

UNDERSTANDING THE PHILOSOPHY OF DIVINE LOVE THROUGH SUFİ AHMAD YASAWI'S POETRY

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Abstract. Since the Islamic development era, divine love themes are widely placed in Eastern world literature and are still being studied around the world. This study examines the topic of divine love philosophically and discusses the history of the formation of love terms and their use in Sufi literature. An etymological analysis of the philosophical interpretation and stages of love is analyzed. Also, a literary analysis of “love” terms in the Uzbek language which are used in the mystical sense of divine love, is presented. The content-essence and methodical application of terms related to divine love are shown by giving examples from the poems of the great Turkic mystic, Sufi Ahmad Yasawi. Overall, this study sheds light on literary analyses that contribute to the illumination of the topic of the philosophy of divine love in Sufi literature, especially Turkic Sufi poetry.

Keywords: *Sufi Poetry, Ahmad Yasawi, Philosophy, Turkic World Literature, Divine Love.*

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1. Introduction

Love is one of the oldest themes in literature. In literature, love themes usually include mutual love (beloved), love of material things, love of career, and divine love (“Yor”)¹. Love is something that can develop meaningful relationships or teach important lessons and change lives in certain situations. That is why love is one of the most studied topics in literature (Sha’bāni *et al.*, 2019). Love is one of the most powerful and influential things in the world (Sudhir & Ross, 2012). It can positively impact the life of anyone who receives it. That is, love has many meanings for people. Being in love is not just being with the one you love; it is the feeling of both people enduring each other (Hendrick *et al.*, 2011; Tobore, 2020). Emily Brontë’s literary work “Wuthering Heights²” shows how the heart can move a person forward and bind them to loneliness. Love can be the deepest feeling a person experiences (Nussbaum, 1996). Thus, love has been a prominent motif in literature. Love is really a complicated topic to consider. This study deals with the

¹ The term "yor" in Sufi literature which means “beloved companion”. The term – “yor” came from Persian, and it refers to “beloved” in Persian literature. In Sufi literature, “yor” refers to “Beloved Companion” which is Almighty God.

² “Wuthering” is an old term meaning “to strike with a dull roaring sound”. “Heights” in this case refers to the location of the house at the top of a hill, where the weather is almost always dreary, dark, and windy.

theme of love, which is one of the remarkable themes in classical literature. However, this study does not discuss whole “love” matters, but it explores the divine love, on the example of Sufi poetry. Great Sufi Ahmad Yasawi’s (May God make his secret very sacred) “Compendium of Wisdom – Diwan-i Hikmat” will be cited³ (Devin, 1996; Haqqul, 2001). The study takes citations and quotes of Yasawi’s poems from a collection published in 1992. So, at first, attention was paid to the history of the formation of the word love, and the history of the introduction of this word into the language is etymologically analyzed. We will discuss Uzbek (or old Turkic) words “ishq⁴” and “muhabbat⁵” which came from the Arabic language and are used for “love” in Sufi Literature (Hasan, 1999; Haqqul, 2001). Although these words are similar in meaning, they differ from each other in terms of content and methodical use (Dustkoraev, 1994).

Additionally, this study discusses the formation of mystical words and phrases. In particular, the words used in the mystical sense, such as “ishq”, “oshiq – lover”, and “ma’shuq – beloved” (Uzbek terms used in Sufi poetry or in love themes in literary works), are shown with instances⁶. As abovementioned the examples will be cited from the “wisdom” poems of Sufi Ahmad Yasawi. Sufi Yasawi’s poems are called “hikmat” in the Turkic language (Haqqul, 2001), which came from Arabic, and means “wisdom” in English. Along with giving an example of Sufi Yasawi’s “Compendium of Wisdom”, his “wisdom” poems with a mystical meaning are also explored. Words and phrases that are difficult to understand during the study are also clarified. In this case, “Wisdom” poems are analyzed in 3 different directions:

1. The type of “Hikmat” i.e., “wisdom” poem according to its structure, in what form, and weight it is written.
2. Verbatim interpretation of “wisdom” verses.
3. In terms of mystical meaning and content of “wisdom”.

Sufi Ahmad Yasawi’s “wisdom” poems on every word and phrase related to Sufism are quoted, along with legends and narratives that are common in folklore. Subsequently, it is known that the methods of verse and prose were widely used in the spread of Sufism, as a result, Sufism literature was formed (OĞUZ, 2016). The main theme of Sufi literature has been the glorification of divine love. In this, the scientific heritage of many famous Sufis is famous (Knysh, 2000). Thus, regarding the methods, the “observational” method is used in this study. That is, the philosophical theme of divine love is observed in Sufi literature (Khodjiyeva, 2015). During the study, the philosophical meanings associated with the concept of divine love will be revealed. In this, the divine names, the behavior of the lover as a slave, the degrees of love, and the important consequences of God’s love will be at the center of analysis. As the verses of the poems are studied, the importance of the mutual nature of love between God and mankind should be revealed. Also, using this method, literature shows the synergy between divine love and love addiction (Zulfiqar Ahmad Naqshbandi, 2001).

Thus, the philosophical understanding of divine love and its levels (and meanings) are in the main context of this study. As mentioned, quotations from Yasawi’s “Hikmats” are presented in order to better understand the basic context. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the explanation of Sufi literature, especially to shed light on the

³ Sufi Ahmad Yasawi (1093–1166) was a great Sufi and Turkic poet, and a pioneer of popular mysticism, founded the first Turkic Sufi Order - “Yasawi Order”.

⁴ The term “ishq” refers to love is widely used in Sufi poetry and literature to denote “selfless and fiery love” for God.

⁵ “Muhabbat” is Arabic word, its root is “hubb”, comes from the same root as the word 'seed' – that which has the potential to grow into something beautiful, and it is the most common word for “love”.

