

The Verse of Light



“God is the light of the
heavens and the earth...”

24:35

CONTENTS

GOD IS THE LIGHT (NUR).....	1
THE NICHE (MISHKAT).....	3
THE MISBAH (LAMP)	5
THE GLASS(ZUJAJA)	10
THE OLIVE TREE & IT'S OIL	14
GOD'S LIGHT IS ABSOLUTE.....	18
GOD GUIDES TO HIS LIGHT... ..	22
THE MUHAMMADAN LIGHT	26

GOD IS THE LIGHT (NUR)

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ

God is the light of the heavens and the earth;..... 24:35

The word Nur is generally translated as light. Light by definition is that which is essentially manifest and makes other things manifest and visible as well; it is clear and it makes clear; it is apparent and it makes apparent. What is initially understood by light is physical light that comes from lighted objects such as, the sun, the stars, and man-made lamps without which the world would be shrouded in darkness.

"He it is Who made the sun a shining brightness and the moon a light (a reflection)" 10:5

"All praise belongs to Allah who created the heavens and the earth and made the darkness and the light." 6:1

The application of the word light, however, is not limited to physical light. It can be applied to whatever is "manifest and makes manifest" or, put differently, to whatever is "apparent and makes apparent." For instance, we often refer to knowledge as light, for it is in its essence clear and also sheds light on other realities. Light represents consciousness as well. When we do not understand something, we say we must "bring it to light." If we are confused we need more light – When we think of an idea – we say that 'a light came on' and when a person is a believer in the true sense we say that he/she is enlightened.

When Abbas Ibn Hilal asked Imam Ar –Ridha (pbuh) about the meaning of Ayatun Nur, Imam replied: "He is the guide for the inhabitants of the heaven and the inhabitants of the earth."

Therefore, the source of Light is Allah alone. However, anyone who reflects this light becomes a secondary source of Light too. There are over 40 references to Light in the Qur'an. Amongst the entities which are classed as Nur (Light) in the Qur'an are:

1. The Qur'an "... ***there has come to you light and a clear Book from Allah***" 5:15
2. Faith (Belief) "***He who was lifeless, then We gave him life and provided him with a light by which he walks among the people...***" 6:122

3. Rasulallah (pbuh) ***“O Prophet! surely We have sent you as a witness, and as a bearer of good news and as a warner, And as one inviting to Allah by His permission, and as a light-giving torch.33:45,46***

Imagine that every entity in creation is a mirror wishing to reflect divinity (perfection) and therefore reach its full potential.

The mirror would need:

1. To have a light source.
2. To be directed towards the source of light.
3. To be free of obstacles,
4. To be free of damage, dirt and cracks in order to reflect the light fully.

Now, apply this to the human being wishing to reflect divinity and reach his full potential.

1. The soul needs to acknowledge the Creator
2. Needs to direct all actions to Him (Intention QurbatanIlallah)
3. No false customs, interpretations, beliefs, interpretations etc....)
4. To try and keep away from damage to the nafs with sins. 83:13,14

THE NICHE (MISHKAT)

مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ

*"...a likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp...."*24:35

The Niche (Mishkat) is a shallow recess in the wall of an Eastern house, fairly high from the ground, in which a light in the room, in which a light (before the days of electricity) was usually placed. Its height enabled it to diffuse the light in the room and minimised the shadows. The background of the wall and the sides of the niche helped throw the light well into the room.

As the aya is a parable, it may have several applications. We will use the aspect of it representing the foundation upon which the lamp rests as the chest is the foundation upon which the heart rests thus representing the physical body and the lamp representing the divine spark of eiman within our hearts. The Lamp is the core of the spiritual Truth, which is the real illumination; the Niche is nothing without it for the Niche is actually made for it. In order to understand the body let's look at its origin.

The universe began with the command 'Kun' (Be). The letter K representing Kamal or perfection and the letter N for Nur which is light. Thus came the creation of the perfect light of Muhammad (pbuh) which preceded the material universe. It is the building block out of which all else was created.

We all existed as a whole when we were asked "Am I your Rabb?" Then we were sent individually immersed in the four elements of creation – water, earth, air and fire

*"He created man from dry clay like earthen vessels..."*55:14

Thus the non material soul passed through all the material elements that generate the material world and the soul of light embedded itself in a pot of clay – the physical body which included emotions, thoughts & energies. Each soul was provided with the link to the divine in the form of divine attributes.

Embodied in materialism, to manifest divinity there was a need to break out of the clay pot. The tools provided were the mind and will. The mind gave the ability to know right from wrong and the will the capacity to choose right action. The basic principal is simple as taught by Rasulullah (pbuh) "Do that which is lawful and don't do that which is unlawful and if you are unsure....do not act until you are sure." This is what we call religion or guidance. The prophetically

revealed knowledge is simply that there is one Reality. That Reality encompasses all creation, but we have to awaken to it by submitting to it, and then behaving and safeguarding our body, and not accepting that the body is all that there is.

