To Be Is To Love:

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

by

NABIL SYED ALI

(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 rahma, shukr, mahabba, wudd, ishq, and irada—demonstrates the central role that this semantic field has in Islam. Although rooted in the Qur'ān 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, mahabba, poetry
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by

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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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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Acknowledgements | Chapter
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>1  INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>2  THE SEMANTIC FIELD OF LOVE IN ISLAM: AN OVERVIEW OF SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rahma</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Shukr</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Maḥabba and Wudd</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>'Ishq</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Neo-Ḥanbalī classification of ‘ishq</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Irāda</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3  THE SEMANTIC FIELD OF LOVE IN THE QUR’ĀN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rahma</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Shukr</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Maghfira and ‘Afw</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lutf</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Wudd</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Maḥabba</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>THE SEMANTIC FIELD OF LOVE IN THE SUNNA AND ḤADĪTH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40  Irāda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44  Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ḤUSAYN IBN MANŞUR AL-ḤALLĀJ: ‘ISHQ AS ESSENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69  Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72  Ḥallāj’s Islamic roots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73  Tawḥīd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76  ‘Ishq as Essence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79  Madhhab-i ‘ishq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MAWLĀNA JALĀL AL-DĪN RŪMĪ: MADHHAB-I ‘ISHQ (PATH OF LOVE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>83  Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84  Works</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The roots of the roots of the roots..............................................................................................88
What is ‘ishq?.................................................................................................................................89
The sword of love.............................................................................................................................90
Rahma.............................................................................................................................................93
Muṣṭafā............................................................................................................................................93
Ma‘shūq ..........................................................................................................................................96
‘Āshīq ............................................................................................................................................99
Madhhab-i ‘ishq ............................................................................................................................102
Conclusion......................................................................................................................................104

7 MIYĀN MUḤAMMAD BAKHSH: SAFAR AL-‘ISHQ (JOURNEY OF LOVE)..............................105
Life .................................................................................................................................................105
Works ............................................................................................................................................109
Safar al-‘ishq .................................................................................................................................113
God as source of ‘ishq....................................................................................................................114
Ma‘shūq ..........................................................................................................................................116
‘Āshīq ............................................................................................................................................117
Journeying through ‘ishq: from majāzī to ḥaqīqī ..........................................................................121
Conclusion......................................................................................................................................126

8 Conclusion.....................................................................................................................................128
REFERENCES .................................................................................................................................130
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 Maṃṣūr al-Ḥallāj, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Miyaṅ Muḥammad Bakhsh. The expressions of love by these three Sufis is characterized by their emphasis on the term ‘ishq (intense, passionate love) rather than maḥabbah (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 madḥhab-i ‘ishq (path of love). His works deal with the extensions of ‘ishq, which he describes as being synonymous with the path to God. Miyaṅ Muḥammad Bakhsh, benefited from the vast legacy and literature of Sufism coming from the Persiane 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 Miyān 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 worldview 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.”

Altogether, the terms rahma (compassion, mercy), irāda (will), lutf (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

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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 ḫaṁma. Irāda, lutf, maghfīra, ‘āfw, maḥabbā, wudd and ‘ishq can all be described as positive expressions of ḫaṁma.

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.” This interconnection between terms can also be applied to shukr, which can be connected with īmān (belief). 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

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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 ([raḥīm] "womb" i.e., kith and kin) with you and sever relations with him who will sever the relations with you.”

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.” 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. Caner Dagli suggests the inclusion of raḥma, whereas Frederick M. Denny refuses any relation. Denny argues, “It is erroneous to confuse raḥma ("mercy") and maghfira ("forgiveness") with love (hubb or wudd)...His mercy is offered to all, but His love only to select ones.” Gordon Nickel, who seems to support Dagli and contradict Denny, attests to the augmentation of the semantic field of love with the

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6 Reza Shah-Kazemi is currently a Research Associate at the Institute of Ismāʿīlī Studies who specializes in comparative mysticism, Islamic studies, Sufism, and Shiʿism. 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 Qurʾān 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, Qurʾānic studies, and Islam in North America.
The inclusion of ṭahma. “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.”

Rahma 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 rahma describes an attribute, which is bestowed upon all of creation. Yet, the meaning of rahma 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 rahma’s relational meaning, terms such as irāda, lutf, maghfira, ‘afw, mahabba, wudd and ‘ishq, all can be described as positive expressions of rahma. Whereas Divine rahma is bestowed upon all of creation, mahabba and wudd are reserved for those who please God; while under the broader concept of mahabba, we find the more specific concept of ‘ishq, which is an intensified form of mahabba. As the will or devotedness of God, irāda acts as a prerequisite to rahma, from which everything is initiated, while shukr is the appropriate response to rahma. 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. The relation between rahma 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.

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11 John Penrice, A Dictionary of the Koran (NY; Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 98.
with forgiveness and infinite mercy.”

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

Daud Rahbar states that in Islam “God’s love is conditional.” He then lists nineteen actions that God loves and twenty-three actions that God does not love. 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 *mahabba* 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.” 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.” 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 *rahma* is given in

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13 Ibid, 78.
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 rahma as encompassing all of creation stating, “the whole of the cosmos is understood by Sufis to have become existentiated through nafas al-Rahmān, 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 rahma permeates the universe, nurturing all of creation at every instant. Preceding wrath, rahma occupies a preeminent ontological place from which other attributes are made manifest, including love. Thus, rahma becomes the focus-word of the semantic field of love, from which other key words, such as irāda, lutf, 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

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²⁰ Ibid.
²¹ Ibid, 93-94.
Rabb (Lord, Sustainer), He sustains us at every moment. Thus, shukr becomes the active response to rahma. Similarly, shukr as an aspect of love should draw a person closer toward God. Ibn ‘Arabī states in his Kitāb al-Naṣā‘iḥ (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.”

