

# A Glance at Love in the Transcendent Philosophy

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## Introduction

*Praise be to God, His prophets and His friends.*

The author would like to open the discussion with some of Ibn 'Arabi's words on love: Love can never be defined in term of its essence, and all the definitions provided for it so far have been nothing more than a number of formal and verbal statements. Whosoever defines love has not known it; and whosoever has not sipped from the goblet of love has not perceived it; and whosoever claims that he has quenched his thirst with the goblet of love has not grasped it, for

love is a wine which does not let anyone drink it to satiety.[1]

One of the beauties and wonders of the world of creation is the mysterious phenomenon of love, whose notion, like that of existence, is extremely evident, and whose reality is extremely hidden. One reason for its being unknown is that philosophers and psychologists have provided too many different and, sometimes, contradictory definitions for it. The face of love is hidden behind veils, and everyone narrates his own tale of love and presents his own reasons for proving his claims in this regard. Such different and possibly contradictory interpretations testify to the significance and magnitude of this reality. They also remind us of the people who were trying to know what an elephant was. As the story goes, the gigantic size of the elephant and the ignorance of those trying to describe it led to idle talk and nonsensical descriptions, and everybody provided a different definition for the animal from where he was standing and from his own point of view.

The likening of love to a lion, camel, whale or sea in works of prominent gnostics proves this claim: A bird foolishly invited a camel as a guest into its house, When the camel walked into the house of the bird, the house was destroyed and its ceiling collapsed.[2]

Love is real, do not take it as a metaphor; This is a lion's tail; do not play with it. Love is a black lion, thirsty and blood-drinker; It buys nothing other than the heart-blood of lovers.[3]

If you see the canines of the lion displayed, Do not think then that he is smiling.[4] And sometimes it is even more active and fierce than a lion and sharper and of a more cutting edge than the sword: The heat of the roaring lion, the sharpness of the cutting sword, The masculinity of all males is blunt compared to love.[5]

Comparing love to a roaring black lion whose only prey is the blood of lovers' heart reveals that the transaction of love is not an easy profession so that any spoiled individual accustomed to luxury and affluence can undertake it. Neither is it a danger-free route that any tradesperson or wise man can take in search of attaining his sublime goal. Rather, it is a battlefield in which javelins and swords shower from every side and, certainly, it is no place for cowardly dastards. So many Rustams have weltered in their own blood in the battlefield of love that there is no place for old hunchback women.[6]

Do you come with such a mind and heart to the meeting of the highwaymen?

What has a coward merchant to do with such an uproar?

Here there is sword-wound, javelin-wounds are everywhere, What has the gathering of slim-legged tall ladies to do here?

Today Rustams have rolled in their blood, What have the doubled-up old Zals to do here?

Lovers are the targets of arrows; they accept and love injury, What have the safety lovers to do with such a passion?[7]

The nature of love is unknown to everyone, and it is its very concealment and charming smile that might rob people of their hearts. Love stands like a suspended sea that cannot be located at any direction.

What a rare and beautiful suspended sea is the sea of love, O' lovers! It is not underneath, nor above nor in the middle. [8]

Such interpretations are the products of gnostics' meticulous experiences; people who see the realities rather than know them. In this paper, the author intends to examine the mysterious phenomenon of love from the viewpoint of the prominent Islamic philosopher, Mulla ?adra. He is the meeting point of the two oceans of gnosis and philosophy and enjoys the power of mystical vision and intuition, as well as the ability of philosophical analysis. Of course, for a better clarification of the issue, in addition to his ideas, we will also resort to the views of some other philosophers, particularly Ibn Sina. Mulla ?adra talks about love and affection and their different types (the main points of emphasis in this paper), in the 7th volume of his invaluable .book, al-Asfar, in 8 chapters

### **Definition of love**

The word 'love' ('ishq) has been derived from the Arabic word 'ashaqah'. It is the name of a plant which is also called 'lublab', and when it coils itself around trees, they dry up. This is the very feeling created by love; when it dwells in one's heart, the owner is withered and turns pale. Love is the enchantment of the lover by the beauty of the beloved; it means going beyond limits

in friendship and can be found both in piety and debauchery. It is something that makes the senses blind to the faults of the beloved; an obsession that drags people to itself, misleads them and dominates their mind in a way that they see some faces so beautiful. It is also defined as a kind of mania which is developed as a result of witnessing a beautiful face.[9]

There are lots of disagreements concerning the nature of love. Ilahi Qumsha'i, the contemporary philosopher, quotes some of the miscellaneous views in this regard in his book, *A'ikmat-i ilahi* (Divine Philosophy). He says Plato considers love as 'a divine mania affecting sacred souls and the supreme spirits'. Aristotle defines love as 'the blindness of the senses in perceiving the beloved's faults.'

Ibn Sina in his book, *Qanun* (The Law), defines love as follows: "Love is an obsession similar to melancholy. Man falls in love by inducing his mind to admire certain images and qualities." Some say that love is the attraction of God's secrets, and some others maintain that love is a mental disease caused by frequent attention to the beloved's beauty. Love is the divine fascination and inspiration provoking the sacred spirit to move towards the realm of beauty and virtue.

Love is the manifestation of attraction of beauty and attractive beauty. It is a remedy for all pains and an incurable pain at the same time. It is the supreme commander of all faculties of existence and the authority refuting the judgments of the intellect and intuition. Love is the sweet pain and the painful pleasure of man's soul.

Love is the attraction of delicate and sensitive souls towards beauty and perfection. It is the fire of divine desire burning the desire of all other than God all together.[10]

Mulla Sadra views love as being identical with existence, and both identical with beauty and goodness, and believes that it is present at all levels of existence.[11]

He maintains, Some view love as a psychological disease due to its side effects on the lover. They include insomnia, emaciation, agitation, listlessness, sinking of eyes, paleness and fluctuations in pulse rate. There are also others who consider love as a divine mania due to their failure in finding a cure for it. Greek philosophers saw the remedy for it merely in prayer, invocation, almsgiving and devotion.[12]

In his footnotes on *al-Asfar*, 'Allamah I`abai`aba'i says, In its general sense, love refers to a specific attachment between male and female animals, that is, the love of sexual relationship.