Balancing the body (Perfecting the niche)

1. **Salaa** – It is the mi'raj of the believer. 'Mi'raj' is the journey in which Rasulallah (pbuh) travelled through the seven heavens getting as close to divine light as is ever possible.
2. **Fasting**- "I have prescribed fasting for you and I am its reward" Hadith Qudsi. Rasulallah (pbuh) loved fasting. What is so special about fasting?
 - i) It is essentially private. Only God and you know.
 - ii) It reveals the nafs. We often see the impatient and selfish side of the nafs when fasting.
 - iii) It strengthens the will.
 - iv) It teaches us that we do not have to be a slave to our habits.
3. **Good Akhlaq** – Acting with beauty, refinement and respect. "I was sent if only to teach the best of akhlaq." Rasulallah (pbuh)
 - 1) Compassion attention is what the Rasulallah (pbuh) taught.
 - ii) To serve others with gratitude for the opportunity to serve is good akhlaq. "I, who cannot be contained by the whole universe am contained in the heart of a believer" Hadith Qudsi
When we serve on of His creations we serve God. When you serve the Created, you serve Creation.
4. **Remembrance (Zhikr)** - *"O you who believe! Remember Allah, remembering frequently. And glorify Him morning and evening."* 33:41,42
" O children of Adam! Remember Me moments after dawn and moments before evening. I too will assume your important affairs." Hadith Qudsi
5. **Remembering Death** –Contemplating death is a powerful tool in becoming more aware of the present, and a way of beginning the process of personal growth. Two important attitudes to develop towards death are:
 - i) Death is inevitable
 - ii) We don't know when death will come

THE MISBAH (LAMP)

مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ

"...a likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp..."24:35

In the parable **the Misbah (lamp)** is eiman which is the life giver of the soul housed in the body of the believer. (The Niche).

The soul is not physical, yet it is the essence of one's being. It is intangible and 'unseen.

"This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who are God conscious. Those who believe in the unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them.."2:2,3

The soul is a system of light. The frequency of the light depends upon our consciousness.

Emotions are currents of energy with different frequencies. Negative emotions such as hatred, envy, resentment have a lower frequency and lower energy whilst positive emotions such as affection, compassion & love have a higher frequency and higher energy. We say that a depressed person is 'drained' whilst a content person is 'radiant'.

Different thoughts create different emotions and these manifest themselves. What we feel and think, how we behave and what we value is reflected in the light energy of our soul. Every intention affects the light frequency of the soul. Rasulullah (pbuh) has said: *"Intention is superior to action or rather intention is the complete reality of the act itself"*

Intentions set into motion processes that affect every aspect of our lives. If there are conflicting intentions, then we are torn between both dynamics which are set in motion opposing each other resulting in a splintered human being. The light is diffused and dull whilst a whole personality is one whose light is a single focused beam.

The soul is endowed with eiman. It is neither acquired nor taught, it is our most natural state. A child has natural eiman. He believes in whatever you tell him although he may sense it not to be true.

Eiman is not to be confused with childhood naivety nor is it an absence of reason but the most powerful force in our lives. It is the faculty that recognises truth that are infinitely greater than ourselves.

The manifestation of eiman is in the physical deed, not just in the mind. The Qur'an associates eiman with 'amilussaalihaat' (good deeds). The best of thoughts and feelings cannot make you perform good deeds. It is the good deed where intention and action are on one plane that establishes a relationship between the human being and God and which enables success.

Imam Sadiq (A.S.) when commenting on the **aya 67:2** "**...so that we may test you as that who does 'ahsanu 'amal...'**" said:

"It does not mean one of you whose deeds are more numerous but one who is more rightful in his conduct, and this righteousness is nothing but the fear of Allah and sincerity of niyya and fear." Then he added "To persevere in an action until it becomes sincere is more difficult than performing the action itself, and sincerity of action lies in this that you should not desire anyone to praise you for it except Allah, and niyya supersedes action. Lo! Indeed niyya is action itself"

Imam then quoted **aya 17:84** "**Everyone act according to his/her shakilatih (character)...**" Imam explained that character meant intention. Eiman cannot be compartmentalised. To keep the lamp burning, we cannot relegate it to certain times or parts of our lives. It must affect everything in our lives.

Eiman is not passive. To know what eiman is, you have to see it in action. If you do not live it, you do not believe it. Even if one is on the right path, you will get run over if you just sit there... The Qur'an speaking of a group of nomadic Arabs who came to the Prophet (pbuh) saying "**We have eiman**" says "**...You do not have eiman, but say - we submit for eiman has not yet entered your hearts...**" **49:14** Why? They had refused to accompany the Prophet (pbuh) on the pilgrimage yet when they were afflicted by a famine, they flocked into Madina with their entire families to claim relief and professing eiman. Allah continues describing those who have eiman - "**Indeed the mu'mineen are those who have eiman in Allah and His rasul, they do not doubt after that, they strive with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah...**" **49:15**

One with eiman knows that no matter how much effort he invests, all blessings originate from Allah. But we must create the containers to contain these blessings. It may rain for days, but if a farmer has not ploughed and planted, not a single plant will grow. On the other hand, however much he ploughs and plants without Allah's blessing, there is nothing the farmer can do to coax a plant from the ground.