⁶ Annotated dictionary of the Uzbek language, (2013), Letter “O”, pp.170-1, [in Uzbek]

philosophy of divine love in the example of Yasawi's poetry (Muminov, 2012). Because Sufi literature plays a major role in the spiritual education and nurturing of mankind, in Sufism the themes of divine love serve to understand and remind people of the real meaning of life (Chittick, 1983; Malikov, 2010; Helwa, 2020).

2. Philosophical understanding the divine love

Love is a wonderful word in the Uzbek language too, as it has a wide range of meanings in a language. At the same time, the literary name of love in Uzbek is called "muhabbat" which came from Arabic (see above, "Hubb")⁷. In fact, there are many words for love in Arabic, but the main word is "Hubb or Habba". That is, the core of the word "muhabbat" used in the Uzbek language is exactly the word "Hubb". Love in literary context means "satisfaction with a person or thing", for instance, to be satisfied with something means to love it (Komilov, 2009). Another important point is that the English verb "to believe" is also associated with love. Usually, one believes only what he/she likes and pleases (Obediat, 2017). What one's heart accepts is what he/she believes. If you look at one of the root meanings of the word "Hubb" and "Habba" in Arabic (Zulfiqar Ahmad Naqshbandi, 2001), it also has the meaning "seed" in the English language. So, love is a "seed" grown and nourished by the knowledge of the "ma'shuq" – "beloved"⁸. That is, the more a person knows about the person he/she loves, the closer one feels to the person he/she loves. One of the definitions of love is "friendship" in a fire. This is something that "starts to consume" a loved one (Zamim & Sahari, 2020). This means, in many romantic works of literature, there are characters who literally died of love. At the same time, there were such people in real life. People, whose tears were "blood" – real blood from love, passed away. So, tears flowed as real blood. Because when a person falls into a very strong state of love (in Turkic Sufi literature: "oshiq" – "lover")⁹, the small blood vessels in the eyes burst. So, this "crying of blood" is a real event. In this case, a loved one may have bloodshot eyes because of remembering the places they have been. This causes tears and a mixture of blood to flow from the eyes (later, we discuss the philosophy and understanding of the blood flow of the eye). Thus, there are those who literally died from love.

At this point, it is necessary to dwell a little on the word "ishq"¹⁰. The love – "ishq" is one of the most common words in Sufi literary texts, especially in Turkic Sufi poetry (Abashin, 2001; Haqqul, 2001). This word has also been adopted into the Turkic (Uzbek) language from Arabic. In Arabic, there is a word called "ashaqa" which is actually used to refer to a type of plant similar to grapes that starts to grow around a tree. The type of plant that the Arabic word "ashaqa" is used for usually grows close to the tree and suffocates the tree, and eventually the tree withers. In Arabs, the state of being deeply in love is called "ishq"¹¹. At the same time, Sufi Literature explains that "ishq" is like a fatal

⁷ Annotated dictionary of the Uzbek language, (2013), Letter "M", p.662. [in Uzbek]

⁸ Annotated dictionary of the Uzbek language, (2013), Letter "M", p.556, [in Uzbek]

⁹ In English explanations, you can also see this term as "al-oshok" meaning adulation. This is actually Arabic term but its pronunciation as "oshiq" came from Persian into Turkic, so, "al-oshok" is mainly used to describe the extreme love and deep admiration that lovers experience when they get to know each other intimately.

¹⁰ Annotated dictionary of the Uzbek language, (2013), Letter "P", p.261.

¹¹ You can also see the term: "al-'ishq" meaning "adoration" as we discussed above. This depicts the feeling when infatuation properly takes hold, spreading thoroughly throughout the heart. The roots of this word hold connotations such as "to become nested in", "to be covered in" and even "to become blind to" in the English Language. As we are highlighting that this is the highest stage of pleasurable passion before love becomes darker and more meaningful. The love is now all-consuming there [Jessica Harn's article at www.theculturetrip.com, 2017].

disease. The “ishq” is a disease that can only be cured by “bonding”. That is, it is “healed” by connecting with “oshiq” – “beloved” or by uniting with “Habib” (another Arabic term for “beloved”). This method of “curing” the “oshiq” – lover is also common in Uzbek (and old Turkic world) Literature. Especially, as we mentioned above, Great Sufi Ahmad Yasawi gave examples of such “treatment” methods in his “Compendium of Wisdom – Diwan-i Hikmat” (we are calling it “Hikmats” too). For instance, Sufi Yasawi wrote:

*Haqqa oshiq bo'lg'an qullar doim bedor,
Rizvon emas, maqsudlari erur diydor*

Meaning:

*Slaves who are in love with the Truth (God Almighty) are always awake,
It is not to be granted with Paradise, but their goals are reaching the divine Face
(of God)*

In other words, the true goals of those who are in love with the Truth (i.e., Haqq – God) (Salik – a novice¹²) are only to see the beauty of their loved ones (Nijat, 1985; Knysh, 2002). They (slaves of God) can withstand any difficulties and trials on this path. The hearts of those who have fallen in love with God, are always awake (Komilov, 2009). This means they are extremely busy remembering (dhikr) the Truth. In this case, their hearts are always awake. The purpose of this remembrance is to see God’s divine Beauty (Zulfiqar Ahmad Naqshbandi, 2001). They do not look for anything else like that. Even the Paradise that a believer tries to reach (if he/she cannot see the Beauty) is not necessary. That is, the reason for the prayers and dhikrs that the leeches do is not to reach the Heavens – Paradise, but to see the Divine Beauty of the “Yor” – Beloved (God Almighty).