However, in its particular sense, it is synonymous with or similar to 'affection', meaning the particular attachment of an intelligent existent to another due to its being beautiful so that when he finds his beloved, he loses his desire for her, and when he loses her, he longs for

[her].[13]

## Infusion of love in all existents

One of the important points in the works of Islamic philosophers and gnostics is the diffusion of love in all existents. All beings, including material and immaterial things, even the Almighty Truth, enjoy this blessing. The point at stake here is the difference between 'desire' and 'love', which are sometimes used synonymously. However, there is a great difference between the two, namely, love is more general than desire and contains it. Love is a companion to conscience, and desire is a companion to privation. Every existent protects its existence by means of its inherent love and seeks for what it has lost through his hidden desire. Accordingly, love can be attributed to all existents, even to the Almighty Truth, since it is an attribute of existence, while desire is not so.

In his glosses on al-Shawahid al-rububiyah, Sabziwari, by referring to the holy a\*adith, "whoever seeks Me will find Me, and whoever finds Me will love Me", tries to prove that attributing love to God Almighty is permissible. On the same basis, Ibn Sina, too, in his Risalat al-'ishq, maintains that attributing love to God is justified.<sup>[14]</sup>

The term 'desire' is employed when dealing with material existents possessing potency and disposition and suffering from different types of ontological loss and emptiness. Thus the desire for perfection and compensation for their loss blazes in them.

Love without desire is specific to intellectual separate beings which enjoy actuality in all aspects, as well as to other existents which are not void of deprivation and, at the same time, possess potency and disposition and, in line with their ontological grade, possess love and voluntary or natural love and desire. Such love and desire provoke different motions, both mental and physical, in existents. Physical motion is either qualitative or quantitative, or either descriptive or special, and each being in the world of nature has some of these motions.<sup>[15]</sup>

Therefore, the desire for transforming potentialities to actualities exists in all corporeal existents. An apple's qualitative motion to change its unpleasant and acrid taste into a pleasant and sweet one originates from its desire to attain perfection and compensate for its defects. The motions of spheres, planets and stars also originate from the same desire. Mulla ?adra concludes the infusion of love in all existents from the same premises and on the same basis. He argues, "Tendency and desire emerge when a thing loses its perfection; hence, love always flows in all beings, while desire is not so. It is specific to those whose losses can be imagined."<sup>[16]</sup>

The beginning of one of A\*afi's beautiful sonnets also reflects the same view: Men and angels are dependent on the existence of love, Show your love and sincerity, so that you should prosper.

Do your best, O man, so that you should not be deprived of love, For nobody buys a slave who  
has no art or skill.

Ibn Sina insists on this issue in *Risalat al-'ishq*, and Mulla ʿAdra has taken this theory from him. Ibn Sina explains the point there by referring to two premises: According to the first premise, all sages and philosophers unanimously believe that on the basis of the principle stating 'every contingent being is a compound,' every contingent being has two aspects: existence and quiddity.

According to the second premise, existence is the source of all goodness and perfection, and quiddity is the origin of all evil and imperfections. Thus every contingent being, due to its ontological aspect, always desires for perfection and goodness, and, because of its nature and essence, despises and flees away from evil and deficiency, which are the indispensable aspects of quiddity and matter. We call 'love' this very essential zeal and innate intellectual intuition causing the subsistence of their existence.

The divine wisdom necessitates this intrinsic love to be trusted as a gift in the essence of all beings of the contingent world so that they can reach from imperfection to perfection, avoid evil and turn to goodness.<sup>[17]</sup>

Ibn Sina divides love into two types: 1) natural love and 2) voluntary love. Natural love is one whose bearer will never rest in peace until it reaches its real destination. In this process, if there is an obstacle in its way, like a stone falling to the ground to rest in its natural place, it will try to remove it to reach and reside in its original place. The same is also true about vegetative powers, which are constantly desiring for food and absorbing it for the body, unless there is some obstacle standing in their way and stopping their functions and activities.

Voluntary love is one whose bearer sometimes turns his back to it, and it emerges when the lover feels a loss. For example, when beasts see a fierce animal, in order to protect themselves, they forget about eating their prey, which is their greatest desire. This is because they are aware that getting away from the scene leads to their survival and is more to their advantage than to eating the prey, which leads to their death.

Natural love exists in all existents due to their nature, while voluntary love is limited to animate beings. Concerning the generalization of love to existents, including simple substances, hyle, forms, accidents, plants and animals, Ibn Sina says, "Hyle, due to its greed for form, is always concomitant with it, and form is always concomitant with the object of love and accompanies its natural perfections and positions. The accidents of love are concomitant with their object, since their existence depends on it.

