



LOVE *of* GOD

Making God One's Supreme Concern

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



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Translated by:
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FOREWORD

There are two aspects of God-realization— Love and Fear. On the one hand, God is very compassionate, and on the other hand, He is very just. When man thinks of the unbounded mercy of God, he develops the feeling which has been called in the Quran, “Loving God Most.” (2:165) Similarly when man thinks of God as being just, he has that feeling which has been alluded to when the Quran speaks of: “those who stand in awe of none but God.” (9:18)

The personality of a believer is made up of these two feelings. On the one hand, he loves God the most. And on the other hand he fears God the most. The love of God is such as is filled with agony. Similarly, the fear of God is such as is filled with the love of God. This is a relationship which man hopes to have with the Being he fears lest He deprives him of His blessings. This is

the combination of love and fear which can be felt but cannot be expressed in words.

This is the sign of a high level of realization, in which there is peace as well as agony. A high level of realization implies hope as well as fear. A high level of realization brings conviction as well as uncertainty. A high level of realization embraces closeness as well as distance. A high level of realization is a place where sometimes the believer is sure that he has reached his destination, while sometimes he is in doubt as to whether or not he is on his way to the right destination. At times he has this feeling that he has reached a full stop, while at other times, he is in doubt as to whether he is still at the stage of the comma. This feeling of love and fear is true realization, another name for which is *maarifah*.

Real love for God will find expression in many ways. Even uttering such words as praise (*hamd*), thanksgiving (*shukr*), and remembrance (*zikr*), as we find in the Quran, is also an expression of our love for God. It would be right to say that *Alhum-do-lillah*, praise be to God, signifies love for God (*Alhub-bu-lillah*). Praising God means loving God. Gratitude to God also means loving God. Remembering God also indicates a strong love and affection for God.

Gratitude and acknowledgement is the key to entering Paradise.

There is a long tradition recorded in the books of Hadith, one part of which is: “The Prophet of Islam once observed that God would not cast anyone in the fire whom He loved.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No 13467)

This Hadith has nothing mysterious about it. The love mentioned in this hadith is two-sided, not one-sided. This means that one who, upon reflection, realizes God, the Creator, who discovers God as the Benefactor, will become endeared to God. All his emotions and feelings will become attached to God.

When one reaches this state as a result of conscious realization, he will take God as the sole object of his love. Subsequently, when such a man becomes a beloved of God, this will be a guarantee that, on Doomsday, God will never cast him into the fire.

There is nothing mysterious about becoming a beloved of God. This is a natural happening. When someone so attaches himself to God that he comes to love God more than anyone else, he becomes deserving in the eyes of God, and God showers His mercy upon him and saves him from hellfire in the Hereafter.

LOVE OF GOD

God's loving a person stems from his divine mercy, making man's love of God its own reward. God's love for a person is like a divine gift, and the love for God by God's servant is a matter of gratitude and acknowledgement. It is this gratitude and acknowledgement which are without doubt, the key to entering Paradise.

Wahiduddin Khan

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REALIZATION OF GOD

Realization of God is the discovery of the Benefactor, the source of one's support system and all blessings. Love of God wells up within one's entire personality with this realization.

The Quran describes one basic quality of the believers thus: "Those who believe love God most." (2:165) The Believers mentioned in the Quran in this verse are those who have discovered God at the level of realization. All their feelings and emotions will be associated with God alone. Their hearts and minds will focus solely on God.

Owing to his limitations man cannot see God in this present world, but he experiences God's mercy and blessings at every moment, and this experience is the real source of his love of God. Everything man has received in this world is a blessing from God. The more one thinks of divine blessings, the more one's love of God will increase. The source of the love of God is the discovery of blessings and not the sight (*deedar*) of the Benefactor (God).

Who has created man? God! Who has given man great abilities of different kinds? God! Who has created an exceptional planet like the Earth for man? It is God

alone! Who has created the life support system for man? God! Who has provided all the needs of man? Again it is God. Who has given man such a mind that, living on this planet Earth, he can encompass the entire universe? It is God alone!

Realization of God is the discovery of the Benefactor who is the source of all blessings. When man attains this realization in the real sense, the love of God wells up within him. Every fibre of his being is enlightened with divine love. Obedience to God is, without doubt, the demand of faith, but it would be an underestimation of the love of God if it is taken only in the sense of obedience. Obedience is only a legal description of the relationship with God, whereas love entails man's entire existence being moulded in the remembrance of God. Man comes to acknowledge God in the perfect sense when it is with the whole of his being.

MAKING GOD ONE'S SUPREME CONCERN

Faith in God is for man to discover God to the extent of loving Him more than anything else. Praise (*hamd*), thanksgiving (*shukr*) and remembrance (*zikr*) are expressions of our love for God.

The strongest human feeling or emotion is that of love. When man makes something his supreme concern, it naturally happens that a feeling of love becomes associated with that thing. In religious terminology, this is called “deification”. The thing one loves the most is one’s deity, (*mabud*) whether or not one utters this word.

Faith in God is for man to discover God to the extent of loving Him more than anything else. The Quran says that “those who believe love God most.”(2:165) One who loves God the most is one who has made God his object of worship.

Real love for God will find expression in many ways. Even uttering such words as praise (*hamd*), thanksgiving (*shukr*), and remembrance (*zikr*), as we find in the Quran, is also an expression of our love for God. It would be right to say that *Alhum-do-lillah*, praise be to God, signifies love for God (*Alhub-bu-*

lillah). Praising God means loving God. Gratitude to God also means loving God. Remembering God also indicates a strong love and affection for God.

The Quran has this to say: “Remembrance of God gives one’s heart peace of mind”. (13:28) This means, moreover, that it is only love of God which can give man peace of mind in the real sense.

Belief in God begins with the discovery of God. In the Quran this discovery is called *Maarifah*. *Maarifah*, or realization of God, in the real sense, becomes a part and parcel of one’s existence. When this happens, all those high and noble manifestations expressed in such words as love, gratitude and remembrance of God come into evidence.

SUBMISSION TO GOD

Emotional attachment is established not by observation, but at the conceptual level, through thinking. Then both belief in God and love of God is possible while He is unseen.

There are certain people who say that loving God means being obedient to God. They explain it by saying that God is an invisible being, and, in the case

of an invisible being, an emotional attachment cannot be established. Only obedience to Him is possible. This obedience will be in accordance with commands which we have learnt from the Quran and the Hadith. This is incorrect. Because what is said about the love of God relates also to faith in God. If faith in God is possible while God is invisible, then the love of God is also quite possible when God is invisible.

The truth is that, whether it is a matter of faith or a matter of love, both are desired in relation to God, rather than in the general sense. Faith means belief (*aqida*). The word faith or belief is applicable to a visible entity. At that time, belief will be used as defined in the dictionary. But when the word belief is applied to God, because of the change in its relation it will be taken in the sense of elevated belief. In the same way, when the word love is used in relation to God, it will relate to elevated love.

The study of human psychology tells us that emotional attachment to or with any person is not in reality established by seeing but is rather established at a conceptual level, through thinking. Whether it is something seen or unseen, man's relationship is established with it only at a conceptual level.

In respect to human psychology, belief is conceptual in nature. It is at the conceptual level that the individual attains to the realization of God; it is at the conceptual level rather than at the level of observation that the human being loves God in the real sense.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GOD

Love of God, the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth, ushers a revolution within one's personality producing positive thinking in oneself and well-wishing for others.

Love of God is a part of faith. This has been a part of the teachings of many revealed religions. For example, in the Bible, it is stated in both the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament that:

‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.’ (*Matthew*, 22:37; *Deuteronomy*, 6:5)

Love of God is not something mysterious. It is the highest degree of acknowledgment of God. When a person discovers God, when he becomes consciously aware of God's blessings, when he realizes that

his existence and entire life are replete with God's blessings, at that moment a strong affection wells up within his heart. This strong affection is called love of God.

To love God is to love the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth. Such a love is not only an emotional relationship. It brings about a revolution within the human personality. Love of God produces many elevated human qualities, for example, positive thinking, well-wishing for others, trust, courage, etc. Love in relation to God, is the highest degree of discovery and with reference to man it means developing human-friendly behaviour. Calling people to God is also a manifestation of love of God.

When anyone establishes a relationship with God which is imbued with love, he naturally has a strong urge to convey the message of God to his people, so that none of God's servants are deprived of the eternal mercy of their Lord.

