

# Love

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## Abstract

Love is one of the most precious human experiences. One's love can be directed at a variety of things that can be classified into two general categories: divine and non-divine. If one develops love of God and His friends, one will come to love everything that has a trace of God and His friends. Love is a two-edged sword: depending on the value of what is loved, it can help one achieve eternal happiness and salvation, or it can lead to one's fall to lowest degrees. This paper explains different types of love, what cultivates it in human heart, its signs, and its personal and social effects.

**Keywords:** *love, happiness, faith, remembrance of God, God's friends*

## Introduction

Love is one of the most precious human experiences. It is an internal relation between a person and his or her beloved. Indeed, from the viewpoint of Islamic ethics, one's love can be directed at a variety of things that can be classified into two general categories: divine and non-divine. As to the divine, one's love can be directed at God, His friends, His religion (beliefs, righteous deeds, and high morals), believers, and so on; as to the non-divine, love can be directed at material things such as wealth, social status, and power, as well as deviant beliefs, wrong deeds, and evil entities. If one develops love of God and His friends, one will come to love everything that has a trace of God and His friends. Imam al-Baqir (a) is reported to have said, "What is religion but love? Religion is love, and love is religion" (Majlisi 1403 AH, 66:238). An analogy will help us see the value of love: if a person with strong love for his fiancé is asked to stop loving her in exchange for whatever he wishes to have, then he will not do so unless there is something else that he loves at least as much as he loves his fiancé. In other words, people do not exchange what they love with anything else, because they consider it a loss. Love can give meaning to one's life, motivate him to do things, lead him to what he loves, and cause him to become similar to his beloved. Indeed, love of something leads one to become like it, in which case one may construct one's own self anew. With the vehicle of love, one can arrive at the station of divine proximity, thus achieving the status of divine successorship.

## Literal and Technical Definitions

In his *al-Mufradat*, al-Raghib takes "*mahabbab*" (love) to consist a desire for what one rightly or mistakenly deems good. He enumerates three types of love: (1) love in virtue of pleasure, such as that between men

and women, (2) love in virtue of interests or benefits, such as love of something from which one benefits, and (3) love because of a virtue in the beloved, such as love for scholars because of their scholarly achievements (Raghib al-Isfahani 1412 AH, 214).

Love might be said to be a self-evident concept, not in need of a definition. For if we were to define love, we would have to find a concept that is more obvious than love. However, it seems impossible, or at least very difficult, to spot such a concept. Thus, in this essay, we treat the concept of love as a self-evident or obvious concept that everyone can find in themselves to varying extents. Notwithstanding, we might say that, extensionally speaking, whoever experiences love also experiences certain other things such as infatuation, attraction, pleasure, delight, elation, sadness after separation, and the like. Thus, things in terms of which love is defined are indeed its effects, attributes, and evidence, since love is an intuitive or presentational grasp of something which cannot be formulated in verbal terms.

### Love in Quranic Verses and Hadiths

In the holy Quran, love is referred to with words such as “*mahabbah*,” “*wudd*,” “*shaghaf*,” and “*hawa*,” which point to different degrees of love. There are certain other words in the Quran, such as “*rahmah*” (mercy) and “*linah*” (softness) that can also be associated with the notion of love. It turns out to be difficult to deal with all the various words associated with love in the Quran, particularly in such a short essay. Thus, we will only discuss some of the Quranic verses and hadiths in which the word “*mahabbah*” and its cognates are used. We will do so within a classification of love.

## Types of Love

### I. God's Love for Himself

The Quranic verse “Indeed, Allah loves the doers of good” has been cited by prominent scholars such as ‘Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani as implying God’s love for Himself. Al-Kashani writes, “God has said, ‘Indeed, Allah loves the doers of good,’ and He says, ‘And He [i.e., God] certainly did good to me’ [Quran 12:100]; therefore, God truly loves Himself, because He is a true doer of good, and since love is grounded in the apprehension of the beloved’s beauty and goodness, and since God has absolute beauty, the perfect love is God’s love for His own self” (Kashani 1380 Sh, 374).

