

**The Love poem from Ibn 'Arabi's Diwan
(Uni 1438.0063)**

By the mighty power of love (*ḥubb*)! Love made me witness
the essence of the beloved whom I love in my mind.
Had his form appeared in the sensory realm
to the eye of my senses, I would neither take away nor add.
For the state of his presence is like the state of his absence,
that is a quality not known in anyone [else].
I [alone] am favoured with it: no-one disputes with me
about it, and the people of spontaneous love go wrong about it.
That is why those who have not experienced it deny it,
and everyone denies it if they cannot find [it].
The mystery of that is that in the world of subtle beauty
people are only infatuated with the world of form.
Were they like me in love, they would be satisfied
and they would witness his essence in every form of belief;
for they would be [sharing] in what my vision determines¹
if they were in love from the world of direct observing.

He (Ibn 'Arabi) said, may God be pleased with him:

the reason for these verses is His saying “and God will bring people whom He loves and who love Him” (Q 5:54), for He loves them in their visible presence and actuality (*shahādatan wa 'aynan*), while they love Him in His absence, desiring His presence (*ghayban wa istiḥdāran*). But I have not seen anyone other than me who has tasted this station: I see everyone who has a belief affirming his belief and taking every other belief to be false. So I composed these verses to awaken those who make such claims and are bound by such a mindset.

We specifically said in this poem (*qaṣīd*): “I would neither take away nor add” when witnessing the beloved, if He is one who has a sensible form, and “desiring His presence”² if He doesn't have a sensible form, as in the Prophet's saying “Worship God as if you see Him”.

Our saying “I would neither take away nor add” is in reference to Qays, the mad lover of Layla, who was the greatest to suffer the the power of love. One day, his beloved came to him: he was saying ‘Layla, Layla’ and throwing ice on his chest, and the heat of his heart melted it. She said

¹ This line has an alternative reading in the Paris ms: “... what my desire/aim (*waṭarī*) determines”. The last two lines could also be read as: “because as far as my viewpoint can ascertain, if only they loved intensely, they would belong to the world of true observing”.

² That is, making the beloved present in the mind through an act of imagination.

to him: 'O Qays, I am in front of your eyes. I am Layla'. He looked at her and said to her: 'Leave me alone, love of you has occupied me, rather than you.' This is the most subtly beautiful of apparent [forms] in those who are in this condition of being under the dominion of love, because her apparent form when he witnessed it stood between him and what was in his imagination of her. So she was more beautiful in his imagination than in her actuality. When he felt the loss of that subtle beauty (*lutf*) in looking at her, he told her to go away.

That which we have tasted and mentioned in this poem, of there being an equivalence of presence and absence, is a more complete kind of love, more powerful, more truthful. If the true lover is united with his beloved in his mind and then his loved one appears to him in actuality, for him there will be neither addition nor subtraction. When he sees her, he will dress her in that image that he has of her in himself, so that his state does not change for him. In other words, he is not a person of loss.

One who takes the Real, exalted is He, as his beloved, and is truthful in his love, and his direct knowledge is complete insofar as it is correct to say that it is complete, [such a person] will see Him in every form of belief, since the Real is too exalted and vast to be limited to any belief, whatever it might be. Given that His mercy has extended over everything, what will be the situation with Him?! For every belief is accepted by His all-inclusiveness. My evidence [for this] is what Muslim reported in his Sahih, in the Book of Iman, regarding the change and transformation of forms in the Divine Self-disclosure³. So know this!

³ Referring to the following Divine saying: "And there remains that community with its unbelievers amongst them. God, blessed and exalted is He, appears to them in a form different to that form of His which they recognise, and says, 'I am your Lord!' 'We take refuge in God from you,' they reply. 'This is where we shall be until our Lord, glorified and magnified is He, comes to us. And when our Lord comes to us, we will know Him.' God, blessed and exalted is He, then comes to them in that form of His which they recognise, and says, 'I am your Lord!' 'You are our Lord indeed!' they call out. They follow Him, and the path is laid down." (See Ibn 'Arabī, *Divine Sayings*, trans. S. Hirtenstein and M. Notcutt, 26, p. 45)