CAUSE OF THE FAILURE TO LOVE GOD

When someone develops love of God, he starts remembering Him most of the time. Love for anything other than God gives one mere lifeless rituals.

According to the Quran, only that person is able to achieve a high level of realization of God who is able to develop a relationship with God on a very high plane. The sign of this level of relationship is his developing an intense love for God (2:165) and standing in awe of God alone. (9:18)

When someone develops such a profound relationship with God, he begins to remember Him most of the time, if he is lacking in this relationship by even one percent, he will be deprived of any high level of realization of God.

This was the state of the Jews in later periods of degeneration. Their deep relationship was centred on their great religious scholars. As a result, they were deprived of this high level of realization. This is the case of the Muslims in present times. Each group of Muslims has certain great men and they are deeply attached to them. They have no real attachment with the Almighty.

These great men have been given different titles, *Akaabir*, *Aslaaf*, *Mashaaikh*, *Buzurgan-e-din*, etc. Muslims owe their allegiance to these supposed saintly figures. The proof of their deep attachment is that any criticism of these great men is not tolerated by them. This intense love for anything other than God deprives one of God's granting man true love of Him. Only lifeless rituals come to their share, rather than any high quality of faith which can bring one to a high level of realization. The love of God has a price, and it cannot be attained without paying its price.

TWO ASPECTS OF GOD-REALIZATION

The personality of a believer is made up of these two feelings. On the one hand, he loves God the most. And on the other hand he fears God the most.

There are two aspects of God's realization— Love and Fear. On the one hand, God is very compassionate, and on the other hand, He is very just. When man thinks of the unbounded mercy of God, he develops the feeling which has been called in the Quran, "Loving God Most." (2:165) Similarly when

man thinks of God as being just, he has that feeling which has been alluded to when the Quran speaks of: “those who stand in awe of none but God.” (9:18)

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This is the sign of a high level of realization, in which there is peace as well as agony. A high level of realization implies hope as well as fear. A high level of realization brings conviction as well as uncertainty. A high level of realization embraces closeness as well as distance. A high level of realization is a place where sometimes the believer is sure that he has reached his destination, while sometimes he is in doubt as to whether or not he is on his way to the right destination. At times he has this feeling that he has reached a full stop, while at other times, he is in doubt as to whether he is still at the stage of the comma. This feeling of love and fear is true realization, another name for which is *maarifah*.

PRAISE BE TO GOD (ALHAMD-O-LILLAH)

When man has an ocean of gratitude for God's innumerable blessings, he spontaneously utters words of praise in universal acknowledgement. This is true Alhamd-o-lillah.

The second verse of the Quran is, "Praise be to God, the Lord of the Universe." (1:2) These are words which it takes but a moment to repeat. But if these words have to express true realization of God, their significance is so great that nothing can be greater. That is why, there is a Hadith which has this to say: "*Alham du Lillah*, fills up man's balance (of good deeds) or scale of action." (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 223)

When one thinks that the universe came into being fifteen billion years ago, and that it is still expanding, one finds this extremely frightening. Then, when man thinks about his own creation, he finds that his existence is a miracle, no part of which can be reproduced, however minute.

Then man thinks about how God sends him light and heat from the sun in the space and has provided him a continuous supply of oxygen through the air. The earth gives him a variety of produce. It also gives

him stability through the force of gravity. In fact, a complete life support system has been established for his special benefit.

Thinking upon these things man feels that he owes oceans of gratitude to God. It is as if his soul has been engulfed by a huge divine storm, which has had a thrilling effect upon his mind. When man experiences these indescribably godly feelings, he spontaneously utters words of praise in universal acknowledgement. This is true gratitude to God. It is these feelings of praise to God which have been expressed thus in the Quran: "Praise be to God, the Lord of the Universe." (1:2)

THE SOURCE OF THE LOVE OF GOD

When man consciously discovers God's blessings, a deep feeling of love is produced in him for the Benefactor. This love manifests itself in the form of thanksgiving and worship.

Chapter 16 of the Quran has this to say: "And be thankful for the blessing of God, if it is Him you worship." (16:114) Thanking God for all His blessings is no simple matter, for in this love of God is automatically included. Awareness of God's

blessings produces love in the believers. Then, man spontaneously gives voice to such words as are an acknowledgement of the divine blessings. This is praise (*Shukr*) to God. The bestowal of blessings produces emotions or feelings of love for the Benefactor, and this love is expressed in words of acknowledgement. This is what is meant by gratitude.

This reality has been expressed in a tradition of the Prophet: "That is, love God for all His blessings that He has given you." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3789)

In the original version of this tradition, the word provision is used in a symbolic sense to mean all the kinds of blessings which man has received from God, both material as well as spiritual.

On deeper thinking on this verse of the Quran and the tradition, we learn that the source of the feeling of our love for God, is the awareness of how blessed we are. In the present world whatever man has received, whether great or small, has been received from God as a unilateral reward without there having been any contribution from us. The more one thinks of the state of oneself as well as that of the external world, the more one will discover the blessings of God.

When man consciously discovers divine blessings, the natural result is that a deep feeling of love is produced

in him for the Benefactor. It is this love which manifests itself in the form of thanksgiving and worship.

THE PRICE OF THE LOVE OF GOD

To be held deserving of God's choicest blessings it is desired of man that he love God most (2:165). One who loves God most can never allow feelings of hatred to enter his heart.

Chapter 33 of the Quran describes a law of nature in these words: "God has not placed two hearts in any man's body." (33:4)

It is the result of this law of nature that both hatred and love cannot come together in the heart of a man. If hatred finds a place in a man's heart, the feeling of love will go out of it. Similarly in the case of one who loves everyone, the feeling of hatred for others will find no room in his heart. This is something serious and worth paying attention to.

It is desired of man that he love God most (2:165). Without this, no one can be held deserving of God's choicest blessings. But this love of God necessarily has a price. The price is that in no circumstances should

man allow feelings of hatred to enter his heart. He should forgive and forget all the wrongs done to him, he should remain patient about any harm done to him and he should avoid reacting to anything unpleasant meted out to him. In short, he should be willing to pay any price to save himself from hatred. This is the price of love of God. One who does not pay this price, will remain deprived of the blessings of the love of God.

People generally find one or the other excuse for hatred. They think their hatred is justified for one reason or another. But the truth is that all such excuses are false. When it comes to the love of God, no excuse is justifiable. If one resorts to any such excuse, the cost to him will be the love of God.

STRONG, EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO GOD

Love of God—the strong, deep, emotional attachment of the heart—is produced within one who discovers God’s great, superior blessings at a conscious level.

Chapter 2 of the Quran tells us that “those who believe love God most.” (2:165) What is meant by love of God in this verse? Religious scholars generally

hold that “loving God” means “obedience to God”. The Sufis take it in the sense of a strong love of God (*ishq ilaahi*). But neither of these interpretations conveys the real sense of love. Love, in actual fact, is another name for strong affection, deep emotional attachment.

This strong, deep, emotional attachment of the heart is produced within one who discovers God’s great, superior blessings at a conscious level. God created man when he had no existence (19:9). “God shaped you, formed you well” (40:64). God created man in His own image. God gave man the earth to live on where all his exceptional needs were available. God made a perfect world for man in the form of Paradise, where he can have total fulfilment. God gave man reason and intelligence which, according to a tradition, made him the most respected of all creatures. God created in man this exceptional affection because of which family and society have come into existence (30:21). Furthermore, as a matter of prime importance, God gave man consciousness, so that he might realize the divine blessings. He also gave man a sense of pleasure, so that he might fully enjoy the divine blessings. There are innumerable blessings which God has bestowed upon man. When man thinks about these countless blessings of God, he has the same experience as has

been expressed in the Quran as, “strong love and affection for God” (2:165).

REAL LOVE, RELATIVE LOVE

God alone is the giver of all bounties. When man acknowledges these blessings wholeheartedly, that is another name for the love of God.

Chapter two of the Quran tells us that the believers love God most (2:165). What does it mean to love God? Religious scholars generally say that ‘love of God’ means submission to God. On the other hand, the Sufis hold that loving God means having an intense love (*Ishq*) for God. Neither of these explanations is a correct interpretation of this verse of the Quran.

