

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Many Facets of Love

by Jamiluddin Morris Zahuri

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The Many Facets of Love

This is the second of what it is hoped will be a series of short booklets on the Sufi path. Effectively they will try, with Allah's help to form comments on the writings of the great mystics like Mevlana Rumi, Khawaja Muinuddin Hasan Chishti, Shah Wali Ullah, Attar, Abu Said, Bayazid Bistami, Hazrat Kharaqani and of course by my spiritual guide Hazrat Zahurul Hasan Sharib and many others.

In all cases the comments on the Masnevi are based on the well known English translation made over 80 years ago by R. A. Nicholson.

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The Pain of Love

One great Sufi called Fariduddin Attar of Khorosan wrote this:

*'Let idolaters get idolatry and let the pious, piety gain,
One particle of the pain (of love) let Attar attain.'*

(Translation by Z.H Sharib)

Mevlana Rumi right at the beginning of the great Masnevi writes in the voice of the reed flute, the Ney, : *'I want a heart torn by separation, that I may unfold the pain of love desire'*.

The pain referred to is not physical, of the type you may get if you accidentally hit your thumb with a hammer or suffer some particular physical ailment. It is more devastating by far. It is to feel the vast void beneath all experience, the absolute non existence beneath existence itself. As with physical pain we try everything we can to avoid it. There is a saying in English that 'nature abhors a vacuum'. We fill up the void with all sorts of diversions. Whether it be how to make a living or what we need to buy for our physical comfort, or children that we must bring up with love, or material possessions that will appear to enhance our social standing, or physical pleasures. In the end it is not only with idle pleasures that we attempt to fill the void but our more noble and selfless activities too are really diversions to keep us away from that painful emptiness. Some use art and music this way.

Even if you accept philosophically that there is such a pain filled void, it must be experienced to know it's reality.

The experience of it is of course painful in a deep spiritual sense. It may sometimes be linked with the 'Hal' or state of sobbing which may last for hours. It is what is meant in Sufi poetry by tears of blood. It usually has no outward cause. It is as if there is a well in the heart which the individual has somehow accessed. Sometimes the pain of that void is experienced without tears.

There is a French film called Playtime in English. In this comedy the 'hero' goes to hotels which are virtually identical in decor. As he enters, the glass door swings open and we see something like the Eiffel Tower. He pauses a moment looks at the reflection and then carries on into the identical hotel.

In a similar way it is just in odd moments we get to become aware of the Real and then mentally shrug our shoulders and carry on with the distraction of events in our life. People do whatever they can to cover over the underlying emptiness which is actually the pain of love. They cover this with various activities depending on whatever stage of life they are at: toys for children, parties and adventures for teenagers: romance, for twenty somethings: parenthood, work commitments for the middle aged, family responsibilities etc. There is nothing wrong with these things but they are masking a void which is often not confronted until death becomes a reality. The holy Prophet Muhammed said famously - 'die before you die'. The death referred to is not the physical death but dying to the diversions which conceal the pain of Love.

The things that divert our attention from it are not all equal considered by themselves. Diversions of sensual pleasures for

example are not the same as attention to charity or to improving the lot of others or religious or spiritual pursuits such as prayer or meditation or Zikr. Nevertheless when it comes to the pain of love such things are still diversions. The holy Prophet Muhammed listed three things in this world as remaining of interest to him and one of those was ritual prayer. To some mystics even prayer of this type is a diversion of a kind, even though in itself it is of great spiritual virtue to most seekers.

Let us briefly mention those qualities which are more in accord with the pain of love. Their relationship to it is that these qualities or virtues, if properly imbibed, lead to self purification which so to speak clears the path to love.

Essentially they are what Shah Wali Ullah calls the cardinal virtues:

Humility: the way to this means recognising that ‘everyone is better than me’. Distinguishing it from false humility such as that practised by Uriah Heep in the Charles Dicken’s book, David Copperfield, is essential.

Purity: this implies as well as physical cleanliness that all one’s habits and behaviours are halal and in accord with high ethical standards. For instance foregoing to take interest if one lends something to another, or not taking a gift back. Hazrat Ali showed a wonderful example in refusing to kill an unbeliever he had defeated in combat because the man made him feel anger by spitting on him.

Generosity: This is not only about material generosity, such as giving money or goods, but that one is generous for example in one's thoughts about others and putting the best interpretation on their behaviours.

Justice: this is thought of as the supreme cardinal virtue. It implies that in every situation one gives due recognition to the rights of others and measures one's own behaviour against the touchstone of truth. There is an Hadith related by the sheikh in the Turkish film on Yunus Emre. In this the holy Prophet, very near to death and unable even to stand with support from others, asks his companions if he owes anything at all to any of them. On the third time of asking one tells how the holy Prophet had actually hit him on the back accidentally with his sword. The Prophet sends for the exact same sword despite the companion's protests and insists the person return the blow on his own back.

In purifying oneself the above qualities must be absorbed not merely practiced outwardly.

The broken heart is often referred to in Sufi literature as something desirable. The human heart is seen as hard to break. It retains, in all sorts of conditions, pride in itself and its independence. It is quite easy to make the body submit to the will of Allah as Muslims do in prayer often several times daily when they put their forehead on the ground. However making the heart submit is quite different. How many Muslims, if they were honest about it, would have to say that, try as they may by the power of

Will to make the heart participate in the act of submission by putting its head to the floor, they were not able to do so.

