



ACADEMY OF SELF KNOWLEDGE

COURSE
TWO
THE PROPHETIC
WAY OF LIFE

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Book Description

This volume of work corresponds to the entire Course TWO on the Prophetic revealed path that the Academy of Self Knowledge (ASK) has offered in the past.

We have renamed it to “*The Prophetic Way of Life*” and put together all 12 lessons (known as maps in this eBook) of the course into this single eBook for the convenience of the students who would go through the entire course, doing the exercises and quizzes at their own pace.

The course unveils the Prophetic path, enabling people who have studied the cosmic design to maintain inner reliability and reference points. This experiential journey offers keys to the awakening of the heart and its nourishment by means of its purification. Based on the cosmology/view that the heart is the connecting point between the soul (the eternal), and the self (the ephemeral), the course focuses on transformation through awareness and the practices of the Prophetic path. This way of transformation includes understanding accountability, and performing structural responsibilities while being continually aware of the soul and higher consciousness.

Having studied and gained an appreciation of the blueprint of life, students can now learn how religious practices are transformational tools to enlightened awakening. This course teaches the student how to navigate through the challenges of this world while constantly referring to the limitless zone of absolute perfection that produced and sustains this world. It illustrates to the seeker the fact that no one can stop striving for perfection, and yet no one can attain perfection for any durable time. This is because the One Source that contains all these perfections owns and possesses the entirety of creation, and not the other way around. God's perfect attributes permeate all of existence, which bind, unify and drive creation towards fulfillment. The objective of this course is to enable the seeker to love the One unconditionally, and deal with multiplicity rationally. The maps specifically deal with the following matters:

Charting the Way – Map No. ONE: *One Creator – Countless Creations*

Book Description

This map explores how we may achieve our highest potential as created beings by conscious worship of our original Source.

Charting the Way – Map No. TWO: *One Truth – Countless Realities*

In this map we learn about how our relationships with each other and our inner cosmology represent changing realities against the backdrop of a singular and unchanging truth.

Charting the Way – Map No. THREE: *Patterns in Existence – Allah’s Ways*

This map looks at how perfection underpins everything in existence, whether or not we perceive it as such, and how it is made possible for us to access guidance from Allah.

Charting the Way – Map No. FOUR: *The Prophetic Model of Muhammad*

Map Four teaches us that all prophets brought essentially the same divine message and that the Prophet Muhammad’s greatest miracle for all mankind, for all time, is the Qur’an.

Charting the Way – Map No. FIVE: *The Qur’anic Prescription for Life*

In this map the role of the Qur’an as the mirror for all creation is discussed; a mirror in which individuals and society as a whole are reflected and which guides both to live according to precepts laid down in it.

Charting the Way – Map No. SIX: *Acts of Worship*

In Map Six we are shown the vital link between acts of worship and a heightening in our awareness of the divine.

Charting the Way – Map No. SEVEN: *Relationships and Transactions*

The power of correct intention and the importance of our relationship with our original source are discussed in this map.

Book Description

Charting the Way – Map No. EIGHT: *Towards Perfection and Enlightenment*

Map Eight teaches us about the power of the present moment as it is only the moment that contains within it divine perfection and the seeker who grasps this is set on the right course to enlightenment.

Charting the Way – Map No. NINE: *Principles and Foundations of Islamic Thought*

This map analyzes the tremendously cohesive influence of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad's exemplary life on disparate communities and nations.

Charting the Way – Map No. TEN: *Culture and Civilization of Muslims*

A further analysis of the cultural aspects of Islam and how the authentic prophetic teachings and cultural influences have mingled to positive and ill effect is done in this map.

Charting the Way – Map No. ELEVEN: *Individual and Society*

This map looks at how our outer reality reflects our inner and vice versa, and the inseparable connection between individuals and the societies they create. It reiterates the binding force that faith and its rituals provide, which serves to unify the individual and society.

Charting the Way – Map No. TWELVE: *Remedies and Prescriptions for the Wayfarer*

This map aims to provide an overview of the hierarchies of spiritual growth. An understanding of these hierarchies is important for anyone who wants to live in an enlightened way while adhering to the ideal code of conduct bequeathed to us by all prophets and especially the Prophet Muhammad.

