

THE SIGNS OF A SINCERE LOVER

The daily rising of the sun is itself proof of the existence of the sun. Similarly, the scent of a fragrance indicates its presence:

*Musk emanates a scent by itself,
It needs not the seller to describe it.*

Several signs by which a sincere *'ashiq* may be recognized are given below:

Sign Number One

A sincere *'ashiq* can be recognized by the essential nature of his being [*dhāt*]. When the blessed Prophet ﷺ was asked about the signs of the friends of Allah ﷺ [*awliya*] he replied:

الذين إذا رؤوا ذكر الله

*Those people who - when they are seen - Allah is
remembered.*

The signs of a sincere *'ashiq* are found in his radiant face and noble demeanor, such that even a stranger can recognize an *'ashiq*

upon seeing him. Even though his appearance seems modest, an intelligent person recognizes the sincere *'ashiq* at first glance. Hearts are attracted to a sincere *'ashiq* as strongly as metal is attracted to a magnet.

Sign Number Two

The Glorious Quran mentions three signs of the lovers:

إذا ذكر الله وجلت قلوبهم و إذا تليت عليهم آياته زادتهم إيماناً و على ربهم
يتوكلون

Those people whom, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts tremble with fear, and if a verse is recited unto them, their faith is strengthened [thereby]. And they trust and rely upon their Lord. (8:2)

The first sign is that when Allah ﷻ is mentioned before them, their hearts tremble with fear. A poet once said:

*Not for a moment may love be concealed,
when Your name is taken.*

The second sign is that when the words of the Beloved ﷻ are recited before them, their faith [*imān*] is strengthened. The third sign is that they have trust and reliance [*tawakkul*] upon Allah ﷻ.

Sign Number Three

It is reported in a hadith that once the blessed Prophet ﷺ was asked about the signs of a true believer. He replied:

تجافي عن دار الغرور و الإنابة إلى دار الخلود و استعداد للموت قبل نزوله

Withdrawal from the abode of deceit (the material world); inclination toward the eternal abode (the Hereafter); and readiness for death before its arrival.

The first sign is that despite its attractions and abundant goods, the material world [*dunyā*] is unable to attract a believer's heart and he remains unaffected by the glamour of this world.

*Withdrawn have I from the affairs of the world, O Lord,
What heights of pleasure and serenity are to be found,
Once the dunyā is extinguished from one's heart.*

The second sign is that his attention is focused toward the everlasting life [*ākhirah*]. The third sign is that he prepares for death before it comes, just as an '*āshiq* prepares to meet his beloved. It is reported in a hadith:

الموت جسر يوصل الحبيب إلى الحبيب
Death is a bridge which brings one friend to another.

Sign Number Four

According to a famous Arabic saying:

لو كان حبك صادقا لأطعته إن المحب لما يحب مطيع
*If your love is true, then certainly you will obey him (your
beloved), for verily the lover is not but obedient to his
beloved.*

A sincere '*āshiq* always obeys his Beloved ﷺ. Truly, this is the greatest sign of all. The entire life of the sincere '*āshiq* conforms to the sacred law [*shari'ah*] and the way [*sunnah*] of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Once a watermelon was presented before *Hadrat* Bayazid Bustami (rah). He asked, "What is the Prophetic way [*sunnah*] to cut and eat this?" None of the scholars gathered were able to answer and as a result *Hadrat* declined to eat it, lest he eat it in a manner contrary to the *sunnah*. Although it is permissible in the *shari'ah* to eat such a thing in whatever way one may wish, for

the lovers, adhering to the *sunna* of the blessed Prophet ﷺ is the only way of life.

Sign Number Five

A distinct sign of a sincere *'āshiq* is that he does not care for anything other than his Beloved ﷺ. In the *shari'ah*, just as loving Allah ﷻ is an act of worship, so too is having disdain for everything other than Allah ﷻ. The heart of a sincere *'āshiq* is empty of love for everything other than Allah ﷻ. The sword of "*Lā ilāha illa'Llāh*" has severed all relations. The heart of one immersed in metaphorical love [*'ishq majāzī*] loves none other than its beloved. What then can be said of those who attain the lofty rank of divine love [*'ishq haqīqī*]?

Once a man saw a beautiful woman and exclaimed, "I am in love with you and want only you!" In reply she said, "My sister is coming behind me, and she is even prettier than me." As the man turned to look back, the woman struck him on the head with her shoe saying, "You liar! If truly you loved *me*, then what need was there to look in any other direction?"

A person once proclaimed love for Queen Zubaida. Zubaida called him and said, "Take however large a sum you wish from the treasury, but proclaim not that you love me." The man asked, "How much money are you offering me?" Zubaida replied, "Ten thousand *dinārs*." Upon hearing this, he fell quiet, silencing his claim of love. Zubaida told the Caliph, Harun al-Rashid, "This man is a deceiving liar. Have him punished." After receiving a sound thrashing, the man regained his senses.

Sign Number Six

Hadrat Khwaja Uthman Haruni (rah) used to say that there are three characteristics that mark a sincere *'āshiq*: he is humble like

the Earth; he has mercy like the sun; and he is generous like the ocean.

Sign Number Seven

According to a poet:

*Know that the signs of an 'āshiq are three,
A pale complexion, deep sighs, and wet eyes.
And that the signs of a traveler [sālik] on the path [tarīqah]
Are three as well - eating less, speaking less, and sleeping less.*

The first characteristic of a sincere *'āshiq* is a pale and yellow complexion. Intense spiritual training and abundant devotions often have such an effect. The second characteristic is deep sighs of longing, due to separation from the Beloved ﷺ. The third characteristic is that the eyes remain wet with tears, as the restlessness of the heart is released through the eyes. The fourth characteristic is to eat little. A sincere *'āshiq* does not succumb to gluttonous pleasures; rather he eats merely to get by. The fifth characteristic is to speak little. The person whose inner soul converses with his Beloved ﷺ has no desire to engage in idle conversation. The majority of the *awliyā* speak only out of necessity. Otherwise it is their practice to remain silent.

Once someone asked of *Hadrat Khwaja Baqi Billah* (rah), “*Hadrat*, you are always silent. If you were to speak some words of advice, people would benefit.” *Hadrat* replied, “Those who benefit not from my silence will be unable to benefit from my words.”

The sixth characteristic of a sincere *'āshiq* is to sleep little. His nights pass in remembrance [*dhikr*] and worship. A *shaykh* used to say, “A seeker [*sālik*] should refrain from sleeping until sleep overcomes him so greatly that he collapses or comes close to

collapsing.” A sincere *'ashiq* spends his entire life restlessly seeking his Lord through worship, until he attains the state:

و اعبد ربك حتى يأتيك اليقين

And worship your Lord until certainty comes over you. (15:99)