

Sublime Gems

Selected teachings of
Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani

الْمَعْلَمَاتُ



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Book Description

Since the 11th Century Baghdad, Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani has continued to inspire and guide sincere Muslims throughout the Islamic world. Recognized as the founder of the Qadiriyyah school of Sufi teaching, he is widely known among the Muslim community at large as the Ghaus ul-A`zam (supreme helper). The Memon community in particular holds him in the highest regard, for the role his teachings played in bringing them to Islam.

This collection of extracts compiled and edited thematically from all his available existing works brings into focus the transformative impact of his teachings. Firmly embedded within the traditional sciences of knowledge – the Qur’an and the way of the Prophet Muhammad (S) – the reader is guided by teachings, comments, elucidations and instructions that render the life-transaction of Islam dynamic, meaningful, immediate and liberating.

‘This outstanding book will teach you how to live in this world in harmony with the laws of Allah; it will revolutionize your belief, your thinking, and will direct you to live successfully in the material and spiritual dimensions.’ – From the Introduction by Ismail A Kalla.

About Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani

`Abdalqader Gilani Al-Sayyid Muhiyudin Abu Muhammad `Abd al-Qadir Al-Jilani Al-Hasani Wal-Hussaini (born 29 Shaban, 470 Hijri, in the town of Na`if, district of Gilan, Persia, or Gilan Al-Mada`in, Iraq, and died 11 Rabi At-Thani 561 AH (Monday 14 February 1166 C.E), in Baghdad, (1077–1166 CE), was a Persian Hanbali jurist and Sufi based in Baghdad. Qadiriyya was his patronym.

In A.H. 488, at the age of eighteen, he left his native province to become a student in the great capital city of Baghdad, the hub of political, commercial and cultural activity, and the center of religious learning in the world of Islaam. After studying traditional sciences under such teachers as the prominent Hanbali jurist [*faqih*], Abu Sa`d `Ali al-Mukharrimi, he encountered a more spiritually oriented instructor in the saintly person of Ab`ul-Khair Hammaad ad-Dabbaas.

Then, instead of embarking on his own professorial career, he abandoned the city and spent twenty-five years as a wanderer in the desert regions of Iraq. He was over fifty years old by the time he returned to Baghdad, in A.H. 521/1127 C.E., and began to preach in public. His hearers were profoundly affected by the style and content of his lectures, and his reputation grew and spread through all sections of society.

He lived to a ripe old age, and continued his work until his very last breath, as we know from the accounts of his final moments recorded in the Addendum to Revelations of the Unseen.

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Publisher's Note

This present work is an edited and abridged, thematic compilation of Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani's key teachings and directions. The intention has been to present the reader with the most useful and applicable instructions and enlightening guidance on the Islamic way of living and worshipping. The text has been retained in the form of direct speech by the Shaykh and are extracts from several of his works, listed in the bibliography.

The publisher would like to acknowledge the excellent work of Muhtar Holland and Al-Baz Publishing for their contribution in making available the teachings of Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani in English.

Introduction

This book was inspired by the distinguished and world-renowned personality, Sufi, scholar, and `Alim, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri. Under his guidance, his student, Zaheer Cassim, was empowered to coordinate the collation of the discourses of the illustrious, most celebrated saint of Jilan, Ghaus ul-A`zam Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir Jilani, an eminent `Alim, an outstanding educationist, a doctor of law, a great philanthropist, and businessman. Many titles were conferred upon him by his devoted followers: Al-Ghaus ul-A`zam: The supreme helper; Shaykh Muhyi ud-Din: The Reviver of the Religion; Sultan al-Awliya': The Sultan of Saints; Al-Hasani Wa'l-Husayni: descendants of both Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn (May Allah be pleased with them). His noble father was the descendant of Imam Hasan; his revered mother was the descendant of Imam Husayn.

Throughout the ages many Muslim leaders and sultans had teachers, mentors or Shaykhs – often connected to a Sufi lineage. The Sufi movement was a natural corrective attempt to restore the balance in the life of Muslims who had deviated from the original prophetic path. For centuries Sufi saints and their *tariqahs* (their practices and communities) had kept the inner core of Islamic teachings alive. The centers as well as shrines had been for centuries visited regularly by serious seekers, as well as the general public, seeking blessings. In spite of the fact that some Muslims consider visiting shrines or maintaining Sufi traditions as inadmissible Islamic practices, the Sufi movement has only gained strength and thus maintained momentum, especially in respect of brotherhood and community cohesion. The Qadiriyya *silsilah* (chain of transmission) is possibly the most universally known and respected *tariqah*, and is based on the revival movement of Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani.

In this profound, thought provoking, informative and practical guide, Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani teaches us how to live successfully in this world and develop our soul for the Hereafter. The Sunnah (tradition) of our Prophet Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is: “To work in this world as if we are going to live in it forever, but to live in this world as if we will die tomorrow.”

This great teacher and Saint of Jilan explains the impact prayers have on our material and spiritual personality. He unfolds the method to discover the power of Allah, through *Salaat* (formal prayer) and *Dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), both individually and collectively.

This great Sufi advises and guides us to listen to the inner voice, and unleash the power that Almighty Allah has placed within us, we are fortunate to have him in our midst through his speeches. His powerful, potent speeches will revolutionize your belief, your thinking, and will give you the direction to live successfully in this world and in the Hereafter.

Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir Jilani (May Allah be pleased with him) was born in 470 A.H. (1077 CE) in a beautiful town in the North West of Iran, called Jilan, South of the Caspian Sea (`Abd al-Qadir means servant of the Powerful, i.e., Allah).

At a very young age he was influenced by his pious parents to pursue Islamic studies. He completed his education in religious sciences, as well as training in mystic disciplines, at the age of twenty-five. Instead of embarking on a career, he left the city of Baghdad and wandered in the desert of Iraq, pondering, thinking, contemplating, exploring Allah's laws governing creation, questioning the annihilation of this temporary world, the Hereafter, and the Day of Judgment. His metaphysical and spiritual insight developed his faith. He concluded that there is a power, the Greatest Power, the power of Allah. Everything is planned by Him. One of the greatest Sunnahs or customs of our Nabi Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was to think, ponder, contemplate, this Ghaus ul-A`zam did consistently, and skillfully, for days on end.

Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir Jilani (May Almighty Allah bless him) was modest, humble and unassuming. He never evaded the company of the poor and he often left work to attend to needy and destitute children.

At the age of 50 Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir Jilani, may Allah be pleased with him, returned as a teacher and public speaker to the university of his old teacher, Qadi Abu Saeed al Makhrami. The Muslim communities, en masse, were influenced by his profound manner and content of his outstanding lectures. He always spoke and lived the truth. His reputation spread throughout the society of Baghdad. The whole of Baghdad assembled to listen to his lectures. The King, his chief ministers, along with the rank and file, were inspired by his discourses. They used to sit in a corner attentively listening to his speeches without any fanfare. Scholars and jurists rubbed shoulders with the students.

Through his powerful speeches, he infused a breath of new life, zeal and self-confidence into millions of people. In his lectures, people could feel his spiritual power that was released

through his voice originating from his heart. Many miracles and supernatural exploits (*karamat*) were attributed to this great luminary. He brought about a religious renaissance. Thousands of Jews and Christians would embrace Islam. Robbers, criminals, plunderers, and traitors renounced their mistaken beliefs and reverted to Islam. This happened after every lecture he delivered.

He advised the believers that if any action violates the commandments of Allah, then it is definitely from the influence of *Iblis* (Satan).

Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir Jilani had a magnetic influence that made a lasting impression on the minds of the people of Baghdad. He followed the Sunnah of our Nabi Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. He spoke on the current problems of that era, which are still valid today. He analyzed the reasons for the miseries of the people, and provided answers to their doubts, and their deficiencies, as well as recommended remedies to all the maladies.

