



Mahabbat and Wadud: The Attractive Love for Allah Swt
Mirroring Hearts Reflect the Light of Love

Did you ever wonder, amidst all the misery, poverty, death, and destruction in this world, what the force is that moves a mother, who is only skin and bones, to hold her child, dying from starvation, with such love and affection? Or what it is that allows a father to carry the corpse of his son for days to a place where he can have a proper burial? Did you ever wonder things like that? No? You never saw pictures of dying and impoverished people in Darfur and wonder? It is almost as if the whole universe, in its enormity, is necessary to create the mold for love that resounds in the hearts of human beings, human beings who can easily forget about love, because of some other force of nature, what is called ego or selfishness. The Divine Crafter of this world [has created us,] a world within a world. There is a world within us that most people do not know about, which is the foundation of *mahabbat* – the attraction, love for Allah Swt.

The Prophet (sal), along with the other *ambiyā*, appear almost out of the darkness at times when the world is dark or turning toward negativity, and lost inside the wilderness. Inside the heart of these prophets, like the Prophet Mohammed (sal), there is a kind of rhythmic beat. His heart is polished so that there is a mirror that reflects the *tajalli* / lucent manifestations of the Attributes of Allah Swt. Each one of those attributes has a quality of love in it, even the ones you would think do not. Those qualities are like rays of the sun, shafts of light that reflect from the mirror in our hearts, and reflect towards all the other mirrors. That light bouncing from heart to heart to heart, we call love. Because love is an energy, isn't it? Sometimes you feel there is a veil over the mirror. The mirror has been turned away, and the light you are casting out has not come back to you. "Do you love me? I do." How do I know that?

We know that because there is light reflecting back from your heart to my heart, even in the last glimmer of light of that child dying in the mother's arms, or in the remnant remembrance of that light while the father carries the corpse of his son in Syria to the grave. And the Creator, Allah, we realize at some point didn't love us from the time we were born, but from *semper* eternity. He loved us from the time immemorial, until the end of time. When we look at ourselves in the mirror of the hearts of other human beings, we should remember Allah Swt Who chose the beauty and the goodness and the righteousness as qualities that He imbued in us or placed in us so those qualities can be reflected upon others.

This is the core of my argument, actually, that you cannot change a people unless they change themselves. I think the element that has to be understood in that, which is very slippery, is that as you refine yourself, that refinement is an attraction for other human beings. As you refine yourself sincerely, spiritually, intentionally, overcoming your torpor, laziness, distractions and whatever you want to call them, it's not that you are trying to change the world. It's that you realize, as you refine yourself, that it is the only way that the world can change, because you are now putting out these luminous rays – *tajalliyat-e-bāri ta'la* – of the manifestations of Allah Swt, and people resonate or reflect it in their own hearts.

Once they catch that beam of light of knowledge, of sacrifice, of love, of service, goodness, ethic, concern and repentance in their mirror, it begins to reflect out again. It awakens the question, "Do you love me?" You receive the love, and then you give it back; you reflect it outward. Even though this is a private journey, my second part of the argument is that Allah Swt created us and called us an *ummah*; we didn't call us that. He told us to gather in *jamat*; we didn't decide that. He placed within us this attraction / *jedhb*, and this desire as social beings to gather together, and to act in ways that are complementary to each other.

Yes, there is all that negative stuff. I can talk about that some other time, and I will—all the wars, oppression, misery, and ignorance caused by human beings upon other human beings, whose hearts are veiled, whose mirrors are unpolished.

Maybe this life is about looking at our self in the mirror of other people's hearts. If we are so dull and so distracted by our own egos, and our own desires, and our own fears, and our own justifiable schedules and demands on us, and all the rest that makes such good sense... nonsense... still and all, if we pull back the veil, if we really polish our mirror, then the light that comes in love toward us we will reflect back. When a light comes from us, a love that is reflected in the hearts of others returns to us manifold, and people change. Individuals change and groups of individuals change. You may say that I didn't make the argument very logically, but there is this endless source of light, like the sun.

The sun virtually is endless, though we know that at some point, the sun will die. But there is a love that doesn't diminish, and doesn't lose its passion, affection, and attraction called "*wudd*." There's "*hubb*," and there's "*wudd*." It is a kind of love that doesn't diminish at all. From that, we get the word "*wadud*," which means a constant, perpetual, continuous love, which is one of the Names and Attributes of Allah Swt. In this *hadith*, the Prophet (sal) said that Allah's love or loving is infinitely ancient. Once we are born, Allah Swt has already loved us from eternity. There is nothing we can do, good or evil, to ourselves or even to others that can fluctuate the amplitude of this love coming toward us. But unless our heart is touched by it, and unless we can reflect it back, we become a useless being, really. We may become someone who engages in *fitna*. We become a useless being, because part of the role of the human being is to reflect that Divine love.