Love is also hidden in plants' faculties of nutrition, growth and reproduction and stimulates

them to absorb food and have the desire to grow and reproduce. The secret of animal faculties and souls' functioning in different ways lies in their hidden love, which encourages and provokes them to participate in wrathful and passionate activities, in addition to activities similar to those of plants.[18]

Mulla ʿAdra believes that demonstrating the existence of love in objects without demonstrating life and intelligence is nothing more than playing with words. Thus one should, firstly, prove the universality of intelligence and life in objects and then attribute love to them. Accordingly, in the first journey of al-Asfar, under the issues of the intellect and the intelligible and the like and in the light of the theory of principiality of existence, he views knowledge as coextensive with existence. However, he considers matter and body as being the criteria for absence, and attributes knowledge and presence to their imaginal and rational forms which are their very actuality. Likewise, he demonstrates the existence of power at different degrees of strength and weakness in all existents. Since he views love as an ontological attribute and coextensive with existence, Mulla ʿAdra emphasizes that attributing love to material and corporeal things depends on demonstrating the existence of life and intelligence in them. He considers this as a significant point which only he, himself, and some of the people of unveiling and intuition among Sufis have discovered and of which Ibn Sina was unaware. Later he refers to two glorious verses in the Holy Qurʾan, chapter al-Isra: 44 (The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him, and there is not a thing but hymneth His praise; but ye understand not their praise. Lo! He is ever Clement, Forgiving.), and chapter al-Raʿd: 15 (And unto Allah falleth prostrate whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, as do their shadows in the morning and the evening hours.), to prove the existence of life and intelligence in all existence, whether material or abstract, and thanks God by saying, "And praise be to God for our understanding this by both reason and faith, and this is specific to us in the light of God's Mercy and His Best Guidance.[19]

ʿAllamah Iʿabaiʿabaʿi comments on Mulla ʿAdra's words as follows: Since all beauty, goodness and happiness returns to existence (as their opposites to non-existence), such a connection exists between each level of existence with the one above it and between the individual and himself. Therefore, we can pass the judgment that love exists and flows in all existents, whether endowed with intelligence and life or not, and 'knowledge and intelligence' are obviously out of the domain of the concept of 'love'. Thus Mulla ʿAdra's view is open to debate to some extent.[20]

The gist of Sadrian philosophy is that existence is principial and the only source of effect. Each level of existence includes all ontological effects, and attributes and effects, although graded,

are not separate from existence. Love is among the effects of existence and exists at different degrees of strength and weakness at different levels of existence

### **God as the real beloved of all existents**

When talking about the universality and inclusiveness of love, naturally, reference is also made to the beloved and the object of love. Love, the lover, and the beloved are necessary for and concomitant with each other, and the love relation, primarily and essentially, dominates all these concepts. In a chapter devoted to this issue, Mulla ?adra says, although the beloveds could be different from each other, the true beloved is only one, since attaining perfection and absolute goodness and beauty is the goal of every and each existent, and this reality is inherent in all beings.[21]

In order to prove his claims, Mulla ?adra suggests some premises, which are briefly stated below:

1. Existence is the absolute good and is effective and pleasant, while non-existence is evil, distasteful and repellent.
2. Existence is a simple unique being and of different degrees of strength, weakness, perfection or deficiency.
3. The reality of existence accepts no deficiency, finitude or limitation.
4. Each caused being has a portion of the perfection emanated from the Necessary and suffers from some deficiency in proportion to its causedness.
5. The Necessary Being is the absolute existence and enjoys the highest level of beauty of love by essence.
6. All beings are in love with existence, seek for perfection and detest non-existence and deficiency.

Conclusion: All being loves the Pure Being, the Almighty God.[22]

Mulla ?adra's words are in complete agreement with Ibn Sina's argument in his Risalat al-'ishq (Treatise on Love).[23] He says that God has left in all beings a kind of instinctive love to employ as a means to attaining their perfection which is the very goodness. All beings love the absolute good, which is manifest to all lovers; however, they are different in their acceptance of and connection to its manifestation. What is the absolute good, the cause of attaining goodness, and the real beloved of all beings is the very first cause, which is loved by all things.[24]

All caused things derive all their goodness and existence from their cause; therefore, the highest beloved is God, Who is loved either consciously or unconsciously by all existents

## **Loves of the human world**

Due to his multidimensional existence and complexity of structure, man has various concomitants that completely distinguish him from all other beings in nature. He is the epitome of existence, the microcosm, and, in a sense, the macrocosm. He is the gathering place of all wonders. The labyrinthine layers of his existence have created different shapes and needs in his spiritual, individual and social life. Therefore, it is worth to devote a separate chapter to his different types of love. Man has a nature, instincts and innate dispositions. He is a mineral, a plant, an animal and an angel, at the same time. Thus each of these dimensions necessitates a special kind of life and causes specific effects. His loves and affections are also of different kinds, and, naturally, there is a philosophy behind each of them. In what follows, we will briefly .refer to man's different types of love from Mulla ?adra's viewpoint

### **Classification of human love into real and metaphorical types**

Generally speaking, human love is of two types:

1. Real love: The love of God and His Attributes and Actions due to man's dependence on Him.
2. Metaphorical love: Any kind of love for anything other than God.

Metaphorical love, by itself, is divided into spiritual and animal loves, which will be explained later.

The most important kinds of metaphorical love are the following:

1. Love of animal souls for marriage and mating. The philosophy behind it is the survival of generations and preserving the species.
2. Love of leaders for power and leadership and their greed for attaining and securing it. This love seems to be a part of their nature and soul. The philosophy behind it is longing for dominance of the soul over its subordinate powers.
3. Love of merchants and the rich for gaining wealth and their avarice for collecting and saving money. This also seems to be a part of their nature and soul, and the philosophy behind it is to guarantee the happiness and prosperity of their children or those who come after them.
4. Love of scholars and philosophers for gaining knowledge, compiling, writing and publishing books, doing research for discovering the secrets and complexities of science, and teaching and presenting them to learners and the talented. This kind of love is also natural and intrinsic, and the philosophy behind it is to revive the souls, resurrect them from a death due to benightedness, help them to rise out of the grave of nature, and awaken them from the sleep of ignorance and forgetfulness.
5. Craftsmen's love for presenting their art and improving, embellishing and developing it. This



kind of love also seems to be instinctive, and the benefits of people and society lie in it.

