal consciousness. Because we were "left out," this awesome experience carried a note of sadness with it (Private communication).

Body, soul, and spirit; euphoria, awe, and sadness; contained, containing, and side-by-side; motionless and dancing: the variety and flow of imagination in this moment of *rati* hints at the density and clarity possible in a single instance of Zeus' one-night stands. The density and clarity suggest as well the diversity of psychological and interpersonal work which goes on during love-play. We discover new dimensions of ourselves, our partners, and our union. Such multi-dimensional encounters with another human being constitute one of the most powerful and dramatic ways to discover our own souls, to appreciate dimensions in ourselves of which we may not formerly have dreamed or which we may not have known how to reach.

Another characteristic of love-play has to do with the changes it takes us through. The mythology of Zeus provides a useful metaphor also for this second characteristic. In various of his seductions, Zeus assumes opportune shapes. He visited Danaë in the form of a golden shower, seduced Europa in the shape of a bull and enticed her to ride. He coupled with Leda in the form of a swan and Dia as a horse. And to make love with Artemis' nymph Callisto, Zeus assumed the form of Artemis herself. Joseph Campbell rightly points out the underlying unity amid Zeus' changes:

All of his goddesses were actually but aspects of the one, in a gown, so to speak, of changeable jade; while he in each of his epiphanies was as different from his last as was the goddess in the case from hers (1964: 148f).

Campbell's appeal to oneness refers to Rumi's dwelling place, the secret chamber the lovers are preparing even as they square off over the game-board of love-play. Campbell is right to point out this deeper truth. But let us not disregard the shape-changing. No doubt change reveals the One beneath the flux, but there are important psychological reasons for the changes.

This becomes obvious when a Zeus-like god goes through several transformations in order to make a single conquest. The fullest example occurs in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (I. iv. 1-5), a Hindu scripture, which states that in the beginning of the universe there was only the self (Viraj) alone in the shape of a person. Desiring a mate, Viraj became the size of a man and woman in close embrace. He then divided his body in two and became husband and wife.

She reflected: "How can he unite with me after having produced me from himself? Well, let me hide myself." She became a cow, the other became a bull and was united with her; from that union cows were born. The one became a mare, the other became a stallion; the one became a she-ass, the other became a he-ass and was united with her; from that union one-hoofed animals were born. The one became a she-goat, the other became a he-goat; the one became a ewe, the other became a ram and was united with her; from that union goats and sheep were born. Thus, indeed, he produced everything that exists in pairs, down to the ants (Nikhilananda, 190).

This is a story about how the universe came to be as we know it. It started out as a single point, a Self, and elaborated itself through a lengthy episode of love-play. Furthermore, although the play is made possible and driven, as it were, by the agency of the first (male) subject, his beloved mate introduces a variety without which the universe could not have become what it is. Through the exigencies of love-play, therefore, his beloved forces Viraj to actualize what he already potentially is. The asceticism of rati, we may say, requires him to acknowledge novelty in her and become something new himself.

D. H. Lawrence hints at this function of love-play in his novel, *Women in Love*, at the point when Gudrun's affair with Gerald is beginning to go sour. She more and more finds Gerald to be a stodgy stick-in-the-mud, entirely without imagination. At a ski resort she begins a flirtation with a playful German, named Loerke. Gerald is disgusted by it and unable to understand what is going on with this slippery, less than manly German.

The whole game was one of subtle intersuggestivity, and they wanted to keep it on the plane of suggestion. From their verbal and physical nuances they got the highest satisfaction in the nerves, from a queer interchange of half-suggested ideas, looks, expressions and gestures, which were quite intolerable though incomprehensible to Gerald (546).

They talked a mixture of languages. The groundwork was French, in either case. But he ended most of his sentences in a stumble of English and a conclusion of German, she skillfully wove herself to her end in whatever phrase came to her. She took a peculiar delight in this conversation. It was full of odd, fantastic expression, double meanings, of evasions, of suggestive vagueness. It was a real physical pleasure to her to make this thread of conversation out of the different-coloured strands of three languages (552).

Gudrun and Loerke are experiencing, here, some of the creativity of Viraj and his anima: a delightful coming into being of new dimensions of relationship and new aspects of themselves. Their love-play contrasts with Gerald's stuffed-shirted heaviness as day with night. D. H. Lawrence -- a bit bluntly for my taste -- interweaves this episode of love-play with the dominant theme of the book, a passion for the ultimate quiet of death. Gerald, who accidentally and brutally murdered his brother as a teenager and courts death his whole life, is fascinated during this ski outing with the notion of murdering Gudrun:

But he kept the idea constant within him, what a perfect voluptuous consummation it would be to strangle her, to strangle every spark of life out of her, till she lay completely inert, soft, relaxed forever, a soft heap lying dead between his hands, utterly dead. Then he would have had her finally and forever; there would be such a perfect voluptuous finality (560).

