

Stages of the Mystics and Stations of the Spiritual Journey – Part V

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Abstract

In what follows, the author regards longing and love as two stations for spiritual wayfarers. Longing arises in man's soul when his spiritual craving (*irada*) is strengthened and, having perceived the pleasure of being with the beloved, he yearns for meeting the beloved again. The love of the faithful for God can be developed by means of senses, imagination, and intellect. Love may be classified as true and false. True love emerges when one properly recognizes the perfection of the

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beloved, and false love emerges when one mistakenly considers a pseudo-beloved as a true one. Over and above fear and hope, love must be at the center of moral education and training. A moral person ought to identify his true self and what is good and bad for it in order to be able to refine his morality. After considering longing and love, the concepts of knowledge, certainty, and tranquility will be discussed. If one knows certain fundamental facts about God, that may lead one to develop some moral virtues associated with Him. These virtues include hope, fear, trust, contentment, and submission. The author speaks of the source of certainty and its effects. Afterwards, he explains the divisions of tranquility, and its right and wrong sorts.

Keywords: *longing, true love, false love, knowledge, certainty, tranquility.*

14. Longing

Craving, when strengthened, turns into longing. Some wayfarers are merely followers; that is, their progress is not fast enough to turn their craving into longing. They are always followers and mere wayfarers, but the craving of the one whose progress is swift intensifies and transforms into longing; this is why it has been said that “desire is strengthened craving.” This is the approach Muhaqqiq Tusi and others have adopted.

Longing emerges when a person tastes the love of the beloved, and at the same time, he feels the pain of being separated from the beloved; therefore, longing is accompanied with pain and the longer always feels the pain of separation. However, this pain helps the wayfarer realize the perfection of the beloved. Moreover, this pain is, at the same time, pleasant and bearable and develops the grounds for attainment. It

motivates the wayfarer to move faster. The one in pain of longing struggles to reach his beloved more than a person who is not in pain.

The word “*shawq*” for longing does not appear in the glorious Qur’an, but its meaning can be understood from some verses, for instance: “That those who have been given knowledge may know that it is the truth from your Lord, and so they may have faith in it, and their hearts may be humbled before Him” (22:54). Those who know that this revelation is truth and it is from God believe in it and show *ikhbat* (humbleness). *Ikhbat* is one of the stations of the spiritual journey. It is being totally obedient before God. Such a state can be seen in some birds when they are in pain: if another bird comes to them and pecks at them to take out what has caused pain, they do not move at all. Therefore, the state of absolute and mere humbleness before the beloved is called *ikhbat*.

15. Love

About love, the glorious Qur’an says, “Among the people are those who set up compeers besides Allah, loving them as if loving Allah” (2:165). The faithful love God and befriend Him, while polytheists and infidels befriend idols; but the love of the faithful for God is greater than the idolaters’ love for idols, because no god is as beautiful as God and no knowledge is as perfect as knowing Him; therefore, no one is in such a deep love as the faithful are. Love has different levels of depth and intensity, even though it does not have measurable quantity.

The primacy of the faithful’s love for God over polytheists’ love for idols is that even if idols were beautiful, their beauty would be either visual or imaginary. Such beauty is perceived by eyes and ears and its effect does not go beyond imagination. An ignorant person imagines that idols—and anything other than God—can do something.

Therefore, the knowledge of idol-worshippers and their understanding of beauty are limited to imagination and perception of eyes and ears; thus, their love is limited in terms of its means to eyes and ears and in its scope to imagination. However, the faithful not only see their Beloved's natural manifestations through eyes and ears and His metaphysical manifestations through imagination but they also see the perfection of His beautiful names through their intellect. Since their perception and the Perceived are stronger, their love for the Perceived is greater.

True and False Love

There are two kinds of love: true love and false love. True love takes place when a person properly recognizes perfection, which naturally attracts people to itself. However, false love is when a person considers imperfection as perfection and is attracted to that false perfection, such as the attraction of an animal to a snare or the attraction of the material world, which leads its lovers to destruction.

Only love for God is the true love. He is not only the Beloved of the faithful but also their Lover, who revives and perfects them. Thus, it has been said,

Lo! Anything other than God is void,
and every blessing is bound to perish!

Imam Ali (a) said, "I advise you to abandon the world, for it will abandon you" (Majlisi 1403 AH, 86:237). Human beings will sooner or later be dismissed and deprived of this world, its pleasures, and positions; thus, the Qur'an introduces this world as the abode of deceit. Of course, what is meant by "this world," is not the sky or the earth, since these are the signs and blessings of God; rather, what constitutes

this “abode of deceit” is our attachment to, and false love for this world in such a way that we forget God, its Creator and Lord.

