



SUFI WISDOM

A Source of Inspirational and Traditional Islamic Knowledge

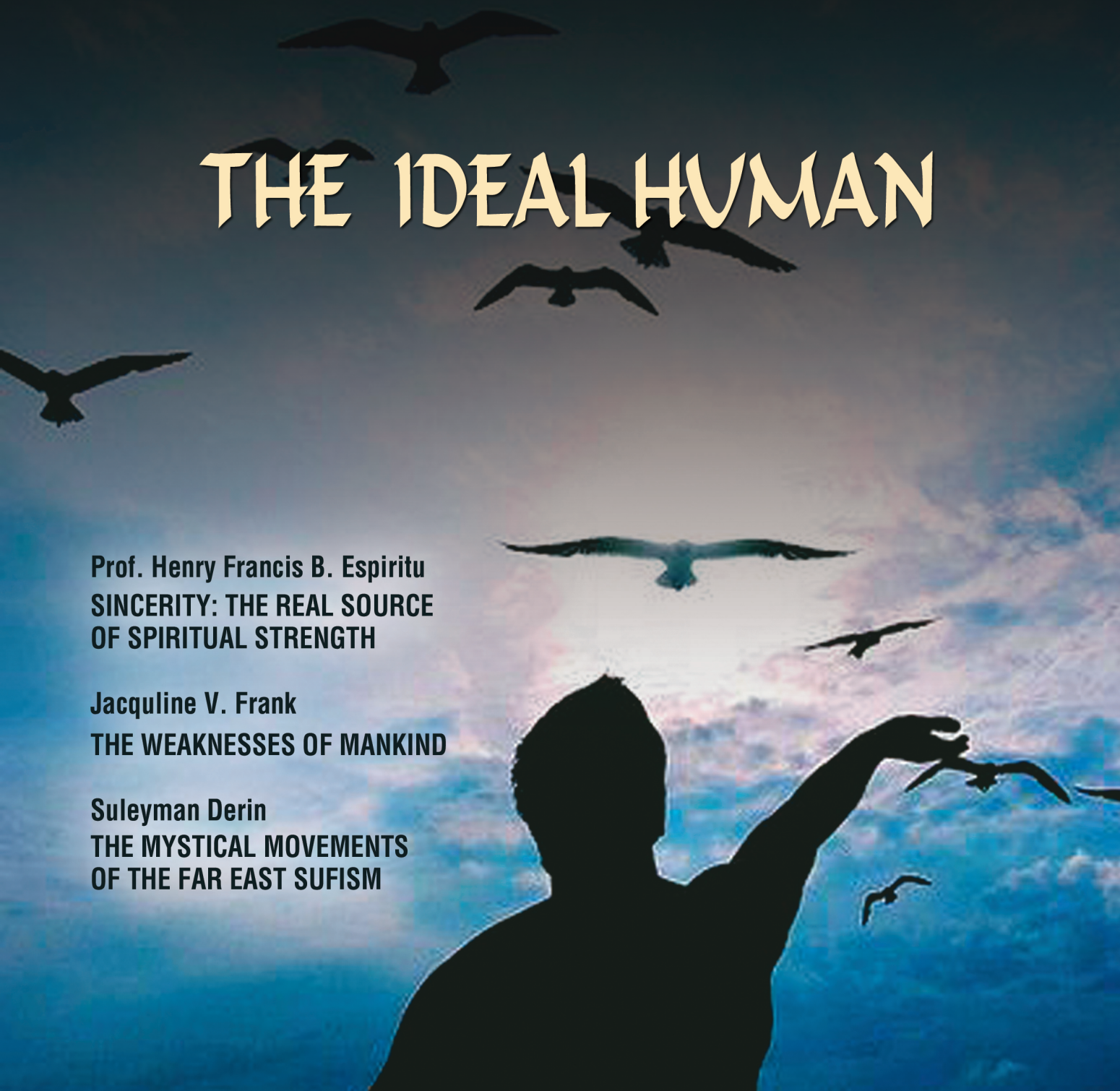
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THE IDEAL HUMAN

Prof. Henry Francis B. Espiritu
SINCERITY: THE REAL SOURCE
OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

Jacqueline V. Frank
THE WEAKNESSES OF MANKIND

Suleyman Derin
THE MYSTICAL MOVEMENTS
OF THE FAR EAST SUFISM





Dear Readers,

They (the angels) said: "Glory to Thee of knowledge we have none save that Thou hast taught us: in truth it is Thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom. (Qur'an:2/32)

The angels continuously testify that Allah Almighty alone is perfect in knowledge and wisdom. The human, on the other hand, must work a great deal to gain wisdom as they run through their appointed term in this worldly life. For this reason, we at Sufi Wisdom have decided to dedicate this issue to the topic of wisdom and working for the sake of Allah.

In this issue, our master, Osman Nuri Efendi, discusses the topic of the ideal person, and the signs that one can look for in order to recognize such a person. In addition, he gives some instructions in the area of serving Allah for the sake of Allah, as giving of oneself solely for the reward of seeing Allah's face is truly one of the signs of an ideal servant.

Also included in this edition is an interview with Prof. Hasan Kamil Yilmaz about how a person can reach "spiritual maturity". He explains some of the characteristics of the *nafs* and its relationship to the *kamil* (perfected) person.

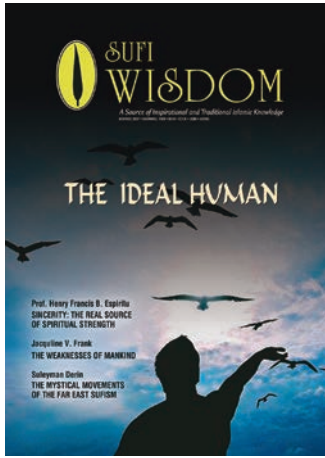
This issue also contains the first part of a four-part series entitled "The Weaknesses of Humanity", which will discuss the four main areas of weakness and what Allah tells us about them in the Qur'an. This series will focus also on how Satan uses these weaknesses to keep humans from succeeding.

In addition, there is an article which focuses on the faith of the people who have reached the level of *kamil* by recognizing the tricks of Satan and by eliminating their weaknesses; that is, the Companions of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh).

It is our duty as Muslims to continue to strive to reach the level of the *kamil* person, the wise person, everyday. Part of this duty can be carried out by educating ourselves about who we are as Muslims and humans, and part of it is done by working for the sake of Allah to better the lives of those around us, and indeed for the betterment of the whole creation of Allah. It is our sincere wish here at Sufi Wisdom that this edition will indicate the best way in which to achieve this goal.

He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the message but men of understanding. (Qur'an:2/269)

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The Ideal Human

OSMAN NURI EFENDI

They were
a society
who constructed a
civilization of virtues
by taking the spiritual
constitution of the
Prophet of Allah as
their example.

There have been splendid eras in the history of Islam. The time of the four rightly guided Caliphs, the time of Omar bin Abdulaziz, the first 250 years in Andalusia and the first three centuries of the Ottoman Empire were all examples of these splendid eras.

There are two significant points that act as the basis of these successful eras:

The first one was the well-trained ideal Muslims and the second was serving Allah and His Religion.

At these times, educating people and serving Islam were never neglected. Many foundations (*waqf*) were established and these foundations brought service to humanity to remove their sorrow and misery, and even bringing service to animals with a great enthusiasm of worship.

On the other hand, there were eras of gloom in the history of Islam. There are two significant reasons for these eras of depression: a lack of well-educated Muslims and an insufficient number of foundations ...

Therefore, it becomes more necessary to educate ideal people and to establish foundations for *hidhmat* (service). In the Qur'an, Allah the Almighty describes the efforts and service of these ideal *hidhmat* people's as those who give Him a loan:

"And why aileth you that ye spend not in the way of Allah, when unto Allah belongeth the inheritance of the heavens and the earth?" (Qur'an:57/10)

"Who is he that will lend unto Allah a goodly loan, that He may double it for him and his may be a rich reward?" (Qur'an:57/11)

Allah the Almighty encourages the believers to do good deeds, to help others and serve to creatures with these verses from the Qur'an. Of course, Allah has no need to borrow from His servants. In fact, Allah is content in any means. As stated in the verse, everything belongs to Him. And Allah is pleased with the believers who work on the way of Allah and serve the needy with a humble manner and be good examples to others and to the next generations...

Allah wants us to be ideal humans... like Muhajir and Ansar...

THE MUHAJIRS AND ANSARS...

The *Muhajirs* were brave people who left their homes and countries without any deviation from their faith. On the other hand, the *Ansars* were monuments of sacrifice who generously spent of their lives and wealth for the *Muhajirs*... The fortunate people of the Era of Felicity... The architectures of the civilization of virtue...

They were a society who knew Allah and the Prophet of Allah very well. They were a society who constructed a civilization of virtues by taking the spiritual constitution of the Prophet of Allah as their example. Their time was a time of profound contemplation.

They succeeded in eliminating worldly interests, namely, the idols from their hearts by setting *tawhid* (the oneness of Allah) at the center of their thought and ideals. Wealth and life became a means. The pleasure of faith was obtained. Compassion became boundless. Service became a life style.

They exhibited a personality of sacrifice and Islam. They lived in a state of bidding to do what is right, one which is implied by compassion. They made sacrifices and gained knowledge. They traveled a distance of one month and returned back to understand just one hadith. They did not narrate the hadith that was narrated by one who deceived his horse for fun.

They learned

- Reflection and intense spirituality and,

- *Aqrabiyyah* (being close to Allah by the profound realization that Allah is closer to us than everything else), seeking the cause of Allah in every moment and breath from the Prophet of Allah.

Thus, good and truth with their complete beauty and evil and the untruth with its complete flagrancy became clear in their hearts.

They lived with a divine scale and understanding about Allah, the universe and the soul. They reflected the lofty state of the Prophet of Allah in every instance like the reflection of the sun in a small mirror. Excessive consumption, gluttony, luxury and ostentation were life styles about which the society and environment of the Prophet's Companions had no knowledge. They realized that: "Tomorrow, the location of this soul will be the grave". With this realization, the city state of Medina, which was founded by one thousand five hundred people, became one with a population of one hundred and fifty thousand in just ten years. The borders of the city state of one kilometer reached to Palestine and Iraq.

They reached the ultimate limit that the mind, spirit and soul can reach. They attained *nafs al-kamilah* by leaving behind *nafs al-ammara*.



Today, humanity is lacking in terms of moral and humanitarian characteristics and this is because every virtue and divine feeling is somehow under the tyranny of the nafs and Satan.

They became people who criticized their own souls. The barbarian and Bedouin people of the past gained an angelic-like state. Likewise, the hard-hearted Omar of pre-Islamic time became the softhearted Omar after Islam.

They set Allah and His prophet at the center of friendship. They became the apex of civilization although they had been illiterate. Abdullah bin Mas'ud was an ordinary camel herder. He founded the school of Qufa after he completed his education by the Prophet of Allah. Abu Hanifah and many scholars graduated from this school. They were so educated that Solon and Hammurabi, who were as the world's most famous jurists, could only be pupils of Abu Hanifah.

These successes and values of the Companions of the Prophet were absolutely dependent on the strength and ardor of the idea of "what Allah wants us to do and in which condition the Prophet of Allah wants to see us".

These characteristics, their era and their time were illuminated by the light of virtue. An era of felicity was granted to humanity.

This was because they harmoniously and simultaneously used the functions of the mind and the heart that cause the believers to reach spiritual maturity. They kept the reality of ardor and love alive.

They lived with the cognition that this world was a form of examination. Hearts became familiar with the embroideries of the divine magnificence and power. For the sake of *al-'amr bil ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar* (bidding to do what is right and lawful, and forbidding what is wrong and unlawful), they went to China and Samargand and the ones after them went to Andalusia. That ignorant society became of the

ones "who really know". Night turned into day. Winter became spring. Contemplation improved and profound contemplations about the formation of the human being from a drop of water, of a bird from a simple egg and of tree and fruit from an almost non-existent seed began. Life was indexed to the sake of Allah. Compassion, mercy and depth of the performance of true actions reached their zeniths.

For the *Sahabah* (the Companions of Prophet), the best and most meaningful instances of life were to convey the message of *tawhid* (the oneness of Allah). The *Sahabah* thanked a priest who asked for a three-minute delay at the moment of the execution of his punishment and they said: "Thus, we have three minutes to call him to Islam"

In conclusion, they lived with the Qur'an and for the Qur'an and devoted their lives to the Qur'an. They showed unique action; they were subjected to torture, torment and tyranny, but they did not deviate from the values in which they believed. They migrated to live in accordance with the verses bestowed by Allah, abandoning their wealth and homes. They did not abandon the Qur'an, even in the most dangerous instances. Every rule of the religion was a source of limitless pleasure for them. There was always the Qur'an at the center of their lives.

Abu Talha narrated as following:

"One day, I went to the Prophet of Allah. He was bent double from hunger and had put a stone on his stomach to keep his back straight. He was giving a lecture on the Qur'an to the *Ashab-i Suffa* in this condition. The *Sahabah* took this characteristic as an example and Medina was filled with Qur'anic scholars."

Regarding educating ideal people, we have to start first with our children, as the religion will continue with them and they are the future.



Their loyalty, love, ardor and enthusiasm for the Qur'an were so great that a verse revealed was like a feast from the Heavens. All efforts were to understand, live and convey the verses. They preferred praying at night and reading the Qur'an at dawn to sleeping in their beds. Thus, those who passed near their homes heard the sounds of *dhikr* and recitation of the Qur'an like the buzzing of bees. (Ibn-i Sa'd and Ibn-i Asir)

To sum up, the essence of their virtue and value can only be expressed with the following recognition:

THE EDUCATIONAL MIRACLE OF PROPHET OF ALLAH

One of the most important methodologist of Islamic law, Qarafi, says that:

"Even if the Prophet of Allah had not performed any other miracles than his Companions, they would have been enough to prove the prophethood of the Prophet of Allah."

Here, with such miraculous characteristics, they performed service in the best way and spent their all efforts to serve the religion of Allah in the best form. To give their own wealth and lives as charity for the sake of Allah was a pleasure for them.

Supporting this, the All-Compassionate Creator says "...and those who followed them in goodness..." (Qur'an:9/100). In other words, the All-Compassionate Creator mentions those who follow the way of the *Muhajirs* and *Ansars* by taking them as an example; those who share the goodness of the holy *Sahabah* compliment and appreciate them.

To attain this compliment, it is necessary to live a life worthy of Our Prophet, the *Muhajirs* and the *Ansars*. What has Allah given us as capital? Our minds, intelligence, and physical and spiritual powers... It is necessary to use these in serving the sake of Allah. Concerning the measure of this, the All-Compassionate Creator states the

following:

"By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love" (Qur'an:3/92)

Man gives to one who he loves as much as he loves. Thence, we should ask: How much do we love Our Lord?

The following question should contain our answer:

HOW MUCH CAN WE GIVE FOR ALLAH?

In the Qur'an, it is indicated that we should pray: "Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear!" (Qur'an:2/286).

Our Lord states in the first part of the same verse: "On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear."

This means that the All-Compassionate Creator does not place a burden greater than our strength, but He wants us to do as much as we can. He places a burden as great as we are able to bear.

If this is so, then it is necessary to give to charity whatever the All-Compassionate Creator has given to us.

