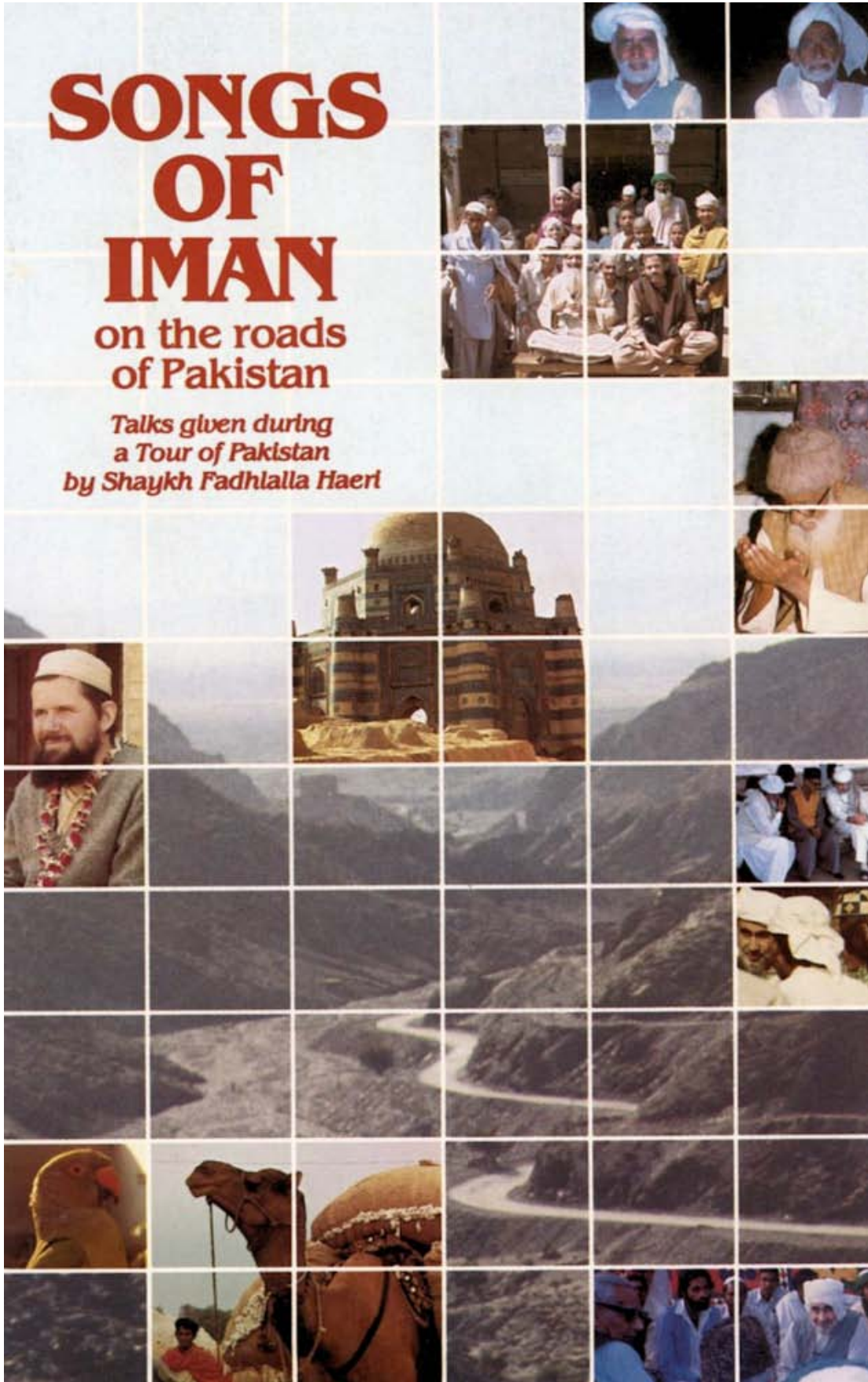


# SONGS OF IMAN

on the roads  
of Pakistan

*Talks given during  
a Tour of Pakistan  
by Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri*





Publisher: Zahra Publications

ISBN (Printed Version): 0-88059-007-6

ISBN (E-Book Version): 978-1-919826-66-0

<http://www.zahrapublications.com>

First Published in 1983

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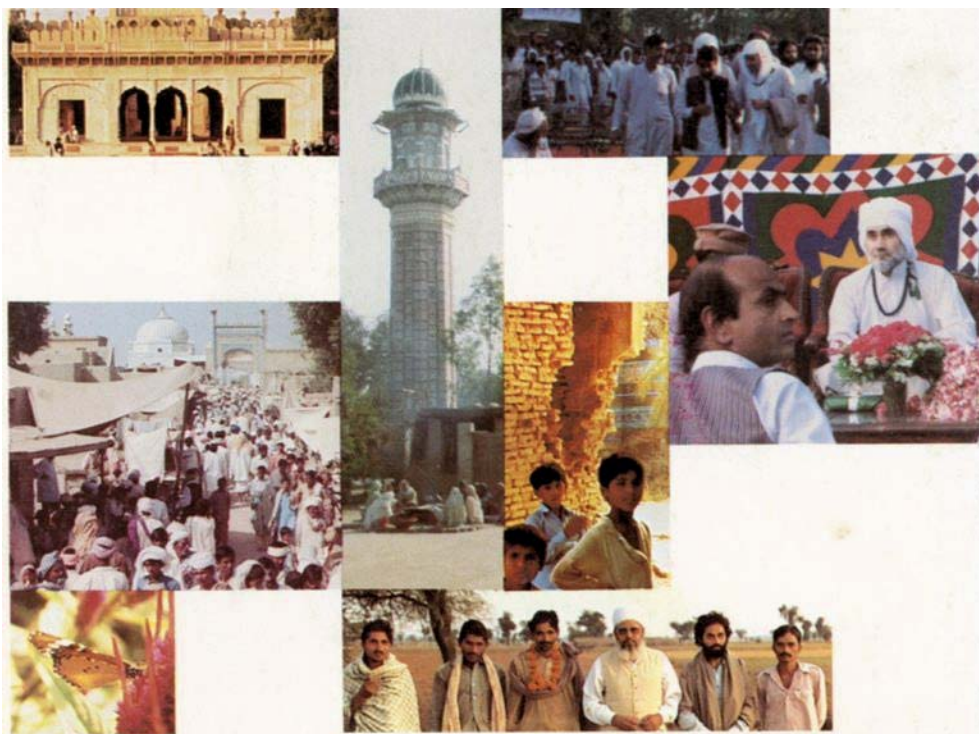
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## Book Description

SONGS OF IMAN ON THE ROADS OF PAKISTAN is a series of talks given by Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri during a tour of the country in 1982. Shaykh Fadhlalla speaks out on the central theme of the conflict between the pursuit of Western technologic and materialistic goals and a spiritual way of life promising fulfillment by seeking knowledge of God and living the Way of Submission, Islam. This divergence between *Iman* and *Kufr* taking place in Pakistan is only a reflection of a condition occurring everywhere else in the Muslim world, and indeed in the rest of the world today.

This volume of collected talks, which includes a detailed commentary on *Surah al-Infitar* (*Surah* 82), is relevant to anyone who is seeking a way out of the chaos of a collapsing, amoral *Kufr* society, and a clear guidance and knowledge of an alternative way of living – a code of conduct that will enable him to travel with humility and purpose toward his Creator and the fulfillment of his noble destiny.



## **About the Author**

Acknowledged as a master of self-knowledge and a spiritual philosopher, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri's role as a teacher grew naturally out of his own quest for self-fulfillment.

He travelled extensively on a spiritual quest which led to his eventual rediscovery of the pure and original Islamic heritage of his birth, and the discovery of the truth that reconciles the past with the present, the East with the West, the worldly with the spiritual – a link between the ancient wisdom teachings and our present time.

