

ACADEMY OF SELF KNOWLEDGE

COURSE
ONE
THE SUFI MAP
OF THE SELF



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Publisher: Academy of Self Knowledge (ASK)
Category: Self Knowledge



Publisher: Zahra Publications

ISBN (Digital Version): 978-1-919826-28-8

ISBN (E-Book Version): 978-1-919826-56-1

<http://www.zahrapublications.com>

First Published in 2012

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	i
Book Description	xiii
About the Author	xvi
Overview.....	1
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 1: Dynamic of Existence & The Nature of Creation.....	3
Charting the Way: Map No. 1 – Contents	4
Learning Objectives.....	5
Introduction	6
Exercise One	7
The Human Paradox	8
Happiness Within	8
Denial.....	9
Higher Self.....	9
Awareness.....	10
Exercise Two	11
The One Essence	12
Life is Energy.....	13
Exercise Three: You as Energy.....	15
Patterns in Existence.....	16
Gatheredness and Separation.....	16
Connected	17
Inner and Outer	17
Heavenly and Earthly.....	18
Meaning and Form.....	19
Soul Language	20
Being Human	20
Exercise Four: Raising your awareness of opposites	21
The Rise of Consciousness.....	22
Nature of Duality	22

The Forces of Attraction and Repulsion.....	23
Levels of Consciousness.....	23
Seeking Essence.....	24
Charting the Way – Map No. 1: Exercises to Deepen Learning	26
Exercise Five: Self-Assessment	27
Charting the Way – Map No. 1: Multiple Choice Quiz.....	28
Recommended Reading for Map No. 1	30
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 2: Inception and Creation	31
Charting the Way: Map No. 2 – Contents	32
Learning Objectives.....	33
Introduction	34
Exercise One	35
Inception and Creation.....	36
The Basis of Creation	36
Emergence	36
Inner Dependence	37
The Nature of Human Beings.....	37
Soul and Self.....	38
Entity and Identity	38
The Unifying Source of Creation.....	39
Unfolding of the Self	39
Eternal Ongoingness and the Sublime.....	40
Exercise Two	41
Potential Energy	42
The Primal Blueprint	42
Charting the Way – Map No. 2: Exercises to Deepen Learning	45
Exercise Three – Self-Assessment	46
Charting the Way – Map No. 2: Multiple Choice Quiz.....	47
Recommended Reading for Map No. 2.....	49
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 3: The First Steps of Our Journey: Early Childhood.....	50
Charting the Way: Map No. 3 – Contents	51

Learning Objectives.....	52
Exercise One	53
Pure Consciousness in Dynamic Flux	54
The Body-Soul Bond	54
Making Choices.....	55
Enabling Transformation.....	56
Exercise Two	58
Relationships	59
Layers of Consciousness	60
A Spiritual Vantage Point.....	60
Call of the Soul to Unity.....	61
Exercise Three.....	63
Reflections from the field of Psychology.....	64
Charting the Way – Map No. 3: Exercises to Deepen Learning	66
Exercise Four – Self Assessment.....	67
Charting the Way – Map No. 3: Multiple Choice Quiz.....	68
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 4: Childhood and the Map of the Self	70
Charting the Way: Map No. 4 – Contents	71
Learning Objectives.....	72
Introduction	73
Exercise One	74
Early Development of Consciousness	75
Attraction and Repulsion	75
Driven to Growth.....	77
Exercise Two	79
Inner and Outer Kingdoms	80
Inner and Outer Senses	80
Guidance through the Self and Soul	81
Love, the Source of Creation.....	81
Nurturing Independence	83
Adolescence	84

Attachment.....	85
The Witness and the Monitor.....	86
Signals from the Soul.....	87
Exercise Three.....	88
Hierarchies.....	89
Awareness of Awareness.....	89
Charting the Way – Map No. 4: Exercises to Deepen Learning	91
Exercise Four – Self Assessment.....	92
Charting the Way – Map No. 4: Multiple Choice Quiz.....	93
Appendix (Charting the Way – Map No. 4): The Five Inner Senses	97
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 5: Virtues and Vices.....	101
Charting the Way: Map No. 5 – Contents	102
Learning Objectives.....	103
Introduction	104
Exercise One.....	105
Qualities of the Divine Attributes in the Soul	106
The Seven Attributes	107
Knowledge – The All-Knowing	107
Ability – The Ever-Able	107
To Hear – The All-Hearing.....	108
Sight – The All-Seeing	108
Life – The Ever-Living.....	108
Power to Cause Inevitable Effect – Will	109
The Command of Speech – The All-Compelling.....	109
Relatedness of Attributes.....	110
Removing Veils from the Light of the Soul	111
Exercise Two – Identifying Divine Qualities.....	113
Virtue and Vice.....	114
The Path from Virtue to Enlightenment.....	114
Models of the self – One.....	117

The Bestial Self (as driven by the power of attraction)	117
The Predatory Self (as driven by the power of repulsion).....	117
The Rational Self	118
Models of the Self – Two	120
Attraction	120
Repulsion	121
The Illuminated Self	122
The Combined Virtues.....	123
The Rewards of Virtue	123
Life through Action	123
Exercise Three.....	125
Charting the Way – Map No. 5: Exercises to Deepen Learning	126
Exercise Four – Self Assessment.....	127
Charting the Way – Map No. 5: Multiple Choice Quiz.....	128
Appendix I (Charting the Way – Map No. 5): The Complete Works of Aristotle.....	131
Appendix II (Charting the Way – Map No. 5): Aristotle: Virtue Ethics, Character.....	133
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 6: Patterns in the Map of Existence.....	135
Charting the Way: Map No. 6 – Contents	136
Learning Objectives.....	137
Introduction	138
Exercise One	139
Hierarchy of Existence: From the One to the Many.....	140
Potential and Manifestation	140
Gatheredness and Separation	141
Enlightenment.....	143
Exercise Two	144
Laws of Opposites as Complements.....	145
Appropriateness and Inappropriateness	146
Chaos and Order	147

