

To Be Is To Love:

The semantic field of love in the works of al-Ḥallāj, Rūmī, and Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh

by

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(Under the Direction of Alan Godlas)

ABSTRACT

Although critics of Sufism have sometimes presented a vision of Islam in which love of God does not have a central place, a semantic field of love is indeed present in the earliest Islamic textual sources and has been further developed by Sufis. This study of key terms and their interrelationships—terms such as *raḥma*, *shukr*, *maḥabba*, *wudd*, *‘ishq*, and *irāda*—demonstrates the central role that this semantic field has in Islam. Although rooted in the Qur'an and *Sunna*, the semantic field of love was substantially elaborated upon by Sufis such as Ḥallāj, Rūmī, and Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh. In particular, their works illustrate how the term *‘ishq* (intense, passionate love) represents a development in the semantic field of love in Islam, demonstrating that *‘ishq* as a part of the nature of love is an integral component of Islam.

INDEX WORDS: Islam, Muslim, Qur'ān, Sufism, *Sunna*, Prophet, Ḥallāj, Rūmī, Bakhsh, love, *‘ishq*, *maḥabba*, poetry

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandfather Syed Zakir Ali (*rahmatullah alaih*), whose love of Sufism and Sufi poetry inspired me, and to my father, mother, and wife.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Although critics of Sufism have presented a vision of Islam in which love of God does not have a central place, in fact, a semantic field of love is present in the Qur'ān and *Sunna* (the example set by the Prophet), and has been further developed by Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh. The expressions of love by these three Sufis is characterized by their emphasis on the term *'ishq* (intense, passionate love) rather than *maḥabba* (affection). Although the term *'ishq* has no textual root in Islamic textual sources, these three Sufis demonstrate that *'ishq* as a part of the nature of love is an integral component of Islam. Ḥallāj was one of the first figures of Sufism in the formative period to extensively employ the usage of the term *'ishq* when describing Divine love. He then later on identified *'ishq* as a Divine attribute, going so far as to attribute *'ishq* to being a part of the Essence of God. Rūmī followed in this development of describing Divine love in terms of *'ishq* and based his entire works upon a *madhhab-i 'ishq* (path of love). His works deal with the extensions of *'ishq*, which he describes as being synonymous with the path to God. Miyān Muhammad Bakhsh, benefited from the vast legacy and literature of Sufism coming from the Persianate world into the Indian subcontinent. He inherited and integrated the development of the semantic field of love in Islam into his own works, further expanding upon *'ishq*. He describes *safar al-'ishq* (journey of love) as a journey toward God, using *'ishq-i majāzī* (metaphorical love), as the bridge to *'ishq-i ḥaqīqī* (real love).

Each figure represents a progression of the semantic field of love in Islam. While each figure's development expands the semantic field of love to include *'ishq*, they each remain

inextricably rooted within the Islamic textual sources. This development is diachronic; if it had been heterodox, it would have died out. This link is demonstrated by the Qur'ānic verses, *ḥadīth* literature (sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad), and examples from the *Sunna* that each of the three figures employ, using them as the foundation from which their expansion is built upon. In order to correct the current misrepresentation of Islam by a segment of the Muslim population (a misrepresentation that marginalizes love), it has become vital to demonstrate the viability of the semantic field of love by relating the development of Ḥallāj, Rūmī, and Miḡān Muḥammad Bakhsh's semantic fields of love to the Islamic textual sources.¹

¹ The semantic field is best described by Toshihiko Izutsu who states, "Semantics, thus understood, is a kind of *Weltanschauungslehre*, a study of the nature and structure of the world-view of a nation at this or that significant period of history, conducted by means of a methodological analysis of the major cultural concepts the nation has produced for itself and crystallized into the key-words of its language." Therefore, the semantic field of Islam is the Islamic vision of the universe. See Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran* (Tokyo, Japan; Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964).

CHAPTER 2: The Semantic Field of Love in Islam: An Overview of Scholarly Perspectives

The semantic field of love in Islam is a conceptual framework which entails several key terms, whose independent meaning reveals aspects of the concept of love and whose relational meaning allows an insight into the Islamic perspective of love. The terms that constitute this semantic field possess a dual nature, which includes a basic independent meaning and a relational meaning. Each term displays an independent and relative aspect. Both aspects consequently form the sum of the term, which is not exhausted by either aspect solely. The relationship a particular term has with other terms reveals an element of the conceptual framework in usage by that particular community. Toshihiko Izutsu states, “what we call the ‘relational’ meaning of a word is nothing other than a concrete manifestation, or crystallization, of the spirit of the culture, and a most faithful reflection of the general tendency, psychological and otherwise of the people who use the word as part of their vocabulary.”² Altogether, the terms *rahma* (compassion, mercy), *irāda* (will), *luṭf* (grace), *shukr* (gratitude, thankfulness), *maghfira* (forgiveness), *‘afw* (pardon), *maḥabba* (affection), *wudd* (love) and *‘ishq* (intense, passionate love) form the semantic field of love in Islam. The isolated meaning of the term *rahma* describes a fundamental characteristic of God from the Islamic perspective, while its relational meaning serves as a focus word from which key words

² Toshihiko Izutsu is a former University Professor at the Institute of Cultural Linguistic studies at Keio University in Tokyo and the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy in Tehran and McGill University. For a thorough analysis of the semantic field in the Qur’ān see Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran* (Tokyo, Japan; Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964), 24.

emanate as expressions of *raḥma*. *Irāda*, *lutf*, *maghfira*, *‘afw*, *maḥabba*, *wudd* and *‘ishq* can all be described as positive expressions of *raḥma*.

The complexity of identifying distinct semantic fields is difficult because different semantic fields tend to overlap. Toshihiko Izutsu alludes to this complexity, stating, “In other words, they form among themselves, various groups, large and small, which, again, are connected with each other in various ways, so that they constitute ultimately an organized totality, an extremely complex and complicated network of conceptual associations.”³ This interconnection between terms can also be applied to *shukr*, which can be connected with *īmān* (belief).⁴ These terms are not necessarily synonymous; rather they are all used in conjunction to convey aspects of the same concept of love in Islam. Thus, an analysis of this semantic field of love is composed of the relationship that each of these key words share with one another and the meaning that they bestow collectively. This semantic field of love begins first and foremost with the earliest Islamic textual sources: the Qur’ān supplemented by the *Sunna* and *ḥadīth*; and was developed through the successive generations of Muslims, in particular in the realm of *taṣawwuf* (Sufism).

Raḥma

Raḥma is derived from the Arabic root *r-ḥ-m*, which denotes mercy, and compassion. The noun *raḥma* denotes pity, compassion, human understanding, sympathy, kindness, and mercy. From the same root we also have the term *raḥm*, which is rendered as "womb," "relationship," or "kinship." The connection between the womb and mercy can be found in a *ḥadīth* related by Abū Hurayra: “The word *al-raḥm* (womb) derives its name from *al-Raḥmān*

³ Ibid, 30.

⁴ Toshihiko Izutsu describes the term *īmān* as a “focus word,” which is a key term that is the focus of a particular system of key terms; the conceptual center. He describes *shukr* as a positive derivative of *īmān*. Ibid.

(i.e., one of the names of God) and God said: ‘I will keep good relations with the one who will keep good relations ([*raḥim*] "womb" i.e., kith and kin) with you and sever relations with him who will sever the relations with you.’⁵ Hence, our connection to *raḥma* began before birth, in the womb, which nourishes, which is reminiscent of the role of *al-Raḥmān* (The Most Merciful) as the nurturer of creation. Reza Shah-Kazemi adds, “Just as the womb entirely envelops the embryo growing within it, the divine ‘matrix’ of compassion contains and nourishes the whole corpus of existence unfolding within itself.”⁶ Furthermore, the connection to *raḥma* remains intact after birth. Its preservation becomes manifested in our familial relations.

There has been some contemporary debate as to whether or not *raḥma* can be included in the semantic field of love in Islam. Gordon Nickel cites two scholars who represent both sides of the debate, Caner Dagli and Frederick M. Denny.⁷ Caner Dagli suggests the inclusion of *raḥma*, whereas Frederick M. Denny refuses any relation.⁸ Denny argues, “It is erroneous to confuse *raḥma* (“mercy”) and *maghfira* (“forgiveness”) with love (*ḥubb* or *wudd*)...His mercy is offered to all, but His love only to select ones.”⁹ Gordon Nickel, who seems to support Dagli and contradict Denny, attests to the augmentation of the semantic field of love with the

⁵ Bukhārī, Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad. al-, *Kitāb jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, trans. M.M. Khan as *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhari*, vol. 8, bab. 73, *ḥadīth* #18 (Lahore: Ashraf, 1978-1980).

⁶ Reza Shah-Kazemi is currently a Research Associate at the Institute of Ismā‘īlī Studies who specializes in comparative mysticism, Islamic studies, Sufism, and Shī‘ism. Reza Shah-Kazemi, *My Mercy Encompasses All* (U.S.; Shoemaker Hoard, 2007), 7.

⁷ Gordon Nickel is a professor of religion who has taught courses on the Qur’ān and Islam in the Modern World formerly at the theological graduate school of Trinity Western University. Caner Dagli is a professor of religion at Roanoke college teaching Islamic philosophy, and Sufism. Frederick M. Denny is a professor emeritus at Colorado University teaching comparative religions, Qur’anic studies, and Islam in North America.

⁸ Gordon Nickel, “The Language of Love in Qur’ān and Gospel,” in *Sacred Text: Explorations in Lexicography*, ed. Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala and Angel Urban (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 238.

⁹ Frederick M. Denny, “The Problem of Salvation in the Qur’ān: Key Terms and Concepts,” in *In Quest of an Islamic Humanism: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Memory of al-Nowaihi*, ed. A. H. Grau (Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press, 1984), 199.

inclusion of *raḥma*. “It should be noted that though including mercy and forgiveness in the language of love would certainly expand the expressions of God’s actions toward humans.”¹⁰ *Raḥma* as the focus word of the semantic field of love in Islam entails a dual function, acting as an umbrella, which envelops, and as a womb, which nourishes the other terms. As an independent meaning *raḥma* describes an attribute, which is bestowed upon all of creation. Yet, the meaning of *raḥma* does not begin and end with its independent meaning, rather its relational meaning must be taken into account. As parts make a whole, both independent and relational meanings make up the whole. Thus, in *raḥma*'s relational meaning, terms such as *irāda*, *lutf*, *maghfira*, *‘afw*, *maḥabba*, *wudd* and *‘ishq*, all can be described as positive expressions of *raḥma*. Whereas Divine *raḥma* is bestowed upon all of creation, *maḥabba* and *wudd* are reserved for those who please God; while under the broader concept of *maḥabba*, we find the more specific concept of *‘ishq*, which is an intensified form of *maḥabba*. As the will or devotedness of God, *irāda* acts as a prerequisite to *raḥma*, from which everything is initiated, while *shukr* is the appropriate response to *raḥma*. *Maghfira* and *‘afw* become the reciprocated Divine response to *shukr*. *Maghfira* and *‘afw* both denote forgiving, however there is a distinct difference which separates them. *Maghfira* is derived from the Arabic root, *gh-f-r*, which means to cover or conceal, whereas *‘afw* comes from the Arabic root *‘-f-w*, which means to obliterate all traces, to pardon.¹¹ The relation between *raḥma* and *maghfira* is best surmised by Reza Shah-Kazemi who states, “Just as natural law ordains that night ‘enwraps’ day and day ‘enwraps’ night, so the supernatural ‘Law,’ that of overflowing mercy, ordains that the Creator ‘enwraps’ His creation

¹⁰ Gordon Nickel, “The Language of Love in Qur’ān and Gospel,” in *Sacred Text: Explorations in Lexicography*, ed. Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala and Angel Urban (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 238.

¹¹ John Penrice, *A Dictionary of the Koran* (NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 98.

with forgiveness and infinite mercy.”¹² Likewise *luṭf*, which is derived from the verb *l-t-f*, which literally means to draw near, is also derived from *raḥma*, and hence *luṭf* according to Reza Shah-Kazemi, “expresses a synthesis of the following notions: grace, kindness, subtlety, intimacy and immense power.”¹³

Daud Rahbar states that in Islam “God’s love is conditional.”¹⁴ He then lists nineteen actions that God loves¹⁵ and twenty-three actions that God does not love.¹⁶ Rahbar concludes that God’s love is reserved for those who perform good deeds, therefore rendering God’s love as conditional. The instances Daud Rahbar identifies in the Qur’ān, instances that denote God’s love, are, from his perspective, limited to those verses that contain the terms *maḥabba* or *wudd*. He adds, “This is all that the Qur’ān has to say on Godward love. On the other hand, fear of God is the oft-mentioned Godward sentiment in the Qur’ān and goes so naturally with the idea of the lord of justice and authority.”¹⁷ Gordon Nickel cites Daud Rahbar’s pronouncement as a possible reason for the “reticence of the classical Muslim exegetes to freely develop the theme of love between God and people.”¹⁸ Daud Rahbar’s argument that the fear of God plays an important role from the Islamic perspective is valid, yet his claim that it is of greater significance than love of God as well as his conclusion that the fear of God justifies the preeminence of God’s severity and justice overlooks the preeminence that *raḥma* is given in

¹² Reza Shah-Kazemi, *My Mercy Encompasses All* (U.S.; Shoemaker Hoard, 2007), 70.

¹³ *Ibid*, 78.

¹⁴ Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1960), 172.

¹⁵ 2:191, 3:128; 3:141, 5:16, 5:94, 7:54, 2:222, 2:222, 9:108-109, 3:70, 9:4, 9:7, 3:140, 3:153, 5:46, 49:9, 60:8, 61:4.

¹⁶ 2:186, 5:89, 7:53, 2:277, 3:133-134, 3:50, 42:38, 5:69, 28:76-77, 6:142, 7:29, 8:60, 4:40, 31:17, 57:23, 4:107, 16:25, 22:39, 3:29, 30:43-44.

¹⁷ Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1960), 181.

¹⁸ Gordon Nickel, “The Language of Love in Qur’ān and Gospel,” in *Sacred Text: Explorations in Lexicography*, ed. Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala and Angel Urban (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 243.

the earliest Islamic textual sources. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr states, “Although God is just and majestic and also the Supreme Judge who judges our actions and can become wrathful if human beings do not act according to His Will and in goodness...it is written on the Divine Throne, ‘Verily, my Mercy (compassion) precedeth my Wrath.’”¹⁹ He then relates *raḥma* as encompassing all of creation stating, “the whole of the cosmos is understood by Sufis to have become existentiated through *nafas al-Raḥmān*, usually translated as the ‘The Breath of the Compassionate.’ The Islamic universe is therefore plunged in the ocean of compassion.”²⁰ He adds:

The Sufis, who aspire to enter the Garden of Truth, emphasize the Divine Mercy and Compassion, which precedes God’s Wrath without in any way forgetting the significance of inner discipline and the necessity of living according to God’s laws, thus abstaining from actions that can incur His Wrath. Nor do they forget the positive nature of holy anger when one is faced with falsehood and injustice. In Christianity holy anger is even associated with some of the saints, and also certain episodes of the life of Christ—in a religion that is predominantly a religion of love.²¹

According to the Islamic perspective *raḥma* permeates the universe, nurturing all of creation at every instant. Preceding wrath, *raḥma* occupies a preeminent ontological place from which other attributes are made manifest, including love. Thus, *raḥma* becomes the focus-word of the semantic field of love, from which other key words, such as *irāda*, *luṭf*, *shukr*, *maghfira*, *‘afw*, *maḥabba*, and *wudd* relate.

Shukr

Shukr is derived from the Arabic root *sh-k-r*, denoting thankfulness and gratitude.

Gratitude is a key concept in Islam, as it is a method for mankind to rectify *ghafla* (forgetfulness). In order for a person to love God, one must first be grateful to God, for as the

¹⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam’s Mystical Tradition* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 93.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid, 93-94.

Rabb (Lord, Sustainer), He sustains us at every moment. Thus, *shukr* becomes the active response to *raḥma*. Similarly, *shukr* as an aspect of love should draw a person closer toward God. Ibn ‘Arabī states in his *Kitāb al-Naṣā’ih* (Book of Spiritual Advice), “Every [act of] thankfulness (*shukr*) which doesn’t bring with it an increase (in spiritual blessings) can’t be relied upon.”²² Likewise, al-Ghazzālī states that *shukr* marks a progression of an individual, beginning with knowledge and culminating in an action.

Shukr consists of a knowledge, a state, and an action (*‘ilm wa-ḥāl wa-‘amal*). Each of the three gives rise to the next in succession: the knowledge generates the state, which in turn generates the action. The knowledge in question is knowledge of the benefaction and of its being from the benefactor. In the case of God, the requisite knowledge involves the recognition that all possible benefactions issue from Him, and the withdrawal of any feelings of gratitude from the persons or things by means of which He bestows them.²³

Thus, for al-Ghazzālī *shukr* is not only the recognition of Divine *raḥma*, but it ultimately leads an individual to become active in thankfulness. Toshihiko Izutsu defines *shukr* as the appropriate response to *raḥma*. “The fact that God acts towards man in such a gracious way and shows all sorts of goodness and kind consideration in the form of *āyāt* “signs”—this initial fact already determines the only right response possible on the part of human beings. And that response is “thankfulness” or “gratitude” (*shukr*), thankfulness for all the favors He is bestowing upon them.”²⁴ The concept of *shukr* consists of a recognition of *raḥma* on the part of mankind, which in turn gives rise to an active response of *raḥma*. Recognizing *raḥma* by mankind consists of a knowledge, which in turn brings one closer to God, as a reciprocation of *raḥma*.

²² James W. Morris, “Introducing Ibn ‘Arabī’s ‘Book of Spiritual Advice,’” *Journal of the Muhyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī Society*, 28, (2000), 14.

²³ Marion Holmes Katz, *The Birth of the Prophet Muḥammad: Devotional Piety in Sunni Islam* (New York; Routledge, 2007), 110.

²⁴ Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran* (Tokyo, Japan; Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964), 231.

Maḥabba and Wudd

As previously stated, Daud Rahbar does not include *rahma* in his understanding of love and hence argues that in Islam “God’s love is conditional.”²⁵ Nevertheless, when viewed as a manifestation of *rahma*, love is not conditional. Rusmir Mahmutćehajić notes, “God’s love for man is unconditional and primary, since He created man in love so as to manifest Himself. God’s love is eternal and timely.”²⁶ The argument that God’s love toward mankind is exclusively conditional is fraught with inconsistencies, as the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* literature repeatedly rebuke such a notion.²⁷ According to Mir Valiuddin, love is the highest reach of religion; thus limiting the relationship of love between God and mankind to only select situations is a gross misinterpretation. He states:

Muslims of all denominations agree that love of God is obligatory. But there are a few literalists who hold that “love of God” means merely perpetual devotion to His service and even for this God’s grace is necessary: In love similarity of nature or disposition between the lover and the beloved is indispensable, so that there may be attraction between the two, as is well-known: “Like attracts the like.” But, as no similarity of any kind exists between the creator and the created, there can be no love between them. In reply, it is generally argued that as there is a consensus of opinion among the Muslims that love of God is obligatory for one and all, how can a thing be regarded as obligatory which does not exist at all? How can we interpret love as mere obedience or devotion; for, obedience or devotion is subservient to love and a fruit of it. Love should first be there, then only the lover can obey the beloved.²⁸

From the Islamic perspective love is obligatory, which necessitates obedience or devotion.

Therefore obedience or devotion is a result of love, not vice versa.

²⁵ Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1960), 172.

²⁶ Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, *On Love: In the Muslim Tradition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 114-115. Here Mahmutćehajić must be relying upon the famous “hidden treasure” *ḥadīth qudsī*, where God says, “I was a hidden treasure and I loved (*fa-aḥbabtu*) that I be known, so I created creation in order to be known.”

²⁷ This will be demonstrated in the following chapters, especially pages 20-28, and 48-52.

²⁸ Mir Validduin, *Love of God: A Sufic Approach* (England: Sufi Publishing Company, 1972), 85.

Maḥabba and *wudd* are reserved for those who perform acts that please God, which acts as an aspect of *rahma*.²⁹ *Maḥabba*, which is derived from the Arabic root ḥ-b-b, also denotes "love," and "affection."³⁰ The verbal noun *ḥubb*, of the fourth verbal paradigm *aḥabba*, can be translated as "love" or "affection." Similarly *wudd* is derived from the root, w-d-d, which is rendered as to love, desire, or wish. One of its cognates, *mawadda*, denotes "love," "affection," and "friendship." Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Sūfī³¹ in his *Book of Ḥubb* (Love of the Divine) states:

Ḥubb is, in its root meaning, a seed. It is a seed, which lies embedded in the ground and while the rain comes on it, it does not move. The sun comes on it and it does not move. The winter comes on it and the summer comes on it, and there is no change in it. Once that not-changing is established so that the summer and the winter are the same for it, and the rain and the sun are the same for it, at a certain moment it is ready to sprout, and from it come the green shoots and the leaves and the fruit.³²

Thus, as a seed, which gives off fruit, *maḥabba* acts as a broad concept from which more specific concepts arise, which in turn denotes several aspects of love. Al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074) proposes several definitions of *maḥabba* and its origin. The variety of such definitions also highlights the broad nature of the term *maḥabba*. One such definition that he puts forth describes *maḥabba* as an "intense love," which is more commonly associated with the more radical term *‘ishq*: "They also say *ḥabab* about things that appear on the surface of the water during a heavy rain. Hence *maḥabba* means the ‘boiling’ or ‘stirring’ of the heart

²⁹ Frederick M. Denny, "The Problem of Salvation in the Qur’ān: Key Terms and Concepts," in *In Quest of an Islamic Humanism: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Memory of al-Nowaihi*, ed. A. H. Grau (Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press, 1984), 199.

³⁰ John Penrice, *A Dictionary of the Koran* (NY; Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 31.

³¹ ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Ṣūfī is a contemporary *shaykh* of the Darqāwī-Shadhilī-Qādirī order, and founder of the Murabitun World Movement based in Cape Town, South Africa. He is also author of numerous books on Islam, Sufism and political theory. Ian Dallas was born in Ayr, Scotland and accepted Islam in 1967 at Masjid al-Qarawīyyīn in Fez, Morocco.

³² ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Sūfī, *The Book of Ḥubb (Love of the Divine)* (Cape Town, South Africa; Madinah Press, 2007), 9-10.

when it is thirsty and its passionate longing for meeting its beloved.”³³ Ibn ‘Arabī adds another aspect of *maḥabba*. “Every truly divine love (*ḥubb ilāhī*) that is accompanied by constraint/limitation cannot be relied upon.”³⁴ In the same vein he adds, “Every love (*ḥubb*) that doesn’t depend upon (God) Himself—which is what they call ‘being in love with love’—can’t be relied upon.”³⁵ In these two definitions Ibn ‘Arabī describes *maḥabba* as both unrestrained love, and dependent upon God, hence ascribing an intensity and a Divine origin to *maḥabba*. Al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) explains an interconnection between *maḥabba* and *irāda* by stating that the essence of *maḥabba* is “for your heart to be in agreement with what your beloved wills. This means that you are to be in conformity with your beloved, loving what he loves and hating what he hates.”³⁶ Thus, love shares a connection with "will."

‘*Ishq*

‘*Ishq* is derived from the Arabic root ‘-sh-q, which is rendered as an "intense, passionate love." According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “The word ‘*ishq*, according to traditional sources, is derived from the name of a vine that twists itself around a tree and presses so hard upon its trunk that the tree dies. This poetic etymology refers to the profound truth that intense love involves death.”³⁷ Similarly Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Sūfī states, “‘*Ishq* derives from ‘*Ashiqā*, and ‘*Ashiqā* is also a term used for a creeper, whose other name in Arabic is *Liblab*. The creeper grows and entwines itself around a tree slowly, slowly it covers all its branches and it

³³ Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism: Al-Risāla al-qushayrīya fi ‘ilm al-tasawwuf*, trans. Alexnader D. Knysh (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing Limited, 2007), 327.

³⁴ James W. Morris, “Introducing Ibn ‘Arabī’s ‘Book of Spiritual Advice’,” *Journal of the Muhyiddīn Ibn ‘Arabī Society*, 28, (2000), 17.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 13.

³⁶ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Normont Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 68.

³⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam’s Mystical Tradition* (New York; HarperCollins, 2007), 66.

takes from the tree its leaves and its fruit until the leaves turn yellow, and it completely destroys the tree until it becomes the tree. ‘Ishq is this term for ardent love.’³⁸

The term ‘*ishq* began to be applied to Divine love by early Sufis of the formative period such as Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 261/875), Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910) and Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922).³⁹ As a result of this relatively widespread use by early Sufis, ‘*ishq* would later become the underlying theme of the entire works of later Sufis, the most notable of which is Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 627/1273).⁴⁰

Muḥammad ibn Khafīf (d. 372/982), a Sufi from Shīrāz, initially rejected the usage of the term ‘*ishq*, yet he reversed course after he discovered that Junayd, who was a proponent of *ṣaḥw* (sobriety)--i.e., the "sober" school of Baghdad--declared the usage of the term ‘*ishq* valid.⁴¹ A disciple of Ibn Khafīf, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī (d. 392/1001) stated, “Love has various names derived from its stages and degrees. The words may differ, but the meaning is one. As the stages become higher, their names change. In all there are ten stations (*maqāmāt*), ending in an eleventh, namely eros (‘*ishq*), which is their culmination.”⁴² In his list of the stages of love, al-Daylamī places *maḥabba* as the fourth stage, and ‘*ishq* as the eleventh, and final stage.

³⁸ ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ṣūfī, *The Book of Hubb (Love of the Divine)* (Cape Town, South Africa; Madinah Press, 2007), 10.

³⁹ Joseph E. Lumbard, “From *Ḥubb* to ‘*Ishq*: The Development of Love in Early Sufism,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007): 358.

⁴⁰ The usage of the term ‘*ishq* will permeate the Persian, Turkish and Indian Sufi literary landscape, for future generations of Sufis, one such figure being Miān Muḥammad Bakhsh, who will be dealt with in a following chapter.

⁴¹ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), xlvii.

⁴² *Ibid*, 31.

For some Sufis the definition of *‘ishq* is integrated with other terms. Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/860), one of the earliest representatives of Sufism in Egypt states, “The origin of *‘ishq* is *ma‘rifah* (gnosis).”⁴³ *Ma‘rifah* is direct, intuitive knowledge of God, thus according to Dhū al-Nūn, the roots of *‘ishq* are in this direct intuitive knowledge of God.⁴⁴ Junayd states, “Its beginning is *maḥabba*, which increases until it becomes *‘ishq*.”⁴⁵ For Junayd, the broader term *maḥabba* represents the beginning of love, while the culmination of love becomes *‘ishq*. Thus, the two terms denote a development from the more germane to the more ardent. Al-Biṣṭāmī when describing what love consists of, states, “It is of four kinds: one from *him*, which is his *raḥma*; one from *you*, which is your obedience to him (*‘ibāda*); one *for* him (*lahu*), which is your remembrance of him (*dhikr*); and one between the two of you, which is *‘ishq*.”⁴⁶ Al-Biṣṭāmī links *‘ishq*, *raḥma*, *‘ibādah* (worship), and *dhikr* (remembrance) together, thus expanding the semantic field of love to include these four terms. Love that is made manifest from God, from mankind for God, and between God and mankind correspond to different terms; however, each term is connected within the same semantic field of love.

Neo-Ḥanbalī classification of *‘ishq*

The neo-Ḥanbalī classification of *‘ishq* can be articulated in two principles; censure for its unlimited nature and relegation to the realm of profane love. The neo-Ḥanbalīs consists of 13th-14th century Ḥanbalī traditionists, the most notable of whom were Abū al-Faraj ibn al-

⁴³ Ibid, 51.

⁴⁴ For an explanation of Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī’s exposition of *ma‘rifah* see Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *Tazkirat al-awliyā’* (Memorial of God’s Friends: Lives and Sayings of Sufis) trans. Paul Losensky (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 164-187.

⁴⁵ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 52.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 68.

Jawzī (d. 597/1201), Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymīya (d. 728/1328), and Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīya (d. 751/1350).

Both the neo-Ḥanbalīs and Sufis agree upon the withering nature of *‘ishq*. The neo-Ḥanbalīs believes *‘ishq* to wither the body, whereas the Sufis believe *‘ishq* to wither the *nafs* (ego-self). Seyyed Hossein Nasr states, “When the Sufis speak of love, or *‘ishq*, they are thinking of its liberating and not confining aspect. To love God fully is to possess complete freedom from every other bond, and since God is absolute and infinite, it is to experience absolute and infinite freedom.”⁴⁷ In contrast to Nasr's understanding of *‘ishq*, the neo-Ḥanbalīs asserted that *‘ishq* was chiefly characterized by its confining aspect, which is the confinement of the lover to their beloved. Ibn al-Jawzī censures *‘ishq* because “*‘ishq*, which exceeds the limit of mere inclination towards the beautiful and (normal) love and by possessing the reason causes its victims to act unwisely, is blameworthy and ought to be avoided by the prudent.”⁴⁸ Ibn al-Qayyim, unlike Ibn al-Jawzī, considered it possible to apply the term *‘ishq* in reference to sacred love. “Thus, however great his reservations, our author admits that the usage is at least conceivable. He does not condemn the word *‘ishq* outright but chooses rather to stress its inappropriateness.”⁴⁹ However, not to be considered “soft” on *‘ishq*, Ibn al-Qayyim still deems the term inappropriate and deserving of condemnation, as Joseph Norment Bell observes, “Despite his hesitation to censure it unconditionally, Ibn al-Qayyim certainly considered *‘ishq* as it generally occurred to deserve condemnation in the harshest

⁴⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition* (New York; HarperCollins, 2007), 68.