We will give from what we have, be it physical, economical or intellectual... Not only from the physical things we have, but from every possession and all the bounties we have...

About this, it is stated in a verse:

"And on that Day you will most surely be called to account for [what you did with] the boon of life!" (Qur'an:102/8)

To go through that accounting with a good name it is a must to fulfill His call and service with every possession that He has given us. Concerning service, a believer should not seek any excuse; rather, they should seek for opportunities to serve. Namely, in every case, it is must to be in search of "which possession has Allah given to me and how I can serve the sake of Allah with this possession?"

**Unesco
announced
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Because, people who
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In our times, there is a great need for service and service organizations. To be with the homeless, poor and orphaned with compassion and mercy as well as educating ideal personalities, the greatest needs of humanity, is the most important service in our time. This is because, today, humanity is lacking in terms of moral and humanitarian characteristics and this is because every beauty, virtue and divine feeling is somehow under the tyranny of the *nafs* and Satan. Namely:

SATAN IS A PARTY TO MANY THINGS...

In the Holy Qur'an, when describing how Satan disturbs human beings, it is said that he becomes a party to the wealth and offspring of negligent people. (Qur'an:17/64)

Is not Satan a party to wealth? What kind of commercial life is there? In what kind of capitalist trap has society fallen? How do enormous possessions come into existence? Consumed, oppressed, weak people... Capitalism is a tyrannical system. Every means, both legal and illegal, is being sacrificed for that system. There is an expression that explains unfairness and tyranny: "Survival of the fittest". Today, this approach controls almost the entire economic system, that is, it is tyrannical capitalism. This is a commercial approach in which Satan is a shareholder.

In the verse above, it is stated that Satan is a party to offspring in addition to wealth/commerce. Satan has a share in all of today's traps and dangers that lay in wait for children, doesn't he? Today, there are so many things that beckon to our children... Foremost, the harmful media programs take a share of our children. Children are educated by television and the internet.

What about the streets? To what degree do the streets give positive or negative energy? The answer is obvious. How much does the education system spiritually train or damage them? The answer to this is obvious as well.

Thus, today, the importance of educating ideal

human beings and of fulfilling service is very important. In other words, the main service is to inoculate health into the spirits and hearts and to hand life jackets to those who are about to drown spiritually.

Regarding educating ideal people, we have to start first with our children, as the religion will continue with them and they are the future. If the future generations are not educated properly, religion will die away. All these factors are connected to one another. Observe the world! There are many lessons to be seen.

Today, to save future generations and to educate them ideally has become an urgent religious obligation. To be able to educate a generation that is made up of believers, which serves Allah and follows the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions is necessary, at least in terms of the future.

THOSE WHO KEEP THE SOCIETIES ALIVE ARE THE IDEAL PEOPLE...

People admire character and personality. They follow those who have a strong character or personality. They imitate such aspects. Understanding without an example is impossible. With an example, the good and the bad become clear. So, when a prophet came to a people everyone would admire his demeanor, the behavior, the character and personality of the prophet. Everyone would say "This person is the most righteous person" or "this person would never lie". Consequently, all of society follows that person as an example.

For this reason, particularly during the *jahiliyya* times, Allah Almighty sent prophets to humanity. Societies attained peace and salvation through these ideal people who were the peak of humanity. It was almost as if they were lifted from the depths of the Indian Ocean to the highest peaks of Everest. Although the world experiences constant manifestations of wisdom, divine lessons and knowledge, whenever it falls into the pitch of the *jahiliyya* it is in greater need of the divine breath to extricate itself.

A believer should not seek any excuse; rather, they should seek for opportunities to serve. It is must to be in search of "which possession has Allah given to me and how I can serve the sake of Allah with it?"

Yesterday, the divine breath that cured the age of the ferocious *jahiliyya* and turned it into an *asr al-saadat* (time of happiness) was Prophet Muhammad; today the breath that will save the world is his breath of mercy.

Today, the world is once again in a state of *jahiliyya*. All of humanity is again in need of the prophet, who was a "mercy to the worlds". During the French Revolution, Lafayette called out to our Prophet in the following words:

"O, great man! No one yet in the world has realized the justice that you have delivered"

Actually this lament was a search for the ideal man. If Lafayette had known him better, he would have thrown himself on the threshold of *hidaya*. He himself would have been an ideal human; everyone who affiliated with the prophet with love and drank from his *kauthar* of life, *hidaya*, morality and worship became an ideal and exceptional person. They lived with the endeavor of nurturing people. For this reason they did not die, even after bidding farewell to this world. Like Rumi...

Year 2007 was announced as the year of Rumi. According to a proposition from Unesco, 2007 became the year of Rumi. Why? Because, people who are drowning in today's *jahiliyya* are in search of an ideal human who will show them safe passage. Rumi is the right name. It should be stated that Islam has raised the most ideal humans in this world. Those who are looking for ideal humans can protect the dignity of their humanity in correlation to what they find. If these ideal humans are not found and new ones are not raised, societies cannot continue their existence within a frame of good identity. For this reason:

RUMI CONSTANTLY SEARCHED FOR THE IDEAL HUMAN

Rumi narrates:

"It was night time. I left home. I wandered in the fields. I saw a man going around with a lantern. I asked: 'What are you looking for in the dark of the night?' He replied: 'I'm looking for a human.' I said to him: 'Pity! You are tiring yourself for naught... I left my homeland and still cannot find him. Go home... go to bed and do as you please. Your search is useless; you will not find him anywhere!'"

The man looked with grief and said: 'I too know that I will not find him. But, even searching him with yearning gives me pleasure. It eases me to know that what I am looking for is him... '"

Mentioning the attributes of an ideal person, this time Mevlana tells us the same story with a difference:

"Once upon a time there was a man whose heart was ablaze with love. During the daytime, he would go around the marketplace with a lantern in his hand. Someone asked him: 'What are you looking, searching in every shop with a lantern in your hand at midday? What are you looking for with a candle in daylight? Are you making fun of people? What is wrong with you?'"

He replied: 'I am looking for the genuine man who is full of the divine breath. Actually, I am looking for a human whose heart is full of the divine gift!'"

The other man asked: 'Is there such a person?'"

Another person who heard this said: 'O free sage! Do you not see that this market, these shops



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When a prophet came to a people everyone would admire his demeanor, the character and personality of the prophet. Everyone would say “This person is the most righteous person. ” Consequently, all of society follows that person as an example.

are full of men?’ The man with the lantern replied: ‘I am looking for the person who does not rage when he is furious and wrathful when standing at the crossroads, for the person who can contain himself and stand against all kinds of worldly desires when he is in the hands of desire and lust!

‘Where is the man who can contain himself and be patient when he is furious or driven by lust? I am looking for such a man in every street and every neighborhood. Show me the man who can resist, withstand and show patience against these feelings (fury and lust) and I will give my life for him!’”

As long as the search for the ideal human continues, they will exist, new ones will be raised and societies will continue to exist. Societies are always in need of ideal humans. Today the most important struggle is to raise ideal humans. Such a person is a servant to “*Haq*” and attains the manner of looking at the creation with the Creator's vision... It is necessary to raise a human being that delivers compassion and kindness... To raise a human who will turn misery into happiness, ease the agony of the suffering and grant healing to worn out hearts...

The ebbs and tides of life weakened the values that are essential for an ideal human and many grave matters have subsided.

Although it is a divine order, the brotherhood of religion has weakened. It is a religious and a conscientious obligation to ask oneself the questions: “How can I serve my brother/sister, what is my obligation to him/her? How can I fulfill this order?” But people are living a brotherhood that belongs only to good moments and comfortable

times. The brotherhood of hard times is forgotten. This has weakened when it is most necessary for relieving the pain of our siblings. The weakened condition of the ideal human is the seal of this bond.

On the other hand, good conduct has weakened. Yet, religion is conduct. The model of the Qur'an and Sunnah should reflect on every aspect and every moment of our lives.

As each day is torn out from the calendar of our lives we should question ourselves, asking “How much for myself and how much for others today?” Unfortunately today, family life, commercial life, economic life and social life have also weakened.

As a result, the idea of taking responsibility or sharing a brother's burden has weakened. Sacrifice has decreased. This is all because the concept and structure of the ideal human has weakened.

The number of real and living ideal humans has declined. Perseverance, ideals and virtues have been buried in comfort and ease. About this Ikbal says: “Throw yourself onto the grindstone.”

Muhammad Ikbal, the intellectual founder of Pakistan, tells a story that draws attention to the point at which an ideal human is matured with grief and suffering and through difficulty and trials:

“A gazelle pouring out his grief to another gazelle said: ‘I have had enough of the wickedness of these hunters. They lie in ambush in meadows and follow our tracks day and night. From now

on I will live in the Ka'ba. Hunting is forbidden in Mecca. I will live and graze there. I want to be safe from the worry of hunters. I want a moment of peace in my heart!... '

The wise and experienced gazelle that was listening to this said:

'O my clever friend! If you want to live, live in danger! Throw yourself on the grindstone; live sharper than a sword that is from clean metal. Danger tests strength. (Dangers, anguish and calamities test your character, personality and belief.) This strife will show you what the body and soul is capable of"

Sufyan as-Sawri relates this truth as follows: "It is more profitable for you to go to Horasan and make *tabligh* than to live in Mecca."

Although it may seem like a threat to the tranquility of this world to live a life feeling sorrow for the pain of others, to go through difficulty and anguish is a blessing for the hereafter.

On the other hand, not caring about pain and anguish and being drowned in comfort and ease is actually not real comfort, but a danger that will diminish our eternal share. Allah Almighty warns us against this danger:

"Spend your wealth for the cause of Allah, and be not cast by your own hands to ruin!" (Qur'an:2/195)

This is the measure for the ideal human!

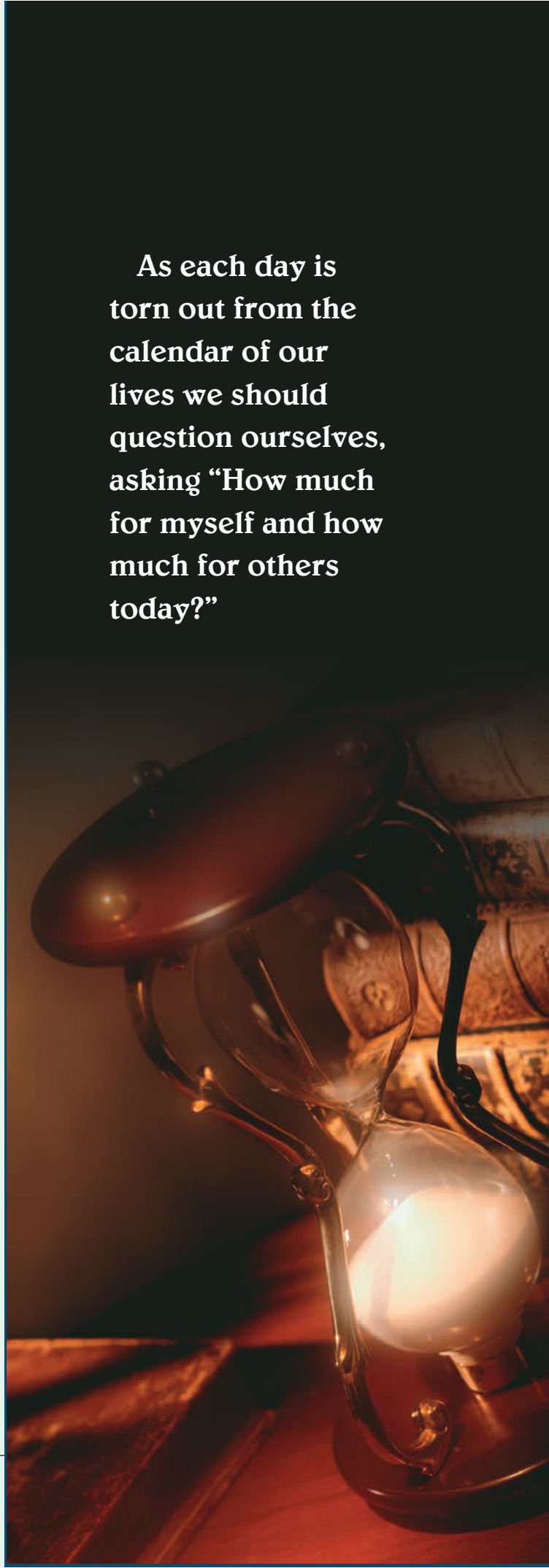
All calamities turn into benefaction where there is an ideal human who has been raised within these measures. Abundance replaces privation. Unease submits to peace.

Wickedness yields to good. Satan and the self are imprisoned in labyrinths of weakness. The roads to hell are blocked and the roads to heaven are opened wide. In short, the ideal human bears tomorrows ideal.

If an upcoming generation is raised within the measures of an ideal human, not spending its strength with brute force or selfish pleasures and faces Haq, for them is the best of futures. That generation's society has a bright future. But if youth is overtaken by brute force and selfish pleasures then the future is dark.

Accordingly; If we love our religion, if we want to protect our *iman*, we need to raise a beautiful generation. It has to be a generation that makes us proud and puts our hearts at ease when we look back so that we will have a beautiful smile on our face!

**As each day is
torn out from the
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Sincerity: THE REAL SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

PROF. HENRY FRANCIS B. ESPIRITU

We owe our beautiful Islamic heritage to the Companions of the Prophet whose sincerity and spirituality made Islam victorious throughout the whole world during their time

The Spirituality and Sincerity of our Righteous Ancestors Resulted in the Golden Age of Islam.

The golden era of Islam was the time when Muslims were the leaders of the world civilizations; unfortunately, this age has already sadly passed away. These past moments of victory for Islam have escaped from us because of our carelessness, love of self, love for fame, and love for the world. The early Muslims were the acknowledged leaders of the world because of their spirituality and because of their sincere love for Allahu Taala and their obedience to the commands of the Holy Prophet (pbuh). During these times of intense spirituality and sincere commitment to Islam, the *kalima*, "*la ilaha illallah*" was proclaimed from the lands of Arabia, to Africa, to Andalusia (Spain), to the land of the Balkans, Central Asia, Turkey, the Indian Subcontinent, Mongolia, China, until the Philippine islands. During these times of Islamic glory, the Muslim civilization existed as a beautiful combination of Arab, Turkish, Indian, Mughal, Byzantine, and Persian cultures showing that Islam is indeed a very cosmopolitan, tolerant, and universal faith. Our ancestors' brave proclamation of God's greatness (*Allahu Akbar*) and their sincere intention to propagate the message of Islam to the whole world made Islam march from victory to victory, winning the hearts of peoples by their message of the oneness of Allah. The spirituality (*ruhaniyyat*) and sincerity (*ikhlas*) of our righteous ancestors were the reasons why they were able to

establish the "golden age" of Islam during their time. We owe our beautiful Islamic heritage to the Companions of the Prophet whose sincerity and spirituality made Islam victorious throughout the whole world during their time.

