



The inebriation of His enrapturing Call (Mast-and bulbulán)¹

Mast-and bulbulán is a 22 coupletes poem composed by Bahá'u'lláh, whose *radif* is *yá Húy-i-ú*. While commenting upon the use of *radif* in Rumi's *Díván*, Johann Christoph Bürgel, an expert in literature of the Middle East, writes:

in Rūmī's ghazals the *radīf* is not a mere ornament, and also not just a formal factor that imparts unity to the poem, but a strong vehicle of meaning which intensifies the message and the symbolism. ("Speech is a ship" 50)

These words also apply to this poem by Bahá'u'lláh in which the *radif*, *yá Húy-i-ú*, His *Yá Hú*, translated as "His enrapturing Call," does not meet only formal exigencies, but is a kind of *basso ostinato* that reproduces, in its sound and meaning, the ecstatic atmospheres of the meetings of Sufi brotherhoods. During those meetings, the Sufis perform two rites that sometimes carry them to para-sensory experiences: *dhikr* and *samá'*.

Dhikr, recollection or mention of God, is a particular, often repetitive, form of prayer. At the time of his initiation, each aspirant Sufi is taught by his master a specific formula, sometimes the *Shahádá* (there is no other god but God), sometimes the *Tasbīḥ* (*subhána'lláh*, Glory to God), sometimes one of the so-called ninety-nine "Names Most beautiful (*al-asmá'u'l-ḥusná*)" of God, sometimes the invocation *yá Hú*. Usually, these formulas are repeated according to specific techniques: choral chanting, gestures and movements, and particular respiratory techniques. Sufis use these instruments to obtain particular states of consciousness, which they define as ecstatic. The German Orientalist Annemarie Schimmel (1922–2003) writes about the *dhikr*:

The *dhikr* could be loud or silent; the loud one is generally used in the meetings of Sufi brotherhoods and ends in the repetition of the last *h* of *Allah* after every other sound has slowly disappeared; this last stage

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¹ For a general introduction to this and other poems by Bahá'u'lláh, see Julio Savi, "Bahá'u'lláh's Persian poems written before 1863," *Lights of Irfan* 13 (2012):317-361.

resembles a deep sigh. The silent *dhikr* too has been described as a journey through the letters of the word *Allah* until the meditating person is, so to speak, surrounded by the luminous circle of this final *h*, the greatest proximity that one could hope to reach. (*Deciphering* 148)

Bahá'u'lláh calls *dhikr* His Lawḥ-i-Halīh-Halīh-Halīh-Yá-Bishárat.

As to *samā'*, the audition, the French ethnomusicologist Jean During explains that the word *samā'* (“*Samā'*”)

generally denotes the hearing of music, the concert, and in its particular sense, the Ṣūfī tradition of spiritual concert, in a more or less ritualised form. *Samā'* is then considered to be the “nourishment of the soul,” in other words, a devotional practice which, according to Ṣūfī authors, can induce intense emotional transports (*tawāḍjud*), states of grace (*aḥwāl*), of trance or of ecstasy (*wāḍj*, *wudjūd*) and even revelations. These manifestations are often accompanied by movements, physical agitation or dance which are of set form or otherwise, individual or collective, of which Persian miniatures have left numerous testimonies and of which certain forms are still in use.

This is its poetical description by the celebrated Sufī poet Nūr ad-Dīn ‘Abdu’r-Raḥmān Jamī (1414–1492), the last of the great Persian poets, in a translation by William C. Chittick, the author of important books on Islamic thought, Sufism, Shi‘ism, and Persian literature:

Do you know what it is—the sound of lute and rebec?
“You are my sufficiency, You are my all, O loving God!”
The dry and dismal have no taste of *sama'*—
otherwise, that song has seized the world.
Oh that Minstrel! One tune
and every atom of being began to dance.
The ascetic stands on the shore of imagination and fantasy,
the gnostic’s soul is drowned in the sea of Being.
The holy threshold of Love has no form,
but in every form It shows Itself alone.
It displayed Itself in the clothing of Layla’s beauty,
It stole patience and ease from Majnun’s heart.

It tied the veil of Adhra to Its own face,
 It opened the door of heartache on Wamiq's cheek.²
 In reality, It played love with Itself—
 Wamiq and Majnun are nothing but names.
 Jami saw the reflection of the Cupbearer,
 then fell to prostration, a pitcher before the cup. (*Diwan*301; qtd. in
 Chittick, *Sufism* 79-80)

As to the locution *yá Húy-i-ú*, His *Yá Hú*, literally “His ‘O He!’,” *Hú* corresponds to the Arabic *Huwa*. In Sufi literature, the third-person singular pronoun, *Huwa*, is often used to denote God in His hidden, unmanifested Essence. It means Allah, His Uniqueness . . . [It] refers to the spiritual, abstract, and bodiless entity of Allah's divinity and to His Ipseity. It also symbolises an advanced degree of ecstatic transport” (Chebel, *Dictionnaire* 204). As has been just said, *Yá Hú* is a typical invocation among the Sufis, who use it as a *dhikr* in their ecstatic sessions. Schimmel compares this invocation to the Hindu *Om* and writes:

nobody who has heard the long-drawn-out call *Huuu* (literally “He”) at the end of a dervish ceremony such as the Mevlevi *samā'* can forget this sound, whose vibrations move body and mind equally. Listening to such sounds, one understands why “sound” could be regarded as Creative Power, and it becomes perfectly clear why musical therapy with sacred, *baraka*-loaded sounds was well known in Islamic culture and is still practised among certain Sufi groups. (*Deciphering* 114)

According to Bausani, the invocation *yá Hú* hints at the “Man of God” as ‘the sign of divine unity . . . the absolute Reality concentrated in a single very luminous point, God's Personality” (“Nota introduttiva e note” 21). He quotes an ode by Rûmî that recites (Nicholson, *Selected Poems* 127, no.125, vv.6-8):

My place is the Placeless, my trace is the Traceless;
 'Tis neither body nor soul, for I belong to the soul of the Beloved.
 I have put duality away, I have seen that the two worlds are one;

² Vámiq and ‘Adhrá, literally, the lover and the virgin, are two lovers of Islamic poetry often mentioned together with Majnún and Laylí. The best-known version of their story is that of the Persian poet Abu'l-Qásim ‘Unşurí (d. ca. 1039).

One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call.
He is the first, He is the last, He is the outward, He is the inward;
I know none other except “Yā Hū” and “Yā man Hū”

In his translation of one of Rūmī’s ghazals, Nicholson leaves this call in the original language, “Yā Hū” (*Selected Poems* 127, XXXI.8; see also Rūmī, *Mystical Poems* 64, no.72, v.8). However, since the word “yahoo” is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary “A name invented by Swift in *Gulliver’s Travels* for an imaginary race of brutes having the form of men; frequently in modern use, a person lacking cultivation or sensibility; a philistine; a lout; a hooligan” (20:687),³ we have preferred to convey its meaning through the locution “enrapturing call,” which describes how this call is perceived in the Muslim world. Another translation of this locution could be “His call of ‘O God’.” In this poem by Bahá’u’lláh, the locution “His enrapturing Call (*yá-Húy-i-ú*)” could denote the announcement of the revelation of the Beloved. Therefore, this poem could describe the Most Great Spirit and Its impact on Bahá’u’lláh and the world.

