



LIVING ISLAM
EAST & WEST

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri



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Book Description

This is the journey of a contemporary Sufi master's travels through many lands in the East and West. From Japan and India, to Britain and America, he speaks to contemporary audiences about the timeless eternal reality of the path of dynamic submission and the way of self-fulfillment.

In *Living Islam*, **Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri** shows how it is possible to apply the eternal teachings of Islam to one's own life in this modern age. Portraying ageless wisdom against the backdrop of a changing world, this vivid and captivating work is essential for all sincere seekers of the Truth.

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

This book evolved out of a series of diverse talks given, as the title suggests, in the East and the West. Gratitude and thanks are due to Hajj Abbas Taylor, Hajj Ahmad Mikell and Dr. Abdul Wahab Boase for editing all the material into its present form.

Ahmed

PART I – EAST

The Recovery of Spiritual Values

Everybody is at a loss except those who understand the nature of man's capacity to fall into loss and thus act correctly. Correct action means for the sake of Allah, anything else is not correct action. Our mission is only to know the reality of Allah. If we aim for that, we will achieve everything else. If we merely try and explain aspects of Islam, we will always be at a loss. If we aim for Allah, we will understand everything, but if we only go for bits and pieces, we will always have divided opinions. In every so-called Muslim country there are factions and people at odds with one another because they are Muslims by name, but not Muslims by heart and action, and this is the situation everywhere in the world, not only in Muslim countries but in Christian countries, in Hindu countries, in Buddhist countries, and in countries where there is no religion. The reason for this is simple: they are not living this life for Allah and for the next life they do not remember death.

Allah in Arabic is the Majestic Name. It has no attribute, rather it indicates the essence. Attributes are all of the qualities we can witness: the Powerful, the Giver, the Taker, the One before us, the One after us, the One who gives life. All of these are attributes of Allah. Creation is Allah's action. In order to find out the meaning of good and bad, we must start with creation. We begin from the physical, and find that it is relative and not acceptable, because it is ever-changing. For example, the child begins to experiment with his immediate environment because he wants to connect with everything around him, he wants to assimilate all that he encounters. This search at the existential level takes the form of searching for cause and effect relationships.

Islam, meaning 'submission', is complete understanding and unification with the reality of existence. We are actually already unified with that reality, but we do not know it because we see separation and boundaries. As a global community, we have different habits, different languages and different cultures, but in truth, we are all created from one self. The Qur'an says,

We have created you from one self.

Self (*nafs*) means all of the different character manifestations and feelings each one of us has. Self means the attributes, feelings and experience which all of us share. We all know the meaning of peace and love and hate and insecurity. We all know the meaning of fear and pain and hunger. We all experience heat and cold. In fact, everything we experience is based on opposites. You cannot have life without death. Allah cannot be experienced without the knowledge of evil, nor friendship without enemies. Adulthood cannot be experienced without the experience of childhood. There is day and night, high and low, man and woman. All of these we experience in our lives. This is the meaning of one self.

Also, we have a faculty in us, the faculty of reason. That faculty must be nourished as we grow. We are all programmed to want to know more, and if we do not continue to know more, we suffer. We all want to be in harmony in this life, which is a preparation for the next life. Ultimately, we will come to know that there is only One Reality behind all this. This is the meaning of “There is no Allah but Allah”. The statement is easy, very easy. All religions, all men seeking enlightenment say “There is no Allah but Allah”. Anybody who contemplates, meditates or sits quietly, after a while sees one hand behind everything. What is difficult is “Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”. The wisdom of seeing One we can obtain quickly. The problem is what to do next. This is where differences occur. How are we going to devise the best type of society in this world? All of the Prophets have tried, in their respective times, to teach the people of their society the most suitable way to live. Each Prophet embodied the teachings of those before him and brought a system that was particularly applicable to the needs of his time. Some prophets did not prohibit the use of wine because it was one of the most important foods that the people had. As they pressed the grapes for juice it became wine in the hot weather. Certain factors made it necessary to prohibit the intake of alcohol during the Prophet Muhammad’s time, one of which certainly must have been that alcoholic intoxication had become a serious problem among the Arabs and was due to remain a social problem in the future as we witness in our own time. We raise this matter here because it is an example of a prophetic law, and therefore a Divine Law, which differed from what came before. It is a law which many people could not and cannot follow, thus cutting them off from the Path of Reality. The Prophet

said: “I am the city of knowledge,” so access to knowledge is obtained emulating and imitating his way. He further said: “And `Ali is its gate (the gate to the city of knowledge). Whoever enters a city must enter by its gate.”

The Prophet Muhammad spent a lot of time with `Ali, and `Ali asked him many many questions which clarified the prophetic knowledge. The knowledge of `Ali and his descendants (the Imams and the *Ahl al-Bayt*) is the same knowledge as that of Muhammad. It only serves to explain the teachings of Muhammad. To give you an example, at the time of the Prophet people had few clothes, thus holes were mended with patches and the clothes continued to be worn until they were threadbare. Everybody lived like this. After the Prophet, people seeking to imitate him continued to wear patched clothing even though Arabia had become extremely wealthy. During the time of Imam Ja`far as-Sadiq, a person came to him and asked, “Why do you dress so well when your great-grandfather wore patched clothes.” He said, “At that time there was nothing else. Now everybody has these clothes. I dress like everybody else. I don’t want to be different. The Prophet said that one should dress as the people do.” And then the Imam said, “If it was for me I would wear what I have underneath.” And he showed a cloth underneath which was all patched.

These teachings have come down to us from the Prophet, but since he did not have time to elaborate and explain them, this task was left to the *Ahl al-Bayt*. This is the difference between Shi`ah and Sunni Islam. In reality there is no difference, it is only a matter of dogma. We want to reach Allah and we know that the quickest way to Allah is the way of Muhammad. In order to understand Muhammad, we need to understand his family, for the Prophet enjoined this upon us. This then is the school of the *Ahl al-Bayt*. It makes the teachings of Muhammad easier and more accessible. If we are not interested in knowing the laws of Allah, we will always have disagreements and disputes. Those who seek the knowledge of Allah gather together so that they can determine how best to live life successfully, nobly, honorably, and in harmony. They meet in order to prepare for the next experience which is death.