Celestial and Earthly, Sensory, Meaning and Form, Inner and Outer	147
Neutralizing the Opposites.....	148
Knowledge of the Self	149
Choosing Enlightenment.....	149
Charting the Way – Map No. 6: Exercises to Deepen Learning	151
Exercise Three – Self Assessment	152
Appendix I (Charting the Way – Map No. 6): The Theory of Human Motivation	153
Appendix II (Charting the Way – Map No. 6): A Basic Anatomy of the Self	158
Recommended Reading for Map No. 6.....	161
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 7: Evolving Consciousness.....	162
Charting the Way: Map No. 7 – Contents	163
Learning Objectives.....	164
Introduction	165
Exercise One	166
The Development of Humanity	167
Movement, Change and Permanence.....	167
Creation vs. Evolution by Owen Waters	168
Inner Dependence to Inner Reliance.....	171
Conscious Control of Your Thinking by Nona Coxhead “Beyond Psychology” (1991)	172
The Soul and Its Servants	176
The Servants of the Soul.....	176
The Mind and Its Limitations	176
Exercise Two	179
Exercise Three.....	180
Conditioned by Light.....	181
The Mercy of the Heart	181
Consciousness and Development	182
The Importance of the Beginning	183

Our Actions and Our Growth.....	183
Our Will, Our Yearning for Truth	185
Decree and Destiny, Freedom and Predestination.....	185
Charting the Way – Map No. 7: Exercises to Deepen Learning	187
Exercise Four – Self Assessment.....	188
Charting the Way – Map No. 7: Multiple Choice Quiz.....	189
Appendix I (Charting the Way – Map No. 7): How Do We Define Consciousness?.....	191
Appendix II (Charting the Way – Map No. 7): A Basic Anatomy of the Self.....	193
Recommended Reading for Map No. 7.....	194
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 8: Soul Dynamics	195
Charting the Way: Map No. 8 – Contents	196
Learning Objectives.....	197
Introduction	198
Exercise One	199
Patterns of the Soul.....	200
Appropriateness	200
Exercise Two	202
The Secret Within.....	203
Soul Satisfaction.....	204
Praise and Gratitude.....	205
Self as Holographic Image of the Soul.....	205
Preparing the Self	206
Divine Qualities & Attributes that the Self Yearns For.....	209
Exercise Three.....	215
Charting the Way – Map No. 8: Exercises to Deepen Learning	216
Exercise Four – Self Assessment.....	217
Charting the Way – Map No. 8: Multiple Choice Quiz.....	218
Appendix (Charting the Way – Map No. 8): A Basic Anatomy of the Self.....	220

CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 9: Relationships	221
Charting the Way: Map No. 9 – Contents	222
Learning Objectives.....	223
Introduction	224
Exercise One	225
Relationships and Our Return to Unity	226
The Three Relationships.....	226
Relationships with Others.....	227
The Child and the Parent	228
Exercise Two.....	232
Partnerships in Life.....	233
Exchange	235
Stillness.....	236
Exercise Three.....	237
Charting the Way – Map No. 9: Exercises to Deepen Learning	238
Exercise Four – Self Assessment.....	239
Charting the Way – Map No. 9: Multiple Choice Quiz.....	240
Appendix (Charting the Way – Map No. 9): A Basic Anatomy of the Self.....	242
Recommend Reading for Map No. 9.....	243
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 10: Mind, Body and Spirit.....	244
Charting the Way: Map No. 10 – Contents	245
Learning Objectives.....	246
Introduction	247
Exercise One	248
Body, Mind and Soul.....	249
Where Mind, Body and Soul Meet.....	252
Referencing the Soul	253
The Mind	254
Inhibition of the Development of Consciousness.....	257
Self Love.....	258

Completing the Circle.....	259
Spiritual Attachment.....	261
The Role of Personal Development.....	262
The Knowing Heart	263
The Mind: An Instrument of the Heart.....	264
Exercise Two	265
Charting the Way – Map No. 10: Exercises to Deepen Learning	266
Exercise Three – Self Assessment	267
Appendix (Charting the Way – Map No. 10): A Basic Anatomy of the Self	268
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 11: Decree and Destiny	269
Charting the Way: Map No. 11 – Contents	270
Learning Objectives.....	271
Introduction	272
Exercise One	273
Perfection.....	274
Perception and Perfection.....	274
Freedom and Independence.....	275
Dynamic Perfection	276
Discrimination	277
Aligning Our Will to the Divine Will.....	278
Destiny and Decree.....	279
Karma.....	280
Freedom in Action	281
Accountability and Truth.....	281
The Rebellious Self.....	282
Exercise Two	284
Charting the Way – Map No. 11: Exercises to Deepen Learning	285
Exercise Three – Self Assessment	286
Charting the Way – Map No. 11: Multiple Choice Quiz.....	287

Appendix (Charting the Way - Map No. 11): A Basic Anatomy of the Self	289
Recommended Reading for Map No. 11	290
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 12: Aging and Inner Sight	291
Charting the Way: Map No. 12 – Contents	292
Learning Objectives.....	293
Introduction	294
Exercise One	295
Age and the Desire for Constancy.....	296
Greed: A Way to Truth.....	297
Limitations.....	298
Absence and Suffering.....	298
Beyond Suffering.....	298
Maturity	299
Preparedness	300
Separation and Loss.....	301
Union	303
Longing for Light	303
Fear of Death	304
Exercise Two	306
Charting the Way – Map No. 12: Exercises to Deepen Learning	307
Exercise Three – Self Assessment	308
Charting the Way – Map No. 12: Multiple Choice Quiz.....	309
Appendix (Charting the Way - Map No. 12): A Basic Anatomy of the Self	312
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 13: Life, the Grave and Beyond	313
Charting the Way: Map No. 13 – Contents	314
Learning Objectives.....	315
Introduction	316
Exercise One	317
The Resolution of Enlightenment.....	318