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Huva’l- ‘Azíz

He is the Glorious

Muslim writers often open their writing with an invocation of God.

1

Mast-and bulbulán⁴ zi⁵ naghmiy-i-yá Húy-i-ú,
Ham ján-i- ‘áshiqán zi⁶ jur ‘iy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

Nightingales are inebriated by the melody of His enrapturing Call,
And spirit lovers by one draught of His enrapturing Call.

³ See also “a member of a race of brutes in Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* who have the form and all the vices of humans . . . a boorish, crass, or stupid person” (Merriam-Webster online); “One of an imaginary race of brutes having the form of men in *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift . . . an uncouth or rowdy person” (Webster’s 2646).

⁴ *Majmú’ih* 30 writes *Bulbulán mast-and*.

⁵ *Majmú’ih* 30 writes *az yik*.

⁶ *Majmú’ih* 30 writes *ján-i- ‘ushsháqán ham az yik*.

This verse announces the inebriation of the nightingales and the lovers, the former when they hear the song of the Beloved, the latter when they quaff His wine. Both motifs seem to denote the Revelation of the Most Great Spirit. The joy caused by the announcement of His Revelation is a recurring theme in Bahá'u'lláh's Writings. For example, He wrote in one of His Tablets:

Proclaim unto every longing lover: "Behold, your Well-Beloved (*Yár*) hath come among men!" and to the messengers of the Monarch of love impart the tidings: "Lo, the Adored One (*Nigár*) hath appeared arrayed in the fullness of His glory!" O lovers of His beauty! Turn the anguish of your separation from Him into the joy of an everlasting reunion, and let the sweetness of His presence dissolve the bitterness of your remoteness from His court. (*Gleanings* 320, sec.CLI, para.1, Lawḥ-i-‘Áshiq va Ma‘shúq; *Muntakhabátí* 206)

2

Ján bi-Jánán mí-rasad bá vajd-u ḥálat dar damí,

Gar bi-gúsh-i-ú rasíd⁷ yik ṣayḥiy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

In a fit of ecstasy, souls conjoin with the Adored One,

As soon as they hear an echo of His enrapturing Call.

This couplet introduces the concepts of *vajd* and *ḥálat*, two words that denote ecstasy. As to *vajd*, it means: "being transported, in an ecstasy of love; ecstasy, excessive love" (Steingass 1457). Shaykh Abú Ismá'íl 'Abd'Alláh Anṣarí (1006–1088), one of the earliest Persian mystical poets, lists 100 stations in his first work, *Sad Maydán* (lit. A Hundred Fields), centred on love for God. He writes about *vajd*:

Ecstasy is the eight-ninth field and arises from the field of mystical perception. God, the most high, has said, "We made their hearts firm when they stood forth and said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth" (XVIII: 14).

Ecstasy is a fire which is kindled from striking the stone of freewill against the iron of spiritual need. It possesses three aspects: an ecstasy of the psyche (*nafs*), an ecstasy of the heart (*del*), and an ecstasy of the soul (*jan*).

⁷ *Majmú'ih* 30 writes *rasad*.

The psyche's ecstasy overpowers the intellect, puts patience to flight, and reveals the invisible. This ecstasy is spiritual (*ma 'nawi*) in nature.

The heart's ecstasy, however, puts such a strain on one's endurance that one is driven to move, to cry out and rend one's clothes. This ecstasy is also spiritual in nature.

But the ecstasy which befalls the soul, (*jan*) bestows delight in the vision of God, drowns the psyche (*nafs*) in Truth-Reality, and beckons the soul towards severance from the body. One who experiences this ecstasy is the object of God's regard. (*Ṣad Maydán* 428-29, qtd. in Nurbakhsh 1:185)

Bahá'u'lláh mentions "a fit of ecstasy (*vajd-u ḥálat*)" (v.2) and writes that "the Maids (*Húryán*) . . . go into raptures (*vajd*), | If they hear the melody of His enrapturing Call" (v.12).

As to *ḥálat*, it means "state, quality, condition . . . one of the stages of the mystical progress of the Sūfis, ecstasy" (Steingass 409). In the Sufi world *ḥál*, another form of the word *ḥálat*, is defined as follows:

Literally, state [*ḥál*] denotes the end of the past and the beginning of the future. From the point of view of the people of God, however, it is a spiritual reality that occurs to the heart without the hearts claiming to possess it or seeking to acquire it, whether it be rapture, sorrow, contraction, expansion or awe. With the re-emergence of the attributes of the *nafs* it disappears, whether to be followed by another state similar to it or not. Whenever it lasts, becoming permanent, it is known as a station. States are gifts, while stations are acquired. The former comes from the wellspring of God's Generosity, while the latter are attained through effort and spiritual striving (*mojāhada*). (Nurbakhsh 8:84-5)

This poem by Bahá'u'lláh is ecstatic, the fruit of His ecstatic experiences in Teheran. It is filled with this mystical condition.

This couplet seemingly announces the reunion of the soul with the Beloved when the Beloved sings *Yá Hú*, that is, reveals Himself through "His enrapturing Call." This reunion can be seen from at least two perspectives. The first is the reunion of the Manifestation of God with the Most Great Spirit. Bahá'u'lláh has described this concept through a Muslim Tradition:

Arise, O Muḥammad, for lo, the Lover (*Ḥabīb*) and the Beloved (*Maḥbúb*) are joined together and made one in Thee. (*Gleanings* 64, sec.XXVII, para.4; *Muntakhabátí* 51)

The second aspect is the reunion of all the souls with the soul of the Manifestation of God. Bahá'u'lláh describes this concept in the following words:

Hear Me, ye mortal birds! In the Rose Garden of changeless splendour a Flower hath begun to bloom, compared to which every other flower is but a thorn, and before the brightness of Whose glory the very essence of beauty must pale and wither. Arise, therefore, and, with the whole enthusiasm of your hearts, with all the eagerness of your souls, the full fervour of your will, and the concentrated efforts of your entire being, strive to attain the paradise of His presence, and endeavour to inhale the fragrance of the incorruptible Flower, to breathe the sweet savours of holiness, and to obtain a portion of this perfume of celestial glory. Whoso followeth this counsel will break his chains asunder, will taste the abandonment of enraptured love, will attain unto his heart's desire, and will surrender his soul into the hands of his Beloved. Bursting through his cage, he will, even as the bird of the spirit, wing his flight to his holy and everlasting nest. (*Gleanings* 320-1, sec.CLI, para.3, Lawḥ-i-‘*Áshiq* va Ma‘*shúq*)

3

Ján-i-‘áshiq bar-parad tá Sidriy-i-Aqşáy-i-‘Ishq,

Gar madadkár-ash buvad yik naghmiy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

Spirit lovers fly away to the remote Tree of Love,

If they are assisted by the melody of His enrapturing Call.

