

Epilogue

Reforming of the Individual and the Community

Tahdhib al-Insan

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In this paper the subject of *tahdhib al-Insan* (reformation of humankind) is presented using the works of many great Islamic and Western scholars and improving on them as far as possible. Consider the following hadith, which suggests various ways of reforming oneself:

O Allah! Verily! I seek refuge with you from weakness, laziness, senility [of old age], cowardliness, stinginess and the torment of the grave. O Allah! Give my soul its good and purify it, for You are the best to purify it. You are its Guardian and Master. O Allah! Verily, I seek refuge with You from a heart that is not humble, a soul that is not satisfied, knowledge that does not benefit and a supplication that is not answered.¹

The question may be asked: why is this discussion so important as to merit its inclusion in a book on time and space? The answer is that it is completely relevant. My paper on “The Architecture of Time, Space, and Motion in Islam” stresses the importance of developing one’s inner self to appreciate and even achieve a glimpse of the various time zones in Islam other than serial time. It is one’s spiritual development by means of extra,

¹ Shaykh Safiur Rahman al-Mubarakpuri et al., *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (Riyadh, Houston, New York: Darussalam Publishers, 2000), vol.10, p.499.

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optional prayers, remembrance of God, and thinking deeply about His creations that brings insight into other levels of time. According to Mullâ Sadrâ, and later Iqbâl, the soul has a beginning in time, for it was created at the same moment as the body, hence time cannot be irrelevant in the development of the personality.

During the entire history of Islam, not just during the lifetime of the Prophet, there have been many saints and dedicated scholars of Islam who have been known to describe past and future events as if they had themselves experienced them in the present. Furthermore, they have been known to develop spiritual personalities by means of dedication, concentration, and focus in approaching God in various forms of prayer. The aim of this chapter is to establish a basis for developing a spiritual personality, in conjunction with an intellectual personality to confront the various challenges of life. This basis can then be used positively to help individuals and to facilitate interaction among communities to devise solutions to many individual problems. Starting with the Qur'an and various Traditions of the Prophet, known also as the Hadith, we will systematically examine various theories available on the subject and finally arrive at a practical approach leading to *tahdhib al-insan*.

Tahdhib al-insan brings one close to the reality of time and space, which allows one to attain a glimpse of eternity in life. Closeness to the reality of time and space implies closeness to Reality and the Truth of God. Those who achieve this aim manifest the ability to look at things in their true perspective and focus. Therefore, they see the reality and truth in all creations, that is, what they are meant to be.

The Qur'an says: "Seeing that it is He That has created you In diverse stages? (71:14). The creation of a human personality can occur in several ways according to the above verse:

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- (1) Gradual evolution in the mother's womb, where the embryo becomes a new, self-contained human entity.
- (2) Human personality has developed through the ages to the current level of the modern human being with unusual opportunities for development.
- (3) Successive development in stages of human personality in spiritual and physical knowledge.

Since the Qur'an has mentioned the creation of Adam and Eve, as described later in detail, the above verse could not refer to the evolution of the human species, starting with the most primitive organisms on earth. Muhammad Asad has mentioned a possible interpretation of the human species ascending from the primitive organisms on earth to higher stages of development, and then to the level of complexity of body, mind, and spirit evident in human beings.² This interpretation can be easily rejected when the overall intent of the whole of the Qur'an is considered.

The development of the human personality is paramount in Islam. The Qur'an teaches the Islamic way of life. The family in Islam is the focal point of human existence. Each member of the family, by full submission to the One God, Allah, commands a way of life taught by the Qur'an. Each member of the family also participates in a community that believes in the growth of the personality of a family based on principles laid down in the Qur'an. This community also learns to exist with other communities which do not have similar beliefs but who do not challenge the existence of an Islamic community. Therefore, the existence of an individual depends on the existence of a family, and the existence of a family depends on union with the community. The individual is like a wave in the ocean. Outside the ocean, it is nothing. The individual contributes to the family and to the community in which he/she

² Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1993), p.897.

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lives. The community helps nourish the individual based on values which are built on specific bonds as indicated in the Qur'an: bonds of human existence within the family, and bonds of existence within the community as the servant of God. God says in the Qur'an: "And I have not created the invisible beings and humans for any end other than that they may worship Me" (51:56).

The main purpose of the creation of all beings is their cognition (*ma`rifah*) of the existence of God. Consciously, all created beings willingly conform to their own existence to whatever they perceive of God's will and plan. Thus cognition and willingness give the deepest meaning to what the Qur'an in the above verse describes as "worship" (*'ibadah*).

Who breaks a bond with God after it has been established, and cuts asunder what God has bidden to be joined, and spreads corruption on earth; these are all those who shall be losers. (2:27)

The "bond with God," which is often described as "God's covenant" refers to *al-insan's* (man or woman) moral obligation to use the inborn gifts – intellectual as well as physical – in the way intended for them by God. The "establishment" of this bond arises from the faculty of reason which, if properly used, must lead *al-insan* to a realization of his/her own weakness and dependence on a creative power, and, thus, to a gradual cognition of God's will with reference to his/her own behavior. This interpretation of the "bond with God" seems to be indicated by the fact that there is no mention of any specific "covenant" in either the preceding or subsequent verses of the passage under consideration. The deliberate omission of any explanation in this regard suggests that the expression, "bond with God," stands for something that is rooted in the human situation.

Now, verily, it is We who have created *al-insan*, and We know what the innermost self whispers within him [her]:

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for We are closer to him [her] than his [her] jugular vein.
(50:16)

And who keeps together what God has bidden to be joined.
(13:21)

From instinct and conscious experience, the “bond with God” can be perceived as the innate relationship with God, Who created *al-insan*.

The bonds of the family’s responsibility include the care of orphans and the poor, the mutual rights and duties of neighbors, as well as the spiritual and practical bonds which ought to exist between all who belong to the brotherhood of Islam. The spiritual obligation on the part of *al-insan* is to remain conscious of the unity of purpose underlying all of God’s creation. *Al- insan*’s moral duty to treat all living beings with love and compassion.

The Qur’an teaches us a specific mode of ethics and strict observance of the unity of purpose.

And, indeed, He has enjoined upon you in this divine writ that whenever you hear people deny the truth of God’s messages and mock at them, you should avoid their company until they begin to talk about other things – or else, verily, you will become like them. Behold, together with those who deny the truth, God will gather in Hell the hypocrites. (4:140)

Thus God describes clearly how a believer should behave in a community. The following verses describe how one should behave towards parents: one should obey them unless they request that which goes against the Qur’an and the Sunnah:

Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them

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attain old age in your life, do not say to them a word of
contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of
honor. (17:23)

And, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: “My
Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy, even as they cherished
me in childhood.” (17:24)

The Qur’an further guides us to speak to one another, even to
unbelievers, in a kindly manner. (17:53)

The Qur’an refers to various qualities which help
individuals to achieve a spiritual state essential for the further
development of their personality. Here are some Qur’anic verses
which elaborate on this subject:

Those who consciously turn towards God in prayer, who
incessantly persevere in their prayer, and in whose
possessions there is a due share for such as ask, and for
such as are deprived, and who accept as true the Day of
Judgment, and who stand in dread of their Sustainer’s
chastisement. (70:22-28)

The above verses therefore point to basic fundamental
personal qualities in human beings that are essential for the growth
of their spiritual state.

The Prophet’s life is an example that is to be followed in
the development of the human personality. The Companion `Ali
confronted many serious challenges in his life and is an example to
us all. Numerous other Companions of the Prophet have set good
examples. Many Muslim scholars have touched upon the
development of the human personality.

Therefore remember Me. I will remember you, and be
grateful to Me and do not reject faith. (2:152)

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And when My slave asks you concerning Me, then, I am indeed near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls on Me. So let them obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright. (2:168)

The Prophet described some occasions when God conveyed to him, in revelations, some sayings which were then transmitted by his Companions and were known as *Hadith Qudsi*. In one such hadith, Abu Hurayrah related:

God's Messenger said: "God said, 'I will declare war against him who shows hostility to a pious worshiper of mine. And the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me by performing *nawafil* till I love him, then I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with which he sees, and his hands with which he grips, and his legs with which he walks; and if he asks Me, I will give him, and if he asks My protection, I will protect him; and I do not hesitate to do anything as I hesitate to take the soul of the believer, for he hates death, and I hate to disappoint him.'"³

The Prophet said, "Allah says: 'I am just as My slave thinks I am, and I am with him if he remembers Me. If he remembers Me in himself, I too remember him in Myself;

if he remembers Me in a group of people, I remember him in a group that is better than them; if he comes one span near to Me, I go one cubit near to him; if he comes one cubit near to Me, I go a distance of two outstretched arms

³ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.8, hadith no.509.(Bulag, Al-Matba`ah al-Kubra al-Amiriyah, 1893-94).

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nearer to him; and if he comes to Me walking, I go to him
running.”⁴

The next very important step in developing the human personality, according to the Qur’an, is to lead one’s inner self towards spiritual growth, which allows one to control ones external behavior: “*wa thiyabaka fatahhir*” (74:4).

In this verse *thiyab* (plural of the noun *thawb*) implies self or the spiritual state of a person. *Tahir ath-thiyab* implies one who is clean in their garments or in themselves. This implies that individuals have to work hard to achieve self-control, and to do good deeds to purify themselves. This is the critical aspect of developing the human personality in Islam. A purified self represents a personality that is in a spiritual state of contact with Reality and is guided to do further good deeds to the self and to the community. A community whose individuals have no contact with their spiritual selves is in a state of making decisions based on their desires, which can cause them to make errors in judgment. We will now try to probe more deeply to find the roots of this spiritual state.