⁴⁸ Abū al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī, *Dhamm al-hawā* ed. Muṣṭafa ‘Abd al-Wāḥid (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1962), 306, trans. Joseph Norment Bell in, *Love Theory in Later Hanbalite Islam* (Albany, NY; State University of New York, 1979), 37.

⁴⁹ Joseph Norment Bell, *Love Theory in Later Hanbalite Islam* (Albany, NY; State University of New York, 1979), 166.

terms.”⁵⁰ A part of this condemnation can be seen in Ibn al-Qayyim’s identification of *‘ishq* with Zulaykhā and the people of Lot.⁵¹

In each of their lists of the stages of profane love, Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Taymīya, and Ibn al-Qayyim all place *‘ishq* directly preceding terms such as *shaghaf*, *tatayyum*, and *walah*, which all denote derangement and enslavement of the lover.⁵² For Ibn al-Qayyim, the enslavement of the lover constitutes idolatry.⁵³ Hence, *‘ishq* plays a negative role in each of their conceptual framework of love. Ibn al-Qayyim reasons that “*‘ishq* implies excess, a quality which can be asserted neither of God’s love nor, more especially, of man’s love for God, since the latter is never equal to its object.”⁵⁴ Thus, for Ibn al-Qayyim the unlimited nature of *‘ishq* is not appropriate to refer to God, for God is transcendent, and therefore His love is beyond mankind’s love. Likewise, Ibn Taymīya when discussing *‘ishq* sought to assert himself, alongside Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn al-Qayyim, as an opponent of *‘ishq* due to its excessive nature. Joseph Norment Bell states, “*Ishq*, he maintains, despite the fact that some admit its applicability to the relationship between God and man in the sense of complete love, is like *ladhdha*, liable to be understood as connoting earthly pleasure and passion. Thus earlier authorities objected to describing God himself as loving with *‘ishq* on the grounds that the term denotes excess in love, whereas there can be no excess in God’s love. They likewise rejected the use of the term *‘ishq* for man’s love to God. Such an excessive love can only occur in

⁵⁰ Ibid, 164.

⁵¹ Zulaykhā had unsuccessfully attempted to seduce Yūsuf (Joseph), throwing herself at him, while the people of Lot practiced sodomy. Hence, any connection to either Zulaykhā or the people of Lot carries a severe negative connotation. Ibid.

⁵² Ibid, 156.

⁵³ Ibid, 159.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 167.

conjunction with a corrupt representation of the beloved.”⁵⁵ Although Ibn Taymīyah condemns the application of *‘ishq* to the relationship between God and mankind, he nonetheless takes a more tempered approach than Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn al-Qayyim, as Joseph Norment Bell observes: “As in his analogous treatment of *ladhdha*, the jurist is not maintaining after the fashion of Ibn al-Jawzī that the word *‘ishq*, is absolutely inapplicable to sacred love but merely that its use is unnecessary and confusing in this context and should be avoided.”⁵⁶ Therefore, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Taymīyah and Ibn al-Jawzī all assert the imposition of a limit to love which contradicts the unlimited love that the Sufis profess, thus rendering *‘ishq* as inappropriate for both God and mankind, in the relationship between God and mankind.

Irāda

The term *irāda* is derived from the Arabic root, *r-ā-d*, which means to seek. In *Irāda*, which is the fourth verbal paradigm of the root *r-ā-d*, can be translated as, to will, wish, desire, intend, or mean; however, in the context of the Islamic textual sources *irāda* is either rendered in one of two ways, to will, or to desire. Joseph Norment Bell argues that *irāda*, “in the divine context is best rendered by *to will (wills)*, rather than, for example, by *to desire* or *to purpose*. This translation makes clear the reference of the word to the totally free exercise of God’s creative will (*irāda*), unfettered by want, lack, need, or purpose (*gharaḍ*).”⁵⁷ Fethullah Gülen further elaborates upon *irāda* as the totally free exercise of God’s creative will. Gülen adds to the depth of the concept of *irāda* by highlighting the ambiguous distinction of the initiator and the goal; the *murīd* (seeker) and the *murād* (desired one).

⁵⁵ Ibid, 81.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 9.

Irāda (will) is both a verb and a noun. As a verb, it means to choose between two things, to desire. As a noun, it means the mental power by which a person can direct his or her thoughts and actions. Will has been defined by those living a spiritual life as overcoming carnal desires, resisting animal appetites, and always preferring, in complete submission to His Will, God's wish and pleasure over one's own. A willing disciple (*murīd*) never relies on his or her own power, and is absolutely submitted to the Will of the All-Powerful, Who holds all of creation in His Grasp. As for the one willed (*murād*), he or she overflows with love of God and never considers or aspires to anything other than obtaining His pleasure. Such a person has become a favorite of God.⁵⁸

In the above quote Fetullah Gülen addresses the relationship of the terms *murīd* and *murād*. In Sufism these two terms take on the distinct connotations of disciple and goal. The *murīd* literally means “seeker” and represents the aspirant on the Sufi path who is seeking God. The *murād* literally means “desired one” and represents the goal of the seeker. The penultimate *murād* is none other than God, whom every Sufi seeks and desires, on the path. Building upon the relationship between the seeker and God, the roles are reversed. God becomes the *murīd*, for He wills His servants to draw closer to Him, and the seeker becomes the *murād*, for he or she is the one whom God is willing, thus, the object of desire. The reciprocal nature of these two terms is accentuated by the *ḥadīth*, “I was a hidden treasure; I desired to be known, hence I created the world in order to be known.”⁵⁹ Thus, God desired that His creation draw close to Him.

Al-Qushayrī adds to the definition of *murīd* stating:

The majority of Sufi masters say: “Desire is giving up what people are accustomed to, and the custom of most people is to race in the fields of forgetfulness, the drives of their passions, and to reside in the domain of desire.” However, the (Sufi) *murīd* has rid himself from all those qualities. His abandoning them is a sign and proof of the soundness of (his) desire. His condition is called ‘desire’, which is the abandonment of

⁵⁸ Fetullah Gülen, “Irada, Murid, and Murad (Will, the Willing One, and the Willed One),” *Fetullah Gülen: Understanding and Respect*, <http://www.fetullahgulen.org/sufism-1/888-irada-murid-and-murad-will-the-willing-one-and-the-willed-one.html>. (accessed February 1, 2010).

⁵⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany, NY; State University of New York Press, 1989), 141.

(one's) habits, for the abandonment of (one's) habits is the sign of desire. The True Reality of desire is that your heart rushes forth in search of God.⁶⁰

Thus, consistency and faith are innate to *irāda*. It is the antipode of apathy and doubt; once a person has will than they become active in their consistent faith. Rusmir Mahmutćehajić elaborates upon the relationship between *irāda* and love, stating, “When love is revealed as the attraction between the lover and the beloved, in which its real aim cannot be determined, the form toward which the lover is directed, in order for the will to be expressed as the content of love, must be specified and recognizable. But, what the will is directed toward cannot be the determinable aim of love. It is just one of the stops on the limitless path of drawing near to oneness.”⁶¹

Conclusion

The semantic field of love consists of a particular focus word (*raḥma*) surrounded by different key words, which are dependent upon one another. The independent meaning of terms accompanied by their relational meaning form the conceptual framework for the semantic field of love in Islam. *Irāda*, *luṭf*, *shukr*, *maghfira*, *‘afw*, *maḥabba*, and *‘ishq* through their relational meanings, all become manifestations, operating as key words of the focus word, *raḥma*. This group of terms en masse forms the semantic field of love in Islam. Each term as a manifestation of *raḥma* demonstrates the preeminence that the concept of love has in Islam. Although certain segments of the Muslim community have attempted at various points in history to place a limit upon love's nature, the inclusion of the term *‘ishq* referring to love of God by some early Sufis, such as Ḥallāj, represents a development in the semantic field of love,

⁶⁰ Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism: Al-Risāla al-qushayrīya fi 'ilm al-tasawwuf*, trans. Alexnader D. Knysh (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing Limited, 2007), 214.

⁶¹ Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, *On Love: In the Muslim Tradition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 24.

a development that would become fully integrated and employed by later Sufis, such as Rūmī and Miḡān Muḡammad Bakhsh in their literary traditions.

CHAPTER 3: The Semantic Field of Love in the Qur'ān

The Immanence of God is one side of the double-edged sword of God's attributes. Qur'ānic verses such as, "And God's is the east and the west: and wherever you turn, there is God's countenance. Behold, God is infinite, all-knowing" (Qur'ān 2:115), and "Now, verily, it is We who have created man, and We know what his innermost self whispers within him: for We are closer to him than his jugular vein" (Qur'ān 50:16), illustrate the immanence of God.⁶² The Immanent attributes used to describe God in the Qur'ān give an insight into the relationship of love between God and mankind. The Qur'ān distinguishes which actions God loves and which are not loved by God. The semantic field of love in the Qur'ān is not contained in just one word, *maḥabba*, which is the most commonly identified term for love, rather it encompasses a wide range of terms and concepts that all combine to create the concept of love, including *raḥma*, *irāda*, *lutf*, *maghfira*, *'afw*, *shukr*, *maḥabba* and *wudd*. The Qur'ān does not contain the term *'ishq*. Nevertheless, all the components of *'ishq* can be found within the Qur'ān under the broader concept of *maḥabba*. Once these components, along with the other aforementioned terms, are assembled then the entirety of the semantic field of love can be discerned.

Raḥma

When discussing the semantic field of love, the entire field would be bereft of substance without the inclusion of *raḥma*. The Qur'ān contains the term *raḥma* seventy-nine times, and

⁶² *Wajh* (Qur'ān 2:115) translated by Muḥammad Asad and Mohammed Pickthall as "countenance" literally means face, and the "jugular vein" (Qur'ān 50:16) refers to the jugular vein.

its cognates occur 269 times.⁶³ According to al-Qushayrī only *raḥma* emanates from God and crystallizes into differing expressions in accordance to the context. The juxtaposition of anger and love are relative, but both are ultimately *raḥma*. God’s desire (*irāda*) - praise be to Him - is but one quality. However, its names differ in accordance with the different objects of its application. When it applies punishment it is named “wrath”; when it applies to all His favors (toward His servants) it is named “mercy”; and when it applies to the special favors among them, it is named “love.”⁶⁴ This definition connects the apparent mutually exclusive concepts of wrath and love under the term *raḥma*. Everything is permeated by *raḥma*, the difference occurs in the way it is experienced by different people according to different circumstances. Thus, according to al-Qushayrī, *raḥma* is considered the foundation for love.

The *basmala* is the formula of consecration. It consists of the phrase, “In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.” It contains the two words *al-Raḥmān* (The Most Compassionate) and *al-Raḥīm* (The Infinitely Merciful), which both derive from the Arabic root, *raḥima*. God is referred to as *al-Raḥmān* in fifty-seven occasions, and *al-Raḥīm* in ninety-five occasions.⁶⁵ The Qur’ān employs both names, *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*, each of which denoting a particular role of *raḥma*. According to Muhammad Asad *raḥma* as the encompassing aspect of mercy and *raḥīm* as its direct manifestation.

Both the divine epithets *raḥmān* and *raḥīm* are derived from the noun *raḥmah*, which signifies “mercy”, “compassion”, “loving tenderness” and, more comprehensively, “grace.” From the very earliest times, Islamic scholars have endeavoured to define the exact shades of meaning, which differentiate the two terms. The best and simplest of these explanations is undoubtedly the one advanced by Ibn al-Qayyim (as quoted in

⁶³ Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu’jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur’ān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), 387-393.

⁶⁴ Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism: Al-Risāla al-qushayriya fī ‘ilm al-taṣawwuf*, trans. Alexnader D. Knysh (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing Limited, 2007), 326.

⁶⁵ Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu’jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur’ān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), 389-392.

Manar I, 48): the term *raḥmān* circumscribes the quality of abounding grace inherent in, and inseparable from, the concept of God's Being, whereas *raḥīm* expresses the manifestation of that grace in, and its effect upon, His creation—in other words, an aspect of His activity.⁶⁶

Similarly, Seyyed Hossein Nasr follows the same distinction stating:

Yet, these two names denote two different aspects of the Divine Mercy. *Al-Raḥmān* is the transcendent aspect of Divine Mercy. It is a Mercy which like the sky envelopes and contains all things. Were God to be without this all-encompassing Mercy He would have never created the world. And it is through His Mercy, through the “Breath of the Compassionate” (*nafas al-Raḥmān*), that He brought the world into being. That is why creation is good as also asserted in the Bible. The world of creation itself is not evil as was held by certain schools such as Manichaeans. As for *al-Raḥīm* it is the immanent Mercy of God. It is like a ray of light, which shines in our heart and touches individual lives and particular events. The two qualities combined express the totality of Divine Mercy, which envelops us from without and shines forth from within our being.⁶⁷

In other words both Muḥammad Asad, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr agree upon the complementary nature of both terms that combine in the concept of *raḥma*. *Al-Raḥmān* refers to all of creation, representing the sun, which shines its light upon all. *Al-Raḥīm* refers to the select individuals who have attained faith, representing the rays of the sun, which touch every person individually. Another scholar of Islam, Reza Shah-Kazemi states, “The very fact that two Names of Mercy are given in this formula, which inaugurates the revelation and consecrates every act of significance for the Muslim, allows one to see that the essential nature of ultimate Reality is compassionate and merciful, these two qualities being expressive of the overflow of infinite love.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qurʾān* (The Book Foundation, 2008), 12.

⁶⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Chicago, IL; ABC International Group, Inc., 2000), 52.

⁶⁸ Reza Shah-Kazemi, *My Mercy Encompasses All* (U.S.: Shoemaker Hoard, 2007), 6.

The primacy of the name *al-Raḥmān* is highlighted by the invocation of the *basmala*, which begins every chapter of the Qur’ān, except for one.⁶⁹ Additionally, every licit act a person performs should be consecrated by the *basmala*. As a result of its place at the beginning of the Qur’ān and before any action, it can be ascertained that God has chosen this as the first attribute to be known. The Qur’ān establishes the primacy of the name *al-Raḥmān* over the other names when invoking God. “Say: ‘Invoke God, or invoke the Most Gracious: by whichever name you invoke Him, (He is always the One-for) His are all the attributes of perfection’” (Qur’ān 17:110). Muhammad Asad states: “The epithet *ar-raḥmān*...has an intensive significance, denoting the unconditional, all-embracing quality and exercise of grace and mercy, and is applied exclusively to God, ‘who has willed upon Himself the law of grace and mercy.’”⁷⁰ This injunction serves as a backdrop for approaching God. A person is commanded to invoke *al-Raḥmān*; emphasis is given to God’s mercy. Hence, *raḥma* is part of the source from which existence was brought into being acting as the nourishment for all creation. “Say: ‘Unto whom belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth?’ Say: ‘Unto God, who has willed upon Himself the law of grace and mercy’” (Qur’ān 6:12). The act of willing of grace and mercy is also found in another verse. “And when those who believe in Our messages come unto thee, say: ‘Peace be upon you. Your Sustainer has willed upon Himself the law of grace and mercy – so that if any of you does a bad deed out of ignorance, and thereafter repents and lives righteously, He shall be (found) much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace’” (Qur’ān 6:54). In his note on this verse, Muhammad Asad states, “The expression “God has willed upon Himself as a law” (*kataba ‘alā nafsīhi*) occurs in the Qur’ān only twice – here and in verse 54 of this surah -

⁶⁹ The ninth chapter of the Qur’ān, *al-Tawbah* (Repentance) is the only chapter that does not begin with the *basmala*. However, the *basmala* occurs within the twenty-seventh chapter, *al-Naml* (The Ants). Thus, the *basmala* occurs 114 times in the Qur’ān.

⁷⁰ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’ān* (The Book Foundation, 2008), 556.

and in both instances with reference to His grace and mercy (*rahmah*); none of the other divine attributes has been similarly described.”⁷¹ These two verses convey the notion that none of the other ninety-nine names occupy an overarching supremacy except for *al-Rahmān*. *Al-Rahmān* is in a sense the umbrella that both shades all of creation and from which other attributes manifest into more distinct explications of *rahma*. This analogy is summarized in another verse. “I smite with My punishment whom I will, and My mercy embraceth all things” (Qur’ān 7:156). This verse alludes to the idea that nothing is left untouched; everything becomes absorbed into *rahma*, including perceived evil.

To demonstrate the breadth of *rahma* over all creation the Qur’ān testifies, “For, should you try to count God's blessings, you could never compute them! Behold, God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace” (Qur’ān 16:18). The scope is beyond our perception. It is incumbent upon humanity to remember God unceasingly for we are engulfed in *rahma* during all stages of life. We are in a bubble that never pops but only becomes more or less visible depending on our own level of knowledge. The Qur’ān also reminds the people of the contractual relationship that the *Rabb*, which is God, has towards His dependents. “And (always) does He give you something out of what you may be asking of Him; and should you try to count God's blessings, you could never compute them. (And yet), behold, man is indeed most persistent in wrongdoing, stubbornly ingrate!” (Qur’ān 14:34). Muhammad Asad interprets this verse as meaning that, “God satisfies every one of man's desires, provided that His unfathomable wisdom regards its satisfaction as ultimately beneficial to the human being concerned.”⁷² God, being *al-Rahmān* cannot go against His nature and withhold blessings. Even

⁷¹ Ibid, 219.

⁷² Ibid, 478.

though God absolutely sustains creation still there are people who persist in committing sins and being ungrateful.

In addition to the *basmala*, the Qur’ān contains the chapter *al-Raḥmān*. “It is the Lord of Mercy who taught the Qur’ān. He created man and taught him to communicate. The sun and the moon follow their calculated courses; the plants and the trees submit to His designs; He has raised up the sky. He has set the balance so that you may not exceed in the balance” (Qur’ān 55:1-9). Here the Qur’ān details from which of God’s attributes do the measure of things emanate from, *al-Raḥmān*. Reza Shah-Kazemi notes, “It is not just the creativity of the Compassionate that is to be noted here, but also the fact that the “measure” of things is determined by this quality of God, even though one might have expected the divine quality of justice to be stressed here. One is enjoined to be just in upholding the measure of all things, but this measure is itself fashioned by the compassion at the creative source of all things.”⁷³ This chapter also repeats the refrain, “Which, then, of your Sustainer’s powers can you disavow?” (Qur’ān 55:13). This is posed in thirty-one of the seventy-eight verses in the chapter. Muhammad Asad interprets this occurrence as attesting to the permeation of *raḥma* in the universe. “The above refrain, which is repeated many times in this surah, bears not only on the bounties which God bestows on His creation but, more generally, on all manifestations of His creativeness and might.”⁷⁴ Additionally, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī states, in his *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, “The Messenger of God was reciting *ṣūrāt al-Raḥmān* to us, and when he completed it, he said, “What is wrong with you that you have been silent (throughout)? Verily the jinn are more responsive than you. Not once did I recite this verse to them—So which of your Lord’s favors will you deny? But that they said, ‘Not one of your graces, our Lord, do we deny, for (all)

⁷³ Reza Shah-Kazemi, *My Mercy Encompasses All* (U.S.: Shoemaker Hoard, 2007), 90.

⁷⁴ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’ān* (The Book Foundation, 2008), 1054.

praise belongs to You.”⁷⁵ The refrain is a challenge issued by God to all of creation to deny the *rahma* that has been given. From the first verse until the end, the chapter *al-Rahmān* manifests God’s mercy and grace in a clear manner.

From the Qur’ānic perspective an aspect of *rahma* is the ability of God to transform a person’s frailty and sin into strength and *ḥasanāt* (good deeds). “Excepted, however, shall be they who repent and attain to faith and do righteous deeds: for it is they whose (erstwhile) bad deeds God will transform into good ones – seeing that God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace” (Qur’ān 25:70). The act of *tawbah* (repentance), which literally means “to return,” instigated by the person results in a dispensation of mercy. “Verily, God loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and He loves those who keep themselves pure” (Qur’ān 2:222). So God not only loves those who return toward him, but he transforms their impurities into purities, by bestowing His mercy.

The Qur’ān also speaks of the ultimate mercy, which is embodied by the Prophet.⁷⁶ “We have sent thee as (an evidence of Our) grace towards all the worlds” (Qur’ān 21:107). The title given to the Prophet is, *rahmatan lil-‘ālimīn*, which can also be rendered as “a Mercy unto the worlds.” As John Penrice notes in his definition of the term *‘ālam* (worlds), “The worlds spoken of in the Qur’ān are taken to mean the three species of rational creatures, viz. men, genii, and angels.”⁷⁷ Thus, the Prophet was a mercy sent by God to all of creation. Reza Shah-Kazemi states, “All the other aspects of following the Prophet’s example are to be appreciated in the

⁷⁵ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, “Tafsīr al-Jalālayn” *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=74&tSoraNo=55&tAyahNo=13&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=2>. (accessed March 1, 2010).

⁷⁶ Whenever the name of the Prophet Muḥammad is mentioned, Muslims are recommended to offer the formula, “*Salla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*” (May God’s peace and blessings be upon him). For the sake of brevity this formula will be omitted from this paper.

⁷⁷ John Penrice, *A Dictionary of the Koran* (NY; Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 99.

light of this fundamental—one might say, cosmological—function of radiating that Mercy that is at one with the very nature of God.”⁷⁸ The Qur’ān also affirms the quality of *raḥma* that the Prophet possessed. “Indeed, there has come unto you (O mankind) an Apostle from among yourselves: heavily weighs – upon him (the thought) that you might suffer (in the life to come); full of concern for you (is he, and) full of compassion and mercy towards the believers” (Qur’ān 9:128). Although the Prophet Muḥammad was totally focused upon God, loving God also entailed having compassion and mercy towards others. There are other verses, which further elaborates the role of the Prophet as *raḥma*. Mohammed Pickthall translates, “O Prophet! Lo! We have sent thee as a witness and a bringer of good tidings and a warner. And as a summoner unto Allah by His permission, and as a lamp that giveth light. And announce unto the believers the good tidings that they will have great bounty from Allah” (Qur’ān 33:45-47). Hence, as *raḥma* the Prophet is *sirājun munīrān* (light-shining lamp), which lights the way to God, for all to follow, and a bearer of good news of God’s bounty.

The Qur’ān also delineates the protocol of the *‘ibād al-Raḥmān* (servants of the Most Merciful). “For, (true) servants of the Most Gracious are (only) they who walk gently on earth, and who, whenever the foolish address them, reply with (words of) peace” (Qur’ān 25:63). This is a description of a contractual relationship. In order to truly be a servant of *al-Raḥmān* one must embody the moral values that are found within the Qur’ān, one of which is compassion or mercy. If this person does not meet this minimum qualification then they are not fulfilling their obligation and cannot be counted, as an *‘ibād al-Raḥman*, for *raḥma* is apart of God’s nature. In addition, *raḥma* must be shared, for the Qur’ān states, “and being, withal, of those who have attained to faith, and who enjoin upon one another patience in adversity, and enjoin

⁷⁸ Reza Shah-Kazemi, *My Mercy Encompasses All* (U.S.; Shoemaker Hoard, 2007), 12.

upon one another compassion” (Qur’ān 90:17). It is an active process that requires participation. This also alludes to the term Muslim, which literally denotes one who actively seeks a means of surrendering to God.

Shukr

Shukr in the Qur’ān acts as the appropriate human response to *rahma*, thus establishing reciprocity and relation between *shukr*, and *rahma*.⁷⁹ The verb *shakara* and its cognates appear fifty-eight times in the Qur’ān.⁸⁰ The Qur’ān enjoins mankind to be grateful towards God. “So remember Me, and I shall remember you; and be grateful unto Me, and deny Me not” (Qur’ān 2:152). This is even further pronounced by the covenant of Mankind. “Am I not your Sustainer?” – to which they answer ‘Yes, indeed, we do bear witness thereto!’ (Of this We remind you), lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, ‘Verily, we were unaware of this’” (Qur’ān 7:122). This is the fundamental question and the pinnacle of gratefulness. God asks us “will you be grateful to Me for sustaining you?” One of the ninety-nine names of God is *al-Shakūr* (The Ever Grateful).⁸¹ Being ever-grateful God is continuously displaying his affection. “And they will say: ‘All praise is due to God, who has caused all sorrow to leave us: for, verily, our Sustainer is indeed much-forgiving, ever-responsive to gratitude’” (Qur’ān 35:34). Once a person is grateful toward God, He bestows blessings from His bounty upon them. When God responds to the gratitude shown to Him, He in turn reciprocates that gratitude and multiplies

⁷⁹ Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran* (Tokyo, Japan; Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964), 231.

⁸⁰ Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu’jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur’ān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Hadīth, 1988), 489-491.

⁸¹ Reza Shah-Kazemi notes the difference opinion in the translation of *al-Shakūr* as “The Grateful.” Others have translated the name as “bountiful,” “ever responsive to gratitude,” and “appreciative.” Reza Shah-Kazemi argues though that the human quality of gratitude derives from the archetype of gratitude, which is rooted in God. See Reza Shah-Kazemi, *My Mercy Encompasses All* (U.S.; Shoemaker Hoard, 2007) 70.

it. “Since He will grant them their just rewards, and give them yet more out of His bounty: for, verily, He is much-forgiving, ever-responsive to gratitude” (Qur’ān 35:30). Another verse draws attention to the promise of God’s function as responder to gratitude. “And (remember the time) when your Sustainer made (this promise) known: ‘If you are grateful (to Me), I shall most certainly give you more and more; but if you are ungrateful, verily, My chastisement will be severe indeed!’” (Qur’ān 14:7). This verse refers to the previous verse in the chapter, which speaks of the “blessings which God bestowed” (Qur’ān 14:6). God handsomely rewards people who do even a few good deeds. This is a reminder to people that not only is *shukr* a good trait to have, it is directly rewarded, and with even more blessings than a person deserves.⁸² “(And We said): ‘Labour, O David’s people, in gratitude (towards Me) and (remember that) few are the truly grateful (even) among My servants!’” (Qur’ān 34:13). “David’s people” here refers to all people, hence it is an admonition for all people. According to al-Zamakhsharī, “truly grateful (to God) is only he who realizes his inability to render adequate thanks to Him.”⁸³ Thus, there can never be enough thankfulness given to God on the part of mankind for the infinite amount of *rahma* He bestows.

Shukr also carries with it an aspect of love, and is expressed in the following verse. “That (bounty) whereof God gives the glad tiding to such of His servants as attain to faith and do righteous deeds. Say (O Prophet): ‘No reward do I ask of you for this (message) other than (that you should) love your fellow-men.’ For, if anyone gains (the merit of) a good deed, We shall grant him through it an increase of good: and, verily, God is much-forgiving, ever responsive to gratitude” (Qur’ān 42:23). Loving your fellow man engenders an appreciative response from God, hence loving mankind is part and parcel of *shukr*.

⁸² Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’ān* (The Book Foundation, 2008), 469.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 835.

Maghfira and 'Afw

Repeatedly found in the Qur'ān the verb *ghafara*, is another aspect of the reciprocity of *rahma*. *Ghafara* and its cognates occur 234 times in the Qur'ān, the most notable of which is the noun *maghfira*, which occurs twenty-eight times.⁸⁴ Another term denoting forgiving is *'afw* and its cognates occur thirty-five times in the Qur'ān.⁸⁵ Although both terms denote forgiving, in the case of *maghfira* God covers, or conceals one's sins, while in the case of *'afw* God removes your sins from your records, leaving no trace. Thus, God pardons certain sins, and for those he does not pardon, he forgives. This relationship is an extension of *rahma*. The Qur'ān states that God is *al-Ghafūr* (The All-Forgiving) and *al-'Afuww* (The Pardoner). Daud Rahbar notes that *al-Ghafūr* accompanies *al-Rahīm* in roughly 97 verses.⁸⁶

The relation between *rahma* and *maghfira* can be seen in the Qur'ānic verse, “He it is who has created the heavens and the earth in accordance with (an inner) truth. He causes the night to flow into the day, and causes the day to flow into the night; and He has made the sun and the moon subservient (to His laws), each running its course for a term set (by Him). Is not He the Almighty, the All-Forgiving?” (Qur'ān 39:5). In his note on this verse, Reza Shah-Kazemi states, “Just as natural law ordains that night ‘enwraps’ day and day ‘enwraps’ night, so the supernatural ‘Law,’ that of overflowing mercy, ordains that the Creator ‘enwraps’ His creation with forgiveness and infinite mercy.”⁸⁷ This connection between *rahma* and *maghfira* is further emphasized in another verse. “O you servants of Mine who have transgressed against your own selves! Despair not of God's mercy: behold, God forgives all sins—for, verily, He alone is

⁸⁴ Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur'ān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Hadīth, 1988), 634-638.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 592-593.

⁸⁶ Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1960), 163-164.