The Transition of Death.....	320
The Unveiling of the Grave	321
Courtesy to His Mercy.....	322
The Journey of the Grave	323
The Journey of Soul and Self	324
Compassion	325
Exercise Two	327
Charting the Way – Map No. 13: Exercises to Deepen Learning	328
Exercise Three – Self Assessment	329
Appendix (Charting the Way – Map No. 13): A Basic Anatomy of the Self	330
CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 14: Light upon Light or the Absence of Light	331
Charting the Way: Map No. 14 – Contents	332
Learning Objectives.....	333
Introduction	334
Exercise One	335
Paradigms or Realms.....	336
Being in the World and Aware of the Next.....	337
The Significance of Having a Heart that is Peaceful after Death.....	338
Patterns in the Unseen.....	339
Between Death and Resurrection	341
The Inter-space	341
God’s Covenant Written in Our Hearts	343
The Garden and the Fire	344
The Souls Whose Self Will Not Yield.....	345
Exercise Two	348
Charting the Way – Map No. 14: Exercises to Deepen Learning	349
Exercise Three – Self Assessment	350
Charting the Way – Map No. 14: Multiple Choice Quiz.....	351
Appendix (Charting the Way – Map No. 14): A Basic Anatomy of the Self	354

Recommended Reading for Map No. 14	355
GLOSSARY	356
eBooks By Zahra Publications.....	360
General eBooks on Islam.....	360
The Qur'an & Its Teachings	360
Sufism & Islamic Psychology and Philosophy.....	361
Practices & Teachings of Islam	363
Talks & Courses	364
Poetry, Aphorisms & Inspirational.....	365
Autobiography	366
Health Sciences and Islamic History	366

Book Description

This volume of work corresponds to the entire Course ONE on cosmology of the self that the Academy of Self Knowledge (ASK) has offered in the past.

We have renamed it to “*The Sufi Map of the Self*” and put together all 14 lessons (known as maps in this eBook) of the course into this single eBook for the convenience of the committed reader who would go through the entire course, doing the exercises and quizzes at their own pace.

The course sets out maps of the cosmic design between the outer and the inner, as well as other elements of life and how they work. It offers a description of truth, reality and what life is about and seeks to answer the questions: “Who am I? What is my role in life? What can I do to remain consistently content? How can I live so that I do not deny the world, what is happening in it, and my essential needs?” The maps specifically deal with the following matters:

Charting the Way – Map No. ONE: *Dynamics of Existence and the Nature of Creation*

This introduction to the course presents a context for The Sufi Map of the Self and explores the relationship between timelessness and time describing basic principles of our experience of this realm.

Charting the Way – Map No. TWO: *Inception and Creation*

This map presents the inner and outer journey of embryonic development as the unborn child enters the conscious realm through pregnancy and birth, followed by childhood.

Charting the Way – Map No. THREE: *The First Steps of Our Journey, Early Childhood*

This map explores the development of the self as a baby and the early impact of parenting on the growth of the child.

Charting the Way – Map No. FOUR: *Childhood and the Map of the Self*

This map presents the development of the child through the inner and outer senses to bring the child to an initial stage of consciousness and maturity.

Charting the Way – Map No. FIVE: *Virtues and Vices*

This map presents the way that the self develops through the combined effects of our intentions and actions.

Charting the Way – Map No. SIX: *Patterns in the Map of Existence*

This map describes some of the apparent paradoxes through which human transformation and evolution take place.

Charting the Way – Map No. SEVEN: *Evolving Consciousness*

This map charts the nature of human consciousness in terms of its levels and spheres.

Charting the Way – Map No. EIGHT: *Soul Dynamics*

This map explores the dynamic tension between virtues and vices to the development of the self in relation to the Soul.

Charting the Way – Map No. NINE: *Relationships*

This map describes the inner meaning of interpersonal relationships and their connection to the evolution of the self.

Charting the Way – Map No. TEN: *Mind, Body and Spirit*

This map explores the interrelation of the realms of mind, body and spirit.

Charting the Way – Map No. ELEVEN: *Decree and Destiny*

This map explores the association between perception and perfection and the process of the witnessing of perfection.

Charting the Way – Map No. TWELVE: *Aging and Inner Sight*

This map clarifies the inner meaning of the transition of to older age and the meaning of suffering. The map explores how, as our outer senses and faculties diminish, our insight, awareness and wisdom increase.

Charting the Way – Map No. THIRTEEN: *Life, the Grave and Beyond*

This map explores the meaning of death and processes that unfold for the soul within the realm of relative non-time following death.

Charting the Way – Map No. FOURTEEN: *Light upon Light or the Absence of Light*

In this map the dynamics of the soul in its return to timelessness are explored.

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

Broadly speaking, as individuals, we wish to attract that which we think is desirable and repel that which we think is undesirable. However, what we perceive to be desirable changes from minute to minute, day to day, year to year. It may vary according to our physical state, our state of mind or changing circumstances. This constant state of flux is therefore the cause of much of our apparent turmoil.

The key to our inner stability therefore, is by reference to the soul, which is unchanging and eternal. Consequently, the greater our connection to the soul, then the more our experiences and endeavors become sensible, rational, and in perspective. Conversely the less we refer to the soul, the more overwhelming our lives become.

The entire cosmos is fastened together and connected by the unconditional love of the Creator. Our lives are a process of rising through a hierarchy of knowledge that never ends. We start from the material and physical and move on to the mental, to the realms of meaning, to the intellectual. Eventually we reach a point of subtlety that is more intuitive, and has greater inner meaning. The awareness of this higher self increases until such time that we are no longer only temporarily aware of it every now and then – until eventually we enter into a zone of perpetual and spontaneous reference to the ultimate awareness in us – this is called enlightenment.

Everybody is enlightened but is aware of it to a greater or lesser degree. It is a zone that is within us and it is up to us to tap into it. How? The answers lie in this course, but suffice to say that the keys to an enlightened state are worship, adoration and passion. We have the potential to live in perpetual bliss by simply being with our self - meaning with the higher self, because the lower self is destructive.

Therefore self-knowledge is the most vital map that any traveler in this world requires. The knowledge that there is only one truth, and that all paths lead to it by different means, has been shared to varying extents by enlightened people throughout history. In this course we bring together selections of the knowledge of ancient historical and more recent cultures; prophetic

Overview

unveilings and teaching from the various monotheistic religions, the wisdom of the Far East, of Asia, Africa, America, Europe, combined with modern day psychology, physical and social sciences.

