

Purifying YOUR HEART

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Purifying
YOUR HEART



miftaah
EBOOK



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INTRODUCTION:

PURIFYING YOUR
HEART

Introduction



When Allah (SWT) created Prophet Adam (AS), He (SWT) taught him the names of all things, a wisdom not given to the angels. Allah tells us this in Surah Al-Baqarah.

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَٰؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

And He taught Adam the names – all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, “Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful.”

(Surah Al-Baqarah:31)

Everything we have learned is from Prophet Adam (AS). And while we intuitively understand aspects of our existence, such as breathing, there are other things that can only be understood through experience, like our Deen.

Our faith encompasses various dimensions and the core of our faith rests upon three fundamental concepts.

'Umar bin Al-Khattab said:

" بينما نحن جلوس عند رسول الله، صلى الله عليه وسلم ذات يوم إذ طلع علينا رجل شديد بياض الثياب، شديد سواد الشعر، لا يرى عليه أثر السفر، ولا يعرفه منا أحد، حتى جلس إلى النبي، صلى الله عليه وسلم، فأسند ركبتيه إلى ركبتيه، ووضع كفيه على فخذيه وقال: يا محمد أخبرني عن الإسلام، فقال: رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: الإسلام أن تشهد أن لا إله إلا الله، وأن محمداً رسول الله وتقيم الصلاة، وتؤتي الزكاة، وتصوم رمضان، وتحج البيت إن استطعت إليه سبيلاً. قال صدقت. فجعنا له يسأله ويصدق! قال: فأخبرني عن الإيمان. قال أن تؤمن بالله، وملائكته، وكتبه ورسله، واليوم الآخر، وتؤمن بالقدر خيره وشره. قال صدقت. قال فأخبرني عن الإحسان. قال أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه؛ فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك. قال: فأخبرني عن الساعة. قال: ما المسؤول عنها بأعلم من السائل. قال: فأخبرني عن أماراتها قال: أن تلد الأمة ربتها، وأن ترى الحفاة العراة العالة رعاء الشاء يتطالون في البنيان. ثم انطلق، فلبثت ملياً، ثم قال: يا عمر أتدري من السائل؟ قلت: الله ورسوله أعلم. قال: فإنه جبريل أتاكم يعلمكم أمر دينكم "

Once we were sitting in the company of Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) when there appeared a man dressed in very white clothes and having extraordinary black hair. No signs of fatigue of journey appeared on him and he was known to none of us. He sat down facing the Prophet (ﷺ) leaning his knees against the knees of the Prophet (ﷺ) and placing both of his palms over his two thighs and said, "O Muhammad (ﷺ)! Tell me about Islam". He (ﷺ) replied, "Islam is to testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah, and that Muhammad (ﷺ) is the Messenger of Allah; that you observe Salat (prayers), pay Zakat, observe Saum (fasting) of Ramadan and perform Hajj (pilgrimage) of the House, provided you have resources of making journey to it." He replied: "You have spoken the truth." We were surprised to

see that he had asked him and confirmed the correctness of the answers. He then enquired: "Tell me about Iman." He (ﷺ) said: "It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day and that you believe in preordainment (destiny), its bad and good consequences." He said, "You have spoken the truth." He then enquired: "Tell me about Ihsan." He (ﷺ) said, "It is to worship Allah as if you are seeing Him; and although you do not see Him, He sees you." He enquired: "Inform me about the Hour (i.e., the Day of Resurrection)." He (ﷺ) replied, "I have no more knowledge thereof than you". He said, "Inform me about some of its signs." He (ﷺ) said, "They are - that a bondswoman gives birth to her own master, and that you will find the barefooted, naked, poor shepherds competing one another in the construction of higher buildings." Then he departed. The Messenger of Allah kept silent for a while then he said to me, "O 'Umar! Do you know who the questioner was?" I replied, "Allah and His Messenger know better." The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "He was Jibril (Gabriel); he came to you to teach you your religion." (*Sahih Muslim*)

These three components, Islam (practice), Iman (theology), and Ihsan (spirituality), work in synergy to create a dimensional relationship between us and our religion. These elements are necessary to enrich our understanding of our faith and extract greater significance from it.

Islam's core is grounded in the Quran and urges us to discern Allah's (SWT) magnificence through the signs of this world. Only when we adopt this perspective can we begin to unearth deeper significance in our existence.

While Islam and Iman can be committed to memory, Ihsan demands embodiment. It emphasizes that not every

aspect of our faith relies solely on external rituals. Ihsan encourages us to delve within ourselves and prioritize the purification of our hearts, recognizing that the heart is the most essential part of our being.

Allah (SWT) said:

إِنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضَغَةً إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ، وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ. أَلَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ.

There is a piece of flesh in the body. If it becomes good (reformed) then whole body becomes good but if it gets spoiled the whole body gets spoiled and that is the heart.