#### 6. Love of the witty and people of elegant taste for the beautiful.[25]

The above kinds of love are quite common among people, and philosophers have offered a philosophy for each of them. The affection for the beautiful, which is called love in its height of intensity, has always been a topic for discussion and contemplation due to its being in contrast with moral, religious and ethical issues, and a lot of different and contradictory ideas have been expressed in relation to it. The criteria for distinguishing good love from bad love, certainly, consist of their consequences and effects. Accordingly, it is said that the nobility of love lies in the nobility of the beloved, and the kind of the beloved the soul desires depends on its degree of existence and nobility. Thus one will know about the nobility of love, the degree of the lover's nobility, and his ontological grade by attending to the beloved. Mulla 'adra has an interesting and memorable remark in this regard. He says that the nobler and the higher the souls, the more beautiful, subtle, valuable and pure their friendships and desires. So, the love of vegetative powers, whose function is limited to nourishment, growth and reproduction, is limited to the same things. The love of the animal soul, which is superior to the plant and is endowed with higher powers concerning eating, having relationships with the opposite sex and reproduction is reflected in a more delicate and distinguished way. Such functions are performed naturally in plants, while in animals they are accompanied with free will, choice and employment of the senses and imagination. When a noble power such as rationality is added to an animal's powers, its actions will also be more noticeable, purposeful, enduring, solid and sublime.

From man's animal soul actions and reactions such as feelings, imagination, eating, sexual relationships and fighting the enemies are issued. Insofar as these faculties are not directed by the rational soul, they will be mean and worthless, as the actions of the wicked and inferior people, who look more like beasts than human beings, are considered to be similar to those of animals. It is only after association with the rational soul that such faculties gain value, luminosity and delicacy, and the same animal actions are issued with a kind of skillfulness, perfection, nobility and elevation.

The nobler and higher the souls, the more delicate and glorious, and the purer and richer their [objects of love and desire].[26]

#### **Love of the beautiful**

A kind of love in human life appears in the form of one's excessive interest in another person. This love is much deeper than parental or married love; it reaches a degree at which the lover

goes beyond his normal state, loses the ability to eat or sleep, and all his attention is directed to his beautiful beloved. An example in this regard is Majnun love for Laila, which has been repeatedly referred to in Iranian literature. In such a state of love, the lover finds all perfections, virtues and good in his beloved and is ready to sacrifice his life and soul for her; he cuts off from all and makes a special fire with the imaginal form of his beloved in the realm of his existence. He burns himself in the heat of that fire and enjoys this burning. Such a state is never felt by animals or, at least, cannot be proved or observed in their case. The nature of this state comprises one of the subjects of philosophy and modern psychology

### **Views on the nature of the love of the beautiful**

Murta'ea Mui`ahhari has a short discussion on this issue in his Fii`rat, which is mainly inspired by Mulla ?adra's views in al-Asfar.: He says, "Some have dispensed with this word simply by saying that it is a disease or an illness. This theory - love as a disease - has no followers nowadays. On the other hand, it is said that love is a gift rather than a disease. [27]

It has been written in al-Asfar that some people believe that love is condemned and obscene and is the job of the idle and the lazy.

Some have viewed it as a mental disease; some call it the 'divine madness'; and some have never apprehended its nature, meaning or end at all.

Conversely, some have regarded it as a human virtue, praised it, and spoken about the virtues of lovers, the nobility of love and its end. [28]

To continue with his discussion, Mui`ahhari says, "Some believe that there is only one kind of love, and that is the sexual love, and that all kinds of human love are rooted in the sexual instinct. He refers to Freud as one of the advocates of this theory. However, this view is absolutely unjustified, because sexual love is rooted in egocentricity and the lover's selfishness and desire for possessing the beloved for himself, in which case we would rather call it 'passion' rather than love. Union and possession have no place in love; the problem there is the annihilation of the lover, which is not consistent with egocentricity. It is here that the above issue develops an extremely important and debatable form and turns into a topic worthy of analysis in philosophy and psychology. [29]

After quoting various views concerning this kind of love, Mulla ?adra expresses his views on its philosophical nature. He presents a relatively detailed account of this issue in a chapter entitled 'On the Love of the Witty and the Youth for Beautiful Countenances'. In a part of this chapter he says,

If we inquire into this kind of love more carefully and pay attention to its universal causes, transcendent origins and philosophical ends, we find out that such a love, that is, taking

extreme delight in watching beautiful countenances and having excessive fondness for those of delicate features and a beautiful appearance is among divine actions, has a philosophy of its own and leads to some benefits. It exists in the souls of the majority naturally and without any formality or artificiality. It is certainly good and desirable, especially when it becomes a means to higher ends. Tough souls, hard hearts and dry natures are void of this kind of love, and their

love is simply restricted to the mutual attraction between men and women".[30]

In another passage, to reject some views, Mulla ʿAdra argues as follows: Regarding those who attribute this love to the deeds of the idle and those who have no ambition, it should be said that they have no understanding of hidden issues or subtle secrets. Neither do they know anything except for what is manifested to the senses or appears to superficial perceptions. They are also unaware of the fact that the Most High God does not create anything in the nature of souls unless for an important reason and great purpose.[31]

To clarify the issue still further, Mulla ʿAdra, as mentioned earlier, divides love into real and metaphorical types. Metaphorical love, itself, is divided into human love and animal love. The origin of human love is the similitude of the souls of the lover and the beloved in nature and substance, as well as the lover's obsession with and wonder for the features of the beloved, which originate from his soul.

In animal love, the origin is corporeal passion and the desire for animal pleasures, and the lover's utmost lovesickness and wonder are directed to the appearance of the beloved and the color and shape of her body.

