

Love: the motivating force of God's Self-manifestation

The Divine prototype of love is expressed in the following divine saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*):

"I was a hidden (or unknown) treasure, and I loved to be known. So I created the creatures that I might be known."

For 'Irāqī, love (designated by two terms, *maḥabba* and *'ishq*) is the source of both lover and beloved, and is synonymous with God. It is the shortest and sweetest route to the Divine, all other ways being long and tortuous. Love is not really in the domain of the soul or the heart, but is the king of the territory of the spirit. The true lover is profoundly indigent, like earth, before the beloved, whose eminence is like the heaven – hence the much used metaphor of being dust on the threshold of the beloved.

According to Farghānī, love is:

"... an inward inclination toward reaching a perfection.

Its reality is a unifying relation between the seeker and the sought.

Its meaning is the domination of that which brings about unification and sharing.

Its effect is the disappearance of that which brings about differentiation and diversity between the seeker and the sought."¹

According to Qūnawī:

"It is inconceivable that one thing should love another thing in the respect that that thing differs from it. It can only love that thing as a result of some meaning shared between the two of them, in respect of which an affinity is established between them, an affinity that will lead to the domination of the property of 'that which brings about unification' over the property of 'that which brings about differentiation and separation'. As a result of knowledge and awareness of this affinity, the person who has this knowledge and awareness will seek to remove totally the properties of separation and to manifest the dominating force of 'that which brings about unification'. Then complete union will definitely follow."²

¹ *Mashāriq al-ḍarārī*, ed. Ashtiyānī, p. 606, trans. Chittick (*Divine Flashes*), p. 17

² *al-Nafāḥāt al-ilāhiyya* (Tehran, 1898), p. 220, trans. Chittick (*Divine Flashes*), p. 18.

"Every lover in reality loves only himself. But the form of the beloved stands before him as a mirror in which he contemplates himself in respect of complete affinity and spiritual parallelism (muhadhat). So what is called 'beloved' is a precondition for the lover's love of himself."³

The Qalandar:

A type of wandering dervish, who does not adhere to the usual mores and standards. They are presented as being outside the law and beyond the pale:

idolaters who permit everything and turn their back on the religion of Islam, who become idol-worshippers, frequenting churches, monasteries and temples

drunkards, who spend their time in taverns and indulge in wine, women, song, games and general debauchery, including the contemplation of young boys

In other words, they are the complete opposite of the sober, serious muslim, who obeys the law as instituted by the Prophet – and they criticise such as hypocrites. For 'Irāqī, the Qalandars are the prototype of the sincere lover, willing to sacrifice everything (reputation, honour, decency) for the sake of love, one whose heart is alive.

³ *I'jāz al-bayān* (Hyderabad, 1949), p. 120, trans. Chittick (*Divine Flashes*), p. 26.