The following is a complete overview of the course.

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.

Overview

All of the Prophets indicated the same truth: that there is an Absolute Reality that germinates existence. It is timeless, beyond time and space, and from it has come multi-layers of lights. These lights have interacted with other layers of creational aspects, or other consciousness, resulting in multi-layered creations. These include many heavenly seen and unseen, and many earthly layers. We as human beings have many levels of consciousness. We have physical consciousness, of our hands, of our mind, of our sight, of our senses. Also, we have consciousness of our heart, whether it is clear or full of anger and rancor. The way of Islam gives a mapping whereby we can save ourselves from ourselves; ourselves from others; and others from ourselves. At all times we can use that mapping as a reference point of correct action.

Now the way (*deen*) has also many zones within it. Some aspects are very structured and ritualistic. There is a right time to face a certain direction and disappear into nothingness, which is our prostration (*sajda*). Then at certain times repeatedly throughout our life we abstain from food and drink, and so on. All of our rituals within the *deen* have deep meanings, which bring about spiritual growth and transformation. There are many layers of these meanings, which we become more and more sensitive to as we go along. The revealed books to so many Prophets, culminating in the Qur`an, contain many horizons of insights. There are some specific injunctions of do's and don'ts: be generous; do not hoard; do not fear for your provision. It is *Shaytanic*, from the lower aspects of the self. Do not harbor animosity for others; do not backbite; walk lightly on this earth. There are a lot of high quality prescriptions from the Qur'an.

Then there is another wave in it, which is to do with the history of mankind, individuals as well as societies. Where are they now? What did they do? What did they leave behind? What state are they in now? The Prophetic tradition is that you leave this world according to the state that you are in. You will be resurrected according to the state in which you have died. We all want bliss. We all want the eternal garden because the soul has been designed with the feeling of that state within it. So the question is how? We cannot do two things in this world at the same time. The how therefore becomes easy. Avoid those aspects, which are going to lower our consciousness, and our awareness, and get us imprisoned by the ego. Care more and more, and practice aspects

Overview

of our life to heighten our awareness, reduce selfishness, and make us ready to leave this world as well as to stay in it. If we have a very clear map, we know where we are going to end up anyway, so we want to project and place ourselves in that position right now.

Our *deen* is a way life, a way of thinking, a way of eating, a way of worshipping, a way of transacting, and a way of relationships. Every aspect has the appropriate courtesy. To begin with, for a child it's a bit difficult because he does not immediately see the benefit that he shouldn't eat while he is walking; he shouldn't drink while he is running, and so on. But as he gets older he finds that these practices are beneficial because he does not get indigestion. All of these virtues, which are a result of practicing the *deen*, are of immediate direct benefit. We are living at a time when society cannot help the family and individual very much because of the smaller households, and all of the other demands of pleasures and frivolous distractions. Therefore, simply giving orders to young people to follow rituals will not work. But if they realize that they can excel in their studies and exams by perfecting their *sajda* (prostration), how to disappear and have no thought in it, they will certainly do their *salat* (prayers) more enjoyably, and more on time. They will not miss it. There are benefits of *salat* at every level. So we need to live our *deen*, and to absorb the benefits of every aspect of the Qur`an and Prophetic teaching. We must be the first beneficiaries, otherwise we will be preaching without partaking ourselves, and that is hypocrisy. That is what so many so-called religious communities suffer from. So the second course introduces us to the *deen*, the *shari`ah*, the way of life: the way of thinking, moving, transacting; what is correct, what is allowed and what is not; what is forbidden completely and what is despicable and to be avoided. It is all for our own sake. Allah does not need it. You and I need it in order to realize the light of Allah in our hearts. The course shows us how to transform vices into virtues, and how every aspect of the *shari`ah* is designed to bring about a shift and elevation in the level of our consciousness and awareness.

CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 1:

One Creator – Countless Creations

This introductory map corresponds to Lesson ONE of ASK Course TWO and explores how we may achieve our highest potential as created beings by conscious worship of our original Source.