Nevertheless, breaking the heart so that it gives up its independence and becomes a willing servant of Allah is essential for the sincere mystic and indeed for the sincere Muslim. To reach the pain of love it is required.

'Love whether it comes from this side or that side leads us yonder'. Mevlana Rumi

Let us give regard to the love for another person. In other words the love that comes from 'this side'. It may initially be mixed with desire or it may be purely platonic but nevertheless it is such a deep innate need that all reason and even morality is put aside by the lover.

There is famous Sufi story related by many in varying versions including one by Hazrat Fariduddin Attar, concerning a Muslim man of great piety, and religious reputation, Shaykh San'an, who falls in love with a beautiful Christian girl. She persuades him to renounce Islam, to tend to her pigs, even to burn the holy Quran in order to gain her love. The various versions as written by different authors come up with different solutions to the problem and even different causes such as that the man concerned had refused to accept Hz Abdul Qadir Al Jilani.

The key thing though is that his love is so intense that it supercedes everything he has ever valued. Thus it is for one who truly goes by the path of love with a human beloved. Uniting with the object of love is the all consuming purpose and neither fear of going to hell or losing paradise or of social condemnation or

even prison or execution deters the would be lover - but that is not the end of the story. The mystic who finds him or her self in love this way has in effect taken one step towards divine love. They have sought to cross the river from this world to the unseen and have in a sense landed on a rock in the middle of the fast flowing river. In other words if the object of their love remained the particular person and they were to remain there, it would very hard, but if Allah in His mercy sends an Angel the person is conducted to the far shore where the evidence of Allah is overtly present everywhere. If the love of that person is deemed pure they now witness the astonishing beauty of Allah's creation.

Once there, the human beloved is forgotten in the astonishment and wonder of the lover at the marvels of Allah's creation. Mevlana says *'Love is the astrolabe of the mysteries of God.'* An astrolabe is an ancient device for measuring the motions of the physical heavens. In this case however it is the unseen world that is revealed with its multiple levels and layers, For instance the Abdal, the souls who meet and discuss the governance of the universe, are revealed. Often their bodies are physically asleep. What may be witnessed by the lover is the process of gathering which their souls participate in, and the discussions they have based on their local knowledge that is important. They gather in a place separate from the other parts of the universe. Most of the universe is interconnected and any discussion takes place in this context but the Abdal can discuss outside of this interconnectedness.

The divine parliaments and so on are shown and so many other hidden things such as the residences of the saints.

In Love

*Love, when you turned me, again, in poetry,
We became one in one, me in you in me;
You round me round you, dancing effortlessly,
Till the stars beneath laughed in glee.*

*The moon smiled so appreciatively,
The sun agreed, patient in its supremacy;
The spheres' renowned musical sound,
To the heart's ear, joy in sorrow had found.*

*In Love lust served a much deeper end,
In Love shame became just another friend;
In Love greed found fulfilled its every need,
In Love the persistent rebel Shahada did read.*

*In Love time ended its total tyranny of old,
In Love dirt threw off its coat, revealing gold;
In Love vanity from being a jailer did cease,
In Love, the pearl was pierced by peace.*

*In Love sensuality reached its goal, and expired,
In Love the mind became in clarity attired.
In Love poetry and music reached an accord,
In Love Truth held aloft its great sword.*

*In Love wise Abraham from the fire was secured,
In Love mighty Muhammed men to paradise led;
In Love brave Ali became a lion, and roared,
In Love great Ghaus Pak a starving man fed.*

*In Love the poor a patron found, from Sanjar,
In Love Bilqis to Wisdom came from Sheba;
In Love Majnun his beloved would not betray,
In Love Hafiz and Mevlana showed the Way.*

*In Love death found it could with life intertwine,
In Love life felt it had reason, rhythm, and rhyme;
In Love religion found its perfect purity,
In Love the intellect found more than curiosity.*

*In Love even Gabriel one can (almost) see,
In Love, strangely, even a cat can an Abdal be;
In Love the axis turns and sets the room straight,
In Love it appears even patient Pirs cannot wait.*

*In Love the Word and Spirit unite essentially,
In Love is revealed Majesty's sacred epiphany;
In Love lies a treasure desiring to be known,
In Love's polished mirror the hidden was shown.*

*In Love the holy fold enfolded are, in humility,
In Love the august Assembly joy does decree;
In Love the Beautiful Names look on enviously,
In Love the true guides talk together excitedly.*

*O Love, not only of the heights can you speak,
When you, in me, in you, have touched the peak,
From the great deep a solemn sound says — 'Be',
And what will be, rises up with inevitability.*

*Then like a babe fresh from the womb,
Or like words from a holy saint's tomb;
This thought as your gift appears in me
'In Love you have found your humanity'*

Zahuri

There is a story about Hazrat Hafiz the great mystical poet of Iran. It's verity I cannot confirm but it is entirely plausible. It is said that he was in love with a beautiful woman and wanted to marry her. She, however, was way beyond his reach in terms of class and wealth and so on. He heard that if one performed the

forty night retreat known as 'Chilla' at the tomb of baba Kuhu on a hill outside Shiraz, that the saint would grant that person's desire. Hafiz Saheb undertook this and for 39 nights submitted himself to the rigours of Chilla. As he neared the end of the Chilla he had a divine visitation. Some say it was Hazrat Ali. The upshot was that he received many blessings and the gift of writing poetry in which he became a supreme master. Having seen divine beauty the desire to marry that woman departed.