The Pitiful Situation of the Muslim Ummah Today as a Sign of our Spiritual Weakness:

Islam came and spread to the world to bring dignity to humanity and to preach the liberating message of *tawhid* (oneness of Allah) to all peoples. However, today, enemies from all corners attack Islam; Muslims are becoming more defensive day by day. We Muslims are given the command by Allahu Taala to be the model community in showing the path of unity, harmony, and solidarity; but today we are becoming divided and we have lost the ideals of *akhuwwat* (brotherhood) that characterized the conduct of the *Sahabah* (Companions of the Prophet) and the *Tabi'en* (the generation that came after the Prophet). The *Ummah* that was once the brave protector of the oppressed and the poor is now becoming helpless due to its internal and external enemies. The *Ummah* which had once placed its trust and hope in Almighty Allah is now becoming more and more dependent on the protection of this world's mighty nations. Islam eliminated slavery from the world, but alas, we are now becoming slaves of the unbelieving economic and political superpowers! What is the cause of our degradation; and what is its cure? It is indeed high time now to diagnose our spiritual illness and together we will search for its cure; *Inshallah*, the *Ummah* will recover from this disease and begin once again to take up the

position of global leadership to bring the world towards peace, understanding, and unity.

Diagnosing our Situation with the Purpose of Curing our Spiritual Sickness

To diagnose the spiritual sickness of the *Ummah*, we will begin by consulting our beloved Prophet, Muhammad (pbuh) so that through his deep prophetic wisdom, we will receive helpful advice to cure our serious spiritual illness.

Once the Prophet (pbuh) was asked by his *Sahabah* regarding the situation of Muslims in the future, specifically at the time when the Day of Judgment approaches. Our Prophet said: "A day will surely come when all unbelievers will unite against Muslims and will launch joint attacks against them." The *Sahabah* asked the Holy Prophet, "Will the Muslims be less in number compared to the enemies?" Rasulullah replied; "Muslims will be spread throughout the world and will be numerous, but their strength will be like a tiny ball of cotton, they will be powerless and helpless unless they repent and turn to Allah for help. Another *Sahabah* asked, "Oh Prophet of Allah: What will be the cause of the weakness of Muslims?" He replied: "Your weakness comes from your love of this world, love of self, and love of fame."

From this *hadith sharif*, we can infer many important lessons for our own spiritual benefit. Firstly, the Prophet recognized the spiritual weakness of Muslims as the Day of Judgment approaches. This shows that our Prophet was truly given the capacity of knowing some aspects of *ilmul-ghaib* (unseen events); specifically those

To diagnose the spiritual sickness of the Ummah, we will begin by consulting our beloved Prophet (pbuh) so that through his deep prophetic wisdom, we will receive helpful advice to cure our spiritual illness.



“Returning back to Allah” means, instead of loving our self, our fame, and worldly things, we will endeavor to sincerely love Almighty Allah with all our heart, with all our spirit and with our whole being.



events that are concerned with future situations of the Islamic *Ummah*. Likewise, this prophecy of the Prophet should make us aware that indeed, our time today is already near the Day of Judgment—indeed, the Muslim *Ummah* has already become victim of the oppression of the powerful unbelieving superpowers. However, this *hadith* brings great hope for us Muslims because it contains the diagnosis of our sickness and the promise for the cure. The Holy Prophet said that the cause of our weakness is threefold, namely, love for this world (*hubb-e-dunya*), love of self (*hubb-e-nafs*), and love of fame (*hubb-e-jah*). These three wrong types of love have removed the love for Allah and for His Prophet in the heart of careless believers. According to the Prophet, these loves of self, the world, and fame have made our faith (*iman*) and resolution (*niyyat*) as powerless as a tiny ball of cotton; this is the reason why today the unbelievers are oftentimes successful in defeating us. Happily, our situation is not hopeless. The Prophet also announced the powerful cure for our spiritual cancer. He said that if we will repent and turn back to Allah then He will aid and support the Muslim *Ummah* once again. “Repenting” means to ask forgiveness from Almighty Allah for our heedlessness (*ghaflat*) and to reject our exaggerated love for self, for fame, and for the world. “Returning back to Allah” means, instead of loving our self, our fame, and worldly things, we will endeavor to sincerely love Almighty Allah with all our heart, with all our spirit and with our whole being. “Turning to Allah for help” means trusting and putting our confidence in Allah alone as the Source and the Architect of all victories and successes that come to our lives. Thus, it is indeed very clear from this *hadith sharif* that the real source of the *Ummah’s* victory is in the genuine spirituality (*ruhaniyyat*) of individual Muslims. True spirituality begins with *islah-un-nafs* (reformation of our *nafs* – ego) and the practise of sincerity (*ikhlas*) in all our actions.

According to the Holy Qur-an, Allah’s Help Will Depend on the Ummah’s Sincerity and Spirituality

“When Allah’s help and victory comes to you. And you will see men entering the religion of Allah in companies. Celebrate the praises of thy Lord and ask His protection. Surely, He is Ever Returning in mercy.” (Qur’an:110/1-3)

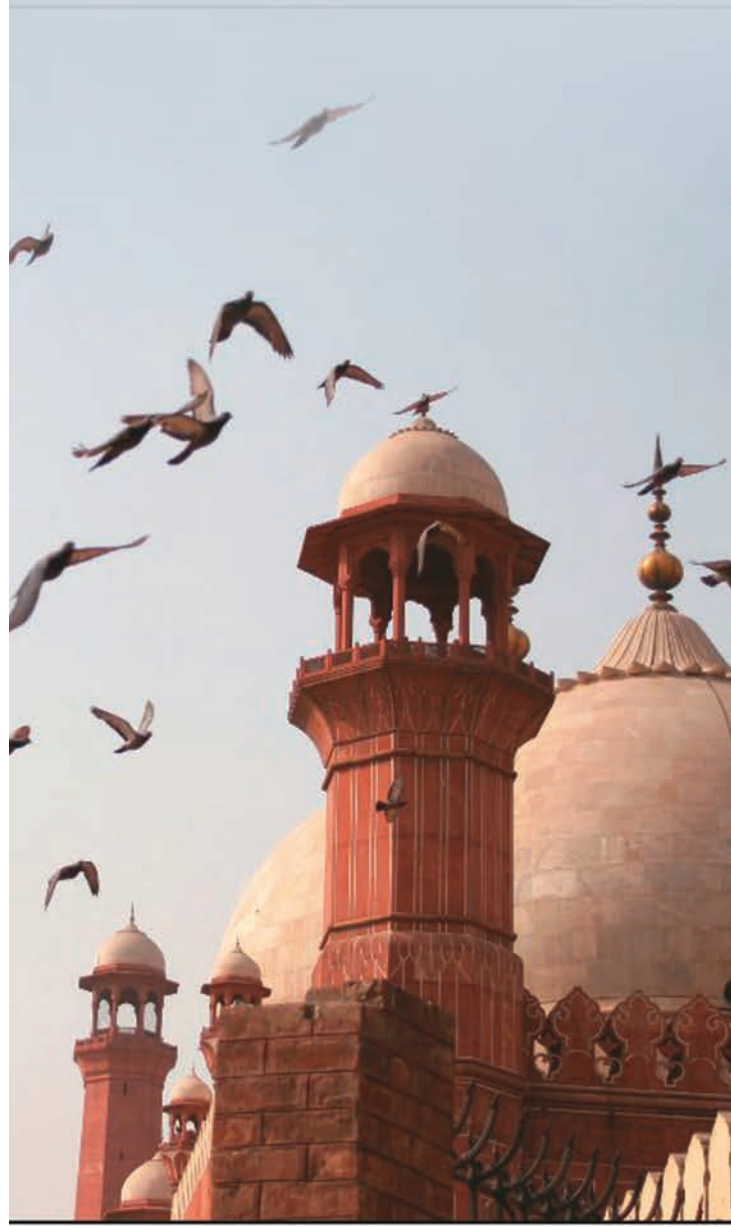
Surah Nasr is very helpful in understanding how the help of Allah comes to the believers, and what

the believers can do to win Allah's grace and favor. This particular *Surah* contains the key that unlocks our understanding regarding the relationship between the sincere spiritual conduct of Muslims and Allah's promise of *nusrat* (help/support) and *fath* (victory) for the *Ummah*.

Historically speaking, the content of *Surah Nasr* describes Allah's help and victory that He gave to the early Muslims when they triumphantly conquered Mecca without a fight or bloodshed. The victory being referred to in this *Surah* was the conversion of the whole Arabian Peninsula to Islam. After the conquest of Mecca, various deputations of Arab tribes came to the Prophet to swear their allegiance. The Prophet saw with his own eyes how the promise of Allah became true in his lifetime. Despite his overwhelming victory, the Prophet was reminded by Almighty Allah in this *Surah* that true victory comes only because of Allah's help. Following this great victory, Almighty Allah told the Prophet to praise and worship Him for all the wondrous things that the Almighty did for Islam and the Muslims. On the other hand, the Prophet was also required to ask Allah's protection. What was this seeking of protection for? Why ask for protection after this great and overwhelming victory? This *Surah* teaches us to take shelter in Allah always, even if we think that we have achieved great things. This is because it is our human nature to easily forget Allah when great achievements are made. Oftentimes, great achievements lead us to desire more victories so that we can use these victories for our selfish aims. Whenever achievements and victories come to our lives, Satan also wants to gain advantage from our victory; this is the reason why we need to ask for protection against the pride of our power and self-vanity.

There are three beautiful pieces of advice that we can find by reflecting on the meaning of *Surah Nasr* in our lives as Muslims. Firstly, this *Surah* shows us that Muslims can be victorious only if they truly and sincerely depend on Almighty Allah's help. Without Allah's help, despite all our efforts, we will never achieve anything. Secondly, we can invite Allah's mercy and aid by living a genuine Islamic life—a life of loving submission to Allah by following the Sunnah of the Prophet. Thirdly, we can be assured of continued victory in our lives if we remain humble, despite the achievements that come our way. Almighty Allah's help is guaranteed

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if we live a life of simplicity—this is the life modeled after the *Sahabah*, and characterized by self-denial, humility, and meekness, even in the midst of tremendous victory.

Important Advice for the Muslim Ummah: Strive to Practice True Spirituality and Sincerity, while Having Faith in Allah's Help

The Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh), and the spiritual examples found in the lives of the *Sahabah* and the *Tabi'en* testify that the true power of Muslims was not dependent on military superiority or on greater armed capability. The evil plans of the unbelievers were not able to overwhelm the *Sahabah* because of their pure intentions and sincerity—that is the reason why they were able to spread the liberating message of Islam to the ends of the earth. Victory is promised to those who "believe, do good, exhort one another to truth, and exhort one another to be patient" (See, *Surah Asr*).

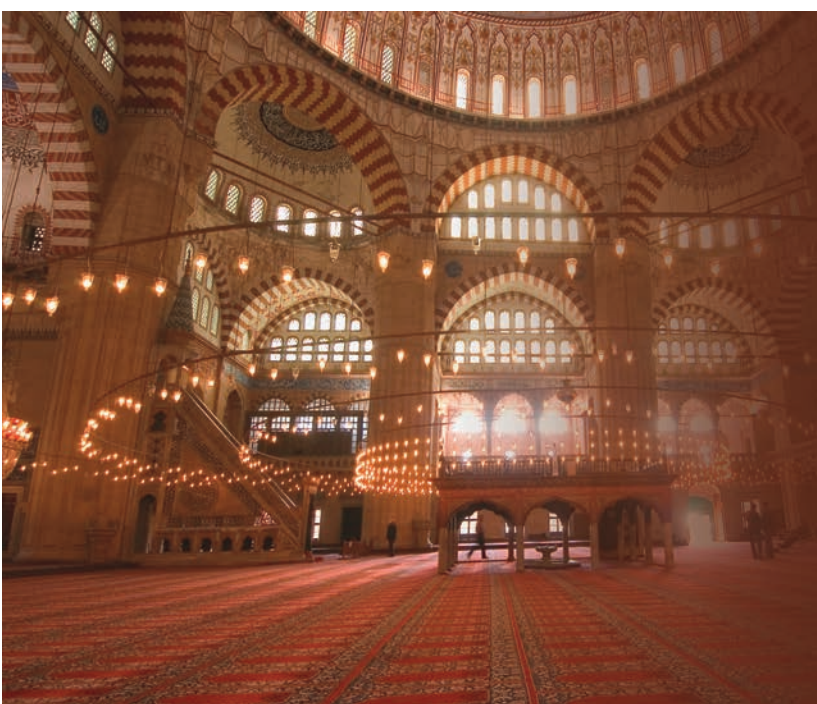
The *Ummah* can qualify for Allah's help only after the attainment of a high state of spiritual cultivation which can only be achieved by undertaking the first step, that is, self-reformation. The promise of the Qur'an that believers will receive the help and support of Almighty Allah is based on three conditions that Muslims should be able to fulfill, namely; moral purification, sincerity of intention and cultivation of spirituality. Righteous deeds that are acceptable by Allah are those actions that have passed through the doors of moral purification and sincerity. So-called "good deeds" that lack moral purification and sincerity can never merit

Almighty Allah's favor. A good deed devoid of sincerity or moral purification will never produce reformation in the Islamic *Ummah*.

Therefore, good deeds, if separated from sincerity, will never have any spiritual value in the sight of Allah Almighty. The *Sahabah* were able to achieve great work for Islam since their outward conduct was perfectly harmonious with their inner intentions. Allah gave His blessings and help in all the affairs of the *Sahabah* because they lived a life of pure sincerity. We, too, can qualify for Almighty Allah's assistance if we can model our life with the sincerity of the *Sahabah*.

The present situation of the *Ummah* shows that the unbelievers are constantly bombarding our way of life, our family, our belief system, and even our Muslim territories, for total destruction. The enemies of Islam are targeting the entire *Ummah* with the view of annihilating it. We are left with two powerful remedies to cure this situation and these are: repentance for our carelessness and living the spiritual life with the Prophet and the *Sahabah* as our models. Spiritual life and sincerity are the two keys that will change the pitiful conditions that characterize present-day Islam. Living a truly sincere spiritual life is our real defense against our worldly enemies; no other kind of defense is more powerful than living a sincere and spiritual life in direct obedience to the will of Allah and His Prophet.

May Allah have mercy on us so that we will be able to live a life of genuine spirituality and sincerity. Amen!



The *Sahabah* were able to achieve great work for Islam since their outward conduct was perfectly harmonious with their inner intentions.

THE MYSTICAL MOVEMENTS OF THE FAR EAST SUFISM

SULEYMAN DERIN, PhD

Sufis believe that the real miracle is to lead a life of piety and good morality, to help others and be patient with their errors.

Modern human beings have tasted all the pleasures of material life and now realize that they also have a soul whose needs should be taken care of as well. The increasing number of suicides and the abuse of drugs, as well as the breakdown of family values, all show that the materialistically preoccupied human beings of the modern era are not happy with their lives, even though they have all the products of the latest technology at hand. Hence, there is an increasing interest towards mystical movements all over the world. However, it is sad that most of these mystical movements only give a false kind of spirituality. The followers of such paths pretend to work miracles by making their bodies undergo great hardships and at times by using all kinds of magic and deception. Most such mystical movements turn the gurus into new idols for Western people. People who have no experience of any kind of mystical life eagerly follow the first guru they meet. What should be our attitude towards these kinds of movements and towards people who seem to work miracles or perform difficult feats of the body? Imam Rabbani gives us very valuable information about our position in such situations.