Similarly, shukr as an aspect of love should draw a person closer toward God. Ibn ‘Arabī states in his Kitāb al-Naṣā‘iḥ (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.” 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.

Thus, for al-Ghazzālī shukr is not only the recognition of Divine rahma, but it ultimately leads an individual to become active in thankfulness. Toshihiko Izutsu defines shukr as the appropriate response to rahma. “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.”

The concept of shukr consists of a recognition of rahma on the part of mankind, which in turn gives rise to an active response of rahma. Recognizing rahma by mankind consists of a knowledge, which in turn brings one closer to God, as a reciprocation of rahma.

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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.” 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.” The argument that God’s love toward mankind is exclusively conditional is fraught with inconsistencies, as the Qur’an and ḥadīth literature repeatedly rebuke such a notion. 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.

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

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

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 qudṣī, where God says, "I was a hidden treasure and I loved (fa-ḥabtu) 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.
Maḥabba and wudd are reserved for those who perform acts that please God, which acts as an aspect of raḥma. Maḥabba, which is derived from the Arabic root ḥ-b-b, also denotes "love," and "affection." 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-Sūfī 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.

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.

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31 ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ṣūfī is a contemporary shaykh of the Darqāwī-Shadhili-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.
when it is thirsty and its passionate longing for meeting its beloved.” Ibn ‘Arabī adds another aspect of maḥabba. “Every truly divine love (ḥubb ilāhi) that is accompanied by constraint/limitation cannot be relied upon.” 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.” 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.” 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.” Similarly Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Sūfī states, “‘Ishq derives from ‘Ashiqa, and ‘Ashiqa 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

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35 Ibíd, 13.
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.’

The term ‘ishq began to be applied to Divine love by early Sufis of the formative period such as Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 261/875), Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910) and Ḫusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922). 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).

Muḥammad ibn Khāfīf (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. A disciple of Ibn Khāfīf, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Dīlamī (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.” In his list of the stages of love, al-Dīlamī places maḥabba as the fourth stage, and ‘ishq as the eleventh, and final stage.

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.
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).”

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. Junayd states, “Its beginning is maḥabba, which increases until it becomes ‘ishq.” 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-Bistāmī when describing what love consists of, states, “It is of four kinds: one from him, which is his rahma; 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.”

Al-Bistāmī links ‘ishq, rahma, ‘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-

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43 Ibid, 51.
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.” 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.” 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.” 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

49 Joseph Norment Bell, Love Theory in Later Hanbalite Islam (Albany, NY; State University of New York, 1979), 166.
terms.\textsuperscript{50} A part of this condemnation can be seen in Ibn al-Qayyim’s identification of ‘ishq with Zulaykhā and the people of Lot.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{52} For Ibn al-Qayyim, the enslavement of the lover constitutes idolatry.\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 164.
\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 156.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, 159.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, 167.
conjunction with a corrupt representation of the beloved.”

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.”

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).”

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 intiator and the goal; the murīd (seeker) and the murād (desired one).

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55 Ibid, 81.
56 Ibid.
*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.  

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.” 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

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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 Mahmutćehazić 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.”

**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, lutf, 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.

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a development that would become fully integrated and employed by later Sufis, such as Rūmī and Miyān Muḥammad 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. 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 ṭaḥma, 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

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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.\footnote{Muhammad Fu’ad ‘Abd al-Baqi, Al-Mu’jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur’ān al-karīm (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), 387-393.} According to al-Qushayrī only ṛaḥma 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 ṛaḥma. 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.”\footnote{Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayrī, Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism: Al-Risāla al-qushayrīya fi ’ilm al-taṣawwuf, trans. Alexnader D. Knysh (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing Limited, 2007), 326.} This definition connects the apparent mutually exclusive concepts of wrath and love under the term ṛaḥma. Everything is permeated by ṛaḥma, the difference occurs in the way it is experienced by different people according to different circumstances. Thus, according to al-Qushayrī, ṛaḥma 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, ṛaḥima. God is referred to as al-Raḥmān in fifty-seven occasions, and al-Raḥīm in ninety-five occasions.\footnote{Muhammad Fu’ad ‘Abd al-Baqi, Al-Mu’jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur’ān al-karīm (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), 389-392.} The Qur’ān employs both names, al-Raḥmān and al-Raḥīm, each of which denoting a particular role of ṛaḥma. According to Muhammad Asad ṛaḥma 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
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.  

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.

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.”

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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.
The primacy of the name *al-Rahmān* is highlighted by the invocation of the *basmala*, which begins every chapter of the Qurʾān, 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 Qurʾān and before any action, it can be ascertained that God has chosen this as the first attribute to be known. The Qurʾān establishes the primacy of the name *al-Rahmān* 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’” (Qurʾān 17:110). Muhammad Asad states: “The epithet *ar-rahmān*...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-Rahmān*; 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’” (Qurʾān 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’” (Qurʾān 6:54). In his note on this verse, Muhammad Asad states, “The expression “God has willed upon Himself as a law” (*kataba ‘alā nafsihi*) occurs in the Qurʾān only twice – here and in verse 54 of this surah -

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⁶⁹ The ninth chapter of the Qurʾān, *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 Qurʾān.

and in both instances with reference to His grace and mercy (raḥmah); 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-Raḥmān. Al-Raḥmān is in a sense the umbrella that both shades all of creation and from which other attributes manifest into more distinct explications of raḥma. 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 raḥma, including perceived evil.

