



SUFI WISDOM

A Source of Inspirational and Traditional Islamic Knowledge

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STRIVING FOR A SOUND HEART FOR OUR SALVATION

"Only the one who comes to God with a sound heart will prosper on that day)"

(Shuara, 26:89)

OSMAN NURI EFENDI
THE ESSENTIALS OF
FRIENDSHIP
IN MATHNAWI

AHMET TASGETIREN
THE HARMONY OF HEART
AND LIFE

PROF. HENRY FRANCIS ESPIRITU
THE SPIRITUAL GUIDE-DISCIPLE
RELATIONSHIP

CAFER DURMUS
THE DESCRIPTION OF A
MUSLIM'S HEART



Dear Readers,

"The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, But only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart" (Shuara, 26/88-89).

This edition has been dedicated to "Sound Heart", focusing on the definition of a sound heart, the types of hearts and how we should keep such a heart spiritually alive to achieve harmony in our life.

If the heart is sound, purified, and is full of faith (iman), then we will refrain from sins. Hence, only those with a strong and sound heart and who are full of love for and fear of Allah will refrain from doubtful matters and unlawful acts. But those whose hearts are full of diseases and whose faith is weak may commit sins. Such actions are connected to the status of the heart. This is the reason why Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) warned us about the importance of the heart in following hadith:

"Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the human body. If it is pure, then the whole body is right and sound; if it is corrupted then the whole body is corrupted. Look, this is the heart." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

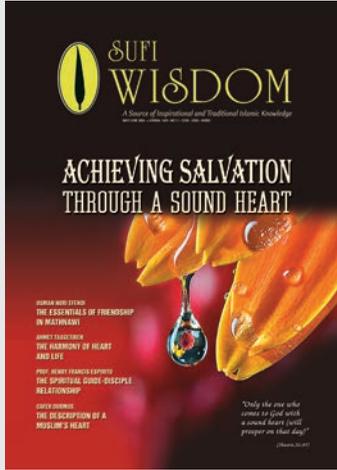
In this edition, you will read Ahmet Tasgetiren's article; "The Harmony of the Heart and Life", Prof. Hasan Kamil Yilmaz's article; "Sensitivity of the Heart" while Cafer Durmus explains to us what a Muslim's heart should be like.

Our beloved teacher Osman Efendi uses some excerpts from Rumi's Mathnawi to tell us about the 'Essentials of Friendship.'

If we want to avoid unlawful acts and thoughts, as well as doubtful matters, then we must consider our heart. We have to cleanse our heart and make sure it is pure and alive and that it is sound.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition, and that you will find all the articles helpful in learning methods that will increase spirituality, leading us all to having a "Sound Heart."

May Allah Almighty let us be among His servants who have the soundest and purest hearts and among those who are aware of being thus. Amen!



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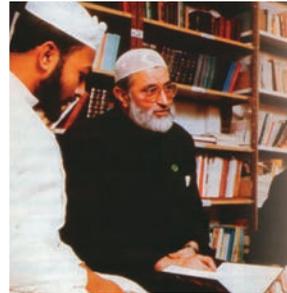
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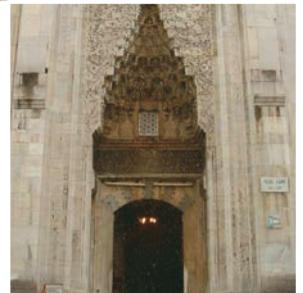
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THE ESSENTIALS OF FRIENDSHIP IN MATHNAWI

Mathnawi: "The human is the eye, a heartfelt perception; the rest is (worthless) skin. What that eye envisions is seeing the Beloved. When there is no sight of the Beloved, then there is no eye." (v.1, 1406)

The eye is a window that opens to the world of thought and feeling. In reality, everything one sees, whether good or bad, generates reflections and associations in the heart and mind.

The first step in contemplation and deep reflection is to look around with an eye of admonition. Allah Almighty invites His servants to possess a perception that is the means for grasping the meaning of these admonitions; in various verses He says: "Do they not look ... at the camel... at the cloud... at the rain... at the mountains... at the vegetation that die in the winter and return to life in spring or at the works of the people who lived long ago?"

In the Qur'an, following the manifestations of Allah Almighty's blessings, humans are addressed several times as "those with comprehension and vision" and are expected to contemplate the universe with perception. Many similar verses decree that humans look at the universe not with empty or hollow eyes, but with an eye that observes perception in order to comprehend the wisdom of it. In such a manner, many verses ask: "Do they not contemplate? Do they not think? Do they not comprehend?" Those who observe the universe with such perception apprehend its Creator and His art, which, in proportion to human potency, leaves the mind helpless.

Spiritual elevation can only be achieved in stages; it can not be sudden. Therefore, on this journey, it is imperative to have human friendships, which are an indispensable phase of reaching Allah's companionship.

The universe is a source of divine joy. This work of art, which is called the human being, is the manifestation of divine joy. The eyes that see and the hearts that perceive do not perceive or see anything but divine joy.

Human beings should raise their heads at dawn and look at the rising sun, observing the colorful scenes of the horizon. How can we, who are filled with admiration at the sight of a painting by an artist, stay apathetic and impassive before the exquisite pictures that are continuously drawn by the Divine Artist, which are observed wherever we turn?

Look at the tulip or violet. Where did they find these colors in the black earth? What about the red mulberry? Look at the blue and the pink of the flower that trembles under the sunlight and all the other beautiful things that we cannot even begin to count. There is a wonderful exhibition all around for a heart that has emotional depth.

Look at the grace of the flower, the dance of the bee and the butterfly, look at the moth that throws itself at the fire, the laments of a nightingale and then turn and look at yourself. All of this, all the beauty, consists of a spark that comes from the reflection that seeps from the beauty of Lord Almighty.

The sun that illuminates at dawn brings us the tidings of a new day, as if saying: "Wake up!" and brings us into an atmosphere of reckoning: "Once again this morning you have been presented with a new page from the book of life. How will you fill this page which will be brought in front of you on the Day of Judgment? What are you planning to prepare for the fearful day when you will hear the order: 'Read your book; today will your nafs

be enough for you as a reckoner?'

When the evening closes, the skies turn red and then with every wave they are painted black; the night talks to humans with poise and says: "Another day has passed. You are a step closer to death. There is no need for useless lamentation. You cannot bring back the passing day, however much you strive. Now you will surrender yourself to the arms of sleep, a sibling of death. What did you do? What should you have done? Put whatever you have and have not done in front of you and think! Maybe you will never see the lights of the morning again."

The souls who turn towards the universe with contemplation and reverence will finally find Allah Almighty as the truly beloved and the genuine companion.

The greatest helper of a human in this direction of admonition and wisdom is submission to the revelation which directs contemplation and reverence, and establishing a true friendship with the pious ones who have become companions of Allah Almighty!

Calling these people "companions" is a metaphor. Although true companionship means orienting towards Allah with devotion, it is a requirement of human weakness to befriend those who are close to Him and to metaphorically actualize the absolute love and friendship as a first stage of reaching Allah Almighty. This is because spiritual elevation can only be achieved in stages; it cannot be sudden.

Therefore, on this journey, it is imperative to have human friendships, which are an indispensable phase of reaching Allah's companionship.

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person.*



If the servant is arduously trying to get close to His Lord in his heart, then Allah Almighty announces that He will become "His eyes that see, his ears that hear, his hands that hold..."

In the following verses Rumi explains this matter further: "If you fall into despair because of loneliness and the lack of a mind to consult, seek the shade of a friend who belongs to the sun of truth."

"Go, quickly find yourself one of His friends; if you do so, Allah will become your companion and helper."

"Seclusion and solitude can only be towards strangers but not towards the friend. The fur is for the winter not for the spring."

"When a healthy mind unites with another healthy mind trained with revelation, it strengthens, the light from it increases and it will see the way clearly."

"The nafs likes to be with another nafs just for its selfish desire of fulfilment, and so the darkness on that path increases, the truth becomes invisible."

Mathnawi: "O heart! Go where they shine towards you, and where there are mature people close to you so that they can act as armor for you against afflictions."

"They will pardon your wrong deeds and give you a place within their souls." (v.2, 2576-2577)

Punishing incorrect actions in order to prevent them from happening again is a standard rule of law in all judicial systems. The Shariah also prefers this route of "prevention". The Sufis, while not welcoming or rationalizing such behavior, use a method to compensate for corrupt behavior, evaluating such actions as "a person being unable to protect themselves from falling into wrong behavior". They see the person as a bird with a broken wing. Instead of punishing them immediately they turn to treatment options, just as in medicine. No doctor would scold a patient and ask: "Why didn't you protect yourself from having a car accident" or "...from getting a cold?"

On the contrary, the doctor will accept their responsibility to treat the patient. Sufis treat flawed people in the same way that doctors treat their patients. Broken objects are taken to a repairman.

The skill of the repairman is relative to the perfection of the object that was broken.

Mawlana states this truth as follows: "They will pardon your ill-doings and give you a place within their souls."

Mathnawi: *"The penetrating intellect, through separation from its friends, (becomes) like an archer whose bow is broken."* (v.3, 3693)

In Islam the intellect is called "akl al-nakís" (the lesser intellect). It means that the intellect on its own is not sufficient to reach goodness or to find Allah. This truth is confirmed by the fact that Allah Almighty sent a prophet to human beings, a creature that He had endowed with an intellect. The intellect is a primary condition for a human to be held responsible. In all judicial systems a person who commits murder without any intellectual capacity is pardoned. These people are not punished. Offenders who are punished receive such treatment because their intellect and conscience are deemed to be intact. Even this shows that the intellect does not have the perfection needed to protect a human from wrongdoings.

Because of this deficiency, one intellect should be strengthened with other intellects. The rule that "two heads are better than one" demonstrates the necessity of consultation with those who are competent and qualified. Consultation is ordered in many verses of the Qur'an so that the individual and the society can improve: "...and consult them in affairs (of moment)!" (Imran, 3/159) "...who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation ..." (Shura42/38)

Mathnawi: *"Whoever you see engaged in search of Allah (wanting Allah), O son, become his friend and place your*

head before him."

"...through being a neighbor of the seekers of Allah you yourself will become a seeker, and through them you yourself will become a conqueror." (v.3, 1446-1447)

In Turkish there is a saying, "The grape will ripen according to the other grapes." Sufis say "The (emotional, intellectual, spiritual) state is contagious" which means "a condition or a state passes from one person to another". Your state will change according to the person you love and with whom you spend your time. For this reason Allah Almighty says in the Qur'an: "...be with those who are true (in word and deed) (Tauba, 9/119). A person receives a share of the fate of those whom they love and to whom they have mutual inclinations and feelings. Being together with the pious brings about a positive effect on the advancement of a person.

Mathnawi: *"Know this for sure; in the end all of the mortal and dishonest companions and false lovers will become adversaries against you. They will become the foes that slay."*

"...whereas you will be left in the tomb, lamenting and beseeching Allah and (crying) 'Do not leave me (here) alone'" (v.5, 1523-1524)

Humans have closeness and heartfelt affection for many things in this world. But when the time comes for the eternal journey, they will have to abandon all these things and all of those who once were loved or relied upon in this world will have to be left behind, and they will no longer be of any use. The things one loves most in this world are one's children and possessions. Lord Almighty explains in the following verses that even these cannot bring any benefit in

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the hereafter: "The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, But only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart" (Shuara, 26/88-89).

Mathnawi: *"Whoever has a passion for that which is mortal, it is only in hope to reach the One that is (in reality the only one Who is) alive and living. Thus, loving a mortal becomes a bridge to deep affection and takes one to divine love."* (v.3, 545)

"O the one whose journey is to Allah! Exert yourself in the hope of the Living One, so that after some time the soul that you give does not become lifeless or get buried in the ground."

"Do not follow your desires and choose a piece of straw, a mortal excellence, as a friend. The affection and friendship in him are borrowed. Search for the permanent friend."

"If those to whom you gave your heart possessed any fidelity or constancy, then what has happened to your friendship with your mother and your father, who were your most faithful friends?" (v.3, 547-549)

"When the gold nature of that you love turns to its original ugliness, when only the copper remains, your nature is surfeited and is separated from it." (v.3, 555)

"The beauty in mortals is only but a temporal reflection of divine beauty. The reflecting light will return to its origin one day. O disciple! Thus, do not gaze on mortal or temporal beauty, but rather search for the One who gave them!"

"The light falling onto the wall from the sun returns to the sun. Do not look at the light on the wall, go to the one that sends the light, go to the sun; this is what you deserve."

"Henceforth take your water from heaven, as you have

not found any faithfulness in the aqueduct." (v.3, 558-560)

The human disposition to affection is an invaluable treasure. It is a great loss for this love to be wasted in useless places. All friends in this world other than Allah who receive love are absolute mortals. For this reason the main target of love, passion and friendship should be Lord Almighty. On the one hand, the Lord Almighty is beyond comprehension and distant from perception (muta'al), but on the other He is a friend and helper of His servant, He is closer than the jugular vein. If the servant is arduously trying to get close to His Lord in his heart, then Allah Almighty announces that He will become "His eyes that see, his ears that hear, his hands that hold..." (Zubdatu'l-Bukhari, 1107). About this state it is said: "For us Allah sufficeth, and He is the best disposer of affairs." (Imran, 3/173)

When all is said, lawful human love, which is a heartfelt closeness and bonding with another other than Allah, is only permissible when it is experienced as a temporary phase. In this case, that love becomes a phase on the path to divine love. But, if that mortal being captivates the heart, it will become idolized and hinder divine reunion. If one can become like Majnun and say, "I found my Lord through reciting (her name), Laila" and turn the lawful affection that began for a mortal into a phase of reaching divine love, what a blessing this is! "Absolute Beauty" is the reality. To become a seeker of it is the greatest and noblest goal in this life.

