

The Shortest Way to God is (through) Love

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*The divine love is like a huge ocean;
there is no definition of love or of its borders.
(Seyyid Nizamoglu)*

Introduction

According to Islam, Adam, said to be created as a best mould,¹ is a vicegerent (*khalīfa*) of God.² This means that He is the Owner, the supreme creator of the universe and man is created from the similar qualities as His Master. He says in the Quran "I have breathed into him of My Spirit."³ This implies that man has two sides: one belongs to the world, and the other belongs to the divine. God is said to have created man in His form⁴ and this shows that a human being is different from His other creations. Man is a combination of body and spirit and has been entrusted with both wisdom and the ability to recognise wisdom.⁵ Man is different from animals according to the philosophers; man is explained as *hayvān-ı nātiq* i.e. man with wisdom. According to the Islamic mystics man is a lover (*hayvān-ı āshiq*).

In this paper I will try to present the way to love and its peculiarities as the Sufis interpret it with reference to Hujwārī (d. 1077), Najmaddin al-Kubrā (d. 1221) and specially Mawlānā Jalāl al-dīn al-Rūmī (d. 1273). My purpose is to understand the subject according to the views of the historians, the intellectuals and the academics. Love is something as vast as an ocean and thus I feel that it is impossible to speak about real love properly, much less define it. Further more, it is well known that the explanation of love is not love alone, because love is a feeling (*hāl*), and feelings are never mere words (*qāl*). In Sufi tradition, this constraint is stated briefly in these words: "the one who doesn't taste, doesn't know." So how are we now going to find out how we might reach the heights of loving God and what are the ways by which we can reach Him?

1 Qur'ān 95:4.

2 Qur'ān 2:30.

3 Qur'ān 15:29; 38:72.

4 Bukhārī, "Istifzān", 1; Muslim, "Birr", 115.

5 The verse says that: "Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it. Yet man took it up; surely he is unjust, ignorant." (Qur'ān 33:72).

The ways of reaching the great heights to God

In the Sufis books, it is written generally that the ways to God are according to the number of creatures' breath, meaning that the ways to reach God are uncountable. A question then comes to mind; are these ways similar or different? In another words, does every man reach God at the same time and in the same manner? According to the historical research, the dervishes have completed the spiritual training in different times according to their individual characteristics. Najmaddīn al-Kubrā, who is the founder of Kubrawiyya order, classifies the ways to God, in three main groups: Akhyār, Abrār, and Shuttār.

The way of Akhyār is the path of piety (*zuhd*), and consists of being without doubts (*varā*), and full of devotion (*taqwā*). It includes a fear of displeasing God and yet hoping that He will love us. It includes ibādah meaning worship. The basic tenets of Akhyār are, prayers, fasting, reciting the Qur'an, and of course, remembrance of God. It is also called as the way of Ābids and Zāhids. It is necessary to spend much time in ibādah or worship in order to reach to God. For that reason, there are few men who reach their objective through Akhyār.

The way of Abrār is the path of self exertion (*Mujāhada*), of abstinence (*Riyāzah*) and of purification (*Tasfiya*). In Abrār, it is necessary to not separate from sincerity (*Ihlās*) and Truth and remain straightforward in relations between men and Truth (*Haqq*). The essential teaching of this order is to uproot the bad habits, and replace them with good habits. There are more men who reach their objective by this order than by the way of Akhyār.

The way of Shuttār is the path of excessive love, ecstasy (*Jazba*) and rapture. This way, according to the Sufis, is the shortest way to God. It is established on death, when one accepts denials willingly, i.e. to die voluntarily before the known death. In other words, this means that while still living in this world; abandon all the bodily and worldly desires. The voluntary death is the main basis of the some Sufi orders, like Kubrawiyya and Mavlawiyya.⁶ The principle of voluntarily death (dying of one's ego) is aimed to take away the love of this world. This aim is emphasized by the remembrance of death and one ponders on the consequences of death (*tafakkur-i mawt*, *tazakkur-i mawt*), and "ties oneself by remembering the death" (*rābita-i mawt*), making man ready to accept death. He awaits the meeting of His Lord with pleasure as his final goal. He remembers Allah and dies with the words of oneness (*tawhīd*) on his lips; i.e. there is no God but Allah.