Let us examine the situation in Japan, for instance, to see how a spiritual tradition, which was until recently deeply rooted among the people, is beginning to decline. Many of the good habits

of the people have become mere rituals which have lost their meaning. Family life is not as strong now as it was twenty years ago. The same is true of loyalty to one's friend and one's employer and morality in general. There is much decadence and corruption. Before, in this country, sport was for people to participate in. Now it has become spectator-oriented because it is copying the decadent West. Tradition now has become a once-a-year annual event. Husbands and wives may dress up in traditional dress only once in their lifetime for a photograph. Values and practices are imported from the West and the old values are no longer nurtured. Traditional Japanese values are those of Islam: honesty, openness, loyalty, love for family, humility, modesty. Women traditionally placed their husbands before themselves, and were subservient and obedient. The situation in the West is not like this and this erosion of values has affected countries throughout the world. The Arab countries where Islam began and grew have lost their traditions and have become arrogant. They have become fat. All the rulers of the Arab countries are dictators. This has nothing to do with Islam. The only Islam is an attempt in Iran which was the most decadent and corrupt country in the Middle East until the Islamic Revolution. Now they are hoping to change, but this change takes time. Fifty years of corruption is not wiped away in five years. We hope and pray for its success, because if the attempt succeeds, then many other countries can learn from it.

Japanese culture was based on modesty and contentment. The influx of decadent western values began in 1953 with Commodore Perry. It is alright to have Commodore Perry if the culture is strong in its inner meaning. The Shoguns knew that the code of conduct was not strong enough and that is why they wanted to close the country. Japan is now bowing to the West and does not really wish to do so, so there is conflict. The Japanese personality is facing a crisis.

It is not true that the Shoguns vanished in 1867. The Shogun is still there. He is in the White House. He pays his respects to the Emperor. However, only one Emperor can rule. A nation will not be one nation under one rule unless it rules itself. Islam rules the self. The Muslim believes that man has the capacity to be Allah's representative on this earth, if he is just, compassionate, wise, and his body and his soul are in harmony, if he is ready to serve and wants to bring peace for everybody. The Muslim believes that eventually everyone will realize that the way to live in this world is peacefully with few desires and much service, positive service, not just running

around aimlessly, chasing a little golf ball. The prosperity of towns in Japan can now be measured by whether or not they have a golf course.

In traditional Japanese culture when men became old, they were considered the most important member of the family. The children loved to be with them, and they taught because they had reached a high degree of wisdom. They had stopped chasing after business and material success because they had become older and wiser. In modern Japan, when a person becomes old, he is sent out on a golf course to chase after a ball. It is therapy for the decadent West. Man's life is supposed to be balanced. He should not expose himself to an office environment for so long that he has to go out and get drunk to forget about the madness he is in. This situation is that of the world in general, not just of Japan.

Islam is the therapy for all mankind. The Qur'an says the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, was 'A Mercy for all the worlds' (21:107). Every teaching that came before Islam is within Islam. We say that every child is born a Muslim until his parents change him, because the child is natural and in a state of submission.

If the Muslims who truly understand the meaning of Islam can show the Qur'an and the way of Muhammad to people all over the world in a digestible form, then they will have provided a great service. Allah will love them because they will be doing His work, which is to save man from his own ignorance.

Remembrance of Allah

The basic principle of *dhikr* (remembrance or invocation of Allah) is to bring oneself into a state in which there are no thoughts, thereby becoming neutralized and cleansed. At first it is difficult. We are distracted by many thoughts and memories. Eventually, we should reach a point in which we are clear and without thoughts.

There are many techniques which may be used to achieve this state. One which I find very useful is thinking of the word ‘Allah’ in Arabic. As an aid you can picture yourself writing it. But remember, it is just a technique to exclude thoughts. Another method is to visualize yourself within the black stone, with absolutely no color and nothing that you can discern. The objective is to become neutralized. The Qur’an says:

So when you are free (emptied), still toil. (94:7)

Faragha in this *ayah* means ‘empty’, empty of what matters, which are thoughts. It is very difficult to do.

I will give you an example of how difficult it is to achieve, even for a great man of knowledge. Imam Ghazzali asked his mother why his brother Ahmad had never prayed behind him. Imam Ghazzali was a teacher and scholar, and had a large number of followers and belonged to a Sufi order or *tariqah* (literally path). Imam Ghazzali wondered why people came from all over the world to pray behind him yet his brother had never done so. Later, their mother asked Shaykh Ahmad to please pray behind his brother. So one day he and his few disciples (*murids*) came to the great mosque in Baghdad where thousands of people had gathered. In the second *rak`ah* (a part of the prayer) behind Imam Ghazzali, Shaykh Ahmad suddenly left the prayer. A few of his followers, bewildered, did the same. This created a great disturbance in the mosque. When Shaykh Ahmad was approached and asked, “Why did you leave the prayer, what happened?” he replied: “In the second *rak`ah* you did not have an Imam, he had left you.” The people, very disturbed, asked Imam Ghazzali if what Shaykh

Ahmad had said was true, that he had left them in the prayer. He replied: “Regretfully, he speaks the truth; my mind did wander off in the second *rak`ah*.”

As another example of the difficulty of controlling the thoughts that enter the mind, I mention the following story told by a great Shaykh from Turkey named Shaykh Muzaffar:

Not long ago in Istanbul a *majdhub* (a man mad in Allah) happened to be praying behind a famous scholar. Suddenly, in the middle of the prayer, the *majdhub* started screaming, “My stick is under the apple tree, my stick is under the apple tree!” This was quite disturbing to everyone. Later, some of the men went after him determined to harm him. The Imam said, “No, please do not do anything to him. Leave him alone because the disturbance during the prayer came from my mind. It suddenly occurred to me whilst I was praying that yesterday I had left my stick under an apple tree in an orchard.”

The only way that the thoughts in one’s mind can be controlled is through awareness. There is a famous story about a rascal who lived in India during the reign of a king who had lost all his hair. As a consequence his queen no longer cared for him and he desperately sought help to grow his hair back. The rascal came to the king and assured him that he could cure him. The king replied, “I am willing to spend whatever it takes to find a cure. The only thing that is important to me in this life is that my hair should grow back.” The man told the king that he could help him, but there would be many conditions. The king eagerly agreed to everything he wanted.

First, the clever man mobilized the king’s entire army to gather herbs from specific places in a complicated fashion that looked very impressive. He arranged to be given a whole wing of the palace in which to live and prepare his elixirs. The king went to a great deal of expense, and finally, after a long wait, was told that his remedy was ready.

“You must rub this medicine on your head three times a day for forty days,” instructed the rascal to the king. “But there is one simple condition: when you rub it in, you must not think of three things – spinach, buttons, and roast chicken.” “That will be easy,” said the king, “I

hate spinach, I don't even have buttons on my clothes and roast chicken is not among my favorites." "If you do think of any of those things," the trickster said, "you must begin the treatment again for the full forty consecutive days. It is fully guaranteed."

For three years the king tried in vain to carry out his promise but each time, after twenty or so days had passed, he would inevitably say to himself, "Oh, what was it that I was not supposed to think of?" The rascal had successfully swindled the king.