Muaʿaqqiq Iʿusi's remarks in his commentary on the ninth Namai` (section) of al-Isharat in this regard are worth reading: Beware that human love is divided into real love, as discussed before, and metaphorical love, which is divided into the human and the animal loves. The origin of human love is the similitude of the souls of the lover and the beloved in substance. The lover's utmost obsession which originates from his soul is the beloved's features. The origin of animal love is animal desire and the lust for bestial pleasure, and the lover is mostly amazed at the appearance of the beloved and the color and form of its body due to their being corporeal issues.[32]

There is a fine borderline between human love and animal love, since both are a kind of attraction between opposite sexes, though originating from two different human aspects. The former is necessitated by subtlety of the soul, purity of the spirit and tenderness of heart, while the latter is necessitated by the carnal soul and originates from sexual desires. Perhaps, one of the reasons for philosophers' disagreements concerning the love of the witty for beautiful countenances and their praise or contempt for this kind of love is the very superficial similarity

between human love and animal lust. According to Ibn Sina, rational human souls, due to their abstract and spiritual aspects and natural subtlety, always desire for things which are unique in beauty, glory and goodness. They are also interested in harmonious sounds, savory food and drinks and the like. Ibn Sina believes that this kind of love is rooted in the animal soul; however, he maintains that, due to its association with the rational soul, the animal soul sometimes follows it in its good choice and search for desirable things. Nevertheless, it lacks the power or right to interfere with the issues specific to the rational soul, such as perceiving the universals and imagining the intelligible. [33]

Desire for union as the criterion for spiritual love

The main difference between love and lust is that the latter is transient and can be associated with other issues in man's heart, whereas true love is permanent and once settled in the heart, it will drive all others away from there.

Animal passion is just a whim, and after the sexual intercourse of the two bodies and their lustful satisfaction, the attraction usually subsides or dies out altogether. However, the world of love is different. Love and lust, like faith and disbelief, cannot come together in one heart; one cannot hit 'the ball of love with the bat of lust'.

The lover has an excessive desire for union with the beloved. Evidently, the union of two bodies is impossible, and this is because of their material features. As we know, matter is the criterion for absence, disunion and separation rather than presence and union. Any kind of union ascribed to material bodies has no reality beyond nominalization; it is merely a kind of association, mixing, mating and contact. However, the lover really desires for union with the beloved, and this indicates that love is an attribute of the immaterial soul, and the body is the idea of neither the lover nor the beloved. The closer the lover comes to the beloved, the closer he still wishes to get, as if he wants to unite with it and be one soul. Evidently, the spear of such love is pointed at another world. Most often, love begins with the lover's desire to be close to the beloved and be among her friends, but when he achieves his purpose, he will ask for more, that is, to be alone with the beloved. Later he will not even be satisfied with this and will ask for hugging and kissing her. His thirst will not be quenched with this either; his heat and the fire of his passion will rise higher, and he will long for the beloved with all his body, heart and soul, and the flame of the fire of his desire will still blaze more brightly. It has been narrated that Majnun was so much drowned in the love of Laila that one day when she, herself, came to him and announced her presence, he did not pay attention to her and said, "Your love has made me needless of you." Alluding to this story, Mulla ?adra states that the object of love is essentially the imaginal form of the beloved, and the lover comes into union with this

imaginal form. This form becomes a part of his being, and he builds upon that form a world full of joy, warmth and drunkenness. This union is like the union of the 'intellect and the intelligible'.

He quotes in al-Asfar some excellent verses that apparently belong to Ibn 'Arabi:

I hug her, but the soul still desires more; is there any state closer than hugging one another?

And I kiss her lips to cool down my heat, but my excitement is increased even more.

It seems as if the fire of my heart will not extinguish, unless two souls unite with each other.

Mulla 'Adra believes that the reason for such a burning and unquenchable thirst is the following: The reason is that the beloved is, in fact, other than flesh and body. And there is nothing in the corporeal body that the soul desires; rather, his beloved is a spiritual form  
[existing in another world].[35]

### **Value and function of spiritual love**

There is no philosopher who has voiced his approval or recommendation of the value of spiritual love and its function in absolute terms and unconditionally. As mentioned earlier,

some philosophers have considered this kind of love a kind of disease and something worthless, and even those who have approved of it have conditioned it to certain factors.

According to Ibn Sina, Whenever man likes a beautiful countenance only because of animal pleasures, he deserves to be blamed and scolded. Adulterous and homosexual people are of this kind. If corrupt people love beautiful countenances on an intellectual basis [only for the sake of beauty rather than animal pleasures], this will help them as a means for advancing in benevolence and virtue, for this will, in fact, show their greed for the most effective thing to bring one close to the first source of influence and the absolute beloved and is the most similar  
to transcendent and noble issues.[36]

The bearer of animal love intends to possess the beloved, enjoy her being and satisfy his animal passion, whereas the bearer of transcendent love is ready to lay his existence at the feet of his beloved, sacrifice himself for her and disappear in her.

The noticeable point that Ibn Sina refers to is that man's outward and inward depend and reflect on each other. He quotes a *hadith* from the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) in this regard: "Seek your needs from beautiful countenances," and concludes that the beauty of countenance is due to the beauty of behavior, and that upright posture and graceful external shape reflect excellence of internal constitution. It is the beautiful inward that creates a beautiful form, and they are beautiful attributes that create noble virtues in the person. He usually thinks of people with beautiful faces as good people but admits, "There are those among people who are ugly in appearance but beautiful in attributes," and also, "There are

those who are beautiful in appearance but ugly in attributes."

