



## Immortal Echoes in Mortal Words: “Love”, “Attraction” and “Selflessness” in Fayḍ Kāshānī’s Mystico-Philosophical Poetry<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Research Article



This paper explores the metaphysical concepts of divine “love” (*‘eshq*), “attraction” (*jadhb*), and “selflessness” (*bīkhodī*) in the seminal Iranian Shī‘ī Muslim thinker Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī’s poetry. It seeks to comprehensively understand these themes in the context of self-transcendence and divine unity. This research emerges from the gap in existing literature, which mainly explores Fayḍ Kāshānī’s philosophical, theological, or *ḥadīth* works, while the scrutiny of his poetry largely stays within its literary attributes, overlooking the philosophical and mystical themes embedded within. The paper’s thesis posits that according to Fayḍ Kāshānī, the spiritual journey commences with reason, progressing to constant divine contemplation. This combination of philosophy and spirituality nurtures *muḥabbat*—an initial stage of divine love—which, when discovered, evokes a more intense love: “divine attraction” in the seeker’s heart, leading to selflessness and divine unity. This paper employs the hermeneutic method and analytical examination to scrutinize Fayḍ Kāshānī’s poetry within the context of his treatises. It follows an “intracultural” interpretation to explore Fayḍ Kāshānī’s thought within Persian intellectual tradition and uses an “intercultural” interpretation to contextualize the findings within Islamic, Christian, and ancient Greek metaphysics. The methodology includes a “horizontal interpretation” of Quranic and *ḥadīth* references in Fayḍ Kāshānī’s works and a “vertical interpretation” of unveiling deeper meanings of Fayḍ Kāshānī’s thoughts within the broader mystical traditions. The research accentuates how Persian metaphysical poetry, like Fayḍ Kāshānī’s, offers an evocative platform to articulate and traverse the mystic’s inner landscapes, contributing to Islamic Studies and Islamic Metaphysics and inviting scholars to explore this fertile domain.

**Keywords:** Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, metaphysical poetry, divine love, divine attraction (*jadhb*), selflessness (*bīkhodī*), self-transcendence.

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## Introduction

Born in Kāshān, Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1091/1681 H/CE) was an Iranian, Twelver-Imam Shī'a Muslim philosopher, logician, poet, mystic, jurisprudent, *muḥaddith*, and Quranic commentator during the Safavid period. Lewisohn (2007, p. 113) refers to Fayḍ Kāshānī as one of the most eminent Shī'ite scholars and mystics of seventeenth-century Persia and adds, "There was hardly any field of knowledge among the sciences of his day that he did not examine and discuss in his works." Fayḍ Kāshānī offers autobiographical accounts in his works, highlighting his life, thoughts, and academic contributions. Notably, *Risālat al-i 'tidhār* contains details about his birthplace, while *Sharḥ-i Ṣadr* offers insights into his educational journey. He was associated with the Isfahan school, renowned for Mullā Ṣadrā's "transcendental theosophy." His intellectual growth was significantly influenced by his mentors—Shaykh Bahā'ī, Mullā Ṣadrā, Mīr Findiriskī, Mīr Dāmād, and Allāmah Muḥammad Taqī Majlesī—and was later reflected in the teachings imparted to his prominent students, such as Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Majlesī, Sayyed Ni'mat Allāh Jazāyirī, and Qāḍī Sa'īd Qummī. For further information on the background of these figures and the School of Isfahan and its precursor, the School of Shiraz, refer to (Nasr, 2006).

Fayḍ Kāshānī was a prolific writer, with his scholarly contributions extending to 116 books and treatises, spanning diverse fields such as philosophy, gnosticism, poetry, Quranic commentaries, *ḥadīth*, natural theology, jurisprudence, and other religious works. For a categorized list of Fayḍ Kāshānī's works, refer to footnote 1.<sup>1</sup> For further reading about Fayḍ

1. In philosophy and gnosticism (*'irfān*), Fayḍ Kāshānī provided significant works. He clarifies the prerequisites of the spiritual journey in *Zād al-Sālik*. He penned *Ilm al-Yaqīn*, based on the Quran, Sunnah, and the narratives of *Ahl al-Bayt* (PBUT). In contrast, *Ayn al-Yaqīn* is more philosophical and technical. Other essential works in this area include *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn*, *Ḥaqq al-Mubīn*, *Jabr wa Ikhtiyār*, *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna* (quotes from Gnostics); *Uṣūl al-Ma'ārīf* (the summary of "*Ilm al-Yaqīn*"); *al-Kalimāt ul-Makhzūna* (excerpts from *al-Kalimāt ul-Maknūna*); *al-il'ālī* (excerpts from *al-Kalimāt ul-Makhzūna*); *al-Kalimāt ul-Maḍnūna* on God's Oneness (*Tawḥīd*); *al-Anwār al-Ḥikma* (summary of "*Ilm al-Yaqīn*" on a more philosophical grounds); *Uṣūl ul-'Aqā'id*, a philosophical work with references to *ḥadīth*. He also authored *al-Mashwāq* to clarify mystic symbols. Lastly, *al-Inṣāf* illuminates the path to unraveling the mysteries of faith and certainty.

Fayḍ Kāshānī was also a skilled poet, and his works include *Dīwān-e Ash'ār*, *al-Muntaza' min al-Mathnawī lil-Mawlawī al-Ma'nawī al-Rūmī*; *al-Muntaza' min Ghazaliyyātihi*; *Namūdḥaj Ash'ār-i Ahl al-'Irfān fi al-Tawḥīd*; *Āb-i Zulāl*; *Shawq al-Mahdī*, a collection of poems about the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam of Shiism; *Shawq al-'Ishq*; and *Shawq al-Jamāl*.

Kāshānī’s biography, see (Algar, 1999).

Importantly, Fayḍ Kāshānī highlighted the importance of theological, gnostic, and philosophical understanding to grasp the Quran and *ḥadīth* fully. He advocates combining Scripture with reflection to attain true knowledge—instead of merely relying on philosophical or Sufi texts. He further suggests that seekers enhance their faith and certainty (*yaqīn*) through worldly detachment (*zuhd*) and piety (*taqwā*) to maximize the benefits derived from knowledge and wisdom.

A prominent characteristic of Fayḍ Kāshānī’s poetry, evident in his Ghazals such as (*Diwan*, G.424:6, G.961:3, G.837:1-7),<sup>1</sup> is the infusion of Ṣadrian theosophy, particularly the “gradational (*tashkīkī*) hierarchy of existence.”

Sadrian gradational unity presents existence as an interconnected singularity comprising diverse instances or “existents.” These instances maintain their individuality while being part of a hierarchical, gradational relationship. This relationship manifests in “horizontal” and “vertical” multiplicities. The horizontal involves multiple unique quiddities sharing the same existential plane, retaining their identities while sharing in existence. The vertical

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His commentary on the Quran included *Tafsīr aṣ-Ṣāfi*—a *ḥadīth*-based commentary—*al-Aṣfā*, and *Tanwīr al-Mawāhib*. His *ḥadīth* contributions can be found in *al-Wāfi* (A fifteen-volume collection of the *ḥadīth* from the four major Shī’a *ḥadīth* books—*Kutub-i Arba’ah*), *al-Shāfi* (A collection of prominent *aḥādīth* from *al-Wāfi*), and *al-Nawādir* (A collection of *aḥādīth* not found in *Kutub-i Arba’a*).

His contributions to theology and other religious studies were notable. Works include *al-Muḥajja al-Bayḍā’ fī Ihya’ al-’Ihyā’*, which is a revised version of al-Ghazālī’s *al-’Ihyā’ al-’Ulūm al-Dīn*; *al-Kalimāt al-Sirrīyya al-’Ulīya* (A collection of excerpts from Shī’a Imams’ prayers); *Sharḥ al-Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādīyya*; *Jalā’ al-Qulūb*, *Muntakhab al-Awrād*, *Lubb al-Ḥasanāt*, *al-Adhkār al-Muhimma*, and *Zād al-’Uqbā* on the science of *dhikr*. Additionally, he wrote *Al-Kalimāt al-Ṭarīfa*, *Bishārat al-Shī’a*, and *Rāh-i Ṣawāb* that addressed various Islamic schools of thought and their belief systems. He discussed divine knowledge in *Al-Lubāb* and the world’s creation in *Al-Lubb*. He wrote a Persian treatise on Principles of Religion (i.e., *Uṣūl al-’Aqā’id*), namely, *Tarjimat ul-’Aqā’id*, using the Quran and *ḥadīth* without resorting to *Kalāmī* methods. His works *Mizān al-Qiyāma* and *Mir’āt ul-Ākhira* centered on eschatology.