His need for control and possession is precisely the motive which love-play seeks to surpass.

There is a scene early in *Women in Love* in which Gerald forces a young horse to stand unflinching at a railway crossing, only a few feet from a speeding train. Lawrence refers to this incident several times later on in the book. Clearly he wants us to see it as characteristic

of Gerald's stance against natural and spontaneous life. In his professional career Gerald has succeeded in converting his father's inefficient paternalistic mining company into an impersonal money-making machine. Whereas his father had known the family of every one of his workers, Gerald knows the science and economics of mining. In attempting to apply this kind of control to his relationship with Gudrun, he has been continually frustrated by unexpected, and even whimsical developments. Loerke represents the culmination of all of these. From Gerald's perspective Loerke represents the destructive potential of play, while in the eyes of Gudrun he embodies the transcendent promise of *rati*. This is again coherent with the mythology of Shiva:

Among ascetics [Shiva] is a libertine and among libertines an ascetic; conflicts which they cannot resolve or can attempt to resolve only by compromise, he simply absorbs into himself . . . Where there is excess, he opposes and controls it; where there is no action, he himself becomes excessively active. He emphasizes that aspect of himself which is unexpected, inappropriate, shattering any attempt to achieve a superficial reconciliation of the conflict through mere logical compromise (O'Flaherty, 36).

In the moribund relationship of Gudrun and Gerald, Loerke's very name suggests the happy, whimsical bird whose name means transcendence in so much of English poetry. Just as Gudrun finds herself weighted down with the gloom of Gerald's possessiveness and control, a German-speaking Shiva falls trilling from the sky and invites her on a soul-restoring lark.

In relationship, life-giving change frequently appears as the "unexpected [and] inappropriate, shattering any attempt to achieve superficial reconciliation." Love-play is the arena where old expectations are overthrown and staid roles dissolved. My beloved continually becomes someone new, and I cannot remain what I was. I cannot cling to the comforts of yesterday, to an eternal unconscious oneness. Love-play is the stream of imagination which constantly challenges and renews. As we observe and act upon its apparent whimsies, we find our beloved changing, as well as the capacity to change within ourselves. Like Gudrun and Loerke, we find that transformation is fun: it entices us into dropping our defenses, lures us into becoming our greater selves. Love-play is above all the arena for this kind of challenge and growth.

Only the One in which love is anchored is beyond change. We, on the other hand, are both multidimensional in any moment and in flux over time. We take delight when our lover's eye is caught by our attributes. We feel newly understood and appreciated. We are reassured that we are worthwhile -- perhaps even fascinating. At the same time these newly appreciated attributes become more solidly integrated into our self-image. We gain in self-confidence, we feel healed and made whole. We begin to contemplate a brighter future. We feel more closely linked with our partner through an understanding and an intimacy which formerly was only implicit -- if not wholly unknown. In this way our beloved, through the kaleidoscopic "moves" of love-play, sets us free from our former limitations. And by the same process we set her or him free. Love-play is the creative element in romantic love. In our *rati* we re-create one another, ourselves, and our relationship.

Love-play occurs during the spontaneous choreography of sexual intercourse, and especially foreplay. But it is by no means identical with sexual behavior. Whenever intercourse is dull and predictable, love-play is missing. But love-play is also not limited to physical, sexual relating. Love-play occurs in conversations, looks, and gestures, as well.

Whenever we are caught by light glancing off new facets of our diamond beloved we are making a "move" on the game-board of love. Love-play is the transcendent element in romantic love. Through its magic, we slip the coils of our old selves, our former limitations, the limitations we unconsciously placed on our beloved and on our relationship.

Rati enables us to transcend all of this. It is like a breath of fresh air. Like an underground stream, it secretly searches out depths and crannies and channels which lead us, smooth and tumultuous, to the vastness of the sea. Like a jet stream, it takes us sailing and weightless at unheard of speeds. Birds of light burst from our chests, merge like candle flames, and disappear in the distance -- hundreds of them, all single-file, following the same course. Love-play is the stream of imagination which miraculously cascades out of our meeting. To observe it is to be inspired; to act upon it is to effect our own transformation.