According to the Quran, “the faithful have a more ardent love for Allah” (2:165), so if one’s love for anything other than God is equal to his love for God, he is not a true believer, and this, as will be explained later, shows that one’s knowledge is not perfect, because knowledge is the foundation and source of love for God. At the end of the love story of Layla and Majnun, Layla becomes very ill and her liveliness fades away. She asks her mother to tell Majnun, “If you ever wanted to take someone as your beloved, choose one who does not lose all their liveliness after a fever ... Choose a friend who is unfading.” Thus, knowledge brings about true love, and ignorance brings about false love.

The Qur’an says,

No Indeed! Rather you love this transitory life and forsake the Hereafter. Some faces will be fresh on that day, looking at their Lord, and some faces will be scowling on that day, knowing that they will be dealt out a punishment breaking the spine. (75:20-25)

Those who love this transitory life and choose it as their beloved will have a sad face on the Day of Judgment, but those who choose God as their true love will have happy faces. Elsewhere, the Qur’an says, “And you love wealth with much fondness” (89:20). Some people greatly love wealth; such people will suffer a lot upon death, because they have to leave behind all their worldly wishes and desires. Sometimes, the amount of wealth is little but the attachment to it is great. The mentioned verse does not say that “you love too much wealth” but that “you love wealth with much fondness.” There are other verses in surah

al-Tawbah and other chapters of the Qur'an related to wealth and accumulating it; for example: "Those who treasure up gold and silver, and do not spend it in the way of Allah, inform them of a painful punishment" (9:34), and "Woe to every scandal-monger and slanderer, who amasses wealth and counts it over. He supposes his wealth will make him immortal!" (104:1-3). Such a person amasses wealth and tries to add up to it in the banks every day. He enjoys having enormous wealth but he is not able to enjoy it, and he is actually its treasurer. Such a person struggles and will suffer the consequences of his wealth in the hereafter, and the heirs will enjoy his wealth. One who lacks knowledge makes mistakes in choosing his true beloved.

Love, the Building Block of Education

An important topic in Islamic education is love. The glorious Qur'an, as the teacher of morality, considers love the most important virtue in ethics. Imam Sadiq (a) said, "God, the Glorious, educated His messenger upon His love" (Majlisi 1403 AH, 17:3). The act of God is education, and the Prophet (s) is educated by Him based on love.

The existence and all its perfections begin from the Master, not from the servant; that is, it is not human beings that have three ways to choose from in worshipping God, but it is God who educates people in three ways out of His wisdom: some people with fear, some with hope and good news, and some people with love. The latter are the Friends of God: "Look! The friends of Allah will indeed have no fear; nor will they grieve" (10:62).

Since the Prophet's (s) conduct was based on love and because he (s) is our exemplar, we are obliged to act upon love, both with regards to God and to people. Although sometimes using other ways may be necessary, our education system has to be essentially love-based. Although

warning and giving good news are frequently mentioned in the Qur'an and hadiths, but they are final solutions for weak people and means for those in the middle of the way so that they move on by means of admonition and encouragement and then proceed to the final destination based on love.

Fundamental Elements of Moral Purification

Since ethics is a part of humanities, moral purification is based on two fundamental elements: knowing the reality of man and knowing what is beneficial or harmful for him. Obviously, the second element is dependent on the first, because if a person knows the reality of his self, he can know what benefits or harms him.

Insofar as self-love is the most basic motivating reason for man to act, if he knew his true self, he would not fail to identify it as distinct from his false self, and he would be able to select as his goal what benefits his true self.

In lieu of complying with intellect, those in the lowest level of spirituality replace intellect with such human qualities as lust and anger. When lust and anger become the rulers and the beloved of one's soul, he does anything they dictate.

At a higher level, a person does not give the control of his affairs to lust or anger but to fantasy, seeking things like position and power. Thus, he may keep away from the prohibited and from obeying his lust and anger, and may do righteous deeds but not sincerely; rather, he seeks to be known among people as a pious person and gain good reputation. Thus, his actions are good but not himself, since he is only a hypocrite.

The third level is when a person does not give the control of his affairs to lust, anger, or fantasy, but he wishes that people remember him in a good way after he passes away; he appreciates this more than wealth, power, or having fame and popularity when he is alive. Of course, having good reputation is not wrong in itself; rather, it is one of the blessings of God, which He bestows upon His special servants: “And [We] conferred on them a worthy and lofty repute” (19:50). What is wrong is to do good deeds with the intention of gaining good reputation, whether during one’s life in this world or after it.

The fourth level is when one’s intention is not gaining material benefits or good reputation; rather, he seeks to please God but in order to go to Paradise or to be saved from Hellfire. Although such intention is not in itself wrong, it is imperfect compared to the intention of those who reach the next level.