There is a well-known hadith<sup>1</sup> called the “Hadith of the Hidden Treasure” (*al-kanz al-makhfi*), in which God refers to His own essence as a hidden treasure, knowing which is the purpose of creation.<sup>2</sup> That is to say, God is aware of His perfection and beauty, and this awareness engenders love. God’s love of His own essence is much more intense than the love of creatures for Him, since He is the most perfect and the most beautiful beloved and the most knowing and finest lover. This amounts to the highest possible apprehension of the most attractive beauty. Avicenna devotes a chapter of his *al-Najat* to this issue. He writes, “A chapter on the fact that He is by His essence a beloved and a lover, pleasing and pleased, and that pleasure is a perception of the agreeable good ... So, the Necessary Being is His own greatest lover and

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<sup>1</sup> The hadith is objectionable with respect to its chain of transmission. However, it seems to be unobjectionable with respect to its implications and thus it has been cited by many Muslim mystics in their works.

<sup>2</sup> “I was a hidden treasure, so I loved to be known; hence, I created creatures in order to be known” (Majlisi 1403 AH, 84:198).

greatest beloved [at once]. He is in utmost perfection, beauty and magnificence. He intellectually apprehends His essence by considering the utmost degree of magnificence and beauty, with full apprehension, and He intellectually apprehends Himself as an intellectual apprehender and the intelligible because they are truly the same” (Ibn Sina 1379 Sh, 590-91).

## **2. God’s Love for Human Beings**

God’s love for His creatures is beyond doubt. Indeed, God loves everything He creates, just as any maker loves and cherishes whatever he or she makes out of wisdom. There is a parable according to which a person used to go to a potter to purchase urns. Whenever he bought an urn, he broke it before the eyes of the potter. Finally, the potter objected to him, and when he saw the purchaser’s astonishment at his complaint, he said: “Do not do this before my eyes, at least. I have made them with my own hands and I cherish each of them.” Creatures in the world are like those urns—they are loved and cherished by their Creator. This sort of love—namely, God’s love for creatures and in particular human beings—is highlighted in many Quranic verses and *sacred (qudsi) hadiths*.

A noteworthy point about the Quranic view of love is that the divine attributes Merciful and Compassionate, recurring at the beginning of all Quranic chapters except one (Quran 9), are the best evidence for God’s infinite mercy and love for His creatures, as is the sending of prophets and sacred scriptures to guide people to the right path. Moreover, there are many other Quranic verses referring to God’s love for certain groups of His servants who do particular things, such as

good-doers,<sup>1</sup> repentant and pure people,<sup>2</sup> those who obey the Prophet (s),<sup>3</sup> those who fear God,<sup>4</sup> the steadfast,<sup>5</sup> those who trust in Him,<sup>6</sup> just people,<sup>7</sup> and so on.

Of sacred hadiths, we cite two that indicate God's utmost love even for His sinful servants:

(1) God told Prophet David: "Oh David! I love the one who loves Me, and I am the companion of the one who is My companion, and I am on intimate terms with the one who is on intimate terms with Me, and I am friend with the one who is friend with Me, and I choose the one who chooses Me, and I obey the one who obeys Me, and if a person loves Me from the bottom of his heart, I will give him a life I have never given to anyone before him." (Shahid al-Thani n.d., 17-18)

(2) God said, "Oh My servant! I am rightly your Lover, so for My right incumbent upon you, love Me." (Daylami 1412 AH, 1:171)

In the second hadith, God appeals to His right incumbent upon His servants to encourage them to love Him, whereas this love is obviously in the interest of the servants themselves. Divine mercy is so vast that even Satan will keep a hope for it (Shaykh al-Saduq 1400 AH, 205).

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<sup>1</sup> "And do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good" (Quran 2:195).

<sup>2</sup> "Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves" (Quran 2:222).

<sup>3</sup> "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you" (Quran 3:31).

<sup>4</sup> "Whoever fulfills his commitment and fears Allah - then indeed, Allah loves those who fear Him" (Quran 3:76).

