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Education of Self-actualization in Persian mystical texts

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to show the nature of the station of belovedness and to reveal the foundations of this station in the mystical thoughts. This essay has been authored based on a descriptive-analytic method. As a result, some of these masters, including Aynalquḏathamadani and Rūzbihān Baqli Shirazi have referred to two stations of loverhood and belovedness. As a conclusion, after we assayed the theories of masters of Sufism from the beginning until the time of Sultan Walad, we found out that the belief in such a station is rooted in Quran and also a tradition of Prophet.

Key Words: Love Stations, Rūmī, Shams.

La educación de la autorrealización en textos místicos persas

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio es mostrar la naturaleza de la estación de la amada y revelar los fundamentos de esta estación en los pensamientos místicos. Este ensayo ha sido escrito sobre la base de un método analítico descriptivo. Como resultado, algunos de estos maestros, incluidos Aynalquḍathamadani y Rūzbihān Baqlī Shirazi, se han referido a dos estaciones de la amante y la amada. Como conclusión, después de haber ensayado las teorías de los maestros del sufismo desde el principio hasta el momento del sultán Walad, descubrimos que la creencia en tal estación está arraigada en el Corán y también en una tradición de profeta.

Palabras clave: Estaciones de amor, Rūmī, Shams.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Problem Statement

In Walad-Nāma, Sultan Walad refers to the station of belovedness along with the station of loverhood and is of the belief that Shamsitabrīzī and Rūmī have reached the station of belovedness (SultanWalad, 1997). This essay is concerned with the following questions: what is the station of belovedness? On which principles and foundations does it stand? What difference does it have with the station of loverhood? How one can reach this station? On which evidences do we include Shams and Rūmī among those who have reached this

station? If Sultan Walad's theory is rooted in the previous mystical ideas? To this end and for the sake of tracing the roots of theory of the station of belovedness in the thoughts of mystics who lived before Sultan Walad, we have assayed the stations of love in the thoughts of the early Islamic mystics.

This essay is based on the hypothesis that the station of belovedness is the highest and the final station and station that the perfect mystics can reach and the belief in such station has its roots in the thoughts of Sultan Walad and religious and Quranic doctrines. Our objective of the current research, firstly, is to show the nature of station of belovedness and to reveal the foundations of this station in the mystical thoughts. Secondly, we are seeking to demonstrate Rūmī's station of belovedness in mysticism through assaying the words of mystical masters on Rūmī. Finally, we seek to substantiate the latter claim through offering evidences from Rūmī's key works – particularly *Spiritual Couplets (Mathnavi)* and *Fihi Mā Fihi* which is according to numerous interpreters an exstation of *Mathnavi*.

The background of this research can be considered in two parts: background in mystical texts and background in contemporary studies. Through a study of the mystical texts from the third century of Hijra to Sultan Walad's time we found that the theory of the station of belovedness in mysticism has been dealt with in the works of some mystics before Walad-Nāma, but there is no contemporary independent work on the stations of loverhood and belovedness particularly as to the relation of these notions with Rūmī and Shams neither in general

nor in detailed form. In this essay, we have used a library-based method to gather the required data from the mystical texts and the theories and ideas of the masters of Sufism and mysticism and after it via a descriptive-analytic method the research data have been analyzed.

2. LOVERHOOD STATION AND BELOVEDNESS STATION

In his *Walad-Nāma* Sultan Walad alludes to a station that is nobler and higher than the station of saints and states:

Since Adam's time until now numerous perfect saints and true lovers emerged and the people turned to them and the story of their greatness and majesty was heard by everyone and the shallow minded people were uninformed of their spiritual state; insofar as they hung Mansoor Hallaj due to their ignorance. Yet there is a sphere even higher than the station of saints, i.e. the station of the beloved. This news did not reach any ear in this world (1997: 166, 167).

Distinguishing between the lovers and the beloved ones of the Divine Essence, Sultan Walad states: The lovers of God are of three stages and likewise His beloved ones are also of three stages; first, middle and the final. Mansur Hallaj was of the first stage of loverhood station. Its middle stage is great and the final stage is even greater. The words and modes of these three stages of loverhood were revealed to the world people and there are certain books regarding them but the three stages of belovedness is hidden. From its first stage, the perfect

lovers have only heard a name, and are eager to get in touch with it. Nothing has been revealed of the middle stage, even in terms of name. From the final stage, they have not heard themselves anything at all.