Love, in actual fact, is another name for a strong heartfelt attachment. When you develop a strong attachment for anyone, that is love. In this respect, God alone deserves to be loved by His servants.

Love, in relation to God, is another name for a thorough-going acknowledgment of God’s blessings. Therefore, without doubt, God alone deserves this kind of love from man.

There are two kinds of love—real and relative. For various reasons, in the life of this world, an individual may develop love for another creature, even sometimes for an animal, or even any inanimate object, such as his home. But no love of this kind exists after death. All of a sudden, man is cut off from all such relationships. For all such feelings are relative, produced on the basis of temporary reasons. And the moment the reasons are no longer there, they vanish instantly. On the contrary, the love of God is real love—feelings produced for real reasons, and when these feelings are engendered in man they are everlasting. Death cannot put an end to them. God gave man existence, and an extremely favourable world to live in, with a sophisticated kind of life support system. Such being the case there are innumerable things in this world—all put there for man's benefit. God alone is the giver of all these bounties. No other being has been instrumental in the granting of these blessings. When man acknowledges these blessings wholeheartedly, that is another name for the love of God.

TWO CATEGORIES OF PARADISE

Those who have made God their supreme concern, live in the presence of God at a psychological level. Then their thinking becomes God-oriented in the full sense.

The Quran says of the people of Paradise that they will find themselves “in the seat of truth with an all-powerful sovereign.” (54:55)

This verse and other verses from the Quran indicate that there are two categories of Paradise. One Paradise is near and the other Paradise is far away. The Paradise which is close at hand will be in the neighbourhood of God and it is here that those people will be lodged who have attained a high level of realization. The Paradise which is far away is that which is distant from the neighbourhood of God. The people of Paradise who are of a general category will find a place in this latter Paradise. That is, the true believers of the general category will find a place in the far off Paradise and not in the nearby Paradise.

The Quran has this to say about people who have attained God-realization: “those who believe love God most.” (2:165) These realised souls have discovered

God as the most superior Being, and acknowledge Him as such in the innermost recesses of their hearts and minds.

They have truly dedicated themselves to God and God has become their supreme concern. Their thinking has become God-oriented in the full sense.

Those who develop this kind of relationship with God begin to live in the presence of God, that is, they begin to live in the vicinity of God in this world itself, apprehending such proximity at a psychological level. In the hereafter they will have the same experience but as a material reality. If they have been experiencing closeness to God in the life of this world itself, in the hereafter they will be blessed with a far greater degree of closeness to Him.

INTENSE LOVE OF GOD

When man discovers that God created him, gave him a life support system and arranged for his guidance through prophets, then his heart overflows with love for and gratitude to God.

The second chapter of the Quran states that believers are “those who love God most.” (2:165)

According to this verse, the sign of a true believer is his capacity for intense love for God.

The truth is that love is produced within man as a response. When man discovers God, his greatest benefactor, his heart is filled with a vast ocean of love. This intense love by its nature is the result of discovery. It is not just the carrying out of a command.

When man discovers himself as having been created in the best of mould (95:4), when he discovers that God has granted him great honour (17:70), when he discovers that God has subjected the earth and the heavens to him, when he discovers the innumerable blessings of the life supporting system, when he discovers God's blessing of having, unbeknownst to him, arranged for his guidance through the prophets, when he discovers God as the Creator and Sustainer of the whole universe, then his heart is overflowing with gratitude to God. This gratitude is the source of the love of God. This produces that deep attachment for God which is called in the Quran 'loving God most'. Loving God, in reality, is to discover God as the greatest of Givers. This is what engenders intense love for Him.

STRONG BELIEVER, WEAK BELIEVER

God is All-powerful and man is completely helpless. This helplessness is the meeting point between God and man. Acknowledging one's helplessness make one deserving of God's succour being granted to him.

Among human beings there are those who are strong and those who are weak, mentally as well as physically. This difference is also found among the believers, in the way they have been created. There are some who are strong believers and others who are weak believers. Referring to this difference, there is a Hadith which says: "To God, the strong believer is better and more loving than the weak believer, but there is goodness in both." (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2664) Now the question arises as to what is meant by goodness in both kinds of believers. The truth is that the goodness in both has two different meanings. The goodness of the strong believer is that God has created him with greater capability, and the goodness of the weak believer is that, due to his lesser ability, God has compensated him with more divine succour. It is obvious that, divine succour ranks higher than human capability. That is why, the weak believer, if he is sincere in his faith, can also, thanks to special

divine succour, perform greater tasks than the strong believer. This is without doubt a good tidings for the weak believer.

Weakness is the cause of helplessness, a state in which man cannot stand by himself. God is All-powerful in the complete sense: the power of God encompasses this universe to the ultimate extent. No place is beyond His power. In such a situation, in this world man can stand only at one place, and that is one of helplessness, the level at which man's relation with God may be established. Helplessness is the meeting point between God and man. It is only when the weak man acknowledges his helplessness that he can become deserving of God's succour being granted to him.

TWO LEVELS OF REALIZATION (MAARIFAH)

One level of maarifah is at the conscious level, when one adopts a modest attitude of his own free will. The second level is when God, out of His mercy, places man in a compulsive situation and praise and thanksgiving spontaneously pour out of his heart.

The Prophet of Islam is reported to have said: "My Lord offered to turn the entire valley of Makkah

into gold. I said, No, my Lord I want to eat my fill one day and go hungry the next. When I am hungry I entreat you, I remember you. And when I have my fill I praise you and thank you.” (*Sunan at-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2347)

The Hadith shows the level of realization of the Prophet. The Prophet’s realization is at the conscious level. He speaks, and takes decisions of his own free will without any pressure being applied to him. This we find exemplified in the above tradition. This level of *maarifah* may be called the adoption of a modest attitude of one’s own volition.

The second level of *maarifah* is that in which God grants His mercy to someone by putting him in a compulsive situation and then owing to the exigencies of such a situation, that person experiences spontaneous praise and thanksgiving.

It is perhaps this point which is mentioned in this tradition: “When God loves anyone, He puts him on trial.” (*Sunan at-Tirmidhi*; Hadith No. 2396)

It is as if the realization of the Prophet is at a voluntary level, while the realization of others is a matter of compulsion.

Fani Badayuni (d. 1941) was an Urdu poet and a truth seeker. One of his couplets expresses this level of

God-realization:

*“Meri hawas ko aishe du Alam bhi tha qubul
tera karam ke tu ne diya dil dukha hua.”*

(My desire sought all the luxuries of both the worlds.
But it is Your Grace that is kind enough to grant me
the grieving heart.)

PEOPLE WORTH ENVYING

Those who make God the object of their love and the centre of all one's feelings and emotions, also become God's beloved. This is the highest level of faith.

According to Sunan Al-Baihaqi, there is a tradition recorded in different books of Hadith which says: “So, I tell you of those who will neither be prophets nor martyrs but on the day of judgement the prophets and the martyrs will envy them, because of their rank with God. There they will be on the pulpit (raised platform) of the light.’ The Prophet was asked who they would be. The Prophet said, ‘They are those who make efforts to bring people to love God, and so enable them that God loves them and they walk the earth as the well-wishers of others.’” (*Shu‘abul Iman of Al-Baihaqi*, Hadith No. 405)

Who are these people whom even prophets would envy? They are those who discover God in such a way that God becomes their beloved, who live in the love of God. There is no being greater than God, therefore, no act can be greater than the love of God. When one lives in the love of God, he will also try to give to others what he has discovered for himself. He will expend all his energy in the effort to make others also discover God in the same way, so that the realization of God may become embedded in their hearts, and God becomes the Being whom they love most, and who is the centre of all their feelings and emotions. Those who make God the object of their love in this way, also become God's beloved—this is the highest level of faith.

SACRED NARRATION

When a servant of God loves and remembers God, then God loves him from this world to the next and that servant becomes the recipient of divine mercy.

The wordings of one Hadith Qudsi (sacred narration), attributed to God are: “God said that when one of my servants finds meeting Me the

most cherished thing, (then) for Me also meeting him becomes the most cherished thing.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 7504)

There is nothing mysterious about this. It is an expression of a known reality. It is an event of discovery by man and the response to, and appreciation of this discovery by God.

The truth is that when a servant of God thinks deeply, the result is that he discovers God and when he remembers God and His boundless blessings, it is but natural that he should start having feelings of boundless love for God. God loves such a servant from this world to the next world, and that servant becomes the recipient of spiritual divine mercy.