(Sahih al-Bukhari)



CHAPTER ONE:

EMBARKING ON A
SPIRITUAL
JOURNEY

CHAPTER ONE:

Embarking on a Spiritual Journey



As we age, we instinctively recognize our religion encompasses not only external practices but also internal dimensions. Spirituality is the instrument through which we draw meaning from our existence and, in Islam, spirituality is a major component of our religion. A ritual performed with feeble spirituality resembles a lifeless body devoid of a soul, similar to a corpse. Nurturing one's spirituality establishes a profound sense of purpose by bridging the gap between the inner and outer dimensions, solidifying our sense of meaning in the dunya (the world).

Dunya derives from **د - ن - و** which means to be close but lower, because it is beneath the heavens. This suggests that the Dunya is a humble domain, driven by deceit and heedlessness. In this world, we are often deluded by four things; Nafs (ego), Hawa (desires), Dunya (the material world), Waswasa (Shaytan's whispers).

A sign of the end of times is that people will lack basira (foresight); they will only be able to see with their eyes but not with their heart. This means they will forfeit the capacity for profound and comprehensive vision, becoming confined to a single perspective despite Allah's (SWT) gift of two eyes. He (SWT) mentioned in Surah al-Balad:

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ

Have We not given them two eyes (*Al-Balad:8*)

The concept of Dajjal's one eye is esoterically interpreted as a one-dimensional vision, lacking depth and understanding. In contrast, a mu'mineen will possess a multifaceted perspective and the ability to discern deception.

Once, the Prophet (ﷺ) slaughtered a sheep and distributed its parts to his companions, prioritizing those in greatest need and leaving only its shoulder untouched. Seeing the remnants, Aisha' asked:

مَا بَقِيَ مِنْهَا
مَا بَقِيَ مِنْهَا إِلَّا كَتِفُهَا

“What remains of it? Nothing remains but its shoulder.”

The Prophet (ﷺ) replied:

بَقِيَ كُلُّهَا عِزْرٌ كَتِفُهَا

“All of it endures but its shoulder.”

The Prophet (ﷺ) was not preoccupied with his own losses; rather, he rejoiced in others' gains and remained grateful for his possessions. This instance illustrates that with elevated spirituality, our perception shifts beyond mere appearances and externalities.

Spirituality is linked to the choices we make that have a significant impact on our hearts. The purity of our hearts is contingent upon our relationship with the entirety of creation. When it is put into practice, we enhance both our internal and external perspectives, encompassing everything within our sphere of knowledge.

We should aspire to adhere to the perspective of the Prophet (ﷺ); we should find meaning in our difficulties and obtain an increased level of spirituality that requires dedication and discipline.

It is important to acknowledge that each of us embarks on a distinct spiritual journey, full of its own intricacies. Recognizing our individual potential, free from comparison to others, significantly impacts the progression of our spiritual path. We must tap into our inner essence to become the best version of ourselves and be mindful that Allah (SWT) observes us, while understanding our capacity to live the life He (SWT) ordained for us.

Before embarking on our spiritual voyage, we must reaffirm our intentions and slowly begin to rectify our daily actions and behavior. While we aspire to reach our destination, it is equally important to recognize our starting point.

Spend some time to think about where you want to be, what you want to achieve and how you will be able to achieve this goal. Prepare to document the lessons you'll gather throughout your journey, and recognize that no expedition is smooth; every journey has hurdles and obstacles that all individuals must overcome.



CHAPTER TWO:

CERTITUDE IN SUBMISSION

CHAPTER TWO:

Certitude in Submission



Islam, Iman, and Ihsan are verbal nouns, each implying a call to action. Motion is inherent within our faith, although it does not mandate uniformity; no two spiritual journeys appear identical.

Imam Abdullah ibn Alawi Al-Haddad’s book, “The Book of Assistance”, will be our roadmap as we embark on this journey and grow in spirituality. Every terrain we will pass will not be void of cracks and crevices. We all come from diverse corners of the world and our hearts bear different burdens. Everyone’s spiritual journey starts in a different place, yet we all share a common destination. And our ability to reach our destination begins with certainty, a condition that requires understanding and submission.

In our spiritual journey, water symbolizes our path—it is expansive, not limiting. In her quest for water in the vast desert, Hajar ran between two mountains, relying on Allah's guidance and hoping for sustenance. When (SWT) Allah

miraculously provided her with water, not only did it provide nourishment for her and her child, it marked the establishment of the city of Makkah.

This demonstrates that during our own spiritual journey, we must build fortitude and resilience through our challenges. Every encounter on our path presents an opportunity for growth and transformation.

When we are being guided towards something, it's imperative we extract meaning from it. We should be capable of acknowledging our weaknesses and making improvements. The absence of progress in our practice hinders our spiritual development as we cannot be molded if we are not willing to be shaped.