In the teachings of Shams the saints of Allah are of two types: the desirer and the desired. In his articles, Shams writes:

Beyond these great superficial masters who are known to the people and in the religious gatherings and ceremonies their names are voiced, there are hidden servants who are higher and more perfect than the known ones; and there is a Desired One who is known to a number of these hidden servants... The story of the Desired has not been told in any known book and in ordinary speeches regarding the ways and missions (2012: 127).

He does not have any sign in the corporeal world. Every sign is related to the desirer not the desire. All words are concerning the desirer (Ibid: 763). Regarding the knowledge of the desired saints Shams states:

Knowing this group is harder than knowing the Truth. It can be known through reasoning; since whenever you see a carved timber, there should be a carver for it. It is for sure that it is not carved by itself (Ibid: 657).

Sultan Walad's theory of the station of loverhood and belovedness, and in general, the stages of love, in some people's opinion, is driven from the words of Shams and a station of his teachings (Movahed, 2010). An assessment of the mystical texts of the seventh century of Hijra, however, shows that there certain signs of the

theory of Shams in the works of mystics who were active before him. To understand Sultan Walad's meaning and revealing the roots of this we have to delve into the theories of Iranian Sufis concerning the stages of love from the very beginning to our age.

3. STAGES OF LOVE

In Iranian Sufism, love is of such an eminence that it has always been emphasized as the promotion and perfection of the soul. According to Ghazāli (1980), love is the highest goal of the stations and the loftiest summit of the mystical stages station (Ghazāli, 1990; Ghazāli, 2001). In Iranian Sufism, the historical transformation of love stages can be traced from its origins to the time of Sultan Walad. It seems that the order of love in Sufism has its roots in the Quran; in a verse Allah states: "Observe how We have given some of them an advantage over some others; yet the Hereafter is surely greater in respect of ranks and greater in respect of relative merit" (Chapter 17: 21).

A number of researchers are of the view that since some lists containing eighteen or nineteen stations have been attributed to Dhul-Nun al-Misri, one can feasibly claim that love hierarchy has been discussed with him for the first time. However, Nwyia has traced the signs of Sufis' interest in the structure of mystic experience back to Ja'far Ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣadiq (Nwyia, 1990). It seems that the three

lists that have been detailed by Al-Sadiq as the plan of the spiritual wayfaring for the sake of meeting Allah have served as the basis of the of Dhul-Nun's Sufi interpretation of the issue of the station. Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya the renowned mystic of Basra is known as the man who has distinguished between two types of lovers of God: a selfish lover who is desiring to reach paradise and the unselfish lover who just thinks of the eternal beloved. In her thought, love means preferring the Lord to every other thing (Ghazāli, 1990). Rabi'a has not said anything beyond this distinction as to the analysis of love, but IbnArabi says: "she is the one who analyzes and classes the categories of love to the point of being the most famous interpreter of love" (2005). The distinction between selfish love of God through which the wayfarer seeks to reach paradise and the love that asks nothing of God but God himself, is the starting point of understanding the stages of love and this distinction has been more elaborated in the works of early Iranian mystics.

In the second century of Hijra, Shaiq al-Balkhi has offered one of the first descriptions of gradual and station-by-station promotion of the human soul in his book entitled *Ādāb al-ibādāt* (The Manners of Worship) according to which there are four stations in the path of love: asceticism; fear; longing for paradise; love of God (Nwyia, 1987). Shaiq al-Balkhi's mystical experience has its root in his thinking on Quran and does not still have any impression of the terms and words of the philosophical or theological system that is founded later in Sufism (Ibid: 106-107). In the third century, the Sufis of Baghdad were interested in this subject; insofar as Sumnun Muhibb believed in the highest degree of love and stated: love is the principle and foundation

of the path to God Most High and the states and stations are abodes; in whichever abode the seeker resides, it is appropriate that it should end, except for the stage of love. In no way is it appropriate that this should come to an end, as long as the Path exists. Among Baghdad based Sufis, Hallaj has also insisted on love as one of the attributes of God. He has delineated a fourteen-fold list of spiritual modes and stations of the wayfarer the final categories of which are explicitly related with love (Sulamī, 1990).