It is sometimes possible to find some ugly people with good attributes and some beautiful people with bad attributes, but these are only exceptions. He believes that people with hideous faces but glamorous attributes did not originally possess such an appearance but became so due to some accidents. Their ugliness is not genuine, constitutional or rooted in their primary creation; rather, it is accidental, and their good temper has been the result of habit and mixing with good people. On the other hand, there are some people with a beautiful face but despicable behavior, and this could be possibly the effect of two factors: either their bad conduct has nothing to do with their essence, and they were essentially good and virtuous at the beginning, and then, because of some accidents, they became vicious or ill-natured, or perhaps mixing with evil characters has influenced them in the wrong direction and created a number of secondary bad habits in them.[37]

Therefore, according to Ibn Sina, if the aim of the lover in the process of love is not the satisfaction of his instinctive and passionate desires; if he is only in love with the beauty of her countenance, erect posture, and virtuous attributes; and if his affection is roused by the beloved's beauties rather than his longing for satisfying his passion, his love is admirable and rational. And since form and conduct are compatible with each other, the lover is, in fact, in love with virtuous behavior, though he is looking at it through the mirror of appearance. Man's disposition for falling in love with beauties and good things is a blessed opportunity; it grants subtlety, enthusiasm, ecstasy and sadness to the soul, makes it cry and causes tenderness of heart and thoughtfulness of mind. It also gives delicacy and liveliness to man's emotions and feelings. It is as if the lover is seeking for an inward and hidden aspect in the senses, and, consequently, he is liberated from worldly concerns and turns away from whatever other than the beloved. In this case, too, his purpose will be one and limited to the beloved; he starts his mystic journey from the world of multiplicity to the world of unity, and, thus, the process of his reaching the real beloved will become much easier. This is because he does not need to cut off from multiple things for joining his true beloved who is the origin of all perfection, virtues and beauty; rather, it suffices for him to turn away from one and join the other.

Concerning the effect of this love, Mulla ?adra writes, By my life, this love frees the soul free from all worldly concerns, except for one: the desire to see human beauty in which many traces of the Beauty and Glory of Allah could be seen, as God has referred to this in His Words, "We have indeed created man in the best shape" (Qur'an, chapter al-Tin, 95: 4), and "... and then produced it as another creation. So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators!" (Qur'an, chapter al-

Mu'minun, 23: verse 14). It makes no difference whether what is intended by another creation is the apparent perfect form or the rational soul, for outward is only another label for the inward, and form is the image of reality, and the body and all its components correspond to the soul and its attributes, and the metaphor is the passage to reality".[38]

One of the major obstacles to man's spiritual and intellectual perfection is his diverse concerns and dispersed motifs and tendencies. Most people's faculty of imagination, like a wondering bird, sits on a different branch at every moment and wastes all their power and energy on such useless diversities. Having a single concern is a privilege enjoyed by wayfarers, thinkers and all those who have been successful in their field and profession. In some prayers we read: "Oh, God! Make our concerns only one." The gracious Prophet

aelig;) said in a tradition to his people: If it were not for your excessive talking and the confusion within your heart, you would see what I see and would hear what I hear.

When man has only one concern, all his energy and power will be concentrated on one direction and lead him to his goal. This great art only lies in love. It is the Elixir unifying man's being and his diverse imaginations with each other and bringing all of them to a point of focus. Thus it is a very powerful factor for motion and search. It fills its owner with courage and dares him to step in fields which reason will never have the courage to enter.

All kinds of loves are one in nature, and their difference lies in their object. Whatever its kind, one of the precious functions of love is to provoke the motion from multiplicity to unity, which provides a very good context for wayfaring and cutting oneself off from natural multiplicity.

Love is, indeed, the very excessive desire and zeal of the lover for union with the beloved. In the ninth Namai` (section) of al-Isharat, where Ibn Sina speaks of the mystical and ascetic practices, he refers to softening of the inward as one of the aims of mystical practices and struggles. An issue that he considers as beneficial and helpful in this regard is having 'subtle thought and chaste love.'[39] He believes that a kind of love involving chastity and purity is very beneficial in this process. Khwajah Na'ir al-Din I'usi in his commentary on al-Isharat explains

Ibn Sina's remarks as follows: In his speech on chaste love Ibn Sina refers to the first of the two metaphors ... and, on the contrary, the first makes the soul delicate and enthusiastic, marks it with ecstasy and tenderness, brings it into opposition with worldly concerns, makes it reject whatever other than its beloved, and transforms all concerns only into a single one. Thus turning to the real beloved will be easier for the lover than to others, because he does not need to reject many things, and one who has said, ' whosoever falls in love, remains chaste, keeps his love secret, and then dies has died a martyr,' has certainly referred to the same point. Regarding the possible consequences of the love for the beautiful, Ibn Sina writes, "Loving a



beautiful form entails three things: firstly, the desire for hugging it; secondly, the desire for kissing it, and thirdly, the desire for becoming one flesh with it. It is the third desire that marks the borderline between spiritual love and animal love. If the lover hopes to do this with his beautiful beloved, his love will be of the kind of animal love, though it can dispense with its beastly aspect through sharing with the rational soul and come of value by intending to survive and reproduce. The first and second desires, that is, the desires for hugging and kissing, are considered vicious, provided that the motif behind them is passion and lust. However, they are not so if the intention behind is to come closer to the beloved or unite with it, and if they are [void of lustful purposes].[40]

### **Metaphor as the passage to reality**

There is hardly any difference between metaphorical (spiritual) love and real love. In both of them, the beloved is a being endowed with perfections, virtues, beauties and absolute attributes that strike the eyes and the imagination of the lover. The major difference here is related to their extension; in the former, what the lover accepts as absolute are pure imagination and a metaphor for reality. This is because a being with such absolute and unlimited attributes cannot be found in this earthly world. In this state, if the lover is directed by an experienced and successful wayfarer, he has found access to an immensely valuable means for his attaining the reality. The journey from metaphorical to real love had been discussed in the works of ancient Greeks, especially in those of Plato. Nevertheless, closer inspection of Muslim scholars' works reveals that mystics, philosophers and scholars of ethics have been inspired by the holy Qur'an in their turning to love as a method, and it was only after this that they began to devise the principles of this method. And, naturally, through internal reflections and deliberations, they learnt about some of the divisions and characteristics of each kind of love and their principles.[41]

Nowadays, scholars of ethics propose two ways for purifying the soul: the way of the intellect and the way of love. The way of the intellect is very long and time consuming and comes to fruition very late, thus it is not the way chosen by sagacious toppers. It is on the route of love that one can reach his final destination just by one song, and thus its effect is extremely remarkable.