⁸⁷ Reza Shah-Kazemi, *My Mercy Encompasses All* (U.S.; Shoemaker Hoard, 2007), 70.

much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace” (Qur’ān 39:53). This verse speaks to the all-pervasiveness of *raḥma* and its inclusion of *maghfira* in its pervasiveness, even for those who choose not to obey God. Mir Valiuddin attests to the nature of *raḥma* as encompassing all of creation at ever instant. “He said not: ‘O My servants who obey’ or He said not: ‘O My servants who repent,’ or said not: ‘O My servants who act aright’ but He said: ‘O My servants who transgress against their souls.’ The mode of address alone bears testimony to the kindness, mercy and love which God bears towards His servants.”⁸⁸ Reza Shah-Kazemi goes further in describing the unlimitedness of *raḥma* to include *shirk* (associating partners with God). “One can interpret in the light of this verse any other verse that appears to restrict the universal scope of divine forgiveness, such as the one that says God forgives all sins except *shirk*, the sin of setting up “partners” with God. Although theologians may insist on overcoming the apparent contradiction by making *shirk* the exception that proves the general rule, the Sufis uphold the universal principle without allowing for any exception whatsoever.”⁸⁹

Ibn ‘Arabī clarifies the Sufi perspective of the allowance of divine forgiveness without any exceptions including *shirk*. “For the Divine Presence accepts all beliefs other than associating others with God (*shirk*). It does not accept that, since the associate is sheer nonexistence, and Non-delimited Being does not accept nonexistence.”⁹⁰ Thus, for Ibn ‘Arabī, since *shirk* does not exist, then it is not something can be forgiven, for God cannot forgive something that does not exist. Therefore for Sufis *maghfira*, and *‘afw* reinforce the notion that *raḥma* is the primary attribute of God, from which the other attributes act in accordance with.

⁸⁸ Mir Validduin, *Love of God: A Sufic Approach* (England: Sufi Publishing Company, 1972), 90-91.

⁸⁹ Reza Shah-Kazemi, *My Mercy Encompasses All* (U.S.; Shoemaker Hoard, 2007), 72.

⁹⁰ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn ‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 252.

Maghfira, and *‘afw* likewise continue the reciprocity beginning with *rahma*, followed by *shukr* and continuing with *maghfira*, and *‘afw*.

Luṭf

Luṭf in the Qur’ān acts as a distinct expression of *rahma*, as drawing a person closer to God, through grace and kindness. *Luṭf* and its cognates occur eight times in the Qur’ān, of those the name *al-Laṭīf* occurs six times.⁹¹ *Al-Laṭīf* is one of the ninety-nine names of God. John Penrice defines *al-Laṭīf* as, “Gracious, kind, sharp-sighted, acute, one who understands mysteries.”⁹² This synthesis can be gleaned from the Qur’ānic verse, “God is most kind unto His creatures: He provides sustenance for whomever He wills – for He alone is powerful, almighty!” (Qur’ān 42:19). This verse describes an attribute that is without preconditions; grace, kindness, and power are simultaneously given in abundance to all, which is reminiscent of the attribute of *rahma*. Reza Shah-Kazemi states, “It is as if absolute power is unleashed by infinite kindness, a power that is irresistible by virtue of its absolute subtlety and thus all-pervasiveness.”⁹³ Thus, *luṭf* acts as another expression of *rahma* in a more distinct manner.

Wudd

In order to understand the semantic field of love, attention should be drawn to the name *al-Wadūd* (the Loving). The term is derived from the Arabic root *wudd*, which means to love, wish for, desire, be fond of. *Wudd* and its cognates occur twenty-nine times in the Qur’ān, among those occurrences the name *al-Wadūd* appears twice.⁹⁴ Al-Ṭabarī in his *tafsīr* refers to

⁹¹ Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu’jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur’ān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), 821-822.

⁹² John Penrice, *A Dictionary of the Koran*, (NY; Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 131.

⁹³ Reza Shah-Kazemi, *My Mercy Encompasses All* (U.S.; Shoemaker Hoard, 2007), 78.

⁹⁴ Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu’jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur’ān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), 915.

the combination of *maḥabba* and *maghfira* as an explanation of *al-Wadūd*.⁹⁵ The term appears in the chapter *al-Hud*: “Hence, ask your Sustainer to forgive you your sins, and then turn towards Him in repentance—for, verily, my Sustainer is a dispenser of grace, a fount of love!” (Qur’ān 11:90). This verse establishes God as the source of love, who bestows love upon those who turn towards him. This is seconded by the verse, “And He alone is truly-forgiving, all-embracing in His love” (Qur’ān 85:14). Another Qur’ānic verse describes *wudd*, a derivative of the term *wudd*, as a reward for faith and the performance of righteous deeds. “Verily, those who attain to faith and do righteous deeds will the Most Gracious endow with love” (Qur’ān 19:96). Al-Daylamī states that this verse was revealed as a result of a statement of the Prophet to ‘Alī and that *wudd* refers to “love in the hearts of men.”⁹⁶ “Lord, grant me affection in the breasts of believers, intimate friendship (*waliya*) and love in thy sight, and a constant bond with thee.”⁹⁷ This Qur’ānic verse identifies the name *al-Raḥmān* in conjunction with the term *wuddān*, which according to Muhammad Asad denotes to, “bestow on them His love and endow them with the capability to love His creation, as well as cause them to be loved by their fellow-men.”⁹⁸ This verse demonstrates that an aspect of *al-Raḥmān* is to bestow love, which denotes that *wudd* is a manifestation of *raḥma* for those who obey God.

Another derivative is used, which carries with it the meaning of creating love, *mawuddatan*, which appears in the chapter *al-Rum* (the Romans). “He engenders love and

⁹⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān* vol. 30 (Beirut: Dār Ihyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2001), 169.

⁹⁶ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 16. Cf. al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, vol. 2 (Arab World Publishing House), 527.

⁹⁷ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 16.

⁹⁸ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’ān* (The Book Foundation, 2008), 599.

tenderness between you.” (Qur’ān 30:21). Therefore, God also is the One who creates the love in their hearts and then places it there.

Maḥabba

Maḥabba is the most common term used to convey which acts are deserving of God’s love. *Maḥabba* and its cognates occur ninety-five times in the Qur’ān, of those occurrences *maḥabba* occurs once, and *ḥubb* occurs four times.⁹⁹ Thus, the term can be used to describe that which God loves, likes, is pleased with, and with the addition of a negative particle, can be used to describe that which God does not love, like, and displeased with. The positive and negative are both used in regards to acts performed by mankind. One of the group of people that God loves are the *ṣābirīn*, (patient). “And how many a prophet has had to fight (in God's cause), followed by many God-devoted men: and they did not become faint of heart for all that they had to suffer in God's cause, and neither did they weaken, nor did they abase themselves (before the enemy), since God loves those who are patient in adversity” (Qur’ān 3:146). In this verse, God’s love is extended over those who persevere and do not desert their love. This is further explained by another verse. “Verily, God loves (only) those who fight in His cause in (solid) ranks, as though they were a building firm and compact” (Qur’ān 61:4). The implication in this verse is that those whose deeds correspond to their faith are those who are fighting, which is not solely identified with warfare. If a person strives to tame his or her *nafs* and brings it into harmony with the Divine will, that is considered fighting for God’s cause. Thus, *maḥabba* is reserved for those who take an active role and struggle.

So how does a person engage in an active role? The method of taking an active role is found throughout the Qur’ān, which is first and foremost the Prophet Muḥammad. “Say, (O

⁹⁹ Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu’jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur’ān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), 243-245.

Prophet): ‘If you love God, follow me, (and) God will love you and forgive you your sins; for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace’ (Qur’ān 3:31). As Reza Shah-Kazemi states, “To love God is to love His Love, which is expressed in myriad forms of creative manifestation, guiding revelation, and merciful reintegration. All three principles are manifested in the prophet as the ‘perfect man’ (*al-insān al-kāmil*): It is thus that love of God is inseparable from the emulation of the Prophet.”¹⁰⁰ This verse defines *maḥabba* as the first step of showing one’s love toward God. It is followed by the method to realize this love by following the example of the Prophet. It is not merely an ancillary of Islam; rather it is incumbent upon those who desire to be encompassed by love to emulate the example that has been brought forth to guide. “Verily, in the Apostle of God you have a good example for everyone who looks forward (with hope and awe) to God and the Last Day, and remembers God unceasingly” (Qur’ān 33:21). Allahbakhsh Brohi states, “It would appear that the Qur’ānic view about steps to be taken to show one’s love for God is, in the first instance, to obey unconditionally what the Prophet says.”¹⁰¹ Thus, the steps begin first and foremost through the Prophet.

Daud Rahbar states that from the Qur’ānic perspective love is conditional; reserved for only the obedient, as opposed to being enjoined by God and thus encompassing all of creation.

The relationship of love...is a reciprocal one. The Qur’ān never enjoins love for God. This is because God Himself loves only the strictly pious. To love God one must presuppose that God is reciprocating the sentiment. And to presuppose that is to presume that one is perfectly pious. Such presumption the Qur’ān never allows. Even the most virtuous men as prophets are constantly reminded that they are sinful creatures who must ask forgiveness of smallest sins whether they are aware of them or not. Side by side with such a conception of God’s unrelaxing justice love for God would

¹⁰⁰ Reza Shah-Kazemi, *My Mercy Encompasses All* (U.S.; Shoemaker Hoard, 2007), 12.

¹⁰¹ Allahbakhsh K. Brohi, “The Spiritual Significance of the Quran,” in *Encyclopedia of Islamic Spirituality*, vol. 1 *Foundations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 16 (Lahore, Pakistan: Shirkat Printing Press, 2000).

certainly be out of place. It is therefore very rarely that the subject of human love for God is touched at all in the Qur'ān.¹⁰²

However, the Qur'ān identifies *īmān* with *maḥabba* as a reciprocation of this love. The one who is sincere in their faith in God is one who is a lover of God. “O you who have attained to faith! If you ever abandon your faith, God will in time bring forth (in your stead) people whom He loves and who love Him – humble towards the believers, proud towards all who deny the truth: (people) who strive hard in God's cause, and do not fear to be censured by anyone who might censure them: such is God's favour, which He grants unto whom He wills. And God is infinite, all-knowing” (Qur'ān 5:54). Seyyed Hossein Nasr interprets this verse as an indication of love beginning with God, and enjoined upon all of creation. “This verse, which has been quoted many times by Sufis writing about love, makes clear that first of all God loves His creation and as a consequence of this love we can love Him.”¹⁰³ This establishes God at the head of this ontological hierarchy. Mir Valiuddin commenting upon this verse, identifies God as the source of love, from which mankind's love emanates. “It means that they did not love God until He loved them. Therefore, their love for God was due to God's love for them: and the reason for this is that God loved them from eternity without cause. When God brought them forth from the loins of Adam and when His love manifested itself in their hearts and attracted them towards His, some of them knew it and others did not.”¹⁰⁴

As a result of our free-will, we have the option of not reciprocating this love. If we choose to exercise reciprocating love toward God, then this verse establishes that the reciprocation can be accomplished through *īmān*, which can be defined as love between God

¹⁰² Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1960), 180.

¹⁰³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 63.

¹⁰⁴ Mir Validduin, *Love of God: A Sufic Approach* (England: Sufi Publishing Company, 1972), 175.

and the people who have faith. Therefore, a *mu'min* (believer) is someone who has this sincere faith and is by default a lover. On the contrary, abandoning faith is in effect turning away from God and thus, it is abandoning love. The consequence of this abandonment is to be removed and replaced by those who have cultivated this relationship of sincere faith and love with God, which emanated from God. Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī, the younger brother of Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazzālī in his commentary on this verse further elaborates upon the identification of God as the source of love, from which grew mankind's love. "The root of love grows out of the infinite pre-existence. The diacritical dot of (the letter) *bā'* of *yuḥibbuhum* (He, i.e., God, loves them) was cast as a seed on the soil of *yuḥibbūnahu* (they love Him); nay, that dot was on *hum* (them) until *yuḥibbūnahu* (they love Him) grew out. When the narcissus of love grew out, the seed was of the same nature as the fruit and the fruit had the same nature as the seed."¹⁰⁵ Ibn Khafīf believes the verse expresses *maḥabba* as clinging or keeping close to their beloved, "for he poured out his own love upon human hearts, and it took hold of them, and clothed them with a garment (attribute) of their beloved."¹⁰⁶

The Qur'ān enjoins people to worship Him. The concept of *'ibādah*, also entails love. William Chittick explains the connection between *'ibādah* and love as method and the goal: "The goal of worship is not to remain distant from the Lord, but to be brought into His proximity. It is characteristic of love to bridge the gap between lover and beloved and to bring about nearness, especially when God is the lover."¹⁰⁷ This connection is further solidified by

¹⁰⁵ Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī, *Sawānīḥ: Inspirations from the World of Pure Spirits The Oldest Treatise of Love*, trans. Nasrollah Pourjavady (Routledge: 1986), 68-69.

¹⁰⁶ Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Normont Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 27.

¹⁰⁷ William C. Chittick, "Worship," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter, 233 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

the Qur'ānic verse, “And (tell them that) I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may (know and) worship Me” (Qur'ān 51:56). Muhammad Asad in his translation of this verse connects *'ibādah* with love.

Thus, the innermost purpose of the creation of all rational beings is their cognition (*ma'rīfah*) of the existence of God and, hence, their conscious willingness to conform their own existence to whatever they may perceive of His will and plan: and it is this twofold concept of cognition and willingness that gives the deepest meaning to what the Qur'ān describes as “worship” (*'ibādah*). As the next verse shows, this spiritual call does not arise from any supposed “need” on the part of the Creator, who is self-sufficient and infinite in His power, but is designed as an instrument for the inner development of the worshipper, who, by the act of his conscious self-surrender to the all-pervading Creative Will, may hope to come closer to an understanding of that Will and, thus, closer to God Himself.¹⁰⁸

Therefore, love is entailed in worship. The connection between both terms is inextricably intertwined and blends the concept of *'ibādah* with that of love, as God is the object of love, and worship. To worship the One, is to love the One.

From the Qur'ānic perspective, whether worship is performed whether ardently or not, a person's worship is not complete unless the needs of others are taken care of. “(But as for you, O believers), never shall you attain to true piety unless you spend on others out of what you cherish yourselves; and whatever you spend – verily, God has full knowledge thereof” (Qur'ān 3:92). Thus, the love of others is an integral aspect of the love of God. *Maḥabba* is used both in reference to what God loves and also to describe the relational love between creatures of creation. A person cannot be shortsighted adopting an exclusivist approach of investing every ounce of love toward God while shunning creation, for that results in an outcome which is opposite of *tawḥīd* (Oneness), for creation must be loved as it is a part of God, for God is the Ultimate Reality. Moreover, encompassing creation, which includes, mankind, animals, plants, and nature, in a person's love completes their worship, which in turn completes their love. A

¹⁰⁸ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān* (The Book Foundation, 2008) 1030.

person must be concerned solely with God, which includes love for others, which is encapsulated with loving God. This obligation is further emphasized as something that pleases God. “Who spend (in His way) in time of plenty and in time of hardship, and hold in check their anger, and pardon their fellow-men because God loves the doers of good” (Qur’ān 3:134). The reward for participation in loving mankind is the experience of God’s love; therefore establishing reciprocation.

Passionate love

The term *‘ishq* has no textual basis in the Qur’ān, because *‘ishq* is the apogee of love, in which only a few are included; while the Qur’ān is for all people, not limited to infatuated lovers. Nevertheless, within the Qur’ān become the prerequisites of love. An example of passionate love can be found in the story of the prophet Yūsuf (Joseph) and Zulaykhā. Zulaykhā had been able to perceive the beauty of Yūsuf, and as a result had fallen in love. The Qur’ān states, “And (it so happened that) she in whose house he was living (conceived a passion for him and) sought to make him yield himself unto her; and she bolted the doors and said, "Come thou unto me!" (But Joseph) answered: ‘May God preserve me!’” (Qur’ān 12:23). The passion she conceived caused her to act not only irrationally, but she thoroughly crossed bounds, for Yūsuf had lived in her house and was raised by her. Her vision narrowed and perceived none else but Yūsuf. At that instant she became willing to sacrifice everything, her marriage, honor, and sanity for her beloved, which had become Yūsuf. Her passionate love reverberated among the other women whom she had summoned upon hearing their censure of her love. This story is related in the Qur’ān in the chapter Yūsuf.

Thereupon, when she heard of their malicious talk, she sent for them, and prepared for them a sumptuous repast, and handed each of them a knife and said (to Joseph): ‘Come out and show thyself to them!’ And when the women saw him, they were greatly amazed at his beauty, and (so flustered were they that they cut their hands (with their

knives), exclaiming, "God save us! This is no mortal man! This is nought but a noble angel! Said she: "This, then, is he about whom you have been blaming me! And, indeed, I did try to make him yield himself unto me, but he remained chaste. Now, however, if he does not do what I bid him, he shall most certainly be imprisoned, and shall most certainly find himself among the despised! (Qur'ān 12:31-32)

The women became inebriated by the mere appearance of Yūsuf. They were completely lost in a state of ecstasy that made them numb to their existence. Zulaykhā wanted to share this experience of ecstasy with others who doubted her. She wanted to showcase the object of her enrapture. The swoon she fell into when she desired Yūsuf was also a state of ecstasy. She became numb to her own senses and forgot her husband.

Whereas Zulaykhā exemplifies an intense love of forms, intense love for God can be gleaned from the example of Yūsuf. After her seduction failed, Zulaykhā had Yūsuf imprisoned. Yūsuf's response to the imprisonment reflects his intense love for God. "Said he: 'O my Sustainer! Prison is more desirable (*aḥabbu*) to me than (compliance with) what these women invite me to: for, unless Thou turn away their guile from me, I might yet yield to their allure and become one of those who are unaware (of right and wrong)'" (Qur'ān 12:33). In this verse the superlative form *aḥabba* (more loved) of the verb *ḥabba* is used. Yūsuf had forsaken the love of Zulaykhā for the love of God. Yūsuf continues his proclamation of an intense love for God, "Originator of the heavens and the earth! Thou art near unto me in this world and in the life to come: let me die as one who has surrendered himself unto Thee, and make me one with the righteous!" (Qur'ān 12:101). This love is reciprocated by God in the following verse, "(All the earlier apostles had to suffer persecution for a long time); but at last—when those apostles had lost all hope and saw themselves branded as liars—Our succour attained to them: whereupon everyone whom We Willed (to be saved) was saved" (Qur'ān 12:110). The affliction God inflicted upon the prophets was a prerequisite to attain His succor. The Qur'ān attests to

this axiom in two consecutive verses, “And, behold, with hardship comes ease: verily, with every hardship comes ease!” (Qur’ān 94:5-6). The Qur’ān employs a repertoire of rhetorical devices, including repetition. The repetitive technique in these two verse serves to emphasize what each verse is trying to make, which in this case is “with hardship comes ease.”

The Qur’ān differentiates between the kinds of love, an endowed love, and an innate love. An example of this can be found in the Qur’ānic verse, “If your fathers and your sons and your brothers and your spouses and your clan, and the worldly goods which you have acquired, and the commerce whereof you fear a decline, and the dwellings in which you take pleasure – (if all these) are dearer (*aḥabba*) to you than God and His Apostle and the struggle in His cause, then wait until God makes manifest His will; and (know that) God does not grace iniquitous folk with His guidance” (Qur’ān 9:24). Once again, the superlative form *aḥabba*, of the verb *ḥabba* is used. This verse demonstrates that God, the Prophet Muḥammad and struggling in His cause should be more loved than the world. As Muḥammad Asad notes this verse, “postulates ideology (God and His Apostle and the struggle in His cause) as the only valid basis on which a believer's life – individually and socially – should rest.”¹⁰⁹ Mir Valiuddin even refers to this verse as a “threat” from God, exhorting Muslims to love God and the Prophet.¹¹⁰ This verse also alludes to the fact that loving God, the Prophet and struggling in His cause more will result in the bestowal of God’s grace, which emphasizes its superiority to the love of the world. Al-Daylamī states, “The first endowed love is the one that is an obligation among

¹⁰⁹ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’ān* (The Book Foundation, 2008), 323.

¹¹⁰ Mir Validduin, *Love of God: A Sufic Approach* (England: Sufi Publishing Company, 1972), 86.

the conditions of faith...This is the love of the commonality of Muslims, while the other is the love of the Gnostics who know him and of the adepts of love among the people of God.”¹¹¹

The Qur’ān enjoins people to devote themselves completely to God: “But (whether by night or by day), remember thy Sustainer's name, and devote thyself unto Him with utter devotion” (Qur’ān 73:8). In this verse the term *tabattala*, which is the fifth verbal paradigm derived from the root *batala*, which means, to cut off, separate, is used. *Tabattala* means, “to devote oneself wholly to God’s service.”¹¹² Thus, the devotion of oneself also involves a separation from the world. This injunction is representative of an intense love, without which a complete separation from one’s context could not be achieved.

When speaking of the difference of love shown by idolaters and Muslims, the Qur’ān states, “And yet there are people who choose to believe in beings that allegedly rival God, loving them as (only) God should be loved: whereas those who have attained faith love God more than all else” (Qur’ān 2:165) This is another component of *‘ishq*, loving God more than anything else, which is a renunciation of all else. Therefore, a person has to be consumed with love completely, and this is not on par with the love shown by idolaters. This exemplifies a hierarchy of love. Although the term *maḥabba* is used the imagery it evokes is an intensified expression. It is not correct to assume that the idolaters did not love their idols, for in fact they were lost in this love, which is why the Prophet was sent to restore the faith in the One God and destroy the idols. However this fervor was a perversion of love, for it was directed toward creation, not towards the Creator, which is why they were called upon to reform this perversion. This verse also illustrates the connection between love and faith, without loving

¹¹¹ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 75.

¹¹² John Penrice, *A Dictionary of the Koran* (NY; Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 15.

God one's faith cannot be complete. Mir Valiuddin states, "faith does not attain perfection without love, for faith demands submission and devotion which is possible only when the heart is turned on and attuned to God."¹¹³ The Qur'ān states, "But there is (also) a kind of man who would willingly sell his own self in order to please God: and God is most compassionate towards His servants" (Qur'ān 2:207). This verse was revealed about Suhayb al-Rūmī. Suhayb had intended to perform the *hijra'* (migration) to Madīna, however he was prevented from leaving. The Quraysh would allow him to migrate only after forfeiting his entire wealth. Suhayb abandoned his wealth and migrated to Madīna. Thus, Suhayb sold himself for the sake of God, which represents his intense love for God. The example of Suhayb is contrasted with the *munāfiqīn* (hypocrites) who outwardly devote themselves to God, but whose heart is devoid of the love of God.

Irāda

Irāda in the Qur'ān acts as a prerequisite of love, in order for their to be love their must first be *irāda*. *Irāda* occurs twenty times in the Qur'ān and its cognates occur 127 times.¹¹⁴ These occurrences identify *irāda* beginning with God, which in turn becomes intertwined with creation. "Whenever We will anything to be, We but say unto it Our word 'Be' — and it is" (Qur'ān 16:40). Thus, every approach a person makes towards God is not derived from the person; rather God is the initiator: "His Being alone is such that when He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it, 'Be' — and it is" (Qur'ān 36:82). *Irāda* is what Muḥammad Asad calls, "the

¹¹³ Mir Validduin, *Love of God: A Sufic Approach* (England: Sufi Publishing Company, 1972), 101.

¹¹⁴ Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur'ān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), 414-418.

exclusiveness of God's creative being."¹¹⁵ As *al-Ḥaqq* (The Truth) God is the only True Reality. Thus, any *irāda* is from Him and creation in turn becomes the *murād*.

Irāda is another prerequisite to love. A person must desire something first then that desire cements itself and becomes love: "Hence, repulse not (any of) those who at morn and evening invoke their Sustainer, seeking His countenance" (Qur'ān 6:52). This verse illustrates that the first step is to seek God's grace and countenance, and not only at set times, but "at morn and evening" which is constantly. Thus, constant *irāda* is a preliminary stage of love. In order for a person to be constantly desirous of a thing, he or she must possess an attraction to that thing. Likewise to achieve an ultimate goal a person must maintain a sustained will, or determination. If there is a will, there is a way: "But as for those who care for the (good of the) life to come, and strive for it as it ought to be striven for, and are (true) believers withal—they are the ones whose striving finds favour (with God)!" (Qur'ān 17:19). Thus, those who have *irāda* find favor with God; therefore God loves them.

In addition to *irāda*, the Qur'ān uses the term *shā'a*, which means to want or more appropriately to will, from which we have the phrase *inshā'Allāh* (God willing). *Shā'a* and its cognates occur 136 times in the Qur'ān.¹¹⁶ Everything a person says that he or she will do should always be accompanied with this phrase, which denotes the human dependence upon God, who wills everything. Entrusting one's faith in God is summarized by this phrase. "Verily, thou canst not guide aright everyone whom thou lovest: but it is God who guides him that wills (to be guided); and He is fully aware of all who would let themselves be guided" (Qur'ān 28:56). This verse was revealed about the Prophet's uncle Abū Ṭālib, who in his last

¹¹⁵ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān* (The Book Foundation, 2008), 865.

¹¹⁶ Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur'ān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), 496-500.

breath still did not profess the *shahādah* (declaration of faith) despite the persistence of the Prophet. The Prophet had a close relationship with his uncle, yet even though he loved him and desired his uncle to profess the *shahādah*, his uncle did not. Thus, not even someone whose relationship is close and built upon love can be persuaded without the will of God. God's will is firmly entrenched upon creation and He is the initiator. Even the cultivation of this relationship of love between humankind and God begins firstly with God. In this verse, *maḥabba* cannot exist without the presence of God's will.

Conclusion

The semantic field of love in the Qur'ān consists of many terms that combine to form the concept of love. Through their independent as well as relational meanings terms such as *raḥma*, *irāda*, *lutf*, *maghfira*, *'afw*, *shukr*, *maḥabba*, and *wudd* each convey aspects of love. While *raḥma* is the sun, the other terms are rays from the sun that manifest in particular concepts. Additionally, under the term *maḥabba* can be found the components of *'ishq*. Thus, *maḥabba* can be viewed separately as a sub-focus word, with *'ishq* operating as one of its branches. The semantic field of love found within the Qur'ān serves as the foundation, which later generations of Muslims built upon to construct their own interpretations of love, while remaining rooted in the Qur'ān. This construction will be further augmented by the semantic field of love found in the *Sunna* and *ḥadīth*, which complements the semantic field of love in the Qur'ān.

CHAPTER 4: The Semantic Field of Love in the *Sunna* and *Ḥadīth*

The semantic field of love in the *Sunna* and *ḥadīth* are a direct reflection of the semantic field of love that is found within the Qur’ān. The life of the Prophet exemplifies the principles of Islam. In the Qur’ān he is described as “*uswa ḥasana*,” (Qur’ān, 33:21) the beautiful model, which is to be imitated. Within the *ḥadīth* literature terms such as *raḥma*, *maghfira*, *shukr*, and *maḥabba* are employed to supplement the semantic field of love found within the Qur’ān, helping to construct the foundation of the semantic field of love in Islam. This foundation becomes the starting point from which the semantic field of love develops in the works of successive generations of Muslims, specifically among Sufis. The term ‘*ishq*’ which becomes an important term in the semantic field of love for particular Sufis, has a textual basis in only one *ḥadīth*, whose authenticity is considered weak. Within the *ḥadīth* literature, however, Sufis find the components of ‘*ishq*’—the terms of *raḥma*, *maghfira*, *shukr*, and *maḥabba*—to be manifested not only in the sayings of the Prophet but also in his actions. Through the love he displayed in his household, in the public, and toward all of creation, the Prophet’s example is the ideal manifestation of love in life, highlighting another function of the Prophet, who is the beloved of God (*ḥabīb Allāh*), as the lover *par excellence*.

Ḥabīb Allāh

One of the titles ascribed to the Prophet is that of *ḥabīb Allāh* (beloved of God). The problem of whether or not to consider the Prophet as *ḥabīb Allāh*, or *khalīl Allāh* (friend of God) has been debated, yet regardless, this title denotes the special place occupied by the Prophet

Muḥammad, which is unparalleled by the other Prophets.¹¹⁷ According to Annemarie Schimmel, “In fact, from Muḥammad’s role as *ḥabīb Allāh* one could derive the conclusion (as Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers did) that Islam is the ‘religion of Love,’ for the ‘station of perfect love is appropriated to Muḥammad beyond any other prophet.”¹¹⁸ Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), a Sufi of the formative period states, “The first is Muḥammad the Beloved (*al-ḥabīb*), for when God willed to create Muḥammad, he displayed from his own light a light (that) he spread through the entire kingdom.”¹¹⁹ Hence, the Prophet is accorded a unique position from which he can be deemed as the lover *par excellence*.

Raḥma

The qualities of *raḥma*, *shukr*, *maghfira*, and *maḥabba* can be seen in the event of the Prophet’s return to Makkah. After twenty years of strife, the Prophet returned to the origin of his mission, Makkah. He returned triumphant over *Jahilīya* (Age of Ignorance), opening Makkah to its revived role as the *bayt Allāh* (House of God). Although the persecution of the Muslim by the leaders of Makkah had caused the Muslims to flee and abandon their families, homes and possessions, the Prophet prohibited revenge and ordered forgiveness. After the

¹¹⁷ Ibn al-‘Arabī argues that God took the Propet alone as *ḥabīb* and he does not share that role with anyone else. Ibn al-Qayyim, a Ḥanbalī jurist argues that the title of *ḥabīb* can be any Muslim who repents, in accordance with the Qur’ānic verse, “God loves the repentant” (Qur’ān 2:222). He relegates the position of *ḥabīb* to lower than that of *khalīl* (intimate friend), of which there have been only two honored, the Prophet Abraham and Prophet Muḥammad. He cites the Qur’ānic verse (4:125) in which Abraham is called *khalīl Allāh*, and a ḥadīth, “God took me as a friend (*khalīl*), as he took Abraham as a friend.” Thus, because of the rarity of the title of *khalīl Allāh* Ibn al-Qayyim places is as superior to *ḥabīb Allāh*. For a more in-depth study of Ibn al-Qayyim’s position, see Joseph Norment Bell, *Love Theory in Later Hanbalite Islam*, (Albany, NY; State University of New York, 1979), 161-162.

