

## The Elixir of Self-Building

Love is the elixir of self-building and enrichment. Love of God Almighty cures all moral vileness entirely and presents all good attributes as a whole to the lover. The elixir of love makes the lover so enamored of the beloved that every other association with anything and anyone else except God is broken off.

In the Whispered Prayer of lovers, which is attributed to Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (a), we read:

"الهي من ذا الذي ذاق حلاوة محبتك فرام منك بدلا ومن الذي الذي انس بقربك  
فابتغى عنك حولا"

"My God, who can have tasted the sweetness of Thy love, then wanted another in place of thee? Who can have become intimate with Thy nearness, then sought removal from thee?"<sup>1</sup>

'Love is charming and when it is settled in the soul,  
It closes the door of heart to everything other than the beloved.'

And in a *hadith* attributed to Imam al-Sadiq (a), we read:

"حب الله إذا أضاء على سر عبد أخلاه عن كل شاغل، وكل ذكر سوى الله  
ظلمة، والمحِبُّ أخلص الناس سرًّا لله تعالى، وأصدقهم قولاً، وأوفاهم عهداً"

"When the radiance of love of God shines on the heart of a devoted person, it delivers him from any other preoccupation; anything but remembrance of God is darkness. The lover of God is the most sincere of God's servants, the most truthful in speech, and the most faithful to vows and commitments."

In the first stage of detachment, the carnal soul (i. e., the soul that bids to evil) dies and the human rational life begins; and in its highest stage the eye of heart enlightens by the light of meeting with Allah

and man attains the highest degree of monotheism, which is the status of *ulu 'l 'ilm*. We read in *Munajat-i Sha'baniyya*:

"الهي هب لي كمال الانقطاع اليك وأنر أبصار قلوبنا بضياء نظرها اليك"

"My lord! Grace me with the highest stage of detachment (from all things) toward Yourself, and enlighten the eyes of our hearts with the light of its looking (directed toward) You."<sup>2</sup>

## The Real Elixir

An interesting account related by the Shaykh about love of God as an elixir as well as the real elixir is quoted as follows:

"Once I was looking for the science of alchemy; I practiced self-discipline for a time until I reached a dead end and gained nothing.

Then, in a spiritual state I was graced with the verse,

(من كان يريد العزة فلله العزة جميعا)

(If any do seek for glory and power—to Allah belong all glory and power) (Fatir: 10). I said I wanted the science of alchemy. I was told (by inspiration): 'They want alchemy for glory and power; the reality of glory and power is in this verse (the aforesaid verse). This set my mind at ease.'

Several days later, two men (following ascetic practice's) came to my house and asked to meet with me. When we met they said: 'It has been two years since we have been trying to acquire the science of alchemy but to no effect. We appealed to Hazrat Imam al-Reza (a), he referred us to you.

The Shaykh smiled and told them the above story and then added: "I was permanently delivered (from such an aspiration); the reality of alchemy is attaining (proximity with) God Himself."

Sometimes the Shaykh would recite the following statement from the supplication of *'Arafah* to his friends in respect to the above verdict:

"ماذا وجد من فقدك وماالذي فقد من وجدك."

"The one who has not found (known) You, what has he found? And the one who has found you; what has he not found?"

Imam al-Sajjad (a) has made an interesting reference to the elixir of love of God at the ending part of the supplication of *Makarim al-Akhlaq* (Noble Moral Traits).

"وانهـج لي الى محبتك سبيلا سهلة أكمل لي بها خير الدنيا والآخرة"

"...Open a smooth road for me to Thy love, and complete for me thereby the good of this world and the next."<sup>3</sup>

Hafiz has beautifully touched upon this point in his following couplets:

'O ignorant one! Make an attempt to become insightful,  
You will not be a leader, unless you are a seeker on the path (yourself first).  
In the school of truth and with instructor of love, try, O son, to become a father some day.  
Give up the copper of your existence like the men on the (spiritual) path,  
So that you discover the elixir of love and turn into gold. If the light of love shines on your heart and soul,  
By God you will get brighter than the sun in the heaven.'