The love for the holy Prophet Muhammed by Owais Qarni is famous in Sufi circles. Although he never actually physically met the holy Prophet he was so in love with him that, on hearing that a tooth of the messenger of Allah had been broken in battle, he had all his own teeth removed. The term *Owaisi* became used for anyone who had a close affinity with a saint without physically meeting him. The founder of the Gudri Shahi order of the Sufis, Hazrat Malik Muhammed Saeenji Gudri Shah Baba had such a relationship with Khawaja Muinuddin Hasan Chishti who he did not meet in the normal sense in the physical world as they lived many years apart.

There is a marvellous story near the beginning of the Masnevi. It concerns a King 'spiritual and temporal' who marries a servant girl who he meets on the road. She becomes ill and doctors are unable to cure her. The King prays in distress and is shown in a dream a wise man of spiritual greatness coming to help him. The next day the dream is fulfilled and such a person arrives and is greeted by the king personally in a very tender scene. The king recognises that this saint is his real spiritual beloved but acknowledges his affection for the girl

in this world of cause and effect and this is the reason for our mentioning it here because the mystic may have a desire for the true beloved (God) but this does not negate the ordinary affections in this world.

It is probably a veiled reference to Mevlana Rumi's famous relationship to Shemsuddin Tabrizi. Mevlana was married with children and one cannot doubt his affection for his family nor that his spiritual connection with Hazrat Shems was a love of an entirely higher kind. Shems was like a magnifying glass in which the divine love of Allah was focussed in the way that is rather like the sun being focused in a magnifying glass till it sets light to a piece of paper. The concentration of Allah's light in Shems' spiritual himmet set light to Mevlana's soul.

In this story of Mevlana the two types of love are present together. One does not exclude the other, and though some important mystics did not marry or engage in worldly love most married and no doubt had real affection for their spouses. The holy Prophet set the example of this with his love for Allah not compromised by his affection for his wives and daughter.

Mevlana said,

'Whatever I say about love I am ashamed of that.'

This being the case perhaps we should not attempt to talk about love at all. Still when we focus our attention on love it is far better than putting our attention elsewhere. There are undoubtedly benefits and that must be our justification albeit anything we say about love will be inadequate. To participate in the 'shame' of Mevlana is higher than the glorifying of many

another. There is also the argument used by Shah Wali Ullah that so much rubbish has been written about mysticism that it is necessary to make things clearer.

There is a question to be asked and answered at this point. The question is why if love is union of lover and beloved did love separate into lover and beloved in the first place. We may say it separated in order re-unite but what is the purpose this? The answer is in bringing something into being. The clue to this is found between men and women whose unification results possibly in a child. But lover and beloved is not by any means limited to human beings the sun and soil unite to produce a flower and even the muse and the poet unite to produce an actual poem.

On the of discussing of love Mevlana wrote: '*When it comes to love itself the pen breaks*'. Of course this refers to the ineffability of love but perhaps also to the failure of the mind and imagination to be able to convey it in words.

'If you want know what love is - become me'. Mevlana

Could it be that Mevlana here is talking about Fana. There is a series of fanas recognised amongst the Sufis. One is the Fana of the guide that may be followed by Fana of the Pir and then by Fana of Hazrat Ali and then Fana of the holy prophet. Fana in this sense is different from concentration on the object of love such as the guide, though that is an excellent practice. It means becoming the object. This may be imaginary at first but the perspective is different from concentrating on the face of the guide for instance. His face becomes your face.

Actually you and he become one. As far as I understand it this then becomes part of the murids persona.

Fana in another sense is the Fana of Allah. In this the invisible wall that surrounds the individuality of the mystic dissolves and he becomes one with the entire universe. Only the smallest particle of him continues to exist. The image of a mountain of sugar is often used by the Sufis. In this mountain only one particle is vinegar.

That particle has its part to play in Baqa but that is another topic.

You may be asking what can I do to become aware of the pain of love. It is indeed laudable to wish to have some technique that will make you conscious of its presence but these things are not amenable to techniques. You may of course pray for it but it is in the hand of Allah to give or withhold it.

About love in general and its importance in the spiritual path so much can be said but I have confined myself above to speaking about the pain of love. We will add one thought from Mevlana Rumi however. Basically this points out that there is a cure for this pain that comes with it. What this cure is one cannot describe even if one wanted to. We could say that Allah sends the pain and the salve. When we love in this way we are loved.

Love as A Temporary State

The Hal of Ishq or spiritual love is a temporary state that arrives as gift without any specific technique to obtain it or even an identifiable trigger.

Metaphorically one can say it's as if a universal holiday was suddenly declared in ever cell in the body and each in a drunken way abandons its duties and comes out to dance. Thought effectively flees, and *Wajd* or bliss pervades the body from toe to the top of the head. One thought however may remain and that is 'How do I get out of this state'. I read somewhere that the great Bayazid Bistami said he was unable to come out of this state.

If Divine love is granted to an individual it can appear to their awareness as an invisible sphere enclosing that individual. Anything entering that sphere is affected by that love. Suppose a someone is walking towards the person who is in the state of love and that stranger is intent on saying something spiteful, by the time the person enters that sphere their intention changes and what comes from them is an expression of that love.