When we oppose the flow of playfulness in love, our relationship seems to die, or at least get stuck. We become bored and irritated and we begin to think of escape. Our fancy turns to adultery, to *parakiya* love, to the erotic/religious playfulness which restores our soul. But we need not literally carry on an adulterous affair to achieve transcendence through *rati*. If *rati* seems impossible with our lawful spouse or other on-going relationship, the reason is often to be found in our rigidity. We get stuck in the way we see our partner; and, inevitably, our partner gets stuck in how he or she sees us. It is as though we already know one another too well. We know exactly what to expect. The images we and our partner have of one another are as if carved in stone.

In my experience, our getting stuck in the way we see our partners is the most common difficulty in relationship. When we know our partner "too well," there is no mystery, no novelty, indeed no life left in our interactions. Growth and change have disappeared. Play is the gentle force of transcendence which can break up the log-jam and thaw the ice. If we cannot welcome playfulness into our relationship, there are only two possibilities. Either we resign ourselves to the dull prison of boredom, or the forces of change become disruptive like the Shiva who opposes all quiescence with excess and all excess with inaction. Shiva can be almost cruel in his playful, pain-causing disruptions:

Knowing of her egotism, Shiva decided to reveal himself in such a way as to break her heart and remove her pride. He arrived surrounded by ghosts and goblins, riding on a bull, three-eyed, smeared with ashes, carrying a skull, wearing an elephant skin (O'Flaherty, 217).

The ego-centered lover who cannot allow the spontaneous flow of love's playfulness may experience the horrific dimension of imagination as well as boredom. When, on the other hand, we value *rati* and allow ourselves to explore the intimate chambers it unlocks, we find ourselves challenged and enlarged. Here is where our souls dance an unremembered choreography while a spirit pair unites somewhere else. These are the moments when the formerly unthinkable becomes the touchstone of reality. We conceal the marvelous and divine aspects of our partners behind the masks we project upon them. In love-play we drop those masks and try on a whole series of guises (like those of Zeus and Viraj). We and our beloved appear to one another in new and surprising ways. Our old certainties finally become shaken, and our joint future opens up with new hope and promise. We begin to contemplate and to live adventures and roles which far exceed our habitual expectations. Something of this is hinted at in the mythology of Shiva:

Although when he first made love to [Parvati] there was no biting of her lips and scratching of her breasts, later her hands were tremulous with pain, her lips marked with bites, and her thighs scarred with the traces of his nails (O'Flaherty, 233).

Love's madness makes the beautiful Parvati a horror to look at, her marred body a rebuke to all conventional expectations. But Parvati herself is not at all upset about the bruises and scratches on her body. Although she may not have wanted them while in a sober state of mind, once she had been overtaken by the heat of *kama* the violence of Shiva's love became the vehicle which transported her to an altered state of consciousness. There, as the *Kama Sutra* says, the scars depend upon the depth and force of passion and are the "innumerable, varied and artistic . . . symbols of [one's] love" (Vatsyayana, 33). After the passion has passed, they become badges, as it were, of our partner's desire and respect. The *Kama Sutra* goes so far as to say that this kind of violent *rati* is the secret of love's continual renewal:

When a man bites his mistress in the violence of love
She should return his gesture with twice the force;
Thus for a point she should tender a line of points
And for a line of points -- a broken cloud_ --
And if breathless with passion she should accuse her lover
And provoke a lover's quarrel, seize him by the hair,
Bend his head and fiercely embrace his lower lip,
Then closing her eyes she should bite him all over his body
As an animal in the fury of passion does its mate.
Even in the daytime when her lover shows her the scars
She should smile, turn her head, then angrily show
The wounds his love has left on her.
Thus, if men and women act in mutual accord,
Their passion and desire for each other
Will not diminish even after a hundred years of love (37).

We have touched upon three contributions which love-play makes to an erotic relationship. Its first achievement is to deepen, differentiate, and explore intimacy's chambers. In illustration of this we have considered such visionary experiences as the golden rainbow pouring through the lover's chest, the spontaneous choreography of imagination, and the union of spirit beings. Love-play's second contribution is its break with the past which throws down all our former certainties. The third achievement is to call us gently into a new way of being. *Rati's* imaginative flow presents us with a vision for what is incipient in ourselves, in our partners, and in our union. We might call this last the "enjoyment body" of love-play.