<sup>5</sup> "And Allah loves the steadfast" (Quran 3:146).

<sup>6</sup> "Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]" (Quran 3:159).

<sup>7</sup> "Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly" (Quran 5:42).

### 3. Love for God's Friends

God's loving care for His friends is particularly conspicuous. These people, who are also known as saints, become similar to God and come to possess His perfect attributes because of their proximity to Him. One who loves God will also love His friends if he is aware of their place before God. Love for God's friends is rooted in love for God. This is obvious about Prophet Muhammad (s) as well as his pure household. Love for these pure lights is the same as love for God. A love culminating in the obedience of these prominent figures will bear the fruit of divine love: "Say, [O Muhammad], If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you" (Quran 3:31).

Love for prophets, the Infallible Imams (a), and saints, and following them in practice result in achieving their station—that is, the station of divine proximity. It is because of the tremendous effect of love for God's friends in making progress towards perfection that we are frequently advised to be with them. Indeed, religion as a way to God is nothing but love. Consider the following story: A visitor from Khorasan went to Imam al-Baqir (a). He had travelled a long way on foot; when he took off his shoes, his feet were cracked. He told Imam al-Baqir (a): "I swear to God that nothing has brought me from where I have come except the love for you, the Household of the Prophet." The Imam said, "I swear to God that if a stone loves us, God will resurrect it and reunite it with us, and is religion anything but love?" (Majlisi 1403 AH, 27:95)

In spite of the emphasis on love for fellow human beings in Islam, it is not to be taken as unconditional. We are prohibited, for example, from

loving vicious character traits of God's enemies, disbelievers<sup>1</sup> wicked people,<sup>2</sup> the ignorant, and liars and from closely associating with them.<sup>3</sup> In religious terminology, love for God's friends is called "*tawalli*," and enmity towards God's enemies is called "*tabarri*."

#### 4. Love of Human Beings for God

Beauty and perfection are considered to be grounds for lovability, and since God is absolute beauty and perfection, He is loved by His knowledgeable servants. That is to say, every person loves God's beauty and perfection in proportion to his or her own knowledge. The Quran characterizes the love of believers for God as follows:

And [yet], among the people are those who take other than Allah as equals [to Him]. They love them as they [should] love Allah. But those who believe are stronger in love for Allah [than polytheists are for their idols]. (2:165)

O you who have believed, whoever of you should revert from his religion—Allah will bring forth [in place of them] a people He will love and who will love Him [who are] humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers. (5:54)

One who savors the sweetness of God's love will not choose a beloved except Him: "My God, who can have tasted the sweetness of Thy love,

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<sup>1</sup> "Refrain from loving God's enemies or loving anyone other than God's friends, for he who loves a people will be resurrected with them" (Tamimi al-Amidi 1366 Sh, 204).

<sup>2</sup> "Avoid the companionship of the wicked and the vicious and those who openly sin" (Tamimi al-Amidi 1366 Sh, 433).

<sup>3</sup> "Whenever Amir al-Mu'minin went on minbar, he said: 'A Muslim should avoid the brotherhood of three groups of people: the wicked, the fool, the liar'" (Kulayni 1407 AH, 2:639).



then wanted another in place of Thee? Who can have become intimate with Thy nearness, then sought removal from Thee? My God, place us with him whom Thou hast chosen for Thy nearness and Thy friendship, purified through Thy affection and Thy love, given yearning for the meeting with Thee” (al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya, The Whispered Prayer of the Lovers).

### **5. Love of Human Beings for One Another**

Love of human beings for one another, which is an offshoot of God’s love for His creatures, has always been deemed significant by divine religions, particularly Islam. Such love leads to spiritual and physical growth of people as well as material and spiritual progress of societies. Thus, the unique role of love in the cultivation of morality and the promotion of religion among people has been accentuated by the Quran, the Prophet (s), the Imams (a), and prominent religious figures. From an Islamic point of view, people’s love for one another is extraordinarily valuable. The Muslim nation is characterized by the Quran as merciful, kind, and gracious among themselves: “[The Prophet’s companions are] merciful among themselves” (48:29). That is to say, they are compassionate to, and love, one another (Maybudi 1371 Sh, 9:231).

Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, “Muslims are obligated to unite, kindly help one another, equally treat those in need, and to be gracious to one another so that they become, as God has commanded, merciful among themselves. And when something (a need or trouble) about them is hidden from you, you should be sad about it, as were the Helpers during the lifetime of the Messenger of God” (Majlisi 1403 AH, 71:257).

In what follows, we will discuss people’s love for one another under three general issues:

### **A. Relation between Love and Faith**

According to some hadiths, love for God's servants is so important that the Prophet (s) referred to it as the foundation of faith along with reason.<sup>1</sup> Because of the importance of this moral characteristic in Islam, religion is taken to be nothing but love (Majlisi 1403 AH, 27:95), and it is said that the more one loves his religion, the more one loves his co-religionists (Majlisi 1403 AH, 50:152).

Bringing joy to believers, which stems from loving them, is deemed the best action after praying: "The best action after prayer is to bring joy to a believer with that which is not sinful" (Majlisi 1403 AH, 44:194). Thus, the Prophet (s) said: "He who pleases a believer pleases me, and he who pleases me pleases God" (Majlisi 1403 AH, 71:278).

### **B. Relation between Love and Training**

Many moral virtues can be taught to others only through kindness. If moral instructors (e.g., fathers, mothers, teachers, or ethicists) are not kind, their efforts will be futile. The Prophet (s) managed to train pious people and change the world via his pure love for all God's servants.

Moreover, love is a basic need of children. If children receive enough love from their families and the people around them, they will have a happy and successful life. A house full of love paves the ground for fine emotions and a healthy spirit and cultivates virtues in children.

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<sup>1</sup> "A crucial aspect of intellect after faith in God is love for people" (Majlisi 1403 AH, 1:131).

### C. Relation between Love and Happiness

As long as Muslims observe moral principles in their interrelations and love one another, they will be on their way to happiness.<sup>1</sup> Love for others is the key to Heaven and eternal happiness. The Prophet (s) refers to faith as the key to Heaven, and to love as the key to faith: “I swear to God in whose Hand is my life, you will not enter Heaven unless you have faith, and you will not have faith unless you love one another.” He then points out a simple way to spread love among believers: “Should I guide you to something that if you do, you will love one another? Openly say ‘*salam*’ to [or greet] one another” (Shaykh al-Saduq 1378 Sh, 2:123).

Greeting, as recommended in this hadith, is important because it is a starting point for a healthy relationship between two persons, conveying messages of love, sincerity, and friendship between them. If these messages are properly sent and properly received, they pave the path for more expanded and firmer social ties.

Believers should express their love to one another. Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, “If you love someone, let him know, because this would solidify the foundations of your friendship” (Kulayni 1407 AH, 2:644).

Some hadiths warn against the consequences of disunity among believers, which harms their happiness in this world and the afterlife. Sometimes, arrogance or misunderstanding causes grudges, leading to divisions among people and destroying friendship. Thus, Ali (a) instructs his son, Imam al-Hasan (a), to express love and friendship to his brothers in faith:

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<sup>1</sup> “As long as my people love one another, guide one another, and deliver trusts [back to their owners], they will do well” (Shaykh al-Saduq 1378 Sh, 2:29).

When your brother parts company with you, you reestablish the friendship; if he turns away, you be kind; if he is stingy, you be generous; when he stays away, you approach; when he takes it hard, you take it easy; when he does something wrong, accept his excuse as if you were his servant and he were your master. (Nahj al-balagha, letter 31)

Thus, one should sometimes condone his own rights lest the connection of friendship is lost. Imam al-Sadiq (a) said that when two Shiites end their friendship, both of them may face divine curse if neither of them makes any efforts toward reconciliation (Kulayni 1407 AH, 2:344).