Certitude was the hallmark of Abu Bakr's (RA) character, granting him the title of Al-Siddiq, one who is truthful. When the Quraysh approached Abu Bakr (RA) upon the Prophet's (SAW) return after Isra' and Mi'raj, they said:

هَلْ لَكَ فِي صَاحِبِكَ يَزْعُمُ أَنَّهُ أُسْرِيَ بِهِ فِي اللَّيْلِ إِلَى بَيْتِ الْمُقَدَّسِ

“Have you heard that your friend imagined he was taken by night to the sacred house?”

He calmly questioned the naysayers:

أَوْ قَالَ ذَلِكَ

“Did he say that?”, and when they answered “Yes”, he further asserted:

لَئِنْ كَانَ قَالَ ذَلِكَ لَقَدْ صَدَقَ

“If he said it, he has spoken the truth.” And when they would not accept his answer, they continued pestering:

وَتُصَدِّقُهُ أَنَّهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّيْلَةَ إِلَى بَيْتِ الْمَقْدِسِ وَجَاءَ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُصْبِحَ

“Do you believe he went by night to the sacred house and returned before morning?”

He responded with affirmation:

نَعَمْ إِنِّي لِأُصَدِّقُهُ بِمَا هُوَ أَبْعَدُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ أُصَدِّقُهُ بِخَبَرِ السَّمَاءِ فِي عُذُودِ أَوْ رُوحَةٍ

“Yes. Absolutely, I believe what is even more astonishing than that: I believe he has received messages from heaven for everything he does.”

A true believer affirms with certainty – because our religion is one of certitude. When certitude is present in our undertakings in the Deen, there will be validity to everything we do. By possessing certainty, we construct stability and discover equilibrium.

Certitude, however, is not static: It fluctuates, akin to Imaan. We must continue to strengthen it and cultivate the virtue of patience in this journey as our faith is rooted in both patience and unwavering conviction. Abdullah ibn Mas’ud (RA) said:

عَبْدُ اللَّهِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ الصَّبْرُ نِصْفُ الْإِيمَانِ وَالْيَقِينُ الْإِيمَانُ كُلُّهُ

“Patience is half of faith and certainty is faith in its entirety.”

(Shu’ab al-Imān)

In a beautiful narration, Abu Hurairah (RA) shared a striking demonstration of patience and certitude. The Prophet (ﷺ) invited him into his house, where a bowl of milk was present on the table. To Abu Hurairah’s surprise (RA), the Prophet (ﷺ) instructed him to call the people of as-Suffa to

drink from the bowl before partaking himself. He recounted:

ذَلِكَ فَقُلْتُ وَمَا هَذَا اللَّبَنُ فِي أَهْلِ الصُّفَّةِ كُنْتُ أَحَقُّ أَنَا أَنْ أُصِيبَ مِنْ
هَذَا اللَّبَنِ شَرْبَةً أَتَقْوَى بِهَا

“I said to myself, ‘How will this little milk be enough for the people of As-Suffa?’ Though I was more entitled to drink from that milk in order to strengthen myself.”

When the group entered the Prophet’s (ﷺ) house, he ordered Abu Hurairah (RA) to hand the bowl of milk to the people of as-Suffa. As they drank from the bowl, Abu Hurairah (RA) waited patiently for his turn. After the group was finished, the Prophet (ﷺ) looked at him with a radiant smile and said:

" بَقِيْتُ أَنَا وَأَنْتَ. " اقْعُدْ فَاشْرَبْ "

"There remain you and I. Sit down and drink."

Abu Hurairah (RA) did as he was told until his belly was so full he refused another sip:

" لَا وَالَّذِي بَعَثَكَ بِالْحَقِّ، مَا أَجِدُ لَهُ مَسْلَكًا "

"No. by Allah Who sent you with the Truth, I have no space for it (in my stomach)."

Afterwards, the Prophet (ﷺ) proceeded to drink the remaining milk and praised Allah.

From this story, a profound lesson emerges: certainty brings power and dispels doubt. Despite Abu Hurairah’s (RA) doubt about the quantity of milk, the Prophet remained certain in his decision. Our doubts originate from Shaytaan and it is

imperative that we continuously combat them.

Whenever the Prophet (ﷺ) experienced doubt, he dispelled them by relying on a good support system. While visibly shaken by the revelation presented at the cave of Hira, the Prophet (ﷺ) found solace in Khadijah's comforting certitude. This showcases the importance of not confronting doubts in isolation, as those who are alone are more susceptible to the influence of Shaytan.

Developing effective strategies to overcome our doubts is important to our spiritual journey. This involves finding good companionship and reciprocating good friendship to others. Additionally, recognizing Shaytan's tactics and understanding his nature can aid in outsmarting him in order to fortify ourselves with unwavering conviction when confronted by doubt.