Charting the Way: Map No. 1 – Contents

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- Charting the Way – Map No. 1: One Creator – Countless Creations
 - * Consciousness
 - * Returning to Source
 - * Polarity
 - * Self-Knowledge
 - * Inner Cosmology
 - * The Realms of Essence, Attributes and Action
 - * Divine Presence
 - * A World of Opposites
- Foundations – Charting the Way – Map No. 1: One Creator – Countless Creations
 - * Qur’anic Revealed Knowledge – Allah ‘The One Essence’
 - * Relevant Prophetic Teachings – Allah ‘The One Essence’
- Exercises / Multiple Choice Quiz

Learning Objectives

From this map, you will gain an understanding of:

1. Returning to the One Source (*Allah*) from which multiple realities emanate.
2. Ascending to the highest levels of consciousness and fulfilling our potential.
3. The nature of the Soul (*ruh*) and the spectrum of the Self (*nafs*).
4. What it means to be a conscientious seeker.
5. Complementary opposites and duality.

Overview

Every aspect of manifest existence is based on movement and change and yet what human beings tend to seek is stability and security. Solving this apparent enigma involves discovering the singular truth, the light of which is reflected in the soul and heart of all human beings. The human heart contains the one constant screen upon which ever-changing patterns and images flash and generate countless forms and ideas that originate from the One Source.

Charting the Way – Map No. 1: One Creator – Countless Creations

Higher consciousness is only realizable by withdrawal from lower consciousness.

Consciousness

Our purpose as aware human beings is to make ourselves conscious of, or to ‘realize’, the One Essence. But we also know that this Essence is impossible to describe, perceive and therefore ‘know’ or comprehend in its totality. We may refer to it as pure consciousness, or God, or Allah, but these remain mere words and not a living and complete conscious realization. Over time, and by practicing deep meditation and reflection, we may begin to understand that there are ways to ‘perceive’ that are beyond the limits of our intellect and reasoning. This kind of perception is aligned with pure consciousness manifesting as infinite levels of conditioned human consciousness. It is beyond words and thoughts and feelings but still manifests in our more accessible consciousness and exerts a subtle but powerful influence over our lives and the lives of those around us.

Allah reveals that He is a hidden treasure and He loves to be known, thus He creates everything known or unknown to us. All admirable attributes emanate from the One Essence. Indeed, the fabric of life is inextricably woven from these attributes.

As a result, every human consciousness is driven to unify with this pure essence and to realize its own ultimate potential by it.

Returning to Source

All movement and change in the world is to do with ascending towards the highest possible consciousness. What we call evolution is also a progression towards the subtlest and the highest. All the multiple varieties of creation have emanated from, are sustained by, and are yearning to be united with the One Essence that permeates all within and beyond time.

Charting the Way – Map No. 1: One Creator – Countless Creations

While the soul dwells in the heart of the human being it remains pure potential energy. The struggle to achieve unity with the One Essence, which is a struggle worthy of the highest description and honor, begins when this potential energy is galvanized and unleashed through conscious, willing and proactive aspiration. It takes a focused and sustained conscientious effort to achieve the quantum leaps in consciousness that characterize the journey towards discovery of, and awakening to, the One. Being proactive in our aspiration is of far greater value than being an unaware, compelled, passive and inert creature.

The divine creator, the One Essence of all creation, is not subject to time or space or prone to the impact of any changes we experience in our earthly realm. He is the cause and the power behind all creation; He is the motivator and the witness of everything and therefore if we are conscious of Him to the extent that He permits us to be, then we embody the means by which He causes, motivates and witnesses in creation. He becomes the eye with which we see, the ears with which we hear and the hand with which we grasp (*Hadith Qudsi*, Sacred Tradition).

Creation follows a certain prescribed path or decree towards its final destiny, which is the One Essence, the origin towards which it was journeying all the time. This is the meaning of “from Allah by Allah to Allah”. Every material thing, animate or inanimate, is subject to natural laws and limitations within time and space. Although humans have emerged from and are returning to the zone beyond, they ideally need to be constantly aware of this final return and hence live responsibly in the here and now. The conscientious seeker lives and acts responsibly with patience and understanding but also experiences the delights of deeper perception and insight that come from beyond the rationality and reason born of conditioned consciousness.