To demonstrate the breadth of raḥma 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 raḥma 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-Raḥmān cannot go against His nature and withhold blessings. Even

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 Qurʾān contains the chapter al-Rahmān. “It is the Lord of Mercy who taught the Qurʾān. 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” (Qurʾān 55:1-9). Here the Qurʾān details from which of God’s attributes do the measure of things emanate from, al-Rahmān. 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.”

This chapter also repeats the refrain, “Which, then, of your Sustainer’s powers can you disavow?” (Qurʾān 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 rahma 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.” Additionally, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī states, in his Tafsīr al-Jalālayn, “The Messenger of God was reciting sūrat al-Rahmān 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)

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73 Reza Shah-Kazemi, My Mercy Encompasses All (U.S.: Shoemaker Hoard, 2007), 90.
74 Muhammad Asad, The Message of the Qurʾān (The Book Foundation, 2008), 1054.
praise belongs to You.” 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 hasanāt (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. “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-‘ālimin, 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 Qurān are taken to mean the three species of rational creatures, viz. men, genii, and angels.” 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

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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 Qurʾān also affirms the quality of rahma 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”
(Qurʾān 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 rahma. 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” (Qurʾān 33:45-47).
Hence, as rahma 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 Qurʾān also delineates the protocol of the ‘ibād al-Rahmān (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” (Qurʾān 25:63). This
is a description of a contractual relationship. In order to truly be a servant of al-Rahmān one
must embody the moral values that are found within the Qurʾān, 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-Rahman, for rahma is apart of God’s
nature. In addition, rahma must be shared, for the Qurʾān 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*. The verb *shakara* and its cognates appear fifty-eight times in the Qur’ān. 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). 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

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

Reapetedly found in the Qurʾān the verb *ghafara*, is another aspect of the reciprocity of *raḥma*. *Ghafara* and its cognates occur 234 times in the Qurʾān, the most notable of which is the noun *maghfira*, which occurs twenty-eight times.\(^84\) Another term denoting forgiving is ʿ*afw* and its cognates occur thirty-five times in the Qurʾān.\(^85\) Although both terms denote forgiving, in the case of *maghfira* God covers, or conceals one’s sins, while in the case of ʿ*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 *raḥma*. The Qurʾān states that God is *al-Ghafūr* (The All-Forgiving) and *al-ʿAfūw* (The Pardoner). Daud Rahbar notes that *al-Ghafūr* accompanies *al-Rahīm* in roughly 97 verses.\(^86\)

The relation between *raḥma* and *maghfira* can be seen in the Qurʾānic 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?” (Qurʾān 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 *raḥma* 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

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\(^85\) Ibid, 592-593.
much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace” (Qur’ān 39:53). This verse speaks to the all-pervasiveness of ṛaḥma and its inclusion of maghfira in its pervasiveness, even for those who choose not to obey God. Mir Valiuddin attests to the nature of ṛaḥma 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.”

Reza Shah-Kazemi goes further in describing the unlimitedness of ṛaḥma 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.”

Ibn ‘Arabi 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.” Thus, for Ibn ‘Arabi, 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 ṛaḥma is the primary attribute of God, from which the other attributes act in accordance with.

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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-Latīf occurs six times.\(^91\) *Al-Latīf* is one of the ninety-nine names of God. John Penrice defines al-Latīf 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

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the combination of mahābbā and maghfīra as an explanation of al-Wadūd. 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.” Lord, grant me affection in the breasts of believers, intimate friendship (walīja) and love in thy sight, and a constant bond with thee.” This Qur’ānic verse identifies the name al- Ра h mā n 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.” This verse demonstrates that an aspect of al- Ра h mā n is to bestow love, which denotes that wudd is a manifestation of rahma 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

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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. 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

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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.”

This verse defines mahabba 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.”

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

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


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 yuḥibbuḥum (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.” Ibn Khafif believes the verse expresses mahabba 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.”

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.” This connection is further solidified by

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the Qur’anic 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’an 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’an 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’anic 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’an 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

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’an 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’an, because ‘ishq is the apogee of love, in which only a few are included; while the Qur’an is for all people, not limited to infatuated lovers. Nevertheless, within the Qur’an 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’an 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’an 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’an 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’an 94:5-6). The Qur’an 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’an differentiates between the kinds of love, an endowed love, and an innate love. An example of this can be found in the Qur’anic 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’an 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.” Mir Valiuddin even refers to this verse as a “threat” from God, exhorting Muslims to love God and the Prophet. 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-Daylamî states, “The first endowed love is the one that is an obligation among

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

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.” 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 is 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

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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

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exclusiveness of God’s creative being.”\footnote{Muhammad Asad, \textit{The Message of the Qur’an} (The Book Foundation, 2008), 865.} As \textit{al-Haqq} (The Truth) God is the only True Reality. Thus, any \textit{irāda} is from Him and creation in turn becomes the \textit{murād}.

\textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{irāda} find favor with God; therefore God loves them.