The fifth level, which is higher than all the previous levels, is the level of love for God and friendship with Him—when a person does righteous deeds not to gain material benefits, to be praised, to be saved from Hellfire, or to reach Paradise, but only out of love for God and for His sake.

Betraying the Self

Just as betraying the properties, rights, and reputation of others is wrong, betraying one’s own self is also wrong. And one of the main instances of betraying one’s self is to mistake other things with intellect, to replace it with lust, anger, fantasy, and so forth, which is rooted in insufficient knowledge; rather, it is an instance of betrayal in knowledge, which leads to betrayal in actions. This is why there are many moral instructions that warn against betraying and harming one’s self.

Showing Love to the Servants of God

What was said about “self” needs to be also observed about the members of one’s family, and especially one’s parents. Our tradition strongly emphasized the importance of showing love to and respecting the parents, especially when they reach old age: “Should they reach old age at your side—one of them or both— do not say to them, ‘Fie!’” (17:23). We are also instructed to consider our nation as one unit, to consider others like ourselves and to treat them as we would like them to treat us, which is among the most important and most difficult teachings in social ethics and among the practices that our tradition calls the “masters of practices.” It is reported that the noble Prophet (s) told Imam Ali (a), “O, Ali! Three things are masters of practices: treating people fairly, consoling the brother for the sake of God Almighty, and remembering God, Holy and Exalted, all the time” (Majlisi 1403 AH, 66:371). A society that is founded upon such practices is a society in which love, mercy, and friendship prevails.

16. Knowledge

In his book *Arwsaf al-ashraf* (The Attributes of the Noble), Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi maintains that love is the axis around which a series of moral virtues revolves. However, it is knowledge (*ma’rifa*) that is the axis, not love. According to Khwaja, since God is merciful and forgiving and possesses all the beautiful and perfect attributes, we hope to receive His mercy; by also realizing that God punishes, we fear His wrath; thus, the foundation for the acquisition of the station of *rida* (being pleased with whatever God wills) is achieved by knowing that God performs nothing but good. One reaches the station of submission (*taslim*) by truly believing the fact that God is purely good and only wishes well. Therefore, it is not appropriate for us to say,

“Whatever God finds pleasing we also find pleasing”; rather, we should say, “We have no personal likes or dislikes.” This is what is called “submission”. God has greater knowledge than us concerning what is beneficial or harmful for us, and has the power to bring them all into existence. Therefore, it is better for us to have complete reliance (*tawakkul*) on God, as it is in this love that the foundations of achieving that complete reliance are acquired.

Although the above statements are true, we realize, in a deeper analysis, that it is knowledge which is the axis of all these acts, not love. Knowledge of a Lord who possesses kindness, mercy, magnanimity, and generosity is what allows for the foundations of hope to be attained. Moreover, when we know about His wrath and that He will punish the disobedient, fear will develop. In fact, this fear is a great blessing and constructive trait, and it is not merely about the fire of hell. When man realizes that all actions are governed by the Lord of the worlds, and that if he sways from the straight path, punishment awaits him, he will not go astray. Therefore, such fear is a cause for salvation.

The Quran teaches us that all beings move towards God: “And toward God is the return” (3:28), and that all obey Him: “And He said to the heaven and to the earth, ‘Come! Willingly or unwillingly!’ They said, ‘We come heartily’” (41:11). Only human beings can disobey God and commit sins, but swimming against the current will result in the suffering and punishment for those who choose to do so.

Accordingly, every particle of this world is moving towards perfection and is traversing upon the commanded divine path, and the righteous also accompany this worldly caravan towards the Truth. It is because of this that we recite in the daily prayers, “You alone do we worship, and to You alone do we turn for help” (Quran 1:5). The meaning of “we

worship” in this verse is not merely that all other humans and I worship You; rather, it means all other existents in the world and I worship You.

So, if a person wants to sin, to move in the opposite direction to that of the other existents, the whole universe will be against him. This is why it is impossible for a person to deviate yet reach the real destination. Therefore, if a person truly believes that all existents are traversing the path of obedience, he will never disobey God, because he is afraid that he will be suppressed by the universe. Thus this kind of knowledge lays the groundwork for fear.

Similarly, assume that a spiritual person knows (1) that he needs lots of things; (2) that he is unaware of what exactly he needs; (3) that all the causes and sources would not be at his disposal if he exactly knew his needs; and (4) that given that beings other than God are able to solve his needs, at times they ungenerously refuse to do him a favor. So he believes that no one is as knowledgeable, powerful, and generous as God. Such a person entrusts his affairs only to God and no one else. Therefore, coming to know that God has those attributes prepares the ground for complete reliance on Him. As a result of this, if he were to go through difficulties and disasters, he would be pleased with the decree of God, because he believes that “in a complete system, everything has its own specific place” (Sabziwari 1369-79 Sh, 2:422); that is, everything is perfect and beautiful in its own place. Hence, it is this knowledge that enables one to reach the station of satisfaction (*rida*).