Polarity

Anything experienced in the realm of existence is balanced in a polarity of opposites: health / illness, love / hate, light / darkness. Anything that manifests in the world of consciousness must be perceived in terms of the spectrum of these opposites. Things may be totally dark or slightly or pure light. Human consciousness scans a horizon of experiences perceiving life as very desirable or very undesirable, joyful or miserable, with many variations in between.

Charting the Way – Map No. 1: One Creator – Countless Creations

We are programmed by the One Essence to experience these layers of shifting and conditioned consciousness. But the constant yearning and call from the One Essence is also in our hearts urging us on to our highest potential consciousness. This is what is meant by ‘Allah calls us to Himself’. The inherent drive towards such a higher aspect leads some of us to turn away from the transient and ever-changing world. This turning away is not a renunciation of the world – because the prophetic path insists on a full engagement with life in all its aspects – but is a subtle spiritual avoidance of things that will stop us evolving towards higher consciousness.

Those who respond to the call remember at a profound level the passion for that eternal bliss and cannot settle only for the changing world of good and bad, desirable and undesirable. No one will ever be content in such a world because of its inherently uncertain nature. That is why we are enjoined to be “in this world but not of it”, even though we are in a constant and full engagement with the world. By our very turning ourselves towards that zone of bliss beyond this world we become more self-accountable, constantly watchful and incredibly humble so we do not fall short of our own high aspirations. We chastise ourselves if we do anything that may prevent access to that zone.

Exercise One

“... from Allah, by Allah, to Allah”

Meditate on this truth for a few minutes. How does it relate to your own life as a seeker?

Exercise Two

“Higher consciousness is only realizable by withdrawal from lower consciousness”

Reflect on the statement and ways in which you as a seeker can ‘withdraw from lower consciousness’, at the same time living ‘responsibly in the here and now’.

Self-Knowledge

When we reflect on the highest divine attributes (aspects of which are contained within our soul and heart – referred to as *ruh*) we find sameness and a ‘gathered’ quality within all human beings. This sense of being gathered is the foundation of harmony. But when we analyze the ego-self (also often referred to as the *nafs* or lower self) we become aware of differences, the foundation of most conflicts within ourselves and between ourselves and others. The lack of unity and alignment between the soul and the self *within* the individual is one of the primary reasons for these conflicts.

The soul is always in harmony with itself and others. It is like a ray of light that emanates from a source of light – it is not the source but essentially the same as the source. Or we can say that the soul is like a spark that emanates from a flame – where the spark is not the flame but essentially the same as it. In a similar way, diverse shapes and individuations emerge once embers collect around the spark, just like the human identity or personality. These individual differences are superficial, incidental and accidental while the light within the spark remains vivid as ever and owes itself to its source.

The Prophet Muhammad taught that “*The souls are divine agents. Those who know each other are in harmony, those who do not know are in conflict*”. The meaning of this tradition is that before the *ruh* enters the body it has knowledge of all the other spirits (*arwah*)¹ because they all emanate from the same source². But once it comes into the body it is covered by the *nafs*, implying that it is in fact the *nufus*³ that are in conflict and not the *arwah*. This is as it should be: life began from a totally gathered state and manifests in dispersion and diversity.

Self-knowledge will enable us to see the unifying source that underlies diverse and apparent opposite manifestations. This is returning to the point made earlier about seeing with a ‘deeper perception’ beyond the limited intellect. To understand our individuality we need to uncover the unifying essence within ourselves, which will enable us to see it (Essence) reflected in all

¹ Plural of *ruh*

² Surah *al-A`raf* 7:172

³ or *anfus* – plural of *nafs*

creation. Man is a miniature image of the cosmos and his own complex cosmology, briefly outlined below, is designed to allow this unveiling process to take place in a conscious way.

By means of knowledge of the self we can identify the lower tendencies of the self and, through that understand the higher attributes of Allah. This kind of knowledge requires us to try and comprehend a thing by its opposite. By being aware of one's meanness, one can visualize Allah's generosity, for instance. Transcending the *nafs* before death brings about wisdom and illumination. Fear of death is a clear indication that transcendence has not yet been achieved.

Inner Cosmology

Here are some key terms to which we will refer during this course:

The self (*nafs*) resembles a hologram that can reflect and reproduce ever-changing states and attributes. Its range covers the lowest qualities to the highest divine attributes. The *nafs* can act in the meanest as well as in the most generous of ways: fearful or courageous, impulsive or patient, silly or wise, agitated or peaceful, ignorant or illuminated.