His contemporaries paid tribute to his profound knowledge, piety, large heartedness, modesty, hospitality, generosity and kindness. He was not envious of anyone. He never sent a beggar away without giving him/her something. If he had a thousand *dinars*, he would spend it before daybreak. Every day he would invite as many poor and needy guests as possible for dinner.

In one of his discourses, Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir Jilani says: “When the heart acts in accordance with the book of Allah and the Sunnah of our Prophet Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, it draws closer to Allah, and when it has drawn close it acquires knowledge.”

Allah is always testing His believing servants in proportion to their faith. (The sincere believers are tried according to their faith.) Our Prophet Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said: “We, the community of Prophets, are the people most severely tried, then others according to the perfection of their faith.”

The difficulty the Muslim community is going through in these trying times is a test from Allah. Allah (Exalted is He) subjects the believers to constant testing, so that they will always stay in His presence and never relax their vigilance, for He loves them. They are the people of love, who love the Lord of Truth.

This eminent, esteemed scholar, the Saint of Saints, Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir Jilani, passed away in Baghdad in 561 A.H. (1166 CE). On his deathbed he ordered one of his sons, Taj ud-Din (may Allah be pleased with him), to settle in India, and spread the light of Islam to this sub-continent.

According to popular belief, in 838 AH (1421 CE) Sayyed Yusuf ud-Din Qadiri, fifth descendant of Taj ud-Din (may Allah be pleased with him), in a miraculous dream was ordered to set sail for Sindh, which now falls under Pakistan, and guide its people to Islam.

Sayyed Yusuf ud-Din Qadiri, may Allah be pleased with him, was received with honor as the guest of the Noble ruler of Sindh, Markab Khan, chief of the Samma Dynasty in Nagar-Thatta, the capital of the Sindh Province. Markab Khan was influenced by Sayyed Yusuf ud-Din Qadiri (may Allah be pleased with him) and embraced Islam. He became a *mureed* (follower/student) of the Great Shaykh of Jilan through Yusuf-Ud-Din (may Allah be pleased with him).

Manekji, the head of eighty-four divisions of the Lohana community, followed their ruler the honorable Markab Khan. Manekji's son Ravji was named Ahmed; while Ravji's sons, Sundarji and Hansraj, were named Adam and Taj Muhammed.

Seven hundred Lohana families, comprising of 6,178 individuals, were influenced by their leader Manekji, and accepted Islam at the hands of Sayyed Yusuf ud-Din Qadiri.

The great Sayyed was very impressed. He recognized the sincerity and commitment of this tribe. He referred to these converts as true believers and changed their name from Lohana to *Mu'min* (believer).

After converting, the *Mu'min* (now known as the Memons) were being persecuted and ostracized by their Hindu friends, relatives and compatriots so they were forced to migrate.

To this day, the Memons are staunch, faithful followers of the Great Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir Jilani, may Allah be pleased with him. As a mark of respect and reverence, the Memons refer to him as Peeran-E-Peer Dastagir, meaning the learned guide of leaders who holds the hand of people; Vado Peer, Great Leader; and Ghauspak, the supreme leader. These names are called upon by the elder women in times of danger, excitement, or when an accident or an unfortunate event occurs.

The largest concentration of Memons is in Pakistan, where they were very influential in the establishment of Pakistan. They came out in open and full support of Quaid-E-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Muslim league in 1940 when the idea of Pakistan was first mooted. They gave blank cheques in support of the establishment of Pakistan as a Muslim State.

Today this very small number of just over one million Muslims are spread out in all corners of the world.

After reading the manuscript, this book touched my heart. It made a difference in my thinking, and stimulated my mind to ponder and reflect on why we are here and where we are going.

I urge you to read this book once, twice, three times. Read it over and over. Every time you read this book it will develop your faith and transform your personality – bringing out the best in you. This outstanding book will teach you how to live in this world in harmony with the laws of Almighty Allah – it will revolutionize your belief, your thinking, and will direct you to live successfully in the material and spiritual dimensions.

The teaching of this great Sufi will transform and help you to remove the veil between the self and the soul, and will make you ready to face Almighty Allah. If God wills (*Insha' Allah*) you will be infused with the passion and desire to make a difference to the lives of others.

We pray to Almighty Allah to inspire us to share His blessings with all whom we come into contact with, and fulfill our endeavors.

Ismail A Kalla
6 Muharram 1426
15 February 2005

Chapter 1: Islamic Belief

Divine Unity (*Tawhid*)

Men of wisdom who seek the truth have achieved the true state of the dervish, which is the state of total need. Not needing anything but Allah, they leave everything, except the search for truth. They will find what they seek and will enter the realm of truth, the realm that is nearest to Allah, and live for nothing except His Essence.

Those who have witnessed the beauty of truth, do not care to see anything else. They cannot look upon anything with love or yearning. For them, Allah becomes the only beloved and the only existence. That is their station in both worlds and their only purpose. Finally, they have become Men, and Allah has created Man to know Him and to reach His Essence.

When man finds his goal, his home, and discovers the causal intelligence, his worldly mind that led him until then, he submits to its command. His heart is in awe and he is tongue tied. He has no power to convey the news of these states because Allah is beyond resemblance to anything we can conceive.

Lovers of Allah are content with Him to the exclusion of all others. To Him alone do they turn for help. To them, the bitterness of poverty becomes the sweetness of doing without this lower world and of being content with Him and enjoying affluence with Him. Their wealth lies in their poverty, comfort in their affirmatives, friendship in their loneliness, nearness in their remoteness and relaxation in their weariness. How blessed are you, O patient ones and contented ones, and you who pass beyond your lower self and your passionate desires!

Allah is One and He loves whatever is in unity. He wants all worship and all righteous acts, which He considers as devotion, to be carried out for Him alone. Therefore a man's actions should neither be based on other people's approval or rejection, nor carried out for worldly gain.

Allah's very words point to what should be man's principal occupation, which is to know the Divine Names and Attributes. They are the knowledge of one's inner being. Whoever obtains that knowledge reaches the level of divine wisdom. This is where the knowledge of the Name of Unity is complete.

O young man! Good health lies in giving up the quest for good health. Affluence lies in forsaking the pursuit of wealth. The remedy lies in abandoning the search for it. The complete remedy lies in submission to the Lord of Truth and eliminating material ties and all other attachments from your heart. The remedy is found in affirming the Oneness of Allah with your heart and not only your tongue. The affirmation of Oneness and abstinence are not incumbent only on the body and tongue, but must dwell in the heart. Abstinence, pious devotion and direct experience must also be in the heart. Knowledge of the Lord of Truth, love for Him and nearness to Him, must be in the heart!

How could anyone have power over those who sincerely affirm Divine Unity, and whose actions are not designed to impress? Speech comes at the end and not at the beginning. The beginning is without words and the end is speech. The kingdom of the sincere person lies in his heart while his power dwells in his innermost being. He has no regard for outer show. Rare are those who combine both the inner and the outer.

Carry out your actions by the sun of the affirmation of Unity, the sacred law and pious devotion. This sun will prevent you from falling into the trap of the desires, the self, the devil, and idolatrous creature-worship and will also prevent you from moving along too hastily.

O young man! There is nothing here but the Creator, so if you are united with Him, you are His servant, and if you are united with His creatures, you are their servant!

As far as your heart and your inner being are concerned, you can say nothing until you have crossed wastelands and deserts, and have detached yourself from everything. Surely you know that the seeker of the Lord of Truth must leave everything behind? He realizes that everything

that has been created is a veil between him and his Lord. Anything he dwells on becomes an obstacle.