Eiman also trusts. It does not waver even if things don't work out as we want.

To measure the frequency of one's soul light, Imam Ali (pbuh) sites the qualities one displays when one who is God conscious... His companion Hammam wanted signs of a virtuous person he requested the explanation to be so vivid and graphic that he could visualise it. (Nahjul Balagha Sermon 193)

Let's look at some extracts from the sermon:

Thus, the God-fearing, in it are the people of distinction.

- Their speech is to the point,
- their dress is moderate
- Their walk is humble.
- They keep their eyes closed to what Allah has made unlawful for them,
- they put their ears to that knowledge which is beneficial to them.
- They remain in the time of trials as though they remain in comfort.
- If there had not been fixed periods (of life) ordained for each, their spirits would not have remained in their bodies even for the twinkling of an eye because of (their) eagerness for the reward and fear of chastisement.
- The greatness of the Creator is seated in their heart, and, so, everything else appears small in their eyes.
- To them Janna is as though they see it and are enjoying its favours. To them, Jahannam is as if they see it and are suffering its punishment.
- During a night they are on their feet reading the Qur'an seeking by it the cure for their ailments. If they come across an aya creating eagerness (for Janna) they pursue it avidly, and their spirits turn towards it eagerly, and they feel as if it is in front of them. And when they come across an aya which contains fear (of Jahannam) they bend the ears of their hearts towards it, and feel as though the sound of Jahannam and its cries are reaching their ears.
- They do ruku and sujud beseeching Allah for their deliverance.

- During the day they are enduring, learned, virtuous and God-fearing.
- They are not satisfied with their little good acts, and do not regard their major acts as great. They always blame themselves and are afraid of their deeds. When anyone of them is spoken of highly, he says: "I know myself better than others, and my Lord knows me better than I know. O' Allah do not deal with me according to what they say, and make me better than they think of me and forgive me (those shortcomings) which they do not know."
- In the evening he is anxious to offer thanks (to Allah).
- In the morning his anxiety is to remember (Allah).
- The coolness of his eye lies in what is to last for ever, while from the things (of this world) that will not last he keeps aloof.
- You will see his hopes simple,
- his meal small and simple,
- Good alone is expected from him.
- Evil from him is not to be feared.
- Even if he is found among those who forget (Allah) he is counted among those who remember (Him).
- He forgives him who is unjust to him, and he gives to him who deprives him. He behaves well with him who behaves ill with him.
- Indecent speech is far from him,
- his words are lenient,
- he is dignified during calamities,
- patient in distresses,
- thankful during ease.
- He does not commit excess over him whom he hates,
- he does not commit sin for the sake of him whom he loves.
- He admits truth before evidence is brought against him.
- He does not misappropriate what is placed in his custody,
- he does not forget what he is required to remember.
- He does not call others bad names,
- he does not cause harm to his neighbour,
- he does not feel happy at others misfortunes,
- He does not enter into wrong and does not go out of right.
- If he is silent his silence does not grieve him,
- if he laughs he does not raise his voice,

- If he is wronged he endures till Allah takes revenge on his behalf. His own self is in distress because of him, while the people are in ease from him.
- He puts himself in hardship for the sake of his next life, and makes people feel safe from himself.
- His keeping away from others is by way of asceticism and purification, and his nearness to those to whom he is near is by way of leniency and mercifulness. His keeping away is not by way of vanity or feeling of greatness, nor his nearness by way of deceit and cheating.

It is related that Hammam fell to the ground and breathed his last. Imam said that he feared this saying “Effective advices produce such effects on receptive minds”.

THE GLASS(ZUJAJA)

المِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ ۝

The lamp is in a glass....

الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ

(and) the glass is as it were a brightly shining star.....24:35

The lamp is in a **zujaja** - purest glass, like a glistening star of purity - a similitude for the **heart**, likened to glass inasmuch as it possesses the qualities of the heart of the believer.

*"Allah does not evaluate according to your physicality or your appearances; He considers your hearts and your deeds".*Rasulullah (pbuh)

Rasulullah (pbuh) has said: *"Knowledge is of two kinds: The knowledge of the tongue...and the knowledge of the heart, which is truly valuable knowledge."*

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (pbuh) has said: "Indeed the hearts are of three kinds:

The inverted heart (Qalbulmankus), wherein there is no good – that is the heart of one who has no eiman;

the heart where there is a black spot in which there is a conflict between good and evil; each of which seeks to overcome the other and,

the open heart (Qalbulmaftuh) wherein are lamps whose lights will not go out until the day of Resurrection – that is the heart of a believer"

Usul *al-Kafi*, vol. II, p. 422, "kitab al-Imanwa al-kufr" "bab fi Zulmahqalb al-munafiq" hadith 3.

Prophet Dawud (pbuh) asked God "All kings possess treasure; then where is your treasure? Allah replied: I possess a treasure greater than the sky, vaster than the heavens, more fragrant than Janna, more beautiful than the celestial kingdom. Its earth is enlightenment, its sky is belief, its sun enthusiasm, its moon is love, its stars inspiration and attention towards me, its clouds are reason, its rain is blessing, its fruits obedience and its harvest wisdom. My treasure has four doors: The first is knowledge, the second is reason, the third is patience and the fourth is contentment. Know that my treasure is – the heart of a believer."