This course therefore is contextualized within the age we are living in, for anybody with a yearning for higher knowledge, based on eternal truth. It is a means towards the attainment of a level of inner stability in order to deal with and even enjoy the outer instability rather than be constantly resisting it. The course will take us a step at a time, towards the realization that we are not who we thought we were, not by denying our lower selves, but by prioritizing what is higher and more lasting. Grooming the self is the nourishment that every serious traveler on this path will attain.

The Sufi Map of the Self is explored here through time. This course maps the evolution of the self from before birth through life, death and beyond.

CHARTING THE WAY – MAP NO. 1:

Dynamic of Existence & The Nature of Creation

This introductory map corresponds to Lesson ONE of ASK Course ONE and presents a context for the Sufi Map of the Self and explores the relationship between timelessness and time describing basic principles of our experience of this realm.

Charting the Way: Map No. 1 – Contents

- Learning Objectives
- Introduction
- The Human Paradox
 - * Happiness Within
 - * Denial
 - * Higher Self
 - * Awareness
- The One Essence
- Life is Energy
- Patterns in Existence
 - * Gatheredness and Separation
 - * Connected
 - * Inner and Outer
 - * Heavenly and Earthly
 - * Meaning and Form
 - * Soul Language
 - * Being Human
- The Rise of Consciousness
- Nature of Duality
 - * The Forces of Attraction and Repulsion
 - * Levels of Consciousness
 - * Seeking Essence
- Exercises / Self-Assessment / Multiple Choice Quiz
- Recommended Reading

Learning Objectives

From this map, you will gain an understanding of:

1. The origin of human beings.
2. The relationship between the physical and non-physical worlds and how they interact.
3. The unified nature of all creation.
4. The dual patterns of existence.
5. The two manifestations of energy that govern physical existence.
6. The concept of consciousness.

Introduction

This first map lays the foundation for understanding the dynamics of existence and the nature of creation. It starts by pointing to the longing for eternal bliss and happiness that is an innate quality within every human being. It goes on to discuss the seemingly paradoxical nature of human existence, encapsulated by the fact that while we are born into a physical world of space and time, which is relative (conditioned consciousness), our true nature and essence is of/from an eternal and permanent source (pure consciousness). The map outlines some of the basic patterns in existence that characterize this paradox, including gatheredness and separation, meaning and form, and the heavenly and earthly realms. The map shows how reflecting on these opposites can help us recognize the One Essence that governs the multiple facets of our life.

Exercise One

These questions are to help you focus on some of the concepts in this map. You might like to write your answers down. When you have finished the map, you will be asked to reflect on them again.

1. What is happiness?
2. Why do we desire equilibrium?
3. What do all human beings have in common?

The Human Paradox

Every human being at some time or other has pondered over the creation of the universe, its sheer unfathomable immensity and power. They have also wondered about the meaning and purpose of life, what their direction in life is, and how to bring about lasting contentment and happiness. It is the desire of most people to seek lasting happiness and contentment. But often this search does not come to fruition because people do not have the knowledge of what brings about happiness and contentment and they look for it in the wrong place.

People often tend to think happiness can be found by possessing great wealth, marrying the perfect partner, buying the latest car, owning a beautiful home, becoming famous etc. – but all these are allurements of the outer realm.

Happiness Within

Through suffering and loss, one begins to discover that lasting happiness does not come from anything one can acquire in this world. The realization begins to dawn that true and ongoing happiness cannot be found in the realm of the relative, but can only come from a source of constancy and permanence which lies within our very selves.

Many who have aspired to and achieved immense wealth have discovered to their regret that the fortune they had amassed, though it made them happy at the time did not bring them the lasting happiness they had expected. Rather, in their all-consuming drive for money and power and the ‘good life’, often what initially brought pleasure turned to disappointment, and their relationships with their families, loved ones and friends and even their health suffered.

As seekers of bliss and of the Infinite and the Absolute Truth, we also still have to deal with the relative, which is in time and space. The pursuit of wealth, power, physical beauty and rare and priceless objects is indeed a natural instinct through which new insights – essential to human growth and development – are learnt.

Denial

Paradoxically however, if we deny the desires of the relative, we will be denied access to knowledge of the Absolute, which is timeless and permanent. If, for example, we deny and totally suppress our love of money and power, which is in the realm of the relative, we will be denied access to the greater knowledge that our true desire may actually be for infinite wealth and power, and this can never be attained in this limited realm of time and space. When we realize this, it may lead us to be content with our more modest portion of wealth and power, which in turn may help weaken excessive drives or desires within ourselves. We then benefit and society, as a whole, benefits, by our acknowledgment of something higher than ourselves.

To illustrate further the dynamic between the relative and the absolute, if, for example, I think that I will be content as an executive with a fancy car, a smart office and several secretaries, then that image enslaves me. Rather than focusing on the true contentment that lies within the heart, I pursue the ephemeral “imagined” contentment that is no more than a construct of my mind. Pursuit of the relative, then, will not bring about lasting contentment and happiness, because true contentment comes from access to a zone within us all that is constant and permanent, and that gives us the joy of being alive.

Higher Self

We are influenced in who we are by a range of factors, for example, our parental and family background, our educational and economic opportunities, and social and cultural exposure. We are also influenced by our past experiences, both positive and negative, and our expectations and desires, and all these taken together have a major bearing on our emotional, spiritual and mental make-up.

Although one or more of these factors may have been a constraint in our lives, within us lies what we refer to as a higher self that can guide us to overcome the limitation of these influences.

According to this cosmology, the self is understood as our identity as a person. It is what we mean when we say “I” and which includes our personality, cultural conditioning and biological make-up. This “identity” refers to our conditioned consciousness. Our essential reality, however, is represented by a singular “entity”, which is the soul from which we all emanate, and is pure consciousness—non-delimited, boundless awareness without content; a silent state of inner wakefulness with no object of thought or perception. (See [Glossary](#)) In other words, the “I” in us spans a spectrum; at one end it is pure light – what we refer to as the higher self, which is also equated with the soul – and at the other end is the lower self, which represents the baser tendencies.

The self changes and progresses through numerous stages, much like climbing a ladder. The lowest rung rests upon the earth and the highest rung reaches to the heavenly soul, which is unchanging and eternal.

Awareness

Through awareness and reference to the higher self, we recognize that ultimately access to lasting contentment and happiness lie not without but within. We then are able to transcend what we often perceive to be our limitations.