The point of this story is that it is impossible to refrain from thinking, and therefore, it is necessary to find an image, like Allah's name, the black stone or any other thing that helps us to obliterate our thoughts. It is impossible not to think. Our objective is to be in a pure state of consciousness, which is not easy, but which can be achieved through practice.

The reason for the circles in the recitation of *dhikr* (invocation, remembrance) is to help us to practice being in a state of full alertness and wakefulness, yet without thoughts. It is very refreshing and rejuvenating. It is energizing and it gives us a new state of elation. That is the purpose of *dhikr*. It is not a superstitious exercise; rather it has a direct effect, that of purifying our hearts, making them turn. The *dhikr* causes us to turn from a state of thought to one of non-thought and back again. By this we are neutralized, refreshed, and ready to accept anything again in life.

Remembrance is a technique for overcoming the self which is constantly under strain. As a matter of course, the self manifests a certain measure of doubt. Allah's statement:

Now surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest.
(13:28)

addresses this propensity of the self. Thinking of Allah means not thinking of other than Allah. In a way, everything else we can think of can be considered other than Allah. This is not Allah, and yet it is created by the decree of Allah.

Through subtlety we find that we only see Allah. Even when hit upon the head we are wont to say, ‘Praise be to Allah! Yes, I realize I should not be here. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time.’ To reach this state a neutralizing factor is needed. When people do *dhikr* – if they are the right people, performing it for the right purpose, in the right way – this is the result.

Recite *dhikr* as loud as you like. The sound is important, it helps to overcome the thoughts. Try to be as comfortable as possible so that you can forget your body and yourself. The object of this is to be nowhere. Not sitting comfortably indicates that later your circulation of blood in certain areas of your body may be hindered. So be as relaxed as possible. Generally, because of the electric and magnetic currents in our body, it is very useful to keep your hands touching. We will find most Sufi paths place the right hand on top of the left; somehow that helps to neutralize the body.

The more we practice, the more we find that the best position is to sit cross-legged with the spine erect. You may prop yourself up or sit in a chair to achieve a relaxed position. Ultimately, most of the paths of Sufism take a person into what is called *khalwah* (seclusion, retreat) or *i`tikaf* (retreat at specific times). *Khalwah* and *i`tikaf* have a certain etiquette surrounding them. Generally speaking, *i`tikaf* refers to the last ten days of Ramadan when one may remain confined within the precincts of the mosque, but it also means to have taken refuge, to have isolated one’s self in order to attain the state of purification. In any case, the more we practice, the more we can do it anytime, anywhere.

There are various methods of helping to subdue our thoughts during *dhikr*. One way is not to attack them. We allow them to come out and be looked at. If a thought is disturbing to us, we do not suppress it, for that would only confirm it more. Allow the thoughts to come out, greet them, salute them and then dismiss them as if you were a sergeant major in charge of inspecting his soldiers. Recognize one bad aspect of each soldier and move on to the next, until the parade of thoughts passes you by completely and you are no longer distracted. Incidentally, we must be in *wudu*; not being in *wudu* may cause us to become distracted.

When this occurs, the ultimate subtlety, which is in the form of energy, becomes manifest. When the subtle (*latif*) and dense (*kathif*), the light and the sound, become so connected at the same time, the subtle becomes more subtle, almost obvious as one approaches the nondescript state of no-thought.

I hope these words will be helpful to you whenever you sit and do *dhikr*. The more we dive into it the more it will become second nature to us; and the *dhikr* may be resumed at whatever stage we left off.

Another suggestion which is useful for the early stages of the practice when you are very agitated, is to think of yourself sitting in front of a very calm sea, looking at the horizon. Then think of the name of Allah emerging slowly from it, getting bigger and bigger. This technique helps to focus one's thoughts. At the end of a session of *dhikr* it is useful to do the *dhikr* very quietly. Most of the Naqshabandi *tariqahs* (orders, paths) end their *dhikr* with almost twenty minutes of complete silence. The idea is to obtain the maximum benefit from it. After we have quieted our minds completely, we just stay still. We can paint the name in our hearts so that it remains the point of tranquility from which we can benefit during the day.

I would like now to talk about things of interest to the businessman. There are a great deal of misconceptions and misunderstandings about the meaning of *dunya* (the material world) and what it is; as well as about wealth and poverty. I am going to read from a collection of *hadiths* which I have gathered and which, I hope very much, will one day be translated into Malay. It is a very brief collection covering matters that concern the person on the path. It is broken down into sections by topic. There is no commentary, only *ayats* from the Qur'an and *hadiths*. So it can serve as a foundation for knowledge. I shall give you some idea of it, so that you may see if it appeals to you. I would like to read from a section which defines many of the key terms within Islam, beginning with *shukr* (gratefulness). The Qur'an says:

If you are grateful, I would certainly give to you more. (14:7)

How does this work? How does man obtain increase, as the Qur'an says, from gratitude? Well, we may say that if a businessman is grateful for his business he will make more business and thereby be more successful. How does this come about? Let us look at it this way: the moments we are in *shukr* will be the moments in which we will find increase – any ordinary person, any unbeliever who is grateful will also find increase. Even the worst disbeliever, who does not pray, but who has the state of gratitude will benefit from it. Many of the unbelievers have absorbed aspects of our great heritage of Islam without even knowing it, but they greatly benefit from them. The moment a person is in *shukr* his heart is contained and content. Suppose a child wants a bicycle. The desire for the bicycle is an agitation which vanishes as soon as he receives the object. His state becomes one of complete contentment. The state of contentment is good for us because within it our energies are preserved and we are whole.

The believer's nature is to be content with knowledge. This should be our aim. Man's normal state is discontentment because he wants to go back to Allah and maintain the perfect eternal situation. If he experiences something good, he wants it to be preserved forever. If what he experiences is bad, he wants it to vanish. But, of course, this is not possible in this world. Allah says:

What troubles my slaves is that they seek comfort in this life
and I did not create it for comfort.

He created this world so that we are constantly sparked and thereby constantly evolving.

When we are satisfied we have no agitation, no desires, we are whole. At that moment we are most efficient, and therefore, we will have a greater possibility of succeeding. Psychologically, this is the most efficient state because our thoughts are contained, thereby allowing us to better project our will.

Therefore, the state of gratitude is a state of inner tranquility and balance. All our faculties are present – our senses and our faculty of reasoning – and because of that we will correctly judge

the situations that confront us, bringing success. The section on *shukr* is two pages long but, as I said, it is a very simple formula based solely on traditions without a commentary.

