

## Self-Realization Through The Sufi Journey In The Realms Of Materialism: A Case Of Louise Glück's Poetic Persona

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### Abstract

*The poetry of Louise Glück (b. 1943) is characterized by the confusion and disorder that a seeker faces on the path of self-realization. The disorder is, in a way, a symbol of new knowledge and clarity. Hence, the poetic persona (the first person pronoun/ the speaker/ the adept/ the lover/ the subject self/ the voice/ the self) "I" in her verse is in a struggle with itself to reach some shore swimming across the ocean of multiple disorders. The study is about the poetic persona "I" as portrayed in Glück's poetry and its struggle to initiate a spiritual journey to find the ultimate truth. The persona in her poetry is a seeker that is in search of self-realization which is a spiritual and mystical notion in Sufism. The study traces several stages of the persona's journey that include existential crisis, self-awareness, self-purification, self-illumination, and its final stage self-realization or the fulfillment of life's purpose. For the theoretical insight to interpret the selected texts, Ibn-e-Arabi's mysticism was consulted as he is the first to systematize Islamic mysticism, that is, Sufism. The selected poetry of Glück was interpreted in the light of Sufism to find the poetic persona of Glück as a Sufi. However, the study concludes that the poetic persona of Glück remains within the station of awakening and purification of the self and fails to achieve illumination of it.*

**Keywords:** Materialism, Mysticism, Sufism, Self, Self-realization, Gnosis, Knowledge, Path, Poetic Persona.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The postmodern culture of the US is more bent on materialism leaving little room for its participants to ponder on spirituality. Materialism is directly opposite to spiritual aspects of the seeker's life. Spiritual thoughts, when raw, strike materialism, and generate internal disorder that a writer projects in their works. The study is about the spiritual underpinnings of Glück's poetry and an ongoing incessant struggle of the persona "I" that oscillates between cultural materialism and call of the self to decide the course of action. The subjective self in her poems is a divided individual that is torn between the two opposing forces. This tussle is the result of an existential crisis that an individual can ask. Hakim (1993) puts:

Rare are those who have left the noisy crowd and clung to the door of His Presence. They have displayed the 'stations' (maqamat) of those who came before and the 'spiritual states' (ahwal) of those who followed. They

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have followed the way of purification and spiritual training and that of love and invocation; (p. 18).

Her poetry is aggressive and challenging but quite confusing. Morris (2006) describes the poetry of Glück as a mystic poet with an ambivalent attitude towards institutional religion. The self in her poems is consistently at war with it. Moreover, this destructive facet of it, is in a way, some kind of explicit or implicit charge against the ultimate Truth. The persona seems to be constantly coming to the doorsteps of the Creator having little clue about the light and guidance. The poetry of Glück is a mark of confusion for those who are practitioners of spirituality. Glück (b. 1943) is believed to be one of the finest contemporary American lyric poets. She is a mystical poet but without any institutional label. Zazula (2020) asserts that “[it would be presumptuous to “nail” a consistently evasive poet such as Louise Glück with a single religious label” (p. 255).

The study aims to locate the journey of the persona, that is, the subjective self, which is mostly hindered by worldly pursuits and material veils and finally, it results in self-realization. Self-realization has multiple dimensions as it has its roots in psychology (Akram et al., 2023; Akram et al., 2022; Ramzan et al., 2023), anthropology, and many other sciences; however, the dimension of self-realization for this study is purely theological and spiritual. Usman (2020) explains that it is the beginning of the journey of the wayfarer (adept) towards God. It has its milestones and paths – It begins with the awakening of the self. Self is the inner dimension of the adept that is the real being of him. It is the spark of light and it is present in all the children of Adam, however, there is a need to discover it because it is hidden from material senses. Chittick (2005) explains that the human self has two dimensions – the base self and the noble self. The base self is the earthly part of human beings and the noble self is the divine part of them (Ramzan et al., 2023). The seeker awakes it and starts the journey

The first milestone – the awakening of the self leads to the tougher and harder milestone which is the purification of the self. The Self awakes and begins the journey as it cannot stay idle, it has to move on and the force that pushes the adept is love. Schimmle (1975) traces the wayfarer’s journey from the beginning to the ultimate destination of self-realization. She further explains that the stage of purification of the self requires consistent patience, blood, and sweat because in this stage the adept is surrounded by material desires greater than ever and the role of Satan becomes more active. Arberry (2002) also points out the stage of purification as necessary and harder in the journey of the seeker. It is necessary because God is pure and light and only light and purity can come into contact with Him. Therefore, this stage is necessarily a tougher one and needs to be carried out consistently.