So what the above discussion illustrates, then, is that the human being is a paradox, representing the intricate connection between the ever changing material and physical, and the non-changing eternal soul. The mystery is how the earthly and heavenly meet within the same person. This is what we will be examining closely in this program.

Exercise Two

Consider something you desired very much, which you imagined would make your life happier, and which you eventually obtained.

1. Did you feel happier?
2. How long did this feeling of happiness last?
3. Do you still feel the same way today?

* * *

The One Essence

In order to understand the human paradox and its subtle connection with the outer earth and the inner heavens, we need to consider the origins of the human being from its source, the One Essence.

The Absolute is the One Essence from which all existence manifests. The Absolute is also referred to as the Absolute Truth, or Reality, which is permanent and not subject to change. It is boundless and timeless, whereas all creation and discernible existence has a beginning and an end in time and space. All creation is unified by its relationship with the One Essence.

Emerging from the timeless zone into creation and returning to the same zone after death, human beings are bracketed into this intermediate phase called 'life'. This phase is a manifestation of infinite varieties of creation, all energized by the One Essence, which is their source. Again, paradoxically, the human being is the inter-space, timeless in essence but living and embodied in this temporal world of movement and change, which is nothing other than energy (*See box and exercise below*).

Life is Energy



Everything we experience in this existence is based on energy. We know through physics, for example, that the more energetic a thing is, the hotter it is, until it becomes plasma. The inside of the sun, for example, is plasma. In the extreme heat of plasma, there is constant movement and there is no longer a stable balance of electrons. The opposite of this state is absolute zero, which is -273°C , known as the Bose-Einstein Condensate, where all atoms behave the same. There is uniformity in every atom, as though no distinction exists between one atom or molecule and another, because at absolute zero, they have been reduced to a phase of pre-energy, in which everything is uniform. This plasma- Bose-Einstein Condensate dynamic illustrates that there is an underlying unity out of which emerges the movement and activity of life.

Life, then, is experienced in this constant flux of energy. We seek to function at optimal levels of energy. At a physical level, we like to be fit, vital and dynamic; at a mental level, we like to be sound, focused and alert. At a spiritual level, we like to experience the stillness and calm to enable a clear reflective heart so that the light of the soul within illuminates instantaneously what we have not seen before. It is through the stillness beyond the noise of the mind that we see clearly things as they are. Freshness of insight and new knowledge brings forth appropriate action. Ultimately, we cannot but desire to exude appropriate energy towards others and ourselves.

Charting the Way – Map No. 1: Dynamic of Existence & The Nature of Creation

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Exercise Three: You as Energy

Take one day in your life and monitor the quality, quantity and use of your energy in the morning, afternoon, evening and nighttime.

1. How does your energy fluctuate?
2. What is the source of your energy?
3. What external and internal factors affect your energy, e.g. food, exercise, people, events, moods? In particular, notice the connections between you and your environment.

Patterns in Existence

All existence is created in pairs of opposites. These opposites are complementary, and they are the patterns, or imprints, by which all of existence is experienced. These pairings include gatheredness and separation, inner and outer, heavenly and earthly, and meaning and form. All these concepts will become clearer as we proceed.

So divinely is the world organized that every one of us, in our place and time, is in balance with everything else.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 – 1832),
German scientist & dramatist

Gatheredness and Separation

All existence may be experienced within the dynamic of gatheredness and separation. In fact, as human beings we are both gathered and in separation. Gatheredness is unity, inseparability. It is that pre-creational state of pure light, or what we refer to as pure consciousness.

Before creation (human or cosmic), there was absolute gatheredness, or unity; there was only the divine Light of lights – the One Essence – with nothing beside it. From this source, separation began with the emanation of movement and energy, then patterns emerged, all of which generated the archetypes of all that exists in creation. Further down this arc of creation, energy, matter and form interlinked. At yet a further stage in this process, separation took place when the opposites in creation, such as day and night, hot and cold, and wet and dry, became clearly distinguishable one from the other.

Human beings came into existence from the gatheredness of the pre-creational source into this world of separation and diverse identities. As we know, every human being is biologically different from another, although there is a common genetic connection going back through time. Even in our personal experience, deep down, we can all discern a shared sense of sameness in what matters most in our life. Our form or color may differ but we all unite in our desire for contentment and happiness. We are the ultimate example of how difference, or separation, meets in sameness or gatheredness.

Connected

With regard to the outer world, then, we are compelled to connect with and relate to the thread of unity that permeates all existence. At the very instant that separation occurs (that is, the cosmic Big Bang or human inception), what comes into being is seeking its gatheredness or original unity. The source of our desire for gatheredness is the soul within us, which replicates the original primal gatheredness and unity. The self, which is shadow to the light of the soul, drifts away to experience separation, insecurity, restlessness and all the opposite qualities beamed out from the soul, such as tranquility, contentment, joy and bliss.

The shadow/self imagines that by acquiring wealth and worldly reputation, for example, it may increase its status and honor. The self imagines this because the acquisition of wealth and reputation is a small reflection of what the soul already has, which is being totally honored and loved by its Creator. The self in its waywardness spends a lifetime trying to imitate the soul by striving to acquire fame, wealth, knowledge, security, and so on, with a modicum of success that is always short-lived and never ultimately satisfying.

When and if the self truly surrenders to the soul, it realizes the folly of its years of being the prodigal child. It sees that people may reject us, but never our soul or our Creator.

Inner and Outer

Human beings have both ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ aspects. Everything – a person, atom or fingerprint – has an outer identity of unique characteristics. Our genetic code shapes our identity, and each of

us is different in the outer and earthly sense. In the inner and heavenly sense, however, we are the same as we have all emerged from the One Timeless Essence. Nature interacts with nurture in such a way that we come to realize we are comprised of both heavenly and earthly aspects, and far more besides. For example, the child's early experiences are primarily with the outer earthly and physical environment. Later on, as the child grows and develops, it may then come to discover its inner heavenly nature, which is vast and limitless.