According to Islam, miracles are gifts given to the believers in difficult times. However, a miracle is not just the demonstration of extraordinary powers. Sufis believe that the real miracle is to lead a life of piety and good morality, to help others and be patient with their errors. These and similar characteristics are the real miracles. These are called spiritual miracles in the language of Imam Rabbani:



The gnostic who possesses the first kind of miracles is always occupied with Allah and they do not waste their time with the hidden aspects of mankind or other parts of the creation.

"O my brother/sisters listen! The extraordinary events are divided into two branches. The first is related to the Necessary Being and His attributes, which are attained by the heart rather than reason. These are given to the elected servants of Allah Almighty alone. The second kinds of miracles are related to the creation of Allah and the knowledge of their hidden aspects, allowing one to be informed from the unseen or the future. The first kind of miracle is given to the gnostics (arifun), whereas the second kind of miracle is given to both the pious believers as well as the non-believers. The first kind of miracle is the portion of the friends of Allah, hence they possess value in the sight of Allah. The second kind of miracle has no value at all in the sight of Allah since both His friends and enemies have a share in it." (Letter 293)

Although Allah Almighty values the first kind of miracles, that is gnosis and good morality, not everyone can appreciate this. The lay people only value the second kind of miracle, that is, the physical miracle:

"The second kind of miracle is valued very much by the lay (awam) people. Even if this occurs in the hands of unbelievers the lay people, due to their ignorance, adore them. They follow the commandments of those who perform physical miracles even though they command bad things. What good can there be if one knows the secrets of Creation, to give information from the secrets of others (leaving aside the knowledge of the Creator)?" (Letter 293)

The gnostic who possesses the first kind of miracles is always occupied with Allah and they

do not waste their time with the hidden aspects of mankind or other parts of the creation. They do not abuse their spiritual powers for worldly praise or fame. However, some of those who possess the second kind of miracles may tend to abuse their psychic and mystical powers. Through long hours of fasting and other mystical techniques such people can attain telepathic powers and show extraordinary powers over others. They use these powers to attain worldly gains, making themselves little gods to be worshipped. While the friends of Allah demonstrate miracles occasionally to gain respect for the religion, the second group seek only personal gain. Hence, all their extraordinary powers provide no benefits in the hereafter.

The following classification of Ibrahim Hakki Erzurumi, the author of the *Marifatname* describes the owners of extraordinary powers in the following way:

"Those who have mystical powers over others can be classified into three groups. The first group possesses an angelic nature and they are responsible for inviting the created (man) to the Creator. The second group is made up of those who also have an angelic nature but they are not obliged to invite people to Allah; they have left the creation to their Creator and busied themselves only with the Creator. Such people are saints, the friends of Allah. The third group is those who have an animal nature and are proud of their misguidance and these are magicians." (Marifatnamah, Istanbul, 1999, II, p.583)

Are Miracles Proof of Perfection on the Religious Path?

Allah Almighty sometimes gives the ability to work physical miracles to His friends, but this cannot be taken as the sole measure of perfection on the spiritual path. Both believers and non-believers can work such physical miracles:

"Merely being able to perform a miracle is not proof of one's perfection . On the contrary, there are many friends of Allah who have a higher status, although they have never worked a miracle. Miracles are given to mankind in order to strengthen their faith; if one has already reached a strong faith which leaves no space for doubt, they do not need to work miracles." (Letter 293)

"Miracles and extraordinary happenings are not intended to attract disciples to the Sufi path. The disciples are attracted to the spiritual perfection of the Sufi master. If a disciple cannot appreciate the spirituality they cannot attain perfection, and have no share in spirituality. Even if they witness a thousand miracles they cannot benefit from them." (Letter 292)

Therefore, the disciple should not seek miracles or desire to work miracles themselves. In particular, they should be aware of the fake Sufis who try to form a community for themselves by using false miracles. Foreign mystical practices such as yoga, transcendental meditation and the like will not benefit Muslims in their spiritual transformation, since they are the products of non-Islamic philosophies. Imam Rabbani saw this danger long before, in the 17th century, and made the following comment about Hindu gods.

"Ram, Krishna and other Hindu gods are the vilest creation of Allah Almighty and they are born

from other creatures. To believe in them as the Lord of the universes or to mention their names besides Allah is the worst thing that can be done.

"The Hindu gurus believe that they share the divinity of their gods and ask people's full obedience, including their worship. Although they believe in the existence of Allah, they claim that Allah has been incarnated in them. Hence, they commit all kinds of haram (illegal) acts, using the excuse that they are divine and divine beings cannot be limited by any laws."

Imam Rabbani compares these false gods with the prophets of true religions:

"So far almost 124,000 prophets have passed through the world and they have all invited humanity to worship only one Creator. They have prohibited the worship of other idols. They also admit that they are simple slaves of Allah. They fear the majesty of Allah more than that of others."

These words explain well the difference between the real prophets and the modern day charlatans. We all need to be aware of such movements and protect other Muslims from such harmful philosophies. The best way to achieve this is to present the Islamic alternatives to eastern mysticism. That is Islamic Sufism. Sufism as a branch of Islamic sciences has all the answers to the mystic-spiritual needs of Muslims. People do not need to practice yoga; we have *tafakkur*, which is much deeper than yoga. The rich traditions of Sufism are enough for Muslims who want to follow a spiritual path.

The disciple should not seek miracles or desire to work miracles themselves. In particular, they should be aware of the fake Sufis who try to form a community for themselves by using false miracles.



THE WEAKNESSES OF MANKIND

JACQUILINE V. FRANK

Allah is ever inviting humanity to look at and see His greater Universal plan, so that His greatness can be recognized and so that man can understand their own limitations in the intellect.

It is Allah Who created you in a state of (helpless) weakness, then gave (you) strength after weakness, then after strength give (you) weakness and a grey head: He creates as He wills and it is He Who has all knowledge and power. On the Day that the Hour (of reckoning) will be established the transgressors will swear that they tarried not but an hour: thus were they used to being deluded! But those endued with knowledge and faith will say: "Indeed ye did tarry within Allah's Decree to the Day of Resurrection and this is the Day of Resurrection: but ye were not aware!" (Qur'an:30/54-56)

In the Qur'an, Allah continuously reminds mankind of their weaknesses and the best way in which to overcome them, either by making them into strengths, or by eliminating them altogether. Allah reminds humans that overcoming one's weaknesses is necessary, as these weaknesses are the very reason for the veils that separate humans from Allah.

It is mankind's weaknesses that hold them at the base level, and keep them from rising to the level of complete God-consciousness.

Although there are many forms of weakness, there are four major categories of weakness mentioned in the above verses that form a basis for much needed discussion and further contemplation. These weaknesses are in:



Knowledge, when learned from the right source and used in the correct manner, is a tool which always leads back to Allah and a deep understanding of His attributes.

1. the mind and knowledge;
2. the body and physical ability;
3. morality through transgression; and
4. one's faith and heart (spirit).

It is also necessary for human beings to become aware of the ways that Satan exploits these weaknesses to gain a stranglehold over them and keep them away from their desired success. The very weaknesses of mankind will be the cause of their destruction if they are unable to rise above these weaknesses.

WEAKNESS OF MIND AND KNOWLEDGE

Do ye not see that Allah has subjected to your (use) all things in the heavens and on earth and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, (both) seen and unseen Yet there are among men those who dispute about Allah without knowledge and without guidance and without a Book to enlighten them! (Qur'an 31:20)

The Qur'an in many places uses verses which contain the phrases "do you not see?" or "will you not understand?" These verses point to the weakness of human beings in that they fail to try to completely understand all of the things that are happening around them.

At the same time, Allah points to the necessity for humanity to continue to use their minds in an effort to gain as much knowledge as possible.

The reason that continuous learning is such a necessity is this: knowledge, when learned from the right source and used in the correct manner, is a tool which always leads back to Allah and a deep understanding of His attributes.

Through verses like this, Allah is ever inviting humanity to look at and see His greater Universal plan, so that His greatness can be recognized and so that man can understand their own limitations in the intellect. Allah wants all of human beings to embrace the fact that their mind is limited, while still using their mind for the noble purpose for which Allah gave it to them in the first place. Allah wants human beings to look, think, contemplate, and to understand how truly generous the Creator has been in His creation.

Indeed, one can understand how valuable it is to gain knowledge for the purpose of understanding the Creator in light of the hadith reported by Imam Hussein, the son of Ali. "O people, Allah did not create mankind except that they know Him, for if they know Him they will worship Him, and if they worship Him they will benefit from his grace".

By fulfilling this duty of *tefekkür* (deep thinking), people are able to see the attributes of Allah at work in every aspect of His creation, thus the small details of man's mundane life become irrelevant to the grand plan and design of Allah.

Humans become able to embrace their limitations through the understanding that they are part of something completely unlimited; they become able to love themselves because they are part of a greater love and to become merciful because they are part of a greater mercy.

The truth of the above hadith is attested to in the Qur'an in the following verse: *Say: "Whether ye believe in it or not it is true that those who were given knowledge beforehand when it is recited to them fall down on their faces in humble prostration"* (Qur'an:17/107).

Thus it becomes understood that *tefekkur* will bring mankind closer to Allah, and guide every person in their worship of Allah.

Allah even tells humans that the Qur'an should be used as the first source of knowledge and first object of *tefekkur*, as it is the "Book of Enlightenment" which leads a person away from dispute and through which Allah says: *And Allah makes the Signs plain to you: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.* (Qur'an:24/18)

Truly, it is in the events that are apprehended through the senses that people can clearly see the grace and bounty of Allah.

However, often there are works that take place beyond one's sphere of knowledge. These are things which are part of Allah's Universal plan, showing Allah's independence from and power over humans.

It is this realm of the unseen in which the Universal plan unfolds in its entirety. It is in this unseen realm that perfect knowledge is found and even the angels say, *"Glory to Thee of knowledge we have none save that Thou hast taught us: in truth it is Thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom."* (Qur'an:2/32)

It is this perfect knowledge which escapes the limited mind of the human, but which can be given by Allah, in small amounts, as a gift or a reward for good deeds. Even this bounty is given away freely by Allah out of His generosity to His noble creation.

Through understanding this, human beings can see the cycle more clearly: the more one knows, the more one understands the Creator and His creation around themselves, and thus acts correctly. The more a person carries out the deeds which their knowledge tells them will bring them closer to Allah the more they are rewarded with knowledge. This is evident in the verse: *When Joseph attained his full manhood We gave him power and knowledge: thus do We reward those who do right.* (Qur'an:12/12)

There are some whose vision is cleared because they spend a great deal of effort in seeking such profitable knowledge, and for their effort they receive a deeper knowledge and guidance. They have a sight beyond sight. They are able to see the grace of Allah working in every circumstance.



**With tangible
knowledge certain
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and wisdom can be
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against the treachery of
Satan.**

This is clear evidence that it is through the continuous struggle to learn that one obtains tangible knowledge, and with tangible knowledge certain amounts of insight and wisdom are gained. This wisdom becomes guidance against the treachery of Satan.

Certainly, sometimes a person can see nothing at all. They become intellectually and spiritually blinded and this causes them to lose hope of Allah's grace and bounty.

Such people are those that make little use of their intellect and give into their passions. Once their passions take control, they lose the true guidance, and since spiritual insight has left them, they run the risk of losing their faith by denying what has been revealed to them.

This is because ignorance is a deception which leads to rebellion. Just as a person without knowledge can come to a wrong conclusion about this worldly life, it is also more certain that they will draw wrong conclusions about the "unseen" realm of Allah's perfect knowledge. About such people Allah says:

"Leave them alone to enjoy (the good things of this life) and to please themselves: let (false) Hope amuse them: soon will knowledge (undeceive them)" (Qur'an:15/3)

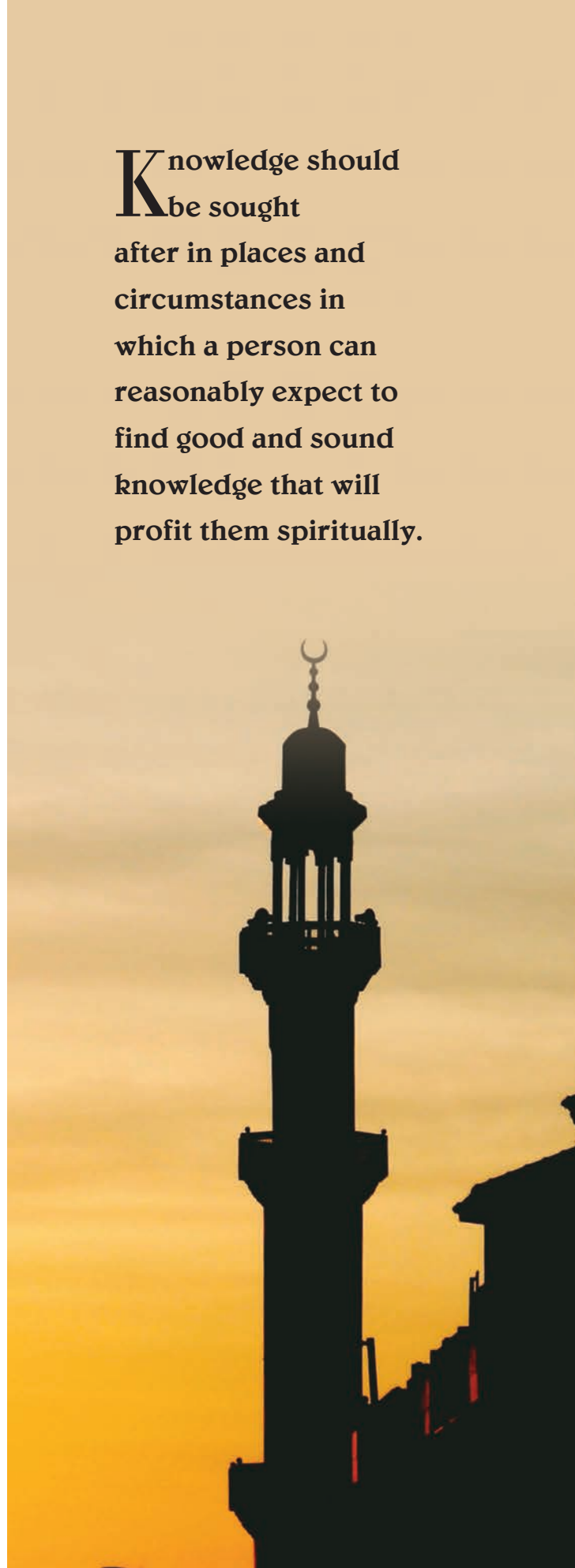
In fact, it is in the realm of the "unseen" and "miscomprehended" that Satan exploits the vices of humanity. Sometimes people can physically see, but not realize, the reason for an event that occurs, while in other cases they are completely blind spiritually to these events, and just sit in denial of them. Either circumstance can cause a person to lose patience and to fall into dispute.

Certainly, man spends a great deal of time trying to prove a thing they do not "really" know, and just as much energy trying to teach something he does not "really" understand. This is because, as Allah warns us, dispute leads to rebellion.

And yet among men there are such as dispute about Allah without knowledge and follow every evil one obstinate in rebellion! (Qur'an:22/3)

It is at these two doors of "dispute" and "rebellion" that Satan is constantly knocking!

