



## ‘Manifestation’ in Semnani’s al-Urwah and Its Connection to the Opinions of Ibn al-‘Arabi and the Beliefs of al-Ash‘ari

Seyyed-Mohammad Dashti<sup>1</sup>  | Somayyeh Sohrabi<sup>2</sup> 

1. Corresponding Author, Assistant Professor, Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Salman Farsi University, Kazerun, Iran. Email: [dr.dashti@kazerunsfu.ac.ir](mailto:dr.dashti@kazerunsfu.ac.ir)

2. PhD Student, Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Salman Farsi University, Kazerun, Iran. Email: [s.sohrabi@kazerunsfu.ac.ir](mailto:s.sohrabi@kazerunsfu.ac.ir)

### Abstract

One of the significant topics of mystical worldview is the concept of “Manifestation” and appearance of Supreme Being in the world. Ala'a al-Dawla Semnani is one of the prominent mystics of 8th century AH in whose masterpiece, Al-Urwah, manifestation has an especial place. In the present descriptive-analytical study, we have endeavored to illustrate the types of manifestations, its terminologies, and the unique metaphors that attributed to it in Ibn 'Arabi's theories. By providing evidences from 'Al-Urwah', we aim to demonstrate that Semnani has drawn upon Ibn 'Arabi's concepts of manifestation and its related terminologies. Findings of the present research indicate that the primary source of Ala'a al-Dawla's words on manifestation is the thoughts of Ibn 'Arabi. Therefore, it is necessary to revise and change the current viewpoints regarding the thought relation between Ala'a al-Dawla and Ibn 'Arabi. In spite of his famous opposition to Ibn 'Arabi on the issue of the unity of existence (Monism), Sheikh of Semnan has followed Ibn 'Arabi's commentary on the issue of manifestation. On the other hand, the idea of manifestation in 'Al-Urwah' has been explained and influenced by Ash'ari's beliefs and firmly linked to the ideas of Divine knowledge and will of God. This observation challenges some claims about the Shi'ite affiliation of Semnani.

**Keywords:** Ala` al-Dawla Semnani, Ash‘ari, al-Urwah, Ibn ‘Arabi, Manifestation.

### Introduction

One of the most important theoretical concepts in Ibn 'Arabi's mysticism is the concept of “Manifestation” which is, in a sense, the main foundation of his mystical worldview in such a way that it can be said that his theory of “unity of existence” (Monism) completely arose from his attitude towards “manifestation”. The “personal unity of existence” which is the explanation of the presence of an absolute existence in the entire universe is nothing but the God's manifestation.

Before Ibn 'Arabi, the term Tajli (manifestation) was, more than anything else, a spiritual concept that would explain the way of mystical seeker's epistemic approach to Allah through the removal of obstacles. In the school of Ibn 'Arabi, manifestation has also become an ontological idea that is responsible for explaining the system of existence and the way of the relationship between God and creatures, and also the connection between the



multiplicity of phenomenal worlds and the absolute unity of the Almighty God. Ibn 'Arabi's systematic theory about manifestation is unprecedented among the previous Sufis.

In his works, Ibn 'Arabi has proposed two main types of manifestation, i.e. the holier grace, or the intrinsic manifestation (Feiz e Aghdas), and the holy grace, or the manifestation of attributes (Feiz e Moghaddas). The two Holier and Holy graces (manifestations) belong to the two positions of oneness (Ahadiyat) and unity (Vahdaniyat), respectively. The position of oneness is the position of God's inherent knowledge about his own essence. In this position, God does not have any kind of manifestation by names and attributes. But, in the position of unity, the almighty God is manifested by his names and attributes. This is the position of God's detailed knowledge of creatures.

“Fixed entities” (A'ayan e Thabete) are the intellectual forms of things that have been fixed in the sight of Almighty God since eternity. The role of fixed entities in manifestation is important, because if the fixed entities did not appear and exist, the universe would not have come into being.

The most prominent concept in *Al-Urwah Le Ahl al-Khalwa wa Al-Jalwa*, the most famous work of Sheikh A'la al-Dawlah Semnani, (died 736 AH), is also manifestation. Like Ibn 'Arabi, he gave an ontological position to the manifestation and explained the mechanism of creation with it. Semnani considers the world to be a manifestation of God and like Sheikh Akbar, he also believes that anything other than God is nothing more than an illusion.