Another instance of purifying the spiritual state of a person is given in the Qur’an:

Consider the human self, and how it is formed in accordance with what it is meant to be, and how it is imbued with moral failings as well as with the consciousness of God. To a happy state shall attain one who causes this self to grow in purity, and truly lost is one who buries it. (91:7-10)

It is God-consciousness that helps individuals to overcome weaknesses. According to the Qur’an (8:24): “...and God intervenes between *al-insan* and his/her heart, and unto Him you

⁴ Ibid., vol.9, hadith no.502.

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shall be gathered.” In its deepest sense, our ability to act wrongly is dominant over our ability to act rightly: it is these inherent polarities of tendencies which gives to every “right” choice a value and endows us with moral free will.⁵ It is the exercise of free will to do good deeds that overcomes our natural instinct of committing evil deeds to satisfy our desires. Our evil nature and our good nature within us must confront each other in making a judgment on our behavior: “And it is We Who have created *al-insan*, and We know what his [her] innermost self whispers within him [her]: for We are closer to him [her] than his [her] jugular vein” (50:16).

The Qur’an says: “Whenever the two recording angels receive [human beings], seated on the right and the left” (50:17). Traditionally, the right side of our bodies is linked to the human propensity to do good and with cleanliness, whereas the left side indicates our baser inclinations and uncleanness. According to the Qur’an: “Not even a word is uttered but a watcher is with him, ever present” (50:18). These are described as the two fundamental motive forces: the inner self (*nafs*) within human nature and the primal instinctive urges and desires, both sensual and non-sensual, on the one side, and conscious reason, both intuitive and reflective, on the other. These two forces contend for predominance within every human being.⁶

(“*Wa ja’at kullu nafsim ma`aha saiqun wa shahid* “):And every human being will come forward with [his] inner urges and [his] conscious mind, with that which drives and that which bears witness (50:21).

The term *saiq* refers to peoples primal urges, particularly those which drive them to unrestrained self-indulgence and, thus, into sin - also described in the Qur’an (12:53) as *al-nafs al-ammarah*. The term *shahid* here alludes to the awakening of the deeper layers of human’s consciousness, described in the Qur’an

⁵ Asad, *The Message of the Qur’an*, p.242.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.798, n.12.

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(75:2) as *nafs lawwamah*, leading to a sudden perception of one's own moral reality, the "lifting of the veil," which forces people to bear witness against themselves. Interaction between *saiq* and *shahid* is responsible for people's spiritual downfall when the *saiq* dominates the *shahid*. People's evil impulses and appetites cannot gain ascendancy unless their conscious minds go astray from moral verities.⁷

We should look also at the following verses:

("Qala qarínuhu hadha ma ladayya 'atid"): And his companion will say, "This is what has been prepared in my presence." (50:23)

("Qala qarínuhu rabbanna ma atghaytuhu wa-lakin kana fi dalalin ba'id"): Man's other self/companion will say: "O our sustainer! It was not I that led his conscious mind to evil, for it had gone far astray of its own accord." (50:27)

The inner self (*nafs*) consists of two parts: *saiq* and *shahid*, which are connected by *qarin*. Here, the verb *qarana*, from which the noun *qarin* has been derived, signifies the "link" or the "intimate companion," which is the awakened moral consciousness or reason "intimately associated" with the inner self (*nafs*). Thus the enlightenment of the inner self is the enlightenment of *nafs al-lawwamah* or *shahid*, which overcomes *al-nafs al-ammarah* and the *saiq*. It is this success and accomplishment in the life of the *insan* which give rise to a third inner self called the *nafs al-mutmainnah*. It is described in a Qur'anic verse (89:27) as one suffused with peace and tranquility upon the return to one's Lord.

We now move forward to the benefits of the enlightenment of the inner self. The Qur'an (86:3) points to *al najm al-thaqib* "the star of piercing brightness." In the darkest sky shines most brilliantly the light of the star with piercing brightness. Many of

⁷ Ibid., p.798, n.14.

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the commentators have understood this phrase to refer to the morning star, or Saturn, or Sirius, or the shooting stars, etc.

However, this may have been used as a parable, namely, that in the night of spiritual darkness or distress, there shine the glories of God's revelation. A human being lost in the deepest of distress and sorrow may suddenly attain intuitive enlightenment, which disperses the darkness of uncertainty; or finally arrive at divine revelation, which knocks, as it were, on the door of the human being's heart, and thus fulfills the functions of both solace and enlightenment. This enlightenment will be that of *al-nafs al-lawwamah* and *shahid*. Development of this aspect of the inner self, therefore, should be our primary focus, which seems possible only by developing a relationship with God.⁸

The Almighty God has also created *al-insan*'s spirit, which has the ability to attract one towards worldly things, and also to control one's desires (cf. the Qur'an 12:53 for reference to *al-nafs al-ammarah*, 75:2 for *nafs lawwamah*, and 89:27 for *al-nafs al-mutma'innah*). It is critical therefore, that the inner self be awakened to develop the self-control needed to fight the urge to sin.

Therefore, every human being is subject to the two fundamental opposing forces: the inner self (*nafs*) and instinct versus conscious intuitive and reflective reason.⁹ Iqbal uses his own terminology to combine *al-nafs al-lawwamah* and *shahid* and calls it the "appreciative self" in a person; he also combines *al-nafs al-ammarah* and *saiq* and calls it the "efficient self." The intuitive and reflective side of human beings is termed the "appreciative self," and the primal instinctive urges and desires the "efficient self." This efficient side is apparent in the world of space, it is the practical self of daily life in its dealings with the external order of things. This self holds an external position, as if unaware of the

⁸ Ibid., p.912.

⁹ Ibid., p.798.

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existence of the inner self, which can be made to interact with it. The time and space in which the efficient self exists are the setting for the spatial and temporal events external to one another like so many stages of its life. When we make a deeper analysis of the conscious experience, we see what Iqbal terms the appreciative side of the self. It is very difficult to catch a glimpse of this appreciative self when the efficient self is pre occupied with daily life as described above. A kind of a veil is thus created between these two entirely different sides of the self. In the Islamic way of life there are many methods of meditation that help remove this veil and enable contact between the appreciative self and the efficient self. In this way the inner center of experience can be reached. According to Iqbal:

In the life-process of the deeper ego, the states of consciousness melt into each other. The unity of the appreciative ego is like the unity of the germ in which the experiences of its individual ancestors exist, not as a plurality, but as a unity in which every experience permeates the whole.¹⁰

The true self thus resists the transience of time, for it has grasped time's real essence. Only in the moments of proximity and love – the modes of creation – can the temporality of time be

arrested and pure duration grasped.¹¹ This is the intuitive grasp of pure duration that makes history a creative act of a real and enduring soul that leads to open challenge for the future. This is

¹⁰ M. Iqbal, M, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, edited by Saeed Sheikh (Lahore: Iqbal Academy and the Institute of Islamic Culture, 1989) p. 38.

¹¹ S. Alam Khundmiri, "Conception of Time," in Hafiz Malik, *Iqbal: Poet, Philosopher of Pakistan* (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1963), p.243.

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where the understanding and clear interpretation of time and space are critical in Islam. According to Iqbâl, the soul has a beginning in time, for it was created at the same moment as the body, hence time cannot be irrelevant to the development of personality. The inner self, therefore, relates to various levels of time in Islam. This is not realizable unless the individual reforms and makes it possible for the inner self to govern behavior from the experience of levels of time.

According to Iqbâl:

There is change and movement, but change and movement are indivisible; their elements interpenetrate and are wholly non-serial in character. It appears that the time of the appreciative self is a single 'now' which the efficient self, in its traffic with the world of space, pulverizes into a series of 'nows' like pearl beads in a thread.¹²

It is not difficult to see that this is where "freedom" of will and action is built into the structure of humans as a direct response to the humans' willingness to accept the *amânah*, that is, God's trust in making a choice between "good" and "evil." It is with human will, strength, and spiritual control that the choice of giving the appreciative self dominance over the efficient self may be made, resulting in actions that help "good" overcome "evil." In this way, the *tahdhib al-insan* or "reform of the human being" begins to play a major role in structuring the personality.

The Qur'an states:

("Inna Allaha la yughayyiru ma bi qaumin, hatta yughayyiru ma bi anfusihim"): Verily, God does not change the condition of a nation, until they change their inner selves. (13:11)

¹² Ibid., p. 39.

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The individual thus awakened and developed is now responsible for helping the community move in the right direction. In its wider sense, this is an illustration of the law of cause and effect, which dominates the lives of both individuals and communities, and makes the rise and fall of civilizations dependent on people's moral qualities and change in their inner selves. The communities consisting of awakened individuals are now live communities that will be capable of confronting and solving the difficult problems ahead. God helps and participates with these communities in their actions.

If *al-insan* has a true spiritual inner self, God protects in many ways that are not apparent. Although *al-insan* may be an insignificant creature, the soul raises him or her to a level of dignity above other creations. The relationship with God can be established only by methods clearly described in the Qur'an and which are prescribed for us as our primary objectives.

Soon We will show them Our signs on the farthest horizons, and within themselves, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord witnesses all things? (41:53)

Al- insan, therefore, has been given the opportunity to develop an insight into the wonders of the universe by making progressive efforts to understand the depth of these creations. Similarly, *al-insan* has been given the opportunity to develop an insight into the inner

self and discover spiritual knowledge. These insights, physical as well as spiritual, point to the existence of the Creator:

Thus, there is nothing static in my inner life; all is a constant mobility, an unceasing flux of states, a perpetual flow in which there is no halt or resting place. Constant

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change, however, is unthinkable without time. On the analogy of our inner experience, then, conscious existence means life in time. A keener insight into the nature of conscious experience, however, reveals that the self in its inner life moves from the center outward.¹³

Say [O Prophet]: “This is my way: resting upon conscious insight accessible to reason, I am calling unto God – I and they who follow me, limitless is God in His glory; and I am not one of those who ascribe divinity to anything besides Him.” (12:108)

Wang Tai-yü on Character Development

The Chinese Islamic philosophers¹⁴ have expressed Islamic thought in terms of neo-Confucian thought so that they can convey it more clearly to the ordinary Chinese people. They deal with Islamic thought as three cardinal concepts:

- (1) principle (*li*);
- (2) nature (*hsing*); and
- (3) destiny or mandate (*ming*).

