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LOVE FOR ALLAH ﷻ **By Shaykh Zulfiqar Ahmad (db)**

The Effects of Love

The Holy Quran tells us that Allah ﷻ loves intensely those who believe in Him. The depth of this love is directly proportional to the amount of faith a believer has in His Lord, and is inversely proportional to how strongly a believer will feel the difficulties he faces in his life. This means that a believer will be able to tolerate more difficulty and obstacles, the greater his love for Allah ﷻ, and vice versa.

This is comparable to the case of a woman who has great desire in her heart to become a mother, and for this is willing to bear tremendous hardship. She is willing to carry a child inside her for nine months, suffering all kinds of ailments such as back pain and morning sickness. However, they are tolerable because she keeps her goal of becoming a mother in perspective. She is also aware of the possibility that complications can develop during labor that may lead to a lifetime of suffering, and also that there may be something wrong with the child that is born. In addition, she also knows that for the first few years she will have to be entirely devoted to the child, sacrificing rest and food for the sake of her baby. However, her intense desire of becoming a mother and love for the child overshadows all this and makes her burden easy for her to bear.

Hence love eases pain, so much so that we do not even consider a burden to be a difficulty or an inconvenience. Likewise, all difficulties, be they physical, financial, or otherwise, become easy for the believer when he has love for Allah ﷻ in his heart. Moreover, the true believer even longs to make sacrifices for Allah ﷻ, and is even willing to sacrifice his biggest asset, his life, for the sake of the Lord who blessed him with this gift in the first place. The sad truth is that we have not properly understood or inculcated true love for Allah ﷻ in our hearts, and have been negligent of our duties to our Creator.

Levels of Love

A small amount of love is achieved with the mere recitation of the *Kalima* (Testament of Faith). Those Muslims whom we may regard as rebellious are at the very least Muslims by name and have achieved the minimal level of love associated with this status. However defiant and sinful a believer may be, he or she will never tolerate any insult against Allah ﷻ, though he or she may tolerate a stream of insults leveled at him or her self. Hence, one enjoys a taste of this love when one recites the *Kalima*.

Another important concept for the believer is *shadda*, or intensity in love. Intensity or growth of love for Allah ﷻ is achieved through righteous deeds and the remembrance of Allah ﷻ (*dhikr*), increasing in proportion to the amount of dhikr one engages in. The

amazing thing about this love is that it is without limit. This intense love is what the Friends of Allah ﷻ (*awliyaa*) possess, and it radiates from every part of their body and soul.

Nothing seems difficult or onerous to the one who achieves this high degree of love. Standing in prayer is no longer a burden but a source of immense pleasure. If a lover of ice cream is presented with the flavor of his choice and the person offering it says, "Please bear the burden of eating this," this will sound ludicrous to the one on the receiving end. Far from seeing it as a burden, he loves the ice-cream and longs for any opportunity to consume it. This is the case of a lover of Allah ﷻ and how he perceives the commands of his beloved Lord.

Three Types of Love

Haji Imdadullah Makki (may the mercy of Allah ﷻ be upon him) was a noble elder of the Chisti Sufi order but his first oath was in the Naqshbandi order. At that time there were two famous centers of religious training (*khanqahs*): one belonging to Hazrat Shah Ghulam Ali Delhvi and the other to Hazrat Shah Afaaq (may the mercy of Allah u be upon them both).

A *shaykh* once commented that he had seen only two "markets of love" in his lifetime; that of Ghulam Ali Delhvi and of Shah Afaaq. Hazrat Shah Afaaq's authorized representative (*khalifah*) was Maulana Naseeruddin Delhvi, to whom Hazrat Imdadullah Makki (may the mercy of Allah u be upon them) first pledged allegiance.

Hazrat Imdadullah Makki worked hard and become *khalifah* in the Naqshbandi order but then, unfortunately, his teacher passed away. He was still young and could not imagine proceeding without a mentor and so pledged a second time into the Chisti order, for which Allah ﷻ accepted a great deal of work from him. It is from this most honorable personality that we learn of three types of love.

1) *Ishq-e-Zati* (Love of a Person): When in love with another individual, one becomes oblivious to any shortcomings in the beloved, as this kind of love renders one blind and deaf. The lover does not pay any heed to any negative reports he receives about his beloved because he is so completely in love.

A king once told his attendant to bring him the most beautiful boy in the kingdom, and the attendant dutifully went home and brought back his dark and skinny son. The king said, "I told you to bring me a beautiful boy," and the attendant replied, "There is no one more beautiful in my eyes than my son."