In addition to \textit{irāda}, the Qur’ān uses the term \textit{shā’a}, which means to want or more appropriately to will, from which we have the phrase \textit{inshā’Allāh} (God willing). \textit{Shā’a} and its cognates occur 136 times in the Qur’ān.\footnote{Muḥammad Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, \textit{Al-Mu’jam al-mufahrās li-alfāẓ al-Qur’ān al-karīm} (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), 496-500.} 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
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, maghfīra, ‘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 ṭaḥma, 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 ṭaḥma, 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.\textsuperscript{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.’”\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{119} Hence, the Prophet is accorded a unique position from which he can be deemed as the lover par excellence.

\textit{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 Jahiliya (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

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{117}] Ibn al-‘Arabī argues that God took the Prophet 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.
\item[\textsuperscript{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.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
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”\textsuperscript{120} (Qur’an 12:92). This statement echoed the words of forgiveness of Yūsuf to his brothers for their abandoning him the well. Here the \textit{maghitra} of the Prophet is an act of \textit{rahma}, and this \textit{maghitra} was in accordance with the \textit{rahma} of God, which is testified to by the \textit{ḥadīth}, “One who suffers oppression and forgives the oppressor is the most favored for succor from God.”\textsuperscript{121} Even stalwarts of the \textit{Jahiliya} such as Abū Sufyān, ʿIkrimah, Suhayl and Ṣafwān were pardoned and later accepted into the folds of Islam, even though they all treated the Muslims cruelly in Makkah.\textsuperscript{122} This attitude is mirrored by the \textit{ḥadīth}, “There should be neither harming, nor reciprocating harm.”\textsuperscript{123} This \textit{ḥadīth} represents another manifestation of \textit{rahma}, 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 removed, or minimized, for a person should prevent harm from taking place. This \textit{ḥadīth} acts as an injunction for establishing \textit{rahma} for others by prohibiting the creation or allowance of a harmful atmosphere for others. Thus, in social interaction harm is replaced by \textit{rahma}.

\textsuperscript{120} Martin Lings, \textit{Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources} (Vermont; Inner Traditions, 1983), 314.
\textsuperscript{122} ʿIkrimah, Suhayl and Ṣafwān had also initially attacked one of the Muslim contingents led by Khālid bin Wafīd, 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 Ṭāʾīf before they had entered Islam.
\textsuperscript{123} Abū Zakarīa Yahuḏ ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, \textit{Al-Nawawī’s 40 Ḥadīṯ} 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.”

This was in response to certain companions who had chosen to pray and fast unceasingly and who had abandoned their sexual life. 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 haqq (truth; reality). William Chittick explains this hadīth further as, “Realization is to give oneself, one’s Lord and all things their haqq. So, if worship is ‘the realization of tawhīd’, this means that is to give God his due and to give his creatures their due in accord with the divine Haqq. It is to be at once sincere worshipper and a perfect servant.”

Thus, a person can participate in the world, while at the same time remembering God. In this hadīth 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

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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.’”\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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 \textit{rahma}
ever 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

\textsuperscript{127} Al-Bukhārī, vol. 8, bab. 73, \textit{hadīth} # 149.
\textsuperscript{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 hadith 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 hadith 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 hadith 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

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 hadīth is a prerequisite of belief.

**That Which Were Made Lovable**

When examining the semantic field of love within hadīth 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” (ḥubbība 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 hadīth 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 hadīth 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

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One of the disciples of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s most important disciple Sadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274), was Mu’ayyid al-Dīn Jandi (d. c. 700/1300) who further expands upon the significance of the love of women. Jandi 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

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  \item [134] Ibid, 189.
  \item [136] Muslim vol. 1, bab. 93, ḥadīth # 91.
  \item [137] Badi‘ al-Zamān Furūzanfar, Ḥadīth-i Mathnawī (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1955), number 48.
\end{itemize}
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.” 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.” 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.” 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

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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.
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.’” Here the Prophet unites both maḥabba and ṭama. Rahma as expressed to one’s children becomes maḥabba. In addition, God reciprocates this expression of ṭama 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).” Thus, a simple act that might be taken for granted, such as being affectionate towards children and family is a sign of ṭama, which offers the chance to experience the reciprocity of ṭama 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-Rahmān 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

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143 Al-Bukhārī vol. 2, bab. 23, ḥadīth #390.
145 Abū Zakarīyā Yahyā 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.” Ṣadaqah (charity) is something done for God’s sake alone, and smiling is an expression of that charity. This hadith 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.” 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

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146 Al-Bukhārī Fiqh al-Sunnah vol. 3 hadith #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.”

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.”

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

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148 Muslim bab. 4, ḥadīth #951.
149 Al-Bukhārī vol. 3, bab. 40, ḥadīth #551.
not trampled on a litter of puppies. 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.” 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.” 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.” 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’an states, “We made out of water every living thing” (Qur’an 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

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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-Musāqāt, 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.’”

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.” 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 ablation), when there is a lack of water. Therefore, inherent in the earth is a sacred quality that is in need of protection of the khalīfah, 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.” In this *ḥadīth*, the term ‘ashiqa


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

(loves), is employed. However, the authenticity of this hadīth is debated and its level of authenticity is generally considered weak. 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 hadīth and actions of the Prophet that are included under maḥabba, rahma, and shukr.

Hadīth qudsī are hadīth in which God speaks in the first person through the words of the Prophet. Two of these hadīth would become foci for the construction of the metaphysics of God’s Love for the world. “I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known, so I created the world,” and “But for thee, I would not have created the celestial spheres.” Both of these hadīth 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.” Likewise “but for thee” expresses the unique position that mankind occupies vis-à-vis God. Thus, both hadīth give credence to the formulation of God’s love toward creation.