### Research Findings

Examining the issue of manifestation and its types in the *al-Urwah* and comparing it with Ibn 'Arabi's views show the influence of Ibn 'Arabi on A'laa al-Dawlah Semnani in such a way that its signs can be clearly observed in the different parts of *al-Urwah*. Sheikh has used terms of Ibn 'Arabi such as Essence position (Maqam Zaat), oneness and unity, hidden sphere (e'ama), talent and the like to express manifestation. The basis of Semnani's discussion about manifestation is the narration of hidden treasure (Kanz e Makhfi). In *Al-Urwah*, Sheikh deduces from this hadith the two statuses of "oneness and unity", which are undoubtedly taken from Ibn 'Arabi. By referring to the role of love as the source of creation, Sheikh A'laa al-Dowlah Semnani points to the manifestations of Essential Oneness and attribute unity, which are a translation of Ibn 'Arabi's views.

Sheikh 'Alaa al-Dawlah Semnani also refers to "e'ama" which is a special term used by Ibn 'Arabi and considers it to be compatible with the position of unity and the first determination.

Like Ibn 'Arabi, the author of *al-Urwah* believes that all creatures have been created according to their talents. Semnani, influenced by Ibn 'Arabi's theory of fixed entities' talent, believes that although the manifestations of almighty God are countless, everything depends on the talent of manifestation. The word *al-Urwah* in this case is the same as Ibn 'Arabi's words in *Fusus*.

Examining the issue of manifestation in *Al-Urwah's*, in addition to clarifying Ibn 'Arabi's influence on him, reveals Semnani's viewpoint about an important theological debate, namely Determinism and free will, revealing his theological denomination. Semnani does



not deviate from Ash'ari beliefs in bringing up the issue of manifestation and creation. He considers God to be the only effective existence in the world. Sheikh, like Ash'ari, believes that God has been aware of the details of affairs from the eternal day. All creatures are created according to God's knowledge and will.

## Conclusion

1. Although Sheikh A'laa al-Dawlah Semnani did not like Muhyi-alddin Ibn 'Arabi's opinion about the "unity of existence", but according to his words about manifestation, it can be said that his thoughts about this key concept were influenced by Andalusia Sheikh. In fact, the contents of al-Urwah from this respect are the same as those mentioned by Ibn 'Arabi in "Fusus-ul-Hakam and Fotuh at e Makkiye".
2. To express the manifestation, Sheikh has used terms of Ibn A'rabi such as: the position of unity and oneness, hidden sphere (e'ama) and the talent of fixed entities.
3. Semnani, like Asha'reh, consider God's knowledge to be eternal and dominant over everything. Whenever manifestation and creation are the topic of discussion, he brings it up in connection with knowledge and divine will. Semnani's firm belief in the principles of Asha'reh shows that some people's claim about him to be a Shi'ite is not true.

## References

- Ash'ari, A. (1991). *Essays on Islam and Discord of Muslims*. Mohammad Mohiuddin. Abdulhamid's research. Cairo: Maktaba al-Nahda al-Masriyyah. (in Arabic)
- \_\_\_\_ (2019). *Abstaining from the fundamentals of religion*. Investigation and suspension of Dr. Fuquah Hossein Mahmoud. Cairo: Darul Ansar. [In Arabic ].
- Ibn 'Arabi, M.(1992.)*fusus al-Hikam*. Correction and suspension by Abu Alaa Afifi. Tehran: Al-Zahra. (in Arabic).
- Jami, A. (1992). *Naghd Al- nus*. correction and suspension by William Chittick. Tehran: Institute of Cultural Studies and Research.
- Qaysari, M. (1992). *Description of fusus alhikam*. Qom: Bidar. [In Arabic.]
- Semnani, A.(1984.)*al- urwuh lahil alkholuih waljalwati*. To the effort of Najib Mile Hervey. Tehran: Molly. (in Persian)
- \_\_\_\_ (1988). *Forty councils or Iqbaliyah treatise*. Written by Iqbal-Shah Sajestani. [Najib Mile Hervey's correction]. Tehran: Adib. (in Persian)

Print ISSN: 2228-5563  
online ISSN: 2588-4816

## Religions and Mysticism

University of Tehran  
Faculty of Theology  
and Islamic Studies



**Cite this article:** Dashti, S., & Sohrabi, S. (2024). 'Manifestation' in Semnani's al-Urwah and Its Connection to the Opinions of Ibn al-'Arabi and the Beliefs of al-Ash'ari. *Religions and Mysticism*, 56 (2), 439-462. (in Persian)

---

**Publisher:** University of Tehran Press.

© The Author(s).

DOI:<https://doi.org/10.22059/jrm.2024.366124.630473>



**Article Type:** Research Paper

**Received:** 9-Oct-2023

**Received in revised form:** 13-Jan-2024

**Accepted:** 27-Feb-2024

**Published online:** 16-Mar-2024