## The Shaykh's Greatest Art

The Shaykh's greatest feature and art was his achievement of "the elixir of love". He was an expert in practicing this alchemy and was no doubt one of the clearest manifestations of: (يحبهم ويحبونه والذين امنوا) (Whom He will love as they will love Him) (al-Ma'idah: 54); and (But those of faith are overflowing in their love for Allah) (al-Baqarah: 165), and whoever approached him would somehow enjoy the elixir of love.

The reverend Shaykh said:

"Love of God is the last stage of servitude. Love is beyond infatuation; infatuation is accidental, whereas love is essential; the infatuated one may turn away from their beloved, but the real lover is not like this; if the infatuated ones' beloved get handicapped or lose their virtues, their infatuation may disappear, but a mother loves even her handicapped child."

He used to say:

"The standard for evaluation of deeds is the standard by which the doer loves God Almighty."

'The one who has not sown the seed of love,

Will not harvest even a single grain of perfection.

## **Shirin and Farhad**

Sometimes the Shaykh would cite the story of Shirin and Farhad as similitude to what he wanted to impart to his disciples:

"With any strike of his pickaxe, Farhad was remembering Shirin.

Whatever you do, you should be in such a state to the end of your task; all your thinking and remembering must be of God, not of yourself."

## **"Write for the Love of the Beloved!"**

One of the Shaykh's disciples related: 'I was the secretary to a trading company. One day he (the Shaykh) came to me and told me:

"Who are you writing in these notebooks for?" I said, for my master. He asked:

"If you write your name in these notebooks, will your master make any objection to it?"

I answered, certainly he will. Then he asked:

"The cloth you are measuring, for whom you are measuring it? Yourself or your master?"

I said, for him (my master). Then he asked: "Did you understand". I said, no. Then he went on to say:

"With every pickaxe that Farhad struck, he would say along: 'My sweetheart Shirin!' and he did not mention anything but Shirin's name. So, you write this notebook with the love of the Beloved! Measure the cloth with his remembrance! Consequently all these will be a preliminary step toward union (with the Beloved); even your breaths must be breathed in His memory!"

## **"God Has no Clients!"**

In order to find clients for God (!) the Shaykh would say:

"Imam Husayn (a) has got so many customers (clients); perhaps this is the case for other Imams, too; but God has few clients! I feel pity for God with so few clients; very few come over to say: I want God; I would like to make acquaintance with Him."

Sometimes, he would say:

"While you are in need of God, He is in love with you!" We read in a *Hadith-i Qudsi* (Divine tradition):

"يا ابن آدم! إني أحبك فأنت أيضا أحببني"

"O son of Adam! I love you, So, you love Me you, too."4

"عبيدي! أنا وحقِّي لكَ محبٌ، فبحقِّي عليكَ كن لي محباً"

"My servant! I swear by My right that I love you, so, do love Me by my right over you!"5

Sometimes he would say:

"Yusuf is good-looking, but think of the One who has created Jusuf; all beauty belongs to Him."

'In the world, no one saw beauty such as that of Yusuf,

The (absolute) beauty (however) belongs to the One who created Yusuf.6

## "Teach Lessons of Love!"

One of the Shaykh's disciples related; 'The late Shaykh Ahmad Sa'idi, an eminent *mujtahid* Jurist) and the teacher of the late Agha Burhan7 in *Kharij* (doctoral) lessons, asked me once:

Do you know any tailor in Tehran to make a cloak for me? And I introduced the reverend Shaykh to him.

After a time, I saw him who said to me as soon as he saw me: 'What did you do with me?! Where did you send me?!' I asked: 'How come? What has happened?' He said: 'I went to the gentleman that you introduced to me to make a cloak for me. When he was measuring for my size he asked me about my job. I said I was a *talaba* (an Islamic Seminary student). He asked:

"Do you study or teach lessons?"

I answered I was teaching. He asked what I was teaching. I said I was teaching *Kharij* lessons (advanced levels of Islamic studies). He nodded in agreement and said:

"It's fine, but teach lessons of love!"

This statement of his transformed me to a totally new person; it changed my life!

After this event, the late Sa'idi kept his contact with the Shaykh and enjoyed his audience, praying for me for having introduced the Shaykh to him.