Mathnawi: *"I swear by the Holy Being of Allah, Whom everything and everyone is in need of but Who is not in need of anything or anyone, that a malignant snake is better than a malignant friend... The malignant snake takes the life of*

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a man. But a malignant friend leads him into the everlasting fire."

"The heart secretly steals the disposition from the disposition of the companion, without speech and talk and his morals become yours."

"When he casts his shadow over you, that unprincipled one steals away your principles." (v.5, 2634-2637)

As we have stated before, "the state is contagious", that is, being with a good person will have a good influence and being with a malignant person will have a bad influence. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) explained this with the following illustration: "The friendship of a good or a bad person is like the state of the perfume vendor and the blacksmith. The perfume vendor will either give you some perfume for free or you will buy it. (Or) You will have inhaled the beautiful scents (while you are with him). The blacksmith will either burn your clothes or you will be uncomfortable with the disagreeable smell of his shop" (Bukhari, Zabaih, 31).

Imam Rabbani gave the following example of the perils that befalls one with corrupt friends.

"The person who is very close to gamblers might not be gambling. Thus, he will not feel tarnished. However, during the time he accompanies them he will start condoning gambling. And this is a spiritual disaster."

Consciously or not, abandoning such a shield (siper-i saika), which is a necessary protection from any kind of sin, introduces the danger of falling into that sin at any moment. Companionship with crude or ignorant people will bring about a "mental closeness" with them.

In time, this closeness will turn into "heartfelt closeness" and step-by-step one will be dragged into destruction.

Mathnawi: *"The turpitude of befriending the hypocrites makes the believer wicked and rebellious like them." (v.2, 2892)*

The worst wickedness is discord. The state of a hypocrite in Islam is worse than that of a "harmless heathen". A hypocrite's harm in misleading is far greater than that of a heathen who does not insinuate their ideas to people with blasphemy. For this reason, those who come to the greatest harm are those who befriend the hypocrites. Mental connection turns into a heartfelt relationship. This causes the ruin and disappointment of the believer. Mevlana indicated this reality in the previous verse.

Mathnawi: *"Since in our eyesight (foresight) there is much defect, go, let your own sight pass away in the sight of the friend."*

"His sight for ours - what a goodly recompense! In His sight you will find the whole object of your desire." (v.1, 921-922)

Although it may be bitter, friends always try to tell the truth. A friend will not shy away from telling the truth and will prefer to temporarily hurt a friend rather than see them endure a lasting harm.

In some other verses, Mawlana J. Rumi explains this with the story of a man who tells another man who has come to him for advice that he cannot help him. "A man wanted advice on a matter upon which he could not decide from another, in order to rid himself of hesitation and to attain a firm decision. The person he wanted to consult said: "I appreciate the fact that

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True friendship is a current between two hearts. With this current, with the flow of love, every state of the beloved radiates to the one who loves. The oceans of love in the soul start to rise and the suns of devotion start to burn.



you trusted me and came to me for advice. But I am not your friend. Go and find someone else and consult him. I am not your friend, so do not consult with me.

One cannot succeed with the advice of one who is not a friend. Go and search for a friend. Surely a friend will want his friend's well being. I am not a friend; someone like me is of no use to you. I walk crookedly; I will tell you wrong things. A man who befriends good people and spends time with them thinks he is in a rose garden, even if he is in a furnace. But the person sitting in a garden with the foe that he thinks is a friend will be sitting in a furnace. Come to your senses and do not belittle that genuine friend by giving into your ego, do not hurt him."

Mathnawi: *"The heart takes nourishment from every friend. The heart receives spiritual joy, pleasure and purification from every piece of knowledge." (v.2, 1089)*

"You receive some spiritual nourishment from every person you meet. You also will receive something from every good friend." (v.2, 1091)

As we have mentioned above, we have to choose our friends very carefully. This verse from Mevlana points out the benefits of befriending good people. Like we have said before the state of people is contagious. Affection is the course of this state. A human acquires the state of the person with whom they spend time together in proportion to the affection felt for that person. As hate prevents this spiritual relationship, affection, according to its strength, will cause this relationship to increase rapidly.

Mathnawi: *"Though you be a rock or marble, you will become a jewel when you reach a man of soul."*

"Plant the love of the holy ones within your heart, do not give your heart to anything save to the love of them whose hearts know (Allah)."

"Do not go to the neighborhood of despair, there are gates of hope. Do not go in the direction of darkness, the suns are shining."

"The heart leads you into the neighborhood of

the men of soul; the body leads you into the prison of water and mud."

"Take heed! Give your heart nourishment from conversations with the one who is a friend of the soul." (v.1, 722-726)

The nafs guides humans in wretched directions. So, like an owner who tames a wild horse we have to tame our nafs and make it righteous with knowledge and worship within the climate of those who are on the path of Allah. Knowledge is essential for this, but it is not enough. People of knowledge should turn their knowledge into wisdom and reach maturity in their state and behavior. Thus, the functions of heart and mind will be moving together in harmony. Otherwise, dry knowledge can drag a human into vanity, selfishness and destruction. The nafs has many levels.

A nafs that has never been trained is *ammarah*. This will always desire wickedness, but with constant training it can be raised to the levels of *lawwamah*, *mulhimah* and *mutmainnah*. When it reaches these stages, the fierce nafs has become like a tame horse and takes its owner to the desired place (*menzil-i maksuduna*). True servanthood to Allah is seen at this stage.

Only with the grace of Allah Almighty can one mature and reach the (higher) stages of *radiyyah*, *mardiyyah* and *kamilah*. One of the main conditions of reaching this state is togetherness and heartfelt affection with those who are close to Allah. An untamed nafs does not desire this. It will force you to be with worldly people. Yet, as there is ease with every hardship, there is ease with this too. It is enough that one should undertake this path.

Reaching a stage higher than the angels can only be achieved through a trained nafs. When Adam was first created the divine order for the angels to prostrate to him was the result of this ability to take control of the nafs. The angels turn towards their Lord without any obstacles in their way, but for a human being, achieving this is only possible through rising above the obstacle of the nafs. The victory a human being achieves through

True benefit from ordeals and blessings does not come from the obvious reasons, but rather from being content with Allah Almighty and comprehending the actual reason.



(spiritually) reaching their Lord requires greater recognition and reward than that of the angels.

Mathnawi: *"How can a friend turn aside from the pain inflicted by his friend? Pain is the kernel, and friendship is (only) as the husk. Has not joy in tribulation and calamity and suffering become the sign of (true) friendship? A friend is like gold, tribulation is like the fire: gold becomes pure in the heart of fire."* (v.2, 1459-1461)

There is an old saying: "A noble human is recognized in tribulations and a noble metal is recognized in fire." Indeed, in the same way that blessings are for us, remorse is also for us. However, there is a great danger of erring for those who object to either of these manifestations.

In the face of ordeals, patience through the pursuit of genuine reasons results in divine consent, while rebelling against ordeals can result in destruction.

In a way, the blessings are the same. Knowing that a blessing is from Allah Almighty and being thankful to Him brings great prosperity and abundance, but to think that this blessing is from one's own power and to fall into arrogance and vanity will also result in destruction.

Saints, those great souls, benefit from both blessings and ordeals and do not encounter harm due to these because they have strictly trained their understanding and perception with the revelation. So, they can say, "Your ordeals are as sweet as your blessings". With the grace of our Lord, we should strive to be like them.

True benefit from ordeals and blessings does not come from the obvious reasons, but rather from being content with Allah Almighty (being content with whatever He gives) and comprehending the actual reason, called *musabbibu'l asbab* (the Causer of the reasons). Those who achieve this, reach the state of *riza* (acceptance) and this is what Mawlana talks about in the verses mentioned above.

Mathnawi: *"Oh, alas, alas for the sorrow and grief caused by a base friend! Oh sirs, seek you a good and a suitable companion!"* (v.6, 2950)

"Take heed, do not become a worshipper of form and do not say this. Do not seek (to discover) the secret of congeniality in the (outward) form." (v.6, 2953)

Friendship forms from mutuality in positive or negative attributes. But true friendship can only be harbored in sincere souls. This characteristic is found in the highest states of the human being. Friendship stays alive when both parties have the same emotions concerning incidents.

True friendship is a current between two hearts. With this current, with the flow of love, every state of the beloved radiates to the one who loves. The oceans of love in the soul start to rise and the suns of devotion start to burn.

Therefore, the closeness, felt by those who do not share mutual feelings and only have an external or coincidental affinity, for example, relations or casual friends, has no connection with true friendship. Thus, Abu Lahab was the prophet's uncle, but he was amongst the unfortunate who were farthest from the Prophet.

Knowing that a blessing is from Allah Almighty and being thankful to Him brings great prosperity and abundance.

THE HARMONY OF HEART AND LIFE

One of the best-known hadiths explicitly declares that the essential character of the human being is found in the heart. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) says:

"Be aware that there is a small piece of flesh in the human body. If this piece of flesh is good, the whole body is good; if it is spoilt, the whole body is spoilt. This piece of flesh is the heart." (Buhari, Iman 39, Muslim, Musakat, 107,108).

Because the heart contains the essential characters of human beings, within the framework of Islam the evaluation of every behavior is related to the heart. According to the statement of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), the place where "actions via intentions" and intentions occur is the heart.

Practices are considered eligible with sincerity (ikhlas), which means "only for Allah" and the place where ikhlas resides is the heart.

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) says:

"Allah does not look at the bodies or faces of human beings, but rather looks at their hearts. (Muslim, Birr, 33)

All in all, the doctrines of Islam state that faith only becomes realized with "the confirmation of the heart".

It is said that sultan will not enter a palace unless the palace is thriving. If this is the case, how is the world viewed by Allah? Firstly, those things that should be avoided are:



The heart should not be darkened.
 It should not be diseased.
 It should not be hard.
 It should not be covered.
 It should not be locked.
 It should not be sealed.
 That is to say,
 It should not be cursing or protesting.
 Well then, what should the heart be like?
 It should be as soft-hearted as a bird.
 It should be a heart that trembles when the name of Allah is mentioned.
 It should be humble.
 It should be benign.
 It should be satisfied.
 In other words, it should be the heart of the faithful (mumin).

It is necessary to go into the presence of Allah with a pure heart. This is desired and the validity of this has been announced. (Shuara, 26/89)

A heart which is clean, purified, pure, peaceful, satisfied and which has escaped turbulence...

The book of Allah presents an arena and imposes upon us a consistent mission for the building of self-hood for humanity, mentioning, on the one hand, "the exculpation of the self", while, on the other there is "the violation of

heart" and "purification".

"Qad eflaha men tezekka. Indeed, he who purifies himself shall achieve success." (Ala, 87/14)

"Qad eflaha men zekkaha. Indeed, the one who succeeds is he who purifies himself from wrong." (Shams, 91/9)

Salvation is dependent on a heart that is clean according to the criteria of Allah; the result of violation is darkness.

"Ve kad habe men dessaha. Indeed the one who fails is he who accepts the wrong himself." (Shams, 91/10)

Violation and cleanliness are not limited to the barriers of the heart and self which are spiritual focal points; they do not start and finish at these points. Violation is the result, cleaning is the realization of the will to eradicate this result...

A black point occurs in the heart of the faithful when they commit a sin. If they abandon their sin and repent, asking Allah for forgiveness, then the heart resumes its original brightness. If they continue to commit sins, the black point increases and covers the heart. "Nay! On their hearts is the Rana (covering of sins and evil deeds) which they have earned" (Mutaffifin, 83/14), "...it is that rust ..." (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 29).

The sins are the exception rather than the rule in human behavior. Allah Almighty denotes the rule: when "Hududullah", the boundaries

The maintenance of a clean heart is only possible when one is aware of sin and tries to extricate the heart from the sin.





After cleaning the deadly components from the heart, it becomes prosperous through munjiyah. Munjiyah is things such as patience, fear, hope, asceticism, love of Allah... This is the heart which is oriented by Allah's Mercy.

determined by Allah, are transgressed, the valley of evil is entered and each sin is reflected on the heart as blackness or dirt. When the human commits a sin, the intensification of the sin occurs in heart. Moreover, it is not possible to maintain good attitudes with an unclean heart.

The maintenance of a clean heart is only possible when one is aware of sin and tries to extricate the heart from the sin. It is stated that salvation is through repentance. Repentance is turning to Allah with a will to purify. In other words, it is saving the heart from the continuation of the sin, rejoining it to its essential communication and making the heart a respondent with Allah.

For the continuation of the heart, it is necessary not to be in the valley of sin; if it has fallen in there for any reason, then it should save itself from there with the "rope of repentance". Moreover, in order for there to be a continuation of goodness in behavior it is necessary that the internal guidance of the heart should lead.

Imam Ghazali says:

"A light reaches the heart through the good deed of the body. That light is a heavenly seed. Through each evil deed the heart becomes dark. This darkness is the seed of corruption." (Alchemy of Happiness, p 344).