Another quality of love is remembering. For instance, usually, when a person loves someone, the lover remembers and thinks about the beloved. That is what happens when a person falls in love. A person says to himself/herself “I am only thinking about my love” or “I cannot stop thinking about my love”. It is true that when a person falls in love, he/she cannot stop thinking about the beloved. This situation puts pressure on the heart because a person is in love. A person in love talks to his/her lover in his/her mind writes poems and thinks about the love repeatedly. In this case, what is that thing or feeling that prompts you to write a poem? People write the “worst” poems when they are in love, but that does not matter. They would never do that if they were not in love. They know how funny their poems are, but it does not matter. Because there must be a “ta’bir” which is used in Sufi terms. But what does “ta’bir” mean? This word is also Arabic and is derived from the word “yu`abbir” which means “to connect”. The Arabic word “ibrah” is also derived from this word and is used in the Uzbek language as “ibrat”, and it is used in Sufi Yasawi’s poetry.

The word “ibrat” in the Uzbek language also means “example” in a certain context. That is, this word is used for an act or behavior that is an “example”¹³. Besides, this means that a person will learn or take a clear lesson from something or someone, which is called “ibrat” in Uzbek. However, the Arabic verb “abra” at the root of this word indicates “tears”, too. The word “abra” is also related to the word “e’tibor”, its first meaning is “attention” in English. The word “e’tibor” also refers to the meaning of “respect” or “esteem”. In the Uzbek language, the word “e’tibor” can be explained as “giving

¹² “Salik” is a follower of Sufism, from Arabic verb “salaka” which means *to travel* or *follow*. A Salik is also called “Murid” when one becomes a disciple to a certain Spiritual Teacher - Murshid (a Sufi master).

¹³ Annotated dictionary of the Uzbek language, (2013), Letter “I”, p.170, [in Uzbek]

importance”. So, if something has “importance” (e.i., “e’tibor”) and meaning for a person, that thing begins to affect the heart. The whole existence of the beloved becomes important to the lover. In fact, in the VII-VIII centuries, along with Islam, the Arabic language entered the regions of Transoxiana. As a result of this, many Arabic words and expressions have appeared in Turkic languages including Uzbek. We talked about them briefly above. How important these words are in the Turkic language can be seen from the fact that many Arabic words are used in the literary works created in the XI-XII centuries. For instance, in Sufi Ahmad Yasawi’s “Compendium of Wisdom – Diwan-i Hikmat” we can find many Arabic words and expressions such as “ishq” (love), “ma’shuq” (beloved), “Yor” (beloved), “oshiq” (lover), and so on. Here, we mention an example from “Diwan-i Hikmat” of Sufi Yasawi:

*Ketganlarni ko’rub sen ham ibrat olg’il,
Ibrat olsang, yotmish yering bo’lur gulzor*

Meaning:

Take a lesson from those who have left (this world, e.g., “dead”),

If you take a lesson, (one day you die) your sleeping place will be a flower garden (i.e., Paradise).

Through these verses in his “Hikmats”, Sufi Ahmad Yasawi is explaining to us that a person should not care about this world and must control his “nafs” – ego. It shows that the position and wealth earned in this world will not be faithful to him/her (Muminov, 2012). Instead, one should focus all his/her efforts only on God Almighty. In this poem, the word “ibrat” meant “taking a clear lesson”, and not repeating the mistakes made by others before you and correcting the mistakes they made. You can find many similar “wisdom” verses in Sufi Yasawi’s poetry. In his wisdom poems, Sufi Yasawi refers to the word “ibrat” through the content of the thought without using it directly. For example:

*Ota-ona, qarindosh, qayon ketti, fikr qil,
To’rt oyog’lig’ cho’bin ot bir kun senga yetaro.*

Meaning:

Think, where did your parents, relatives go,

A “four-legged wooden horse” one day will reach you.

In this excerpt from “Hikmats”, Sufi Yasawi tells his readers (and/or all mankind) that one should learn from people, even from one’s own parents who passed away. That is, according to Islamic tradition, when a person’s close relatives and parents die, they cannot take any of their belongings with them (Paya, 2014). Only their good and bad deeds can accompany them. Therefore, a person should learn from the past and live his/her life. It is said that after the death of Alexander the Great, he bequeathed one hand to be removed from the coffin. Sufi Yasawi says a “four-legged wooden horse” to define the “coffin”. So, Alexandre the Great meant that “I have gained so much wealth and prosperities in my life, but I cannot take any of them with me”. Similar meanings are hidden in the essence of Sufi Yasawi’s wisdom poem.

Thus, love has been at the center of poetry since the days of Jahiliya in the Arabs. Even though they were “jahili” – ignorant people, they knew what love was. Because according to literary analysts, Jahili Arabs had a deep knowledge of the word “hubb” or “habba” – to love. Some literary works even have texts about the “value” of the places

where the lover lived for a while. In this, the place of the beloved is cited as one of the reasons for crying. Consequently, love is like “Layla and Majnun” (Akgül, et al., 2022). The following wonderful story about “Layla and Majnun” is presented. “Someone said (to Majnun): “Did not you ask about the land (where Layla lived for a while)? That neighborhood does not exist now”. (Or) “Did you not ask which house Layla lived in?” Majnun said: “No, I asked. But how could the dead stones answer me?” Someone else said, “Did you find out where everyone (who lived in this neighborhood) went?” Majnun said: “I go to these stones and (old) dwellings. I kiss this wall, and then I kiss that wall”. Someone was surprised. Then Majnun (again) said: “What makes my heart kiss the walls is not the love of the walls, but the love of the beloved who used to live within the walls” (Ganjavi, transl., 1966; Footohi, 2013).

In fact, people of faith go on pilgrimage to places they consider holy. For instance, in Islam, Muslims go to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah to visit the Kaaba and the Prophet’s tomb. Muslims do not really go for those buildings, but they visit those places because of the love of God and the love of the Prophet (peace be upon him – PBUH¹⁴).