In the fourth century, Daylami (2007) has offered a list that is exclusively dealing with the stages of love. He describes the ten-fold stations and writes: “Those ten stations lead to the eleventh station, i.e. the station of love, and it is the ultimate of love. When it reaches this degree, it is no longer called love, rather it has other appellation” (Daylami, 2011: 25). In his opinion, love is leaving everything aside, but the beloved... and if you call the lover with a name other than that of beloved he does not understand; because he is unaware of oneself and the other (Daylami, 2011). Daylami’s theory of the stations of love is a transcendent theory as compared to the other alternative theories and it is for the first time in his thought that we come near to the concept of transcendent unity of existence. However, according to Sultan Walad, this theory is still a description of loverhood station not of belovedness station. In the fifth century, Qushayri in his explanation of the stations of love describes love and longing as the closing stages (Qushayri, 2009). Khajah Abdullah Ansari in his essay entitled *sad maydān* (One Hundred Fields) describes love as the comprehensive

principle of spiritual progress and after counting hundred-fold grounds from repentance to annihilation, he writes:

These one hundred fields are all submerged in the field of love. The field of friendship is the field of love. This is why God has stated that whenever you love the servants you indeed love your lord... But love is of three stations: first, uprightness, second, intoxication and third, nothingness (Ghazāli, 2001: 78).

In the early years of the sixth century, Ghazāli (2001) has described love in his monumental work entitled *Sawanih* as follows: the truth of love that has departed the stage of absoluteness along with soul in the descending arc is degraded to the stations of loverhood and belovedness and then once again in the ascending arc paces these stages and returns to its origin and oneness (Ghazāli, 1980). Ghazāli's (2001) theory is a more developed theory as compared to previous theories, but it is for the first time in the thoughts of his pupil Aynalquḏathamadani that we are presented with an explanation of the station of belovedness. In the chapter six of *Tamhidat*, Aynalquḏathamadani divides love into three lesser, greater and in-between or mutual categories and believes that lesser love is our love of the Transcendent God and the greater love is the Lord's love of his servants (Aynalquḏathamadani, 1998). Ayn al-Quḏat describes the mutual and greater love as follows: In mutual love you can distinguish between the vision and the visible, but in the final stage of love there remains no difference and discrepancy between the lover and the beloved, and between the vision and the visible. You may find this a type of Incarnation but this is not Incarnation at all; it is the perfect

version of union; and the true scholars do not believe in any other school but this (Ibid: 115).

He continues: from the love of Allah, which is the greater love no sign can be indicated for the beholder (Ibid: 123-124). In Ayn al-Qudat's thought, the first station of the wayfarer is that he is wondered and baffled (Ibid: 109). Ayn al-Qudat is focused on the mutual relationship between God and man and this happens when the verse He loves and who love Him becomes true. Divine love turns to reality when you come to love them (Ibid: 128). Ayn al-Qudat refers to a prophetic tradition that is exactly the interpretation of belovedness station in the thought of Sultan Walad: listen to this tradition that quotes the Prophet Muhammad to have said: when God loves a servant he turns him to a lover. Then he becomes his lover himself. He addresses his servants in the following words: you are our lover and we are your lover whether you want or not (Ibid: 112).

As we see, Ayn al-Qudat speaks bluntly of the station of belovedness where the servant is the Lord's beloved and it seems that the belief in this station is rooted in the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. If we look even closer and much deeper, we can see the roots of the station of belovedness in the Quranic verse that declares loving servants is tantamount to loving the Lord. Ayn al-Qudat is the pioneering Sufi in propounding the theory of belovedness, but the most interesting description of this station and in general, of the stations and stages of love can be found in the works of Rūzbihān Baqli Shirazi. In 'abhar al-Āshiqīn, Rūzbihān divides love into human and divine and

conceives two stages for human love: natural and spiritual (Rūzbihān, 1987). He enumerates twelve stations for human love, all of which have been explained based on the theory of (Daylami, 2007). These twelve stations that are merely the beginning of the promotion of lover and Rūzbihān describes them as the streams that pour into the sea of love are as follows: familiarity; intimacy; affection; real love without metaphorical love; friendship; infatuation; testimony; ravishing; bewilderment; agitation; thirst; longing (Ibid: 40-41).