The first hemistich mentions “the remote Tree of Love (*Sidriy-i-Aqşáy-i-‘Ishq*).” Bahá'u'lláh uses the term *sidrih* with two different acceptations. In other poems, *sidrih* refers to the Burning Bush from which Moses heard God's voice calling Him and announcing His Prophetic mission. However, *Sidrih* also is a Koranic term used in the locution “the Sidrah-tree, which marks the boundary (*al-Muntahá*)” (53:14). This tree “could represent the boundary which human knowledge cannot surpass, marked by a mysterious Lote-tree” (Bausani, “Introduzione e commento” 667n14-15). Persian mystic poets use the following

locutions: “*sidratu’l-muntahá, sidra’i tūbā*, A lote-tree in Paradise; the heavenly mansion of the angel Gabriel;—*tā’iri sidra*, The bird of the heavenly lote-tree, i.e. Gabriel” (Steingass 663). Therefore, this word could also denote the *Sadratu’l-Muntahá*, a term that “is often used in the Bahá’í Writings to designate the Manifestation of God Himself” (“Preface and Notes” 220n128) and “to designate Bahá’u’lláh” (“Preface and Notes” 220n164). It is the station of the Manifestation of God. Therefore, this couplet could hint at Bahá’u’lláh accepting His Prophethood, when the Most Great Spirit sings *Yá Hú*, that is, reveals Itself to Him through “His enrapturing Call.”

4

Mast gardad ‘álam-i-Hastí, chih⁸ ‘áshiq az jamál,
Gar bi-dawr uftad zi Sáqí bádiy-í yá Húy-i-ú.

The world of Being is intoxicated as a lover by beauty,

If the Cupbearer hands round the wine of His enrapturing Call.

The Cupbearer seems to be the Manifestation of God; the wine of His enrapturing Call seems to be Its Revelation. When the Most Great Spirit reveals Itself through His Manifestation, the world of being is filled with joy. This hemistich is reminiscent of the Tablet of Carmel:

Seized with transports of joy, and raising high her voice, she [Mount Carmel] thus exclaimed: “May my life be a sacrifice to Thee, inasmuch as Thou hast fixed Thy gaze upon me, hast bestowed upon me Thy bounty, and hast directed towards me Thy steps. Separation from Thee, O Thou Source of everlasting life, hath well nigh consumed me, and my remoteness from Thy presence hath burned away my soul. All praise be to Thee for having enabled me to hearken to Thy call, for having honoured me with Thy footsteps, and for having quickened my soul through the vitalising fragrance of Thy Day and the shrilling voice of Thy Pen, a voice Thou didst ordain as Thy trumpet-call amidst Thy people. And when the hour at which Thy resistless Faith was to be made manifest did strike, Thou didst breathe a breath of Thy spirit into Thy Pen, and lo, the entire creation shook to its very foundations, unveiling to mankind such

⁸ *Majmú’ih* 30 writes chú.

mysteries as lay hidden within the treasures of Him Who is the Possessor of all created things.” (*Tablets* 3, para.2, Lawḥ-i-Karmil)

5

*Músiy-i-Ján munša ‘iq dar Ṭúr-i-Ma ‘ní uftad,*⁹

Gar bar afrúzád bi-Síná jadḥviy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

The Moses of Spirit faints on the Mystic Mount,

If the Sinai is lit with the spark of His enrapturing Call.

In this verse, Bahá’u’lláh refers to Moses through the image of Mount Sinai and uses the words *Ṭúr*, “A mountain, especially mount Sinai” (Steingass 821) and *Síná*, “Mount Sina” (Steingass 718). The image used in this verse is drawn from the story of Moses as narrated in the Koran. When God revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai, He swooned, that is, He became annihilated. Lambden remarks:

Celebrating the spiritually intoxicating and eschatological consequences of the Divine Beloved’s rhythmic chant “O He!” (*yá hú*), Baha’u’llah . . . associates the burning of the “firebrand” (*jadḥwa*) of this invocation on Sinai with the “Moses of the soul” (*músáy-i ján*) falling into a swoon on the “Mystic Mount” (*ṭúr-i ma’aní*). (“Sinaitic Mysteries” 116-7)

It seems a reference to the “‘Sinai’ of Moses’ ‘bosom’ (or interior self)” (Lambden, “Sinaitic Mysteries” 5:109-10, cf. Koran 27:12), purified by the quickening influence of the Beloved. Thus, this couplet seemingly hints at the annihilation of the human qualities of Bahá’u’lláh in front of the Most Great Spirit, when He received the Intimation of His Divine Mission.

As to the word spark (*jadḥvih*), it seems to denote an emanation of Spirit. Also, Western mystics used the term spark to refer to a spiritual reality. For example, the German Dominican preacher, theologian and mystic Meister Johannes Eckhart (ca.1260–1327) calls the inner self “*scintilla animae* (the spark of the soul).” He wrote:

I have occasionally said that there is a power in the spirit that alone is free. Occasionally, I’ve said that there is a shelter of the spirit.

⁹ *Majmú’ih* 30 writes *úftad*.

Occasionally, I've said there is a light of the spirit. Occasionally, I've said there is a little spark. Now, however, I say it is neither this nor that. All the same, it is a something, which is more elevated above this and that than heaven is over earth. For this reason I name it now in a more noble way than I have ever named it in the past . . . It is free of all names and bare of all forms, totally free and void just as God is void and free in himself. It is totally one and simple, just as God is one and simple, so that we can in no manner gaze into it . . . For the Father really lives in this power, and the Spirit gives rise along with the Father to the same only begotten Son. (*Passion for Creation* 277)

6

*Ṭúr-i-díl gardad munír-u ján bi-raqş áyad hamí,
Gar dar-uftad dar jáhán yik ḡhunniy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.*

The Sinai of the heart shines and the soul dances,

If the earth echoes with the warbling of His enrapturing Call.

The image of the Sinai is also used in this couplet, which seems to describe the light and the joy brought by the new Revelation. Bahá'u'lláh adopts the locution “the Sinai of the heart (*Ṭúr-i-díl*)” in other Writings as well:

The light hath shone on thee from the horizon of the sacred Mount and the spirit of enlightenment hath breathed in the Sinai (*síná'*) of thy heart (*qalb*). (Arabic Hidden Words, no.63; *Al-Kalimátu 'l-Maknúnat* 29)

Verily, I say, so fierce is the blaze of the Bush of love, burning in the Sinai of the heart (*sínáy-i-ḥubb*), that the streaming waters of holy utterance can never quench its flame. (KI61, para.65, KMI47)

As has been said, both the two words *Ṭúr* and *Síná* denote Mount Sinai. As to the sentence “the soul dances,” the place of dance in mystic writings is variously explained. Javad Nurbakhsh (1926–2008), the master of the Ni'matu'lláhi Sufi Order from 1953, a psychiatrist and a prolific writer, explains that dance is a “rapture of the spirit” (1:179). He also writes (1:180):

Abo'l-Hasan Kharāqānī¹⁰ said, “Dancing is the activity of one who, as he stamps his feet on the ground, sees through the earth, and as he flings up his hands, beholds the divine throne. All dancing besides this is disrespectful to the character of Bāyazīd Bastāmī, Jonaīd, and Sheblī.”¹¹

Ḥāfīz writes:

Come, let us under the sword go merrily dancing (*raqṣ*) together;
Fortunate he at last whom thou, Beloved, has slain! (Qtd. in Nicholson,
“Notes” 243.XVI.9; see *Divan* 117, “Ghazalyāt,” no.111, v.9)