However, Schimmle, (1982) asserts that the great master (guide) is necessary because the journey of two hundred years can be traveled in two hours if the master is *Insan ul Kamil* (the perfect man). The next milestone of self-realization is the illumination of the self. Chittick (2017) explains that illumination of the wayfarer is possible only when the base self is completely annihilated and the heart of the adept is clean enough to reflect the attributes of God. The self is at this stage alive, healthy, and blessed. It lives in the presence of God and the microcosm comes to life with all the manifestations of Reality. Here the adept is *Insan-ul-Kamil*, that is, *Khalifa-tu-Allah* (the second in command to Allah). The Sufis strive to achieve this perfection in this temporary world of senses.

Sufism is Islamic mysticism and it has its roots in the concept of *Tawhid* (Oneness of God). Its origin is not determined, however, there are different opinions, for example, Chittick (2010) is of the view that Sufism is from *suf*, that is, woolen dress because the Sufis of the

second-century hijrah was used to wear a thick dress of canvas or suf. It follows the path of love that has different stages and the ultimate end of it is to get close to God and live in His presence. Burkhart (2006) explains that Sufism is from Tasawwuf which is an inner world of the religion Islam; hence, it is about the esoteric aspect of the religion and it is converse, in a way, “exoteric” aspect of it (p. 1). It is the path of the wayfarer (salik) to reach God and live with it. This desire to seek God is as old as man himself is on earth. The first man Adam when he was sent down to hearth from heaven, started searching for his Creator, repented of his mistake, and was forgiven and taken into divine blessings. It accounts for that it is innate to human beings to look for reality and to struggle to achieve it. It begins with the question, ‘who am I?’ and sets the seeker on a constant journey. It is the beginning of the awakening of the soul that is natural to lead to further inquiries, that is, the tougher stages of the journey. The subjective self of Glück’s poetry is a wayfarer that awakes when struck by nature or another phenomenon. It lacks light or guidance and first, it probes its darkness to find some clue of reality. In a confused state of mind and heart (bast) it moves on. Chittick (2007) argues that those who confuse Sufism, generally, rely upon expressions such as Islamic mysticism, esoterism, or spirituality.

Geoffery (2005) dispels the allegations leveled by hardliners on Sufism as they regard it as an outside cult having nothing to do with Islam. In their views it is not from the Qur’an but a later development. In the days of the Prophet (peace be upon him) his companions were in the presence of the realized and perfect man (the prophet), therefore, they were the first to experience the divine light and there was no need to name their spiritual condition. They were the witness of the divine vision. Therefore, in the days of the Prophet (peace be upon him) Sufism was without a name. The terminology and doctrine of it came into use later in the ninth century during the process of codification and process. Moreover, the fundamentals of law, fundamentals of religion, comparative law, terminology of hadith, and Qur’anic commentary did not exist during the time of the prophet (peace be upon him) (pp. 50-51) Chittick (2007) concludes that Sufism constitutes ‘submission (Islam), Faith (Iman), and doing the beautiful (Ihsan). Thus Sufism is Islam and as per Islamic teachings (p.4).

Many studies are present that explore the mysticism of Louise Glück and try to pin some label of religion on her. Morris (2006) declares her as “a mystic poet” but with ambivalence in her treatment of the subject. Her discourse springs from Gnosticism in line with Judaism. Her poetry is personal and based on her beliefs of mystical dimensions. Most often her perspective is transpersonal which is particularly visible in her spiritual poems. The image of God is hidden in materialism it irritates the subjective self; hence, the Godhead of Glück is not pantheism, although, it is not transcendence (p. 3). There is no clear-cut boundary of mystical dimension in her poems and her status as a mystic remains an enigma. However, a strong identity crisis remains persistent.