Rasulullah (pbuh) has said: "Look for your heart in 3 places;

When listening to the Qur'an; When seeking knowledge; When in solitude. If you cannot find it in these places, then ask Allah to bless you with a heart, for indeed you have no heart."

To understand the heart and make it a vessel like a bright star (kawka bunduriyy) that reflects the spark of divinity it is pertinent to look at Suratu Yaseen (36) known as **Qalbul Qur'an** (the **heart** of the Qur'an)

A glimpse at Suratu Yaseen

- The sura begins by addressing the Prophet 36:1
- The chains of pride, expectations and desires are weaved by ourselves and they end up lifting our chins high in arrogance. 36:8
- The message that we dictate our own destinies is made clear by the meaning of good and bad omens in the narration of the messengers sent to Antioch. 36:19
- The qualification of messengers is given – they expect no reward whatsoever from anyone 36:21
- The meaning of Janna is made clear.36:55



REMEDIES FROM THE QUR'AN FOR THE HEART

HEART AILMENTS

1. Place right hand on the place of pain and recite Suratu Al Imran 3:145
2. Recite and/or write Suratu Qaf 50:37 on water and drink it.

3. Recite and/or write Suratu Al Imran 3:8&9, Suratur Ra'ad 13:28, & Suratu Yunus 10:22 on water and drink it. Also may be worn as tawidh.
4. Recite and write Suratur Rahman (55) with saffron, wash with water and drink it.
5. Recite Suratul Inshirah(94).

BROKEN HEART

1. Write Suratul Fatiha on an earthenware plate, wash with water and drink it.
2. Recite Suratur Ra'ad 13:28

LOVE IN A RELATIONSHIP

1. Recite Suratu Yaseen 7x on 7 separate almonds trough palm of the right hand and give to spouse.
2. Recite Bismillahir Rahmanis Raheem 786x on water and give spouse to drink.
3. Recite Suratun Nisa (4) 7x daily.
4. Recite Suratul Jumua' (62) on Friday.
5. Recite Suratul Quraysh (106) on roses and give both parties to smell.
6. Recite Suratul Muzzammil (73)41x on a sweet thing and give spouse to eat.
7. Recite Suratu Al Imran 3:31 3x on water and give spouse to drink.
8. Recite Suratu Yusuf 12:29&30 on a sweet thing and give to both parties to eat.
9. Recite Suratu Sad 38:32 on a sweet thing and give both parties to eat for 7 days.
10. Recite Suratul Ma'idah 5:54 on a sweet thing and give to both parties to eat.
11. Recite Suratul Qadr (97) with hand on hair of spouse.
12. Recite Suratul A'raf 8:62&63 on a sweet thing and give to both parties to eat.
13. Recite Suratu Yaseen 36:83 on a sweet thing and give to both parties to eat.
14. Recite Suratul Ahzab 33:40 on some fragrant flowers and a sweet thing and give spouse to smell/eat.

15. Recite Ayatul Kursi 2:255 equal in number to the total number of both their names.
16. Recite Suratul Anfal 9:129 30x on Friday night thinking of spouse.

THE OLIVE TREE & IT'S OIL

يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ

lit from a blessed olive-tree

لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ

neither eastern nor western,

يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ

the oil whereof almost gives light though fire touch it not.....24:35

The energy for this Misbah (lamp) is oil pressed from the blessed olive tree which is in a place so medial that the sun reaches it at both the beginning and the end of the day, making its oil the purest and least opaque-so clear it almost glows by itself, without fire.

Every light that exists in the universe needs requires a spark to set it alight – however the light of God is the only exception.

Perhaps it indicates that the guidance provided to eiman in the heart is from an eternal source implying that it does not have a point of termination through the Qur'an and Rasulullah (pbuh) and his ahlulbayt which are unadulterated (neither eastern or western).

THE OLIVE TREE & IT'S OIL

The olive tree is the most cited tree in recorded literature and has been cultivated since ancient times. The roots of the olive tree are so extensive and strong that in times of drought, when other trees die, the olive tree is still standing because it draws from deep within the earth when the heavens withhold their life-giving water.

Rasulullah (pbuh) has said: "Use olive oil and anoint yourself with it, because it is 'from a blessed tree'"

The local application of olive oil or the water extracted from the crushed olive oil leaves is effective on boils, rashes and itching. Olive oil prevents dandruff, moisturises skin, soothes aches and pains and aids digestion. Massage of olive oil with common salt over the gums is a remedy for several diseases of gums and teeth. Imam Ali (pbuh) has said the people who use olive oil and vinegar will not

be afflicted with poverty.

It is called "liquid gold." In ancient Greece, athletes ritually rubbed it all over their body. Olive oil has been more than mere food to the peoples of the Mediterranean; it has been medicinal and an endless source of fascination and wonder.

