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The Concept of Love in Sufism

This paper as its title shows deals with the Concept of Love in Islamic Sufism. But, first one should know what is the meaning and essence of Sufism.

Titus Burkhardt^a a good expert on Islamic Sufism writes:

"Sufism (Tasawwuf) is the esoteric or inward (batin) aspect of Islam, is to be distinguished from exoteric or external (zahir) Islam just as direct contemplation of spiritual or divine realities is distinguishable from the fulfilling of the laws which translate them in the individual order in connection with the conditions of a particular phase of humanity.

Whereas the ordinary way of believers is directed towards obtain-ing as state of blessedness after death, a state which may be at-tained through indirect and, as it were, symbolical participation in divine truths by carrying out prescribed works, Sufism contains its end or aim within itself in the sense that it can give access to direct knowledge of the eternal".

He then continues: "This knowledge, being one with its object, delivers from the limited and inevitably changing state of the ego.

The spiritual state of (baqa), to which sufi contemplatives aspire (The word signifies pure "subsistence" beyond all forms), is the same as the state of (moksha) or "deliverance" spoken of in Hindu doctrines, just as the "extinction" (Al-fana) of the individuality which precedes the "subsistence" is analogous to (nirvana), taken as a negative idea".

Burkhardt adds: "For Sufism to permit of such a possibility it must be identified with the very kernel (al-Iubb) of the traditional form which is its support. It cannot be something super-added to Islam, for it would then be something peripheral in relation to the spiritual means of Islam. On the contrary, it is in fact closer to their super-human source than is the religious exotericism and it participates actively, though in a wholly inward way, in the function of revelation which manifested this traditional form and continues to keep it alive."

This famous researcher concludes that: "This "central" role of Suf-ism at the heart of the Islamic world maybe veiled from those who examine it from outside because esotericism, while it is conscious of the significance of forms, is at the same time in a position of intellectual sovereignty in relation to them and can thus assimilate to itself -at any rate for the exposition of its doctrine- certain

ideas or symbols derived from a heritage different from its own traditional background."

Therefore, Sufism or Islamic mysticism is a special type of knowledge which is based on spiritual exercises and internal journey through heart.

Sufism is away, an effort to seek the ultimate truth. So it is a mystical and inward traveling. A traveling from duality and multiplicity to unity. For the Sufis, this journey is a chain of Love that begins in a grade of soul and lifted to the consciousness by gift or the great beloved mercy. The Sufis are those who love him only for him.

They come to feel the sweetness of the unity of love in their existence.

Some investigators like Sachiko Murata has explained scholarly the meaning of unity and duality that comes from unity with using (Asma Al Husna). She has divided God's names in two categories, the names of Majesty, "Jalal" (masculine quality or "yang" in China cosmology terminology), and the names of Beauty, "Jamal" (feminine quality or "yin" in China cosmology). God through his names is a balance between majesty, Almighty and as the Merciful Compassionate and receptive.

Although the division is not new or initiative with regard to the long and rich history of Islamic Sufism. She has shown that masculinity and femininity in man's scope has positive and negative side that both of them complete each other. The balance and unity between "Jamal" (الجمال) and "Jalal" (الجلال) as an aim of the whole creation. So the essence of life goal, man or woman is to be "insan-i kamil" (الانسان الكامل), namely man and Jalal to be kamil (perfection).

In Hadith it is said that: "the Mercy of Allah (Rahma) is before his anger so "Rahma" (Divine Mercy) character is more basic from divine reality than wrath/anger. Every God's action that contains anger reality contains "Rahma" like a father's angry to his son, may be based on love.

In the case of Allah, There is no problem to say that wrath and his anger is based on love because "Rahma" is the one of the essential attributes of Allah.

The names of Beauty (الاسماء الجليليه) make God near to his creatures and they feel Intimacy with him. And the names of majesty make God far from his creatures and they feel his power (Haybah) and unique Greatness (Azamah). The first category of those names are more related to respective side because related to feminine qualities like love, beauty and affection. On the contrary, second category of names are more related to Domination, power and the strength or "yang" dimension.

Both of them are very important for every existence and can't be separated. The beauty has its majesty. The majesty has its own beauty.

Anger must contain mercy and mercy not always free from anger. This is a kind of interconnection or interrelation between the two main types of Divine names. So there is no real separation between the two.

In the case of Sufism, the generally accepted name for Islamic mysticism, mysticism contains something mysterious, not to be reached by ordinary means or by intellectual effort, is understood from the root common to the word mystic and mystery, the Greek *myein* "to close the eyes", to close the mouth or to remain silent.