**Knowledge should
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It is understood from the Qur'an that such people are lacking in knowledge because they fail to use their minds (those who fall into erroneous ideas about Allah, this worldly life and the next life); it is they who will fall into confusion within their own hearts and argumentation with those around them. It is about these that the Qur'an is referring to in the verse:

For the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are the deaf and the dumb, those who understand not. (Qur'an:8/ 22)

Allah also warns man against using the mind out of idle curiosity in the verse: *And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning) (Qur'an:17/36).*

Curiosity can lead one to look into things which have little or no benefit. It can even lead one to look into openly evil things, simply due to one's ignorance to the fact that a thing is evil.

Thus, knowledge should be sought after in places and circumstances in which a person can reasonably expect to find good and sound knowledge that will profit them spiritually.

To protect man from curiosity, ignorance and rebellion, Allah repeats time and time again, "Do you not see...?"

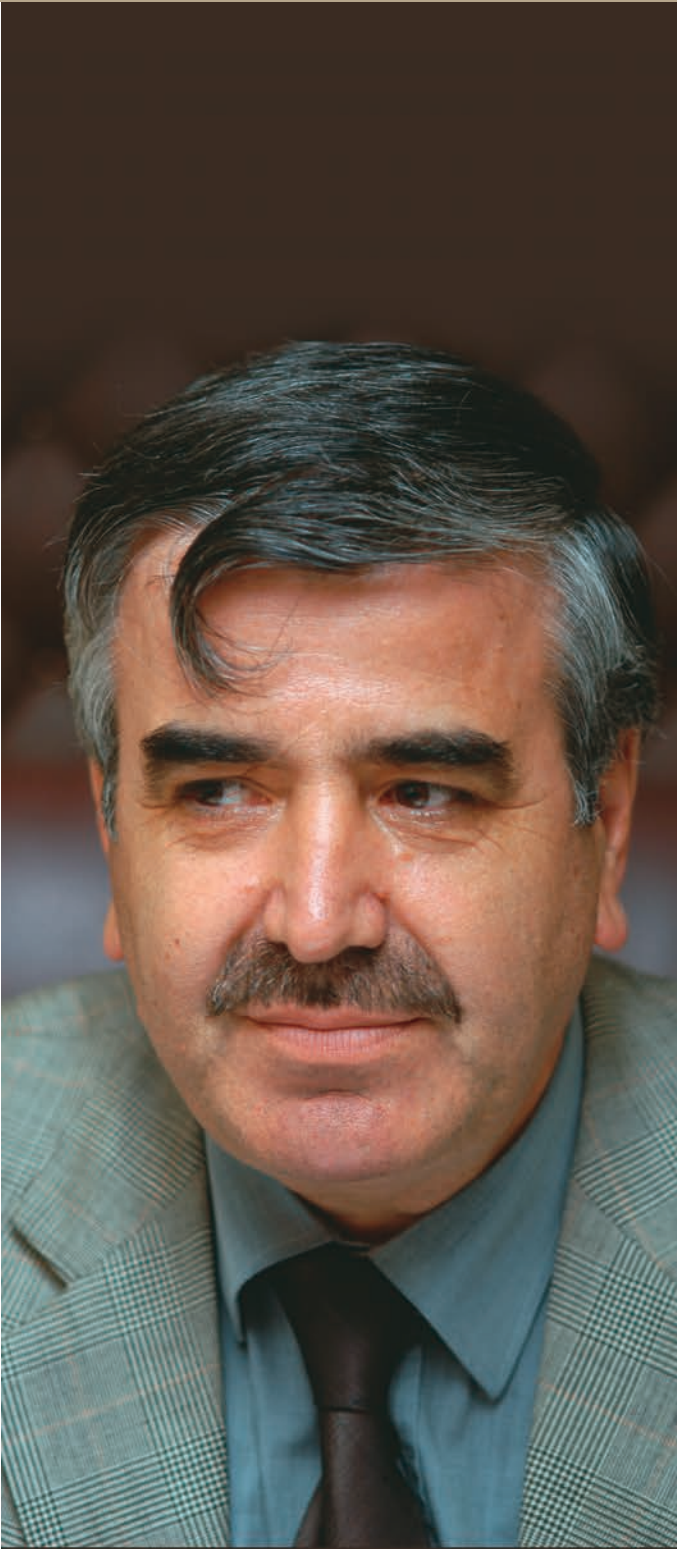
He invites people to look at His creation, and gain knowledge from what they see. Allah invites the noble-minded human creation to piece together the puzzle which He has laid out so that closeness to Him can be gained in the process. Allah gives humanity chance after chance to fulfill the reason for which they have been created in the first place: to know Allah.

However, be rest assured that whether human beings spend their time seeking knowledge or falling hopelessly into ignorant dispute, they will all return to Allah in due time; Allah reminds us:

Assuredly it is thy Lord who will gather them together: for He is Perfect in Wisdom and Knowledge. (Qur'an:15/25)

**Allah gives
humanity chance
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place: to know Allah**





Prof. Hasan Kamil Yılmaz is the head of Tasawwuf Department at Faculty of Theology at Marmara University in Istanbul

Allah Has Given Us Ability To Reach Spiritual Maturity

HASAN KAMIL YILMAZ

SW: Why was the human being created? To know Allah? Or servitude? Or for love? Is the priority of spiritual life connected to love, knowledge or worship?

In two of the three verses* that speak of the purpose of the creation of the human being, it is declared that the human being was not created for naught and that they will not be left without control. In the third verse, Almighty Allah states as *"I have only created Jinns and men, so that they might worship Me."* (Qur'an:51/56) In this verse, the "servitude" stands out as the purpose of creation. Regarding the interpretation of this verse, as narrated from Ibn-i Abbas, knowledge, as stated in "Know Me", is also mentioned as another explanation of the purpose of creation. In addition, knowledge is important for love. For this reason, it is possible to state that the purpose is servitude and servitude only has a meaning if it is performed with love. Also, the way of love in servitude depends on knowledge. To sum up, the servant will first know Allah, and then they will love Him by worshipping and obeying Him and they will continue to serve with love.

* (Qur'an:23/115, 75/36, 51/56)

SW: *If it was necessary for the human being to completely abandon this worldly life and devote themselves to worship, would not Allah have created the human being as an angel?*



**The servant
will first know
Allah, and then they
will love Him by
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will continue to serve
with love.**

In terms of people being completely free from worldly attributes, it is not expected that they completely abandon this worldly life. Rather, they are to get eliminate the love of this worldly life from their heart and to save themselves from the love of this world. If one is endowed with many worldly bounties this does not create *zuhd* (that is, living without love for or interest in this world) if they do not allow affection for such things to enter their heart. Certainly, human beings cannot be expected to be angels. But, if the human being does not learn to control the desires of their *nafs*, they will be defeated by the infinite desires of the soul. The feeling of eternity in the human being, which is prevalent most of the time, presupposes that eternity is in this world and thus deviates from their real goal. The great amount of advice about *zuhd* (ascetism) in Sufism is because of the fact that human beings are not angels.

SW: *In Sufism, the spirit is mentioned a great deal. Considering the verse: "They ask thee concerning the Spirit (of inspiration). Say: "The Spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord: of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, (O men!)" (Qur'an:17/85)*

What is the origin of such a great deal of information?

The reason for mentioning the spirit often in Sufism is that Sufism deals with the spiritual aspects of the human being. The spirit of the human being has a divine origin, as we can ascertain according to statements in the Qur'an. It is stated as ""When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit..."

The spirit of the human, whose body was made of earth and water, has been the subject of a great deal of research and many questions because of its divine origin. The above verse was revealed when the Jews asked the Prophet of Allah what the spirit is. In this verse, the declaration that the spirit is formed "by command of The Lord" is indeed a clue about the nature of the spirit. This also can be explained by acknowledging the fact that the human being is a vicegerent. A vicegerent is endowed with the characteristics of the One who has given them this post, as they must execute some commissions on behalf of the appointee. Here, the human being bears some responsibilities on the Earth on behalf of Allah due to their spirit which has the characteristic of management and execution. By declaring that very limited knowledge has been given about the spirit is an expression of the fact that knowledge about the spirit is very little with respect to its importance and magnificence. On the other hand, in Sufism, knowledge about the spirit is generally related with the manifestations and attributes of the spirit. These are not directly related to the spirit itself.

SW: *What are the states and characteristics of the soul?*

The states of the soul during spiritual progress are classified in different ways. There are some states that consist of three stages, some of five, while others are classified into seven states, for example *ammara*, *lawwama*, *mulhimah*, *mutmainnah*, *radiyah*, *mardiyyah* and *qamilah*. These states are explained below.

Nafs al-ammara: This is the soul that incites and commands to perform forbidden and evil things. The verse in the Qur'an "the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil..." indicates this state of the soul. The one who is in the state of *nafs al-ammara* does not perform good works and does not refrain from evil things, but they repent when bad things happen. However, this repentance does not affect their future actions. The soul with this attribute is greatly addicted to their own desires. The one who is in this state must recite the phrase *La ilahe illallah* and their mission is *sayrullah* (The observation of Allah in terms of His holy names).

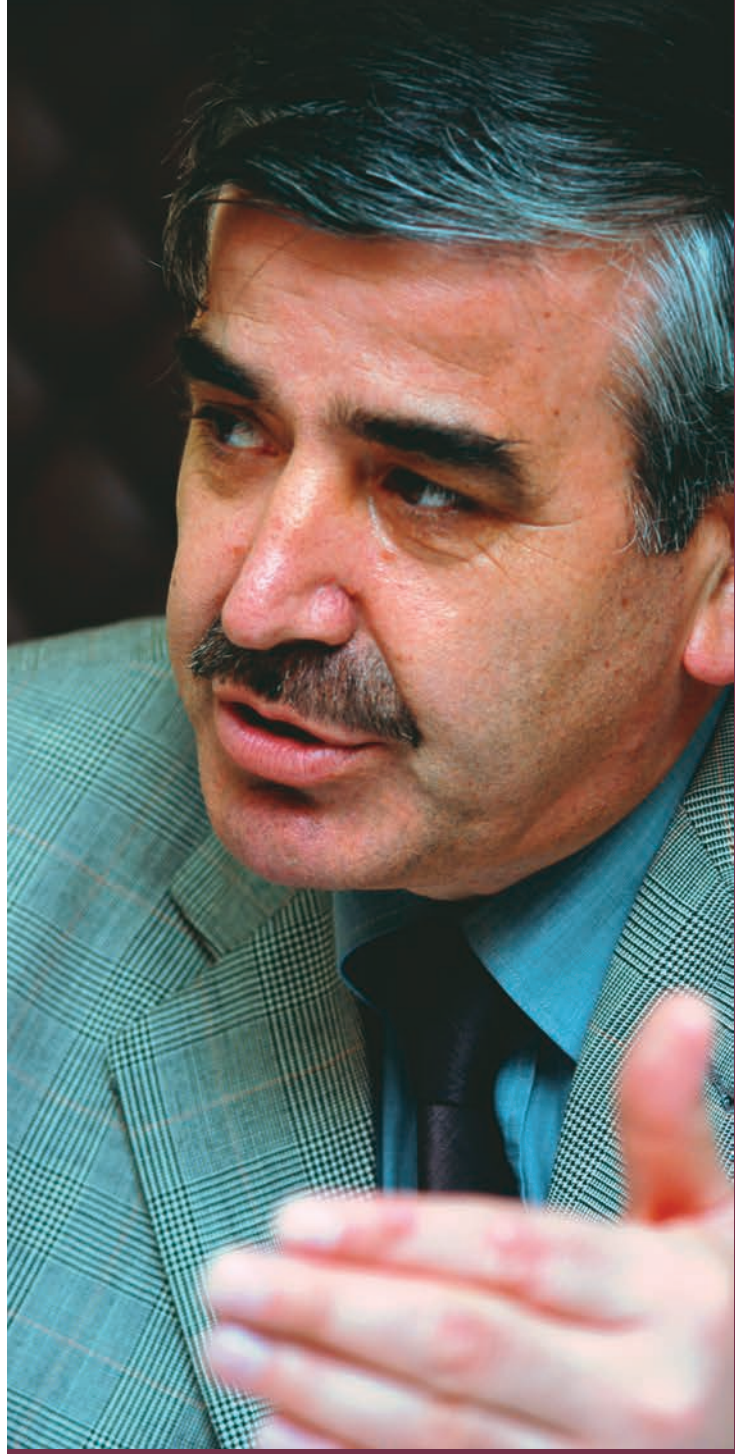
Nafs al-lawwama: This is a soul that sometimes repents due to evil actions that are preformed, accusing the soul for the evil things done and which is inclined to seek for forgiveness. The name comes from the verse in the Qur'an "Nay, I swear by the accusing soul (*nafs al-lawwama*)" This soul recites the glorious word "Allah" and its mission is *seyri lillah* (observation for Allah). At this state, the love of Allah comes into existence.


Nafs al-mulhimah: This is a soul that has been bestowed with some inspirations and the uncovering of the unseen, which has the ability to distinguish between good and evil and has the power to resist the desires of the soul. The name comes from the verses "And a soul and He who perfected it... And inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it." At this state, the soul must recite the word *Hu* (He) and its mission is *sayrullah*.

Nafs al-mutmainnah: This is a soul that has been cleansed from bad and evil attributes and has been granted with good deeds. This soul, with the help and aid of the All-Compassionate Creator, is bestowed with satisfaction and precise knowledge and survives spiritual pains. At this state, the soul is bestowed with the divine address: "O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction!" since "the Light of Muhammad" manifests with the disappearance of human nature. This soul recites the name *Hakk* (The Truth) and its mission is *seyri maallah* (Observing with Allah)

Nafs al-radiyyah: This is the state of soul in which the soul has consented to commands manifested to it, accepting them without hesitation. This is a state in which one uncovers divine secrets.

Human beings cannot be expected to be angels. But, if the human being does not learn to control the desires of their nafs, they will be defeated by the infinite desires of the soul.





It is necessary to make the effort to have the soul perform the commands of the mind and follow the religious rules by giving up those things that it enjoys instead of following its every desire.

It recites the name *Hayy* (The Alive) and its mission is *seyr fillah* (Observing at Allah). The verse in the Qur'an, "Come back thou to thy Lord -well-pleasing unto Him..." indicates this state.

Nafs al-mardiyyah: This is the state in which consent becomes a common attribute between Allah and the servant; the servant consents to Allah's commands and Allah consents to the servant's actions and attitudes. The remaining part of the verse mentioned above, "... and well pleased (thyself)", indicates this. At this state, the soul recites the name *Qayyum* and its mission is *seyr anillah* (Observing from Allah).

Nafs al-kamilah: In this state, one ascends to the state of *irshad* (being spiritually authorized to educate students) having attained all the states of knowledge. This state is not gained by effort, but is rather granted by Allah. The soul recites the name *Qahhar* and its mission is *seyr billah* (Observing by Allah).

SW: *Can human beings go beyond the states of the soul by themselves?*

The classifications made by Sufis about the states of the soul are in general relative. From this view, it is not possible for human being to go beyond these. There must be a *murshid* (spiritual guide). Additionally, this classification does not precisely separate the states one from the other; it is not a mathematical classification. Sometimes there may be overlapping.

Moreover, the state of *mulhimah* is one in which the soul is bestowed with inspiration. This state can only be handled with the knowledge of authorized and skilled *murshids*.

The possessor of such a soul who starts to be bestowed with inspiration may fall into hypocrisy and selfishness. And, such cases may cause *mezlaka-i akdam*, which means falling down by slipping.