You know and I know that you can become so self-absorbed, so worried, so desirous, so fearful, that veils fall over the heart. "Darling, what's wrong?" "Nothing." "What's bothering you?" "Nothing." "Tell me." "You don't want to know!" And immediately

you tell, and it can inflict pain. Pain because the person you are telling feels bad for you; or pain, because in that moment there is a feeling of alienation, separation, loss of something that one had had before; otherwise, you wouldn't ask in the first place; you wouldn't care. It's not anger, but it can evoke anger. It's not lack of love, but it feels like it lost its passion and affection. And it's always, invariably, wrapped up in something worldly – something we want, something we lost, something we fear, something we doubted. Because we really don't understand very easily, if at all, the motivations of other human beings. But if they come to us with love, then everything else about them is good, pious, good, righteous, selfless, serviceful, kind, because we are all flawed.

Everyone is flawed. Did you know that? If you only look at the flaws – that's what I used to call “back-pocket excuses” – you always keep it in your back pocket, so when you need an excuse, you can trump whatever situation is happening. You put down the flaw, and that allows you to make the break, to distance yourself, or make the change in your life that your ego, fears, desires, and wants are pulling you to do – the Shaytan. Allah's Love is Wadūd. Human love at its epitome is *hubb* and *eshq*. We know that human love can be diverted, can be lost. Unless your love is that kind of reflective love, coming from Allah's light and reflecting off your heart to others. And in that process, you, yourself, become purified. Aha! You thought I wasn't going to get to this. You cannot change a people until they change themselves. It's not, you cannot change a people until you change *yourself*; it's until they change *themselves*.

We talked earlier about “*aam*,” broad, general things, like a train. Then we talked about “*khas*,” a person on the train. The *aam* are the universal blessings that come from Allah Swt. But when the ‘*abda-Llāh* becomes a Lover, and is carried alone toward the rendezvous with the Beloved, that is *khas*. We are part of this reality of love / *wadud*, but specifically each one of us needs, we feel, to fall in love. We fall in love with human beings, and we have all these expectations. Most of which are, over time, shall I say, either refined or discarded. Hopefully, they are refined. They will be refined to the

degree that you surrender, that you submit, that you trust, that you love one another *fī sabīli-Llāh*, and that you strive to keep your heart polished and your soul refined. In other words, you don't lose track of the fact that you are on a journey; that you are a passenger on the train.

It was narrated by the Prophet Mohammed (sal) that ***“There is no good within a person who does not reconcile lovingly, and he is not reconciled by others who love him.”*** The serious sojourner on this path is someone who seeks to reconcile differences, and seeks reconciliation of differences or misunderstandings with others. That takes *shawq* / yearning in this case. That exists within the boundaries of *mushahadah* / witnessing or perception of the lucent manifestation of the *tajalli*, the light that comes from the eternal sun that is Allah Swt that we witness in our own self, which begins at some point to fulfill our yearning, that allows Allah Swt then to provide for us what we need and what we eventually realize is the essence of what we always wanted, whether it's something we wanted in the physical world or something we wanted spiritually, or both.

The image of the Lover and the Beloved, those images on the screens or the mirrors of others' hearts are like projections on a movie screen. The life of the Lover and the Beloved are like reflections, traces of the impact of Divine love on humanity. In other words, every attribute of Allah Swt is manifest in the world. When you aggregate some of those qualities and attributes of Allah Swt, they form in human beings something. What they form in human beings is attraction / *jedhb*. It is in human beings attraction toward other human beings. The light of *wadud* becomes *hubb*, love from one human being to another human being. Fear of loss of the Divine blessing; that is to say, fear of loss of the Blessings of Allah, *khawf*, becomes fear of loss of the love of the human being.

If we understand how we live those human things out, as reflections of the Divine, it's not that we deal with them better; it's that we understand the personalized experience we

are having all the time of the Divine that we don't attribute to the Divine experience. Does that make sense? We don't attribute it as an experience with Allah; we attribute it as an experience with a human being. We are always somewhat disappointed in that – not always, but often. In some cases, you are not. The cases where you are not are when you work at it, when you have two human beings, or a group of human beings, who work at understanding this analogical reality, this metaphorical reality. It is the Reality within that small reality we call our day to day life. How do we do that? We are back at *muraqabah*. We are back at prayer. We are back at *mushahahadah* – the 3 M's.