In the thought of Rūzbihān, the ultimate end of human love is this; because the soul is visioning the products of the producer, but the love of the producer is not distinguishable from the love of the product, since it is the origin of love (Ibid: 42). In his opinion, all this is still in the realm of human love, contemplating the works of the Creator, in the beginning of love. The philosophical categories of love are still unpurified and contain the flaws (ʿilal) of the carnal self. Natural love, the lowest form, can nonetheless be first spiritualized and then divinized (Ernst, 1999). But when the veil of human love is torn by the eternal creator the love turns into a special love. If the follower becomes purified of the carnal defects, he will be steadier in his divine love (Rūzbihān, 1987). After explaining the stations of human love, Rūzbihān turns to the explanation of the stations of divine love or as he terms it, degrees of transactions. When the simple hearted lover passes the exam of human love and ascends to the stations of divine love, he needs the degrees of transactions in order to use it as a ladder to reach the world of eternity (Ibid: 101). The stations of divine love as conceived by Rūzbihān are as follows: ubūdiyyat (servanthood);

wilāyat (sainthood); murāqabat (meditation); khawf (fear); raja (hope); wajd (finding); yaqīn (certainty); qurbat (nearness); mukāshafa (unveiling); mushāhada (witnessing); maḥabbat (love); shawq (longing) (Ibid: 101-137).

Rūzbihān has described the meaning of every station in a comprehensive and detailed fashion and after elaboration of the ten stations, he expands on the nature of the eleventh station, i.e. love (maḥabbat). According to Rūzbihān, this love can naturally be divided into two phases corresponding to the common folk and the elite. The love of the common folk is based on the manifestation of beauty in creation, and while it is indeed miraculous, its degrees are those of faith rather than direct witnessing. The elite love is based on three kinds of witnessing. The first of these occurred in the precreational state, when the disembodied spirits of humanity made a covenant with God by acknowledging Him as their Lord. This is followed by a second stage of witnessing in which the substance of the spirit is not veiled at all by human characteristics, and the divine beloved is encountered without any intervening medium. The third stage of witnessing perfects the second, as the unimpeded vision of God takes place in eternity. Each attribute of the beloved inspires a different kind of love, and the lover is transformed into a mirror of God, so that whoever looks upon the lover becomes in turn a lover of God. Even at this level of love, there are additional distinctions, depending on the degree of knowledge of the divine unity (Ernst, 1999).

With the twelfth stage, longing (*shawq*), Rūzbihān brings us so close to the divine unity that the distinctions implied by love and longing become paradoxical. He connects longing to prayers of Muhammad that ask for the pleasure of gazing on your face, and the longing for meeting with you. He describes longing as a fire that burns away all thoughts, desires, and veils from the heart. Yet when the lover is united with the beloved, for whom is there longing, for whom is there love if not oneself? (Rūzbihān, 1987; Ernst, 1999). But the stages of divine love in the thought of Rūzbihān Baqli do not come to end here. Following these twelve stages, we reach the highest stage of the universal love or the perfection of love (*'ishq*) that is the ultimate goal of soul (Rūzbihān, 1987). Concerning the perfection of love, Rūzbihān resumes his theme by equating God with love. Since passionate love (*'ishq*) is a divine attribute, God loves himself; God is love, lover, and beloved. The perfection of *'ishq* is identical with divine *maḥabba*. This does not imply any distinction within the divine essence; God's multiple attributes are simply aspects of his beauty that he revealed to the spirits of humanity. Love remains an eternal quality. Rūzbihān calls it the ivy of the ground of eternity, which has twined around the tree of the lover's soul. It is a sword that cuts off the head of temporality from the lover. It is the peak of the mountains of the attributes, where the soul of the lover who arrives there becomes the prisoner of love. When lover and beloved become one, there is a complete transformation: Then the lover becomes the ruler in the kingdom of the Real. When the Real overpowers him, his bodily form becomes heavenly, his soul becomes spiritual, and his life becomes divine. He becomes the

beloved of the beloved, the desired of the desired (Rūzbihān, 1987; Ernst, 1999).