The principle of the voluntary desire of death is mentioned in the Sufis' books as of ten, hundred or thousand stations and stages.⁷ For example, ten stages are: (1)

6 Najmaddīn al-Kubrā, *Usūl al-'Ashara: Tasavvufi Hayat* (Prepared by Mustafa Kara), Istanbul 1980, 33–43; Mehmet Ali Ayni, *Tasavvuf Tarihi*, 193; Ismail Hakkı İzmirli, *Yeni İlm-i Kelām*, Vol. I, 155; Māhir İz, *Tasavvuf: Mahiyeti, Büyükleri ve Tarikatlar* (Prepared by M. Ertugrul Duzdag), Istanbul 1990, 175; Selcuk Eraydin, *Tasavvufi ve Edebi Yazilar*, Istanbul 1997, 86.

7 See for the stations and stages: al-Ansārī, *Manāzil al-Sāirīn*; al-Baqlī, *Maşrab al-Arvāh*; Anqa-

repentance (*tawba*), (2) piety or renunciation (*zuhd*), (3) reliance (*tawakkul*), (4) contentment or satisfaction (*kanāah*), (5) to live alone at a particular period (*uzlah*), (6) to continue the remembrance (*dhikr*), (7) the submission (*taslīmiyyah*), (8) inclination towards God (*tawajjuh*), (9) contemplation of Divine Nearness (*murāqabah*), and (10) contentment after accepting Allah's ways (*ridhā*).

The concept of love

The love of God for the servant is described in the Sufi tradition as annihilation for the beloved, in the Beloved. Real love, therefore cannot be described or understood, or defined easily.⁸ At the same time, there is nothing clearer and more certain than love in the heart of the lover. As long as the lover feels and understands the concept of love, there is no need to explain it. Rūmī explains it in his poem: “Whenever I have to explain the concept of love, I feel repentant as I become influenced by love. My pen moves over the paper, and the pen would not dare to write but splits.”⁹ For example explanation of love is like a donkey stuck in the mud. This means that the wisdom reaches its borders and one is not able to explain what love is.

In order to understand the concept of love, we have to elaborate upon the concepts of ‘*ishq majāzī* and ‘*ishq ilāhī*’, which is known as the real love. The first one, which is ‘*ishq Majāzī*, is related to the material world and body love, like the love between male and female. But the real love, ‘*ishq Haqīqī*, is the love which is felt towards God. In other words, the metaphorical love is transient and, therefore, fleeting. However, the real love is eternal and infinite.¹⁰

It should be noted that metaphorical or transient love is not an empty one as long as it is not stained and contaminated with the desires of the flesh. It is also believed that this type of love can be a bridge to real love. And on the other hand, the love toward the beautiful is not the love toward the person, but it is the love towards the beauty that the person is created with. The amazing beauty of the beautiful is a reflection of the beauty of the Creator, His art, His power, and His majesty. To be amazed and stunned by such beauty opens the way to real love. Rūmī says:

ravī, *Minhāc al-Fuqarā*.

8 Süleyman Derin, *Love in Sufism*, Istanbul 2008, 13.

9 In other words: “Whatsoever I say in exposition and explanation of love, when I come to Love (itself) I am ashamed of that (explanation). Although the commentary of the tongue makes (all) clear, yet tongueless love is clearer. Whilst the pen was making haste in writing, it split upon itself as soon as it came to Love. In expounding it (Love), the intellect lay down (helplessly) like an ass in the mire: It was love (alone) that uttered the explanation of Love and loverhood.” See, *Mathnawī*, Vol. I, no. 112–115.

10 Sefik Can, *Fundamentals of Rūmī's Thought: A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective*, ed. and tr. by Zeki Saritoprak and Cunejd Eroglu, New Jersey 2004, 149.