While we progress on this journey, certitude stands as our final destination. Here are a few practical tips on how to implement certitude in our daily lives:

1. Start by overcoming any doubts by looking into yourself and those that surround you.
2. Spend time in nature and reflect on creation in a meaningful way. Set a process to look at what Allah has created.
3. Look into the Qur'an and Hadith and formulate who Allah is. Then, implement its teachings and move forward.
4. Keep pushing yourself but bear in mind that you are never going to be perfect and you will make mistakes along the way.

5. Be gentle with yourself. Ihsan is not about perfection, it is about recognizing your imperfection.

6. Strive in a way that is certain and give your all to Allah. Try your best. When you strive for certitude, certitude will be given to you.

In taking these steps, we hope that Allah grants us Tawfiq and ease in the certainty we seek to build.



CHAPTER THREE:

BUILDING AN INTENTION

CHAPTER THREE:

Building an Intention



Every journey must begin with an intention. Intention facilitates comprehension and contemplation of our first steps. It serves as the internal affirmation of our forthcoming journey.

To build an intention, believers must reflect on their sincerity. Actions performed mechanically without mindfulness will not foster spiritual growth and Ihsan.

The Prophet (ﷺ) always made Du'a before any undertakings, proving awareness of his purpose and mindfulness of his actions. When Allah (SWT) is a part of everything we do, we receive His blessings. Through our Du'as, we acknowledge our dependence on Allah (SWT) and submit ourselves to His volition. In addition, our Du'as serve as a shield from missteps and misfortune along our journey.

Failing to establish an intention can divert you from your initial objectives and can lead you to act in accordance with others. This was evident among the polytheists of

Makkah when the Prophet (ﷺ) began Dawah. When he screamed atop Mount Safa, the Quraysh attested to his trustworthiness. Yes, the moment Abu Lahab exclaimed, “May you perish for this!”, and turned away in denial, the people followed his lead.

Our Deen does not prescribe actions based upon maintaining status quo and does not allude to the modern ailment of having the fear of missing out. We wouldn’t want to fall in the same category as the people of the past nations who worshiped idols on the pretext of following their forefathers.

As we are told in the Qur’an, it is disastrous when people blindly follow others or their own desires. As a means of prompting the community to confess their own misdeeds, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) approached them and his father to probe about the objects of their worship:

مَا تَعْبُدُونَ

“What do you worship?”

They responded:

تَعْبُدُ أَصْنَامًا فَنَنْظِلُ لَهَا عَافِيَةً

“We worship idols and remain devoted to them.”

He further asked:

هَلْ يَسْمَعُونَكُمْ إِذْ تَدْعُونَ؟ أَوْ يَنْفَعُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَضُرُّونَ؟

“Do they hear you when you complain? Or do they benefit you, or do they harm you?”

They responded:

بَلْ وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا كَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ

“No, but we found our forefathers doing so.”

(Surah As-Shu’ara, Verse 70-74)

Islam is not an inherent birthright. As Muslims, we have to continuously affirm our beliefs for ourselves and address evils within our hearts. Allah has given each one of us the intellect to act accordingly – we are our own individuals. So, we must individualize our own actions because, ultimately, we will be accountable for our actions, both virtuous and detrimental.

Once we've set our intentions, it is vital to remain devoted and overtime solidify our routines with good habits. Habits stem from three components; the routine (act), the cue (trigger) and the reward (craving). Understanding this loop gives us a framework we can use to make changes to our routine derived from our triggers and cravings.

The first step in building a positive habit and breaking a bad one is to identify your routine. Next, discern the trigger and craving pertaining to that action and incorporate consciousness into your routine. For example, if you wish to recite the Qu'ran daily, begin establishing a relationship with it. Your impulses will tempt you in various directions, but it's essential to persist in your goal. Transformation is a gradual journey that demands both patience and resolve. Therefore, refrain from being influenced by your emotions.



CHAPTER FOUR:

HAVING A WATCHFUL
HEART

CHAPTER FOUR:

Having A Watchful Heart



The most precious organ within our bodies is our hearts. When our hearts are sound, our lives will be enriched with light. On the contrary, if it is corrupted, our lives will be engulfed in darkness. Without proper nourishment, our hearts lose their vitality and without constant protection, they become tainted.

Vigilance of the heart (Muraqabah) means looking after our hearts to ensure our hearts can watch over us. Being vigilant is being proactive in protecting our hearts from harm. If we are not protective of the most important organ in our body, our hearts will become diseased. At every juncture, assessing our situations and engaging in Muraqabah is important for a watchful heart.

Are you taking the right step? Recognize the contents of your heart and evaluate its direction. Negative elements such as nafs, dunya, hawa and waswasa can persuade your decisions but if you are mindful of Allah (SWT), He will

protect you from them.

Allah (SWT) watches us at every moment – whether we are still or in motion. Our thoughts are often impacted by the noise that surrounds us and what we consume through our senses. To safeguard our hearts, it is necessary to withdraw from the worldly commotion and concentrate deeply on our internal states.