Generally, we all seek the truth and yearn to know the truth. But where did this longing for the truth come from? According to an oft-quoted Islamic tradition, it was revealed that God was a hidden treasure who loved to be known. Therefore, He created humankind and the world so that He could be known. That treasure, that Truth, is latent in every soul – a divine spark within us – and calling to itself. The light of that Truth emanating from within us energizes our experiences and realities. For example, the love of beauty drives us to seek beauty in everything around us, including in our fellow human beings. In truth, what we are seeking is Absolute Beauty itself, which is a divine attribute within the soul.

Our search for Absolute Beauty is Truth seeking itself within us.

...Each thing in the universe is a vessel full to the brim with wisdom and beauty. It is a drop from the river of His beauty. It is a hidden treasure because of its fullness. It has exploded and made the earth more brilliant than the skies–

Jalaluddin Rumi (1207 – 1273),

Persian Sufi master, born Balkh, modern Afghanistan

Heavenly and Earthly

As mentioned earlier, human beings comprise both ‘heavenly’ and ‘earthly’ aspects. The heavenly aspect is subtle and lies within the domain of the unseen and non-material. It is indiscernible. Its rules and patterns contrast greatly with those of the earthly aspect. It is in the earthly domain that things happen based on cause and effect, and due to opposites meeting and either complementing or opposing each other.

The human being, whilst earthly in the outer sense, constantly tends to look towards the heavenly, seeking answers to the purpose of life and the meaning of existence. Angels, however, are heavenly in essence yet focused on the earthly. We can see in this example that existence manifests as one of two opposite aspects whilst intrinsically containing both aspects.

Our tendency to look towards the heavenly is ultimately a desire to experience durable peace that is beyond time and space. We have the inner ability to momentarily freeze movement and thought, which enables us access to that zone of peace within, which is a state we all yearn for. We tap into that timeless zone, which is within us and has no movement or flux, no beginning and no end; it is a state similar to deep sleep. It is in sleep that we have a taste of this. This deep inner peace is part of a pre-creational pattern, which is imprinted within the soul.

The stillness in stillness is not the real stillness. Only when there is stillness in movement can spiritual rhythms appear, which pervades heaven and earth.

Ts’ai-ken t’an,
A First Zen Reader

Meaning and Form

In the way that we, as human beings, constitute ‘heavenly’ and ‘earthly’ aspects, we are also both ‘meaning’ and ‘form’. We must accept our form – which is the human body – and its limitations. At the same time our physical form embodies that which has never ever been subjected to any limitation – the soul. This is why many people love extreme sports that take

them to the very edge of safety. It is because in truth there is no edge – the soul is forever free, without limitations, and the self wants to imitate the soul.

Soul Language

Our meaning, as humans, is conveyed by the soul within, which is our true nature or essence. The soul of the human being, as we have discussed, is a light that originated from the One Source, or One Essence, and as such, just as a droplet of water contains the entire ocean, so is the soul a holographic image of all existence. In other words, the meaning of the human being is that s/he is a reflection of the entire universe and further has the potential to manifest all of the qualities and attributes that we associate with the soul's perfections.

A rose, for example, radiates its meaning through its vibrant color, its perfumed scent, the velvety touch of its petals, and its generosity of simply being, as a source of beauty and pleasure to the beholder. Gazing upon a rose can evoke in one a deep sense of beauty, serenity and joy.

Heavenly and earthly, inner and outer, meaning and form, they all meet within us, and by these opposites we experience gatheredness or separation. In order for us to realize this gatheredness or unity in us, we have to experience the opposite, which is separation and disunity. Absolute accord is in us, but it can only be realized or attained by experiencing its opposite, which is relative discord.

Being Human

Regarding our human qualities, we swing in varying degrees between two extremes: generosity and meanness, peace and violence, love and hate, virtue and vice. These extremes are like two arms projecting from, and yet part of, one torso. The soul is one, and we can manifest in varying degrees or shades – either as a reflector of that soul, or as a deflector of that soul.

Exercise Four: Raising your awareness of opposites

Reflect on a day in your life: when did you feel 'gathered' and when did you feel 'separated'?

The Rise of Consciousness

In order to grasp the subtle concepts of gatheredness and separation and the other patterns of complementary opposites in existence, we need to consider the story of Adam in the garden of paradise, as related in the teachings of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In the story, Adam has no knowledge of boundaries or opposites nor does he experience time, as he resides in the realm of eternity. In other words, he has no perception of beginnings or endings, love or hate, or good or bad. Adam was in the ultimate state of gatheredness as there was no separation or duality. The tree of knowledge represents all the complementary opposites of existence, whilst its roots are sunk deep in the eternal garden of unity. Then Adam, who had been in a state of pure bliss, begins to experience both pleasure and displeasure after having approached the tree.

The exposure of Adam to all the patterns of existence allows him to appreciate the ultimate treasury of the Creator. His ‘descent’ to the world of separation and duality (that is, ‘heavenly’ and ‘earthly’, ‘meaning’ and ‘form’, ‘inner’ and ‘outer’), enables him to recognize and awaken to his origins in the pre-creational realm of gatheredness, for he can only know anything with certainty by experiencing its opposite. Therefore, the so-called ‘fall’ of Adam can also be seen as a metaphor for the rise of consciousness in all humankind.

Nature of Duality

In our own experience, this nature of duality can be seen as complementary. The opposites in existence may seem to clash in our limited perception but do not at all in their absolute perfection. All the snapshots of our life show our oscillation from one opposite to the other – for example, from total darkness to total light—with multitudes of shades in between. We constantly experience good and bad times whereas we desire unchanging or absolute goodness and perfection in our lives. Actually, there is only absolute goodness and there is no such thing as absolute badness. Absolute badness is akin to non-existence, as anything in existence must contain two opposites. In other words, no bad alone can exist in this world.

The Forces of Attraction and Repulsion

All existence is energized through movement and change, which emanated from the One Essence, and manifests as two opposite but complementary forces called attraction and repulsion, a subject we will look at in much greater depth later on in this course. We have also discussed how human beings come into this world innately wanting – generally – to attract deep inner peace and stability. Equally, we are repulsed by chaos, ignorance and meaningless activity. Our worldly existence and experiences are shaped to a large extent by the need to attract what is considered desirable and to repulse what is undesirable.