Obviously, the emphasis on love is not limited to believers. Imam 'Ali (a) commands Malik al-Ashtar: "Develop in your heart the feeling of love for your people and let it be the source of kindness and blessing to them. Do not behave towards them like a barbarian, and do not appropriate to yourself that which belongs to them. Remember that the citizens of the state are of two categories. They are either your brethren in religion or similar to you in creation" (Nahj al-balagha, letter 53).

## **6. Human Love for Other Creatures**

From a religious, and particularly Islamic, point of view, a believer is to love all creatures. In Islam, animals and plants have the right to live, and so their lives cannot be taken away from them without justifiable reasons, nor can a pointless pain or harm be imposed on them. In this essay, we are not concerned with animal rights or rights of plants. Instead, we will review some hadiths regarding love for these creatures.

The Prophet (s) called for loving animals: "Fear God in your treatments of these tongue-less animals" (Khurramshahi and Ansari 1376 Sh, 450). In the Islamic view, the kind treatment of animals results in the

forgiveness of sins: “If one has mercy even on a slaughtered sparrow, God will have mercy on him on the day of resurrection” (Khurramshahi and Ansari 1376 Sh, 451). The Prophet (s) prohibited Muslims from initiating fights between animals for entertainment, because it violates their rights and is an instance of mercilessness towards them (Ibid.).

### **Semantic Relation between Love and Mercy**

The word, “*rahmah*” (mercy) is derived from the Arabic root “*r-h-m*,” which means affection or emotion (Ibn al-Manzur 1414 AH, 12:2311) or a sort of kindness and compassion required by doing good (to someone). According to another definition, *rahmah* means a sort of psychological affection in one’s heart towards another person, leading the former to do good to the latter (Tabataba’i 1417 AH, 16:166).

There are differences between love and mercy, including the following:

1. Love is usually mutual, but mercy is unilateral and sacrificial. For a society to survive, sometimes mutual services are required, which are grounded in love, and sometimes ex gratia services are required, which demand sacrifice and mercy. Thus, love is, for instance, a motivation for marriage, but it will finally be replaced by mercy.
2. Love is a manifestation of the spiritual aspect of the connection, and mercy is a manifestation of its practical aspect (Makarim Shirazi et al, 1374 Sh, 16:393).
3. Love is a state satisfying one’s own psychological need, while mercy satisfies someone else’s needs (Raghib al-Isfahani 1412 AH, 347).

4. Love is what appears in one's heart at first, and then (as a result of love) mercy appears (Mustafawi 1360 Sh, 4:92).

### **Love in the View of Muslim Intellectuals**

Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Kharaqani, a Muslim mystic, says the following about love for fellow human beings: "If a thorn injures someone's finger in Turkistan or Levant, that is mine [i.e., it is as if the thorn injured my own finger]. Moreover, if a stone hurts someone's foot in Turkistan or Levant, the pain is mine, and if there is sadness in someone's heart, that is mine [i.e., I will be sad as well]" (Attar Nishaburi 1386 Sh, 590).

According to Attar, a mystic collected dates and sold them in order to buy clothes for an orphan and make him happy (ibid., 282).

### **A Story about Love**

A burglar broke into a sage's house, but found nothing. The sage told him: "Take the bucket and use the water to perform wudu' and then do your prayer. Then, stay here until someone comes here tomorrow and brings something that I can give to you, so that you do not leave my house empty-handed." The next day, someone showed up at his home with one hundred and fifty thousand dinars. The sage gave the whole money to the burglar and said: "This was the reward for one night of your prayer." The burglar shivered and sobbed, and then said: "I was going astray." So, he repented, rejected the money, returned to God, and became a follower of the Shaykh (Rafi'i 1390 Sh, 342).

One night, Bayazid was leaving the cemetery. A young man was playing oud. Bayazid recited: "There is no might nor power except in Allah."

The young man disliked Bayazid's reaction, so he hit Bayazid's head with his oud, breaking both Bayazid's head and his own oud. The next morning, Bayazid sent money for the oud in a tray of halva and apologized, with a note saying: "Here is the money for the oud, and enjoy this halva so that the sadness of breaking the oud goes out of your heart." The young man was impressed with Bayazid's graciousness. He went to Bayazid and repented. Some other young men also followed his lead and repented (Rafi'i 1390 Sh, 343).