There are other concepts such as the Great Ultimate (*t'ai-chi*), vital energy (or material force, *ch'i*), the investigation of things (*k-wu*), and humanity (*jen*). The Way (*tao*) is that which can be followed for ever, and the principle is that which is for ever unchanging. Principle is self-evident and self-sufficient, extending everywhere and governing all things. It is many but essentially one, for all specific principles are but one principle. Everyone and

¹³ M. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, ed. Saeed Sheikh (Lahore, Pakistan: Iqbal Academy & Institute of Islamic Culture, 1989; Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1934), p.38.

¹⁴ For the works of Wang Tai-yü's Great Learning and Chi Hsi, see Sachiko Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), p.69; see also, Sachiko Murata, “Islamic Cosmology in the Chinese Language,” in this book.

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everything possess it. It is the universal truth, universal order, universal law...it is a universal process of creation and production.

The Great Ultimate gives rise to the universe through movement (*tung*) and quietude (*ching*), which are designations for the two basic cosmic forces (*yang* and *yin*). There is another event in the universe except *yin* and *yang* succeeding each other in an unceasing cycle. This is called change. However, for this movement and quietude, there must be the principle that makes them possible. This is the Great Ultimate.¹⁵

According to a hadith of the Prophet: “There is in the body a lump of flesh. When it is wholesome, the whole body is wholesome, and when it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. According to a hadith *qudsi*, God said: “My heaven does not embrace Me, nor does My earth, but the heart of My faithful, gentle, and meek servant does embrace Me.”

The heart is open to both good and evil. It is important to investigate how one can cultivate the body and acquire a good character. Purification of the heart is the basic step in reforming one’s character or personality. To accomplish this, one needs to develop a personal relationship with God and the universe and train oneself to adopt the attributes of God. The key to developing this relationship is, first, to recognize the truth and the purpose of the creation of the universe and, in particular, the earth.

Those who wish to govern their countries should first regulate their families. Those who wish to regulate their families should first cultivate their bodies. Those who wish to cultivate their bodies should first make their hearts true. The body here is the foundation of the human consciousness and the basis of human relationships. It must be trained to act correctly in all circumstances and behave with propriety (*adab*) in every situation.

¹⁵ Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light*, p.37.

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Cultivation of the body can be understood to mean refinement of the individual's moral and ethical character. In Islamic terms, it means to eliminate base character traits and to acquire noble character traits.¹⁶

Sachiko Murata's book, *Tao in Islam*,¹⁷ provides an extensive discussion on the importance of training our hearts. According to many Qur'anic verses¹⁸ the heart is the center of one's relationship with God and the site of moral and character transformation. In these and many other Qur'anic verses and hadiths, the heart is the center of human behavior, where numerous virtues are recognized such as purity, piety, mercy, confirmation, gentleness, decisiveness, sociability, peace, love, and repentance. The heart is cleansed and purified by the remembrance of God. The God-fearing individual develops all of the above qualities in the heart. Knowledge and faith are awarded by the mercy of God to God-fearing individuals, and those who receive them are given God's enlightenment. The heart is both spirit and body and the heart can be inclined to either.

Jili on *al-Insan al-Kamil*

Shaykh Abdul Karim al-Jilani, widely known as al-Jili, was a Muslim philosopher (767 AH-811 AH) from Jilan, whose monumental work *al-Insan al-Kamil* [The Perfect Man] brought him enormous recognition.¹⁹ This work comprises two volumes, in which he develops the doctrine of "the perfect man." First, he tries

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.38–39.

¹⁷ Sachiko Murata, *Tao in Islam* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), p.289.

¹⁸ See, for example, in the Qur'an, 3:154, 167; 7:179; 9:45, 64; 18:13–14, 28, 57; 21:2; 22:46; 33:5, 51; 47:24; 48:11; 59:14; 64:11.

¹⁹ Jili, Abdul Karim ibn Ibrahim, *Al-Insan al-Kamil* (Cairo: Al-Matba`ah al-`Amirah al-Sharifah, 1300 AH), p. 73; Jili, Abdul Karim ibn Ibrahim, *Al-Insan al-Kamil*, translated in Urdu by Farid Miran (Gugurat, India: Kitab Ghar. 1925), p. 29.

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to develop knowledge of the Ultimate Ego and explains the *dhat* or Essence of God:

- (1) The Essence is absolute or pure existence – Pure being God.
- (2) The existence is joined with nonexistence – the creation – Nature.

According to al-Jili, the Essence of God or the Pure Being cannot be understood or expressed in terms of worldly or material knowledge. The various attributes of the Pure Being cannot be expressed in any words known to us, for they are beyond all relation, and knowledge is all relation. The Pure Being can be classified under three possible headings: Oneness, He-ness, I-ness. In Oneness there is an absence of all attributes and relations, yet it is called one, and therefore Oneness marks one step away from the absoluteness. He-ness and I-ness are subsequent steps, the I-ness being an external manifestation of the He-ness. The classification of the names and attributes of the Pure Being have received expression in nature and crystalized as *uluhiyyat*. They are as follows:

- *Al-Zatiyyah*: *Allah, al-Ahad, al-Wahid, al-Fard, al-Witr, al-Samad* (this aspect is fully known only to God which concerns His true uniqueness and true potentiality).
- *Al-Jalaliyyah*: *al-Kabir, al-Muta'al, al-'Aziz, al-'Azim, al-Jalil, al-Qahhar*. (Note that these are the aspects of the Powerful Majesty of God: in the Chinese language this is termed *yang*.)
- *Al-Jamaliyyah*: *al-'Alim, al-Rahim, al-Salam, al-Mu'min, al-Bari, al-Musawwir*. (Note that these are the aspects of the Wonderful Kindness of God: in the Chinese language this is termed *yin*.)
- *Al-Kamaliyyah*: *al-Rahman, al-Malik, al-Rabb, al-Muhaymin, al-Khaliq, al-Samia*. (In God, al-Jalaliyyah and al-Jamaliyyah

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come together, which manifests perfection in His *Kamaliyyah*.)

Life continues from the synergy between the principles of *al-jalaliyyah* and *al-jamaliyyah*, which manifests itself in *al-kamaliyya*. The life of *al-insan* is encapsulated within the synergy between the inner self and the external self; ideally, the former should guide the latter. In the interaction between *al-nafs al-ammarah* and *al-nafs al-lawwamah*, a deed is rendered bad if the former dominates or good if the latter prevails. The *yin-yang* relationship works well in the case of a husband and wife, for they work together to protect each other's honor.

Each of these names and attributes has its own particular effect by which it illuminates the soul of the perfect human being. According to Jili:

Divine nature soars upwards, human nature sinks downward; hence perfect human nature must stand midway between the two, it must share both the Divine and the human attributes – in one word Perfect Man must be God-man.

The Perfect Man attains to harmony and perfection.

The Perfect Man undergoes three stages of spiritual training. The development of the Perfect Man entails spiritual ascension towards the Pure Being, whereas the Pure Being descends from Absolute Being to Oneness, He-ness, and I-ness. In the first stage of his spiritual progress, the Perfect Man meditates on the name and studies the nature of the stages of development. In the second stage he enters the sphere of attributes, and in the third stage the sphere of *dhat* (essence), where he becomes God-man. The God-man understands the mystery of his own being, which has realized himself as God-man. However, when that

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particular spiritual realization is complete, man is man and God is God. The Perfect Man receives illumination from all the essential names and attributes and the Pure Being's attributes reappear in him. The doctrine of developing a Perfect Man is described by al-Jili as follows:

- (1) Independent life, or existence.
- (2) Knowledge is a form of life.
- (3) Illumination of the knowledge of God according to the requirement of the Pure Being.
- (4) Realization that the universe, before its creation, existed in the Self of God (or Absolute Self).
- (5) Every possibility is the word of God.
- (6) The power of hearing.
- (7) The power of seeing.
- (8) Beauty – that which appears less beautiful in nature is in its real existence Beauty.
- (9) Glory.
- (10) Perfection.

Jili's view on the Perfect Man is that he is the preserver of the universe. The appearance of the Perfect Man is the necessary condition for the continuation of nature.

Nietzsche and the Superman

Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy of "Superman" deals extensively with material views on the progress of man.²⁰ Nietzsche gives many terms to this superman: "overman," "noble man," "great man," etc. He first describes the stationary level of mankind, where mankind will be able to find its best meaning as a machine in the service of the economy. He then points to an opposing force, the need for a reverse movement – synthetic,

²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann & R.J. Hollingdale, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books; Random House, 1967), p.464.

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summarizing, justifying man, for whose existence the transformation of man into machine is required for maximum exploitation, which will help him to become a higher form of being. Everyone must participate in increasing the welfare of everybody. The “noble man” presented by him has a great deal of promise. To be noble, one leaves happiness to the great majority: happiness is the peace of the soul, virtue, comfort, whereby one instinctively seeks heavy responsibilities. The paths of nobility are many: avoidance of honors and mistrust of all who praise; desire for absence of praise; endurance of poverty, want, and sickness. According to Nietzsche, if God existed, He would, at least on the grounds of decency, be obliged to show Himself to the world only as a man.