Respect for life essentially is an expression of love of the source of life, which begins as energy: as soon as energy and movement manifest, the force released must be one of two, either attraction or repulsion. It is only attraction and repulsion that creates movement in existence.

It is creating harmony between the forces of attraction and repulsion that enables us to achieve that state of inner contentment of the soul that we all so deeply desire. The desire for equilibrium, in turn, is about wanting to maintain that state of ongoing constancy. In this quest for equilibrium, we are all motivated by a certain hierarchy of external needs such as wanting to maintain safety, security, health and wellbeing. This quest leads to a point when we primarily want to maintain the inner joy that calls to us from within our hearts.

Levels of Consciousness

Under an overall umbrella of consciousness, there are multiple layers through which human beings develop. For example, the consciousness of a kitten is not the same as a fully-grown cat. Nor can the cat exceed its ultimate individual consciousness. It cannot, for example, become ten times more intelligent or more aware than a cat. Our innate tendencies and qualities that ultimately define our humanness are stimulated by the external environment to develop different levels of consciousness; when this development reaches its optimum level, our humanness looks for the next level of consciousness.

There is no great mystery in all of this. Life is an infinite variety of resonances and consciousness, all interlinked, interactive, interdependent and yet totally dependent on the One Source, or One Essence, which is beyond time and space.

If it were not for the body, soul or spirit could not manifest. The human being is composed of a boundless light (soul consciousness), embodied within it, in order to activate and unite the seen (body) and the unseen (heart). The rest is all relative reality because it does not last; it changes. Now it smells good, now it is wilting, now it is there, now it is dead. Now it is a flower, now it becomes fertilizer. But the Truth, the One Essence, is forever.

Truth is eternal, knowledge is changeable. It is disastrous to confuse them.

Madeleine L'Engle,

author

As we develop higher consciousness, we realize that most things are ephemeral and fleeting, yet we can see beyond the form to its meaning and essence. The beautiful object we love may fall and break, yet Beauty will always be there. It is Beauty we seek – and majesty, and light, and freedom; we seek everlasting perfections.

Seeking Essence

We start with a little passion for clothes or jewelry, pets, cars or houses, money, sex, or wives, husbands and families. Then comes a time when we realize that these objects of our desires are transitory and not permanent, and what we found appealing was not the object itself but its meaning and essence. For example, a loved one may one day suddenly turn away from us, and then we realize that what we loved were in fact their qualities of kindness, beauty and compassion – these inner qualities of light. Then we realize that boundless passion was calling us

along these small little steps through the pull of our desires to awaken us to the higher. Therefore, to renounce desire is unreal. Desire is the door to higher realization.

In our earthly existence, there is only 'two', veiling the One and yet indicating the One. Every manifestation is one of two, good or bad, virtue or vice, desirable or undesirable. Nothing can be experienced except by attraction or repulsion, emanating from the One. So, in truth, there is only One. That's all it is, and nothing else. The rest is all fantasy; the fluttering of a leaf in the wind.

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

(Dynamic of Existence & The Nature of Creation)

Title:

What drives us to seek bliss? Why must we experience the opposites?

Word Length:

Between 500 and 1000 words.

Criteria:

Please refer to the following criteria for guidance in answering the question. The exercise should:

1. Show an understanding of the love for divine and absolute qualities, and how we can never attain them. (Give at least two examples of such love).
2. Give a brief explanation of heavenly/earthly, meaning/form, inner/outer, and gatheredness/separation.
3. Explain the drives of attraction and repulsion.

Exercise Five: Self-Assessment

Reconsider your answers to the questions in Exercise One. Would you add or change anything in the light of the map?

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

(Dynamic of Existence & The Nature of Creation)

*In each case choose the **best** answer according to your understanding of this map:*

Questions:

Q 1: Human beings

- A. Can never find lasting happiness
- B. Can only find happiness by dealing with the relative
- C. Can be happy if they recognize and follow their desires
- D. Can find happiness through access to a zone of eternal reliability

Q 2: Human beings cannot deny the relative because

- A. They have to live with it
- B. They need to experience the relative in order to understand the absolute
- C. The relative represents reality
- D. The relative is in time and space

Q 3: A human being consists of

- A. An ever-changing self and an unchanging soul
- B. A higher self and a soul
- C. Consciousness and unconsciousness
- D. Body and mind

Q 4: Creation

- A. Only exists in this temporal world
- B. Comes from a timeless zone and will return there
- C. Is absolute existence
- D. Is the only reality

Answers:

1: D.

2: B.

3: A.

4: B.

Recommended Reading for Map No. 1

(Dynamic of Existence & The Nature of Creation)

Haeri, Shaykh Fadhlalla (1989). [*The Journey of the Self*](#). San Francisco: HarperCollins.

eBooks By Zahra Publications

General eBooks on Islam

Living Islam – East and West

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Ageless and universal wisdom set against the backdrop of a changing world: application of this knowledge to one's own life is most appropriate.

The Elements of Islam

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

An introduction to Islam through an overview of the universality and light of the prophetic message.

The Qur'an & Its Teachings

Beams of Illumination from the Divine Revelations

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

A collection of teachings and talks with the objective of exploring deeper meanings of Qur'anic Revelations.

Commentary on Chapters One and Two of the Holy Qur'an

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

The first two chapters of the Qur'an give guidance regarding inner and outer struggle. Emphasis is on understanding key Qur'anic terms.

Commentary on Four Selected Chapters of the Qur'an

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

The Shaykh uncovers inner meanings, roots and subtleties of the Qur'anic Arabic terminology.

Journey of the Universe as Expounded in the Qur'an

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

The Qur'an traces the journey of all creation, seeing the physical, biological and geological voyage of life as paralleled by the inner spiritual evolution of woman/man.

The Essential Message of the Qur'an

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Teachings from the Qur'an such as purpose of creation, Attributes of the Creator, nature of human beings, decrees governing the laws of the universe, life and death.

The Family of `Imran

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

This book is a commentary on the third chapter of the Qur'an, the family of `Imran which includes the story of Mary, mother of `Isa (Jesus).

The Heart of Qur'an

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Commentary on chapter *Yasin*. This is traditionally read over the dead person: if we want to know the meaning of life, we have to learn about death.