Hassan (2021) in his comparative study examines Glück’s poetry to trace the identity crisis and several external and internal factors responsible for it. The poetic persona remains confused between personal identity and the larger concepts of it – cultural and national ones. The voices are multiple as if there were multiple speakers switching the voices. Azcuy (2011) is of the view that there are three possible voices – the author as the subject, the inner self of the author, or the reader himself. In the case of Glück’s poetry, it is the inner self that is in conversation with himself and God. In her poems, the addressee is fervently craved for. Her poetics persona is alive and envisions an overhearer and a listener, that is, sometimes the reader and her subjective self. Sastri (2014) also asserts that the subjective voice of her poetry is her personal self which is naïve and self-expressive. It is intuitive. Gosmann (2011) also argues

that she is an intuitive poet who remembers the past and its misrepresentation in poetry. “Poetic memory embraces a vision of the self as malleable and mysterious, characterized by a radical otherness, and shaped by unconscious forces, while it remains open for continual imaginative reinvention” (p. 16). Like the poetry of Sufis, her poetry is a turbulent message of peace and love. Holmqvist (2023) equates her with Søren Kierkegaard in terms of the battle of the individual with himself as it is about humans and alive in times of pandemic. She defies the established norms. These two thematically converge but indirectly advocate for a life of resilience of a stoic. It is to embrace suffering as a way forward.

A mystic, however, is not afraid of the sufferings of the world. He has little concern with them and is least affected by them. It is the search of the seeker to find a new life. Seluzicki (1999) is also of the view that Glück gives new meanings to the term ‘new life’. She, as a seeker, travels on the path of love and reaches maturity, coming back a revived and resurrected individual. She considers worldly occupations such as earthly love, heartbreak, romance, and marriage as merely distractions and shadows. Gordon (2000) argues that the poetic persona of Glück is a product of her biological, psychological, and spiritual experiences that Julia Kristeva calls borderline experiences. The poetic persona of her poetry conceives the “Self” in a mode of reconciliation with material culture and spiritual yearnings. Koplowitz-Breier (2021) views Glück’s poetry in the greater canon of Judaism and the retelling of Biblical stories by women. Glück’s personal pronoun makes attempts to win over patriarchy but hardly makes it. Therefore, in her poetry, there is a deep yearning to come up with the real self and live with it. Her poetry has been interpreted within the framework of many other spiritual traditions. The study evaluates the responses of other readers within the domain of mysticism and spirituality ranging from Christianity to Judaism and then presents a Muslim mysticism – Sufism to view the selected poetry. The research gap, that is, Muslim Sufism is filled by this study.

## **2. Methodology**

This study is an analytical, critical, and textual analysis of the poetry of Glück. It follows the qualitative approach and interprets the selected poems to answer the research questions. The poems from a range of works of the poet are selected which fulfill the purpose of the study, unlike random sampling. Thus, this study is an analysis of Glück’s poetry from a Muslim Sufi perspective. For this purpose, the mysticism of Ibn-e-Arabi was consulted for insight to interpret the selected text. The study has the following objectives:

1. To trace elements of confusion, existential crisis, and reclusion from the material world.
2. To trace elements of self-realization in the poetry of Glück.
3. To uncover the traces of Sufism and its several stages that a wayfarer undertakes to travel on the path of self-realization.

### **2.1 Theoretical framework**

For the interpretation of the data and answering the research questions the insight was taken from Ibn-e-Arabi’s theory of mysticism. In Muslim tradition, he is known as shaykh al-akbar (the “greatest master”). He was born in 1165 AD in Andalusian Spain which was a centre of cultural glory and knowledge. The study takes his ideas from his books, *Fusus al-Hikam* and *Futuh al-Makkiyya*. Originally written in Arabic, these two books have been translated into many languages of the world. The present study makes use of its English translations The

Bezels of Wisdom (2015) and *The Meccan Revelations* (2002, & 2004). *The Meccan Revelations* is a comprehensive encyclopedia of the ideas of Ibn-e-Arabi. Sufism (Islamic mysticism) is deeply and solely connected with the seeker's heart. Hakim (1993) writes: "Ibn 'Arabi, like all Sufis, has made the heart of the servant the centre of his real existence and action" (p. 34). The knowledge of self comes from the heart. Arabi says in *The Meccan Revelations*: "[this knowledge of God which follows the knowledge of self may be either a knowledge of one's incapacity to attain knowledge of God or a knowledge of the fact that he is God" (II 500.16). further, he says: "As knowledge of self has no end so there is no end to knowledge of God...hence the knower says in every state, 'Increase me in my knowledge' and God increases him in knowledge of self that he may increase in knowledge of his Lord" (III 198.33). Moreover, the seeker the seeker has to move with constancy. He concludes: When we know our souls we know our Lord like two exactly similar things hence 'He who knows etc.' and hence (The Qur'an, 41:53) "We show them Our signs upon the horizons and in themselves till it is clear that He is the Real" (III, 404.28).