### **Factors That Cultivate and Consolidate Love**

Quranic verses and hadiths point to factors that contribute to the development and consolidation of love both between God and His servants and between human beings themselves. We will first talk about the factors contributing to the development or increase of God's love for His servants as well as people's love for God, and then about the factors leading to the development and reinforcement of love among human beings.

#### **A. Factors Leading to the Increase of God's Love for People**

1. Remembrance of God. If one remembers God, God will also remember him or her, as the Quran says: "So remember me; I will remember you" (Quran 2:152). According to a hadith from Imam 'Ali (a), "If one remembers God very often, God will love him" (Kulayni 1407 AH, 2:500).
2. Repentance (*tawbah*). God loves and purifies a person who regretfully repents to him—that is, God assigns the highest status to such a person:

“Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves” (Quran 2:222).

A subtle point in this verse is that God purifies and then loves a repentant person, as Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, “If a faithful servant [of God] sincerely repents to God, God will love him” (Shaykh al-Sadiq 1406 AH, 171).

When a person is loved by God, he will love God as well. There will be mutual love between God and the person; and if he does not undermine the love with sins or disobedience, the love will keep increasing throughout his life. A person whose heart is filled with God’s love cannot forget God even for a moment and cannot take even a single step on a path that does not please God. Such a person has sought, moved towards, and found his Lord, and thus he can never lose what he has achieved.

3. *Taqwa* (God-wariness). *Taqwa* can be conceived of as avoiding that which is in conflict with love. That is to say, disobedience or sins seriously undermine and finally extinguish one’s love for God. The role of piety in gaining God’s love is evidenced by the following verse: “Allah loves those who fear Him” (Quran 3:76) and a hadith according to which Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, “He who disobeys God does not know God,” and then the Imam (a) recited the following poem: “You disobey God and then express your love for Him? I swear to your life that this is astonishing! If your love was sincere, you would no doubt obey Him, since a lover obeys the person he loves” (Harrani 1404 AH, 294).

4. Performing obligatory actions. “God says: ‘My servant does not seek my love with anything dearer [to me] than doing what I have made obligatory for him’” (Kulayni 1407 AH, 2:82).



## **B. Factors Leading to the Increase of One's Love for God**

Factors leading to the increase of one's love for God can be summarized in the factor of knowledge. That is to say, the more one knows about God as infinitely beautiful and perfect, the more one will love and obey Him. Thus, the Friends of God who deeply know Him and His perfect attributes intensely love the beauty of their beloved and never disobey him. Prophet Abraham (a) was ready to sacrifice his dear son for the love of his Beloved and to gain His pleasure.

## **C. Factors Leading to the Development and Increase of Love between Human Beings**

There are hadiths concerning different factors that have a role in the development and reinforcement of love between people, some of which are not in one's control and others are. In the latter case, one needs to provide those factors.

One factor of love and friendship that depends on divine predestination is the homogeneity and familiarity of souls in a preexisting world. The Prophet (s) said: "The spirits are drafted soldiers (*junud mujannada*). Those who were acquainted with one another [in the world of *dharr*] are united; while those who were not acquainted are disunited" (Shaykh al-Mufid 1414 AH, 1:48).

Among the factors of development and reinforcement of love that depend on one's efforts, the following can be mentioned:

1. Faith in God. One's faith in God and seeking His pleasure result in the consolidation and increase of one's love for God and His creatures. The Quran says about the love of believers for their Creator that "those who believe are stronger in love for Allah" (Quran 2:165). It also says

about the role of faith in the development of love for believers in the hearts of others: “Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds, [God] the Most Merciful will put for them affection [in the hearts of others]” (Quran 19:96). According to a hadith, “When God loves one of His servants, He tells his great angel, Gabriel: ‘I love that person, so love him.’ Gabriel will also love him and then proclaims in Heaven: ‘O people of Heaven! God loves such and such a person.’ Then all people of Heaven will love him, and then he will be loved by people of the Earth” (Payandeh 1382 Sh, 290).