Discover a peaceful setting that encourages self-reflection and isolation, a place where you can draw strength for your interactions with the world. Take a moment to pause and reflect where that location will be. Where is your place of stillness? Where can you go to find pure silence?

Your location should be carefully selected, balancing accessibility with its capacity to foster serenity. Take into account different aspects of your surroundings, from the physical environment to the overall atmosphere, and remember to personalize the space to align with your preferences. For instance, you might find that nighttime is more conducive to calmness in your selected space as opposed to the daytime. All of these considerations play a crucial role in creating the optimal place of serenity tailored to your needs.

Once you've found your location, create a daily schedule that designates time for you to spend in your solitary space. Focus on what you are able to draw from this exercise as opposed to what isn't there. Take advantage of the moment and do this consistently.

Consciousness in moments of serenity help us recognize Allah (SWT). We have to know our Creator to build a relationship with Him. Allah (SWT) is always with us and connected to us. He engages with us based on who He is, not based on who we are.

It is beyond our capacity to truly fathom and rationalize

the extent of Allah's (SWT) mercy and power. We should not channel our interactions with others and experiences in this world dictate Allah's (SWT) interaction with us. There is nothing like Allah (SWT).

He tells us in Surah Ash-Shura:

فَاطِرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْاَنْعَامِ اَزْوَاجًا
يَذُرُّكُمْ فِيْهِ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهٖ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيْرُ

[He is] Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you from yourselves, mates, and among the cattle, mates; He multiplies you thereby. There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing. (Surah Ash-Shuraa:11)

Knowing Allah (SWT) allows us to find solace in Him rather than fear Him. The only fear we should have of Him is fear rooted in reverence. The Prophet's (ﷺ) fear of Allah (SWT) compelled him to pray all throughout the night until his feet were swollen. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

أَفَلَا أَكُوْنُ عَبْدًا شَكُوْرًا

“Shall I not be a grateful servant?”

Once we cultivate a positive connection with Allah (SWT), we instinctively avoid actions that might displease Him. We constantly seek avenues to draw ourselves closer to Him - this exemplifies the quality known as Haya (modesty).

Haya encompasses more than just modest clothing and averting one's gaze - Haya is a state of the heart that recognizes Allah's (SWT) presence. It compels us to behave obediently so that Allah (SWT) never witnesses us in a

compromising manner.

Being mindful of our actions is a component of achieving Ihsan in our actions. As the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

الإِحْسَانُ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

"Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not achieve this state of devotion, then (take it for granted that) Allah sees you."

A strong measure of our character is the actions we perform while in solitude. Recognize the true state of your heart and practice Muḥāsabah (self-accountability). There is always room to grow, but understanding your true self is a prerequisite to become the person you aspire to be.

If you find yourself struggling in your worship to Allah (SWT), Imam Al-Haddad shares a few useful tips:

1. Remind yourself that Allah (SWT) hears and sees you, and knows your secrets and secret conversations.
2. Increase your knowledge of Allah (SWT), and be wary of the two angels sitting on your shoulders, recording your good and evil deeds.
3. Remind yourself of the reality of death as a means of spiritual increase; your time in this world is limited.
4. Reflect on the afterlife. Understand the reality of heaven and hell. The belief in reward and punishment will allow us to be obedient or disobedient.

Be the soldier of your heart; don't let it be stained by darkness. Shield it with the Qur'an, righteous company,

service to Allah's (SWT) creation, and engaging in Muraqabah.



CHAPTER FIVE:

LOOKING
INWARD AND
OUTWARD

CHAPTER FIVE:

Looking Inward and Outward



Once we have learned to be vigilant with our hearts, it is time to direct our attention to the totality of our existence: Jasd or Badn (the physical body), Qalb (the spiritual heart), Ruh (the soul), Aql (the intellect), Iraada (sheer will), and Nafs (the ego).

Each of these elements is intricately interwoven with each other and ultimately perfect our form.

Allah (SWT) tells us:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

We have certainly created man in the best of stature

(Surah At-Tin:4)

While society emphasizes the external features of a human being, Islam underscores the importance of engaging with our inner state to attain a cleansed heart. Allah (SWT)

does not focus on our external forms but gazes at our hearts. When selecting His last messenger, He (SWT) picked the Prophet (ﷺ) because he had the best heart amongst mankind.

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ نَظَرَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْعِبَادِ فَوَجَدَ قَلْبَ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ خَيْرَ قُلُوبِ الْعِبَادِ فَاصْطَفَاهُ لِنَفْسِهِ فَابْتَعْتَهُ بِرِسَالَتِهِ ثُمَّ نَظَرَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْعِبَادِ بَعْدَ قَلْبِ مُحَمَّدٍ فَوَجَدَ قُلُوبَ أَصْحَابِهِ خَيْرَ قُلُوبِ الْعِبَادِ فَجَعَلَهُمْ وُزَرَءَ نَبِيِّهِ يُقَاتِلُونَ عَلَى دِينِهِ فَمَا رَأَى الْمُسْلِمُونَ حَسَنًا فَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ حَسَنٌ وَمَا رَأَوْا سَيِّئًا فَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ سَيِّئٌ

“Indeed, Allah looked at the hearts of the servants, and He found that the heart of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was the best among them, so He chose him for Himself and He sent him with His message. Then, He looked at the hearts of His servants after Muhammad, and He found that the hearts of his companions were the best among them.