In this case, it is especially appropriate to recall the following examples of Bābarahim Mashrab¹⁵:

*Yorsiz ham bodasiz Makkaga bormoq ne kerak?
Ibrohimdan qolg'on ul eski do'konni na qilay?!*

Meaning:

*What is the need to go to Makkah without “Yor” (for sake of God)?
What do I do with the “old shoppe” left by Abraham (Prophet)?!*

Muslims also go to Makkah because they have love in their hearts for God, the Owner of the Great Building - Kaaba. The real goal is not the Kaaba, but the Owner.

Another story related to Majnun says: “(People or some) saw Majnun kissing a dog, feeding it, and petting it. They said to Majnun: “What happened to you? Why are you (suddenly) treating this dog so (special)?” Majnun replied, “Do not blame me. Leave your blaming because my eyes have seen this dog with Layla once. It was this dog that was next to my Layla”. Majnun had a special love for the dog, which was a sign of his true love for Layla (Akgül et al., 2022). Such love is not imaginary, but real love (heliotricity.com, 2021; Satsangi and Sinha, 2012; Llewellyn, 2011).

Today’s modern people sometimes do not know what true love is. Or some (or many) people have lost the ability to feel true love. Usually, this happens when a person is too far from his/her heart – he/she loses the ability to love. Imagine how can you know what love is when you are cut off from your heart? Because the secret of the heart is in love.

According to the narrations of muhaddith (Scholars of Hadith, i.e., Prophetic tradition Studies), after the death of the Prophet (PBUH), his prominent companion Bilal (May God please with him) could not live in Madinah and moved to Sham (Syria). According to the narrations, Bilal returned to Madinah once, but this return happened 20 years later (Transcripts by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, 2014). People (barely) persuade Bilal to say “azan” (adhan) - the call to prayer. Bilal did not want to do it in the Prophet’s

¹⁴ PBUH is an abbreviation. It is a saying of respect; Muslims follow the name of the Prophet by the Arabic blessing: meaning - Peace be upon him – to Prophet Muhammad.

¹⁵ Babarrahim Mashrab was a Sufi mystic, medieval scientist, significant Turkic (Uzbek) poet, a representative of mystical literature, and a famous name in Central Asian folklore.

Mosque. It was very difficult for Bilal. Because Bilal used to call the prayer during the Prophet (PBUH) was alive. Bilal used to sound the adhan, and the Prophet (PBUH) would come and lead the people in prayer. Bilal made the call to prayer and remembered those days. His eyes flowed like a river. In fact, the hearts of the Companions were so strongly attached to the Prophet (PBUH). Thus, Bilal's tears were because of love. His state was a state of love. According to the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH), you cannot love God without loving what God loves. Because the religion of Islam is about love. One cannot truly love God until he/she loves what or whom God loves. According to the Islamic pure Sufi tradition¹⁶, Prophet is the person that God loves much and foremost. Sufi teaching says, if you love God, then follow the Prophet. Because it is a sign of your love. In fact, the sign of love is that one follows the beloved. You will do what the beloved says, and the beloved of God is the Messenger of God – Muhammad Peace be upon Him. The Prophet is “Habib” – the one who is loved by God, and we will discuss these terms later again.

According to another narration, after the Prophet (PBUH) migrated to the city called Yasrib, later it changed to Madinah, people wanted to choose a place to build a mosque for the Prophet. However, it was a “case” that when Prophet's “she-camel” namely Qaswa knelt down, then the Prophet (PBUH) said, “This place, Allah willing, will be our abiding place” (Sahih al-Bukhari 3906) So, the she-camel sat down in a certain place, and right upon the place the mosque (and house) was built. According to related narrations, a companion named Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (May God please with him) took the luggage of the Prophet (PBUH). In fact, everyone wanted the Prophet to live with them in their house, but it was given to Abu Ayyub. So, the Prophet settled in his house. The Prophet wanted to stay downstairs as the companion's house had two floors. Abu Ayyub wanted to respect the Messenger of God, and he (PBUH) explained that it is easier for visitors to enter the lower floor than to go up the stairs. After the Prophet settled in his house, Abu Ayyub used to enter meals for the Prophet (PBUH). Abu Ayyub used to order his wife to watch which side of the bowl Prophet ate and which part the Prophet's fingers touched. Because the companion wanted to eat food from the same side touched by the Prophet's fingers in that bowl. This was a high level of love (Sahih Muslim, 2053c).

In fact, people come to Holy cities – Makkah and Madinah for the love of God and the love of the Prophet. The Arabic word “wajh” [*waj-h*] which means “face” of the beloved in English, is used in Eastern (Middle East and Turkic) literary texts and romantic poems. This word also means “the quality of sharing an interest”. The reason a person who has love stands in the holy places is not the place, but the place is great thanks to God's love (Chittick, 2013; Dajani & Khalidi, 2013). Therefore, the lover could only stare at the things in this place. Or if a lover has a picture of his/her beloved, he/she always keeps it. He/she never gets tired of looking at the picture. However, this picture, or the tomb of the Prophet or mosques in holy places, actually represents something special. That is, the Holy Kaaba or the Prophet's Mosque – all these are walls that “hide” the Eternal and Ever Living God Almighty. This is the world. Therefore, when a person begins to understand this, he/she realizes that this is what he/she likes in the world. In Sufi literature, there are two words “Dunya” and “Aalam”, they both mean the “World” in English. In fact, the word “Dunya” refers to this life, mostly the Earth under the sky

¹⁶ For the purposes of this study, the term “Sufi tradition” refers to the tradition of tariqat (Sufi Order, Sufi Schools) that promote uncontroversial adherence to the Quran and Prophetic teaching (Sunnah). In general, “Sufi tradition” is synonymous with “Pure Sunni Islamic teachings”. For instance, Yasawi Order, Naqshbandi Order, Kubrawi Order, and other similar famous Sufi Orders that have maintained their viability since Sufism appeared as Sufi Order or Tariqat.

