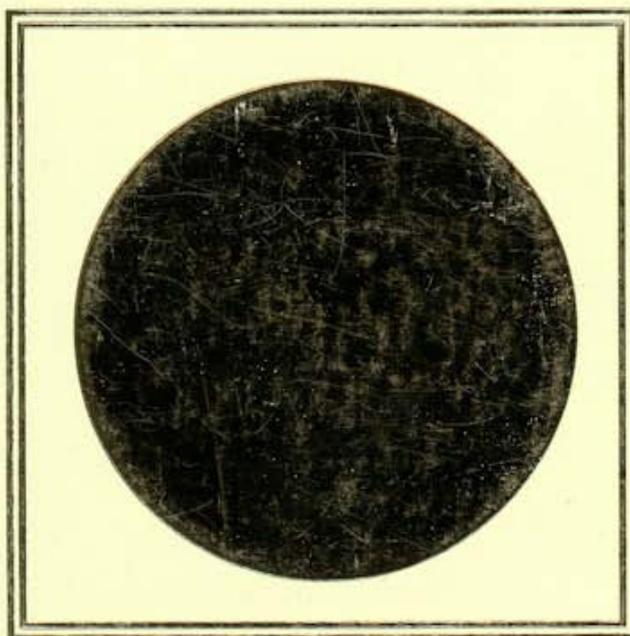


# Beginning's End

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri





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## BOOK DESCRIPTION

**Beginning's End** is a contemporary outlook on the Sufi sciences of self-knowledge, intended for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The author holds that truth has no end and is eternal, and that is why human beings will seek total freedom, of which material freedom is only a small part. The final freedom is a natural, spontaneous submission and being connected to timelessness, yet experiencing time.

“This book was written mainly to highlight the truth that if you wish to nourish the heart and nurture the light within, you need to make structural adjustments to your way of life as well as the all-consuming material drive. The book is a challenge to our modern lifestyle that is out of balance.

Now it is being reprinted as the gap widens between the sustainable inner happiness and the ever-increasing outer frenzy.”

– *from the* Preface to the Reprinted Edition

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **PREFACE TO THE REPRINTED EDITION**

Originally this book was written when I was living in the United States and had met many people with a strong spiritual thirst but who were completely engulfed in the competitive world of ambition and material excellence. I had realized that many of these people preferred an esoteric and less demanding path than that which I had been committed to.

This book was written mainly to highlight the truth that if you wish to nourish the heart and nurture the light within, you need to make structural adjustments to your way of life as well as the all-consuming material drive. This book is a challenge to our modern lifestyle that is out of balance.

Now it is being reprinted as the gap widens between the sustainable inner happiness and ever-increasing outer frenzy.

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri  
May 2001, White River  
South Africa

## INTRODUCTION

All of us are students of self-knowledge in varying degrees of commitment and intensity. Some of us are concerned with knowledge of physical and biological matters; others with subtler, inner realms of meaning. But whatever form our search takes, we are all seeking the ultimate knowledge that has brought about our individual destinies. Our present moment, our present situation, constitutes our momentary destiny. This momentary destiny is the result of the interaction between the laws that govern existence and our individual wills, an interaction that results in a balance of these factors. The moment is the only reality of which we can be totally certain, subjectively and objectively.

The truth of 'now' is what human beings share, and 'now' is beyond time. It is not subject to the moment just past or the one to come. It is simply now – and the now that one experiences is the product of the past and the cause of the future. Now is both independent of and connected to past and future. This truth is the root of the dynamism of cause and effect and of the balance of duality in this existence.

Absolute, pure 'now' is that state of balance achieved when the pointer on the scale of duality is at the exact mid-point. When this occurs, each side is in total harmony and balance with its opposite. Duality is nullified and only pure, blissful 'now' exists.

We are born into this world in order to grow in experience and wisdom and to recognize the one unifying principle of Reality. We may recognize it in a limited way – for example, when we see ecological harmony – or we may know it in a more pervasive way when we experience the overwhelming presence of the Creator of all.

However we look at it, we must still ask, 'Having recognized the unifying principle of Reality, what comes next in our search for the purpose of existence?' After we have gained a measure of wisdom, wealth, harmony and security in this life, we then ask, 'Is there meaning beyond this? Is the recycling of the body to the earth from which it came the end of all experience?' The majority of us avoid this question, or try to rationalize it away, instead of confronting it totally and fearlessly.

Everything acts in accordance with its own nature. For example, steel belongs to the earth as iron oxide. Because of its strength, we use steel to construct bridges. But the moment a bridge is raised, the steel starts moving toward its destiny, back to dust; thus, it starts rusting. If we want to preserve the bridge, we have to balance the natural inclination of steel to return to its source with our human desire to keep the bridge from rusting. We cannot, however, pretend that the bridge will remain forever. Steel belongs to the earth, and it will fulfill its destiny; man belongs to his Creator, and wherever he finds himself, whatever he does, his natural disposition will lead him toward the knowledge of his Creator.