SW: *What is nafs al-ammara? What must we do to save ourselves from nafs al-ammara?*

Nafs al-ammara is the soul that is always interested in evil acts and forces its owner to do such things. It does not repent the things it does much. It is must to educate a soul in the state of *ammara* by obeying the religious rules and performing moderate mortification. This is an education of the will. It is necessary to expend efforts to have the soul perform the commands of the mind and follow the religious rules by giving up those things that it enjoys instead of following its every desire.

The soul is generally compared to a child. In the same way that a mother who wants to stop breastfeeding a child must resist her child and control her will during this period if she wants to succeed, it is necessary to have a strong will and to struggle within the limits of the religious rules to handle the *nafs al-ammara*.

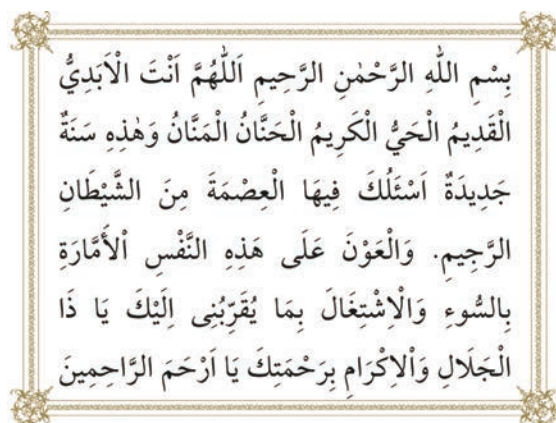
THE SUPPLICATION TO BE READ IN THE MONTH OF MUHARRAM

MAHMUD SAMI EFENDI

- Recite this supplication three times on the first day of Muharram

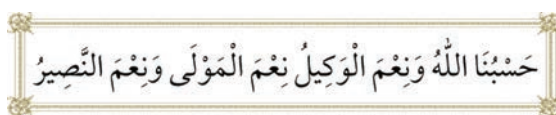
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى
سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَإِلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ. اَللّهُمَّ اَنْتَ
الْاَبَدِيُّ الْقَدِيْمُ الْاَوَّلُ وَعَلَا فَضْلُكَ الْعَظِيْمُ
وَجُودُكَ الْعَمِيْمُ الْمَعُوْلُ وَهَذِهِ عَامٌ جَدِيْدٌ
قَدْ اَقْبَلَ نَسْتُلِكَ الْعِصْمَةَ فِيهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ
وَاَوْلِيَائِهِ وَجُنُوْدِهِ وَالْعَوْنَ عَلَى هَذِهِ النَّفْسِ
الْاَمَّارَةِ بِالسُّوْءِ وَالِاسْتِعَالَ بِمَا يُقَرِّبُنِي اِلَيْكَ
رُفْقَى يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ
عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ النَّبِيِّ الْاَمِّيِّ وَعَلَى اٰلِهِ
وَاَصْحَابِهِ الطَّيِّبِيْنَ الطَّاهِرِيْنَ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِيْنَ

- Recite this supplication on the first day and the tenth day of Muharram:

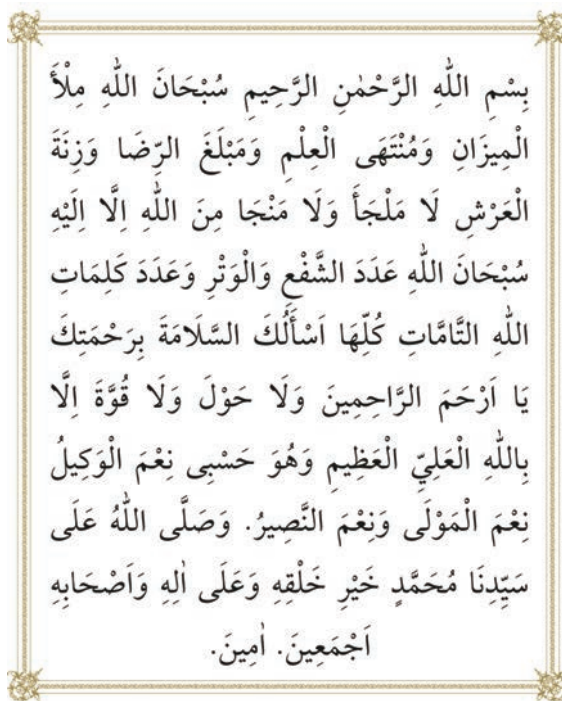


Whoever this supplication three times in the morning on the first and the tenth day of Muharram, will be protected from all calamities until the next year.

- Recite this supplication on the 10th of Muharram: First recite 70 times:



then recite this supplication 7 times:



THE VIRTUES OF THE DAY OF ASHURA*

Narrated by Ar-Rubai binti Mu'awwidh: the Prophet (pbuh) sent a messenger to the village of the Ansar on the morning of the day of Ashura to announce, "Whoever has eaten something should not eat but complete the fast, and whoever is observing the fast should complete it." Ar-Rubai binti Mu'awwidh went on to say, "Since then we used to observe fast on that day regularly and also make our children observe the fast. We used to make toys of wool for the children and if anyone of them cried for food, he was given those toys until it was the time for the iftar (breaking of the fast)."

Look how seriously the great companions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) took every act of worship and taught their children to perform them, even when they were very young!

According to the scholars of Islam, fasting is not obligatory for children, but it is recommended. According to Imam Shafii, children should be ordered to fast after the age of seven or ten, if they are physically strong enough; according to Ishak, children should be ordered to fast from the age of twelve; according to Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, children should be ordered to fast from the age of ten. Evzai said: "If you encourage your children to fast, it is recommended that they fast for three consecutive days."

However, we should not cause children to become weak, and also we should remember that even travelers are permitted not to fast. We should not forget that Allah says in the Qur'an: "Allah desireth for you ease; He desireth not hardship for you."

According to the narration of Ibn Abbas: "The Prophet (pbuh) came to Medina and saw the Jews fasting on the day of Ashura. He asked them about this fast. They replied, 'This is a good day; it is the day on which Allah rescued the Israelites from their enemies. So Moses (pbuh) observed the fast on this day.' The Prophet (pbuh) said: 'We have more claim over Moses (pbuh) than you.' So the Prophet (pbuh) observed the fast on that day and ordered that Muslims fast on that day."

It is narrated that on this day (Muharram 10th) that the repentance of Adam (pbuh) was

accepted, that Adam (pbuh) reached the level of prophets, that Enoch (pbuh) was raised to a high place, the ark of Noah (pbuh) was saved, Abraham (pbuh) was rescued from the fire, Moses (pbuh) was given the Torah, Joseph (pbuh) was saved from the dungeon, the sight of Jacob (pbuh) was restored, Job (pbuh) was cured, Jonah (pbuh) was saved from the belly of the fish, the Red Sea was divided in front of the Children of Israel and they were saved from the armies of the Pharaoh, David (pbuh) was forgiven, Solomon (pbuh) was given his throne and wealth, the past and future sins of Muhammad (pbuh) were forgiven, the earth was created and the first rain fell on the earth.

It is said that buying food for one's house and giving food to neighbors, relatives and the needy on this day may cause the blessings of Allah to be with one for the whole year. It is also said that one who fasts on this day and prays during the night will receive the good pleasure of Allah.

Ibn Abbas narrated that in order to be different from the Jews we should not fast only on the 10th of Muharram, but on the 9th and the 10th, or on the 10th and 11th.

Ar Ravzul Faik relates the following story in his book: "There was a wealthy man in Basra. Every year on the day of Ashura he used to invite his Muslim brothers to his house, and read the Qur'an all night, help the needy, the poor and the widows. In his neighborhood, there was a man who had a daughter; both of them were paralyzed and could not walk. That night the girl asked her father, 'O father, why did our neighbor gather so many people in his house and read the Qur'an all night?' The father answered, 'Today is the day of Ashura, which has many blessings, and this day is very important before Allah.'

Later, her father went to sleep, but the daughter could not. She was listening to the Qur'an and the *dhikr*. When the recitation of the whole Qur'an was finished she raised her hands and said, 'O Allah, for the sake of this night, and for the sake of Your servants who do not sleep tonight to read the Qur'an, make me healthy again!' When her father saw her the next morning, he was surprised to find that she could walk and asked how she had been restored to health. She said, 'I prayed to Allah through the blessings of this night, and He gave me back my health.'

*the tenth day of month Muharram


It is narrated that on this day (Muharram 10th) that the repentance of Adam (pbuh) was accepted, that Adam (pbuh) reached the level of prophets, that Enoch (pbuh) was raised to a high place, the ark of Noah (pbuh) was saved, Abraham (pbuh) was rescued from the fire.



MAHMUD SAMI EFENDI'S

Visits And Services To OTHERS

MUSA EFENDI



When Allah the Almighty loves one of His servants, He puts mercy and love into the heart of this servant, and as a result the servant loves all creation and serves all in the best manner without feeling any hardship.

Our Beloved Master Mahmud Sami Efendi continuously visited Muslim scholars and other Sufis during the Eid. Among these scholars and Sufis the following were included: Haji Nuri Efendi, Alasonyali Jamal Efendi, Sheikh Abdul-Hay Efendi, Sheikh 'Ali Haydar Efendi, Sheikh Shafiq Arvasi Efendi, Sheikh Mahmud Kotku Efendi, the Hadith scholar Bakir Haki Efendi, 'Ali Yakta Efendi, Omar Nasuhi Efendi, Sulayman Efendi of Silistra and Mustafa Efendi of Bayindir.

Even though many of these personalities did not return the visits due to old age or neglect, our Master would not get angry with them or be saddened by this, and he would continue visiting these people in the same manner he always had. When they apologised for their negligence he would answer: It is our duty to visit you without expecting any return. Since he did not expect any thanks or response he never felt dispirited.

When our Master was a murid (student of his sheikh) in the Sufi lodge, all the difficult duties were on his shoulders. He would tend the garden, as well as deal with the problems of the visitors who came to see the Pir, including answering letters that were written to the Pir.

Mustafa Doganay of Konya remembers that in those days in the lodge Mahmud Sami Efendi would sleep very little. "He would do most of the work, such as preparing other people's beds. He would never feel tired. We all would go to bed at the same time. However, after everybody slept he would get up. After renewing his ablution he would perform his devotions until morning time, praising the holy names of Allah and contemplating the secrets of the creation on his prayer rug. Before the time for Morning Prayer he would bring wood from the

All disciples should have such a strong will in following this path to overcome all the difficulties along the way. In this way, vices are burnt and the pure gold of the soul is purified from dust.



garden and start a fire to heat water for those who needed to make ghusl (major ablution). Because of his kindness and his service to his brethren everybody loved him".

When Allah the Almighty loves one of His servants, He puts mercy and love into the heart of this servant, and as a result the servant loves all creation and serves all in the best manner without feeling any hardship.

In one of my Master's visits to Medina during the holy month of Ramadan I was with him. He would perform all of the five daily prayers in the Mosque of the Holy Prophet, except the evening prayer, which he would pray at home. This was in order to keep his wife happy and so that she would not feel lonely. He would break his fast with our mother (the author uses the term mother metaphorically out of respect for the wife of the Master) and in that way he would show the best example of how one treats one's family.

I used to think that between the prayer times he was resting. However, later I found out that during these breaks he was either helping our mother or he was answering letters which had been addressed to him. Hence he was not resting in the hot climate of these holy places, where most people spend their daytimes in retreat.

In this respect, I would like to remind my readers that serving all human beings is a very important concept in this path. Our Pir Shah Bahauddin Naqshband once told his murids to clean the rooms of the lodge and added:

"Once I used to clean all the toilets in the Bukhara Madrasah (religious school)."

For the spiritual training his murid commanded Bahauddin Naqshband Amir Kulâl to serve his

people for seven years. After completing this duty with success he commanded Bahauddin to serve the animals for another seven years.

Bahauddin completed this duty with modesty and sincerity. Whenever he saw injured animals he would tend to them and heal their wounds. After completing this difficult task he was ordered to clean the streets of the town. Bahauddin Naqshband so devoted himself to this task that he did not even have time to clean his own dress. At that time there were no gloves or protective gear. Under such difficult conditions he served the creations of Allah for almost twenty years. One day, after cleaning the streets, he wanted to attend Amir Kulal's suhbat. He was tired and his dress was not very clean. Amir Kulal asked who he was:

They replied:

"It is Bahauddin."

Amir Kulal told them:

"Do not let him join the sohbah (spiritual discourse)."

Hence he had to leave the gathering. He was deeply saddened and his nafs was revolting against this behaviour of his Master. However, he did not listen to the voice of his nafs but told himself:

"This is the door of Haqq (Divine Truth and reality), I will not abandon it whatever happens."

So saying this, he put his head on the step of the lodge door and slept. It was snowing, and by morning the snow had partly covered his head. When Amir Kulal left his house in the morning for the dawn prayer he did not see him and unknowingly stepped on him. When he looked carefully he saw Bahauddin and felt sorry for him. He took him to his house and told him:

"O my son, this holy duty is your right."

(Meaning that Bahauddin would replace his post as master of the Sufi order after he had passed away)

Similarly all disciples should have such a strong will in following this path to overcome all the difficulties along the way. In this way, vices are burnt and the pure gold of the soul is purified from dust. This is the way to success; not the performance of many supererogatory prayers or continual fasting. In this regard Abdul-Qâdir Jaylânî once said:

"O my brothers in Islam! We did not attain proximity to Allah by performing night prayers or fasting during the daytime or learning and teaching the sciences. We attained this station of nearness (qurbîyyah) through modesty, generosity, benefiting others and through the greatness of our hearts."

The greatest enemy that prevents people from reaching this station is the nafs (lower self) and love of worldly concerns. The greatest veil between human beings and Allah is the love of the world. Generosity kills this vice, since giving away worldly possessions removes the love of them from the heart. Similarly, modesty kills the vices of the nafs. By the greatness of the heart, Allah is manifested in the heart and the vices leave it. In this way the servant attains proximity to his Lord.

Ibn Atâ'ullâh says in his Hikâm:

"Clear away the vices which are obstacles to serving Allah; only then do you deserve to be loved by Allah and can you attain proximity to Him."

Ubaydullâh Ahrâr narrates:

"I was in Heri during the reign of Mirza Shahruh. I was completely penniless. My turban was an old piece of cloth. I knotted one end and the other end kept coming undone due to its wretchedness. One day when I was walking in the marketplace a beggar asked me for money. I had no money so I could not give him anything. But I did not want to leave him helpless, so I took him to a restaurant and told the cook: 'My turban is old but it is clean. You can use it to dry the plates. Take it and give this beggar some food.' The cook gave food to the poor man and offered back my turban with great respect to me. I did not accept it and left it with him."

He had such great mercy for the creatures of Allah that he would serve anyone, without discriminating between acquaintances or strangers.