¹¹⁸ Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic piety* (Chapel Hill, NC; University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 57.

¹¹⁹ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 54.

destruction of the idols, the Prophet addressed the Quraysh of Makkah with words of forgiveness: “Verily I say as my brother Joseph said: *This day there shall be no upbraiding of you nor reproach. God forgiveth you, and He is the most Merciful of the merciful*”¹²⁰ (Qur’ān 12:92). This statement echoed the words of forgiveness of Yūsuf to his brothers for their abandoning him in the well. Here the *maghfira* of the Prophet is an act of *raḥma*, and this *maghfira* was in accordance with the *raḥma* of God, which is testified to by the *ḥadīth*, “One who suffers oppression and forgives the oppressor is the most favored for succor from God.”¹²¹ Even stalwarts of the *Jahilīya* such as Abū Sufyān, ‘Ikrimah, Suhayl and Ṣafwān were pardoned and later accepted into the folds of Islam, even though they all treated the Muslims cruelly in Makkah.¹²² This attitude is mirrored by the *ḥadīth*, “There should be neither harming, nor reciprocating harm.”¹²³ This *ḥadīth* represents another manifestation of *raḥma*, for causing harm to someone, or reciprocating harm is prohibited. Additionally, the prohibition of harm is not limited to recently committed acts, rather even if its existence pre-dated this axiom then it should be removed, or minimized, for a person should prevent harm from taking place. This *ḥadīth* acts as an injunction for establishing *raḥma* for others by prohibiting the creation or allowance of a harmful atmosphere for others. Thus, in social interaction harm is replaced by *raḥma*.

¹²⁰ Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Vermont; Inner Traditions, 1983), 314.

¹²¹ Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, *Miṣbāḥ al-hidāyah*, 357, in Javad Nurbakhsh, *Traditions of the Prophet*, vol. 2 (New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1983), 53.

¹²² ‘Ikrimah, Suhayl and Ṣafwān had also initially attacked one of the Muslim contingents led by Khālīd bin Walīd, that entered Makkah in 630. After the conquest of Makkah, Ṣafwan and Suhayl were even allowed to participate in the battle of Ḥunayn and the siege of Ṭā’if before they had entered Islam.

¹²³ Abū Zakarīā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Al-Nawawī’s 40 Ḥadīth* trans. Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (New Delhi, India; Adam Publishers, 2003), 107.

Although the Prophet partook in rigorous night vigils and engaged in spiritual retreats, he always advised his companions to perform their worship in moderation, so as to not overexert themselves. He said, “Do not do that! Fast on some days and eat on others. Sleep part of the night, and stand in prayer another part. For your body has rights upon you, your eyes have a right upon you, your wife has a right upon you, your guest has a right upon you.”¹²⁴ This was in response to certain companions who had chosen to pray and fast unceasingly and who had abandoned their sexual life.¹²⁵ He wanted to make it clear to his companions that they must also live in this world and take care of their responsibilities. Fulfilling one’s obligations and duties in this world was not a distraction, taking one further from God; rather the fulfillment of one’s responsibilities was part of one’s worship, bringing one closer to God. The term used for “rights” is *ḥaqq* (truth; reality). William Chittick explains this *ḥadīth* further as, “‘Realization’ is to give oneself, one’s Lord and all things their *ḥaqq*. So, if worship is ‘the realization of *tawḥīd*’, this means that is to give God his due and to give his creatures their due in accord with the divine *Ḥaqq*. It is to be at once sincere worshipper and a perfect servant.”¹²⁶ Thus, a person can participate in the world, while at the same time remembering God. In this *ḥadīth* the Prophet establishes that the *wājib* (obligatory) acts of worship are sufficient. Moderation is not an exemption of worship rather it serves as a reminder that part of serving God is also taking care of your body, and your family.

Another aspect of *rahma* is *lutf*. Although usually rendered as kindness, *lutf* describes a more sublime concept, causing to draw one near. An example of *lutf* can be seen in the

¹²⁴ Al-Bukhārī, vol. 7, bab. 62, *ḥadīth* # 127.

¹²⁵ Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 114.

¹²⁶ William C. Chittick, “Worship,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter, 224 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

behavior of the Prophet toward the Bedouin. “A Bedouin urinated in the mosque, and the people rushed to beat him. Allah’s Apostle ordered them to leave him and pour a bucket or a tumbler (full) of water over the place where he has passed urine. The Prophet then said, ‘You have been sent to make things easy (for the people) and you have not been sent to make things difficult for them.’”¹²⁷ The companions’ immediate reaction was of anger as they rushed to punish the Bedouin for his offense. Defiling a mosque, which is considered sacred space where a person stands before God, is an affront toward God. However, the Prophet’s response was the reverse. He ordered the companions not to disturb him, and to let him finish. Whereas the companions focused upon the act itself, the Prophet embodied foresight. The Prophet understood that this Bedouin either might have never had access to scholars in the desert, or he could have recently converted to Islam.¹²⁸ When the Bedouin finished, the spot was cleaned with water. After the spot had been cleaned, the Prophet informed the Bedouin of his transgression in a polite manner. The Bedouin after realizing his wrong, made amends and was grateful to the Prophet for the manner in which he had dealt with his transgression. If one is ignorant of their act, what benefit is there in treating them with harshness? The Prophet’s behavior exemplifies behaving with *lutf*, which will in turn bring a person closer to God, as opposed to driving them away.

The Prophet’s resolve was tested numerous times as many people insulted him on a regular basis. Yet, despite such provocations the Prophet’s resolve remained and his *rahma* never swayed. An example of this can be seen in the story of his neighbor. There was a woman whose custom it was to dump trash everyday in front of the Prophet’s house. One day

¹²⁷ Al-Bukhārī, vol. 8, bab. 73, *ḥadīth* # 149.

¹²⁸ The Bedouin was possibly ignorant to the prohibition of urinating in the mosque, for his life was in the desert where the concept of a designated place of worship in the nascent of Islam was foreign. To him the mosque was the primordial mosque, nature.

when the Prophet saw that no trash had been dumped he became concerned. So, the Prophet went to her house inquiring as to her well-being. He found her ill, and when she saw the compassion and care he had for her well-being, in spite of her cruelty, she wept and converted to Islam. In brief, the *rahma* that the Prophet embodied was a direct manifestation of Divine *rahma*, establishing normative behavior in human life.

Maḥabba

The Prophet's example represents the normative manifestation of love in human life, thus establishing the Prophet as the lover *par excellence*. According to Mir Valiuddin, "if we turn to the Traditions of the Prophet, we will find that here, too, love of God has been emphasized as a *sine qua non* of faith. In other words, the heart which is devoid of the love of God is usually lacking in faith. The very foundation of faith rests on love."¹²⁹ An example of this is given in the *ḥadīth* reported by Anas ibn Mālik, "None of you is a believer till I am dearer (*aḥabb*) to him than his child, his father and the whole of mankind."¹³⁰ In this *ḥadīth* the role of the Prophet vis-à-vis the Muslim community is established, with the Prophet at the head. According to Annemarie Schimmel, "the relation of Prophet to people is like that of children to father, a most revered, loved, and therefore exemplary elder in the family."¹³¹ This *ḥadīth* establishes the precedent that the Prophet must be dearer, or loved more than a person's family for a person to have true and complete faith. The family unit is usually the closest loving relationship a person has. So, placing the Prophet even before the family unit is an example of the centrality of the Prophet's example for Muslims. He is like the keystone, which marks the apex, and which locks the other pieces into position. As the guide he is the apex of

¹²⁹ Mir Validduin, *Love of God: A Sufic Approach* (England: Sufi Publishing Company, 1972) 91.

¹³⁰ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣāḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 1, bab. 17, *ḥadīth* # 71 (Lahore: Ashraf, 1971-1975).

¹³¹ Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic piety* (Chapel Hill, NC; University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 210-211.

mankind and the figure in whom we must depend upon. The relationship, between the Prophet and mankind is based upon *maḥabba*, which according to this *ḥadīth* is a prerequisite of belief.

That Which Were Made Lovable

When examining the semantic field of love within *ḥadīth* literature, an intriguing insight is revealed when the Prophet mentions items, which were made lovable to him by God: “Three things of this world of yours were made lovable to me—women, perfume, and the coolness of my eye (as) was placed in prayer.”¹³² First of all, each of the three things mentioned are prefaced with “made lovable to me” (*ḥubbiba ilayya*). Hence, each of the three things that were made lovable to the Prophet was derived from God, which makes the three things of a Divine origin. In addition the *ḥadīth* can be taken to illustrate a progression, from the love of women, to the love of perfume, to the love of prayer, with the love of prayer at the end, making it the goal. The first part of the *ḥadīth* is the love of women. The love of women serves not as a distraction from God, causing a distancing from God; rather it draws one nearer toward God. Sachiko Murata states, “The ‘mystery’ of women lies in the fact that sexual act provides the occasion for experiencing what Ibn al-‘Arabī calls God’s “greatest self-disclosure.” From the perspective of incomparability, God is unknown and cannot be experienced. But from the perspective of similarity, God shows Himself in all things and can be experienced through all things. The whole cosmos and everything within it is God’s self-disclosure. But the greatest locus of experiencing God’s self-disclosure is the sexual act.”¹³³

¹³² Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, bab. 3, *ḥadīth* #128, 199, 285 (Lebanon: Mu'asasat al-Risalah).

¹³³ Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam: A sourcebook on gender relationships in Islamic thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 186.

One of the disciples of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s most important disciple Sadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274), was Mu’ayyid al-Dīn Jandī (d. c. 700/1300) who further expands upon the significance of the love of women. Jandī recognizes the love of women as the knowledge of self, which in turn leads to the knowledge of God. “The reason for this is that woman is a part of the man in the root of the manifestation of her entity. A human being’s knowledge of his soul is prior to the knowledge of his Lord, since his knowledge of his Lord is the result of his knowledge of his soul. That is why the Prophet said, ‘He who knows his soul knows his Lord.’”¹³⁴ The second part of the *ḥadīth* is the love of perfume. According to Frithjof Schuon, the perfume “symbolizes the sense of the sacred and in a general way the sense of ambiances, emanations, and auras. Consequently, it has to do with the ‘discernment of spirits,’ not to mention the sense of beauty.”¹³⁵ The scent of perfume covers the ugliness of odor and gives off a beautiful aroma; beauty being a central component to Islam, which is attested to by the *ḥadīth*, “God is beautiful and He loves beauty.”¹³⁶ Thus, this perfume brings us closer to God. The last of the three loves mentioned in the *ḥadīth* is that of prayer, which is the rite of remembrance. Remembrance is fundamental to human life because it rectifies our forgetfulness, which is part and parcel of the fall of Adam and Eve from Paradise. Remembering the source of all creation, God, turns our selves toward Him alone, while all else vanishes. In the same vein, the Prophet would call to Bilāl, one of his companions, “Bilāl, refresh us with the call to prayer!”¹³⁷ The call to prayer was a call of love for it presents an opportunity for the lover, the Muslim, to stand

¹³⁴ Ibid, 189.

¹³⁵ Frithjof Schuon, “The Spiritual Significance of the Substance of the Prophet,” in *Encyclopedia of Islamic Spirituality*, vol. 1 *Foundations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 59 (Lahore, Pakistan: Shirkat Printing Press, 2000).

¹³⁶ Muslim vol. 1, bab. 93, *ḥadīth* # 91.

¹³⁷ Badī al-Zamān Furūzanfar, *Aḥadīth-i Mathnawī* (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1955), number 48.

before the Beloved, God. Annemarie Schimmel adds, “For ritual prayer reminded the Prophet of his heavenly journey when he could speak to God without a veil.”¹³⁸ During his *mi’rāj* (nocturnal ascent) the Prophet was taken to the presence of God, a position that no other Prophet ever enjoyed. He had been taken directly to the object of his love and worship, God. The parallel of prayer and the *mi’rāj* (nocturnal ascent) can be seen from the *ḥadīth*: “Prayer is *mi’rāj* (ascent) for the *mu’min* (faithful), which can only be achieved through concentration and remembrance.¹³⁹ Thus, the love of prayer is the supreme love for it brings you to the presence of God. The placement of the love of prayer at the end of this *ḥadīth* signifies the culmination and conclusion of love, which resides with God alone.

Household

Although the Prophet was occupied with his community, he did not neglect his household. He displayed just as much affection within his household as he did outside of it. As ‘Ā’isha narrates, “I did not feel jealous of any of the wives of the Prophet as much as I did of Khadīja (although) she died before he married me, for I often heard him mentioning her, and God had told him to give her the good tidings that she would have a palace of Qasab (i.e. pipes of precious stones and pearls in Paradise), and whenever he slaughtered a sheep, he would send her women-friends a good share of it.”¹⁴⁰ Even after her death, the Prophet still honored his wife Khadījah and expressed his love for her by mentioning her and honoring her friends out of love for her. This love also encompassed his children; for example whether he was in the public sphere or at home, the Prophet would rise whenever his daughters would enter into

¹³⁸ Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic piety*, (Chapel Hill, NC; University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 21.

¹³⁹ Syed Ali Ashraf, “The Inner Meaning of the Islamic Rites: Prayer, Pilgrimage, Fasting, Jihād,” in *Encyclopedia of Islamic Spirituality*, vol. 1 *Foundations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 114 (Lahore, Pakistan: Shirkat Printing Press, 2000).

¹⁴⁰ Al-Bukhārī vol. 5, bab. 58, *ḥadīth* #164.

his presence. He would always greet his daughter Fāṭimah with utmost respect and love. He would kiss her, and then would have her seated next to him. The love he displayed toward his daughters established the importance of unconditional love for all children, whether a son or a daughter. This display of affection was unbeknownst to the Arabs of the time, as we can see from a *ḥadīth*. According to Abū Hurayrah, “The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, kissed Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī while al-Aqra’ ibn Habis al-Tamīmī was sitting with him. Al-Aqra’ observed, ‘I have ten children and I have not kissed any of them.’” The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, looked at him and said, ‘Whoever does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.’”¹⁴¹ Here the Prophet unites both *maḥabba* and *raḥma*. *Raḥma* as expressed to one’s children becomes *maḥabba*. In addition, God reciprocates this expression of *raḥma* as *maḥabba*, for the role of the parent to their children is reminiscent to that of the Creator to His creation. This reciprocity can be seen in another *ḥadīth*, “God is merciful only to those of His slaves who are merciful (to others).”¹⁴² Thus, a simple act that might be taken for granted, such as being affectionate towards children and family is a sign of *raḥma*, which offers the chance to experience the reciprocity of *raḥma* as well. In addition to being affectionate the Prophet also taught his companions the importance of expressing grief, for grief was an expression of love for a person who has passed away. Although he taught his companions not to be excessive in expressing their grief, he nonetheless expressed grief.

We went with Allah's Apostle to the blacksmith Abū Sayf, and he was the husband of the wet-nurse of Ibrāhīm (the son of the Prophet). Allah's Apostle took Ibrāhīm and kissed him and smelled him and later we entered Abū Sayf's house and at that time Ibrāhīm was in his last breaths, and the eyes of Allah's Apostle started shedding tears. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin ‘Awf said, ‘O Allah's Apostle, even you are weeping!’ He said, ‘O Ibn ‘Awf, this is mercy.’ Then he wept more and said, ‘The eyes are shedding tears and the

¹⁴¹ Al-Bukhārī vol. 8, bab. 73, *ḥadīth* #26.

¹⁴² Al-Bukhārī vol. 2, bab. 23, *ḥadīth* #373.

heart is grieved, and we will not say except what pleases our Lord, O Ibrāhīm! Indeed we are grieved by your separation.”¹⁴³

Grieving was an expression of love, and its justification is attested to by the latter part of the *ḥadīth*, “and we will not say except what pleases our Lord.” Thus, expressing grief was an act that pleased God; and hence it is a valid expression of love. Grieving was not limited to his immediate family either; rather as companions died, the Prophet displayed his sorrow for them as well. When his adopted son Zayd ibn Ḥāritha was killed in the battle of Mu’tah (7/629) the Prophet was reported to have visited Zayd’s family to inform and console them.

The Prophet then went to Um Ayman and Usāmah and told them about Zayd’s death, his eyes full of tears: he had loved him like a son, and his family was particularly dear to him. Just after he left their dwelling, Zayd’s youngest daughter came out of her home and rushed into the Prophet’s arms; he tried to comfort her while tears were streaming down his face and he was sobbing. One of the Companions who was passing by, Sa’d ibn Ubādah, was surprised at this scene and particularly at the Prophet’s tears, and asked him for an explanation. The Prophet answered that this was “someone who loves weeping for his beloved.”¹⁴⁴

Thus, the Prophet was not averse to openly express his love for members of his community. Acts like this stress the importance of expressing emotions for others as acts of love, and should be displayed toward a person during life and continued after death.

Community

The Prophet puts forth the axiom, “None of you (truly) believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”¹⁴⁵ This *ḥadīth* puts forth the axiom of love and compassion for all members of the community, which must be characteristic of an Islamic community, and which it is supposed to be built upon. This is the golden rule, to treat others the way you wish

¹⁴³ Al-Bukhārī vol. 2, bab. 23, *ḥadīth* #390.

¹⁴⁴ Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 173.

¹⁴⁵ Abū Zakarīā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Al-Nawawī’s 40 Ḥadīth*, trans. Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (New Delhi, India; Adam Publishers, 2003), 56.

to be treated. Its importance lies in the fact that the Prophet connects true belief with compassion for others. You can perform the five pillars of Islam diligently, but if you do not desire for others that which you desire for yourself you have not totally surrendered to the Divine will for you are still bound to your self, while simultaneously being detached from others.

The Prophet dealt with people with tenderness and love. Even a simple act such as smiling can be charity: “Your smile for your brother is *ṣadaqah*. Your removal of stones, thorns, or bones from the paths of people is *ṣadaqah*. Your guidance of a person who is lost is *ṣadaqah*.”¹⁴⁶ *Ṣadaqah* (charity) is something done for God’s sake alone, and smiling is an expression of that charity. This *ḥadīth* places smiling on par with the more exerting tasks as guiding the lost and removing obstacles from a person path. When you greet a person with a smile you convey a sense of ease that is usually reciprocated with ease. Another example of this would be the customary greeting, *al-salām ‘alyakum* (Peace be unto you). This salutation eases the tension of introduction, which can be a tense situation because of the unfamiliarity. The root of *salām* is *s-l-m*, which means to be safe and sound. According to John Penrice, *salām* means “peace, safety, a greeting of peace, security.”¹⁴⁷ With *al-salām ‘alyakum* (Peace be unto you) the starting point is peace, and if used as the statement of departure, the end is peace as well. Thus, you can begin and end with peace and security. The smile and the salutation offer basic foundations for relations between people. The acts are done solely for the sake of God, which in turn pleases God.

The Prophet’s affection can even be seen in situations that others might deem a nuisance. “The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) would listen to the crying of a lad

¹⁴⁶ Al-Bukhārī *Fiqh al-Sunnah* vol. 3 *ḥadīth* #98.

¹⁴⁷ John Penrice, *A Dictionary of the Koran* (NY; Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 71.

in the company of his mother, in prayer, and he would recite a short *sūrah* or a small *sūrah*.¹⁴⁸ He knew that the crying of the child causes difficulty for the mother. Knowing that the needs of a child must be cared for, he shortened the prayer to allow the mother to answer her child. This flexibility is not only allowed, but it is a precedent because the Prophet was the doer of the action.

Love of creation

Mankind's role as *khalīfah* (vicegerent) means that they are responsible for all of creation. This role is made explicit in the Qur'ān verse, "Lo! I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth" (Qur'ān 2:30). "For, unto God belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth; and, indeed, God encompasses everything" (Qur'ān 4:126). Thus, the *Sunna* of the Prophet encompasses all of creation, which not only includes mankind but animal, and plant life, nature in its entirety.

While a man was walking he felt thirsty and went down a well and drank water from it. On coming out of it, he saw a dog panting and eating mud because of excessive thirst. The man said, "This (dog) is suffering from the same problem as that of mine. So he (went down the well), filled his shoe with water, caught hold of it with his teeth and climbed up and watered the dog. Allah thanked him for his (good) deed and forgave him." The people asked, "O Messenger of God! Is there a reward for us in serving (the) animals?" He replied, "Yes, there is a reward for serving any animate creature."¹⁴⁹

Quenching the thirst of the dog was considered a good deed, and the weight of this deed was so much that God forgave the man's sins. Even during times of crisis, the Prophet's love towards animals never wavered. As the Muslims were marching toward Makkah, the Prophet who was preparing for the return to the origin of his mission took the time to ensure that the army had

¹⁴⁸ Muslim bab. 4, *ḥadīth* #951.

¹⁴⁹ Al-Bukhārī vol. 3, bab. 40, *ḥadīth* #551.

not trampled on a litter of puppies.¹⁵⁰ Conversely, just as treating animals with kindness is considered a good deed, being cruel to animals is a serious offense. The Prophet states, “A lady was punished because of a cat which she had imprisoned till it died. She entered the (hell) Fire because of it, for she neither gave it food nor water as she had imprisoned it, nor set it free to eat from the vermin of the earth.”¹⁵¹ Not only was the cruelty of the woman toward the cat wrong, but she was also punished in Hell.

In addition to animals, the Prophet also placed importance upon plant life: “If one of you holds a (palm) shoot in his hand when Judgment Day arrives, let him quickly plant it.”¹⁵² This act is not only recommended, but also rewarded: “If any Muslim plants any plant and a human being or an animal eats of it, he will be rewarded as if he had given that much in charity.”¹⁵³ Planting a plant can give benefits to others, which in turn becomes caring for others.

As men of the desert, the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula were well aware of the importance of water. Water is essential to sustain life, and its importance is even more evident in the harsh climate of the desert. In addition, water has always been valued and has occupied a symbolic role as a means of purification, which is not unique to Islam, but can be found in many religions. As part of creation, water is something that can be used, but along with all of nature it is not something that should be abused. As the Qur’ān states, “We made out of water every living thing” (Qur’ān 21:30). Thus, it can be said that water is synonymous to life. This was not lost on the Prophet, who in lieu of the importance water plays in life, advised his

¹⁵⁰ Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 175.

¹⁵¹ Al-Bukhārī vol. 4, bab. 56, *ḥadīth* #689.

¹⁵² Muslim *Kitāb al-Musaqāt*, *ḥadīth* #12.

¹⁵³ Al-Bukharī vol. 8, bab. 73, *ḥadīth* #41.

companions to use water diligently when performing their *wuḍū'* (ritual ablution), as well as advising the performance of *wuḍū'* no more than three times a day, as not to waste it. “One day, as he passed Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās, who was performing his ritual ablutions, the Prophet said to him: ‘Why such waste, O Sa’d?’ ‘Is there waste even when performing ablutions?’ Sa’d asked. And the Prophet answered: ‘Yes, even when using the water of a running stream.’”¹⁵⁴

As previously stated, as *khalīfah*, mankind is responsible for all of creation and abusing a part of creation is an affront to the Creator because it is a lack of *shukr* for what has been provided. According to the *ḥadīth*, “The earth has been created for me as a mosque and as a means of purification.”¹⁵⁵ This *ḥadīth* helps to clarify the Qur’ānic verse, “Greater indeed than the creation of man is the creation of the heavens and the earth: yet most men do not understand (what this implies)” (Qur’ān 40:57). The Qur’ānic verse alludes to the significance of creation, and the Prophet establishes nature’s sacred character as an entity as well as a means of purification, which can be seen in the permissibility to perform the *wuḍū'* with earth, *tayammum* (dry ritual ablution), when there is a lack of water. Therefore, inherent in the earth is a sacred quality that is in need of protection of the *khalīfa*, in the wake of abuse and exploitation.

‘*Ishq*

The only textual source for the term *‘ishq* can be found in the *ḥadīth*, “Who loves, is restrained and conceals his love, then dies, is a martyr.”¹⁵⁶ In this *ḥadīth*, the term *‘ashīqa*

¹⁵⁴ Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Mājāh, *Jam‘ jawāmi‘ al-aḥādīth wa-al-asānīd wa-maknaz al-ṣiḥāḥ wa-al-sunan wa-al-masānīd*, vol. 1, bab. 147, *ḥadīth* #425 (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Jāmī‘at al-maknaz al-Islāmī, 2000-2001).

¹⁵⁵ Al-Bukhārī vol. 1, bab. 7, *ḥadīth* #331.

¹⁵⁶ Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Abī Sulaymān, ibn Dā’ūd, *al-Niṣf al-awwal min Kitāb al-Zahra*, ed. A. R. Nykl in collaboration with Ibrāhīm Tūqān (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), 66; Ibn

(loves), is employed. However, the authenticity of this *ḥadīth* is debated and its level of authenticity is generally considered weak.¹⁵⁷ Although the textual basis of term ‘*ishq*’ cannot be found in the *Sunna* except for this lone instance, the intensity of love that the term ‘*ishq*’ engenders can be gleaned from other *ḥadīth* and actions of the Prophet that are included under *maḥabba*, *raḥma*, and *shukr*.

Ḥadīth qudsī are *ḥadīth* in which God speaks in the first person through the words of the Prophet. Two of these *ḥadīth* would become foci for the construction of the metaphysics of God’s Love for the world.¹⁵⁸ “I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known, so I created the world,”¹⁵⁹ and “But for thee, I would not have created the celestial spheres.”¹⁶⁰ Both of these *ḥadīth* indicate the centrality that love plays in the relationship between God and mankind. Omid Safi states, “The very purpose of creation, these Sufis remind us, is for the Divine to manifest Himself in utter fullness, and for the creation to come into that intimate relationship of knowledge and adoration with the Divine.”¹⁶¹ Likewise “but for thee” expresses the unique position that mankind occupies vis-à-vis God. Thus, both *ḥadīth* give credence to the formulation of God’s love toward creation.

The connection between ‘*ishq*’ and other terms such as *maḥabba*, and *raḥma* can be seen within particular *ḥadīth qudsī*. “Allah the Almighty said: ‘Whosoever shows enmity to a friend

al-Jawzī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī, *Dhamm al-hawā*: ed. Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Wāḥid (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1381/1962), 326–29.

¹⁵⁷ For details of the debate see Lois Anita Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love Among the Arabs: The Development of the Genre* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), 105–115.

¹⁵⁸ For a detailed discussion on this construction see William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Fakhruddīn ‘Irāqī: Divine Flashes* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1982), 17–28.

¹⁵⁹ Badī‘ al-Zamān Furūzanfar, *Aḥadīth-i Mathnawī* (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1955), number 546.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, number 70.

¹⁶¹ Omid Safi, “On the ‘Path of Love’ Towards the Divine: A Journey with Muslim Mystics,” *Sufi* 78 (Winter 09/Spring 10): 33.

of Mine, I shall be at war with him. My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks.”¹⁶² This particular *ḥadīth* describes the goal of the lover, which is to reach their beloved. Once a person’s heart is fully devoted to God then every appendage will act according to the Divine will. The lover and beloved are no longer two, but they become one for the lover attains *fanā’* (annihilation) in God, which is a total surrender to the Divine will. Another example of *‘ishq* can be found in the story of Abū Idrīs and Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal:

I entered the Damascus mosque and there was a young man with a beautiful mouth and white teeth sitting with some people. When they disagreed about something, they referred it to him and acted according to his statement. I inquired about him, and was told, “This is Mu'adh ibn Jabal.” The next day I went to the noon prayer and I found that he had got to the noon prayer before me and I found him praying. I waited for him until he had finished the prayer. Then I came to him from in front of him and greeted him and said, “By Allah! I love you for Allah!” He said, “By Allah?” I said, “By Allah.” He said, “By Allah?” I said, “By Allah.” He said, “By Allah?” I said, “By Allah!” He took me by the upper part of my cloak and pulled me to him and said, “Rejoice! I heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say, “Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, said, ‘My love is obliged for those who love each other in Me, and those who sit with each other in Me, and those who visit each other in Me and those who give to each other generously in Me.’”¹⁶³

This *ḥadīth* emphasizes the importance of loving a person for God’s sake. The intensity of the love a person has for God is manifested in loving one another, for the sake of God. The person who loves another for the sake of God is in fact transformed into loving God and is bestowed love from God. This intensity of love is echoed by a *ḥadīth qudsī*, “Where are those who love

¹⁶² Abū Zakarīā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Al-Nawawī’s 40 Ḥadīth*, trans. Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (New Delhi, India; Adam Publishers, 2003), 104.

¹⁶³ Mālik ibn Anas, *al-Muwaṭṭa of Imam Malik ibn Anas: The First Formulation of Islamic Law*, trans. Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley, (Madinah, 2005), 317.

one another through My glory? Today I shall give them shade in My shade, it being a day when there is no shade but My shade.”¹⁶⁴ Moreover, to love one of creation is to love the Creator.

There are numerous *ḥadīth* that speak about loving God, and God’s love. But how can one experience that love? God elaborates through a *ḥadīth qudsī*, “Allah the Almighty said: ‘I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than it. And if he draws near to Me an arm’s length, I draw near to him a fathom’s length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed.’”¹⁶⁵ No matter how much one person strives in loving God, God goes further. God not only reciprocates the love a person has for him, but He gives more than the person offers. This *ḥadīth* also comforts those who seek to draw closer to God for it mentions that God is “with him when he makes mention of Me.” Thus, remembering God is a method, which causes the beloved to draw nearer to His lover. Going beyond mere reciprocation of the love a person has for him, God reverses the role and He becomes the lover and His servants become the beloved. This reversal of roles is further augmented by another *ḥadīth*.