Similarly, attributes such as hope, free will, yearning, love, affection, submission, and so forth are all the products of knowledge. Therefore, that which Muhaqqiq Tusi has mentioned concerning love should have rather been mentioned about knowledge. However, knowledge will have effect on the above-mentioned matters only when it reaches the

boundaries of love; otherwise, knowledge without faith or love has little or no benefit.

Degrees of Knowledge

As knowledge is one of the stations of wayfaring, it has different degrees: it can either be imitational (*taqlidi*), demonstrational (*burhani*), or intuitive (*shuhudī*). Sometimes, knowledge is based solely on imitation. This occurs when a person is unable to provide demonstrations for his beliefs and is also deprived of intuition, but he relies on those whose words are authoritative (*hujjah*), such as prophets and imams. In theology, after proving the existence of God and the prophethood of our Prophet (s), the issues that cannot be independently understood by the intellect can be derived from the Quran and traditions in a justified imitational manner.

Therefore, if the belief of a person in God, His beautiful names, heaven, hell, and so forth is based upon the sayings of prophets and their successors, this is belief by imitation. However, a believer by imitation must undertake some good research on whom he should imitate. The lowest level of knowledge, which in reality cannot be called such, is this knowledge by way of imitation. Therefore, the knowledge of a spiritual wayfarer is in ascending order of importance imitational, demonstrational, or mystical and intuitive.

As an example, it can be said that people who know fire are of three types: (1) those who have never seen fire, but they have relied on the words of others who have seen it; (2) those who have seen fire; and (3) those who have fallen into fire and have been burnt by it. Thus, perception has varying levels. Likewise, man sometimes acquires knowledge about God, His beautiful names, heaven, hell, and so forth by hearing from trusted sources, sometimes by way of syllogism and evidence, and

sometimes he goes beyond these two and can see those realities intuitively; that is, he perceives the effects, signs, and blessings of the Lord and, within the depths of his heart, senses the presence of God, and becomes a lover of God. From here on, he will rather prostrate himself before his sovereign Lord than kneel before anyone else; his sight will be fixed on the hidden treasures of God and not what others may give him. At times, it is also possible for him to go even higher: he will not only see the effects of God in the external world but rather he will gradually see the divine causes in himself being the source of those effects. This type of intuition is the witnessing of the manifestation of God without there being a single iota of independence from the person himself.

However, it should be noted that it is impossible for a person to find a way to the essence of God. Regardless of the amount of awareness he has of God, a wayfarer will always admit that he is unable to know the Almighty the way He deserves to be known. So this kind of admission must be connected with knowledge in relation to God. So, if we read in the sayings of the infallibles (a) that “I came to know God, the Glorified, through the breaking of decisions, change of intentions, and losing of determination” (Nahj al-balagha, wisdom 250), we also read, “We do not know You the way You should be known” (Majlisi 1403 AH, 68:23).

Moreover, the spectrum of incapacity to know God is greater than that of capacity to know Him; that is, it must be acknowledged that God is much greater than what can be known about Him, because if what we know about God was equivalent to what we do not know about Him, it would mean that He is confined and limited. In other words, what we know about God is limited, and if that which we do not know about Him was equivalent to what we know, it would be limited as well;

therefore, God, who is the sum of the two, would also be limited. Therefore, since God is unlimited, it is necessary for us to accept that the spectrum of our ignorance and unawareness about Him is infinitely greater than that of our knowledge.

The Quran's Call for Knowledge

The Quran begins morality with fundamental beliefs and extends it to behavior and speech. One of the most important ethical principles is knowing and following good. An individual or society will be ethical only when they are able to recognize truth from falsehood and follow the truth by performing good actions and abandoning evil.

If an individual is weak in any of these aspects, he will face negative consequences in that specific aspect; for example, if a person lacks a well-established, well-rooted worldview, he will be confused in the battlefield of ideas, because he does not possess the ability to judge between them. As a result, he will be led toward sophism.

Similarly, if a person does not have well-established knowledge, when he sees conflicting and opposing narrations in historical matters, he will feel perplexed. Likewise, in matters of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), he will become heedless when he sees different and conflicting opinions. He will think that these differences between the scholars of jurisprudence shows that this discipline is not rooted in reality, and, as a result, he will become unconcerned in relation to Islamic rituals and laws.