Mysticism has been called "the great spiritual current which goes through all religions". It may be defined as the consciousness of one reality, be it called Wisdom, Light, Love or Nothing, (Emptiness or *Sunyata* in Buddhist spirituality), Nirvana, Brahma and the like.

Mysticism can be defined as Love of the absolute. For the power that separates true mysticism from mere asceticism is love.

Junaid a very famous sufi master says: "Sufism is not achieved by much praying and fasting, but it's security of heart and generosity of the soul".

Abu Nassr Assarraj a well-known sufi writer states: "Sufism is to possess nothing and to be possessed by nothing. Sufism is freedom, generosity and absence of self constraint". Junaid and Nuri, two great mystics have said: "Sufism is not composed of practices and sciences but it's moral. It means to act according to God's orders and laws, which are understood in the deepest spiritual science without denying their outward forms". So Sufism can't be separated from shari'a or the Law and Religious Duty.

This way of life is possible only through loving devotion. The method of mysticism is love. So mystic is a lover. Love can carry the mystic's heart to the divine presence. Iraghi a great mystic poet says: "Basic of God's appearance through his knowledge of his existence (*Wujud*) is love. Love is the essence of God's existence. Through it the appearance of part of his knowledge or his treasure that is hidden (*Kanze makhfi*) is possible. Therefore the school of Islamic mysticism and sufi masters like Rumi, Ibn Arabi, Iraghi, Jami, Attar and the others spoke about love (*Ishgh*) as God's very existence and his (*Wujud*) merely through his attributes and names appear within all his works.

The very famous sacrosanct Hadith says: "I'm the Hidden Treasure, I loved to be known so I created the world and I'm knowable". Iraghi, Jami, Al Jilli said that: "the attributes of Allah are identical with essence and his real essence is Love

that is contained in holy word of, Bismi Allah Al Rahman Al Rahim". In the word there are two kinds of God's love, namely Rahman and Rahim. Rahman is a God Mercy that has essential character (Zati) and Rahim is a God Mercy that has necessary character (Wujub). It is said that Rahman, namely Rahman and Rahim are synonym with love and love is synonym with wujud (Reality or Existence and Truth).

In sura Al Baqarah (115) we read: "Ainama tuwallu fasamma wajho Allah" (where so ever you turn, there is the Face of God). This verse was often quoted by Sufis in their poetry and they interpreted (Wajh) as "Wujud" (existence), namely God's attributes and manifestations.

Love is usually associated with self-sacrifice and suffering and some times it may ends dramatically like Al Hallaj. True Sufis have given their life to get love from God. They do it because of getting love and reach to the degree of annihilation in God (fana). A real sufi is always careful to do all his actions for God and his satisfac-tions. So the Sufis do not do anything merely based on human in-stincts or desires. All their practices are for God and in the case of loving him. The Sufis are those who give and devote their life for loving their beloved. A sufi's love is a kind of love that is always based on deep knowledge and sincere obedience to his beloved. Sufi's deeds are full of attention and responsibility.

Between man and God there's a relationship that is full of intimacy and loving each other. God as the creator, the Maintain Being (Rububiyah) will always give mercy and love to His servants. When someone has more self-consciousness about who he is, the width of the universe and his weakness and more knowing God through His signs, so love starts its probability to grow up and fruitful in him-self. Sufi's love of God is deeply rooted in his intuitive knowledge of God's Greatness, mercy and perfections.

Love is catalisator of memory that is hidden. If we love someone, think about him, we remember him. About God, our love to Him is so powerful. It's a mystery" Light Upon the Light". When the light of our consciousness turn to Him, His Light will see us and help open the hidden things. With the Light of His love, we see the face of creation that hides itself. We can see His Presence with every being and thing. This is one of the fruits of love.

Jalaluddin Rumi the great Persian mystic poet has said about the power and fruits of love very nicely:

"Through love all that is bitter will be sweet
Through love all that is copper will be gold
Through love all dregs will turn to purest wine

Through love all pains will turn to medicine
Through love all the dead will become alive
Through love the king will turn into a slave"

Rumi's poems show clearly how much the power of love is. Love is a power that can change everything. Love is a human purest character. But what's love? In essence it's a state of need. The lover is in need of the beloved, since the beloved reflects something which the lover senses as missing in himself. The experience of love exposes a veiled, unconscious desire to unite with an idealized partner who will supply the bits missing in oneself.