He writes moreover:

On the sky,—what if, of Ḥāfīz utterances
Zuhra’s singing should bring to dancing (*raqṣ*) the Masīḥā (Christ).
(*Dīvān* 44, “Ghazalyāt,” no.9, v.9; see *Divan* 8, “Ghazalyāt,”
no.4, v.8)

Dance as an expression of spiritual joy is not foreign to Western tradition. Titus Burckhardt (1908–1984), the Swiss master of the spiritualist tradition, writes:

A Psalm in the Bible says: “Let them praise His Name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and the harp” [see Psalms 149:3]. It is known that the sacred dance exists in Jewish esotericism, finding its model in the dancing of King David before the ark of the covenant [see 2 Kings 6:14]. The apocryphal Gospel of the Childhood speaks of the Virgin as a child dancing on the altar steps [see Book of James or Protevangelium 7:3], and certain folk customs allow us to conclude that these models were imitated in mediaeval Christianity. St Theresa of Avila and her nuns danced to the sound of tambourines. (*Introduction* 104n6)

One remembers the story of David:

¹⁰ Abu'l-Ḥassan ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Salmān al-Kharāqānī or Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥassan Kharāqānī (963–1033), sometimes written as Khirqānī, is one of the Persian Khurasani Sufi masters. ‘Aṭṭār called him the King of the kings of Sufi Masters.

¹¹ Shaykh Abu Bakr Shiblī (861–946) is a famous Sufi born in Baghdad from a Persian family. He was a disciple of al-Junayd.

And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet . . . And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. (2 Kings 6:14-6, 17-8)

7

*Maḥv gardad rang-i-ghayríyyat zi şafḥiy-i-rúzgar,
Gar nasímí bar-vazad az ja 'diy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.*

Any shade of strangeness disappears from the pages of the world,
If a breeze wafts from the locks of His enrapturing Call.

This couplet uses the image of perfume exhaling from a scented lock to describe the disappearance of “otherness (*ghayríyat*)” from the world.

The word *ghayríyat*, “Change, alteration; strangeness, unreality; jealousy” (Steingass 901), means in theological contexts to be *ghayr*, and *ghayr* in its turn means “other, different” (Steingass 900), that is different from God or unrelated to God. Toshihiko Izutzu (1914–1993), a leading figure in the fields of Islamic, Far Eastern and comparative philosophy, explained that in “the ordinary empirical state”

things are separated and distinguished first from each other, and then from the Absolute. In this dimension man normally sees only the phenomenal world, and considers the Absolute—if man at all becomes aware of the existence of something beyond the phenomenal world—as the entirely “other” (*ghayr*). (*Creation* 54)

However, he adds, in the state of unification called by the Sufis *baqá'* or *jam'*, all the separate things are seen reduced to their original existential unity. All things, beginning with the self-consciousness of the mystic, disappear from awareness. The light of the phenomenal world is extinguished. There remains only absolute unity. There is not even the consciousness of the unity, for there is no trace here of any consciousness. The whole universe

is unity. And the unity is light, but at the same time it is the darkness of the phenomenal world. (ibid.)

This couplet seems to describe the mystic unitive ecstasy Sufis believed to be accessible only to the great mystics.

Bahá'u'lláh seems to explain the concepts of alterity and unification differently. He relates these concepts with a verse of the Koran saying:

All on the earth shall pass away, But the face (*wajh*) of thy Lord shall abide resplendent with majesty and glory. (55:26-7, Rodwell)

He writes (*Gleanings* 29, sec.XIV, para.4, Lawḥ-i-Riḍván; *Muntakhabátí* 28):

Canst thou discover any one but Me (*ghayrī*), O Pen, in this Day? What hath become of the creation and the manifestations thereof? What of the names and their kingdom? Whither are gone all created things, whether seen or unseen? What of the hidden secrets of the universe and its revelations? Lo, the entire creation hath passed away! Nothing remaineth except My Face (*wajhī*), the Ever-Abiding, the Resplendent, the All-Glorious.

He adds elsewhere:

I know not how long they shall spur on the charger of self and passion and rove in the wilderness of error and negligence! Shall either the pomp of the mighty or the wretchedness of the abased endure? Shall he who repositeth upon the loftiest seat of honour, who hath attained the pinnacle of might and glory, abide forever? Nay, by My Lord, the All-Merciful! All on earth shall pass away, and there remaineth alone the face (*wajh*) of My Lord, the All-Glorious, the Most-Bountiful. (*Summons* 133, sec.1, para.269, Súriy-i-Haykal: Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh; *Áthár* 1:86)

This passage seems to convey a concept of alterity as referring to the Manifestation of God and not to God Himself. All human beings are nothing in front of Him and are expected to surrender wholly to Him so that nothing of their will should remain that is not identified with His Will.

Chittick gives another explanation of the concept of alterity among the Sufis:

“Otherness” is a veil over our eyes woven by our own imagination. Neither we ourselves nor the things we perceive outside of ourselves are truly other than God. (*Sufi Path of Love* 304)

Rúmí writes in this regard:

Oh Life of the spirit! Since Thou hast a home in this world, why does the dirt in the road not speak? Why are stones unaware?

Why does poison taste bitter? Why are thorns sharp? Why does anger display violence? Why are nights dark?

One day in the garden of His Face I kept wondering how in this world, during His reign, a thorn could be a thorn.

Has that Presence out of jealousy (*ghayrat*) masked His own Face? Does He maintain His “otherness (*ghayrī*)” so that “others (*ághyārī*)” cannot see Him?

Or is the very eye of the world so coarse and gross and perverted that it can perceive nothing of the Gentleness of that Radiant face. (*Díván*, “*Ghazalyát*” 2555, v.1-5, qtd. in Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love* 307)

Bahá’u’lláh uses the term *ghayríyat* in the following context:

Any shade of strangeness (*ghayríyat*) disappears from the pages of the world,

If a breeze wafts from the locks of His enrapturing Call.

This couplet seems to convey all the above-explained meanings. When the Beloved becomes manifest in the world, showing His unique qualities, all veils seem to fall, and His lovers become annihilated in Him. Bahá’u’lláh seems to state in this verse that everything vanishes when He becomes manifest in the world; only His sovereign Word remains. And whoever is willing to love Him, has the possibility of not being deprived of the bountiful Grace of that Word. This couplet may also mean that the new Revelation has given all human beings the opportunity to understand the concept of Divine Unity:

The essence of belief in Divine unity consisteth in regarding Him Who is the Manifestation of God and Him Who is the invisible, the inaccessible, the unknowable Essence as one and the same. By this is meant that whatever pertaineth to the former, all His acts and doings, whatever He

ordaineth or forbiddeth, should be considered, in all their aspects, and under all circumstances, and without any reservation, as identical with the Will of God Himself. This is the loftiest station to which a true believer in the unity of God can ever hope to attain. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 166, sec.LXXXIV, para.4)

Finally, since *ghayríyat* also means “strangeness” (Steingass 901), this sentence could also hint at the spirit of brotherhood, which is the contrary of “strangeness” amongst human beings brought by the new Revelation.