Nietzsche’s great man²¹ – a man whom nature has invented and constructed in the grand style – has the ability to extend his will across great stretches of his life and reject everything petty about him. He is unaffected by opinions about him; he lacks the virtues that accompany respect; if he cannot lead, he goes alone. He wants no sympathetic heart; he is always intent on making something out of everyone around him. He prefers to lie than tell

the truth, and there is a detachment in him that is inaccessible to praise or blame.

To Nietzsche, the world, even if it is no longer a god, is still supposed to be capable of the divine power of creation, the power of infinite transformations. It is supposed to control every one of its movements at every moment so as to escape goals, final states, and repetitions. Nevertheless, he finally recognizes that the world also lacks the capacity for eternal novelty.²²

²¹ Ibid., p.505.

²² Ibid., pp.546–547.

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Iqbâl regards Nietzsche's "superman" as purely materialistic,²³ he holds the same to be true of the idea of the "overman" in Emerson. Iqbâl charges that Nietzsche's work lacks the true essence of spirituality. Iqbâl criticizes Nietzsche's idea of immorality, which has repeated itself on account of his fatal error, namely, in regarding clock time as real time. Nietzsche's "superman" lacks the morality and spirituality that is inherent in the Islamic concept of the Perfect Man.

Iqbâl's Ideas on Self Development

The twentieth-century philosopher of the East, Allama Sir Sheik Mohammed Iqbâl (1876 - 1938), is remembered for his creative genius in developing Muslim thought to aid in the development of a strong Muslim world community. If we accept him as a Muslim philosopher, then our vision of his work must be broad enough to benefit Muslims all over the world. He is credited with developing the initial idea of the formation of Pakistan; his poem is used in the Bosnian Constitution; and his work has clearly inspired the Iranian leadership. The Iranian religious leader, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei has written as follows:

Iqbâl is a man who, in his philosophical thought, rises to such a high level that he is considered to be a contemporary thinker and philosopher of the same rank as Bergson in the West today, or of the same level as al-Ghazzali in Islamic history.

At the same time, he is a man we regard as being a reformer of Islamic society, who thought about the conditions of human and Islamic society, a society in which he himself lives and for which he performs *jihad* for the salvation, awareness, and liberation of the Muslim people.²⁴

²³ Mohammed Iqbâl, "Note on Nietzsche," in Syed Abdul Vahid, *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbâl* (Lahore, Pakistan: Ashraf Publishers, 1992), p.238.

²⁴ Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamene'i & Ali Shariati, *Iqbâl: Manifestation of the Islamic Spirit*, trans. from Persian by Qara'i Mahliqa, *The Poet Philosopher of*

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Another Iranian scholar and leader, Ali Shariati, writes:

Iqbâl emerges as a Muslim thinker who is familiar with the modern world's mode of thought as well as with the philosophical deadlock of our age. On the basis of his religious faith, he can supply answers to us for the collapse of all ethical and spiritual standards and for the present deadlock in the philosophical and scientific thought of humanity.²⁵

It is therefore very important to analyze Iqbâl's philosophy and his works with a global vision to find a solution to the problems confronting Islamic societies. The main theme of his philosophical works carries that broad mission which can be understood only if it is studied in that context. Note that he developed the Philosophy of Self at a very young age, immediately after his return from Europe in 1908. He published his famous Persian poetic work, *Asrar-e-Khudi* in 1916. This work directly conveys his thoughts on the development of the Muslim individual. Another Persian poetic work of his, *Ramoz-e-Bekhudi*, was published soon after *Asrar-e-Khudi*. In *Ramoz-e-Bekhudi*, he presents ideas concerning the fully developed man of *khudi*, who now moves forward in the development of a community. *Al-insan* has accepted the responsibility to exercise one's choice to direct one's goals. *Asrar-e-Khudi*²⁶ describes in great detail how we can exercise our choices. If one chooses to direct this responsibility towards spiritual goals then one has a chance to be Almighty God's vicegerent (*khalifah*) on earth. Iqbâl undertook the monumental task of facing the challenges inherent in weaving together these thoughts which Almighty God had inspired in him.

Islamic Resurgence (Albuquerque, NM: Abjad Book Designers & Publishers; Markham, Canada: Open Press, 1991), p.5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.27.

²⁶ Mohammed Iqbal, *Kuliyat-i-Iqbal*, Farsi edn. (Lahore, Pakistan: Iqbal Academy, Istiqlal Press; Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 1990), p.23.

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What are these challenges? What is his task? How would he understand and implement the theme? As Khwaja Abdul Hamid writes:

His ambition was to reveal to man the unexplored wealth of his own “manhood”, and his great discovery was that the man with his Khudi, or “Selfhood”, properly developed was the “lord of creation” whom God meant to be His vicegerent (khalifa) on earth.”²⁷

Four things are clear from the Qur’an:

1. That *al-insan* is the chosen of God.
2. Afterwards his Lord chose Adam for Himself and turned towards him (20:122).
3. That *al-insan*, with all one’s faults, is meant to be the representative of God on earth (vicegerent of God):

When your Lord said to the angels, “Verily, I Am about to place one in My stead on Earth,” they said, “Will You place there one who will do ill therein and shed blood, when we celebrate Your praise and extol Your holiness?” God said, “Verily, I know what you know not.” (2:30)

And it is He who has made you His representative on Earth, and has raised some of you above others by various grades, that He may prove you by His gifts. (6:165)

4. That man is the trustee of a free personality which he accepted at his peril, as described in the Qur’an:

²⁷ Kwaja Abdel Hamid, “Remarks on the Development of Iqbal’s Poetic Thought,” in V.G. Kiernan, *Poems from Iqbal*, trans. from Urdu (Bombay, India: Kutub Publishers, 1947), p.127.

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Verily, We proposed to the Heavens, and to the Earth, and to the mountains to receive the “trust”, but they feared to receive it. The *insane* undertook to bear it, but he has proved unjust, senseless.” (33:72)

Iqbâl’s mission was to reveal to *al-insan* the unexplored wealth of one’s own “selfhood”, and his great discovery was that *al-insan* with one’s selfhood properly developed was the “lord of creation,” whom God meant to be His vicegerent on earth. As the Qur’anic account has it, the angels prostrated themselves before Adam at God’s command. Iblis refused to do so, on the grounds that he was superior, for he had been made of fire whereas Adam was made of clay. The angels also voiced a fear that he would sow discord and shed blood on earth. Neither the angels nor Iblis understood *al-insan*, because though both “angelic light” and “satanic fire” were part of his composition, *al-insan* was neither wholly the one nor the other. He had his own unique place in the scheme of things, and his birth was pregnant with serious consequences for the rest of creation. The goal of *al-insan*’s endeavor is neither angelhood nor Godhood. The goal is “*insanhood*” – by means of which humans are God’s vicegerents on earth and deserve His “Friendship” at every stage of being. *Al-insan*’s superiority to angels (by means of prostration) is incumbent upon his/her return to God, and the criterion of the “return” is a successful vicegerency on earth as the result of a developed selfhood.

To develop selfhood is to kill the “Satanism” within. Realizing the source and reality of one’s creativity allows one to attain selfhood. Selfhood may be developed by the constant search for creative growth within oneself. It is only by this constant search and reform that selfhood may develop, predicated on constant dedication to and love for the Creator.

There are many things that Almighty God has entrusted to the *insan*, as a result of which human beings have been given

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various options to exercise control over their faculties. One's thought is a function of one's mind, one's intuition is a function of one's heart, one's sight is a function of one's eyes, one's hearing is a function of one's ears, one's emotion is a function of one's heart, and one's speech is a function of one's lips and one's tongue. The heavens, the earth and other creatures such as animals, birds, and plants, are resources intended to be discovered by humans using a combination of these faculties.

One has been given various other qualities, for instance, *faqr* and *ishq*. The spirit of *faqr* is the consuming thirst for spiritual values. The quality of *faqr* encourages the active renunciation of material possessions so that higher possessions may be secured. The antithesis of *faqr* is greed for power and "Satanism" within oneself. Selfhood is the acquisition of this *faqr*, which is accomplished by one's own effort with the sole purpose of pleasing the Creator, not for the attainment of personal glory. In Qur'anic terminology, we are dependent on God for everything pertaining to our existence in every aspect of our lives; this dependence is termed *faqr*. Hence those who possess the quality of *faqr* lead a life of total commitment to God in every aspect of existence and life. On the other hand, God is *al-Ghani*. He does not depend on anything for His existence, which makes Him *wajib al-wujûd* (always living and always present). The human personality has three major aspects: (1) educational; (2) emotional; and (3) desire and action. The individuals who engage in *faqr* receive knowledge about the duties required of them, then they engage in thought to improve understanding. Their remembrance of God is a strong inclination toward their responsibilities, and so they desire and perform the duties.

The essence of *faqr* is *istighna'* or "freedom from want," which results in a "richness of spirit," the very antithesis of greed for power. Although *istighna'* nourishes the good and the bad, the high and the low, yet it instills the ability to make proper choices so that the internal "Satanism" is destroyed.

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Since people of *faqr* see their existence and lives to be due to God, they love God more than anything else in their lives, and break all other ties. This pervasive, singular love of God is known as '*ishq*'. '*Ishq* for God permeates every atom of the body and leads to the constant remembrance of God in every state of being and to the total dedication of every action to the Divine Being. Islamic knowledge, life, and education center on the love of God as a priority, then love of the Prophet, and then love of all others. '*Ishq* therefore provides the basis of the quality of life. '*Ishq* is the ego's contribution to the sum of being and it gives a glimpse of the higher values of life. '*Ishq* therefore gives priority to spiritual goals rather than personal desires or individual affiliations. This is the faculty with which the *insan* exercises emotions. According to Iqbâl, love is "the principle of individuality and assimilative activity." '*Ishq* for Iqbâl is the motivating or operating force within the cosmic framework. The highest exponent of '*ishq* is the Prophet. His ascension to the highest heaven represents the ultimate in '*ishq*, which puts to rest any controversy that space-time is circumscribed by finitude, since his various experiences (visit to Paradise and Hell, meeting beings from the past and future, etc.) are not measurable even in light years. This is the highest possible level of spiritualism that can be imagined.