The Qur'an in Islam: Its Impact & Influence on the Life of Muslims

`Allamah Sayyid M. H. Tabataba`i

`Allamah Sayyid M. H. Tabataba`i shows in this gem how the Qur'an contains the fundamental roots of Islam and the proof of prophethood as the Word of God.

The Qur'anic Prescription for Life

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Understanding of the Qur'an is made accessible with easy reference to key issues concerning life, and the path of Islam.

The Story of Creation in the Qur'an

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

An exposition of the Qur'anic verses relating to the nature of physical phenomena, including the origins of the universe, the nature of light, matter, space and time, and the evolution of biological and sentient beings.

Sufism & Islamic Psychology and Philosophy

Beginning's End

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

This is a contemporary outlook on Sufi sciences of self knowledge, exposing the challenge of our modern lifestyle that is out of balance.

Cosmology of the Self

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Islamic teachings of *Tawheed* (Unity) with insights into the human self: understanding the inner landscape is essential foundation for progress on the path of knowledge.

Decree and Destiny (Original and a Revised Version)

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

A lucid exposition of the extensive body of Islamic thought on the issue of free will and determinism.

Happiness in Life and After Death – An Islamic Sufi View

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

This book offers revelations and spiritual teachings that map a basic path towards wholesome living without forgetting death: cultivating a constant awareness of one's dual nature.

Leaves from a Sufi Journal

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

A unique collection of articles presenting an outstanding introduction to the areas of Sufism and original Islamic teachings.

The Elements of Sufism

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Sufism is the heart of Islam. This introduction describes its origins, practices, historical background and its spread throughout the world.

The Journey of the Self

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

After introducing the basic model of the self, there follows a simple yet complete outline of the self's emergence, development, sustenance, and growth toward its highest potential.

The Sufi Way to Self-Unfoldment

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Unfolding inner meanings of the Islamic ritual practices towards the intended ultimate purpose to live a life honorable and fearless, with no darkness, ignorance or abuse.

Witnessing Perfection

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Delves into the universal question of Deity and the purpose of life. Durable contentment is a result of 'perfected vision'.

Practices & Teachings of Islam

Calling Allah by His Most Beautiful Names

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Attributes or Qualities resonate from their Majestic and Beautiful Higher Realm into the heart of the active seeker, and through it back into the world.

Fasting in Islam

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

This is a comprehensive guide to fasting in all its aspects, with a description of fasting in different faith traditions, its spiritual benefits, rules and regulations.

Prophetic Traditions in Islam: On the Authority of the Family of the Prophet

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Offers a comprehensive selection of Islamic teachings arranged according to topics dealing with belief and worship, moral, social and spiritual values.

The Wisdom (Hikam) of Ibn `Ata'allah: Translation and Commentary

Translation & Commentary by Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

These aphorisms of Ibn `Ata'Allah, a Shadili Shaykh, reveal the breadth and depth of an enlightened being who reflects divine unity and inner transformation through worship.

The Inner Meanings of Worship in Islam: A Personal Selection of Guidance for the Wayfarer

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Here is guidance for those who journey along this path, from the Qur'an, the Prophet's traditions, narrations from the *Ahl al-Bayt*, and seminal works from among the *Ahl al-Tasawwuf* of all schools of thought.

The Lantern of The Path

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

Each one of the ninety-nine chapter of this book is a threshold to the next, guiding the reader through the broad spectrum of ageless wisdom, like a lantern along the path of reality.

The Pilgrimage of Islam

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

This is a specialized book on spiritual journeying, offering the sincere seeker keys to inner transformation.

The Sayings & Wisdom of Imam `Ali

Compiled By: Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Translated By: Asadullah ad-Dhaakir Yate

A selection of this great man's sayings gathered together from authentic and reliable sources. They have been carefully translated into modern English.

Transformative Worship in Islam: Experiencing Perfection

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri with Muna H. Bilgrami

This book uniquely bridges the traditional practices and beliefs, culture and language of Islam with the transformative spiritual states described by the Sufis and Gnostics.

Talks & Courses

Ask Course ONE: The Sufi Map of the Self

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

This workbook explores the entire cosmology of the self through time, and maps the evolution of the self from before birth through life, death and beyond.

Ask Course TWO: The Prophetic Way of Life

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

This workbook explores how the code of ethics that govern religious practice and the Prophetic ways are in fact transformational tools to enlightened awakening.

Friday Discourses: Volume 1

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

The Shaykh addresses many topics that influence Muslims at the core of what it means to be a Muslim in today's global village.

Songs of Iman on the Roads of Pakistan

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

A series of talks given on the divergence between ‘faith’ and ‘unbelief ‘ during a tour of the country in 1982 which becomes a reflection of the condition occurring in the rest of the world today.

Poetry, Aphorisms & Inspirational

101 Helpful Illusions

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Everything in creation has a purpose relevant to ultimate spiritual Truth. This book highlights natural veils to be transcended by disciplined courage, wisdom and insight.

Beyond Windows

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Offering moving and profound insights of compassion and spirituality through these anthologies of connections between slave self and Eternal Lord.

Bursts of Silence

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Inspired aphorisms provide keys to doors of inner knowledge, as well as antidotes to distraction and confusion.

Pointers to Presence

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

A collection of aphorisms providing insights into consciousness and are pointers to spiritual awakening.

Ripples of Light

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Inspired aphorisms which become remedies for hearts that seek the truth.

Sound Waves

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

A collection of aphorisms that help us reflect and discover the intricate connection between self and soul.

Sublime Gems: Selected Teachings of Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani

Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani

A collection of extracted spiritual nourishment from Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani's existing works.

Autobiography

Son of Karbala

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

The atmosphere of an Iraq in transition is brought to life and used as a backdrop for the Shaykh's own personal quest for self-discovery and spiritual truth.

Health Sciences and Islamic History

Health Sciences in Early Islam – Volumes 1 & 2

Collected Papers By: Sami K. Hamarneh

Edited By: Munawar A. Anees

Foreword By: Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Health Sciences in Early Islam is a pioneering study of Islamic medicine that opens up new chapters of knowledge in the history of the healing sciences. This two volume work covers the development of Islamic medicine between the 6th and 12th centuries A.D.