"Learn Love from a Moth!"8

One of the Shaykh's disciples quoted the Shaykh as saying:

"One night I was engaged in whispered prayer and supplicating and imploring to the Beloved. I noticed, in the meantime, a moth approached the lantern and began flying around it over and over until one side of its body struck the lantern and fell down but did not die. With much effort it moved about and flew to the lantern again and struck the other side of its body to the lantern, giving up its life this time. This event inspired something to me: O such and such! Learn (how to) love from this insect; let no pretension or act of claiming remain in you. The truth of love and affection was what this insect fulfilled. I learned a lot from this strange scene, and my (spiritual) state totally transformed. .."

## Fundamentals of Love of God

The fundamental principle in love of God Almighty is "Knowing Him".<sup>9</sup> It is most unlikely that one knows God and does not fall in love with Him:

'If you see him (Yusuf) and do tell apart between the orange (you are peeling) and your hand,

It will be admissible to reproach Zulaikha (in her fervent love of Yusuf).'

Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (a) said:

"من عَرَفَ اللهَ أَحَبَهُ"

"Every one who knows God will love Him."<sup>10</sup>

The basic question raised here is that what knowledge leads to love of God? Demonstrative knowledge, or intuitive cognition?

The reverend Shaykh said: "The main point here is that unless man attains intuitive knowledge toward God, he will not fall in love (with Him). If he gains the knowledge, he sees all goodness is gathered in God

(ءالله خير أمّا يشركون)

((Who) is better? Allah or the false gods they associate (with Him)?) (al-Naml: 59)); in this case it is unlikely that he pays attention to other than God."

The Holy Qur'an names two groups whose knowledge toward the Exalted and Almighty God is of the

intuitive type: One is "the angels", and the other is "those endowed with knowledge":

(شهد الله أنه لا إله إلا هو والملائكة وأولو العلم)

(There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah, His angels and those endowed with knowledge.)

(Ale 'Imran: 18)

Imam Ali (a) is quoted as saying about the sweetness of His knowledge and the satiating cup of His love enjoyed by the first group, i. e., the angels:

"ثم خلق سبحانه لإسكان سماواته وعمارة الصفيح الأعلى من ملكوته خلقا بديعا من ملائكته .. قد استفرغتهم أشغال عبادته ووصلت حقائق الايمان بينهم وبين معرفته وقطعهم الايقان به الى الوله اليه، ولم تجاوز رغباتهم ما عنده الى ما عند غيره، قد ذاقوا حلاوة معرفته، وشربوا بالكأس الروية من محبته"

"Then Allah, the Glorified, created for inhabiting His skies and populating the higher strata of His realm new variety of creatures namely the angels. ...Occupation in His worship has released them from other responsibilities and realities of faith have served as link between them and His knowledge. Their belief in Him has made them concentrate on Him. They do not long for anything other than what is with Him. They have tasted the sweetness of His knowledge and have drunk from the satiating cup of His love."<sup>11</sup>

## Attaining Intuitive Knowledge

To attain intuitive knowledge, there is no way other than cleansing the stains of unseemly deeds off the heart's mirror. Imam al-Sajjad (a) has said in a supplication quoted by Abu Hamza Thumali:

"وأن الراحل اليك قريب المسافة وأنت لا تحتجب عن خلقك الا ان تحجبهم  
الأعمال دونك"

"The seeker after You has a near distance to You. And verily, You are not veiled from Your creatures unless (unseemly) deeds veil You from them!<sup>12</sup>

God is not veiled; our own actions veil Him from us. If the veil of unpleasant actions is removed off the heart, it will witness the elegant beauty of the exalted Almighty God and will fall in love with Him.

'The Beauty of the Beloved is unveiled and uncovered,  
Settle down the dust over your path so that you can see His Beauty.'

In order to Settle down the dust over the path and cleanse the heart off the indecent actions, the heart must be detached from love of the world, since love of the world is the source of all vanities and vileness.

## The Pitfall of Love toward God

The real pitfall of love of God is the love of the world. According to teachings of the reverend Shaykh, if one wants the world for God's sake, it is a preliminary step toward union with Him; and if it is for the sake of other than God, it will be a pitfall of His love. In this relation, there is no difference between the lawful (*Halal*) and the unlawful (*haram*) worldly attachments.. Obviously, the unlawful worldly gains and pleasures make man farther distant from God.