This means that actions do not stay in the air. Deeds, both good and bad, are reflected in the heart as light or darkness, as corruption or happiness.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the pious

believers, who have a "sensitivity of the heart" and who thus are granted prosperity by Allah, the leaders of Islam and the scholars of Islam warn the people about both the causes that cause illness in the heart and about the attitudes that insure a chance for salvation; in this way they are able to discipline the people who walk hand in hand with them.

For instance, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), an educator of the ages, tried to save people from illnesses such as cursing, discord, arrogance, carelessness, anger, resentment, selfishness, and egoism; furthermore he provided reinforcement for the hearts with faith, taqwa, fear of Allah, love, compassion, repentance, dhikr and prayer.

It is stated in the Qur'an that: "he who takes as his god his own lust" will have his heart "sealed over..." (Jasiyah, 45/23)

This means that it is not possible to open one's heart to the kindness of Allah or to maintain the purity when thinking that one's own lust is a god or when one is enslaved to lust.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) teaches us the following prayer from the Qur'an:

"And let me not be in disgrace on the Day when (men) will be raised up; The day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only he (will prosper) that brings to God a sound heart"(Shuara, 26/87-89)

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also announces in another prayer:

"Allah Almighty, please wash and purify my heart with the water of snow and hail and purify

*All in all,
the doctrines
of Islam state
that faith only
becomes realized
with “the
confirmation of
the heart”.*

my heart from sin like the purification of white clothes from dirt” (Buhari, Davat, 39, 44, 46).

These are the prayers which teach both the love of bringing a “sound heart” to Allah and the desire to reach the “sound heart” for purification from sins.

We should pray as the Prophet (pbuh) did and should avoid walking in muddy places, avoid getting the mud on their hands and be cautious about splashing the mud onto their hearts, they should take shelter in a clean heart. It should be their aim that the “clean heart” that is to be brought to Allah should be ready in this world. In order to do this the heart should sometimes be held in the hand and asked questions, like “are you ready”? In this world, we try to open the heart to the universe and we should be aware that bringing a heart that has not been opened in the world to Allah is a grueling task.

According to Imam Ghazali there are three conditions of the heart...

The first: This is the heart which has been cleaned from dirt, confirmed by training the nafs and refurbished with taqwa. An angel examines the heart, and finds it cleaned in its essence, purified by taqwa, enlightened by wisdom and improved by the light of marifah (knowledge of Reality). The angel reports that what is in this heart is sufficient. At that time the angel helps the heart with invisible soldiers, leading it to a variety of blessings and keeps it going.

In addition, the secrecy of infidelity, something that is more sensitive than the footfall of an ant walking on stones in the dead of night, does not remain in this heart. None of the tricks of evil can win favor in this heart. Even when evil tries to seduce the heart from a distance with honeyed words, the heart does not heed such speech. After cleaning the deadly components from the heart, it becomes prosperous through munjiyah. Munjiyah is things such as gratitude, patience, fear, hope, asceticism, love of Allah, consent, reliance on Allah, mediation, accountancy, etc... This is the heart which is oriented by Allah's Mercy.

The second: This is the heart that is fulfilled by desires and has become miserable. It is polluted by

evil habits and dirty things. The doors of angels are closed and the doors of evil are opened wide. The wickedness starts in the heart with the lusts of the nafs spilling into the heart and taking root there. Then the heart applies to wisdom for a decision to discover the truth. However, wisdom has become accustomed to serving the lusts of the nafs and has become familiar with it. It continuously arranges for the deceits of the nafs and works for such opportunities. For this reason, the nafs occupies wisdom and conquers it and it becomes enlarged and the darkness of enthusiasm is spread to the heart and the defense of the soldiers of wisdom are atrophied. Thus, the authority of evil becomes stronger because, with the diffusion of enthusiasm, the area of evil becomes larger. Thus, evil attacks the heart, decorating the badness, deluding hope and self-esteem. The steady light that consists of the fear of life after death diminishes. If ever a wise man desires to show reality to such a person, it is not impressive; he cannot hear – it is as if he is deaf; he does not see – it is as if he is blind. Allah indicates this in the following:

Have you seen him who has taken as his god his own desire? Would you then be over him watcher affairs? Or you think that most of them hear or understand? They are only cattle nay, they are even farther astray from the way. (Furqan, 25/43-44)

The third: The recollection of enthusiasm is revived in the heart and pulls the heart to that which harms it. On the other hand, the recollection of faith comes and directs the heart towards goodness.

If evil attributions beat in the heart, the evil will conquer it and the heart will retreat from the soldiers of Allah, inclining to the army of evil; this will cause a person to be distanced from Allah in accordance with fate. If the angelic characteristics are triumphant, the heart is not inclined to the persuasion of evil or the encouragement towards ready pleasures; it inclines to the army of Allah Almighty. It travels between the attractions of two powers. This is what helps the heart to be triumphant. It turns to the right and then to the left; it passes from one power to another.

If the angelic characteristics are triumphant, the heart is not inclined to the persuasion of evil or the encouragement towards ready pleasures; it inclines to the army of Allah.



THE SPIRITUAL GUIDE - DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP (I)

By attending the spiritual master's program of spiritual advice and moral reformation; the disciple reaches stability, equanimity, and certainty of faith.



"Oh ye who believe! Fear Allah and join the company of the truthful" (Tawbah,9/119)

"In the voyage towards the Divine, one who travels without a guide needs two hundred years for a two days trip... Patiently search for your spiritual master for without his leading, this journey is filled with ordeals, hazards, and perils. Without the shelter of the spiritual master, one cannot annihilate the lower self. Hold firmly to the mantle of a genuine guide if you seek extermination of your deformed ego." Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi

The Necessity for a Spiritual Guide:

A seeker who earnestly strives to walk on a spiritual path feels deep in his heart the necessity of meeting a genuine spiritual guide who will show him the secrets of Reality. Even in ordinary material matters, the need for a teacher is felt; how much more it should be in the case of spirituality, for the spiritual path is indeed very precarious and full of difficulties. In the spiritual journey, lust, pride, vanity, and rage are the biggest obstacles through which the traveler must overcome. The evil spirits of greediness are waiting to steal the spiritual wealth of a genuine seeker. The demons of pride and vanity send razor-sharp arrows of arrogance and jealousy and the tumultuous hurricane of anger can easily make the seeker drown in the sea

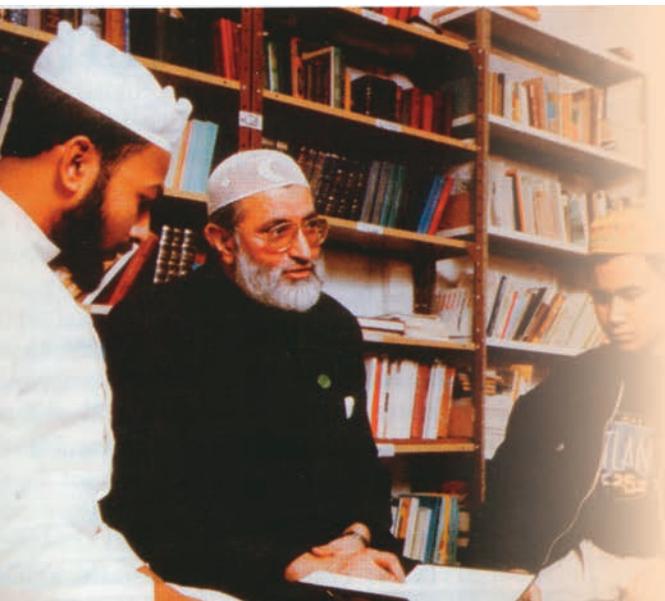
of impatience and impetuosity. The spiritual master alone knows the proper way to escape these dangers in the spiritual journey, for he has already arrived at the end of the journey—he has already successfully denied his ego, reformed his base self, and love the Divine Beloved with sincerity. Out of compassion for the waylaid souls, the spiritual teacher vows to guide others to the spiritual journey. The primary purpose of spiritual tutelage in the compassionate auspices of the spiritual teacher is for the guidance of the disciple to the path of spiritual reformation and rectitude (islah-un-nafs) so that the disciple will be prepared to experience the ecstatic torrents of Almighty Allah's Divine Love (hubb-i-ilahi).

Spiritual initiation is the time when the spiritual guide accepts the disciple into his auspices by receiving him into his audience, giving him preliminary advices, and bestowing the Name of Almighty Allah for the disciple to meditate upon (dhikr). Spiritual initiation is a necessary feature in the journey towards spirituality. Bay-ah, the Arabic word for spiritual initiation, literally means holding firmly the hand of a strong person, knowing fully well that this strong person will guide and protect the person who holds his hand. According to Sufism, during bay-ah or initiation, a spiritual power is being transmitted from the spiritual guide to the disciple. The spiritual guide is himself connected to a spiritual lineage (Arabic: silsilah, literally,

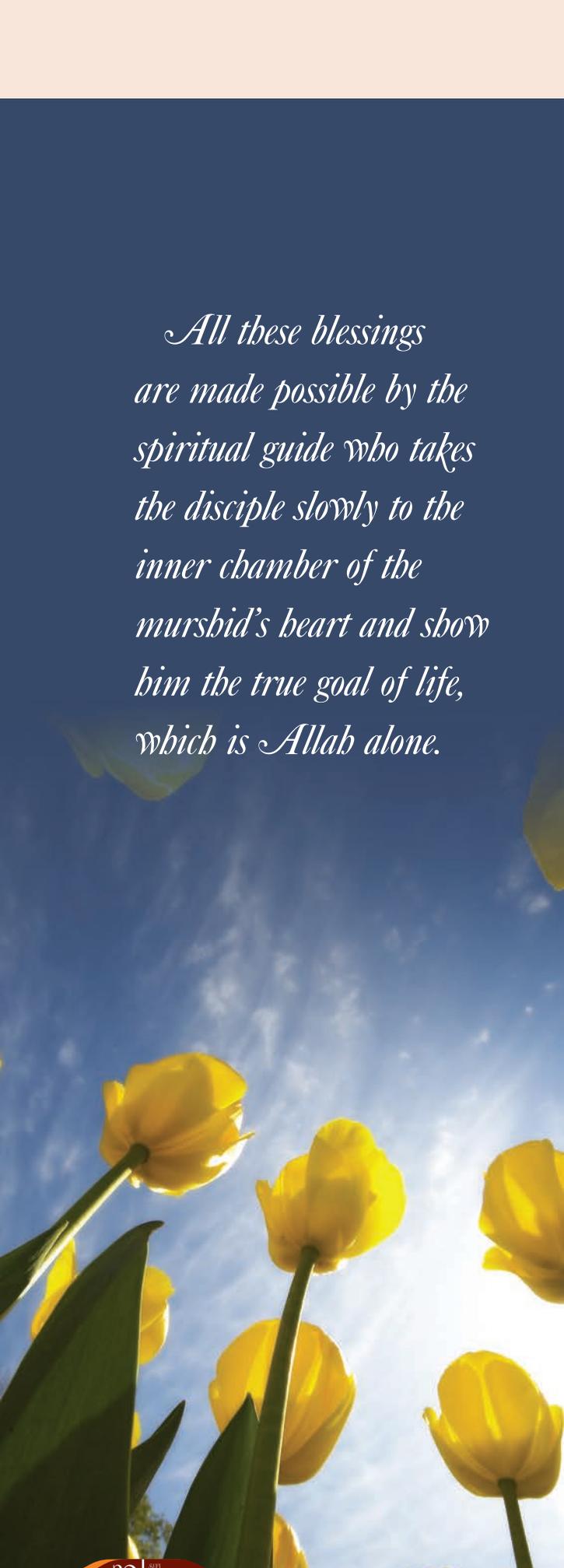
a strong chain) that ties the disciple to a series of previous spiritual guides that can ultimately be traced to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself who was the direct recipient of the vast treasures of spiritual knowledge from Almighty Allah.

One who receives the transmitted power that originally comes from God is a disciple (Arabic: mureed, meaning; one being guided), and one who transmits it by authority of the spiritual lineage of previous spiritual guides is called murshid (the guide). The power coming from the spiritual lineage and now made available to the mureed during initiation is very subtle but powerful.

Meeting a genuine spiritual master and receiving his instructions can clear lingering doubts, extinguish brain-wracking confusions, and settles troubled minds. By attending the spiritual master's program of spiritual advice and moral reformation (nasehat ruhaniyyah wa islah-un nafs); the disciple reaches stability, equanimity, and certainty of faith (yaqeen-e-iman). The disciple finds safety in the compassionate embrace of the spiritual guide, like the helpless eaglet finds safety under the sturdy wings of the mother eagle. Such a one could stare at death without any fear, for he has reached fearlessness by the all-encompassing love and guidance from the spiritual guide.



The disciple finds safety in the compassionate embrace of the spiritual guide, like the helpless eaglet finds safety under the sturdy wings of the mother eagle.



*All these blessings
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*The Spiritual Guide and the Moral Reformation
of the Disciple:*

Obeying the instructions of one's spiritual guide purifies the disciple's understanding. The deformities of the disciple's mind subside and his bewildered mind is finally attracted (nisbah) in following the ways of spirituality. Evil thoughts dare not approach the disciple who is steadfast in his devotion to the spiritual guide. He feels the presence of his spiritual guide everywhere and at all times. A great Indian saint, Ashraf Ali Chishti said;

"The spiritual guide makes his disciple one like him. Even though the preparation takes a little time on the part of the disciple, it takes no time for the spiritual guide's inner light to enter into the disciple's heart to make him one like him. Groping in the dark, one can never reach the light. Light will come from one who is flooded with it. By the illumination, guidance, and spiritual discipline coming from the spiritual guide, the fumbling soul will reach the spiritual effulgence of the Blessed Prophet." (Malfuthat; Kitab-e-Thani, p. 42).

