

# FRIDAY DISCOURSES

Jum'ah Talks at the Rasooli Centre

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Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Vol.1





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## **Book Description**

These talks were delivered over a series of Friday prayer gatherings at the Rasooli Center, Centurion, south of Pretoria, South Africa. Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri boldly addresses many topics that influence Muslims at the core of what it means to be a Muslim in today's global village and how to be transformed by living the *Din* of Islam truly. With his finger on the pulse of our times, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri highlights the critical issues with a sense of urgency, clarity of insight and guidance grounded in the Qur'an and Prophetic way. These challenges ultimately revolve around the core science of self-knowledge and awakening to the inner potential within us to live in harmony with God's decree of unity, justice and mercy.

## **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**

The Rasooli Center was built and developed as a collective effort by several intimate friends and seekers of truth and enlightenment. The early core of supporters were Ibrahim Ravat, Haroun Ebrahim, Farhad Joosub, Yunus Ismail and their families. Soon the number of serious and generous people grew to include Abu Bakr Karolia, Omar Essa, several members of the Kalla family and a few dozens more. The Jum`ah talks became a venue for serious teachings of the Qur'an and the *Din*. For these talks, their recording and transcription, special thanks are due to Yunus Ismail, Sajidah, Dr. Zaheer Adham, Zaheer Cassim, Nusra Cassiem and Muna Bilgrami.

## Introduction

Islam is based on the belief that there is One Compassionate, All-encompassing God; that the purpose of creation is to recognize, desire and embrace his great qualities and attributes, all of which emanate from His essence which is the power behind the universe. Thus our primary and urgent business is the knowledge of Allah, His ways, designs and attributes, and the experience of transformation that follows through reflection and insights. All other human pursuits are secondary.

The spread of early Islam purified old cultures from past unjust or unnatural habits and conditioning. Many of the acceptable customs and traditions were improved by Islam and were allowed to continue. In time a dynamic Islamic culture emerged with regional variations and flavors.

Islam connects the material and discernible world with that which is unseen and considered sacred. The human being is the meeting point between a physical micro-cosmos and the universal macrocosm and Allah's eternal light. The culture of any people is based upon sets of values and perceptions, which motivate them to behave in a particular way over a long period of time. There are several factors that underlie the distinctiveness of the Muslim culture but the most predominant of all is the belief in the eternal Oneness which connects and governs the universe.

It is primarily the *din* and courtesy of Islam – the behavioral patterns, practices, and perceptions of life – that have influenced the Muslim peoples and brought about the basic foundations of an 'Islamic way of life', with variation in culture and social habits. Islam's bedrock is the belief in the One All-embracing God and that this life is a preparation for the hereafter, which is shaped by the quality of life and conduct on earth.

When different races, tribes, and nations assimilate the *din* deeply and correctly, one finds that they first identify themselves as Muslims before nations, societies, or races. Equally, when Islam

is not deeply rooted in a people, the national, racial, cultural, or other group identities take precedence over their faith to the detriment of its application.

The modern world presents new ways and greater complexities, chaos, constant change and challenges our values and way of life. Therefore, what is needed is the rediscovery of Allah's patterns as revealed in the Qur'anic message and translated into action through the prophetic way. The life of a conscientious seeker is far more refined and attuned to the heart, where the soul resides which brings about awareness, accountability, insights and fulfilled beingness.

The following discourses were given during a period of some ten years at the Rasooli Mosque in Rasloww and were transcribed and edited by several friends and students. Please note that it is customary to invoke the peace and blessings of Allah upon the Prophet every time his name is mentioned. While we have not included such mentions for reasons of print economy since we mention him so often, we hope the reader will nonetheless ask Allah for such blessings, and thereby bask in the reflection of the prophetic light. While most Arabic words used have been explained within the text, a glossary has also been included. Translations from the Qur'an have been modified from a selection including those by Yusuf Ali and Shakir.

These Friday talks were given from heart to heart and I hope they will inspire the reader to think and act with greater awareness, better intention and action.



## Chapter 1: The Glory of Islam

Islam provides us with the appropriate maps and prescriptions to relate to the outer world successfully whilst enabling the heart to be wholesome and joyful.

All of us know that as Muslims we submit to Allah – to His Light, His Power, His Knowledge – because we are not independent, but dependent on Him. The child is dependent on its mother and upon reaching maturity transfers this dependency to the Higher. Self-aware parents will admit to their limitations by recognizing that they were acting as *Rabb* (Lord), in the place of the Lord, and therefore as *khalifah* (representative of Allah), but a time has come that the children's potential outstrips that of the parents. Their prayer becomes, therefore, that somehow the children will become better than them, that there is only One *Rabb* and we are merely trying to act by proxy, as guardians.