Here Rūzbihān takes advantage of such phrases as the beloved of the beloved and the desired of the desired in which the first beloved refers to the wayfarer who has reached the station of belovedness and desiredness while the second beloved represents the Divine Lord. This description of Rūzbihān is exactly referring to the station of belovedness in Sultan Walad's thought that is the outcome of the oneness of the lover and the beloved. Rūzbihān believes that there is no perfection in love; because there is no ultimate end for the beloved. Whoever becomes alive by the divine love, no one is allowed to speak of his death. Since love returns to its origin, when the lover becomes united with love in terms of attribute, love absorbs the lover in itself and nears it to the beloved so that he ascends to the realm of spirituality and angels; in the same way that Khidr, Ilyās, Idrīs, Jesus, Abraham, Moses and Muhammad were all united with God and ascended to the heavens and this world and the other world were both under their command (Ibid: 140-142).

Rūzbihān believes that the apex of love is the beginning of gnosis (*ma'rifat*) and in the station of gnosis, love is its perfect degree. In his view, if lover is united and intimate with the beloved, he reaches the station of transcendent unity (*tawḥīd*) and if he turns marveled in gnosis, he reaches the station of gnosis. Rūzbihān is of the belief that these two stations are the final stages of love and when the wayfarer attains the station of gnosis and becomes gnostic, his epistemic

attributes mirror the whole divine attributes. Thus, Rūzbihān concludes his discussion with the enumeration of quadruple stages through which the wayfarer can reach the station of belovedness, i.e. annihilation of action and attribute, annihilation of annihilation, subsistence of action and attribute and subsistence of subsistence. Everyone who is touched with love, he will undergo through these stages: first, annihilation of action and attribute, second, annihilation of annihilation, third, subsistence of them (action and attribute) and fourth, the subsistence of subsistence (Ibid: 145). In this way, the wayfarer ascends to the sphere of abstraction on the back of the roadster of separation and he is beholding but the majesty and magnificence of the eternal entities (Ibid: 146). When the wayfarer becomes purified of the attributes of creation, he reaches the station of union. From this moment onward, he starts to speak of ecstatic expressions (*shaṭhiyyāt*). Mystical words such as Abū Yazīd's Glory be to me and There is nothing under my cloak, but Allah or Ḥallāj's I am the Truth have to be understood in this sense (Ibid: 146-147). This is to say that when the gnostics reach the station of union with the Divine Essence, their action turns divine, their words have eternal taste, and mystical ecstatic expressions have their origin in this station (Ibid).

Having said these, on the one hand, we find out in the thought of Rūzbihān that when the wayfarer reaches the apex of nearness in the ascending arc, he becomes deified (or beloved like) and thus he has the station of belovedness. The prophetic ascension to the heavens have to be understood in this way; that is, these noble people had reached the station of belovedness and were deified and earned the right to ascend

to the heavens. On the other hand, according to the theory of Rūzbihān Baqli, when the wayfarer puts his step in the sphere of love he reaches the station of belovedness which are as follows: annihilation of action and attribute, annihilation of annihilation, subsistence of action and attribute and subsistence of subsistence. According to Rūmī's theory, after the realization of love, the lover becomes annihilated in the beloved and both sides of the love turn united and there is no longer any duality to be discussed (Hāshemi, 2000). He replied, "I have become so naughted in thee that I am full of thee from head to foot" (Rūmī, 2014: 31).

There is no way (admittance) for anyone, till he becomes naughted, into the audience-chamber of (Divine) Majesty (Ibid: 3/1158).

She was empty of self and filled with love for her friend (Joseph), and (as the proverb says), A pot drips what is in it (Ibid: 3/1338).

For sky and sun and moon bow in worship to the people who have escaped from self-existence (Ibid: 1/212).

Rūmī also writes:

Submersion means the whole absence of oneself and no exertion and action or struggle at all; being submerged in the water. Every action that comes from him, that action is not from him rather from the water. If he is still inside the water

and floundering, he should not shout that I am sinking, this is not also submersion. Ordinary people think that saying I am the Truth is a big claim; while I am the Truth is the highest degree of humbleness; because if he says that I am the servant of God, he is proving two independent existences, one the servant and the other God but with saying I am the Truth he is annihilating himself. I am the Truth implies I do not exist and everything is him (1979: 44).