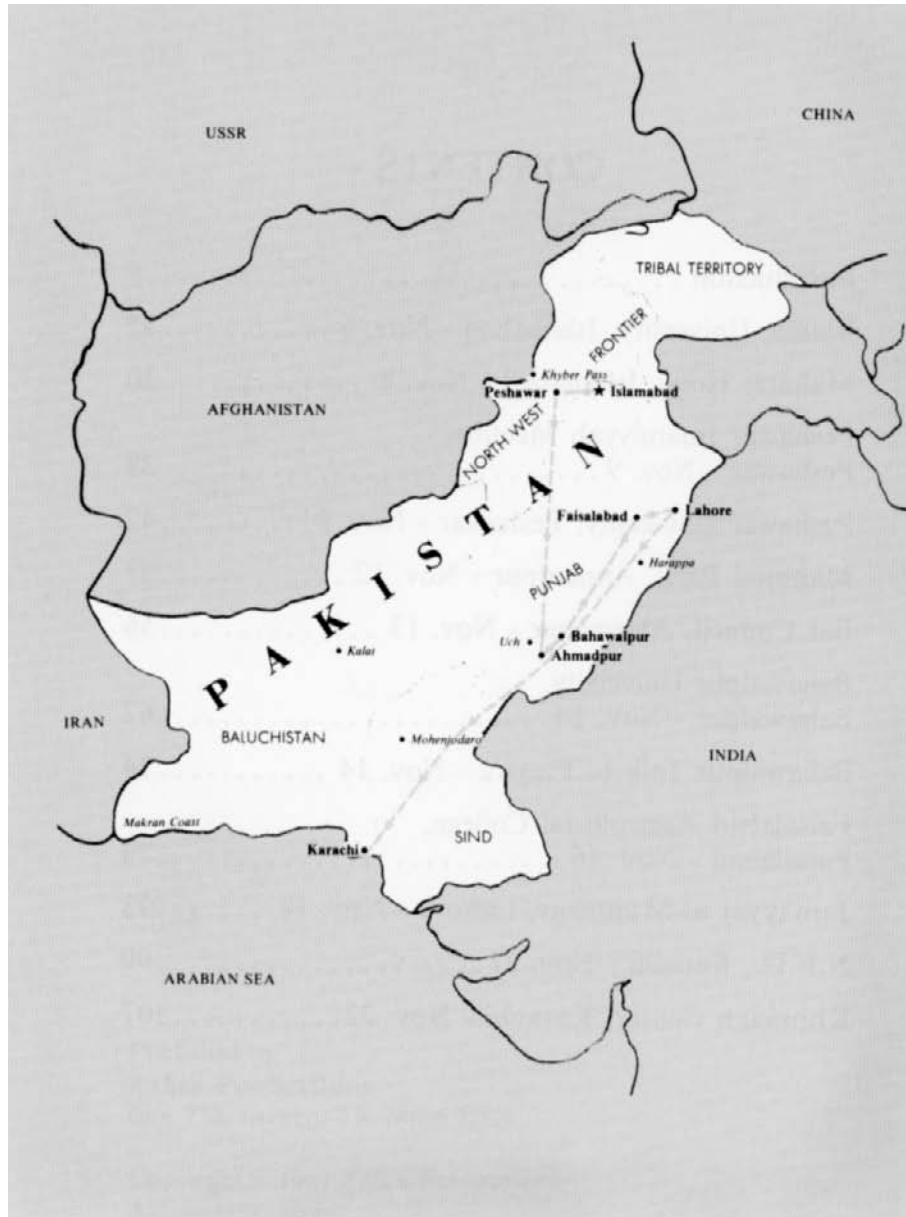
A descendant of five generations of well-known and revered spiritual leaders, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri has taught students throughout the world for over 30 years.

He is a gifted exponent of how the self relates to the soul, humankind's link with the Divine, and how consciousness can be groomed to reflect our higher nature.

The unifying scope of his perspective emphasizes practical, actionable knowledge that leads to self-transformation, and provides a natural bridge between seemingly different Eastern and Western approaches to spirituality, as well as offering a common ground of higher knowledge for various religions, sects and secular outlooks.

He is a prolific author of more than thirty books relating to the universal principles of Islam, the Qur'an, and its core purpose of enlightenment.

## Map of Pakistan



## Introduction

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri, a Sufi Master of the Jafari/Shadhiliyya Order, is the founder of Zahra Spiritual Trust of the United States, under whose auspices the American Institute of Qur'anic Studies was established in Blanco, Texas in 1981. It soon became clear, from the work of Zahra Trust in the U.S., that those from western backgrounds who had embraced Islam and who wanted to live their *Iman* (faith, trust) needed to spend some time among the Muslims of the East, where the roots of Islam have been well established and the traditional code of moral behavior has been an integral part of everyday living, rather than studied and applied in a contrived fashion.

In 1981 some of the followers of Shaykh Fadhlalla returned to Pakistan in order to establish a center in Ahmadpur, in the district of Bahawalpur, in the Punjab. Their objective was to revive the full teachings of the Qur'an and Islamic living according to the *sunnah* (practice, pattern) of the Blessed Prophet; also to offer an Islamic ambience and hospitality to western Muslims who wished to further their knowledge of Islam and taste the delights of the Path of Submission. Several sincere seekers from the West soon took refuge there to study the Qur'an in an environment that was far removed from the hustle and bustle of the supermarkets and parking lots of the materialistic West.

Al-Serat, a charitable trust, was set up in affiliation with Zahra Trust USA, to undertake this work. It is non-sectarian and non-political, and its members are for the most part Sufi-oriented. They wish to live Islam in its pure and original form as practiced by the Blessed Prophet, the members of his Household and the selected Sahabah (companions of the Prophet). The Trust has established several schools for children as well as for the higher spiritual teachings. There is also a health program through various clinics which specialize in alternative medicine such as homeopathy, acupuncture, naturopathy and osteopathy. The intention is that the local people will pick up these techniques and remedies which will then reduce their dependence on the increasingly expensive and often questionable western health values and drugs.

Islam is untrue unless its teachings are lived rather than talked about. For this reason Shaykh Fadhlalla has been active in creating arenas for service whereby the individual can sacrifice

himself *fisabilillah* (in the way of Allah) for the sake of others and begin to discover and erode his own *nafs* (self) and all the animalistic tendencies that exist within him, thereby rising towards his higher potential.

The work of Al-Serat in Pakistan provides one action arena while Latin America is another place where service can be rendered. Whenever Latin America is mentioned throughout these talks, it not only signifies an important location where the time is now ripe for Muslims to go and live the Message of our Blessed Prophet Muhammad, but also stands as a symbol for any place of *hijra*, of migration from the familiar to the new, from the easy to the difficult. It can be regarded as any alien culture and environment – a difficult situation far removed from the familiar which will enable the individual to develop his knowledge and strengths. He will expend these for the sake of the Creator as he seeks his own spiritual evolution and unfoldment.

In November 1982, Shaykh Fadhlalla was invited to conduct a series of talks sponsored by the University Grants Commission at various universities and institutes in Pakistan. He was graciously hosted by his sponsors and was accompanied to most of these talks by several of the people who had been associated with Zahra Trust and Al-Serat, both in America and the East. The talks were spontaneous and mirrored the situation of the university or institute at which they were given as well as the audience itself. They attempted to share with the audience the experience the Speaker had gathered from expounding the message of Submission and Truth throughout the world.

The discourses encompass a wide range of topics and ideas. They have been presented in this publication in the hope that the readers will benefit from the knowledge that may be transmitted through them. The flavor as well as the overall direction differs from one situation to another, reflecting as they each do the spirit of the specific gathering.

There emerges from these talks a clear picture of the widening gulf between what the Institutes attempt to bring about in the form of official Islam and the average, simple Muslim's inner comprehension of the true meaning of Islam. This gulf between formal or institutionalized Islam and the *fitri* (innate) knowledge of safe conduct through abandonment seems wider where the



hearts are purer, as in a place like Pakistan. Wherever Shaykh Fadhlalla travelled he encountered seekers from amongst many different types of people – from the most bereft to the highly educated and sophisticated. It was noticeable that the majority of the so-called “educated” people had fallen into the Western habit of seeking and gathering knowledge rather than practicing what they had found useable. Instead of becoming themselves the living proof of that knowledge they had remained the collectors and preachers of it, like western educational institutions.

Many people in the villages expressed dissatisfaction and disappointment with the experiment of Pakistan. The aim of Pakistan was to unify geographically those who were seeking the knowledge of *tawhid* (unity) in a clean – *pak* – protected environment in which *iman* and *ihsan* could flourish. Somehow the experiment did not mature. As a result one finds among the poorer people a great sense of disappointment and superstition, while in other strata of society, there exist attempts to rectify the situation in a manner that is not natural and organic. There are people in positions of authority attempting to inflict Islamic law upon others without themselves living the meaning of this code of conduct. They talk about the Path of the Blessed Prophet yet they do not follow the Prophetic Way, attempting instead to turn their cities into western-style suburbs and educate their children according to the western system.

Hopefully these talks will be of interest to all men of conscience, for they reflect in a magnified way the affliction that has descended upon the *ummah* (community of believers) of Islam. Every decade we have more supposedly Islamic countries but we witness less and less Islamic values and morals being upheld and lived in these countries. The number of Muslims is increasing while the overall quality of Islam is decreasing. The hypocrisies and impurities existent in Pakistan are more apparent because of the simplicity and purity of the land and its people. Although these discourses are topical to the places where they were given, they no doubt echo the situation that exists everywhere else in the Muslim world.

## Islamic University – Islamabad November 6th

*The University of Islamabad is a monolithic structure created by high technology; in this oppressive building, students are taught Islamic Studies by teachers who are imported from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The meeting was an introductory one, acting as an opener to this series of talks.*

I am completely at home. It is very rare that you find a country such as Pakistan, whose people still maintain that unbending purpose of trying to uphold the values of Islam and love of the knowledge of the Creator. Even with all its problems and difficulties and economic limitations you are in a unique place at a unique time. *Insha' Allah* (God willing) by the end of the talk you will understand why I am beginning with this conclusion.

Pakistan, like any other system in existence, be it human or national, has its limitations. Yet within the borders of this country you are harboring and supporting most of the current possibilities and attempts to reactivate and revive the path of the Blessed Prophet Muhammad. You are doing your best to assist the *mujahidin* (those struggling in the way of Allah), and you are trying to act as a balance between the forces of *kufir* (covering up, denying reality) and *iman* (faith, trust). Within a short span of time this country has reached a point of balance whereby the possibility still exists of creating a model situation in this existence, by attempting at all times to live the best you possibly can along the path that is established by the word of Allah through the Qur'an, following in the footsteps of the Blessed Prophet.