If you want a parallel of this one may recall the conversion of Hazrat Omar who became Caliph of Islam. There are differing versions but the nub of it is that he began as an enemy of Islam intending to kill the holy Prophet and ended up as one of its staunchest advocates. If one enters the ambience of love everything changes.

The love that manifests itself in an individual is not held within that person but flows out from them in every direction and without any judgement of the worthiness of those receiving it. The Mevlevi dancers symbolise this by holding one hand to receive love from heaven and one hand turned down to distribute that blessings to earth. If the person dancing receives that love and does not immediately distribute it then there is risk for such a ‘dancer’. However such rules are not perhaps absolute. Since love flows from Allah He knows best about its distribution.

The Saints Speaking About Love

Nawob Saheb, the guide of Zahurmian wrote:

Love is a cordial prayer, which lovers have come to acquire.

When we think of prayer too often the ritual prayer known as Salat or Namaz in Islam, comes to mind. There is however also what is called dua or personal prayer. One example of this might be Prophet Moses (Musa) who having fled Egypt declared himself in need and prayed for any help that could be given. Very shortly after he found himself with work accommodation and a wife and later children.

Prayer is by no means limited to requests to God for particular thing or even just for help in general. If the prayer is made with the pure heart it may be as simple and short as ‘God is Love’. No ritual is required just a sincere and pure heart.

The acquisition which Nawob Saheb speaks of is in fact a gift, but work on self purification precedes the receiving of such a gift.

Zahurmian wrote '*Love me little but love me long*'

Sometimes the murid may find themselves passionately in love with the murshid there is no harm in that provided the murids behaviour does not exceed bounds, but it is the love that lasts that really counts. Its mark and defining characteristic is prolonged service.

A murid may even over time begin to look like the Sheykh.

There is a story of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia. It is said he gave a pair of shoes to a visitor in financial difficulty, who then left perhaps thinking his financial difficulty had not been resolved. That person then arrived at a caravanserai (a kind of inn) where as it happened Hazrat Amir Khusro (a famous poet of Urdu) was also staying. Hazrat Amir Khusro sensed the presence of his murshid and inquired if anyone had met Khawaja Nizamuddin. On locating the person and hearing about the shoes he offered all his money and purchased the shoes. He then returned them to Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia.

On this point one should give a warning. The Guide will not ask for money or other financially valuable assets like a car or house etc from a murid as proof of love even though the murid essentially has given up worldly goods in favour of the murshid. The holy Quran is quite explicit that the holy Prophet would never ask for anything from his followers for himself. The argument that he was a Prophet and therefor that this doesn't apply to

the murshid who is not a Prophet is so evidently false that I do not dignify it with an argument. If someone claiming to be a guide asks for such things the disciple should question if he or she has found a true guide. The guide may accept unasked for gifts if the gift is offered with a sincere heart and its acceptance is in the interest of the murid.

There is a story about Nuri Baba of Konya. When his guide Moharram Siri Harputi came to Konya Nuri Baba offered the deeds of his own house to him. Muharram Baba refused but said that the offer was all that was required of Nuri Baba.

Khawaja Saheb said: *The heart of the lover is a furnace. Whatever comes in it is burnt, for there is no fire greater in its intensity than the fire of love.*

Bibi Rabia on seeing a man in the throes of the agony of love, crying out that he was on fire, told the people who were talking about putting out the fire with water, that this was not the kind of fire that could be extinguished with water. The beloved was making a place in his heart. Once the beloved had done so he would be peaceful.

She also was found with pitcher of water in one hand and fire in the other. On being asked about it she declared her intention to burn up paradise and to put out the fire of hell with the water. Her concern was only with the Beloved.

In the East the story of Majnun and Laila is very well known. Majnun (literally 'mad') is the would be lover of Laila. One day he was found paying utmost respect to a dog. A dog in the east is regarded as unclean and he was criticised for his

behaviour. His explanation was that it looked like the dog he had seen in the lane of Laila and that was enough to make it special to him.

Zuleika is also famous in the East as a model for lovers. In the holy Quran she appears as a married woman who falls passionately in love with Prophet Yusuf (Joseph). She arranges for him to be sent to prison when he refuses her seduction. Despite this there is some indication that even while he is in prison she remains madly in love with him. This gives rise to stories about her love by some Sufi writers.

There is a marvellous passage in Mevlana Rumi's Masnevi in which she describes her constant love for Joseph (Yusuf) in hidden terms.

Zalikhá had applied to Joseph the name of everything, from rue-seed to aloeswood.

She concealed his name in (all other) names and made the inner meaning thereof known to (none but her) confidants.

When she said, "The wax is softened by the fire," this meant, "My beloved is very fond of me."

And if she said, "Look, the moon is risen"; or if she said, "The willow-bough is green (with new leaves)";

Or if she said, "The leaves are quivering mightily"; or if she said, "The rue-seed is burning merrily";

*Or if she said, "The rose has told her secret to the nightingale";
or if she said, "The king has disclosed his passion for Shahnáz";*

*Or if she said, "How auspicious is Fortune!" or if she said, "Give
the furniture a good dusting";*

*Or if she said, "The water-carrier has brought the water"; or if
she said, "The sun is risen";*

*Or if she said, "Last night they cooked a potful of food" or "The
vegetables are cooked to perfection";*

*Or if she said, "The loaves have no salt (savour)"; or if she said,
"The heavenly sphere is going round in the contrary direction";*

*Or if she said, "My head aches"; or if she said, "My headache is
better"*

*If she praised, 'twas his (Joseph's) caresses (that she meant); and
if she blamed, 'twas separation from him (that she meant).*

*If she piled up a hundred thousand names, her meaning and
intention was always Joseph.*

*Were she hungry, as soon as she spoke his name she would be
filled (with spiritual food) and intoxicated by his cup.*

*Her thirst would be quenched by his name: the name of Joseph
was a sherbet to her soul;*

And if she were in pain, her pain would immediately be turned into profit by that exalted name.