Experience is the meeting of two opposites. This meeting point is the human heart, for in it we experience love and hate, hope and fear, peace and agitation, wakefulness and sleep, security and insecurity. The heart of man contains the entire spectrum of experience; whenever we appeal to the heart, we find a common denominator in humanity. Otherwise, our interaction becomes transactional or hypocritical, based on economics, politics and other man-made disciplines. Although these disciplines have their place, they are limited because they do not lead us to the awareness that whatever appears negative in existence is really in harmony and balance with the total ecology. Because we do not know this, we see incongruity, imbalance, confusion and division in life.

The philosophy of our spiritual model is based on the existence of a merciful Reality that transcends time, encompasses Its creation from beyond time and in time, and creates out of love in order that It may be discovered. Man's purpose is to discover the one and only all-pervading Reality that encompasses his existence. When we are mindful of our purpose, we find a common denominator in everyone's aspirations, hopes, disappointments and problems. All of our experiences – positive and negative – are part of the process of self-knowledge. The root of our behavior can be explained by viewing it through the binoculars of the divine unity of the one Creator.

This work is a collection of glimpses which reveal the unifying substructure that underlies diverse experiences and actions, which is, itself, the truth. It is presented in the hope of confirming to the sincere seeker that the ultimate discovery is that all creation, attributes and actions, stem from and are sustained by the one Source Whose nature is independent of creation.

A taste of the vast ocean of the Oneness increases the thirst of the seeker. Ultimately, the boundary between the seeker and the sought, the questioner and the questioned, and the effect and the cause becomes so faint that one is immersed in the joyful intoxication of the complete beauty and absolute harmony where subject and object have merged.

## **PART I: THE PATH OF DYNAMIC SUBMISSION**

### ***Chapter 1: The Seeker***

The term ‘gnosis’, ultimate self-knowledge, indicates a state that has been attained by certain individuals throughout the ages. The gnostic considers that all prophets and all truly awakened men and women have attained self-knowledge. The great master of gnosis, Ali ibn Abi Talib, was asked: ‘What is gnosis?’ He characterized it as involving purity, abandonment and the search for the one Entity behind multiplicity. This search leads to the awareness of man’s inner poverty and basic nothingness, which leads to the further recognition of the completeness and perfection of whatever situation he may be in.

In every age, men of self-knowledge have existed who have known that the foundations of this knowledge could not be acquired intellectually. These men knew that self-knowledge is accessible only to those who are prepared to undergo a profound existential transformation in order to acquire mastery over themselves. The names differ – the *sanyasi* in India, the gnostic in the West, the monks of the Far East – but the path is one. In the spiritual traditions of the Near East, from the earliest dawn of civilization, we see the same quest for self-knowledge. It is known in Arabic as *tasawwuf*, or Sufism, and the follower of this Way is called a Sufi. The origin of this word is *safa*, which means purity.

As one embarks upon the path, one becomes aware that one’s present mental and physical condition arises from a variety of factors, ranging from the genetic to the environmental. Some of these factors are inherited; some are acquired; most of them can be changed. Some of the subtler influences on us, such as changes in the radiation in the atmosphere, are barely detectable. However, our recognition of any outward factor, whether subtle or obvious, depends on its existence within us. For example, if we have no love within our hearts, we cannot recognize love outside ourselves. It is the same with anger, violence or insecurity. We are conscious of all these factors through a higher consciousness in each of us which unites us.

If this higher pure consciousness is taken to its conclusion, its foundation is the basis of the Unity of mankind. The state, therefore, that each of us is in, each in his or her own internal

cosmology, is a result of the influences and factors we have mentioned. They intermingle and superimpose on each other to create what we call 'I'. From a scientific or causal point of view, our overall state is, therefore, perfect, since it results from a combination of actions and reactions and the superimposition of various layers of systems.

### *Separation and Unity*

From the gnostic standpoint, there is no separation. The concept of separation exists only for the sake of illustration and outward experience. It unfolds a situation that is completely unified. My inner state is completely unified, but if I were to describe my overall condition, I might say that my back is aching from too much travel and my stomach is upset by the altitude. These conditions result from and are revelations of the natural laws of the universe.

We deserve everything that happens to us for we get what we deserve, not what we desire. What we deserve is decreed; not superstitiously by some supernatural power, but by the manifestation of Reality through a combination of factors, both obvious and subtle, resulting in the final state. Every system is governed by a set of laws. In the case of a falling stone, for example, the gravitational force is predominant. Other factors may also influence it minutely, but every system has a limitation that governs its bounds.