The book contains another section on the qualities of character. What is missing in these modern times is the knowledge of behavior. There is a great deal of interest in Islam but not sufficient knowledge which is easily available to us on human conduct. In one section there are traditions concerning the meaning of ‘the best character’, humility, modesty, and forgiveness, as well as obliteration. In Arabic, when we say ‘excuse me’, ‘forgive me’ we are saying ‘please obliterate the time in which wrong was committed’. There are four Arabic words for generosity, one of them is *sakha*. Each one is covered as well as ‘humility’, ‘honor’, ‘abstinence’, ‘fear’, ‘hope’, ‘wealth’, and ‘poverty’, ‘hope’, ‘wealth’, and ‘poverty’.

There are several *ayats* and traditions on the meaning of wealth and poverty. Allah says in *Surah al-Duha*:

Did He not find you in want and free you from want. (93:8)

He is specifically addressing the Prophet, but if we are lovers of the Prophet and his followers, it is also applicable to us. If an *ayah* of the Qur’an were only a message to the Prophet, there would be no point in our reading it. But, in fact, every *ayah* of the Qur’an applies to us. When Allah says:

Perdition will overtake both hands of Abu Lahab, and he will perish. (111:1)

it means not only that Abu Lahab, who seems to be powerful, will die, but that each one of us who acts in the manner of Abu Lahab will perish and be at a loss in the same way that Abu Lahab was. In this world there are many Abu Lahabs.

The Qur’an is not a historical document, it is a manual for existence. If we do not treat the Qur’an as such, we have missed the point. The Qur’an says:

Allah has found you in want. (93:8)

Every one of us has been in trouble, uncertain and insecure and then been enriched. By simply remembering this we will witness nature's perfection. Allah's perfect way has fallen upon each one of us, giving us greater confidence and certainty. Last year each one of us had problems. Where are these problems now? They have gone. And tomorrow we will have new problems. The Qur'an says in another *ayah*:

If they are needy, Allah will make them free from want out of His grace. (24:32)

If a person admits his failings and poverty, Allah will enrich him with His bounty. As you know, enrichment may be of a physical or a spiritual kind. Outwardly we may be well, but inwardly bereft. A person may have a great deal of wealth, but be very unhappy. In fact, this is usually the case, because we cannot become very wealthy unless we have invested a great deal of time and effort that could have been spent on the inner life. There is a formula which states that we cannot have it all. There are a limited number of days and just so much energy for all of us.

If, when we are in poverty, we admit our poverty, there is the possibility of coming out of it. Our recognition will cause us to investigate our situation. We will ask, 'Is it our land? Is it our resources?' We will have the freedom, within limitations, to do something about it. Of course, we are not free to live forever, but we are free to care for our health; in fact, it is our duty, otherwise, we would be washed-out fatalistic people.

We are simultaneously enslaved and free, constricted, and yet able to act within certain constrictions. If we recognize the bounds of the *Shari`ah* (the body of Islamic law), we act within them. This life is Allah's melting pot which tests whether or not we have the power of reasoning that can recognize the bounds of right and wrong within the *Shari`ah*.

If we recognize the source and the root of poverty, we will be able to do something about it or, finding it impossible to do anything, make the best of it. We will not experience agitation and we

will know that we have done our utmost, which is in itself enrichment. The abundance and mercy of Allah is, in this case, the recognition of one's total situation.

The grace of Allah manifests in a variety of ways. The Prophet said; "The dinar and the dirham have caused the destruction of many people before and you will cause your destruction." Imam `Ali was asked, "What is the meaning of dirham (currency)?" He replied: "It is derived from *dar al-ham* (the house of grief)." They asked him, "What is dinar?" and he replied: "It is from *dar al-nar* (house of fire)." Fire has many uses. We can prepare food with it, but it can also engulf us. So watch out for the dirham and the dinar.

In another *hadith* from the Prophet related by Imam Baqir: "There are from amongst my believing slaves those whose religious or spiritual affairs will not be completed unless they are in wealth and in expansion, and in good health in their bodies; so I will afflict them with wealth and good health and expansion, so that their spiritual affairs become appropriate for them. And there are other believing slaves whose affairs will not be put right except by poverty."

In Arabic, the *misqin* is defined as he who does not know from where his next meal is coming, and who suffers from ill health. It is by this situation that his spiritual affairs improve. Allah says, "I know what is best for My believing slaves." Another tradition which is similar to the one which we have mentioned says, "Allah will bring some people to the Garden on bleeding knees and chains, while others He will bring in dignity." These traditions indicate that if a person has true faith, he will recognize his situation to be perfect for him.

If a man is truly a believer, he believes that his duty is to learn to know the way of Allah, and that he is always encompassed by Allah. If there is anything in it that he does not recognize as being in full balance, he should ask Allah for a way out, for Allah is the Most Merciful; and he should do his best to change his situation.

Then of course, he might not know what to do, or how to change his situation. For example, if a man wants to improve his material existence, he might go to a new place and plunge himself into establishing a business, because that is what he knows how to do. When he loses all his money,

he will say, ‘Allah is unkind to me.’ But in truth, he was not sufficiently knowledgeable or discriminating. He did not first survey the market properly and therefore was unprepared. It is ignorance he should blame not Allah, for Allah is above blame. The believer is he who either knows that he is afflicted by his own ignorance and is content with it, or believes he will come to know what is necessary to remedy his situation. His belief is not blind, it is direct witnessing. The Qur’an says:

Say: Are the blind and the seeing one alike? (6:50)

‘Seeing’ means knowledge, insight and correct knowledge; and the more we know, the more we find out how little we know.

Obtaining knowledge of the physical world is very easy to obtain. It is very basic. The physical world is but a small portion of existence composed of many other worlds which we do not perceive. There are millions of worlds whose wave bands are being transported through space, each with a different wavelength. Some of them are of a radiant nature, others are of a magnetic nature. Some of them are within the radar band frequency and we do not feel them. Thank Allah for that! If we felt all of these energies our world would be completely shattered. Our limitations are, in fact, for our protection. If our eyesight saw every detail we would be horrified; the carpet would appear as a jungle with millions of microbes in it, and so on. So the believer constantly sees Allah’s perfection, and therefore is in constant glorification.

Continuing with the topic of wealth and poverty, there is a tradition from Imam Rida in which he says: “He who greets a poor Muslim differently from a rich Muslim will find that Allah will see him on the Day of Reckoning with anger.” The Prophet said: “Look at those who are below you.” Meaning, look at those who are worse off than you. It is another technique of bringing one to the state of gratitude.

In our modern materialistic society, we are taught to look up to those who have more than us. Consumerism is designed to escalate the agitation of those who are subjected to it in order to instill the desire for what is bigger, better and faster. Within the dynamics of desire-generation

and its fulfillment there is a secret. The *kufir* or infidel system, just like the system of Islam allows for the individual to attain satisfaction and, therefore state of momentary gratitude.