“Whether Love be from this (earthly) side or from that (heavenly) side, in the end it leads us yonder.”¹¹

After briefly mentioning the concept of transient love (*‘ishq Majāzī*), we have to elaborate upon the concept of real love (*‘ishq Haqīqī*). Therefore, the question needs to be answered. How can we human beings love God, who is not seen, not known, and not understood thoroughly?

In fact, God’s Messenger, Prophet Muhammad, referring to this ambiguity, says: “O Lord, we have not understood You, as You are supposed to be.” The Prophet of Islam, despite his closeness to God, confesses that he has not understood God as He (the Almighty) merits. Therefore, for the majority of people it is hard to understand, what love really is?¹²

In order to love God, first of all, we have to feel His existence within our conscience, and within our reason. The Creator of this universe has hidden Himself behind His works, and has made His works as a veil for Himself. We can not see Him, but his works are obvious. Everything has been beautifully created. The world is ruled by unchangeable rules. The Creator is majestic and unique. Rūmī, in one of his poems, prays to the Lord as follows:

“O Lord who gives life to my life, lift the veil off from your Face! O You who joins me in my grief and my problems! O My Lord, wherever I am, You are with me! O Beloved who is with me in the night! O the one who hears my supplications all the time! O My Lord who has sent the fire of love to all atoms of my body! You are exalted from all shapes and all bodies, and you are purer than all spirits. You have no image or shape, but you are the magnet of all my shapes. All my existence runs toward You and annihilates itself in You.”¹³

As Rūmī mentioned in the above poem, we can think of the nature of God, which is beyond any shape or image. The Prophet of Islam commended his community not to reflect excessively on how God came into being (*zaat*), for we will never understand that. We can understand God by means of His beautiful Names and attributes, and we can feel Him through His art and His manifestations.

We of course, feel God according to our level of understanding and also according to the grace given by God to us. Without His grace and bounty, we can not find a way towards Him. Therefore, man understands God through God. Everything manifests His power and His art is evident in all spheres.¹⁴

Rūmī says, “All those who live on the earth eat and drink, move and travel. All our bodies are in fact a shadow. The reality of our existence is beyond the limit of this body.” In other words beyond the body the rooh or the soul remains. The Tur-

11 Mathnawī, Vol. I, no. 111.

12 Sefik Can, Fundamentals of Rūmī’s Thought, 153.

13 Ibid., 154.

14 Ibid., 154–155.

kish poet and mystic, Yūnus Amra says, “There is an ‘I’ in me beyond me.” It is said in Sufi tradition; God said “I wanted to be known, therefore, I have created mankind.” The desire to be known is hidden in the concept of love. God does not need to be known and loved, but He loves to be known and loved.¹⁵

Those human beings, who lower themselves from the level of humanity to the level of animals and don’t have senses beyond the biological five senses, are the ones who deny the love of God or any relationship with God Almighty.¹⁶

One way to love God is to give thanks to God because He has given us everything that makes our life beautiful and our world beautiful. He has given us what he has not given to any other creation: the wisdom and the will to choose. Therefore, to not love God considering His unlimited bounties, is to be ungrateful. In fact, there is a need in mankind for love and faith. The person who has abandoned this need of spiritual love becomes ungrateful, not only to God, but also to all the creation.

This lack of love creates emptiness in one’s spirit, in one’s soul and makes us feel that we are missing something important. Thinking of this seriously, one will understand that there is a strong relationship between God the Creator, and man His servant. Usually we take refuge in God when we are in despair, when we grieve, or when we face a disaster. The Qur’an says, “He (Allah) is closer to you than your jugular vein.”¹⁷ Solace then comes in seeking help and refuge in difficult times because we know that Allah says He is so close to us and knows our grief and knows how we feel.