When a servant of God has love in his heart for Him, when he discovers God as the real Benefactor, acknowledges the Benefactor as well as His blessings; then he becomes a servant who is desired by God. He is a servant who will be fortunate enough to be able to meet God. This is the servant who will be eternally lodged in the neighbourhood of God. This eternal neighbourhood of God is another name for Paradise.

The source of loving God is the discovery of God’s blessings. It is owing to this discovery that the door to the great blessings of the Hereafter is opened to

him. It is through this discovery that sublime feelings of gratitude and feelings of acknowledgement of God are produced in a person. It is this sublime feeling of acknowledgement which is another name for the love of God. The love of God by man is the result of discovery, and the love of man by God is the result of His appreciation of this discovery.

LOVE, OBEDIENCE

The love of God is the most elevated state that stems from realization of God. Obedience to God and His Prophet is a necessary demand of this love.

In chapter two of the Quran what typifies the believer has been indicated in these words: “Those who believe, love God most.” (2:165)

Love literally means a strong affection. A believer is one who develops a strong affection for his Lord.

There are some who take love in this verse to mean obedience. To support this interpretation, they refer to the following verse of the Quran: “Say, ‘If you love God, follow me and God will love you.’” (3:31)

This reference does not warrant taking love in the sense of obedience. This verse of the Quran, rather

than defining the love of God, merely tells us one demand or aspect of the love of God, and that is, that the love of God demands that you become the follower of God's Prophet.

The love of God is the most elevated state. The source of the love of God is the realization of His blessings. When a person discovers God as a perfect benefactor, this results in his total immersion in the love of God. The love of God becomes the most cherished thing in his heart and mind.

The truth is that, everything that we have in this world, right from one's own existence to all things external, are gifts from God—including one's feelings of happiness and pleasure. This being so, it is but natural that, man should love God more than anything else, that he will have a strong attachment to God and that God should become the centre of his feelings and emotions. Such love is a psychological state of the highest order. It is a feeling that cannot be properly described in words. Obedience to God and His Prophet is a necessary demand of this love. But love cannot be defined as obedience.

LOVE OF GOD

An all-embracing love of God arises in one who discover God as one's Creator, Giver and Benefactor. Then God becomes one's Supreme concern. Everything else becomes secondary.

Someone once asked me, "In your writing you lay more emphasis on the love of God than on anything else. Please tell us how to love God. What is the way to do this?" I asked him, "Have you got a son?" He said he had. Then I asked him, "Do you love your son?" He said, he did. Then I asked him, "When your son was born to you, did you go to people asking them how to love your child?" He said, "No". Then I observed: "Without asking anyone how to love your son, you love your son but when it comes to loving God, you are asking me how to love God?"

I said, "This is no simple matter. It relates to your consciousness." Every father loves his son, for he thinks that his son is an extension of himself. This is why every father starts loving his son automatically. In this matter, no father needs to ask anyone how to love his son. God's place is far far greater for everyone than this. God is your Creator and you are His creature, yet you have not discovered God as your Creator. It is this lack of awareness that explains your lack of love

for God. If you had discovered God as a Creator, as a Giver, as your Benefactor, then certainly, you would not have asked this question. An all-embracing love of God, your Creator, would have arisen on its own. God would have been Supreme in your life. All other things would have been secondary to Him.

There is nothing artificial about the love of God, it is the call of human nature. It is indeed the wrong conditioning of man's environment which turns him away from God. If you could de-condition yourself by your own thought processes, you would on your own become attached to God. You would start loving God by the force of the voice of your very own nature, just as you love your son.

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

A deep love of God formed by a profound discovery of divine blessings produces a deep relationship with God in a person. This is called 'loving God most'.
(2:165)

Discovering God as an external reality is not enough. A deep relationship with God can be established only when man discovers God as the Giver of all blessings. For instance, everyone is deeply

attached to his parents. Man keeps thinking that his parents have done this for him, his parents have done that for him. If God were the object of this kind of thinking in a person, a strong attachment with God would be formed.

The present world with all its components is an expression of the blessings of God. For a thinking person, every such experience and every observation remind him of the universal gifts of the blessings of God. This discovery is enough to make him regard God as his Benefactor. He becomes the grateful servant of God. But this feeling becomes the most intense when man discovers all these blessings at the level of his own being. The first discovery causes man to utter these words, "God, You have given me so much!" But further discoveries cause him to call out spontaneously, "O God, You are so merciful that You have given me those blessings of which I knew, and besides those You gave me Your countless blessings about which I had no knowledge and so could not have asked You for them."

What is most desirable for man is a deep relationship with God. Such a relationship can be formed by profound thinking which causes man to discover divine blessings at the level of his own being. It is this kind of personal discovery that can produce a deep

relationship for anyone. It is this deep relationship which has been called 'loving God most'. (2:165)

CLOSENESS TO GOD

God will only accept those who have developed a divine personality in themselves in this world. In the Hereafter only divine souls will find a place in the vicinity of God in Paradise.

Plastic Surgery in medical terms is known as auto-grafting. If any grafting is to be done on any part of the human body, the skin of the person concerned is used for this purpose. No other person's skin can be successfully used. Making this point, Professor William Boyd writes: "Self will not accept not-self."

The most fortunate people in the Hereafter will be those who can have God's company, once they are lodged in the divine vicinity of Paradise. These fortunate people will be those who have adopted the divine way of life in this world, who have opted for a life of divine choice, and who measure up, therefore, to the divine criterion. These superior qualities can be produced only in one who develops his consciousness to such a degree as may enable him to realize God at a deeper level. The life before death has the status

of a preparatory period. What man must do here is discover what God wants from us and then he should build his personality accordingly. His thinking, his speech, his behaviour, in short, his whole lifestyle must be dyed in God's hue. (2:138) Man should be so sensitive in this matter that he will refuse to allow any erosion of this ideal. This is divine personality, and those who are able to develop it are the fortunate ones who will find a place close to God in the eternal life. Just as, 'self does not accept not self,' similarly God will not accept those human beings who have not developed a divine personality. In the eternal world of the Hereafter only divine souls will be fortunate enough to find a place in the vicinity of God.

THE CONCEPT OF INCARNATION

The concept of unity (*wahdat*) does not exist between God and man, but in Islam the concept of the nearness between God and man is valid in the perfect sense: "Prostrate yourself and come near" (96:19).

Some religions subscribe to the concept of incarnation, which is also known as *hulool*. *Hulool* means embodiment in flesh or *vahdate-wajood*

(monism). *Hulool* or *tajseem* (incarnation) has been expressed thus: “God’s embodiment in human form.”

The concept of incarnation is originally a philosophic construct. The ancient philosophers held that there was a God of this universe, but that God was a kind of spirit, without corporeal form. When this God wanted to manifest Himself, he took human form. It is this which is called “*avtarvaad*” in the Hindu religion. According to this concept, God is essentially an impersonal God, but in different periods of history he has taken some human form. This is called taking an avatar in the Hindu religion.

This concept of *hulool* or incarnation, is totally baseless. Some Sufis have introduced this concept in the form of monism into Islam, but it is certainly without foundation, and has no room in Islam.

The Quran says, “Prostrate yourself and come near” (96:19). This shows that the incidence of nearness between God and man does take place but God and man do not become one entity. Rather what happens is that when the servant becomes a true *sajid* (one who prostrates himself before God), at a psychological level, he experiences nearness to God. He comes in contact with God. He whispers to God. In the words of the Hadith, he begins to worship God as if he were seeing God. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 50) The

concept of unity (*vahdat*) does not exist between God and man, but in Islam the concept of the nearness between God and man is valid in the perfect sense.

GLORIFICATION OF GOD

Hamd or acknowledgment entails man's acknowledgement of the innumerable blessings he receives from God. Offering the utmost gratitude to God enables one to gain entry into Paradise.

Man is required to glorify God. That is to say that a believer's God-realization should be so deep that he may acknowledge God from the innermost recesses of his heart. From the Quran we learn that this, the glorification of God, is also required from the whole world of nature. According to the Quran, "All that is in the heavens and on the earth extols the glory of God." (64:1)

What does this mean? It means that what God wants from His creatures more than anything else is *Hamd*, that is acknowledgment. Besides man, all the things of the universe are constantly engaged in God's glorification, albeit in an unspoken language. God has

exceptionally granted man speech, so he is required to glorify God in spoken language. On seeing how highly meaningful the universe is, man cannot but make a profound acknowledgement of God. This is known as *Hamd*, or praise.