In natural theology, he wrote *Tashrīḥ al-’Ālam fī Bayān-i Hiy’at al-’Ālam*. In jurisprudence, Fayḍ Kāshānī penned works such as *Mu’taṣim al-shī’a fī aḥkām al-sharī’a*; *Mafātīḥ al-Sharāyī’*; *al-Nukhba*; *al-Arba’in fī Manāqib al-Amīr al-Muminīn*; *Safīnat al-Nijāt*, *al-Uṣūl al-Aṣliyyah*, and *Naqd al-Uṣūl al-Faqīhīyyah* on the *ijtihād* approach used in jurisprudence.

1. Except for Ghazals 318, 349, and 570—which are sourced from (Fayḍ Kāshānī, n.d.)—all citations from Fayḍ Kāshānī’s Ghazals in his *Dīwān* are sourced from Fayḍ Kāshānī (2002a) and (2002b). To enhance text concision, in-text citations omit the works’ dates. The Ghazals are referenced with Ghazal numbers, represented as “G,” and line numbers. For example, (G.313:8) denotes Ghazal 313, line 8.

encompasses varying existential ranks from absolute Existence at the top to the potentiality of prime matter at the base, each level reflecting a different mode of being with varying intensity, perfection, or deficiency. This gradational model emphasizes different degrees of perfection, culminating in limitless perfection at the highest level (Tabatabai, 2011, pp. 17-20). Fayḍ Kāshānī's gradationist philosophy is outstandingly exemplified in Ghazal 837.<sup>1</sup>

Why this research? The existing literature chiefly delves into Fayḍ

1. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.837: 1-7):

دل از من بردی ای دلبر به فن آهسته آهسته / تهی کردی مرا از خویشتن آهسته آهسته  
کشی جان را به نزد خود ز تابی کافکنی در دل / به سان آنکه می‌تابد رسن آهسته آهسته  
ترا مقصود آن باشد که قربان رهن گردم / ربایی دل که گیری جان ز من آهسته آهسته  
جو عشقت در دلم جا کرد و شهر دل گرفت از من / مرا آزاد کرد از بود من آهسته آهسته  
به عشقت دل نهادم زین جهان آسوده گردیدم / گسستم رشته جان را ز تن آهسته آهسته  
ز بس بستم خیال تو تو گشتم پای تا سر من / تو آمد خرده خرده رفت من آهسته آهسته  
سپردم جان و دل نزد تو و خود از میان رفتم / کشیدم پای از کوی تو من آهسته آهسته

With gentle art and charm, You claimed my heart, gradually, gradually,  
And hollowed me out of my self, gradually, gradually.  
You draw the soul to Yourself, kindling a flame within the heart,  
Much akin to a rope being pulled, gradually, gradually.  
Your aim it seems, is for me to be a sacrifice on Your path,  
Pulling the heart to take my soul, gradually, gradually.  
Your love found home within my heart, its city wholly seized,  
It liberated me from my existence, gradually, gradually.  
To Your love, my heart I gave, indifferent now to worldly charm,  
Severing the thread of life from the body, gradually, gradually.  
So deep my contemplation, I became You, from head to toe,  
You came little by little, and I left, gradually, gradually.  
To You, my heart and soul I pledged, and vanished from the stage,  
I retreated from Your alleyway, gradually, gradually.

In this Ghazal, Fayḍ Kāshānī employs the phrases “gradually, gradually” (“*āheste, āheste*”) and “little by little” (“*khord-e, khord-e*”) to mirror the gradationist hierarchy, indicative of Sadrian philosophy. In the poem, Fayḍ Kāshānī narrates a progression of self-emptying “gradually, gradually,” liberation from personal existence “gradually, gradually,” and severing the life thread from the body “gradually, gradually.” This philosophy is most vividly illustrated in the line, “I contemplated You so much that I became You, head to toe / You came little by little, and I left, gradually, gradually,” a vivid portrayal of the transformation and transcendence. The poem pictures the transition from the material to the spiritual world, self-annihilation, and unity with the Divine, reflecting the vertical gradation of existence—an upward journey on the ladder of existence. This portrayal illustrates the Sadrian gradationist ontology, reflecting Fayḍ Kāshānī's philosophical royalty to his master.

Kāshānī’s philosophical, theological, or *ḥadīth* works, while the studies on his poetry primarily focus on its literary aspects, with a notable absence of critical examinations delving into the philosophical and mystical themes in his poetry. Tracing such themes throughout the Iranian mystic philosopher’s poetic expressions and providing a comprehensive exposition within the context of his treatises and the relevant secondary sources and Islamic thought will elucidate the mystic’s ideological framework, thereby inspiring further inquiry. This research is driven by the unexamined critical discourse on central metaphysical concepts in Fayḍ Kāshānī’s thought.

This paper explores the metaphysical concepts of divine “love” (*‘eshq*), “attraction” (*jadhbe*), and “selflessness” (*bīkhodī*), as portrayed in Fayḍ Kāshānī’s poetry in the context of his treatises. It seeks to comprehensively understand these themes in the context of self-transcendence and divine unity.

This paper’s thesis posits that according to Fayḍ Kāshānī, the spiritual journey commences with reason, progressing to constant divine contemplation. This combination of philosophy and spirituality nurtures *muḥabbat*—an initial stage of love—which, when discovered, evokes the more intense love: *jadhbe* or “divine attraction” in the seeker’s heart, leading to selflessness and unity with the Divine.

This paper aims to methodically interpret the critical nuances, predominantly employing an “intracultural” contextualization to delve into Fayḍ Kāshānī’s thought. While the “intercultural” approach, which often benchmarks Western texts, has its merits and should be used, it is essential to anchor Persian poetry *mainly* within its intellectual tradition. Hence, the primary analysis leverages secondary sources in Farsi to scrutinize Fayḍ Kāshānī’s thought in a broader Islamic discourse. The paper follows a two-part methodology. Initially, a “horizontal interpretation” is employed to elucidate terms, expressions, and allusions to the Quran and *ḥadīth* embedded within the poems. Subsequently, a “vertical interpretation” is undertaken to unearth key concepts’ profound meanings, intertwining the insights from the horizontal analysis with the broader narrative within the author’s corpus and Islamic, Christian, and ancient Greek metaphysics.

## Literature review

Although the existing literature on Fayḍ Kāshānī in Farsi is not extensive, it provides insights into his works and thoughts. Notable among these are the editions by Mostafa Fayḍ Fayḍ Kāshānī (2002b), which encompass a complete compendium of Fayḍ Kāshānī’s works across four volumes, elaborating on his



biography, background, and educational trajectory. Similarly, Rasoul Jafarian (1992c) contributed to the discourse by compiling and editing ten of Fayḍ Kāshānī's treatises, thereby enriching the understanding of Fayḍ Kāshānī's intellectual domain. Further, Ibrahimi Dinani's (2018) commentary on Fayḍ Kāshānī's mystical treatise *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna* stands out for its meticulous examination. An in-depth exploration by Mohammad Sadeq Kamelan (2008) sheds light on Fayḍ Kāshānī's distinct philosophical stance, encapsulating transcendent theosophy, mysticism, and Sufism within a tradition-oriented Islamic framework while drawing comparative insights with the philosophical musings of Mullā Ṣadrā and Suhrawardī.

Transitioning to the relatively sparse English literature on Fayḍ Kāshānī, several pieces contribute to the field. In his edition (Lewisohn, 2007, pp. 63-134), Lewisohn explores late Safavid Iran, particularly the views of 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhijī and Fayḍ Kāshānī on the relation of *taṣawwuf*, *ḥikmat*, and *'irfān*. Nevertheless, in this chapter, Lewisohn fails to be objective and gives a surprisingly self-contradictory account aiming to "prove" Fayḍ Kāshānī's association with *taṣawwuf* and unleashes his anger and disdain toward Fayḍ Kāshānī—where he fails to establish this association as he wished—and the Shī'ī clergies (to elaborate). Furthermore, Henry Corbin's examination (1977, pp. 176-179) delves into Fayḍ Kāshānī's notion of the intermediate world, bridging the corporeal and spiritual domains and facilitating their interaction. Corbin navigates through traditional and mystical terrains to furnish a philosophical schema that deciphers various religious and esoteric phenomena through the lens of this intermediate world concept. The book by Ahmadvand and Naqibi (2011) collects selected papers from a conference dedicated to Fayḍ Kāshānī, notably in jurisprudence, Sufism, and poetry. It also translates some of Fayḍ Kāshānī's articles into English, thus presenting a holistic examination of Fayḍ Kāshānī's scholarly imprint and broader impact. Moreover, Zargar's article (2014) examines four mystical treatises by Fayḍ Kāshānī—which are varying versions of one text—spotlighting how the first treatise, *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna*, influences the other three—*al-La'ālī*, *Qurrat al-'Uyūn*, and *al-Kalimat al-Makhzūna*—crafted for different audiences—esoterically elite and the public. Zargar traces the evolutionary trajectory of Fayḍ Kāshānī's representation of Ibn 'Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā's ideas, accentuating Fayḍ Kāshānī's attraction towards Shī'ī *ḥadīth* sources while reflecting on the dialog among Sufi cosmology, Islamic philosophy, and scripture both in scholarly dialogues and broader societal discussions.