In cold weather it was a fur to her. This, this (is what) the Beloved's name can do (when one is) in love.

The vulgar are always pronouncing the Holy Name, (but) it does not do this work (for them) since they are not endowed with (true) love.

That (miracle) which Jesus had wrought by (pronouncing) the Name of Hú (God) was manifested to her through the name of him (Joseph).

When the soul has been united with God, to speak of that (God) is (to speak of) this (soul), and to speak of this (soul) is (to speak of) that (God).

She was empty of self and filled with love for her friend (Joseph), and (as the proverb says), "A pot drips what is in it."

From Masnavi Book Six (4021-4041) translation Nicholson

Abu Said Abil Khair an important Sufi poet of Persia, wrote the following poem:

*When I was a lion hunting the leopard was my way,
I used to get whatever I thought I may,
But when I made room in my heart for Your love,
A lame fox drove me out of the jungle strange to say.*

Translated from Farsi by Z. H. Sharib

This means that he formerly used his spiritual powers to gain what he wanted and to subdue those with less power, but when he found the Love of God in his heart he was driven out of the jungle of his Self, his lower nature, by the weakest of creatures.

This brings us to two ways in which the Sufi may pursue the path to Allah. One is called the way of Love, our present discussion is concerned with this path. The other is called the way of Power. In this the seeker is primarily concerned with pursuing the Majesty of Allah. As a matter of fact it is said that one who is concerned with the path of love should avoid attending the shrine of saints between midday and two pm as this time period is designated for those who seek Allah's majesty. For the Shaykh who has realised Allah there is no difference, the two ways converge in the unity of Allah.

Zahurmian said: *Love confers concentration.*

Concentration is great importance to the seeker and lover. If you regard an ordinary torch it's light spreads and catches in its beams many things in the environment. A concentrated beam like in a laser is brighter and more powerful. It shows the object it is pointed at. The feedback from an ordinary torch is diffuse but the feedback from the laser beam is powerful and elevating. When practising this concentration it is initially hard to keep focus. However. If you do then later on there is a surge of pleasure - even ecstasy.

This is a kind of modern version of the moth and butterfly. The latter skips from flower to flower, but the moth seeks out the light and sacrifices himself in it.

The lover is single minded in his or her pursuit of the beloved ignoring other attractions.

Someone asked what is Sufism. The Sheykh said *“to feel joy in the heart at the coming of sorrow”*.

The use of symbols in the writings of the saints

The saints in their talking and writings use images and symbols designed to have a specific effect for instance they may talk about the deep cold and pure whiteness of snow on the Himalayas or about the heat of the deserts or fire according to the state of the audience. These images have an effect on the psyche. The mystic in talking to murids may use such images according to the needs of his audience. In the case of the Masnevi the images are of course written but Mevlana was reciting to an audience. The same might be said about earthy images or images of flight. The sight of an aeroplane high in the sky or a bird in flight might be drawn to the murids attention in order to elevate his state. In this respect they are purveyors of the signs of Allah.

In the same way love, being such a powerful symbol that even if it is understood to refer to secular love or even sex, it focusses the attention in ways other things may not. Mevlana Rumi in the great Masnevi on several occasions includes stories about various aspects of sex for example, from these he draws moral conclusions. His choice of those particular examples, however, adds power to the moral conclusion.

Love and the After Life

The great Sufi poet Hafiz wrote this extraordinary line.

The heart that is alive with love does not die - ever.

According to Shah Wali Ullah we live in the next world for sometime after our body dies and our state in that place, is determined by how we have behaved in this world. After a while the individual souls sleep until awakened for the day of judgement. Those, however, who in this life are true lovers of God receive from Him everyday fresh life and remain awake until the day of judgement. They partake of His administration of the world. Thus Khawaja Saheb is the emperor of the Indian sub continent and Mevlana Rumi the Sultan of Turkey. Most have lesser authority but are nevertheless important in local administration.

In fact it is tradition for Sufis to perform *ziarat* or visits to the graves of local shaykhs because they are the living ones in that place, whereas the people who appear to be alive are really not alive.

So being a true lover of God is not merely something that passes with the life of the individual, it is for eternity as Hafiz says in that line. So for the Sufi to love is not merely a nice extra. It is urgent and of the highest priority.

The Way of Love

Lord Jesus Christ introduced two commandments to supersede all previous ten commandments. The first is:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”.

The second is like it: *‘love your neighbour as yourself’*.

(Quoted from: The Path of perfection by Zahurul Hasan Sharib).

As well as talking about the pain of love and that void beneath everything we do and say and think and feel which is implied in the first commandment of Prophet Isa (Lord Jesus), there is also the social dimension of love implied in loving one’s neighbour.

The second, or social kind of love, in some ways conceals the love pain of the first. However that concealment is also a manifestation of that love so it is so much more than appears. Of course your neighbour is not limited to the person living in the next house but to all other persons you come into contact with.