The Holy Prophet (s) has been quoted as saying:

"حب الدنيا وحب الله لا يجتمعان في قلبٍ أبداً"

The love of the world and love of God never meet in a single heart."<sup>13</sup>

Imam Ali (a) also said in this respect:

"كما ان الشمس والليل لا يجتمعان، كذلك حب الله وحب الدنيا لا يجتمعان"

"As the sun and the (darkness of the) night do not meet, neither do the love of God and the love of the world (ever) meet."<sup>14</sup>

He said in another *hadith*:

"كيف يدعي حب الله من سكن قلبه حب الدنيا؟!"

"How may a person claim (boast of) love of God, whereas love of the world has nestled in his heart?"<sup>15</sup>

The reverend Shaykh would always compare the world to "the hag" in his examples and sometimes would face a disciple and say: "I see you are encumbered by this hag!"

And then he would recite this poem of Hafiz:

"There is none who is not entangled in that curling ringlet,  
Who is there in the way of who lies not such a snare of tribulation?"

Actually, the Shaykh had adopted this comparison from the following *hadith*:

"ان عيسى بن مريم - عليه السلام - كوشف بالدنيا فرآها في صورة عجوز  
هتماء، عليها من كل زينة فقال لها: كم تزوجت؟ قالت: لا أحصيهم. قال: وكلهم  
ماتوا او كلهم طلقوك؟ قالت: بل كلهم قتلت. فقال عيسى -ع- بؤسا لزوجك  
الباقين، كيف لايعتبرون بازواجك الماضين؟ كيف تهلكينهم واحدا واحدا ولا  
يكونوا منك على حذر؟"

"The reality of the world was revealed to Jesus (a). He saw it as an old woman (hag) that had lost all her teeth and had all (types of) ornaments on her. He asked her: 'How many husbands have you got?' She said: 'I have not counted!' His holiness asked: 'Have all your husbands died or have they divorced you?' She replied: 'No, rather I have killed them!' Jesus (a) said: 'Woe to your future husbands who have not taken a lesson from your past husbands; how you killed them one by one and they did not distance themselves from you!' <sup>16</sup>

The Shaykh would repeatedly say: "Those who are coming to me are just looking for the hag<sup>17</sup> nobody comes here to say, "I am not on good terms with God; reconcile me with Him!"

## The Inward Aspects of the Worldly-Minded People

The reverend Shaykh who saw people's innermost aspects with his insight, would say about the inward images of those who are people of the world, people of the hereafter, and people of God:

"The ones who want the world by unlawful means, their inner aspects are like dogs, those who want the Hereafter are neutral, and those who want God are manly."

## The God-Displaying Heart

The reverend Shaykh would say: "The heart indicates whatever it wants. Make an effort that your heart may indicate God! Whatever people like its picture will be reflected in their heart so that those who are endowed with Divine knowledge can realize what state they will have in *barzakh* by means of viewing their hearts. If they are infatuated with outward beauty of someone, or highly interested in money or property, they will adopt in *barzakh* the same forms as the things they loved in the world."

## "What have you Done?"

One of the Shaykh's disciples said: 'One night I had an exciting and erotic dream which preoccupied me during the day too. The next morning I went to visit the Shaykh. Once he saw me, he recited the following poems:

'If you have in mind not to dissociate with the Friend,  
Hold on to the string (of love) so that he holds on to it too.  
O heart earn livelihood in a way that If your feet slip,  
The angel will keep you (safe) with the two hands of supplication.'

I found out he had sensed something; he would not recite these lines without a purpose. I kept sitting for a time. The Shaykh was busy with his tailoring. I said: Is there something (you want to say)?! He said:

"What have you done that your face has turned like that of a woman?!"

I said I saw a beautiful woman in a dream and the memory has been retained in me. Then he said:

"That's it! Ask for God's forgiveness!"