In reality, the truth is always present. It neither disappears nor diminishes. The believer realizes this and becomes one with that which has created him.

Everything will perish but His Countenance... 28:88*

Anything in creation that is united with eternal existence cannot be conceived as being separate. When all earthly ties are abandoned and one is in union with Allah, the Divine Truth, one receives eternal purity which will never be blemished, and becomes like one of these:

But those who believe and do good deeds ... (they) are the people of the Garden and there they will remain. 7:42

But one needs a great deal of patience.

And Allah is with those who patiently persevere. 8:66

* These references are from the Qur'an.

Submission (*Islam*)

There are different religions. Faith, however, draws a distinction between what is true and what is false. It expels every hypocrite from his position of authority and brings him out of his pulpit, making him hold his tongue instead of lecturing.

O you hypocrites! You must practice true Islam in order to develop faith, conviction, direct experience and intimate conversation. Be sensible! Do not be satisfied with outer forms which are devoid of inner spiritual meaning. If you perform your duties with sincere devotion, you will be saved. Whoever behaves humbly and modestly will be promoted to a high rank. You must act as a servant to become a master. Surely you have heard the saying, ‘The master of the people is their servant.’

As for you, you do an excellent job when it comes to serving yourself, your wife and children and your own whims and self interest. But, when it comes to giving to the poor, you are very stingy.

True Islam is submissive obedience. What is required is sincere practice combined with humble submission. You must purify your outer nature through the practice of Islam, and your inner nature through submission. You must surrender your whole self to your Lord and be content to accept His management. You must give up your own power in exchange for the power of your Lord’s decree and welcome whatever destiny brings.

Your Lord knows you better than you know yourself. Respond to His words cheerfully. Observe His commandments and prohibitions with an eagerness to comply. Welcome the hardships He inflicts on you. Prove that you have the courage of your convictions by wearing your badge on your sleeve!

The Prophet¹ is reported to have said:

¹ It is customary to invoke peace and blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, whenever his name is mentioned.

Part of the excellence of a man's Islam is paying no attention to that which does not concern him.

To busy oneself with anything irrelevant is the distraction of idle fools. Anyone who fails to put into practice what God commands and occupies himself with matters that he has not been instructed to deal with, will be deprived of the good pleasure of his Master.

Most of you are out of touch with reality. You are pretending to practice Islam, when in actual fact you are doing nothing of the kind. Woe unto you! Using the label of Islam will do you no good whatsoever. While you may be carrying out the required rituals, this may only be on the surface and devoid of inner meaning, so that your action has no value.

Your outer form may well be in the prayer niche, but your inner being is putting on a show while your outer self is playing the hypocrite. Outwardly your conduct seems pious and devout, but your inner being is preoccupied with unlawful matters.

If you wish to make Islam a reality, you must practice obedient submission. If you want to be near to Allah, you must prostrate before His decree and action without asking, 'Why?' and 'How?'. Thus you will draw near to Him. You must not will anything, for it can do you no good.

As Allah has said:

And you do not will except that Allah wills. 76:30

Since you cannot accomplish what you will, do not will! Do not challenge Him in His workings. If He takes away your honor, property, health and children, and if He destroys your reputation, you must smile in the face of His decree, His will and transformative action.

O young man! You do not amount to anything, for Islam (submission to the will of Allah) has not become a reality for you.

Islam is the foundation upon which everything is built. The profession of faith (*ash-shahada*) has not become complete for you. You say, 'There is no God but Allah,' but you are lying. There is a whole collection of gods in your heart. Your fears of your ruler and local governor are gods. Your reliance on your income and profit, on your power and strength, on your

hearing, sight and energy, are all gods. Your way of seeing creation as the source of injury and benefit, giving and withholding, are also gods.

Many people talk about these matters and make it seem as though they are talking about the Lord of Truth. The way they mention Allah has become a habit of their tongue but not of their heart. When they are challenged about this, they fly into a rage and declare, ‘How can such things be said of us? Aren’t we Muslims?’

Tomorrow the shameful facts will be disclosed, and whatever has been hidden will be revealed.

The first stage is Islam, which means compliance with the commandments, avoidance of the prohibitions and patience in the face of adversity.

The final stage is the renunciation of everything, apart from the Lord of Truth, and an attitude of indifference towards gold and dirt alike, praise and blame, the giving or withholding of gifts, Paradise and the Fire, blessing and suffering, affluence and poverty, and the presence or absence of creatures. When one has attained this stage, Allah is there, beyond all of it!

Then comes the selection by Him to leadership and authority over creation. Anyone who sees one so appointed will derive great benefit from him, because of the awesome dignity and radiance of Allah with which he has been invested.

Shame on you! You have yet to experience the real meaning of Islam, so how can you put yourself on this lofty pedestal, teaching and imparting knowledge to your fellow men? You had better get down from there at once; otherwise I shall knock you down so that you land right on your head!

Faith (*Iman*)

At times, the believer is like a mountain, and at others, like a feather.

In the face of adversity, he is like a mountain, I but in the company of the Lord of Truth, he is like a feather, being wafted by the winds of His decrees.

He who perseveres patiently in loving Allah and is sincere in his love never running away from His door to escape the arrows of His affliction, but accepting them with a sincere heart will be one who is loved, desired and sought after.

Anyone who has tasted this will understand the nature of the experience.

Mu`ad used to say to the Companions, 'Come on! Let's believe for a moment! Yes, come on, taste for a moment! Come on! Enter the door for a moment!'

He meant this in a spirit of friendliness. He was hinting at an insight into hidden matters and looking with the eye of certainty.

Not every Muslim is a believer nor is every believer convinced. This is why, when the Companions said to the Prophet, 'Mu`ad is saying "Come on, let us believe for a moment for are we not believers?"' the Prophet replied, 'Leave Mu`ad to do his business.'

As the Prophet has said:

Faith is two halves: One half is patience and one half is gratitude.

If you are not patient in the face of adversity and are not grateful for your blessings, you are not a believer, for part of the reality of Islam is obedient submission.

If you desire the most delicious food, the finest clothing, the best accommodation, the beautiful faces and abundant financial resources for yourself, while wanting the opposite for your Muslim brother, you are lying in your claim to perfection of faith.

Faith opposes disasters and patiently bears our burdens. It is the wrestler and the fighter. Faith is the generous distributor of its worldly fortune. Faith behaves generously for the sake of Allah while desire acts generously for the sake of Shaytan. Whoever has missed the door of the Lord of Truth, sits at the doors of His creation. Anyone who has gone astray from the path of the Lord stays on the path of creatures.

When Allah wishes someone well, He shuts the doors of creation in his face, cutting him off from their gifts in order to bring him back to Himself. He directs him away from inland creeks towards the riverbank. He directs him away from nothing to something.

O my people! You must work hard to attain faith! Strive for it by making serious efforts to discipline your lower self. In order to train it in faith, you must submit it to a trainer who speaks the kind of language it understands. Your lower self is lazy and unruly, arrogant and proud.

When afflictions draw near, a clear picture emerges showing the effective influence of faith, the sound result of conviction and the power of affirming Allah's Oneness, by having absolute trust and confidence in Him. Faith is the unquestionable evidence that must be shown to support a claim. Believers fear Allah with their hearts, and pin their hopes on Him alone. Before Him and no other do they lay down all their needs, resorting only to His door.

Fulfill the conditions of Islam and practice sincerely, obeying and submitting to Allah.

Comfort His creatures today so that He may comfort you with His mercy tomorrow. Be merciful to those on the earth, so that He who is in the heavens may be merciful to you.

Fearful Awareness and Love of Allah (*Taqwa*)

Anyone not in fearful awareness of Allah cannot be using his common sense! A town without a police force goes to ruin, and flocks without a shepherd are devoured.