If Allah has loved a servant (of His), He calls Gabriel (on whom be peace) and says: “I love So-and-so, therefore love him.” He (the Prophet – peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “So Gabriel loves him. Then he (Gabriel) calls out in heaven, saying: ‘Allah loves So-and-so, therefore love him.’ And the inhabitants of heaven love him.’ He (the Prophet – peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Then acceptance is established for him on earth. And if Allah has abhorred a servant (of His), He calls Gabriel and says: ‘I abhor So-and-so, therefore abhor him.’ So Gabriel abhors him. Then Gabriel calls out to the inhabitants of heaven: ‘Allah abhors So-and-so, therefore abhor

¹⁶⁴ Abū Zakarīā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Al-Nawawī’s 40 Ḥadīth Qudsī*, trans. Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (New Delhi, India; Adam Publishers, 2003), 100.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 78. Cf. William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (Netherlands: Mouton & Co., 1977), 175.

him.' He (the Prophet – peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “So they should abhor him, and abhorrence is established for him on earth.”¹⁶⁶

In this particular *ḥadīth* God becomes the lover and His servants become the beloved. God establishes His love in His whole domain, and the awareness of His love is made known and established on earth. This establishment allows mankind to experience and feel love by engaging and participating in it. Likewise, the opposite of God’s love, His abhorrence, is established on earth as well. However, God’s abhorrence, though established, is overcome by His love, for the Prophet states, “When God finished the creation, He wrote in His book, which is there with Him, above the Throne: Verily, My Mercy overcomes My Wrath.”¹⁶⁷ Therefore we can conclude that God’s *rahma* eclipses his abhorrence, which underlines the supremacy of God’s love.

The reciprocation of love between God and mankind is made clear by the *ḥadīth*, “If my servant longs to meet Me, I long to meet him. And if he abhors meeting Me, I abhor meeting him.”¹⁶⁸ This *ḥadīth qudsī* expresses *maḥabba* in an intensified manner. William A. Graham translates *ḥubb* in this context as “longs to;” however he states, “The verb *aḥabba* in this Saying could be translated simply as ‘desires’, but its sense in Arabic is stronger than ‘desires’ indicates. This *ḥadīth* has been interpreted generally by *Ṣūfī* writers within the context of the passionate longing of man for God.”¹⁶⁹

As previously stated, the Prophet himself participated in night vigils and spiritual retreats. Although he advocated moderation in observing practices to his companions, he

¹⁶⁶ Abū Zakarīā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Al-Nawawī’s 40 Ḥadīth Qudsī*, trans. Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (New Delhi, India; Adam Publishers, 2003), 102. Cf. William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (Netherlands: Mouton & Co., 1977), 194.

¹⁶⁷ William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (Netherlands: Mouton & Co., 1977), 184.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 153.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

nonetheless maintained a higher degree of worship. According to ‘A’isha, “The Prophet used to offer night prayers till his feet became swollen.” Somebody said, to him, ‘Allah has forgiven you, your faults of the past and those to follow.’ On that, he said, ‘Shouldn't I be a thankful slave of Allah?’”¹⁷⁰ This act ties both *shukr* and *ishq* together. The Prophet was dedicated to remaining in a state of *shukr*. This state serves as a pretext to an intensity of love, for as the believer *par excellence*, he would stand before God neglecting his sleep and body. If a sinner were to perform this same act for repentance, he would be performing the act in order to be redeemed, while the Prophet performed the act solely for the sake of God.

The prophethood of the Prophet entailed enduring suffering, which was both physical and symbolic. The nadir of his prophethood came after his expulsion from the near-by city Ṭā’if. In 619, the Prophet’s wife Khadījah and his uncle, Abū Ṭālib, both died. Khadījah was the Prophet’s intimate companion and had consoled him from the very beginning of his prophethood, after the first revelation. She was a source of support, as well as the first person to enter Islam, and her passing deeply grieved the Prophet. Her death was closely followed by the death of the Prophet’s uncle Abū Ṭālib. Abū Ṭālib’s death was equally as painful for Abū Ṭālib was the Prophet’s protector. Although Abū Ṭālib never became a Muslim, his support of the Prophet never wavered. These two bereavements left the Prophet in a state of sorrow and has hence been known as “the year of sadness.” These deaths compounded what had been a difficult time for the Muslims in Makkah, for it was also at this time that the Quraysh instituted a boycott of the Banū Hāshim, to which the Prophet belonged. With no protection, no consoler and his community in destitution, the Prophet decided to seek help outside of Makkah. His request was made to the Banū Thaḳīf, of the near-by city of Ṭā’if. The Banū Thaḳīf however

¹⁷⁰ Al-Bukhārī vol. 6, bab. 60, *ḥadīth* #360.

were in no mood to receive such a message and rudely ridiculed and rejected the Prophet. The leaders of the Banū Thaḳīf implored their children and slaves to physically expel the Prophet from Ṭā'if with stones and insults. Dejected, the Prophet found refuge outside the city in an orchard, offered to him by two men of Quraysh, 'Utbah and Shaybah, who pitied the Prophet after his expulsion. The expulsion from Ṭā'if marked the nadir of the Prophet's prophethood. He had been cast out by his kinsmen, the Quraysh; his wife of twenty-five years and his uncle who had protected him since childhood had both passed away, and a tribe he sought help from rebuked his plea and expelled him. The Prophet's suffering culminated in a prayer,

O God, unto Thee do I complain of my weakness, of my helplessness, and of my lowliness before men. O Most Merciful of the merciful, Thou art Lord of the weak. And Thou art my Lord. Into whose hands wilt Thou entrust me? Unto some far-off stranger who will ill-treat me? Or unto a foe whom Thou hast empowered against me? I care not, so Thou be not wroth with me. But Thy favoring help—that were for me the broader way and the wider scope! I take refuge in the Light of Thy Countenance whereby all darkneses are illuminated and the things of this world and the next are rightly ordered, lest Thou make descend Thine anger upon me, or lest Thy wrath beset me. Yet it is Thine to reproach until Thou art well pleased. There is no power and no might except through Thee.¹⁷¹

This prayer demonstrates the Prophet's commitment to his prophecy and his trust in God. Even at this depth of despair, he remained firm and accepted the suffering placed upon him. This suffering would become symbolic for later generations of Muslims who find in the Prophet a likeness that they can identify with in times of distress. Tariq Ramadan states, "At that particular moment, away from other people, in the solitude of his faith and of his confidence in the Most Gracious, he literally and wholly put himself in God's hands in this sense, this prayer reveals all the confidence and serenity Muḥammad drew from his

¹⁷¹ Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Vermont; Inner Traditions, 1983), 101.

relationship to the Most Near.”¹⁷² The connection between suffering and love is made explicit by the *ḥadīth*, “Whenever God loves a devotee, He subjects him to ordeals. Should he endure patiently, God singles him out; should he be content, God purifies him.”¹⁷³ Hence, the acceptance of suffering for the sake of God is an underpinning of *‘ishq*, for enduring suffering for the sake of the beloved is what constitutes an intense love.

Conclusion

As the Qurān provides insight into the ontological relationship between God and mankind, the *Sunna* and *ḥadīth* offers a glimpse into the examples of love that permeated the life of the Prophet. These examples are indicative of the type of relationship a person is supposed to have with God. As an example, the Prophet set the standard and established what was normative. *Ḥadīth* that employ the term *maḥabba* are recognizable as pertaining to the semantic field of love, yet after a closer examination the relational meaning of the terms *raḥma*, *maghfira*, *shukr*, *maḥabba*, and *‘ishq*, demonstrate a broader and more nuanced concept of love. This connection combines all the concepts that each of these terms entail, into a synthesized thread of Islamic discourse, upon which Sufis expand and elucidate.

¹⁷² Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 69.

¹⁷³ Ruzbihān Baqlī, *Mashrab al-arwāḥ* 15, in Javad Nurbakhsh, *Traditions of the Prophet*, vol. 2, (New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1983), 75.

CHAPTER 5: Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj: *‘Ishq* as Essence

Ḥallāj is a controversial figure whose place in history has been debated within Islam since the 9th century. Ḥallāj played a pivotal role in the development of the semantic field of love in Islam by incorporating and propagating the term *‘ishq*. The principal element of Ḥallāj’s semantic field of love is his employment of the term *‘ishq* as opposed to the more traditional *maḥabba* when discussing Divine love. Although the term *‘ishq* has no textual root in the Qur’ān and *Sunna*, Ḥallāj demonstrates the viability of this component by identifying *‘ishq* as a Divine attribute, and likewise, the highest human attribute. *‘Ishq* becomes the focus-word of Ḥallāj’s semantic field of love, with other attributes acting as manifestations of *‘ishq*. His *Diwān al-Ḥallāj*, *Kitāb al-Tawāsīn*, and *tafsīr* reveal Ḥallāj’s understanding of the semantic field of love as directly inspired by the semantic field of love found within the Qur’ān, *Sunna*, and *ḥadīth* and as a bridge transitioning to the preeminence of *‘ishq*.

Life

Al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (244/858-309/922) was born in the village of Baydā, a city in the southern Persian province of Fars. The region was known for its cotton cultivation; and Ḥallāj’s father was a cotton-carder by trade, hence the name al-Ḥallāj (cotton-carder). Ḥallāj’s father was a Muslim, but his grandfather was a Zoroastrian. The city of Baydā, along with most of the regions of the eastern provinces of Persia were linguistically Persian and religiously Zoroastrian. However, at the time of his birth, Baydā had become one of the first areas of the region to become Arabicized and Islamicized. Ḥallāj was a Persian by ancestry, yet despite his Persian lineage, he was completely Arabicized. He was recorded to have “always

thought and prayed in Arabic,”¹⁷⁴ and that he “did not understand Persian.”¹⁷⁵ His lack of Persian was a direct result of the Arabicization of Baydā, in addition to the time he spent in the Arabic milieu of Wāṣit. The Arabicization process had started a generation before, which was the time during which his father had become Muslim. Ḥallāj’s father led a simple life; and his ascetic lifestyle left an indelible mark upon Ḥallāj.

Ḥallāj was born not long after the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate (750 CE-1258 CE) had been in power for one hundred years. The ‘Abbāsīds had played on the emotion of Shī’ites by propagating their support for the *ahl al-bayt* (family of the Prophet Muḥammad). They criticized and challenged the rule of the Umayyads, while championing religious leadership. After they wrested the rule from the Umayyads, the ‘Abbāsīds turned their back on the Shī’ites and became adherents to Sunnī Islam. This betrayal led to many Shī’ites uprisings, which the ‘Abbāsīds subsequently crushed with violent reprisals. During their ascendancy to power, the ‘Abbāsīds had relied on the support of non-Arabs, specifically Persians. This led to rifts between the Arabs and the ‘Abbāsīds after their ascension to power. This was the political and cultural turmoil with which Ḥallāj was surrounded at the time of his birth and throughout his life.

Ḥallāj had a sojourn in Wāṣit between 249/863-258/871. Wāṣit was an important military and commercial city located in present-day eastern Iraq. It was in Wāṣit that Ḥallāj received his religious orientation. The milieu of Wāṣit was linguistically Arabic, which solidified Ḥallāj’s usage of Arabic and contributed to his lack of Persian. Ḥallāj’s religious formation was rooted strictly in Sunnī Islam, specifically the school of Ḥanbalī traditionists. Ḥallāj spent his youth learning and memorizing the Qur’ān, becoming a *ḥafīz* (guardian,

¹⁷⁴ Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, vol. 1, *Life* (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1982), 56.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

memorizer of Qur'ān) under the tutelage of 'Alī ibn 'Aṣīm al-Wāṣitī (d. 201/816). In addition to his religious training, he would engage in spiritual retreats. In 260/873, Ḥallāj moved to Tustar, a city in the province of southwestern Persia, and attached himself to his first spiritual teacher, Sahl al-Tustarī, remaining with him for two years. Sahl al-Tustarī would have a lasting impact on Ḥallāj, for Ḥallāj would retain some of Sahl al-Tustarī's teachings. However, Ḥallāj abruptly left Sahl al-Tustarī for Basra where he came into contact with and became a disciple of 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān al-Makkī (d. 291/903-4). It was 'Amr al-Makkī who would be the first to initiate Ḥallāj into the Sufi path. 'Amr al-Makkī was a *muḥaddith* (specialist in ḥadīth) and a pupil of the famous *ḥadīth* compiler Imām al-Bukharī (d. 256/870). 'Amr al-Makkī also had an interest in Sufism and was associated with 'Abd Allah al-Nibajī and Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz. Ḥallāj remained 'Amr al-Makkī's disciple for about a year and a half until a dispute arose stemming from Ḥallāj's marriage to the daughter of Abū Ya'qūb Aqṭa'. During this dispute Ḥallāj began to consult Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/910), simultaneously seeking his counsel and receiving guidance for a few years through letters and occasional meetings. A few years later, Ḥallāj took Junayd as his spiritual guide.

From 272/885-900 Ḥallāj traveled extensively throughout Central Asia, which included Khurāsān, and Transoxania and India.¹⁷⁶ As a result of his travels, he acquired a sizable amount of followers. In addition, Ḥallāj made the *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Makkah three times, around 270/883, 280/893, and 290/902. After his travels, Ḥallāj took up residence in Baghdad and lived there until his execution in 309/922. It was here that Ḥallāj would befriend other notable Sufi's such as, Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946) and Abū al-'Abbās Ibn 'Aṭā' (c. 235-849-309/922). During the last two decades of his life Ḥallāj became a controversial Sufi who figured

¹⁷⁶ Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 25.

prominently in public discourse. He was put on trial twice, first in 298/910-301/913 when he was accused of *ḥulūl* (incarnationism); and the second in 308/921-309/922 in which he was found guilty on the charge of substituting the *ḥajj* (pilgrimage) to Makkah by a replica of the Ka'ba that he had built.¹⁷⁷ For eight years in the years between the first and second trial Ḥallāj was imprisoned. Ḥallāj was publicly executed in 309/922.

Ḥallāj's Islamic roots

Louis Massignon states, “Ḥallaj was specifically a *Muslim*. Not just the original terms of his lexicon and the framework of his system, but the whole thrust of his thought derives from a solitary, exclusive, slow, profound, fervent, and practical meditation on the Qur'ān.”¹⁷⁸ Spending his youth memorizing the Qur'ān, Ḥallāj had direct exposure to the Islamic textual sources. Toby Mayer adds, “It is not a matter of Junayd being more scrupulous in upholding *Sharī'ah* (Islamic law), for Ḥallāj himself was allegedly extremely meticulous in his religious observance and renounced all legal mitigations and concessions (*rukhaṣ*).”¹⁷⁹ Junayd's criticism of Ḥallāj was due to Ḥallāj's ecstatic proclamations, not his Islamic identity, for he was a strict adherent to the *Sharī'ah*.¹⁸⁰ Likewise, the epistemology of Ḥallāj also includes the Prophet, whose position in his epistemology is demonstrated in Ḥallāj's *Kitāb al-Tawāsīn*. In his *Kitāb al-Tawāsīn*, Ḥallāj honors the Prophet in lyrical verse, even dedicating an entire chapter the *Ṭā-Sīn al-Sirāj* (the Ṭā-Sīn of the Prophetic Lamp), to praise of the Prophet: “No scholar ever attained

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, vol. 3, *Teaching* (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1982), 3.

¹⁷⁹ Toby Mayer, “Theology and Sufism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 268.

¹⁸⁰ For a thorough in-depth analysis of the Ḥallājian case see Louis Massignon's, *The Passion of al-Hallaj* (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1982).

his knowledge nor did any philosopher become cognizant of his understanding.”¹⁸¹ Here Ḥallāj proclaims the spiritual superiority of the Prophet, adding, “If you flee from his domains, what route will you take without a guide, oh ailing one? The wisdom of the sages crumble like a dune falls away before his wisdom.”¹⁸² Ḥallāj believed that the Prophet was the true spiritual guide, which for Ḥallāj also entails the function of the lover *par excellence*. “He lifted the cloud, and pointed to the Sacred House. He is the limitation, and he is a heroic warrior. It is he who received the order to break the idols, and it is he who was sent to mankind for the extermination of them.”¹⁸³ Upon his return to Makkah, the Prophet destroyed all the idols in and around the Ka‘bah, in order to direct the people toward God, who alone should be loved. Ḥallāj was rooted in the Qur’ān and looked to the Prophet as his guide. Ḥallāj’s Islamic roots testify to the link that his growth had with the Islamic textual sources.

Tawḥīd

At the core of Ḥallāj’s belief is God as *ma‘shūq* (Beloved). Ḥallāj, “based his personal mission and witness of the transcendent source Himself, on the One he called Beloved or Friend or You and ultimately his Only Self.”¹⁸⁴ For Ḥallāj God is the supreme source of valid knowledge. In one of his works, *Kitāb nafy al-tashbīh*, Ḥallāj affirms God’s Oneness, “There is no *before* which precedes Him; there could be no *after* to go beyond Him, nor any *place* where He could come from, nor any *where* to meet Him.”¹⁸⁵ This was a commentary upon the Qur’ānic chapter *al-ikhās* (sincerity; purity). This chapter is also known as *al-tawḥīd* (Oneness), for it

¹⁸¹ Aisha Abd al-Rahman al-Tarjumana, *The Tawasin* (Lahore, Maktaba Jadeed Printers, 2000), 23.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 24. Cf. Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, vol. 3, *Teaching* (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1982), 289.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 23.

¹⁸⁴ Herbert Mason, *Al-Hallaj* (Routledge, 1995), 33.

¹⁸⁵ Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, vol. 3, *Teaching* (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1982), 126.

describes God's Oneness and absolute uniqueness. "Say: 'He is the One God: God the Eternal, the Uncaused Cause of All Being. He begets not, and neither is He begotten; and there is nothing that could be compared with Him.'" (Qur'ān 112:1-4). In this chapter God is referred to as *al-Samad* (The Self-Sufficient). Muhammad Asad defines this attribute as a combination of the, "concepts of Primary Cause and eternal, independent Being, combined with the idea that everything existing or conceivable goes back to Him as its source and is therefore, dependent on Him for its beginning as well as for its continued existence."¹⁸⁶ The Qur'ān further elaborates on God as the sole object of mankind's concentration. "And withal, they were not enjoined aught but that they should worship God, sincere in their faith in Him alone." (Qur'ān 98:5). Ḥallāj identifies *ikhlas* (sincerity; purity) as a precondition for *'ibadah*. Ḥallāj in his *tafsir*, which can be found in 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sulamī's *tafsir*, *Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsir*, states, "*ikhlas* in religion is purifying the action of defects of irritation and annoyance."¹⁸⁷ Thus, for Ḥallāj to be sincere in faith toward God entails a process of purification, only after which a person can begin to approach God.

Ḥallāj's description of God was primarily apophatic. Apophatic theology, or negative theology, attempts to describe God by what He is not. Ḥallāj describes God as being above and beyond description. "Is it He, he (*huwa huwa*)?—No! God is, over and beyond any 'he'; 'he' simply designates the (limited) object which one thus describes as not possessing anything other than itself. But God, perfect in His essence, posteternal in the duration of time, is the One Who existentializes all qualified things, toward whom all things subject to a master (*marbūb*) reach. He destroys his host. He overturns his enemy. If He Himself attests to Himself

¹⁸⁶ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān* (The Book Foundation, 2008), 1244.

¹⁸⁷ 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsir*, <http://altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=30&tSoraNo=98&tAyahNo=5&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>. (accessed, January 1, 2010).

to you, then he has *outdistanced* you. If He hides his presence from you, it is because He is listening to you.”¹⁸⁸ In the same vein, Ḥallāj even criticizes the label of *tawḥīd*. He argues that the concept of *tawḥīd* did not fully capture God’s absolute transcendent Reality: “Unity is an attribute of the created subject who bears witness to it. It is not an attribute of the Object witnessed as one.”¹⁸⁹ For Ḥallāj God was above and beyond any such classification, His awesomeness not confined in terms.

Ḥallāj’s supporters and followers believed him to be the *shāhid ani* (eternal witness) of love.¹⁹⁰ Ḥallāj claimed that the witnessing of God could be achieved through *awliyā’ Allāh* (friends of God), as a *zuhūr* (manifestation) of God. The *zuhūr* represents an evidence of God, which draws people toward God. This doctrine was later developed into what is known as *ṣifātī* mysticism by one of Ḥallāj’s disciples, Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Wāṣitī (d. 320/932). *Ṣifātī* mysticism held the belief that the saint is invested with a *ṣifa* (Divine attribute). Ḥallāj made the distinction that God and creation never combine; the *zuhūr* (manifestation) is “not an infusion (*ḥulūl*) in material receptacle (*haykal juthmānī*).”¹⁹¹ As Toby Mayer notes, “Ḥallāj himself rejected the concept of *ḥulūl*.”¹⁹² Similarly, Ḥallāj taught the concept of ‘*ayn al-jam’* (essence of union), in contrast to the concept of *ḥulul*, which he was accused of. He describes ‘*ayn al-jam’* as the state when, “All the acts of the saint remain coordinated, voluntary, and deliberate, by his intelligence, but they are entirely sanctified and divinized. The effect of divine unity is not the destruction of the mystic’s personality, by crushing it with rites (*sabr*,

¹⁸⁸ Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, vol. 3, *Teaching* (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1982), 131.

¹⁸⁹ Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj: The Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 316.

¹⁹⁰ Herbert Mason, *Al-Hallaj* (Routledge, 1995), 16.

¹⁹¹ Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, vol. 3, *Teaching* (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1982), 45.

¹⁹² Toby Mayer, “Theology and Sufism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 267.

ṣaḥw) or disengaging it through ecstatic intoxication (*sukr*); divine unity perfects it, consecrates it, exalts it, and makes it its own free and living agent.”¹⁹³ Ḥallāj’s clarification proclaims that *tawḥīd* means that the will of the saint becomes in harmony with the Divine will. The annihilation (*fanā*) of the saint in the Divine is not physical, rather it entails an emptying of the individual self, returning to its origin in the Creator.

‘Ishq as Essence

Al-Daylamī cites al-Ḥallāj, along with Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī (d. 261/875), and Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/910) as one of the earliest Sufis who allowed the usage of the term *‘ishq*.¹⁹⁴ Although the term *‘ishq* has no textual basis in the Qur’ān, Ḥallāj was one of its earliest proponents. While Ḥallāj also employed the term *maḥabba*, which has textual basis in the Qur’ān, he emphasized the usage of *‘ishq*. Ḥallāj also put forth the notion that God’s love for mankind is eternal, existing before mankind, and continuing after.¹⁹⁵ This formulation corresponds to the Qur’ānic verse, “O you who have attained to faith! If you ever abandon your faith, God will in time bring forth (in your stead) people whom He loves and who love Him - humble towards the believers, proud towards all who deny the truth: [people] who strive hard in God's cause, and do not fear to be censured by anyone who might censure them: such is God's favour, which He grants unto whom He wills. And God is infinite, all-knowing” (Qur’ān 5:54). This Qur’ānic verse states that God’s love precedes mankind’s love, which Ḥallāj concurs.

¹⁹³ Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, vol. 1, *Life* (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1982), 274.

¹⁹⁴ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Normont Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 8.

¹⁹⁵ Süleyman Derin, *Love in Sufism: From Rabia to Ibn al-Farid* (Istanbul, Turkey: İnsan publications, 2008), 119.

Süleyman Derin states, “According to Ḥallāj, as God has created man in love, it therefore follows that God’s love for man precedes man’s love for God.”¹⁹⁶

Ḥallāj states in his *Dīwān* that “*Ishq* existed in the preeternity of the preeternities from all eternity, in him, through him, from him; in it appears the manifestation of being. *Ishq* is not temporal, it is an attribute of the attributes, of one, the victims of love for whom still live.”¹⁹⁷ In Islamic philosophical discourse there are things created in time; *ḥadath* (temporal) and things uncreated; *qīdam* (eternal).¹⁹⁸ In these verses Ḥallāj explicitly identifies *‘ishq* as *lā ḥadath* (uncreated), thus eternal, and that *‘ishq* is not only an attribute of God, but that it was present at the beginning.

What separates Ḥallāj from other Sufis is that his teachings entail a description of love’s ontological status and its cosmogonic function.¹⁹⁹ Ḥallāj identifies the covenant between God and mankind as the participation in love. Massignon states, “To Ḥallāj, the mystery of creation is love, the ‘essence of the divine essence.’ And the covenant of humanity is the ceremony of election proclaimed by the Spirit of God, the form of man’s predestination to participate in this essential love without any other motive than that of the pure divine generosity.”²⁰⁰ Ḥallāj believed and taught that *‘ishq* was “inherent in the essence of God.”²⁰¹ Ḥallāj not only asserts

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Sa’dī al-Ḍannāwī, *Dīwān al-Ḥallāj* (Beirut; Dar Sader Publishers, 2008), 25. Cf. Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 71.

¹⁹⁸ Philosophical debate has gone for centuries between philosophers and theologians about whether or not the Qur’ān was created, or uncreated.

¹⁹⁹ Joseph E. Lombard, “From *Ḥubb* to *‘Ishq*: The Development of Love in Early Sufism,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007): 360.

²⁰⁰ Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, vol. 3, *Teaching* (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1982), 104.

²⁰¹ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 43.

that *'ishq* was present at the beginning but that *'ishq* is the essence of the Divine essence and from which creation emanates, he writes:

God in his preeternity was conscious of himself through himself, and there was no “thing remembered” until he displayed persons, forms, spirits, knowledge, and gnosis, and discourse came about in terms of possession, possessor, and possessed, and agent, act, and object of act became known. Thus in his preeternity he was contemplating himself through himself in his totality, nothing having yet appeared.

All the attributes that are known, including knowledge, power, love (*maḥabba*), *'ishq*, wisdom, majesty, beauty, glory, and all others with which he is described such as mercy, compassion, holiness, and spirits, as well as the remaining attributes, are forms within his essence that are his essence. And He contemplated, through the perfect totality of His attributes, the attribute of *'ishq* in himself, which is a form in his essence that is his essence.²⁰²

Ḥallāj even goes so far as to place *'ishq* in the forefront, above and before other Divine attributes.

'Ishq is the fire of the light of the first fire. In pre-temporality it was coloured by every colour and appearing in every attribute. Its essence flamed through its (own) essence, and its attributes sparkled through its (own) attributes. It is (fully) verified, crossing not but from pre-temporality to post-temporality. Its source is He-ness, and it is completely beyond I-ness. The non-manifest of what is manifest from its essence is the reality of existence; and the manifest of what is not manifest from its attributes is the form that is complete through concealment that proclaims universality through completion.²⁰³

The supremacy that Ḥallāj gives to *'ishq* in his cosmogony represents a development in the semantic field of love in Islam. In these passages Ḥallāj situates *'ishq* as the focus-word in his semantic field of love, while describing all other attributes, including other key words, such as, *raḥma*, *luṭf*, *maghfira*, *'afw*, and *maḥabba* as manifestations of *'ishq*. This development will prove

²⁰² Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 39-40. Cf. Joseph E. Lumbard, “From *Ḥubb* to *'Ishq*: The Development of Love in Early Sufism,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007): 361.

²⁰³ Joseph E. Lumbard, “From *Ḥubb* to *'Ishq*: The Development of Love in Early Sufism,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007): 362. Cf. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 70-71.

vital to the elaboration of the metaphysics of love by later figures of Sufism.²⁰⁴ As al-Daylamī relates, “The difference between him and the claim of the first philosophers is that the first philosophers make love a thing produced (*mubda'*), and he makes it something pertaining to the (Divine) Essence.²⁰⁵ Ḥallāj's departure from earlier love theories provides a different conceptual system, in which *'ishq* is the focal point.

Madhhab-i 'ishq (Path of Love)

Ḥallāj preached that God was the “Only Desire and the Only Truth.”²⁰⁶ Hence, the path of love is the path of God. Omid Safi states, “The Path of Love is God's own path. The path to God, and the path of God (as both are possible translations of *madhhab-i khudā*) is in fact the path of love. Only love delivers humanity to the Divine. Rather than identifying the path with a noted theologian or jurist, they identified the path with love, and even more, directly with God: They asked Ḥusayn Manṣūr (Ḥallāj): ‘Which path are you on?’ He said: ‘I am on God's path.’ (*anā 'alā madhhab rabbi*).”²⁰⁷ This answer equates the path of love with the path of God. For Ḥallāj the seeker must become totally enraptured with love. This is interpreted as meaning that one should totally empty himself of everything other than Him. In his *Dīwān*, Ḥallāj states, “I saw my Lord with the eye of the heart. I said: ‘Who art thou?’ He answered: ‘Thou.’”²⁰⁸ Here Ḥallāj alludes to the *shahādah*, “There is no god, but God,” which can also be

²⁰⁴ This would prove especially instrumental for Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī and his *Sawānih*, see Joseph E. Lumbard, “From *Ḥubb* to *'Ishq*: The Development of Love in Early Sufism,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007): 362.

²⁰⁵ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 43.

²⁰⁶ Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, vol. 1, *Life* (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1982), lv.

²⁰⁷ ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, *Tamhidat*, 22 in Omid Safi, “On the ‘Path of Love’ Towards the Divine: A Journey with Muslim Mystics,” *Sufi* 78 (Winter 09/Spring 10): 28.

²⁰⁸ Martin Lings, *Sufi Poems A Mediaeval Anthology* (Cambridge; The Islamic Texts Society, 2004), 28.

translated, as “There is nothing real but the Real.” All of creation is dependent upon God, a vertical relationship of dependence, while all of creation and its creatures are horizontally related; thus, God is the ultimate Reality. Therefore, the final goal of this path is to come to the realization that only God exists, and therefore the path of God is synonymous with the path of love.