The mind (*`aql*) is the faculty of rationality and reasoning. It is the foundation for civilized society, culture and tradition. The limitations of the mind are also the source of its power as a universal utility and how it makes human inter-relationships possible. Mind is vital to begin with until the illuminated heart supersedes it.

When the heart has been illumined, it penetrates all layers of the lower *nafs* and recognizes it and is vigilant over it. This is what is understood from the prophetic tradition that "*He who knows his Self knows his Lord*". Access to your Lord is through your soul, which dwells in your heart.

The soul (*ruh*) is the divine ray which energizes and gives life to the self and its physical body. It is the ultimate and constant reference point for the *nafs*. The actions and experiences of the *nafs* are only possible to understand because of the *ruh*. During sleep dreaming occurs when the *nafs* is distracted or less dominant. Death occurs when both the *nafs* and the *ruh* depart and the body is returned to its earthly origin.

Charting the Way – Map No. 1: One Creator – Countless Creations

The heart (*qalb*) and its facets of monitoring, reflecting, witnessing and recording are the link between the *nafs* and the *ruh*. When the heart is clear of defects (hatred, suspicion, lust and so on), then it will reflect to the *nafs* the source of higher guidance – the *ruh* and divine light.

Good intentions and appropriate actions are needed to cleanse the heart, purify it and enable it to reflect the higher truth. Invocation (*dhikr*) and other acts of worship (*sawm*, *salat*, etc.) are also means of purifying the heart and increasing the remembrance of the Divine Being. Access to your Lord is through your soul, which dwells in your heart.

Exercise Three

Consider (A) someone you get on really well with and (B) someone you do not get on well with in the light of the following:

Dispersion and separation, lower tendencies of the ego-self, the faculty of reasoning (*mufakkira* – see the eBook “*Sufi Map of the Self*”), a pure heart and the *ruh* as a reference point for the *nafs*.

The Realms of Essence, Attributes and Action

As we noted above, life in our sensory world is based on movement, which means we live with and are influenced by constant change; hence we need to find a reliable and constant zone of reference that will assist us in dealing with and understanding the extent and quality of change. To illustrate this point, let us look at the concept of pain. I experience pain and a fever and that distresses me. I also know that I have experienced worse pain in the past. Within me, then, resides a reference to pain-free wellbeing as well as to a much higher degree of intolerable pain. Hence with adequate reflection on both I may find equilibrium in my current state.

The realm of attributes is subtler than that of the realm of action and manifestation. It is these attributes that provide the impetus for all action and physical existence. Even subtler is the essence of Allah which is hidden in His attributes. Witnessing and understanding the unity of actions and how it manifests comes first. Only then may we begin to comprehend the unity of attributes, all of which meet in the One Essence.

The universe is composed of infinite varieties of diverse and heterogeneous components: solids, liquids, gases, living, inanimate, seen and unseen energies, colors, galaxies, relative time and apparent infinite space. There is One unique power, however, that enables these existential realities to connect, relate and interact with each other: the Divine Essence; Allah, the Glorious, the ultimate unifier and source of all relative powers; the one unique, all pervading-Creator and Sustainer of time and space; the Light behind all lights and shadows.

What we all seek, consciously or otherwise, is the knowledge of this absolute truth. Allah's attributes – the Everlasting, the Merciful, the All Knowing, the All Powerful, the All Hearing, the All Seeing, and so on – are the doors which lead to the divine. These attributes are what govern the universe. Access to this knowledge comes only through self-knowledge, negating the ego-self (another definition of which is the shadow of the light of the soul) whilst upholding the spirit and reading the true meaning and message behind experiences and events.

Divine Presence

Charting the Way – Map No. 1: One Creator – Countless Creations

The true purpose of life is to adore, glorify and worship Allah. Yet how can you be consistent in your commitment, love and submission to Allah unless you experience the Divine presence at all times? How can you be illuminated, awakened and enlightened if you are dominated or influenced by the ego-self? The evolved seeker acts upon what the heart transmits and by doing so is transformed and able to transform. Constant, faithful submission, humility and high expectations of Allah will open up channels of insight and spiritual drive leading to a reliable and steady inner awareness, which becomes the source of true joy.