Thus, He made them into the ministers of His Prophet, fighting for the sake of His religion. Whatever the Muslims view as good is good to Allah, and whatever they view as evil is evil to Allah.” (*Musnad Ahmad*)

Exploring our inward state lies in turning our attention to our hearts because that is where Allah (SWT) gazes at us.

While pointing at his heart, the Prophet (ﷺ) stated:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى أَجْسَادِكُمْ وَلَا إِلَى صُورِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ

Indeed, Allah does not look to your bodies nor to your faces but He looks to your hearts. (*Sahih Muslim*)

Social media implies that our value is determined by the quality of our physical features, thereby exerting pressure

to conform and seek validation. It causes havoc within the heart as everyone is desperately attempting to fit in. In Islam, we understand that the Believer is at peace when the heart is at ease. This is why peace will be one of the greatest rewards of Paradise, as its inhabitants will be in a state of inner and outer tranquility. Finding peace in this world can be challenging, but it is imperative we practice to cultivate it and permeate our essence.

To achieve peace, we should avoid relating our worth to external attributes and, instead, align ourselves to The One who believes in us and The One who gives for our gain. Allah (SWT) doesn't degrade us; He loves us more than a mother loves her child. He does not evaluate us according to society's standards, but gazes at us through our inner conditions.

Abu 'Inabah reported: The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ آيَةً مِنْ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ وَآيَتُهُ رَيْكُمُ قُلُوبُ عِبَادِهِ
الصَّالِحِينَ وَأَحَبُّهَا إِلَيْهِ أَلْيَنُهَا وَأَرْفَعُهَا

“Indeed, Allah has vessels among the people of the earth, and the vessels of your Lord are the hearts of His righteous servants. The most beloved of them to Him are the softest and most tender of them.” (*Musnad al-Shāmiyyīn lil-Ṭabarānī*)

The inner self is a gift that maintains our connection to Allah (SWT) and frequently influences our outward actions. The validity of the acts of worship we perform is dependent on the state of our hearts. Imam Al-Haddad highlights, “God never mentioned the inward and the outward in His Book without beginning with the inward.”

The Du'as the Prophet (ﷺ) made were often in relation to changing the internal self. Du'as are a reflection of the

current state of the heart, therefore are instrumental in causing positive change. The Prophet (ﷺ) used to supplicate:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ سَرِيرَتِي خَيْرًا مِنْ عَلَانِيَتِي وَاجْعَلْ عَلَانِيَتِي صَالِحَةً اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ صَالِحٍ
“O Allah, make what is within me better than my outward appearance and make my outward appearance righteous.”
(Sunan al-Tirmidhī)

Focusing only on our physical attributes while neglecting your inner essence means you are overlooking your heart. The heart can manifest both beauty and ugliness, which is why we should strive to nurture it with righteousness instead of evil.

Our inner state is intimately connected with our actions. If we engage in acts of disobedience, our inward state will struggle to flourish. One of the signs that we've strayed is when our inner state is in disarray. Believers are not immune to sinning and our errors do not make us evil; it is a phase that requires rectifying. The most vital component to overcome this struggle is resilience.

The Companions have struggled similarly; they surrendered to their vices on occasion but their hearts continued to strive towards Allah (SWT). Our struggles are a reminder to not be complacent in our relationship with Allah (SWT).

Believers must also refrain from passing judgement on others as we cannot ascertain who is beloved to Allah (SWT).

Narrated `Umar bin Al-Khattab:

أَنَّ رَجُلًا، عَلَى عَهْدِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ اسْمُهُ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ، وَكَانَ يُقَبَّبُ جِمَارًا، وَكَانَ يُضْحِكُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، وَكَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَدْ جَلَدَهُ فِي الشَّرَابِ، فَأَتَى بِهِ يَوْمًا فَأَمَرَ بِهِ فَجَلِدَ، فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ

اللَّهُمَّ الْعَنهُ مَا أَكْثَرَ مَا يُؤْتَى بِهِ. فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " لَا تَلْعَنُوهُ،
فَوَاللَّهِ مَا عَلِمْتُ أَنَّهُ يُحِبُّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ "

During the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ) there was a man called `Abdullah whose nickname was Donkey, and he used to make Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) laugh. The Prophet (ﷺ) lashed him because of drinking (alcohol). And one day he was brought to the Prophet (ﷺ) on the same charge and was lashed. On that, a man among the people said, "O Allah, curse him! How frequently he has been brought (to the Prophet (ﷺ) on such a charge)!" The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Do not curse him, for by Allah, I know for he loves Allah and His Apostle." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*)

Analyzing our hearts allows us to cleanse our hearts and grow spiritually. It is crucial we are mindful of our nafs, as these are the thoughts that lead to our desires and are detrimental to our lives. Our nafs are a looking glass to our true selves and we need to visualize where we are to recognize who we can potentially be.