This aspect of submission, or our dependency on the Creator, is one of a half dozen foundations of the *din*. If we do not understand them, we will not be able to build anything of our *din* upon them. Another major foundation is that we are always trying to attract to ourselves what we like and avoid that which we do not like – this is to do with obedience and living in harmony with attaining the higher goals of what it means to be human. What we may like now may be to do with our lower self – our ego, our stomach or something else – but ultimately if we want to bring ourselves to light or higher knowledge then what we like should be a good objective. Avoiding evil, doubt, misery, or ill health is a part of that. We must encourage that which we like and avoid that which we do not like, provided it is not 'we' anymore, but the higher in us that decides what is appropriate for us and what is not.

These are basic foundations from the Qur'an and the way of the Prophet. If you can understand them then I can share with you the foundations of the glory of our *din*, not the glory of Muslims. On occasion Muslims have acted gloriously and at other times perversely. Soon after the departure of the Prophet, a lot of unnecessary tension and new ignorance came to the fore, for which, in a way, we are all still paying the price now. We have inherited the entire legacy of the

light of Muhammad together with the ignorance of many communities and their inadvertent mistakes.

We cannot avoid facing our past. As human beings, we are the recipients of the entire consciousness of humanity, from the rise of our father, Adam, to all the other thousands of prophets until now. We cannot deny the effect of this upon us. As Muslims we want to be proud of our heritage and yet we find so much of our previous generations' conduct and, indeed, even some of the conduct that goes on presently in the Middle East and elsewhere unacceptable. At a human level it is unacceptable, let alone at the spiritual level. As a result, many of us are confused. Many of us act as if we know Islam is the greatest, but then we are also disappointed or upset by the conduct of the Muslims and our own conduct because we are the same.

The glory of Islam can only be regained if we adhere to Allah's ways. Allah's ways are based on *la ilaha illa'llah* – denying falsehood and acknowledging truth: no god BUT Allah. We cannot do one without the other. We cannot have any experience in life unless it is based on 'no' to that which is not right and 'yes' to that which is right. Then we are in balance. The glory of Islam will only be regained and become effulgent if each one of us as Muslims, as individuals, as families and as communities, realize what is to be avoided and what is to be encouraged.

What we are suffering most from nowadays, as was the case in the past, is ignorance or 'darkness'. This is the situation of human beings:

*'I swear by Time: Most surely man is in loss.'* [103:1-2]

The first thing we should say no to is ignorance and to being stubbornly attached to what we are used to in the past simply because of what our fathers or somebody else said or did. The banner of Islam was raised amongst people who were the most ignorant – the Arabs of those days – at a time when there was maximum darkness by a being who was in every way illuminated and taken into the divine precinct. We therefore have to be vigilant of ignorance. If the ignorance involves only one person, the effect is not too bad, but when it involves a whole community or becomes an attribute of certain teachers, leaders, rulers or religious scholars (*'ulama'*), then it can be catastrophic, because it's effect is far more dominating and dangerous.

This has been the case for centuries with many of us. Be aware of it. Simply because a person has a platform or a big name or a big turban, it does not mean that he is in every way truly a seeker (*salik*) on the path, or that he is truly under the protection of Allah's *rahmah* and is yielding to his *iman* (faith and belief in Allah), acting in *ihsan* (perfect conduct) and ready to leave this world. We have to evaluate it and judge it for ourselves.

If we are to regain any of the glories of the way of our Prophet the first step is the removal of all falsehood. This was the case in Makkah. The removal of falsehood took place in Makkah when the Prophet came. Most of the *ayat* (Qur'anic verses) revealed in Makkah were about action: verses exhorting people to wake up, reflect, ponder, look at the sky and the heavens and other signs, and acknowledge death. We are told to listen to this voice of *Haqq* (Truth), for it is to do with *haqiqah* (truth and reality). The Prophet addressed everyone in Makkah, as if spreading pearls before the oceans of humanity.