By this expression, "enjoyment body," I refer to the doctrine in Buddhism that the Buddha had three bodies. The first is the flesh-and-blood body of the sage Siddhartha who was born around 560 BC and lived about eighty years, during which he attained enlightenment and taught it to others. This earthly body (*nirmanakaya*) corresponds to the human body of Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter and enlightened master of Christianity who died on a cross in about his thirty-third year. A second body of the Buddha (*dharmakaya*) is eternal and wholly beyond sense perception. It corresponds in Christianity to Christ the unchanging Son of God, co-eternal with the Father. The "enjoyment body" of the Buddha (*sambhogakaya*) lies between the purely human and purely divine. The Buddha, in his "enjoyment body," appears to individual Buddhists to encourage their devotion and aid them in their quest for nirvana.

When the saint, in mystical trance, seems to encounter the Buddha and learns at first hand a new appreciation of old truths it is the *Sambhoga*-body of Buddhahood he has met. There are descriptions of the amazing forms in which this body appears to [the] faithful: it is resplendent in light and glory and the title given it, "Enjoyment-body," seems to indicate the belief that this "body" is in part the symbol of the conviction that the attainment of enlightened Buddhahood brings with it untroubled joy of a kind so different from any which the mere mortal can experience that we have no suitable words to describe it.

There are many stories of supernatural appearances of the Buddha and in general we may apply the term *Sambhogakaya* to them all . . . It is in the form of *Sambhogakaya* that the Buddha-Truth preaches most of the Mahayana sutras [scriptures appearing after the earliest period of Buddhism] . . .

In short, the function of the *Sambhogakaya* is first to symbolize the self-enjoyment of Buddhahood and second to be the locus of mystical instruction and enlightenment. As such it is another link between the unimaginable Ultimate and the limping consciousness of the earthbound man (Fox, 192f).

The Buddhist doctrine of *sambhogakaya* clearly corresponds to the appearances of the resurrected Christ. Such an appearance to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32) includes an explanation of how the events of Jesus' life fulfill the scriptures regarding the Messiah. When, in his breaking bread, they finally recognize him, they say, "Did we not feel our hearts on fire as he talked with us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?" All these events have as their common denominator an experience coming from elsewhere (God, Christ, the Buddha) but finely tuned to effect a transformation in the recipient. An "enjoyment body" experience, we may say, works as a kind of mirror for the individual soul, showing it precisely what it needs to know to recover from its stuckness and proceed upon its path. At the same time our accepting the challenge posed through the "enjoyment body" of our beloved enables us to approach our own "buddhahood."

The Buddha's "enjoyment body" and Christ's resurrected body are instances of a divine love-play, calling us to transcend ourselves. Applied to human love-play, the "enjoyment body" of my beloved is how she or he appears, radiant and glorious, shot through with the light of the divine spark, resplendent in our mutual love. More than that, it is my beloved made new, recreated in the imaginative flow of *rati*, opening my eyes to realities I have overlooked, and making my heart "feel on fire." The "enjoyment body" of love-play is the "good news" which this particular friendship with this unique individual at this specific moment brings into my life. Thousand-year-long frolics, such as Shiva and Parvati enjoy, must be studded with nearly a billion such epiphanies.

An epiphany is an "outward manifestation" of something usually hidden -- especially an outward appearance of divinity. In the Christian tradition, the term *epiphany* is used almost exclusively for the fairly few instances in which Christ's divinity became manifest to onlookers. One thinks, for example, of the infancy narratives in which various groups or individuals recognized the divinity or messiahhood of Jesus: the shepherds, the Magi, Simeon, etc. There was also the baptism by John in the Jordan, attended by a dove and voice from heaven, as well as the several post-resurrection appearances. Perhaps the most striking instance is that of the "transfiguration":

The appearance of his face changed and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there were two men talking with him; these were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, the destiny he was to fulfill in Jerusalem. . . .there came a cloud which cast a shadow over them; they were afraid as they entered the cloud, and from it there came a voice: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him." When the voice had spoken, Jesus was seen to be alone. The disciples kept silence and at that time told nobody anything of what they had seen (Luke 9:28-36).

When love-play is completely successful, every "move" on love's game-board is an epiphany. Every step in our dance, every guise my beloved assumes and then drops, is a facet in the magnificent jewel of the Self, aglow with the divine spark within. The reason we laugh and slap our gaming pieces on the board with such gusto is that we know very well we have been dragging our bed into intimacy's central chamber.

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1. The difference in the spelling of the god's name is due to O'Flaherty's having used diacritical marks in transliteration of Sanskrit words and names. There is an accent mark over the initial letter in O'Flaherty's spelling of the god's name. This indicates the *s* should be pronounced as *sh* is pronounced in English.