Once the Lover and Beloved are united with love.... *once* they are united in love... not twice, *once*. Right? Do you hear that? *Once* you put the key in the lock, you don't take it out and put it in again – take it out and put it in again; take it out and put it in again, and then turn it. You put it in and turn it, *once*. If you turn it and nothing happens, you know something is wrong. Are you with me in this metaphor? Once the Lover and Beloved are united with love as one everlasting unit within this greater blessing in space and time we call life, this experience of loving; once that happens, then everything dissolves. The goodness for all the forms of manifestation that Allah has created, the goodness of beauty, of service, of sacrifice, of serving, of love, of concern, of patience, all of that goodness are *isharat*/ hints. It all started before pre-eternity.

This *eshq* (unrestrained love), the force of that love moves us toward the *dhat* (the inner essence). We actually find that certain human beings, like the *ambiyā*, like the *awliya-Llāh*, were adorned with a kind of light of *jedhb* / attraction. If you came into their circle, it was like using the gravitational pull of the earth to send a rocket off into space. You, yourself, are attracted to them. If you get pulled into that attraction, you get that extra shot of energy off into space, without which we could not get enough force within ourselves. Sometimes you go to Walmart, or maybe you turn on television, and you see some of those cable shows, and you look at the people and think, “What in God's name could have attracted those two people to each other?” You know, it is that really bigoted

and biased, miserable and prejudiced feeling, where you look at those people and think, “My God, those people are... (ugly, gross, miserable, obese, whatever).” You think, “What could have possibly attracted them to each other?” None of you have ever felt that. I have felt that. You wonder, “How in God’s (not Allah’s) name did these people ever find each other?” And you think, “They must love each other.” They see something of attraction in each other.

There was a show with a little girl called “Honey BooBoo.” The most disgusting human beings you could ever think of. You should really watch one episode if you can get through it. It is so worthwhile. You will understand why no bill can get passed in Congress, why people will not give up their guns, why people harm each other, why they are opinionated. People couldn’t act like that if they tried. And yet they have some kind of love for one another. It’s amazing. There is a couplet that sort of describes that: “*Allah within the human has hidden secrets, indiscernible except by those freed slaves.*” The Prophet (sal) said, “***The one who loved passionately, if dies while maintaining chastity and keeping secrets, died as a martyr.***”

My point is even in the most gross, obscure, obscene situations there are *isharat*. There are hints at the power of love. People who have no sense of human sensibility, no sense of social responsibility, no concern for other human beings you can see, who love their dog more than they love their neighbor, who love their gun more than they love their child. Allah has placed in everything something that people call love. Really, that’s the journey we have to take. We have to assume that there is something of that in each one of us. There is also something that has brought us, who were born, not that situation; who were educated, not in that situation. We were given opportunities that the vast majority of human beings in this world were never given. To this very day, there are so many very impoverished human beings in this world, people who all they have is a dying child in their arms, and a few grains of rice.

Then we have to ask ourselves, “What have we done with this love?” And are we resting on our laurels, because we know our work is in caring for and trying to care for those people? Are we resting somewhat on our laurels when it comes to our own spiritual life and our own reflection of that light? How dare we do that. How dare we do that. Within the virtues of the lovers, there is a vector of *isharat*, pointing, hinting toward something immaterial, indivisible, and subtle/*latif*. So that there is a guide for the path of *muhabbat*, and there is a legend for the lovers about *eshq*. Think about that.

The Prophet (sal) knew that the soul of each human being was somehow sanctified. They came sacred, roaming around the world of pre-eternity, coming face to face with the Divine reality, having a trace of the *haqq* on their soul. A mirror, once polished, enters this world semi-polished, unpolished, or with attributes, *maqams*/stations where we recognize beauty, and truth, and justice, some of us. And there is a sense of whether or not we deserve the purity of those attributes, or their awareness of the knowledge and the intellect. Do we know that our souls are traveling from soul to soul, and do we understand this love that we yearn for, and that we feel, and that we keep or lose, depending on how we share the journey with another human being or not, or group of human beings or not?

This is the core of *suhbat*. This is the core of to what degree we can help to change the course of humanity by changing our self. This is the way we begin to understand the secret of *sirr*, and what’s hidden / *khafī* within us. Hidden behind that, which loses the identification of our ego, our own self, we find the most hidden secret. We realize it is nothing but the pure reflection of Divine light in our own self. But Allah says, through the Prophet Mohammed (sal), “***The souls are like unto an army. Those enlisted together recognize one another, gathering together or regrouping. Those who do not recognize disavow each other, disperse, and never regroup.***” So which army do you want to be part of? Don’t worry, this is easily forgotten in the trials, tribulations, and vicissitudes of day to day life will still be with us. *Asalaam aleikum*.