GUIDANCE

Every created being has a definite place in creation but it is not intended to remain the same throughout its span of life. It is endowed with a number of potentialities and instinctively tends to realize them, becoming more perfect in the process. It is through Divine Guidance, termed *Rububiyyah* in the Qur'an, that things develop and finally attain the form of which they are capable.

Who created and perfected, Who measured and directed. A natural thing is endowed with certain potentialities and guided by its *Rabb*, passes from stage to stage until it has reached its full potential..

It must not be supposed that the guiding power acts upon things from outside. It is inherent in their nature and acts from within them. It would be more correct to say that it is the nature of a thing to seek the development of its latent capacity and thus to reach its destiny.

Wahi literally means prompting, inspiring or infusing a thought or feeling into a person. At different levels of creation *wahi* operates in different forms, ranging from inciting a blind urge to inspiring a thought. All things from material bodies to rational beings are amenable to *wahi*. The earth and the heavenly spheres are represented as submitting to Divine direction.

"He inspired in each heaven its mandate 41:12.

"The Earth shall tell out her tidings. For that your Rabb will inspire her" 99: 4-5

In the animal world, Divine guidance takes the form of instinct. Instinct enables the animal to make a satisfactory adjustment to its environment. It enables it to satisfy its basic needs and so preserve both itself and its young.

The human being, by virtue of possessing an autonomous self, occupies a privileged position in the universe. Divine guidance is offered to him in the form which is suited to a free rational being. It does in no way curtail man's freedom of choice and action. Man has the right to reject it, if he so desires and is willing to pay the price of rejection.

- For human being, *Wahi* or revelation, is the vehicle of Divine Guidance. God selects a man who is fit to be the custodian of truth. This man *the Nabi* who receives the revelation from God, keeps it inviolate and

faithfully communicates it to his fellow-beings. Those who accept it, of their own accord, find themselves following the path which leads to the enhancement of their powers and towards the goal of perfection. Those who reject it, have perforce to follow the downward path of deterioration and degradation. Self-fulfillment is the reward of the former, while an enfeebled and perverted self falls to the lot of the latter. Such is the Law of Requit.

- The *Wahi*-the Divinely revealed guidance-is really God's Word. It is not contaminated by the personal likes and dislikes, feelings and desires of the recipient. The medium specially selected by God is so refined that the *Wahi*, in passing through it, suffers no diminution in its purity or luster. The *Wahi* transcends human intellect but does not conflict with reason. It rather supplements it.

The oil (energy source) also provided a **fragrance** to the lamp.

"al-mar'atu rayhana wa laysat bi qahraman"

(a woman is an aromatic plant and not a dominator). Imam Ali (AS)

What actually does the expression 'aromatic plant' denote?

Scholars of insight say that there is a metaphysical fragrance that only attracts those who can appreciate the scent of spiritual realities.

Rasulullah (pbuh) has said:

"There is nothing more pleasant than the scent of a believer (al-mu'min); and indeed his fragrance can be felt in the horizons..."

"Surely a virtuous and good offspring is an aromatic plant among the aromatic plants of the Janna."

"Whosoever backbites a Muslim, his fast is invalidated and his minor ablution (wudhu) is void, and he would come on the Resurrection Day, while a stench more foul than that of a corpse would come out from his mouth, which would disturb the people of Resurrection .

Imam Baqir (pbuh) told one of his companion Maysar:

"Do you gather in private, and discuss and speak what you want [of the truth]?"

Maysar says: Yes Indeed, by Allah, we do gather in private and discuss and say what we want. Thereupon Imam said: I swear by Allah, I love to be with you in some of these places. [And] I swear by Allah, I love your scent and your spirits...'

All these ahadith clearly show that beyond the physical aroma there is a spiritual fragrance that only those endowed with inner apprehension can comprehend

and appreciate. They also enlighten us about the path of attaining a pleasant spiritual aroma in oneself.

GOD'S LIGHT IS ABSOLUTE

نُورٌ عَلَىٰ نُورٍ ۗ

light upon light..... 24:35

God's light is Absolute with no limit or boundary. However, in the stages of exposure, its manifestation is relative to the capacity of the recipients. When a human being ascends to higher levels of understanding in **tawheed**, he benefits from further illumination.

It may refer to the successive line of the **Ahlulbayt** from Rasulullah (pbuh).

We need to begin to understand **tawheed**, we must learn to go beyond our mind, ego and tools of perception. To look for Allah with our eyes is to try to capture the sun's rays in our hands.

It can only happen if we remove obstacles of self centeredness, dishonesty, ignorance and fear from our lives.

The Prophets were sent to make human beings aware of their original nature which is inclined towards Allah and to direct them how to achieve their full potential as human beings

Imam Ali (pbuh) has said: "God sent His Messengers among men so they might question them concerning their covenant with God, recall to them the forgotten bounties of God, speak to them by way of admonition, arouse in them hidden wisdom, and display to them the signs of God's power."