The foundation of religion is fearful awareness and pious caution, and its destruction is greed. A person who is afraid moves at night – and keeps moving, without staying in one place. The goal of the lovers of Allah is nearness to the Lord of Truth.

The necessary stages in the development of true devotion (*taqwa*) are in the following order of priority:

1. Absolving oneself of any guilt from offences committed against others and from compensation being owed to others for having violated their rights.
2. Acquitting oneself of any guilt brought about through committing major or minor acts of disobedience.
3. Making a conscientious effort to abstain from transgressions of the heart, for they are the mother and root cause of all wrongdoing.

A heart that is not in fearful awareness of Allah is like a piece of land with no trees, or a flock of sheep without a shepherd. The land will soon become a desert and wolves will devour the sheep.

Allah makes the whole of creation afraid of anyone who is in fearful awareness of Him. He makes anyone who is not in fearful awareness of Him afraid of creation. Allah makes creation serve the one who serves Him, because He does not allow an iota of any of His servants' work go to waste.

As you pay allegiance, so allegiance will be paid to you. You will be treated according to the way you act towards creation.

Be in a constant state of obedience, fear, and cautious awareness until your death. Then you may pass from this world to the Hereafter in a safe state, immune to change and alteration.

Lovers of Allah are in dire peril, and their fear does not subside until they meet their Lord. When one really knows Allah, one's state of fearful awareness becomes intense. This is why the Prophet said:

I am the one among you who knows Allah best and fears Him most.

A certain righteous man was asked, 'Do you see your Lord?' 'If I did not see Him, my whole state of being would fall apart!' was the man's reply. 'How do you see Him?' the enquirer asked. The righteous man answered, 'If a man closes the eyes of his physical existence, he will see his Lord, in the way He shows Himself to the people in the Garden. As He wills, he will see His heart, His attributes, His beneficence, His gracious favor, His kindness and His protecting wing.'

Allah has said:

Do you know anyone who can be named as a namesake of His? 19:65

What this means is that every Name attributed to Allah is applicable not only to Him but to others as well; to Him in the real sense, and to others in an illustrative or metaphorical sense. That is with the exception of one Name, the Name 'Allah'. The Name 'Allah' belongs exclusively to Him, since It contains the meaning of Supreme Lordship and all the implications thereof are encompassed by It.

You must serve this All-Providing King, this Benefactor, the One who has given you the sun as a source of radiance, the moon as a source of light and the night as a time of peace and quiet. He has invited you to be aware of bountiful blessings, and has recorded their number, so that you may offer thanks for them. Then He has told you:

...If you try to reckon the bounty of Allah, you will never count it.
14:34 and 16:18

The vision of Allah is twofold: one is to see the manifestation of His attribute of Perfect Beauty directly in the Hereafter, and the other is to see the manifestation of the Divine Attributes reflected on the clear mirror of the pure heart, both in this life and this world.

In this case the vision appears as the manifestation of light, emanating from Allah's Perfect Beauty, and is seen by the eye of the heart. Allah describes this:

...The heart did not deny what it saw. 53:11

On seeing the manifestation of the Divine through an intermediary, the Prophet says, 'One who is faithful is the mirror of the Faithful'.

What is meant by the first 'faithful', the mirror, is the pure heart of the believer. The second 'Faithful' is Allah Most High.

Whoever arrives at the level of seeing the manifestations of Allah's Attributes in the world, will certainly see His Essence without shape or form in the Hereafter. The reality of this has been confirmed by many of the lovers of Allah and His beloved. Hazrat `Umar² said, 'My heart saw my Lord by the light of my Lord'.

Hazrat `Ali³ said, 'I will not pray to Allah unless I see Him'.

They must have both seen the manifestation of Divine Attributes. If someone sees sunlight coming through the windows and says, 'I see the sun!' he is telling the truth. Allah gives the most beautiful example of the manifestation of His attributes:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.
 The parable of His light is as if there were a niche
 and within it a lamp, the lamp enclosed in glass,
 the glass as it were a brilliant star lit from a blessed tree,
 an olive, neither of the East nor of the West,
 whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarcely touches it;
 light upon light!
 Allah guides whom He wills to His light. 24:35

The meaning of the 'niche' is the faithful heart of the believer. The lamp enlightening the niche of the heart is the essence of the heart, while the light that it sheds is the Divine Secret, the sultan-soul.

The glass is transparent and does not keep the light within, but protects it and allows it to spread, which is why it is likened to a star. The source of the light is a divine tree. That tree is the

² Companion of the Prophet and commander of the believers (R.A.)

³ Another companion of the Prophet and commander of the believers (R.A.)

state of unity reaching out with its branches and its roots, imparting the principles of faith, communicating without any intermediary in the language of purity.

True worship can only be performed when the veils hiding the heart are lifted, so that that eternal light shines upon it. It is only then that the Divine Light enlightens the heart. It is only then that the soul sees the truth through that celestial niche.

The purpose of the creation of this universe is to discover, to see that hidden treasure. Allah says through His Prophet, 'I was a hidden treasure, and I willed to be known. I created the creation so that I would be known.' That is to say, that He would be known in this material world through His attributes, manifested in His creation. But to see His very Essence is left to the Hereafter. There, the vision of Allah will be direct, as He wills, and it will be the eye of the child of the heart that sees Him.

On that day some faces will beam (with joy and beauty), looking at their Lord. 75:22-23

Our Master, the Prophet (S), says:

I have seen my Lord in the shape of a beautiful youth.

Perhaps this is the manifestation of the child of the heart.

The self of those in the realm of Essence does not exist; they feel the Essence and nothing else.

The Prophet explains this well when he says:

I knew my Lord by my Lord. In His Light, by His Light! The truth of man is the secret of that Light.

As Allah says through His Prophet:

Man is My secret and I am his secret.

The lover possesses nothing and hands everything over to his Beloved. Loving and possessing are incompatible.

The sincere lover of the Lord of Truth will surrender his own self, wealth and destiny to Him. He will give up his freedom of choice where He and others are concerned. He will harbor no suspicion about His way of managing his affairs. He will not try to hurry Him, or accuse Him of being ungenerous. He will find whatever comes to him from Allah agreeable. All directions, apart from the only one, will be closed to him.

O you who claim to love Allah! Your love for Him cannot be considered perfect until all other directions are closed, leaving you only one way. Your Beloved will repel all creatures between the heavenly Throne and the surface of the earth from your heart, so you will love neither this world nor the Hereafter.

You will be estranged from your self, and feel at home with Him. You will come to resemble Layla's Majnun⁴, who was so obsessed with love for her that he shunned his fellow men, preferring to live in isolation, with only wild animals for company.

If one were to recognize all of Allah's bountiful blessings, he would be so overawed that he would find it quite impossible to express his gratitude. That is why Moses once said, 'O Allah, I thank you through my inability to thank you!'

⁴ Lovers in a famous Persian story by the 12th Century poet Nizami.

Trust in Allah (*Tawakkul*)

Anyone who puts his trust in mankind is like a person clutching at water: he opens his hand only to see nothing there.

When a person's affirmation of Divine Unity becomes strong, he is left without a father or mother, without family, friends or foe, without wealth or social status. He has nothing to rely on, apart from clinging to the door of the Lord of Truth and His gracious favors.

O you who trust in the dinar and the dirham, very soon they will leave your possession, as a punishment!

The Prophet is reported as having said:

Accursed, accursed is he whose trust is in his fellow men.

Reflection

The Prophet would often experience prolonged bouts of sadness, and was constantly in a state of contemplation. It would seem as if he were listening carefully to an invisible speaker or someone calling out to him from the unseen. His executors, representatives, deputies and heirs are likewise renowned for their long periods of sadness and their constancy of contemplation.