The same can be said when it comes to ethical issues. When a person does not have the ability to judge or distinguish between good and bad, when he hears differing opinions from various ethical scholars, or when he sees different deeds from different people, all this leads him to become heedless in relation to ethical issues.

The objective of the above was to show that sophism in worldview, skepticism concerning historical issues, inattentiveness in relation to the law and ethics, all stem from weakness in judgment and inability to differentiate and distinguish. Religion, which has the responsibility to purify souls and cleanse hearts, and whose primary goal is to build a perfect human being, has invited man to acquire knowledge in order to prevent him from making such ill-informed choices. In the Quran, the dangers of skepticism and lack of understanding have been repeatedly mentioned and the means of saving oneself from it has been adequately presented. This is why God has made it obligatory to acquire knowledge and abstain from ignorance and has regarded knowledge as the criterion for confirming or denying different claims. In this regard, He has sometimes addressed the Holy Prophet (s) as follows: “Know that there is no god except God, and plead [to God] for forgiveness of your sins” (Quran 47:19).

Such verses, which command the Holy Prophet (s) to seek knowledge and understanding, are given so that he becomes a role-model for his nation in this regard. At other times the Holy Prophet (s) is addressed as follows:

Know that God intervenes between a man and his heart. (8:24)

Know that God revives the earth after its death. (57:17)

Know that the life of this world is just play and diversion, and glitter. (57:20)

These are a group of verses which directly call people to knowledge and learning. Another verse commands the Prophet (s) not to follow anything unless he knows it: “Do not follow that which you have no

knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the eyesight, and the heart, all of these are accountable” (17:36). In some other verses, God introduces Himself and His Prophet (s) as the teachers of wisdom:

These are among [precepts] that your Lord has revealed to you of wisdom. (57:39)

And when I taught you the Book and wisdom. (5:110)

And [for you] to teach them the Book and wisdom. (3:164)

In surah al-Isra, God determines some instances of wisdom including “conscious following” and “blind following” (17:36). In another place, God rebukes unjustified denial: “Rather, they deny that whose knowledge they do not comprehend, and whose explanation has not yet come to them” (10:39), just as blind acceptance is also frowned upon: “Was not the covenant of the Book taken with them that they shall not attribute anything to God except the truth?” (7:169).

By calling to knowledge and education, forbidding blind following, and prohibiting unjustified denial and confirmation, the Quran works toward developing people who investigate to establish the truth.

The Call of the Infallibles (a) to Knowledge

Ahl al-Bayt (a) also encouraged both the individual and the society to acquire knowledge and understanding, as can be seen clearly in the profound and well-known saying of Imam Ali (a) to his close companion Kumayl:

People are of three types: the divine scholar, the seeker of knowledge on the path of salvation, and the common fly that flies towards every caller and goes

whichever way the wind blows; it seeks no light from the effulgence of knowledge and does not have any reliable support and base. (Nahj al-balagha, wisdom 147).

The insightful supplication Makarim al-Akhlaq (Noble Moral Characteristics) shows that the purpose behind our traditional supplications is not only teaching us how to ask for forgiveness of our sins or for permission to enter Paradise; rather, many of them are intended to provide us with deep understanding of true beliefs and right actions. In the aforementioned supplication, Imam Sajjad (a) asks God to make him of those who comprehend, who are able to distinguish, and who thoroughly inquire, and to keep him away from blind following, cowardice, and stagnation. The opening part of the supplication is the following:

O God, bless Muhammad and his Household, cause my faith to reach the most perfect faith, make my certainty the most excellent certainty, and take my intentions to the best of intentions and my actions to the best of actions. O God, complete my intention through Your kindness, rectify my certainty through what is with You, and set right what is corrupt in me through Your power. (Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah, Supplication 20)

The faith that comes at the very beginning of this supplication is one that is based on knowledge and understanding, therefore two relationships or “knots” are necessary for faith: (1) the relationship between the subject and the predicate that occurs within propositions (this relationship is the reason why a proposition is called a knot “*aqd*”), and (2) The product of the proposition, which is the result of

the first bond, ties a knot between one's heart and the proposition, so one's heart becomes bound to that matter.

Therefore, conviction (*aqidah*) can be defined as the establishment of a bond between the heart of a person and the product of a proposition. It is possible for a person to be aware of something without being faithful to it; for example, a doctor who knows the dangers of alcohol but still drinks or a lawyer who is aware of the ills of a crime but still commits it. So one can have faith only if there is a second bond between one's heart and the content of the proposition that one believes.

An individual has knowledge, certainty, and intention. The intention of every person is related to the amount of certainty they have, and their certainty is related to the amount of knowledge they have. In other words, something is first understood, then it is believed, and then a decision may be made concerning it. It is only possible for a person to gain a pure and sincere soul once these fundamental issues have been resolved for him.