where we see the stars. In the literary context, “Dunya” is mostly used for mortal life. While “Aalam” refers to the universe or whole worlds that exist. So, the word “Dunya” is not just “Aalam”. The word “Aalam” is called by the Arabs as a noun for a certain tool. So, “Aalam” is a tool to “know”. That is the tool for knowledge, or something is learned with the help of this tool. If a person knows something from the “Aalam” – “world” well, that person is called “Aalim” in Arabic – a “knowledgeable” in English. So, it is God’s means to give us knowledge. That’s why things (that is, objects) are very important. Because things have a meaning. In the Islamic tradition, the Prophet (PBUH) gave names to all his properties. In fact, the Prophet did not have much, but he named what he had. Because those things were considered “meaningful”. This is the world we are discussing here. Everywhere, everything has “meaning” (Nasr ct. from Barkhah; Nasr, 1973). Thus, this whole universe is the meaning embedded in the images. Sufi tradition said that whoever understands this world is one of the wise. Or such people are called “ahl-ul-ibr” – people of “example”- others follow their example. Such a person who understands well; thinks well; and learns well. Then this word “ibrat” (we discussed above) leads to “abra” (i.e., connection or bridge), where the tears of the eye come. These tears come from the perception of meaning. Knowing what something really means is a wonderful blessing. Therefore, one of the most emphasized statements in Sufi Literature is that “God taught man”. God taught Adam names and gave him the ability to give meaning to things. Because the meaning is to “transfer” or “move”. It means “moving” from one thing to another. So, the name (naming) is a huge meaning. For instance, when a plant is mentioned as a “tree”, an image of the tree immediately comes to mind. That is why in love – the more a person learns about the beloved, the more he/she understands the importance of the beloved. This is called finding the “meaning”. Those meanings penetrate so deeply into the heart. According to the hadith (word of the Prophet PBUH), the beauty of a person’s Islam is that he/she abandons things that have no meaning to him/her. So, everything is related to this.

According to Sufi tradition, a person in love knows the meaning, experiences it, tastes it, and realizes it is a reality. Other things are not real, but the meaning is real. The real meaning, i.e., the greatest meaning in this world for Muslims and in the Islamic tradition, is the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Sufi literature highlights that only the understanding of the Prophet can be a bridge to the divine love of God Almighty. In this sense, Sufi Ahmad Yasawi also expressed his love for the Prophet (PBUH) in several places of his “Compendium of Wisdom” (Hikmats). In many of his wisdom poems, he portrays the Prophet (PBUH) as “Pir-i Mughan” (i.e., the greatest teacher or master)¹⁷. Sufi Yasawi emphasizes that understanding the divine love of Truth (“Haqq” – God) begins with love for the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH); Yasawi wrote:

*Ko ‘nglumga solib ishq-u muhabbatni ilohim,
Qilg’il mani sen oshiqi yaktoyi Muhammad*

Meaning:

*Ô my God put the love into my heart,
Make me the unique lover of Muhammad (PBUH).*

¹⁷ “Pir-i Mughan” also refers to a great shaykh of a certain Sufi Order, the most powerful spiritual guide of his time, and a Master Saint.

3. The stages of Love

Indeed, the love theme is a huge concept. Love may even require struggle and sacrifice. Because if one loves, this person should fight and need to sacrifice something along the way. This is one of the “demands” of love (Satsangi & Sinha, 2012). So, the lover should make a sacrifice for his/her beloved. One of the proverbs in Turkic (Uzbek) languages is that “If you do not sacrifice your life, no way to get the beloved”. If a lover does not fight, then there is no love, his/her love is not real. If it’s just “me, me, me”, it is not love. Thus, in this part, we will focus on the ten stages of “Muhabbat” – Love. Each stage is the name of “love” in different words. Each level that will be explained below mainly came from the Arabic language into Turkic languages and is used to illustrate the love themes in prose and poetry including Sufi (mystic) Literature (Ormsby, 2011; Hamori, 1973; Komilov, 2009).

The first stage is called “aloqa” [*a-`lo-qa*] which means “attachment” in English¹⁸. According to Sufi scholars, this stage means the “connection” of the lover’s heart to the beloved, that is, the “aloqa”. This word also refers to “bonded” or “attached” in the English language. For instance, “I am attached to him or her”, or when you are attached to someone or something, you care deeply about them. So, this is called “aloqa”.

The second stage is called “iroda” [*ee-ro-dah*] – “will”. This level refers to the intended love. At this level, the lover begins to look for his/her beloved. In Sufism, there is an Arabic term called “Murid” (a novice or follower of a Sufi order) which literally refers to a person who sets out with “iroda” – “will”. This level means the beginning of the path of love (Knysh, 2002). The lover begins to desire his/her beloved. The third stage is called “al-siba” which is the Arabic word for “falling” water¹⁹. In English, if someone loves, it is said: “he or she falls/fell in love”. This stage explains the situation where the lover begins to lose control and falls in love. Then, the fourth stage is called “gharam” which is Arabic²⁰; the word “gharam” is used for a type of punishment in hell. It is so punishing that it does not stop and remains continuous. This stage explains to us the situation where the lover only wants to be with his/her beloved continuously. We can quote the following verses of Sufi Ahmad Yasawi about this:

*Qoydin topay, ishqing tushdi, qarorim yo ‘q,
Ishq sanosin tuni-kuni qo ‘yori yo ‘q,
Dargohingdan o ‘zga yerga bororim yo ‘q
Har na qilsang, oshiq qilg ‘il, parvardigor.*

Meaning:

I have lost my mind, how can I find You, I fell in love,

¹⁸ You can also see this term in English as “al-‘alaqah” meaning “attachment” as we discussed above. It is when there is an attachment or connection from the bottom of the heart to another; what exists between the two parties can now be considered a real relationship. The root verb of this word means “to become attached to” or “to cling to”, indicating that the bond between the pair has reached the point of dependence [Jessica Harn’s article at www.theculturetrip.com, 2017]