When man thinks about himself, he finds that God has created him in the best of moulds (95:4). Similarly, when he reflects on the creatures of God, he finds that everything is in the ultimate state of perfection. “God has ordered all things to perfection.” (27:88)

Reflection on all these things produce vibrant praise for God within him. Man, with all his heart, soul and mind, starts acknowledging God.

The Quran tells us, “He has given you all that you asked of Him.” (14:34)

That is, God has given man everything he asked for. When you realize this it means that God gave to man all that he wanted, without his even asking for it. When man thinks of the innumerable blessings given by God, then he offers the utmost gratitude to God. It is *Hamd* or acknowledgment of this high order that will enable the believer to gain entry into Paradise.

A CASE OF EXCEPTIONAL MERCY

Pleasure is an exceptional gift given to man that he can enjoy in the present world in a limited way, whereas in Paradise he will experience this to the ultimate degree.

Man's being is a manifestation of the mercy of God. All the things that have been given to man in this world according to his needs (14:34), will be given to man in greater abundance in Paradise as a special mercy of God. According to the Quran: "All these things will be given to man in Paradise according to his desires." (41:31)

It is desired of man that he discovers all these blessings in relation to divine mercy. Just as in the present world, man's receiving everything according to his needs is a manifestation of divine mercy, so also in Paradise is the receiving of all things according to one's desire an expression of divine mercy. In the present world, we experience divine mercy at the level of our needs being met. Paradise is the place where we will experience divine mercy at the level of enjoyment.

Pleasure is an exceptional gift given to man. In the entire universe it is man alone who has been given

this special capacity to enjoy things. He has this ability to enjoy things in the present world in a limited way, whereas in Paradise he will experience this to the ultimate degree.

The special mercy God gives to man is his greatest asset. It is the discovery of this special mercy which produces the feeling of the utmost love for his Lord (2:165). This strong affection is the most superior level of God-realization. A real basis is required for this strong affection for God. This real basis is man's ability to discover God's exceptional mercy. It is this discovery which will produce in man a strong affection for God. Without this discovery, no other method or way can promote the attainment of this state.

GOD IN OUR HEARTS

The true believer is one who discovers the Greatness and Glory of the Lord of the Worlds. Then his heart is filled with God's Greatness.

Maulana Abdul Basit Oomri, who lives in Qatar, is associated with our Dawah Mission. He listens to our Internet lecture broadcast from CPS, New Delhi. He sent an e-mail to me expressing his

impression in these words: “The Ruler and Founder of the United Arab Emirates, Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan, died in 2004. At that time there was a program broadcast on Arab radio on Shaikh Zayed. This program was titled: “Shaikh Zayed in Our Hearts”. In this program people spoke on the personality and contributions of the Shaikh. People would often have tears in their eyes while expressing their thoughts. When I thought about this incident, I felt that there is no one in this world who speaks of ‘God in our Hearts’. There ought to be a program entitled “God in Our Hearts”, on which people speak on the blessings of God, the Majesty of God and the greatness of God, thus expressing their love for God.

Indeed, the true believer is one who discovers the greatness of the Lord of the Worlds. Anyone who discovers the Lord of the Worlds in all His Glory and Power, will feel his heart filled up with His Greatness. He will start living in the greatness of God. God will become his greatest asset. Everything in the universe will remind him of God. He will see the Glory of God in the sun and the moon. He will observe the wonders of God in the mountains, and on the oceans. Human life and death will remind him of God.

Those believers who live in God’s greatness will have

their lives coloured in the hue of God. (2:138) When they will speak, they will speak of the greatness of God. When they write, their writing will be an introduction to the Majesty of God.

THE REMEMBRANCE OF GOD

Remembrance of God is that man's mind may become so alert that he is able to relate creation to the Creator. Everything then becomes for man a reminder of God.

Remembering God is without doubt the greatest form of worship but this remembrance does not mean just repeating the name of God with each rosary bead you count. The remembrance of God is that man's mind may become so alert that he is able to relate creation to the Creator. Everything then becomes for man a reminder of God. A certain person was once walking along a street in the city with his friend. There was a toy shop on the way and when they reached this shop he stayed there for a moment. The friend saw that when he looked at the shop, his eyes were filled with tears. When his friend asked him why his eyes welled up, he did not reply. Finally when

his friend insisted, he told him that two years ago he had come here with his eight year old son. The child had asked him to buy a toy for him from this shop. But the next morning his son had to go to another city with the family so the father told him that when he came back, he would buy this toy for him. But on the way back the car met with an accident and the child died on the spot. When he looked at the toy in this shop, he remembered his child's desire and then he became disturbed and tears came to his eyes.

For this person the toy became a point of reference for the remembrance of his son. When reminded of his son he started crying. Similarly, man's own existence and the entire world around him are points of reference for the remembrance of God. Every event of creation reminds us of the Creator. If people were as serious about God as they were for their children, everything in this world would serve as a reminder of God. Everything would awaken godly thinking in them. They would find a reflection of God in everything. Everything would serve as a reminder of God.

TWO LIFESTYLES

Those who live in a godly way will be lodged in eternal Paradise in the Hereafter. Those who live an ungodly life will be eternally deprived of divine blessings.

There are two ways of leading one's life in this world—one, living in God, the other, living in something other than God. True believers are those who live in God. Those who live in something other than God, may be described as worldly people. These two lifestyles were just as prevalent in earlier times as they are today.

Who are the people who live in God? They are those who are serious about life, and who being truth seekers, ultimately discover God. Then they have to build their lives in accordance with this discovery. Their thinking, speech, behaviour, dealings with others—all become dyed in God's hue. (2:138) A very different kind of life is that lived by those who accord some worldly thing that status which is due to God alone, who think only about material progress and establish their relationship accordingly.

For them their family enjoys the greatest importance. Political matters form the centre of their attention.

They regard the interests of their community as supreme. Worldly honour and worldly progress are the be all and end all for them. They are happy when they make some worldly progress, conversely, worldly loss makes them sad. Worldly things are the target of their ambitions and desire. All such people are those who live an ungodly life.

Those who live in a godly way are those who are desired by God. They will be lodged in eternal Paradise in the Hereafter. Those who live an ungodly life are not God's desired servants. Such people will be eternally deprived of divine blessings.

THE POWER OF HELPLESSNESS

Arrogance (*kibr*) is a means of distancing oneself from God, while helplessness (*ijz*) is a means of achieving closeness to God.

People are aware of the power of the oppressed, but they do not know the power of the helpless, although, the power of the helpless is greater than that of the oppressed.

Helplessness is a greater reality than being oppressed.

If someone discovers his helplessness in the real sense, if someone in the real sense realizes or understands that he is totally helpless as compared to the Omnipotent God, then such words will come to his lips as even the Earth and the Heavens cannot bear to hear. These words are: “O God! You have created me as a helpless person. Now can You become indifferent in my case? How can You do so?”

What is helplessness? Helplessness is in fact the discovery of the real position of man. Helplessness is man’s real position in relation to God. Helplessness, or (*ijz*), is not simply powerlessness. *Ijz* is another name for the discovery of reality. *Ijz* is a power on its own. *Ijz* is the greatest recommendation to God. *Ijz* means being pleased in being God’s servant and, without doubt, there is no position greater than that of servitude to God for man.

The Quran has this to say: “Prostrate yourself and come near.” (96:19) *Sajda* or prostration is the ultimate form of the expression of *ijz* or helplessness. Helplessness, without doubt, is the greatest means of being near to God. At the last extent of helplessness one starts having that experience of God which is called, ‘meeting God’.

It is a reality that arrogance distances man from God, whereas helplessness brings man closer to God. *Kibr*

or arrogance, is a means of distancing oneself from God, while helplessness, *ijz* is a means of achieving closeness to God.

CRYING IN REMEMBRANCE OF GOD

Self-prostration (*sajdah*) is a moment of nearness between God and man. This experience of nearness to God is the greatest spiritual experience a man can have.

It happened once that the parents had to send their son to a distant place, where he had to stay for about 10 years without any further contact between them. Finally, a friend of the son came to meet the mother. He had a photograph of her son. When the mother saw this photograph, her eyes were full of tears. Why did this happen? The reason was that on seeing the photograph the mother remembered her son. After seeing the photograph an invisible contact was established between the mother and the son as so many memories were associated with it.