I can tell you sincerely, as a man who is simply trying to reflect the truth, that in Pakistan the people still have more dynamism, possibilities and hope than in many other so-called Islamic countries I know. If this model situation is to happen, the people must be aware of the unifying factors in life that enable us to go more and more towards that which binds human hearts together – the love of the Creator – which is the path of *tawhid* (divine unity), the purpose of Islam. The bonds of Islam must be strengthened and those aspects which create negativity and divisions, such as are found in the *kafir* systems in India, cast off.

I would like to share with you the experiences that I and a few of the people with me, who have been travelling *fisabilillah* (in the path of Allah), have gained in this short period of our lives. Wherever we go, as we grow older, we see the escalation of world problems, be they political or economic, and of course, at the spiritual level. Every year of my life I see greater disillusionment and increasing decadence, and the decay in basic human values everywhere in the world. It is very clear what is happening in Western Europe and in America.

During a period of no more than thirty years acceptable values of honesty and integrity have been seriously eroded, for even *kufir* has its bonds, its standards of moral behavior. In the city of London, a man's word was his bond. I knew people in London who were acting as trustees and guardians for financial institutions, who were basically honorable people. They still adhered to some of the Christian values and retained love and respect for the Prophet `Isa (Jesus), peace be upon him.

There was still a family unit. I remember as a student visiting one of the top families which really own America. It was a weekend and they were all together in a country house – something like fifty people. The extended family still existed. They were units within the greater unit of the nation, helping each other in the spirit of love, compassion, mutual co-operation and bondage. You felt you were with an extended family, a greater household. I was with the same family a few years ago during the Christmas festivities, which were nothing more than a commercial jamboree. This time there were about seven or eight people present. One daughter was pregnant by a man who was not her husband, the other daughter was a divorcee for the third time and living on tranquilizers. The head of the family, who was then in his mid-sixties, was nearly an alcoholic. There are now over ten million alcoholics in America alone. This is a clear indication of the decay of a system. Alcohol can be useful, when it kills the germs on your wound, but people who resort to such artificial means of support in order to continue their life obviously indicate that their situation is symptomatic of some much deeper illness. They are fragmented beings with scattered, shattered lives, unable to experience their oneness. Part is the businessman, part the family man, part the hypocrite – the sometime adulterer or law evader.

The heavy use of alcohol, drugs and suppressants only indicates the decay of the system. A good illustration of this decay can be found in the workings of today's medical systems, which are

becoming more based on quick results, with the emphasis on addictive chemicals that suppress the patient's symptoms rather than address themselves to the cause. A headache is an indication that something is basically wrong – taking an aspirin is not going to solve the problem. The headache is Allah's way, nature's way of telling us that something is wrong, often somewhere else in the body. There is a cause and the headache is its effect. By suppressing the effect all that we do is leave the cause unattended to. In 1981 Americans spent forty four billion dollars on drugs. Antibiotic medications are one of the biggest growth industries in America. These chemicals are being dumped upon the people of the third world as we continue to use an increasing amount of new drugs and to employ modern doctors, the majority of whom function as the unpaid salesmen of the pharmaceutical companies. They are so busy propagating the use of "wonder drugs" that they have little time to examine the cause of disease in the patient. Every year the medical bill in America increases. How can the poor of the Third World afford this type of medicine, even if it is useful?

Looking at the world today you find a polarity between those who have and those who have not, and that gap is widening. The "haves" number about ten percent of the world's population, the "have-nots" the vast majority.

If you look back into the system of Islam at those communities that were based on mutual co-operation, on knowing and having compassion for each other, you will find that there was no need for high-powered drugs. As a child, I lived in a city in Iraq, in a household where children were born and old people died under the same roof. One small hospital served a city of one hundred eighty thousand people, and that was only an isolation hospital outside the city gates. There was no traffic in the town, no stresses or strains. I did not know what aspirin was until I went to study in the West, nor did I have any need for it until the days of my education in the so-called developed world.

For everything in life there is a price, there is no escape. Life is balanced between opposites. Where there is health there is illness, where there is wealth, poverty – and you usually find them side by side. The economic boom that took place in Lebanon during the 1960's and 1970's was on the shoulders of a poor displaced people, the Palestinians. It is they who built Lebanon. As a businessman I had offices in Lebanon for some years. I always felt the system would not last.

Across the corridor from my apartment there was a family who every weekend had dinner flown in directly from Paris, and they were served by people who had barely enough to eat for the evening. We could look down from where we lived in the most exclusive part of town and see the Palestinian shanty towns on the beach. Lebanon's fall was inevitable. Life is striving towards balance and eventually every system will veer towards the middle course. *`Adl* (justice) has as one of its meanings "straight, upright." This signifies the middle. Allah's law is permanent. He is the Merciful, hence eventually His Justice will prevail. Allah's justice can only be based upon the foundation of *zuhd* (doing-without). Justice cannot exist where there is luxury.

We have just completed the ten days of Muharram when we celebrate Sayyidina Husayn's, peace be upon him, revolt against the injustice that followed the death of the Blessed Prophet. Before that revolt, Mu`awiyah and his son Yazid had been encouraging the people towards a life of luxury and decadence. This is usual in human life. Life is cyclical. Medina models will come and go until man himself evolves. The time will eventually come when the individual realizes that unless every one of us bears the responsibility for his actions no government can improve the system. It is pointless criticizing a king, a government, or a president if the people themselves do not want to improve, and be accountable for their own actions. This is not possible unless they recognize that Allah knows what is in the heart at all times, and as a consequence improve the quality of their intentions so that their actions become better. To return to the theme of the situation in the world as we are witnessing it and living it, there is no separation. There is only oneness.

The Americans are a simple, basically good-hearted people but easily brain-washed. The Zionists propagated and propagandized the Holocaust so well that the American people became fired with a great desire to serve the Jews. They did not know that their sentimentality and deeply engrained Christian guilt was serving a minority unjustly at the expense of much larger numbers, and made them responsible for the creation of this aberration in the heart of Islam – the State of Israel. Islam cannot be possible unless we stand firm against that which afflicts us. Israel is an affliction so we must stand against it. We are not trying to bring people to Islam by the sword. Islam can only be propagated by people who live it, drowning themselves in the glory of their abandonment and in submission, which is the true meaning of Islam. The poor Americans were

brain-washed by this Zionist clique and by their own “humane” attitude which springs from the worship of the material that lies within us all.

To simply call ourselves Muslims does not mean we are safe in the peace of Islam. You will find in the Qur’an that the Jews are referred to as a “guided” people. The guided is he who recognizes he has no choice and has entrusted himself to the will of Allah, in the knowledge that there is no choice, only direction. He is willing to face whatever comes to him in the recognition that it is part and parcel of the *Rububiyyah* (Lordship). The Muslim trusts in Allah. He trusts that Allah is the Ever-Living whereas he himself is only a passing phase which will eventually return to that One Reality from which even now he is not separate. This is the true situation of the slave of Allah who is willing to face life and read in it the Reality. So what we see in this world is a polarity between the “haves” and the “have-nots”, and the split between the systems of *kufr* and *iman* is widening. This is the Mercy of Allah. If this gap were not very wide people like us who are not as perceptive as our forefathers would not have seen it. Hence this is the perfect time for us. Here is also the perfect place for us to see the system of hypocrisy largely prevalent among the struggling majority in the world of “have-nots.” From among them we can identify the true way of the *din* (life transaction, debt upon us). The people who want to know what the Blessed Prophet really intended behind the *ahadith* (traditions of the Blessed Prophet and his family), not those Muslims who inflict upon others the letter of the law without understanding its spirit and applying it fully to themselves. Indeed many widely quoted *ahadith* are not true ones, but are later fabrications of the Umayyads and `Abbasids.

People must be allowed to follow their own hearts and their faculties of reasoning to come to know themselves according to their abilities. The intelligent man soon begins to accumulate experiences that will direct him towards the conclusion that we are speeding up to a clear break between the system of *kufr* and the system of *iman*. You find this within the family unit, the national unit and on a global scale. The oppressed people in Latin America are very similar to the oppressed living in the so-called “Muslim” countries; only the color and faces change. There they hide behind the face of socialism or some other “ism” whereas many of these “Muslim” countries also hide behind the facade of another system. If you look at these “Muslim” countries you see that the majority are suffering from tyrannical rule. They have been thrown into “democracy” and they are beginning to abandon the system of organic Islam. Islam means we

are controlled from within, by our hearts, by our *iman*, and by recognizing our responsibilities – not constantly demanding our rights, as happens in the West. All the battles in the West are about “rights”, whether they are financial, social or so-called “human rights.” America is a great advocate of “human rights” so long as it is in its own interest. Once they knew the Shah was out of control, for example, “human rights” was brought into the picture. The Shah deserved what he got because he relied on a system of *kufur* rather than the people of Iran, the eighty percent of the nation who were becoming worse off every year. We all get what we deserve, not what we desire. Twenty years ago Iran was self-sufficient in agriculture. Then the elite discovered the systems of money-mongering and international banking from which only they benefited with their commissions while the country at the end of it became completely dependent upon grain imported from America – grain that has very little food value.

