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34. What do 'Spiritual Vision' and 'Mystical Intuition' Mean?

One of the sources of acquiring cognizance is spiritual vision and mystical intuition.

Primarily it is essential to define this source, which is unfamiliar to a great number of people, in order that on the one hand, the difference between this and the issue of revelation, inspiration and innate disposition becomes clear and the ignorant ones do not consider it to be a figment of imagination and on the other, the path of misuse that many have resorted to in connection with this topic and which has compelled many to look upon it with scepticism, is blocked.

The entities of the world of existence are fundamentally of two kinds:

1. Entities that can be perceived by the senses; these entities are referred to as the World of Senses.
2. Entities that are concealed from our senses and cannot be perceived by them; these are referred to as the World of Unseen.

But at times it is possible that man acquires a new perception, enabling him to witness a portion of the World of Unseen (as per his capability). In other words, the curtains are drawn aside and some of the realities of the World of Unseen are made manifest for him as clearly as man perceives things by his senses – rather, much clearer and in a manner which imparts much more certainty.

This state is referred to as spiritual vision or mystical intuition.

This is the same thing that the Qur'an mentions in verse 5 and 6 of Suratul Takathur:

كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ. لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ

“Nay! if you had known with a certain knowledge, You should most certainly have seen the hell!”

In various Islamic sources, regarding both the believers and the offenders, it has been stated that at the time of death they come to acquire a spiritual vision as a result of which they are able witness the angels and the holy souls of Allah's awliya, whereas those around them lack the ability to perceive these things.

This is that very state which the Noble Prophet (S) came to possess during the Battle of Khandaq when he said: “In the spark that was created by the striking of a pickaxe with a stone, I witnessed the palaces of Khusroe or Caesar or the castles of the Yemeni kings.”¹

Similarly, it has been reported about Aminah, the honourable mother of the Noble Prophet (S), that when she bore the Noble Prophet (S) in her womb, she said: I saw a light emanate from me and by means of it I witnessed the palaces of the land of Basri, in Syria. These are neither revelation nor are they spiritual inspiration but a kind of perception that differs vastly from sensory vision.

This is that very station which a renowned critic has mentioned, saying: If an eye of the Unseen opens up for you, the atoms of this universe shall become intimate and share their secrets with you. It is then that you shall hear the talks of water and flower. Hearing the hubbub of the glorification (of Allah) of the entities of the universe, scepticism shall be erased from within you. The ears of the untrustworthy ones do not hear these realities and only the person, who has been made intimate, is worthy of hearing these sounds and secrets.²

Thus, mystical intuition and vision can be defined in one sentence as: The entry into the meta-sensory world and witnessing its realities by an inner eye in a manner similar to sensory vision – only more powerful or listening to those murmurings by the ears of the soul.

Of course, the words of every person who claims such vision cannot be hastily accepted, nor can the words of every claimant be believed. Nevertheless, the initial discussion in this topic is concerned with the actual existence of such a source of (Divine) cognizance³, after which comes the discussion regarding the manner of attaining it, and finally, the means of distinguishing between the true and false claimants.

1. Kamil Ibn Kathir, vol. 2, pg. 179

2. A summary of some renowned verses.

3. Tafsir Payam-e-Qur'an, vol. 1, pg. 252

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