This example tells us what it is to weep in God's remembrance. Such remembrance is the result of a contact at a psychological level between the Lord

and His servant. When a human soul undergoes this experience of contact with God, then it is reflected in the form of tears.

This same reality has been expressed thus in chapter 19 of the Quran: “For when the revelations of the Merciful were recited to them, they fell down, prostrating themselves and weeping.” (19:58) At another place in chapter 96, the Quran has this to say: “Prostrate yourself and come closer to God.” (96:19) A true act of self-prostration is a moment of nearness between God and man. At that moment a spiritual contact is formed at an invisible level between God and man. This experience of contact is so intense that tears fall from the eyes of the servant.

In the life of this world this experience of nearness to God is the greatest spiritual experience a man can have. This state of nearness is not between two equals but rather is between two who are unequal. This is why at the time of contact, man undergoes the same experience as that of the mountain during the time of Prophet Moses, because in this kind of unequal contact, “When God manifested Himself on the mountain, He broke it into pieces.” (7:143). For a servant this experience is like the coming together of two extreme states, in one sense intense anguish, and in another sense, ultimate comfort.

THE SPIRIT OF RELIGION

People are in awe while passing through a worldly palace, but show no awe when they pass through the divine palace. Showing no signs of modesty, they distance themselves from the mercy of God.

Once, having been invited to participate in a conference I had occasion to go to a country which had formerly been ruled by a king but now the monarchy had been abolished, and replaced by a presidential form of government. All the grandeur and majesty of the ancient royal palaces were still intact. But this royal palace was now called the 'Presidential Palace'.

I and other members of the conference were ushered into this Presidential Palace to meet the President of the country. When we entered this awe-inspiring building we saw that everyone's demeanour had changed all of a sudden. Everyone fell silent and when they talked, it was in hushed tones. They all looked very serious and in awe as they looked at all the objects in the Palace.

On seeing this, I thought that the world we live in is also a great Palace of God. Everywhere there are the

splendours and wonders of God's Glory and Power. In this divine Palace, man should have the same feeling—only more intense—which he has while walking inside a royal palace. But when I see people walking along the roads of the world, I am shocked to see that they walk here as if totally unaware of this great reality. There are no signs of modesty on their faces which they should actually demonstrate.

On the faces of the people I find unawareness rather than discretion. Their gait shows no modesty. There is arrogance in the way they walk instead of responsibility registered on their faces, there is insensitivity. In this world of God, people are not even as serious as they are while walking inside some palace or some presidential home. Those who are in awe while passing through the human palace show no awe while walking through the divine palace. It is as if they have distanced themselves from the mercy of God.

GOD'S PLEASURE, MAN'S PLEASURE

Depending on what one's inner state, intention (niyyah) is while doing anything, actions can either be seeking the pleasure of God or seeking the pleasure of man. The former have their seats reserved in Paradise, while the latter have a place reserved in the eternal dustbin.

The Quran and Hadith have in many ways stressed this point that in respect of the Hereafter “Only that action has any value in which the spirit of seeking the pleasure of God is immanent” (57:27). Any action which is devoid of this spirit is not going to be of any value in the tally of deeds in the Hereafter.

God does not reach a verdict just by seeing an individual's outward acts. He decides by looking into the inward states, or the state of the heart of the person concerned. This is called ‘intention’ or ‘Niyah’ in the Shariah. In this respect, there are two kinds of human actions. One is that which has been done by seeking the pleasure of God, and the other is that which has been done by seeking the pleasure of man.

One who seeks the pleasure of God is always focused on God. In all matters he strives to gain the approval, or avoid the disapproval of God. He always bases his

behaviour on the principle of truth. He speaks only what is in accordance with the will of the Lord. He walks only in the direction commanded by God. He adheres to this path, or attitude or way, even although he is opposed by everyone.

Conversely, the case of one who is the seeker of man's pleasure is different. The attention of such a person is focused on man instead of God. In all matters he thinks of his nation, of his community, of his circle, of his party, of his worldly guardians, etc. He always says such things as are liked by these people, he does such things as are aimed at making him popular with others.

Those who seek the pleasure of God are sensitive about God's will to the ultimate extent. They can ignore all else, but ignoring the importance of God is not possible for them. On the contrary, those who seek the pleasure of man are sensitive about man's affairs only. They totally focus on man, just as they should have focused on God. The former have their seats reserved in Paradise, while the latter have a place reserved for them in Hell.

THE GLORIFICATION OF GOD

When the realization that God is All-Powerful, the Giver, while man is only a taker becomes articulate, it is described as the glorification of the Lord.

The Quran has repeatedly urged man to glorify God. There are other similar synonymous words used in the Quran such as praise (1:2), glorify (30:17), revere (*tahmid, tamjid, taqdis*), etc. We can sum up all these words as acknowledgement. What is called acknowledgement in relation to man, is called glorification in relation to God, that is to say, man's expressions of God's glory and majesty.

The relation between God and man is that of Giver and Taker. A servant has nothing to give to God. The only thing he can offer God is to discover God as the Lord of the worlds, as the All-Powerful Being. Realization is the name of this discovery. When a servant strives towards God, that is, engages in deep thinking about God, at that time by God's grace, the reality of God, the Omnipotent, is revealed to him. He attains realization of God with perfect conviction. He subsequently experiences an intellectual storm in his mind. He starts uttering words of high acknowledgement of God. This is the inner realization

becoming articulate. This is the event which has been described as the glorification of the Lord. This is to discover the Creator through the creation. This is to discover the Sought One by the seeker, this is to discover the Omnipotent by the totally helpless. This discovery can be differently described as the moment when a human being discovers his Lord. He is then in a position to see God without seeing Him, to experience God's closeness in spite of the immeasurable distance separating them.

THE OMNIPOTENT GOD AND HELPLESS MAN

Only those men and woman have the right to live in this world who accept their position of helplessness vis-à-vis the All-Powerful God. This helplessness leads to humility and the voluntary acknowledgement of the higher truth.

The relation between God and man is not that God is the whole and man is a part of Him or God is the ocean and man is a drop in it. All such relations are wholly baseless. The truth is that the relation between God and man is that God is everything and man, in relation to God, is nothing. God is self-existing,

whereas man is totally, and in every respect, a creature which has come into existence by the command of God. The special virtue of man is that it is endowed with consciousness. Man illustrates the phenomenon of conscious helplessness. And, without doubt, there is nothing greater than this. This is the real value of man. Man is a unique creature who presents another dimension of conscious helplessness as compared to conscious Power. He proves to be egoless as compared to the Divine Ego.

This conscious helplessness is man's greatest asset. This is the greatest discovery for man. When any man or woman speaks in the language of helplessness, they are making the right use of words as compared to those men and women who speak in the language of superiority such as pride, arrogance, self-centeredness, selfishness, etc. That is when they make the wrong use of their language. In this world, only those men have the right to live who pay its price and this price is humility and helplessness. Without paying this price of helplessness, living in this world is without doubt equal to committing a crime.

Helplessness is in fact another name for accepting the highest form of reality. Helplessness is not something to be done out of compulsion. Helplessness is in

fact the positive feelings which are produced by the voluntary acknowledgement of the higher truth. There is no passivity about helplessness. It is a far more active state than anything else.

INITIAL HAMD (PRAISE), ULTIMATE HAMD

In this world a believer, due to his limitations, can engage only in the initial *Hamd*. In the unlimited world of God, a believer will have the opportunity to express the ultimate *Hamd* of God in eternal Paradise.

Rabindra Nath Tagore (died 1941) a famous Bengali writer, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. He wrote in one of his poems: “The whole life was spent in setting the strings of the Sitar, but I could not ultimately sing the song that I wanted to sing.”