### 3. DISCUSSION

The first stage of the Sufi journey of self-realization is confusion or existential crisis. It raises questions about existence and the true meanings of life. Life cannot be led without purpose; it has to be examined and reexamined by the sane people on earth. It is a thinking process that requires answers to serious questions of life. The poetic persona of Glück's poetry every now and then seems to be struggling with this existential crisis and is continually in search of meanings of life. Faith, however, in a culture and society that is heavily dominated by science and technology is on the lower side. The struggle of the poetic persona (subjective self) seems to be continuous because in the beginning the confusion overtakes it and leaves it with multiple questions with half or no answer. It signals some new gnosis nearing it. In *Matins from Wild Iris* (1992) the persona is confused about its identity, there is something missing inside it as a seeker who is searching for reality. With the help of imagery of gardening, the speaker is weeding in the flower beds to come to know the hidden truth, the originality of life but fails to find any. The Sufi path of self-realization requires unprecedented courage as it demands sacrifice. The speaker says:

I'm looking for courage, for some evidence  
my life will change, though  
it takes forever, checking  
each clump for the symbolic  
leaf, (Glück, 1992, p. 3).

It is the sacrifice of the material world that is one of the biggest hurdles on the Sufi path of love. The seeker walks, falls, rises, walks, and falls, till the time the self is fully awakened. The persona 'I' is fed up with materialism in all its forms and manifestations and looking for the awakening of the self. It is not simple but rather a complete transformation of the seeker's (adept) life. It is the change that is needed in perspective, psyche, and way of life, morals, and deeds. The world is no longer attractive to the seeker once the self is awakened. Although the change is certain, the duration and sequence of certain stages are subject to the sacrifice of the adept (wayfarer). Arabi argues: "refraining from the excesses (i.e., the desires)

of the bodily members and the promptings of the egoistic self (the nafs), for if you cannot distinguish between those waters (i.e., which are truly pure and divinely revealed, and which polluted by human interference)” (2004). The animal (base self) is to be curbed and the worldly ties to be suspended to be fully dependent on one God, for He talks to the seeker in his seclusion.

The capacity of the seeker determines the intensity of adherence to the cause. However, (Schimille, 1975) argues that awakening of the self begins with confusion, it gets longer if the wayfarer is not well directed. Moreover, it is dependent on spiritual experiences. The poetic persona of Glück is a wayfarer looking for some change through spiritual experiences but there are multiple veils of materialism that delay it. The world to the persona appears big then small then very small because distances are removed. /“The world was very large. / Then the world was small. /” (Glück, 2022, p. 3). In the Sufi path, the world is considered dangerous because it is a snare that is set on the path to God. It is described with crude and harsh words. The persona of her poems also takes it down as a low place and encourages the listeners to be aware of it and be aware of the truth. “/a place where human life has no meaning. /” (Glück, 2006, p. 14).

The journey of self-realization has to be maintained by the seeker without rest – there is no relaxation in it. Chittick (2015) is of the view that the time, the seeker stops it, by any means, he goes back to the point zero from where he has to start it again. Till the time the self is fully awake it has to be cleaned from all the sins and worldly desires. It is the purification of the self that requires a greater amount of struggle. Purification of the self is an exploration of the noble self as well as a fight against the base self.

The base self is to be dominated and the seeker has to ask for pardon for all his previous life he spent in oblivion of the truth. God says in the Qur’an, “Truly, God loves those who repent, and He loves those who cleans themselves.”(2:222). Repentance is necessary for the seeker of God all through the journey of self-realization. The seeker seeks forgiveness of his Lord all the time because the noble self remains in danger. However, when he finds acceptance in the court of his Lord, he is protected by Him. Likewise, the poetic persona of Glück, in the poem Parable of Faith, states:

Do you know

What forgiveness means? It means

The world has sinned, the world

Must be pardoned—(2004).

The poetic persona is sure of the fact that forgiveness initiates a fresh start and looks for the signs of God. Hence, the poetic persona of Glück seeks it to set himself fully on the journey of self-realization. Cleanliness of the heart is inevitable because it is the dwelling place of the noble self. As Arabi says: “When God created the earth of your body, He created within it the Ka’ba that is your heart. He made the heart house the noblest house in the faithful man” (Futūhāt, 5: 477–78).