2. Repentance. Sincere repentance brings about God’s love for the repentant person, and according to the general principle that whoever is loved by God will be loved by His servants, it follows that he will be loved by God’s servants as well.

3. Righteous deeds. Righteous deeds develop and reinforce love. The Quran says: “Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds, [God] the Most Merciful will put for them affection [in the hearts of others]” (19:96). According to a hadith, Abu Dharr asked the Prophet (s): “[How is it that] one does something for God, and then people love him?” The Prophet (s) replied, “This is a quick [worldly] reward for believers” (Majlisi 1403 AH, 68:370); that is, the reward in the afterlife will still be in place.

Righteous deeds involve disinterest in what other people possess,<sup>1</sup> benevolence for everyone (Tamimi al-Amidi 1366 Sh, 224), good behavior toward people,<sup>2</sup> and so on.

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<sup>1</sup> “Approach [or seek love in] people through disinterest in what is in their hands, so that you win their love” (Tamimi al-Amidi 1366 Sh, 437).

<sup>2</sup> “He who does good to people will constantly receive their love” (Tamimi al-Amidi 1366 Sh, 386).

4. Loving others. Love generates love. Thus, the Prophet (s) told a man who asked him a piece of advice: “Love people so that they love you” (Kulayni 1407 AH, 2:642).

5. Having good morals (*mabasin al-akhlaq*) and noble character traits (*makarim al-akhlaq*).<sup>1</sup> If people have morals such as kindness, fairness, respect, honesty, trustworthiness, and the like, love among them will grow. Fairness, mercifulness, and lack of jealousy are good moral characteristics that reinforce love among people. To the contrary, unfairness and jealousy generate enmity. Imam ‘Ali (a) said: “Brothers need three things among themselves. If they have them, [then they will persist in their brotherhood]; otherwise they will be divided and turn into enemies: fairness, mercifulness, and lack of jealousy” (Harrani 1404 AH, 322).

Imam ‘Ali (a) also said: “Having an open smiling face, generosity, good behaviors, and initiation of greetings wins people’s love” (Tamimi al-Amidi 1366 Sh, 434). Also, Imam al-Sadiq (a) quoted the Prophet (s) as saying, “O children of ‘Abd al-Mutallib! You cannot generate environments full of mercy and love encompassing everyone and win

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<sup>1</sup> About the difference between good and noble morals, the following can be said: moral commands concerning social relationships, material interests, and interactions with others that lead to the improvement of this-worldly life count as “good morals.” However, morals serving as criteria of humanity, indicating one’s spiritual greatness and sublimity count as “noble morals.” For example, trustworthiness, honesty, and the like count as “good morals,” but doing good to those who wrong one indicates the greatness of one’s spirit and thus count as “noble morals.” Plausibly enough, the first step in observing morality is acquiring good morals, which are prerequisites for attaining noble morals.

their hearts with your wealth. Thus, treat people with your smile and welcoming face, and then attract their love” (Kulayni 1407 AH, 2:203).

6. Expression of love. One factor leading to the development and reinforcement of love among people is the expression of one’s love for others. Thus, hadiths from the Infallibles (a) instruct people to express their love for their brothers in faith, because it generates love. Imam Ali (a) says: “Expressing love generates love” (Kulayni 1407 AH, 2:203).

### **Signs of Love**

Love has certain signs, some of which are the following:

#### *A. Signs of God’s Love for His Servants*

1. To test him; “When God loves a servant, He tests him so that He can hear his supplication” (Daylami 1412 AH, 1:183).

2. Passion for worshiping God, contentment, an insightful understanding of religion, certainty, chastity (Hakimi 1380 Sh, 4:377), as well as peace and patience (Tamimi al-Amidi 1366 Sh, 285).