8

*Az qyám-ash tú qyámat bín míyán-i-‘áshiqán,
Ham shinú áváz-i-Şúr az nafkhiy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.*

As He arises, you see the lovers resurrected, and hear

Sarañiel’s trumpet from the blow of His enrapturing Call.

This couplet uses the language of eschatology, referring to the Day of judgment or resurrection through the words resurrection, *qyámat*, “The resurrection, last day” (Steingass 997), Sarañiel’s trumpet, *Şúr*, “A trumpet, clarion, horn; the trumpet of Isrāfíl summoning mankind to resurrection” (Steingass 796), and the word *nafkhih*, “One blow; [*nafkhatu ’l-ba‘ş*, The trumpet-blast of resurrection;—*nafkha’i rūh*, The Holy Spirit which the angel Gabriel blew into the sleeve of Mary according to Muhammadan belief]” (Steingass 1415), used in the Koran to refer to the trumpet-blast or horn-blast of resurrection (Koran 6:73, 23:101, 39:68, 69:13, etc.).

Resurrection can be seen from two different perspectives: personal and eschatological. As to the personal perspective, the key to reading this metaphor is in the Kitáb-i-Íqán (KI118-9, para.125; KMI90):

Such things have come to pass in the days of every Manifestation of God. Even as Jesus said: “Ye must be born again [1 John 3:7].” Again He saith: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit [2 John 3:5-6].” The purport of these words is that whosoever in every dispensation is born of the Spirit and is quickened by the breath of the Manifestation of Holiness, he verily is of those that

have attained unto “life” and “resurrection (*ba ‘ath*)” and have entered into the “paradise” of the love of God. And whosoever is not of them, is condemned to “death” and “deprivation,” to the “fire” of unbelief, and to the “wrath” of God. In all the scriptures, the books and chronicles, the sentence of death, of fire, of blindness, of want of understanding and hearing, hath been pronounced against those whose lips have tasted not the ethereal cup of true knowledge, and whose hearts have been deprived of the grace of the holy Spirit in their day. Even as it hath been previously recorded: “Hearts have they with which they understand not [Koran 7:178].”

As to the eschatological perspective, Bahá’u’lláh concisely writes:

the Day of Resurrection (*qyámat*) . . . is the Day of the rise of God Himself through His all-embracing Revelation. (KI143, para.151; KMI111)

According to the Koranic descriptions of the Day of Judgment or Resurrection, this Day will be announced by the blast of the trumpet of the Angel Seraphiel (*şúr*), the Angel of death, mentioned in verse 8. Bahá’u’lláh explains the motif of the Koranic horn in His Kitáb-i-Íqán. He writes, referring to the Muḥammadic Dispensation, that “by ‘trumpet (*şúr*)’ is meant the trumpet-call of Muḥammad’s Revelation, which sounded in the heart of the universe, and by ‘resurrection’ is meant His rise to proclaim the Cause of God” (KI116, para.123; KMI89). Then, He explains that “resurrection” is the day of the advent of each Manifestation of God. In this hemistich, Bahá’u’lláh may allude to the beginning of His Dispensation.

9

Ján-i-‘áshiq bar-parad tá ‘arsh-u zán ham bu-gudharad,

Chún shavad majdhúb-i-‘ishq az jadhbiy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

Spirit lovers fly towards the Heavenly Throne, and beyond it,

When they are drawn to love in their ecstasy of His enrapturing Call.

This couplet describes the lover falling a prisoner of Love through the revelation of the Most Great Spirit and winging his flight towards the “Heavenly Throne (*‘Arsh*).”

In the language of the Sufis, the Throne (*‘Arsh*) is always associated with Divine power. In the hierarchy of the Divine worlds typical of Sufism, to which

Bahá'u'lláh sometimes referred (see Savi, *Towards the Summit* 31-5, 270-88), the throne is variously interpreted as the world of *Háhút*, or *Láhút*, or *Jabarút*. The Throne of God, '*Arsh*', is often mentioned in the Bahá'í Writings, and it usually denotes the sovereignty of God. The "Heavenly Throne ('*Arsh*)," mentioned in verse 9, could hint at the lofty station of God's Manifestation. For further comments upon the concept of the throne in the Bahá'í Writings, see Savi, *Towards the Summit* 88-9 and 1.14.

In light of what has been said, this couplet seems to explain in poetical terms that the Manifestation of God reaches the apex of the heavenly hierarchy because of His deep love for the Most Great Spirit.

10

*Dast bar-dárad zi ján jánán bi-jahd,*¹²

Gar futad dar mulk-i-hastí jilviy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

Lovers eagerly forfeit their lives, if in the world

The splendour is unveiled of His enrapturing Call.

When the Most Great Spirit reveals Itself, the Manifestation of God, and with Him all the lovers of God, lay down their all, even their life. Bahá'u'lláh has exposed this concept in many passages. For example, He wrote:

Every moment of my life my head crieth out to Thee and saith: "Would, O my Lord, that I could be raised on the spear-point in Thy path!" while my blood entreateth Thee saying: "Dye the earth with me, O my God, for the sake of Thy love and Thy pleasure!" Thou knowest that I have, at no time, sought to guard my body against any affliction, nay rather I have continually anticipated the things Thou didst ordain for me in the Tablet of Thy decree. (PM106, sec.66, para.7)

By God! Mine head yearneth for the spear out of love for its Lord. I never passed a tree, but Mine heart addressed it saying: "O would that thou wert cut down in My name, and My body crucified upon thee, in the path of My Lord!," for I see the people wandering distraught and unconscious in

¹² *Majmú'ih* 30 writes *bi-jahd-i-khish*tan.

their drunken stupor. (*Summons* 132, sec.1, para.266, Súriy-i-Haykal: Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh)

11

Bád-i-báqí bar-vazad az mulk-i-fání in Zamán,

Chún vazídiḥ búy-i-mishg az náfiy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

The breeze of eternity wafts in this Day from the mortal kingdom,

'Cause a fragrant scent breathes from the musk of His enrapturing Call.

The stage of annihilation (*faná'*) implies denial and subjugation of all one's attributes, a goal that seekers must reach to attain their subsistence in God (*baqá'*), that is, the affirmation and acquisition of the divine qualities. The term *faná'* denotes, among the Sufis, "extinction of individual limitation in the state of Union with God" (Burckhardt, *Introduction* 116). It means the abandonment of personal attributes, required so that subsistence in God, *baqá'*, that is, the acquisition of the divine qualities, may be attained. *Fání* is "(in the parlance of the Sūfīs) one who has reached the state of *fanā'*, or annihilation" (Steingass 905). In the Bahá'í Writings, this term seems to denote a person who increasingly subordinates his animal nature to his spiritual nature through his submission to the will of God as voiced by His Manifestation (see Savi, *Towards the Summit* 366-7). The locution "mortal kingdom (*mulk-i-fání*)" seems to describe not only the human world but also the human condition whereby the flesh keeps longer and longer silence, that condition which Sufis call *faná'*. These verses allude to the victory over the self that love requires.

The locution "in this Day (*in Zamán*)" is not a mere temporal indication; it may also refer to the Day of God (*Yawm-i-Khudá*), which Bahá'u'lláh calls both with the Persian-Arabic words *zamán* and *yawm*. Bahá'u'lláh explains its meaning in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (KA80, para.167; Arabic 160):

This is the Day of God (*Yawm Alláh*), the Day on which naught shall be mentioned save His own Self, the omnipotent Protector of all worlds.