The sluggish progression of a Muslim's spiritual life is hastened by the mercy of the spiritual guide. Through the spiritual guide's assistance, the mureed attains the power to reform his sinful existence and he will begin to live a life of genuine piety and love for Allahu Taala. In the blessed company of the spiritual guide, the life spent in negligence and materialism becomes a life of constant awareness of what things may please and displease Almighty Allah. Through the aid of the spiritual guide, the disciple has attained the stage of renunciation (zuhd) of all unbeneficial things. All these blessings are made possible by the grace of the spiritual guide who takes the disciple slowly to the inner chamber of the murshid's heart and show him the true goal of life, which is Allahu Taala alone. Shah Bahauddin Naqshband says,

The spiritual guide is an authentic treasure room containing diamonds of taqwa (fear of Allah) and emeralds of ashq (divine love). Despite his high spiritual status, he remains humble, simple, and approachable; and many people do not know his lofty station. He is a burning fire capable of setting

his disciples' heart with the fire of Allah's love. The spiritual guide is likened to spring water that cleanses all worldly impurities and quenches the spiritual thirst of his disciples. He disciplines through love and instructs through his actions. It is impossible to attain detachment from worldliness without the grace of the spiritual guide (Kalam-e-Shahan Shah Naqshband, p. 88).

A man may be a great scholar of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). He might have renounced the world and might have undergone many difficult exercises of self-abnegation, but the grace of Allah (ni'matullah) is revealed only to him who has become a surrendered slave to the spiritual guide. To demonstrate this very important point, the following anecdote is beneficial.

Fakhruddin Razi, was a great Sunni saint, scholar, and commentator of the Holy Qur'an. Imam Razi wrote a 500-page exegesis of Fatiha Sharif alone. It was narrated that on his deathbed, the damned Shaytan came and sat by the side of Imam Razi's left head and began to argue with him on the existence of Allahu Taala. The devil asked Imam Razi as to how he believed that Allah exists. Imam Razi gave a philosophical proof but the devil argued against the proof given by Imam Razi. Imam Razi continued to give proofs one after another but the tempter also continued to present counter arguments of the proofs that Imam Razi gave. The debate made Imam Razi tired, dejected, and despondent to the extent that the great Qur'anic scholar even began to entertain doubts concerning his faith in Allah's existence. At that time, Imam Razi's spiritual guide, Shaykh Najmuddin (rahmatullah alayh), located thousands of miles away, came to his succour. Shaykh Najmuddin communicated to Imam Razi's heart by divine inspiration and

said, "O my mureed! Say that you believe in the existence of Almighty Allah without any need of proofs." Thereafter, Imam Razi repeated his spiritual mentor's words to Shaytan: "Oh Shaytan, I believe in Allah Taala's existence without any need of proofs". With this answer, the cursed devil was silenced since he cannot anymore debate with Imam Razi and the accursed Shaytan, in anger, ran away since he was now incapable of placing doubt in the heart of Imam Razi (Karamat-e Awliya-ullah, p.163).

It is very interesting to note that in the above-mentioned anecdote, the accursed Shaytan sat by the side of the left head of Imam Razi's bed; the former did not sit beside Imam Razi near his chest area where the heart is located. Shaytan will always tempt persons who only listened to mental reasoning and philosophical argumentations. Scholars of tassawuf (Islamic mysticism) believe that the realm of the mind is where spiritual battles take place; it is the mind where the damned Shaytan can implant doubts on the believer's faith.

The above mentioned episode in the life of Fakhruddin Razi taught us three precious lessons for our spiritual guidance. Firstly, we must believe in Allahu Taala out of pure faith (iman); and our faith should not be subjected to mundane philosophical proofs or speculations. Secondly, a person who is convinced of Allah's existence simply by philosophical reasoning and not out of pure faith will be easily swayed by opposing philosophical proofs against Allah's existence. Thirdly, even if a person possesses profound and oceanic knowledge of Islamic theology, one still needs a perceptive spiritual guide to assure the preservation of one's faith and to remain steadfast in Islam.

Spiritual initiation is a necessary feature in the journey towards spirituality.



SENSITIVITY OF THE HEART

The happiness and joy of the heart is to know Allah, to love Him and to taste His remembrance. This is paramount to tasting the life in Heaven on earth.

Almighty Allah has placed the human being at the center of life and He has placed the heart at the center of human beings. The heart is the compass that determines the path in human life and which enlightens its conduct. Therefore, the heart is the center of knowledge, love and faith. We, obviously, are not using the term 'heart' here to describe the human organ that is made of flesh. What we mean here is one of the fundamental functions of the human soul. It is divine blessing. The meaning of heart is reflected by the word "tongue" in Persian and described by the word "soul" in Turkish and English.

It is the inclinations of the heart that make life meaningful. The life of a human being is shaped by the tendencies of their heart. Since a heart does not have a consciousness, it needs to be connected with something. Connecting the heart means perceiving the meaning of creation. Human beings are created in order to be slaves to Allah Almighty and to shed tears for His Greatness, not for prosperity in this world. As a poet said:

Do not assume that we have come to the world for chasing higher titles.

We have come to the world to sigh the universe for the sake of the Beloved.

As a consequence of its creation the heart or soul sails towards Allah Almighty and the other world. The happiness and joy of the heart is to know Allah, to love Him and to taste His remembrance. This is paramount to tasting the life in Heaven on earth. There are two Heavens that are prepared by

Allah for His servants; one in this world and the other in the next world. Humans who do not enter Heaven in this world cannot enter the one in the other world.

A heart is awakened by messages and warnings that are obtained by its senses. These warnings estrange the heart from its main sphere of interest, which is Allah Almighty. To extricate the heart from the effects of such things is only possible by strengthening it with moral values. Ibrahim Havas, the Islamic scholar, asserts that there are only five things by which the sensitivity of the heart can be maintained:

- Reading the Qur'an while considering its meaning

- Not eating too much
- Spending the night in prayer
- Remembering Allah at dawn
- Being with pious ones

The most important thing that affects a heart is being with people who are without care or diligence. If someone spends time with other people who have no aim in particular, they will be spoiled by their breaths, influenced by their souls and tinted with their hues. They become a wagon and spend time with evil instead of being the locomotive and leading others towards the path of goodness. As stated in the Qur'an, "On

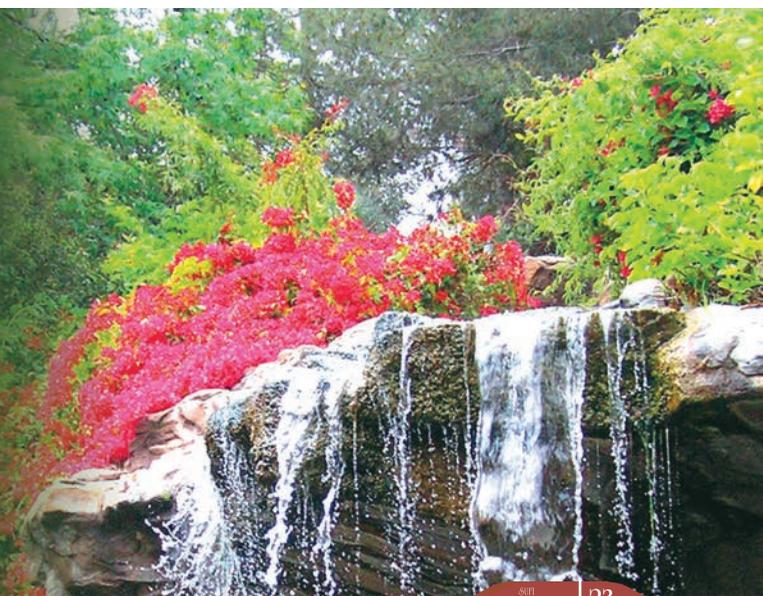
that Day, friends will be foes unto one another—save the Allah-conscious." (Zukhruf, 43/67) People will regret any unnecessary complications or relations, because none of these will be of any use.

As human beings need to live in a society, it is impossible for people to remain secluded among others. How are Muslims to behave in society? In the social environment the true believer in Allah should both be present and secluded, near and far, sleeping and awake. That means they will look at people, but not see them; they will hear them, but will not listen to everything they say. They should know how to be selective. They should not let their nafs gain consciousness and thus avoid being influenced by its occupations. What matters most is for the servants to be faithful to Allah by keeping their promises, promises they have made even before they were born.

What preoccupies a heart most are feelings of hope and passion. There are three counterparts to hope: desires, wishes and requests.

The term 'desire' means wanting something that is obtainable. When that thing cannot be obtained, then we use the word 'wish'. A 'request' describes the situation in which a heart carries hope to obtain something in the future. There is a difference between wishes and requests. A wish is an idle action, an indulgence. A person

What matters most is for the servants to be faithful to Allah by keeping their promises, promises they have made even before they were born.



Passion without true belief, ideals without wisdom can only drag people towards meaningless actions, but passion with wisdom can lead human beings to their goals.



who wishes is not willing to undergo any trouble to obtain their aim. A person who makes a request puts some effort to obtain their goal. Therefore, a request is deemed to be a virtuous quality.

Desires and wishes are deemed to be bad qualities when compared to requests. The Prophet of Allah, Muhammad (pbuh), explains the relationship between fate and the passions that preoccupy humans. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) first drew a square on the earth. He then made a straight line that went through the square and drew small vertical lines that intersected one another. He then said: "The line that crosses through the middle of the square is the human being and the square is his fate. Fate surrounds him completely and the line that crosses the square is his passions. The vertical lines that intersect one another are the troubles and disasters that come upon him. One of these disaster lines will certainly strike him, even if others miss, and he will be caught by his fate." Another version of this saying states that: "While a person waits for his passion that is distant, fate comes and catches him."

A very striking example from the Holy Qur'an shows us how unlimited passion can affect human beings; "Leave them alone; let them eat and enjoy themselves the while the hope beguiles them: for in time they will come to know." (Hijr, 15/3)

Passion produces evil and causes a heart to stray with limitless passion; there is no deed that can be performed without passion. As Rumi elaborates:

"Allah created everyone on a purpose. He placed passion in the hearts of everyone, leading them to be occupied with something. How can our hands and feet move without demand? How would dust go away if no water were to run or no wind to blow?"

"If you have the passion of advancing, clap like the bird, and ascend! If your heart desires the earth and not the sky then cry, cry aloud!"

Life on earth is similar to being on a ship. The losers are those who jump ship before the coast comes in sight; hope is the capital of the losers. They assume that they will collect pearls in the expanse of the sea and throw themselves into the sea. Baseless and utopian waves of hope preoccupy them like a bone does a dog. The hopes that arise from selfish

feelings are the capital of the nafs. Human beings follow these hopes without cessation. Since a human cannot be human without ideals, dreams or excitement, the faithful people should focus their passions and ideals on wisdom and true belief. Passion without true belief, ideals without wisdom can only drag people towards meaningless actions, but passion with wisdom can lead human beings to their goals.

Loving Allah means turning away from everything but Him. The great Islamic scholar Rabbani also states that the sickness of a heart can be detected if one is aware that it likes and loves something more than Allah. Particularly, if one is interested in their self, this presents one of the most serious aspects of the disease; in this situation people are loving things for their nafs. Love for richness and higher position is just the passions of the nafs.

There is a serious danger that the human nafs can see its passions as gods. Whoever chooses to follow this lead becomes one who looks for routes other than that of Allah. Allah leaves these people to those they wish to follow. Allah ceases to help these people, and they are faced by disease and evil. Their minds and hearts are blurred by problems. Their hearts also lose pureness and sensitivity. Therefore, a heart should follow and trust Allah alone. However, those who follow their evil passions forget to remember and glorify Allah. Once a heart loses its sensitivity, the palace of the soul is invaded by surreal gods and goddesses. Allah Almighty describes those who cannot protect their souls in the following manner: "For these have taken to worshipping deities other than Allah, hoping that they would be a strength for them. But nay! These will disavow the worship that was paid to them and will turn against those." (Maryam, 19/81-82)

*Only
a softened
heart and a pure
soul can help us
on the Day of
Judgment.*



"Do not set up any other deity side by side with Allah, lest thou find thyself disgraced and forsaken." (Isra, 17/22)

"And Anyone who honours the symbols set up by Allah, verily, these from the Allah-consciousness in the hearts." (Haj, 22/32)

Whatever enters our mouths and whatever words emit from it also have an influence on the sensitivity of the heart. In other words, suspicion and forbidden (haram) words and objects leave their mark on the hearts and they darken souls. Even those things that are not forbidden, but which are not obligatory or wasteful may have negative effects on hearts and souls. They enable evil to influence human beings.

Sensitivity of the heart prepares people to have softened hearts. Softened hearts are mentioned in two different sections of the Qur'an. Such a heart is free from the concerns of earthly assets, and it has been purified from selfish deeds or illnesses. This is the heart that is awarded by Allah Almighty. The softened heart submits itself to Allah unconditionally. Nothing from this world can help us on the Day of Judgment. Only possessing a softened heart and a pure soul can help us on that day. It is for this reason that Rumi says: "Oh thou rich one! Even if you take a hundred sacks of gold into the presence of Allah, He would say to You, hunched under those packs, bring me a soul, and only a soul. If the soul is happy with you, so am I. But if it turns away from you, then so do I. I heed none but the soul. Thus, bring me a soul as present."

