

On Love

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Love that leaves you any piece of mind which may turn to other than the beloved is not true; and love that may leave room in your heart for other than the beloved is not real.

Love which comes and goes is a whim and is bound by temptations; and in the case of our Lord, it is bound by His Grace. Such a lover is not but a lover of the gifts and far from loving Allah.

Love which makes you think and reflect is managed by reason; the danger is that it makes your understanding a god above the real god; and it gives authority to your mind to change or sway according to the thoughts that pass by it – good or bad, right or wrong. Love cannot be managed by reason.

If you want to know whether you are on the true path of love or not, then look at the level of love you have for the Beloved: is it increasing or decreasing?

Your connection with the Beloved corresponds to your state of loving Him.

Is your love for the Beloved increasing every moment, as we breathe? Then you are in the state of annihilation in the Beloved.

Is it increasing regularly with the five daily prayers? It is then well maintained, and there shall be no fear on you.

Nevertheless, if your feeling of an increase occurs only once or twice a day when you sleep or wake up; then you are a common lover.

If you remember your Beloved every week as you meet Him in public on Friday prayer; you would then be at a high risk of losing this connection with the Beloved.

The weakest level of love is when you feel your love and see its increase once a year in Ramadan, which is supposed to be a season for fasting from other than the Beloved. This is the lowest level of love which may be accepted and amended.

Search your heart for all kinds of love and bring them out of it one by one, or all at once, if you are brave. Allah does not accept associating others with him; not in belief nor in worship; nor in love.

Your heart should be emptied from all others and filled with what comes from Him Almighty, Most Generous.

Lovers may become crazy if exposed to the Beloved all of a sudden without being cultivated in preparation. Layla once came to see her lover Qays, best known as the Insane of Layla; he was shouting: Layla! Layla! and due to the heat of love, ice was melting when he was putting it on his heart to cool it. She said to him, "Here I am; I am, the one you are seeking; I am your beloved; I am the coolness of your eye; I am Layla!" He replied to her, "Go away; your love distracted me from you".

His reaction explains the level of control he had over his emotions; although it seems crazy to turn away the beloved, that is the very correct position, in the law of shari'a and in the law of love; as shari'a stipulates rules for meeting a woman you love; and love dictates that coming close to your beloved, if you are not prepared, veils you from him: "Too much closeness is a veil" –

شدة القرب . حجاب.

Therefore, it is only the qualified lovers who dare ask for closeness to Him, Almighty, or are even invited before asking. In this regard, Sufis often quote a hadith of the Prophet, Salla Allah ‘alayhi wa sallam, which is not found in the books of hadith, “I have time with my Lord, during which neither a close angel nor sent Prophet can be with me”. Imam Qushayri quotes it as, “I have time in which no one would be with me other than my Lord”. One of the meanings of the statement is that, I have time with my Lord no one can afford to be with me during it; not even Angel Jibril or Prophet Ibrahim.

As for Qays, the Insane, his love was directed to another human being, it did not distract him from his duties towards Allah. He prayed regularly; but when he remembered her he would be distracted in the prayer – not from the prayer. He said in a line of poetry, “I perform Duhaa prayer; but when I remember her I quickly forget whether I prayed two rak’as or eight.” This is because he would be counting by his finger, and Duhaa prayer is eight rak’as, so when folding two fingers, the fingers remaining unfolded would be eight: so he forgets: did he mark two or eight?

True love of Allah should make you His beloved; and then you are at the highest level of love; as Allah Almighty becomes your hearing with which you hear; your sight with which you see; your hand with which you strike and your leg with which you walk, as Allah says in the Divine Hadith.

Ibn Arabi relates that at one stage in his state of love, he started witnessing His Beloved while having his meal; so he would stop eating and be in the pleasure of witnessing Him. He remained in this state for many days abstaining from food while busy witnessing Him without feeling hungry nor thirsty. His wife and students were amazed how he was becoming fat without food. He said, “My looks at Him sufficed for me from all food”.

I finally quote the following lines from my poem, “My spiritual Journey”:

I have not reached Him but through love -
not my love but the love of the Near.

My love for Him is as little as a seed;
His love for me is beyond measure.

The honour is not in your loving Him,
rather in being His Beloved.

ما وصلت إلا بالمحبة *** لا مني بل من القريب
محبتني له قدر الحبة *** وحبه لي شيء عجيب
ليس الشأن أن تحبه *** بل أن تكون أنت الحبيب



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