One cause of momentary happiness is the fulfillment of a desire. The less we desire, the more contentment we will possess and the happier we will be. If we were to be told that whatever we wanted in this world would be granted, we would experience a moment of happiness. The next moment, of course, something else would happen. The unbeliever also recognizes that a measure of happiness is achieved through the fulfillment of a desire. So the disbelievers fan the desires of their people through consumerism making much of what is offered available. Efforts are made to make the products easily accessible through a plastic credit card so that for a split second the exhilaration of contentment is achieved.

The believer has reached the foundation or root of contentment. He has gone beyond the little trick of achieving momentary happiness. Because Islam turns its people away from the banking, monetary system, it is a threat to the *kafir* system.

The believer is the biggest threat to the materialistic West because of what faith implies, but the majority of believers do not understand this. Reflect upon it. The consumer who chases after numerous different material objects during his day achieves only a split-second of contentment which the believer can achieve by sitting for fifty seconds and saying, ‘Allah,’ and emptying himself. The believer can then say to himself, ‘No, I am discontented. I am not doing enough. I must see what I can do for my family, my fellow Muslims and humanity.’ Because he is committed to doing his best, he is a slave – day in, day out, every second is accounted for.

Nay! Man is evidence against himself, though he puts forth his excuses. (75:14-15)

We are our own witnesses. Within each cell are chromosomes upon which are written the entire story of our being and so we have our choice:

Surely, we have shown him the way; he may be thankful or unthankful. (76:3)

Allah says to each soul before it is born into this world, “Am I not your Lord?” Either man is in a state of gratitude *shukr*, and therefore in contentment as befits his position as Allah’s vicegerent (*khalifah*), or in denial, covering it up, and making endless excuses. It is clear.

We are accountable to the One and Only. If we live by this reality with every breath, then there is hope for us as individuals and for humanity. Otherwise, Islam remains only sentimental, intellectual teachings. Those who know do, those who don’t teach. Islam is about being. Whenever there is an Islamic Studies department, know that it is almost the end of Islam. Presently, there are more Islamic Studies departments in the *kufir* system than in the Muslim countries, but the Muslim countries will soon catch up because their Islam is fossilized – it is an official Islam, for ceremonies, superstitious, marriages and divorces.

People think that *wudu’* (ritual ablution) has to do with cleanliness, but actually it is a purely spiritual exercise performed in order to remember that nothing goes into our mouths unless it is completely in the way of Allah, and nothing comes out of our mouths that is poisonous, that is against anyone else. Likewise, *wudu’* reminds us that whatever we see, it is going to be for Allah’s sake; and that we are not going to look at what is forbidden. Our right hand, the hand of right action, enjoins the good ‘In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful’, as is appropriate for the ‘representative’ of the Creator; while our left hand discards what is unworthy and forbids evil. *Wudu’* is a detailed inner ritual which presupposes our physical cleanliness.

We have to grasp the entire model of Islam which is devoted to Allah, the All-Encompassing. We cannot just take an aspect of Islam so that it becomes easy and comfortable. This is what ‘official’ Islam is today.

The *hadith* quoted in this regard says that ‘marriage is half the *din*, or way of Islam, so that you may pay attention to the other half which is more important’. The *hadith*, when it is mentioned as a whole unit, indicates that we should pay more attention to our spiritual dimension, but this cannot be done without first satisfying and containing our lower part. But the second half of this *hadith* is generally omitted because people do not want to hear it.

The purpose of existence is to know Allah. By practicing only part of the *din* we will fall short of achieving our goal. Our lives will be without purpose if our priority is not to come to know Allah and prepare for the next life.

We may have a house, a wife, a car, and children, and then we will die. Is that acceptable to our intellect and sense of justice that, after we have done our utmost to learn how to live in this world and to know its purpose, that at the end there is only six feet of dust awaiting us? It can only be acceptable if we believe, perhaps blindly in the beginning, that there is only Allah and we have been put on earth to come to know the outer manifestations of what Allah has created of physical forms in order to know His Attributes and Names, and in our moments of inner silence become certain of the One and Only Reality Who encompasses all other realities emanating from the One Source.

Though the goal is beyond our comprehension, logic, and tongue, if it is not the purpose of our embracing Islam, then we are not embracing the right Islam. Islam is not about a certain ritual and the glorification of the Qur'an in its physical form. We have traditions of the Prophet which say that there will come a time when the Qur'an will be so revered that it is hardly read. This is our time. There is, increasingly, a tendency to put the Qur'an in velvet boxes.

The Commander of the Faithful, `Ali, says that we are the evident book. We must examine ourselves and the Islam that we are living. It is up to each of us to make ourselves accountable to our Creator. We are accountable to each other only for our outer conduct. We cannot judge others except by the outer crust of the *Shari`ah* (divine law), in the hope that it will serve to preserve a vibrant inner core.

The men of Allah will be produced everywhere. The object of our Islam should be to create a situation from which men of Allah may emerge, and in which there are *walis* (friends of Allah) all around to remind us.

I once visited a cemetery in Morocco; there was so much light emanating from one of the graves that even a blind man could see it a hundred miles away. I asked whose grave it was, and was

told that it was the grave of a man who died at an advanced age. At no time in his life was he known to have sat in a circle unless the talk was about Allah. This is what Islam is about, but it does not mean that we neglect our health and other fundamental aspects of our life. Actually, they are the first things we should set in order. Nor does it mean that we should first become rich and then start on a spiritual path. It does not work that way.

I have collected *hadiths* with the object of awakening people like us, living under difficult times. If we are not men of *tawhid*, aiming at unification with Allah, then we have missed the path. Our goal is to become people who see unity and cause and effect behind everything.

If we do not help to produce men of Allah, then we are not the hand of evolution, working on the path of Allah. In any case, Allah's path will prevail. Allah has promised that there will come a time when the entire world will be inhabited by men of Allah. The Qur'an says:

Certainly we wrote in the Book after the reminder that (as for) the land, My righteous servants shall inherit it. (21:105)

As Muslims, we have to believe that a time of darkness will come in the world and that its opposite will also appear. Anything which moves beyond its boundary will turn into its opposite. Everything in existence – any plant, imagination, thought, is rooted in its opposite. The root of appreciating wealth lies in the knowledge of poverty. The root of appreciating health lies in experiencing illness. The times we are living in are so dark that they will also turn to their opposite. It is the law of Allah and Allah says about His laws:

And you shall not find any change in the course of Allah. (33-62)

Everything has its secret in its opposite.

Now, everywhere throughout the world, there are hearts starting to ask the right questions. The media, which is the cause of all the oppression, will reverse itself. It is only a vehicle. Whatever you put into it will come out.