"The Prophet removes all arduous rules and customs that human beings had placed on their necks like chains. So those who believe in him, respect him and aid him, who follow the light that has been revealed to him, they are, in truth, those who are saved in this world." 7:157

By understanding tawheed as the essence of absolute reality, we come to the awesome realisation that there is none/nothing else like Him – just as is summed up in Suratul Ikhlas.

Tawheed therefore is the belief in the One and Only God – Allah after rejecting all other idols – physical or mental. Thus the awe inspiring slogan for every Muslim

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

There is no God except Allah.

THE 7 STAGES OF TAWHEED

Tawheed has different levels and degrees.

We must rise step by step until we begin to see the universe from a spiritual perspective. This journey will complete the circle of our cosmic mission – starting from Allah and ending in Allah – thus fulfilling our mandate of existence.

1. Tawheed in Ibada
2. Tawheed in Sifaat (Attributes of Allah)
3. Tawheed in that none can order or forbid except Allah.
4. Tawheed in that none can benefit or deprive except Allah.
5. Tawheed in trusting none but Allah.
6. Tawheed in ‘amaal (deeds).
7. Tawheed in total devotion to none but Allah.

1. Tawheed in Ibada’

The niyya for ibada (worship) must be totally for Allah.

Niyya is the longing felt when one feels lonely and helpless and desires to be tied with the Truth to remove the feeling of loneliness and helplessness.

In the rational sciences, it is demonstrated that an objects actuality depends on it’s form and not on it’s matter. Niyya constitutes the form of a deed and the action it’s matter.

2. Tawheed in Attributes (Sifaat)

“Say (O Muhammad): Call upon Allah or call upon The Merciful, whichever you call upon, He has the best names.....” 17:110

The word Allah in the Qur’an is the name of an essence of His 99 beautiful names and qualities like Merciful, Kind, Knowing..... Whatever little information the human being can get about Allah can only be acquired through His names.

Otherwise, we have no access.

Our whole word in essence is a name of Allah because nothing which exists can come into existence automatically. These qualities and Names are therefore an infra-structure for human akhlaq because in Islam, the human being is the representative of Allah. The Prophet (pbuh) has said:

“Adopt the akhlaq of Allah”

In the same way, in order to arrive at the ideal society of the Qur'an, we must build our society with the Divine Attributes.

3. Tawheed in that none can order or forbid except He

Imam Ali (pbuh) Sermon 196 -Nahjul Balagha "...Thus, one who has applied this stage of tawheed in his life demonstrates the quality of taqwa in his life – in other words one who fulfils all the wajibaat and keeps away from all the muharrimaat."

4. Tawheed in that none can give benefit or deprive except He

"Whatever Allah grants to human beings out of His Rahma, there is none to withhold it, and what He withholds there is none to send it forth after that, and He is the Mighty, the Wise." 35:2

It is very easy to fall into thinking that this means that all actions of the human being are pre-destined. Imam Ja'far Sadiq (pbuh) has said: *"Neither determinism nor free will; the truth of the matter lies between these two."*

5. Tawheed in trusting none but Allah

"And put your trust in Allah, and Allah is sufficient as a protector" 33:3

"...And so Allah loves those who trust (Him). 3:159

"Tawakkul means entrusting all matters to Allah and relying upon His trusteeship."

"Tawakkul upon Allah means the severance of the abd of all hopes and expectations from others creations of Allah." Trust is not passive – it does not mean sitting back and accepting events as they happen. . e.g. camel tied and then trust for safekeeping. It means knowing that however much effort one invests, all blessings originate from Allah and 'trusting' that Allah always does what is good and right. True trust does not waver – even if things do not workout the way we like. It is not blind faith of ignorance – rather it is the uncompromising belief in the absolute truth. Trust in Allah is the purest expression of love for Him.

6. Tawheed in 'amal (deeds)

This means that in all our actions there should be no riya' or suma'. Riya' is doing something so as to be seen by others (showing off) and Suma' is doing something so that when people hear of it, they praise it.

7. Tawheed in total devotion only to Allah

The human being is programmed within his fitrat to love perfection. 'Fitrat is the basic consciousness.

“Say, (O Muhammad) If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and will forgive your sins; Indeed Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” 3:31

GOD GUIDES TO HIS LIGHT...

نُورٌ عَلَىٰ نُورٍ ۗ

light upon light.....

يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ

God guides to His light whom He pleases

وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ۗ

and God sets forth parables for humankind,

وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

and God is Aware is of all things.24:35

God's light is Absolute with no limit or boundary. However, in the stages of exposure, its manifestation is relative to the capacity of the recipients. A human being ascends to higher levels of understanding in **tawheed**, he benefits from further illumination.

It may refer to the successive line of the **Ahlulbayt** from Rasulullah (pbuh). To reach our full potential in radiating the light of the Creator; to reach the pinnacle of tawheed, we need to understand the seera of the Prophet (pbuh).

“Those who believe have intense love for Allah...” 2:165

“When a servant is occupied completely with My service I will make his desire and pleasure to be remembering Me. Whenever I make his desire and pleasure to be in remembering Me, he will love Me and I will love him, and when he loves Me and I love him, I will remove the veil from that which is between Me and him.”Hadith Qudsi

In Arabic the word for love is ‘ahabba’ which is used to describe state of a camel who when it kneels refuses to stand up again just as a muhibb will not move his heart away from remembering his beloved. ‘Habb’ – seeds of plants for love is the seed of life.