As we have said, our present state results from many factors. All of these factors superimposed, collected, are connected together resulting in one overall state. Yet, for the majority of us, our inward condition is at best confused. We react to our inner confusion by blaming our state on some external factor, such as the weather or the government. The more intellectual among us may write up long, complex dissertations about the cause of our current situation. The seeker's objective is to reach a state of awareness so that he or she sees the perfection of the state he or she is in.

*The Desire to Know*

According to the gnostic teachings, Reality, or Allah, wanted to be known; therefore He created. Thus the purpose of creation is to come to know. If we set out on the path of self-knowledge, then we can only experience growth and increase.

One of the names of God in Arabic is *Rabb*, meaning Lord. This word is related to the verb *rabba*, which means to bring up to its full potential. One of the responsibilities of the Lord, therefore, is to bring people to their full potential.

If our objective is to know, we have to begin with an understanding of ourselves and our immediate situation. If I examine clearly, for example, the reasons why I lost my job – a difficult boss, unstable market conditions, a move to new premises – the loss will be quite understandable. If we simply act as pure observers and remove from our hearts any subjective psychologizing, we are bound to see perfection in every situation – however personally detrimental or unpleasant it may be. If we consider any situation purely from the viewpoint of the creational laws that govern it, we will see the perfect harmony behind it. This does not mean that we should condone destructive behavior, but rather that we should observe the absolute perfection inherent in any situation, agreeable or disagreeable. Once we have reached this state of awareness, we have made a start on the path of self-knowledge.

When we see greed, or any other emotion, arising within us – for example, in the course of a business transaction – our very witnessing of our state means it is less likely to afflict us. If we are spontaneously conscious of the anger rising in us, it is less likely that the anger will overwhelm us. Once we are able to recognize these emotions as they occur, we are less likely to be controlled by them.

*Recognition of Bounds*

The next stage in self-knowledge is the recognition of bounds. Every system exists within certain set boundaries. The simpler the system, the easier it is for us to observe the boundaries clearly. In the plant kingdom, for example, a severe frost may cause the end of a species or bring about

some mutation. The human condition is more complex because we are able to stretch the bounds that apply to us. Our physical bounds are wider than those of other forms of creation, while our inner bounds are wider still. We may, for instance, allow anger and hatred to fester within us for years before they erupt. If we do not recognize the bounds of systems, we will create disturbance in an ecology that inherently contains its programs of checks and balances. The lack of restrictions in society today has resulted in a confusion that is a reflection of our reality. The prevalent *laissez-faire* attitude means that we no longer know where a thing begins and where it ends.

Nature itself extends courtesies towards everything within it. These courtesies are bounds and they will be maintained because the laws of creation are eternal. The cosmos began from a point of non-awareness in non-time. You and I also began from a point of non-awareness. We were not aware of our existence in the womb, but awareness grew within us.

There are certain laws of the universe, such as the law of gravity, that will never change. Another is the law of action and reaction. If we give love and fairness to others, we will eventually receive it in return. It may not happen immediately, for we are tested by ourselves in order to know the extent of the purity of our intentions. We are programmed to learn the truth. The more sensitive and connected we are, the more quickly the truth will unveil itself, and insight and cognizance will prevail.

Recognizing that the laws of creation are absolute is part of our growth. We have freedom of choice, for there is no such thing as an experientially fixed state. This would be tyrannical, and creation emanated from love. It emanated from One and is permeated by Oneness. However, the laws of creation do not change simply because we are well-meaning. The law of gravity did not prevent the arrows from striking the Prophet Muhammad in the battle of Uhud. The afflictions of the Prophet Jesus did not cease because he kept on singing the one and only song of Reality, irrespective of what happened to him, as had every other prophet or reflector of truth.

Each of us has the potential to reflect the entire creation. Our nature is to want to share; that is why we cluster in cities, nations and cultures. We basically gravitate towards those who reinforce our own experience and knowledge, and erect barriers against those who do not. Different

cultures, nations and movements are all attempts to unite because most of us do not realize that everything is already united. We do not see unity because we experience everything in duality – we see life and think of death. We know poverty and wealth, hunger and satiety, love and hate. We all know these opposites, and we all want to see how everything interconnects. In other words, we are all seekers.

Everyone is a seeker of Truth but few know it. Everyone is in submission – the true meaning of *Islam* – for we are in submission to the ultimate experience of death. The only certainty we all have is that daily we are moving closer towards death. None of us wants to die and most of us are afraid of death. This, too, is a reflection of the Eternal Truth, for the Absolute, Higher Consciousness, Allah, is for ever. We have the seed of that truth in us; therefore we want foreverness. Our very desire for that foreverness arises from our perverted love of God.