If any of you are interested in nutrition a little research will show you that the grain in North America has become so depleted that the vitamins and minerals obtained from their grain are nonexistent or deficient, often both. The Vitamin C that you get from a can of juice is of little value because your body cannot absorb it unless it is fresh. The label may state it contains 600 milligrams of Vitamin C but 100 milligrams derived from fresh juice will be far more beneficial.

In our small community in Texas we are fortunate in having people who know a great deal about nutrition and the need to supplement our diet with vitamins. We are very careful about checking the origins of these vitamins. I guarantee that if you walk into a pharmacy in Pakistan or any other Muslim country you will find most of the calcium and many other minerals are derived from bones and other parts of animals that have been slaughtered in a *haram* (forbidden by the law of Islam) way. The majority of gelatin capsules are derived from pigs’ feet. You are fortunate in Pakistan that the majority of your soap and other toilet articles are manufactured here, which gives you some protection.

Fortunately, American law obliges all companies to divulge product contents on the label, but it is not easy to discriminate in most other countries. This is one instance of America’s amazing system of self-revitalization, which gives hope for the country’s future. The Americans are the descendants of people who could not make a go of it anywhere else, either economically, politically or spiritually, and within their spiritual abyss, there is also the possibility of

awakening, for wherever there is darkness there is also light. Ironically, it is in America that you can most easily propagate the *din* freely. Indeed in America, we can live in relative freedom. We have a center there that is a haven for anyone who wants to behave correctly and follow in the footsteps of the Blessed Prophet, and his *Ahl ul-Bayt*. Anyone who is sincere is welcome. We try not to see differences. We want to unify for this is the age of unification.

The system of *kufir* has managed very successfully to create differences between Muslims and to make them suffer for it. We have enough to do trying to seek what unifies us without fighting over details that have no relevance to our day-to-day existence. We reflect the divisiveness in the world but *insha' Allah* we can all come to see where these divisions and gulfs are, so that we do not fall into them.

The “haves” of the developed world are continuing their colonization of the “have-nots” by making us dependent on products and services that thirty or forty years ago we did not know of, much less need. In the past towns were compact because houses were close together. People could obtain everything they needed for their existence within a few minutes’ walk from their homes. The grocery shop, the clothes shop and even the undertaker were only minutes away. Nowadays we have become modernized with our villas and two cars. This means more work, more earning power, more borrowing. This leads to *riba* (interest). This is the system we are heading towards in our ignorance. In America you do not know where the city begins and the country ends. It has become mile upon mile of endless suburbs with ever-present supermarket consumerism to the hilt. Everybody is collecting and collecting until there is no more room in their bedroom or sitting room. Then they have garage sales to get rid of the junk they have collected.

I went to England as a young man and even then there was still some dignity. A flavor of the Victorian era still remained. The Victorians had close advisers who were Muslims from India. There was a great deal of goodness injected into that system through the channel of Islam. If you look at some of the Victorian photographs you see it; sober, bearded gentlemen standing behind ladies in long dresses and hats. It was the same in America. I once saw photographs of ladies working in the first telephone exchanges. There were no men in their offices; all supervision was



done by ladies and they all wore long dresses. By the nineteen forties it was ending, the fifties saw the end of the old order and by the sixties debauchery was in full swing.

How can there be freedom without constriction? How can there be life without death? The West wants freedom without discipline, without proper respect for their elders or those with greater experience and wisdom. They are ending up with highly civilized nations that are bereft of any culture to maintain their civilizations. Culture implies a sense of order from within, from the people themselves. This does not mean an order that is imposed upon them or structured. Highly centralized bureaucracies will eventually collapse. A system cannot work if people do not want it. Think back on Muharram. Think back on the decadence in Medina fifty, fifty-five years after the *Hijrah*. Imam Husayn, peace be upon him, left Medina because it had become too luxurious; it had too many palaces. Wealth had poured into Medina from the Romans and Persians after the liberation of these countries by the hands of the early Muslims. In the midst of all this abundance Imam Husayn, peace be upon him, went to Mecca and preached simplicity, the *zuhd* (doing-without) of the heart. In Mecca he heard the call from the people of Iraq. They said: “Come because we are under the *hukm* (jurisdiction) of Yazid. We trust in the Blessed Prophet’s family and in the true teachings. Come and revive it.” When the Imam arrived in Iraq he found that bribery and corruption had seized people’s hearts. We are all potentially subject to this state. The people had fallen into tyranny and been ensnared by love of the *dunya* (life of the world). So he told them, “Let me go back.” He did not want to fight single-handedly. He gave them three choices. Either he would go back to his homeland, or to a frontier Muslim land such as Yemen, or to a *kafir* land where he could bring the non-believers to Islam by his example. The Iraqis would not let him leave, so he had no alternative but to stay and fight. He could not pay homage to a man like Yazid, who was later to ransack Medina and demolish the *Ka`bah* (House of Allah). The revival of Islam that Imam Husayn, peace be upon him, instigated still continues. It will spread throughout the world. The fact that some Muslim countries are in difficulties should not be taken as a bad sign. This is Allah’s way and Allah’s way will prevail. Allah’s light will spread throughout the world as He has promised us. True Islam, true *iman* will be in every heart and that will be the end of the world. It is evolutionary, but not in the biological, Darwinian sense.

We have come from a clot and have evolved into this great thing that contains the meaning of all the rest of creation within it. All the fish, the animals and their consciousnesses are within ours, but our consciousness is higher. We develop from being animalistic – vulgar, fearful, lustful and ignorant – into a true *khalifah* (representative) of Allah. This will come towards the end of time with the advent of the Mahdi, when everybody will be a true man of Allah. The afflictions of the Middle East and Muslim world are really benefits to the rest of the world. Indeed many of the people who are now with me in the United States and Latin America are there because they were forced to leave their own lands.

This would not have happened had we been living contentedly basking in the glory of real Islam. If the Medina model were existent in our cities we would not have been in the parking lots and on the dreadful highways of America, where every year twenty-five thousand people die in alcohol-related automobile accidents.

This is not a correct system, and we in the East with our attempts at “modernization” are following headlong in their footsteps. This is not said in the spirit of criticism but in the hope that alternatives will be considered. In the field of medicine, for example, the science of *hikmah* (traditional medicine) can be revived, and improved upon.

The *hakim* (doctor) has no clinic. He gives his services without charge, just accepting what the patient is able to give him. This approach would be much appreciated in the West, where people are beginning to realize the limitations of their system and acknowledge that it is on the edge of collapse. The system of *kufr* is a cybernetic system which will bring about its own destruction. Any civilization that acknowledges and accepts homosexuality has to end in collapse as happened in the time of Sayyedina Lut (Prophet Lot), peace be upon him, for this system itself is decaying from within. It will be followed by the system of *iman* – of trust in Allah, of people helping each other, loving, strengthening and giving to each other. People will ignore each other’s weaknesses, concentrating instead on the positive elements. The *mu’minun* (believers) are like two hands holding each other. The bodies of all become as one body. If any part is in pain the whole *ummah* (community of believers) is in pain.

Today the so-called Muslim world is divided up under fifty-nine different governments that spy on each other. How can there be spying in an Islamic State? How can we have *riba* in banks if we aspire towards true Islam? *Alhamdulillah* (All praise belongs to Allah) Pakistan at least is trying, but it will be a difficult task. We have all inadvertently swallowed the poison of *kufr*. Once we realize this, we can look for an antidote. We are not going back to the Middle Ages. It is progress, not regression.

The future of this world lies with the majority. The majority are poor, ignorant or sick. One day we visited one of the great shrines of Pakistan for the *barakah* (blessing) and to remember the people who lie buried there, who were among the first Muslims to come to this country. We went to the mosque and *madrasah* (Islamic school). The people were living in the most abject poverty. There were flies everywhere; the teacher was clothed in rags, the students looked hungry. This was an arena to produce terrorists and criminals, not a haven to produce men of Allah, men of Islam. The keepers of the shrine had prepared a feast for us and brought Coca Cola to drink – the most poisonous thing you can take – because they had heard we had come from America. I said, “Please excuse me, I can’t drink it.” Our hosts later accused us of being discourteous. These men were ignoring the condition of their own poor students but because we had come from America we were put on the rostrum and feted as though we were something. They did not recognize that we are decaying and at any moment we could die and some worm would nibble us. The future lies with the poor people, not the wealthy. You cannot have leaders of the country given special protection during *Hajj* (pilgrimage). Something must be wrong if they have to be protected from their own people. If they need protection from the Muslims who have come to worship Allah in his House, the House would have to have guns in it and once that started everybody would have to carry guns.

We are all of us, the speaker included, in hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is a very subtle element, while *kufr* is easy to recognize. “He is a *kafir*. He does not believe in Allah, he does not worship, he does not love the Prophet of Allah nor does he follow the *sunnah* (pattern, practice) of the Prophet, peace be upon him.” The *mu’minun* can be recognized by their lives, by their willingness to die at any moment. They are willing to be in *jihad* (striving, struggle), inwardly and outwardly, giving up the best they have without attachment to it. A man may have built a fine house, have a wonderful family and a good life but still he is willing at any moment to let go

and follow the wind of destiny, to let the call of the heart take him towards the Creator in the service of His creation. So *iman* is also easy to recognize.