Love pain is the root of love but love is also manifest in acts of goodness towards others. The holy Quran says again and again,

“Believe and do good”.

The words of the Quran comprehend the commandment of Lord Jesus. Belief is that personal commitment to Allah with your entire being whilst to do good is the expression of social love.

Zahurmian said *"Take love as best and leave the rest"*.

There is a poem by an English Victorian clergyman, Leigh Hunt, which talks of the the Sufi mystic Ibrahim Bin Adhem.

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:—
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?"—The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, "The names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow men."
The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blest,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

The story of Ibrahim bin Adhem is inspiring. He was a king and one day he heard the sound of someone on the roof of the palace. He asked who was there. A voice replied "I am seeking my camel". "How can you expect to find a camel on the roof" he asked. The reply came, "How can you expect to find God sitting on a throne".

He gave up his throne and became a wandering mystic. One cannot find Love by sitting on the throne of Self.

The barriers to love may seem to be many but they boil down to selfishness. When an individual is absorbed in their own pleasures or even their own pain they have ceased to love. Without love there is no real life - yes there is breathing and eating and so on but real living is absent. As Khawaja Uthman Harooni, the guide of Khawaja Muinuddin Hasan Chishti puts it our real purpose is to live. This does not imply to be in pursuit of excitement or mere sensation as some like to do. It means to be constantly in pursuit of the reality of love.

Socially that means to serve the needs of others and ask nothing from them in return.

I was asked once by Ali Baba of what work I did. I told him that I worked for Social Services, which pleased him, and he said something that echoed what Zahurman had often expressed - the service of mankind is the service of God.

The love we have for dear ones, spouses, parents, friends, children and so on are all dependent on love itself. Of course we identify it with the persons concerned but in

truth the source of that love is love itself. We could say that love is gift, as Nawob Saheb says, but it is also a gift that keeps on giving.

Social occasions such as birthday parties and other celebrations may be very mixed or even at times unpleasant but when real love is present they take on a different dimension. This is rather like the situation in the Dergah during the death anniversary celebrations. People arrive from various places having different backgrounds, different cultures and even different religions, they begin with differences and even hidden hostilities but as the influence of the Pir's love Increases with Quran recitation, music and poetry and even food used to facilitate this, so the differences diminish and the feeling of commonality and humanity rises. In some ways humanity is the expression of love.

This is a practical example of the social effect of love. The mind and heart of people are very changeable and affected by circumstances but the one who is devoted to Love returns each time to that Love. The holy Quran speaks of Prophets who turn to Allah on every occasion of difficulty and for the one who is devoted to love the process is essentially the same.

There are those who question how God can be a God of love when some terrible event happens either personally or socially. Of course that is due to their limited idea of love. There is a story in the Masnevi of a saint whose two sons die when young. The people including his wife complain as to how it is that the Sheykh appears quite happy about it and often smiles and laughs. He asks them why he should be sad when every time he looks in a certain direction he sees them playing happily in the garden of paradise.

A man was dying he turned to those near him and said in the end the only thing that really mattered in life was love. He was not a saint just an ordinary man but his conclusion at the end of life was perfectly correct.

It is the struggle to keep the perspective of the centrality and overpowering effect of love to give meaning to life that may have been meant by Zahurmian when he spoke of giving disciples a sense of perspective.

There are many well meaning people who will try to change society by political activity. They may well want a less selfish and more loving society but have they found out how to love? If not then how can their efforts bear fruit? Discover within yourself the power of love and you will unconsciously be changing society since in hidden ways you are connected to those around you and in fact to humanity at large.

Inaam Hasan the successor of Zahurmian writes in the preface to 'The Sufi Saints of the Indian Subcontinent' by Zahurul Hasan Sharib, (published by Munshiram Manoharlal 2006.)

By their personal example as well as their precepts and preaching, they (The Sufi saints) transformed and transfigured society, endowing it with new concepts, new values, renewed vigour, and a new lease of life.

A new type of society came into being which had no invidious distinctions of caste, class, creed, or colour, and had, as its foundation, a deep rooted humanism, a belief in social equality, universal brotherhood, equality of opportunity, an insistence on

women's rights, protection of orphans and the handicapped, the right use of money, a sense of contentment, trust in God, emphasis on inner purification, hope, belief, and faith, tolerance, a reliance on meditation, self-introspection, self-realisation, self-effacement, a belief in an ascetic life, self-help, mutual-help, selfless service, the dignity of individual and, above all, on love, which alone can transform an individual in a way nothing else can.

It is not too large to say that the purpose of the true Sufis is to improve the state of mankind. Leave aside the 'spiritual experiences' (albeit they have their place), and understand this fully and act upon it you will have progressed beyond superficial 'spirituality' to real service

Do it quietly but with unflagging zeal.

Do it without advertisement.

Do it without expectation of reward from people or social prestige.

Leave the result to Allah. It is He we serve and if we do so that is our privilege.

Amin

Quotations about Love.

There is a famous hadith (saying of the holy Prophet Muhammed) the last part of which is:

Allah says *“When I love my servant I become his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to seek refuge with Me, I would surely grant him refuge.”*

It is worth noting that contrary to some translations it is hearing and seeing, not ear and eye that is mentioned in the first part and it is specifically hand and foot That are indicated in second part.