The poetic persona as a wayfarer is a microcosm and the universe is a macrocosm these two reflect the manifestations of God. The adept of Glück is looking for the manifestations outside and trying to connect its real self. The reality is out there, every seeker thinks so and

searches it out there. However, the earth is not a place of the seeker nor of God because it is a low place. For Glück the place of the wayfarer is beyond the limits of this world of senses “[you]’ve been living, / it seems, somewhere else, in the silence of the night sky. /” (Glück, 2006, p. 13). To the persona “I” human life has no meaning on earth. It is an utter kind of dilemma that a wayfarer comes across in the first stage of the sufi journey of self-realization. For her persona as a wayfarer, this low world among the worlds created by God, heavens, and paradise is not a fit place to live. The identity of the wayfarer is not earthly rather it is heavenly, however, there is a need to discover it and live with it. “You’re not a creature in body. /You exist as the stars exist,” (p. 13). The relation of man with this world is false, not the existence.

The seeker according to the speaker of Telescope needs to establish a relationship with the truth that is veiled. It is the vision and the eye of the heart that needs to be discovered. Schimmle (1975) makes it simple that the seeker can travel the journey of the Sufi path with the help of “love for the Creator” in hours that is otherwise a journey of two hundred years (p. 108). In case, love is missing or it is absent in the first stage it has to be located and ignited because this divine spark is present in every human being. It is the divine breath of God that he blew into Adam and the same breath continues in his children till the end of this world. Without love, as Glück puts in the poem *Matins* (2012) the plight of the wayfarer is like a gardener who is weeding the garden to find the seed if it is sprouting. The seed is the metaphor for the divine breath, the spark of life that can connect the seeker with the Creator.

You want to see my hands?

As empty now as at the first note.

Or was the point always

to continue without a sign? (p. 3).

The poetic persona of Glück awakes with a shock and discovers the reasons for the shock gradually, moving from confusion to clarity which further leads to confusion. However, it determines that it belongs somewhere else and this world is not its home. The home is beyond the boundaries of this world of material and senses. Sometimes, the seeker comes in a state of *bast* (extension/ expansion) and it is proceeded by the state of *qabz* contraction. If the adept is in a state of expansion he is happy and enjoys the light of God and if he is in a state of contraction then he cries because he misses the light of the Beloved. Hence, sometimes in the process of weeding his hands are empty and cannot reach the essence – the seed. Schimmle (1975) argues that these two conditions of the seeker overlap each other during the stage of awakening of the self. Glück (1995) in her poem *Aubade* traces the progress of the seeker that when the seeker starts moving toward God, He paves his path, and if the seeker continues the journey with love he achieves higher stations of self-realization because “a cry / so common.../” (p. 140) becomes the guide of him. It wakes the seeker and the seeker wakes his noble self. Glück (1995) equates it with the call of the gull wakes the persona again and again and introduces it with reality. The bird is the self of the speaker who is now ready to abandon the material world and embrace the truth. Gradually, the persona breaks free from the material world and finds solace in nature where there are explicit manifestations of the Truth.

The seeker is an impatient lover and keeps on moving on the spiritual journey of self-realization because his ultimate destination is union with the Beloved. Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that Allah says, “[...Whoever draws close to Me by the length of a hand, I will

draw close to him by the length of an arm. Whoever draws close to Me the by length of an arm, I will draw close to him by the length of a fathom. Whoever comes to Me walking, I will come to him running. Whoever meets Me with enough sins to fill the earth, not associating any partners with Me, I will meet him with as much forgiveness.” (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 2687). God paves the path of the lover and draws him nearer. This journey is covered more quickly with the wings of love than it could be by any other means. Love finds expression in a heart pure of worldly lust and desire.

The Beloved is pure and it lives in the heart that is pure. Therefore, the purity of the heart is of utmost importance. Moreover, having awakened the self, the seeker further sets on the journey and becomes impatient to come into the court of the beloved. Here, he has to clean his self. The self is attracted by the luster of the material world. The earthly body of the adept is from earth, hence, it is prone to earthly desires. It wants luxury and pleasure and all the things that belong to the material world. Whereas, the noble self (soul) of the seeker is otherworldly and yearns to go back to its home.