How could they fail to follow the example he set, when they are standing in his stead, feeding people with his food, quenching their thirst with his drink, using his horses for transport and wielding his swords and spears in battle?

Woe unto you! You must ponder over you actions! Contemplation is a matter for the heart. So, when you notice that you have done something good, give thanks to Allah and when you see that you have acted badly, repent through scrutiny. In this way, your religion will live, and your devil will die! This is why it has been said that an hour of contemplation is better than a whole night's vigil.

Contemplation of worldly matters is a veil, while contemplation of the Hereafter gives knowledge and life to the heart. Whenever the ability to contemplate is granted to a lover of Allah, he is given knowledge of the states and conditions of both this world and the Hereafter.

It is through genuine reflection that absolute trust (*tawakkul*) becomes firmly established. This world disappears from the heart, and it forgets about jinn, human beings, angels and all creatures, while it remembers the Lord of Truth.

Lock the doors of contemplating creation, and open the doors of contemplating the Lord of Truth!

Sincerity and Devotion

You cannot be instrumental in reforming transgressors until you have become a truly righteous person yourself, living in fearful awareness of your Lord.

When you are alone, you must be sincerely devoted to Him and when in company, your behavior is not influenced by the desire to impress your fellow men, and you affirm the Oneness of Allah in every aspect of your life.

Abstain from exercising your will and personal desires! Refrain from conversation and intimate friendship with your fellow men!

Once you have attained this, the conversation of your heart and intimate friendship will be with your Lord. The remembrance of Him will be stamped on your heart. You will become one who remembers Him, while He remembers you. You will concentrate your heart and intellectual faculty on Him, uniting them both in His presence.

The learned person has no legs with which to run to the doors of creation. The abstinent person has no hands with which to take people's goods. The lover of Allah has no eyes with which to look at any other than Him!

Even if he were to meet all creatures in existence, the sincere lover would take no pleasure in looking at them. He sees no one but his Beloved. This world does not seem important to the eyes of his heart, the Hereafter does not seem important to the eyes of his heart, and to the eyes of his innermost being, nothing seems important but the Master.

The token of your sincerity is that you are indifferent to the praise and blame of others, and do not covet what they possess. You would rather give Lordship its due, working for the sake of the Benefactor not the benefit, for the Owner not the property and for Truth, not falsehood.

The Prophet is reported as having said:

Let he who would like to be the noblest of all, devote himself piously to Allah. Let he who would like to be the strongest of all put all his trust in Allah and let he who would like to be the richest of all, be reliant on what is in the hand of Allah, rather than relying on what is in his own hand.

If a person wishes to enjoy prestige in this world and the Hereafter, he must devote himself piously to Allah because He has said:

...Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most devout of you. 49:13

How can you rely on what you hold in your hands, when it is likely to disappear, while you abandon reliance on Allah, who will never disappear? Your ignorance of Him leads you to depend on others instead of Him.

Your confidence in Him is absolute enrichment whereas your confidence in others is absolute impoverishment.

O you who abandon sincere devotion! You have been deprived of honor, both in this world and the next.

O you who put all your trust in fellow men and materialistic matters! You have been deprived of strength and empowerment through Allah, both in this world and the next.

O you who rely on what you have in your hands! You have been deprived of enrichment through Allah, both in this world and the Hereafter.

The unseen is in His presence, so draw near to Him until you see Him and what is in His presence. Leave your family, your property, your town, your wife and children – move away from them with your heart! Leave everything and travel to His door!

When you arrive at His door, pay no attention to His attendants, His dominion and His kingdom. If you are offered a meal, do not eat it. If they provide you with a room, do not make

yourself at home there. If they offer you a wife, do not marry her. You must accept none of these things until you meet Him, just as you are, in your everyday clothes, weary, disheveled and covered with the dust of your journey. Then it will be He who transforms you, feeds you, dispels your loneliness, comforts you, refreshes your weariness and calms your fear. You will find satisfaction in His Intimacy, and your sustenance in beholding Him.

What does the patronage of fellow men mean? It is to make them the object of one's hopes and fears, and to put one's trust in them. This is the meaning of the patronage of creation.

Make sure you are amongst the devoted! Polytheism can be both outer and inner. Outer polytheism is idol worship, while the inner kind is putting one's trust in creation, regarding them as the source of harm and benefit.

When a human being has this world at his disposal, but is not in love with it, he possesses it, but it does not own him. It loves him, but he does not love it. It runs after him, but he does not chase it. It serves him but he does not serve it. He divides it up but it does not divide him up.

His heart is in the proper state for Allah, and this world is unable to corrupt it: he can deal freely with the world, but it cannot deal freely with him. This is why the Prophet has said:

How excellent is worthy money for a worthy man.

The believer is alive, whereas the hypocrite is dead. The believer works for Allah's sake, but the hypocrite works for the sake of creation, looking to them for praise and reward. The believer's work is on both his outer and inner states, his private and public life and in good and bad times. The hypocrite's work is only in his public life. He works there when times are good, but when he experiences hardship, he does not work.

He has no friendship with Allah. He has no faith in Allah, His Messengers or His Books. He does not remember the Gathering, the Resurrection and the Reckoning.

His way of practicing Islam is in order to keep his head and property safe in this world, and not to protect him from the fire in the Hereafter. He fasts, performs the prescribed prayers and

studies religious knowledge in the presence of others, but when they are not around he reverts to his own business and unbelief.

I see you going through the motions of the *salaat* (prayer), standing upright, sitting on your heels, bowing from the waist, and falling in prostration, as you lose sleep in weary vigil. But your heart never moves from its abode! It never leaves the home of its being, and never changes its familiar habits.

Be sincere in your quest for your Master, and your honesty may enable you to dispense with a lot of exhausting effort.

Peck open the egg of your being with the beak of honesty, and knock down the walls of your devotion and attachment to humankind with the pickaxes of sincerity and affirmation of Unity.

Worship Him, then be sincerely devoted to His service. Surely you must have heard Him, how He declared:

And I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me.
51:56

When our Prophet became attached to his daughter's two sons, al-Hassan and al-Husayn, Gabriel came to him and asked: 'Do you love the two of them?' 'Yes', he replied. 'One of your grandsons will be given poison, and the other will be slain,' Gabriel told him.

After hearing these words, the attachment to his grandsons left the Prophet's heart as he emptied it for his Master, and his delight in them turned into sadness.

The Lord of Truth is jealous of the hearts of His prophets, His saints and His righteous servants.

The love of the Lord of Truth and the love of others cannot be combined within a single heart. As Allah tells us:

Allah has not assigned to any man two hearts within his body. 33:4

The Lord of Truth wants pious devotion (*taqwa*) and sincerity from your hearts. He pays no attention to the external appearance of your deeds.

As Allah has said:

Their flesh and their blood do not reach Allah, yet your devotion reaches Him. 22:37

Justice

O servants of Allah! Beware of being unjust, for it will result in darkness and gloom on the Day of Resurrection, and causes the heart and the face to darken completely. Take heed of the prayer of supplication offered by one who has been treated unfairly. Beware of the tears shed by one who has suffered injustice, and of the fire that burns in the heart of the victim of oppression.

Do not treat yourself or others unfairly, for injustice casts dark shadows both in this world and the Hereafter. Injustice darkens the heart and stains the face and skin.

Do not be unjust, and do not assist a tyrant, for the Prophet has warned:

A crier will cry out on the Day of Resurrection, 'Where are the tyrants? Where are the tyrants' helpers? Where is he who put a pen on their pen? Where is he who prepared an inkwell for them? Assemble them and put them in a coffin of fire!'