Accepting God therefore, is a natural phenomenon. Those who remember God frequently, work for humanity, do good deeds and commit their actions honestly regardless of the nature of their duty, and who pray to God excessively are the happy people who have reached this level of closeness to God.¹⁸

God is not something material. Therefore, closeness to Him should not be understood in a material and physical sense. This closeness has nothing to do with space and distance. The closeness is through the senses, love, and attributes. As the verse suggests, “I have blown into him (Adam) a part of my spirit.”¹⁹ Man, who has become the reflection of this verse, is therefore close to God. The verse says, “Surely, we have made you a vicegerent on the earth.”²⁰ Therefore this special relationship between man and God exists. It is actually God, who has given man superiority over all other creatures. After all we do have God Almighty’s rooh or spirit in all of us, hence our closeness.

Rūmī says, the situation of a man who feels alone in this life and has been left by all of his friends, says: “Don’t feel alone. There is a hidden one here, inside you.”²¹

15 Ibid., 155.

16 Ibid.

17 Qur’an 16:55.

18 Sefik Can, *Fundamentals of Rūmī’s Thought*, 156.

19 Qur’an 15:29.

20 Qur’an 26:38.

21 Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Husayn Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rūmī, *Dīvān-i Kabīr*, tr. Bedi-

The One who Rūmī is referring to is the One who cannot fit within the heavens and the earth because of His majesty, but can fit into the heart of a believer because the heart of a believer can be larger than the universe as long as it is connected to God.

In the other poem, Rūmī says: “There is another soul in your soul. You seek for that soul. In the mountain of your body, there is a highly valuable element. You seek for the mine of that element. O mystic, you, who looks around, if you search for Him. Don’t look for Him outside. For Him, look inside.”²²

The soul, the spirit or the rūh which has come to us from Him, make us look for Him. The search for the soul, therefore becomes the search for understanding God. To understand God is to love God. But what is love of God in the heart of the servant? This is a feeling of the servant and cannot be described in words. It is a subtle, joyful, a pure sense. This leads us humans to exalt God over everything, to seek for His pleasure before everything. When he fulfills his duties to God, he finds relaxation in his inner self. Therefore, those who are friends of God and feel friendship with God, live in a state of purity. They ritually wash themselves which is called ablution, not only at times of five daily prayers, but those who are friends of God, always think of Him and keep pure inside and outside with their piety as well as with ablutions and wash themselves frequently. They remember Him in their hearts, they feel Him in their inner sense, and they work hard and are excited to please Him and to meet Him. The servant, thus, will find God’s power, His beauty and harmony in everything and in every event and will be amazed to discover God’s bounties. When people smell a beautiful flower’s fragrance, they see the beauty and the art of God. When people eat fruits, they think of the Creator who has given these lovely fruits from the soil and they are amazed by the bounties of God that have been given to them and therefore thank Allah in gratitude.

Those of us who travel towards God, have to believe in the ultimate justice of God. If and when we see injustice in society, we believe that sooner or later, His justice will prevail, here in this world as well as in the hereafter.²³ A firm believer knows that he has to meet and face His Lord on the Day of Judgment. All actions of our life are recorded and will be revealed to us. Each person will then know how much good he earned or how much of evil has he accumulated. A firm believer believes that God is a just God and we all will be judged according to our deeds.

Sufis’ definition of love

I want to give you a few examples of love as it has been defined by the Sufis. However, first I should make it clear that the answers, which were given to the question

uzzaman Furuzanfar, *Danishgah-i Tehran*, 1377/1957, Vol. I, no. 188.

22 Sefik Can, *Fundamentals of Rūmī’s Thought*, 157.

23 *Ibid.*

of what love is, are relative. A particular lover replies to the question, according to his spiritual level and his views. I think that this is the reason for the different definitions of real love.

‘Abdullah al-Tustarī (d. 896) says: “Love consists in embracing acts of obedience and in avoiding acts of disobedience.”²⁴ Hujwīrī explains this definition like this: “a man performs the commands of his beloved more easily in proportion to the strength of love he holds in his heart.

On the other hand, some people say that man can attain such degree of love without obedience to the commands. It is pure heresy as I feel, to suggest that one can abdicate one’s religious duties or divine commands and still claim to love Allah. A believer cannot be a believer if he does not follow the commands of Allah and his prophets. Even prophet Muhammad was not made exempt from the commands of Allah; He followed them rigorously, and if one such person was granted relief from the requirements then why not all people?

