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The Literature of Love by Three Theologians in the Arab Islamic Tradition

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Abstract

In the Arab and Islamic tradition, encyclopedic books have traversed the axis of the emotion of love in all its forms. Theologians in particular have had a principle role in this endeavor and have addressed the phenomenon of love for centuries. Some have praised it and some have disapproved of it. This rich literary assemblage has helped to appreciate the social life and to understand human relationships in a manner that positively influenced the early Arab Islamic society. There is a need today to resurrect this literary memory. This may benefit the culture of contemporary generations of Arab and non-Arab youth.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, the youth of contemporary Arab Islamic civilization may find themselves in dire need of restoration of their intellectual heritage, and the shedding of light on the literary body of work that can show them how to look at the natural human emotion of passion, especially as it relates to what goes on between men and women. Furthermore, we know that the young Arab generations of today are seriously affected by cultural globalization, which usually reflects the western domination, and this has had a negative impact on these generations' way of living. Therefore, the return to literary references may help maintain the natural form of human relationships in the Muslim community.

2. Passion: A common subject

To talk about passion is to talk about the most common emotion among humans, a subject that has mass appeal. When examining the heritage of the Arab Islamic civilization one finds that talking of passion has been

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associated with some prominent efforts by scholars of Islamic religion and jurisprudence. They dedicated a great deal of their written work and long hours of oral preaching to talk about passion. Thus, scholars of Islam have left us with literary masterpieces to explain passion and love in all their associated shades.

The collective work of jurists in the Arab Islamic civilization is characterized by its comprehensiveness, clarity and realism. Therefore, the literary references of that classical era have preserved important and interesting lessons that provide those who seek knowledge in the field of passion and instinctive human feelings with a clear interpretation. This outpour increased when the state of the Islamic Caliphate expanded, and the civilization of Islam flourished as it involved both the general public and the elite. The greatest part of this production revolves around the sacred relationship between men and women, and the basic, positive emotions built on it that were made so special by the Almighty. He says: “And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought” (Rum verse 21)[†]. Here, Allah urges worshipers to think deeply about the significance of His creation as well as the miraculous connection between men and women as they are two different creatures connected together by that sacred bond of marriage. People are also ordered to think about whatever is based upon that sacred relationship in terms of feelings that help enable healthy human life to continue by means of having offspring

3. A pioneer jurist speaking on the rules of love

The first book to be discussed in this paper is entitled *Al Zuhra* by Abu Bakr, Muhammad Ibn Daud AL Asbahani (255-297 AH / 868-909 AD) who was a pioneer who undertook extensive research on the concept of love. He was a person who revealed a unique vision which represented the essence of the Arabic theory on love. He relied on his religious culture when interpreting what philosophers said. Moreover, his literary studies of Arabic poetry in various ages helped him to present a complete book of fifty chapters explaining passion and its conditions. Al Asbahani was one of the most intelligent people of his age as described by Al Safadi in his book *Al Wafi Belwafeyaat*. He also memorized the Holy Qur'an at seven and had versified famous poems, and had a great sense of humour. Furthermore, he was a person who studied deep issues of jurisprudence to the extent that some people called him the jurist of Iraq.

In *Al Zahra*, Ibn Daud leads the reader to elevate his emotional status to reach a high spiritual level without any sign of moral weakness nor the quest for quick pleasure, as he establishes some traditions and rules for love. This is done by means of achieving pleasure through contemplation, patience, confidentiality and devotion to the idea. Also, this jurist focuses on the lover's emotions in isolation from the beloved. Therefore, love does not increase nor decrease depending on whether the beloved expresses love or not. Love for Ibn Daud is an intellectual position that a true lover should commit himself to, regardless of the position of the beloved.

His book has one hundred chapters; each containing one hundred lines of poetry. Fifty chapters focus on the different types of passion, its conditions, rules and its various courses. The other fifty chapters focus on the remaining subjects of poetry. The chapters on flirtation are made of proverbs which are arranged according to the order of occurrence. The author starts with describing passion and its causes. Then, he gives a simple description of passion's different situations when it becomes strong, such as abandonment, separation, yearning and pity. The book concludes by mentioning ideas related to faithfulness after death, which is an indicator of true love that is greater than that expressed when the beloved is still alive. All of this is done in an orderly manner.