Through these explorations, the literature in both Farsi and English

formulates a narrative that accentuates the intellectual vigor and evolving philosophical discourse of Fayḍ Kāshānī.

Was Fayḍ Kāshānī a Sufi? Let us answer this question through Lewisohn's aforementioned work. In the chapter "Sufism and Society in Safavid Persia," Lewisohn (2007, pp. 63-134) exhibits a discernible bias, neglecting an objective examination of the Safavid period. For instance, he writes (2007, p. 87, *emphasis added*), "One need not search far afield to find the reason why Sufism has been marginalized [in the Safavid period]: it lies in the crisis of cultural identity experienced by Sufis in late seventeenth-century Iran when confronted by an *evil even worse than* the Qizilbāsh warriors of Ismā'īl: the rise of the cult of the Uṣūlī *mujtahids*, creating a trend which, amongst its latter-day fundamentalist heirs, has carried on right down to the present day in Iran." Furthermore, he (2007, p. 113) unjustifiably and mistakenly claims: "Unfortunately, ... the study of the works Fayḍ-i Kāshānī has been dominated by *sharī'a*-minded Iranian Shī'ites who portray him as a foe of mysticism and Sufism ... ." Lewisohn concludes (2007, p. 127), "the intellectual motivation behind his [Fayḍ Kāshānī's] distancing himself from the Sufis near the end of his life remains an enigma."

There was indeed an unfriendly atmosphere for Sufism in the Safavid period; however, it is crucial to distinguish between the genuine aspects of Sufism that even Shī'ī scholars—whom Lewisohn likes to paint as "sword-holding devils"—and mystics, including Fayḍ Kāshānī, acknowledged, and the pseudo-Sufism that was practiced which is precisely what the Shī'ī scholars and mystics *rightly* criticized—and continue to do so. Some of the unhealthy and invented practices of pseudo-Sufism find support in neither the Quran, *ḥadīth*, nor reason. Acts like the distinguished Sufi, Abū Sa'īd Abū al-Khayr's (d. 440/1049 H/CE) seven years of living in the desert and feeding on thorns (Mihani, 1988, p. 27), or Abī Bakr Shīblī's (d. 335/946 H/CE) putting salt into his eyes at nights to avoid sleep (Attar, 2008, p. 286). If such practices should not be criticized, what should? Thus, Fayḍ Kāshānī's reason for distancing from Sufism is *not* an "enigma."

Despite the commonly acknowledged distinction between the Shī'ī *'irfān* and Sunni Sufism, Lewisohn replaces the latter for the former *at will* just to make his point come true. Even at times when Fayḍ Kāshānī does not use the term Sufi, Lewisohn uses it on Fayḍ Kāshānī's behalf. For instance, when Fayḍ Kāshānī speaks of "divine scholars" (*'ulamā-yi rabbānīyin*), Lewisohn (2007, p. 118) takes them as "Sufi," not (God forbid!) as gnostic/mystic or *'ārīf*, which is the common term used for Shī'ī mystics. Additionally, when

discussing individuals “versed both in exoteric and esoteric knowledge,” Lewisohn concludes, “there can be no doubt that this group are Sufis since one of the characteristics of this group is their ecstatic disposition, a trait peculiar to the Sufis in Islamic society.” But Lewisohn does not bother explaining how such people are “without a doubt” Sufis and not *‘urafā* (plural of *‘ārīf*). As if “one of the characteristics” of *‘urafā* is *not* their ecstatic disposition, a trait *not* “peculiar to them.” These points show clear bias and distortions of Fayḍ Kāshānī’s assertions—an attitude far from academic integrity. Lewisohn (2007, p. 127) continues, Fayḍ Kāshānī “experienced considerable disillusionment with Sufism and was overtaken in later years by a more critical attitude towards both *taṣawwuf* and *‘irfān*.” Here, satisfying his interests, Lewisohn “quietly” adds *‘irfān* to the list, whereas Fayḍ Kāshānī does *not*.

Not satisfied with Fayḍ Kāshānī’s orientation, Lewisohn (2007, p. 127) unleashes his anger and scorn: “It ... appears rather *hypocritical* of him [Fayḍ Kāshānī] to cite passages from the various Sufi authors such as Sanā’ī, Sa’dī, and Rūmī to illustrate his ideas while *belittling* the Sufism of those very same authors ... to expound an *idiosyncratic type of Islamic mysticism*, ... *snobbishly* disdaining to acknowledge the validity in Rūmī’s Sufi methodology!?” (*emphasis added*).

Fayḍ Kāshānī endorsed some aspects of Sufi cosmology, though criticizing some others. Supporting a school of thought “partially” does not necessarily mean that one should endorse all its aspects, nor does it mean that one is necessarily a member. Rūmī, for instance, acknowledges some aspects of Christianity and the high rank of Jesus Christ (PBUH), but he is not a Christian—it is quite simple! So, Fayḍ Kāshānī was neither a “hypocrite” nor a “snob,” nor was he “belittling Sufism.” He was partly supportive and partly critical of Sufism. In *al-Muḥākama*, Fayḍ Kāshānī openly criticizes some Sufis (1992b, p. 104, *emphasis added*): “*Objectionable* actions emanating from today’s so-called “Sufis,” who are *imperfect* ascetics and worshippers, include the following: One issue is their practice of pronouncing *dhikr* very loudly, whereas Almighty God declares in the Quran,” “And remember thy Lord within thy soul, humbly and in awe, being not loud of voice, in the morning and the evening, and be not among those who are heedless” (Quran, 7:205).<sup>1</sup> Fayḍ Kāshānī maintains that God also says, “Call upon your Lord

1. In this paper, Quranic references are sourced from Nasr’s work (2015), *The Study Quran*. The year is omitted in citations, with only chapter and verse numbers mentioned.



humbly and in secret. Truly He loves not the transgressors" (Quran, 7: 205). Meaning, adds Fayḍ Kāshānī, "invoke your Lord with supplication and quietly, for indeed, God does not love those who *exceed moderation*."

To further support his assertion, Fayḍ Kāshānī (1992b, p. 104) cites several *aḥādīth* (plural of *ḥadīth*). One *ḥadīth* from the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) who, during a journey, encountered a valley, where he witnessed people elevating their voices in the recital of *tahlīl*—an Islamic *dhikr* meaning, "There is no god but Allah." He kindly advised: "O people, utter your divine remembrance softly. Indeed, you invoke not one who is deaf or distant but one who is hearing, proximate, and present with you." This *ḥadīth* is sourced in *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfi* (Fayd Kashani, 1994/1995, p. 206). In another *ḥadīth* Fayḍ Kāshānī cites (1992b, p. 104)—referenced in *A'lām al-Dīn fī Ṣifāt al-Mu'minīn* (Dilami, 1987/1988, p. 193)—the Prophet (PBUH) asserts, "'O Abū Dharr, remember Allah with a sincere remembrance.'" I asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, and what is sincere?' He said, 'The secret remembrance.'"

Fayḍ Kāshānī's disapproval of Sufis extends further. He (Fayd Kashani, 1992b, pp. 105-106) enumerates additional objectionable behaviors of this group, such as clapping during *dhikr* gatherings, dancing, fainting, and similar actions. He calls such Sufis' "worship" there as "play" and "mockery."

Nevertheless, Fayḍ Kāshānī does not disdain all Sufis and Sufism. As Fayḍ Kāshānī (1992b, pp. 102-103) himself puts it in *al-Muḥākama*, "Whenever a few objectionable actions are observed from a group attributed to a sect of the righteous [*ahl-e ḥaqq*], it is imperative not to generalize the entire sect as malevolent. After all, both commendable and reprehensible aspects can be found within every sect ... ." He even criticizes excessive rebuking and accusing Sufis of heresy, calling such accusers (and pseudo-Sufis) as "ignorant" (Fayd Kashani, 1992b, pp. 107-108).<sup>1</sup>

Lewisohn appears determined to believe that Fayḍ Kāshānī should have *fanatically* endorsed Sufism, and not satisfied by Fayḍ Kāshānī's inclinations, he insults the thinker—a situation that a modest understanding of logic and familiarity with academic manners could have prevented.