To remove falsehood in Muslim communities now, first and foremost, we must remove our fantasies or assumptions or presumption about worship. This is the cause of all the unnecessary hair-splitting disputes between the different *madhahib* (schools of Islamic jurisprudence, pl. of *madhhab*). If you perfect your worship, then you realize that Allah is in charge of you and Allah is in charge of other people. Then you wonder why they are causing so much damage. Allah enables us to choose and allows us to cause damage so that eventually we have to stop. The earth is Allah's kindergarten:

Allah's ways and laws are like a master of a kindergarten who allows the inmates to make mistakes up to a certain point, beyond which as Allah says:

*'...Allah will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him...'* [5:54]

Human history takes place in cycles. The Mongols set out to destroy the Muslims. For nearly eighty years they had the upper hand over Muslims. They nearly finished them off, but twenty or thirty years after that the Mongols themselves embraced Islam and enhanced the glory of Islam even more than before. Look at the cycles that go on in our lives. It is Allah's way. It is nature that will dictate what will prevail. You cannot go against Allah's nature. Animals have to learn

how to conduct themselves and they often do from their genetic imprint. We human beings need to learn it much more than other animals: in the first seven years we have to learn to play; in the next seven years we have to learn what is allowed and what is not, what is correct and what is wrong; and in the third seven years we have to apply it. By the time we are twenty one we should know what to do and what not to do and our parents may continue to accompany us to make sure that we are following the ways of nature. That is our *din*.

The first step towards perfecting worship is to remove falsehood from it. Allah loves those who are humble, who trust in Allah and who surrender to Allah. Worship is not about the number of times you have stood up to pray, nor how many prostrations you have made, nor how many times you have read the Qur'an or recited it aloud. It is about the quality of your trusting, yielding, loving and giving in. Even if you do not know about the *din*, Allah will send you those who will come and show you. Love, trust, submission, knowledge that Allah is here, Allah was here, Allah will be here and that you are created to appreciate Him, know Him, love Him, adore Him, give in to Him, dive into Him and live by Him – that is worship.

The second step is to correct our relationships. Again, we Muslims assume that relationships are set in a certain way and that women have to be told what to do and their only role is to be locked behind the kitchen sink or in the nursery. A similar situation exists in relationships with our parents, our friends and at work. We are least clear about how our relationships at work should be. We do not understand that the people who are working with us are like our younger brothers, sons or daughters.

So to understand how far we have gone wrong we have to re-examine the relationships of the great ones – how the Prophet treated his people, how the great *Sahabas* (Companions of the Prophet) treated them, how the great Imams (Righteous Leaders) and the *Awliya'* (Saints) treated their people. We are all equal in the eye of Allah, but not equal in our abilities or skills or other worldly or esoteric knowledge. We have to accept that, but as far as Allah is concerned we are all the same. We have come here in order to leave. These are the fundamental parameters of proper *mu`amalat* (transactions).

The third most important thing we have to remove in terms of falsehood is the poor quality of leadership. Who are those who are qualified to lead us? If a person himself is not healthy, how can he give you some advice about your health? If a person himself is completely confused in his mind, how can he help you sort out your confusion? Leadership implies those who are able to lead themselves. How? By recognizing who is the real leader of it all, who is the Creator of it all and what are His ways, His intentions and His purpose. In other words, the best and the most qualified leaders are those who have recognized the predominance, dominance, omnipotence, and omnipresence of Allah and then they can take counsel in terms of worldly matters. Our glorious Prophet always took counsel on worldly matters, but then he took the decision.

These are the ways that we can remove our falsehood. You may claim, 'I am a Muslim. I know the Qur'an. I have even contributed to some mosque.' But are you free from fear of creation and of provision? Are you fearful of the Creator of it all? Are you in *taqwa* (cautious awareness arising from the love of Allah)? If you are, then you are fine. Otherwise, you will move endlessly from pillar to post, from one mosque to another, from one teacher to another.

The next part of this program of truly glorifying our *din* (the transaction of our life) is to live our *din* by establishing the truth. As you remove falsehood, you are establishing the truth – they go hand in hand. *La ilaha illa'llah* – there is no god BUT God. In Madinah the *din* was fully practiced. People were told, 'You cannot do this. You must not do that. You must watch out. Other people are like you so treat them as you would wish to be treated.' From Makkah we have moved from that which was open to everyone, which is the whole of Makkah, to the courtesy of Madinah, to establishing the truth in its fullness.

The truth is found at various levels: at the physical, the mental, the heart and the spiritual level – in fact at all levels. There is a truth in all of them, which is that there is one truth that never ever change, and that is the absolute foundation of the *Nur* (Light) of Allah. Everything has truth in it: you have a toothache, it is real. There is a toothache, yes, but hopefully it will not last, so its truth is delineated by time. The removal of falsehood brings us alongside the establishment of the truth. The two go together.