The Trial and the Test

Whatever you possess does not really belong to you. It is actually the common property of your neighbors who are your partners. Your acquisitions have been placed at your disposal as a trial and a test:

...And spend out of that to which He has made you successors. 57:7

...that He may see how you behave. 10:14

Such is the case of the believer. When Allah befriends him, He tests him by subjecting him to trials and tribulations. Then, if he endures them patiently, He blesses him with His gracious favor and His intimacy. When bitter experiences come the believer's way, he shows every sign of being completely satisfied. He gives the appearance of being sick when he gets what he likes, and stays calm at the advent of misfortunes and the decrees of destiny.

To quote a saying of the Commander of the Believers, `Ali ibn Abi Talib: 'Be as if you were a corpse laid out on a slab, so that benefits may increase and you may be protected from harm!'

Surely you have heard the story of Job (Ayyub). When Allah wished to love him and choose him for His own, wanting to share him with no one but Him, He separated him from his possessions, his family and his companions, and made him live in a shack on top of a garbage dump, away from civilization. None of his family stayed with him except his wife, who worked as a servant and brought him food.

Then He took away his flesh, his skin and his strength, and left him with only his hearing, his sight and his heart, in which He showed the wonders of His power.

So Ayyub used to remember Him with his tongue and converse with Him intimately with his heart. He would behold the wonders of His power with his sight, while his spirit came and went in his physical frame. The angels would pray for him, and came to visit him.

He was cut off from human kind, while intimate friendship was being connected to him. Material means, strength and energy were cut off from him, while he remained the prisoner of

His love, His destiny, His power, His will and His establishment. His state of affairs was a mystery, till it eventually became public knowledge.

The first part was bitter, but the second turned out to be sweet. Life became pleasant for him in the midst of misfortune, just as life became pleasant for Ibrahim (Abraham) in the midst of his fiery furnace.

Lovers of Allah are accustomed to exercising patience in the face of misfortune, and the kind of disturbance that bothers you does not upset them.

Trials and tribulations are of various types. Some of them affect the physical constitution, while others affect the heart. Some of them are experienced in relation to creation and others in relation to the Creator.

A person who has never had to suffer is of no worth! Trials and tribulations are the grappling hooks of Allah:

Allah loves those who are patient. 3:146

It is only because of His love for you that He tests you. Whenever you carry out His commandments and observe His prohibitions, you are loved all the more. Whenever you bear His tribulation with patience, you are drawn closer to Him.

A certain wise man is reported as having said, ‘Allah refuses to punish His loved one, but puts him to the test and tries his patience.’

And the Prophet used to say:

It is as if this world never was, and as if the Hereafter had never ceased to be.

Contentment with Allah's Decree and One's Destiny

Be warned – may Allah have mercy on you! – about how it will be when you meet Him, since you challenge His judgment and decree. Do not question and do not argue. Uzayr (Ezra) challenged his Lord on the subject of creation, asking whether He could create something and then make it cease to exist, so He erased him from the register of Prophethood. He caused him to die for a hundred years, and exiled him from His presence. Then He brought him back to life and restored him to his former condition.

Why should He love someone who complains about Him, and argues and quarrels with Him? Love and ardent longing and nearness to Him do not become established under these conditions. If love is genuine, no pain is felt when the decrees of destiny come about. When love is firmly established, resistance and suspicion disappear.

Anyone who wishes for safety in this world and the Hereafter must cultivate patience and contentment. He must give up complaining to others, submit his needs to his Lord, practice obedience to Him, wait for happiness to come from Him, and be devoted exclusively to Him, since He is better than His entire creation!

His deprivation is actually a gift, His punishment a blessing, His trial a remedy, His promise ready cash, His word a deed, His will a state of being.

Surely His word and His command when He intends a thing, is to say to it:

'Be!' and it is. 36:82

All His deeds are good, wise and beneficial, although He hides knowledge of the benefits from His servants, and reserves it for Himself alone.

It is therefore most fitting and proper for his servants to be in a state of contentment and submission, and dedicated to servant-hood by fulfilling commandments, observing prohibitions, and submitting to the decree of destiny.

Lovers of Allah must also abandon preoccupation and conflict with Lordship. Lordship is the source of the decrees of one's destiny and one must stop asking why, how and when and not be suspicious of the Lord of Truth, in all His phases of movement and repose.

This rests on the authority of the hadith of Ibn `Abbas and his father, from whom it is transmitted by `Ata`.

Ibn Abbas related, 'I was riding behind the Messenger when he gave me this advice.

“My boy, take care of Allah, and He will take care of you. Take care of Allah, and you will find Him in front of you. So when you have something to ask, ask Allah, and when you seek help, seek help from Allah.

“The pen has already run dry from writing all that is to be, so even if His servants were to strive to bring you some benefit Allah had not decreed, they would not be capable of it. Likewise, if His servants were to try to injure you, and it was not decreed for you, they would be unable to do so.

“Therefore, if you can relate to Allah with trust and honesty, do so; and if you cannot, there is much good in bearing what you dislike patiently. Know that help resides in patience, joy with sorrow, and remember...*with hardship comes ease*”“ 94:5.

It benefits every believer to make this *hadith* a mirror for his heart. He should wear it as an under and outer garment, treat it as his own *hadith*, on which he should act in all circumstances, whether he is moving or at rest. By doing this, he may be safe in this world and the Hereafter, and receive honor in both domains through Allah's mercy.

O young man! If something belongs to you, it will not pass you by, nor be used by anyone else. But if something belongs to someone else, it will never come your way, however much you want it. There is only yesterday, which is past, today, where you are right now, and tomorrow, which is yet to come.

Your yesterday became a lesson for you to apply today. As for tomorrow, it is unclear whether you will be here or not, since you have no way of knowing what tomorrow holds in store.

The Prophet is reported as having said:

If someone is not content to accept the decree of Allah, there is no remedy for his stupidity. That which He has decreed will surely come to pass, whether His servant approves or disapproves.

Is it possible for you to alter night and day? Night comes whether you like it or not, and the same applies to the day. Each of them takes its course without referring to you. And so it is with the decree and destiny of Allah, no matter whether it is to your advantage or disadvantage.

When the night of poverty approaches, you must submit and say farewell to the day of wealth. When the night of sickness comes, you must accept it and say farewell to the day of good health. When the night of what you dislike comes about, you must abandon the day of what you like. Welcome the night of sicknesses, poverty and loss of reputation with a tranquil heart.

Do not reject any part of Allah's decree, for if you do, you will perish and lose faith: your heart will be thrown into confusion and your innermost being will die. As Allah has told us in one of His Books:

I am the One God (Allah), except for Whom there is none worthy of worship. If someone submits obediently to My decree, endures My tribulation with patience, and gives thanks for My blessings I shall record Him in My presence as a champion of the truth and I shall resurrect him in the company of the champions of the truth. And if someone does not submit obediently to My decree, does not endure My tribulation with patience, and does not give thanks for My blessings, then let him seek a Lord apart from Me.

When a servant's bondage and direct experience are fully realized, he will not say, 'let me see', or 'do not let me see.' He will not say 'give me' or 'do not give me.' He becomes wholly absorbed.

The one who has attained this station says, 'What do I care about me?' Well said indeed! I am His slave, and the slave in His master's company has neither choice nor a will of his own.

Anyone wishing for success must practice inner and outer quietness in His presence. Asking constitutes bad manners in my opinion, and I consider it acceptable only as a special concession. Carry out His commandments, observe His prohibitions, comply with His decree, and keep your

outer and your inner calmly speechless in His presence. Then you will experience what is good in this world and the Hereafter.

Do not ask mankind for anything, for men are weak, and incapable of bringing harm or benefit to themselves or anyone else.