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

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158 For a detailed discussion on this construction see William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson, Fakhruddīn Ḥaṣb Allāh: Divine Flashes (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1982), 17-28.
159 Ḍhū al-Ẓamān Furūsī, Aḥādīth-i Mathnawi (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1955), number 546.
160 Ibid, number 70.
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.”

This particular hadith 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 fana’ (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‘ādh 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 give to each other generously in Me.’”

This hadith 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 hadith qudsī, “Where are those who love

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

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.”\textsuperscript{164} Moreover, to love one of creation is to love the Creator.

There are numerous hadīth that speak about loving God, and God’s love. But how can one experience that love? God elaborates through a hadīth 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.’”\textsuperscript{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 hadīth 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 hadīth.

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

\textsuperscript{164} Abū Zakariyyā Yahyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, \textit{Al-Nawawī’s 40 Hadīth Qudsī}, trans. Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (New Delhi, India; Adam Publishers, 2003), 100.
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.”

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.” 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.” This ḥadīth qudsi expresses maḥabbā in an intensified manner. William A. Graham translates ḥubb in this context as “longs to;” however he states, “The verb aḥabbā 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 Śūfī writers within the context of the passionate longing of man for God.”

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

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168 Ibid, 153.
169 Ibid.
nonetheless maintained a higher degree of worship. According to ‘Aīsha, “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?’ 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 Khadijah and his uncle, Abū Ṭālib, both died. Khadijah 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 Thaqīf, of the near-by city of Ṭā‘if. The Banū Thaqīf 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 Thaqīf 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 darknesses 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 Muhammad 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.

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CHAPTER 5: Ḥusayn ibn Mašūr 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 Mašūr 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. Hallāj 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 ‘Abbāsid Caliphate (750 CE-1258 CE) had been in power for one hundred years. The ‘Abbāsids had played on the emotion of Shi‘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 ‘Abbāsids turned their back on the Shi‘ites and became adherents to Sunnī Islam. This betrayal led to many Shi‘ites uprisings, which the ‘Abbāsids subsequently crushed with violent reprisals. During their ascendancy to power, the ‘Abbāsids had relied on the support of non-Arabs, specifically Persians. This led to rifts between the Arabs and the ‘Abbāsids 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 ḥafiz (guardian,

175 Ibid.
memorizer of Qur’ān) under the tutelage of ‘Alī ibn ‘Āṣim 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 Saʿīd 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. As a result of his travels, he acquired a sizable amount of followers. In addition, Ḥallāj made the ḥajj (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

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. 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.” 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 (rukhas).” 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. 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-Ṭawāsīn, 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

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177 Ibid.
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.”  

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.”  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.”  

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.

Tawhīd

At the core of Ḥallāj’s belief is God as mašhūq (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.”  For Ḥallāj God is the supreme source of valid knowledge. In one of his works, Kitāb nafy al-tashbih, 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.”  This was a commentary upon the Qur’ānic chapter al-ikhlās (sincerity; purity). This chapter is also known as al-tawhīd (Oneness), for it

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183 Ibid, 23.
184 Herbert Mason, Al-Hallaj (Routledge, 1995), 33.
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.”\textsuperscript{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 ikhlās (sincerity; purity) as a precondition for ‘ibādah. Ḥallāj in his tafsīr, which can be found in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Sulamī’s tafsīr, Ḥaqāʾiq al-tafsīr, states, “ikhlās in religion is purifying the action of defects of irritation and annoyance.”\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{186} Muhammad Asad, \textit{The Message of the Qur’ān} (The Book Foundation, 2008), 1244.
\textsuperscript{187} ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, Ḥaqāʾiq al-tafsīr, \url{http://altafsir.com/Tafsir.asp?MadhNo=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.”

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.” 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. Ḥallāj claimed that the witnessing of God could be achieved through awlīyā’ 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).” As Toby Mayer notes, “Ḥallāj himself rejected the concept of ḥulūl.” Similarly, Ḥallāj taught the concept of ‘ayn al-jam’ (essence of union), in contrast to the concept of ḥulūl, 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,

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

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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.”

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.” In Islamic philosophical discourse there are things created in time; ḥadath (temporal) and things uncreated; qidam (eternal). 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. 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.” Ḥallāj believed and taught that ‘ishq was “inherent in the essence of God.” Ḥallāj not only asserts

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196 Ibid.
198 Philosophical debate has gone for centuries between philosophers and theologians about whether or not the Qur’ān was created, or uncreated.
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 preternity 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 preternity 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, rahma, lutf, maghfira, ’afw, and maḥabba as manifestations of ‘ishq. This development will prove

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vital to the elaboration of the metaphysics of love by later figures of Sufism. 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. 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.” 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).” 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.’” Here Ḥallāj alludes to the shahādah, “There is no god, but God,” which can also be

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


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 (fātā) 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.
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.  

Ḥallāj believed ittisāf to be the highest stage in love. Alexander Knysh interprets ittisāf 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, maḥabbā).”  

It was through love that Ḥallāj believed one could taste the essence of God. Ḥallāj had preached union with God through love. 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).” 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.’ 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

214 Ibid, 611.
he be content, God purifies him.”

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. 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.

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.