“Love is perpetual turning towards the Beloved with a heart distraught with love.”

“Love is called ‘mahabba’ because it obliterates everything but the beloved from the heart.

Love is a subsistent relationship which is based on resemblance and similarity. Essentially it is need which is the root of love. It has different degrees of strengths and weaknesses and entails self sacrifice. By extension we love the things related to the loved one.

“Say, (O Muhammad) If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and will forgive your sins; Indeed Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” 3:31

‘Ittibaa’ is the concept of a person submitting to and accepting the authority of the expert in a particular field (without demanding proof and justification for every view, opinion and credit).

The following is a practical and a potential following. So much so that just as a glass container takes the colour of its content; when someone observes us; they would immediately say that we are ‘Muhammadi’

The word **‘seerah’** from root word saa’ir – meaning movement. In this context means the method and manner by which the Prophet (pbuh) behaved in different situations.

“Indeed in the messenger of Allah you have a perfect example...”33:21

1. When he was asked “Who resembles you the most?” He said “Shall I let you know who resembles me most in his akhlaq?” The companions affirmed. He replied: i) The one who has the best of akhlaq, ii) The one who has the greatest compassion iii) The one who shows goodness to his family iv) The one who shows justice during anger and contentment.”

Media manipulation, preconceived ideas tend to make us fail to recognise real truths although we cannot change truths – The Prophet (pbuh) said “If you have a pearl in your hands and people call it a peanut it will not cease to be a pearl”. His whole seera is based on compassion.

He was born an orphan but belonged to the noblest of the Arabian tribes, his genealogy accepted as the most righteous, yet he said **“No honour is nobler than humility and kindness”** He would say repeatedly – “There are 5 things I will not give up until death – eating with slaves on the ground, riding a donkey without a saddle, milking goats with my hands, wearing coarse clothes and greeting children”

He abhorred nationalism – “Human beings from Adam to this day are like the teeth of a comb, there is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for one colour over another except with God awareness”.

His opponents created enmity with him – wronged him, spoke ill of him, harassed him, yet he would say “Oblige your brother by warning them, correct

them by showing favours and giving them favours” e.g. the woman who threw garbage on him every time he passed her house to walk to the mosque, when one day she did not he enquired about her, on learning she was ill he visited her.

He was always first to greet others

He always addressed people with the titles they deserved (honoured them)

He spoke in short, meaningful sentences and was never seen or heard to interrupt anybody's speech.

He always smiled when he spoke.

He avoided sitting at prominent places in gatherings – rather sitting in a circle to avoid any distinction, so much so that visitors had difficulty identifying who he was, visited the poor and sick – no housework was too low or undignified for him- ate the simplest of foods.

When it came to bravery there was no parallel - his most perfect student and successor – Ali (pbuh) would say “ When we used to meet the enemies and battle was at its peak, we would stand behind Muhammad when our hearts wavered – He was always closest to the enemy” and battles – he instructed his people never to start war and to fight only when they were attacked first- if the enemy lost, his orders were not to chase the fleeing soldiers – he would always try and talk to the enemy hoping that their humanity would shine through and the fighting averted .

He emancipated women – He taught that both genders were created for the same purpose – the recognition of their Creator and therefore the realisation of their full potential as human beings – but have been given different tools with which to fulfill their common goal. Indeed, their physiological, emotional, and psychological differences are a result of their divergent spiritual mandate Man and woman represent two forms of divine energy, they are the male and female elements of a single soul. In secular societies even today if a woman marries, she changes her name. She has no essential existence - A name is significant - she does not possess sufficient value or credit to have a name. When his daughter used to enter the room he would stand for her in respect.....

They tried to bribe him – intimidate him, threatened him with death and destruction – but he stood firm – not for a moment losing momentum in pursuing his mission to ensure that in recognising the unity of the one God, the human being would realise his/her full potential physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

A teacher is recognised through his students – Let’s see how Ali (pbuh) describes him – “In the past I had a brother in God – the insignificance of the world in his eyes made him great in my eyes. He was not ruled by his stomach – he used to

keep silent most of the time – yet when he spoke he silenced all speakers and quenched the thirst of all questioners. He was more eager to listen than to speak. He was considered weak, yet in an emergency he was a lion of the forest. He would not advance an argument unless it was decisive, and he would not censure anyone for what could be excused until he had heard the excuse. He would say what he would do and not say what he would not do. When two things came to him, he would see which was more emotionally desirable and then do the contrary.....”

THE MUHAMMADAN LIGHT

يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ

God guides to His light whom He pleases

وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ۚ

and God sets forth parables for humankind,

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and God is Aware is of all things.24:35

The light that God guides us to is the Muhammadan light. The goal being able to walk the path of Rasulallah (pbuh). Rasulallah (pbuh) has said: "The first thing which God created was my light."