The path of love toward the Beloved, like the path of God, is a path to alleviate separation. Ḥallāj who was asked by Abū Bakr al-Shiblī about the possibility of the lover being separated from their Beloved, answered, “It is impossible for a valiant Knight (*fatā*) to endure being deprived of the One who is his soul; as soon as love settles in, the blending is consummated, and separation becomes unrealizable.”²⁰⁹ Hence, the purpose of human existence is to travel and reach the Divine: “If you love God, follow me, (and) God will love you and forgive you your sins; for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.” (Qur’ān 3:31). Commenting upon this verse Ḥallāj states, “True love is arising with your beloved, removing your attributes and then acquiring His attributes.”²¹⁰ This is Ḥallāj’s explanation of the concept of *ittiṣāf* (state of being adorned with the attributes of God). In his discussion of the “fruits of love” Mir Valiuddin defines *ittiṣāf* as the ‘*abd* (servant) being adorned with the attributes of God. He writes:

In the terminology of Sufis *ittiṣāf* implies that the ‘*abd* is adorned with the Essence and Attribute of God. It is a well-known doctrine of the Sufis that, truly speaking, the essence and attributes are for God alone and, the essence and attributes ‘*abd* are merely suppositional and figurative and, the essence and attributes of the ‘*abd* are the shadow, or, reflection of the Essence and attributes of God. “Incarnation” and “unity” are well-known problems of the Sufis. Incarnation implies the entering of one thing into

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 47.

²¹⁰ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā’iq al-tafsīr*, <http://altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=30&tSoraNo=3&tAyahNo=31&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>. (accessed January 1, 2010). Cf. Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, vol. 1, *Life*, (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1982), 11.

another, just as the filling of water in a goblet. Unity means the joining of one thing with another, just as the mixing of milk in water. This relation is not found between the Essence of God and the essence of *'abd*. The Essence of God neither enters the essence of the *'abd* nor, is united with it. If someone holds it, it is infidelity; for, the uniting of two species together is unity and incarnation. According to the belief of the Sufis God and the *'abd* are not two separate species as the *'abd* does not exist, God alone exists.²¹¹

Ḥallāj believed *ittiṣāf* to be the highest stage in love. Alexander Knysh interprets *ittiṣāf* as *jam'* stating, "This union, or joining (*jam'*), leads to a unification (*ittiḥād*) which al-Ḥallāj presented not as a union of two substances, but as an act of faith and love (*'ishq, maḥabba*)."²¹² It was through love that Ḥallāj believed one could taste the essence of God. Ḥallāj had preached union with God through love.²¹³ Ḥallāj even further expounded upon the force of love when he was heard on the gibbet reciting these verses, "Through the sacred holiness of this Love which the world cannot lust after to corrupt. I have felt no harm since suffering came upon me, nor has it caused me any injury; No limb, no joint of mine has been cut off which has not made you remember (God)."²¹⁴ Ḥallāj stated, "To say to God; I love You, I give You thanks,' means to give oneself to Him; it means to die with Him of the same Desire that He has of Himself, in calling Himself supreme. He, in the same eternal present moment in which this extraordinary word of loving annihilation resuscitates Him: and resuscitates us: 'those whom Desire kills. He returns them to life.'"²¹⁵ Ḥallāj's conclusion that suffering is synonymous with and necessary for love is reflective of the *ḥadīth*, "Whenever God loves a devotee, He subjects him to ordeals. Should he endure patiently, God singles him out; should

²¹¹ Mir Validduin, *Love of God: A Sufic Approach* (England: Sufi Publishing Company, 1972), 196.

²¹² Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2000), 79.

²¹³ Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, vol. 1, *Life* (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1982), 81.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 611.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, 344-345.

he be content, God purifies him.”²¹⁶ Hence, Ḥallāj identified suffering as part and parcel of ‘*ishq*, which follows the etymological origin of the term which states an intense love involves death.²¹⁷ Ḥallāj describes the consequence of ‘*ishq* as a death, for to love something or someone requires some sort of self-sacrifice, thus a degree of dying. This dying however brings about life, for the lover is truly alive, loving not their *nafs*, but the *ma’shūq*. This is an allusion to the *ḥadīth*, “Die before you die.” Ḥallāj’s formulation of a death, reached its culmination in the utterance, “I am the Truth” (i.e., I am God), which has been commented upon by later Muslims ever since.²¹⁸

Conclusion

Ḥallāj’s selection of the term ‘*ishq* in addition to the more commonly used term *maḥabba* demonstrates a shift in the semantic field of love in Islam. ‘*Ishq* becomes the focus word of his semantic field of love, from which all other attributes emanate. This identification places ‘*ishq* at the forefront, relating the other key words as manifestations of ‘*ishq*. Even though there is no textual basis for the term ‘*ishq* Ḥallāj identifies ‘*ishq* as a Divine attribute and in turn the highest human attribute. Ḥallāj’s development marks a point of departure from other Sufi’s of the formative period, while creating a new avenue for a love-centered metaphysics that will be further developed and integrated, by future generations of Sufis such as Rūmī.

²¹⁶ Ruzbihān Baqlī, *Mashrab al-arwāḥ*, 15 in Javad Nurbakhsh, *Traditions of the Prophet*, vol. 2 (New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1983), 75.

²¹⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam’s Mystical Tradition* (New York; HarperCollins, 2007), 66. Cf. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ṣūfī, *The Book of Hubb (Love of the Divine)* (Cape Town, South Africa; Madinah Press, 2007), 10.

²¹⁸ See note 177.

CHAPTER 6: Mawlāna Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī: *Madhhab-i 'ishq* (Path of Love)

The semantic field of love in Rūmī's works is centered upon the term of *'ishq*. *'Ishq* becomes the focus word in Rūmī's semantic field of love, building upon the development of earlier Sufis, such as Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, who thrust *'ishq* to the forefront of the semantic field of love in Islam. Rūmī continues the development implemented by Ḥallāj culminating in a *madhhab-i 'ishq*, which he equates to the path of God. Rūmī's *madhhab-i 'ishq* is rooted in the Islamic textual sources. Drawing from Qur'ānic verses, *ḥadīth*, and examples from the *Sunna*, Rūmī articulates the *madhhab-i 'ishq*, describing God as *ma'shūq*, and the Prophet as the *'āshiq* (lover) *par excellence*. This articulation will serve as a backdrop from which later generations of Sufis will draw from and elaborate upon.

Life

Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Balkhī was born in 604/1207 in the city of Balkh in present-day Afghanistan. Balkh had been a center of spirituality and Islamic intellectuality. In the 13th century Balkh was a part of Greater Khorāsān, the eastern most province of the greater Persian-speaking milieu, which at the time had been under the control of the Khwārazmian Empire. The Khwārazmian Empire was a Persianate Sunnī Muslim dynasty. Thus, Rūmī was born and raised in the Persianate realm of Islam, primarily writing in Persian. Rūmī was born during the beginning of Genghis Khan's assault of the Khwārazmian Empire. Rūmī's father was Bahā' al-Dīn Walad (c. 540/1145-628/1231). Bahā' al-Dīn Walad was an accomplished scholar, earning the title *Sulṭān al-'ulamā'* (King of the Scholars). He was an authority in both the exoteric and esoteric sciences, possibly an immediate disciple of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d.

618/1221), founder of the Central Asian Kubrawīyah *ṭarīqah* (Sufi order).²¹⁹ He was a jurist and an accomplished Sufi. He traced his spiritual lineage to the well-known Sufi master Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī. Bahā' al-Dīn Walad wrote the *Ma'ārif* (Divine Sciences), which was a defense of spiritual and esoteric teachings.²²⁰ Muhammad Isa Waley states, "The discourse reveal a great deal concerning the author's personality, his teachings, his interpretation of the Quran and *ḥadīth*, and his deep influence on the thought and style of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. They show Bahā' al-Dīn to have possessed some of that ecstatic tendency."²²¹ Around 1210 a dispute arose between Bahā' al-Dīn Walad and the king, which resulted in Bahā' al-Dīn Walad's departure, cursing the city he said, "A storm will come that no one can imagine." This curse held true, for Genghis Khan and his Mongol hordes destroyed around Balkh around 1219/1220. After performing the *ḥajj* (pilgrimage), the family traveled through Baghdad, Damascus and Anatolia, finally settling in Konya (Qunyah) in Anatolia under the rule of the Seljuq Dynasty, after Bahā' al-Dīn Walad had been invited there by the sultan 'Alā' al-Dīn Kayqubād, who was a patron of his teachings.

Rūmī began following in the footsteps of his father and forefathers from an early age, studying the sciences of *naḥw* (Arabic grammar), prosody, *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *ūsūl al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), *ḥadīth*, Qur'ān, *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic exegesis), *kalām* (dogmatic theology), *falsafa* (philosophy), *manṭiq* (logic), as well as astronomy, history, and mathematics. Rūmī continued his studies under his father until his father passed away; Rūmī was 24. By this

²¹⁹ Muhammad Isa Waley, "Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and the Central Asian School of Sufism (The Kubrawiyyah)," in *Encyclopedia of Islamic Spirituality*, vol. 2 *Manifestations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 89 (Lahore, Pakistan: Shirkat Printing Press, 2000).

²²⁰ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 1.

²²¹ Muhammad Isa Waley, "Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and the Central Asian School of Sufism (The Kubrawiyyah)," in *Encyclopedia of Islamic Spirituality*, vol. 2 *Manifestations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 89 (Lahore, Pakistan: Shirkat Printing Press, 2000).

age, Rūmī had mastered the exoteric sciences, becoming a *faqīh* (jurisprudent) in the Hanafi *madhhab* (school of Islamic jurisprudence). After Bahā' al-Dīn Walad's death, Rūmī began to study under one of his father's former disciples, Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī (d. 638/1240), known as *Seyyid-i Sirdān* (Lord, Master of the secrets in hearts). Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī was a Sufi *shaykh* (spiritual master) as well as a Qur'ānic commentator. Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī was the first to officially initiate Rūmī onto the spiritual path. Although Rūmī's father Bahā' al-Dīn Walad was an accomplished Sufi *shaykh* in his own right, Rūmī had showed little interest in Sufism until he began his study under Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq.²²² Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī sent Rūmī to Aleppo and then on to Damascus to congregate and study with other Sufi *shuyūkh* (spiritual masters). Rūmī remained Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī's disciple and student until his death in 638/1240 in Kayserī. After the death of Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī, Rūmī gathered many disciples and became a popular teacher in Konya.²²³

Rūmī taught and presided over many students for several years. However, in 1244 everything changed for Rūmī when he came into contact with the curious figure, Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī (d. 1248). This encounter with Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī completely transformed Rūmī into the intoxicated lover he is known as today.²²⁴ As Seyyed Hossein Nasr aptly points out, "It seems that Shams al-Dīn was a divinely sent spiritual influence which in a sense 'exteriorized' Rūmī's inner contemplative states in the form of poetry and set the ocean of his being into a

²²² William C. Chittick, "Rūmī and the Mawlawiyyah," in *Encyclopedia of Islamic Spirituality*, vol. 2 *Manifestations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 106 (Lahore, Pakistan: Shirkat Printing Press, 2000).

²²³ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 2.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

motion which resulted in vast waves that transformed the history of Persian literature.”²²⁵

This was a tremor in the psyche of Rūmī, for it shook his very core and left him destroyed.

This destruction allowed for a new foundation to be built; a foundation that was built upon *‘ishq*, from which Rūmī developed a *madhhab-i ‘ishq*.

Works

The *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* is Rūmī’s earliest poetic work. It is a collection of about 40,000 verses, consisting “of about 3,200 ghazals (odes or sonnets), and qasīdahs (elegies); and about 2,000 rubā’īs (quatrains), and tarjī’bands (refrain poem).”²²⁶ Most of the poems were written in Persian, but there are some poems and verses in Arabic and a fewer amount of Turkish and Greek words. The *Dīwān* was composed in the later period of Rūmī’s life after his encounter with the mysterious Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī. As previously mentioned this encounter was the cause of the waves of poetry. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes, “The voluminous *Dīwān* is the response of Rūmī to the *sympathia* (*hamdamī* in Rūmī’s own words) created between Shams and Rūmī.”²²⁷ Hence, the *Dīwān* was named after its inspiration, Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī. Unlike writers who are first and foremost poets, Rūmī did not obsessively adhere to the classical rules of Persian poetry in his *Dīwān*. Nevertheless, remarkably, his poems generally do keep to the classical rules of the poetry. We must emphasize, however, that Rūmī did not consider himself a poet, and he despised being called one: “What is poetry that I should boast of it, I possess an art other than the art of poets. Poetry is like a black cloud; I am like the moon

²²⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Jalal al-Din Rumi: Supreme Persian Poet and Sage* (Tehran: Shura-ye ‘Ali-ye Farhang O Honar, 1974), 23.

²²⁶ Reynold A. Nicholson, *Dīwān-e Shams-e Tabrīzī* (Bethesda, MD: Ibex Publishers, 2001), ii.

²²⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Rūmī and the Sufi tradition,” in *Rūmī: In the Light of Eastern and Western Scholarship*, ed. M. Ikram Chaghatai. Lahore, Pakistan: Sang-e-Meel Publications, (Lahore, Pakistan: Sang-e-Meel Publications), 293.

hidden behind its veil. Do not call the black cloud the luminous moon in the sky.”²²⁸

Therefore, his works represent a deeper reality than mere verse, and meter.

The *Mathnawī ma‘nawī* is Rūmī’s magnum opus and was written after the *Dīwān*. *Mathnawī* literally means, rhyming couples, and it is a poetic form in Persian poetry, consisting of rhyming couplets. The *mathnawī* poetic form would later find popularity in the Indian subcontinent in Persian derivative languages, such as Urdu.²²⁹ This style is usually used for the praising of kings, epics, historical narratives, and romantic tales. Rūmī’s *Mathnawī* consists of about 25,000 rhyming couplets. This work was dedicated to Rūmī’s disciple Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī. Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī was the third figure through which Rūmī found inspiration. It was Ḥusām al-Dīn who pleaded with Rūmī to compose poetry. Rūmī first resisted, but then later relented. Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī then scribed Rūmī’s poetry and the *Mathnawī* was formed.

Rūmī’s *Fīhi mā Fīhi* (Discourses), are a collection of seventy-one lectures given to his disciples. These Discourses give an insight into Rūmī’s opinion on particular topics. While Rūmī did not systematically espouse philosophical ideas, he did hold particular views on various issues, which can be discerned from his Discourses. *Fīhi mā Fīhi* was an informal prose work, delivered amongst Rūmī’s disciples during a *majlis* (spiritual gathering). *Fīhi mā Fīhi* tend to be overlooked due to Rūmī’s vast amounts of poetry. However, they are insightful, sometimes describing particular Qur’ānic verses, or *ḥadīth* at length.

Rūmī’s life represents a Ḥallājīan progression. He begins his adult life as a jurispudent, occupied primarily with the Qur’ān and the *Sunna*, then after coming into contact with Shams-i Tabrīzī he becomes “drunk” and composes ecstatic poetry, and then after Shams al-Dīn

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ See Christopher Shackle, “The Story of Sayf al-Muluk in South Asia,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 17, no. 2 (2007): 128.

Tabrīzī's death he puts the pieces back together, integrating ecstatic love with sobriety. This progression is reminiscent of al-Ghazzālī's transformation.²³⁰ Whereas the result of al-Ghazzālī's transformation culminated in his *'Ihyā' 'ulūm al-Dīn* (The Revival of Religious Sciences), Rūmī's transformation culminates in his *Mathnawī*, which integrates the ecstatic expressions of love of Ḥallāj, with the exoteric sciences.

The roots of the roots of the roots

Rūmī prefaces his *Mathnawī* with, "This is the Book of the *Mathnawī*, which is the roots of the roots of the roots of the Religion in respect of (its) unveiling the mysteries of attainment (to the Truth) and of certainty; and which is the greatest science of God and the clearest (religious) way of God and the most manifest evidence of God."²³¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr adds, "One of the greatest living authorities on Rūmī in Persia today, Hādī Hā'irī, has shown in an unpublished work that some six thousand verses of the *Dīwān* and the *Mathnawī* are practically direct translations of Qur'ānic verses into Persian poetry."²³² Rūmī clarifies any ambiguity by stating, "I am the servant of the Qur'ān as long as I have life. I am the dust on the path of Muḥammad, the Chosen one. If anyone quotes anything except this from my sayings, I

²³⁰ Al-Ghazzālī had rose to prominence in Baghdad as a theologian and intellectual figure in his early life. However, he was overcome with a spiritual crisis and abandoned his post as the head of the *Nizāmīya madrasah* in order to wander and seclude himself in search of what ailed him. He returned to public life after about ten years, composing the *'Ihyā' 'ulūm al-Dīn* (The Revival of Religious Sciences), which was an attempt of an integration of Sufism with the exoteric sciences.

²³¹ Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawī of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1926), 3.

²³² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Rūmī and the Sufi tradition," in *Rūmī: In the Light of Eastern and Western Scholarship*, ed. M. Ikram Chaghatai. Lahore, Pakistan: Sang-e-Meel Publications, (Lahore, Pakistan: Sang-e-Meel Publications), 296.

am quit of him and outraged by these words.”²³³ Thus, he establishes himself within the Islamic framework, being directly influenced by and a product of Islam.

What is ‘*ishq*?

William Chittick had no qualms in asserting that in everything that Rumi wrote love (‘*ishq*) occupies the most significant place, “It can easily be shown that Love (‘*ishq*) is the central theme of all Rūmī’s works. If we were to begin studying him through the *Dīwān*, we would soon see that most of its poems deal explicitly with this subject. And as soon as one understands what Rūmī means by Love, one can see that even the *Mathnawī* and *Fīhi mā Fīhi*, where the word ‘Love’ is not mentioned nearly as often, deal largely with Love’s branches and ramifications.”²³⁴ Rūmī defines love in many different ways, in one such definition Rūmī describes ‘*ishq* as a combination of worship, thankfulness, and contentment: “Love is the preventer of anything unworthy of *the lover*. If Love were not, the Creator would never have appeared (*in the creation*). Do you know what the meaning of the letters of *the word* ‘Love’ is? ‘AYN is the worshipper, SHEEN is the thankful, and QAAF is the contented.”²³⁵ In this acronym the letter ‘*ayn* stands for the word ‘*ibādah*, *shīn* stands for the word *shukr*, and *qāf* stands for the word *qanā’at* (contentment). So for Rūmī ‘*ishq* entails worship, thankfulness and contentment. In this manner, Rūmī describes the concepts of ‘*ibādah*, *shukr*, and *qanā’at* as manifestations of ‘*ishq*, thus establishing them as key words in his semantic field of love. The eminence that ‘*ishq* has in Rūmī’s conceptual framework is attested to by Ibrahim Gamard who states, “Without Love, the most essential Divine Attribute, God would not have manifested Himself through his

²³³ Ibrahim Gamard, *The Quatrains of Rumi* (San Rafael, CA: Sufi Dari Books, 2008), 2.

²³⁴ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 194.

²³⁵ Ibrahim Gamard, *The Quatrains of Rumi* (San Rafael, CA: Sufi Dari Books, 2008), 454.

other Attributes in the creation.”²³⁶ This is reminiscent of Ḥallāj’s formulation of the superiority of *‘ishq*, which Ḥallāj places as first, while the other attributes occupy a subservient role.

The sword of love

The teachings of Rūmī are vast; a systematic analysis of its totality in such a concise manner proves difficult. However, one principle underlines his works and life; the *shahādah* “There is no god but God.”²³⁷ Rūmī “takes the principle of the ‘profession of God’s Unity’ (*tawḥīd*) as given and explains all that this principle implies for us as human beings in terms of our ideas, our activities, and our existence.”²³⁸ The sword of *lā* in the *shahādah* exemplifies the sword of love. For the *lā*, in *lā ilāha* (there is no god), is the *nafy* (negation) slaying all that is; followed by the *illa Allāh* (except for God), which is the *ithbāt* (affirmation), affirming God as the Real. Consequently the *shahādah* becomes the sword of love, for if nothing exists except for God than He becomes the *ma’shūq*, the aim of mankind’s love. Rūmī replies to those who stop at the façade of forms, rather than continuing toward God stating in his *Mathnawī*, “Whatever animal or plant they look upon, they may feed on the meadows of Divine Beauty. Hence He said unto the company (of mystics), ‘Wheresoever you turn, His Face is there.’”²³⁹ This is from the Qur’ānic verse, “And God’s is the east and the west: and wherever you turn, there is God’s countenance” (Qur’ān 2:115). Hence, all of creation reflects God’s countenance. Another Qur’ānic verse augments this concept, “and never call upon any other deity side by side with God. There is no deity save Him. Everything is bound to perish, save His (eternal) self” (Qur’ān

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 7.

²³⁸ Ibid, 8.

²³⁹ Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawī of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*, vol. 4 (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1926), 458.

28:88). Thus, everything is an illusion, with relative existence; only God ultimately exists. Stopping at creation, instead of focusing on the Creator becomes idolatry, which is prohibited. In the Qur'ān, Abraham admonished his people for their idolatry, “You worship only (lifeless) idols instead of God, and (thus) you give visible shape to a lie! Behold, those (things and beings) that you worship instead of God have it not in their power to provide sustenance for you: seek, then, all (your) sustenance from God, and worship Him (alone) and be grateful to Him: (for) unto Him you shall be brought back!” (Qur'ān 29:17). Likewise upon his return to Makkah, one of the Prophet's first acts was the destruction of the idols that had been set in and around the *Ka'bah* (the House of God). His destruction of the idols reestablished God as the *ma'shūq*. Rūmī states in his *Mathnawī*, “Muḥammad broke many idols in the world, so that the *religious* communities were saying, ‘O *our Sustaining Lord!*’ If it had not been for Muḥammad's efforts, you also would have worshiped idols like your ancestors. This head of yours has escaped from prostrating to idols, so that you may recognize his claim of *gratitude* upon the *religious* community. If you speak, talk about gratitude for this liberation, so that he may also free you from the inward idol.”²⁴⁰ For Rūmī the appropriate response of the destruction of idols is an act of *shukr*, which is directed toward God, for the destruction reestablishes God as the *ma'shūq*, therefore God should be reciprocated with *shukr*.

In Rūmī's idol symbolism, the *nafs* is referred to as the “inward idol.” As Ibrahim Gamard notes, “The inward idol refers to forms of self-worship of one's ego, such as pride, reputation, justification of anger, jealousy, and selfish desires.”²⁴¹ Rūmī equates the taming of the *nafs* as a prerequisite for loving for God: “The ‘sword of religion’ is that which wages war

²⁴⁰ Ibrahim Gamard, *Rumi and Islam: Selections from His Stories, Poems and Discourses* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2004), 149.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, 148.

for the sake of religion and which endeavors utterly for God. It discerns the right way from the wrong and the true from the false. However, one should wage war first with the self and discipline and the character of the self. As the Prophet said, ‘Begin with your own self!’²⁴² This verse implies embarking on what the Prophet called the *jihād al-akbar* (greater struggle), which is the struggle with one’s *nafs*. This struggle is one of love for it seeks to wrest control from the *nafs*, in order for God’s love to assume control. Rūmī states in his *Mathnawī*, “Oh, happy he that wages a holy war (of self-mortification), and puts a restraint upon the body and deals justice (against it), and, in order that he may be delivered from the pain of that world, lays upon himself this pain serving God.”²⁴³ The prerequisite of love is to be delivered from the world, which makes it possible to begin to serve, love, and know God, lest the worship of God be distracted by the material world. In the same vein, in his *Rubā’iyāt* Rūmī advises people to undergo death in order to be reborn. “O you who live by the life of this world: may you be ashamed! Why do you live in such a way? Don’t be without love, so that you won’t be ‘dead.’ Die in love, so that you may remain alive!”²⁴⁴ Here Rūmī is referring to the *hadīth* “Die before you die.” His interpretation equates dying in love with dying to your *nafs*. If you cannot die in love then you cannot live in love. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr, notes, “Rumi had realized that *amors est mors*; through the love of God he had tasted death while physically alive and was a resurrected being shrouded in the light of Divine knowledge when still discoursing and walking among men.”²⁴⁵

²⁴² W. M. Thackston Jr., *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi* (Boston, Massachusetts: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1994), 178.

²⁴³ Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawī of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1926), 349.

²⁴⁴ Ibrahim Gamard, *The Quatrains of Rumi* (San Rafael, CA: Sufi Dari Books, 2008), 562.

²⁴⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Rūmī and the Sufi tradition,” in *Rūmī: In the Light of Eastern and*

Raḥma

The names or attributes of God can be divided into two categories, those of *tanzīh* (incomparability) and those of *tashbīh* (similarity), in other words, attributes of Transcendence and attributes of Immanence. An example of *tanzīh* would be, “Utterly remote is God, in His limitless glory, from anything to which men may ascribe a share in His divinity!” (Qur’ān 59:23). An example of *tashbīh* would be, “We are nearer to him than his jugular vein” (Qur’ān 50:16). Rūmī identifies the category of Transcendence with the name *al-Qahhār* (the Severe) and the category of Immanence with the name *al-Raḥmān*.²⁴⁶ Citing the *ḥadīth*, “My Mercy encompasses My Wrath,” Rūmī relates that the attributes of Immanence, which include *al-Raḥmān*, take precedence over the attributes of Transcendence. Rūmī states in his *Mathnawī*, “Although He has such a mighty and overpowering Wrath, look at the coolness of His Mercy, which is prior to it!”²⁴⁷

Muṣṭafā

The figure of the Prophet is a common fixture in Rūmī’s works. Seyyed Hossein Nasr states, “In fact one of the most sublime and profound descriptions of the personality of the Prophet of Islam is to be found in the *Mathnawī* and the *Dīwān*. If one were to assemble those parts of Rūmī’s works which deal with the Holy Prophet one would come into the possession of an incomparable spiritual biography, which is in fact so much needed today especially in a European language.”²⁴⁸ Following the *Sunna* of the Prophet is made explicit by the Qur’ānic

Western Scholarship, ed. M. Ikram Chaghatai. Lahore, Pakistan: Sang-e-Meel Publications, (Lahore, Pakistan: Sang-e-Meel Publications), 291.

²⁴⁶ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 45.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Rūmī and the Sufi tradition,” in *Rūmī: In the Light of Eastern and Western Scholarship*, ed. M. Ikram Chaghatai. Lahore, Pakistan: Sang-e-Meel Publications, (Lahore, Pakistan: Sang-e-Meel Publications), 285.

verse, “Verily, in the Apostle of God you have a good example for everyone who looks forward (with hope and awe) to God and the Last Day, and remembers God unceasingly” (Qur’ān 33:21). In addition, the Prophet’s wife ‘Ā’isha, when asked about the character of the Prophet said, “His character was the Qur’ān.” Therefore, following his example is tantamount to following God. As Rūmī attests to in his *Mathnawī*, “whatever is said by the speech of Muḥammad, the words are spoken *in reality* by the Ocean.”²⁴⁹ Ibrahim Gamard states, “This affirms that the actions and words of the Prophet were inspired by God.”²⁵⁰ Rūmī also adds the function of the *‘āshiq par excellence* to the Prophet. “The leader of our caravan is Muṣṭafā, glory of the world.”²⁵¹ “Love is the path and road of our Prophet.”²⁵² “The Chief of the Pilgrimage of Love has arrived, the Messenger of the Ka’ba of good fortune.”²⁵³ Rūmī even depicts Muslims as becoming ecstatic from the effects of the Prophet’s actions: “The Prophet’s feet were made swollen from standing *during most* of the night, until the people of Qubā tore *their* shirts because of his wakefulness.”²⁵⁴ Furthermore Rūmī states in his *Dīwān*, “Grab the cloak of Muḥammad the Messenger, *and* hear the call to prayer of Love every moment from the soul of Bilāl.”²⁵⁵ Rūmī regards the *adhān* (call to prayer), which is announced five times daily, as being tantamount to the call of love. This notion is seconded by the *ḥadīth*, “Bilāl, refresh us with the call to prayer!”²⁵⁶ Annemarie Schimmel explains the *adhān* as synonymous with the call of

²⁴⁹ Ibrahim Gamard, *Rumi and Islam: Selections from His Stories, Poems and Discourses* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2004), 153.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁵¹ Reynold A. Nicholson, *Dīwān-e Shams-e Tabrīzī* (Bethesda, MD: Ibex Publishers, 2001), 33.

²⁵² Ibrahim Gamard, *Rumi and Islam: Selections from His Stories, Poems and Discourses* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2004), 151.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ Badī al-Zamān Furūzanfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī* (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1955), number 48.

love, “for ritual prayer reminded the Prophet of his heavenly journey when he could speak to God without a veil.”²⁵⁷ Each of these lines substantiates the claim that the *Sunna* of the Prophet must be followed, which the Qur’ānic verse, “Verily, in the Apostle of God you have a good example,” (Qur’ān 33:21) puts forth.

Rūmī considers the Prophet to be the “prototype of the prototype.”²⁵⁸ He is *al-insān al-kāmil* (the perfected man) because he is so purified of his ego that he reflects God’s attributes like a polished mirror. As Annemarie Schimmel adds, “The state of perfection attained by the Prophet is the highest imaginable; all other prophets and the saints are like rays from his sun.”²⁵⁹ In this vein, Rūmī states in his *Dīwān*, “The Sufi is hanging on to Muḥammad, like Abū Bakr.”²⁶⁰ Abū Bakr was a *ṣaḥābah* (companion) and he had accompanied the Prophet on the *hijra’*. Rūmī likens the *hijra’* to the spiritual path, making it the model of the journey.²⁶¹ During the *hijra’*, the Prophet hid in a cave, along with Abū Bakr, who is also known by the Persian expression, *yār-i ghār* (friend of the cave). Annemarie Schimmel states that this expression, “denotes the closest possible friendship between two men, and according to the tradition of the Naqshbandiyya order, it was in the cave that the Prophet taught Abū Bakr the secrets of silent remembrance of God, the *dhikr-i khafī*.”²⁶² Therefore, the Sufi is like Abū Bakr, who represents the traveler, in attempting to achieve closeness to the Prophet, who is the guide, in order to tread the spiritual path.

