



Objects of Our Desire: Exploring Our Intimate Connections with the Things Around Us

Salman Akhtar

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What makes something sexy? Why are some things regarded as sacred and others profane? Why do mourners face such difficulty in parting with their beloved's possessions? Why do we often feel distraught when we lose something, even when the object has little real value?

We spend our lives in a meaningful dialogue with things around us. Sometimes the conversation is loud, as in a collector's passion for coins or art. More often, the exchange is subtle and muted, even imperceptible. We are surrounded by things, and they affect our emotions and impact our thoughts. The arrival of a dozen flowers from a lover or a letter from a grandchild makes our day; an old photo album or an afghan knitted by a favorite aunt offers comfort when we are troubled.

From exploring what makes something "beautiful" to why we place such value on antiques and artifacts from the past, Objects of Our Desire offers insights, both deep and delightful, into the ways we invest things with meaning and the powerful roles they play in our lives.

Notice the inviting contours of that sofa, the glint of a knife's edge, the sparkle of a diamond ring. Feel the softness of the pashmina around that woman's milky shoulders. Look at the majesty of a large jet plane. Take in the somberness of a gravestone. Put on an old pair of shoes. Clutch a warm mug of freshly brewed coffee. Sit on a rocking chair. Feel the sumptuous leather seats of a new car.

We are surrounded by things. We are involved with them, indebted to them. We speak to things and things speak to us. To say that we are interdependent is banal. Let us be courageous. Let us admit it: we are lovers.

—From Objects of Our Desire

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