He also explains it in the Súriy-i-Haykal:

the Day of God (*Yawm Alláh*) is none other but His own Self, Who hath appeared with the power of truth (*Summons*: Súriy-i-Haykal 27, sec.1, para.63; *Áthár* 1:20)

The Day of God (*Yawm-i-Khudá*), one of the leitmotifs of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings, is extensively described by Bahá'u'lláh as a Day

[that] eclipseth all other created Days (*Summons* 80, 1, para.154, *Súriy-i-Haykal: Napoleon III*),

which the Pen of the Most High hath glorified in all the holy Scriptures (*Gleanings* 13, sec.X, para.2);

[alluded to] in all the sacred Scriptures¹³ (*Gleanings* 11, sec.VII, para.2, *Lawh-i-Karmil*);

which God hath announced through the tongue of His Apostle [Muhammad] (*Epistle* 101);

the purpose underlying all creation . . . the Day which all the Prophets, and the Chosen Ones, and the holy ones, have wished to witness (Qtd. in Shoghi Effendi, *Advent* 77);

[for which] the soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted . . . All the divers kindreds of the earth have, likewise, yearned to attain (*Gleanings* 10, sec.VII, para.2, *Súriy-i-Qamís*),

[when] He, the Ancient of everlasting days is come, girded with majesty and power (*Gleanings* 36, sec.XV, para.1);

of God Himself . . . [when] the Lord alone shall be exalted (*Gleanings* 13, sec.X, para.2);

on which naught shall be mentioned save His own Self, the omnipotent Protector of all worlds (*KA80*, para.167);

which God hath exalted above all other days, and whereon the All-Merciful hath shed the splendor of His effulgent glory upon all who are in heaven and all who are on earth (*Summons* 68, par. 133, *Lawh-i-Haykal: Napoleon III*);

¹³ See "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3:12, KJB).

in which God's most excellent favors have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things (Qtd. in Shoghi Effendi, *Advent* 77);

in which the fragrances of mercy have been wafted over all created things, a Day so blest that past ages and centuries can never hope to rival it, a Day in which the countenance of the Ancient of Days hath turned towards His holy seat (*Tablet* 3, *Lawḥ-i-Karmil*).

whereon the Ocean of God's mercy hath been manifested unto men (*Gleanings* 7),

[in which] the potentialities inherent in the station of man, the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality, must all be manifested (*Gleanings* 340, sec.CLXII, para.1);

[when] "God will satisfy everyone out of His abundance" (*Tablets* 67, *Kalimát-i-Firdawsíyyih*, quoting Koran 4:129);

that God hath ordained to be a blessing unto the righteous, a retribution for the wicked, a bounty for the faithful and a fury of His wrath for the faithless and the forward (*Tablets* 103, *Ishráqát*).

The Day of God is described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Day when

the Sun of Reality will arise . . . with the utmost warmth and splendor (*Some Answered Questions* 57, sec.11, para.44).

Shoghi Effendi quotes many passages by Bahá'u'lláh on the greatness of this Day in his *Advent* (77-80).

The "breeze of immortality (*bád-i-báqí*)" hints not only at the renewed spirituality brought by the new Revelation, but also at that condition which Sufis called *baqá'* and which has been described above as "the affirmation and acquisition of the divine qualities." The "musky scent (*búy-i-mishg*)" could describe the effusion of spiritual bounties bestowed by the new Revelation. The image of the "musk-pod (*náfih*)," "A bag or bladder of musk; the belly, or skin of the belly of any animal" (Steingass 1376), is commonly used by Sufi poets. Ḥáfiz writes:

Of the musk (*mushk*) of Khutan and of musk-pod (*náfih*) of Chīn none hath seen

What, from the fragrant morning breeze (of the east) every morning
I see. (*Dīvān* 671, “*Ghazalyát*,” no.392, v.5; *Divan* 370,
no.357, v.6)

Verse 11 could hint at the spiritual transformation that takes place in all the seekers who inhale the scents of the Revelation of the Spirit in this new Day of God.

12

Húríyán dar ghurfíy-i-‘izzat bi-vajd áyand, agar
*Bar-vazad bar gúsh-ishán*¹⁴ *yik ranniy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.*

The Maids in the glorious chambers go into raptures,
If they hear the melody of His enrapturing Call.

This couplet describes, with the typical hyperbolic language characterising the Sufi descriptions of the Beloved, the exultation of the spiritual worlds for the advent of the new Day. The “Maids (*Húríyán*)” in their “glorious chambers (*ghurfíy-i-‘izzat*)” are reminiscent of the Tablet of the Holy Mariner, when it says:

Whereupon the maid of heaven (*Húríyata ‘r-Rúh*) looked out from her exalted chamber (*ghurfáta ‘l-a‘lá*) (*Bahá’í Prayers* 224; *Ma’idih* 4:336)

13

Tarhí az naw bi-fikanad andar jahán-i-áb-u gil,
*Gar tulú‘ árad*¹⁵ *zi mashriq vajhiy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.*

New designs are drawn in the world of water and clay,
If from the East the features arise of His enrapturing Call.

This couplet hints at the renewal of the world brought by the parousia of the Beloved. It is reminiscent of the following sentence in one of the Tablets of Ridván (*Gleanings* 29-30, sec.XIV, para.5, *Lawḥ-i-Ridván*):

Verily, We have caused every soul to expire by virtue of Our irresistible and all-subduing sovereignty. We have, then, called into being a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men.

Bahá’u’lláh writes moreover:

¹⁴ *Majmú‘ih* 30 writes *bi-shinavand az gúsh-i-khúd*.

¹⁵ *Majmú‘ih* 30 writes *ṭáli‘ ar áyad*.

Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration. (*Tablets* 84, Lawḥ-i-Dunyá)

The second hemistich is reminiscent of the following words by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

From the beginning of time until the present day . . . the light of Divine Revelation hath risen in the East and shed its radiance upon the West. The illumination thus shed hath, however, acquired in the West an extraordinary brilliancy . . . In the books of the Prophets . . . certain glad-tidings are recorded which are absolutely true and free from doubt. The East hath ever been the dawning-place of the Sun of Truth. In the East all the Prophets of God have appeared . . . The West hath acquired illumination from the East but in some respects the reflection of the light hath been greater in the Occident. (qtd. in Shoghi Effendi, *World Order* 74-5)

14

‘*Álam-i-imkán bi-súzád ham khiyám-i-‘izz-i-quds,*
Gar bar-áyad bar¹⁶ samá yik náliy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

The earthly world and the holy and glorious bowers catch fire,
If heaven resounds with a sigh of His enrapturing Call.