Iqbâl's philosophy of self does not direct us toward *wahadat al-wujûd*, which had been the central theme of ancient mystics such as Mansur al-Hallaj, who was followed by Ibn al-'Arabî. Iqbâl's philosophy of self helps us capture our inner selves for the betterment of our outer selves. This is what leads a community from darkness into light. It helps us realize and focus our identity on earth. It provides us with an opportunity to discover a new meaning of life. We participate in the progress of the world with a spiritual purpose in life and succeed in the forward movement of life. The philosophy of self allows us to capture the Satanism within us. It helps us to focus our attention on our weaknesses and gives us the strength to fight them. Iqbâl's

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philosophy of the self is entirely based on Qur'anic concepts and provides a system for controlling our actions by those means identified in the Qur'an and Hadith.

The struggle between rich and poor, employer and employed, exploiter and exploited, is dominated by a material outlook. In Islam "good" stands for "spiritual value" and "bad" means everything that negates the "spiritual value." According to Iqbâl, art is a creative activity, which should be in the service of life and of that highest manifestation of life, which he calls "the self-creative ego." The war within the human personality is to be carried out between self-creative egos, that is, by minds conscious of their divine origin and their divinely appointed destiny.

Nietzsche's superman is not man; he is qualitatively different from ordinary man as the latter is different from an animal. In contrast, Iqbâl's great man is what every ordinary man should hope and strive to be in accordance with the Qur'anic view of the Prophet as "the fount of blessing for humankind." He is the Perfect Man, not a superman.

Amir Khusrau's *Insan-i-Kabir* (Great Man)

Consider the human self, how it is formed in accordance with what it is meant to be, and how it is imbued with moral failings as well as with consciousness of God. (91:7-8)

Verily, We created *al-insan* in the best form, thereafter We reduced him to the lowest of the low. (95:4-5)

The above Qur'anic verses indicate that humans were created with certain physical and mental inborn qualities, with the natural advantages and disadvantages within the limitations imposed by the environment, corresponding to the functions that they are intended to perform. Humans are reduced to the lowest of

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the low as a result of persistently adhering to false beliefs and refusing to hear the voice of truth, thus losing the ability to perceive the truth. This alludes to the extremely complex phenomenon of a life entity in which bodily needs and urges, emotional and intellectual activities are so closely intertwined as to be indissoluble, following organically upon a call to consider the inexplicable grandeur of the universe as perceived and comprehended by the human. This is the natural consequence of the acceptance by humans of the freedom to choose and act. Human nature either rises gradually to reach great spiritual heights or falls into the utter depths of carnality by one's own actions.

According to Islamic philosophy, all materials are classified as dead, angelic (*jamadat*), and living. Living materials are vegetable (*nabati*), animal (*hayawani*), and human spirits.

Amir Khusrau reveals some of the mysteries locked up in his own heart to readers who are minutely perceptive and who can probe the depth of such mysteries with their keen intellect.

Amir Khusrau points out in his *E'jaz-i-Khusravi*²⁸ that the soul of meaning is located in the body of words and writings as Jesus was in the womb of Mary. All three are gathered in a house like three spirits in a single body. The individual with very limited knowledge is described as one containing only the vegetable spirit. However, the knowledge of the individual grows, and so this spirit ascends to the level of the animal spirit, and then finally to that of the human spirit. When someone enlivens the hearts of his readers, then the animal spirit is awakened and provides a vital influence which keeps the hearts alive (with the life of emotions), just as the animal spirit keeps the body alive. Those with dead hearts are as unaware of his virtue as inorganic souls are of the animal spirit. Amir Khusrau further states:²⁹

²⁸ Amir Khusrau, *E'jaz-i-Khusravi* (Lucknow, India: Knol Kishore Press, 1876), Risala 4, p.3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

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Eventually, that solitary cell where we three met and became the image of the great man,³⁰ owing to the configuration of the three spirits (the inorganic vegetable, the animal or the human or the eloquent). These three worlds (each of which was a microcosm) influenced every single earthly creature, elevating its creation to the high spirits to bring together heaven and earth. In the discussion of sublimities, [the same person] raided the treasures of intellects and spirits. Sometimes with the arrows of our intellect we pierced both Jupiter and Venus like plots in geomancy. The true structural pattern of human can be comprehended with reference to what has been said in the Divine Scripture: “God created the human in His own Image.” [God endowed humans with His own qualities.] Consider what Divine Mystery confronts the mirror of phenomenal existence. The myriads of luminescent bodies adorning the glassy heavens and the myriads of images adorning the picture gallery of the emerald green earth are the Image of the Matchless One, faithfully reflected by this mirror.

Although the mandrake has the shape of a human, it does not have the qualities of a human and cannot rise from its low vegetable status to human status. The *waqaaq* tree (whose fruit resembles a human head) is tall in appearance (like a human), yet it is not equal in status even to the leg of a humble ant, inasmuch as the former owes its status to the power of growth and the latter to the power of life. Indeed, human-in-appearance is as different from human-in-reality as a mandrake is from a human. One who has allowed the human self to be contented with ignorance and boorishness is one who from the lofty status of a human being has fallen so low that he has reached a level even lower than that of the animals and has attained the status of grass (vegetables). In falling

³⁰ In *E'jaz-i-Khusravi*, Amir Khusrau uses *insan-i-kabir* for “great man.”

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down to this hard substratum of inorganic spirit existence, the human's backbone of humanity has been smashed.

Al-Amanah (the Trust)

Truly, We did offer *al-amanah* [trust] to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it. But man bore it, he was unjust and ignorant. (33:72)

Al-amanah has been interpreted in various ways: as entrusting reason or intellect and the faculty of volition, obedience; entrusting the obligatory duties (prayer, fasting, seeking purity by ablution, and charity); entrusting commands and prohibitions; accepting the responsibility that there will be reward for doing good and punishment for doing evil. *Al-amanah* is the ability to choose between two or more possible courses of action or modes of behavior, and thus between good and evil. This is because Allah breathed something of His spirit into human beings and gave them the will to choose. Part of *al-amanah* is that the woman is entrusted with her own chastity. *Taqwa* in a person to a certain extent is the fear of Allah, born of the recognition of the challenges inherent in the concept of *al-amanah*.

Because the sons and daughters of Adam have undertaken to fulfill the *amanah* or their duties in the faith of Islam, Allah will punish those who are hypocrites, who make an outward display of faith on account of vested interests and whose hearts conceal disbelief.

According to Imam Ahmad from Hudhayfah (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet said: “*Al-Amanah* is deeply rooted in the hearts of the believers,” and: “A man will sleep and *al-amanah* will be taken from his sleep but a trace like a blister left by a coal if you were to roll over your leg – you will see it protruding but there is nothing

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inside.” Then he took a pebble and rolled it over his leg, then he said: “Then the people will start buying and selling, and hardly anyone will be paying any attention to *al-amânah*, until it will be said that among the tribe of so-and-so there is a trustworthy man, and it will be said of a man, ‘how strong he is, how nice he is, and how wise,’ and there is not even a mustard seed of faith in his heart.”³¹

God breathed something of His spirit into human beings and granted them free will,³² which could not be accepted by other creations such as the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, which adhered to God’s laws without their will. To be worthy of *al-amânah*, one should adopt God like attributes (though to a much lesser degree, of course) of Will, Forbearance, Love, and Mercy, which bring humans nearer to Allah, than is possible for other creatures of God. The human who generically fulfils this responsibility successfully and reaches the height of covenant with God is regarded as God’s vicegerent on earth.

God said: “God, it is He Who has subjected to you all that is in the heavens, and all that is in the earth; it is all [as a favor and kindness] from Him. Verily, in it are signs for a people who think deeply.” (45:13)

God said: “Do you not see that God has subjected to your [use] all things in the heavens and on the earth, and has made all His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, seen and unseen? Yet there are among men those who dispute about God, without knowledge and without guidance, and without a book to enlighten them!” (31:20)

God said: “He has made subject to you the night and the day; the sun and the moon; and the stars are in subjection

³¹ Al-Mubarakpuri, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol.8, p.55.

³² ‘Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an*, pp.1080–1081.

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by His command: verily, in these are signs for men who are wise.” (16:12)

The innermost purpose of the creation of all beings is their cognition (*ma`rifah*) of the existence of God. Consciously, all created beings willingly conform to their own existence according to what they perceive of God’s will and plan. Thus cognition and willingness give the deepest meaning to what the Qur’an in the above verse describes as “worship” (*‘ibadah*). The universe is presented as a gift to human beings, who are endowed with the most suitable faculties to discover hidden knowledge about scientific processes; for example, the revolution of celestial bodies based on gravitational attraction. Human beings with their faculties ignore the hidden messages and pursue ceaseless quest for self-expression. Despite all their failings, however, they still demonstrate their superiority to Nature in as much as they hold the great trust or *al-amanah* which the heavens, the earth, and the mountains refused to bear.

When human beings were endowed with the ability to name things and conceptualize them, they became attracted to enormous material gains. Their hearts grew as hard as nails, and they ceased to feel the inward push of advancing life, thus being reduced to the level of dead matter, the lowest of the low.

It is by means of spiritual as well as scientific advancement that human beings have an opportunity of uncovering the knowledge of a reality yet unknown. As Iqbâl states:

The Qur’an, recognizing that the empirical attitude is an indispensable stage in the spiritual life of the humanity, attaches equal importance to all areas of human experience as yielding knowledge of the Ultimate Reality which reveals its symbols both within and without.³³

³³ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p.12.