It is not possible to move along the path of knowledge if we do not begin to recognize the bounds and treat them with courtesy and respect. People are now beginning to realize that the serious state the world is in today arises from our neglect of these eternally fixed bounds. The very fact that more than half the world today is in poverty whilst the minority suffers from overabundance reflects our abuse of boundaries. We claim to be scientific, yet we have arrogantly forgotten those scientific laws that govern the subtler elements of being human beings. If members of a family cannot live in harmony, how can they influence their neighbors to live in harmony? It is not possible. The sage knows that the vessel will ooze with what is in it. Show me the way a man lives and what he eats and I will tell you who he is.

Many of us attribute the desperate situation of the world to colonialism, capitalism, Zionism, communism or some other 'ism'. This situation results, however, from nothing other than failure to respect the bounds of reality.

The last few decades in the West have seen the erosion of the moral fiber that was behind the great experiment of establishing these countries. People no longer cultivate their inner awareness of these bounds and their meanings. Once we become conscious of our transgression, we see that every action has a reaction. Whenever we transgress, we eventually pay a price; there is no escape from this natural law.

*Freedom and Bounds*

In reality there is no freedom. If we could be aware of all that is happening around us, each action we take would be specific and appropriate to a particular moment in time. We do not have the capacity physically or morally to absorb the entire spectrum of Reality; however, the seeker of self-knowledge seeks to gain that capacity.

That is why the man of knowledge is in the right place at the right time doing the right thing. His knowledge comes from the recognition that there is one guiding principle that permeates everything and that everything is contained within its web. This web is tangible and we can know it if we want to. Its root is the unseen and its branches are the visible, physical manifestations.

So the reason why we are in such chaos today is very simple. We have allowed everything to happen in the name of freedom and ‘open-mindedness’ without placing restrictions on our behavior. Everything has its bounds, but we think we are gods, not recognizing, as the Master Ali said, that we contain the meaning of Godness within us. God will not interfere haphazardly; He will not change the law of gravity, for example. Yet we in our arrogance may forget this and try to defy the immutable laws. We may be destroyed for we are subject to these laws and not above them.

The love of Reality for us is such that we are given the freedom to transgress the bounds so as to recognize the limits and respect them. Yet, it is because of these transgressions that we find our lives in such disarray. We end up being isolated, selfish, and more dependent on our bank accounts than on the relationships we have with our friends, neighbors and countrymen. The lives of our forefathers were grounded in relationship, and they lived far fuller and happier lives.

Look at us now – the average working man may struggle for the whole year so that he can take a two-week fishing holiday – yet he could spend all year fishing. It does not cost anything. We fluctuate from one madness to another in our confusion, from heated anger to emotional, romantic love, and we call ourselves a scientific society.

Modern technology has given birth to amazing new complexities, some of which we are renouncing as we discover that technology feeds on itself. If we do not begin to see what is happening in each one of us, we will continue to apply artificial values to situations, not recognizing that the entire world and whatever is happening in it is knowable, because it is within us. If the entire cosmos is not contained within us in a meaningful sense, how else could we conceive of it?

We can point to only one thing at a time. If we are angry, we cannot be calm at the same time. If we are anxious about ourselves, we cannot show compassion at that same moment. Because of our current state of disunity, we are far more superstitious. We blame mishaps on luck and constantly seek the supernatural, not recognizing that the supernatural is only the natural which is not understood.

We are constantly falling prey to one 'ism' or another, not realizing that what we want to know is contained within us. We have either been given improper guidance, or we are weak and improperly disciplined. Therefore, we do not progress in self-knowledge, which is the only knowledge that is going to give us balance and show us why there is this apparent conflict within us.

We experience one state after another. A state of expansion is always followed by a state of contraction. How can an economy continuously grow in one country in the world unless it shrinks somewhere else? If people are suffering elsewhere, we may not be fully cognizant of their plight. We cannot have the experience of life unless we have the experience of death. We cannot fully appreciate the solace of friendship unless we experience loneliness. The man who lives his life at one extreme can have his life balanced only by the opposite extreme. Thus, if we really want to know the meaning of freedom, we must know the meaning of complete constriction. This is what all spiritual paths, all true religions, have taught.

Ultimately, to reach the goal of self-realization, all men and women of knowledge have to go through a period of reflection and retreat. It does not have to be in a cave in the Himalayas or in some other remote location. It is possible for us to have, here and now, the same experience as the great masters of history.

However a quiet, remote environment is very helpful until the seeker is strong enough to retreat into his inner cave, even though he may be in the midst of the market-place. In reality, no place is more spiritual than another. It is we ourselves who create situations from which we then have to flee in order to reach some level of quietude.

### *Ignoring the Bounds*

We say we are a tolerant society. But what this really means is that we have inadvertently allowed all kinds of limiting factors to emerge, both inwardly and outwardly. Nature will recycle those who have gone beyond its bounds. The disease AIDS illustrates how nature comes to its own rescue. Respect for boundaries is part of scientific law. But through our ignorance, we have transgressed this law and have rationalized our mistakes.