Selfish feelings, like greed, lust and envy, are among those that make a heart ill. The easiest way to abstain from these sins is to be aware of how Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers were faithful servants to Allah.

Pearls of Wisdom

"Beware! verily there is a piece of flesh in the body of man, which when good, the whole body is good; and when bad, the whole body is bad, and that is the heart."

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

"Do not deceive or be faithless even with your enemy."

Abu Bakr

"Knowledge is not what one has memorized. Knowledge is what benefits."

Imam Shafi

"Muhabbah (love) is restlessness that does not end until the lover is connected with the beloved; it is a fire that does not cool until the lover realizes his objective."

Imam Shibli

"Enough for the fear of Allah is knowledge and enough for self-importance is ignorance."

Jafar Al-Sadiq

"The strong man is not one who is good at wrestling, but the strong man is one who controls himself in a fit of rage."

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

"There is nothing better than to be without everything - no theories or practices. When you are without all, you will be with all."

Bayazid Al-Bistami

"The Ways of God are as many as the breaths of Human beings."

Anonymous

"Sleep with the remembrance of death and rise with the awareness that you will not live long."

Uwais El-Qarani

"Do not serve Allah like a laborer expecting wages."

Rabi'a Al-Adawiyya

"There is no greater wealth than wisdom and no greater friend and helpmate than consultation."

Imam Ali





Islam is so clear and generous sea that you may gain the assent of Allah by just having one of these merits. The most prominent of these merits should be the heart peace.



THE DESCRIPTION OF A MUSLIM'S HEART

How is the heart of a Muslim defined in Qur'an? How do we imagine a Muslim's heart to be?

Not only the ill and sealed hearts of non-Muslim groups are described in the Holy Book Qur'an but also the determinations about the consistency of the heart are specifically stated in some miscellaneous verses of the Qur'an. Eating habits, walking, speaking, laughing of a Muslim are disciplined so his heart particularities are drawn attention in many ways because of its outstanding method. There are two verses in the Surah of Hashr reminds the possibility of this kind of prominent lives:

"And those who, before them, had homes (in Al-Madina) and had adopted the Faith, love those who emigrate to them, and have no jealousy in their breasts for that which they have been given and give them (emigrants) preference over themselves, even though they were in need of that. And whosoever is saved from his own covetousness, such are they who are successful.

And those who came after them say: "Our Lord! Forgive us and our brethren who have preceded us in Faith, and put not in our hearts any hatred against those who have believed. Our Lord! You are indeed full of kindness, Most Merciful." (Hashr, 59/9-10).

The first one of the above mentioned verses is the last verse which mentions the distribution of captured property and it also draws attention to the generosity and renounce of Ansar-i Kiram. In the second verse it is pointed out a holy goal to the future generation which has its roots from the tabiin and tebe-i tabiin.

It is stated in the verse that it is required to be protected by the stinginess of the yourself. The most important thing in this verse is that it is stated as "being protected" instead of "protecting". Because nobody can protect his/her heart without the help of Allah. Therefore, both special struggle and special praying are required in order to be one of these protected people.

The word "shuhha" in the verse means stinginess and parsimony. However if we apply this word for the lower self (nafs), it has many meanings like narrow-minded, jealous, parsimonious, selfish etc. Apart from the "the stinginess of self (nafs)" as stated in the translation, it is a comprehensive keyword which summarizes some of the moral illnesses. So "shuhha" is thought to be the reason of stinginess as well.

Ibn-i Umar describes shuhha as: "It means that a person's coveting the properties of others by ignoring properties of herself/himself." Because if a person is like this, he/she can

also be chary for the properties of others and doesn't want anybody to be generous.²

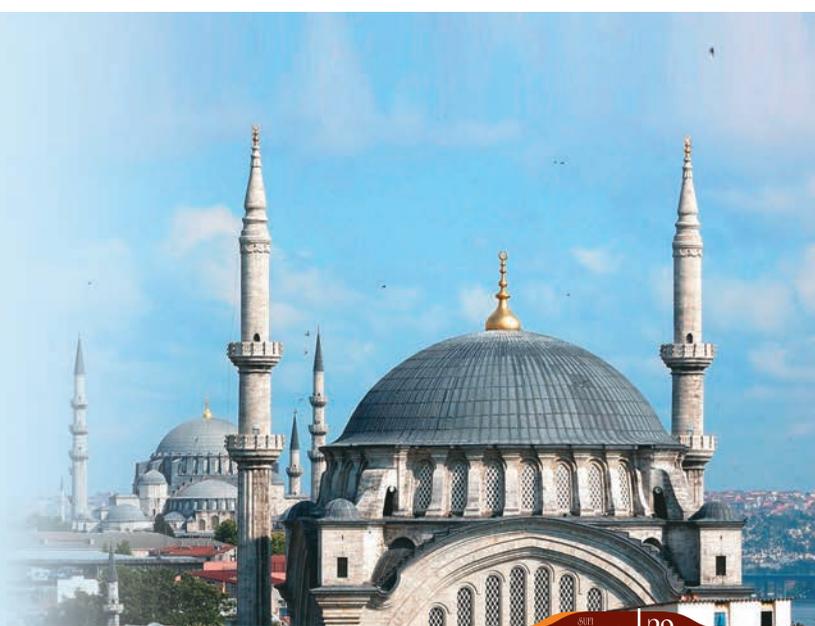
Therefore, sanctifying the lower self (nafs) from these bad features is admitted to be one of the conditions of the protection. Our prophet Muhammad Mustafa (pbuh) perceives it as a reason for corruption and he says that " Avoid shuhha because it destroys previous nations."³ In another Hadith transferred by Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) states that the faith and the shuhha of lower self cannot be together".

A Muslim should check her/his heart. He/she should look for the outstanding people who will help her/him in order to reach the mercy and kindness of the heart of a Muslim. He/she should intend to be one of the people who are complimented in the verses.

As transferred by Anas; the Prophet (pbuh) was talking to his companions and he said that "A man who is one of the people going to heaven will come here now", immediately a man from Ansar came in a condition of ablution that the water was dropping from his face.

This happened three times in the same situation and every time the same companion came. After this event Abdullah, the son of Amr ibn-i As, decided to observe that man who is going to heaven in order to learn his

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I close my eyes and imagine a Muslim's heart; it is sparkling, spotless. I imagine a heart; it gives priority to other Muslims although he/she is in the need of a thing.

practices. He wanted to stay in the house of that companion by. After three days, Abdullah explained the real reason why he was staying there. He said, "The reason why I am here is that we were sitting and talking with the Prophet and whenever he says "A man who is one of the people going to heaven will come here now." You came every time. I stayed here in order to learn and do the same practices that lead you going to heaven. But I haven't observed so many practices. What do you have in order to confirm the words of the Prophet (pbuh) about you?"

The companion answered this question: "As you see, I haven't got many things, but I will never have bad thoughts about a Muslim. I will never be jealous of the properties which are given to others by Allah".

Therefore, Abdullah said; "This is the reason of your reaching an outstanding level. It is not possible for everyone to reach that level."⁴

Islam is so clear and generous sea that you may gain the assent of Allah by just having one of these merits. The most prominent of these merits should be the heart peace. It can also be dissolving your existence with the existence of Muslims by getting rid of selfishness and jealousy.

I close my eyes and imagine a Muslim's heart; it is sparkling, spotless. It is totally purified by the stringiness of nafs.

I imagine a conscience; it is scale for differentiating the truth from the false.

I imagine a heart; it gives priority to other Muslims although he/she is in the need of a thing.

I imagine a heart; the one which is as huge as the world. When he/she hang the hands up for praying, he/she refers all the Muslims living in the past, at present or in the future. "Oh Lord! Please clean all the animosity against the Muslims from my soul!" he/she says. So his/her heart is the place of Allah who says in a verse "I don't fit into anywhere but the heart of my Muslim slave".

Nowadays a self-centered life style is common so everybody thinks mostly herself/himself. But a Muslim can tell to her/his nafs "Our sisters or brothers are before ourselves". He/she never has any kind of animosity against none of the Muslims. The capillaries of his/her heart are fed by the virtues of Islam etiquette.

If we have the conscious of looking for that kind of heart and we start with our hearts then this shows that we are on the right way.

1) Haj, 22/35, Mu'min, 23/60, Ra'd, 13/28.

2) Elmalili Hamdi Yazir, Tafseer of Qur'an (the explanation of the related verse).

3) Muslim.

4) Ibn-i Kesir, Tafseer of Qur'an (the explanation of the related verse).



THE Weaknesses Of MAN

IV



"And that those on whom knowledge has been bestowed may learn that the (Qur'an) is the Truth from thy Lord and that they may believe therein and their hearts may be made humbly (open) to it: for verily Allah is the Guide of those who believe to the Straight Way. (Haj, 15/54)

One of the greatest weaknesses of mankind is that they often forget by whom they were created, and the purpose of their creation. As discussed in prior articles, this occurs due to certain weaknesses in the human being, as well as certain characteristics which develop because of these weaknesses. However, it is the design of Allah that each human being should learn their own personal weaknesses and overcome them so that they can rise to the level of the "Best Stature" (Ahsen-i Taqweem). (Tin,95/4)



Allah gives mankind many examples of humans who have been able to accomplish this feat and who have earned a place in the memories and hearts of all who came after them. These are the humans to whom Allah has shown the straight way, and once they saw it, they never left it. Prophets, saints and Islamic scholars of great renown have traveled the path and have in themselves become exemplars of the struggle and endeavor required in order to triumph over one's particular weaknesses.



*Did Prophet
Solomon (pbuh)
become arrogant due
to his great wealth?
Did Prophet Job
(pbuh) lose his
patience when he was
ill and desperate?*

For instance, ask yourself: Was Prophet Joseph (pbuh) proud of his looks? Did Prophet Solomon (pbuh) become arrogant due to his great wealth? Did Prophet Job (pbuh) lose his patience when he was ill and desperate? Did Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) ever lose his manners or tell a lie? The reason why there are no such examples of these situations ever happening is because these men are examples of how educating the mind, fighting and defeating the nafs, working the body continuously and purifying the heart aides the human being in the war against one's weaknesses, thus becoming successful in this life and the next.

Although the argument could be made that these men were exceptional because they were prophets, it is closer to the truth is that they became Prophets because of their ability to overcome their weaknesses. In truth, Prophet Joseph (pbuh) was handsome as a youth, before he was thrown into the well, and Prophet Solomon grew up in the house of his wealthy father, Prophet David (pbuh), before he was given dominion over the jinn who mined his great riches from the ground. Furthermore there is no doubt that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was called "El-Amin" before he received his first revelation.

Such is the case for these beautiful saints and scholars whose stories can be recounted with love and affection by those that knew them, or in some cases, those who merely heard of them, as is the situation of Islam's current generation. With examples like Abu Hanifah and Imam Shafi, or Imam Ghazali, or lovers of Allah like Rumi or Shamsi Tebrizi, one can easily see that every man has the potential to rise to levels of perfection of mind, body and heart. In fact, their perfection made them the standard to which all Muslims should try to raise themselves, and their good character and manners still bring people to Islam today, hundreds of years after they have left this world.

Our beloved Ustadh Musa Efendi comes to mind as an example of this truth for the current times. He was one who educated his mind, body and heart to such a level. His generosity and love for the creation of Allah was well known, and the very mention of his name calls to mind endless stories



of kindness and mercy for both man and beast. Tears flow freely even from those who never met him, for they feel the great void left in this world by his passing.