Do not find fault with me, if from the mosque I go to the tavern, The preaching session is so long, and time is passing.[42]

On the way of love, it is recommended to the wayfarer to tie the leash of his affection and love to a perfect man, and since the first fruit of love is the similitude and sameness of the lover and



the beloved, the beloved's attributes, like a generator, will be transferred through the cable of love to the lover. It is from here that the rules of finding friends and winning the love of the people of the house of piety comes of undeniable value.[43]

Mulla ?adra does not recommend spiritual love in absolute terms and on unconditional grounds. He claims that the merit of this kind of love depends on the time and conditions of individuals and believes that it would be useful only in the middle of the process of mystical journey for softening the soul and awakening the wayfarer from the sleep of ignorance and saving him from the sea of animal lusts. However, when the soul is perfected through gaining divine knowledge and the privilege of connecting to the holy realm, one should not continue his spiritual love, since such a person has found access to the truth.

Undoubtedly, abandoning the truth and that high rank for attaining a metaphorical and lower rank is condemned and despised by the wise: "When passing through the archway to the world of reality has been completed, turning once again to the beginning of the journey is abominable and deemed contemptuous." [44] He does not reject the possibility that one of the reasons for philosophers' disagreements in this regard might be staying at the state of metaphorical love or turning one's back to the truth after reaching it.

It is said that the beginning of the experience of love in the life of most mystics has been with metaphorical love. Such stories have been told about Ibn 'Arabi, Rumi, A\*afiî, and, among the contemporaries, Shahriyar. In the school of love, the toddler has to be taught by childish games initially, so that later, after developing the necessary skills, he could be connected to the truth.

The warrior puts a wooden sword in the hands of his son, So that when he becomes skilful in using it, he would carry a sword in war.

The love that man has is that wooden sword, At the final trial, it will turns into love of the Merciful.[45]

Alas! This desert is extremely dangerous, and it is impossible to pass through it without having Khizr (the Green) as your companion. No one recommends taking such a risk; however, if, by destiny, such a thing happens to the wayfarer, his chastity, shrewdness and patience will be greatly effective in dealing with it and rubbing out the rusts and impurities from the metal of his existence. Nothing could do this other than love; it breaks the walls of egotism and selfishness in him and increase his thirst for moving towards perfection and beauty. It will also bring his potentialities into actuality, grant him a sharp mind, an enlightened heart, a tender spirit, and delicate feelings, and draw his attention to the perception of subtle points and spiritual and transcendental issues.

If this human love does not originate from excessive animal passion, but from the admiration

of the features of the beloved and her excellent shape, well-combined features, good temper, harmonious movements and actions, and coquetry and flirtation, it will be considered a virtue. It will bring tenderness to the heart, and sharpness to the mind and draws the attention of the soul to the perception of noble issues. And that is why masters have ordered their disciples to begin with love. As the hadiths go, "Allah is Beautiful and loves beauty," and also "whosoever falls in love, remains chaste, keeps his love secret, and then dies has died a martyr." [46]

In Mystic terms, the true beloved of all people, at whatever level they are, is God. However, such a love and affection for this Beloved is manifested in the love for others. Ibn 'Arabi's approves of this idea by saying, "Nobody has ever loved anyone other than his creator, but He is hidden from him by Zaynab, Suad, and Hind." [After stating in his Risalat al-'ishq (Treatise on Love) that the first cause and the Necessary Being is pure Good, Ibn Sina adds that the real beloved of human, angelic and divine souls is the very Pure Good and the Absolute Perfection.

Every soul is in love with itself and its own perfection, and since all perfection and good are emanated from the first cause, and the perfection of souls lies in knowing it and coming close to it, all souls, indeed, love and desire the first cause and the Pure Good. He also writes in Ilahiyyat Shifa, "The Necessary is intelligible, whether it is understood through the mediation of other than Him or not, as He is the Beloved, whether other than Him love Him or not." [49]

The heart that loves beautiful and virtuous ladies, Whether it knows this or not, loves Him. In his al-Shawahid al-rububiyah, under the heading 'Qur'anic wisdom', Mulla 'adra writes, All worshipers are monotheists at the level of conception and polytheists at the level of judgment.

Since they worship and love the origin of good and the absolute perfection... Even idolaters think of their idols as divinity, and, thus, they are no different from most Muslims, and the holy verse, "Thy Lord hath decreed, that ye worship none save Him ..." (chapter Bani Israel, 17: 23), could signify this divine command, universal nature and intrinsic religion in all beings. [50]

Regarding the point that all loves and affections, whether conscious or unconscious, lead to the love of God, Ibn 'Arabi in his Futu'at-i makkiyyah says, We usually love God in His manifestations and under particular names, such as Laila, Lubna and the like, and we do not know that the object of love is the very Truth. We love a name and we are unaware of the fact that it is the very Truth.... Some will recognize their beloved in this world, and some will not until after death; however, when the veils are removed, they will learn that they have not loved anyone other than God, but it has always been the name of the creature that had veiled Him.

Concerning idolaters, he states, "And he has not loved other than God without knowing it and has named his object of worship Manat, 'Uzza, and Lat, and when he dies and the veil is drawn aside, he will recognize that he has not worshipped other than God". [51]

Rumi also believes that the earthly beloved is loved because a ray of the real beloved exists in her, and a drop of that secret goblet has been poured over her, and, in fact, the spear of worldly lovers is always pointed at the origin and source of those beauties and perfections.

You have spilt a drop from that hidden goblet over the land of my earth, the goblet of the honored.

There is a trace of that drop on the tresses and the visage, and because of that the kings are licking the earth.