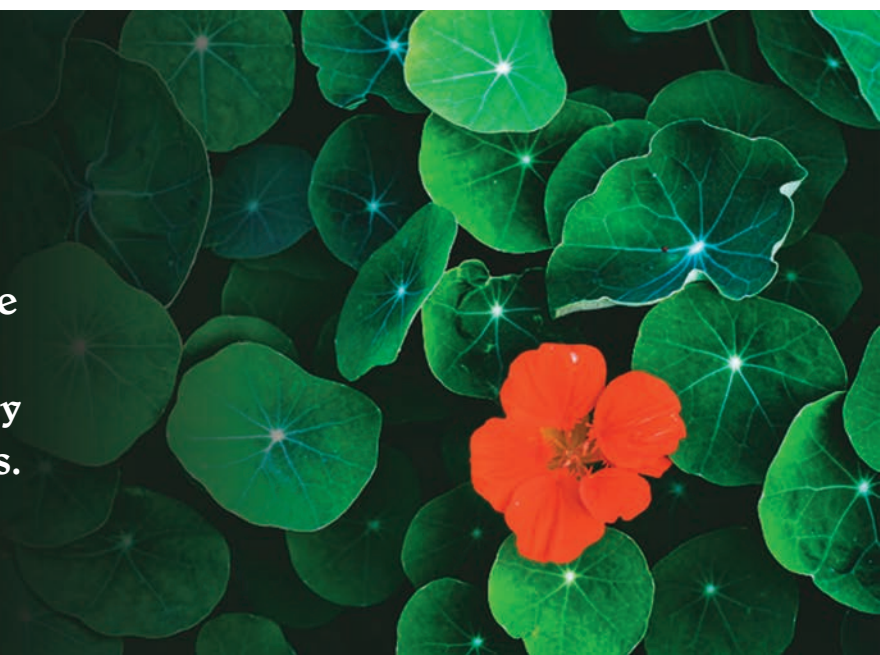
He also said:

"I attained what I have in tasawwuf not through reading books on tasawwuf, but by serving the people. Everyone has a different path to Allah. I was guided to Him through giving service to His creation".

The Prophet (pbuh) said:

"Whosoever sets out to help their brother in Islam shall be rewarded seventy times for every step they take. If they continue to assist their brother until their help is no longer needed, then all their sins shall be forgiven. Should they continue in this manner until their death, they shall enter Paradise without question."

Generosity kills this vice, since giving away worldly possessions removes the love of them from the heart. Similarly, modesty kills the vices of the nafs.





The Message

It took some time, but now I see the light.
How can it be wrong when it feels so right?

The lifestyle of a Muslim may seem very demanding,
But you have to look deeper than your own understanding.

The ways of the Prophet (pbuh) have been revealed unto you.
Now that you've heard Allah's message, what are you going to do?

Hellfire is eternal and we don't have forever,
How long will it take to get our act together?

The message was revealed, and it's very clear.
You were in Jummah too, so didn't you hear?

We look forward to the feast and we all want to be blessed,
But when the feast is complete, what about the rest?

There is more to Islam than just fasting and praying.
If you pay attention in Taleem, then you know what I am saying.

There are five pillars of Islam and to be Muslim you must submit.
Just because the feast is here doesn't mean that is it.

We have to strive to learn more, because knowledge is the key.
The Qur'an is an instruction book on how our lives should be.

We should share what we learn with others, so that we can live on.
Our teachings will still be here long after we are gone.

There is no God but Allah! Or haven't you heard the latest?
"Allahu Akbar" translated means "Allah is the Greatest!"

Sheila Wade



THE FIRST CHAPTER OF QUR'AN GUIDED US TO OUR CREATOR

AMINAH DOROTHY WESTON

I was christened by the Salvation Army into the Church of England and named Dorothy. The first time I remember going to Sunday school I was five years old, and was asked why I had coloured Moses (pbuh) a light brown. I could not understand why they asked me this; they then asked if it were to do with my own colour.

I liked going to Sunday school, although I could never make much sense of the stories. There was a kind of peace there that I liked; I would ask question's, but never got any answers. It was hard to workout "God, the Son and the Holy Spirit", and how the son died for our sins; no wonder I had questions.

The colour of my skin also caused some problems with the white people and a few black people; some of the priests/vicars had problems with me wanting to be in the church. When I was nine years old, I caught an illness that sometimes was crippling and this kept me inside for a few years.

Things changed after that. Sometimes I could not go out, so I found that I was not doing many of the things my friends did, and so I kept out of trouble, but going to church had stopped. Sometimes I would go sit in the church when nobody was there; the peace and the feeling close to God is what I was looking for.

When I was in my teens I would go sit in a field

near were I lived and sit for hours watching the rabbits and birds, listening to the water flowing in the beck, and feel the peace that I had felt in the church and knew there was more.

By this time I was feeling the knocks of life, being of African background in a white area and family, so I was aware of many negative feelings, to the point that sometimes I could not understand what was positive. As I had tried to live my life there was a feeling of being lost, of something missing, of never knowing fully what it was.

When I was between fourteen and fifteen years old, Bob Marley came into my life, and though his music I began to feel some peace inside and once again started looking for what was missing in my life. I looked at the Rastafarian religion; it looked so right for me that I could feel myself growing and I started to look at what it was saying. The only thing was that I did not know where I could go and talk to a true Rasta to get the full understanding. Bob was saying things, like Stand up for your rights. And I knew I had rights, not just as a human but also as a woman - the problem was finding them.

I started reading the Bible again, but found it hard to understand. So I started looking at other religions. I knew I could not be a Jew because I was a woman; there were the Indian religions,

the Krishnas and Buddhists. I liked what some of them were saying but they did not seem right, some just went on and were not saying much. I still could not find God, but I could see the badness around me.

I so much wanted to be a Rasta; I liked what Bob was saying and it was also the closest thing to what I was feeling.

By this time I had started to have children and that is an amazing thing, to hold the child that grew inside me. All I knew was that it had to be different for them.

None of my children were christened because I could not make a promise to God that I would bring them up in the church, as it felt wrong.

But as a young mother I needed help to find the best way; I have been called a wicked mother because I would not let my children go all over, like the others. And I did not like what society was saying. The feeling in me was stronger, sometimes I felt very lost and alone.

One day my stepson's mother came to see me and she was wearing a scarf, she was different to anything I knew. I asked her, and we talked and I liked what she said. It made some sense and I had many feeling inside that needed answers; over the next few months I saw her a lot.

Now I had only to take that step which I was finding so hard, a new way of life and I was scared. But something happened and it was not too good, and as always when something bad happens, the first words out of my mouth were, "Oh God let it be alright."

Once the words had come out I had to think about what I had said, but there was nothing to think about. I went to see my stepson's mother and told her she had to tell me more. She gave me the Qur'an to read and told me to read Al-Fatihah; these seven lines said it all, they told me all I wanted to know - that there was only One God and I was to worship only Him, that He created all living things that were in the universe and on earth, and that He created the unseen. I now had guide lines for my life and that of my children. I cannot say what all this meant to me; all I know is that all those feelings inside me had found what they were looking for and I was happy that at last I had found Allah the most Merciful and the most Compassionate.

**I knew I had
rights, not just
as a human but
also as a woman
- the problem was
finding them.**



The Qur'an: THE WORD OF A MAN OR THE WORD OF ALLAH?

MUSA BELFORT

The inimitable character of the Qur'an

There is much discussion about the character of the Qur'an, about whether it is inimitable or not. Is this book the word of a man or that of Allah? The answer is that there can be no doubt that the Qur'an is literarily inimitable. Here are some of the reasons why we make this statement: the Qur'an is of divine essence, the Word of Allah and it was revealed to humankind from time immemorial and in all places. This fact is undeniable, as no human being is not able to compete with the contents of this book with regard to - in particular - the choice, the order and the harmony of the words, as is confirmed in the following verse:

"Say: "If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed each other up." (Qur'an: 17/88)

The principal argument to be highlighted is the concept of *i'jaz*: i.e. the inimitable character of the Qur'an. Professor Malek Bennabi, an eminent Algerian professor, said this in the foreword of his book *The Qur'anic Phenomenon*: "Etymologically, *i'jaz*, means a challenge that reduces to impotence (...). This challenge was perceived, by those who came before, particularly in the literary aspect. It was a question of putting to the test the Arab literary genius by summoning it to compose a speech of beauty, majesty and power comparable with the Qur'anic style. "



The Prophet had the verses that were revealed to him written down by scribes who were charged with this work alone while he prohibited anyone from transcribing his own words to avoid any confusion.

The factor of time is also important. Over the twenty-three years of revelation, no one was able to contradict the truths emitted by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). No detractor or enemy of Islam could find arguments to compare with the great literary beauty and harmony of his recitation. Even close relations and Companions were left in admiration when faced by this great light.

Let us take into account the fact that Muhammad (pbuh) distinguished between the Word that was divinely inspired and his own words; he had the verses that were revealed to him written down by scribes who were charged with this work alone. On the other hand, he prohibited anyone from transcribing his own words in order to avoid any later confusion. It should be realized however that such words were later compiled after his death, at the instigation of certain scholars, in particular Bukharî and Muslim, and called Hadiths.

Another fundamental element to highlight is the fact that from the time of the revelation of the Qur'an until today, from a philological point of view, Qur'anic expression is untranslatable in the pure Arab language, that is, in what is known as the profane. The subtlety of the Arab language is such that it is difficult to compare it to other languages. This is particularly true in the literary dimension: that is, semantics, syntax, the prose or the morphology of the text.

However, it is necessary to recognize and pay homage to the efforts and the merit of scientists such as Mohammed Hamidullah, Hamza Boubakeur and Jacques Berque. With a scientific approach, these eminent men have helped those

who are not familiar with the Arab language in the interpretation of Qur'anic verses while trying to bring them closer.

The last element to highlight is that for fourteen centuries the language of the final Divine Book has not deteriorated in any way. It occupies a dominant place in the heart and life of Muslims. Believers cry when listening to it. Lives are transformed by contact with it. As this famous verse testifies:

"Allah has revealed the most beautiful Message in the form of a Book, Consistent with itself, (Yet) repeating, (its teaching in various aspects): The skins of those who gear their Lord tremble thereat; then their skins and their hearts do soften to the celebration of God's praises. Such is the guidance of God: He guides therewith whom He pleases, but such as God leaves to stray, can have none to guide." (Qur'an: 39/23)

The Qur'an is made easy for meditation. Thus, in a subjective way we realize in our hearts that this book is not like others! Its literary beauty in all its perfection throws a luminous certainty into the hearts of believers. This book speaks to us; it enlightens our way in this lowly world and reveals to us the secrets of the future. Let us affirm with emphasis that the Qur'an is literarily inimitable and that no other can be made that is its equal. The Qur'an is what it is: the Word of Allah addressed to the whole of humanity:

"Alif Lam Ra (This is) a Book, with verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning) Further explained in detail, - From One Who is Wise and Well-Acquainted with all things" (Qur'an:11/1)

Memorizing and transmitting the Qur'an.

The Arabia at the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) relied greatly on oral tradition. As far as the conservation of the Qur'an by memorization is concerned, it is necessary to include and understand historical data to perceive the precise context. Poetry enjoyed great prestige; epic accounts were related in the houses, public places and the markets. Arabic had a refined poetical language in which rhythm and prose mixed harmoniously. The subtlety of the Arab language, without a doubt, suited poetry excellently. When the Qur'anic revelation came, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) accepted the gift of memorizing these divine words on behalf of Allah. In the following verse we are told:

"Move not thy tongue concerning the (Qur'an) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it. But when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated): Nay more, it is for us to explain it (and make it clear)." (Qur'an:75/16-19)

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was also extremely worried about transmitting the Holy Qur'an. It is for this reason that, according to Suyutî, more than twenty people among the Companions profited from the benefit of memorizing the Qur'an. In addition, we know that the hadiths encourage the believer to transmit knowledge of the Qur'an. Some people think that the oral culture tradition predisposed the hearts and later served the cause of Islam. The natural provisions that enabled the Muslims to propagate the religion are due to two essential factors: Firstly, the Arabs of the time had an ability to memorize due to their traditions. Secondly, the fragmented

and progressive revelation of the Qur'an made it possible for the Muslims to retain the verses more easily.

Thereafter, the oral transmission of the Qur'an was maintained thanks, in particular, to the different legal schools, which, with the aim of perpetuating this tradition, taught the Qur'an in addition to sciences concerned with commentary (*tafsir*). When one stops to consider that from the 7th century until today, much that is taught in many countries, be they Muslim or not, is taught in a systematic way we can realize that this practice is all the more beneficial. In short, preserving the Qur'an both through writing and through memorization helped to preserve it. In spite of written records, which remains indisputably essential, the conservation of the oral mode is necessary to preserve the heart of the Divine Word which, in all circumstances, has helped Muslims in their daily lives and is tantamount to spiritual sustenance.

Examples of Abû Bakr and Uthman during their respective caliphates.

The efforts of Abû Bakr are those of a person who devoted himself primarily to protecting the Holy Qur'an. Indeed, the commission chaired by Zayd ibn Thabî, a man who acted as personal secretary to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), had the role of bringing together the entire Qur'an into one book. The majority of the members of this commission knew the Divine Book by heart. They were thus charged to establish the written text so that it would not become changed or lost. It should be remembered that many members of a group known as *Al-Qurra* were killed



Our Holy Book occupies a dominant place in the heart and life of Muslims. Believers cry when listening to it. Lives are transformed by contact with it.

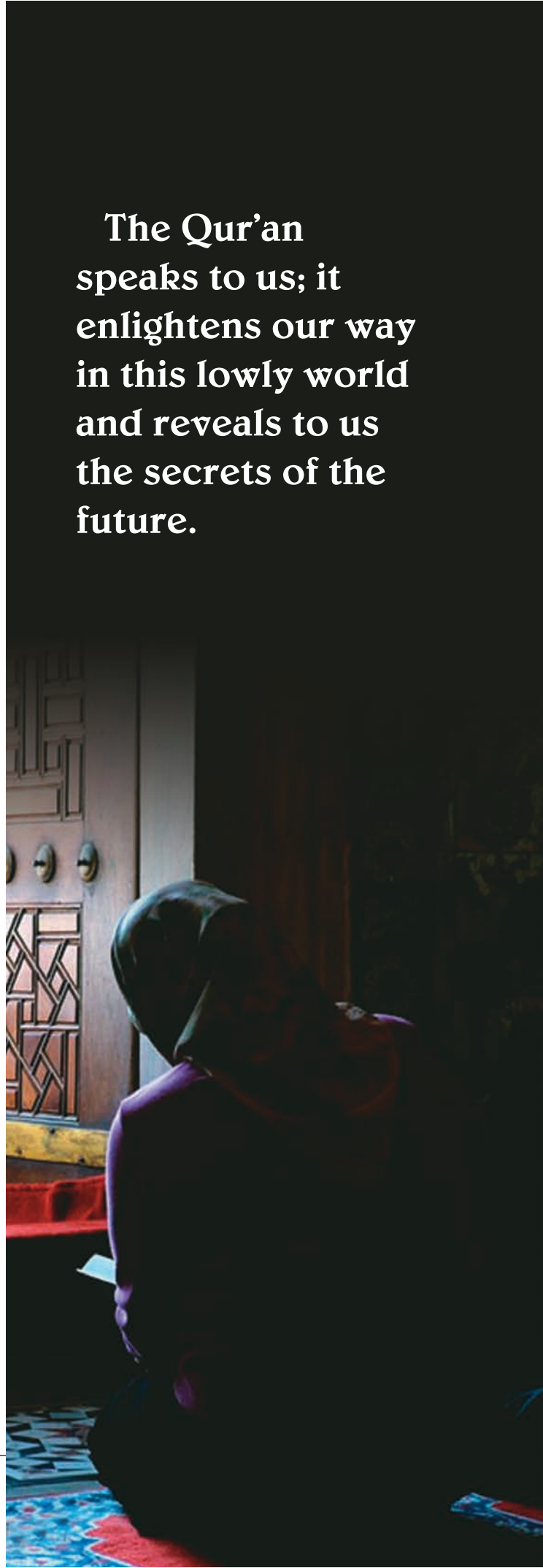
shortly before the famous war of apostasy. These dramatic circumstances are of great importance in understanding the events that followed. After this disaster Abu Bakr established groups to ensure that the Qur'an would not be lost.