We all want to be free, but we do not realize that we have inflicted tyranny upon ourselves by not recognizing the wisdom of the duality of existence. From the moment you and I are conceived, we are subject to the opposites – health and illness, growth and shrinkage, life and death. This seeming confusion is reconcilable. If we want to know, we will come to know, and the more we want to know, the more we will know. But if we are insincere, our desire for knowledge becomes a game and can even lead us to such transgressions as pursuing the occult.

Another transgression common in today's society is an undue concern with the future. People generally become concerned with knowing the future because they are not content with the now. But if we peek into the future, we are likely to cause ourselves distress. If we recognize with amazement, however, the perfection of reality as we can experience it right now and as it emanates from a pure heart, we will not worry about the future, for time will cease to exist for us. Indeed, there are people who are completely and soberly drunk with the ecstasy of the moment.

We contain within us the Book of Knowledge, which was engraved in the womb of our mothers at the moment of conception. This all-encompassing inner book gives us ultimate knowledge – provided we want to look at it. If we do, we will find that the knowledge of bounds and the fear of transgression is within us. The most useable book we can read as a guide is the ultimate book, the Qur`an. The most perfect being whose footsteps we can attempt to follow is the last of the

prophets, Muhammad. But we don't come to ultimate knowledge merely by reading a book or following a guide.

We came into the world alone and we will go out of it alone; in the meantime we are totally responsible for our actions, and with that ultimate responsibility comes ultimate freedom. But our society has failed to recognize even the normal moral bounds that have been common throughout the ages in every spiritual teaching. Instead, we have transgressed according to every system's standards. We have become so hypocritical that even our discussions about gnosis, or the inner journey, have become superficial. The reason for this superficiality is that we do not know where to begin.

We have ended up living in confusion and hypocrisy because over a period of time we have locked ourselves into a tight corner from which we do not know how to escape. We live under more and more layers of self protection and end up being completely isolated, even though we may be surrounded by people. The reason for the increasing popularity of skiing and gliding and similar sports is the illusion of freedom and escape which they bring. Everyone wants that freedom, so what is it that keeps our hearts from soaring?

### *Freedom of Inner Detachment*

The word for heart in Arabic is *qalb*; the root of it is *qalaba* – to turn, to revolve unattached. This means it is not desirous or expectant, or attached to any direction; it turns freely. In our society we often equate detachment with irresponsibility. But correct behavior is based on inner detachment accompanied by outer attachment and adherence to the laws of nature. Not keeping to these laws will cause us only affliction. Even if we do not pay for our mistakes when we commit them, we will eventually reap the fruits of our actions.

We must recognize our bond with Reality; we must see that we are totally connected and that there is no separation. You and I appear to be different because of our outer physical differences, but inwardly we are the same. It is this sameness that connects the entire race of mankind. If we do not understand this we will continue to look for a quick formula to resolve our difficulties because this is the age of instant solutions.

We are now suffering from its side-effects: instant wealth, instant happiness, instant friendship. How can friendship in the true sense grow instantaneously? That could only happen if it is based on the ultimate foundation which is the love and knowledge of Truth. Then we will find everyone in harmony because there will be true inner courtesy, not merely outer courtesy.

The truth is always there, yet we have inadvertently been seeking false truth, in the name of convenience or economic progress or whatever reason motivates us. If we do not act in accordance with the laws that govern existence, we will pay a great price. We will eventually suffer from our mistakes individually and collectively. It is inevitable, for every action has an equal and opposite reaction. The more we see this fact and the more we live in the present, the more we experience timelessness and the moment touches the infinite. At this point we are exposed to the knowledge of Reality and the system that constitutes it; so we recognize wisdom in Reality's diversity, and unity in its infinite Oneness.

When people experience this sense of timelessness, beyond expression, they are commonly said to be 'awakened' or 'realized'. All of us have the potential to see everything as it is but if we do not want this knowledge, we will end up gathering worthless information instead. If we are not schooled in the outer, how can we train ourselves in the inner? We cannot start the inward journey unless we begin with the outer. The inner moves outward and the outer ends up containing the inner.

We begin by wanting the truth and end up by being aware and totally responsible. This correctness is not subject to religiosity, but rather to the divine laws that all the prophets tried to express, culminating with the completed message of the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad.

### *The Teachings of Muhammad*

It is the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad that we are trying to follow in order that we may live better, happier lives now. The teachings of Muhammad, like the teachings of all men of knowledge of Divine Unity, are not separate from their lives.