This verse seems to hint at the beneficial effects of the new Revelation on all the worlds, even the supernatural worlds. The image of the “holy and glorious bowers (*khiyám-i-‘izz-i-quds*)” also is used in the Kitáb-i-Íqán where it could describe the spiritual worlds whence the Manifestations of God descend on earth:

The significance and essential purpose underlying these words is to reveal and demonstrate unto the pure in heart and the sanctified in spirit that they Who are the Luminaries of truth and the Mirrors reflecting the light of divine Unity, in whatever age and cycle they are sent down from their invisible habitations of ancient glory (*khiyám-i-ghayb-huwiyyih*) unto this world, to educate the souls of men and endue with grace all created things,

¹⁶ *Majmú‘ih* 30 writes *az*.

are invariably endowed with an all-compelling power, and invested with invincible sovereignty. (KI97, para.103; KMI73)

Thou art surely aware of their idle contention, that all Revelation is ended, that the portals of Divine mercy are closed, that from the day-springs of eternal holiness no sun shall rise again, that the Ocean of everlasting bounty is forever stilled, and that out of the Tabernacle of ancient glory (*khiyám-i-ghayb-i-rabbání*) the Messengers of God have ceased to be made manifest. (KI137, para.148; KMI107)

15

*Gúsh-i- ‘álam pák gardad zán-chih bi-shníd az jahán,
Gar dar-áyad yik damí dar ḥalqiy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.*

Mortal ears forget what they heard in the world,
If they just enter the circle of His enrapturing Call.

This verse seems to hint that the new Revelation implies the abandonment of whatever had been learnt from the past culture. The locution “the circle of His enrapturing Call (*ḥalqiy-i-yá Húy-i-ú*)” is better understood in the light of the Sufi explanations of the term *ḥalqih*, which Steingass also defines an “assembly, circle of friends, fraternity” (Steingass 428):

The sitting together of the Sufis in an assembly for the purpose of the remembrance of God is called a circle. The symbolism is that of links in a chain, all joined to one another and forged into a single unit. Likewise, the hearts of the Sufis in the circle of *samâ’* are so closely conjoined that they form a single heart. (Nurbakhsh 1:175)

The wording of this verse resembles what Bahá’u’lláh writes in the Kitáb-i-Íqán:

They that tread the path of faith, they that thirst for the wine of certitude, must cleanse themselves of all that is earthly—their ears (*gúsh*) from idle talk . . . (KI3, para.2; KMI2)

This concept is explained in doctrinal terms in the same book:

As He hath said: “When the heaven shall be cloven asunder [Koran 82:1].” By “heaven” is meant the heaven of divine Revelation, which is elevated with every Manifestation, and rent asunder with every subsequent one. By

“cloven asunder” is meant that the former Dispensation is superseded and annulled. I swear by God! That this heaven being cloven asunder is, to the discerning, an act mightier than the cleaving of the skies! Ponder a while. That a divine Revelation which for years hath been securely established; beneath whose shadow all who have embraced it have been reared and nurtured; by the light of whose law generations of men have been disciplined; the excellency of whose word men have heard recounted by their fathers; in such wise that human eye hath beheld naught but the pervading influence of its grace, and mortal ear hath heard naught but the resounding majesty of its command—what act is mightier than that such a Revelation should, by the power of God, be “cloven asunder” and be abolished at the appearance of one soul? Reflect, is this a mightier act than that which these abject and foolish men have imagined the “cleaving of the heaven” to mean? (KI44-5, para.46)

Shoghi Effendi explained the same concept in the following words:

If long-cherished ideals and time-honored institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine. (*World Order* 42)

16

*Níst gardad hast-u*¹⁷ *ham rang-i-qidam gardad ‘adam,*

Gar bar-áyad Ghayb-há az pardiy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

Life comes to naught, nothingness takes on eternity’s hues,

If the things unseen emerge from the veil of His enrapturing Call.

¹⁷ *Majmú‘ih* 30 writes *hast*.

This couplet could hint at the reversal of the values brought by the new Revelation. Bahá'u'lláh refers to this concept in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas:

Behold, the “mystery of the Great Reversal in the Sign of the Sovereign” hath now been made manifest . . . How many the outwardly pious who have turned away, and how many the wayward who have drawn nigh, exclaiming: “All praise be to Thee, O Thou the Desire of the worlds!” In truth, it is in the hand of God to give what He willeth to whomsoever He willeth, and to withhold what He pleaseth from whomsoever He may wish. He knoweth the inner secrets of the hearts and the meaning hidden in a mocker’s wink. How many an embodiment of heedlessness who came unto Us with purity of heart have We established upon the seat of Our acceptance; and how many an exponent of wisdom have We in all justice consigned to the fire. We are, in truth, the One to judge. He it is Who is the manifestation of “God doeth whatsoever He pleaseth,” and abideth upon the throne of “He ordaineth whatsoever He chooseth.” (KA75-6, para.157)

This verse is explained in the “Notes” as follows:

Bahá'u'lláh in one of His Tablets refers to the “symbol and allusion” of the “mystery of the Great Reversal in the Sign of the Sovereign.” He states: “Through this reversal He hath caused the exalted to be abased and the abased to be exalted,” and He recalls that “in the days of Jesus, it was those who were distinguished for their learning, the men of letters and religion, who denied Him, whilst humble fishermen made haste to gain admittance into the Kingdom.” (“Preface and Notes” 239n171)

17

Maḥv-i-muṭlaq gardad án-kash¹⁸ árzu’í dar dil¹⁹ ast,

Gar bi-bínad yik nazar án shu’liy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

Craving hearts vanish into utter self-effacement,

If they catch one glimpse of the flame of His enrapturing Call.

¹⁸ *Majmú‘ih* 30 writes *án-kas*.

¹⁹ *Majmú‘ih* 30 writes *sar*.

The first part of the couplet is reminiscent of a couplet by Majdúd Saná'í (ca.1045–ca.1141) quoted by Bahá'u'lláh in the Four Valleys:

Never the covetous heart (*dil bá árzú*) shall come to the stealer of hearts,
Never the shrouded soul unite with beauty's rose. (FV60; CV152)

When the seeker meets the Beloved, he falls in love and love “yieldeth no remedy but death, he walketh not save in the valley of the shadow (*vádíy-i-‘adam*, literally valley of nothingness)” (SV10; HV102). Therefore, the lover must renounce his “covetous heart,” that is, his own lower self, to mirror forth the divine attributes of the Beloved.

18

Kay tavánistí Masíḥ az gunbad-i-a ‘lá gudhasht,

Gar na-búdí rah-bar-ash yik na ‘riy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

How could have the Messiah crossed the heavenly vault,

Shouldn't He have been guided by the roar of His enrapturing Call?

This couplet seemingly hints at the image of Jesus descending from heaven, in which Jesus says: “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38, KJV). This reference is also present in other passages. For example, Bahá'u'lláh wrote in His Tablet to Pius IX: “He, verily, hath again come down from Heaven even as He came down from it the first time” (*Summons* 55, sec.1, para.102, *Súriy-i-Haykal*: Pope Pius IX). Jesus came down from heaven, guided by the revelation of the Most Great Spirit. From another perspective, it could hint at the image of Jesus ascending to the Highest Heaven through His ecstasy.

19

Kay tavánad ghayr-i-ú dar mulk-i-hastí pá-nihád,

Zan-kih báshad bas ghayúr án shahniy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

Besides Him, no one could set his foot into the world of being,

So earnest is the watcher of His enrapturing Call.