18. Certainty (YAQIN)

As long as knowledge does not reach certainty, a wayfarer remains at the beginning stages of his journey toward God; however, as soon it reaches the level of certainty, he will pass through the states one after the other.

Certainty itself has three levels: (1) knowledge of certainty (*'ilm al-yaqin*), (2) essence of certainty (*'ayn al-yaqin*), and (3) truth of certainty (*haqq al-yaqin*). Even though certain levels were mentioned for knowledge, but some of its levels fall within the borders of the domain of certainty.

Certainty is that indubitable conviction which corresponds to the reality. Unfortunately, certainty is a very rare trait; it is the blessing that has been distributed the least amongst people. This can be seen in the following saying of Imam Rida (a): “He has not divided any blessing more scarcely amongst His servants than certainty” (Kulayni 1407 AH, 2:52). It is possible that at times a person may think that he has certainty, whereas it is actually a strong presumption (*dhan*); the knowledge that is based on such states is not certainty, because certainty is that which cannot be doubted nor dissolved. It is this level of knowledge that is called certainty.

Knowledge of Certainty and Essence of Certainty

The Quran places knowledge of certainty as a step to reach the essence of certainty. It says. “No indeed! Were you to know with certain knowledge, you would surely see hell” (102:5-6).

If a person reaches the level of the knowledge of certainty, it opens the path for him to become acquainted with the level of the essence of certainty. The verse does not mean that a person will reach the essence of certainty after his death, as everyone, be they a mystic, commoner, atheist or monotheist, will reach the essence of certainty after death. The Quran says that when a disbeliever is taken to hell and is thrown into the fire, it will be said to him, “Is this then magic, or is it you who do not perceive?” (52:15); in the past, you would call the Holy Prophet (s) a magician and the truths he told you about a myth, but now that you see the hell, do you still claim that it is magic or myth? On that day, atheists will also say, “Our Lord! We have seen and heard. Send us back so that we may act righteously. Indeed, we are now convinced” (32:12).

Therefore, when God says in the Quran, “No indeed! Were you to know with certain knowledge, you would surely see hell,” (102:5-6) it is dealing with a fact in this world before death. Therefore, if we are able to achieve the knowledge of certainty in this world, we will be able to see the fire of hell. Hell in this verse is merely an example. If a person is able to achieve the knowledge of certainty, he will also be able to see heaven, the bridge (*sirat*), the reckoning, the scales, and the plain of the Day of Judgment. In reality, the meaning of the above-mentioned verse becomes as follows, “No indeed! Were you to know with certain knowledge, you would surely see hell, heaven, the bridge, the pond, the scales, the handing over of the books, and the testimony of the limbs, the plain of the Day of Judgment, and so forth.”

Above the station of the knowledge of certainty is the station of the truth of certainty. This is when a person does not only witness the reality but becomes part of its intuitive essence, detached from everything but God. He does not possess anything anymore and is encapsulated by the divine knowledge of God. The station of the truth of knowledge is the highest level of certainty: “It is indeed certain truth” (69:51).

The Source of Certainty

Just like material things are divided into pure and impure, so are the thoughts coming from the soul. Those culminating in monotheism, being pleased with the decrees of God, entrusting affairs to Him, submission to, and complete reliance on Him are among the pure thoughts, and a soul which is adorned with them is a pure soul, whereas those which deviate from the path of monotheism are from the impure ones, and the soul which is infected by them is an impure soul.

One of the purest thoughts of the soul is certainty. A person who is certain about God and the hereafter and about the attributes and names of God distances himself from those stained thoughts and attaches himself only to pure thoughts. The holy Prophet (s) has said, "Certainty suffices as your wealth, and worship as your occupation" (Majlisi 1403 AH, 67:176).

A person who has certainty is extremely proficient, is not easily misled, and has the ability to unravel many theoretical and practical matters. He is indeed rich, because he has true wealth. A person may be materially wealthy but without having certainty. As a result, he would be in constant fear of poverty and misfortune. On the other hand, a person may have no material wealth but, because of his certainty, possess a calm and tranquil heart. It is mentioned in the supplication of Kumayl: "His obedience is wealth" (Kaf^āami 1405 AH, 560). This obedience stems from certainty, as a person who is certain obeys, and this will lead him to becoming an affluent person.

The Quran reports the following conversation between God and Ibrahim (a):

And when Abraham said, "Show me how you revive the dead." He said, "Do you not believe?" He said, "Yes indeed, but in order that my heart may be at rest." (2:260)

About this verse, a tradition is narrated from Imam Rida (a), in which the Imam (a) is asked. "Did Prophet Ibrahim have any doubts?" The Imam (a) replied, "No, he had certainty, but he asked for an even greater amount of it" (Majlisi 1403 AH, 67:176-77).