Muhammad's life was based on spontaneous, dynamic submission. He was completely interconnected with and aware of his environment, of the past and the future. He lived in a non-time zone within time. He was subject to all the biological fluctuations, to wakefulness and sleep, and all the other experiences that every other human being is subjected to. He was the same as everyone else; yet he was different from everyone else. His similarity was based on the sharing of experiences and consciousness. His differences sprang from his indescribable degree of awareness, and his living of each moment in true submission, in a perpetual and spontaneous state of adoration and absolute glorification of the Creator. His reverence for all creation, his desire not to harm life or to change it adversely, led him to enhance whatever situation he found himself in. His life was an instrument of evolution, in a spiritual sense, not in a Darwinian sense; he helped everything along its path towards its unfolding, towards the realization of its higher potential.

Dynamic submission leads to this state; submission itself brings about unity, and dynamism makes one's life rich and blissful because that is the prescribed path of nature. Outwardly Muhammad was subject to all that we experience. He had moments of comfort and satisfaction, of apparent bewilderment and of reflection. However, a man who lived the moment totally had access to that non-time state which is utter peace; so his interior life was without doubt that of complete contentment, harmony and peace.

His outer life, however, reflected the law of opposites in this world – health and illness, acceptance and non-acceptance. Muhammad encouraged those who were following the true path and he admonished those who strayed from it.

Muhammad never allowed people to exalt him. He often reminded them that he was a mortal, born of a mother, like all other human beings. He lived in this world but he was of another world. He was intensely alive, dynamic, and scintillating, yet he said, 'If you want to see a dead man walking, look at me.' He was dead to ambition, to expectations, to attachments, to fears about the provision of material necessities, to personal anger and jealousies. But he was alive to the ever-living Reality and Its actions manifested in this existence. He was a true slave in perpetual, spontaneous adoration and worship, moving where the winds of his destiny took him, for he knew that all is from God, by God's grace, and all returns to God.

Muhammad's teachings grew out of his life, and what came through him was the message of the Creator, the Qur'an – the eternal message, applicable in all circumstances, at all times. Because his life and his teachings were one and the same, his example has been followed by millions throughout the ages.

There have been thousands of prophets throughout history from different cultures, different ages – prophets of plenty, prophets of scarcity, prophets who harnessed visible and invisible powers, prophets who ploughed the land and taught only two or three among the poor, prophets who traveled, and prophets who simply sat and spent much time in invocation. All of these prophets have been part of the divine plan. What is the meaning of prophethood and messengerhood, and why is the emergence of prophets necessary?

### *The Prophetic Teachings*

A prophet is the culmination of a mutational event that manifests clearly as a link between the past and the future, the seen and the unseen, this world and other worlds, the Creator and creation. Prophets are beings who are genetically and environmentally able to transmit, in a humanly realizable manner, the purpose of creation and the path that leads to its knowledge and fulfillment. As teachers, they are masters of the self. Yet as masters of life their very lives manifest the perfection and the truth of dynamic submission. All the prophets were in submission to their Creator. They are transforming agents, the catalysts in the perfect formula.

### **Adam**

All prophets discovered their submission to the one Reality with their awakening. The first mutational situation in creation was the rise of consciousness in man. The Prophet Adam was in total harmony with creation in a non-worldly sense. His state was one of total tranquility and harmony, and primal, blissful existence. He began to question. The rise of the questioning of the ego, desire and expectation aroused man's consciousness. With that arousal came responsibility and the need for discrimination.

The next stage that Adam went through was the gaining of knowledge of what was good for him and what was not, which desires were useful and which were destructive. Desire for the

knowledge of the spiritual path leads to a healthy drive in man, but desire for worldly possessions or material or physical relationships brings disappointment. If desire for worldly things does not bring disappointment in this existence, it will bring disappointment at some other time.

Then Adam learned the art of submission. But neither the art of submission nor man's awareness of it could have been developed without the awakening of man's higher consciousness. The faculty of reasoning was dormant until the light of consciousness shone. Prior to his arousal, Adam was in a state of non-awareness in the garden of pure bliss.

Adam learned that the all-encompassing Reality enabled him to commit errors, recognize his (Adam's) dislike of their outcome, and start afresh. Through his dynamic submission, Adam obtained the keys to heaven and hell. By accepting the truth of his nature, his Adamic nature, his human nature, which can lead him astray, as well as by accepting his divine heritage, he obtained the keys to conscious choice. The result of his choices could now be used to delineate the bounds of the path, to avoid transgressing these bounds, and to adhere to the path, thereby re-entering the garden with the key.

### **Noah**

As a man of knowledge, the Prophet Noah saw that the actions of his people were so ecologically unsound that nature itself was going to revenge and redress the imbalance. Noah foresaw the disaster that was coming, so he started in the most rational way he could to avert it. He attempted to change their actions so that their correct behavior would create a new wave to neutralize the impending disaster. But after 550 years of weeping for his people – the name Noah is from the Arabic word, *naha*, to weep, to cry or mourn – of imploring them to mend their ways, all that Noah could do was to save himself, his close ones and the animals of the land. Final destiny, once it sets in, cannot be changed.