The seeker believes and hopes; the awakened knows and relies on the eternal truth. The seeker looks for the light of Allah to guide. He benefits and progresses according to the actions of submission, humility, patience, generosity, letting go and so on. The awakened only sees the merits of these attributes as emanating from Allah and as decreed for the awakened to act accordingly.

It is recorded in a prophetic tradition: *“I take refuge in Your forgiveness from Your punishment / purification [unity of actions], and take refuge in Your mercy from your anger [unity of attributes], and I take refuge in You from You [unity of essence]. Oh Lord, do not let me rely upon myself, not even for a blink of an eye”*. This means that we are acknowledging that there is only ‘You’ at the source of all that appears, and within all that there is. ‘You’ are the outer and the inner, the apparent and the hidden.

Exercise Four

Make a list of four things which help you on this path. For each one grade at what stage you are on a scale of 1 – 10 (10 being the highest).

E.g. 10 minutes meditation a day (5)

A World of Opposites

It soon becomes clear to the sincere seeker that everything in creation is based on opposites. All physical creation or experience falls into, or is perhaps classified by, combinations of the following: ‘outer’ / ‘inner’, ‘sensory’ / ‘meaning’, ‘earthly’ / ‘heavenly’.

To illustrate this, let us imagine that I am standing before you presenting a discourse. It is an ‘outer’ event. You are looking at me and listening to me. It is also a ‘sensory’ experience for both of us. We are in the material / physical world and this event is therefore ‘earthly’. So we are undergoing an outer, sensory, earthly experience. Yet the purpose of my discourse is to share inner knowledge with you. So the purpose and sharing has an ‘inner meaning’ and this makes it a ‘heavenly’ experience.

The two opposites are balanced. The root of every situation or event lies in its opposite. Ordinary physical or material actions can be given a higher purpose and direction by awareness of the related inner event. For example, eating a meal is an outer, sensory, earthly event.

However, if we eat with the intention to nourish our bodies in order that it may be used effectively by the soul and thus carry us on the journey to greater perception and enlightenment, we will see that the act can be placed in the categories of inner, meaning, and heavenly.

All events and experiences can be categorized according to any of eight combinations of opposites. These may be classified as:

Charting the Way – Map No. 1: One Creator – Countless Creations

Combinations of Opposites	<i>Example</i>
1. Outer – Sensory – Earthly	<i>building one's house</i>
2. Outer – Sensory – Heavenly	<i>building a place of worship</i>
3. Outer – Meaning – Earthly	<i>seeing someone in pain</i>
4. Outer – Meaning – Heavenly	<i>looking at someone praying</i>
5. Inner – Sensory – Earthly	<i>remembering a loved one</i>
6. Inner – Sensory – Heavenly	<i>reflecting upon the stars</i>
7. Inner – Meaning – Earthly	<i>heart overflowing with love for all creation</i>
8. Inner – Meaning – Heavenly	<i>meditating upon God</i>

These and other concepts will be discussed in more detail as we proceed with this course.

Exercise Five

How & why would you classify the following in terms of the categories given above?

1. Reading an ASK map
2. Playing a game with children
3. Enjoying a day out with your partner
4. Visiting a holy shrine

Foundations – Charting the Way – Map No. 1: One Creator – Countless Creations

- Qur’anic Revealed Knowledge – Allah ‘The One Essence’
- Relevant Prophetic Teachings – Allah ‘The One Essence’

Qur’anic Revealed Knowledge – Allah ‘The One Essence’

Allah says:

“Say: He is Allah, Absolute Oneness, All, the Everlasting Sustainer of all. He has not given birth and was not born, and no one is comparable to Him.” (Surah al-Iklas 112:1-4)

Allah is the ultimate Divine Light, which is always present, representing the Absolute Essence from which all attributes, names and manifestations emanate. Allah’s dominion encompasses whatever is known or unknown, and cannot be comprehended/encompassed or limited by creation’s thoughts, concepts, indications or attempts. All creation strives towards Him and His qualities – the All-Merciful, All-Generous, All-Powerful, Ever-living, Beautiful One, the Perfect Light of Lights.