¹⁹ There is also “al-sabwa” means “amusement” in English. This word “al-sabwa” is derived from the Arabic word *السبوا* (al-siba) as we defined above, which refers to “boyhood” in English language. This phase illustrates the sweet spot before things get real when two individuals are enjoying each other’s company without putting a label on the relationship. However, some definitions show that the “flirtationship” has not evolved into a legit relationship yet, but it might [mawdoo3.com]

²⁰ “Al-Gharam” meaning strong passion or fervor. The Arabic term “al-gharam” is defined as being attached to something and not being able to let go of it. It is at this time that lovers feel that it is impossible to live separately and always find ways to return to each other, regardless of the situation [mawdoo3.com]

*Days and nights – there is no end to the song of this love.
I cannot go anywhere but Your [divine] Presence.
Whatever you do, make me Your lover, Ô Lord.*

In other words, when a particle of the love of the Lord (Allah Almighty) falls into a person's heart, it makes a person restless and renounces this material world and everything related to it. There is also a famous narration (story) about this in Sufi Literature. One day, the honorable Prophet Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) came across a young man who was watering the garden. The young man begged Jesus (PBUH): "Ask Allah for a tiny bit of His divine love". When Jesus (PBUH) replied: "If I ask Almighty God for a tiny bit of His divine love, you will not be able to bear it". The young man begged: "Then ask half of the tiny bit". Then Jesus (PBUH) prayed: "Ô Lord, give this young man half of the tiny bit from your divine love", then walked away. Months or weeks later, when Jesus (PBUH) came to this place again, he (PBUH) asked about that young man. People said that he went crazy, and he is on the mountain. Jesus (PBUH) prayed to God Almighty to show him that young man, and he found him sitting on a rock, looking up at the sky. Jesus (PBUH) greeted him, but he did not reply. Then God let to know Jesus (PBUH) through a revelation: "Ô Jesus, how can someone who has half of the tiny bit from my divine love in his/her heart listen to the words of other people?! I tell you that if you cut this young man with a saw, he will not feel it". Sufi Ahmad Yasawi has some verses about this kind of love statement in his other "wisdom" poem:

*Haq rahmati ulug' daryo, bir qatra bas,
Qatrasidin bahra olg'an qilmas havas,
Movumanlik sendin ketar misli magas,
Haq jamolin ko'rsatmasa zomin bo'lay.*

Meaning:

*God's mercy is a great river, just a drop is enough,
If someone has that drop, he/she does not envy (others or other things)
Calamities go away from you, like a fly.
If God does not show his (divine) "Presence", then I am guilty (or a loser).*

Venerable Sufi Yasawi compares the mercy of God to a great river. This river is a never-ending, always overflowing river. The river is given according to the desire of the one who asks for it (Nijat, 1985). Then, one drop is enough for someone who demands a "true divine love" of God. The person who enjoys a drop of divine love renounces his/her lust (all calamities) for the world and the pleasures in it. His/her heart will now be filled only with true divine love (Zulfiqar Ahmad Naqshbandi, 2001). A heart full of divine love cannot fit anything else. "Nafs"²¹ – ego (or soul) and its desires will be gone away. Sufi Ahmad Yasawi portrays such situations in a person as the feeling of being lost (OĞUZ, 2016). In other words, arrogance and ignorance represent one of the worst evils in a person's ego (Chittick, 1983). When a drop from a great river" falls into the person's heart, all those worst evils (calamities, bad behaviors) will fly away from him/her like a fly. In these verses, Yasawi expresses in his own style that the heart of a person who

²¹ "Nafs" is an Arabic word occurring in the Quran, literally meaning "self". It can be translated as "psyche", "ego" or "soul" into English. The word "nafs" is used in both the individualistic and collective sense, indicating that although humanity is united in possessing the positive qualities of "Nafs", they are individually responsible for exercising the agencies of the "free will" that it provides them [source is Wikipedia].

enjoys the love of God will leave such characters. That is, arrogance flies far away from a person, and he/she can no longer have it.

The fifth stage is called “widad” which means “pure love”. This is a situation where the lover has moved to a specific point. Because in the previous stages, there were some “nafs” that is, “desires”. For instance, a lover wants to see his/her beloved constantly. So, this stage – “widad” is really not about the beloved (“ma’shuq”), but about the lover (“oshiq”). According to Islamic teachings, God has the name called “Al-Wadud” which has the same grammatic root as the word “widad”. Sufi tradition explains that God’s name - “Al-Wadud” has two meanings. The first, “Al-Wadud” is the One who loves His servants very much. The second, “Al-Wadud” is the only God whose servants love Him very much. In addition, in Prophetic tradition, there is an amazing explanation: for a man and a woman (who are married) to be constantly together, God places between them “al-mawaddah” – “pure love”. This “pure love” is such that one of them (husband or wife) does not divorce (or leave) the other even when he/she becomes ill (incurably or severely). Or a man does not leave his wife even when a wife grows old and loses her beauty.

Let’s brief discuss this matter here, as we are exploring the philosophical understanding the “love”, and here, the meaning of the stage called “wodd”²², “wudd” or “widad” (Chittick, 2013). So, what does Allah describe as true love? The purpose of a male and female coming together. Sufi poetry and prose convey that God Almighty put “mawadda” between a male and a female; that is called “pure love”. It is the love that the husband will not divorce the woman when she gets sick, or she is no longer such beautiful.

Thus, Sufi literature always quotes from Quranic and Prophetic traditions. So, there is a hadith, in which the Prophet said, “I was made to love women” which has nothing to do with lust. There was also talk about “perfume” there. However, what is the connection between women and perfume? Perfume just gives scent. Perfume dissipates its own self for others. Subsequently, to explain this statement philosophically, when one puts on perfume, it diffuses, and it gives something pleasant to others. Islamic scholars such as Venerable Shaykh Hamza Yusuf explained “that is the quality of women that the Prophet loved. It was that sacrifice that comes so naturally to a woman and men find so difficult. That is why we learn such audacity in terms of sacrificing the best from our mothers. Then to highlight and honor women, Sufi literature has quotes from prophetic tradition, in which, it is said, “Paradise is that the under the feet of mothers”. Because that is where we learn at best and where one sees it most embodied”.