Zahurmian wrote of a conversation with Love entitled Sufi language:

when I was sitting all alone in my small room. Love came uninvited. As you know she always comes in this way. Finding me alone, she confided to me some of her secrets. What did she say? Should I tell you? Perhaps you are impatient to know it. I will tell you. Do not lose patience.

Love began to talk to me in a soft, sonorous, but stern voice thus: ‘People should feel obliged to me, that I unite them. I give them courage and I give them power to bear hardships without grudge. Throughout my life, I have played a constructive role. I have always united people and never separated them.

I am free from pride and prejudice. People call me blind, but I assure you, that I am not blind. I have eyes to see. I recognise the right and a fit person, who can be recipient of my favour. Once I select the person, the life of the person selected, is transformed and changed considerably. Once I selected Majnun for my favour and as you know, Majnun has become immortal. Majnun has come to be recognised as an inspiring figure’.

At this point I interrupted her and said to her, that at one stage of his life Majnun appeared to be tired of her. She said: ‘What do you mean? I can not understand. Please, explain.

I said, that I mean to refer to what Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi has written. Hearing this, she said that she would very much like to hear it all. I said, that I am prepared to give her in a nutshell, what Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi has written about her relations with Majnun. He has thus described how Majnun complained to God and what reply God gave to Majnun:

One night, in the secluded chamber of secrecy,
Majnun said: ‘O, Sustainer and Nourisher, independent and free,
Why hast Thou given me the name of Majnun?
And why hast Thou placed the love of Laila in my heart?
Thou hast made my bed a bed of thorns,
My weeping and wailing the nights carry upward to the sky.
What dost Thou desire from my dire condition?
O, my God, and what from my wailing and weeping?’
An invisible Speaker said that: ‘O, thou, man humble and meek,

In love I have given thee the sweet pain,
It is not the love of Laila, it is My handiwork;
The beauty of Laila is the Reflection of My Cheek.
It appears to Me nice, thy complaints in the night,
I am pleased by thy saying in agony: 'O, my Protector and Preserver'.'

Hearing all this, Love appeared to be pleased and said smilingly: 'It is due to me, that Majnun was able to attain such a high position, that God liked to hear him and reply'.

I asked her: 'Tell me, whom else you have favoured?' She said, that there are a few chosen ones. I said: 'Will you name them?' She said: 'If you want to know their names, I may tell you that besides Majnun and Laila, whom I have favoured, there are others too. To name a few, they are Farhad and Shirin, Yusuf and Zulaikha, Anthony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet, Othello and Desdemona'.

The talk ended. For some time we were sitting together and talking without speaking. It was a silent speech. All of a sudden I stood up. I consulted my watch. It was 6 pm. I said to her: It is now 6pm. It is the time for me to go to one of your chosen ones, the one who is also your votary. 'Who is he?' she anxiously inquired. I replied: 'You must be knowing him well. He is Mu'inuddin Hasan Chishti, to whose shrine I go every day at this time. He has loved you all his life'. Love said: 'Yes. It is true and perfectly true. He has loved me well'.

I said: 'You stay. I shall be returning soon'. She said: 'You go and return whenever you like. I promise to stay'.

The Culture of the Sufis Zahurul Hasan Sharib P 194 Appendix 5

Bayazid Bistami said:

I came out of myself like a snake shedding its skin. When I looked carefully lover, beloved and love in the land of union they were all one.

Anytime Haq (truth, reality or God) has love for one of His creation He makes any other of His creation as the enemies of that one, so that that person comes closer to Him.

Hazrat Abdul Hasan Kharaqani said:

Anyone who sits down alone with Allah his Creator that is the sign that he loves God but the one who is in the midst of a crowd but who is happy with his God, then that is the sign that Allah loves him.

Translations of the above by Nur Jamil From Farsi of Farzanegan Khosravani

Abil Said Abil Khair wrote:

*My whole body, filled with tears, from my eyes they poured
In Your love then without eyes, one's life should be lived?
Of me nothing was left, then where is this love from
Who then is the lover if I became all the beloved*

Someone asked the Abu Said to talk about love. He said '*Love is the network of Truth*'.

Amir Khusro the beloved disciple of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia wrote:

Your love each moment increases

The heart from your sorrow becomes a drop of blood

The above translated by Nur Jamil from 'Amir Khusro' by Shahid Mukhtar

Jami wrote: (b 1414 - d.1492 AD)

A lover who sincerely commits himself to the path of love will himself ultimately attain to the title of beloved.

From Yusuf and Zuleika trans by Pendlebury.

Khawaja Ahrar said:

Scholars Abu Hanifa and -Shafi'i discussed the external aspects of the sacred law. Of the reality of Love they had no knowledge.

(From Masters of the Wisdom of Central Asia p89) Translated by Hasan Shushud.

Mevlana Rumi

There is a story by Mevlana Rumi in Fihi Ma Fihi concerning a lover of God.

It is related that there was once a king who had a favourite and highly confidential servant. Whenever that servant set out for the royal palace, people who had a request to make presented him with their histories and their letters, begging him to submit them to the king. He would place the documents in his wallet. On coming into the king's presence he could not endure the splendour of king's beauty, and would fall down dumbfounded. The king would then in a loving manner put his hand into his purse and pocket and wallet, saying, 'What has this dumbfounded servant of mine, who is utterly absorbed by my beauty?' In this way he found the letters and would endorse the petitions of every man and then return the documents into the wallet. So he would attend to the needs of every one of them, without that servant ever submitting them, in such manner that not a single one was rejected; on the contrary their demands were granted many times over, so that they attained far more than they had asked for. But in the case of other servants who retained consciousness, and were able to present and indicate to the king the histories of people in need, out of a hundred affairs and a hundred needs only one perchance would be fulfilled.

