

deep enough to recognize the One we cannot see but expressions of His love are scattered all around us? Or is it shallow that it begins and ends only with humans who need them the most, whose love brings heartbreak and depression and who will be the first to leave us when we depart from this world?

Ask yourself how much do I love Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who had said: “By Him in Whose Hands my life is, none of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father and his children and all mankind” [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī]

Did you ever wonder how we can get Allah to love us too?

Ask yourself why do I love the people I do? Are the motives all worldly like their looks or money or is it something deeper like their piety or good deeds?

Is Valentine's Day anything but obeying our baser desires and following our lusts?

Are we only like cattle following our needs and the desires without knowing why, without understanding?

In Islam there is no concept of a boy-girl friendship. Qualities of women are described in Quran as:

“Chaste, not lustful nor ones taking secret friends” [Al-Nisa':25]

Muslims have a beautiful institution of marriage where romance is not a summer fling nor is it based on superficial looks, but on a serene relationship of mutual affection, kindness and responsibility.

TRUE LOVE

Among all love and affections, the primary essential love and the love which is the most unique and highest of all is the indispensable love for Allah Almighty. This is because Allah Almighty has the most unique attributes, thus being the Inventor, Maker, and Creator of all.

Muslims have a day of *Eid al-Adḥā* for expressing their love to Allah, when they sacrifice animals only to please Him and to revive the *sunnah* of Prophet Ibrahim ؑ.

Do we have pure and intense love for our Lord in our Life? Who do we love the most-our own desires or will of our Creator?

If we love Allah, how can we celebrate pagan custom when our Lord abhors paganism more than anything else?

A Muslim has a purposeful life so its love is meaningful and expression of Love is useful, since instead of spending thousands on flowers and cards, on *Eid al-Adḥā* meat is provided to poor, jobs are created for many, animal skin is too used for leather and so on.

Let us then find TRUE LOVE.

True love seeks sacrifice and I've given it all.

Thus, this is true love in it's purest form.

I turn my face towards You now

The Lord of my world and the Heavens above

I am Yours and Yours, alone

My prayer, my sacrifices are only for You

My life and death are Yours to take

A promise I make

To lay my life for You

An oath that I worship

No-one but You.

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True Love

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

LOVE- one of the strongest emotion - a power that can ruin or redeem a life- that can bring joy or a painful heartbreak.

Today as the world celebrates this emotion on Valentine's Day, we see shapes of hearts of all sizes all around, hearts of chocolate, satin, red roses, poetry, candies and above all LOVE!

Where did Valentine's Day come from?

There are many traditions about its origin, but the most authentic seems to be the one from Encyclopedia Britannica that says that this day has nothing to do with Saint Valentine, instead it is related to the Roman pagan festival of their god, Lupercalia.

It was celebrated on 15th February and in honour of the goddess Juno Februata, the names of girls were placed in an urn and the men would draw out the name of a girl at random who would then become their date for the remaining festival.

When Christianity came to Rome, they tried to Christianize this obscene yet popular festival by replacing the names of girls by those of saints. The men were then supposed to emulate the saint, whose name they drew, for the rest of the year. However this attempt proved unsuccessful and the use of girl's names returned.

Many associated it with Cupid (the virtually naked god of love), the central character of Valentine's Day paraphernalia, which shoots people with its arrows to make them fall in love. His mother is said to be Venus (goddess of love) and apparently the rose was her favourite flower. Another tradition speaks of a Saint Valentine who was killed on 14th Feb. by Emperor Claudius for secretly arranging the marriages of his soldiers whom he had banned from marriage.

The Bishop is said to have fallen in love with the jailer's daughter during his imprisonment and wrote her a letter signed 'Your Valentine', which

became a tradition for people to come. In 496 Pope Gelasius officially replaced the pagan festival of 15th Feb with St Valentine's Day on 14th Feb.

Valentine's Day Today

Whatever the origin of this day, today it seems to have returned to its pagan, vulgar roots with the child-god cupid and open dating being very much a part of it. The valentine lottery caused severe problems in France and was banned completely in 1776. Later Italy, Hungary, Austria and Germany also rid themselves of this obscene custom. England remained safe until it was under Puritan rule but then Charles II started it again and from there it entered America, where it was first commercialized by EA Howland, who made 5000 dollars from selling Valentine cards. In 1995 one billion valentine cards were delivered in the US and the postal Dept. made an extra profit of \$ 30 million. Flowers began to be used in 1300.

Now people all over cash in on this opportunity to kindle the fire in young hearts and instill in their minds the necessity of having a 'Special Someone' to love.

No wonder, a newspaper carried news of a woman who sued her husband for divorce for not giving her anything on Valentine's. According to her it was absolutely necessary to express one's love on this day and her husband did not give her anything which meant that he did not love her. Apparently Valentine's Day made her feel 'unloved' rather than 'loved'.

What kind of love depends upon gifts for its survival? What kind of love is restricted to one day in the whole year? What kind of love breeds hatred, jealousy and a sense of deprivation in many?

Valentine's Day also proves exceptionally painful for the not-so-popular children in school

who don't get as many Valentine cards as their friends do.

In Pakistan, this day has come to mean getting dressed in red, valentine cards, hearts, and chocolates. Through these apparently innocent things the occasion promotes the culture of free sex and male-female relations. Also becoming common are public displays of emotions including advertising love messages in newspapers, going out on romantic dates and attending valentine balls and parties. Schools are not far behind in holding such parties for their students. As a result, even young children are fed new ideas of developing lusty feelings and expressing them boldly. The young imitate their favourite movie love scenes in broad daylight. In all this 'love' fever Islam is given a backseat to sit and see how it's teachings are being ridiculed in public.

The question that comes to mind is why should WE celebrate Valentine's Day? Is it our national festival or a religious one?

Festivals are a part of a nation's identity. They symbolize any religion or culture.

ASK YOURSELF!

On this day that the world celebrates love and you see hearts all around, ask yourself: "Have I ever thought of loving the One Who created me, the One Who gave me a heart that can feel love? Has this heart ever felt love for Him? How many times have I cried for His love?

Have I ever spent any time, effort or money to express my love to Him? Am I confident enough to declare my love for Him? Do I ever miss Him in solitude or amongst a crowd? Or am I wasting away a beautiful emotion that was meant for eternity- not just momentary gratification of our ego? In spite of our ingratitude, The Merciful One continues to love us.

Our love is a measure of our faith. Is our love