The case of persons, who are overcome with rapture (*maghlūb*) and those who are mentally deficient (*ma’tūh*) is different. It is possible, however, that God in His love should bring man to such a degree that he has no trouble in following the commands of Allah and his religious duties, because the more he loves Allah, the easier obedience becomes. The Prophet, Peace be upon him, said: “Verily, a veil is drawn over my heart, and I ask forgiveness of God seventy times daily.” He asked to be forgiven for his actions as he thought that his actions were not worthy of God’s acceptance. Though he was the most pious of the pious he kept asking for forgiveness.”²⁵

Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 909), one of the important Sufīs in the early period, says: “Love is an inclination of the heart.” Kalābāzī (d. 990) explains this definition like this: “Love is inclination of heart; of a servant of God and that it belongs to Him.”²⁶ And Shiblī (d. 945) says: “Love is called as a “*mahabbat*” because it obliterates from the heart everything except the beloved.”²⁷

Abu’l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1072) says: “Love is the effacement of the lover’s attributes and the establishment of the Beloved’s essence.”²⁸ Hujwīrī says that since the Beloved is subsistent (*bāqī*) and the lover is annihilated (*fānī*) the jealousy of love requires that the lover should make the subsistence of the Beloved absolute by negating himself, and he cannot negate his own attributes except by affirming the essence of the Beloved. No lover can stand by his own attributes, for in that case he would not need the Beloved’s beauty; but when he knows that his life depends on the Beloved’s beauty, he necessarily seeks to annihilate his own attributes, which

24 Ali b. Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, translated: Reynold A. Nicholson, Darul-Ishaat, Karachi 1990, 311.

25 Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 312.

26 Kalābāzī, *al-Ta’arruf: Dogus Devrinde Tasavvuf* (prepared by Suleyman Uludag), Istanbul 1992, 161.

27 Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 305.

28 *Ibid.*, 311.

veil him from his Beloved; and thus in love for his Beloved he becomes an enemy to himself.²⁹

According to Hujwīrī, for the heart love is like food or nourishment. The heart, which has no love, is empty, ruined and destroyed.³⁰

These definitions of the Divine love are mentioned here: the inclination of the servant's heart towards God; the obliteration of everything from the heart except the beloved; the effacement of the lover's attributes and the establishment of the Beloved is the essence.

From love (*mahabbat*) to the excessive love (*'ishq*)

It is said that there are two stages of love in early period of the Sufi training. The first one is fear (*hawf*) or grief (*huzn*) which is represented by Hasan al-Basrī (d. 728). The second one is love, which is represented by Rābia' al-'Adaviyya (d. 801). The way which is represented by Hasan al-Basrī is not well known or acclaimed. However, the second one given by Rābia' has spread among the Sufis, and has been a major understanding of Sufi thought.

Historically, love in the beginning is called *muhabbat*. This term of *mahabbat* is used in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. God says: "O believers, whosoever among you apostatize from their religion; God will assuredly bring in their stead a people whom He will love and who will love Him."³¹ And He also said: "Some men take idols beside God and love them as they love God, but the believers love God best."³² And the other verse says to the Prophet (*Pbuh*): "(O Messenger), tell people: 'If you indeed love Allah, follow me, and Allah will love you and will forgive you your sins. Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.'³³ The last verse explains that to love and to obey the Prophet are obligatory for the believers.

And He also said: "God loves to meet those who love to meet Him, and dislikes meeting those who dislike meeting Him."

And said again: "When God loves a man He says to Gabriel, 'O Gabriel, I love such and such a one, so do you love him'; then Gabriel loves him and says to dwellers in Heaven, 'God loves such and such o one' and they love him too; then he bestows on him favour in the earth, so that he is loved by the inhabitants of the earth; and as it happens with regard to love, so does it happen with regard to hate."

29 Ibid., 311. Hujwīrī also says: "It is well known that the last words of Husayn b. Mansūr (al-Hallāj) on the scaffold were "It is enough for the lover that he should make the One single." See same page.