The first foundation for knowledge of truth for Muslims is the knowledge of Qur'an and the Qur'anic fundamentals. The Qur'anic fundamentals are essential. Most of our young people do not have a clue about the din because we have not given them the foundations of the Qur'an. In order to approach the Qur'an we have to be pure. Pure in what way? Pure in having neither presumption nor assumption. If we approach the Qur'an as if we were ready to die then we will be amazed every time we read it. Every time we come to it we will find it fresh. If we come to it with a presumption or assumption, we will only see it through the veil of that presumption and assumption and, therefore, misconception. If we come to it free of any energy or possibility that we attribute to ourselves, we should ask Allah's guidance and read it in an attitude that says: 'O Allah, I am the most wretched and you are the most Glorious. Cover my wretchedness by Your Glory.' We will then see wonder upon wonder.

The second foundation, which goes hand in hand with it the Qur'anic, is the way of the Prophet and that is not only the *Sunnah* (the prophetic practice) but also the *Sirah* (the life of the Prophet), that is, the way he acted based not only on his authority and the verbal and linguistic injunctions of *Hadith* (Prophetic traditions), but also how he acted, what he said, how he said it, to whom he said it, and whether it was only on that special occasion that he said it or whether it referred to all times. The way of the Prophet which comes to us with the love of the Prophet, abandonment to the Prophet, submission to the Prophet and silence in the presence of the Prophet.

The third most important foundation is self-knowledge, particularly for our young people. Who are we? Why do we constantly look for this, that and the other? How reliable are we? One moment we are in a good mood and the next in a bad one, so which is the good part of us? Each one of us will reach a conclusion that there is within us a platform or a dimension that never ever changes and that is called *ruh* (the soul). We are a *ruh* caught in the prison of the body which has a *nafs* (self/ego). And the *nafs* is *ammaratum bi's-su'* – it always takes us hither, thither and nowhere, confusing us. But then we also have a *Qalb* (heart) and within the *Qalb* there is a *Shahid* (a witnesser), there is a *Raqib* (the monitoring self) and there is a *Qarin* (the recording companion). All these terms and the functions they stand for come from the Qur'an.

We must understand the cosmology that is within us so that we can transcend it. When we learn to recognize these different elements at play we can negotiate with ourselves – *‘I know you bring me down all the time. I know you want to pounce on others and take a pound of flesh off them, but look back at the last twenty years: how many times have you done that and what did you get out of it? Nothing but misery. So stop it!’*

Knowledge of the self revives the *din*. If we know ourselves – the lower self and the higher self – and transcend it, that is called ‘living Islam’. We live it without talking about it anymore. There are no longer ‘Islamic schools’. You do not lock Islam up in a museum or in a *madrasah*. It is alive! It is natural to make mistakes. But even though we may make them, if we are able to remain on that carpet of the humility born of our recognition and remorse, then we are in our *mihrab* (prayer niche), which is the place for war against the self (the *nafs*). *Mihrab* comes from the verb *haraba*, to wage war against ignorance, arrogance and assumption, and to wage war against the lower tendencies in us. When we engage with ourselves in that way then with our full-fledged, dynamic inter-active potential we are waking up to the *nur* (light) of Allah. The light of Allah is potentially in every heart. When we alive to it, then we will be living Muslims. If we are living Muslims, then for us *Iman* (faith and trust) is a foundation and for us *Ihsan* (perfect conduct) is none other than the doctrine and Highway Code by which we are living because that at any second we are aware we may leave this world. Then the question remains: Are we leaving it contentedly or do we still have accounts to be rendered?

The glory of Islam is with us, but we Muslims must rise to it. Islam has always been glorious. Islam is nothing other than the essence of victory in this life and total eternal joy in the next life, provided we are up to it. This is something we cannot inherit. We have to take it by determination, perseverance, and abandonment. It has to be the sole *qiblah*.

***‘Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves.’ [13:11]***

## Chapter 2: The Revival of the Muslims

Muslims are the people who consider themselves adherent to the path of Islam. Some of them are Muslim by name, others are transformed by faith, worship and conduct.

We are living at a time where changes in the world are taking place rapidly in every way – economic, cultural and otherwise. Like being adrift in the middle of an ocean, the winds and waves are coming from every direction. We have been impacted on a personal level, on a family level and across societies and communities. No matter who you are or where you are, you cannot but feel the winds that are buffeting you. Wherever Muslims are – from China to the Atlantic, in Europe or in Africa – we are all feeling the same chilling winds.