## "What Do I see in you?!"

One of the Shaykh's devotees said: 'Once I left home for visiting the Shaykh. On my way to his house I happened to see an unveiled lady (with no Islamic modest dress) who attracted my attention. I got in the Shaykh's house and sat next to him. He took a glance at me and said:

"Such and such! What do I see in you?!"

I said to myself: '*Ya Sattar al-'uyab* (O Concealer of defects)! The Shaykh smiled and said:

"What did you do that what I was seeing disappeared?!"

## Men who had turned into Women!

Dr. Hajj Hasan Tawakkuli related: 'One day I left my (dentist's) clinic to go somewhere. I took a bus and when it stopped near Firdaws Square, some people got on the bus and then I saw the driver was a woman and when I looked further I saw all (passengers) were women with the same appearance and clothing! I saw a woman was sitting next to me too! I pulled up myself, thinking that I had taken the wrong bus and that it was the women employees' bus service. That bus stopped and a woman got off. After that the woman got off, all (people riding the bus) turned into men!

Although at first I hadn't intended to visit the Shaykh, when I got off the bus I went to the Shaykh. Before I said anything, the Shaykh said:

"You saw all men turned into women! As those men's attention were attracted by that woman, all turned into women!"

Then he went on to say:

"When dying, whatever a person is paying attention to would materialize before their eyes. The love of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (a), however, leads to Salvation."

"How good it is to be absorbed in the Beauty of God...so that you see what others do not see and hear what others do not hear."

## **"What's that Table?"**

Dr. Thubati said: There was a cobbler called Sayyid Ja'far, who is dead now. He related: 'Once I had a big table in my house that I did not have a suitable place to put it and I was wondering what to do with it. When in the evening I went to the session, as soon as the Shaykh saw me he said in a low voice:

"What is that table you have placed there—pointing to my heart?!" The cobbler suddenly noticed what the Shaykh meant; he smiled and said: 'Reverend Shaykh! I did not have any place to put it, so I left it here!!'

## **Attaining Divine Mysteries**

The reverend Shaykh believed that the most fundamental step in attaining Divine mysteries is to be God-Oriented.

He would say:

"Until an iota of love for other than God exists in the heart, it is impossible to achieve any of the Divine mysteries!"

"Do not Desire Anything Save God!" The Shaykh had learned from two angels the idea that 'he should desire nothing save God.'" One of his disciples quoted the Shaykh as saying:

"One night two angels taught me in two statements the path to annihilation (in Divine Unity). And the two statements were: Do not say anything of yourself, and do not want anything save God!"<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, he stated:

"Be conscious, creation has been for your sake. Whatever you want beside God is (a sign of) your failure."

## The Status of the Intellect and that of the Soul

The reverend Shaykh said:

"If man is in the stage of intellect, he will never evade devotional acts, does not commit sins – in disobedience to God, and according to the *hadith*: "العقل ما عبد به الرحمن واكتسب به الجنان" (the intellect is that by means of which the Merciful God is worshipped and by means of which the Paradise is attained) 19 at this stage he seeks other than God – i.e., Paradise. But when he achieves the stage of *ruh* (spirit), according to the verse<sup>1</sup> (ونفخت فيه من روحي) (...and (I) breathed into him My Spirit) (al-Hijr: 29) he will only look to the Truth and becomes an evidence to the second couplet of the following:  
'The fastings of the masses are from drinking and eating. The fastings of the elect are from all sins. His fastings are from other than the Friend. Whatever he wants is all for His sake.

And as Hafiz stated:

'If the Paradise is granted to me how may I accept it.

As the union with the Friend is better than the Paradise in my view.' ”

## Worship Based on Affection

At the peak of his God-Seeking, man worships God on the basis of affection rather than out of desire for the Paradise or fear of the Hell; the same way as Imam al-Sadiq (a) said about his own worship:

"ان الناس يعبدون الله عز وجل على ثلاثة أوجه: فطبقة يعبدونه رغبة في ثوابه فتلك عبادة الحرصاء وهو الطمع، وآخرون يعبدونه فرقا من النار فتلك عبادة العبيد وهي الرهبة، ولكني أعبده حبا له عز وجل فتلك عبادة الكرام وهو الأمان، لقوله عز وجل: (وهم من فزع يومئذ آمنون) ولقوله عز وجل: (قل ان كنتم تحبون الله ..) فمن أحب الله أحبه الله عز وجل، ومن أحبه الله عز وجل كان من الأمنين".