## **Abraham**

The great and glorious Prophet Abraham met his final test when there lingered the possibility of inner attachment to his son. Prophet Abraham was given this most precious object of his affection in his old age. But a subtle doubt arose within him about the totality of his submission to his Lord. The test that arose from that doubt was the vision to sacrifice his son, Ishmael. Following the voice of truth within, Abraham began the sacrificial act. Doubt rose again, this time disguised as the voice of reason. Why should Ishmael be sacrificed? What fault had the son committed?

Abraham's test was not about sacrifice or his love for his child; rather it was about transmutation and transcending form. Would he be able to detach himself from his precious and innocent son for what he knew was the all-encompassing Reality? When the moment for the sacrifice came, Abraham's decision to transcend attachment interlinked matter and energy, which were already interlinked in the subtle realm, and manifested in the appearance of the ram.

Once the decision was made and he actually embarked upon the act, the physical sacrifice was no longer relevant. Once intention and action are united, the matter is as though done. However, there is a danger that man's weakness and subtle hypocrisy may set in and stop at the level of intention. It is not enough to love only with intention; intention must be manifested in action. The inner and outer must connect.

The Prophet Abraham was totally determined to make the sacrifice and it was only when the barrier of that determination was crossed that the actual act was transferred to the ram, and not before. If we wish to emulate Abraham or any of the prophets, we must fuse our pure intentions with our actions, our worthy desires with achievements. Otherwise we will live unfulfilled and disconnected.

## **Moses**

The Prophet Moses went through a similar self-discovery. He was inspired to deliver the message of Divine Unity to the ruling tyrant of the land. The human side of him questioned and doubted his ability. He said, 'Send me with my brother; he can speak well,' for apparently Moses suffered from stuttering.

Moses did not know what to do in the face of the mighty powers of the magicians. But his Lord said, 'You have their signs and powers and they are from me. It is not you. Draw your hand out and it will dazzle them.' Bewildered and uncertain, Moses approached the enemy. Suddenly that total submission in unity took place and Moses' beingness entered into that interspace between the seen and the unseen, between the human tyranny before him and the absolute slavery to his Lord to whom he was so magnificently bound.

So the man of true submission is no longer in a state that we, lesser mortals can describe and explain. The man of unity has already placed his investments in God's vault. He has put his ultimate treasure (his life) into God's hands; he has utterly, unquestionably, totally submitted; he is a dynamic flux in this existence – from moment to moment, from day to day, up and down, well treated or mistreated, respected or disrespected.

With signs and powers bestowed upon him the Prophet Moses walked with the tribe of Israel. No sooner did they cross the Red Sea, however, than the tribe of Israel started craving manufactured idols. As soon as Moses left them for his appointed forty days with Reality on the mountain, they disobeyed him and plunged into habitual disobedience.

Moses immediately recognized that this too was the plot of the Creator. Nature's job is to purify, to constantly strip away in order for everyone to submit if they will. Moses recognized his anger was a product of his expectations – he was not free.

What could he do but be in dynamic submission? What could he do but expect the best from what he was asked to do? Yet, he was always aware that Reality constantly pulls the carpet out from under our feet so that we realize that we cannot count on any earthly stability. Such a man gives in to helplessness and then becomes free of it.

### **Jesus**

The Prophet Jesus was the pure master of the light of abandonment. When he turned the other cheek, he was in a state of total negation; that is, there was no 'he' to be struck. Because he was in a state of utter abandonment, whatever struck him struck Reality. We are liars if we speak the words of the Prophet Jesus without being what he stood for. Because of the discrepancy between

word and actions, Christianity has become merely a romantic notion and a utopian ideal. Jesus came to put back the spirit of the Judaic law into the dead letter of the law which had become the order of the day. Some time after him, however, what was left was a spirit with no clear code or law.

### **Muhammad**

Muhammad acknowledged all of the prophets before him for they all were from the same source; they all had the same light, the same vibrancy, the same transmission. But Muhammad was the last one and the book that came through him, the Qur'an, the book of Allah, had no discrepancies in it. The way of Muhammad is known to us, especially if we look at the successor he appointed and at those who have followed him for centuries.

When we dwell upon the life of Muhammad, we contemplate a brilliant star, the last star in the heavenly revealed knowledges, which heralded the beginning and the end. As far as Allah is concerned, there is no beginning or end because He is the beginning and the end. Muhammad's message encompasses all the other messages that went before it, both in its inner meaning and its outer code of conduct.

Prior to Muhammad's time, humanity had not evolved far enough, both materially and spiritually, to be prepared for all the restrictions, as well as the freedom, that the Divine Creator intended for man.