So the time of the Mahdi is near. This is the good news. He will come in a way in which we will understand. Maybe madmen in some country will ignite one of the nuclear bombs, setting off a chain reaction resulting in nuclear war. Where will it be safe? Perhaps Sri Lanka or Bangladesh because nobody wants them. The sooner we turn to our One and Only Friend and remain with Him the better. The time we are living in is as we have already indicated, the physical and spiritual corruption which is now rampant throughout the world will decline. The land will be overtaken by the men of Allah and the *khalifah* of Allah will emerge. In the Qur'an Allah told this to the angels.

The Prophet who contained Adam's heart knew that at all times Allah's justice prevails in spite of us. Our justice is within Allah's creation just as our injustice is within His justice. The believer sees the injustice of man, but He sees it within the context of divine law.

Eventually, the justice of our earth will be unified with Allah's justice. Allah's justice will prevail because there will be men of Allah left on the earth.

The evolution which Allah promises is the coming of a time when all men on earth will be *walis* (friends of Allah). This, not Darwin's theory, is the description of the real evolution. Within us is contained the meanings of all of the animals, without a doubt. How can we understand the snake unless there is a snake within us? And the time will come when those who are awakened will be as light. The awakening of the intelligence began with Adam.

We have come from a resurrected state, in which there was no discrimination. Adam, when *Shaytan* spoke to him, did not recognize his voice. He had only heard the voice of the Merciful One Who only spoke the Truth. A prophet is infallible. Question the Qur'an and find out the real meaning of this story. Adam did not make a mistake. When he heard another form of adoration which is called *shatana* in Arabic, meaning 'being far from Allah's prescribed path', which is the condition of *Shaytan*, he did not know that it was not to be followed. Allah had to cause Adam to leave the Garden in order for discrimination to arise.

We have no option but to increase in discrimination. We have to feed our faculty of reasoning. A time will come when everyone will be in almost pure consciousness, which is the meaning of *dhikr*, remembrance, awareness. Allah says in the Qur'an:

There surely came over man a period of time when he was a thing
not worth mentioning. (76:1)

Looking at the lowest and most obvious meaning of this *ayah*, we see that it says that there was a time when no one could mention us, no one could say any one of us would be born. Elevating our perception, we see that it also means there was certainly a time when we were in the *dhikr* of Allah. We were in the knowledge of Reality which is beyond time. A time will come when there will be full awakening for everyone.

May Allah bless all of you. May Allah give you the courage and the strength to move vigorously on the path of Islam. May Allah give you knowledge of the true faith in all its meanings. May Allah make us true brothers in Islam. May Allah fuse our hearts in faith.

Living Real Islam

Wherever I have been, I have noticed that there are new people who want to know Islam and the way to Allah; new people who are suffering from the way of unbelief or *kufr*. People only deny the existence of Allah because they lack the knowledge of *La ilaha illa'llah, Muhammadun Rasulu'llah* (There is no Allah but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet). At the same time, I have met a considerable number of Muslims whose Islam has become diluted or has not been confirmed by their actions – it has merely been inherited. The Qur'anic statement

You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in Allah. (3:110)

has not taken root in them.

There are many countries in the modern world where Islam has failed to take root as a complete way of life. Malaysia is a good example. A few hundred years ago some of the sultans embraced Islam and thereafter the people accepted the basic practices and rituals. But, for the most part, it has remained just another convenient way of keeping people at bay and maintaining the economic class structure. It is not the Islam of Muhammad. It is not the Islam described by the Prophet's words: "Poverty is my pride." Instead of establishing a dynamic Islam, they have introduced Islamic studies departments within the universities – what they have established is academic Islam.

In the last few years the demand for, and curiosity about, Islam has, to a great extent, coincided with the Islamic Revolution in Iran. People everywhere have been asking, 'How can a country live without either being under the control of America or Russia?' After fifty or sixty years of oppression, mediocrity, and *kufr*, the people in Iran are attempting to establish, in every aspect, the true way of Islam. It will take some time for it to succeed. It will take time for the outer changes to enter into the heart so that the outer and the inner unify.

There have been an increasing number of people, especially amongst the poor and the oppressed, who want to know: What is the way of abandonment? What is the way of freedom? How can man live on this earth, yet not belong to this earth? For a few years we are imprisoned in our bodies on this earth but, in essence, we do not belong to this earth. We all know we are dying and that every step brings us closer to the death when everyone will encounter the face of his Lord:

With your Lord shall on that day be the place of rest. (75:12)

We all know, whether we like it or not, that this life is a short journey from which we shall enter another zone of experience which is beyond time, which is forever. The entity which is called ‘I’ will exist in the next world just as I have left it while living on this earth. If I die as a good Muslim and a believer, this will be the state of that entity in that beyond-time-zone.

Wherever we go, we find people who want to know the way to submission. They want to know the way to Allah, to “*la ilaha illa’llah*” (There is no Allah by Allah). We find that this step is not difficult: even in the worst system of unbelief or *kufir* people are ready to accept the fact that there is one Entity behind what is happening. They are ready to accept that there is one hand behind all things. Scientific research shows us, through the laws of cause and effect, that the entirety of this existence is but one fiber. Whatever we do affects the rest of existence. We are not isolated. As the individual evolves, this knowledge gains a hold within him and he begins to embrace the knowledge of “*la ilaha illa’llah*”. But the acceptance of this knowledge is difficult. To come to know the Prophet, his people, his companions and his kinsmen, the *Ahl al-Bayt*, requires time and study. One has to become acquainted with the Prophet’s behavior and special qualities. How were he and his followers and household able to be in this life and yet not of it? The Prophet said: “If you want to look at a dead man walking, look at me.” He also said: “Die before you die.” What do these statements mean? True Islam only comes alive through the example of the Prophet and his pure family and followers.

I have just come from Peshawar¹ where I was with some of the *mujahidin* (fighters for Allah). Two of them whom I met had just come from the front the day before, having lost many of their friends. You could feel that there was a different quality of life amongst them. My experience of them was a proof that Islam without *jihad* (struggle in the way of Allah) cannot exist. We cannot take one part of Islam out of convenience and reject another because it is uncomfortable. Islam is not about convenience but about Allah. It means living as though at any moment you will see nothing other than Allah. The spiritual state of excellence consists of acting as though you are seeing nothing other than Allah. Although people unavoidably become attached to certain aspects of Islam, the Qur'an or their teacher, a time comes when the true seeker is weaned from that to which he is attached, thereby enabling him to see nothing other than his Creator. The teaching of Islam leads us to understand that.