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Soon We will show them Our signs on the farthest
horizons, and within themselves, until it becomes manifest
to them that this is the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord
witnesses all things? (41:53)

Tahdib al-Insan in Practice

We are now in a position to assess the best practical means of refining a personality. The appreciation and control of change, as manifested in the Qur'an, enables us to build a durable civilization. The universes, as they are given to us with their shifting actualities, direct our attention to fresh formations. However, the subtle aspects of religious and human experience sharpen our insight into the temporal and non-temporal contacts to give us a deeper understanding of human life in the nobler interest of a free upward movement of worldly and spiritual life, taken as a basis to seek sense perception knowledge of the numerous constant creations. It is a systematic reform achieved by the self-control of one's internal and external behavior. It is also based on the continual increase in knowledge of the divine scriptures and change in the deeper layers of the personality by continuing education in and application of the guidelines provided in the divine scriptures. The refining of the heart, for instance, results in a change in our relationship with those around us. The refining of the *nafs* gives us the ability to make better choices in our actions. The refining of the mind enables us to choose carefully the mode of gaining knowledge. The refining of one's character requires adherence to the etiquette prescribed by the Qur'an and the Prophet. The refining of the trust requires us to be truthful to God and to discharge the responsibility that He has laid on us to behave equitably and generously toward humanity and other creatures of God. The following stages are proposed for the refinement of a personality:

1. *Tahdhib al-Qalb*

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Al- qalb is the heart, which is located in the breast. The connection of the soul with the heart is the connection of attributes with the bodily limbs. It holds the knowledge of God, spiritual values, and worldly usages. *Ruh* is a material thing within the heart, which animates the whole body. It is also called life, while the immaterial, subtle thing is called the soul.³⁴ According to the Qur'an: "They ask you about *Ruh*. Say: 'It is a command from my Lord'" (17:85).

The Chinese philosopher, Wang Tai-yü, in particular, has stressed that the development of a community first requires the cultivation of the body, and the development of the heart is the first stage in the cultivation of a body. The Qur'an says:

Have they not traveled through the land, and have they not hearts with which to understand and ears with which to hear? Verily, it is not the eyes that grow blind, but the hearts which are in the breasts that go blind. (22:46)

Ibn Kathir states that Ibn Abi al-Dunya said in his book *At-Taffakur wal-I'tibar*:

Some of the wise people said, "Give life to your heart with lessons, illuminate it with thought, kill it with asceticism, strengthen it with faith, remind it of its mortality, make it aware of the calamities of this world, warn it of the disasters that life may bring, show it how suddenly things may change with the passage of days, tell it stories of the people of the past, and remind it what happened to those who came before."

³⁴ Imam Muhammad al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* (Lahore, Pakistan: Kazi Publications, 1974), vol.3, p.2.

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Enlightenment of the heart is the result of an increase in knowledge from reading, writing, and gaining experience from other activities. In the famous Qur'anic verse:

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His light is, as it were, that of a niche containing a lamp, the lamp is in a glass, the glass is like a radiant star, lit from a blessed tree – an olive tree that is neither of the east nor of the west – the oil whereof would well-nigh give light even though fire had not touched it: light upon light. God guides to His light him that He wills; and God propounds parables to men, since God has full knowledge of all things. (24:35)

The lamp alludes to the spirit, which is lit by God's Light and also to the revelation that God grants to the Prophet. Here, the niche is an allusion to conscious reason because it is by reason alone that true faith finds its way into the heart of the believer. Furthermore, the glass is an allusion to the message that is reflected in the believer's heart. Because of its spaciousness, the glass in the verse is compared to a shining star. Training the heart to believe firmly in God's Omnipresence, Omniscience, and uniqueness, and truly submitting to His guidance in the Qur'an, makes the heart blessed with God's Light. Thus the heart becomes receptive to God's guidance and light. The tree from which the glass is kindled is the holy soul purified and to the organic continuity of all divine revelations, which branch out like branches from the root of the tree. The light that shines upon it from actualized perfection is a light added to the light of fixed preparedness. It is with love, affection, and kindness that the heart receives enlightenment and can impart these qualities to all those who are nearby. All who

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see these affairs with intelligence and wisdom in the form of hidden inspirations enter their hearts as if the river is mirrored and illuminated in water. And the images of the mysteries are indeed brought together in the purified self like the thoughts reflected in the mirror.

One must strive to remove all forms of sickness in the heart resulting from exposure to and involvement with every kind of evil. As has been discussed earlier, the awakening of *al-nafs al-lawwamah* by various forms of prayer, remembrance of God, mercy, and charity for the needy, allow the individual to control *al-nafs al-ammarah* which always leads to evil desires. If the individual is governed by *al-nafs al-lawwamah*, then the heart is enlightened, and if the individual is governed by *al-nafs al-ammarah*, then the heart is in darkness. It is by *al-nafs al-lawwamah* that the individual is helped in developing a relationship with God. The heart is made responsible for many positive qualities, such as guidance, faith, intelligence, understanding, light, certainty, mercy, empathy, sympathy, responding to others' needs, etc.

2. *Tahdhib al-Nafs*

Iqbâl's *khudi* (self) deals with the development of *nafs* (soul) and is the basis of any means of refining the personality. Its various stages of spiritual expansion are as follows:

- i. Complete surrender to the Qur'anic laws and guidance as provided in various hadiths of the Prophet.
- ii. Exercise of self-control.
- iii. Adherence to the "vicegerency of God."

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We need only to draw on the Qur'an and the Prophet's Traditions for methods to develop the inner self. The Qur'an advises us to perform extra prayers, like the *tahajjud*, *nawafil* (supererogatory), and the late night or the early morning reading of the Qur'an to achieve closeness to God. Thus, closeness to God is a gain in spirituality and His guidance. The Prophet has given numerous examples of *dhikr* or praises of God to be recited repeatedly after each prayer or during the night and early morning to gain closeness to God. The literal meaning of *dikhr* is remembrance.

The Qur'an states, "Fadhkuruni, adhkurukum, wa ashkuruli, wa la takfurun" [Remember Me, I will remember you. Be grateful to Me, and deny Me not] (2:152). This is an indication that the *dhikr* required by the Qur'an is an invitation to come closer to Him, and it is the only way He will listen to our supplication. Note that the Qur'an also uses *dhikr* to refer to Allah's messages, and even the Qur'an itself.

The word *al-basirah* is derived from the verb *basura* or *basira*. The noun *al-basirah* has the connotation of seeing with one's mind, or it is usually defined as conscious insight. True devotion leads to this insight, which becomes the source of spiritual knowledge. All knowledge becomes accessible to anyone who attains this state. The faculty of this conscious insight is developed by the purification of the inner self as described above. By following its guidelines, we are led by the Qur'an to all questions of faith, ethics, and morality. It is with the faculty of conscious insight that we draw closer to God, and are therefore guided by His help.

Therefore, human beings need to set aside some time each day for the achievement of spiritual life, which essentially dominates one's whole life, while still participating in worldly

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gains. It is these human beings endowed with creative activity who create new paths and new horizons of research and accomplishments yet unknown.

Gaining self-control requires first the control over one's *nafs* or "soul." This requires leading one's *nafs* toward obedience to God and the path commanded by Him. As has been described above, self-control requires late night prayers and *dhikr* or remembrance of God. Each individual is equipped with fear: fear of worldly or material needs, fear of the Day of Judgment, fear of God, and fear of the many evil consequences that can happen. Each individual is also equipped with love: love of material gain, the love of kith and kin, love of one's country, love of God and the Prophet's path. The individual has choices to make between one's ultimate good and one's ultimate evil. The *nafs* needs to be directed to make the choices which ultimately benefit the individual. It does not require that one has to give up something for something else, rather, that one has to set priorities in one's choices. One who sets *tawhîd* (oneness of God) as the primary goal of life is endowed with the internal will and power to liberate oneself from all fear. Clearly, on the path of *tawhîd*, and by following the guidelines set forth, one has a place for all love and life in a pre-defined order. All these help build inner strength with which to confront the challenges inherent in daily life.

The quality of *faqr* in human beings induces them to give up everything in life for the remembrance and service of God, which then becomes the foundation upon which life is built. The quality of *ishq* is the faculty of love exercised on behalf of those things considered important in one's life. The people who possess both qualities, *faqr* and *ishq*, and who engage in remembrance of God, realize that their existence is nothing in the presence of God and so they will not engage in any activity that displeases Him. Every atom of the universe looks to this person as a manifestation of the glory of God, and as spirituality increases, so also the glory and *ishq* for God, together with the knowledge of God and His

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creations. The qualities of *faqr* and *'ishq* make one realize that everything that is attained and possessed belongs to God. It creates an innate desire to seek the various attributes of God and adopt those qualities in acquiring self-discipline. One realizes that one is always in a state of struggle and cannot enjoy rest. This stage is accomplished by following the path of the life of the Prophet and dedicating oneself to truly adhering to Qur'anic ideals. No one can be closer to these ideals than was the Prophet himself, so following his example brings one close to this path. This person becomes the "friend of God" or "God's vicegerent on earth" with unusual qualities and strength to perform the required duties. The development of God's attributes thus enables people to accomplish difficult tasks. The hearts of such people imbued with the qualities of *faqr* and *'ishq* are illuminated with knowledge and filled with desire for more knowledge for themselves and for interacting with others. Their hearts are merciful toward all surrounding communities and they develop the desire to play a constructive role in the lives of others. When these people attain this stage, then the truth of the creation of the universe becomes manifest. The purpose of this stage is not to destroy oneself but to live a life of purpose and to help one's community to achieve the higher goals of life. At this stage these people know the path to God and how to fulfill God's purpose for the truth of the creation of universes, earth, and everything between them. These qualities give them dominance over time and space and thus they achieve mastery over the universe.