To work on yourself, recognize these different types of thoughts within you:

Rabbani – Divine thoughts/thoughts which come from Allah (SWT). These are thoughts that are purely good.

Malakaani – Angelic or spiritual thoughts. These thoughts are good but slightly lesser in degree than the Rabbani thoughts.

It will allow us to perform additional good acts.

Nafsaani – Egoistic thoughts from the nafs. These thoughts convey the notion that there is no necessity to engage in additional virtuous deeds.

additional virtuous deeds.

Shaytaani – Satanic thoughts from Shaytan. These thoughts tell us to leave good acts completely.

We must be attentive of our inward and outward state by performing good deeds, publicly or privately, that contribute holistically to our beings. Only when we achieve harmony with ourselves will we feel complete. Imam Al-Haddad synthesizes, “If you cannot make your inward better than you outward, the least that you can do is to make them equal.”



CHAPTER SIX:

THE SIGNIFICANCE
OF TIME

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The Significance of Time



We transition from grasping the interwoven relationship between our inward and outward condition to understanding the utilization of time. Time is what encompasses Islam, Iman and Ihsan.

Time is the essence of our life and every transformative experience requires time. In the transient nature of the Dunya, our time is measured by the decisions we make.

As we journey through life, we are confronted with the reality that our time is limited. Barakah (blessings) in our time becomes evident when we dedicate ourselves to acts of worship. This practice, often referred to as Awrād or Wird, typically involves engaging in supererogatory prayers, reciting the Qur'an, seeking knowledge, engaging in invocation (dhikr), or contemplation (fikr). We are the

progeny of Adam (AS) and were created with the purpose of worshipping Allah (SWT).

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me. (Surah Adh-Dhariyat:56)

We have the opportunity to strengthen our relationship with Allah (SWT) by performing different Awrād. Allah (SWT) acknowledges the diversity of His creations, which is why He provided various avenues to worship Him. Therefore, we should not confine ourselves to rigid rituals, but engage with Him through various acts of worship.

We need to identify actions that resonate with our hearts and are within our capabilities. Islam is not rooted in the quantity of worship, but the quality of the deeds. It is not a matter of how much we do, but how well we perform our actions.

Once you've established an Awrād, your goal is to perform it consistently. Through consistency, you will grow stronger, enabling you to improve and expand upon your actions. With patience, you will maintain your pace and progress in your spiritual growth.

Narrated `Aisha: Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said,

" سَدِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا، وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ لَنْ يَدْخَلَ أَحَدَكُمْ عَمَلُهُ الْجَنَّةَ، وَأَنَّ أَحَبَّ الْأَعْمَالِ
أَدْوَمُهَا إِلَى اللَّهِ، وَإِنْ قَلَّ "

"Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately and know that your deeds will not make you enter Paradise, and that the most beloved deed to Allah is the most regular and constant even if it were little." (Sahih al-Bukhari)

When we heighten our commitment to Awrād, our love for Allah (SWT) and the Prophet (ﷺ) intensifies. Supererogatory prayers and following the Sunnah are potent means of attaining that.

There is a unique Barakah in performing Qiyaam and Tahajjud prayers consistently. The Prophet (ﷺ) often sought permission from Aisha to stand with Allah (SWT) in Tahajjud. The nightly prayer was initially Fard for the first generation of Muslims, meant to soften their hearts and elevate their connection to Allah (SWT).

The night prepares us for the harsh day by softening our hearts. And those who love Allah (SWT) make the night a component of their spiritual growth in the Dunya. Imam Al-Haddad quotes Shaykh Isma'il ibn Ibrahim al-Jabarti, "God has gathered every goodness into the night, and no sainthood was ever determined to be a saint except by the night."

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

"يَنْزِلُ اللَّهُ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ حِينَ يَمْضِي ثُلُثُ اللَّيْلِ الْأَوَّلِ فَيَقُولُ أَنَا الْمَلِكُ أَنَا الْمَلِكُ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَدْعُونِي فَاسْتَجِيبَ لَهُ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَسْأَلُنِي فَأُعْطِيَهُ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَسْتَغْفِرُنِي فَأَغْفِرَ لَهُ فَلَا يَزَالُ كَذَلِكَ حَتَّى يُضِيَءَ الْفَجْرُ."

Allah descends every night to the lowest heaven when one-third of the first part of the night is over and says: I am the Lord; I am the Lord: who is there to supplicate Me so that I answer him? Who is there to beg of Me so that I grant him? Who is there to beg forgiveness from Me so that I forgive him? He continues like this till the day breaks.