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1. Although he does not explicitly mention "Sufis," in *Sharḥ-e Ṣadr*, Fayḍ Kāshānī rebukes those who criticize possessors of esoteric knowledge. He calls such individuals the "ignorant pretending to be scholars (Fayd Kashani, 1992e, p. 47)—that is, those who *only* recognize the exoteric aspect of religion. Fayḍ Kāshānī (1992e, p. 56) rebukes individuals confined to exoteric knowledge who, disparagingly, deem the claims of those with esoteric understanding as heretical. He underscores that esoteric knowledge neither can nor should be measured with exoteric knowledge.

The Iranian ‘*ārif*’ (Fayḍ Kashani, 1992a, p. 196) explicitly mentions in *al-Inṣāf* that he is an outsider to those theologians, philosophers, and *Sufis*—yes, “Sufis”—who do not adhere to the Quran, *ḥadīth*, and the teachings of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (PBUH),<sup>1</sup> an assertion demonstrating that Fayḍ Kāshānī was not a Sufi; he was a Shī‘ī ‘*ārif*—though Lewisohn’s rage and bias have either prevented him from *seeing* (which does not seem to be the case) or *confessing* it.

Lewisohn (2007, p. 127) concludes that Fayḍ Kāshānī’s “‘mysticism’ is that of a sober pietist whose sole consolation is the Muslim Scripture and the Shī‘ite canon of *ḥadīth*.” The spirituality that the “orientalist” calls an “idiosyncratic type of Islamic mysticism” and Fayḍ Kāshānī’s “own version of Shī‘ite Sufism” (p. 123). Yes, Lewisohn, Fayḍ Kāshānī did support a Shī‘ī mysticism; however, this mysticism’s name is ‘*irfān*’ whether or not this term serves your interests). Overall, Lewisohn’s chapter is one of the most biased, distorted, impolite, and self-contradictory works ever written.

## Discussion

### Self: The obstacle

In Ghazal 570, Fayḍ Kāshānī introspectively identifies the self as the primary obstacle to spiritual enlightenment, casting it as a source of self-inflicted suffering and torment that impedes spiritual growth. Fayḍ Kāshānī underscores the “self” as his enemy, symbolically placing a thorn in his foot, halting his spiritual journey, and saddling himself with a constant, self-imposed burden. “I myself am the blockade on my journey / The thorn I’ve placed beneath my own foot” (*Diwan*, G.570:9).<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, Fayḍ Kāshānī does not just dwell on the adversarial nature of the self. He outlines the potential for profound liberation, a release from the shackles imposed by the self. This freedom allows for transcendence beyond existential constraints and imbues the human to command the celestial expanses, as captured in the following verses: “If from my own constraints, I can escape / I shall command the skies of seven heavens” (*Diwan*, G.570:9).<sup>3</sup>

1. The *Ahl al-Bayt* (PBUH) denotes specific relatives of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH). The *ḥadīth* and Quranic passages underscore their esteemed status in Islam. Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) underscored the importance of adhering to both the *Ahl al-Bayt* and the Quran for spiritual direction. Their guidance is equated to divine proof and imamate.

2. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.570:9):

خود سد ره سلوک خویشم / خارم که بیای خود نهادم

3. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.570:9):

چون ... ز خویش اگر رهیدم / فرمان ده هفت آسمانم

In Fayḍ Kāshānī's view, the seeker—embarking upon the spiritual journey—must identify the self both as an obstruction and a potential key to spiritual enlightenment. The critical question then becomes: What is the self's path to this enlightenment?

### Fayḍ Kāshānī's path to divine attraction and knowledge

This section first examines Fayḍ Kāshānī's perspective on how "divine attraction," or *jadhbe*, comes about, specifically, as presented in his poetry. Subsequently, it probes Fayḍ Kāshānī's broader approach towards the means and pathways through which a seeker can attain divine knowledge.

Let us start our examination with a Ghazal in Fayḍ Kāshānī's *Dīwān* that is central to our discussion. In this insightful poem (*Diwan*, G.744:1-5),<sup>1</sup> Fayḍ Kāshānī illustrates the balance between rational reflection and mystical contemplation, forming a pathway to receive divine attraction. The seeker must persistently reflect until it peaks in a state of profound awe or bewilderment (*heyrat*), signifying the limitations of rationality. At this pivotal juncture, the seeker should contemplate<sup>2</sup> God continually and attentively.

Importantly, this "contemplation," more than mere thinking, encompasses an experiential-mystical dimension. In its mystical sense, contemplation is a deep, intuitive journey transcending logical reasoning, culminating in recognizing the Real as the sole real Being. It demands concentrated and deliberate meditation on spiritual and intelligible matters, frequently encompassing a state of mystical cognizance of a superior power or God, realized through consistent meditation and solitary devotion. This aspect is how *dhikr*, or remembrance, is enacted in Islamic mysticism, wherein an individual recurrently utters divine Names and Attributes, meditating on their inner realities with focused attention.

According to Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.744:1-5), this blend of reflection and contemplation ultimately guides the seeker to a higher state of "knowledge" or "gnosis" (*irfān*) and "intimacy" with the divine. When "*muḥabbat*," an initial

1. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*., G.744:1-5):

در ره دانش بفکر تا بتوان گام زن / تا که بجنبد بجنب ورنه بجنبان بفن  
دست ز فکرت مدار تا که بحیرت رسی / دست طلب بعد از آن در کمر ذکر زن  
ذکر چو بر دل زند و اله و مذکور شو / چشم و دل و گوش و هوش جمله بر آن فکن  
میبردت فکر و ذکر در ره عرفان و انس / تا که به محبت کشد کار دل و جان و تن  
چون محبت رسی جذبه رسد زانطرف / تا کشدت سوی خود تارهی از خویشتن

2. Literally, "*dhikr*," or "remembrance." However, the broader term "contemplation" is used which includes *dhikr* practice, too, and presents Fayḍ Kāshānī's intention better.

degree of divine love, appears in the seeker's heart, a divine attraction emanating from the beyond pulls the seeker towards God, liberating them from their individualistic self.

The analyzed poem delineates Fayḍ Kāshānī's integrated perspective on the stages towards divine attraction, identifying philosophy and mysticism as essential prerequisites for experiencing *jadhbe*: (1) The seeker begins with reflection and realizing reason's inherent limitations, (2) practices constant contemplation of God. (3) The fusion of rational reflection and mystical contemplation cultivates *muḥabbat*, and once this love is found, (4) the divine attraction—a stronger form of love (to elaborate)—appears in the seeker's heart. (5) Because of this mysterious pull, the seeker becomes selfless, and (6) subsequently unites with the Divine. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that receiving attraction does not necessarily come through the seeker's sheer volition. The Divine can directly bestow *jadhbe*, skipping the above steps.

Justifying the roadmap painted above, in his treatise *Zād al-Sālik*, Fayḍ Kāshānī (1992f, pp. 89-91) underscores that attaining divine proximity and *muḥabbat* evolves from a committed pursuit of knowledge,<sup>1</sup> especially in matters related to divine knowledge, paired with a concerted effort towards inner purification. When *muḥabbat* intensifies, it escalates and solidifies into *'eshq*, a profound, divine love. Fayḍ Kāshānī suggests a gradual spiritual progression, where earnest endeavors in worship and the quest for knowledge pave the path toward the divine, enabling a transformative journey from *muḥabbat* to the sublime state of *'eshq*. This synthesis of knowledge and spirituality further validates this paper's argument concerning Fayḍ Kāshānī's integration of both reason and mysticism.

In the treatise *Sharḥ-e Ṣadr*, Fayḍ Kāshānī (1992e, p. 57) further intertwines knowledge and spirituality by comparing physical and spiritual nourishment, asserting that knowledge, much like nutritious food, sustains the soul. He stipulates the imperative of internal purification before pursuing knowledge, illustrating that healthy food, while invigorating a healthy body, potentially harms an ill one, equating it to how sacred spiritual nourishment—knowledge—optimally invigorates a purified soul, not one with spiritual illness and worldly desires. Thus, he underlines that individuals consume knowledge prematurely, worsening their spiritual diseases due to the lack of

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1. In *Zād al-Sālik*, Fayḍ Kāshānī (1992f, pp. 86-87) points out that spiritual travelers must continually pursue knowledge of the hereafter, prioritizing it over worldly understanding, and should seek guidance from learned masters, or "*pīr*." Engagement with books and virtuous individuals, from whom commendable morals can be learned, is essential without such a master.

prior spiritual purification and self-refinement, essentially highlighting the paramountcy of inner purification preceding the quest for knowledge to foster spiritual wellness akin to how nutritious food bolsters physical health.