The concept of the jealousy of God, the central element of this verse, has been explained while commenting upon verse 7:

Any colour of strangeness (*ghayríyyat*) disappears from the pages of the world,
If a breeze wafts, exhaling the perfume of the lock of His enrapturing Call.

Shahnih means “A viceroy, vicegerent, representative, lieutenant; head of the police; a prefect; a mayor, provost; an ambassador; a peon or servant of a tax-gatherer” (Steingass 736) and Henri Wilberforce-Clarke (1840-1905), an officer in the British India corps, first translator of the *Bústán* of Sa‘dí and of the *Sikandar Námih* by Nízamí, translated it as “watchman” (Háfiz, *Dīvān* 158, “*Ghazalyát*,” no.64, v.10; *Divan* 54, “*Ghazalyát*,” no.47, v.8). Therefore this verse could denote that the Most Great Spirit,—“the watchman of His enrapturing Call (*shahniy-i-yá Húy-i-ú*)”—reveals the Oneness of God in the world of Existence through the Manifestation of God, “He . . . in Whose name the standard of Divine Unity hath been planted upon the Sinai of the visible and invisible worlds, proclaiming that there is none other God but Me, the Peerless, the Glorious, the Incomparable” (Bahá’u’lláh, *Summons* 49, sec.1, para.93, *Súriy-i-Haykal*). And thus the Manifestation of God is the only One Who sets “his foot in the world of being,” going beyond the barrier of otherness or alterity (*ghayríyyat*).

20

*Rang-i-hastí-rá na-bínad chashm-i-imkán, ay pizar,
Gar ravad bar ham damí án dídiy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.*

No mortal eye could see any hue of existence, O son,

If, for an instant, the eye would close of His enrapturing Call.

This verse could hint that existence is kept in life by the Most Great Spirit. Without it nothing would exist. This concept is exposed by Bahá’u’lláh in the following words:

There can be no doubt whatever that if for one moment the tide of His mercy and grace were to be withheld from the world, it would completely perish. (*Gleanings* 68, sec.XXVII, para.6)

Consider, for instance, the revelation of the light of the Name of God, the Educator. Behold, how in all things the evidences of such a revelation are manifest, how the betterment of all beings dependeth upon it . . . Were this

revelation to be withdrawn, all would perish. (*Gleanings* 189-90, sec.XCIII, para.13, Commentary on a verse from Sa‘dí)

I can have no doubt that should the holy breaths of Thy loving-kindness and the breeze of Thy bountiful favour cease, for less than the twinkling of an eye, to breathe over all created things, the entire creation would perish, and all that are in heaven and on earth would be reduced to utter nothingness. (PM89, sec.58, para.4)

It is the concept of continuous creation, typical of the Bahá’í Faith, better explained in later Writings, for example, *Lawḥ-i-Ḥikmat*. Bahá’u’lláh envisages a creation ruled by natural laws which are expressions of the Word of God, intended both as “the Cause which hath preceded the contingent world” and “the Command of God which pervadeth all created things” (*Tablets* 140, *Lawḥ-i-Ḥikmat*), that is, the creative impulse which brings into existence physical reality, but also the universal law pervading the entire creation.

21

Tishnagán, bar Salsabíl-i-quds-i-rabbání zaníd,

Kih shudih járí hamí án chashmiy-i-yá Huy-i-ú.

O thirsty ones, plunge into the holy, and sanctified waters,

As the fountain is flowing of His enrapturing Call.

The lovers are thirsty, *tishnagán*, plural of *tishnih*, “Thirsty, parched with thirst; eager, greedy, insatiable” (Steingass 303), of the Water of Life, which Bahá’u’lláh calls in this verse *Salsabíl*, explained by Steingass (693) as “Name of a fountain in Paradise; mellow wine; anything soft, tender, digestible.” Shoghi Effendi translates *Salsabíl-i-quds* as “sanctified waters” (*Gleanings* 323, sec.CLIII, para.1; *Muntakhabátí* 208). The lovers are here invited to allay their thirst at the fountain of Revelation, here called *chashmih*, “a fountain, source, spring” (Steingass 394). Bahá’u’lláh often mentions the thirst of human beings and the capacity of the Word of God to allay that thirst:

O banished and faithful friend! Quench the thirst (‘*aṭash*) of heedlessness with the sanctified waters of My grace, and chase the gloom of remoteness through the morning-light of My Divine presence. (*Gleanings* 323, sec.CLIII, para.1, *Lawḥ-i-Aḥmad bi-Fársi*; *Muntakhabátí* 208)

Verily I say, the world is like the vapor in a desert, which the thirsty (*ṣāhibān-i-‘atash*) dreameth to be water and striveth after it with all his might, until when he cometh unto it, he findeth it to be mere illusion. (*Gleanings* 328-9, sec.CLIII, para.8; *Lawḥ-i-Aḥmad bi-Fársí*; *Muntakhabátí* 211)

Thou well knowest, O my God, my Best-Beloved, that naught can quench the thirst (*ẓamá’*) I suffer in my separation from Thee except the waters of Thy presence . . . (PM58, sec.41, para.3; *Munáját* 44)

My remembrance of Thee, O my God, quencheth my thirst (*‘atash*), and quieteth my heart . . . (PM195, sec.114, para.6; *Munáját* 132)

Out of the pure milk, drawn from the breasts of Thy loving-kindness, give me to drink, for my thirst (*al-a ‘tāsh*) hath utterly consumed me. (PM234, sec.145, para.1; *Munáját* 157)

The attainment of this City quencheth thirst (*‘atash*) without water, and kindleth the love of God without fire. (KI198, para.217; KMI153)

O Lord! Dire thirst (*ẓamá’*) hath seized us, and with Thee are the soft-flowing waters of eternal life. (*Summons* 155, sec.2, para.41, Súriy-Ra’ís; *Majmu‘iy-i-Alváḥ-i Mubárakih* 101)

22

*Darvish, zín bish ma-zan nár-i-ma ‘ání dar jahán,*²⁰

Kih shudih yá Húy-i-ú áshuftiy-i-yá Húy-i-ú.

O Dervish, stop setting the fire of meanings to the world:

His enrapturing Call is entangled with His enrapturing Call.

This couplet is a *maqta’*, the final verse, calling the poet to silence. At the vision of the Beloved in love with Himself, the highest form of love we as human beings can conceive, all things are silent. This verse is reminiscent of many passages in the Bahá’í Writings that describe the greatness of God’s revelation “whose power hath caused the foundations of the mightiest structures to quake, every mountain to be crushed into dust, and every soul to be dumbfounded” (Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 196, sec.XCVI, para.3):

²⁰ *Majmú‘ih* 30 writes *Bish az ín, Darvish, ín tár-i-ma ‘ání-rá ma-zan*, that is “Stop playing, of Dervish, the lute of inner meanings.”

In this day the breeze of God is wafted, and His Spirit hath pervaded all things. Such is the outpouring of His grace that the pen is stilled and the tongue is speechless. (KI180-1, para.197)

Reveal then Thyself, O Lord, by Thy merciful utterance and the mystery of Thy divine being, that the holy ecstasy of prayer may fill our souls—a prayer that shall rise above words and letters and transcend the murmur of syllables and sounds—that all things may be merged into nothingness before the revelation of Thy splendour. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, qtd. in *Bahá’í Prayers* 69)

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