Allah, Who is beyond time, knows what is going to be in time, because time is contained in beyond-time. Time is an outer manifestation of non-time. He is the First and the Last. You and I experience time, and yet there is something in us that tells that we do not belong to this chain of events. The ignorant *kafirun*, that is to say those who reject the truth, want to live long. This is the extent of their understanding of *ibadah* – the worship and glorification of Allah. Allah says:

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth declares
the glory of Allah. (64:1)

We glorify that Entity. The whole of creation glorifies Allah, even the *kafir*. But we as Muslims do it in the correct way; we unify our will with destiny, with Allah's will. And therefore, the believer (*mu'min*) finds nothing other than the blessedness of Allah's perfection even when everything around him is crumbling, because he remembers Allah's will and Allah's way. The Qur'an, the Book of Discrimination, says:

Allah is not unjust to them, but they are unjust to themselves.
(3:117)

¹ A city in the North Western part of Pakistan, bordering Afghanistan.

If we are in misery, if we are attacked, if we lose Afghanistan², it is our fault. The blame for whatever occurs falls upon us. Allah has given us, His representatives, the choice to be grateful or disbelieving. Gratitude (*shukr*) is a condition of the heart. In other words, gratitude should not only be on the tongue but in the heart as well. What is the use of knowing the Qur'an by heart and not applying it to our lives as a manual of existence from minute to minute? You must be careful:

Therefore read what is easy of the Qur'an. (73:20)

Every one of us can take what he can of it, joyfully, and move on. The Qur'an says:

Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability. (2:286)

This means that Allah imposes a duty upon everyone to the maximum of his or her ability. Allah, by forcing us to make efforts, is teaching our hearts to be always turning, always grateful. He says:

That you grieve not for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you. (3:153)

The believer never looks back in sorrow or regrets what has happened. If he does, it is only to attain the capacity to discriminate – to understand the underlying causes. Usually, loss and failure is caused by distraction (*ghaflah*), or by a lack of unity between the intention and the action. If I have failed, it is because I have not heard or properly understood the call to prayer which includes the words, “*Hayya `ala'l-falah*”. *Falah* implies to succeed as well as to turn the earth upside down. If our hearts, or our fields, which are this world, are not ploughed and made ready for the Hereafter, there will be nothing for us but indignities. We will have no right to claim the title Allah has given us.

² This speech was delivered during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

The vicegerent or *khalifah* of Allah is he who, with every breath, is aware and is willing. He is totally free of what is in this world yet enslaved to his Creator. His heart turns freely within him. Whenever he looks inward, he sees the incredible universe. Outwardly, he is a slave who cannot but follow the example or *sunnah* of Muhammad. Outwardly he is sober, inwardly he is drunk. Inwardly he is gratified at all times with knowledge, not because he has had a good meal or he has taken a drug. The believer is, at all times, prepared to unify his intention with his action.

The Islam of the East has been diluted. Even so, in agricultural communities Allah's blessedness manifests outwardly through the call to prayer (*adhan*) and going to the mosque. Rural Pakistan is the land of hearts. A land in which *walis* are produced. But *walis* (great men of Allah, inheritors of the Prophetic message) do not come by inheritance. There is no guarantee that the children of *walis* will also be *walis*. Allah says:

He brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living. (30:19)

Though dead inwardly, Allah may bring us to life at any moment in our life. Usually we are woken up through trouble that occurs in our lives which causes us to conclude that nothing in this world is worth struggling for – neither our wealth nor our position. We have come into this world alone to be dumped under six feet of dust. Our awakening usually occurs when we are in distress and loss. Generally speaking, most of us wake up.

The Prophet said, “You are not a Muslim if there is one person in your neighborhood who goes to sleep hungry.” There are individuals in the world who have incomes of millions of dollars which they spend on their petty luxuries while millions of people amongst the Muslim communities have barely a meal each day.

Islam has become diluted by becoming an official Islam, paid for by the government which provides each of the Imams with an official *khutbah* (discourse or sermon). This is official Islam. Vibrant Islam, found amongst the people, is what the system of unbelief is afraid of. Vibrant, green Islam, is an Islam which people want to know. There are no professional practitioners in

Islam. Who were the professionals at the time of the Prophet, or at the time of the early Caliphs? The last leader of the army whom Muhammad appointed was Usama who was one of his youngest companions. Why did the Prophet not appoint one of the others who were much older? Who were the professionals and the graduates? I am not against Islamic colleges, but it is a reflection of the darkness of our times that because Islam is not deep within us, we have to create institutions to preserve it as a museum piece.

I cannot give you the good news without the bad news. The good news is that Islam is vibrant and growing in practically every land, from West Africa to Japan. We have been establishing small centers in which Islam flourishes. Into them we bring young people to learn about their *din*, the path of their religion, and then they are sent out into the world. In this way they see how unbelief creeps into people's lives, and they are then able to advise others on how to fight it.

There are billions of devils or *Shaytans*; every one of us has many of them. Every individual must be like a lion tamer of his *Shaytan*, for unless we watch him he will come out of his corner.

If we are Muslims, we must follow the entire way of Islam without omitting anything. It must not become a nice ceremonial thing, only for marriages, divorces, births and burials, carried out by a class of professionals who are only following the lure of a few rupees³. Our heritage was the reverse; those who were teaching gave money in charity.

If you do not know Islamic history, go and find out. Beware of the fabrications of the Umayyad and the `Abbasid dynasties. Simply because a historical account has come from the government does not mean that it is necessarily true. Yazid, one of the Umayyad rulers actually ransacked Mecca and tore down the Ka`bah.

If Islam is not based on a combination of intellect (`*aql*) and action (`*amal*), it is of no use. You will neither gain in this worldly life (*dunya*) nor in the Hereafter (*akhirah*). It is because of this

³ Pakistani currency

principle that we find our ‘Islamic’ world in such a state of confusion. As far as the Hereafter is concerned, only Allah has knowledge of it. He says:

And whoever is blind in this (world), he shall (also) be blind in the Hereafter and more erring from the way. (17:72)

If in this world, which is clumsy and obvious, we cannot be successful, how can we be successful in a situation which is so subtle such as the next world?

Depend on Allah, and Allah will bring you to the true path. He is not exclusive to a few *shaykhs* (teachers of the spiritual way) or *walis* (men considered friends of Allah because of their piety). Why don't you claim Allah? Allah is not the Preserver of the one or two. The Prophet was asked, “Who are the *Ahl al-Bayt*” (the People of the Household of the Prophet)? He said, “The *Ahl al-Taqwa* (People of fearful awareness)”. *Taqwa* means precaution. How can you be cautious of something unless you know its nature? The nature of Reality manifests in the laws of creation. If we do wrong, we do wrong to ourselves because there is one one *nafs* (self). If we are insincere, we are insincere to ourselves. If we really want knowledge, it will come to us. The *walis* will come running after us. Otherwise, the situation is a superstitious nonsensical ‘bless me’ type. That is not Islam.