²⁵⁷ Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic piety* (Chapel Hill, NC; University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 21.

²⁵⁸ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 61.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ Ibrahim Gamard, *Rumi and Islam: Selections from his Stories, Poems, and Discourses—Annotated & Explained* (Woodstock, Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2004), 171.

²⁶¹ Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic piety* (Chapel Hill, NC; University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 201.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 13.

References to *ḥadīth* can be found throughout Rūmī’s works, two of which being, “I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known, so I created the world,”²⁶³ and “But for thee, I would not have created the celestial spheres.”²⁶⁴ Rūmī states in his *Dīwān*, “God said, ‘O Life of the World, I was a treasure very much hidden, and I wanted that treasure of Goodness and Generosity to become revealed.’”²⁶⁵ Hence, according to Rūmī, God first loved to be known and He manifested the “Hidden Treasure” in order to be known, which results in everything in existence becoming a mirror to the original Love. From these *ḥadīth* Rūmī surmises in his *Fīhi mā Fīhi* that, “It is obvious that Muḥammad was the origin, for God said to him: ‘Were it not for you, I would not have created the heavens.’”²⁶⁶ Rūmī further expounds upon this *ḥadīth* in his *Mathnawī* stating, “Pure Love was paired with Muḥammad—for its sake God said to him, ‘But for thee...’”²⁶⁷

Ma’shūq

The Qur’ān states, “Hence, ask your Sustainer to forgive you your sins, and then turn towards Him in repentance – for, verily, my Sustainer is a dispenser of grace, a fount of love!” (Qur’ān 11:90). From this verse Rūmī concludes that, “Love is uncalculated affection. For that reason it has been said to be in reality the attribute of God and unreal in relation to (man who is) His slave. *He (God) loveth them (yuḥibbuhum)* is the entire sum. Which (of them) is (really the

²⁶³ Badī’ al-Zamān Furūzanfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī* (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1955), number 546.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, number 70.

²⁶⁵ Ibrahim Gamard, *Rumi and Islam: Selections from his Stories, Poems, and Discourses—Annotated & Explained* (Woodstock, Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2004), 131.

²⁶⁶ W. M. Thackston Jr., *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi* (Boston, Massachusetts: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1994), 110.

²⁶⁷ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 198.

subject of the word *yuhibbūnahū*) they love Him?”²⁶⁸ This is Rūmī’s commentary upon the Qur’ānic verse, “O you who have attained to faith! If you ever abandon your faith, God will in time bring forth (in your stead) people whom He loves and who love Him” (Qur’ān 5:54). Similarly, there is the *ḥadīth*, “Whoever is for God, God is for him,” which Rūmī explains in his *Mathnawī* means, “When out of yearning, you are ‘for God,’ then God will be for you. For ‘God is for him.’”²⁶⁹ Rūmī believes that since God is the source of all, He is love, and all love emanates from Him. God commands mankind to love Him, reminding mankind that He loves them, precipitating their love for Him, with His love for them. “Whosoever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, I shall be at war with him. My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks.”²⁷⁰ Rūmī renders this *ḥadīth* as, “He said to him: I am your tongue, your eye. I am your senses, your contentment and anger. Go, be detached! That one who hears through Me and sees through Me is you. Not only are you the possessor of the secret, but you are the secret too.”²⁷¹ This is the goal of reaching the beloved, which causes the lover and beloved to be one will.

²⁶⁸ Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawī of Jalālu’ddin Rūmī*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1926), 221.

²⁶⁹ Javad Nurbakhsh, *Traditions of the Prophet*, vol. 1 (New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1983), 67.

²⁷⁰ Abū Zakarīā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Al-Nawawī’s 40 Ḥadīth*, trans. Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (New Delhi, India; Adam Publishers, 2003), 118.

²⁷¹ Javad Nurbakhsh, *Traditions of the Prophet*, vol. 1 (New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1983), 15.

In his *Fīhi mā Fīhi* Rūmī links the beloved with peace: “The beloved is called *dil-ārām* because the heart finds peace through the beloved.”²⁷² Thus, the beloved is the one who gives the heart repose. Conversely, separation from the beloved leaves a person’s heart in chaos, in which there can be no peace: “It is right *that* your hands, feet, and eyes are two, but it is false that heart and beloved are two. The *human* beloved is a pretext, and the *real* beloved is God.”²⁷³ Rūmī distinguishes God as *ma’shūq*, however, Rūmī, also employs the technique describing the *ma’shūq* by its derivative, one of which being the beauty of women. The derivative beauty of women, does not distract from the Beloved, rather it brings a person closer to God, as evidenced by the *ḥadīth*, “Three things of this world of yours were made lovable to me—women, perfume, and the coolness of my eye (as) was placed in prayer.”²⁷⁴ Rūmī solidifies the importance of women stating in his *Mathnawī*, “She is the radiance of God, she is not your beloved. She is the Creator—you could say that she is not created.”²⁷⁵ William Chittick adds, “the forms of women manifest Gentleness and the serene receptivity and beauty of the soul at peace with God; in them, God’s own Beauty reveals itself clearly. Both the *Mathnawī* and particularly the *Dīwān* are full of verses celebrating woman as the image of the divine Beloved.”²⁷⁶ Rūmī believes that the derivative beauty is beneficial, for it transforms a person into having love for God. “Consider it a blessing that you have suffered loss in the lane of love: leave aside derivative love, the goal is love for God. The warrior gives a wooden sword

²⁷² W. M. Thackston Jr., *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi* (Boston, Massachusetts: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1994), 66.

²⁷³ Ibrahim Gamard, *The Quatrains of Rumi* (San Rafael, CA: Sufi Dari Books, 2008), 372.

²⁷⁴ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, bab. 3, *ḥadīth* #128, 199, 285 (Lebanon: Mu'asasat al-Risalah).

²⁷⁵ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 169. Cf. Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawī of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1926), 133.

²⁷⁶ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 168.

to his son so that he may master it and take a sword into battle. Love for a human being is that wooden sword. When the trail reaches its end, the object of love will be the All-Merciful.”²⁷⁷ This derivative love is classified as *‘ishq-i majāzī* (metaphorical love). According to Rūmī, its validity depends on its significance of serving as a bridge, which leads a person to *‘ishq-i ḥaqīqī* (real love). This is best surmised in Rūmī’s *Dīwān*, “Imitation in this journey is like a cane in your hand, but then the Way’s splendor makes it into an all-conquering sword.”²⁷⁸ Through the effects of the derivative love, the Real love becomes manifest, pointing one ultimately toward God.

‘Āshiq

Rūmī was of the opinion that human beings possess a high rank, “a rank which he tends to forget and which to rediscover he is called to leave the veils of the body, the carnal soul, and the partial intellect until he reaches the wonderful world of the heart, which reveals to him God in His beauty and love.”²⁷⁹ Rūmī believes this rank to be forgotten a result of humanity’s *ghafla* (forgetfulness). Rūmī believes that human beings are an *‘āshiq* of God. In his *Rubā‘iyāt* (Quatrains) Rūmī states, “We are lovers of Love; but the (*common*) ‘Muslim’ is different. We are feeble ants but Solomon is different. Ask us *about our* sallow cheeks’ and torn livers. The market of the butchers is different.”²⁸⁰ Rūmī differentiates between an *‘āshiq* and an ordinary Muslim. Rūmī views the ordinary Muslim as being primarily concerned with the opposing concepts of belief and unbelief, whereas Rūmī views the *‘āshiq* as the Muslim who has actualized their potential. As Ibrahim Gamard explains the differentiation thus, “while they

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 206.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 131.

²⁷⁹ Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A study of the works of Jalāloddin Rumi* (London, East-West Publications, 1978), 279.

²⁸⁰ Ibrahim Gamard, *The Quatrains of Rumi* (San Rafael, CA: Sufi Dari Books, 2008), 406.

have the same Islamic foundation, the presence of God's reality is so evident to them that mental concepts about belief or unbelief as to God's experience can seem irrelevant."²⁸¹ Rūmī adds in his *Rubā'iyāt*, "The lover wanders around the dew and the springtime. The ascetic goes about *with* rosaries and bowing. He's entangled with *cravings* for bread; the other *desires* the 'water bank'. This one has been 'drinking' and that one lamenting *his* hunger."²⁸² Here Rūmī's differentiation between the *āshiq* and the ordinary Muslim, is further elaborated upon, comparing the *zāhid* (ascetic) to the ordinary Muslim. This is a curious association for the *zāhid* practices strict self-denial as a means of personal and spiritual discipline. However, from Rūmī's perspective, the *zāhid* (ascetic) in this verse is depicted as someone absorbed in outward devotion to God, while inward devotion to God is absent. This in contrast to the *āshiq* who is dedicated both outwardly and inwardly to God. The "water bank" symbolizes *dhawq* (taste; immediate awareness of God) therefore the *āshiq* desires *dhawq*, while the *zāhid* desires food.

Rūmī begins his *Mathnawī* with the lamentation of the reed. "Listen to the reed how it tells a tale, complaining of separations—Saying, "Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed, my lament hath caused man and woman to moan."²⁸³ The reed expresses a two-fold symbolism, which in effect are one in the same. The reed is both mankind and the lover. Coming into this world mankind became separated from God, as the lover became separated from their beloved. Rūmī states in his *Fīhi mā Fīhi* (Discourses), "Lovers have heartaches that cannot be cured by any medicine, not by sleeping, or wandering or by eating but only by

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid, 291.

²⁸³ Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawī of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1926), 5.

seeing the beloved.”²⁸⁴ What Rūmī means here is that the person pines to return to their beloved and that this state will not subside until they are united. What causes the lover to be drawn to their beloved, and how is separation so unbearable? Rūmī explains this as, “If the heart is totally absorbed, then everything else is obliterated by it.”²⁸⁵ In other words, the lover becomes numb to everything else, and his entire focus is upon their beloved. “A corporeal being has such power that love for it can put a man into a state wherein he does not consider himself as separate from that being.”²⁸⁶ Thus, if the beloved is no longer seen as separate from the lover than how can one remain separate from themselves. Rūmī compares this to the state of *fanā’* (passing away in God, annihilation): “The saints’ ‘absorption’ is such that God causes them to fear Him with a fear different from the fear humans have of lions, tigers and tyrants. He reveals to them that fear is from God, security is from God, pleasure and ease are from God, and the necessities of day-to-day life are from God.”²⁸⁷ This is true love, which is complete and total submission to the Divine will. The Sufi sees only one, knows only one and loves only one. This One is God and He is the object of their love, the *ma’shūq*. As a result of the Sufi reaching this realization they become completely absorbed in their Beloved and they yearn to reach their beloved. As Rūmī states in his *Dīwān*, “Oh, union with Thee is the root of all joys! For there are all forms, but that is meaning.”²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ W. M. Thackston Jr., *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi* (Boston, Massachusetts: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1994), 232.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 44.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 45.

²⁸⁷ W. M. Thackston Jr., *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi* (Boston, Massachusetts: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1994), 46.

²⁸⁸ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 246.

The image of Yūsuf can be found throughout Rūmī's poetry. In his *Dīwān*, Rūmī places Yūsuf in the context of an *'āshiq*. "Zulaykhā pursued Joseph but God's love caught him."²⁸⁹ This is Rūmī's interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses, "Said he: 'O my Sustainer! Prison is more desirable to me than (compliance with) what these women invite me to: for, unless Thou turn away their guile from me, I might yet yield to their allure and become one of those who are unaware (of right and wrong). And his Sustainer responded to his prayer, and freed him from the threat of their guile: verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-knowing.'" (Qur'ān 12:33-34). Yūsuf prayed to God, "O my Sustainer! Prison is more desirable to me" using the superlative *aḥabba*, which is better rendered as, more loved. His prayer represents his complete devotion toward God, suffering hardship on account of his love for God. Rūmī believed God reciprocated this love, as Rūmī depicts the latter Qur'ānic verse corresponds to God response to Yūsuf's prayer, "God's love caught him."

Madhhab-i 'ishq

Rūmī's integration of *'ishq* creates a *madhhab-i 'ishq*, from which identifies the path of God as the path of love. William Chittick states, "Rūmī's Religion of Love is a message to man from his True Beloved, reminding him that he is the object of God's words, 'But for thee...'"²⁹⁰ For Rūmī love is not just a theory that is posited, rather it is a practice and a realization.²⁹¹ "Oh you who have listened to talk of Love, behold Love! What are words in the ears compared to vision in the eyes?"²⁹² Love is not contained within Rūmī's or any others words, rather it is an experience. Rūmī believes that love for God is a belief system and an entire way of life. God

²⁸⁹ John Renard, *All the King's Falcon: Rumi on Prophets and Revelation* (Lahore, Pakistan: Suhail Academy, 2001), 62.

²⁹⁰ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 334.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 212.

²⁹² *Ibid*, 195.

remains at the center and He is the ultimate goal. Thus, all talk of beloved refers to God and cannot be confused with other than God. In his *Mathnawī* Rūmī states, “The spiritual community of love is apart from all religions. The lovers' (only) community and path (*madhhab*) is God.”²⁹³ Rūmī’s assertion of a *madhhab-i ‘ishq* (path of love) does not supersede Islam; rather it belied a development of emphasis upon ‘*ishq* from within the Islamic tradition. As Omid Safi adds, “It is important to point out that these Sufis were not abrogating the established theological and legal schools, nor were they dismissing their relevance. In fact, many of the Sufis we are about to discuss were themselves important members of these other ‘schools’ as well.”²⁹⁴ So if God is the *ma’shūq* how does one reach God? Rūmī identifies ‘*ishq* as the path toward God and as previously mentioned, the guide as the Prophet: “Know now that Muḥammad is the guide. Until a man first comes to Muḥammad he cannot reach unto Us.”²⁹⁵ Hence, the path of love, is the path of God. Rūmī explains this further stating in his *Mathnawī*, “The Religious Law is like a candle showing the way. Unless you gain possession of the candle, there is no wayfaring; and when you have come on to the way, your wayfaring is the path; and when you have reached the journey’s end, that is the Truth.”²⁹⁶ Rūmī illustrates the *madhhab-i ‘ishq* as being bound by the *Sharīah*. The *Sharīah* is the circle, which encompasses all of life. At the center of this circle lies the *ḥaqīqah* (the inner Truth; Reality). The *Sharīah* signifies the first level of the spiritual path. One must adhere to these laws, which were proscribed by God. The *ṭarīqah* (way) is the radius, which is the journey to God. The *ṭarīqah* signifies the second

²⁹³ Omid Safi, “On the ‘Path of Love’ Towards the Divine: A Journey with Muslim Mystics,” *Sufi* 78, (Winter 09/Spring 10): 28. Cf. Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawī of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1926), 312.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ A. J. Arberry, *Discourses of Rūmī* (New York: Samuel Weiser Inc., 1972), 232.

²⁹⁶ Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawī of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*, vol. 4 (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1926), 3.

level of the spiritual path. The radius is that which connects the outer circle to the central point. Hence, a person undertakes the *ṭarīqah* in order to reach the *ḥaqīqah*.²⁹⁷

Conclusion

As William Chittick states, all of Rūmī's works deal with "Love's branches and ramifications."²⁹⁸ Rūmī's semantic field of love builds upon Ḥallāj's formulation, which identifies 'ishq as part of the Divine Essence, shifting the focus-word, from *maḥabba* to 'ishq, in the semantic field of love in Islam. From this shift, Rūmī develops his semantic field of love constructing a *madhhab-i 'ishq*, based upon the Islamic textual sources. For Rūmī, God is the *ma'shūq*, while the Prophet is the *'āshiq par excellence*. From these assertions Rūmī's *madhhab-i 'ishq*, provides an entire worldview imbued with Divine love. This permeation establishes a *madhhab-i 'ishq*, which Rūmī extrapolates from the Islamic textual sources, presenting 'ishq as the focus word from which other key words such as, *raḥma*, *shukr*, and *maḥabba* have relational meaning. This semantic field of love with 'ishq as the focus word will continue to be developed by later generations of Sufis all over the Islamic world, especially in the Indian subcontinent which inherited the Sufi literature of the Persianate realm, further illustrating its being synonymous with the path of God.

²⁹⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2000) 122.

²⁹⁸ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 194.

CHAPTER 7: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh: *Safar al-‘ishq* (Journey of Love)

The Indian subcontinent experienced the second wave of Islamic expansion, inheriting an influx of Islamic intellectual development from the first wave of Islamic expansion in Persia and parts of Central Asia. One such development was the *madhhab-i ‘ishq*. Omid Safi states, “As a general rule, the madhhab-i ‘ishq developed in the Persian and Persianate regions. Its teachings were easily passed on to the emerging Urdu and Turkish literary traditions.”²⁹⁹ The *madhhab-i ‘ishq*, was identified as being synonymous with the path of God. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh exemplifies one such Indian subcontinent Sufi poet, who continues the development of the *madhhab-i ‘ishq*. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s work *Safar al-‘ishq* serves as an allegory for the stages of the path to God. The principal element of Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s semantic field of love is based upon the term *‘ishq*, the basis of which can be articulated in describing *‘ishq* as a journey from *majāzī* to *ḥaqīqī*. *Safar al-‘ishq* illustrates the importance of human love in transforming Muslims into having love for God, which is the primary aim of Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh.³⁰⁰

Life

Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh al-Qadirī (1246-1324/1830-1907) is a 19th century Sufi *shaykh* and Punjābī poet. He was born in the village Chak Tākṛā of Kharī Sharīf near the town of Mīrpur in the Jhelum area of Kashmīr (present-day Azad Jammu & Kashmir). Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh descended from a long line of Sufi *shuyūkh* (spiritual masters). His great-

²⁹⁹ Omid Safi, “On the ‘Path of Love’ Towards the Divine: A Journey with Muslim Mystics,” *Sufi* 78, (Winter 09/Spring 10): 25.

³⁰⁰ All translations are my own, except stated otherwise.

grandfather was Miyān Dīn Muḥammad, his grandfather was Miyān Jewān and his father was Miyān Shams al-Dīn (d. 1263/1845); each being *shaykh* of the Qadirī *ṭarīqah*, in Kashmīr, during their lifetime.³⁰¹ Miyān Shams al-Dīn was the *sajjādanishīn* (the one who sits on the carpet, the principal successor) of Pīr-e Shāh Ghāzī Qalandar Damrī Wālā (d. 1151/1739).³⁰²

There has been some discussion about the ancestry of Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh and it is believed that his lineage traces back to ‘Umar al-Fārūq, a *ṣaḥābah* and the second rightly guided *khalīfah*.³⁰³ Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh had two brothers, the elder brother was Miyān Bahāwal Bakhsh, and his younger brother was Miyān ‘Alī Bakhsh. In the village of Kharī Sharīf is where Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh spent his formative years, initially studying at home with his father. After this initial tutorial, he and his elder brother, Miyān Bahāwal Bakhsh, attended a *madrasah* in the nearby village of Samwāl Sharīf, under the guidance of Hāfiẓ Muḥammad ‘Alī. At the *madrasah* both Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh and his brother studied the exoteric Islamic sciences, Qur’ān, *tafsīr* (Qur’ānic exegesis), *ḥadīth*, *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *manṭiq* (logic), and *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), in addition to *naẓm* (poetic form) and *nasr* (prose).³⁰⁴ The *madrasah* was also home to Hāfiẓ Muḥammad ‘Alī’s brother Hāfiẓ Nāsir Ṣāhib Samwāl, who was a *majdhūb* (one who is drawn by God; a mystic who advances without personal effort). Hāfiẓ Nāsir Ṣāhib Samwāl would spend times in a *chilla* (the forty-day spiritual retreat) where he would sing to himself. He was aware that both Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh and his brother had beautiful voices and he would ask them to recite the story of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā written by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jamī (d. 898/1492). When Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh and his brother recited

³⁰¹ Miyān Zafar Maqbūl, *Sayf al-Mulūk: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Lahore, Pakistan: Maktaba Dānyāl Publishers, 2002), 1059.

³⁰² Ibid, 1060. Cf. Abū al-Kāshif Qādirī, *Sharh-e Kalām-e Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh: Sayf al-Mulūk-O-Badī al-Jamāl* (Lahore, Pakistan: Mushtāq Bookcorner, 2009), 1104.

³⁰³ Ibid, 1059.

³⁰⁴ Ibid, 1060.

the story, Hāfiẓ Nāṣir Ṣāhib Samwāl would cry profusely and fall into spiritual intoxication. Hāfiẓ Nāṣir Ṣāhib Samwāl would beg Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh to recite it again and again. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh agreed but under one condition, for Hāfiẓ Nāṣir Ṣāhib Samwāl to make *du‘ā* (supplication) that Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh would be able to memorize all scholarly and non-scholarly knowledge. Hāfiẓ Nāṣir Ṣāhib Samwāl became very excited and told Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh and his brother that “all the knowledge will be revealed to you.”³⁰⁵

At the age of 15, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh was appointed by his father to be his *sajjādanishīn*. His father was very ill and before he passed he gathered all his students including his sons, to announce a successor. Miyān Shams al-Dīn appointed his son Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh explaining to all that no other was worthy of this privilege. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh objected to the appointment on the grounds that he was not worthy and that he would not allow his elder brother, Miyān Bahāwal Bakhsh to be deprived of the honor. Hence, Miyān Bahāwal Bakhsh became the immediate successor of his father, who would be followed by Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh. Miyān Shams al-Dīn passed away soon after and Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh lived in his father’s room for four years, out of respect for his father.

At the age of 19 Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh abandoned his home and lived in a grass hut in the surrounding area of the *darbār* (Sufi shrine). Here he engaged in intense worship and rigorous spiritual discipline and after a period of time the inner secrets of the Qādirī *tariqah* were unveiled and God bestowed *karāmāt* (charismatic gifts) upon him. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh began to wear just a *dhotī* (a cloth worn around the waist passing between the legs and fastened behind) and a *kambal* (blanket).

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 1060-1061.

After 14 years in the *khānqāh* (Sufi residential facility) he began to wander the desert. One day while wandering, an old figure like a light form appeared and began to speak Persian with him. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh understood Persian and understood this man to be a *walī Allāh* (a friend of God). The man took a branch and told Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh that he could teach him how to turn this branch into gold. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh said he did not care for gold, but wanted to make his heart a shining gold. The old man laughed at this and left. Another day a man again appeared and said that he was from Kandahār, and that he would teach Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh how to tame all the violent animals of the jungle, and that he could make the lion tame enough to ride. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh told the man that his father had many horses, and that he preferred riding horses, not lions. He then told the man that he was only interested in a formula that would tame his *nafs*.³⁰⁶

Having completed his formal education with Hāfiẓ Muḥammad ‘Alī, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh began his search for the esoteric knowledge.³⁰⁷ He wandered the jungle in search of a *pīr* (spiritual master) who could guide him in his search, while busying himself with intense worship and spiritual discipline. After some time he became depressed and began to doubt himself, because his goal was unaccomplished. He then performed the *istakhāra* (the prayer of guidance), after which he he fell asleep. In his dream a man appeared and took him by his arm and told him, “I am your Pīr, and you are my murīd.” This figure identified himself as Pīr-e Shāh Ghāzī Damrī Wālā, the *pīr* of his father. Pīr-e Shāh Ghāzī told Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh to go to Kharvṛī Sharīf and find Sa’in Ghulām Muḥammad, who was a Qadirī *shaykh* and a

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 1062.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 1061.

spiritual disciple of Pīr-e Shāh Ghāzī, and to take *bay'a* (an oath of allegiance) with him.³⁰⁸ This was Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh's formal initiation with a *murshid* (one who directs).

By the time of his initiation, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh had become a *mujāhid* (one who struggles against his ego-self), for he had given his self to God alone. He would not eat for days and would forget to drink because he was so engaged in his intense worship and spiritual discipline. People were surprised at his appearance, and no one would talk to him because they knew he was lost in his state. After progressing upon the path, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh became more interested in poetry. His first poetic work was a *qasīdah* (ode; medium-length mono-rhyming poem often panegyric in tone) in honor of his *pīr*, and would recite this between the *maghrib* and '*ishā*' prayers.³⁰⁹ In 1298/1880 Miyān Bahāwal Bakhsh passed away and Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh became the *pīr* of the Qadirī *ṭarīqah* of his region. It was from this time forward that Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh began to instruct disciples. For his whole life he would fully use poetry to spread the message of Islam.³¹⁰ Although his brothers were also Sufis, he was more spiritually inclined. He was so occupied with spreading Islam, that he never married. After spending years dedicating his life to Islam and its propagation Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh passed away on the 7th of the Islamic month, Dhū al-Hijjah 1324/1907.

Works

Like other Punjābī Sufi poets, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh used Punjābī as a means of explaining Islam.³¹¹ He was not only a poet, but was also an accomplished Sufi *shaykh* of the

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 1062.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ For a survey of Punjābī Sufi poetry see Annemarie Schimmel, *As Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam* (Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2001).

Qādirī *tarīqah*.³¹² He was fluent in Punjābī, Urdu, Persian, and Arabic, yet his works were written primarily in Punjābī.³¹³ Punjābī is an Indo-Aryan language that is spoken by inhabitants of the Punjāb region, which is in eastern Pakistan and North-western India.³¹⁴ He has written numerous works which include the *Sīharfī*, *Bārān Māh*, *Sohnī Mahīnwāl*, *Tuḥfah-i Mīrān*, *Qīṣṣe Shaykh Ṣun‘ān*, *Nīrang-i ‘Ishq*, *Qīṣṣe Shāh-i Mansūr*, *Shīrīn Farhād*, *Tuḥfah-i Rasūliya*, *Gulzār-i Faqr*, *Sakhī Khawāṣ Khān*, *Mīrza Ṣāhibān*, *Qīṣṣe Sasui Panūn*, *Hidāyat al-Muslimīn*, *Panj Ganj*, *Tazkira Muqīmī*, *Hīr Rānjhā*. In addition, he wrote a commentary upon the *Qasīdat al-Burda* of Imām al-Busayrī.

The *Sīharfī* is one of his earliest writings and contained only eight pages. *Bārān Māh* is a work about Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s feelings about the different months of the year. *Sohnī Mahīnwāl* completed in 1857, *Qīṣṣe Sasui Panūn*, *Mīrza Ṣāhibān*, and *Hīr Rānjhā* are all romantic tales.³¹⁵ *Shīrīn Farhād* completed in 1860 is another romantic tale, originally written in Persian by the famous Persian poets Niẓāmī Ganjavī and Amīr Khusro, which Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh translated into Punjābī. *Tuḥfah-i Mīrān* is a hagiographic work extolling the virtues, and creed of the founder of the Qādirīya order, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166). *Qīṣṣe Shaykh Ṣun‘ān* completed between 1857-1858 is an adaptation of the character Shaykh Sun‘ān found in the *Mantiq al-tayr* (The Conference of the Birds) by Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d. c. 627/1230). *Nīrang-i ‘Ishq* completed between 1859-1860 is a work originally written in Persian by Mawlānā

³¹² Ibid, 1064.

³¹³ Ibid. Cf. Saeed Ahmed notes that all of Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s works were written in Punjābī except for one work in Persian, *Tazkira Muqīmī*, see Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 8.

³¹⁴ Punjābī has two major written scripts, *Shāhmūkhī*, and *Gurmūkhī*. *Shāhmūkhī*, which literally means “from the King’s mouth” is a local variant of the Arabic script. The style of script *Shāhmūkhī* is based upon is the *Nasta‘liq* style of Persian script. *Gurmūkhī* script is a part of the Brahmic or Indic family, which is not a variant of the Arabic script.

³¹⁵ These were Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s versions of the stories, which have been written by numerous poets before.

Ghanīmat Kunjāhī, which Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh translated into Punjābī.³¹⁶ *Sakhī Khawāṣ Khān* is a biographical work of one of the sons of Sher Shāh Sūrī (d. 1545), the conqueror and emperor of the Sūrī empire (1540-1545). It is unknown whether *Gulzār-i Faqr* was written by Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh or translated from another source.³¹⁷ *Tuḥfah-i Rasūliya* is a work about the miracles of the Prophet Muḥammad. This work is from a famous work *Ma'arij al-Nubūwwa* by Mullāh Mu'īn Kāshfī that he translated into Punjābī. *Hidāyat al-Muslimīn* is a refutation of the Wahhābī sect, in which he deconstructed the creed of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792). *Qiṣṣe Shāh-i Manṣūr* is a work detailing the life and teachings of Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), the controversial figure of early Sufism. *Tazkira Muqīmī* is another hagiographic work, which details the Qādirī *silsilah* (chain of transmission) of Pīr-e Shāh Ghāzī. *Panj Ganj* is an original work in which he talks about the five treasures of separation, annihilation, creed, love, and Unity of Being.³¹⁸ All of these works demonstrate the twin achievements of Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh of adapting, translating and creating literary works as well as expounding upon Sufism.

There had been several Punjābī Sufi poets before Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh, of whom his poetry benefited from.³¹⁹ However, a point of divergence can be seen in the metaphors and similes in the language he uses within his poetry. The metaphors and similes he employs mostly deal with the rustic life of the people of Punjāb. Christopher Shackle notes that Miyān

³¹⁶ See Christopher Shackle, "Persian Poetry and Qādirī Sufism in Late Mughal India: Ghanīmat Kunjāhī and his mathnawī *Nayrang-i 'Ishq*," in *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 3, *Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501-1750)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn and D. Morgan (Oxford: OneWorld Publications, 2000), 435–463.