Human beings are weak. The Qur'an tells us on numerous occasions that we have been created weak and at a loss, without inner strengths, permanent rooting or resolve. Therefore, as weak human beings, we have a tendency to want to find a 'quick fix'. Like an elderly sick patient who is prescribed aspirin in the hopes of him starting to walk again and live normally and healthily, with full vitality within a few short minutes – it cannot be.

We must take the pulse of the patient and look into his history. We must then come up with a plan to change the *dis*-ease to ease, illness to wellness. It will not come overnight. The patience we need is like that of a mother. She carries a child for nine months in the womb, and then for the rest of her life – once a mother, forever a mother. In the first few years she has almost total responsibility which never ceases. The father also takes pride in his child and says: 'I am the father,' as though he has done a lot. Yet this poor woman endured sleepless nights and countless anxieties and along comes the father claiming proudly: 'Now look at my son!'

We must look deeply into the situation of the world. How did it come to be where it is now? In the West it is very easy for us to discern the major changes from the so-called Reformation and the development of the work ethic, to the separation of the moral or religious values of the church from the secularized state system. By 1694 in Britain, because of the Cromwellian era, this process was completed by the establishment of the Central Bank. It was privately owned, but



the Government was the agent of ensuring that money was collected for repayment of its debt. The full establishment of the world hegemony of the money-makers and the banks was thus firmly set in motion. Subsequent developments were the natural results of this. With the advent of the French Revolution and the subsequent Bolshevik Revolution, the banks finally became fully and totally in control of people's lives. The politicians were simply there to ensure the stability of the economic system. So they were eventually in a position of mainly implementing policies that would enhance the continuity of the system, not reforming or changing it. By the Second World War most of the world was completely and utterly in the hands of the financial institutions and banks, and therefore the corporate institutions; politicians became scorekeepers and maintainers of the status quo. So the natural split of moral values from secular systems resulted in a very clear dichotomy in the West.

Until about 1750, we in the East or in the Muslim world still had, on the face of it, almost equal civilization, power and abilities. Within 50 years, by 1800, the balance was completely and irrevocably overturned. This is in reference to the social scene. But equal and parallel to the social, world or community scene, is the personal scene. From then onward we in the East also became totally subject to the control of the banking hegemony. Between 1860 and 1890 the bankers loaned enough money to the Egyptians, the Ottomans, and the governments in Iran, Morocco and Tunis and, to a lesser extent, other countries, to result in their gaining control over their governments' functions. Thus, if a Government was about to default, foreign powers had a very good reason for military intervention and to take over, a fact which the rulers of the affected regions knew very well. Thus the rulers in the Muslim world ended up as puppets in the hands of the global banking system.

We call ourselves Muslims but what does that mean? We have so much about this in our traditions from the prophetic teachings, from the Qur'an and from the conduct of the blessed Prophet, his companions (*Sahabah*), his household (*Ahl ul-Bayt*), and others. We know a Muslim is he who has truly and utterly confessed *haqq* (truth) and admits the truth that we are indeed weak; that he has nothing of his own and that other people are safe from his tongue or his hand, so much so that he is cautious all his life; he is in cautious awareness and abstention (*taqwa*), and knows that he is a guest in this world. He has come by his Lord and is returning to his Lord. So

the Muslim ends up being a true *mu'min* (believer): at peace within himself and at peace with other people.

The true *mu'min* will eventually become a *muhsin*. A *muhsin* is one who knows that though he may not 'see' Allah, Allah sees everything, Allah records everything and Allah knows everything. The *muhsin* has no secret agendas. He is clear. He possesses a *qalbun salim* (a clear heart). The light in his heart will guide him because Allah tells us in the Qur'an that the path to understanding, the path to knowing, the path to being with Allah, the path to being illumined by Allah is one of submission. Submit to the truth that we have come here to die.

Submitting to the truth means that the more we know, the more we come to know that we don't know. This is the condition of the Muslim. He or she is alive, not pompous, not like these structured personalities who boast, 'Don't you know who I am?' At the end of the day, the ultimate question is 'Who are you really?' All we can say is: 'I am not really this. I play a role as a father, but I am not just a father. I am a teacher, but I am not just a teacher. I am a person who enjoys doing his *salat*, but I am not only doing that. I am passing on part of Allah's *rahmah* (mercy) that has come to me.' And Allah says: '*The way to Allah is submission,*' meaning all of the religions are Islam. They have come at different times, through different cultures, languages and different prophets or messengers. There were thousands of them. Nothing has changed in this existence.