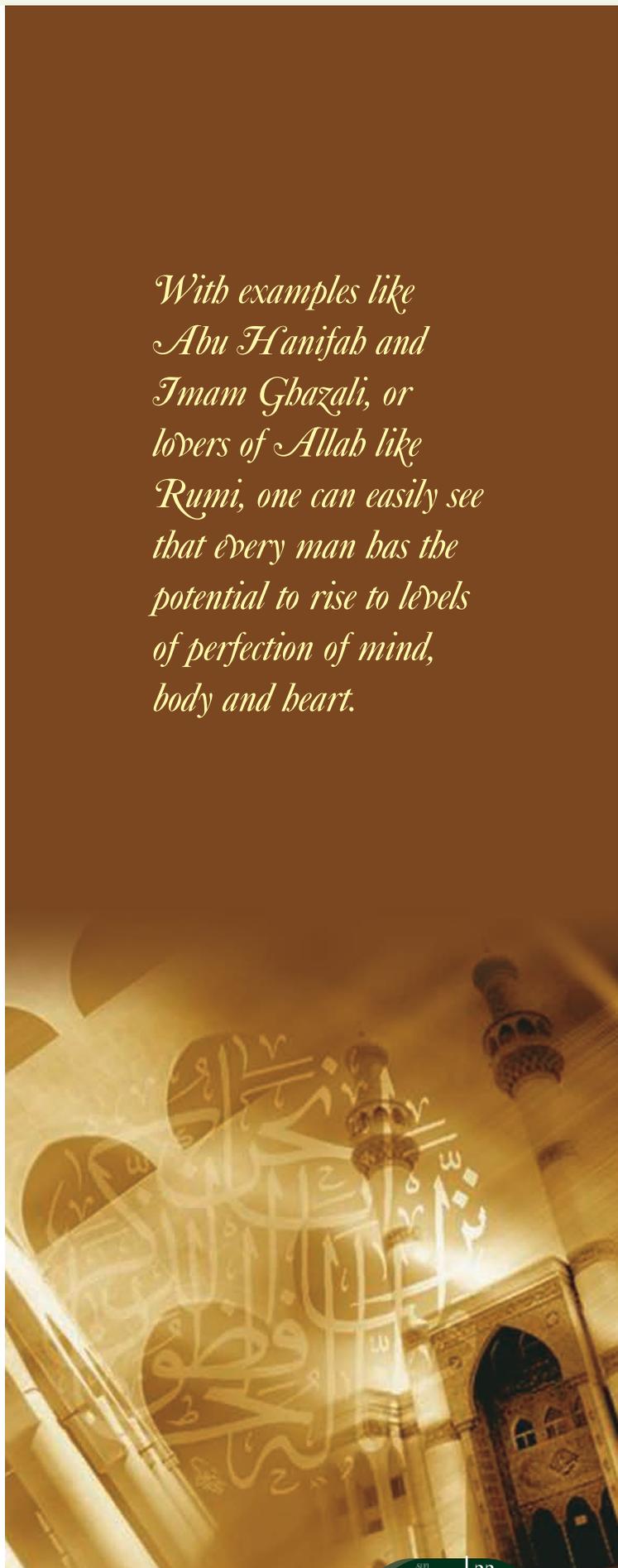
These men were never, according to any recollection, given to weaknesses of the mind such as arrogance, pride, or stinginess; nor were they ever given to the physical weaknesses of laziness or idleness. There are none who knew them, even as children, who recall them in a harsh manner, or remember them dealing in a way unjust to those who asked for their aid. It is impossible to say that these people were prophets; they were mere men who learned and understood the Prophet's saying:

Narrated by Abdullah ibn Mas'ud: Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said, "Allah the Highest has allotted you your characters just as He has allotted you your provisions. Allah the Highest gives worldly things to those whom He loves and those whom He does not love, but He gives religion only to those whom He loves, so he who is given religion by Allah has been loved by Him. By Him in Whose hand my soul is, a man is not a Muslim till his heart and tongue are submissive, and he is not a believer till his neighbor is safe from injurious behavior on his part." (Imam Ahmad and Bayhaqi)

From this hadith one can see that the greatest sign that Allah loves a person is when He gives them guidance. It is not the riches that a person accumulates that are the sign of Allah's favor; after all there are rich atheists. Rather, as this hadith explains, it is guidance from Allah which is the real reflection of His love. However, the mere reception of guidance does not complete the favor. The hadith goes on to explain that guidance has a price.

First, one must work hard to educate the mind and cleanse the heart. Once the heart and mind have been cleansed to the point of submission, then one obtains the level of being called a Muslim. Cleansing is necessary in order to reach submissiveness, because it is impossible to be submissive if one is still obeying the nafs and allowing it to stain the heart with sin. Afterwards,

With examples like Abu Hanifah and Imam Ghazali, or lovers of Allah like Rumi, one can easily see that every man has the potential to rise to levels of perfection of mind, body and heart.





One must work hard to educate the mind and cleanse the heart. Once the heart and mind have been cleansed to the point of submission, then one obtains the level of being called a Muslim.

one must continue the effort of climbing through the levels of iman to the level of believer (Mu'min). Unfortunately, not every person who calls themselves a Muslim applies their effort and dedication to reaching this level. The ones who have, though, are easily recognized. They are recognized by the following hadith:

Narrated by Abu Dhar: Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said, "He whose heart Allah has made sincere towards faith, whose heart He has made free from unbelief, whose tongue is truthful, whose soul is calm, whose nature is straight, whose ear has been made attentive and whose eye is observant has been successful. The ear is a funnel and the eye is a repository for what the heart learns. He is successful whose heart has been made retentive." (Imam Ahmad)

Indeed, all of the people mentioned above knew and understood this hadith, and they all were eternally grateful to Allah for the blessing that He had bestowed upon them. Surely, one can see that the greatest thing that all of these men have in common in their lives was this: they all had ceaseless faith (iman) and they all were grateful servants. All of these men of exemplary character knew that these two situations were necessary to straighten and strengthen the weaknesses of the human being.

Certainly all of the great men mentioned can be recognized as the fulfillment of this hadith; their manners and modesty are a sure sign of the

truth of this statement. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) explained that modesty and good morals are a clear sign of true and sound faith in one's heart, as well as a clear sign that one has overcome their own personal weaknesses. This is because modesty and morals are a sign of purity:

Narrated by Abu Huraira: The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Faith (Belief) consists of more than sixty branches (i.e. parts). And Haya (This term "Haya" covers a large number of concepts which are to be taken together; amongst them are self respect, modesty, bashfulness, and scruple, etc.) is a part of faith." (Bukhari)

Abdullah ibn Amr narrated: When Allah's Messenger was asked who was most excellent, he replied, "Everyone whose heart is clear of pollution (makhmum al-qalb) and whose tongue is truthful." On being told by his hearers that they understood "whose tongue is truthful," but not makhmum al-qalb he replied, "The one who is pure, the one who is pure, with no sin, iniquity, deceit, or envy." (Ibn Majah and Bayhaqi)

So while it can be understood that Allah created human beings with certain weaknesses, He also gave humans the tools and the examples of how to triumph over those weaknesses and to raise their level to the higher stations for which they were created. Since Allah created the human being to be His representative here on earth, then it only stands to reason that He

would not want this blessed creation to languor away in sin and despair. Again, if this statement were true, then there would have been no examples on which to base life and moral values.

Thus, understanding this, it becomes necessary for all Muslims to take account of their weaknesses and shortcomings in order to search out and establish ways to strengthen and purify themselves. This must be done so that they can focus on climbing the steep path which is the "divine" path: the path of the "Best Stature" (Ahsan-i Taqweem).

Finally, every Muslim should look into their heart and observe there the signs of faith, be they weak or strong. If they are weak, then one must use the mind and body to strengthen and purify the heart, and settle true "faith" into it.

If they are strong, then one must use the mind and body to work ceaselessly so that they do not backslide to the lower levels of iman. This is because purity of mind, body, and heart can bring one to righteousness and tranquility. Through tranquility of heart every person will surely find satisfaction...

"Those who believe and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction. (Ra'd, 13/28)

(Good News) To those whose hearts when Allah is mentioned are filled with fear, who show patient perseverance over their afflictions, keep up regular prayer and spend (in charity) out of what we have bestowed upon them. (Haj, 22/35)

Oh Merciful Allah! Grant us the strength of mind to remain on the path of truth and wisdom. Grant us the strength of body so that we may become servants of the Truth.

Grant us strength and purity of heart so that we may be satisfied. Grant us forgiveness for all the weaknesses that we cannot overcome, as you are the Most Powerful, The Greatest, and we are not like you. Amen.



Muslims must take account of their weaknesses in order to search out and purify themselves. This must be done so that they can focus on climbing the steep path which is the "divine" path: the path of the "Best Stature."

IKHLAS:

THE PURIFIED CONSISTENCY OF HEART

Our soul gives vitality to our body, bringing it liveliness, what makes our prayers valuable is our ikhlas. In the same way that a body without a soul serves no purpose, deeds and prayers without ikhlas have no purpose.

Hypocrisy means to worship and work, not with sincere intentions, but to be seen by others. However, ikhlas is to worship and work with sincere intentions and only for the sake of Allah.

Hypocrisy implies material advantage and self-benefit. Hypocritical people do whatever their material advantages require and they progress in this way. However, for ikhlas, the essence is good intentions and the sake of Allah. People who have ikhlas do everything for the sake of Allah and they do it with all their hearts.

Hypocrisy is duplicity. Ikhlas is cordiality, sincerity, being genuine about religion and worshipping only for Allah. Because of that Almighty Allah says: "And they have been commanded no more than this: to worship God, offering Him sincere devotion, being True (in faith)...", "My Lord hath commanded justice; and that ye set your whole selves (to Him) at every time and place of prayer, and call upon Him, making your devotion sincere as in His sight: such as He created you in the beginning, so shall ye return", "Say: Will ye dispute with us about God, seeing that He is our Lord and your Lord; that we are responsible for our doings and ye for yours; and that We are sincere (in our faith) in Him?."

As we learn from the Qur'an and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), hypocrisy is a sign of hypocrites. In the times of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the hypocrites would go to the masjid to

pray with the community, even though they did not believe, just to be seen with the others, they appeared to spend their money for the poor in the way of Allah and they used to join in the wars.

The verses of the Qur'an depict the insincere behavior of the hypocrites:

"The Hypocrites - they think they are over-reaching God, but He will over-reach them: When they stand up to prayer, they stand without earnestness, to be seen of men, but little do they hold God in remembrance"

"Not those who spend of their substance, to be seen of men, but have no faith in God and the Last Day: If any take the Evil One for their intimate, what a dreadful intimate he is!"

"So woe to the worshippers, Who are neglectful of their prayers, Those who (want but) to be seen (of men), But refuse (to supply) (even) neighborly needs."

"Of the people there are some who say: "We believe in God and the Last Day;" but they do not (really) believe. Fain would they deceive Allah and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves, and realize (it) not! In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease: And grievous is the penalty they (incur), because they are false (to themselves)."

Usually, humans want to be appreciated by other people. This is part of human nature. This is why it is very difficult to worship with all of one's heart and concentration (with ikhlas). As a matter of fact, Almighty Allah only accepts those deeds and prayers that are performed with ikhlas. Our Dear Prophet, in one of his sayings, said: "Allah only accepts those deeds that are done of His own will."

When it comes to the worshipping and deeds of the hypocrites, these actions have no value in

the eyes of Allah. They are only a waste of time. It is for this reason that Prophet Muhammad says: "Often a great number of people wake up at night to pray; however, the only benefit accrued to them is that they stay awake. And there are many people who fast; however, the only result they obtain from their fast is thirst and hunger." "Whoever worships or does a deed only so that others see it, will be disgraced by Allah in front of the people on the Day of Judgment. Whoever does something hypocritical Allah will let the people know about their situation."

In fact, our deeds and worships have formal aspects, a guise and an internal aspect.

Our soul gives vitality to our body, bringing it liveliness and dynamism, what makes our prayers valuable is our ikhlas. In the same way that a body without a soul serves no purpose, deeds and prayers without ikhlas have no purpose. For this reason our beloved Prophet (pbuh) said: "Surely when Allah values you, He does not look at your forms or your property, but He only looks at your hearts and your deeds."

One of the great mystics, Fudayl ibn Iyaz said: "Once upon a time they used to do things only for hypocritical reasons, however now they lay claim to things that have not even done." Truly, there are people who lay claim to good acts which they have never done, or they try to appropriate for themselves the good things that some other people have done. These kinds of people always exist inside society.

Hypocritical people behave differently when they are alone from when they are among other people. These people have no identity and they have no true personality. About those people, Prophet Ali said:

"There are two signs of hypocrites:

When it comes to the worshipping and deeds of the hypocrites, these actions have no value in the eyes of Allah. They are only a waste of time.

*The sign and
light of the ikhlas
in their hearts
appear in their
behavior and their
conversation.*

a- When they are alone, they are lazy, when they see people, they act eager.

b- When they are praised they work hard, when they are criticized they work less."

Islamic scholars regard hypocrisy to be minor or hidden shirk (polytheism). In fact, Prophet Muhammad declares that hypocrisy is a minor shirk and says to his friends and community:

In another narrative, Prophet Muhammad said that "without a doubt, hypocrisy is shirk."

"Minor shirk is more hidden than a black ant on a black stone in a dark night." (Ibn 'Abbas)

The term 'minor' here does not mean that they are not as grave or serious. Rather it means that these forms of shirk are more inconspicuous and unnoticeable compared to the others. This form of shirk has been described by the Prophet (pbuh):

"Hence, Muslims should shun and guard themselves very carefully from these kinds of shirk because the most 'minor' shirk may incur a heavier penalty than the most serious sin in Islam. Committing or practicing any act of shirk, whether major or minor, can make one's deeds unacceptable by Allah."

Ikhlas is the first condition for working righteousness/good deeds and forms of worship. Without ikhlas, deeds and praying are not accepted. It is for this reason that Allah commands in the Qur'an: "...whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and, in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as partner."

It is constantly mentioned in the Qur'an that religion is rendered only for the sake of Allah, and that praying and worship are only for Him. In Surah Al-Zumar it is stated: "Verily it is We Who have revealed the Book to thee in Truth: so serve God, offering Him sincere devotion. Is it not to God that sincere devotion is due? But those who take for protectors other than God (say): "We only serve them in order that they may bring us nearer to God." Truly God will judge between them in that wherein they differ. But God guides not such as are false and ungrateful."