Hypocrisy is difficult to discern. In Arabic the word stems from *nafaq*, meaning a tunnel with a hole at either end. A clever animal can always escape through the second hole. The hypocrite's *nafs* (self) follows such deviousness, and will always justify the double standard and the break within. The heart is between oneself and the Creator. The more the heart is purified, the more actions are purified because there is no separation between action and intention. It is all about the freedom of the heart from anything other than dependence on Allah, the One and Only Reality, which brings with it freedom from everything else. If we do not come to recognize Reality here and now in this existence, we are bound to come to it after the experience called death. Death is only an experience, a barrier that bars us from the unseen. That too is part of the Mercy of Allah. Without this shielding there would be no existence. Man returns back from that from which he came in *rida* (inward contentment), the intelligent contentment that comes from knowing why a situation occurs even though he may not like it. It is Allah's decree that will take place, not the desires of man. So the object of this existence is to find out what Allah's decree is and to align one's will with that so in unification we may travel along the path of destiny. Every step taken should be in the name of Allah. Even if you fall over you should say, "*Alhamdulillah*, my leg is now broken but maybe it happened so I could find a wonderful new doctor, or some other benefit will come from the accident."

This reminds me of a man in Afghanistan who used to go to teach people in an opium den. He was always trying to show them the true meaning of Islam and guide them out of the dreadfulness they were in. The people used to tease him and one day they said to him, "If you really believe in Allah, ask Him whether or not it is right for you to jump from this building." The man, who was an *`alim* (one who has knowledge), opened the Qur'an and made *istikharah* (asking for the best guidance). After reading the *ayats* he had turned to, he jumped from the window and in the fall broke his legs. They immediately rushed him to the hospital. While he was being rushed to the hospital the police decided to raid the opium den and take everyone who was there to prison. After a few days the *`alim* came to visit them in prison. He said, "Look, I am all right because I believe in Allah, while all of you are in prison." This does not mean blind belief. It is the knowledge that you will discover the reason for whatever happens to you. It is

scientific fact, not hocus-pocus. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. If your intentions are not *fisabilillah* (in the path of Allah) your outer action – which is the grossification of your intention – will eventually show. Your reward will be as good as your intention.

We want to be with people who live by Allah not fearing what the next day might hold, people who are free inwardly even though they are chained outwardly to the correct discipline and behavior, who beseech the Creator to show them their duties in this existence. Unlike the Americans who are free outwardly but imprisoned inwardly. This is why it has become the age of psychotherapy. The Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq where I was born and brought up, are now full of mental homes. Thirty, forty years ago we never had this problem. In every town there might be two or three disturbed people. They were tolerated and looked after. Nowadays we are breeding madness. This must mean that we are transgressing the laws of the Creator, that our Islam, our submission to Allah, is not fully established. Islam is in the hearts of many all over the world but it is not on such a scale anywhere that we can say, “Here is a real *ummah* (community of believers).”

What I am trying to share with you is the recognition that the system we call Islam is a perfect system from which we can learn. It is a system that polarizes those who are oppressed and those who want to have the delights of *iman*. Islam exists more in the small villages, among the “have-nots.” Yet it is difficult to serve in these villages even in a country like Pakistan. Many of those in authority have abused their heritage, even from among the descendants of the Family of the Blessed Prophet, and have used it as a power base. They do not like any interference.

Our interest is to find people on the subcontinent who want to serve. We have centers in Sri Lanka and India whose purpose is to provide arenas for young people who want to help in the field of health care. The outer must be treated first if the inward is to flourish. How can the heart open and embrace the delights of *iman* if the body is sick? So we have established Nur Health Foundation, hoping that through it we can revive the *hakim*, the barefoot doctor. We are selecting the best methods of diagnosis and treatment from the allopathic schools and will resort to their use if absolutely necessary, but our concentration will be on homoeopathy – the science of treating the illness by itself. Treating by the law of similars has been known since time immemorial. For example, the old Muslim *hakims* (doctors) would treat a scorpion sting with an

ointment made from the burnt sting of the same scorpion. Wherever there is the illness there is the cure.

Dr. Hahnemann, the eighteenth-century founder of modern homeopathy, was so successful in spreading his teachings that by the turn of this century approximately one out of every five doctors in America was a homoeopath. This science is based on dispensing minute doses of medication, hence it is very inexpensive. By the 1930's the drug companies had realized that if homoeopathy continued to flourish their profit potential would be severely decreased. They began to buy up all the homoeopathic hospitals. This factor, combined with the high degree of sensitivity in diagnosis demanded from the homoeopath, brought about its decline. However, the public's dissatisfaction with the excesses of allopathic medicine has in recent years brought about its revival in the United States and Europe, while it has always flourished in pockets in Pakistan and India.

The world today is based on material worship. This is how it is governed. From an Islamic viewpoint there is hardly any difference between Russia and America. It is one dragon with two heads. One is called "capitalist", the other "communist." Both of them have elites. I have been to Moscow several times to purchase educational films from them and have met many of their elite. They are people with special powers, with their villas on the Black Sea. If we are given the choice, we prefer the Americans because we can work within their system – we can teach freely and bring people to Islam. The Russian system is in a sense more oppressive, but then oppression is a part of any system that controls. In America the control is through the owners of capital; mainly a few families who are for the most part themselves Zionistically controlled. They do not care if America and the West collapse so long as their fortunes are safe. The story of the Rothschild family illustrates this. The elder Rothschild sent each of his sons to a different world capital. It did not matter which city supplied the money nor which country they backed in war. By Zionist we are referring to this worship of the material at the cost of all, the potential for which exists in every heart.

The western system is based on the middleman, on the creation of an artificial economic situation whereby the actual producer, be he farmer or manufacturer, gets little in return for his efforts. The middleman at small risk collects his profit on the goods while the consumer supports

him by the payment of a heavy premium. It is a factory of money making money. An Islamic economy cannot be based on this. I am not advocating that we should go back to bartering, but our economic system will not work through the abstract medium of printed paper that is valued arbitrarily, with the inflationary potential that implies. Every one of us wants to sell something for more than it is worth, so we have to guard against that inflationary hypocrisy in our hearts.

It is by the recognition of our situational reality that each one of us will be able to do our best within the limitations bestowed upon us. We all have responsibilities, be it family, a job or perhaps a teaching situation, and we have to abide by these. These responsibilities may be limiting factors but they do not mean that we have to abandon the path of glory, the path of Allah.

If we abandon our responsibilities we are living superficially. At best we are benefiting from the generations that preceded us, whose ability to give and to sacrifice was so much greater than our own. Many of us in the Middle East are living off their *barakah* (blessings) as mere parasites. We now have to question ourselves: what are we doing for our children? There are approximately three million Muslims in the United States of Middle Eastern origin, many of whom still speak Arabic. Many of these people came to America to seek their fortunes and have done little to spread Islam. We are not against wealth. It is a tremendous commodity if used correctly to open up people's hearts and propagate the message of Islam. There are many people from Muslim countries who have emigrated to Latin America, yet there is no proper translation of the Holy Qur'an in Spanish. The best translation was written by a man who wanted to slander the Blessed Prophet. There are two hundred fifty-eight million Spanish-speaking people in the world. The people of Latin America are very similar to those in the East. The whole continent is ripe for Islam. When we visited Costa Rica people were rushing to embrace Islam. In one factory which consisted of 54 ladies, they all wanted to take Muslim names. On my return to America I received a phone call saying "please give us more ladies' names – we are running out of them." Islam has to be taught there by the example of the Muslim natives. The best Muslims among us in Texas are those who came to Islam through having worked with us and dealt with us. Islam survived and spread through traders. It came to Pakistan through people who settled here and intermarried with the local inhabitants. They did not go as whiz-kid missionaries who taught a few things and then returned back home.

If you want to succeed in spreading Islam, you have to establish yourself as a trader *fisabilillah*. Turn your business around and make it the business of Allah. Lead a balanced life as best you can. Try to remedy your own weaknesses and ask Allah to help you. We are all weak creatures. If we allow ourselves we will sink low. It is not easy to go up towards inner freedom, towards closer and closer contact with the Divine Reality. The path of Islam begins with difficulty and ends with ease whereas the path of *kufir* has an easy beginning but a difficult ending. It is vital to keep good company; man becomes like the company he keeps. Life is ecological. There is no separation, only Allah. These poor Americans think they have discovered ecology. They say: “We can’t destroy all these bugs because if we destroy them all, other bugs will emerge.” This is not news to us. We know Allah’s creation is in perfect harmony.

It is a narrow path by which you can survive in this existence and learn to welcome the next experience, death. As far as the *mu’min* is concerned there is no other way. If you truly trust that you have come from a cause, that cause will engulf you so completely that you will have respect for everything else. You must then have respect for the germs. They are doing us a service when they remind us that we have transgressed the rules of good health and have abused our system. We must have become weak because germs never harm what is wholesome. Germs and viruses only attack areas that are already beginning to decay. They are doing their job by helping the recycling process. You can see that our attitude towards medicine is the reverse of the modern trend which is to “attack” the disease.