However, in this life on earth, it strives to be in the presence of the Beloved. For this, the lover (adept, seeker, wayfarer) works on his ethics. He sets himself to do what the Beloved loves him to do and to avoid what He dislikes. The Beloved loves His creation. God says in the Qur’an, “My mercy embraces all things,” (7:156). Similarly, God says in the Bible, “The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made” (Psalm 145:9). Love is an essential component of the Sufi discourse. The persona of Glück’s poetry also uses love as a vehicle to achieve self-realization, however, at the stage of purification it strives to purify the heart to discover the microcosm where he can witness the manifestations of God. Thus, the seeker as a lover falls in love with God’s creation and finds a place in His court. It is now the cleanliness of the heart that becomes possible through the love of humanity and the love of the Creator. One by one, the seeker burns away the base self and its worldly desires. The persona in the poem *Inferno* comes to know the need to get free from materialism. The persona burns “the pyre” (42) for himself to end the sufferings of confusion that have been inflicted upon his soul. It says:

I thought this was the end of my body: fire

Seemed the right end for hunger;

They were the same thing. (Glück, 1999, p. 42)

The toughest thing to do is to break free from the earthly body and to clear the mirror of the heart, where, there lives the Beloved. It is a constant and continuous process. To get rid of the body does not necessarily mean to abandon the world altogether; it means to neglect and ignore its demand which creates a veil of forgetfulness upon the eyes of the lover. It is to say goodbye to all those who prevent the seeker from seeking truth and living with it. The seeker is free to participate fully in the culture he lives in and perform all the social and economic activities within the prescribed limits given by God. No harm should come to humanity otherwise the Beloved will get angry and the lover will lose his position in His sight. It will hamper the purification of the self as well. Therefore, the persona deems it fit to burn the body that does not live as per the commandments of God and injures the merits of humanity. Here, hunger is used as a metaphor for lust and desire for materialism that has to come to an end for the purification of the self. Hunger comes from the body, hence, the right thing is to burn them both away for the purification of the heart.



In *Epithalamium* (2006), the persona swings between materialism and spirituality – body and soul, the relationship with earthly love, and divine love. The poem runs on the struggle of the persona to climb the ladder of self-realization through the acts of its purification. As a seeker, the persona has been witnessing the transformation of others: “/Their bodies were a preparation” (p. 119). This world for him is a place of “pain” and “formless grief” that is linked with the “body”. Therefore, the persona in acts of purification is quite certain that it is the body that is a veil and an object of pain. The veil has to be lifted so that the seeker is elevated. Moreover, the body is the vehicle of earthly desires which is called “hunger” by the persona. It is the expression and “language” of the body. As long as the dust of material/ earthly desires remains on the mirror, the language of the noble self remains a far cry. However, the noble self cannot suspend its striving for perfection. Although, Satan, as a predator, and hunter comes stealthily from the forest of materialism and distracts the seeker. Thus, the persona in the poem *Liberation* (2006) is between the devil and the deep blue sea. Hence, he laments, “/My mind is clouded/” (p. 117), he cannot see the face of Reality, nevertheless, he continues the acts of purification. The analogy of the hunter and the hunted in the poem overtly describes the fight of the seeker with his base self and to subdue it only to liberate the noble self.

He flew

through the empty forest

/

that part of me

that was the victim. (Glück, 2006, p. 172)

It is the hunter (Satan) who is the loser at the end of the game. Purification is more difficult because there is a greater and more vehement distraction of materialism the seeker has to fight with to maintain the purification of the self. This battle of the selves, base versus noble, continues on the field of the heart of the seeker and these opposite forces try to pull him on their side. Hence, it is the test of the steadfastness of the seeker. Likewise, the persona, in the poem *The Garment* (1999) is exasperated to stand on solid ground. Here, it seems to him that his soul has lost its vitality in the face of materialism but it is not “completely” annihilated. The cause that disrupts the purification of the self is not “solitude”, which is essential for the sufi journey, but “mistrust” (p. 20). It is the mistrust of the persona on his capacities to purify himself; as a raw seeker, he cannot take further steps toward the Beloved as he is tired and doubtful.

One by one, the seeker removes bad ethics inculcates good ethics, and keeps on purifying his self. The more he struggles for purification, the more he is embraced by the divine light. Nevertheless, the purification of the self is a constant battle between body and soul because both belong to different worlds. For the persona, the body in this material world is a garment to the soul but it is an unfit one. For him, as long as the seeker does not awake to realize the prisoner (soul) inside him, the prisoner starves and “shrinks” (p. 20). To him, it is the soul only that is capable of standing before the divine with the “divine” grace (p. 20). Only the purified self can have a look at the divine. When it is purified, it can realize its potential and can live with it receiving the divine “grace” (Glück, 1999, p. 20).