The phenomenon of mystical love that underlies this development is one of the most fascinating aspect of sufism, a transcendent and absolute object is made the goal of every thought and feeling. So love gains absolute primacy in the soul and the mind of lover. The soul ascends the ladder of evolution with the power of love. On every step it's reminded of the vast, free spaces of home where the beloved abides. Love is a real changing power which is the source of spiritual transformation.

The prophet of God said, " God is beautiful and He loves beauty". This Hadith is in fact ubiquitous in Ibn Arabi's writings on love (including chapter 178 of the "Futuhat") whether he refers to it explicitly, or discreetly alludes to it. So inseparable are these two notions of love and beauty for him. It's true that Al Ghazali accords equally great importance to this subject in long chapter of "Ihya Ulum Al Din" entitled "Kitab Al Mahabba". However for him, beauty is only one cause of love among others. For Ibn Arabi it's primary and inexhaustible source. Therefore he replies without a hint hesitation to Tirmidhi's one hundred and eighteenth question : " where does love come from ? " by saying" from his epiphany in the name of Jamil ".

Beauty, he maintains is an efficient cause of love since it is love per se (mahbub li zateh). It follows that God who is beautiful, loves Himself. Now, love is essentially a dynamic force. In fact it possesses the property of compelling the (muhibb) to move. It makes him strive towards the object of desire which under the effect of magnetic attraction of love, is in return irresistibly drawn towards the one who desires it. The whole universe is literally move nothing in this way by love. "If it hadn't been for love, " Ibn Arabi said, "nothing would have been desired (consequently) nothing would exist. This is the secret contained in His saying" I loved to be known ". Love is the generally force of existence because it simply has to fill an absence or it wants to make present the love object which is necessarily absent (ghaib) or missing (ma'dum) since it's true that only desires what one doesn't have. One has recourse to "khayal", imagination, which allows

the (mahbub) to revitalize his life when he defined "ihsan" (الإحسان) as "to adore God as if you saw Him". However for some people there's a risk that they will come to refer the image which is imagined-and consequently necessarily limited- to the One of whom it's only an imperfect and limited representation.

In mystical psychology that is provided by the sufis, man experiences various Divine Qualities like tremendous (haybah), fear (khawf) and contraction (qabdh). He also experiences what are related to beauty (jamal), softness (luthf), mercy (rahma), intimacy (uns), closeness (qurb), forgiveness (maghfirah), love (mahabba), hope (raja') and expansion (bast). Ibn Arabi often followed opinion of majority about interrelation of power with majesty, intimacy and beauty. But he also believes that sometimes one of attributes related to Beauty and Glory of God may overcome to each other. So the manifestations of God will differ.

Divine love has primary character. So man's love has secondary character. The sufis read Qur'anic verse: He loves them and they love Him (5:54) as explanation of ontological relationship. Human's love can be born because of God's love. When we start to talk about love, so we talk about separation and unity. In love it-self, two connections, farness and intimacy are present. Even though love is a quality that is related with beauty and softness of God, it also needs majesty and hardness. Rumi is a par excellence speaker for dialogue between softness and hardness that become united in context of love between the servant to Allah.

For Rumi, the universe is connected with love. The first thing that God created was love. The priority of love to the rest of the creation is proved. For it was love that motivated God to create the universe. Rumi considers love to be a fundamental creative force that permeates all created things and brings them to life. It is love that is responsible for the evolution of universe from the lower level of inorganic matters up to the highest level of mankind. Love is according Rumi the cause of the movement in the world of matter, the earth and Heaven revolve by virtue of love. It is growth in the vegetation and motion in sentient being. It's love that gives union to particles of matters. Love makes vegetation growth, and also makes animals move and multiply. In the following verses, Rumi describes the wonder of the creative work of love: "Love is an infinite ocean, on which the heavens are (but) a flake of foam (they are distraught) like Zulaikha in desire for a Joseph. Know that the wheeling heavens are turned by waves of love. Were it not for love, the world will be frozen. How would an inorganic thing disappeared (by change) into a plant? How would vegetative things sacrifice themselves to become spirit? How would the spirit sacrifice itself for the sake of the breath by the waft where of a marry was made pregnant? Each one (of them) would be (as) stiff and immovable as ice "how should they be flying and seeking like locust? Every mote is love with that perfection and hastening upward like a sapling."

With its powerful impact on the human soul, love also can dramatically accelerate the lover's journey towards God. "Love hath hundred wings, and every wing (extends) from above the empyrean to beneath the earth. The timorous ascetic (zahid) runs on foot, the lovers (of God) fly more quickly than the lightning and the wind. Become free from the world and from this wayfaring, for only the royal falcon has found the way to the King.