"In worship of the Almighty and Glorious God, people are in three groups: one group worship Him for reward, which is the worship of the greedy and that is avarice; the other group worship Him out of fear of the Hell, which is the worship of the slaves and that is fearfulness; but I worship the Almighty and Glorious God out of love and affection for Him which is the worship of the noble, and that is the source of safety and security, for the Almighty and Glorious God says: (And they are secure of that Day's fear.) (al-Naml: 89) And also for His Almighty and Glorious saying: (Say if you love Allah....) (Ale Imran: 31)

Thus whoever loves Almighty and Glorious Allah, He would love him too and whoever is loved by

Almighty and Glorious Allah, he will be secure (of the terror of the Judgment Day)."<sup>20</sup> The reverend Shaykh would frequently enjoin his friends to strive to attain a point in God-Orientedness where nothing but love of God motivates their acts of devotion.

## **Everything for Oneself, even God!**

The reverend Shaykh would say:

"O Man! Why do you demand other than the God? What have you seen (received) from other than Him?<sup>21</sup> If He does not will, nothing will be effective; and your return will be toward Him!

'There is sugar (fruitful targets) in the town.

But the wayfaring falcons are content by hunting flies!!'<sup>22</sup>

You have given up God in favor of other than Him! Why are you whirling around yourself!! Seek God and set every demand as preparatory to union with Him. The problem is that we want everything, even God, for ourselves!"

## **The Highest Levels of Piety**

The Shaykh said about the levels of piety:

"Piety has certain levels; the lowest level is performing the obligations and avoiding the prohibited, which is fine and appropriate for some people; but there are highest levels of piety which demand avoiding other than Allah, that is caring for nothing in the heart except for love of God."

## **The School of Love**

The reverend Shaykh believed that man will not attain the peak of humanness unless he diverts his heart from other than God; even if he strives to attain self-perfection, he will not reach that goal. Thus, if someone would come to the Shaykh asking for guidance as to the reason for his failure in his ascetic efforts, he would comment:

"You have worked for results, whereas this is not a school of results, it is a school of love, a school of God-Orientedness."

## **Opening up the Heart's Eye**

The late Shaykh had learned by experience that opening up the eye and ear of the heart and getting to know the mysteries of the Unseen would be possible by means of perfect sincerity and God-Orientedness in the absolute sense of the word. He would say:

"If you watch out for your heart and do not admit other than God in it, you will be able to see what other people are unable to see, and hear what other people are unable to hear."

"If man keeps the eye of his heart away from other than God, He will grace him with radiance and will introduce him with fundamentals of divinity."

"If one works for God, his heart's eye will open up."

"Friends! Pray to God to deliver you from deafness and blindness; (for) as long as man seeks other than God, he is both deaf and blind!!"

In other words the Shaykh believed that intuitive knowledge is not possible except through (gaining) a sound heart; a perfectly sound heart is one in which there is not the slightest love of worldly desires and does not want anything beside God. This is in line with the esteemed saying of Imam al-Sadiq (a) in describing a sound heart.

Interpreting the verse: (المن أتى الله بقلب سليم) (But only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart) (al-Shu'ara': 89), the holy Imam (a) said:

"هو القلب الذي سَلِمَ من الدنيا"

"That is a heart which is pure from (impurity) of the love of the profane desires."<sup>23</sup>

In another *hadith*, the holy Imam (a) said:

"القلب السليم الذي يلقي ربه وليس فيه أحد سواه، وكل قلبٍ فيه شرك أو شك  
فهو ساقط"

"A submissive and pure heart is one that meets the Lord while there is nothing in it other than Him; and every heart in which there is polytheism or doubt it is defective (and diseased)."<sup>24</sup>

## The Inward Aspect of Heart

The reverend Shaykh said:

"Once a person is endowed with the inner eye (heart's eye), as soon as he admits other than God in his heart, his Purgatory inward state takes the same form (as what enters his heart). If you demand other than God, your price (value) is as much as what you have demanded; and if you are God-Oriented, you

are invaluable– whoever is with Allah, Allah will be with him. If you are absorbed in God at all moments, Divine radiance will shine on you and you will see what you wish with the Divine light."