The synthesis of reason and spirituality finds more support elsewhere in the *Sharḥ-e Ṣadr*. Fayḍ Kāshānī (1992e, pp. 55-56) categorizes scholars into three groups: Firstly, those who confine themselves to exoteric knowledge, positing that their lack of a broader understanding precludes them from leadership as they cannot comprehend the nuances of this world or the hereafter. Secondly, he acknowledges scholars of solely esoteric knowledge; while respected, they are deemed unable to enlighten others or ascend to leadership (with few exceptions), given that, says Fayḍ Kāshānī, esoteric knowledge alone fails to perfect the seeker. Thirdly, scholars integrating esoteric and exoteric knowledge are likened to the sun, illuminating the world and emerging as potential leaders and poles (*Qutb*). Additionally, Fayḍ Kāshānī (1992e, p. 54) posits that the insights from prophets and mysteries from saints are accessible only to the astute individuals who adhere to the divine Law (*sharī‘a*) and embrace the internal dimension of Islam (*ṭarīqa*), engage in ascetic practices, and achieve a remarkable level of knowledge.

In his treatise *al-Muḥākama*, Fayḍ Kāshānī (1992b, pp. 98-99) delineates two paths: those of *knowledge-seekers* (*ahl-e ‘ilm*), who practice “inner asceticism” through reflection, learning, and devoutness, and *ascetics* (*ahl-e zuhd*), who engage in “physical asceticism” via *dhikr*, night prayer, and voluntary hunger. While he acknowledges both pursuits as vital and legitimate, Fayḍ Kāshānī prioritizes the former and particularly esteems those scholars who beneficially “apply” their acquired knowledge. He emphasizes this standpoint through the words of Imam Muḥammad Bāqir (PBUH), the fifth Shī‘ī Imam, by citing a narration, or *ḥadīth*: “A scholar who benefits from his knowledge is better than seventy thousand worshipers” (Kulayni, 2020, 1.2.8). This underscores Fayḍ Kāshānī’s emphasis on the practical application of knowledge but also adeptly intertwines it with knowledge-seeking’s superiority. Furthermore, Fayḍ Kāshānī asserts that individuals who combine the pursuit of knowledge and ascetic practices ascend higher than those devoted solely to seeking knowledge. Consequently, while Fayḍ Kāshānī acknowledges the virtue in knowledge-seeking and asceticism independently, he prioritizes the former, though champions combining the two practices as the zenith of spiritual pursuit, followed by the beneficial application of knowledge.

Let us examine the steps leading to attraction closely. Fayḍ Kāshānī’s



perspective is rooted in Islamic tradition. He posits that *muḥabbat* emerges from reflection and contemplation. This viewpoint aligns with the beliefs of many Islamic philosophers and mystics. Nevertheless, some Sufis reject the role of reason, but this view does not reflect the entire tradition. A prominent philosopher-mystic who shares similar sentiments is Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī (1245/1829–1830 H/CE). Narāqī (2012, pp. 734-735) identifies two main components for obtaining and deepening God's love: (1) consistent reflection and contemplation of God and (2) the pursuit and augmentation of divine knowledge (*ma'rifat*). The former entails pondering the marvels of creation, divine Attributes, Grace, and Blessings, accompanied by the renunciation of worldly desires, leading to a purified heart. This purification encourages solitude, devotion, and meditation of God. Narāqī's latter component revolves around recognizing the Essentially Necessary Being through His creation. Crucially, this recognition is intertwined with acts of servanthood, worship, prayer, and invocation, a linkage Narāqī deduces from the Quranic verse (15: 99): "And worship thy Lord, till certainty comes unto thee."

Tracing this perspective further, we find Fārābī, who meticulously navigates his philosophical endeavors with a logical and rational framework until he encounters the pinnacle of cognizing the Divine Essence. He, in *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Farabi, 1984, pp. 63-64), reveals an elevated level of the soul which eludes philosophical understanding and logical approaches. For Fārābī, rational cognition only propels the knower towards bewilderment—an acknowledgment of their incapacity to perceive the Divine Essence intrinsically.

Delving further into Fārābī's thought reveals an interplay between theoretical and practical wisdom, each indispensably tied to the other in the quest for spiritual and intellectual elevation. Fārābī (1984, p. 72) elucidates that the human soul's ascent to perfection is unattainable without theoretical wisdom, while inversely, reaching theoretical wisdom mandates the possession of practical wisdom and the execution of virtuous deeds. This interdependence between the two wisdom forms underscores a philosophically intricate dynamic pivotal to recognizing the Divine Essence.

Having examined Fayḍ Kāshānī's poetic landscape about the prerequisite steps leading to divine attraction, let us now explore his general approach to receiving divine knowledge. Curiously, despite adhering to the *akhbārī* approach—which involves strict adherence to the teachings of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and the twelve Shī'a Imams (PBUT)—Fayḍ Kāshānī stood out due to his proficiency in philosophy and gnosticism, a deviation

from the usual *akhbārī* practice of disengagement with rational sciences. In his treatise, *al-Inṣāf* (1992a, pp. 188-189), penned around 1083/1672 H/CE towards his life's twilight, he asserts a direct correlation between an individual's faith, comprehension, Quranic and *ḥadīth* studies, and their ability to gain from theological, gnostic, and philosophical learning. He argues that without a strong foundation in the latter fields, the full advantages of former studies remain unreachable—in other words, theology, *ʿirfān*, and philosophy are tools to understand the Quran and *ḥadīth* better. Furthermore, Fayḍ Kāshānī advocates combining scripture and reflection as a pathway to true knowledge, contrasting with sole reliance on philosophical or Sufi texts. This stance, which promotes esoteric sciences and philosophy as tools for understanding scripture, remains influential in the Shīʿī Seminary at Qom (Zargar, 2014, p. 262).

The belief that philosophy facilitates comprehension of Scripture better resonates with Ibn Rushd's (1126–1198 CE) stance. In his work *Taḥāfut al-Taḥāfut*, Ibn Rushd (2008, pp. 421–443) advocates for a mutual relationship between reason and spirituality, asserting that they can merge in the collective pursuit of truth. He views philosophy not as a rival but as a means to delve deeper into and interpret the divine knowledge in Scripture. According to Ibn Rushd, the intellect is a divine gift to decipher God's creations and intentions, positioning philosophical and religious exploration as an inherent human responsibility. While he acknowledges the perceived contradictions between faith and reason, he affirms that a nuanced, profound understanding of both can mitigate these tensions, showcasing their potential to mutually support and validate each other. Notably, Ibn Rushd underscores an awareness of the limitations of the human intellect, accepting that certain truths may lie beyond our cognitive reach, which highlights the paramountcy of recognizing both the capabilities and confines of reason and spirituality in comprehending existence and divine knowledge.

Fayḍ Kāshānī's thought trajectory is fascinating. Initially, his writings were predominantly jurisprudential, but over time, he was drawn towards gnosis or *ʿirfān*, culminating in a gnostic orientation even in his jurisprudence works. Nevertheless, his growing inclination towards Shīʿī *ḥadīth* led him to distance himself from Sufism and oppose the *ijtihād* and *uṣūlī* approach—personal juristic reasoning—in *ḥadīth* (Jafarian, 1992c, p. 14). As Zargar (2014) points out, in Fayḍ Kāshānī's later works, clear connections to the Quran and Shīʿī *ḥadīth* are established, indicating a shift from Sufism towards a Shīʿa approach, although Fayḍ continues to value Sufi cosmology. To Fayḍ Kāshānī, all

esoteric knowledge is sourced from the Quran and *Ahl al-Bayt* (PBUT). Notably, adds Zargar (2014, p. 242), “Fayḍ never rejected the science of Sufism but rather rejected Sufi masters as the source of that science, discerning increased urgency in establishing the *akhbār* [*ḥadīth*] as that source.” Intriguingly, toward the end of his life, in his treatise, *al-Inṣāf*, Fayḍ Kāshānī (1992a, p. 196) expresses disappointment with the substantial time devoted to his earlier studies, portraying himself as estranged from theologians, philosophers, and Sufis who do not adhere to the Quran, *ḥadīth*, and the teachings of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (PBUT). Importantly, Fayḍ Kāshānī does not reject theology, philosophy, or Sufism; rather, he subordinates these disciplines to the prism of the Quran, *ḥadīth*, and the teachings of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (PBUT).