The only advantage we have is that the last of all of the prophets and messengers, Muhammad, introduced a package that we can apply at anytime, anywhere. That is the meaning of *khatama'l-anbiya'i wa'l-mursalin* [33:40] – the seal of the Prophets and the messengers, i.e. his message encompasses everything that went before. That is the advantage we have. Therefore, we also have the responsibility of that advantage of being enlightened.

Irrespective of the environment we are in, we must remember the early years in Makkah. A few Muslims were surrounded by enemies. Everybody around them was against them. How did they survive? We are living in a situation similar to the first few years of the Makkan community with added complications, but also with the advantage of knowing about Madinah and the glorious rise of Islam in different communities, cities and environments and what Islamic leadership was

and should be. Whenever we look at the history of the Muslims and the leaders were prophetic, we find that the community grew both in this world and in preparation for the next world. Whenever that balance was disturbed, they became *Ahl al-dunya* (people attached to this material world) and too concerned about organizing this world and money, commerce, buildings and states. When this happens, we find that the community falters and weakens and gets recycled.

Thus the history of the Muslims is basically about the *din*. The Muslim is he who takes on the *din*, which means path or way. The Qur'an is the atlas of life and therefore it is the foundation of this *din*. It is like going into a city we don't know: we want to get to the palace of the King, but if we don't have a map we will go this way and that and may go down a cul-de-sac which we cannot back out of, and sometimes we get stuck. The Prophet says: '*Do not enter through a doorway unless you know how to come out of it.*' So a Muslim is he who has absorbed the Qur'an. He will then truly become a companion of the Prophet. He will become an *Ahl al-Bayt* (member of his household). When the Prophet put his arm around Salman-al-Farsi, he said: '*He is from us, the family of the Prophet.*' Family is not just a blood relationship. In our community we have amongst us some wonderful relationships with people whom we did not know even two years ago. It is our new family, our family by choice. With our blood family, we have no choice. Some cousins and uncles might be the worst of creation, as it was with the Prophet. We can generate a vibrant new family by our choosing people who are committed to the path of Islam, submission, enlightenment and being illumined by that certainty in our lives that Allah is our guide. Allah will always guide us.

Differences come by transgression, affliction and argument. Allah then says, talking again about the illumined Muslim: '*Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth? Thus what they did was made fair seeming to the unbelievers*' [6:122]. The first part of this verse implies that we are biologically dead – '*Is he who was dead then We raised him to life...*' If we are only concerned about our existential bodies and our minds and are not illumined, if we have not discovered that we are a *ruh*, we are dead. The question posed differentiates between whoever is brought to life again by his inner awakening and illumined consciousness and one like '*him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth*'? Being in darkness implies denial of the truth and the purpose of

existence. Furthermore, for those who deny this truth of purpose, *'what they did was made fair seeming'* to themselves. Humans are wired in such a way that we cannot live if we are not content with what we are doing, irrespective of whether it is the path of *haqq* or the path of falsehood. Self-justification is easy to slip into. Once we know that the atlas is the Qur'an and that the map is being read and followed by the great Muslims, primarily by the prophets, then we want to follow the map to arrive in the presence of the King of kings, which is *hudur* (Allah's presence and Allah's light). Allah indicates that once you live in that light and by that light, *'wherever you turn, there is Allah: surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.'* [2:115]

Whatever situation we are in, Allah has made it possible for us to be in it, so that we beg Allah to get out of it. We recognize that Allah is the Doer; so our *tawhid* becomes perfected and we only see One. Our condition is that we experience two states. Gradually we recognize the One behind the two. The Muslim is awakened by his *iman*, constantly exerting *jihad*. The word *jihad* is from the Arabic verb whose noun is *jahd*, or expending energy and effort. Allah says: *'...they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer; this is Allah's grace, He gives it to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.'* [5:54]

The Muslim uses the Qur'an as his atlas. He applies his *din* in full, in faith and in worship, confirming and accepting the *hudud* (limits & boundaries) and *shari`ah* (revealed code of conduct), constantly acting correctly and asking himself: 'Am I doing the right thing? Is it the right time? Is it the right place?' By doing so he or she increases their energy and yearning for Allah, refining their focus so that Allah is called upon in *du'a* (supplication): *'Rabbana la tuzigh qulubana ba`da idh hadaytana'* (Our Lord! make not our hearts to deviate after You have guided us aright, and grant us from You mercy; surely You are the most liberal Giver) [3:8]. Are we giving Allah an order by saying *'la tuzigh qulubana'* (Do not cause our hearts to deviate)? We are simply asking Allah to keep our hearts illumined. Therefore we beseech Him to not let our hearts fall under the tyranny of the *nafs* so that we can maintain our spiritual growth.