## **The Heart to which Everything is Present**

The reverend Shaykh said:

"Try to set your heart for God; when your heart is for God, He will be there; when He is there all that relates to Him will be present and evident there; whenever you will all will be with you, for God is there, the spirits of the Prophets and Awliya will be there; if you will, even Makkah and Madinah will be with you So try that your heart be just for God so that whatever is created by God be present to you!"

## **The Man who Performs Godly Acts**

The reverend Shaykh believed that if the love of God dominates the heart and it really does not wish for anything beside God, man will attain the God–vicegeral status and Godly acts will be performed by him. In this relation he would say:

"If something dominates another thing, it will impart its quality to the latter; like when iron is put in a fire, after a while the fire will permeate the iron enabling it to bum like a fire. The same will be true in respect to the relation between man and his Creator and Lord!"

It is also quoted from him: "We do not do anything extraordinary, rather, we find (develop) the nature that belongs to Godly man. Everything is granted to man by the spirit. The spirit of a cow does the work of a cow and the spirit of a rooster does the work of a rooster. Now tell me! What should the Godly spirit of man do? It must do something Godly. The verse,

"ونفخت فيه من روحي"(And (I) breathed into him of My Spirit) (al-Hijr: 29; Sad: 72) refers to the same issue."

Cleansing the Heart Thus, intuitive knowledge will not be obtained unless by means of cleansing the heart of anything other than love of God; and man will not fall in love with Absolute Perfection except through obtaining Divine knowledge. Therefore, the main problem is that cleansing the heart of the love of worldly desires is not an easy task. How can the heart be set free from its attachment to the love of this "hag with a made up face"?

From the viewpoint of the reverend Shaykh what can cleanse the heart is the same thing that can help man attain the reality of monotheism, i. e., the things pointed out in previous chapter: Perpetual presence, seeking help from the Ahl al-Bayt (a), begging at nights (nightly supplications and whispered prayers), and benevolence to people.

## The Way to Love God

The reverend Shaykh placed a special emphasis on "benevolence to people" in creating proximity to God<sup>25</sup> and loving Him. He believed that the means to love of God is affection to God's creatures and serving people, especially the oppressed and the ones stuck in a plight.

The Holy Prophet (s) is quoted as saying:

"الخلق عيال الله فأحب الخلق الى الله من نفع عيال الله وأدخل على أهل بيت  
سروراً"

"People are the family of God; the most favorite person with God is the one who is the most beneficial to the family of God and who makes them happy."<sup>26</sup>

In another *hadith* it is narrated that the Holy Prophet (s) was asked: 'Who is the most favorite person with God?' The Holy Prophet (s) replied: 'The one who is the most beneficial to the people.'<sup>27</sup>

It is also related in another *hadith* that the Almighty God told the Holy Prophet (s) on the eve of Ascension (Mi'raj):

"يا أحمد! محبتي محبة الفقراء، فأذن الفقراء وقرب مجلسهم منك... فان الفقراء  
أحبائي"

"O Ahmad (Muhammad (s))! Loving me is to love the poor; so draw the poor near to yourself and go to their gatherings, for the poor are My friends."<sup>28</sup>

One of the Shaykh's disciples said: 'On the Shaykh's recommendation, I used to go to Neka (a city in the Mazandaran province, northern Iran) several times to have the audience with Ayatollah Kuhistani. On one occasion I was going to the bus station on Nasir Khusraw Avenue to reserve a ticket for Neka, when I ran into the Shaykh. He asked me where I had been going. I said: 'To Neka to meet Ayatollah Kuhistani.' He said:

"His style is asceticism, come with me to teach you the way of loving God!"

Then he took my hand and led me to Imam Khomeini (ra) Avenue (named so after the Islamic Revolution) which then was covered with cobblestones, and down the street turned to an alley and knocked a door. The shabby building housed a number of poor and wretched children and adults.

Pointing at them, the Shaykh said:

"Fulfilling the needs of these desperate people makes one a lover of God! This is your lesson. With Ayatollah Kuhistani, you had ascetic lessons but here is lesson of loving."