Tagore said this in his particular poetic way. But this is more true of *Hamd*, Praise of God. When a believer discovers God, he spontaneously desires to praise God. He wants to sing the song of God’s majesty. But his time in this world comes to an end without the

feeling that the glory of God has been extolled. The Quran urges the believer to say: "Praise be to God, the Lord of the universe." The Quran (1:2) tells us that this *Hamd* (Praise) will again be expressed in the Hereafter. What is the difference between the two? In fact, in this world a believer, due to his limitations, can engage only in the initial *Hamd*. In the unlimited world of God, a believer will have the opportunity to express the ultimate *Hamd* of God. In present times, people are busy talking of their beloved personalities and other worldly subjects. In the Hereafter, only God and His glory will be talked about. It will be an ongoing discussion which will continue eternally with fresh aspects each time. It will never come to an end. At that time, a believer will feel that the new circumstances have given him the opportunity to tell the untold story of God, and continue to do so for all eternity. The present life is like a training period for producing this spiritual capability. In the Hereafter, he will be given the capacity to engage in unlimited *Hamd* (praise) of God. This is undoubtedly a manifestation of the greatest grace of God. This blessing will be given only to those who in their lives before death have proved their capability for this.

CONSCIOUSNESS IN NATURE

The Creator has made consciousness inherent in human nature. This serves as inner compulsion to recognize God and establish a special relationship of love with Him.

The one most loved by anyone—man or woman—is the mother. This love does not stem from logic. It is totally governed by internal consciousness. If this internal consciousness did not exist, no one could establish the relationship of love for one's mother. The same is true of God, the Creator and Sustainer, only on a more elevated scale.

God's existence is undoubtedly a reality. But we cannot see God with our physical eyes. Similarly, rational or logical arguments work only partially to prove the existence of God. The rational or logical argument about God only takes one to the extent of probability and not to the extent of conviction. It is a great blessing from the Creator that He has made consciousness inherent in human nature. Recognizing God has, therefore, become as certain a thing as recognizing one's mother and establishing a special relationship

of love with her. This natural consciousness serves as inner compulsion for everyone.

This inner compulsion is greater than the greatest of blessings for human beings. Had this compulsory consciousness not been a part of human nature, just rational, logical argument would not have sufficed to bring about belief in God. Even if man were to believe in God, he would not have done so with total conviction in the absence of this consciousness, inhering in his nature. Perhaps without this, no one would have become a true believer in God. The only exception would have been the prophets whom God had made experience faith by direct observation.

The greatest blessing man has is his capacity to realize his Creator. Had everyone expected to believe in God only as a matter of logic, this would have ill-served mankind. It is a great blessing—rather the greatest blessing of God, that He has saved man from this dependency upon logic alone.

THANKFULNESS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Everything man receives is from God. However, when man attributes these blessings to someone other than God, feelings of gratefulness and acknowledgment are not produced within him.

The greatest thing that is desired from man is that he should be grateful to his Creator and Sustainer, and that he should acknowledge God as the Giver of all blessings. But this thankfulness or acknowledgement is the rarest of rare things in this world. Man lives in this world amidst a multitude of divine blessings, yet he remains ungrateful.

What is the reason for this? The reason is that whatever man receives, he gives himself rather than God the credit for it. How did he come to this world? This was owing to his parents. How does he survive in this world? Through his planning and strategy. How did he make progress? By his cleverness. How did all his issues get solved? Through his friends and relatives. How did he receive the place of honour? Through his connections and relations, etc.

In this way, what happens is that everything man receives from God is attributed to someone else, rather than to God.

It is due to this wrong association that feelings of gratefulness and acknowledgment are not produced within him. Just uttering some words like '*Alhamdulillah*' or '*Subhana Allah*' do not suffice for thanksgiving to God.

Gratefulness is always a result of discovery. First of all man discovers the reality of God being our greatest benefactor. This discovery awakens his mind. Subsequently, a process sets in in his mind which results in the flowing of a spring of gratefulness within his heart.

This internal state produced within one finds expression in the form of words of thanksgiving and acknowledgement of God's blessings. One who has not known gratefulness at the level of discovery will fail to do the obeisance of thankfulness to God at the level of human utterance.

THE HIGH DEGREE OF THE DIVINE EXPERIENCE

The realization of God lies hidden in the unconscious mind of man. Shocking experiences awaken this. Then words of creative remembrance are awakened in a person with the special divine blessing granted by God to His chosen servants.

In some traditions it has been recorded that when God's servant calls upon his Lord and God loves that servant, He tells the angel Gabriel not to hasten to fulfil his need, because "I love to hear his voice." (*Al-Mu'jam al-Awsat* of Al-Tabarani, Hadith No. 8442) This refers to the word of true realization. When someone suffers from some problem, at the time all his innermost feelings get awakened and his latent nature comes to the fore.

This is the moment which in modern psychology has been termed brain storming. At that time, such words come out of one's lips as express true divine praise and acknowledgement.

The truth is that in the unconscious mind of a human being there lies hidden, very deeply, the realization of the Creator. But this realization is initially in a dormant state. To awaken these latent hidden feelings, man needs

shocking experiences. On such occasions the latent feelings, that is, godly feelings are awakened, and at that time such words of the remembrance of God come out as are of a creative nature. These words he had never heard from anyone, nor had such words ever come out of his lips, nor had he read them from any book.

This remembrance of God is of a very special nature. In other words, we can call it creative remembrance of God. It happens with the special divine blessing which God grants to His chosen servants.

LIMITLESS MAJESTY OF GOD

The extremely vast universe suspended in limitless space being proof of the infinity of God's majesty defies all description, making man stand in awe of his Creator.

The Quran states: "It was God who raised the heavens with no visible supports."(13:2)

This verse describes a great universal reality. This reality is so great that, on giving it deeper thought, man's heart might well tremble and the hairs on his body stand on end.

In ancient traditional times, man believed that all the objects visible to him had some material support. For instance, the stars, he supposed, were hanging from some heavenly roof, and the earth was based on some material support. But in modern times, with the invention of the telescope, space was observed by it. It was learnt that the whole universe consists entirely of empty space without any support.

Galaxies, the solar system, the stars, and planets were all revolving in a limitless space without any support. All this is happening in such a vast expanded space that even the most powerful telescopes cannot view the boundaries.

This universal system without any support is so huge that we can only make a conjecture about its magnitude. The estimates arrived at about the vast universe and the photos taken of it show that the distances between the heavenly bodies and the earth are so great that they cannot be described in ordinary numbers. They can be estimated only in light years: A light year is a unit of astronomical distance, equal to the distance that light travels in one year, approximately 6,000,000,000,000 miles. Such an extremely vast universe suspended in limitless space is a proof of the infinity of God's majesty which defies all description.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FEAR OF GOD

Fear of God is the real focus in Islam. Being the source of all positive qualities, it makes man both serious and modest and is the greatest source of personal reform.

Faith is the discovery of God. This discovery produces certain qualities in a human being. One such important quality may be called fear of God (*khushu* or *taqwa*), that is, always going in fear of being accountable to God. That is, God will take us to task for all our misdeeds. By introspection one must remind oneself of the accountability on the Day of Judgement. This is the sign of true faith. The true believer is only that person whose greatest concern is God. The true believer's focus of thinking is only one and that is fear of God. That is, he never forgets that he will be called to account by God. Such a person is always conscious of God.

In present times, great movements have been launched for the revival of the Muslim community. But these movements have been infructuous. The basic reason for this failure lies in the shifting of focus in all these Muslim movements. Some have focused on protection

from those who are conceived of as enemies, some have focused on political power, some have focused on the forms of worship, others on community identity, etc. That is why all the Muslim movements of the present time, despite a great furore, have totally failed to achieve the desired result.

It is a fact that fear of God is the real focus in Islam. The fear of God is the source of all positive qualities. The fear of God makes a man both serious and modest. Fear of God instils in man the incentive to admit his mistakes. Fear of God is the greatest source of personal reform. Fear of God nullifies the individual's sense of his own greatness and paves the way for social unity. Fear of God makes one a realist. Fear of God produces Quranic thinking in a man. Fear of God compels man to live in constant remembrance of his death. Fear of God saves man from becoming egoistic and arrogant. The position of the fear of God is, to use the jargon of the carrom board, that of the master stroke, which completely transforms man's entire personality.

THE MAJESTY OF GOD IN THE VAST UNIVERSE

Conscious discovery of God in all His majesty ushers in an intellectual revolution in a person. With this belief a new spiritual (*Rabbani*) personality emerges within him.

There are about 100 billion galaxies in the observable universe and there are more than 100 billion stars in each galaxy. Our solar system is a very tiny part of this gigantic cosmos. It is in this solar system that our planet earth is situated.

All these stars and planets are continuously moving in an extremely organized fashion in a limitless space. This vast universe has been in existence for about 13.3 billion years, but in all that time collisions between celestial bodies have not taken place.