Fayḍ Kāshānī meticulously interweaves emotional and intellectual journeys in pursuing spiritual ascension, illustrating that divine love is not only an emotional undertaking but also evolves through deliberate reflection and contemplation. Despite his seeming adherence to the *akhbārī* approach, he is willing to integrate rational and philosophical insights, proposing that enriching one’s understanding of divine knowledge is achievable through a blend of faith, comprehension, and theological, gnostic, and philosophical pursuits. Fayḍ Kāshānī thereby crafts a pathway through love, reflection, and knowledge, harmonizing emotional depth and rational inquiry to navigate toward the Divine adeptly.

### Love: Wine

The metaphor of “*sharāb*,” or “*wine*,” is prevalent in Persian mystical literature. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.462:9) underscores the spiritual nature of this wine, noting that it liberates one from the effects of conventional grape wine, including hangovers and intoxication. Similarly, elsewhere, Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.544:3) asserts that a person in love with God experiences intoxication *not* from the grape wine but from the divine Beloved’s cup.

In Ghazal 462, Fayḍ Kāshānī utilizes the metaphor of divine wine as a tool for spiritual awakening. This wine revives the heart and bestows divine secrets, contributing to a more profound realization of truth; it brings straightness and light—signifying guidance and enlightenment—and liberates the individual from materialistic constraints. In another Ghazal in *Dīwān*, he writes: “As dawn broke, the Saqi<sup>1</sup> filled my cup, stirring me awake / A wine so

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1. The “saqi,” “saki,” or more accurately, “*sāqī*,” means “cupbearer,” and it is metaphorically used to refer to the Divine, the source and disseminator of love.

pure, it lit the mad heart" (G.318:4).<sup>1</sup> Fayḍ Kāshānī further emphasizes that the wine enlightens the heart, making the individual the reflector of divine lights: Through the divine wine, "In our hearts and eyes, the light of manifestation was lit / Fueled by certainty, into loci of manifestation we were writ (*Diwan*, G.605:11).<sup>2</sup>

Notably, in Ghazal 349, equating "wine" and "love," Fayḍ Kāshānī points to the intoxicating effect of divine love, which leads to true "knowledge" and "awareness": "Only one intoxicated by His love can claim awareness" (*Diwan*, G.349:7).<sup>3</sup> In Ghazal 605, Fayḍ Kāshānī delves deeper into the notion of awareness, saying that divine love catalyzes true awareness: "From Unseen, the Saqī of souls sent us a cup / Its potion gave us selflessness, through which we became aware" (*Diwan*, G.605:5).<sup>4</sup>

In his treatise *Mashwāq*, Fayḍ Kāshānī (1992d, p. 252) highlights that "wine" symbolizes a blend of "taste" (*dhawq*), "ecstasy" (*wajd*), and a transformative "state" (*ḥāl*), permeating the heart of a seeker-lover upon the overpowering manifestation of the true Beloved. This profound experience triggers intoxication and insensibility in the seeker while simultaneously disassembling rational underpinnings with its uplifting effect.

Thus, equating divine wine and love, Fayḍ Kāshānī emphasizes love's transformative power in the spiritual journey toward true awareness and enlightenment.

Let us examine the mystical nature of divine love closely. Yasrebi (1989, pp. 27-28) elaborates on the varying degrees of love, delineating a continuum that extends from love towards the lower realms of existence to love directed at the Essentially Necessary. Each entity's innate quest for superior perfection propels this love spectrum. Among these, love for the Essentially Necessary is distinguished as "real love," in contrast to the love for created entities, labeled as "metaphorical love." This nuanced understanding of love paves the way to explore the bond between humans and the divine, a relationship illuminated by their *shared love* (Quran, 5:54). This shared love entices humans to cherish all manifestations of God, enveloping every level of existence. Through this lens, it becomes apparent that the potency of real love energizes metaphorical love.

1. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.318:4):

بجامم ریخت ساقی در سحرگه تا شدم بیدار / شرابی کز صفای آن دل دیوانه روشن شد

2. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.605:11):

در دل و دیده ما نور تجلی افروخت / تا به نیروی یقین مظهر انوار شدیم

3. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.349:7):

دعوی هوش آن کند کز عشق او مستی کند

4. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.605:5):

ساغری ساقی ارواح فرستاد از غیب / نشاء‌اش بیخودئی داد که هشیار شدیم

Therefore, engaging with metaphorical love kindles a pathway towards real love mirrored in these reflections.

Fārābī presents a complementary viewpoint on the human pursuit of perfection that can help this paper’s exploration of perfection and love. Fārābī (1984, p. 65) underscores that every perceptive faculty inherently discerns a specific perfection, deriving pleasure from its comprehension—a pleasure that subsequently becomes its beloved. Navigating the existential hierarchy, humans fervently seek their beloveds, embodiments of pleasure. Throughout this spiritual ascent—encompassing diverse stages from sensory to intellectual realization—pleasures evolve, culminating in the rational power’s distinctive satisfaction derived from discerning the intrinsic truth, aligning them ever closer to divine Beauty.

Let us return to Fayḍ Kāshānī. In his Ghazals, Fayḍ delineates love as a transformative, spiritual journey marked by intense devotion, sorrow, alienation, and enlightenment. He uses the mystical narrative to communicate the profundity of love in Ghazal 560 and Ghazal 544, employing the recurrent themes of self-realization, self-annihilation, and ultimate union with the Beloved. In Ghazal 560, Fayḍ Kāshānī illustrates the transformative capacity of love, encapsulating an individual’s alienation from the world—including self-alienation. However, contrary to causing despair, this sense of alienation catalyzes personal growth and transformation by providing a space to contemplate the divine Beloved attentively.

Fayḍ Kāshānī’s depiction of love continues in Ghazal 544, adding layers of devotion, absorption, and self-annihilation. In this poem, the intoxicated lover is devoted to the beloved, detached from the world, indifferent to personal desires, and following the beloved’s satisfaction. The lover loses their self-identity to the extent that they embody the beloved’s name. In this portrayal, love is an intoxicating elixir from the beloved, signifying a spiritual intoxication that transcends physicality and transient pleasures—a selfless love, a path paved by the beloved and walked by the devotee with unwavering discipline and dedication.

Ultimately, Fayḍ Kāshānī’s Ghazals reveal love as a transformative force and a spiritual voyage towards self-transcendence and union with the Beloved. This journey is underscored by a “transcendence” reminiscent of the “God-sent love-madness” delineated by Plato in *Phaedrus* (1997, 244a-245b)—a noble, spiritual love that Plato perceives as a divine gift, which reminds individuals of the (Platonic) forms, distracting them from the mundane concerns and raising them to divine wisdom and virtue (1997, 249c-e). A



person occupied by such a maddening love is "possessed" by God (1997, 249d). A transcendence that manifests as the ultimate reward of this amorous expedition. The essence of this journey echoes the profound ethos articulated by the Christian mystic philosopher Meister Eckhart (2009), who writes, "He who has abandoned self and all things, who seeks not his own in anything, and does all he does without why and in love, that man being dead to all the world is alive in God and God in him" (Sermon 16, pp. 124-125).

This thematic vein extends to Rūmī's poetic reflection in *Dīwān-e Shams Tabrīzī*, which elucidates the transformative allure of love: "Illuminated, my heart did glow, it opened and blossomed so / A new petunia my heart sown, shunning the old attire outgrown" (2020, G.1393:13).<sup>1</sup> In this love, Rūmī finds illumination, transcending his "old, worldly clothes"—that is, his "material body"—and blossoms spiritually, forging a conduit to the divine. A love so penetrating, about which Fayḍ Kāshānī himself says (1994, pp. 83-84): "Love became my pursuit, at the root and in every sprout / No "I" remains within me, it's not I, but He, no doubt."<sup>2</sup>

Through these expressions, the mutual relationship between self-transcendence and the resulting divine union underscores love's transformative potential, bridging earthly realms with celestial affinities.

### Divine attraction or *jadhbe*

What is the nature of *jadhbe*? Divine attraction, or *jadhbe*, is not a mere thought; it is a "feeling," an unconditional divine ecstasy accompanied by a feeling of purity and cleanliness. As if a formerly muddy piece of glass is suddenly made clear—something felt "in" the chest—a shiny, pure feeling along with an intense, meditative serenity and focus as if one is absorbing into themselves, nearing God, and this absorption often results in a momentary weakening of the five senses—much like the one experienced upon awakening from sleep.

