

The Sufi Path of Love

In tracing back Hazrat Inayat Khan's Sufi creed '*Ishq Allah Mah'bud Allah*, one cannot but come across the 'founders' of the Path of Love within classical Sufism: al Hallaj, Ahmad Ghazali and Fakhruddin 'Iraqi.

The famous Sufi martyr al Hallaj (10th century) was the first one to introduce the word 'ishq (a word for passionate love, comparable with the Greek *eros*/Latin *amor*) for the love for God instead of the word *mahabat* (Loving kindness, comparable with the Greek *agape*/Latin *caritas*).

The Persian Sufi master Ahmad Ghazali (± 1060–1126), brother of the well-known Muhammad Ghazali (Imam Ghazali), was the first to write a treatise on Love: *Sawanih*, inspiring 'Iraqi and many other authors. Ahmad was a famous deliverer of sermons. Commentators tell us Ahmad Ghazali may have experienced what his more famous brother wrote about. He starts *Sawanih* with:

*God, may he be exalted, has said:
'He (God) loves them (the people) and they love him.'*

(Quran V, 54)

'Iraqi (1213–1289) was a friend of Rumi and a student in the school of Ibn 'Arabi. He bridged the teachings on the Path of Love (also followed by Rumi) with the more intellectual and philosophical teachings of Ibn 'Arabi. He lived for some time in India and the late Islamic scholar Annemarie Schimmel tells us that his influence on Indian Sufism cannot be underestimated. His influence on Hazrat Inayat Khan, his creed and his Message of Perfection of Love, Harmony and Beauty most likely is indirect, as Inayat Khan only mentions 'Iraqi once. Here's a line of 'Iraqi to show the close relationship of these two souls:

*In this place beloved, love and lover are all one not three.
If there is no scope for union, how can there separation be?*

Scott Kugle, p. 163

'Iraqi does not have the sole authorship to this triad of love. In his essay in Pir Zia's 'A Pearl in Wine', Seyyed Omid Safi traces this triad back to Hallaj and follows the Indian strands via the Chisti silsila to Inayat Khan.

Omid Safi, an American professor of Islamic studies of Iranian descent, tells us that the Path of Love (*madhhab-i-'ishq*), knows no 'creedal statements nor particular initiatory rituals, but rather an aesthetic, a "mood", a *rasa*: the intuitive experience of love, which must be tasted personally.' (On the Path of Love towards the Divine).

*Of love, one can only speak with lovers.
Only a lover knows the true value of love.
One who has not experienced it considers it all a legend.
For such a person, even the claim of love,
even the name of love, are forbidden!*

'Ayn al-Qozat Hamadi

The Path of Love starts with the very beginning of Creation, as the famous Hadith Qudsi of the hidden treasure tells us:

*I was a hidden Treasure and wanted to be known (loved),
so I created Creation in order to be known.*

In other words, love is the cause of Creation.

Next comes the famous 'Day of Alast'. On this day, God addressed all of primordial humankind and asked: 'Am I not your Lord' (*Aslastu bi rabbikum?*)'

For Ahmad Ghazali, love is not an attribute of the One. Love is God. So the One asked: 'Am I not your Beloved?' Hereupon the primordial spirit became utterly intoxicated and could only say 'yes' (Sawanih, commentary, p. 100).

This creation story is condensed in in the Quranic verse that opens *Sawanih*: God loves them and they love Him. 'God loves them' comes first, so God started Creation by and through loving us. Only because of this love, we can love back. In the words of A. Ghazali:

'He loves them' inevitably proceeds 'they love him'. Bayazid Bastami – may God be pleased with him – said: 'For a long time I was under the illusion that I loved Him. But (the truth is that) it was He who first loved me'.

Sawanih, chapter 21, p. 42

As lovers, we look in the mirror and see God's loveliness (*husn*, Beauty) (Sawanih, commentary, p. 97):

*When Beauty (husn) manifested itself through Love,
the reflections of forms and essences appeared.
Love functions as a mirror,
while Beauty stands before it and adorn it with splendor.*

Nur 'Ali Shah, quoted by Pourjavady (p. 97)

This leads us to the understanding that when we surrender to love, we feel the need to harmonize and thus can attain beauty. Perfecting this, we can reach the Perfection of Love, Harmony and Beauty, in other words, the One. As Rumi says in his Mathnavi (I, 111):

*Whether love is earthly or heavenly,
In the end it leads us to the other shore*

Habib Allah Zikr

The musical notation is written on two staves in 4/4 time. The melody is in the key of G minor (one flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. Chords are indicated above the staff.

Chords: Gm (Em), Eb (C), F (D), D (B), Eb (C), F (D), Bb (G), Gm (Em), Eb (C), F (D), Bb (G), F (D), Eb (C), F (D), Bb (G).

Lyrics: Yu - hib - bu-hum wa yu - hib - bu-na - hu Hu Al - lah Ha - bib Al - lah
Hu Al - lah ha - bib Al - lah Hu Al - lah Ha - bib Al - Lah

Yuhibbuhum	He (God) loves them (humankind)
wa yuhibbunahu	and they love him
Hu Allah	He is the only One
Habib Allah	(we are) the beloved of the One

Hu Allah

Hu is Arabic for 'He'. On a mystical level, following Ibn 'Arabi's 'Sufi Advaita', the Islamic Creed can be translated as 'only God exist'. According to the Great Sheikh, this means that the whole of Creation has a relative existence, only existing in relationship to the divine. This means that also our individuality (which literally means 'undividable') does not really exist. In other words, we cannot really use personal pronouns and say 'I'. The One is the only one who can do this, so God is called 'HU'. On an experiential sound level, 'HU' is the sound of the breath: through the breath, we can realize our oneness and connection with the One and with each other.

Habib Allah

The beloved of the One. The phrase 'habib Allah' is traditionally used for the Prophet Muhammad. Following the Quranic saying above, we all are the beloveds of the One, who is our 'wali' (the friend, as stated in Quran V, 55).

Habib shares its root with *yuhibbuhum* and *yuhibbunahu*.

A. Ghazali uses *mahabbat* (also from the same root HB and usually translated as lovingkindness) and the in Sufi circles more common '*ishq* indiscriminately. Inayat Khan combines these two words for love in his aforementioned creed '*Ishq Allah Mah'bud Allah*.

References:

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Scott Kugle (ed. and transl.): *Sufi Meditation and Contemplation, Timeless Wisdom from Mughal India*. Suluk Press, Omega Publications, 2012