Laila was so named because she was as dark as the night, and was rather plain-looking, but even so Majnu was madly in love with her. The ruler of the land at that time decided that he wanted to see the Laila about whom he had heard so much, and so ordered for her to be presented to him. Upon seeing how ordinary she was the king commented, "You are no different than any other woman." Laila smiled and replied, "You are not seeing me with Majnu's eyes."

The person thus in love is captivated by everything about his beloved, and will be heedless of any faults in the object of his love and desire. He will remain content in his love even if he is scolded, beaten, and rejected by his beloved because his love is so intense.

2) *Ishq-e-Sifati* (Love for the Sake of Traits): This is a lesser degree of love than that mentioned above. *Ishq-e-Sifati* implies a love for the sake of the beloved's fine character, good habits, and pleasing manners. This is lesser in intensity than the former because the love will exist only as long as the good characteristics are maintained, and so the relationship is weak.

3) *Ishq-e-Ahsani* (Love for the Sake of Favors): This is the weakest form of love in that it is hypocritical and exists only as long as the beloved keeps extending favors to the one who claims to be the lover.

Hazrat Haji Imdadullah said that we have only this third kind of love for Allah ﷻ. We profess our love because of His tremendous mercy and favors upon us, but we falter in that love as soon as we are inflicted with the slightest tribulation. A small misfortune or hardship causes us to first become negligent of our prayers. If we fall in the slightest financial hardship we break our ties with the mosque because we feel the need to work extra hours. This is why this is the weakest form of love, because it is broken with the slightest disturbance in the relationship.

We should all strive for moving from this weakest form of love to the strongest, *Ishq-e-Zati*, where happiness and sorrow become one. Nothing can break the bond of love at this point and it is a most delightful stage to be at. This is our true calling by which we begin to find the way of the *shariah* and *sunnah* not just easy but desirable.

Sign of Love for Allah ﷻ

Once we place Allah ﷻ and love for Him ﷻ foremost in everything we do, then all of our difficulties will seem to vanish and doors of opportunity will open up for us. All this is achieved by obeying the commands of Allah ﷻ, frequenting the mosque, and submitting ourselves fully to our Creator. We will only understand the true value of this in the Hereafter.

Love is indeed an intriguing phenomenon. Khwaja Ghulam Fareed (may the mercy of Allah ﷻ be upon him) was a great scholar and Sufi poet of his time. The following is an excerpt from one of his famous poems.

*Nothing appeals to me but the Alif in Allah ﷻ
When Alif has captured my heart, what use have I for Ba or Ta?
We committed ourselves on the Day of Promises, so why turn back now?
Never will I give up my love, for the remembrance of Allah has taken over my heart
Now everyday I see my Beloved in a different light, ever more beautiful*

Such are indeed the words of one who has true love in his heart. Gatherings such as this one, aimed at the remembrance of Allah ﷻ are where we wash our hearts just like we wash clothes when they become stained. All day we tire ourselves in pursuit of the false attractions of this world and should try and spare at least some time for the worship and remembrance of our Lord.

Allah ﷻ is so merciful that He races towards the one who takes just one step towards Him. Keep in mind that our success in coming to the mosque is an indication of Allah's ﷻ

acceptance of our intention and efforts in coming here. An example of this is that I may tolerate a rude guest once or even twice, but I will never go out of my way to invite him to my house. Permission to enter the mosque becomes restricted in the same manner to those whom Allah ﷻ desires in His house. So our constant coming to the mosque and our attachment to the house of Allah ﷻ is a sign that Allah ﷻ is pleased with our efforts.

The Holy Quran says that mosques are populated by those who believe in Allah ﷻ and in the Day they will meet their Lord. So bear witness to the faith of those you see attached to the mosque. Being able to come here is indeed a great blessing.

Those who do not come to the mosque are to be pitied because they lose out on the blessings that rain down on those who worship here, a depravity that we will only truly realize in the Hereafter. Of course people have commitments because of their work and family, and some really do have a valid excuse because of sickness, but we have to make certain sacrifices to be chosen from among those who are invited to His home. We should all ask Allah ﷻ to be included among these fortunate souls, and indeed this is not hard for Him ﷻ.

When President Johnson visited Pakistan, he traveled in a rickshaw and liked it so much that he arranged for the rickshaw driver to come to America. An ordinary rickshaw driver who could not even speak English and whom nobody considered to be anyone important got the opportunity to visit America. Why? Not because of anything special that he did, but because Johnson took a liking to him and his rickshaw. In the same way we are nothing and deserve nothing and it is only out of His mercy that Allah ﷻ blesses us with His favors.

May Allah ﷻ inspire us with the commitment and grant us the ability to become attached to the mosque, and may He fill our hearts with love and longing for Him. *Amin.*

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