

Love in Islam

by

Mahnaz Heydari

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
Divine Love.....	8
Love as the highest reason for creation.....	8
God's love for Himself.....	9
God's love for His creatures.....	11
God's love for perfect human beings.....	12
Human Love.....	13
Human love for God.....	18
The power of love.....	27
Human love for fellowhuman beings.....	29
Selected Bibliography.....	31

*Every heart that is not aflame is no heart;
A frozen heart is nothing but a handful of clay.
O God! Give me a breast that sets ablaze,
And in that breast a heart and that heart consumed with fire.*
(Vahshi Kermani, 1583)

Introduction

There is a shared commitment to love and compassion amongst all great religions of the world. The virtue of love is universally recognised. However, it is sometimes understood in different ways within different traditions. In Islam, the concept of love is one of the most important concepts. This fact manifests itself in Islamic philosophy, theology, mysticism and ethics; indeed, in some aspects, it plays the most crucial role. For example, in defining the Islamic point of view on the relationship between God and the whole universe in general, and between God and mankind in particular, love has the most significant place. Love is so central in Islam that it is seen as "the firmest handhold of faith" and "faith is nothing but love for the sake of God and dislike for the sake of God". God has created the world out of love, treats human beings with love and asks them to love.

In the present work, I have tried to elaborate on the significance and the doctrinal foundations of love in Islam. I have studied both Divine love (for Himself, for all beings and for mankind) and human love (for God and for fellow human beings). Of

course, this short study should only be considered as an introduction to the subject of love.

To understand the Islamic point of view, my study has involved considerably scriptural exegesis. I have relied greatly on the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* as the primary sources of Islamic thought. The *Sunnah* can be regarded as the application of the Qur'anic teachings to the problems of life as exemplified in Prophet Muhammad's deeds, sayings and approvals (of the deeds or sayings of others in his presence). The *Sunnah* of the Prophet is narrated by Muslims generation after generation, especially by his household, the *Ahlul Bayt*. I have also referred to some masterpieces of great Muslim mystics, philosophers, theologians and poets on the subject of love. What I have done in this work has been to discover a generally accepted picture of love in Islam. Unless otherwise mentioned, I have tried to refer to common points and what is acceptable to all Muslims. Indeed, in principle, there seems to be very little difference between different scholars on the subject at hand.

I have to say that there have been many works completely or partially dedicated to this subject. However, there is still more to be said on this important and vital issue, especially for English-speaking readers. The present work enjoys access to original Islamic sources in Arabic and Persian, whilst also considering available literature on the subject in English. In any case, I hope this study can make a useful contribution to the field of Islamic studies.

Here, I would like to emphasise that the question of love has been my main concern throughout my adult life. I was just 16 when I was so overwhelmed by my love for knowing God and getting close to Him that I felt I would no longer be able to continue my ordinary life. Despite all the plans that my parents and I had previously made for me, I decided to start a completely

new life. With the blessing of my parents, I left my city and moved to the city of Qum, in which one of the main Islamic seminaries has existed for more than one thousand years. I devoted my life to knowing Islam more profoundly and, more importantly, to getting closer to God. Although I am not happy with the progress that I have made, I am quite confident that I have made the best decision for myself and I have chosen the brightest way, the path of love.

Here I would like to thank all who read and made comments on the draft of the present work. I would like also to thank my husband and children for their encouragement, love and support throughout the period of my research for this work. And last but by no means least, I would like to extend my feelings of deep gratitude to God for each and every one of His favours upon us and upon all His servants, in the past and still to come.

Mahnaz Heydarpoor

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