It has been reported that Imam Sajjad (a) "used to prolong his sitting after the sunset prayer to ask God for certainty" (Majlisi 1403 AH,

67:176). When history speaks of the great trials and tribulations this family suffered and yet remained patient, it is because of the wealth of certainty. They knew that a good ending awaits those who are God-wary.

Imam Ali (a) counted the hereafter as the criterion for profit and loss. He said, “Know that what will harm you on the Day of Judgment must not be taken lightly, and that which will benefit you on the Day of Judgment must not be taken lightly either. So, act as though you have seen those things which God has informed you about” (Majlisi 1403 AH, 67:178). Things that will harm or benefit on the Day of Judgment are not to be considered insignificant, as the advantages or disadvantages of something should be assessed using the scales of justice in the hereafter, and not the scales of this material world. In addition, the Imam (a) also said, “That which the religion has taught you must be regarded as certainly true and as something you have seen” (Ibid.).

A common proverb in Persian which says, “When did hearing become like sight?” may have been borrowed from the following saying of Imam Ali (a), “Seeing something yourself is not the same as being informed about it” (Tamimi al-Amidi 1410 AH, 556). Seeing and hearing are obviously not equal. However, if an Infallible informs a person about something and shows him the way to attaining certainty about it, he can transform that verbal statement into something which is visible to him. If a person reaches the level of “semi-sight,” he will be able to reach the higher level, which is the level of “actual sight.”

Effects of Certainty

In order for an individual to be elevated to the eminent station of certainty, he has to submit and surrender to God completely, because when a person is elevated to this level, he will desire in his heart solely

what God wants. However, if he desires in his heart only what God wants, then what he indirectly understands, thinks, observes, and knows will be gradually grasped by his immediate vision.

A group of people appeared before the holy Prophet (s). The Prophet (s) asked them, "How are you?" They responded, "We have faith." The holy Prophet (s) then asked them, "What is the reality of your faith?" They replied, "We are of those who are pleased with the decree of God, we entrust our affairs to God and submit to His will." Then the holy Prophet (s) said, "You are scholars and sages. Your level of wisdom is very close to that of prophets. If you are truthful, then do not build that in which you will not dwell and do not store what you will not eat. Be wary of God to whom your eventual return is" (Majlisi 1403 AH, 64:286).

The reason why it is from a monotheistic standpoint blameworthy to store things in this way is that if a person is constantly concerned about increasing his savings, he may lose his trust in the fact that it is only God that provides sustenance.

19. Tranquility (SUKUN)

When the wayfarer reaches the station of certainty, he finds peace, and nothing can make him anxious. It is here where he sees and experiences that the coordinator of the universe is God. He governs the world based on justice, and every action He does is brimming with wisdom. The wayfarer will also realize that if he hands himself over to God, it will be to his benefit. So, he does that and achieves serenity.

Types of Tranquility

Tranquility is divided into two types: tranquility before movement, which is frowned upon, and tranquility after arrival, which is praised. This can also be seen in physical movements. A person who is lethargic and does not do anything may be in rest, but he has not achieved anything; the one who has strived and reached his destination is also at ease, but he has achieved his goals. Ease before movement and progress is rooted in cowardice, stagnation, staleness, and negligence, whereas ease after reaching one's destination is pure serenity and safety.

The Quran rebukes those who do not take steps to purify their souls, have a false sense of security, and are heedless of their surroundings:

“None feels secure from God’s devising except the people who are losers” (7:99).

However, if a person were not heedless, were aware that there is a destination, and were taught by the guides of God to go through the path towards that destination, then he would reach his destination safely and find peace and contentment there. This feeling of peace and contentment is what defines serenity, about which the Quran says,

“Look! The hearts find serenity only in God’s remembrance” (13:28).

Elsewhere, the Quran speaks about individuals who are at peace and who feel truly secure:

Those who have faith and do not taint their faith with wrongdoing, for such there shall be safety, and they are the rightly guided. (6:82)

Look! The friends of God will indeed have no fear nor
will they grieve. (10:62)

This is the safety and tranquility that appears upon reaching the destination.

Distress during the Journey

Just as it speaks about peace before and after wayfaring, the Quran also mentions the issue of distress during the journey, which is the means by which ease and tranquility is attained.