#### *B. Signs of a Person’s Love for God*

1. Longing for remembering God is a sign of one’s love for God, since if one loves something, one will frequently remember it as well as everything that has something to do with it (Tamimi al-Amidi 1366 Sh, 65), and a sign of one’s harboring an animus towards God is the fact that he avoids His remembrance (Shaykh al-Saduq 1403 AH, 129).

2. Another sign of one’s truthfulness in claiming his or her love for God is to follow the Prophet (s): “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you” (Quran 3:31).

### *C. Signs of People's Love for One Another*

1. Having a welcoming face, which turns hatreds into love: "Graciousness takes away grudges" (Harrani 1404 AH, 45).
2. Forgiving. People who love one another forgive each other's mistakes.
3. Doing good. When one loves another person, he will do good to his beloved. It is impossible to love someone and refrain from being beneficent towards them.

### **Personal and Social Effects of Love**

#### *1. Personal Effects*

- 1.1. Achieving the position of being purified and selected. Love of believers for one another is considered as one of the greatest fruits of faith. A believer can be selected by God if, among other things, he loves and hates for the sake of God, and donates and refuses to donate in the way of God. "Love of a believer for another believer for the sake of God is a great branch of faith. Beware that he who loves for the sake of God and hates for the sake of God and donates for the sake of God and prevents for the sake of God is one of God's chosen ones" (Kulayni 1407 AH, 2:125).
- 1.2. Forgiveness of sins. Shaking hands with believers in a way that expresses love for them leads to the forgiveness of one's sins: "Truly when a believer shakes hands with another believer, their sins will fade away when they part company" (Shaykh al-Saduq 1362 Sh, 22).
- 1.3. Admission to Heaven. Those who befriend and love one another for the sake of God will be resurrected with bright faces and go to Heaven:

Those who love one another for the sake of God will stand on minbars of light on the day of resurrection, and the light of their faces and bodies and minbars will enlighten everything, such that they will be known with it and it will be said, "These are the ones who love for the sake of God. (Kulayni 1407 AH, 2:125)

1.4. Final salvation. Sometimes, one loves another person for the sake of God, because he mistakenly considers the latter a pious person, and sometimes conversely one hates someone for the sake of God, because he mistakenly considers him an enemy of God. However, since these types of love and hate were both for the sake of God, they will lead him to salvation (Kulayni 1407 AH, 2:127).

1.5. Being loved and supported by others. One's love for others leads to their full or partial support for him.

1.6. Peaceful and happy life. Life without loving others is soulless. Without love for others, one will be deprived of the pleasure of friendship and will be restricted to the enclosure of his selfishness. People need each other's support, attention, and kindness, and they become peaceful and happy if others show love to them.

1.7. Increase in one's livelihood. According to many hadiths, high morals lead to the increase in one's livelihood, and loving others is a notable example of high morals. With love for all creatures, which are created by the Merciful God, one paves the path for the increase of one's livelihood.

## *2. Social effects*

2.1. Peaceful coexistence of people with one another. People can enjoy a peaceful life only in the light of love and friendship with one another,

for if there are enmities and quarrels, everyone will try to harm others, in which case everyone will be deprived of a peaceful life.

2.2. People's progress in their material and spiritual lives. With the power of love, people help each other and thus achieve material success and fill their spiritual and emotional gaps.

2.3. Resistance against enemies. In order to fight their enemies, people need to be united, and unity can be easily obtained through love.

## **Conclusion**

Love is a nexus connecting the lover and the beloved. Love is a two-edged sword: it can help one achieve eternal happiness and salvation, or it can lead to one's fall to lowest degrees. If the beloved is transcendent, valuable, enduring, and perfect, love can lead to improvement, transcendence, and the proximity to God. And if the beloved is a lowly mundane thing, one will be dragged to "the lowest of the low" (Quran 95:5). Achieving love depends on certain factors pointed out in this essay. If the seed of love for God and other virtues is sowed in one's heart, the seed will soon turn into a sapling, and finally into a great tree, which then cannot be shaken by winds of material desires. To sum, love is an important path to achieve moral virtues and proximity to God.

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