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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 Maṇṣūr 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 Sunni 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 Sultān 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 țarīqah (Sufi order). He was a jurisprudent 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. Muhammad Isa Waley states, “The discourse reveal a great deal concerning the author’s personality, his teachings, his interpretation of the Quran and hadīth, 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.” 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 (Quniyah) 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 nahw (Arabic grammar), prosody, fiqh (jurisprudence), ʿusūl al-fiqh (principles of jurisprudence), hadīth, Qur’ān, tafsīr (Qur’ānic exegesis), kalām (dogmatic theology), falsafa (philosophy), mantiq (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

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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 Muḥaqiq Tirmidhī (d. 638/1240), known as Seyyid-i Sirdān (Lord, Master of the secrets in hearts). Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqiq Tirmidhī was a Sufi shaykh (spiritual master) as well as a Qur’ānic commentator. Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqiq 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 Muḥaqiq. Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqiq 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 Muḥaqiq Tirmidhī’s disciple and student until his death in 638/1240 in Kayṣerī. After the death of Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqiq Tirmidhī, Rūmī gathered many disciples and became a popular teacher in Konya.

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. 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

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224 Ibid.
motion which resulted in vast waves that transformed the history of Persian literature."\textsuperscript{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).”\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{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 posses an art other than the art of poets. Poetry is like a black cloud; I am like the moon...


\textsuperscript{226} Reynold A. Nicholson, Dīvān-e Shams-e Tabrīzī (Bethesda, MD: Ibex Publishers, 2001), ii.

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 Mathnawi ma‘nawi is Rūmī’s magnum opus and was written after the Dīwān. Mathnawi literally means, rhyming couples, and it is a poetic form in Persian poetry, consisting of rhyming couplets. The mathnawi 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 Mathnawi 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 Mathnawi was formed.

Rūmī’s Fihi mā Fihi (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. Fihi mā Fihi was an informal prose work, delivered amongst Rūmī’s disciples during a majlis (spiritual gathering). Fihi mā Fihi tend to be overlooked due to Rūmī’s vast amounts of poetry. However, they are insightful, sometimes describing particular Qur’ānic verses, or hadīth at length.

Rūmī’s life represents a Ḣallājīan progression. He begins his adult life as a jurisprudent, 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.
Tabrīzī’s death he puts the pieces back together, integrating ecstatic love with sobriety. This is progression is reminiscent of al-Ghazzālī’s transformation.\textsuperscript{230} Whereas the result of al-Ghazzālī’s transformation culminated in his \textit{Ihyā’}‘ulūm al-Dīn (The Revival of Religious Sciences), Rūmī’s transformation culminates in his \textit{Mathnawī}, which integrates the ecstatic expressions of love of Ḥallāj, with the exoteric sciences.

\textbf{The roots of the roots of the roots}

Rūmī prefaces his \textit{Mathnawī} with, “This is the Book of the \textit{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.”\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Mathnawī} are practically direct translations of Qur’ānic verses into Persian poetry.”\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{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 Niẓāmīya 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 \textit{Ihyā’}‘ulūm al-Dīn (The Revival of Religious Sciences), which was an attempt of an integration of Sufism with the exoteric sciences.


am quit of him and outraged by these words.”

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 Dīwân, 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.”

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.”

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

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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 ilaha (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.
238 Ibid, 8.
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.” 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.” Rūmī equates the taming of the nafs as a prerequisite for loving for God: “The ‘sword of religion’ is that which wages war

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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!’”

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.”

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!”

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.”

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242 W. M. Thackston Jr., *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi* (Boston,
Memorial Trust, 1926), 349.
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 tanzīḥ (incomparability) and those of tashbīḥ (similarity), in other words, attributes of Transcendence and attributes of Immanence. An example of tanzīḥ 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 tashbīḥ 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.\footnote{William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 45.} 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 Mathnawi, “Although He has such a mighty and overpowering Wrath, look at the coolness of His Mercy, which is prior to it!”\footnote{Ibid.}

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 Mathnawi 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.”\footnote{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.} Following the Sunna of the Prophet is made explicit by the Qur’ānic
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’an 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.” Ḥadīth states, “This affirms that the actions and words of the Prophet were inspired by God.” Rūmī also adds the function of the ‘āshiq par excellence to the Prophet. “The leader of our caravan is Muṣṭafā, glory of the world.” “Love is the path and road of our Prophet.” “The Chief of the Pilgrimage of Love has arrived, the Messenger of the Ka‘ba of good fortune.” 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.” 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.” 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!”

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250 Ibid, 152.
253 Ibid.
254 Ibid, 123.
255 Ibid.
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 khaft.” 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.
259 Ibid.
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

**Maʿshāq**

The Qurʿān 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!” (Qurʿān 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 Bāḍī’ al-Zāmān Furūzanfar, Ahḍāth-i Mathnawī (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1955), number 546.
²⁶⁴ Ibd, number 70.
subject of the word *yuḥibbūnahū*) they love Him?"  

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.’”  

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.”  

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.”  

This is the goal of reaching the beloved, which causes the lover and beloved to be one will.

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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.” 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.”

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 hadīth, “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.” 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.” 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.” 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

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

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 haqīqī (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.” 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.” 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’īyāt (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.” 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

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277 Ibid, 206.
278 Ibid, 131.
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.”  

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.” Here Rūmī’s differentiation between the ‘āshiq and the ordinary Muslim, is further elaborated upon, comparing the zahid (ascetic) to the ordinary Muslim. This is a curious association for the zahid 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.” 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 *Fihi mā Fihi* (Discourses), “Lovers have heartaches that cannot be cured by any medicine, not by sleeping, or wandering or by eating but only by

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281 Ibid.
282 Ibid, 291.
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’šūq. 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

285 Ibid, 44.
286 Ibid, 45.
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.” 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.”