All we attack is ignorance. Ignorance is darkness but the light of Allah is already there because Allah encompasses all. Allah contains everything, dictates everything, was before creation and will be after creation. We are from that Entity and to that Entity we shall return, from which we have never been nor ever can be separate. The mark of the man of *iman* is his subjective recognition that the hand of Allah is behind everything. Submit to the will of Allah and trust that the Creator has nothing other than *Rahmah* (Mercy) for you and for everything in creation, for each has a role to play. We must learn to recognize *Shaytan* so that in avoiding him we can fall into the lap of Allah. *Shaytan* comes from *shatana*, to be cast off, to be distant. It means go to another energy level, which can only cause us loss of harmony, and destruction. Hence *Shaytan* must be avoided because of the potential damage he can cause.



We must all be able to trust. I will never forget the evening of my last business dinner. The President of a major oil company had invited me to dinner in New York at a fashionable restaurant. I had agreed to come only on the condition that I would leave early. At ten o'clock when the party was in full swing I glanced at my watch to remind my host that it was time for me to leave. The company's number two man who was also present got up at the same time and said: "It is time for me to leave also. I noticed a private eye over at the next table who has come to check on me. He is from a firm my wife has retained to spy on me to collect evidence for the divorce suit. He usually follows me after dark. My wife is paying him from my pocket and as he charges overtime at night I had better go home rather than waste money." This is not fictitious, but a true illustration of the system of *kufir* collapsing on itself. There is no trust. How can a man like this have a moment of peace when there is no trust in his heart? He is unable to trust even those closest to him. When the bond of trust is broken nothing remains. There can be no family, no community, no city, no nation, no possibility of an *ummah* (community of believers).

People distrust others because they do not trust themselves. Charity starts at home and the closest home I have found is in my own heart. If you cannot rehabilitate your heart you cannot rehabilitate anyone else's. I have seen many people trying to spread Islam who have been quite ineffectual, because they were not living the *din* themselves. It is for this reason the majority of our own young people are not taking to the path; they see only too clearly their parents' hypocrisy. We have learned during the few years we have spent on this great path of serving *fisabilillah* that the only way you can spread the teaching is by living it, by being it, existing from one breath to the next in the *dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah.

Remember that at every moment the grave yawns closer – not in the spirit of fear, but safe in the knowledge that you are doing your best, so have no need to be afraid of the darkness of death. If you are willing at any moment to give your last breath, then you are free. You will become your own witness. You will no longer need to assert yourself and you will extend courtesy to others, recognizing their weaknesses with compassion, not afflicting them with "This is not right, this is incorrect." Follow the example of Imams Hasan and Husayn, peace be upon them, who noticed a man doing his *wudu'* (ritual purification) incorrectly. They said to each other, "Let us pretend one of you is teaching the other how to make *wudu'* and maybe he will notice us and learn." The man saw them and corrected himself. Most of us prefer a stick with which to beat others.

Throughout history the true men of Allah have been those who lived close together, helped rather than criticized their brothers, praying that they might be guided to the light and delight of *islam*, *iman* and *ihsan* (sublime excellence). For ultimately there will be nothing other than the Mercy of Allah and that blessed existence hereafter.

‘The width of the Garden is as wide as the heaven and earth’ (Qur’an 57:21). When this *ayah* was revealed to the Prophet, peace be upon him, they asked him, “If the width of the garden contains both heaven and earth, where is hell?” His answer was, “If the light of the day comes, where is the night?” This implies that the bliss of the garden is a state, or condition of the heart. While still in earthly gardens people can experience the hells of jealousy or fear. Their state is their hell.

Today we are building house upon house, institution after institution. Yet with all these places there are no real hearts in them. May Allah enable you to correct this situation here. Christianity was finished when they started building cathedrals. I only hope this is not an omen for us because we are now caring for the mosques rather than for the dwellers within them. The mosques are not being used as centers for social service, where the stranger to town can be welcomed and introduced to the members of the community. Instead they have become a place for politicians and for outer show. I am trying to point out the distinction between this and organic vibrant Islam which exists among the poor and those among the rich who recognize their poverty and their dependence upon Allah. For you can have money but still know the poverty of your existence. The latter is our system, the other is the control system, which is what we are now witnessing throughout the world.

Yet I am very optimistic about what is happening in the world, especially in Pakistan and in the Middle East. There is the beginning of a great awakening, and the young people are questioning. A few years ago there was no such revival. It may have been brought about by the darkness and love of *dunya* (this world) and materialism that has engulfed the world. We in the East have been so brainwashed by western education that the swing of the pendulum was bound finally to turn us towards more spiritual values that are of long lasting benefit, as they fit within the laws of the Creator.

May Allah keep you safe and sound in unity and discipline. May Allah increase your trust among yourselves and among all Muslims on this earth. May Allah enable you to improve the character of yourselves and the quality of your intentions and to translate your intentions into correct action. May Allah keep all those who try to guide you correctly safe and sound.

## **Maharaj Hotel – Islamabad November 8th**

*The talk, held at the invitation of friends and followers of Shaykh Fadhlalla, was given to an audience which included government officials, ministers and senior civil servants. The talk was informal but dealt with some complex issues.*

We say that life is only a preparation for death. The purpose of being in this creation is to learn its meaning. Once you know the meaning of something through its actions, you are on the way to the knowledge of its essence. The opportunities that we have in this life to dive deeply into the source of knowledge, which is in man’s heart, are few. We do not get many chances to shut ourselves away from our outer physical and biological preoccupations and sit in quiet reflection. It is difficult because we are not separate from these functions nor indeed from anything else in this world. There is only one subtle network which contains, encompasses and sustains everything.

This life is for us the realm of affliction, whose testing is part of the *Rububiyyah* (Lordship, Sustainership). It is an aspect of Allah’s love for His creation that He puts these afflictions upon us. We should welcome the exogenous factors that enable us to submit and surrender, without which our situation would remain artificial. We cannot pretend we are in isolation when we are ecological, connected creatures. Everything that touches upon our five senses will interact with us. It is unavoidable.

An Indian guru was telling a pupil one day that nothing could affect him. The pupil started pricking him with needles. The teacher started screaming. So the pupil asked him: “Why are you afraid?” The Master replied; “Ah! It is the body.” How can that be? If there is *tawhid* (Divine Unity) there is no separation. We cannot say this begins here, that ends there; this is my *ruh* (spirit) and that is my body. We use these terms for the sake of illustration and discrimination. It is only a generalization because ultimately the answer and the medicine for everything is the complete recognition of “*la ilaha illa’llah*” (there is no god but Allah). Once that has been said we will also recognize the knowledge and light of the Blessed Prophet Muhammad that shines through the Muhammadi heart.

Both the *sunnah* (pattern, practice) and the *shari`ah* (code of law, lit. road) bring us to the same point: the recognition that those who are closest to us are the most worthy of our love. First we start with ourselves, then with our family, then our neighbors, then we move further and further out. This is how we transmit the goodness that is within our hearts. We do this for our own sakes – nobody else’s – because by so doing we will be helping impede the growth of the lower tendencies that are in every heart. The heart is like a garden. Everything will grow in it, and the weeds will take over if we let them.

The highest values in the heart of man are the values of abandonment, generosity, and having no fear except that of transgressing the laws of the Creator, which is the meaning of *khashia* (deep humility). This leads to *taqwa* (fearful awareness) which is the fear of your own ignorance rather than the fear of an external merciless entity. Allah has only mercy for us; His *Rahmah* (Mercy) encompasses all. Naturally if we transgress the laws of creation we will be punished. The system of creation is complete, self-supporting, self-sustaining and *mubeen* (clear, evident). It is to be expected that like children we will stumble and make mistakes. We are all subject to errors but that again is the Mercy of Allah. He is like the father who loves his child under all circumstances but loves him more when he learns from his mistakes and goes on to new pastures. The man who is in true *iman* (faith, trust) will not repeat the same mistake twice. The electromagnetic bundle that we call our memory bank exists to remind us not to repeat the same situation, although the human tendency is to continue making similar mistakes by sticking to old habits as a result of forgetfulness and non-awareness.

To return to the immediate recognition of *tawhid* and the nature of the flow of love and transmission through hearts, we can only start with ourselves, by being our own witnesses and by recognizing the motives of our thoughts and the resulting actions. It starts with a movement in the heart that brings about a *niyyah* (intention) that then manifests in an action. Life only exists in dynamism, therefore, it can only be experienced in dynamism. It is just another level of dynamism that exists in atoms. The so-called dead matter is not dead. The atoms have electrons whizzing around them. Creation is in a constant state of dynamic flux. It is for this reason that those of us who want to reach a state of inner quietude go through the *dhikr* (remembrance) of “*Hayy, Hayy*” (Ever-Living). Every aspect of *Hayy* is then manifest in all possible forms and combinations, like an enormous jigsaw-puzzle. The way to understanding the meaning behind

this seeming confusion is not by analysis or by accumulating information as in a laboratory or a museum's archives; that process is purely informational. It is a scientific quest for information but it does not lead to true knowledge. It may lead to certain material developments but we are now finding that many of these seeming advancements in technology cause disastrous side effects. A good example of this is the adverse effect on our health of wearing clothes made from nylon and other synthetic fabrics. Yet it is becoming increasingly more difficult and expensive to obtain pure cotton and wool clothing. In America only the wealthy can afford the quality of dress that is owned by the average Sudanese peasant.