(Sahih Muslim)

While it is necessary to engage in worship during the day, it does not imply negligence of our obligations. It is

critical to allocate our time for self-care, spiritual practice and honoring our responsibilities.

Habitual activities can be rooted in spirituality by altering our intention when performing them. For example, there are many Du'as the Prophet (ﷺ) recited before performing daily tasks, highlighting the Barakah in uttering Du'as.

Du'as awaken our hearts and place them in a state of wakefulness. This awareness remains with us as we engage in deeds that shape our lives. Our inner disposition should constantly reflect this state. The Prophet (ﷺ) maintained vigilant even during moments of rest. When Aisha (RA) asked:

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَتَنَامُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُوتِرَ

"O Messenger of Allah! Do you sleep before having performed Witr?"

He responded:

يَا عَائِشَةُ إِنَّ عَيْنَيَّ تَنَامَانِ وَلَا يَتَامُ قَلْبِي

"O Aisha! Indeed, my eyes sleep but my heart does not sleep." (*Jami` at-Tirmidhi*)

Everything we do should incorporate an element of worship. In our tradition, actions are rewarded through our intentions. The Prophet (ﷺ) always had clear intentions prior to his actions:

"إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى"

"Action is but by intention and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended."

(*Bukhari and Muslim*)

This hadith provides a valuable perspective: every intention we attach to a deed carries its own merit. This implies we have the ability to form multiple intentions for our deeds. However, the action is qualified to be an act of worship based on the intention that is rooted within our hearts.

The barakah of time can be sensed through the actions we perform. The actions can consist of smiling at people, visiting the sick, taking care of orphans, tending to our parents', reading the Book of Allah (SWT), etc. The more effort we put into our deeds, the more Barakah we will experience in our lives.

Allah (SWT) tells us the attributes of a Mu'min, are those who avoid things that are لغو, referring to things that are detrimental or futile. To be successful on this journey, a Believer must acquire the skill of abstaining from activities that serve no purpose.

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿1﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ﴿2﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿3﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ ﴿4﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ﴿5﴾

Successful indeed are the believers, The ones who in their prayer are submissive, And the ones who avoid idle talk, And those who pay the zakat, And those who guard their chastity.

(Surah Mu'minun, Verse 1-5)

Perform a Muhasabah of your routine and list actions that are Khayr (good) versus those that are laghu and shar (gossiping, backbiting, lying). Then, construct a calendar that allocates your time based on meaningful experiences spread throughout the day.

Believers should always engage in spiritual growth. Our progress should not be influenced by our inner desires (nafs) or negative influences (Shaytan). It's crucial we

we recognize that heedlessness (ghaflah) obstructs remembrance (dhikr). If we find ourselves in a state of heedlessness, it signifies our hearts are dormant.

In his book, ‘The Hardness of The Heart’, Dhūl-Nūn al-Miṣrī, a spiritual master within our tradition, tells us five actions that will combat ghaflah:

1. Endure in fasting; Through fasting, we re-nourish our inner state.
2. Wake up the heart via Qiyaam; The night is the most blessed time and we should make our stance longer in the last third of the night.
3. Refrain from the prohibited; The haram impacts our inward development and places a dark spot in our hearts.
4. Connect to the Qur’an; Holding the Book of Allah subsides ghaflah and maintains our hearts in a wakeful state.
5. Engage in acts of service.

We must be conscious of how we utilize our time and cherish the opportunities given to us. We should give preference to our responsibilities while allocating specific time slots for our extracurricular activities. And in between, we should dedicate time to various Awrād throughout the day to engage our hearts in spirituality. Inshā’Allah, this will help create a structure that infuses our days with divine blessings and good favor



Purifying YOUR HEART

Purifying Your Heart is an inspiring read that explores the transformative journey of Tazkiah. The reader embarks on a spiritual journey of understanding the essence of the heart and how to cleanse it. Including numerous lessons and principles derived from the Quran and Hadith on the importance of a pure heart, as it is the key to attaining spiritual enlightenment and closeness to Allah SWT.

Imam Khalid Latif is a University Chaplain for New York University, and Executive Director of the Islamic Center at NYU. Under his leadership, the Islamic Center at NYU became the first ever established Muslim student center at an institution of higher education in the United States. Imam Latif's exceptional dedication and ability to cross interfaith and cultural lines on a daily basis brought him recognition throughout the city, so much so that in 2007 Mayor Michael Bloomberg nominated Imam Latif to become the youngest chaplain in history of the New York City Police Department at the age of 24.

Most recently, Imam Latif was selected as one of 60 NYC leaders to serve on Mayor Bill De Blasio's Transition Team, helping to recommend and select individuals for key roles in the current NYC administration and also appointed to a "Task Force to Combat Hate" by NYC Public Advocate Tisch James to deal with the rise in Islamophobic, anti-semitic and anti-sikh sentiment in NYC.