In Sufism, the saying of God (which is called a “Hadith al-Qudsiy”) is quoted: God used the word called “Rahm” (which separated) from (the root, i.e., “r”, “h” and “m” root letters of) God’s Divine Names: “Al-Rahman” (The Most Merciful) and “Al-Raheem” (The Most Graceful). The word “Rahm” as a body part is unique to a woman and refers to “a womb” in English. This body part is placed in the space at the center of the female body. Philosophically, this thing (a womb) is the “Source of Mercy” in the world. In this sense, the mother’s womb was the first abode for everyone (Komilov, 2009). All the men and women of the world were in that abode called “Rahm” which is also part of “compassion”. It is something that can be expanded for other people’s needs. So, it means “wudd”, or “widad” really means “pure love” (Chittick, 2013). This is not a love tainted by utilitarianism (Bowden Peter, 2009; Ivy Panda, 2022).

²² "Al-Wodd" also means friendship. Couples who have reached the level of love are “relationship goals”. They are not only lovers but also best friends. The Arabic term “al-wodd” refers to a very close companionship. This is the purest, most selfless, and most tender kind of love [mawdoo3.com].

The sixth stage is called “pericardium” in modern terms (Shih-Pajares, 2022). At this stage, the heart is surrounded by love. That is, love covers the heart. The seventh stage is called “ishq”, which we briefly discussed earlier. In Sufi literature (especially, in Turkic Sufi poetry), loving God Almighty strongly is called “ishq”, and loving a person is called “oshiq” – the lover. This is actually a dangerous stage. At this stage, “oshiq” – a lover can literally go crazy. As we earlier mentioned Arabic term called “Al-Ashaqa” refers to a suffocating wild plant that envelops a tree and eventually kills it. Thus, the term “ishq” is a type of love in which there is absolute “tightening” (suffocation). The cure for this strong love is to maintain a “bond” with the beloved. There are also some narrations from Sufi literature about “shahid from ishq” – “Martyrs of Love”. They talk about people dying for love. There are several examples of wisdom poems written by Sufi Ahmad Yasawi about this “strong love situation” in Sufism. For instance:

*Qul Xoja Ahmad, ishqdin qattiq balo bo'lmas,
Marham so'rma, ishq dardig'a davo bo'lmas,
Ko'zyoshidin o'zga hech kim guvoh bo'lmas,
Har na qilsang, oshiq qilg'il, parvardigor.*

Meaning:

*Ô slave Khaja Ahmad, there is no heavy trouble, but “ishq”,
Do not ask for a “cure”, there is no cure for the pain of this love,
No one will be a witness but your tears.
Ô Lord, whatever you do, make me Your “oshiq” (lover).*

The eighth stage is called “tatayyum” which is also an Arabic word. At this stage, the condition of “enjoyment” as a “slave” is explained. However, the “slave” here is not physical slavery. This stage comes with a “sense of servitude”. Because, usually, the lover is at the service of the beloved (or is not offended by it at all).

The ninth stage is called “ta’abbud”. That is, this stage explains the situation where a lover (“oshiq”) becomes a complete “slave” for his/her beloved. Whoever fell into this stage is ready to do anything for love. Sufi literature has a lot of books and poems which contain statements that this stage was praised. In Islamic tradition, expressing servitude to God Almighty is actually an honorable title of the Prophet. In Sufi tradition, those who love God are praised as “abd-Allah” – “slave of Allah”, and the condition is called “ta’abbud” (Lectures by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, 2014). Because it is intense love and praise (or slavish worship). In the Sufi concept, the root word “abbud” also refers to a person who “worships”. Thus, the lover has reached the level of “adoration”.

The last stage is called “hulla(h)²³” which refers to the highest level of love. In this case, the Arabic word “mahabbah” – Uzbek word “muhabbat” (love) - covers every cell of the body. It means to be absorbed into the whole soul. In addition, this stage is also called the level of “Halil” (that is, closest friendship). For example, in the Islamic tradition, the Prophets Muhammad and Ibrahim (peace be upon them) are described as “Halilullah” (a close friend of God). Besides, the Prophet (Muhammad peace be upon him) is also called “Habibulloh” (beloved of God) because the Arabic word “hubb” includes all these stages. In Islam, it is believed that God loves the Prophet (Muhammad peace be upon him) absolutely, and the Prophet also loves God absolutely. That is why it

²³ In English, it can be seen as a form of “Al-Kholla”, i.e., unification. The Arabic term “al-kholla” is defined as love and friendship deeply embedded in the hearts. At this stage, one believes that his/her lover is “the one” and he/she will never find a perfect match (soulmate) in him/her [mawdoo3.com].

is explained in Sufism that loving the Prophet is the only bridge to loving God (Komilov, 2009). All in all, not everyone can go through these stages discussed so far. For this, knowledge, patience, and perseverance are required. In order to go up “the stairs” (of spiritual maturity), a person is required firstly to leave his/her “self”. It goes without saying that not everyone can cope with this situation. That is why love is described as great work. Sufi Ahmad Yasawi also mentions the following verses about this in his wisdom poem:

*Qul Xoja Ahmad, o'z din kechmay da'vo qilma,
Xalq ichida oshiqmen deb tilga olma,
Oshiqlik ulug' ishdir, g'ofil bo'lma,
G'ofil bo'lub Haq diydorin ko'rmang, do'stlar*

Meaning:

Ô slave Khaja Ahmad, do not claim (for love) before leaving self.

Do not mention (yourself) publicly that I am an “oshiq” – lover.