Be patient with Allah. Do not make Him hurry things up or hold them back. Do not harbor doubts about Him, for He is more compassionate towards you than you are to yourself. This is why a certain wise man said, 'What is more to me than I am?'

You must obey Him, for He knows you better than you know yourself, and does not make you aware of the benefit in what befalls you. In Allah's words:

But it may happen that you hate a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that you love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows and you know not. 2:216

He has also said:

And He creates that which you do not know. 16:8

And then:

...And of knowledge you have been given only a little. 17:85

A wise man is reported as having said, 'Adhere to the will of the Lord of Truth in respect to mankind, but do not comply with their wishes regarding Him. Whoever gets damaged, gets broken, and whoever gets restored, gets restored.'

Learn submission to the will of the Lord of Truth, from His righteous servants who submit!

Be in harmony with destiny or it will destroy you. Walk with it along its chosen course, or it will slaughter you. Kneel before it until it takes pity on you and lets you ride behind it.

The only intelligent one among you is he who remembers death and who is content to accept whatever destiny brings.

The Prophet has told us:

Allah has finished the work of creation, providence and the timing of events. The pen has run dry from pre-recording everything that is to be until the Day of Resurrection.

Do not devote energy in pursuit of that which has already been destined for you.

Such effort is merely idle sport and foolishness. Whatever your situations and circumstances may be, Allah has already planned them, and set the exact date and time for their manifestation.

Belief in the Last Day and the Place of Return

Tradition tells us that `A'isha⁵ once asked the Prophet, 'Will anyone enter Paradise because of his deeds?' He replied, 'No, only through Allah's mercy.' 'Not even you?' she asked.

Then, placing his hand on top of his head as he spoke, he replied, 'Not even me, unless Allah covers me with His mercy.'

There is not a believer whose eyes will not be uncovered at death, so that he can see what is his in the Garden (of Paradise). The dark-eyed damsels and young servants will beckon to him. The sweet perfume of the Garden will reach him, so death and its agonies will seem pleasant. The Lord of Truth does to believers what he did to Asiya⁶. Those who are brought near (to the Lord), singled out and sought after, are aware of this before they die.

O my People! Remember death and what lies beyond. Give up the desire to accumulate what belongs to this transitory world. Curtail your expectations and ambition. There is nothing worse for you than excessive expectation and greedy ambition!

The Prophet is reported as having said:

When the human being dies and enters his grave, four angels come to its edge. One angel stands beside his head, one to his right, one to his left and one at his feet.

Then the one who is standing beside his head will say, 'O son of Adam, gone are the possessions and only the deeds remain.'

The one who is standing to his right will say, 'O son of Adam, deadlines have expired and only hopes remain.'

The one to his left will say, 'O son of Adam, the pleasures of the flesh are over and only dreary hardships remain.'

⁵ The wife of the prophet (RA).

⁶ The wife of Pharaoh (fir'awn) (RA).

The one at his feet will say, 'O son of Adam, congratulations, if you earned your livelihood by lawful means and gave freely to charity.'

The Prophet is reported to have said:

On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will say to His believing servants, 'You have preferred your life in the Hereafter to your worldly life, and you have preferred My worship to your carnal desires. By My Glory and My Majesty, I did not create My Garden (of Paradise) for anything but your benefit.'

Death and Remembrance of Death

You will experience lonely isolation when death befalls you. Every close friend and relative will cut you off and part company with you. So part company with them and detach yourself from them before they abandon you. Then the grave will be a pathway and a corridor to the Lord of Truth.

You must die before you die. Die to you and them, and then you will live in Him!

You will become like a dead man, who is fed and manipulated by the hand of predestination, receiving his allotted share disinterestedly. When this process is complete, you will experience life in the nearness of and knowledge of Allah. This bird will take off, not caring whether the Resurrection has taken place or not, or whether death has been created, for his sole concern is to arrive at the Truth.

You must remember death and what lies beyond. The Prophet used to teach:

Remember often the wrecker of delights, for the less it is remembered, the more devastating it becomes, and the more it is remembered, the less dreadful it will be.

Remembrance of death is a remedy for the sickness of the lower self, and a strong dose (of remembrance) benefits the heart.

Forgetfulness of death results in hardening of the heart, and causes it to have a lazy attitude towards acts of worship.

You will not be capable of performing good deeds or sincere dedication when carrying them out, unless you curtail expectation. However, you will not be capable of curbing expectation, unless you practice remembrance of death. You will also be incapable of remembering death, unless you make it a habit to contemplate at neglected burial grounds, and reflect on their inhabitants and what they used to do.

Sit beside crumbling tombs, saying to yourselves, 'Once upon a time, those who lie buried here used to eat and drink, have sexual intercourse, engage in sport and play and socialize. What

is their condition now? What benefit can they derive from all that? What do they have at their disposal, apart from their good deeds?’

This is why the Prophet has recommended:

None of you should ever sleep without having his last will and testament, recorded in writing and placed under his head.

Remembering death is a remedy for diseases of the lower self. It is like wielding a trainer’s rod over its head.

I have spent many years practicing remembrance of death, night and day. I have prospered through this habit, and brought my lower self under control. There have been certain nights when I would remember death and weep from the beginning of night till early morning.

On one such a night I was weeping as I pleaded, ‘My God, I beg You not to let the Angel of Death take my spirit away, but to deal with its removal Yourself.’ Then, although my eyes were closed, I saw an old man with handsome features entering through the door. ‘Who are you?’ I asked. ‘I am the Angel of Death,’ he replied. ‘But I have asked Allah to take charge of the removal of my spirit Himself, instead of you!’ I declared. ‘Why did you make such a request?’ was his response. ‘What sin am I guilty of? I am just a servant under orders. I am commanded to treat some folk gently and others roughly.’ He gave me a hug and we wept together. Then I woke up and found myself shedding tears.

You should eat like one who is about to depart. You should be with your family as if you were about to say farewell. When you meet with your brethren you should do so as if you were about to take leave of them. Hence you must instill in your heart, ‘I am someone who is on the point of departure.’

Beware, O deluded fool! Stop being so attached to the lower self and passionate desire, for you cannot escape from death! There is no force to counter it. Whichever way you face, and however much you twist and turn, it is the leader in front of you and the follower behind you.

You do not need to worry about the Day of Resurrection, since the day of your death is an individual and personal resurrection while the Day of Resurrection is a universal occasion for you and everyone else. The first resurrection will show you the second Resurrection. When you see the Angel of Death, he will come to you with a cheerful grin, and his assistants will be smiling just as merrily. They will salute you with the greeting of peace, and gently remove your spirit in the same way that they took the spirits of the Prophets, martyrs and the righteous.

You can therefore rejoice at the good news concerning the resurrection on the first day. The Angel and his assistants will also show you what lies in store on the second Day. If what you see is good it means that your prospects are good, but if what you see is unfavorable, your prospects are bad.

The Angel of Death came to Musa (Moses) with an apple in his hand. He let him smell the apple, and then took away his spirit while he was inhaling its fragrance. The same kind of treatment will be accorded to anyone whose status is that of a person close to Allah. The Angel of Death will take his spirit as smoothly as possible, and in the most beautiful way.

Death for the elite means dying to the entire creation, self-will and choice. Anyone who has truly experienced such a death attains life everlasting in the company of his Lord. His outer death will be but a momentary jar, a fleeting loss of consciousness, a passing daze, a nodding off to sleep followed by an awakening.

If you wish for such a death, you must take the drug of intimate knowledge, nearness and sleep on the threshold of the Lord of Truth, until the Hand of Mercy and Grace takes hold of you and revives you to eternal life.