Allah’s essence and original Light radiate and overflow into all realms of creation. Anything that exists, appears, or lives, has within it an aspect of this light, and thus it is in Allah’s kingdom. We as descendants of Adam’s tribe have within our innate nature (*fitrah*) a yearning and love for all the primal streams and shafts of lights, which have the beautiful and desirable qualities of Allah. These Attributes are referred to in the Qur’an and in the Prophetic teachings as the Most Beautiful or Glorious Names. Most of these Attributes are universally acknowledged by all faiths, communities and cultures as virtues or high qualities⁴. Indeed, sages, saints and great leaders often show a hint of some of these traits and qualities.

Allah says:

“He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward; and He is the Knower of all things. It is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days; then He established Himself upon the Throne. He knows all that enters the earth and all that emerges from it, and all that descends from the sky and all that ascends up into it. He is with you wherever you may be, and Allah sees all.” (Surah al-Hadid 57:3-4)

⁴ Please refer to Map 8, *“The Sufi Map of the Self”*, under section: *“Divine Qualities & Attributes that the self yearns for”*

Charting the Way – Map No. 1: One Creator – Countless Creations

“Allah’s are the most beautiful names, so invoke Him by them. Leave those who desecrate His names. They will be repaid for what they do.” (Surah al-A`raf 7:180)

The task for mankind is to relate and connect to the appropriate quality or Name and be engulfed and absorbed by its glorious quality to realize its immediate present reality. Each and every quality meets all of the other attributes in the all-encompassing One. This great mystery can never be resolved. It will dissolve and yield its truth when we ourselves submit and die into its truth. It is the death of the individual identity – the shedding of the accretions that a human being collects through life – that will reveal His supreme presence.

Allah’s eternal presence and His glorious attributes have been there from before creation and will continue after the end of all creation. Our responsibility is to yield and submit to His signs through our needs, shortcomings and other dependencies. He has created us such that we submit, read the signs and follow with faith and confidence in His grace. All of His names, signs, attributes and qualities are signposts along His path. We are led by Him unto Him.

Relevant Prophetic Teachings – Allah ‘The One Essence’

1. Truly Allah resembles no ‘thing’ and no ‘thing’ resembles Him; everything which enters one’s imagination concerning Him is a misinterpretation.
2. “Praise belongs to Allah, Who cannot be perceived by touch or any investigation by means of the physical faculties. He cannot be understood by the five senses, and imagination cannot grasp Him. Anything sensed, felt or touched by the hand is created (and therefore not the Creator). Allah is Sublime, the Powerful; whatever is desired by Him comes into existence.”

Charting the Way – Map No. 1: Exercises to Deepen Learning

(One Creator – Countless Creations)

Title:

What is the purpose of human existence? How might the seeker move towards fulfilling this purpose?

Word Length:

Between 500 and 1000 words.

Criteria:

You may find the following criteria useful in addressing the question:

1. A description of moving from lower to higher consciousness.
2. The nature of the soul and the self.
3. Dealing with duality.
4. Some references to your own experience.

Charting the Way – Map No. 1: Multiple Choice Quiz

(One Creator – Countless Creations)

*The purpose of this quiz is to test your own understanding of this map. Choose the **BEST** answer A, B, C, or D:*

Questions:

Q 1: Human beings will not reach their highest potential consciousness, unless they

- A. Evolve towards a higher form
- B. Reject undesirable experiences
- C. Turn away from the transient ever-changing world
- D. Retire completely from the outside world

Q 2: The main purpose of self-knowledge is

- A. To repent of the lowest qualities of the self
- B. To understand the true source of all attributes
- C. To avoid committing sins
- D. To appreciate one's own individuality

Q 3: The seeker becomes awakened when he/she

- A. Sees only Allah's hand in everything
- B. Follows the correct path of the believer
- C. Is always humble
- D. Forgets about the *nafs*

Q 4: Awareness of opposites is important because

- A. We can live a balanced life

Charting the Way – Map No. 1: One Creator – Countless Creations

- B. We can combine different types of opposites
- C. We can nourish our minds and bodies
- D. We can develop insights into inner meanings of events and experiences

Answers:

- 1: C.
- 2: B.
- 3: A.
- 4: D.

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