The persona of Glück awakes and purifies his Self from materialism to come into the presence of divine grace. It is now at this stage completely focused on the spirit (soul) which is the divine part of human beings on earth. The persona at this stage is now capable of removing the garment (unveiling of the veil) with a new hope of a new life, “/ and when hope was returned to me / it was another hope entirely. /” (Glück, 1999, p. 20).

Next to purification, the higher station of self-realization is the illumination of the self. Here, the seeker is absolutely free from materialism. He has the least concern with worldly desires because at this point his heart is filled with love. Love is now stronger and weightier than all other desires. Now, the seeker opens his eyes into a brand new world as Glück says:

Like a door

The body opened and

The soul looked out. (Glück, 1999, p. 23)

Love is now stronger and the soul is no more a prisoner looking out not from a window but from the “door”. The dichotomy of window and door is self-evident that the prisoner is now at a higher station and has been embraced by the divine light as his heart is illuminated with the immortal love that according to Glück is opposite to the earthly love. The seeker cannot perceive Truth by virtue of perception. Human earthly senses have limitations, what a person perceives at a meter does not perceive at a mile, and what a mile does not perceive at twenty miles. Arabi says, “The Creator is not sensed, i.e. He is not perceived by the senses by us while we are seeking to recognise Him. We do not know Him by the means of the senses.”(Arabi, 2004, p. 121).

The poetic persona of the poet is bewildered and uncertain all through his struggle to reach truth but seems to fail to live with it. It is because of doubt, as it never leaves him and he does not completely come into the shadow of faith. Faith is the foundation and without it, the building of self-realization will crumble. After awakening the self and putting a lot of effort into purifying it, illumination is still far away because the poetic persona still remains doubtful every now and then, purification is meant to strengthen the faith but it is not there. In *The Retreating Wind* the persona is addressed by God: “/ your lives are the bird's flight / /which begins and ends in stillness /” (Glück, 1992). The persona fails to grab the truth which is self-evident in the manifestations of the Lord, the dust on the heart of him does not completely vanish, and one of the reasons is that there is no guide (murshid / hadi). Had there been some perfect guide, the persona may not have wavered on this journey and reached the destination. In her poem *Violets* the persona monologues with God:

in all your greatness knowing

nothing of the soul's nature,

which is never to die: poor sad god,

either you never have one

or you never lose one. (Glück, 1992)

Since there is no wujud (existence) other than God, there is no question of any centre to remain everlasting in the cosmos which is the reflection of God's attributes. However, the persona of Glück seems to be eternal and real without having realized his self completely and his Creator, the Eternal. It asserts in the poem *The Witchgrass*:

I don't need your praise  
to survive. I was here first,  
before you were here, before  
you ever planted a garden.  
And I'll be here when only the sun and moon  
are left, and the sea, and the wide field.  
I will constitute the field. (Glück, 1992)

Nothing is and nothing will remain but God. God is the necessary being and all the forms around are merely possible beings. The discussion is concluded with the remarks of the persona of Glück in the poem *The Gold Lily*:

As I perceive  
I am dying now and know  
I will not speak again, will not  
survive the earth, be summoned  
out of it again, (Glück, 1992).

Here, the persona realizes his fana (annihilation) which is not an annihilation in God to subsist in God but a perishing of an earthly object that fails to find meaning. Still, there is a long way of self-realization to be covered by the persona, so far it is close to the station of illumination of the self. It can be hoped that in her next volume of poetry, if there could be any, the persona may touch the threshold of the beloved, and be accepted because it is a continuous knocking at the door and only the perfect ones patiently wait for the call from inside.

## **CONCLUSION**

Louise Glück is a contemporary mystic poet who talks deeply and speaks about the meanings of life and the relationship of man with God. Her poetic voice (subjective self/ poetic persona) is the voice of a seeker of God who sets himself on the journey of self-realization. He covers initial stations of awakening of the self and purification of the self also having supplications for forgiveness from the Creator. However, the presence of the true guide is missing from the life of the poetic persona, therefore, the bewilderment of the persona is justified because it is the true guide (hadi/ murshid) whose heart is pure and can purify the heart of the seekers where the attributes and manifestations of God dwell. Illumination is maintained by the guidance of

the guide and love of the seeker because love is a super force that can fight all the distractions of materialism and bring the seeker close to the Beloved which is the ultimate desire of every seeker in the world.

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