Ibn Marduyah reports from Yazed al-Kursi that someone asked Prophet Muhammad:

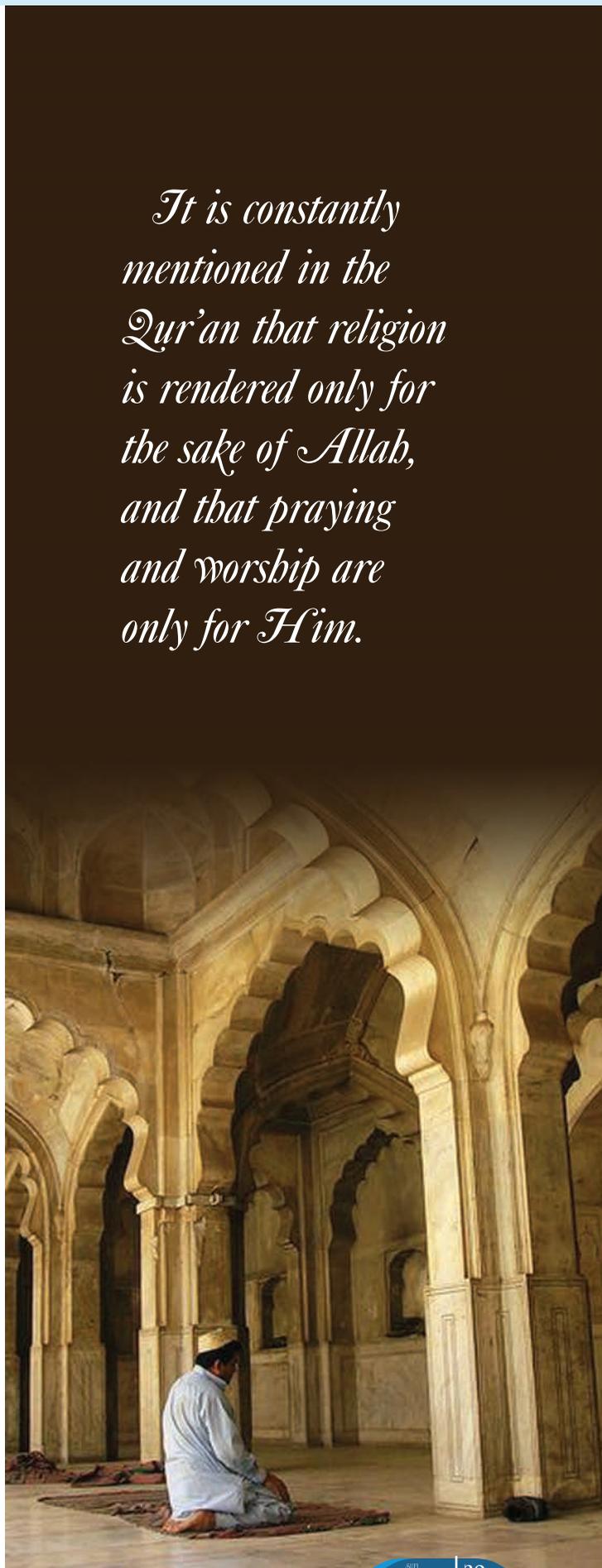
-“If we give charity for reputation, will Allah reward us?” he asked. The Prophet replied in the negative, and then the person asked: “If we give charity both for the sake of Allah and for reputation?” The Prophet answered: “Allah never accepts any deed that is not done for the sake of Him.” The Prophet then read the following verse: “To every people did We appoint rites (of sacrifice), that they might celebrate the name of God over the sustenance He gave them from animals (fit for food). But your God is One God: submit then your wills to Him (in Islam): and give thou the good news to those who humble themselves,- To those whose hearts when God is mentioned, are filled with fear, who show patient perseverance over their afflictions, keep up regular prayer, and spend (in charity) out of what We have bestowed upon them.”

People who have ikhlas in their hearts are like those described in the verse above. The sign and light of the ikhlas in their hearts appear in their behavior and their conversation. It is for this reason that our beloved Prophet Muhammad says: “Whoever behaves with ikhlas for forty days only for the sake of Allah, wisdom fountains will pour from his heart to his tongue.” Also, in other sayings the Prophet mentions this matter: “Those who keep their hearts sincere about their faith (imaan), who keeps their words true, who unites their hearts with peace and tranquility, who keeps their morality in the righteous way, who keeps their ear open to hear the rights and their eyes open to see the realities are surely those who will prosper.”

“As long as a believer has the following characteristics, their heart never feels betrayal, resentment or animosity:

- a- Doing their deeds and works with complete sincerity (ikhlas) and only for the sake of Allah,
- b- Wishing khayr (the best of everything) from Allah for the leaders of Muslim communities,
- c- Not abandoning the Muslim communities because the prayers of Muslims surround them.”

It is constantly mentioned in the Qur'an that religion is rendered only for the sake of Allah, and that praying and worship are only for Him.





SUFI STORIES

MŌSES AND THE SHEPHERD



Moses once heard a shepherd praying as follows: “O God, show me where Thou art, so that I may become Thy servant. I will clean Thy shoes and comb Thy hair, and sew Thy clothes, and fetch Thee milk.”

When Moses heard the shepherd praying in this senseless manner, he rebuked him, saying “O foolish one, though your father was a believer, you have become an infidel. God is a Spirit, and needs not such gross ministrations as, in your ignorance, you suppose.” The shepherd was abashed at this rebuke and tearing his clothes, fled away into the desert.

Then a voice from Heaven was heard, saying, “O Moses, wherefore have you driven my servant? Your office is to reconcile my people with me, not to drive them away from me. I have given each race different usages and forms of praising and adorning me. I have no need of their praise, being exalted above all such needs. I regard not the words that are spoken, but the heart that offers them. I do not require fine words, but a burning heart. Men’s ways of showing devotion to me are various, but so long as the devotions are genuine, they are accepted.”



A DREAM

A visitor came to a sheikh. This visitor wanted to demonstrate his own knowledge of the Qur'an and intended to defeat the sheikh in a debate. However, when the visitor entered, the sheikh took the initiative and mentioned Yusuf and the dreams he had had, according to the Qur'an. The sheikh then suddenly turned to his visitor and asked him if he could tell the visitor immersed about a dream he had had, so that the visitor could interpret it. After receiving permission the sheikh related a dream that had been about both he and the visitor. The sheikh then went on to describe the following event in the dream: "I saw your hand in a jar of honey while my hand was immersed in the latrine."

The visitor hastened to interpret the dream: "It is quite obvious! You are immersed in wrong pursuits whereas I am leading a righteous life."

"But," the Sufi said, "There is more to the dream." The visitor asked him to continue. The sheikh then went on: "You were licking my hand and I was licking yours."

THE PIOUS MAN'S REWARD

A pious man once dreamed that he saw a king in Paradise and a pious man in Hell. "That's not right", he exclaimed. "Surely it should be the other way round?"

"Not at all," came the answer. "The king is in Heaven because he loved and befriended dervishes; the pious man is in Hell because he associated too much with kings."



STAGES OF THE HEART

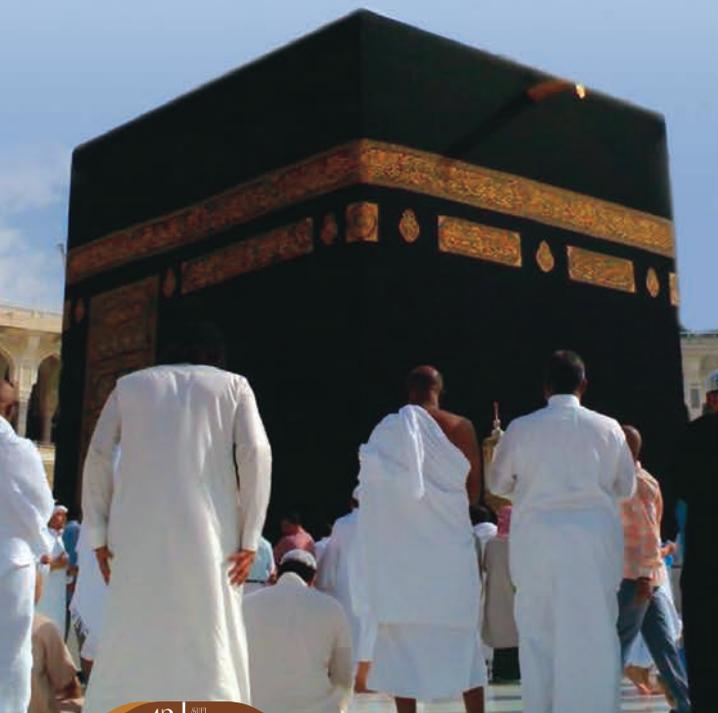
A servant of Allah should arrange all of their behavior and actions in the knowledge that everything is always in the hands of Allah and subject to His divine acceptance.

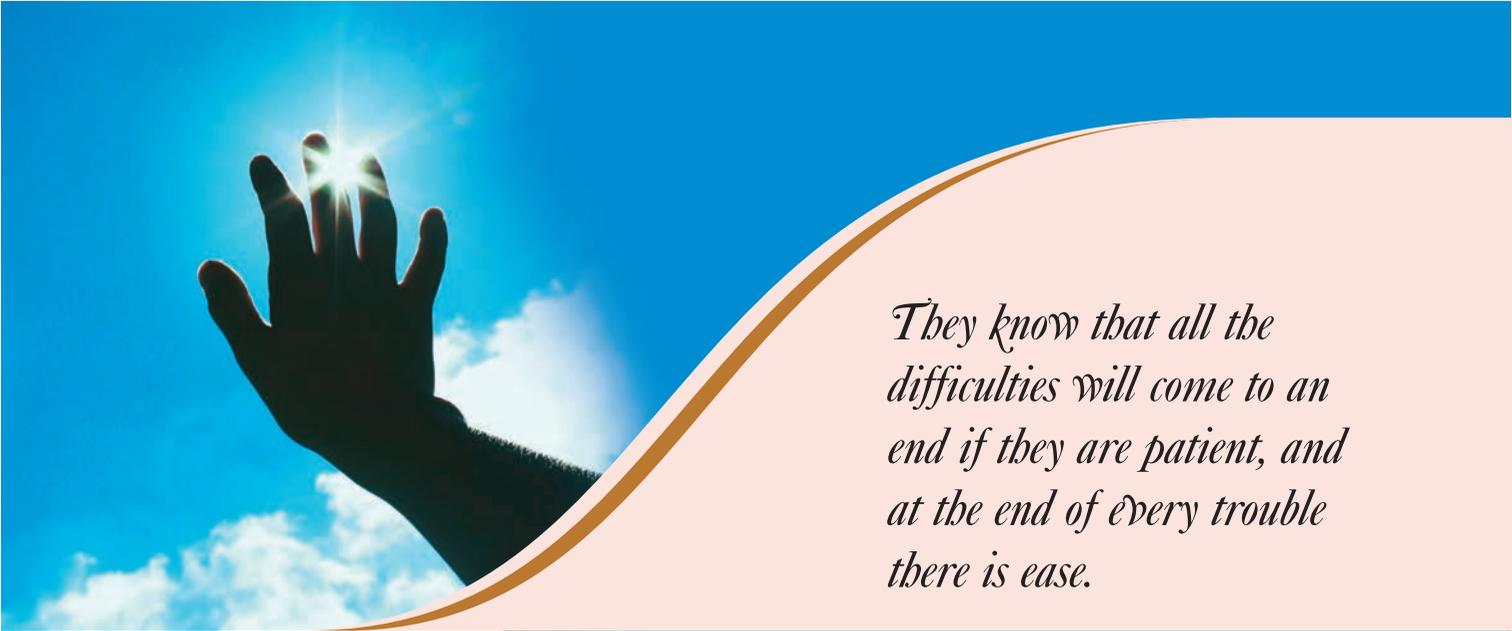
The honored Ustadh Mahmud Sami Efendi used to repeat some hadiths to strengthen belief and enlightenment. By repeating them often, it was as if he was suggesting that they be memorized.

One of these hadiths was originally narrated by Ibn-i Abbas: "One day I was riding behind the Prophet (pbuh). He commanded: 'Son! Let me tell you a few words (to memorize). Respect Allah, that is, take care to stay away from what is forbidden. Consider that you will find Him facing you.' He went on to say 'Whenever you want anything, ask for it from Allah. Whenever you need help, ask for it from Allah.

Even if all creatures were to combine their forces in unison, desiring to offer you some kind of advantage or benefit, they will not be able to grant you anything more than what Allah has prescribed for you. Also, even if all the creatures were to combine forces to harm you, they would not be able to do any more than what Allah has approved for you. Everything has been written, and all the pages have been completed and the ink is long dry."

This is a hadith that every believer should keep like a mirror in their heart. They should act in this way, they should work in this way and end their life in this way. With the mercy and help of Almighty Allah may they be safe and sound from the difficulties of this world and the hereafter.





They know that all the difficulties will come to an end if they are patient, and at the end of every trouble there is ease.

In this hadith, it is stated that a servant of Allah should arrange all of their behavior and actions in the knowledge that everything is always in the hands of Allah Almighty and subject to His divine acceptance.

When a servant of Allah reaches the complete understanding that Allah is the One and Only owner of everything, they are then able to comprehend that whatever position a person finds themselves in they are nothing more than helpless humans with only limited powers.

Therefore, they can rely neither on their name nor their possessions, nor their children. They then know that everything occurs with the help of Allah Almighty and this increases one's knowledge, devotion, love and resignation. Then a person stops expecting anything from created beings. They know that all the difficulties will come to an end if they are patient, and at the end of every trouble there is ease, relief and comfort.

It was always easy to understand from the face of our honored teacher if he did not approve of those who were complaining about their lives or who had unhappy faces or bad tempers.

Such discontent is a result of not being aware of one's own inner self and being preoccupied with searching for others' faults. Or perhaps this could be due to a lack of understanding about the matter of destiny.

People who have such attitudes are in the habit of complaining all the time. They are able to gossip about ten things in five minutes. Not only should we take care of the things that we must do, we also have to stay away from people

who have such temperaments and who are imprudent, because it is easy for imprudence to spread from heart to heart.