Then Allah says: *'Lan tanalu`l-birra hatta tanfaqu mimma tuhibbun'* (By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend [benevolently] out of what you love; and whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it) [3:92]. *Birr* is sincerity, honesty, loyalty and the root is related to *barr* which is open space, infinite desert. The implicit connection in meaning is that if you

truly give of what you love, you will experience inner expansion. We are loyal to the conviction that we had nothing, we have come from nowhere, and we are returning to Him by whose grace and mercy we have come. So unless you expend of what you love, you cannot attain to that blessed state. This is the failing of the *kufr* system and the West because they do not give that which they want. They want the *dunya* and Allah gives them the *dunya*, though: ‘... *they shall have no portion in the Hereafter*’.

*So when you have performed your devotions, then remember Allah as you remembered your fathers, rather a profounder remembrance. But there are some people who say, Our Lord! Give us in the world, and they shall have no portion in the Hereafter. [2:200]*

But what about us Muslims? Why is it we have not developed a system that is truly an alternative to the *kufr* system? Where is it that we have gone wrong? These are the questions we need to ask, but giving quick, glib answers in the hope that we can solve all our problems with a few useless, suicide attacks is not going to work. We have to expend *jahd* in order to practice *ijtihad*, that is, we need to exert our utmost effort in trying to reach the best decisions and derive the best rulings. *Ijtihad* must not simply be one the basics of the foundation of *shari`ah*. *Ijtihad* must be applied in every aspect of life.

The main reason why there is not a single successful, evident, living Muslim community alive now as an alternative to the *kufr* one is because we have failed in our *Ijtihad*. We have not done enough *Ijtihad* regarding the economic system, the way of life, the trading system, and the monetary system. That is why we are now in the situation of having great scholars but who are confined to basics of *shari`ah*. At the end of the day most of the ‘*ulama*’ we have cannot deviate from the original structures. They cannot, therefore, come up with anything new in the way of life guidance. Most of the time we are reacting to the change in life that is coming from the West, rather than living a model based on the full path of Islam. We have not developed an economic system as an alternative to the purely secular and materialistic systems. The whole world now is following the modern Western way without any serious ideological or spiritual grafting. We also blindly follow their education systems, sports, entertainments and so forth without being able to add anything meaningful to the content. That is why Muslims find

themselves in greater and greater difficulty. At heart we are together, yearning for a way out to revive the Muslims, but in reality, historically and currently we can only show bankruptcy on the social and political side.

On the personal side, however, there is always hope for transformation. At all times every one of us can discover the truth in our hearts and yearn for the light that is already within, above, before and after. The Muslim at all times can save himself on an individual level, but on a community or political level this is another issue.

Muslim communities are also struggling to establish a certain measure of integrity and nobility, which is not easy nowadays because the avalanche of the materialistic secular system is sweeping them aside until they re-establish themselves. We do not know what will happen next. Reviving Muslims implies bringing back to life in a community way which individuals know is right. The individual Muslim knows what is *haram* (out of bounds, forbidden), or what is going to lead him down a slippery path ending in a valley out of which he may not be able to climb. Allah says: '*We have created you from one self...*' [6:98]. We are one person, one reality.

This is why the Prophet was sent as *Rahmatan li'l-`alamin*, a Mercy for all mankind. Mankind is one. We are all the children of Adam. The messengers and the prophets came at different times and from different cultures, but there is only one book and one author. Wherever you turn is the trace of that author. Where is it that Allah is not in it, before it and after it? Our differences are superficial. We all have the same questions about life – Is it the right time? Where and how should we proceed? Is this the right job to do or not? Is this the right education? – Our differences are minor. We all would agree that death is the only certainty we can talk about from the time we are born until the time we die. Are we ready for it? Are we ready to admit that we have nothing of our own? We are Allah's guests. *Rahmah* is everywhere, individually and collectively and in other ways. We have to have high expectations of Allah's *rahmah*.

Allah is as good as we expect of Him. If we expect a light and illumination and a correct map to guide us not to deviate, we will have it. If we argue and create dissension and agitation and dispute about this *madhhab* and that *madhhab*, Allah will also give us that. Allah's *rahmah* is

wide and deep. If we want to be content in our hearts and share the delight of that light in us, Allah will give us the opportunity to share it. It will overflow. We are accountable to ourselves.