The *ijaz* in human beings allows them to rise from lowliness into greatness. They transmute the base into the noble and the lowly into the great. Their eyes distinguish the visible from the "invisible," and their hearts are open to the advent of truth. They see where others see not. This is their *kashf*. They are examples of Iqbâl's "great man" as depicted by him in his poetic collection, *Asrar-e-Khudi*. Such people represent the peak of development of humankind, and they exercise sway not only over human hearts but also over animate and inanimate natures. The

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development of *khudi* in the human personality reveals, actualizes, and perfects their manhood and womanhood; it does not deprive them of it. These are the true manifestations of the spirit of Islam.

***Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (“Ctivation of the “Manners” of the Qur’an and the Prophet”)**

The Qur’an and the Hadith are the main source of guidance to individuals on the development of their *akhlaq* (character). It is difficult to mention here all the aspects of character development, for it requires the detailed study of the life of the Prophet. Below are the main traits essential for the sound development of one’s character:

1. God has warned that some of His servants regard their desires as their god. This may refer to many situations where we most likely indulge in sinful acts because of the lack of true knowledge. For instance, two individuals may begin to dislike each other over a particular matter. Although they expect God to forgive them for their sins, they do not forgive each other. Another common instance is when individuals develop their own specific philosophies, although they may be sincere about wanting to follow God’s commandment. This may result in their not only following their own religious philosophies but also in influencing others around them, thus creating groups or sects which differ from one another. In each of the two instances, the individuals’ desires control their actions, resulting in their desires acting as god. This could be due to the lack of knowledge or understanding of the religious guidelines. People need to develop significant self-control in order to govern their actions according to God’s commandments. These are just two examples. There may be numerous instances when individual desires govern actions. Some people may be very pious

Time, Space, and Motion in Islam and God-fearing, yet they may not have developed the necessary self-control to govern all of their actions in various circumstances. Often, developing a spiritual personality or the inner self of a person is essential for acquiring self-control. Note that this type of sin is the most serious and is likely to be treated as such on the Day of Judgment if it is not repented of and corrected in this world.

2. According to Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet said:

Allah will give shade to seven on the Day when there will be no shade but His: [They are] a just ruler, a youth who has been brought up in the worship of Allah, two persons who love each other for Allah's sake and who meet and part in Allah's cause only, a man whose heart is attached to the *masjid* (the place of prayer) from the time he departs from the *masjid* until he returns to it, a person who remembers Allah in seclusion and his eyes are then flooded with tears, a man who refuses the call of a charming woman of noble birth for illicit intercourse with her and says: "I fear Allah, Lord of the worlds," and a man who gives charitable gifts so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given.³⁵

3. Immediately after the first revelation came to him, the Prophet is said to have spoken to Khadija, his wife: "I fear something may happen to me." [She replied]: "Never, by Allah. Allah will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your relatives, you speak the truth, help the poor and the destitute, you serve your guests generously, and you help the deserving among those afflicted with calamity."³⁶

³⁵ Al-Mubarakpuri, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol.2, p.61.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 10, p. 534.

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4. According to the Qur'an (68:4), God says to the Prophet: "*Innaka la 'ala khulqin 'azim*" ("And verily, you are possessed of an exalted character"). The character of the Prophet was the Qur'an, for he did whatever it commanded and he avoided whatever it prohibited.³⁷ Along with this, God conferred on him an exalted character, which included the traits of modesty, kindness, bravery, mercy, gentleness, and the best behavior of all people. He never struck anyone except on a battlefield when he was attacked. One of his Companions mentioned that he spent nearly 10 years in the company of the Prophet and never heard a word of displeasure from him. Imam Ahmad recorded from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet said: "I have been sent only to perfect righteous behavior."³⁸ Since we are required to follow the traditions of the Prophet we must strive to build our character according to his mode of behavior.

5. According to the Prophet, "The stronger person is not the one who overcomes people by his strength, but rather the one who controls his anger."³⁹ We can win the hearts of those in our contact, with the Mercy of God, by concentration on our night prayer, by developing a spiritual life, by self-control, and by controlling our anger. We can win the hearts of friends and relatives with these characteristics that lead us to congenial behavior and influencing others by our behavior.

6. The Prophet said: Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the worst of false tales; do not spy on one another; do not look for each other's faults; do not be jealous of one

³⁷ Ibid., vol.10, p.103.

³⁸ Ibid., p.105.

³⁹ Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, vol.8, book 73, no.135.

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another; and do not desert [shun] one another. And O
Allah's servants! Be brothers.⁴⁰

The avoidance of *tajassus* means that one should not search for something created by suspicion. It also means that one should not listen to people when they are talking without their permission, nor should one eavesdrop. Applying *tadabur* helps in avoiding shunning of one another.

7. Do not shun one another; do not ignore one another; do not hate one another; and do not envy one another; and be brothers, O servants of Allah. No Muslim is allowed to shun his brother for more than three days. According to the Qur'an (49:12), suspicion of one another and backbiting are strictly prohibited.

Tahdhib al-'Aql wa al-'Ilm

'*Aql* is the intellect with which the true nature of things of this material world is known and its seat is in the soul. Intellect is also the power to understand the secrets of different types of learning. According to a hadith:

The first thing that God created was intellect [this may be attributable to first creating the Pen]. Although the attribute of an intellect is an immaterial thing, the attribute cannot stand without a material support. So the place of the intellect should be created first or along with it. Knowledge is the content of intellect and so it was created first.⁴¹

The spirit can be thought of as "air." If wise men remained contented with their knowledge, they would be like an air-filled sheepskin, which is as much empty as it is filled, and from which

⁴⁰ Ibid., vol.9, p.201.

⁴¹ Al-Mubarakpuri, *Tafsir ibn Kathir*, vol. 9, p. 372; Al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol.3, p.4.

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the air escapes when its closed mouth is opened. However, when this air is combined with the fragrance of knowledge, it produces the fragrance of humanity. Wherever a rosebud blossoms, everyone in the vicinity desires its fragrance and benefits from it. So, when somebody's rose of humanity blossoms, that person will become famous and people will honor him till the end of his life. His essence or fragrance perishes at that time and is dissolved in the air.

Amir Khusrau's ideas of developing *Insan-i-Kabir* are as important as any of those described earlier in the development and reform of a personality. The growth of an individual in knowledge requires the reading and writing of literature beyond the basic requirements of the comprehension of the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet. This does not imply that each individual should become a scholar or make a career as a scholar. The habit of acquiring knowledge should be developed consistently over a long time so that each individual increases his/her capacity of retention and develops the ability to meet the various challenges offered by the Qur'an and Hadith.

As narrated by Abu al-Darda', the Prophet said:

Whoever follows a path to seek knowledge, Allah will show him the way to paradise. The angels lower their wings, being pleased with one who seeks knowledge. Whoever is in the heavens and on the earth, even the fish in the sea, ask for the forgiveness of the scholar. The superiority of the scholar over the worshipper is like that of the moon over all heavenly bodies. The scholars are the heirs of the prophets (peace be upon them), for they did not leave behind *dinars* and *dirhams*, but they left behind knowledge; and whoever receives it, receives an abundance of good fortune.⁴²

Tahdhib al-Amânah

⁴² Al-Mubarakpuri, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol.8, p.150.

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The meeting of the obligatory responsibility of *al-amânah* requires that we must accomplish the various stages of *tahdhib al-nafs*, *tahdhib al-qalb*, *tahdhib al-akhlaq*, *tahdhib al-‘ilm/al-‘aql*, and thus train our souls, hearts and minds to develop an awareness capable of critically handling the responsibilities as outlined below (only Allah knows best about the precise details of fulfilling *al-amânah*):

1. Humans are equipped with worldly desires, which sometimes confront and overwhelm the obligatory responsibilities. The Qur’an has stated that this may amount to confronting God’s uniqueness and sharing His powers with these desires. This may amount to the greatest sin in Islam. Developing a spiritual personality, as stated in *tahdhib al-nafs* above, helps overcome this weakness in meeting this aspect of *al-amânah*.
2. Humans are required to adhere to various Qur’anic *ayat* (or signs). While we read them, we may not practice what we are commanded to do, that is, to read, understand, and think about the signs, investigate the truth, and implement their guidance to meet various challenges. Developing our personality so as to discharge these responsibilities is also part of *al-amânah*. Humans are required to imbibe the quintessential wisdom in the Divine Scripture, the Qur’an.
3. According to a hadith, Allah says:

O My servants, I have forbidden injustice for Myself, and made it unlawful for you, so do not commit injustice to one another.... O my servants, these are your deeds, I record them for you, then I will recompense you for them. Whoever finds something good, let him give praise to Allah, and whoever finds something other than that, let him blame no one but himself.⁴³

⁴³ Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies translators, *An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith* (Beirut: Dar Al-Koran Al-Karin, 1976), hadith 27, pp. 80-81.

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Injustice to others must be avoided at all cost. The ability to do justice is clearly one of the requirements of *al-amânah* bestowed on us. One of the obligations of justice enjoined upon human beings is to be dutiful, submissive, and humble to their parents. Another obligation of justice requires that ties of kinship not be severed. Anyone who severs ties of kinship will not enter paradise.⁴⁴

The merciful ones will be granted mercy from the Most Merciful. Hence have mercy on those on earth – the One above the heavens will then have mercy on you. The womb is also from the Merciful, so whoever joins it, it joins him; and whenever he severs it, it severs him.⁴⁵

The Qur'an clearly spells out certain injunctions on justice:

O you who believe! Stand firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, be he rich or poor, Allah is a better Protector of both [than you]. So do not follow the lusts [of your heart], lest you avoid justice; and if you distort your witness or refuse to give it, verily, Allah is Ever Well-Acquainted with what you do. (4:135)

4. Human beings have a pact with God to honor all relationships that are part of God's mercy. Thus, the severance of relationships is forbidden in Islam unless it is to avoid the greater injustice of disobeying God.
5. The position of a *khalifat Allah* is given by God to someone who displays the character traits described above and possesses knowledge of the Divine Scriptures and the prophets. Such an

⁴⁴ Ibid., vol.9, p.109.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.110.