To strive to reach one's full potential – what Allah wishes us to be. We've ascertained that enlightened people are multi-intelligent human beings who communicate with Allah.

The Qur'an and the Ma'sumeen are Allah's discourse with creation whilst our discourse with Him is through the medium of Dua.

"And when My abd ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the dua of the one who does dua when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way." 2:186

"Be careful about the etiquettes of dua, paying attention as to Who you are addressing; how do you beseech Him, and for what purpose is He implored? Think about the Majesty and Splendour of Allah, and look inside your heart and know that He is aware of whatever is contained therein, He knows about your heart's secrets and the truth and falsehood hidden therein. Be careful, to identify correctly the path of your salvation or misfortune lest you request a thing from Him which contains your destruction while you imagine your salvation in it as He says in the Qur'an:

"The human being prays for evil as he prays for good, for the human being is ever hasty." 17:11 *"Therefore, think correctly regarding what do you want from Him and for what purpose is it required. A dua will be accepted only if you exert absolute concentration of your entire existence towards Him, melting your heart while witnessing His presence; abandoning all your disposals, and absolute*

surrender of all affairs with sincerity to Him. So, if you did not act in accordance to above mentioned conditions of dua do not look forward for its acceptance because, Allah is aware of all your secrets and mysteries. Perhaps you beseech Allah for something, while you know that your intention is opposite to your request." Rasulullah (pbuh) Haqayaqi-Faiz, p-244.

"Use the weapon of Prophets." What is the weapon of prophets? He was asked. *"Dua"*. Replied the Imam." Imam Ridha (pbuh)

*"May God bless the servant who seeks his needs from Him and pleads for their fulfilment through duas whether his wants are granted or not. Then he recited the following aya: **"It may be that in prayer unto my Lord, I shall not be unblessed."** 19:48 Rasulullah (pbuh)*

The root of the word *du'a* is *da'a*, which means to call. You can only call if there is inherently within you, an energy which will bring about an answer. From where the question comes, the answer will come. The caller is calling upon one entity. He is able to call because he has energy within him, in the form of life which is the source of desire of the direction of the call. What you are calling upon is rooted in what enables you to call. With experience, a person realises, that you can only call on what you know is realizable. It is the development of the faculty of the intellect or reason. A point has to be reached in which the dua becomes so personal, so inward, that all it can do is elevate, open and light up one's heart.

A dua is not made to improve the outer unless it continues into the improvement of the inner. e.g. If one does dua for a better house then intention in time will find a way of acquiring the knowledge to earn it and if the expectations are not incompatible with the laws that govern existence then it will be achieved for expectation will uncover the means to the acquisition of what has been asked for.. On this the Qur'an is very clear. There must be a means for these things to occur. Sayyida Maryam (pbuh) had to shake the palm. The dates would not drop without that. It is maximum efficiency when you know precisely how to do it and when to do it.

It is said that the dua which is most sincere and always answered forthwith is the dua of the moment. It is reported that Nasiruddin Shah who was the king of Persia once visited the shrine of Imam Ali (pbuh) in Najaf. He found a blind man

at the door of the shrine. On enquiring about him, the blind man said that he had been standing at the door asking for a cure to his blindness for the past year. The king replied: "You have been asking for the past 12 months and your dua has still not been accepted by My Lord. I doubt the purity of your dua! It seems that it is just an excuse for you to collect alms! Now look! I am going inside to pay my respects; if your eyesight is not restored by the time I return I shall put you to death!" The blind man fearing execution wept and implored for the return of his eyesight with sincerity.

It is reported that he gained his eyesight through his dua.

When asked about that which causes non-acceptance of dua, Imam Ali (pbuh) said:

"And the sins which cause the non-acceptance of dua are: Evil intentions, evil thoughts, hypocrisy with mu'mineen, disbelieving that dua will be answered, delaying salaah till their time has passed, abandoning kindness, sadaqa and abusing and using obscene language in conversation."

In Dua Abu Hamza Thimali taught by Imam Ali Zaynul Aabedeem (pbuh), there are various reasons Imam gives in the dua why there is a measure (limit) on our duas even if our nafs yearns to rise to talk to Him (Allah). *"...O Lord! whenever I thought I was prepared and ready and rose to pray, before Your hands, and confided to You, You cast sleep on me when I prayed, and You prevented me from confiding to You when I confided..... maybe You observed my disregard of Your right on me and thus distanced me, or maybe You saw me headed away from (Your path) and thus You withdrew me, or maybe You found me to be in the position of the liars so You rejected me, or maybe You saw that I was not grateful of Your rewards so You deprived me, or maybe You observed my absence from the assembly of the scholars and thus put me down, or maybe You found me to be one of the unheedingor maybe You found me frequenting the assembly of the unfaithful, so between me and them You deserted me,or maybe You equated me with my crime and sin....."*

God is the light of the heavens and the earth;
a likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp,
the lamp is in a glass,
(and) the glass is as it were a brightly shining star,
lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western,
the oil whereof almost gives light though fire touch it not –
light upon light –

God guides to His light whom He pleases,
and God sets forth parables for humankind,
and God is Aware is of all things.

24:35