30 Hujwīrī, *The Kasf al-Mahjūb: Hakikat Bilgisi* (translated into Turkish by Suleyman Uludag), Istanbul 1982, 448–449. (This passage is not translated into English by Reynold A. Nicholson).

31 Qur'ān 5:59.

32 Qur'ān 2:160.

33 Āl-i Imrān, 3:31.

The term of *'ishq* is not mentioned in the Qur'an clearly. According to Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 1240) there is a slight mention in the Qur'an of *'ishq*, as *ashadd-i hubb*. God says: "But those who (truly) believe, they love Allah more than all else."³⁴

Up till the twelfth century, Sufis prefer to use term of *mahabbatullah*, that is *love of God*, rather than *'ishqullah*, which is excessive love for God. This term (*'ishqullah*) became widespread after Ahmad al-Ghazzālī (d. 1126), Ibn al-Fārid (d. 1235)³⁵, Fahraddīn al-Irāqī (d. 1289) and especially Mawlānā Jalāl al-dīn al-Rūmī. According to the record of Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1201), the first time that this term has been used was by Abū Hussein al-Nūrī (d. 908), who said: "I loved God excessively."³⁶

Hujwīrī summarizes the discussion. He says: "There is much controversy about *Ishq* or excessive love, among the Shaikhs. Some Sūfīs hold that excessive love towards God is allowable, but that it does not proceed from God. Such love, they say, is the attribute of one, who is debarred from his beloved, and Man is debarred from God, but God is not debarred from Man. Therefore Man may love God excessively, but the term is not applicable to Allah. Others, again, take the view that God cannot be the object of Man's excessive love, because such love involves passing beyond limits. The modernists assert that excessive love, in this world and the next, is properly applied only to the desire of attaining the essence, and inasmuch as the essence of God is not attainable, the term (*'ishq*) is not rightly used in reference to Man's love towards God, although the terms "love" (*mahabbat*) and "pure love" (*safwat*) are correct.

Man feels love towards God, because God through His attributes and actions, is a gracious benefactor to His friends. Allah's manifestations of love are seen in Jacob. The father of Joseph was absorbed in love for his son, from whom he was separated. He had lost his eyesight because of too much weeping, but when he touched and smelt his son's shirt his eyesight returned. Zulaykhā was ready to die on account of her excessive love for Joseph; her eyes were not opened until she was united with him, according to Hujwīrī. It has been said that excessive love is applicable to God also, since God gives the power of excessive love.³⁷

Intellect (wisdom) and excessive Love

According to Sufi thought, the pace with which man travels with his intellect is limited, but becomes limitless with excessive love or real love. In other words, when the intellect (*'aql*) or wisdom is insufficient, the excessive love starts. In reality, love is an attribute of God. Allegorically, it can be related to the servant. The Qur'an

34 Qur'an 2:165.

35 See for more Derin Suleyman, *Love in Sufism*, 201–226

36 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Telbīsu Iblīs*, Beirut 1992, 153; *Tasavvuf Ilmine Dair Kuseyrī Risalesi*, translated into Turkish by Suleyman Uludag, 500 (footnote 160).

37 Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 310.

says: “He loves His servants. They love Him.”³⁸ Love is a state of experience that cannot be explained in words. There is no doubt that as a result of knowing God, finding him in our hearts through the utmost efforts and long contemplations, prayers, good deeds, and help to others, one will be able, even at the lowest level, to feel the secrets of the existence of God. Through this discovery, the person may reach a higher level of spiritual taste and can feel an indescribable joy of the spirit. Therefore, one can say that the spiritual enjoyment that comes from knowing and loving God is beyond all pleasures. The goal of all lovers of Allah, is to reach that higher level. Here lies the spiritual flavour that few can feel. It has been said that those who feel this state and have reached this level have annihilated their wants and they have no grief at all. Their hearts have become busy with spiritual flavour. Even if they are thrown into fire, they will have no feeling of fire because of their utmost joyfulness that they have been experiencing, in loving God. Even if all of paradise were offered to them, they would not even glance in the direction of paradise for the joy that they have, is even greater than paradise.³⁹ Rūmī describes the state of such mystics in the following poem:

“O My Lord who is my rest of my soul when I am in grief. O My Lord who is the treasure of my spirit when I suffer hunger and poverty. What the imagination cannot attain, and understanding and reason cannot reach, since all beauties come from You to my spirit, You are my Pole Star. My Lord, because of Your grace and bounty I look down on the worldly things. How can this transient world’s richness and wealth deceive me? My Lord, through Your utmost generosity if You give me countless properties and You put before me all Your hidden treasures, I will prostrate from my inner most being and put my face on the ground and say, “My Lord, for me, Your love is worthier than all of this.”⁴⁰

It is possible that the Man may only reach to God through real love. There is no physical closeness when the term of “ultimate union” (*vuslat*) is used. It is intended that this concept (*vuslat*) spiritual closeness which the Man obtains it with his sixth sense, i.e. his inner eyes which is called the “eyes of the heart,” or “*basīrah*”. There are thousands of veils between Man and God. But the Man, who reaches the real love, sees everything in the cosmos as a revelation of his Beloved.

To love the Prophet

All Muslims love dearly their Prophet. In fact, not only Rūmī, but all saints have love and respect for the Prophet of Islam. Moreover, they love not only the Prophet

38 Qur’ān 5:54.

39 Sefik Can, *Fundamentals of Rūmī’s Thought*, 158–159.

40 *Dīvān-i Kabīr*, Vol. I, no. 207.

of Islam, but all messengers of God. Rūmī has a special place in his heart for the Prophet of Islam because the Prophet proposed a high standard of ethical conduct for humankind, such as freeing slaves and caring for the poor. There is no other historical personality like Muhammad who brought freedom to the slaves and the lower classes. Therefore not only Muslim saints but philosophers like Thomas Carlyle and the German poet Goethe have fallen in love with Prophet Muhammad because of his service to humanity throughout his life. They have expressed their reverence for Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in their books. Very recently, Michael Hart has written a book⁴¹ about the hundred most influential historical personalities and ranked Muhammad (*Pbuh*) as number one.⁴²

Rūmī in remembrance to the Prophet says: “We hear all the time the voice of divine love from right and left. With the influence of this voice we are ascending to the heavens. Who has the capacity of watching us? Before coming to this world we were in heaven. We were friends of the angels. There is real homeland, and we will return to it. How distant are the pure pearls of the divine and the dirty world of this soil. Without thinking of your honour, you came to this lower world. Pick up your properties and tie up your burden. This place is not ours. We have to migrate. This young desire is our friend. Sacrificing the soul is our job. And the head of our caravan is Mustafa, the Prophet, of whom the whole universe is proud. Mustafa, peace and blessing be upon him, is so high a being that the moon did not dare to see his face and split.”⁴³ And he says in another poem: “Our prophet’s way is the way of love. We are the children of love, and our mother is love.”⁴⁴

Rūmī is concerned with the love, love of humanity and the love of God. Because he witnesses Allah’s manifestation in every thing. Rumi ignored the mistakes of people and was kind and tolerant towards everybody. Rūmī’s love for the prophet was enhanced by the fact that our prophet always behaved with utmost humility and with tolerance. Not only towards all human beings, but towards his most cruel enemies, also. The well-known title of Prophet Muhammad is Habib Allah or the Beloved of God. The Prophet is the ideal model of all human beings. Therefore, Rumi’s love for the Prophet is based on this principle. In his famous poem, Rūmī says:

“I am the servant of the Qur’an as long as I live. And I am the soil where the foot of Muhammad stepped.”⁴⁵

41 See Michael H. Hart, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, New York 1992.

42 Sefik Can, *Fundamentals of Rūmī’s Thought*, 159–160.

43 *Dīvān-i Kabīr*, Vol. I, 212 (no. 463).

44 *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 1270 (no. 57).

45 *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 1387 (no. 1331).

Rūmī's thoughts about the excessive love (*'ishq*)

Mawlānā Jalāladdīn al-Rūmī is one of the important representatives of excessive love for Allah. In his books, there are a lot of explanations regarding the Divine love and the excessive love in which he has drowned his soul.