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individual is given the right to make decisions on critical
matters for those who seek help and guidance.

6. According to the well-known hadith:

Be mindful of Allah and He will protect you; be mindful of Allah and you will find Him ever with you. Turn to Allah in times of ease and He will turn to you in times of difficulty. If you ask anyone for anything, then ask Allah; if you need to seek help from anyone, then seek help from Allah. Know that even if the entire nation were to come together to do you some harm that Allah has not decreed for you, they will never be able to harm you, and if they were to come together to do you some good that Allah has not decreed for you, they will never be able to do that. The pages have been dried and the pens have been lifted. Strive for the sake of Allah with thankfulness and firm conviction, and know that in patiently persevering with regard to something that you dislike, there is much goodness. Victory comes with patience, a way out comes from difficulty and with hardship comes ease.⁴⁶

It is in this behavior that the secrets of *al-amânah* are hidden.

7. Allah informs us that the heavens and the earth were created in truth, and the heavens and the earth were subjected to human beings as *al-amânah* so that they can draw benefits from them according to the truth. It is therefore expected and required from human beings that they accept this trust by recognizing Allah above all creations, and then using them for their benefit and according to the established purpose of the creations.
8. Imam Ahmad recorded that ‘Abdullah bin ‘Amr said that the Prophet said:

⁴⁶ Ibid., vol.8, p.393.

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There are four things upon whose attainment whatever you miss in this world will not matter: preserving a trust, speaking the truth, being of good character, and moderation in eating.⁴⁷

Throughout his life, even before the honor of prophethood was awarded to him, the Prophet was known to be always most trustworthy, always to speak the truth, and to be of the highest level of character. To strive to be trustworthy, to gain the trust of Allah, to exercise trust in practice, to seek the truth in every action, and to be of good character are among the qualities of *al-amânah*.

9. In another Hadith, the Prophet says:

He who relieves a difficulty for a person, then Allah will relieve the difficulties of this life and hereafter for him. Surely Allah helps a servant as long as the servant helps his brother.⁴⁸

In this are hidden the treasures for the relief of pain and sorrow and bringing happiness for the benefit of all of humanity.

10. In another hadith the Prophet says:

Love your loved one moderately, because one day, he might become your enemy. Hate your hated one moderately, because one day, he might become your loved one.⁴⁹

This teaches a moderate mode of behavior so that one, at all times, is ready to face the required responsibilities.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.56.

⁴⁸ Ibid., vol.9, p.526.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

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11. When a vow is made to perform an action or a deed, it should be fulfilled. Nevertheless, if, before the completion of this vow, another action or deed appears to be more beneficial than the first one, then one must pay a *kafârah* (expiation) for the first one before accepting to undertake what is better. This induces the individual to fulfill all responsibilities according to vows and promises made to fellow human beings.

God's *Khalifah* (Vicegerent) on Earth

The possibilities of humanity in general, and Islam in particular, have not yet been exhausted. By going beyond this serial time and space, we can see the wider dimensions of time, and acquire an insight into the inner consciousness of life and its purpose. Our concept of time usually extends only to the revolution of planets around the sun. However, the sun itself, including all the stars and planets, will have a definite end before the Day of Judgment. On the other hand, time is everlasting and is to be found in all the higher domains. The vision of the self will be severely limited if the concept of the higher domains of life is not realized. In time are arrested the happiness, sorrow, destruction and tragedy of humanity. Time has neither a beginning nor an end. How can one empathize with reality when one has not understood the reality of time? The one who has risen above the reality of time has fully visualized the mission of life and human behavior. The self needs to search for deeper levels of consciousness to understand the real nature of time, which is different from serial or specialized time. The appreciation of the real nature of time leads the self to an understanding of freedom, making it a "free self." The "free self" undergoes creative movement and it creates its own destiny. The "free self" is the creator of new things and works with God to fulfill the purpose of creation. One would expect that when the self is developed to the point of being the "vicegerent of God on earth," it receives a glimpse of Divine time, which is the fulfillment of the Divine Mission. Participation with God in the Divine Mission is the Divine Purpose of the creation of humanity.

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It is the opportunity for the individual self to accept this challenge given to him/her by God. This is the conquest of faith by human beings when they move beyond the spell of serial time and are completely free from the bondage of physical laws. The restless movement of the human ego has its ideal in the Divine personality, which was the Prophet's highest ideal. The highest power is united in the "free self" with the highest knowledge: thought and action, instinct and reason become one. Since God is the creator of the universes and the earth and all that is between them, God's Divine Mission is for the whole of humanity and He provides an equal opportunity for all to benefit from His mercy, forgiveness, and generosity. The vicegerents truly realize their mission for the whole of humanity. The individuals endowed with such realization of responsibility truly understand the cause of the world's problems and the pain suffered by the human race in seeking solutions to them.

Those who have achieved the qualities and refinements described above have most likely gained the status of God's vicegerents on earth, a status known only to God and granted to every ordinary person who struggles for better things in life. The vicegerents have achieved nearness to God by their superior actions, purity of intentions, excellence in behavior, and perfection in prayer. Although the vicegerents can, of course, never attain the full attributes of God, they can reflect some of them. Their actions will demonstrate majesty and care for all human beings. They are an embodiment of reverence, veneration, sympathy, care, affection, love, and generosity for all human beings and other creatures. This status attained in the world is similar to life in a body. So those who are vicegerents lead a life full of mercy and love for everyone and everything around them. They are full of care for humanity and the society in which they live. They make every effort to correct false pretences and to live a life of truth in reforming society. Their hearts are enlightened to the extent that they can see what is good for society and can help the community and society to affirm truth and justice in every facet of life. When the Prophet

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was asked about his condition during sleep, he said that only his eyes were asleep whereas his heart remained awake. Thus, the vicegerents of God's heart are ever vigilant on behalf of what is good for individuals, the community, and society in general. The vicegerents can point to the true virtues for the good of the community and society so that they educate the world regarding the true purpose and motivation for worldly life. The hidden qualities of the vicegerents contain the secrets of life, and are made manifest through their will to help others work for the betterment of humanity.

A society built on *tawhîd*, that is, on the belief in one God, has built the foundation of Islamic thought and practice. *Tawhîd* unifies all actions in one ideal, one theme, one way of thinking, and increases the strength of life. Our participation in life based on our desires has caused our individuality to disintegrate, and it can be restored only by *tawhîd*. Only *tawhîd* can develop the desire to search for and to practice the truth.

Although the task to become a vicegerent appears to be difficult, each individual is equipped with the qualities and faculties and the right to achieve this goal. It is certainly a very achievable task for even the most ordinary individual, as long as one is motivated by a desire to climb up the path of knowledge and dedicate oneself to the service to God and one's society. The vicegerent becomes a source of light for humanity in the darkness of suffering and injustice in the world. It is time for the vicegerent to embark upon the path of love, kindness, and mercy for all, and to confront those who are bent on the destruction of humanity. If one considers humanity as a farm, then the vicegerent sows the seeds of love, kindness, and mercy so that a new life is visible from the soil in terms of new hope and new zeal. Rather than despair, the vicegerent gives birth to a life of justice and peace for the betterment of humanity. The vicegerent illuminates the hearts of others and of those who begin to feel what they were unable to feel before and a new light is spread in the world of despair and

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suffering. The vicegerent inspires others to see a new vision with knowledge born of wisdom and courage so that they see what they were unable to see before. The vicegerent steps forward in life to make the flowers of a life of hope, meaning, and purpose bloom. The world takes on a new shape of selfless dedication, of contribution and service for the benefit of all in society. The vicegerent inculcates equality for all, united in the purpose of seeking a common goal and common purpose. The rays of the sun of hope are extended to all, and suffering and injustice are eliminated.

Here is a hadith from the Prophet, which demonstrates the characteristics of his personality:

Your people have troubled me a lot and the worst trouble was on the day of ‘Aqabah when I presented myself to Ibn ‘Abd Yalil bin ‘Abd Kulal, who did not respond to my call. So I departed, overwhelmed with sincere sorrow, proceeded on and could not relax until I found myself at Qarn Ath-Tha`alib, where I raised my head towards the sky to see a cloud unexpectedly shading me. I looked up and saw Jibril in it, and he called me, saying, “Indeed Allah has heard what you said to the people and what they have responded to you. Therefore, Allah has sent the Angel of the Mountains to you so that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people.” The Angel of the Mountains called and greeted me, and then said, “O Muhammad! Verily, Allah has heard how your people responded to you and He has sent me to you so that you could order me to do what you wish. If you like, I will let al-Akshabayn [two mountains to the north and south of Makkah] fall on them.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “No, but I hope that Allah will let them generate

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offspring who will worship Allah Alone, and will worship
none beside Him.”⁵⁰

Is God’s unlimited mercy not open to all? Does He not deserve attention from all? Would God ever want suffering for anyone, and especially the innocent? Is He not ever waiting to forgive anyone and everyone who is ready to repent? Is not this the truth and the purpose for which God subjected the heavens, the earth, and all that is between them? Should not humanity invest the effort in discovering this very truth for the life in this world? Is God not for peace for all? Did God not endow this trust in humanity? Is this not the truth and the purpose for which God created humanity? Did God not allow His Prophet to show mercy to all? May God forgive us all! Amen!

⁵⁰ Al-Mubarakpuri, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol.3, p.361 (including references to *Fath al-Bari*, 6:360, and *Sahih Muslim*, 3:1420).