Inherited Islam is dangerous, because, although the people have had the blessedness of having been born and brought up in sweetness and with the constant invocation of Allah (*dhikr*), they also have the tendency to disregard it. Familiarity breeds contempt. I have regained much of my Islamic heritage through those who have embraced Islam as adults because they ask questions that had never occurred to me. I took Islam for granted. They ask why the Muslim world is in misery. The answer is because their Islam is outward and not inward. It is very simple. Nine hundred million people profess Islam, but within this quantity of people there is very little quality. You, in this part of the world, are blessed with purity, with what has come to you from centuries of the original stream of Islam. If it is not fully revived on the basis of *tawhid* (unification), it will become diluted and lose its virility. So many great cultures went by the wayside because they became settled – they lost their ability to expand. It is for that reason I pray

that Allah will give us some young people from here who have gained their Islam properly. We will send them out so that they may see that everywhere in the world people are seeking the true light of Islam.

All over the world people are asking for Islam but there are not enough teachers. I will not take a teacher unless he *is* Islam: he should embody the Book and the Sunnah; what he says should come from his heart and be confirmed by his intellect. I do not want preachers. There are enough of them in the forty-six so-called Muslim countries. Their boring propaganda comes to us through the media of television, radio, and so on. They are the people who love to be in the king's parlor. In our way, the king comes to the man of knowledge; the men of knowledge do not go to the king.

In spite of us, Islam will prevail in the world. This is the way of Allah. At best we are but His slaves. Allah promises in the Qur'an that this way, His light, *Nur Allah*, will prevail, and this will occur in man when he is fully awake. Allah says:

If you do good, you will do good for your own souls. (17:7)

Both inwardly and outwardly, this life is *jihad* – a struggle in the way of Allah. We should be continually singing the one and only song of Allah: “*La ilaha illa'llah, Muhammadun Rasulu'llah*” (There is no Allah but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet), wherever we go. We have come to this town in order to change the direction of events. Recently, you have been losing your best people to the system of unbelief. We would like to bring back the best of them to help you, using the new outer technology of the West and the revived inner technology of the East. Simply importing outer technology will ruin us unless it is subservient to our knowledge of the way of Islam. If our moral values are not the dictating factors as to what and when this outer technology is used, it will be of no use to us. We are here with the hope that some people from this community will step forward. We hope that today's young *walis* or friends of Allah will be the people who are familiar with the language of unbelief, who not only know how it works but also understand the religion which they aim to revive. We visited some of the tribes in the North West Frontier [of Pakistan]. There you still see the purity of their hearts and the closeness of

their tribes. But you can also see that this way of life is being eroded. Soon it will be a museum piece, unless they allow themselves to be led by *walis*. I gave them that message and that warning, and they all understood it; they were desperate and asked what they could do about it.

I was brought up in Karbala, a town built upon the spilled blood of Imam Husayn. The Karbala of the past is not longer. For that reason, we have to establish Karbala everywhere. That is the way of our Imams. There is a well-known *hadith* in which the Prophet said, “Husayn is from me and I am from Husayn.” It is easy to understand the first part of the statement because Husayn was his offspring. But what did he mean when he said, “I am from him, from Husayn?” It means that Husayn is his message. The vital message of Islam would have died unless the blood of his grandson had been shed. People often ask: ‘Why did he perish?’ The answer is simple. Islam was becoming a dynastic rule. The followers of Mu`awiyah were making it a hereditary kingdom, like others that had come before it. It was Husayn’s blood that revived Islam.

Karbala is now just another modern city. In my youth this town had a population of over one hundred and fifty thousand people and yet almost everybody knew everybody else. People rarely moved house. I was brought up in a house that had been used by my family for one hundred and eighty years. We were originally from northern Iran. Like many other houses, our house had guest quarters and the guests were of all kinds – beggars, dervishes, rich and poor, often side by side. There were no hospitals, no prisons, no police. One could obtain all that one needed for this life or the next within one minute’s walk. The Bazaars, the bakeries, the public baths and the mosques were all close at hand. But it is not like that any more. Along the streets the entire culture has collapsed. One cannot walk anywhere in the city any more, a car must be used – all in the name of ‘modernization’. Is this progress? I would call it regress. This is what has ruined Islam, so-called ‘modernization’. The medical knowledge of village doctors who were men of Allah has been replaced by the services of allopathic doctors who push drugs that are banned in the West as unsafe. This has occurred because we have been in a state of forgetfulness.

We were led by the worst amongst us. We did not demand to be led in this world by the spiritually enlightened. If the best amongst us spiritually are not going to lead us, if we are only going to put them in caves and in derelict places where we go to receive blessings, we are

doomed. If our *walis* are not going to be amidst us leading us, day in, day out – something is wrong. If we do not want it, or they think we do not deserve it, in either case something is wrong.

I am not blaming any government whatsoever. In fact, because you are allowed to work, think, publish and revive the knowledge of Islam (*ilm*), you have one of the best governments. In the situation you have here when you have any disagreement you can go back to the source and foundation, the Qur'an. If you go back to the way of Muhammad you will find out the truth. If there are still disagreements they will be so minor that they will be insignificant. You are very fortunate, but you have to take advantage of the opportunity, otherwise the caravan will pass you by. Pakistan can be a leading Muslim nation. There are four billion people on earth and Islam has to reach all of them, including the so-called Muslims. I pray that there will emerge from this country people who will sing, whose tongues will express what is in their hearts so that they may communicate the true knowledge to the rest of the world. Islam is the path or *din* of Allah. Allah pervades all and this earth belongs to Him. There are no territories. If we affirm that there are, we will fall into nationalism and racialism.

These are dark times. And in dark times, we must strike stones together in order to make sparks. It is the time when a one-eyed man is king in the country of the blind. People like myself, who have little knowledge, suddenly seem to be doing something which everybody talks about. With a little bit of insight, one seems to be the king. The Prophet said to his Companions: “If I tell you ten things and you forget one, you in in the Fire. A time will come when if people remember but one of the ten they will be in the Garden.” This is, possibly, our time. A few good deeds are very apparent in this time and age, but they must be sincere. Allah says:

Do men think that they will be left alone (at ease) on saying, we believe, and will not be tried? (29:2)

It is a sign of Allah's love for us that He does not allow us to say something without meaning it. Even amongst rascals, good may come. Whatever we look for we will find, whether it be good or bad. Allah has instructed us in Surah Ali-`Imran:

Enjoy what is right and forbid the wrong. (3:110)

Otherwise man is at a loss. There is no use in having faith unless it is accompanied by good actions. If that happens, then the command to do good and the prohibition of evil will make us righteous (*salih*) and the best of communities. Undoubtedly it is upon us. Allah has given us the freedom to do it. After all we have been born into that blessedness of Islam!

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Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq (Translated By Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri)

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Son of Karbala

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

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Collected Papers By: Sami K. Hamarneh

Edited By: Munawar A. Anees

Foreword By: Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

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