Being “oshiq” – a lover is a great deal, do not be unconscious.

Ô friends, being unconscious caused not to see God's (divine) Presence.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, poetic terms such as “ishq” (love), “oshiq” (lover), “ibrat” (taking a lesson), “muhabbat” (love), “ma'shuq” (beloved), which are widely used in Turkic (Uzbek) classical and mystical literature and are originally Arabic words. These terms probably entered together with the religion of Islam. Although current Uzbek language uses these words in their ordinary meaning, these words have many other deep meanings in Turkic World Sufi Literature. It will be much easier for the reader to understand these different shades of meaning if they are studied in the example of Sufi Ahmad Yasawi's “Compendium of Wisdom” (Hikmats). So, “Hikmats” is created for the purpose of explaining and promoting the idea, goals, and tasks of Sufism, which systematically incorporates the principles and practices of Islam, to the public. Wisdom poems have been sung or recited in religious meetings among people. This is the purpose of writing the “Hikmats” in the light tones of the Turkic (Uzbek) traditional weights. Moreover, Yasawi's poems reflect the easy-to-remember style of language among the folk, regardless of which class (educated or uneducated) they belong to. Some wisdom poems are memorized to be repeated instead of dhikr. Some of them have become so popular among the people that they have reached the level of folklore. Venerable Sufi Ahmad Yasawi lived in Turkestan (current southern Kazakhstan) in the 12th century and wrote “Hikmats” which promoted Sufism in his time. Later, many of Yasawi's students, peer poets, and other Sufi poets who lived after him, wrote “hikmat” -wisdom poems. This literary process constitutes the school of “Hikmat” – Wisdom founded by Sufi Yasawi. Then, the issue of “ishq” – divine love is one of the most common topics in classical literature. Divine love is one of the prerequisites for following the path of perfection and mysticism. Because, according to Sufi Literature, to reach spiritual maturity, first, it is required of “oshiq” – a lover to be able to control and finally win over his/her ego. Divine love is the best way to defeat the greatest enemy of mankind which is called “Nafs” (Chittick, 1983).

Thus, Sufism doctrine and literature started a unique renaissance period in the history of Central Asia. Manifestations of Sufism contributed to maintaining the pillars

of religion, spirituality, and enlightenment among the people for many centuries. They left us with an invaluable artistic heritage that is important for both the history of literature and the history of Islam. Sufi Ahmad Yasawi founded the Sufi Order (tariqa) called the “Yasawi Order” in Turkestan, which was essentially compatible with other Sufi Orders. Sufi Yasawi wrote the “Compendium of Wisdom – Hikmats” to convey the rules of Islam and the Yasawi Order in the Turkic language (Hasan, 2012). At the same time, this “compendium of wisdom” became one of the masterworks of Turkic World literature (Harris, 2019). Then, the difference between the Yasawi Order from other Sufi Orders (e.g., Naqshbandi, Kubrawi) is that it was originally created in the Turkic language. It should also be noted that “Hikmat” – wisdom poems are not composed entirely of Turkic words. The proof of this was seen in the commentary and translation of the above verses when the stages of love were explained. Sufi Ahmad Yasawi brought Arabic words into the Turkic language and competently adjusted them to his Turkic language. The words used in his poems can be easily understood by any Turkic-speaking reader who does not know Arabic. In this sense, the legacy of Sufi Ahmad Yasawi is a very valuable source in both Turkic World and Sufi Literature. Finally, the philosophy of divine love in Sufi Literature is a very large and deep topic. Each of the stages of love discussed above can be individually studied by linking to the literature.

Notes:

Sahih Muslim 2053c., Part: 36 - “The Book of Drinks”

“Aflah, the freed slave of Abu Ayyub Ansari, reported: “Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) (Prophet PBUH - fo emit eht ta irasnA buyyA ubA fo .ziv) esuoh sih ni dethgila dah (ﷺ) his emigration to Madinah) and he occupied the lower storey, whereas Abu Ayyub Ansari lived in the upper storey. One night, Abu Ayyub Ansari got up and said (to himself): (How unfortunate it is) that we walk above the head of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), so they went aside and spent the night in a nook and then told Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) about it whereupon Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: The lower storey is more comfortable (for me). but he (Abu Ayyub Ansari) said: We (would not live) over the roof under which you live. So Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) shifted to the upper storey, whereas Abu Ayyub Ansari shifted to the lower storey; and he (Abu Ayyub Ansari) used to prepare food for Allah's Apostle (ﷺ); and when it was brought (back) to him he asked (to locate) the part, where his fingers had touched (the food), and he followed his fingers on that part where his fingers (those of the Holy Prophet) had touched it. (One day) he prepared food that contained garlic, and when it was returned to him, he asked (to locate) the part that the fingers of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) had touched. It was said to him that he had not eaten (the food). He (Abd Ayyub Ansari) was distressed and went up to him (to the Holy Prophet) and said: Is it forbidden? But Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: No, (it is not forbidden), but I do not like it. and he (Abu Ayyub Ansari) said: I also do not like what you do not like or which you did not like. He (Abu Ayyub Ansari) said: (The Prophet did not eat garlic) as Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was visited (by angels) and brought him the message of Allah (www.sunnah.com).

Sahih al-Bukhari 3906. Part 63 – Merits of the Helpers in Madinah (Ansaar).

“[...] Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) stayed with Bani `Amr bin `Auf for ten nights and established the mosque (mosque of Quba) which was founded on piety. Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) prayed in it and then mounted his “she-camel” (her name was Qaswa) and proceeded on, accompanied by the people till his she-camel knelt down at (the place of) the Mosque of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) at Medina. Some Muslims used to pray there in

those days, and that place was a yard for drying dates belonging to Suhail and Sahl, the orphan boys who were under the guardianship of 'Asad bin Zurara. When his she-camel knelt down, Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "This place, Allah willing, will be our abiding place" [...] (www.sunnah.com).

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