We, in the East, have adopted the technologies of the West, without realizing what we have let ourselves in for. A building that has steel structures isolates us from the electromagnetic field of the earth. As a result the occupants feel much more exhausted and debilitated than they would living in a mud brick house. I am not saying that we should never use concrete or similar materials but rather that we should understand the side-effects of their use. This technology belongs to *kufir* (covering up reality) technology. Inherent in it are highly centralized mechanisms that are not conducive to Islam, which is the system of the willingness to abandon. Their mechanisms are not benign or soft. If a concrete block breaks, we have to dump it, if a mud brick breaks, it can be remade. A mud dwelling can be built in stages, adding a room or two as the family grows. Concrete has to be pre-planned so we end up adjusting ourselves to the building, rather than treating the house as a convenient, adaptable shelter.

We are flexible people. Our system of culture is that of the willow tree – deep, strong roots yet it moves with the wind. It blows with the wind of destiny. This is why we say, “Islam will be forever green.” Recently I asked a great Shaykh from Turkey, “What happened, didn't Ataturk cut the tree of Islam down to its roots?” He replied: “But you forget the roots of Islam, now the tree is sprouting in every direction. The cutting down was part of Allah's plot to make it stronger and spread it wider.”

Yet we have burdened ourselves with this excess of encyclopedic information, much of which has little value. There is quantity without quality. People nowadays have more clothes but they are badly made and from synthetic materials. They have more food but it lacks nutritional value because of the widespread use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. This is the mainstream of

culture in the world today and through our lack of discrimination we have abandoned ourselves into it. We have accepted too much, we have been too tolerant. Even the *kufir* system dissolves and recycles when it becomes too tolerant, as happened with the Pharaohs, the Romans and many other past civilizations. Unless clear-cut boundaries are defined, any system will eventually collapse. It is this “open-mindedness” that has brought about our present situation. This is why our families, our cities, our schools, are what they are. Yet we blame colonialism or imperialism. We have become the unpaid agents of colonialism. We can blame neither individuals nor governments for our predicament. We are responsible for our own lives. A government can do nothing unless the people themselves wish to be ruled by the correct code of conduct, which you and I know in our hearts is the code of true Islam.

This is the only way to survive on this earth, let alone living positively and dynamically. Yet many of us are so concerned with superstition and fear of the next life that we overlook the practical implications of Islamic living for the “now.” People are unable to comprehend the nature of this life yet they want to talk constantly about the next life. In this supposedly “scientific, rational” age we have become not only more superstitious than ever before, but also more solidified in our behavior patterns.

Our forefathers lived positively, adventurously. If their city or environment was not conducive they would get up and move. Look at what happened at the time of partition. Millions of people uprooted themselves and crossed borders in search of a better quality of life. Look at the number of individually owned businesses that existed here thirty years ago. There must have been thousands. Today, we are building the system of pharaonic *kufir* under the name of corporation. People have become tiny cogs in a big wheel, desperately waiting to be pensioned off.

In the name of equality we have crisscrossed male/female energy. Instead of making the home a haven for women to bring up their children and enjoy themselves within their own realm, we have sent them out to work. This abnegation of the man’s responsibility to provide for his women and children has emasculated the men and created neuroses in the women. Many men act as though they are grown-up boys while their wives have become mommas to their husbands.

All this has arisen because we have not been searching for the meaning of *tawhid* and its application to our lives. If there is no fusion, there will be confusion. We must be willing to go back into our own *fitrah* (inherent nature), our recesses of genetic memory, and recall the beginning of creation and see the one spark from which all creation came about. Once we have understood the source of creation, we will recognize that the act that has a beginning will have an end. This is the meaning of *fana* (annihilation) within you.

Unless this is experienced we will remain fearful of death. It is only another experience. In the Qur'an it is called *wafah*. The root *wafa* means to fulfill a promise, to pay a debt. That implies we are being loyal to that from which we have come, we are turning back. We have manifested and we will de-manifest again. Then we will remain in the *'alam al-arwah* (world of the Spirits), which is the closest to the Essence, from which come the attributes. The Essence always manifests in existence through a process of beingness.

Water, the lowest possible element, is the most important. Water is made of two molecules of hydrogen and one of oxygen. Hydrogen is the smallest atom. Water comes about by unification through an electric spark of hydrogen and oxygen. Life is dependent on that combination – decaying hydrogen oxidized. Humanly we have also come from the lowest possibilities. One cell, barely visible under a microscope, combines with another tiny cell. Its biological future is enclosed within it; also encoded is the whole story of creation. Therefore, the entire story must be in our hearts, and that is the meaning of the *Hadith Qudsi*, “The heavens and earth do not contain Me but the heart of the *mu'min* (believer) contains Me.”

To gain the clarity that enables us to dwell on such signs, we have first to unify our intentions and actions. It is artificial unless we see the hand of unity in what appears to be diversity and follow the one thread that runs through the dichotomy of opposites. Until we see ourselves as the *barzakh* (interspace) that contains the meaning of these opposites, we have not even begun the process of individualistic awareness, let alone awareness of anything else.

The secret of everything lies in its opposite. Our appreciation of health stems from our experiences of illness, of wealth from poverty. The more we lower ourselves before our Creator, the more we are uplifted in creation, the more we are in inner humility, the more we will find, to



our embarrassment, we are acknowledged. The more we recognize our inward poverty and are devoid of material expectations, the more we will receive. If any of you are businessmen, to use an example, you will discover if you give a little of your time to serve without expectation of result, that small output of energy will result in an inexplicable way in being directly beneficial to the visible part of your business interests. We do not know how this process works and usually we try to explain it by saying it is *barakah* (blessings). When these processes occur the semi-believer says: “Look at Allah’s work!” In reality this is impertinence, as it implies that Allah is not in control at all other times. This is why whenever anything particularly strikes the eye we should say “*Allahu Akbar*” (Allah is Greater) for Allah is greater than anything we can ever imagine.

We cannot contain or describe Allah, we can only approach Him through the understanding and awareness of His Attributes, trusting that eventually we will come to know what we do not know at the moment, trusting that eventually we will see the One Hand behind all other hands. This trust will lead us to greater knowledge. Otherwise we will remain at a loss, which is the common state of creation. The remedy lies in keeping ourselves in constant *dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah and guarding the condition of our hearts. For this reason we must ask ourselves if our *nafs* (self) is at the station of *itmi’nan* (tranquility).

The *nafs* acts as a rough tableau of the different stages of the individual’s development. We start with the *nafs al-ammarah* (the commanding self). This is the lowest animalistic state, full of selfishness and vulgarity, where one does not care for anyone else. The next stage is the *nafs al-lawwamah* (the blaming self), which occasionally blames itself. A spark of light will go into the heart and question; “Why did I do that?” After that comes the tolerant *nafs – nafs al-mulhamah* from *ilham*, inspiration. This is the *nafs* of the artist, the painter, the poet and of the people who say, “Why not, let’s try it.” It is the most dangerous *nafs* because it is untethered. At least with *nafs al-ammarah* we recognize that we can do nothing. It is *shaytan* (the negative force in creation) manifest and should be left alone. The very liberalism of *nafs al-mulhamah* (the tolerant self) threatens the laws of correct behavior and *adab* (inward courtesy) to which creation is subject.

Then comes *nafs al-mutma'innah* (the tranquil self). After the turmoil of going hither and thither without anchorage, *itmi'nan* (tranquility) may begin. At first, we operate by trust. We take it on trust that there exists that Entity that is in control of everything and in His Mercy has love for all His creation, visible or invisible. We take this hypothesis on trust in the same way as we would an algebraic theorem. It might take years of study at university before we prove the theory and find that the assumption we began with was true. The beginning of *itmi'nan* often comes after a period of turmoil and uncertainty, when we have felt at a loss. This is why many people say that Islam will come back from the West, meaning the green plant of Islam will grow stronger there in the fresh soil. The confusion and corruption that is rampant in the West makes it inherently the most potential ground for Islam to sprout. The situation there has gone so far that people are beginning to seek new alternatives and pursue them vigorously, while we in the East tend to take our inherited Islam too much for granted.

We then come to *nafs al-radiyah* (the contented self), which is the *nafs* of positive contentment with knowledge. This means that by our own direct knowledge we will know the reason behind the situations we find ourselves in, and we have only our own ignorance of the creational laws to blame for our predicament. We will recognize that as a result of inappropriate action taken at the wrong time in the wrong place, directed towards the wrong target, difficulties have arisen. By this recognition we can laugh at the situation and observe the melodrama in which one happens to be the principal actor. Pin the label “principal actor” onto the chest, look into the mirror and smile. Once we see all the forces that contribute to the outcome of a situation, we are in the network of watching the oneness of it all.