Rūmī notices that the Love is the doctor of spiritual ills and of suffering and pain: "Rejoice, O Love that is our sweetest passion, physician of our many illnesses!"⁴⁶

According to him, mankind soars to the skies via Love. Rūmī says: "Through love the earthly body soared to the skies: the mountain began to dance and became nimble."⁴⁷ "Love inspired Mount Sinai, O lover, (so that) Sinai (was made) drunk and Moses fell in a swoon."⁴⁸ Rūmī gives the example of divine love as a ship, on which the believers board. He says: "Love is a ship for the elect: Seldom is calamity (the result); for the most part it is deliverance."⁴⁹

Rūmī praises the eye which weeps for God and calls the tears as pearls. He says: "Oh, happy the eye that is weeping for His sake! Oh, fortunate the heart! that is scared/burnt for His sake."⁵⁰ "The tears which people shed for His sake are pearls and people think they are tears."⁵¹

According to him, the light of God illuminates mankind and the light of man who doesn't love, blinds the eyes. Rūmī says: "The reflexion of the servant of God is wholly luminous; the reflexion of the stranger (to God) is wholly blindness. Know every one's reflexion: See (it plainly), O my soul. (Then) ever sit beside those whom thou desirest."⁵²

Rūmī advises to work and to strive for obtaining the love of God and plunge oneself in the ocean of love. He says: "He that is drowned in God, wishes to be more drowned, (while) his spirit (is tossed) up and down like the waves of the sea, (Asking) "Is the bottom of the sea more delightful, or the top? Is His (the Beloved's) arrow more fascinating, or the shield?"⁵³

According to him, a lover is a loved man at the same time. Rūmī says: "Whomsoever thou didst deem to be a lover, regard (him) as the loved one, for relatively he

46 Mathnawī, Vol. I, no. 23.

47 Ibid., Vol. I, no. 25. There is a sign to the verse of surah 7th: "And when Moses came at our appointment and his Lord spoke to him, he said: 'O my Lord! Reveal Yourself to me, that I may look upon You!' He replied: 'Never can you see Me. However, behold this mount; if it remains firm in its place, only then will you be able to see Me.' And as soon as his Lord unveiled His glory to the mount, He crushed it into fine dust, and Moses fell down in a swoon. And when he recovered, he said: 'Glory be to You! To You I turn in repentance, and I am the foremost among those who believe'" (Qur'an 7:143).

48 Ibid., Vol. I, no. 26.

49 Ibid., Vol. IV, no. 1406.

50 Ibid., Vol. I, no. 818.

51 Ibid., Vol. I, no. 1780.

52 Ibid., Vol. III, no. 3253-54.

53 Ibid., Vol. I, no. 1745-46.

is both this and that. If they are thirsty and seek water from the world, (yet) water also seeks those that are thirsty. Inasmuch as He is (thy) lover, be silent: as when He pulls your ear, be thou (all) ear.”⁵⁴

Conclusion

Mawlānā Jalāl al-din al-Rūmī, says about the man who doesn't comprehend value of Divine love, he is like the bird which has no wings. He doesn't go anywhere or fly anywhere. The traveller of Truth, knows the value of Divine love, should pass stages and stations for arriving to their home and original country, i.e. the Divine world or the Akhirat. Coming close to Truth is endless and infinite. Sufī, whichever stage and station he is in, should go on by the Divine love without hesitating. Firstly, he should acknowledge himself and recognize his truth and his place. Where does he stand in the cosmos? He is acquainted with God and ultimate union with Him, when he achieves this knowledge and recognition. The more he has patience and endurance, the more quickly he goes on to the way to Divine love.

Finally, Rūmī, in the beginning of his Mathnawī, says, “Someone asked me, ‘What is love?’ And I told him when you become like me you will understand.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Ibid., Vol. I, no. 1740–42.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Vol. II, (foreword); *Dīvān-i Kabīr*, Vol. II, 1015 (no. 2733).