

ALI 534: The Concept of Love in Islam

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Introduction

- ▶ Class one:
 - ▶ The meaning and symptoms of love, three types of love and loving for the “sake of God”
- ▶ Class Two:
 - ▶ Love and knowledge, The Quran as a path to love and God's love for human beings
- ▶ Class Three:
 - ▶ Love and its connection to suffering and purification, patience, and death

Defining Love

- ▶ The experience of love transcends the formal realm
- ▶ Symbolism: the moth and the flame; the drop of water and the ocean
- ▶ Transcending the dichotomy between the self and the other
- ▶ *My slave approaches Me with nothing more beloved to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him, and My slave keeps drawing nearer to Me with voluntary works until I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he seizes, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks me, I will surely give to him, and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely protect him...*

Three Types of Love

- ▶ We were all created to love but this does not mean we love the right thing
- ▶ We need to love the right thing if we want to feel fulfilled
- ▶ Three types of love:
 - ▶ 1. Worldly love
 - ▶ 2. Human love
 - ▶ 3. Spiritual Love (love of God)

Worldly Love

- ▶ Love that is connected to the world and our lower desires
- ▶ *Have you seen him who takes his low desires for his god? Are you a guardian over them? Or do you think that most of them hear or understand? They are but as the cattle; nay, they are farther astray from the path. (25:43–44.)*
- ▶ Your god is whatever you dedicate your life to; it is whatever you love
- ▶ *Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: Women and sons; Heaped-up hoards of gold and silver; horses branded; and cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the possessions of this world's life; but in nearness to Allah is the best of the goals. (3:14)*

Worldly Love

- ▶ We were created to love that which is Perfect = God
- ▶ Loving something imperfect only increases us in difficulty
- ▶ The love of the world = drinking salt water
- ▶ Minor shirk, what people think of us and the need for self-reflection

Worldly Love

- ▶ *Two hungry wolves do not wreak as much havoc on a flock of sheep as love of glory and wealth do to a Muslim's faith (Prophet Muhammad)*
- ▶ *If a man loves a thing, he becomes blind to its defects, his mind is predisposed to its favor, his sight and hearing lose the power of seeing and hearing realities, and he cannot tolerate to see or hear anything against the object of his devotion... (Imam Ali)*

Human Love

- ▶ Human, intermediate or metaphorical love
- ▶ Creates bonds between human beings
- ▶ *And among His Signs is this, that he created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and he has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect. (30:21)*

Human Love

- ▶ Metaphorical love = pointing to the love of God
- ▶ Like all things, it can be good or bad for us
- ▶ It is bad if: (1) we love humans for the sake of this world or (2) human love becomes our ultimate love
- ▶ The wise person only attaches their heart to that which never dies:
- ▶ *To separate oneself from things of time and to connect oneself with things of eternity is the highest wisdom. (Imam Ali)*

Love for the Sake of God

- ▶ There is only one ultimate, true and everlasting love
- ▶ The love of God removes the love of the this world and it corrects our love for others
- ▶ The correct way to love others is to love them for the sake of God
- ▶ *They perform (their) vows, and they fear a Day whose evil flies far and wide and they feed, **for the love of Allah**, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive,- (Saying), We feed you **for the sake of Allah** alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks. (76:7-9)*

Love for the Sake of God

- ▶ A young boy who is in love with his favorite basketball player, Michael Jordan
- ▶ He know all about him form watching the games (knowledge and love)
- ▶ The young boy goes to meet Michael Jordan and he is given a ball
- ▶ How does he act?

Love for the Sake of God

- ▶ He stares at the ball and remembers Michael Jordan
- ▶ He plays with the ball and remembers Michael Jordan
- ▶ He puts the ball in a case in order to protect and preserve the ball
- ▶ This boy loves the ball for the sake of his “god”, that is, for the sake of Michael Jordan

Love for the Sake of God

- ▶ The ball is just an ordinary ball
- ▶ After some time, the boy would've stopped loving the ball
- ▶ After some time, the boy would've replaced the ball
- ▶ The ball is not special in and of itself.
- ▶ What is special is where the ball came from

Love for the Sake of God

- ▶ In order to love others for the sake of God, we need to love God first
- ▶ When we love God then everything in our lives becomes a gift from Him
- ▶ We see God in these gifts and remember Him through them
- ▶ These things are not special in an of themselves.
- ▶ They are special because they come from God

Ultimate Love

- ▶ When Imam Ali was asked how he reached such a high spiritual station he said:
- ▶ *I sat at the gate of my heart and let no one except God in*
- ▶ To love God and only God is the way of the Prophets, Imams and Saints and we should follow their examples

Ultimate Love

▶ Questions?

▶ **THANK YOU!!**