**Madhab-i ‘ishq**

Rūmī’s integration of ‘ishq creates a madhab-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...’” For Rūmī love is not just a theory that is posited, rather it is a practice and a realization. “Oh you who have listened to talk of Love, behold Love! What are words in the ears compared to vision in the eyes?” 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

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

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.” Rūmī illustrates the madhhab-i ‘ishq as being bound by the Shari‘ah. The Shari‘ah is the circle, which encompasses all of life. At the center of this circle lies the haqīqah (the inner Truth; Reality). The Shari‘ah 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

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294 Ibid.


level of the spiritual path. The radius is that which connects the outer circle to the central point. Hence, a person undertakes the ṭarīqa in order to reach the ḥaqīqa.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, rahma, 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.

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.” 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.

Life

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

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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 Qadiri ṭarīqah, in Kasmīr, during their lifetime.\footnote{Miyān Zafar Maqbūl, Sayf al-Mulūk: Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh (Lahore, Pakistan: Maktaba Dānyāl Publishers, 2002), 1059.} 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).\footnote{Ibid, 1060. Cf. Abū al-Kāshif Qādirī, Sharḥ-e Kalām-e Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh: Sayf al-Mulūk-O-Badī’ al-Jamāl (Lahore, Pakistan: Mustaq Bookcorner, 2009), 1104.}

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 saḥābah and the second rightly guided khālifah.\footnote{Ibid, 1059.} 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 Khārī 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 Hāfīz 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 ʿūṣūl al-fiqh (principles of jurisprudence), in addition to nazm (poetic form) and nagh (prose).\footnote{Ibid, 1060.} The madrasah was also home to Hāfīz Muḥammad ‘Alī’s brother Hāfīz Nāsir Ṣāhib Samwāl, who was a majdhūb (one who is drawn by God; a mystic who advances without personal effort). Hāfīz 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 Yusuf and Zulaykhā written by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jamī (d. 898/1492). When Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh and his brother recited

\footnote{Ibid, 1059.}

\footnote{Ibid, 1060.}
the story, Hāfiẓ Nāṣir Šāhib Samwāl would cry profusely and fall into spiritual intoxication. Hāfiẓ Nāṣir Šāhib Samwāl would beg Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh to recite it again and again. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh agreed but under one condition, for Hāfiẓ Nāṣir Šāhib Samwāl to make duʿāʾ (supplication) that Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh would be able to memorize all scholarly and non-scholarly knowledge. Hāfiẓ Nāṣir Šāhib Samwāl became very excited and told Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh and his brother that “all the knowledge will be revealed to you.”

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 wali 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.

Having completed his formal education with Hāfiẓ Muḥammad ‘Alī, Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh began his search for the esoteric knowledge. 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 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’īn Ghulām Muḥammad, who was a Qadirī shaykh and a

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306 Ibid, 1062.
307 Ibid, 1061.
spiritual disciple of Pīr-e Shāh Ghāzī, and to take bayʿa (an oath of allegiance) with him.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{309} In 1298/1880 Miyān Bahāwal Bakhsh passed away and Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh became the pīr of the Qadirī ṭariqah 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.\textsuperscript{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 7\textsuperscript{th} of the Islamic month, Dhū al-Hijjah 1324/1907.

\textbf{Works}

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

\begin{footnotes}
\item[308] Ibid.
\item[309] Ibid, 1062.
\item[310] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Qādirī tariqāh.\footnote{Ibid, 1064.} He was fluent in Punjabi, Urdu, Persian, and Arabic, yet his works were written primarily in Punjabi.\footnote{Ibid. Cf. Saeed Ahmed notes that all of Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s works were written in Punjabi except for one work in Persian, Taṣkira Muqāmī, see Saeed Ahmed, Great Sufi Wisdom: Mian Muḥammad Bakhsh (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Adnan Books, 2008), 8.} Punjabi is an Indo-Aryan language that is spoken by inhabitants of the Punjab region, which is in eastern Pakistan and North-western India.\footnote{Punjabi has two major written scripts, Shāhmūkhi, and Gurmūkhi. Shāhmūkhi, which literally means “from the King’s mouth” is a local variant of the Arabic script. The style of script Shāhmūkhi is based upon is the Nasta’liq style of Persian script. Gurmūkhi script is a part of the Brahmic or Indic family, which is not a variant of the Arabic script.} He has written numerous works which include the Šīharfī, Bārān Māh, Sohnī Mahīnwāl, Tuḥfa-i Mīrān, Qiṣṣe Shaykh Ṣun’ān, Nīrang-i ‘Ishaq, Qiṣṣe Shāh-i Mansūr, Shīrīn Farhād, Tuḥfa-i Rasūliya, Gulzār-i Faqr, Sakhī Khwāś Khān, Mīrza Şāhibān, Qiṣṣe Sasui Panūn, Hidāyat al-Muṣlimīn, Panj Ganj, Taṣkira Muqāmī, Ḥīr Rānjhā. In addition, he wrote a commentary upon the Qasīdat al-Burda of Imām al-Busayrī.