The human being is aware of himself. Life is all about constant awareness! It's all degrees of awareness until such time that we become divinely aware, which is called the *hadrat ar-rabbaniyyah* (Divine Presence). That is why in our *salat* amongst the subtle conditions is *hudur ul-qalb* (presence of heart). We first do our *wudu'* (ablution). Next we ascertain where our *qiblah* (direction) is, where our *masjid* (place of worship) is, where we are putting our heads and who is our *Imam*, until our hearts are totally and utterly *bayn `asabi' ar-rahman* (between the fingers of the Merciful). We lean on the *Rahman* to tell us how to change, how to turn the *qalb* (heart). *Qalb* is from the verb *qaliba, yaqlibu* – meaning to turn, that is, you are not fixed. You are light!

Essentially the human being is a *ruh*. The *ruh* illumines the *nafs*. The *nafs* must obey the *ruh* until it knows fully, because Allah says that all of the *arwah* have been exposed to: '*alastu bi-rabbikum*' (Am I not your Lord?). So we know that Allah knows. Allah will tell us what we need to know at the time we need to know it. Many a time Allah's *rahmah* is such that He keeps us in ignorance. If we knew what was going to come to us in the next four days or all the turmoil, we may die of a heart attack. If we trust in Allah we will see nothing other than endless and utter joy. Then we become *`Abd Allah*.

So as to revive the Muslim, Allah ultimately reminds us: '*O you who believe! Answer (the call of) Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life; and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart, and that to Him you shall be gathered*' [8:24]. It implies that our life now is biological, physiological, but not illumined. We are not overwhelmed by the joy of the knowledge that Allah knows and that we don't know, but He will give us what we need to know at the time that it is appropriate for us to know; that Allah's *rahmah* will come between us and ourselves because we may be running away here. This is the action of our self. Our hearts told us to go there. Allah teaches us that if you are truly *`abd Allah*, Allah will suddenly change your hearts. Thus your *iman* in Allah increases and by that *iman* you will be illumined.



Revival will only come if there is the right quality of Muslims living their *din*, consulting each other about how to cope with the difficult circumstances and then the *ummah* will rise. Otherwise, it will remain in a nostalgic daydream or some sort of an expectation which may not necessarily be realized.

Charity begins at home. If we are truly Muslims, then we have to live our *din* so others will see us enjoying our path. They will say: 'Please come and show me the atlas. Show me your map. I am constantly having mishaps in my life. Every day I choose a new partner and it is not good. Every time I change my family it is not good. Show me the map so that I don't constantly experience disaster.' The map is the Qur'an and the prophetic way and its application. So many of us think we know because 'Al-hamdulillah, I am a Muslim,' or because we listen to the Qur'an every day, or 'I am a *Qari* or *Hafiz*.' We may be *hafiz al-Qur'an* (memorizer of Qur'an) but has *hifz ul-Qur'an* (memorization of the Qur'an) given us His *hifz* (protection)? Are we protected by it? There is a big difference between the two states.

We have to have *`azm* (steadfastness) and follow the prophet's *ulu'l-`azm* and know that the lower self has no *`azm* and the *ruh* has no beginning and no end. Follow the direction of the *ruh* and then you will experience *ruhun wa rayhan* (mercy and sweet solace). It becomes a perfume that our Prophet loved. If we stay with the people of perfume and the people of goodness, we will find goodness even in the midst of the most difficult situations which we may be experiencing collectively. And we should not curse *dahr* (time) because *dahr* is Allah. We are exhorted not to curse time. Allah has made it difficult so that it becomes easy to wake up, ready to leave this world in full *jihad*, exercising first our inner *jihad*, and then be with the people whom we love. These things are part of our *jihad* until we understand the full meaning of exerting energy, which does not belong to us in the first place.

We should thank Allah all the time so that when we truly declare *al-hamdu li'llah* we mean it: 'All praise belongs to Allah.' We yearn for Allah's perfect qualities and that is *'ibadah* (worship), which is on a road that is *muhabbah* (love). Clarity brings ease. So for the *'abd Allah* in *'ibadah*, asking Allah's *rahmah* is the only recourse he has. It is called *silah al-mu'min* (weapon of the believer). The weapon of the believer is to call upon Allah. If someone has a cell-phone and has not paid his subscription or does not know the number he is trying to call,



there will be no answer. The attempt to call will be a mockery. We must call upon Allah when we are truly *`abd Allah*, truly trusting in Allah, and knowing there is none other than Allah.

*The path to being illumined by Allah is one of submission. Submit to the truth that we have come here into this world to die.*

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