Thus, one can distinguish between two categories of love-based relationship of the worshiper and the worshiped: station of loverhood and station of belovedness. The station of loverhood is the station where the servant is lover and God is the beloved. In this regard, the wayfarer in the station of loverhood is seeking to near himself to the Lord by loving God as his beloved, but the station of belovedness is higher than the station of loverhood. In the station of belovedness the wayfarer reaches the highest points of divine love as far as the Lord falls in love with him. Accordingly, the place of the lover and the beloved changes and this time God is the lover and the servant is the beloved. It is clear that by the station of belovedness Sultan Walad refers to the station where God falls in love with the one who is in love with him and the servant becomes the beloved of God.

In other words, the station of loverhood and the station of belovedness refer to the stations of the saints of Allah. Insofar as the masters of mysticism have said that no age is ever empty of a saint. Rūmī has also poetized this. The saint is the manifestation and the mirror of the Divine Essence; this is to say that right and wrong are known based on the existence of the saint. The saints are the

touchstones and every assessment is done, but through them; however, these saints are of hierarchy. They are either lovers or beloved. The lovers are apparent and their mood is known to everyone while the beloved ones are hidden from the eyes and do not reveal their secret but by few chosen ones. The chosen saint is the one who has been purified of superficial existence and before his bodily death this is the death of uninformed laity he has already died before the magnificence of the Divinity and found a new life that comes from the Lord. The whole world is the follower of such exalted Sheikh; whether they know or not. Trees are always alive by spring; it does not matter if the tree knows that there is a spring? This chosen saint is not involved with the public. He is among the public, but he is hidden from the eyes. The known saint is the medium through which the effusion of the hidden saint reaches the public. The hidden saint is the sun and the known saint is moon (Movahed, 2010).

4. The Station of Belovedness of Shamsitabrīzī and Rūmī

Having explained the details of the hierarchical order of the spheres of loverhood and belovedness, Sultan Walad refers to the mystical status of Shamsitabrīzī as the final stage of the station of belovedness and writes: “Mawlānā Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī was the king of the beloved ones (final stage)” (SultanWalad, 1997: 240). Shams-i-Tabrīz was one of the kings whom God made hidden due to His zeal (Ibid: 241-242). Sipahsālār also addresses Shamsitabrīzī as follows:

“His highness the king of saints and poles, the crown of beloved ones, the loved one of the Lord of the universes, our Lord Shams of Truth and Religion of Tabrīz” (Shamsitabrīzī, 2008: 21). In another place, Sipahsālār calls the elder son of Rūmī Bahā al-Dīn, the King of Beloved Ones and writes: “he was loved by the whole world in his youth” (Ibid: 20). Then, it is clear that describing Shams as the loved one is not in the ordinary sense of the word rather he is loved by the Lord of Universes.

According to Sultan Walad, reaching the station of belovedness requires the wayfarer to meet someone who is of such station. Sultan Walad writes: some saints are known and some others are hidden. The hidden ones are of higher station as compared to the known ones; and this is why the great Sheikhs have always been wishing to find one of these hidden saints and even the prophets did also have such a wish. The story of Moses and Khiḍr has been related in the Quran and likewise the story of Prophet Muḥammad’s call upon honesty and love that I am eager to meet my brothers. The Prophet cries and asks the God to arrange a special meeting with a chosen saint and the Lord answers him that you will meet one of the chosen ones. The prophet informs his wife Ā’ishah that a special guest will visit us in near future. If I was not at home, you have to receive him warmly and serve him in the best way. You must keep him until I am back home. If this was not possible you should remember his face and describe it to me and this is the greatest honor to have an impression of a chosen one (SultanWalad, 1997).

The average saints are known. The unique saints are hidden/ the zeal of God supports them. It is because of this zeal that they are hidden/ there is no Shaykh (spiritual master) in the world who would have not asked the Lord to visit them (Ibid: 225).