Three thousand years ago, for example, it would have been impossible to forbid the intake of fermented fruit juices. At that time people did not know enough about preserving, and in the hot desert climate, many food provisions fermented and turned into alcohol so quickly that it was difficult to avoid consuming it even though it produced harmful side-effects. *At a time when their diets consisted solely of easily fermented foods, they could not have been given the luxury of deprivation of consuming fermented drink.*

It took over 23 years during the lifetime of the Prophet for the message to evolve to its completion. It was then that the Prophet said, 'Now the *deen* (religion) is perfected for all

mankind.' He did not ask the people to stop their lifelong habits overnight, nor did he expect them to do so.

However, we cannot behave as the people of Muhammad's time did. We have no excuse for not doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong in its totality, for not allowing what is good for us and forbidding what is not. We follow Muhammad not because he overruled the other prophets and their messages, but because he updated and completed the way of life that is best for humanity at all times and in all places.

The prophet is a being who is infallible; he is in total peace and harmony, witnessing discord and dispersion while being fully anchored in harmonious contentment, as if in the eye of the storm. The prophets, those great men of perfection, occasionally behaved in a manner that displayed human frailty or emotionalism. This behavior did not detract from their noble, divine state.

That frailty is, in fact, a manifestation of Divine Unity and mercy so that the rest of humanity can relate to them. Acts of human frailty are the doors of the sanctified castle through which we can look. They are not moments of weakness. They are the proof of the love of the Creator for all creation through His perfect interlinks.

The prophet is our guide; he holds our hand and shares our experience. He is subjected to all of the tyrannies of life for our sake. He is devoid of egotism and selfishness. He is egoless and selfless; therefore he experiences all.

The closer a prophet is to Allah, the more he may appear in the eyes of his followers to be in affliction. The Prophet Job, the prophet of patience, saw nothing other than the perfection of the Creator in his trials and afflictions. He saw nothing other than the exquisite, magnificent interlink between cause and effect. He brought himself into the interspace between energy and matter; therefore, all of his supplications were accepted. Whatever he asked for was done, for his supplication was the Creator's command. What he asked for had already occurred in destiny. Job, the man living in time, simply reflected that destiny by his supplication.

When we enter the prophetic path, we are basically acknowledging the possibility of our attaining that state of dynamic submission that results in death-life and life-death, in vibrancy in all circumstances. As a result of that indescribable bliss that does not belong to this world, we are total lovers and followers of the Prophet Muhammad. We are also followers and lovers of all the prophets, at all times, wherever they may have lived, in whatever culture, by whatever creed.

*There is no god, but God*

There is only one creed and that is, there is no Reality but Allah. Once we acknowledge that, then we will know how Allah manifests this teaching through the prophets. Then we will understand the meaning of, 'Muhammad is His Prophet'.

To stop short at 'there is no god but God', is to be in the most sensitive and vulnerable state, for ignorance has begun to be removed and one side of the coin of Unity has been revealed. But the coin cannot be taken without the other side being revealed, Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah. We will remain in loss if we have not stumbled across this treasure.

Through an innate knowledge or scholarly reasoning, there have been individuals throughout the ages who have reached the conclusion that there is an all-encompassing, unifying force that holds together the seen and the unseen, life and death, and the two arms of the balancing opposites. But hearing a song is not the same as singing it; reading the menu will not satisfy one's hunger. Acknowledging justice is not the same as being just; having a good intention is not the same as completing the action.

There is only one path and it is based on the One; it is the beginning and the end and it is beyond time. We can only experience this timelessness if we stop the noise in our heads and sit with full consciousness, completely alive, yet completely dead to clutter. Then we will be in a state where we can begin to see the reason why we are in trouble and how to move away from it.

Once we have recognized that anything that happens is perfection, we can begin to act rather than react. Most of our energy is spent in reacting to changes in situations and states, because we have invested interest in maintaining a conducive or desirable state. The reason there is so little

acting is because we spend so much energy in counteracting change or in adjusting to new situations. This situation will continue until there is neutrality in our actions and we begin to act for Reality's sake rather than following our own whims. When this happens, the outcome of our actions will cease to affect us because they will be the outcome of pure and free intentions.

There is no possibility of our constantly living happily and correctly unless we begin to see where we are transgressing. The reason for the rampant spread of crime in our society today is that there are no bounds. Western societies are characterized by outer abundance and inner poverty. The societies of the past were often those of inner abundance and outer poverty. People lived with the continual possibility of death in front of them.

Today we shun any remembrance of death. We do anything we like because we do not constantly see ourselves six feet under ground. The way of unity is to see oneself in the tomb with each flicker of the eye.

If we choose, we can embark on the path of dynamic submission toward self-knowledge. It is for us to act. The laws of reality will not change, but we have the freedom to recognize them and unite our intentions with those laws. If we do, we will progress. If not, we will stagnate and degenerate. We cannot refuse responsibility for our actions for this implies ignorance. We do not want to be ignorant; we want to know.

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