Those who are on the journey and know that there are dangerous bandits waiting for them along the road—that is, Satan, who said, “I will surely lie in wait for them on Your straight path” (7:16)—are stressed and worried. They are well aware that a wayfarer is at close quarters to Iblis, who has not discussed a peace treaty or ceasefire with any human being, nor will he ever. He is the clear enemy of all, and has a bag full of tricks and countless traps:

“Certainly he has led astray many of your generations.
Did you not use to apply reason?” (36:62)

Satan has specific traps for scholars, ascetics, worshippers, businessmen, youths, the elderly, administrators, and so forth. Therefore, the wayfarer on the path toward God must become a competent soldier in order to come out victorious from this greater struggle (*al-jihad al-akbar*). This is an intense battle that can only be won by the grace and assistance of God. The enemy has lined up with his troops on the opposing front and said,

I will surely glamorize evil for them on the earth, and
I will surely pervert them, all. (15:39)

I will lead them astray and give them false hopes, and prompt them to slit the ears of cattle. (4:119)

The wayfarer is worried and anxious about how to combat this powerful and well-equipped enemy. However, several verses indicate that Satan is still following the great formative (*takwini*) plan of God, even though he is disobedient legislatively (*tashri'i*):

Have you not regarded that We unleash the devils upon the faithless to urge them impetuously. (19:82)

We have indeed made the devils friends of those who have no faith. (7:27)

Ease after Difficulty

In the beginning of the journey, the wayfarer is, on the one hand, anxious and scared, while, on the other hand, he sees himself getting close to God and the splendor and grandeur of his Lord overwhelms him. When he passes through the danger zone and reaches the abode of safety, his fear will gradually fade, and he will gain peace:

The faithful are only those whose hearts tremble with awe when God is mentioned. And when His signs are recited to them, they increase their faith, and who put their trust in their Lord. (8:2)

The initial anxiousness is because a believer knows that his Lord has wrath beside His mercy, and, therefore, he is afraid of doing something that makes him subject to His punishment. The Quran says,

Allah has sent down the best of discourses, a scripture [composed] of similar motifs, whereat quiver the skins

of those who fear their Lord, then their skins and heart softens to God's remembrance. (39:23).

The believers and wayfarers are those who, in the beginning, tremble and feel apprehensive at the recitation of the Quran or the mentioning of God's names but then feel calm and tranquil afterwards. It has been reported that Imam al-Hasan (a) would shake at the time of prayer and the color of his face would change (Shaykh al-Saduq 1367 Sh, 178-79), but then he would slowly attain a state of tranquility, This state is based upon the two stations mentioned in the above verse.

A guest who goes to a place that is unknown to him feels nervous and anxious at the beginning, but once he sees the kindness and mercy of the host, he becomes calm and tranquil. A wayfarer sees that God is his companion and that the path is that of his Lord as well; he walks upon the path of his Beloved while being accompanied by him. It is because of this that he finds peace, calmness, and tranquility, and it is this kind of tranquility that is praiseworthy.

In difficult times, a mystic remains calm and firm, while others stress and worry. This tranquility is not because he is not aware of the difficulty but because he knows that all actions are in the hands of the Lord of the worlds. Being aware of the coming heavy predicament, others may be worried about what will happen in the future because they do not perfectly know that all actions are in the hands of God, and have their own extremely desirable goals which the future events may prevent them from attaining.

A person, who has not moved or progressed due to his negligence, has no worries about the spiritual destination, as he is like a person who is in a deep slumber; a mystic who has reached the destination is tranquil and serene, because he is pleased with whatever pleases the Lord of the

worlds; and a person who has started his journey to God but has not yet reached the destination is at times anxious and worried and at other times calm and tranquil. For this person, there is nothing better than having complete trust in the power of God, as he does not possess the ability to solve his problems and, therefore, must hand them over to the One who possesses the knowledge and ability to solve them and is very generous.

Conclusion

A person feels a longing to do something once his will turns strong. Longing is accompanied by the pain of being separated from the beloved which in turn may result in reaching God. Knowing God is the foundation of love for Him. Love for God based on knowing Him is much more complete than loving something else. Love is true just in case one recognizes real perfections in the beloved which attract his attention. Love is false just in case one recognizes apparent perfections (not real ones) which are in fact defects. Love for God is viewed as the best true love. God loves people who do not love anything other than God. Love can be considered to be one of the most significant approaches towards moral education. Employing the methods of fear from hell, hope for Paradise, and love for God, God educates different groups of people. If one properly knows himself, he will carry out his actions in order to please God not for the sake of interests, power, wealth, fame, hell, or heaven. It also has become clear that the degrees of tranquility are dependent on certainty, and that the degrees of certainty are dependent on the degrees of knowledge. Knowledge, on the one hand, leads to certainty and, on the other hand, brings about tranquility. It also results in love, and, hence, the degrees of love are also based on the degrees of knowledge.

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