Ever since, for about ten years the Shaykh and I would go to the shanty quarters of the city to help the needy; the Shaykh introduced them to me and I supplied them with provisions.

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1. Bihar al-Anwar, XC111, 160; Mafatih al-Jinan; The Psalms of Islam (al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyya), IX, 77: 248.
  2. Bihar al-Anwar, XCV, 99.
  3. The Psalms of Islam (al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyya), p. 75.
  4. Mawa'izal-'Adadi'ah, 419.
  5. Irshad al-Qulub, 171.
  6. According to Dr. Farzam, this poem is by Mulla Biman' Ali Raji Kermani, the famous poet of the Qajar period. He is said to have extemporized the second line of this couplet when Fath Ali Shah Qajar said the first line and told him to tell the second.
  7. A great scholar in Tehran and the founder of Madrasa Ilmiyya (Islamic seminary) of Burhan next to the holy shrine of Hazrat Abdul Azim al-Hasani in Shahr-i Ray.
  8. Moth is a symbol of love (of fire) in Persian literature, which sacrifices its life in the way of its beloved.
  9. For further study on fundamentals of love of God see Muhammadi Ray Shahri's Al-Mahabbafi al-Kitab wa al-Sunna, researched and published by Dar al-Hadith, Qum.
  10. Tanbih al-Khawatir, I, 52.
  11. Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 91.
  12. Mafatih al-Jinan, Dua-i Abu Hamza Thumali.
  13. Mizan al-Hikmah, II, 960: 3162.
  14. Ibid., II, 960: 3164.
  15. Ibid., 960: 3163
  16. Tanbih al-Khawatir: I, 146. See also, Mizan al-Hikmah, IV, 1744: 6010.
  17. Meaning they are asking for solving their mundane problems.
  18. Khaja Nasir al-din Tusi said in this respect: "And man will attain monotheism only after he loses his existence and non-existence and goes beyond these two ranks. As long as he is hesitating between existence and non-existence, he is either a man of this world or of the next. If he wants unreal existence and real non-existence he is a man of the world and the next world is forbidden to him. And if he wants real existence and unreal non-existence, he is man of the next world and this world is forbidden to him. But if he neither wants existence nor non-existence, i. e., if he neither wants his self nor his selflessness and is not aware of these two (states of being) and does not see them, (then) he is a man of God and both this world and the next are forbidden to him. That is to say, if he looks to the world or the Hereafter, he will lose that high status and turns quite the reverse. Since as long as a man is looking for the Hereafter, the paradise, and rewards and happiness he is indeed seeking his own perfection in itself and by itself; therefore he is seeking himself rather than God. And as such, he is a man of multiplicity rather than a man of Unity as stated in the following hemistich:

Whatever you see beside God is an idol; shatter it!

Thus, wanting anything except God is idolatry; the Hereafter, the Paradise, and God's pleasure and proximity are beside God and it is unseemly for the seeker of Unity to care for any of such things or to view himself as among those seeking such things. As whoever (really) knows God bears the sign that he does not wish other than God; and this (process of) knowing God and wanting God is still (a sign) of multiplicity. For, in Unity there is no knowing and the known, no wanting and the wanted; all is God and nothing else. So, the one who sees God and nothing else is the seeker of Unity. If God

Almighty unveils the existence and the non-existence, one will attain such a status. "See, Risala of 'Tawalla wa Tabarra' in the Appendix of Akhlaq-i Muhtashami", p .569.

19. Al-Kafi, I, 11:3.

20. Mizan al-Hikmah, VII, 3418: 11647.

21. It is quoted in a Qudsi (Divine) hadith: 'O Man! Everybody wants you for himself or herself and I want you for yourself, so do not flee from Me! -al-Mawa'iz al-Adadiyah, 420."

22. Hafiz.

23. Mizan al-Hikmah, X, 4984: 16931.

24. Ibid. X, 4684: 16930.

25. See "The Way to Proximity to God", Chapter Six, Part 3.

26. Al-Kafi, II, 164: 6.

27. Ibid. 164: 7.

28. Irshad al-Qulub, 199.

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