³¹⁷ Miyān Ṣafar Maqbūl, *Sayf al-Mulūk: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Lahore, Maktaba Dānyāl Publishers, 2002), 1067.

³¹⁸ *Ibid*, 1067.

³¹⁹ Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh often cites other Punjābī poets in his works, such as Bābā Farīd Ganj-i Shakar, Bulleh Shāh, Waris Shāh and Sulṭān Bahū.

Muḥammad Bakhsh's poetry, "often draw on his extended direct knowledge of many features of human life, hence the many references to natural phenomena, or to such human arts as hunting, fighting, feasting or music."³²⁰ The images his words evoke are scenes that resonate with the differing levels of Punjābī society. "Life is trapped in agonies like sugarcane in the crushing roller. O Muḥammad! In this condition it is impossible for the juice to withhold."³²¹ Sugarcane is an industrial and cash crop for the Indian subcontinent. Sugarcane is tightly bound, with the outer shell protecting the juice that it holds. During the extraction process, the juice is extracted from the sugarcane, for the juice cannot withstand the pressure from the roller. In this verse, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh identifies the sugarcane as the body, and the juice as the soul. When a person dies, the soul leaves the body. Even though the juice wants to remain within the sugarcane it cannot for it is being forced out, by something beyond its control.

Another example of imagery that Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh employs is that of the kikar tree. The kikar tree is a small thorny tree that is a part of the Acacia genus, and is indigenous to the Indian subcontinent. "No one has ever gained goodness from the proximity (closeness) of the mean. If you wind grapevine around an acacia tree, every bunch of grapes will be pricked (wounded)."³²² The imagery of the grapevine wound around a kikar tree is a metaphor for warning against associating with people who do not have your best interest in mind, for, they will hinder your goals. This serves as an injunction for *ṣuḥbah* (good company) with fellow travelers along the *ṭarīqah*. As Jean-Louis Michon states, "The companionship of

³²⁰ Christopher Shackle, "The Story of Sayf al-Muluk in South Asia," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 17, no. 2 (2007): 128.

³²¹ Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 89.

³²² *Ibid*, 19.

these brothers gives numerous opportunities for mutual encouragement in the devout life and the practice of virtues.”³²³

Safar al-‘ishq

Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s magnum opus is *Safar al-‘Ishq*. This work is written in the *mathnawī* poetic form, which literally means rhyming couplets. The *mathnawī* poetic form consists of an indefinite number of couplets with a rhyme scheme of aa/bb/cc. *Safar al-‘Ishq* consists of 9,249 couplets.³²⁴ Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh began this work at the behest of his elder brother, Miyān Bahāwal Bakhsh, and completing it around 1279/1862-1863, at the age of 33.³²⁵ *Safar al-‘Ishq* is written in the *Mājhī* dialect of Punjābī. This dialect is primarily spoken in the cities of Lahore, Amritsar, and Gurdaspur. It is a mixture of Punjābī dialects, whose mixture, according to Miyān Ṣafar Maqbūl, “resembles a river with different canals flowing into, which creates this mixture.”³²⁶

Safar al-‘Ishq became publicly known as *Sayf al-Mulūk* after the main character. This work is an epic poem about a prince Sayf al-Mulūk who embarks on a journey from Egypt for his beloved, the princess Badī‘ al-Jamāl who resides in Russia. The journey of the prince Sayf al-Mulūk to his beloved Badī‘ al-Jamāl parallels the spiritual path of man to God. Allusions to the spiritual path can be found throughout the story. The story is a journey from *‘ishq-i majāzī* to *‘ishq-i ḥaqīqī*. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh uses the characters and their story to discuss his

³²³ Jean Louis-Michon, “The Spiritual Practices of Sufism,” *Encyclopedia of Islamic Spirituality*, vol. 1, *Foundations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 273 (Lahore, Pakistan: Shirkat Printing Press, 2000).

³²⁴ Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 8.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, 6.

³²⁶ Miyān Ṣafar Maqbūl, *Sayf al-Mulūk: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Lahore, Maktaba Dānyāl Publishers, 2002), 1073.

own state, which is *'ishq-i ḥaqīqī* (real love) between him and God.³²⁷ He speaks of what is in his heart while using the name of Sayf al-Mulūk.³²⁸ In fact, he uses *'ishq-i majāzī* as a veil for *'ishq-i ḥaqīqī*, so as not to disclose the true reality of the story to everyone.³²⁹ Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh uses the tactic of cloaking the Sacred by the profane in order to not confuse or overwhelm the common people. The story is written for everyone, not a select group, therefore Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh allows the reader to derive whatever pleasure and meaning they may acquire from this work. Moreover, a reader could either comprehend, and appreciate the work on the profane level, or could penetrate the veils and see that *'ishq-i ḥaqīqī* lies behind the words.

God as source of *'ishq*

In the very first couplet Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh asks God for blessings for his work, employing the term *rahma*. “Send the rain of your graciousness and swell with life my drought-stricken garden — impregnating with fruition the saplings of my aspirations. And fill the fruits with your own creative energies so that they remove the inner ills of those who take them. Make my garden the garden of eternal spring, an inexhaustible source of food for the hungry millions.”³³⁰ Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh opens his magnum opus with this *munājāt* (intimate prayer).³³¹ In this opening couplet Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh asks God to aid, both

³²⁷ Ibid, 1073.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid, 1086.

³³⁰ Najm Hosain Syed, *Recurrent Patterns in Punjabi Poetry* (Lahore: Majlis Shah Hussain, 1968), 60. Cf. Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 11-12.

³³¹ *Munājāt* is derived from the Arabic verbal root, *najā*, which literally means to be saved, rescued, delivered. *Munājāh* is the active participle of the third form of the verb *najā*, and it denotes secret conversations; dialogue with God, fervent prayer. *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J.M. Cowan (Urbana, IL: Spoken Languages Services, 1994), 1110.

his creative will and its manifestation for the benefit of others. Najm Hosain Syed, a contemporary Punjābī poet, playwright and literary critic notes, “Muḥammad Bakhsh initially prays for a personal fulfillment through creative expansion he links that fulfillment with the social purpose of his work.”³³² Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh invokes the aspect *rah̄ma*, which he identifies as instrumental to achieve his two-pronged initiative, personal fulfillment, and to convey a remedy for the inner ills that ail humankind. Thus, the concept of *rah̄ma* serves as the foundation from which the entire story, and one’s spiritual journey is built upon. In another verse Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh relates the role a person of compassion has toward others. “The words of compassionate people stand witness to their personality. The handkerchief filled with flowers emits fragrance.”³³³ *Dardmandān* literally means “those who have pain,” and hence, compassionate or kindhearted people. *Dard* is pain, ache, sympathy, pity, while *dardmand* is an adjective that means afflicted, compassionate. In this verse Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh likens to the people who possess *rah̄ma* to flowers who emit fragrance, their actions and words are scented with the fragrance of *rah̄ma*, which permeates their relationships with the rest of creation.

Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh recognizes God as the ultimate source. “All problems are solved by remembering His Name. If He is gracious, He turns the withered into green. And if He is wrathful, He blazes the green. (He sets fire to the green).”³³⁴ “First, all praise is for Allah, who is the Lord of all. He who recites his Name never will lose in any field!”³³⁵ He always

³³² Najm Hosain Syed, *Recurrent Patterns in Punjabi Poetry* (Lahore: Majlis Shah Hussain, 1968), 61.

³³³ Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 45.

³³⁴ Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 48.

³³⁵ Miyān Zafar Maqbūl, *Sayf al-Mulūk: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Lahore, Maktaba Dānyāl Publishers, 2002), 8.

makes it evident that God is the beginning, “O God! Nothing comes to my mind but to take shelter behind you. The lamp You (Almighty) kindle can never be put out by anyone.”³³⁶ He also says, “O God! Kindle the lamp of ‘ishq and enlighten my heart. Let the light of my heart spread all over the Earth.”³³⁷ This line is interesting for Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s use of the word *chirāgh*. A *chirāgh* is commonly defined as a lamp. However, it literally means a powerful light that illuminates. Conversely, *bey chirāgh*, *bey* being the Persian, Urdu and Punjābī equivalent for the English without, means dark, abandoned, deserted, and desolate.³³⁸ Thus, ‘*ishq* is the lamp that is so powerful that it illuminates the heart. Then Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh asks God to spread that Divine light to the rest of the world. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh is asking God to cleanse himself and purify his heart so that he may be able to spread the message of ‘*ishq* to all the world. Najm Hosain Syed adds, “He does not wish to impose a way of thinking or to rouse others to the necessity of conformity. His concern is to share with others his own intensity of experience, an intensity that can result in an inner transformation.”³³⁹ This inner transformation is the sole purpose of the entire work. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh intends, through the medium of poetry to convey to the people the journey of ‘*ishq* as a transformation to the love of God.

Ma‘shūq

Throughout his work Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh propagates the concept of *wahdat al-wujūd* (unity of Being; the ontological oneness of all things). He explains this by saying, “When a drop falls into the river it loses itself and it becomes the river. Whoever loses himself he

³³⁶ Ibid, 66.

³³⁷ Ibid, 5.

³³⁸ Raza-ul-Haq Badakhshani, *GEM Practical Combined Dictionary: Part II Urdu to English* (Lahore, Pakistan: Azhar Publishers, 2003), 270.

³³⁹ Najm Hosain Syed, *Recurrent Patterns in Punjabi Poetry* (Lahore: Majlis Shah Hussain, 1968), 62.

becomes whatever that is.”³⁴⁰ Whenever a thing is absorbed it ceases to be separate, it becomes that which absorbed it. Likewise, mankind too will become absorbed, in the Creator. When a person dies they return to God, the person’s relative existence, which they experienced during life, is no more, ending their relative existence.

For Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh, God is *ma’shūq*. In this vein Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh speaks of the *‘āshiq* longing to reunite with their *ma’shūq*. “Hear from the wooden flute the grief of its separation from the tree. O Muḥammad! We all have to face the same fate of separation.”³⁴¹ This verse is reminiscent to the story of the reed, which was written by Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, in his *Mathnawī*. The sound the flute creates is the sorrow, which is caused by its separation. Hence, any thing, which is separated from its origin, pines to return. The grief of the wooden flute symbolizes the human state for we are in this world temporarily until we return to our origin. This states parallels the lover who longs to return to their union with their beloved. For how can a lover find ease in separation from the object of his love? The lover cannot find ease in separation from their beloved because it is a part of them that is missing.

‘Āshiq

Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh reserves a special place for the Prophet, as the *‘āshiq par excellence*, as his many verses emphasize attest to. “How can I laud you? O best of all creation! Millions of blessings upon you! Billions of salutations upon you.”³⁴² “I have no words of praise.

³⁴⁰ Miyān Ṣafar Maqbūl, *Sayf al-Mulūk: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Lahore, Maktaba Dānyāl Publishers, 2002), 1093. Cf. Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 56.

³⁴¹ Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 103.

³⁴² Miyān Ṣafar Maqbūl, *Sayf al-Mulūk: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Lahore, Maktaba Dānyāl Publishers, 2002), 21.

Commensurate with your status, ‘Ta Ha’ and ‘Ya Sin.’ The Lord calls you with these qualities!”³⁴³ “‘But for thee’ is enough praise for thee. Which qualities of thine can I add? Millions of blessings be upon you and upon your Progeny and Companions!”³⁴⁴ These verses correspond to the Qur’ānic injunction which set the Prophet as the exemplar servant and ‘*āshiq*. “Verily, in the Apostle of God you have a good example for everyone who looks forward (with hope and awe) to God and the Last Day, and remembers God unceasingly” (Qur’ān 33:21). “Say (O Prophet): “If you love God, follow me, (and) God will love you and forgive you your sins; for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace” (Qur’ān 3:31). These Qur’ānic verses command mankind to obey the Prophet, which is tantamount to obeying God. One cannot deny the Messenger, because then the Message would be denied. The above verses testify to Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s reverence of the Prophet and demonstrate that Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh sought to follow in his footsteps.

“No one can run away from the command of God. We are all slaves of His command. When He takes away life the whole business comes to an end.”³⁴⁵ This is Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s anthropological response. Mankind is fully dependent upon God; therefore we are servants of God, meant to serve Him alone. Additionally, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh believes that being a servant of God also entails loving God. “God has created a unique creature (man) only for Love whereas Angels were already enough for worship.”³⁴⁶ For Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh, mankind was created to love God, which becomes included in worship. Thus, for mankind, love precedes worship; worship in turn becomes a manifestation of love. The Qur’ān

³⁴³ Ibid, 24.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 98.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 28.

states, “And (tell them that) I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may (know and) worship Me” (Qur’ān 51:56). Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh explains this Qur’ānic verse, in the broader sense of the term worship. The worship, which is done by mankind does not only consist of the acts of worship, such as the five daily prayers, fasting, paying *zakāt* (almsgiving) but that worship entails a total surrender to the Divine will. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh states, “No matter how much *‘ibādah* (worship) you do, without *‘ishq*, it is worthless.”³⁴⁷ Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh goes further arguing without *‘ishq* a person cannot have *īmān* (faith). “All our actions in religion would be for naught if it were devoid of love. We would just be going through the motions and not truly worshipping God, as He deserves to be worshipped. The teleological response therefore is to worship God alone, which encompasses knowing, and loving Him.

The Qur’ān states, “Verily, God loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and He loves those who keep themselves pure” (Qur’ān 2:222). Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh comments upon this Qur’ānic verse stating, “Gold is hidden in the sand like your body. You are unable to discover it. Until and unless you don’t wash the sand and clay with the water of your eyes, you cannot find the gold.”³⁴⁸ This verse alludes to the *ḥadīth* of *jihād al-akbar*, which is the struggle against the *nafs*. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh admonishes people to purify themselves as a pretext to experiencing love. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh states, “Some have an un-clean appearance but inwardly they have water of life. Their lips look parched like the lips of thirsty men but their souls are drenched as if bathed in water.”³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Miyān Zafar Maqbūl, *Sayf al-Mulūk: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Lahore, Maktaba Dānyāl Publishers, 2002), 1090.

³⁴⁸ Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 55.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 54.

Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh returns to the etymological root of the term *'ishq*, describing the journey of *'ishq* in terms of enduring suffering. “When you are dealing with the sorrow of love, you give up your comfortable condition.”³⁵⁰ Here Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh implies that love will break you down because it is difficult dealing with love. It involves self-sacrifice, which is what all lovers do for their beloved. He adds, “Don’t watch the thorns of roses fearfully from afar. Unless you endure being pricked (by the thorns) and bleeding you cannot fill your pouch with flowers.”³⁵¹ Suffering as a pretext to love is established by the *ḥadīth*, “Whenever God loves a devotee, He subjects him to ordeals. Should he endure patiently, God singles him out; should he be content, God purifies him.”³⁵² Similarly, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh states, “If the fire of *'ishq* does not burn you, than you cannot understand. Those who do not know the pain of *'ishq* will not obtain the fruits (of God’s love). If God gives you the disease of *'ishq*, you will need a remedy.”³⁵³ Therefore according to Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh, in order to enjoy pleasure, one must first endure pain, for only in pain is true pleasure found. In other words, a person cannot enjoy any pleasurable thing unless they work hard and endure hardships. This parallels the Qur’ānic verse, “But lo! With hardship goeth ease, Lo! With hardship goeth ease” (94:5-6). Without effort nothing can be achieved. For the *‘āshiq* nothing deters their journey toward their beloved. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh states, “Even showers of arrows or swords will not frighten (real) lovers. O Muḥammad Bakhsha! *'Ishq* and restraint

³⁵⁰ Miyān Ṣafar Maqbūl, *Sayf al-Mulūk: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Lahore, Maktaba Dānyāl Publishers, 2002), 1085.

³⁵¹ Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 94.

³⁵² Javad Nurbakhsh, *Traditions of the Prophet*, vol. 2 (New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1983), 75.

³⁵³ Miyān Ṣafar Maqbūl, *Sayf al-Mulūk: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Lahore, Maktaba Dānyāl Publishers, 2002), 1090.

never go together.”³⁵⁴ For Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh, a characteristic of an *‘āshiq* is restlessness; unable to find peace until they reach their beloved. This characteristic of restlessness is mentioned in the *ḥadīth*, “The believer is ever restless until he beholds God.”³⁵⁵ What can frighten or harm a person who is completely absorbed in the love of their beloved? They feel only this love, which trumps all else. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh goes further warning that love not only entails enduring suffering, but also involves a death. “Merciless ‘Ishq is like a ruthless butcher who does not show mercy. It kills by humiliating delicate bodies and feels no worry.”³⁵⁶ This verse harkens to the *ḥadīth*, “Die before you die,” which means to die to your self before you physically die. Once, you die to yourself then can you truly focus upon God, otherwise you will be serving your own self instead. Moreover, before a person can begin their journey toward God they must undergo a death in order to be reborn anew.

Journeying through ‘*ishq*: *majāzī* to *ḥaqīqī*

Sayf al-Mulūk is both a romance, and a spiritual treatise written in poetic form. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s version of the story *Sayf al-Mulūk* is not simply a retelling of the story; rather he imbues the story with spiritual nuggets, which can be perceived by those who have the ability to decipher them. Christopher Shackle identifies Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s version of the story *Sayf al-Mulūk* as both a beautiful work of poetry, and as a spiritual treatise.

His *Sayf al-Mulūk* is a conscious universalisation of the old story, in which the hero’s adventures are seen through the lens of a strongly Sufi vision. The consequent constant interweaving between narrative and teaching is certainly modelled on the example of the formative poetic classics of the Persian Sufi tradition in which Miyān Muḥammad was steeped, like Rūmī’s *Mathnawī* and Jāmī’s *Yūsuf Zulaykhā*. His poem’s hero is seen as

³⁵⁴ Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 30.

³⁵⁵ Javad Nurbakhsh, *Traditions of the Prophet*, vol. 2 (New York: Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1983), 75.

³⁵⁶ Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 30-31.

an exemplar of the “man of resolve”, the same *mard-i himmat* celebrated in ‘Aṭṭār’s Conference of the Birds, and his quest for his princess becomes a true *Safar al-‘Ishq*, the journey to be undertaken by all who seek spiritual awakening through loving search for the Divine. This is, in a word, both the last great romance and the last great Sufi poem to have been written in South Asia.³⁵⁷

As a result of being exposed to Sufi literary tradition of the Indian subcontinent, Persia, and Central Asia, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh was able to develop his own system of expression and contribute a unique piece to the continuous development of the semantic field of love. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s work *Sayf al-Mulūk*’s original title was *Safar al-‘Ishq*. It is a journey through the entire stages of *‘ishq*. He uses *‘ishq-i majāzī* to veil *‘ishq-i ḥaqīqī*, a technique, which according to Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh, allows the reader to derive either pleasure from his words.³⁵⁸ Therefore, *‘Ishq-i ḥaqīqī*, is the central theme of the entire work. For Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh, each line of poetry in his *Sayf al-Mulūk* parallels the Sufi’s journey toward God. The principle stages of *‘ishq* become the stages of transformation of the human soul, beginning with the *majāzī*, and culminating with *ḥaqīqī*.

Throughout the work Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh emphasizes the importance of the *ṭarīqāh* in addition to the guide along that path, the *murshid*. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh believed that the *ṭarīqāh* could not be traversed without the guidance of a *murshid*, for the *murshid* is the one who acquaints the *sālik* (spiritual wayfarer) with the *ṭarīqāh*; for he is aware of the dangers the *ṭarīqāh* consists of. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh plays upon the role of the *murshid*, comparing the *murshid* to a *malāḥ* (boatman, guide) and similarly comparing the *ṭarīqāh* (path) to the river.³⁵⁹ The *malāḥ* is acquainted with the river. The *malāḥ*, as a result of

³⁵⁷ Christopher Shackle, “The Story of Sayf al-Muluk in South Asia,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 17, no. 2 (2007): 128.

³⁵⁸ Miyān Zafar Maqbūl, *Sayf al-Mulūk: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Lahore, Maktaba Dānyāl Publishers, 2002), 1073.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 1092.

having traversed the river himself is aware of its dangers, as well as being knowledgeable of its safe navigation. Without a *malāh*, a person could not cross the river; they would drown.³⁶⁰

Thus, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh states the importance of having a *murshid*, and obeying their command. “Those people who were not able to please the boatman, cannot even board the raft.”³⁶¹ Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh then relates the obedience to the *murshid* as obedience to the Prophet, which in turn is obedience to God. Conversely, forgoing the direction of the *murshid*, who acts in accordance with the Prophet, will prove futile for the *sālik*. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh states, “Those who gave up the way of the Prophet (pbuh), they will never reach their state. If you give up his way, you give up what he told you, and what he showed you.”³⁶² Hence, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh likens abandoning the guidance of the Prophet to an abandonment of the religion.

As previously mentioned, Rūmī also distinguished between *‘ishq-i ḥaqīqī* and *‘ishq-i majāzī* in his works. While *‘ishq-i ḥaqīqī* is lauded for it refers to love for God, *‘ishq-i majāzī* is criticized for it refers to love of the world, which becomes a distraction for one is in love with creation but not the Creator. However, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh argues that *‘ishq-i ḥaqīqī* and *‘ishq-i majāzī* are two ways to look at the same picture.³⁶³ Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh elucidates this phenomenon.

Here can be found all the subtle varieties of pain and pleasure, all the ways of men of non-human beings like fairies and *jinn*s, all the luxurious fanfare of triumphant joy and the unknown modes of inward suffering. Here can be seen the working of wealth and of armed power, the dark subtleties of governance, meanness, and charity, tyranny and justice. Here you can go adrift on ferocious currents of the river and can cross into islet of dense growth. The book contains upward flights and sudden falls, limitless number of robes and roles; clues to the mysteries of Caucasus; cities, busy and abandoned

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Ibid, 1091.

gardens alive with fruits and flowers and colourless face of the dead, saline land; triumph and torture of might, desperate advances and trembling retreats, the intense involvement of fear and hope. And this entire panorama of appearances holds the hidden reality as a walking stick encases a sword. Those looking for a story will be beguiled by the slumberous pleasures of the story. Those touched by the hand of passion will sit up with moist eyes to watch the dawn arrive.³⁶⁴

Najm Hosain Syed interprets these verses as a technique, which Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh employs to achieve his dual initiative, hiding the depth of the ocean underneath the foam on the surface of the ocean. He writes:

Notwithstanding the comprehensive representation of apparent and hidden features of existence, the poet insists on himself standing outside his work and leaving the discovery to the capacity of the reader's eye. Another image representing Muḥammad Bakhsh's vision of life and art is that of a sword encased in a walking stick. The subtle sword is sheathed within the blunt appearance of the familiar walking stick. There is a dramatic opposition in the character of the two articles heightened by the fact that they move as one body. In life and art what appears is both a reality in itself and a symbolic garb for another far more surprising reality.³⁶⁵

The two scenarios that are juxtaposed by Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh in the last two lines attest to the dual nature of the entire work. As Najm Hosain Syed adds, "It appears that the hidden sword Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh mentioned in the earlier verse is here pulled out of the stick and the two lines record this physical fact presenting the stick and the sword side by side."³⁶⁶

Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh dedicates his life to 'ishq-i ḥaqīqī. He states, "O God! Bestow upon me complete, and perfect 'ishq, so that I will turn away from all else. I know only One, see only One, and need only One."³⁶⁷ This verse exemplifies Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh's understanding of love as a complete surrender to God. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh believes

³⁶⁴ Najm Hosain Syed, *Recurrent Patterns in Punjabi Poetry* (Lahore: Majlis Shah Hussain, 1968), 70-71.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 71.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 72.

³⁶⁷ Baba Najabat Husayn Oweysi, *Rūmī-o Kashmīr* (Mīrpūr, Azād Kashmīr: 'Alī Printers, 2005), 123. Cf. Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 26.

that through *'ishq* the veil will be lifted and he will achieve *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (truth of certainty). He prays for *'ishq-i ḥaqīqī*, that will cause him to turn from all else; a love so encompassing that he will know with true certainty that God is One and that only He exists. This verse resembles the *nafy*, which is the first part and *ithbāt*, which is the second part of the *shahādah*, “There is no god but God.” Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh expands upon the symbolism of the *shahādah* stating, “*Ishq* cleans the whole house like a broom. When the dust settles the lovely face appears. ‘There is no god’ was the broom, and ‘but God’ had filled the house.”³⁶⁸ Hence, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh deems the *shahādah* to be the sword of love for it negates everything, while affirming God as the One. This is Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s understanding of *tawḥīd* (Oneness).

Although Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh argues in favor of using *'ishq-i majāzī* as a bridge leading to *'ishq-i ḥaqīqī*, he nonetheless warns of its temptation. “Lechery (lust) cannot rely upon a head which is filled with true Love. The heart, which has true Love of his Friend, does not look towards others.”³⁶⁹ “It is useless to have an attachment (attraction) with the pot. You should love the potter (Creator or God) who made such a shape (pot).”³⁷⁰ If one has *'ishq-i ḥaqīqī* then they will not be distracted by others. They do not stop at the form, but they see the inner reality, otherwise you can become an idol worshipper because you love a thing, which has been created. This would be *shirk* (associating partners with God), for you are focusing your attention upon something other than God. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh even goes as far as

³⁶⁸ Baba Najabat Husayn Oweysi, *Rūmī-o Kashmīr* (Mīrpūr, Azād Kashmīr: ‘Alī Printers, 2005), 121.

³⁶⁹ Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 33.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 34.

to say that “Any heart that does not have ‘*ishq*, even dogs are better than them.”³⁷¹ Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh first abases the superiority of mankind in relation to animals, due to their lack of ‘*ishq*, then he goes further, promoting the status of the dog above the person who is devoid of ‘*ishq* as a result of the dog’s love for their master. The love the dog has for their master is manifested in their behavior, watching over their master, day and night, even in spite of hunger, the dog remains loyal, not caring what will become of them, serving only their master. The love of the dog for their master as opposed to the person who is devoid of ‘*ishq* is illustrated by Saeed Ahmed. “Men are materialists. They guard somebody for their wages or for some other interest whereas it is a wonderful and unique quality of a dog that it remains faithful to its master in all circumstances. Mian Sahib admired the patience of dogs.”³⁷² So if a person possess’ ‘*ishq*, they maintain there higher rank, but if they are devoid of ‘*ishq* the rank of the dog becomes superior.

Conclusion

Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s semantic field of love revolves around the term ‘*ishq*. Whereas he identifies creation as encapsulated by *rahma*, he describes the relation between God and mankind as built upon ‘*ishq*, God being the *ma’shūq*, and mankind the ‘*āshiq*. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh supports the position of ‘*ishq* as the focus word of a semantic field of love, by identifying ‘*ishq* as the pretext of ‘*ibādah*, as well as *īmān*. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s work *Safar al-‘ishq*, which is a romance, serves as an allegory for the journey to God. As a result of inheriting the literature of the Persianate realm, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh was able to build upon the works of Rūmī and demonstrate through a popular romance the importance of ‘*ishq-i*

³⁷¹ Miyān Zafar Maqbūl, *Sayf al-Mulūk: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Lahore, Maktaba Dānyāl Publishers, 2002), 1091.

³⁷² Saeed Ahmed, *Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 29.

majāzī in transforming mankind into having love for God, which is *'ishq-i ḥaqīqī*. This formulation represents a continuation of the development of the *madhhab-i 'ishq*.

CHAPTER 8: Conclusion

The Islamic textual sources provide a wealth of terms, which denote particular concepts that act in unison, establishing a semantic field of love. Although Muslims in general do not debate the validity of loving God, a segment of the Muslim population have presented a vision of Islam in which love of God does not have a central place. The semantic field of love in Islam has been limited to isolated terms found in the Islamic textual sources, which are relevant because they can be literally translated as “love,” such as *maḥabba* and *wudd*. This isolation has led some to conclude that from the Islamic perspective, the justice of God is more prevalent.³⁷³ Others who ascribe priority and superiority to love, in which love becomes the attribute from which God creates and from which mankind approaches God, challenge this summation.³⁷⁴ The Islamic textual sources identify creation as being encompassed by *raḥma*, relating other terms such as, *irāda*, *luṭf*, *maghfira*, *‘afw*, *shukr*, *maḥabba*, and *wudd* as manifestations of *raḥma*. This gave rise to elaboration upon *raḥma*. We have shown how the Sufis Ḥallāj, Rūmī, and Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh further develop this conceptual system, shifting the focus-word of the semantic field of love from *raḥma*, to *‘ishq*, relating the other terms, *raḥma*, *irāda*, *luṭf*, *shukr*, *maghfira*, *‘afw*, *maḥabba*, and *wudd* as manifestations of *‘ishq*.

Ḥallāj, Rūmī, and Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh each mark a stage in the development of the semantic field of love. Ḥallāj was one of the earliest Sufis to permit the usage of *‘ishq* to refer to Divine love and identified *‘ishq* as a part of the Divine Essence. Rūmī’s works deal with

³⁷³ Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1960), 181.

³⁷⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam’s Mystical Tradition* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 93

the extensions of love and its consequences, equating the path of God, with the *madhhab-i 'ishq*. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh articulates the journey toward God, as a *safar al-'ishq*. His work *Sayf al-Mulūk* demonstrates the importance of *'ishq-i majāzī* as a bridge, which transforms a person into having *'ishq-i ḥaqīqī*. While each of the three figures mark a further development in the semantic field of love, they each base their visions upon the Islamic textual sources, thus their development is diachronic. Drawing from the Islamic textual sources, each of the figures studied here arrive at the same conclusion: to be truly is to love.

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