The Barrier or Interspace (*Barzakh*)

This world is the prison of the true believer. Since he is trapped and confined inside, his feet cannot take him everywhere. In order to escape, he must have recourse to spiritual experience, for then the walls of the prison will be demolished and its gates will open before him. His heart will be adorned with feathered wings, so he can fly to the realm of knowledge of Allah, to join the spirits that already dwell there. This is utterly beyond the scope of your mental comprehension. People's hearts and spirits are nourished from the dish of the gracious favor of Allah, even while they are still in this world, just as the spirits of martyrs enjoy their food in the Garden of Paradise. This happens in the here and now.

For those who are completely detached from the realm of creation, the here and now is the kingdom of the heart, so they are kings and chieftains both in this world and the next.

When the outer and the inner, and wisdom and religion unite, one reaches the level of truth, like the fruit tree that first produces leaves, then buds, and finally, flowers that ripen into fruit.

He has made two seas to flow freely - they meet: Between them is a barrier (*barzakh*) that they cannot pass. 55:19-20

The two must become one. Truth can only be attained through tangible knowledge of the senses and the material universe. In that way one can reach the goal, which is wisdom. Allah Most High says about worship:

And I have not created jinn and men except that they should worship Me.
51:56

The Gathering Place of the Day of Resurrection

On the day when the innermost beings shall be put to the test. 86:9

That is to say, on the Day of Resurrection, the Day of Stark Reality, the Day of the Great Catastrophe, the Day of the Sudden Disaster, the Day of the Deafening Cry.

On that day you will be exposed; not a secret of yours will be concealed.
69:18

Upon that day mankind will issue forth in scattered groups to be shown their works, and anyone who has ever done an atom's weight of good will see it then, and anyone who has ever done an atom's weight of evil will see it then. 99:6-8

The crucial question is where you stand in relation to the day when deeds will be weighed in the balance, and when some will prove to be heavy enough, but others will be too light? That is the day which Allah is referring to when He says:

On the day when We shall gather the righteous unto the All-Merciful, a goodly company, and We shall drive the guilty culprits into Hell, a weary herd. 19:85-86

Every true believer will have the veil removed from his eyes at the moment of death, so that he can see what is his in the Garden of Paradise. The houries⁷ and young attendants will beckon to him. Some of the delights of the Garden will be revealed to him so the pangs of death will be a pleasant experience.

The Lord of Truth will treat such people as He treated Pharaoh's wife Asiya. When Pharaoh realized that she was a believer he gave orders for iron spikes to be driven through her hands and feet, and had her lashed with whips. Then the veil was removed from her eyes and gates of heaven were opened wide, so she could see the Garden of Paradise and all that it contained. When she saw that the angels were building a house for her there, she said:

My Lord, build for me, in Your presence, a house in Paradise. 66:11

⁷ Companions in paradise.

Then the angel of death came to take her spirit, saying, ‘This house belongs to you!’ She laughed as the agony of the torture left her. Pharaoh exclaimed, ‘Did I not tell you that she was insane? Can you not see how she is laughing even while she is suffering this torture?’ Just like Asiya, at the moment of death sincere believers will see what is there for them in the presence of Allah.

There are some amongst them who will have this experience before they die. They are the ones who are drawn near to Allah, who are singled out and sought after.

The Garden and the Fire

Luqman⁸ the wise would often say to his son, ‘O my beloved son, how can anyone feel safe from the Fire of Hell, when he must eventually pass through it? How can anyone feel secure in this world, when he must inevitably move on beyond it? How can anyone ignore death, when there is no escape from it?’

All of you will have to pass through the Fire of Hell. This means that you need to equip yourself for the journey with the kind of good supply of sincere worship that I do not see you performing.

O seekers of this world! O you who are so passionately in love with it! Is it anything more than a sip in comparison with the Garden of Paradise? That is the secret you should really be looking for! That is the lady you should really be in love with! That is the real priority!

You should know that entry into the Fire is the result of unbelief and the accumulation of punishment. The scale of bad actions and negative character traits determine the allotment of descending levels.

Entry into the Garden on the other hand, is the result of faith and the accumulation of blessed grace, while the scale of good deeds and excellent character traits determine the allotment of ascending levels.

You must also understand that Allah created the Garden, filling it with blissful comfort, as a reward for those who are worthy of it. Likewise, He created the Fire, filling it with torment, as a punishment for those who deserve it. He created this world and filled it with disasters and blessings, as an ordeal and a trial. Then, when He created mankind, He made the Garden and the Fire invisible, so that they could not see them directly with their naked eyes.

Therefore blessings and disasters in this world serve as the model of the Hereafter, and as the means by which one can experience a taste of it.

There is no Garden of Paradise or drawing close to it before this world and no getting close to it.

⁸ A sage. See Sura (Chapter) 31 in the Qur’an.

The servant of Allah draws close to this world, wishing to possess it, until its faults become apparent, so he learns to abstain from it. He grows satisfied with just enough, and no more than meets his needs. He takes a certain amount with the hand of the divine law, obedient devotion and cautious restraint. He accepts a certain amount with the hand of restraint from this world as the price he must pay for the Garden and its bountiful gifts. Once his heart has entered it and his feet are firmly planted inside, and when his innermost being is firmly in control, all of its affairs and benefits will become easy and readily available to him.

Having attained this state, he will notice the men of God, for they will be heading in his direction.

‘Where are you going?’ he will ask.

‘To the door of the King!’ they will reply.

Then they will make him feel the longing to go there and show him the way to reach it. They will remain detached from the Garden and all that he is involved in and tell him, ‘We are numbered among those about whom Allah has said:

They seek His countenance. 6:52

The land of the Garden of Paradise, however spacious, will therefore seem too narrow for him and he will try to escape. He will act like a bird that flutters at the door of its cage until it is allowed out.

‘I feel like a bird that has been confined in a cage! My heart has entered Your prison! This world is the prison of the ordinary believer, while You are the prison of the believer who has had direct experience!’

Thus, in a state of exhaustion, he will leave the Garden behind, and join the men of Allah, who have passed that way before him.

There are two kinds of ecstasy, physical and spiritual. Physical ecstasy is brought about by the ego and does not give any spiritual satisfaction. It is under the influence of the senses and is often hypocritical, arising so that others notice it.

This kind of ecstasy is completely devoid of value because it is purposeful and willed: one who experiences it still thinks that he can do what he chooses. It is not beneficial to give any importance to such experiences.

Spiritual ecstasy, however, is a totally different state, and is caused by the overflow of spiritual energy. Ordinarily, outer influences, such as a beautifully recited poem, or the chanting of the Qur'an by a beautiful voice, or excitement brought on by the gathering of remembrance of the Sufis, may cause such spiritual elevation.

This happens because at these moments the physical resistance of the being is obliterated. The will and the mind's ability to choose and decide, is overcome. Then the powers of both the body and the mind are undermined and the ecstatic state is purely spiritual.

It is beneficial to submit to such an experience.

Allah Most High says:

...So give the good news to My servants who listen to the word (of Allah), then follow the beauty in it. Such are they whom Allah has guided. And such are the men of understanding. 39:17-18

True ecstasy is the unification of light with light, when the soul of man meets the Divine Light.

Allah says:

...The pure are for the Pure. 24:26

The sweet singing of birds and lovers' sighs are among the outer causes which move spiritual energy.

Influences which bring about spiritual ecstasy are described in the words of the Prophet as:

The verses of the Qur'an, wise and wondrous poems of love, sounds and voices of yearning, all illuminate the face of the soul.

The Garden of Paradise is absolute abundance, utter goodness, total comfort and giving without counting the cost. Everything revolves around the fact that your heart is in the presence of Allah. There is no cause and effect connection with this world, the Hereafter or any of His creation.

Only after death and the experience of remembering it, can your heart be truly present in Allah. If you look, you are looking at death.

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