Sultan Walad is of the belief that Rūmī like Shams had reached the station of belovedness: Mawlānā Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī appeared to Mawlānā Jalal al-Dīn in order to take him from the sphere of loverhood to the sphere of belovedness; because he was from the beginning the pearl of the same sea and we know that everything goes back to its origin (SultanWalad, 1997). In other words, Shams informed Rūmī of the secrets of belovedness. Rūmī's meeting with Shams that has been indicated in various sources (Movahed, 2010), is one of the most wonderful meetings that can be referred to as an example; the meeting that revolutionized Rūmī once for all; insofar as after then he left the worldly affairs aside and kept his company with Shams. It was after this meeting that Rūmī turned into a perfect and luminous man. This is why Sultan Walad says: "Shams appeared to Rūmī and finally Rūmī became like Shams" (SultanWalad, 1997: 260).

According to Shams, the Prophet Muḥammad has reached also the station of belovedness. In his Essays, Shams states:

If someone asks me if the prophet was in love I would say that he was not a lover. Rather he was a beloved, although reason is incapable of describing the station of belovedness and this is why we say that he was a lover (Shamsitabrīzī, 2012: 134).

According to Sultan Walad, Shams was hidden from the public like Khidr; because the zeal of God hid him and people could not see him; even if they were struggling to do so (Sultan Walad, 1997). But he appeared to Rūmī and in the end Rūmī turned one with Shams. Aflaki in his book entitled *Manaqib al-Arefin* refers to this point:

Rūmī said that our lord Shamsitabrīzī is the beloved of Khidr and on the top of his classroom, he has written that here is the place of the beloved of Khidr. He was so high and noble that nobody could see him due to his utmost hiddenness that was even more hidden than Khidr (Aflaki, 1979: 1/349).

This is why Sultan Walad says: “Shams was Rūmī’s Khidr and if someone gets connected with him he would never pay any attention to anyone else” (SultanWalad, 1997: 34). According to him, Rūmī’s love for Shams is like the eagerness of Moses for Khidr who despite his highest station of prophethood was seeking after the men of God. Likewise, Rūmī even in spite of his social stature sought to find a man of God like Shams nssofar as Moses despite his majesty and prophetic status was after Khidr and Rūmī with his virtues and scientific and religious station was seeking after Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī (SultanWalad, 1997; Forouzānfar, 1936).

Rūmī himself has frequently referred to the station of belovedness in his Spiritual Couplets. One of the most striking examples of such allusions is Rūmī’s verses on the story of how the lion pronounced exertion to be superior to trust in God. In this story, lion is the representative of those mystics who do not consider exertion

and effort in conflict with trust in God (Zamani, 2015). The prey stands for those Sufis who consider struggle to be in conflict with trust in God (Zamani, 2015): Yes, Rūmī said the lion;

But the Lord of His servants sets a ladder before our feet./ Step by step must we climb towards the roof: to be a necessitarian here is (to indulge in) foolish hopes./ You have feet: why do you make yourself out to be lame? you have hands: why do you conceal the fingers (whereby you grasp)?/ When the master puts a spade in the slave's hand, his object was made known to him (the slave) without (a word falling from his) tongue./ Hand and spade alike are His (God's) implicit signs; (our powers of) thinking upon the end are His explicit declarations./ When you take His signs to heart (and) devote your life to fulfilling that indication (of His will),/ Then He will give you many hints (for the understanding) of mysteries, He will remove the burden from you and give you (spiritual) authority./ Do you bear (His burden)? He will cause you to be borne (aloft). Do you receive (His commands)? He will cause you to be received (into His favour)./ If you accept His command, you will become the spokesman (thereof); if you seek union (with Him), thereafter you will become united (2014: 89-90).

There are various views of Rūmī's allusion to the station of belovedness. Many of the commentators of Mathnavi-i- Ma'navi including Nicolson have not commented on the eighth verse. The commentaries of Zamani (2015) and Gūlpīnārī (2010) seem to be irrelevant to the point propounded by Rūmī. ShāhDāeiElāAllāhShirāzi, the mystic of ninth century of Hijra explains this verse in these words: "Here there is an allusion to the fact that in the same way that every

master had been one day himself a pupil and this is the destiny of every lover that one day he will become a beloved” (1984: 94).