Ibn Daud tackles issues of passion in its logical order according to his point of view. He also presents these issues in details. He makes an effort to find poems associated with various ideas, as well as arranging them under subtitles. These subtitles engulf the pure, human affection of love from its various sides. Furthermore, many titles in this book have become sayings such as:

[†] www.Quran.com.

- *The mind is captivated by passion, and yearning is the master of both;*
- *The one who is tested by separation and abandonment will have his mind busy thinking about good and bad omens;*
- *The one who has missed the joy of reunion will be revived by fantasy;*
- *The road to patience is so long, and concealing love is so hard;*
- *The one whose patience is defeated, his secret will be told;*
- *The one who is faithful is never known except when there is separation or repulsion; and*
- *The one who was prevented from communicating with the beloved will be satisfied with little things.*

Here the author starts to talk in detail about the degrees of passion. His classification of these degrees is accepted by many authors who followed him. He says that the first thing, which is generated by viewing and hearing, is finding the other person nice. This strengthens to become affection. Then, affection becomes the cause of will, as when someone likes someone else, he/she will want him/her to be his/her close friend. Similarly, when someone likes something, he/she will want to own it. Then, affection is strengthened to become love, and love is the reason to obey the beloved. Next, love becomes stronger to become true friendship, and friendship among human beings means that loving each other has captured their hearts to the extent that all the secrets are told, and one's conscience is no longer hidden. Then, friendship becomes stronger to create passion which means that the lover would fall deeply in love and try to reach the beloved with neither order nor composure. This is done by means of adding the quality of achieving pleasure through contemplation, patience, confidentiality and devotion.

In his study of love, the author has been successful in covering all the details and all the aspects of love and affection which the true lover would face in such an interesting and simple way. This simplicity does not mean that he didn't manage to include some specific scientific and medical explanation as well as presenting medical studies that help the reader understand the psychological and physiological changes that happen to the lovers right after the first sight until they are totally captured by passion.

Furthermore, the author explains the issue from a philosophical point of view that helps us understand the logic behind the secret of attraction between the lover and the beloved.

The scholar of Iraq is also successful in making the relationship between the beloved and the lover look sacred. In addition, he presents some deep poetic legacy that satisfies those who read the book, and makes him/her live with different situations of lovers as well as understanding their various conditions. As a result, the book has become a basic reference for everyone in love, or for those interested in reading on love.

4. A pioneer philosopher speaking on the reality of love

The second scholar to be mentioned in this paper is Ibn Hazm who is one of the most distinguished names in Arabic literature. His book "*Tawq Al-Hamama Fi Al-Olfa Walallaf*" is certified by all those who read it that it is distinguished among all those books written in Arabic or other languages on passion. So, it is described as the collar of the dove. Abu Muhammad, Ali Ibn Ahmad Ibn Said Ibn Hazm (384 AH/994 AD - 456 AH/1064 AD) was a jurist, a philosopher, and a great Imam of Andalusia who had followers of his doctrine. These people are called Al Hazmia for being attributed to Ibn Hazm. Some of his most famous books are *Al Fasel Fi Al Melal Walahwaa Walnehal*, *Al Mahla*, *Al Ahkam_Leosoul_Al Ahkam*, and a message on morality called *Modawat Al-Nofous*.

Ibn Hazm has been successful in finding himself a unique, direct and scientific style of writing. He has also managed to surpass all writers who preceded him in writing on love as he was more accurate in his style which has a clear sequence of ideas with full interdependence of research (Ibrahim, 1970). He is also famous for his sensitivity and deep thinking. In this book, one finds a delicate balance which is not attained by other books written on passion, especially in three main aspects: the balance between the self and the others, the balance between the needs of the body and the aspirations of the soul, and the balance between taking the immediate reality into consideration and going beyond this reality with some philosophical contemplation (Abdalla, 1994). This book is a record of human behaviours that rely heavily on philosophy, Qur'anic verses, the Hadith, aphorism of the righteous, as well as on induction and detection that result from the author's observations and remarks. He

also tries to attribute various phenomena to human psychological motivation to disclose laws that lead humans towards beauty in their emotions. (Khalifa, n.d.).

Ibn Hazm begins his book with an introduction that explains his orientation in tackling the subject of passion. He writes it as a message in which he responds to the request of his best friend. He says that his friend asked him to write a message on the characteristics of love, its causes and symptoms, and what things are related to it in reality.