Almighty Allah commands in the Qur'an: The Day whereon neither wealth nor offspring will avail, except for he who brings to Allah a sound Heart. (Shuara, 88-89)

The heart is divided into five parts:

THE DEAD HEART:

This is the heart of the unbelievers.

THE ILL HEART:

This is the heart that is full of passion for the world (earthly passions).

THE IMPUDENT HEART:

This is the heart that is unsettled between the world and the hereafter.

THE AWAKE HEART:

This is the heart that is busy with dhikr.

THE ALIVE HEART:

This is the heart that puts the states of the Prophet, his companions, and those that are loved by Allah ahead of the others.

As a matter of fact, the elders used to say: "Praying leads to heaven. Praying with utmost respect causes one to reach Almighty Allah."

May our Lord protect our hearts, which He keeps in His view, from all kinds of love for the world and from all the things other than Him, and from the wickedness of our nafs and from evil.

MUSLIM SCHOLARS WHO ARE ENSLAVED BY WORLDLY GLAMOR

Teaching Islam or preaching is only good when it is done for the sake of Allah, when it is not used as a stepping-stone for other worldly purposes. The sign of such a sincere scholar is that he does not have worldly desires that lie behind his knowledge.

Imam Rabbani does not inform us only about matters which are related to Sufism; he also speaks about the problems of Islamic scholarship in general. His advice targets both the illiterate as well as the educated.

As is well known, Islam values learning and education very much. It considers the ink of the scholar to be more valuable than the blood of the martyr killed defending his country. Prophet Muhammad even said that the death of a scholar is equivalent to the death of whole world. However, this great importance attached to the scholar in Islam also burdens them with great responsibilities. It is the scholars of Islam who are also responsible for the rise as well as the fall of Islam. Scholars are indispensable in the teaching of Islam and its practice among the people. It is also interesting that the very scholars who benefit Islam in the greatest way can also cause the greatest damage to Islam. In Letter 33 Imam Rabbani explains the reasons why scholars can be harmful to Islam and how to eliminate causes that can corrupt scholars. His warnings towards scholars are still valid today since, due to some worldly reasons, many scholars produce ideas that are contrary to Islam.

"Loving the world and having an inclination towards its glamour is like dirt on the faces of scholars (of Islam). The knowledge of such scholars might benefit others, but they will not receive any benefit from their own knowledge. Although the propagation of Islam is their privilege, sometimes Allah Almighty can support His religion through a non-believer or a sinner. Concerning this matter



the Prophet (pbuh) says: certainly Allah can support His religion by (using) a sinner."

According to Imam Rabbani, those who use the religion for their personal interests will lose in the Hereafter. They volunteer to distort religion so they can attain fame and government posts. Rather than serving Islam they are trying to make Islam serve them:

"Worldly scholars are like flint. They contain the energy that causes fire. People light fires from the flint, but the flint does not benefit from the flames. Similarly, worldly scholars do not benefit from their own knowledge. It can even harm them since they can state the excuse that they were unaware of the principles of Islam. However, in the Divine Court they will not be excused as they will not be able to say that they did not know that what they did was wrong. The Prophet said: the most severely punished person in the Hereafter will be those scholars of Islam who did not benefit from their own knowledge."

In the following words Imam Rabbani also explains why using religion for worldly purposes is a great sin:

"Knowledge has an immense value in Allah's sight. The scholar who wants worldly gain uses such a valuable gift in order to attain worldly possessions that have no value in the Divine Court. Hence, such a scholar is abusing highly

honored knowledge to collect money, friends and other passing interests. Allah Almighty dislikes those who are worldly and therefore spend knowledge for purposes that are disliked by Almighty Allah; this is very bad conduct which will bring spiritual disaster. Such conduct is paramount to disliking what is liked by Allah and loving what is disdained by Him. Teaching Islam or preaching is only good when it is done for the sake of Allah, when it is not used as a stepping-stone for other worldly purposes. The sign of such a sincere scholar is that he does not have worldly desires that lie behind his knowledge."

Imam Rabbani goes one step further and says that the worldly scholars of Islam cannot be considered to be men of religion. He calls them thieves of the treasure of religion:

"The scholars of Islam who love the temporary goods of this world are in fact men of this world, although they consider themselves to be spiritual men of the Hereafter. They are evil and the most harmful of all human beings. They are thieves of the religion. In the chapter of Mujadele in the Holy Qur'an Allah Almighty states: On the day when Allah will raise them all together, then will they swear unto Him as they (now) swear unto you, and they will fancy that they have some standing. Lo! Is it not they who are the liars? Satan has gained



The Prophet said that the death of a scholar is equivalent to the death of whole world. However, this great importance attached to the scholar in Islam also burdens them with great responsibilities

mastery over them, so he has made them forget the remembrance of Allah; they are of Satan's party; now surely Satan's party is the loser. (Mujadilah, 58:19-20)"

According to Imam Rabbani the duty of the scholars is to show how Islam is to be practiced. But he says that sadly some scholars show people how to evade fulfilling the commandments of Islam. They do the opposite of what they should do: it is a reality that the weakness people show in fulfilling the commandments of Islam is due to the false scholars of Islam. Such heedlessness is caused by the evil words and intentions of scholars who work under the disguise of men of religion.

Opposed to this group there is another group of scholars whom Imam Rabbani calls the scholars of the Hereafter. These are the scholars who have gained their freedom from the shackles of worldly interests. This is the group which was praised by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Imam Rabbani explains their characteristics in the following words:

"The scholars that do not give their hearts to the love of possessions, gaining of fame or high positions, those who do not desire to be rulers over people are the scholars of the Hereafter (ulema-i Ahiret). These are the best of people. Their ink will weigh more than the blood of martyrs who gave their life for the sake of religion. For this group the Prophet said that their sleep is a kind of worship. The beauty of the Hereafter and the ugliness of this world are clear to them. They know well that this world is transitory whereas the Hereafter is endless. Therefore, they are not attracted to the passing glamour of this world and they have focused all their attention on the eternal, the never-decomposing beauties (of the Hereafter)."

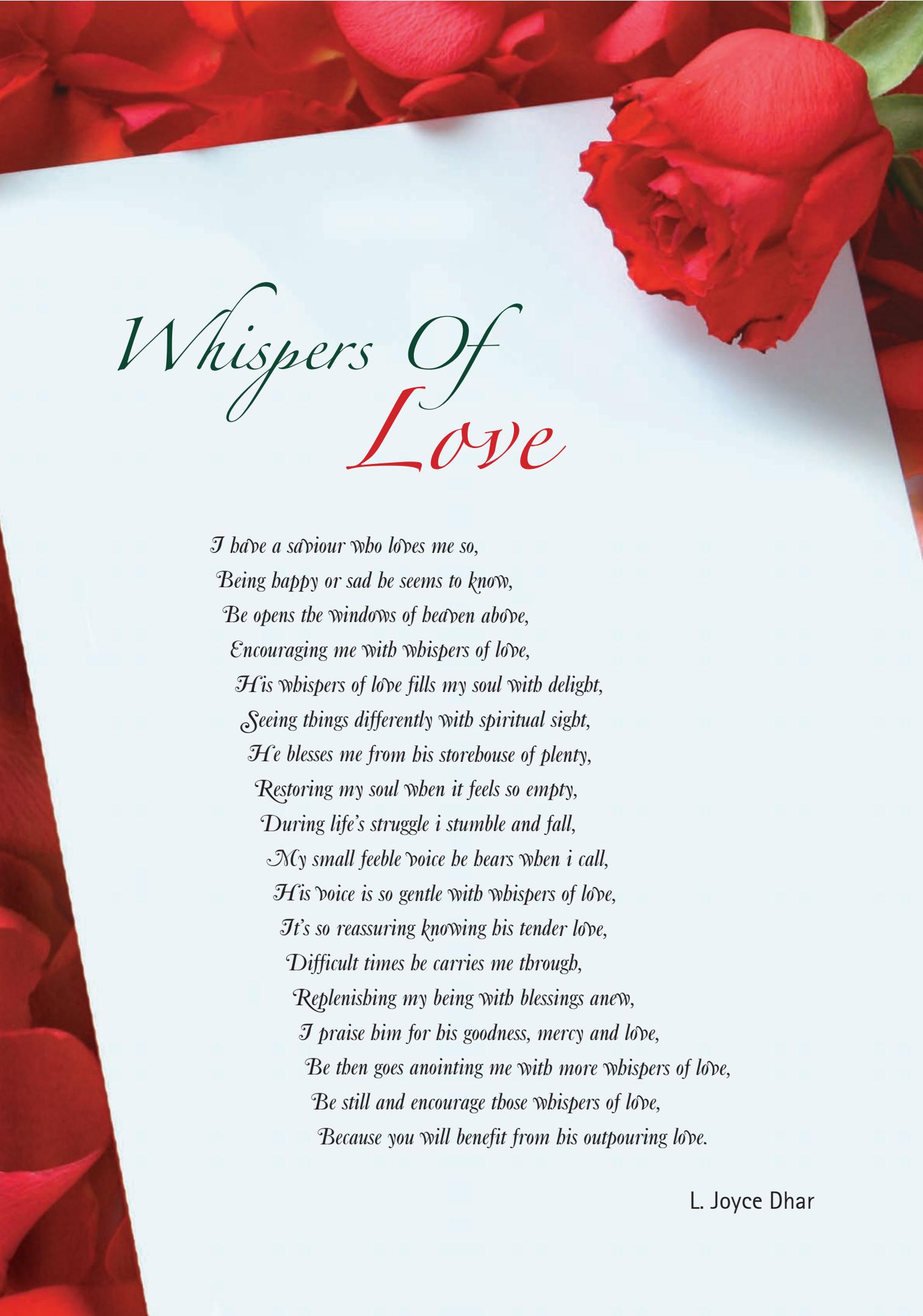
Imam Rabbani is not categorically opposed to worldly possessions. If a Muslim or scholar desires the world, not for selfish reasons, but for the good of Muslim nations, then such a desire is acceptable. Worldly possessions, as long as they do not invade a scholar's heart, are positive as they can be employed in order to help the religion and Muslims. However, such scholars are few in number. Using worldly possessions for the sake of the Owner of the World is not considered to be worldliness.

"Some scholars love this world in order to use it for the sake of Allah without feeling any love for this world. They love it only for the sake of spending it in the good way. The following verse of the Qur'an describes them:

Men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of poor-rate; they fear a day in which the hearts and eyes shall turn about; (Nur, 24:37) Bahauddin Naqshband states: there was a young trader at the market in Mina who was trading to the worth of 50 thousand gold pieces, but his heart never forgot Allah, even for a second."

In these difficult days, when Muslims are going through difficult times, we need such good scholars more than ever. The rise and fall of the Muslim ummah is very much in the hands of the scholars. If they serve Islam selflessly like the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh) the ummah will arise from this difficult situation. If they put their interest first before the interests of Islam then they will cause the fall of Islam as well as their own downfall. Hence, intellectuals should heed the words of Imam Rabbani and take lessons from his warnings.

Worldly possessions, as long as they do not invade a scholar's heart, are positive as they can be employed in order to help the religion and Muslims.



Whispers Of Love

*I have a saviour who loves me so,
Being happy or sad he seems to know,
He opens the windows of heaven above,
Encouraging me with whispers of love,
His whispers of love fills my soul with delight,
Seeing things differently with spiritual sight,
He blesses me from his storehouse of plenty,
Restoring my soul when it feels so empty,
During life's struggle I stumble and fall,
My small feeble voice he hears when I call,
His voice is so gentle with whispers of love,
It's so reassuring knowing his tender love,
Difficult times he carries me through,
Replenishing my being with blessings anew,
I praise him for his goodness, mercy and love,
He then goes anointing me with more whispers of love,
Be still and encourage those whispers of love,
Because you will benefit from his outpouring love.*

L. Joyce Dhar

Quiz For Children



- Which short Surah talks about the Aba-beel birds?
a. Al-uraysh b. Al-Fil
c. Al-Ikhlās d. Al-Falaq
- Which short Surah talks directly to the pagans (non-believers) of Mecca?
a. An-Nas b. Al-Quraysh
c. Al-Kafirun d. An-Nasr
- Which short Surah explains the treatment of orphans?
a. Al-Maun b. Al-Ikhlās
c. Al-Fil d. Al-Kauthar
- Which short Surah mentions the Well of Abundance?
a. Al-Maun b. Al-Quraysh
c. An-Nas d. Al-Masad
- Which short Surah was revealed on the "Night of Power"?
a. Al-Bayyina b. Al-Masad
c. Ad-Duha d. Al-Qadr
- Which short Surah tells of the death of the Prophets uncle and his wife?
a. Al-Qari b. Al-Fil
c. Al-Masad d. At-Tin
- Which short Surah begins with the first five ayats received by the Prophet (pbuh)?
a. Al-Alaq b. Al-Fil
c. At-Tin d. An-Nas
- Which short Surah mentions the help of Allah?
a. Al-Alaq b. Al-Kafirun
c. Al-Falaq d. An-Nasr
- Which short Surah mentions figs and olives?
a. At-Tin b. Al-Alaq
c. Al-Qari'a d. At-Takathur
- Which short Surah starts with a mention of time?
a. Al-Humazah b. Al-Asr
c. An-Nas d. Al-Falaq

.....

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