This is the explanation of the ayats; “*Surely with difficulty is ease, with difficulty is ease. (Qur'an 94:5,6)*. For every difficulty there are two eases because the *alif lam* is identifying *al-usr*. With the difficulty there is ease, certainly with the difficulty there is ease. “The man gave me a dinar; the man gave me a dinar”: so one man gave you two dinars. The first ease is after the difficulty has passed; for no difficulty ever remains. If circumstances do not remove it, your death will. Everything except the face of Allah will come to an end. The second ease comes with *rida* which enables us to recognize how the situation arose. If the problem, for example, is ill-health, think deeply as to the cause of the illness. Once one has discovered all the factors that have led to the illness, the heart will immediately be put at ease. The knowledge and

understanding of the causes that have led to an effect bring us ease. This is why we say the purpose of life is to discover the cause of it. When we are at ease, we have finished, when we have finished, we have begun. This is the meaning of *fana'*. It contains within it all the meanings of the *shari`ah* (code of law, lit. road) and that of the willingness to physically let go.

The next stage is *nafs al-mardiyyah* (the pleasing self). If we are in true station of *rida* which is defined as the contented acceptance of everything through the knowledge of the circumstances that have led up to the event, then we become *mardi* – meaning Allah is pleased with us, as is creation. These ladders can be climbed through *ihsan* (sublime excellence), serving *fi sabilillah* without any expectation, secure in the knowledge that the trust in the heart will deal with whatever comes. Yet nowadays we are anxious all the time; look at the people in the street, walking as though they are carrying the whole world on their shoulders.

I have not come here to lecture or criticize but to share with you what comes to my heart. *Insha'Allah* (God willing) this will benefit you by helping you to recognize the situation we are in, so you can begin to extricate yourselves and move on to states of deeper awareness and service along the path of *islam*, *iman* and *ihsan*.

## **Peshawar Imamiyyah Meeting – Peshawar November 9th**

*This was a gathering of students and recent graduates, followers of the Ja`fari School, who actively pursue the teachings of the Deen. The leaders of this movement invited Shaykh Fadhlalla to speak in order to be guided on how to improve their mission and impart the Message of the Blessed Prophet.*

In order to succeed in outer activity, the inner project must move hand in hand with the outer. Otherwise it will not work. Life is in balance. If you do not dive inwardly, spiritually in inner *`ibadah* (worship), and spend time at night in *dhikr* (remembrance), longing to know Allah, your actions will be mediocre. At best, you may provide a good social or religious service.

The outer project has not succeeded here or anywhere else, because of the imbalance that exists between the inner and the outer. We have not become the *mizan* (the balance) that contains the outer action and the inner absoluteness, which is at peace with its Creator. We cannot have one without the other.

If a person says he is a man of the inward and he wants to retreat to a place where *`ibadah* is constantly observed, we often find that he is trying to escape his responsibilities or hide from something that is unpleasant in his life. The desire for retreat must spring from some imbalance in his life, for biologically man is active and decaying, so why is he seeking retreat? Periods of retreat may well serve as a good medicine but in this realm of existence, *shari`ah* (code of law, lit. road) prevails over *haqiqah* (reality) and the correct balance must be maintained between inward and outward activity. Equally you find people who are too concerned with outer activity, running to and fro like madmen and achieving nothing. Such people die disappointed, with their children clamoring after the possessions they left behind.

I can only give you the recipe that I know. That recipe is for a balanced way of life in which you do not move an eyelid unless you are aware of why you are doing it. So you are in a state of perpetual *dhikr*. From that *dhikr* comes *itmi`nan* (tranquility), and from that tranquility comes greater tasting of *iman* (faith, trust). From that you cannot but act from *ihsan* (sublime

excellence), knowing that Allah is watching your reality, recording it within you. Unless you take on this way of balancing the inner and the outer, your work will only be palliative. You will be well-meaning people with good intentions who want to bring about change.

The translation of good intentions into actions cannot happen unless there is inner knowledge. I do not know any other way that will work except the *Ahl ul-Bayti* (Family of the Blessed Prophet) way, which is the Sufi way. The Imams were Sufi *Murshids* (Masters, Guides). It is for this reason that most of our Imams have said: “We will give this knowledge as we wish. We will inform them as we wish. As for the others, we will not tell them.” In many of our *hadiths* (sayings of the Blessed Prophet and his Family), the Imam was asked: “Why don’t you teach this man *al-`ilmal-laduni* (knowledge of beyond this world)?” The Imam then replied: “We will teach it to whomever we wish,” meaning that they were able to transmit knowledge only to those with whom they had a connection. These pupils may have at first only borne a superficial love towards the Imam, but later they were willing to abandon their lives into his hands as a means towards knowing Reality.

Imam Husayn, peace be upon him, when he knew that his death was imminent, gathered his followers around him, about seventy people, and said, “Look, they are after my blood, not yours. You have given your oath to be with me. I absolve you of that oath. Be safe, disperse, and nobody will harm you.” His followers replied, “What is life worth, if we do not follow your steadfastness and meet our Lord along the path of true *shahadah* (witnessing)?” As a teacher I am interested in giving what I have to those with whom I am maximally connected. By this, I mean that there is trust between our hearts. If, for example, any of my pupils hear something said against me, they will say, “Wait, I trust him. There must be some information missing.”

From that trust comes transmission. True Islam was transmitted through trust. I am not against the transmission of knowledge that takes place in *madrasahs* (Islamic Schools); the more of these *madrasahs* the better. They can only improve in quality and increase in quantity. I am trying to give you an indication that the absorption of knowledge does not come from years of study but from the true love for the teacher which is translated into loyalty. You just look at the teacher, you know what he means, and you take it. You do not need to have written instructions

as if you were a petty government official who has to justify his every action. This is not the way to succeed.

I advise you to select the best man among you. Set him up as your *Amir* (commander, one who has authority). First discuss it with each other, lobby and then elect him unanimously. Everybody should give the *Amir* his hand to acknowledge him as their leader. Let him be in contact with as many fine people as he can, here and elsewhere, *mujtahids* (scholars capable of arriving at legal judgments), *`alims* (one who has knowledge), *sufis* (lovers of Reality), whoever you wish, and get guidelines.

I can only work with people who are connected with me totally. I am only walking along the side of the road *fi sabilillah* (in the path of Allah) and I cannot be involved with just anybody. This is a sufi order, and I only accept those to whom my heart is drawn – how can I do otherwise? How can you marry a woman if your heart has not been drawn to her? How can you take a brother if your heart has not been connected to him? This is the condition of a heart. I can tell you I am already connected with several of you here. I love you, I trust you, and I can help you. I am not interested in collecting *murids* (pupils). I have enough trouble makers on my hands. If you want to collect *murids* today, in one year you could have fifty thousand *murids* between Pakistan and India, and you would become the latest guru. It is easy. There are so many unemployed and superstitious people around. But this is not our path.

You must take leaders and make *bay`ah* (enter into a contract of service) to begin with to the best man amongst you. You must support him and help him to establish himself, unlike this so-called democratic system where no sooner is the man elected than the electors try to cut him down. It is up to you. Nobody can help you. You have to help yourselves. You have to be single-pointed and move. It is true to say that not a single Islamic society exists today, but let us each try to be true Muslims, for then amazing things will begin to happen. You must be fearless. That is why I think there is more hope in Peshawar than anywhere else I have visited, because you still have the frontier energy of the hills and the mountains. Do not be afraid of anybody. Trust that at best you will die; that is nobility.

If any of you want to travel with us and learn from us you are welcome. See what we are doing and take what is relevant to your situation. What is applicable elsewhere is not necessarily applicable here. America is in the hands of the Americans and I cannot impose on them the way of life I experienced in my boyhood in Karbala. It is a different age. Imam as-Sadiq, peace be upon him, says, “Do not expect your children to act the same way you acted, you and they belong to different times.” But the meaning behind the act will be the same. The *adab* (inward courtesy), the courtesy, the generosity, the abandonment, the correct *iman*, these never change. Each age gives rise to a new environment. You just need to translate the eternal values into a model that fits your situation.

Hold regular meetings. These meetings should be based on the study of the Holy Qur’an and *hadith* (traditions of the Blessed Prophet and his Family). Take also from the basics of *Al Kafi* of Kulayni aspects of the lives of the Imams. Read aloud the *khutbah* (discourse) of Sitt Zaynab. Meet once or twice a week for Qur’an study; the person who is the most knowledgeable of *tafsir* (commentary) should lead it. If you read Arabic or Persian, you should get “Al Mizan” by Ayatullah Tabatabai, may Allah be pleased with him. It is one of the greatest *tafsirs* ever written.

Your leader should have sub-leaders for the various activities which I indicated to you – one for publishing, one for traveling and making *da`wah* (invitation to Islam) and so forth.

The outer meaning of *taqlid* (to imitate) is to follow a *mujtahid* (one who is knowledgeable in *shari`ah*). Its inner meaning is to imitate somebody’s heart. This inner meaning is the *sufi/haqiqah* aspect of *taqlid*. The outer meaning is its *`alim/shari`ah* aspect.

Each one of us can learn what we do not know about the *shari`ah*. Each one of us can strive in *ijtihad* (to arrive at a legal judgment through a process of inward struggle). Take all the volumes of *Wasa’il ash-Shi`ah*; you will find all the knowledge you need in it. Study and if you have doubt, ask an *`alim*, for *taqlid* is essential. Start with making *taqlid* of a leader from amongst yourselves and let him find you an *`alim*. First you have to follow. Nothing will happen unless you follow someone you trust.

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