Forouzānfar elaborates on Rūmī’s notion:

The burden in this context refers to the wayfarer who is under the control of the Divine Essence and his actions emerge in an unsophisticated way; the one who has reached the station of union through struggle and effort. Qushayri has quoted Abu Ali Daqqaq to have said: the lover is the bearer and the loved one is the burden (1979: 370).

The other alternative notion of these verses is that when the wayfarer initiates in the path of truth and passes through the stages and receives the allusions from the heavens he reaches to the station of annihilation in Allah and if he could manage to reach higher station he will touch the station of subsistence with Allah (Joseph, 1983).

A number of commentators, including Abdulali Bahr al-Ulum are of the belief that this verse along with the next verse a possible allusion to the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad into the heavens. Accordingly, the virtuous actions serve as a medium through which the prophet reaches the heavens and experience being a companion of God (Joseph, 1983). And this is what Aynalquḏathamadani refers to in his *Tamhidat*: At night Muhammad was addressed as follows: O’ Muhammad! Previously I was the speaker and you were the listener and I was revealing and you were beholding. This night you have to be the speaker and I will be the listener and you will reveal and I will behold. Muḥammad was then the Lord’s beloved as the beloved ones

are always speaking and the lovers listen (Aynalquḏathamadani, 1998). The wayfarer reaches the station of belovedness after reaching the ultimate nearness to God. In that station the wayfarer is the speaker and God is the listener; the wayfarer is the revealer and the Lord is beholder; the wayfarer is the burden and God is the bearer; the wayfarer is the receiver and the Lord is received. Rūzbihān Baqli has also described the Prophet's ascension to the heavens as due to His Highness's reaching the station of belovedness (Rūzbihān, 1987).

The interpretation that Najmaldīnrāzī offers of the Quranic verse we have honored the children of Adam and carried them on both land and sea is also relevant in this regard. Najmaldīnrāzī says: "in this verse God means that mankind is our beloved and this is why we have carried him through the land and sea..." (2010: 48). Thus, one should say that man has to be bearer first in order to become a burden later; that is to say, a wayfarer must be the bearer of the love of God first and only then he can be subject to divine beneficence. In other words, when the wayfarer reaches the highest stage in loving God, the loverhood and belovedness become inverted and this time it is God who falls in love with his lover and the wayfarer will turn to the beloved of his Lord. Therefore, God was first the lover and the man was the beloved; insofar as Najmaldīnrāzī writes following his previous discussion: the beloved's will preceded the will of the lover; it is indeed the coyness of beloved that reaches the lover; because the lover was not the follower of the beloved before his coming into being; but the beloved was a devotee of the lover before the lover's coming into being (Najmaldīnrāzī, 2010). Then God was the lover and created

the man. Man – who is the beloved to this point – disobeyed God and disgraced himself and thus he was banished from the paradise and dropped into the land. Now, man should mollify the lover. Accordingly, he has to appear as the lover of God as his own beloved and ascend through the hierarchy of love so as to reach the station of belovedness.

5. CONCLUSION

As it has been said by the masters of Sufism and mysticism, no age would be empty of a saint but the saints are of heirarchies; they are either lovers or beloved ones. The lovers are apparent and their moods are visible to all while the beloved ones are hidden from the eyes and do not reveal their secret but to certain chosen ones. According to Sultan Walad, Shams and Rūmī were saints who had reached the station of belovedness. The station of belovedness in his thought is a station higher than the station of loverhood. In the station of belovedness the wayfarer ascends in the heirarchy of love to the points where he becomes the beloved of God. At this station the place of the lover and the beloved change and this time the God is the lover and the servant is the beloved. According to Sultan Walad, reaching such a station requires the wayfarer to meet an individual who has already reached the station of belovedness; in the same way that Rūmī met Shams and reached the station of belovedness. In this essay we assayed the theories of the masters of Sufism from the beginning until the time of Sultan Walad and we found out that the belief in such a station is

rooted in the Quran and also a tradition of the Prophet. Moreover, there are certain traces of such notion in Shams Essays, and the theories of Ayn al-Quḍat Hamadāni and Rūzbihān Baqli Shirāzī.

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