Discourse of Rumi translated by A.J.Arberry published by John Murray.

Mevlana Rumi also tells the story of Majnun trying to reach his beloved Laila on a camel whose intention is only to reach her foal. Every time that Majnun slackens his control the camel runs towards its foal. When Majnun comes back to awareness he find he has been taken back a long way. Thus a short journey takes many years. The camel represents the fleshly soul whilst Majnun represents the spiritual lover.

Majnún said (in verse): "My she-camel's love is behind me, while my love is in front of me; and verily I and she are discordant."

Assuredly they (the reason and the flesh) are like Majnún and his she-camel: that one is pulling forward and this one backward in (mutual) enmity.

Majnún's desire is speeding to the presence of that (beloved) Laylá; the she-camel's desire is running back after her foal.

if Majnún forgot himself for one moment, the she-camel would turn and go back.

Since his body was full of love and passion, he had no resource but to become beside himself.

That which is regardful was (ever) reason: passion for Laylá carried (his reason away.

But the she-camel was very regardful and alert: whenever she saw her toggle slack.

She would at once perceive that he had become heedless and dazed, and would turn her face back to the foal without delay.

When he came to himself again, he would see on that she had gone back many leagues. In these conditions Majnun remained going to and for years on a three days' journey.

He said, "O camel, since we both are lovers, therefore we two contraries are unsuitable fellow-travellers.

Thy affection and toggle (propensity) are not in accord with me: it behoves (me) to choose parting from thy companionship".

These two fellow-travellers (the reason and the flesh) are brigands waylaying each other: lost is the spirit that does not dismount from the body.

The spirit, because of separation from the highest Heaven, is in a (great) want; the body, on account of passion for the thorn shrub (of sensual pleasure), is like a she-camel.

The spirit unfolds its wings (to fly) upwards; the body has stuck its claws in the earth.

"So long as thou art with me, O thou who art mortally enamoured of thy home, then my spirit will remain far from Layla.

From experiences of this kind my life-time, for many years, has gone (to waste), like (that of) the people of Moses in the desert.

This journey to union was (only) a matter of two steps: because of thy noose I have remained sixty years on the way.

The way is near (not far), but I have tarried very late: I have become sick of this riding, sick, sick."

He (Majnún) threw himself headlong from the camel. He said, "I am consumed with grief: how long, how long?"

The wide desert became (too) narrow for him: he flung himself on the stony place.

He flung himself down so violently that the body of that courageous man was cracked.

When he flung himself to the ground thus, at that moment also by (Divine) destiny his leg broke.

He tied up his leg and said, "I will become a ball, I will go rolling along in the curve of His bat."

For this cause the sweet-mouthed Sage utters a curse on the rider who does not dismount from the body.

How should love for the Lord be inferior to love for Laylá? To become a ball for His sake is more worthy.

Become a ball, turn on the side which is sincerity, (and go) rolling, rolling in the curve of the bat of Love,

For henceforth this journey is the pull of God, while that (former) journey on the she-camel is our progression (made by our own efforts).

Khawaja Muinuddin Hasan Chishti

Khawaja Muinuddin Hasan Chishti says: “The path of love is such, that he who treads on it, loses his name and identity.”

According to him, “Love is all-embracing and all-pervading: the lover’s heart is a fireplace of love. Whatever comes in it is burnt and becomes annihilated. There is no fire greater in intensity than the fire of love.”

The sign of true love is manifested in obedience to and the fear of the Friend.

As regards the repentance of lovers, he says that this is of three kinds. Firstly, it is due to shame; secondly to avoid sin; and thirdly to purify themselves by purging cruelty and enmity from within themselves. Genuine love rules out the idea of treating the Friend with a reserve. The springs of love are in God and not in us. Hence, love is divine.

Khawaja Saheb says: “The noise of the lover lasts only so long as he has not seen his beloved. once he sees the beloved he becomes calm and quiet, as the rivers are boisterous before they join the ocean, but when they do so, they are becalmed forever.”

From The Sufi Saints of the Indian Subcontinent by Zahurul Hassan Sharib

Zahuri Poems

LoveTalk

The Beloved

*The beginning of loving is becoming 'Me' in 'You'
To bring love into existence I became 'Me' and 'You'
Love separates and unites both 'You' and 'Me'
And between brings into being what needs be.*

The Lover's Reply

*You have broken my heart
And it really, really did hurt*

Beloved

*What an excellent start!
Remember Jacob and Joseph's Shirt!
Mevlana and Shems (I can't tell apart)?
Nizamuddin and Amir Khusro too?
And Majnun and Laila - Oh so true!*

Lover

*And what purpose can there be
In this game of You and me?*

Beloved

*The purpose is to bring into beingz
The actual fact, yes the material thing.
That is the evidence of the true love
In man and woman and heaven above.*

Lover

And this talk now of you and me?

Beloved

Print out the poem - you will see.

Love Lorn

*If God's love-lorn lunatic seeks Love, what harm pray?
In that business he is engaged night and day.
And if that love overflows to everyone he meets,
Then is that not the essence of good in its way.*

Zahuri