The Šīharfī 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, Qiṣṣe Sasui Panūn, Mīrza Şāhibān, and Ḥīr Rānjhā are all romantic tales.\footnote{These were Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s versions of the stories, which have been written by numerous poets before.} 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 Punjabi. Tuḥfa-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). Qiṣṣe 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 ‘Ishaq completed between 1859-1860 is a work originally written in Persian by Mawlānā
Ghanīmat Kunjāḥī, which Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh translated into Punjabi.\textsuperscript{316} *Sakhī Khawās 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.\textsuperscript{317} *Tuḥfah-i Rasūliya* is a work about the miracles of the Prophet Muḥammad. This work is from a famous work *Maʿārij al-Nubūwwa* by Mullā Muʿīn Khānī that he translated into Punjabi. *Hīdāyat al-Muṣlimīn* is a refutation of the Wahhābī sect, in which he deconstructed the creed of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792). *Qiṣṣe Shāh-i Maṃṣūr* is a work detailing the life and teachings of Maṃṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), the controversial figure of early Sufism. *Taẓkira 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.\textsuperscript{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 Punjabi Sufi poets before Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh, of whom his poetry benefited from.\textsuperscript{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 Punjabi. Christopher Shackle notes that Miyān


\textsuperscript{318} Ibid, 1067.

\textsuperscript{319} Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh often cites other Punjabi poets in his works, such as Bābā Farīd Ganj-ī 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.”\textsuperscript{320} The images his words evoke are scenes that resonate with the differing levels of Punjabi 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.”\textsuperscript{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).”\textsuperscript{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 suḥbah (good company) with fellow travelers along the ṭarīqah. As Jean-Louis Michon states, “The companionship of


\textsuperscript{322} Ibid, 19.
these brothers gives numerous opportunities for mutual encouragement in the devout life and the practice of virtues.”

*Safar al-‘ishq*

Miyan 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. Miyan Muḥammad Bakhsh began this work at the behest of his elder brother, Miyan Bahāwal Bakhsh, and completing it around 1279/1862-1863, at the age of 33. *Safar al-‘Ishq* is written in the Mājhī dialect of Punjabi. This dialect is primarily spoken in the cities of Lahore, Amritsar, and Gurdaspur. It is a mixture of Punjabi dialects, whose mixture, according to Miyan Zafar Maqbūl, “resembles a river with different canals flowing into, which creates this mixture.”

*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. Miyan Muḥammad Bakhsh uses the characters and their story to discuss his

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325 Ibid, 6.
own state, which is 'ishq-i ḥaqīqī (real love) between him and God.\textsuperscript{327} He speaks of what is in his heart while using the name of Sayf al-Mulūk.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{330} Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh opens his magnum opus with this munājāt (intimate prayer).\textsuperscript{331} In this opening couplet Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh asks God to aid, both

\textsuperscript{327} Ibid, 1073.
\textsuperscript{328} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{329} Ibid, 1086.
\textsuperscript{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 Punjabi poet, playwright and literary critic notes, “Muhammad Bakhsh initially prays for a personal fulfillment through creative expansion he links that fulfillment with the social purpose of his work.” Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh invokes the aspect ṭahma, 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 ṭahma 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.” 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 ṭahma to flowers who emit fragrance, their actions and words are scented with the fragrance of ṭahma, 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).” “First, all praise is for Allah, who is the Lord of all. He who recites his Name never will lose in any field!”

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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.
becomes whatever that is.”

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’ṣḥūq. In this vein Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh speaks of the ‘āshiq longing to reunite with their ma’ṣḥūq. “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.” This verse is reminiscent to the story of the reed, which was written by Jalāl al-Dīn Ṭūrānī, 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.”

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Commensurate with your status, ‘Ta Ha’ and ‘Ya Sin.’ The Lord calls you with these qualities!”

“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!”

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.” 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.” 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

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343 Ibid, 24.
344 Ibid.
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 ʿibādah (worship) you do, without
ʿishq, it is worthless.” Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh goes further arguing without ʿishq a person
cannot have ʾīmān (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.” 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.”

347 Miyān Zafar Maqbul, 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.” 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.” 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.” 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.” 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

never go together.” 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.” 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.” 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

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


\(^{359}\) Ibid, 1092.
having traversed the river himself is aware of its dangers, as well as being knowledgeable of its safe navigation. Without a malāḥ, 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 jinns, all the luxurious fanfare of triumphant joy and the unkown 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

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\(^{360}\) 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.  

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.

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.”

Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh dedicates his life to ‘ishq-i haqīqī. 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.” This verse exemplifies Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh’s understanding of love as a complete surrender to God. Miyān Muḥammad Bakhsh believes

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365 Ibid, 71.
366 Ibid, 72.
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.” Miyan 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.” Hence, Miyan Muḥammad Bakhsh deems the *shahādah* to be the sword of love for it negates everything, while affirming God as the One. This is Miyan Muḥammad Bakhsh’s understanding of *tawḥīd* (Oneness).

Although Miyan 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.” “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).” 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. Miyan Muḥammad Bakhsh even goes as far as

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 their 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’šūq, 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

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majāzī in transforming mankind into having love for God, which is ʿishq-i ḥaqīqī. This formulation represents a continuation of the development of the madhhab-i ʿishq.
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 ṭabba and ṭudd. This isolation has led some to conclude that from the Islamic perspective, the justice of God is more prevalent. 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. The Islamic textual sources identify creation as being encompassed by ṭahma, relating other terms such as, ṭada, lutf, maghfira, ‘afw, shukr, ṭabba, and ṭudd as manifestations of ṭahma. This gave rise to elaboration upon ṭahma. 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 ṭahma, to ‘ishq, relating the other terms, ṭahma, ṭada, lutf, shukr, maghfira, ‘afw, ṭabba, and ṭudd 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

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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 haqīqī*. 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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