While certain Sufis reportedly exhibited curious behaviors due to experiencing divine attraction, often leading society to perceive them as eccentric or insane, Fayḍ Kāshānī's interpretation diverges from such descriptions. For Fayḍ Kāshānī, the emergence of love in the seeker's heart is

1. Rūmī (2020, *Diwan*, G.1393:13):

تابش جان یافت دلم وا شد و بشکافت دلم / اطلس نو بافت دلم دشمن این ژنده شدم

2. Fayḍ Kāshānī (1994, pp. 83-84):

عشق مرا پیشه شد در رک و در ریشه شد / نیست منی در میان من نه منم اوست اوست

a consequence of reasoning and contemplation, subsequently giving rise to *muḥabbat* and attraction, which shows that his mysticism is reason-initiated.

The precursor to understanding divine attraction is “*wajd*” or “ecstasy.” *Wajd* is intrinsically linked to divine attraction. Each instance of *wajd* signifies a specific manifestation of divine attraction. As Yasrebi puts it (1989, p. 233), *wajd* is a transformative spiritual state endowed from the Real upon the spiritual traveler’s heart. This transformation distances the heart from its usual perceptions. The individual undergoing this transformation is still covered by the veils of self (*hejāb-e nafsānī*); these veils prevent them from “continually” perceiving the Real’s Existence. However, a brief opening occasionally emerges in their existential veil, allowing the Light of the Real’s Existence to illuminate their heart momentarily. But then this fissure seals, causing the Light to vanish.

Another term related to *wajd* is “*wujūd*,” which denotes “existence” or a “state of “being.” Within this spiritual context (Yasrebi, 1989, pp. 233-234), *wujūd* signifies the transcendence of one’s existence into a unity with the Divine after annihilation in God’s Existence and subsisting with It—“annihilation” as self-transcendence, not as essential obliteration. This spiritual pull—that is, *wajd*—seeks to penetrate and dominate human existence. When one’s very being, or ego, succumbs to this pull, *wajd* progresses to *wujūd*, symbolizing a union or realization with the Divine. Thus, *wajd* epitomizes the moments when an individual is drawn toward divine enlightenment, evolving as they draw nearer to this ultimate spiritual culmination.

Shifting the lens to another perspective on the topic at hand, in Islamic mysticism, the individuals who receive divine attraction divide into “*sālik*” (or *muḥibb*) and “*majdhūb*” (or *maḥbūb*). The *sālik* progresses through various spiritual stations using ascetic practices, gradually moving from the worldly realm towards the divine Essence. On the other hand, through *jadhbe*, the *majdhūb* is directly drawn to the Divine effortlessly and without traversing spiritual stations or undergoing ascetic practices. Once they reach the Divine, they return to the created world, guiding other spiritual travelers. Despite the distinctions, divine Grace remains fundamental for both paths. For the *sālik*, Grace is dispensed progressively, contingent upon their actions and journey. Conversely, the *majdhūb* experiences this Grace instantaneously, transporting them immediately to their ultimate goal: divine unity.

Delving into the concept of *jadhbe* and divine love reveals insightful perspectives from Fayḍ Kāshānī’s master, Bahā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad ‘Amilī

(d. 1030/1652 H/CE), known as Shaykh Bahā'ī.<sup>1</sup> In *Kashkūl* (Amili, n.d., Book I: II.I.I), Bahā'ī elucidates the divine and ineffable essence of love, articulating, "Love is the attraction of hearts through the magnetizing [power] of His Beauty. There is no way to understand the quality of this attraction; whatever is said about it often only obscures it further. From this perspective, love is like beauty, which can be understood but never adequately articulated." One should note that, as Bahā'ī points out, the true essence of love and attraction is transcendental and ineffable. However, while one may not grasp them *fully*, one can explore them to the extent human intellect permits and experience them to the extent divine Grace facilitates. Even Bahā'ī himself did so. Interestingly, closely considering the above quote, it becomes apparent that Bahā'ī equates love and attraction.<sup>2</sup> Extending this thought, Fayḍ Kāshānī articulates (*Diwan*, G.31:4): "My heart, like iron, and your love the magnet's charm / Your magnetic pull stole our iron hearts."<sup>3</sup>

In Ghazal 122 (1-7), Fayḍ Kāshānī intertwines divine attraction with self-transcendence and a perpetual quest for the Divine Friend. He presents attraction as the "guiding force"<sup>4</sup> from the Friend's Grace. As discussed (section 2.2.) in his overview (*Diwan*, G.744:1-5), where he listed self-

1. Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad 'Āmilī, also known as Shaykh Bahā'ī, was a prominent Shī'ī scholar in the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE, born in 953 H in Baalbek, Lebanon. He was a versatile polymath, excelling in various fields such as jurisprudence, *ḥadīth*, theology, literature, mathematics, philosophy, and mysticism. Shaykh Bahā'ī held the position of *Shaykh al-Islām* in the Safavid court in Isfahan for a period and played a pivotal role as a mentor to influential scholars like Mullā Ṣadrā, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī. His extensive body of work comprised over 200 books and treatises in Arabic and Persian, encompassing various subjects. Shaykh Bahā'ī's profound knowledge and unique talents left an enduring mark in Islamic scholarship. He passed away in 1030 H in Isfahan and was laid to rest in the sacred shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH) in Mashhad, Iran.

2. In *Kashkūl*, Shaykh Bahā'ī (Amili, n.d., Book I: II.I.I) pictures love as an intoxicating force that captivates the heart, drawing parallels with the nightingale's longing song for the rose. Despite the pain and solitude it might entail, this intoxicating love pulls seekers willingly into the spiritual journey. In his *Dīwān*, Bahā'ī (Amili, 1982, *Mathnawīyyat*, 9:1-2) writes that the goal is distant, time fleeting, and our efforts inadequate—concluding that in this path, time and space can be swiftly traversed through the transformative power of love's attraction. The poem reads as follows:

راه مقصد دور و پای سعی لنگ / وقت همچون خاطر ناشاد تنگ  
جذبه‌ای از عشق باید، بی گمان / تا شود طی هم زمان و هم مکان

3. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Dīwān*, G.31:4): دل من آهن و عشق تو بود مغناطیس / ربود جذبه آهن ربای آهن ما

4. Elsewhere, Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Dīwān*, G.734:1), again, refers to *divine attraction* as a "guide" leading to the Divine Friend.

جانب دوست میکشد عشق مرا که همچین / جذبه اوست سوی او راهنما که همچین

annihilation after attraction, Fayḍ Kāshānī underscores the importance of self-annihilation or becoming “sign-less” to successfully tread the path to the Friend, revealing through a line: “No sign does the Sign-less reveal, except for the sign-less / Let us become signless ourselves, in pursuit of the Friend” (*Diwan*, G.122:2).<sup>1</sup>

The verse implies a requirement to lose the self to immerse fully in the divine union. In another poem, Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.744:1-10) further explores divine attraction and self-annihilation. The divine pull propels the seeker towards self-transcendence: “Once you reach the realm of love [*muḥabbat*], a divine attraction arrives from beyond / To draw you towards Himself, freeing you from yourself” (*Diwan*, G.744:1).<sup>2</sup>

Shortly, an initial appearance of love—that is, *muḥabbat*—brings divine attraction, a more intense love, which leads to self-annihilation—a transformative process of transcendence beyond one’s ego, liberating the seeker from the confines of their identity—and, ultimately, union with the Real. Here, a pertinent question arises: what happens in this self-annihilation?

### Selflessness

Navigating through the intricacies of the spiritual journey, Dāwūd Qaysarī (d. 751/1350 H/CE), in his treatise, *al-Tawḥīd wa al-Nubuwwa wa al-Wilāya* (1978, p. 9), emphasizes the indispensable role of divine Grace. He posits that the servant cannot reach the Divine without the eternal attraction of divine Grace. As one embarks on this journey, an oscillation exists between “*maḥw*” and “*ṣaḥw*.” *Maḥw*, also known as “*sukr*,” is characterized as a state of selflessness, intoxication, and non-thought emanating from love. Intrinsically, this state is an outcome of divine Grace; thus, humans cannot acquire *maḥw* through sheer volition.