There is a drop of beauty on that humiliated earth, which you kiss with a hundred hearts day and night.

A muddy drop of it creates a Majnun; think what a pure drop will do to you.

Every man is tearing his clothes in front of a stone, for that stone of beauty has received a drop.

A drop over the moon, and the sun and the ram; a drop over the throne, the chair and Saturn; A drop over gold, garnet and pearl; a drop over wine, sweets and fruits; A drop over delicate [virtuous ladies; then how is that pure and unmixed wine.[52

## Conclusion

The final conclusion that can be drawn from the remarks of great philosophers and mystics is that all beings are in love with existence and perfection, and love is intertwined with existence, though it is realized in different forms at different levels of existence. Since man is endowed with the power of intellect and will, and his motion is not forced by nature or instincts, his love appears in a certain form. He chooses different objects in the light of his intellect and falls in love with them. Such intellection, imagination and selection are absent in other beings, and their love is simply limited to instinctive and natural attraction.

The writer believes that it would be worthwhile to bring this paper to an end with some of Mulla ?adra's beautiful words in this regard: Beware that the final ends and highest purposes behind the existence of love in the souls of the witty, behind their affection for the beauty of bodies, and behind their adornment of forms are to awaken the souls from the sleep of negligence and ignorance, to train them for a while and bring them from potentiality to actuality, to make them advance from corporeal things to spiritual ones and from there to the best of the permanent universal issues, and to provoke in them the desire for seeing Allah and experiencing the [pleasures of the Hereafter.[53

## Notes

- [1]. Ibn 'Arabi, Futuwa't al-makkiyyah, vol. 2, p. 111 (4 vols. edition). Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi.
- [2]. Mathnawi, 3rd Book, verse 4668.
- [3]. Ghazaliyyat Shams, 2/ 215.
- [4]. Diwan Mutannabi, Edited by Barquti, vols. 3 and 4, and the second sec., p. 85, Beirut: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi.
- [5]. Ghazaliyyat, 2/ 171.
- [6]. Cf. Dr Sayyed Hussein Fatimi, Imagery in Ghazaliyyat Shams, Amir Kabir, 1364 A.S., pp. 87-90.
- [7]. Ghazaliyyat Shams, 2/299.
- [8]. Ibid., 4/202.
- [9]. Dehkhoda Dictionary, Tehran University Press, vol. 10, p. 14024.
- [10]. Mu'ayyadin Mahdi Ilahi Qumsha'i, Divine Philosophy, Islamic Publications Office, 1363 A.S , pp. 140-146.
- [11]. Mulla Sadra, al-Asfar, Qum: Manshurat Mustafawi Publications, vol. 7, p. 15.
- [12]. Ibid., p. 176.
- [13]. Ibid., p. 152, footnote.
- [14]. Cf. al-Shawahid al-rububiyah, Edited by Sayyed Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani,, University Publication Center, and T'aliqat section, p. 597, and Rasa'il Ibn Sina, Risalat al-'ishq, p. 396.
- [15]. Cf. al-Asfar, vol. 7, p. 148.
- [16]. Ibid., p. 150.
- [17]. Cf. Rasa'il Ibn Sina, Qum: Bidar Publications, p. 381.
- [18]. Ibid., pp. 371, 381.
- [19]. al-Asfar, vol. 7, p. 153.
- [20]. Ibid., p. 153, footnote.
- [21]. Ibid., p. 160, title of chapter 17.
- [22]. Ibid., p. 149.
- [23]. Cf. Rasa'il Ibn Sina, p. 377.
- [24]. Ibid., p. 393.
- [25]. Cf. al-Asfar, vol. 7, pp. 164, 174.
- [26]. Ibid., pp. 165-167.
- [27]. Mui'ahhari, Murta'aa, Fii'rat, p. 91.
- [28]. Cf. al-Asfar, vol. 7, p. 91.

- [29]. Cf. Fii`rat, p. 95.
- [30]. al-Asfar, vol. 7, p. 172.
- [31]. Ibid., p. 175.
- [32]. Ibn Sina, al-Isharat wal tanbihat, vol. 3, Book Publication Center, 1403 A.H. p. 383.
- [33]. Cf. Rasa'il Ibn Sina, p. 386.
- [34]. Soroush, Abdul Karim, Story of Masters of Knowledge, Sirat Publications, p. 277.
- [35]. al-Asfar, vol. 7, p. 179.
- [36]. Rasa'il Ibn Sina, p. 387.
- [37]. Rasa'il Ibn Sina, p. 388.
- [38]. Cf. al-Asfar, vol. 7, p. 174.
- [39]. Ibn Sina, al-Isharat wal tanbihat, vol. 3, Book Publication Center, p. 383. 1403 A.H.
- [40]. Rasa'il Ibn Sina, p. 388.
- [41]. Cf. Saeed Rahimiyan, Real Love and Metaphorical Love, Kayhan Andishe, No. 37.
- [42]. Diwan A\*afi`.
- [43]. For more information refer to Murta`a Mui`ahhari, Imam 'Ali's Attraction and Repulsion.
- [44]. al-Asfar, vol. 7, p. 175.
- [45]. Ghazaliyyat Shams, 1/22.
- [46]. al-Asfar, vol. 7, p. 174.
- [47]. Mui`ahhari Murta`a, Fii`rat, p. 120.
- [48]. Rasa'il Ibn Sina, p. 393.
- [49]. Ibn Sina, Ilahiyyat shifa, Tehran: Nasir Khusro Publications, p. 370.
- [50]. Mulla Sadra, al-Shawahid al-rububiyyah, edited by Ashtiyani, p. 144.
- [51]. Ibn 'Arabi, al-Futua\*at al-makkiyyah, vol. 4, Beirut: Dar Sadir, p. 259.
- [52]. Mathnawi, 5th Book, 372.
- [53]. al-Asfar, vol. 7, p. 186.