Historically, we know that Zayd ibn Thabîṭ and the members of this commission carried out immense efforts not only intellectually, but also scientifically. They were very careful to carry out this objective with great precision. However, this work established the Qur'anic text with alternatives, due to various local dialects. Under the caliphate of Uthman, a significant number of dissensions occurred, mainly due to this dialectal diversity. In order to deal with this problem, Uthman delegated another commission to solve this new problem. He had a presentiment that this would be a problem that might lead to discord within the Muslim community, which at that time was geographically widespread. The same Zayd ibn Thabîṭ, with the assistance of eminent Companions, dispatched instructors to teach the Qur'an in one language.

This second commission established the Qur'anic text in one dialect; that is the Arabic of the Quraysh. It also took into account distinct modes of reading. In other words, we can deduce at this stage that the respective works of Abû Bakr and Uthman were significant because of several factors: firstly, the historical factor that was related to the context, secondly, the distinct socio-cultural factor and thirdly, the decisive factor concerning the means used. Consequently, from this time until today, the same text has been presented to us in various modes of reading, which total seven in number.

According to a hadith reported by Bukharî, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: "The Qur'an was revealed according to seven *ahruf* (modes of recitation). Employ that which is most convenient for you." These two caliphs were able to safeguard the Qur'anic text as we find it nowadays. Let us emphasize, once again, the great number of measures that had been taken to preserve the integrity of the Qur'an and in particular the efforts made by Zayd ibn Thabîṭ and the members of the two commissions. Taking all this into consideration, we can say that, without a doubt, the Qur'an is the '*Word of Allah*' revealed for all humankind. It teaches us that Allah wants to inculcate the concept of faith, justice, mercy and particularly that of pure monotheism (*tawhid*) in the heart of man.

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PEARLS OF

The sign of God's love is to bestow three attributes on His lover: A generosity like that of the sea, a kindness like that of the sun, and a humility like that of the earth.

Bayazid Bistami

Forgive he who wrongs you; join he who cuts you off; do good to he who does evil to you, and speak the truth, even if it is against yourself.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

It is better to refrain from sins than to seek forgiveness later.

Imam Ali

There is nothing that deserves to be imprisoned more than the tongue.

Abdullah bin Masud

The heart is comforted by true words just as a thirsty man is comforted by water.

Rumi

Reflection is the lamp of the heart; if it departs, the heart will have no light.

Imam Al-Haddad



WISDOM

A perfect Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands mankind is safe, and a true emigrant [muhajir] is one who flees from what God has forbidden.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

Whoever believes in one God and the hereafter should speak what is good or remain silent.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

Patience is to undergo tribulation with the best of conduct.

Ibn Ata'illah

Taking pains to remove the pains of others is the true essence of generosity.

Abu Bakr

Patience is the most precious aspect of faith. Therefore, those who have no patience have no faith.

Rumi

Being on the way of Allah means gaining the hearts of others, not hurting them.

Osman Nuri Efendi

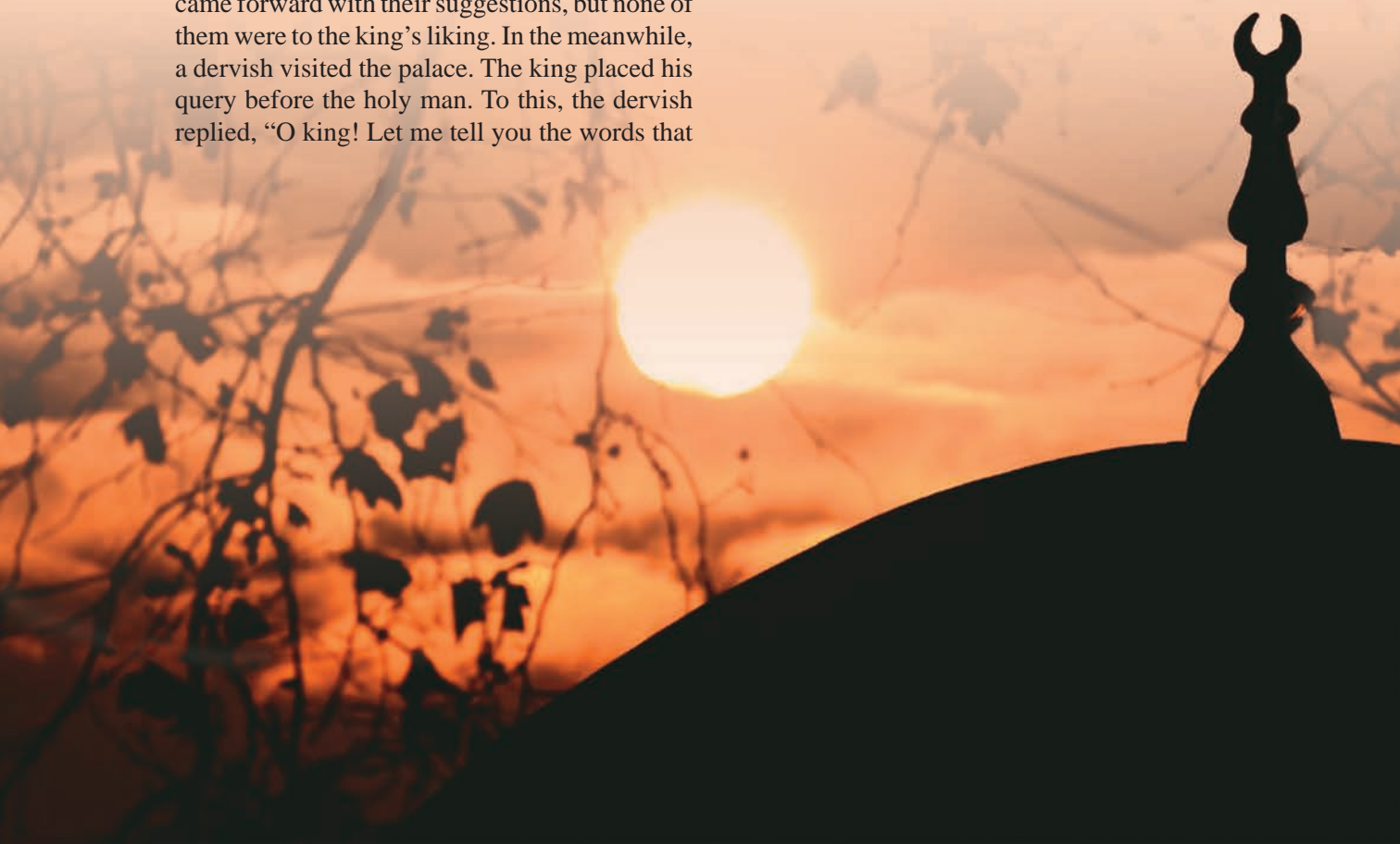




THIS TOO SHALL PASS

Once upon a time, the great Shah of Persia decided to have a special jewel-encrusted ring made for his personal use. On the ring, he wanted to engrave a few words which would always give him comfort in times of distress. He offered a huge reward to any one of his subjects who could suggest the best words of wisdom to him for this purpose. Many people came forward with their suggestions, but none of them were to the king's liking. In the meanwhile, a dervish visited the palace. The king placed his query before the holy man. To this, the dervish replied, "O king! Let me tell you the words that

have always given great comfort and solace to me in times of sorrow. Those words are – "This too shall pass!" The words so touched the heart of the king that he had them engraved on his ring. Whenever any sad or difficult experience came his way, he would just look at the ring and read those words. Immediately, his heart would be filled with a new spirit of courage and faith.





DHUN NUN AND THE MAN WHO SPOKE AGAINST THE SUFIS

A certain young man was always speaking against Sufis. One day, Dhun Nun took the ring from his finger and gave it to the man.

“Take this to the market and sell it for five dinars,” he said.

The young man took it to the market and tried to sell it, but no one would give him more than one dinar for it. The young man returned to Dhun Nun with the news.

“Now, take the ring to the jewelers and see what price they give,” said Dhun Nun.

The jewelers priced the ring at 100 dinars.

“You know as much about Sufis,” Dhun Nun told the young man when he returned, “as those people in the marketplace know about this ring.”

The young man repented, and disparaged the Sufis no more.

RABI'Ā AND THE SCHOLAR

A leading scholar of Basra visited Rabi'ā al-Adawiyya while she was ill. Sitting beside her bed, the scholar spoke about how terrible the world was.

In reply, Rabi'ā told him:

“You love the world very dearly. If you did not love the world, you would not mention it so much. It is always the purchaser who first disparages what he wants to buy. If you were done with the world, you would not mention it, either for good or evil. As it is, you keep mentioning it because, as the proverb says, whoever loves a thing mentions it frequently.”



MAHMUD FAGHNAWI

Faghnawi was a man of moderate height with a pleasant face, a pointed nose and a large mouth. His skin was white and his beard was black. He used to wear a white turban. His character resembled that of Prophet Moses (pbuh) and he was a saint throughout; he performed many miracles. He made jahri dhikr (audible dhikr) the way, earlier it had been hafi dhikr (silent dhikr); he introduced a domination of ecstasy with the guidance and permission of his murshid (spiritual guide), as the jahri dhikr had been inherited from his sheikh, Rivegeri.

The twelfth ring of the golden chain came, like others, from Bukhara. According to Reshehat, Mahmud Faghnawi was born in one of the villages of Eykeni, Fagni, about 15 km. away from Bukhara and lived in Eykeni. His grave is in Eykeni. There is limited information about his life. "Encer", "Encir" and "Incir", which are mentioned with his name in some sources, are most likely epithets. "Encer" means anchor. This epithet may have been given to him since he was a murshid who anchored the tariqah with the principles of the Shariat. "Encir" and "Incir" both mean fig. As Encir and Incir are given as names of a village in Fagni in some sources, it is possible that Incir may have been a district of Faghni.

Before he became murshid after his sheikh Arif Rivegeri, Faghnawi occupied himself with carpentry and construction. After he affiliated with Rivegeri and completed his spiritual education, he began to deal with matters of irshad (spiritual guidance) and to construct hearts. He taught the method of jahri dhikr, the performance for which his guide had given permission in his final days, in both Bukhara and Eykeni. Al-Hadaik-ul'Verdiyye reported that he performed irshad at the Vabeki mosque, which was 15 km. away from Bukhara. He died in 717/1317. His grave is located in the village of Incirbag, 15 km. away from the town of Safirkan near Bukhara.



Mahmud Faghnavi, in addition to being a man of dhikr and heart, enjoyed meetings of knowledge and visited these gatherings from time to time. One day he went to such a meeting where wise men like Shemseddin Halvani and Sheikh Hafizuddin were present; Sheikh Hafizuddin was the grandfather of Muhammad Parsa, who is part of the Naqshi chain later on. Shemseddin Halwani said to Sheikh Hafizuddin: "Ask Mahmud Faghnavi why they perform jahri dhikr although the essence of their way is hafi dhikr?" Faghnavi gave the following answer:

"We perform jahri dhikr with the intention of wakening the sleepers, directing the unaware ones to the way of the Truth, and providing repentance to Allah."

When Sheikh Hafizuddin heard this answer, he said: "Your intention is from the heart, you are complete."

Truly, nothing had been changed. The basis of this dhikr is the traditional way. This manifestation was due to the situation and for a purpose.

Another day, Sheikh Hafizuddin asked Faghnavi: "Who is allowed to perform the jahri dhikr?"

Faghnavi replied: "Those whose tongues are clean from gossip and lies, whose stomachs are free from doubtful and illicit foods, whose hearts are free from hypocrisy, whose sirr is not sullied by concern with the masiwa; these are allowed to perform the jahri dhikr.

Faghnavi's caliph (successor), Ramiteni tells us: "One day, a dervish encountered Hidhir and asked him: 'Is there a wise person in this era who has not deviated from the way of the Shariat and to whom one can be affiliated?' Hidhir replied: 'Mahmud Faghnavi has the characteristics you

desire.'"

One of the students of Ali Ramiteni claims that the dervish who encountered Hidhir and talked with him was Ali Ramiteni. He refrained from giving his own name, so as not to boast about seeing Hidhir.

In a hadith narrated by Hakim Tirmidhi, some saints are of the character of Abraham (pbuh), while others are of Moses' character (pbuh), some of Jesus' (pbuh) character and others are of Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) character. According to tariqah books, Mahmud Faghnevi was a saint who was of Prophet Moses' (pbuh) character.

It is narrated that Sheikh Dehkan Killeli, the student of Gujduwani's caliph the great saint Bukhari, became ill. Mahmud Faghnavi visited him. After expressing his wishes for good health, he left. After leaving, Sheikh Dehkan prayed: "O Allah! My death is close. Send me one of your Saints on my death to help me and to make things easier for me."

As soon as he had completed his prayer, Mahmud Faghnavi entered again and said: "I came to serve you until you die" and he did not leave him until the sheikh died.

It is clear that Mahmud Faghnavi performed miracles. One day, while conducting the dhikr for the students, he heard the following words emit from the beak of a white bird flying overhead: "O Ali! Be manful, be tied by your own words, tightly wrap the foot with which you have been tied, do not break your vow!"

Upon hearing these surprising words Ali Ramiteni said to the students: "This is the voice of our sheikh Mahmud Faghnavi. He is warning us and calling to awaken us."

Some saints are of the character of Abraham (pbuh), while others are of Moses' character (pbuh), some of Jesus' (pbuh) character and others are of Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) character.



QUIZ FOR CHILDREN

1. What material does the Qur'an say humans were formed from?
a. mud b. clay c. bee's wax d. sugar and spice
2. Who was the first human to be created by Allah?
a. Elias b. Noah c. Adam d. Abraham
3. Who bowed to the first human that Allah created?
a. the angels b. the prophets c. the jinn d. the birds
4. How many colors were included in the clay that Allah used?
a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4
5. What did the first human do when Allah gave him life?
a. cough b. laugh c. faint d. sneeze
6. Who was the first woman created by Allah?
a. Aisha b. Maryam c. Asiya d. Hawwa
7. Into which organ did Allah breathe life for the first human?
a. Ear b. Eye c. Nose d. Mouth
8. Why did Satan refuse to bow when Allah told him too?
a. he was arrogant b. he was deaf c. he was sad d. he was scared
9. What disguise did Satan use when he tricked Adam?
a. cow b. snake c. horse d. dog
10. Why did Allah put Adam and Hawwa on the earth?
a. They ate the fruit b. They climbed a tree c. They tripped an angel

Hey Kids! Maybe you can win a prize!

The first 25 entries that have all of the questions correct will win. Circle your answers, fill out the form, and mail to: Sufi Wisdom - Quiz, 8508 So. 71st East Ave. Tulsa, OK 74133 USA.

Name : _____ Age: _____

Address : _____

Parent's Name (for consent purposes only): _____

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