In Qaysarī’s passage, the *ṣaḥw* is a contrasting state of sobriety experienced when the traveler comes out of the intoxication of *maḥw*. Notably, the traveler is not always intoxicated initially since they have not adequately renounced the material world and its desires. Hence, Qaysarī portrays the early phases of this journey as an oscillation, with the traveler sometimes succumbing to the divine attraction and achieving a state of selflessness and spiritual euphoria while, at other times, being drawn back by worldly desires into the realm of

1. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Dīwān*, G.122:2): از بی‌نشان نشان ندهد غیر بی‌نشان / خود بی‌نشان شویم پی جستجوی دوست

2. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Dīwān*, G.744:1):

چون بمحبت رسی جذبه رسد زانطرف / تا کشدست سوی خود تارهی از خویشتن

the tangible.

The instances of *maḥw* peak in the spiritual stage of "self-annihilation" or "*fanā' fi-llāh*." This stage signifies not an essential obliteration but a metamorphosis from one stage of spiritual perfection to another. This stage starts with the "annihilation of the will," or *fanā'-e irāda*, where the traveler submits their will entirely to God, aligning their intentions with God's Will. Following this—as the famous Persian mystic poet Jāmī (d. 898/1492 H/CE) asserts (1992, pp. 150-151)—the traveler experiences the "annihilation of qualities," or *fanā'-e ṣifāt*, wherein their human traits diminish, and they gain divine qualities.

This shift does not imply that the human qualities vanish completely; instead, the traveler's "awareness" of these qualities is diminished as they become absorbed in divine Light. This transition is perceived as an "epistemic" change rather than an "ontological" one (Yasrebi, 1991, pp. 450-459). Put differently, this annihilation does not entail the loss of the traveler's reality or fixed entity (*al-'ayn al-thābita*). As attested by Ibn 'Arabī (2004, p. 36) and affirmed by Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥussein Ṭabāṭabā'ī (in Husseini Tehrani, 2005, pp. 243-244) and Jāmī (1992, p. 151), the self, reality, or fixed entity remains in the *fanā'*. Therefore, self-annihilation signifies a transformation in the traveler's spiritual journey rather than essential perishing. Now, in Persian mystical literature, this "epistemic unawareness" is called "selflessness" (*bīkhodī*) and, at times, "intoxication" (*mastī*), where the traveler is absorbed in the Divine, unaware of the earthly concerns, including their self—a love-induced pleasant madness.

What are the implications of this selflessness? In line with the broader Persian mystical tradition, Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.415:1-6) binds love, selflessness, and the soul's states in an intricate dance. He posits that the soul's essence is divine and points out that understanding it comes only through love-induced intoxication, a state transcending earthly distractions. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.622:1-10) maintains that selflessness paves the way for a deep bond with the Divine, awareness, and the paradoxical attainment of presence through absence. "Until I am lost in selflessness, awareness remains afar/ Until my heart slips from my grasp, I do not own the heart" (*Diwan*, G.622:1).<sup>1</sup>

In *Dīwān* (G.587:1-10), Fayḍ Kāshānī illustrates the intoxicating effect of the Divine manifestation and its subsequent promotion of selflessness—the keen reader realizes that other than "love," another "intoxication-inducer" is

1. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.622:1):

تا من نشوم بپخود هشیار نمی باشم / تا دل ندهم از کف دلدار نمی باشم



introduced: “divine manifestation.” Our poet expresses his intoxication with the love *and* beauty (i.e., manifestation) of the Divine, perpetually nourishing his spiritual state and making him selfless. In this portrayal, the divine manifestation is so overwhelming that it stirs the heavens and the earth into restlessness and intoxication.<sup>1</sup>

To Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.697:6, G.961:1-16), selflessness alleviates and heals pains or afflictions through divine love. One intoxicated by love, in Ghazal 329, perceives pain and pleasure indistinguishably, signifying a transcendental indifference to worldly experiences. “Drunk on love, be it poison or sugar he sips, no distinction does he keep / Even if a sword descends upon his crown, it could never seep” (*Diwan*, G.329:2).<sup>2</sup>

Love’s healing power echoes the words of the *metaphysics of love*’s unparalleled master, Rūmī, who consistently refers to love as a remedy for suffering and challenges. For instance, in *Dīwān-e Shams Tabrīzī* (G.959:10), he writes, “But if love’s pain should conquer you / With this pain the sorrow of the heart you can cure.”<sup>3</sup>

To Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.961), love ignites the soul, consuming the self and bringing about selflessness. The individual is so consumed by divine love that they become oblivious to their existence. Paradoxically, this oblivion allows the individual to gain divine awareness and unity.

Gradually with you, I became intertwined, apart,  
From my essence, the threads and cords of ego I did depart.  
The fire of your love took hold of my soul,  
I burned, freeing myself from my own hold.  
(Fayḍ Kashani, *Diwan*, G.961:3-4)<sup>4</sup>

I pray to the Merciful God, adds Fayḍ Kāshānī (G.961:8-9), to free me from myself since, “If I become selfless, I gain awareness / Unaware I remain, as long as I’m with myself” (G. 961:10).<sup>5</sup> The poem concludes that after being

1. Farsi (*Dīwān*, G.587:4): یک جلوه کرد و بر دو جهان هر دو مست شد / بپخود ازو زمین و فلک بی قرار هم

2. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.329:2): مست عشق از زهر نوشد یا شکر فرقی نباشد / بر سرش گر تیغ بارد هیچ آزارش نباشد

3. Rūmī, *Dīwān-e Shams Tabrīzī* (G.959:10): مگر که درد غم عشق سر زند در تو / به درد او غم دل را روا توانی کرد

4. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G.961:3-4): تار و پود خود گسستم از خودی / رفته رفته با تو پیوستم ز خود  
آتش عشقت بجانم در گرفت / سوختم یکبار جستم از خودی

5. Fayḍ Kāshānī (G. 961:10): گر ز خود بپخود شوم آگه شوم / غافلم تا با خودستم از خودی

liberated from the self, the individual neither possesses self nor selflessness. This paradoxical state of being is a testament to the profound and transcendental impact of divine love, and it is here that the individual truly becomes aware of their oneness with God. "Neither self I hold now, nor selflessness / Neither aware of self, nor unaware of it" (*Diwan*, G. 961:15).<sup>1</sup> Fascinatingly, this point is reminiscent of 7-8<sup>th</sup> century Iranian Sufi Maḥmūd Shabistārī's poetic work *Golshan-e Rāz*, where he asserts (Shabistari, 2017, p. 995), having drunk divine wine, "Now, I neither exist within me, nor cease to be / Neither awake, nor drunken, nor intoxicated."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, aligning with the general trend in Islamic mysticism, Fayḍ Kāshānī views divine love as a transformative force that dissolves the boundaries of the self and leads the individual toward a state of ultimate selflessness and unity.

## Conclusion

This study navigates the path of selflessness within Islamic mysticism, exploring the captivating poetry of Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī through the lens of his treatises and relevant secondary sources. The discourse journeys the soul's voyage toward the Divine through a delicate linking of divine love, attraction, and selflessness. It underscores a critical transformative phase in a seeker's spiritual endeavor, illustrating how selflessness, triggered by love and attraction, orchestrates a deep awareness and unity with the Divine.

The outcomes of this research present a textured insight into love, attraction, and selflessness in the expansive dialogue of Islamic mysticism, marking a notable contribution to Islamic Studies and Islamic Mysticism in various dimensions. Initially, it delivers a robust, textually anchored examination of these central concepts. Subsequently, the analysis reveals the detailed nexus between poetry and mysticism, emphasizing how Persian mystical poetry is a robust medium for articulating and traversing the mystic's inner landscapes. Finally, by meticulously linking various mystic personalities across distinct eras, this study enhances the interpretative scaffold through which scholars can delve into the mystical traditions in Islam.

The engagement with love, attraction, and selflessness, delineated in Fayḍ Kāshānī's thought and situated within a comprehensive Islamic mystical framework, lays down fertile territory for continued exploration. This

1. Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Diwan*, G. 961:15):

نه خودی دارم کنون نه بیهودی / نه ز خود آگه نه مستم از خودی

2. Shabistārī (2017, 995):

کنون نه نیستم در خود نه هستم / نه هشیارم نه مخمورم نه مستم

investigation potentially lays down fresh research paths in Islamic mystical poetry—especially that of Fayḍ Kāshānī—encouraging profound scrutiny into the varied poetic renderings of other core concepts inherent to Islamic mysticism. It invites scholars to venture into comparative scrutiny across diverse mystical traditions within and beyond the Islamic sphere, nurturing a cross-cultural discourse on shared and divergent aspects in the articulation and experience of critical metaphysical concepts. Moreover, the deliberation on selflessness beckons an interdisciplinary exchange among theology, literature, psychology, and potentially neurology, setting the stage for a thorough comprehension of mystic states.

### **Conflict of Interests**

The authors have no competing interests.



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