God reveals Himself in order to kindle love in human heart. Beauty has no full meaning without admiration and love, and the beloved needs the lover for his own perfection. A model of mystical love is (Majnun), the hero of old Arabic tale, who lost his senses in his love of (Laila). This woman who was not even particularly beautiful, was for him the paragon of beauty, and as interpreted by the sufi poets became the manifestation of Divine Beauty seen through the eyes of love.

Love is fire, it burns everything. The mystics have seen love as "a flame that burns everything saved the Beloved". The sufis want eternal love.

Love has a source from the Eternal Being. So that a lover wishes to make unity with his Beloved with sacrificing his own being. As long as a lover can not overcome his egoistic desires, so he'll never get his love. Love is the melting point between lover and his beloved. So love means the beloved attributes absorbed "inner self of the lover". When love comes into the heart deeply and enters to the consciousness of the lover, the unity with the beloved could be happened. This degree is the degree of rana, complete annihilation in the truth and the Holy one, the Real.

In sufi love theories, love becomes with many of the later sufis, the growing power that causes the possibilities of perfection in every-thing to unfold. Love as experienced by the sufis is a strong personal and existential commitment. Love can not be learned, it is the result of Divine grace. The sufis, deepening the general Muslim knowledge that divine greatness overpowers everything, have always felt that man is far too weak to seek God. Man cannot guide himself, God should guide him. This is why man always needs to revelation, the Law and Religion, which is the divine guidance.

Love as a dimension of spiritual experience, not only as theoretical meaning and concept will, wholly transform inward state of the sufi. It can not be explained with words, but only can be understood with experience. Such as someone who wants to explain love to his or her lover, words can not represent something in his heart through a piece of paper. A sufi's love to his Beloved not only can pass the world, but also can appear in the next world and everything that can be overcome by imaginations. Love can't be explained. But people can talk about it any time. It is necessary to know that love really can not be described with any

word. It's an experience that is beyond any thought-but it's an experience that is more real than the objective world and everything in it.

The sufi tradition is full of love. Everything it revolves around love. This is why Sufism refers to itself as the Religion of Love (in Persian kish-i mehr). It's clear that why for the sufis, the mystery of love has always included a strong element of passion, (ishgh); why all great sufi poets and teachers have implied that 'ishgh, love-desire, passionate love, is not a mild pietistic affection or ideal, nor a dreamy, sentimental, poetic metaphor, nor a refined, philosophical concept. It's a crude, ruthless and glorious reality which per-vades all levels of beings, body and soul, and demands complete receptivity, sincerity, attention and responsibility. Ishgh can not be taught, can not be preached and only can be experienced. This is why one finds many allusions to the virility of prophets.

Love, the great power in the universe, is more than such a soul healing. Our love to Him relates with remembering through which we come to know the unity of inwardness and outwardness. A paradox in spiritual traveling is that we take secrets of love that are hidden, but forget it. We try to remember things that we know, to experience what we know, through love, through training of mystical way, meditation, dhikr, and continues spiritual exercises.

The great master of love and passion, in the high sense was, no doubt Jalaluddin Rumi. For him as for many his predecessors and followers, love was the power innate in everything, working through everything and directing all things toward unification. As we mentioned previously, if there were no love, the world would be frozen, there would be nothing.

Mystical love is a total dedication of the will; the deep-seated de-sire and tendency of the soul to its Source. It's a condition of soul enlightenment, a life movement of the self. Love to the mystic, then is the active, connative, expression of his will and desire for the Absolute. For him it's the source of joy, the secret of the universe, the vivifying principle of things.

When the desire of the loved one is total, everything devoid of him becomes boring, empty and dead. Who has ever fallen in love knows this. When the loved one is around, ther's sense of fullness; every-thing becomes full of meaning. But when the beloved is taken away, everything becomes dull and boring. Not just human being, but fullness of being which comes through love, all things live for love. Atoms, stones leaves, butterflies, clouds, angels, galaxies-all are in a constant state of the agitation because of the pull of love. The goal of attraction, says Rumi is procreation and marks a stage on the upward journey home.

Every new generation that comes into being, creates an evolutionary ladder. Every step emerges from an awakening to the beauty of the loved one.

So the power of love in sufism makes sufi a true seeker of perfection, who feels intimacy, to the melting point, absorbed his in-nerself to the unity with his

beloved, Allah. The fruit of love is courage and this is why all real mystics, during history of mankind have been brave people, brave enough to do great works. The pre-sent world needs chiefly to know and experience this kind of Love which is based on rationality, deep knowledge and Divine worship and its fruit is friendship, tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

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