Nevertheless, he chose the title of *Al Olfa* which means that he has exceeded the basic request of his friend because the word *Olfa* means affinity, and affinity is a wider term than passion as it reminds us of the Hadith which says that affinity harmonizes souls. This generalization makes him bring some examples which are not related to love between men and women.

Ibn Hazm records the needs of the body without embarrassment, and considers it a form of love or a path to it. He also records those needs of the body which deviate from nature in total commitment to the use of words that go along with the style imposed by his religious jurisprudence. Nevertheless, his jurisprudence was mixed with philosophy as requested by the topic. This is presented by depicting the causes of love, its phases, its signs and its damage. Here, he becomes close to the general theory of platonic love. (Khalifa) p.93.

Ibn Hazm takes into account his scientific approach to the issue of love as he does not accept what Ibn Daud says regarding chastity which, according to Ibn Daud, is gained from the emotion of passion itself. On the contrary, Ibn Hazm confirms that the lover always needs to fight against himself, and to resist desires so as not to be overwhelmed by love. Otherwise, he will be punished. This means that love is not a stigma of shame in itself, but judging love in the end depends on the behaviour and morals of the lovers. Thus, humans cannot stop themselves from being in love, but they own their movements and behaviours. Therefore, humans are criticized for abjection or being immoral (Abdul Wahed, 1972).

The book begins with a definition of love and its signs. Then it discusses the situations of people who fall in love at first sight, and those who became insolent because of love. The author talks about those who like one characteristic and hate other characteristics of who they fell in love with. Other issues related to affection are discussed in the book such as indirect talk about love, gestures, messaging, sending heralds, keeping and revealing secrets, obedience, disagreement, blamers, friends, observers, reunion, deserting, faithfulness, betrayal as well as satisfaction, separation, abandonment, death, and the ugliness of sin versus the virtue of abstinence.

5. A pioneer reformer speaking on passion and mind

The last book to be discussed here is the one entitled *Rawdet Al Mauhebeen Wa Nuzhat Al Moshtaqeen*, by Muhammad Bin Abi Baker Shams Aldeen, Ibn Qayyim Al Jawzeya (691-751 AH). The author was one of the most famous pillars of reform in the Islamic World. Ibn Al Jawzeya excelled at authoring the aforementioned book as well as many other books on jurisprudence and Islamic law i.e. Shari'a.

This book was classified in some old and recent critics as the best book written on passion because the author was specific in recognizing the purpose of the book. Thus, he explained it to the public and to the elite in a way that everyone could understand.

The author declares that this book is written to establish reconciliation between passion and mind. When this reconciliation is attained, the person in love will find it much easier to fight against the devil and his human weakness. This, in itself, is the ultimate purpose of the jurist who shows people the right path to follow. By doing so, the author provides the explanation for writing this book as it links love to the divine wisdom to stimulate the noble intentions which creation was established upon, and creatures naturally believed in. He also talks, in his initial lines, about the different kinds of lovers and their situations. This book is comprised of 29 chapters. Some of these chapters are the following:

- *The names of love and their meanings and relational adjectives;*
- *The fact that this world and heavens were found by affection and for it;*
- *The causes of love among other related things;*

- *The regulations that govern men and women when looking at each other and the debate between the eye and the heart. Here the author mentions Qur'anic verses, prophetic traditions, the opinion of different scholars and sects as well as the arguments that allow men to look at women and what responses there are towards this issue on the author's part and on other jurists' part;*
- *The reality of love and its description as well as analyzing it by mentioning different views on it;*
- *Talking about those who praise love and those who dispraise it, and judging these two stances;*
- *Favouring beautiful images of lovers' reunion that is accepted by Allah and his Messenger;*
- *The remedy for lovers which is found in their reunion as permitted by Allah;*
- *Signs of love and their pieces of evidence;*
- *Emphasizing the importance of chastity; and*
- *This pain and evil consequences of committing sins.*

Ibn Al Qayyim addresses whatever is in relation to passion in his book. This is presented in an organized, easy and interesting manner. He also manages to give love a sacred position so that he succeeds in achieving his purpose in making the book one of those literary works that fit every time and place so as to help people in controlling their feelings.

The effort of jurists in the Arab-Islamic civilization in dealing with the theme of love, as believed by many critics, has resulted in them- the jurists - being more aware of the reality of human nature. It has also been more related to the characteristics of the Arab nation. The contemporary researchers of these effects have distinguished between the concept of love as presented by the scholars of the Thaheri doctrine such as Ibn Daud and Ibn Hazm, and that presented by the scholars of the Hanbali doctrine such as Ibn Al Jawzi and Ibn Al Qayyim. This difference in the concept of passion among the aforementioned doctrines results from the fact that the followers of the Thaheri doctrine were interested in monitoring the literary position of Ibn Daud, and the behavioral position of Ibn Hazm. On the other hand, the followers of the Hanbali doctrine were interested in things related to religious issues such as discussing the situations when lovers look and listen to each other as well as things attributed to prophets and the righteous.

In her book, *Theory of Profane Love among the Arabs*, Giffen (1996) thinks that Ibn Al Qayyim was particularly able to establish a monument that was a doctrine and theory on love. Ibn Al Qayyim succeeded in doing that by opposing many of popular theories, and in reinterpreting many stories, anecdotes and poems while those who preceded him simply mentioned these things under different headings. Giffen also thinks that the elements of the material used by Ibn Al Qayyim, despite what may seem to be in a state of repulsion, move towards serving his religious and moral beliefs, and the most important belief of Ibn Al Qayyim is that human love finds its most perfect image in marriage alone.

6. Jurists' interest in social relations

The interest in jurisprudent studies is basically an interest in social relations, and what is based upon these relations in terms of what is permissible or forbidden, especially in the rules of Islam concerning women that differ from those related to men regarding many religious obligations like fasting, praying, pilgrimage and clothing. These rulings also include whatever is based on the natural differences between men and women. In addition, all parental and social obligations are also included. Muslim scholars, therefore, were the first to write on these issues to detect human tendencies as well as the nature of the eternal relationship between men and women, and what should be done in order to make that relationship acceptable in Islam and society (Abdalla, 1994).

It is generally noted that the language of jurisprudent writings allows the writer to explain the situations by using words and adjectives that are not allowed to be used except in anatomy and medicine, particularly regarding the nature of the formation of both men and women. This is so because it is important for the scholar to express the opinion of Islamic Law clearly concerning issues related to passion, such as the extent to which looking at the opposite sex is permissible, as well as issues related to meeting and talking to each other in public

places. It is also the role of the scholar to help people keep away from sins and small faults. They should also classify the Islamic rulings on different acts, particularly those related to the situation when lovers are together with nobody else's company, and other things associated with love and passion. All these issues stem from the center of concern of the jurist. This is why many books that are dedicated to talk about love and passion are produced in the Arab Islamic writings.

In the literature of many Muslim jurists, love has become one form of worshipping God as the beloved reaches a lofty status in the heart of the lover. This love becomes so pure when the lover is faithful to only one person. This situation reminds us that one should worship only one God who is completely obeyed in His commands and prohibitions. Therefore, love has occupied a high status in Sufism, just as the goddess of love in pagan religions occupied such a high status.

7. Conclusion

Looking again at these literary masterpieces helps to explain the consequences of expressing emotional feelings in this era of easy communication among young people. These works are distinguished in terms of attractiveness, smoothness, fun and genuine science. The role played by these scholars continues to help successive generations of Muslims by means of saving them from temptation, especially when they find the correct guide and the correct path in such an interesting way. Here, one may remember the Qur'anic verses: "Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?'" Only they will remember who are people of understanding" (alZumor verse 9)[†]. No, they do not enjoy equality. Thus, leaders should perform their duties in guiding the public, especially young people, as they are responsible for creating a sound social environment that helps in the emergence of balanced minds as well as good human souls when providing the requirements of their societies. The success is really great when jurisprudence and science meet to convince the leadership and the general public of the importance of gathering under the banner of the Islamic rules of Shari'a. This will help the society avoid human tragedies which we daily witness in the communities around us.

The relationship between religions and passion is characterized by a natural connection which is evident in all faiths, which all reveal that God is love. It is worth mentioning that the word love and its roots are mentioned more than 80 times in Qur'an. Muslim scholars wrote on these issues as well as the nature of the eternal relationship between men and women, and what should be done in order to make that relationship acceptable in society.

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