This great universe is a witness to the existence of a greater Creator. A Creator who is not just a Creator but who is also ever-living and self-existing. He is Almighty as well as being an unlimited source of wisdom and mercy. This Creator manages this vast universe at such a high level that the whole universe is astonishingly defect-free.

Belief in God is not a mere repetition of certain words. Belief, in fact, is another name for the discovery of this great Creator. When a thinking person reflects, he discovers great miracles of creation, right from his existence to the rest of the universe. Then, he spontaneously calls out that, without doubt, there is a Creator of this universe, and that he should acknowledge Him and surrender before Him totally.

Belief in God is another name for this conscious discovery. This belief, or realization, is an intellectual revolution of a nature which transforms man's entire personality. With this belief a new spiritual (*Rabbani*) personality emerges.

It is this person with the revolutionized personality who is called a believer, or a Muslim. Such a personality is inevitably the result of conscious realization. In the absence of such a conscious discovery, there can be no believing, spiritual personality.

THE FEELINGS OF WORSHIP

Those who make one God the centre of their feelings of worship are the true worshippers. Whereas those who make other than God their object of worship are indulging in *shirk*, or polytheism. And God will never accept this from anyone.

Man by birth is a worship-loving creature. Man wants that there should be a Deity or an object of worship, whom he may worship. Man wants that there should be someone whom he may make the centre of his attention, upon whom he can focus. This is why all the communities or nations become hero worshippers. They made their Mr. Bigs or VIP's or saints (*Akaabir*) the centre of their feelings of worship. This extraordinary attachment to heroes is, in fact, the wrong use of the feelings of worship with which God has imbued man right from the time of his birth. Just as when man feels thirsty, he is compelled to drink water, similarly, every man is forced by his inner feelings to make someone his God, his object of worship and worship Him or It. No one can be free from this feeling.

This is the point upon which man is being tested. Those who make the one God the centre of their feelings of worship are the true worshippers. They are the ones

who have passed their test, whereas those who make anything other than God the centre of their worship are false worshippers, and have failed in their test.

Those people who make the forces of nature, or idols, the centre of feelings latent in their nature and others who make national heroes their object of worship and reserve their feelings of worship for them, are indulging in *shirk*, or polytheism. And God will never accept this from anyone.

Similarly, there is another class which starts loving his Mr. Bigs, like leaders or saints, with the devotion that they ought to show to God. They start attaching such importance to the words of their Mr. Bigs as they should attach to the words of God. Such people are not ready to listen to any kind of criticism about their leaders or saints. This reverence for their saints becomes the best possession of their lives. This is undoubtedly what has been stated thus in the Quran: "They have taken their learned men and their monks for their lords besides God." (9:31) This is to make God out of something which is not God.

The true monotheist is one, whose feelings are centered to the ultimate extent on God alone. One who is not focusing on any other personages, will never become enraged on hearing any criticism against their religious leaders or their Mr. Bigs.

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

When anyone does something to earn God's pleasure, in the course of his tasks, he has such experiences as if he were meeting with God. At that time, he feels as if he is seeing God.

According to a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad: "God will say on the Day of Judgement, 'Son of Adam, I was sick but you did not visit me.' He will reply: 'My God, How could I have visited you when You are the Lord of the World?' Thereupon God will say: 'Did you not know that one of My servants was sick, and you did not visit him? If you had visited him you would have found Me there.'" (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2569)

From this tradition, we learn that when anyone does something to earn God's pleasure, in the course of his tasks, he has such experiences as if he were meeting with God. At that time, he feels as if he is seeing God.

A visit to a patient which is not done to seek God's pleasure, but for some worldly purposes, does not engender godly feelings. Another kind of visit to a patient is one when a servant of God is greatly perturbed to hear about the sick man and is reminded

of God's command to be merciful to others so that He will be merciful to man on the Day of Judgement. With the sincere feeling of pleasing God, he goes to see the sick man and prays for him and helps him in whatever way he can. In this way, the believer experiences God in this world as well as in the next. The only difference is that, in this world, this is an indirect experience, while in the Hereafter, it will be in perfect form and a direct experience.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS IN HUMAN NATURE OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

The faith, or *iman*, arrived at by rational arguments alone is the beginning of faith. One who has found God at the level of this internal consciousness has really discovered faith.

The Chapter 51 of the Quran states: "We created pairs of all things so that you might reflect" (51:49). That is, God has created everything in pairs. There are several aspects to this verse, one of its aspects relating to the being of God Himself. If we think in the light of this principle, it will become a source of faith (*iman*) in the existence of God.

It is undeniable that everyone has tremendous feelings of wanting to find the higher reality. Everyone in this respect is a seeker. When man succeeds in his search and is able to discover God, all of a sudden he feels that he has found the answer to his most natural urge. In this respect, the consciousness of the existence of God in human nature is the internal aspect and the existence of God in the outer world is its external counterpart. This is the greatest proof of God's existence.

There are many philosophic and scientific arguments on the existence of God. These arguments are only partially acceptable, for they provide only rational probability. But faith with total conviction can be achieved by one only when he has discovered God at the level of his own consciousness. Where the rational arguments lead man to probability, it is this internal consciousness which gives man conviction.

Finding God at the level of consciousness in human nature is like a child finding his mother after a long period of separation. At that time, the child without doubt is convinced that this lady, or woman, is his mother. But the basis of this conviction is not on any rational analysis but is rather, a matter of internal consciousness. One who has found God at the level of this internal consciousness has really discovered

God. Real faith is one which is attained as a result of internal conviction. The faith, or *iman*, arrived at by rational arguments alone is not the faith which is desirable for man. It is only the beginning of faith.

SEEKING GOD'S PLEASURE

When the truth is fully revealed to a seeker after deep study, one starts living with profound inspiration that helps one to perform such acts as aim at seeking God's pleasure.

According to Islam, such action is approved of by God which is performed purely to please Him (57:27) and for His approval (2:265). An act in which there is no intention of pleasing God is not an approved act with regard to the Hereafter, even although it may appear to be a very great undertaking.

Functioning for God's pleasure is no simple matter. It does not mean that when you start on any task you should first say, "I am doing this for God's pleasure." This would amount to an insufficient appreciation of God's pleasure. God's pleasure demands a more profound inspiration which arises after a long process. The deeds of one who works with this living

inspiration are indeed carried out seeking the pleasure of God. Any action which is devoid of this spirit is like an artificial flower. The artificial flower appears to be a flower, but it can never be given the status of a real flower.

The truth is that, when a servant goes in search of God, he seriously, wants to know the truth. He studies the book of God, he studies the traditions of the Prophet, he ponders on the creation of God. Wanting to know the truth, he is free of all biases. Finally, the truth is fully revealed to him. This discovery is the point from which begins his journey towards the pleasure of God. After this discovery, man's thinking is transformed. He thinks of the same thing night and day. Finally, it becomes the focus of his life. This focus is the divine pleasure. He is keen to make his Lord pleased with him. He longs to be held deserving of the mercy of God. On Doomsday he hopes to find a place in nearness to God. Any task performed by this spirit is work done for the pleasure of God.

WHAT IS POLYTHEISM?

God is man's real goal. Monotheism means making God one's sole concern, whereas polytheism means partly or totally including anyone or anything else in the godhead.

Chapter two of the Quran, elaborates thus on polytheism: “Yet there are some who set up equals with God and adore them with the adoration due to God, but those who believe love God most. If only the wrongdoers could see—as they will see when they face the punishment—that all power belongs to God, and that God is severe in punishment” (2:165).

From this verse we learn what is meant by polytheism. It is to set up something equal to God, whether in a partial or total sense. Setting up an equal with God can be done with respect to a number of things, two of which have been mentioned in the Quran: love and power (2:165). According to one verse of the Quran, its third aspect is fear (9:18). Basically, these are the three things which are the signs of polytheism. With reference to all these three matters—love, power and fear—whoever sets up equals with God is a polytheist. According to the Quran, there are sometimes people who give themselves the same status as that of God.

On this the Quran says: “Consider the one who has taken his own desire as a deity, whom God allows to stray in the face of knowledge, sealing his ears and heart and covering his eyes – who can guide such a person after God [has abandoned him]?” (45:23).

This can be expressed as an antithesis: monotheism means in every respect making God one’s sole concern, whereas polytheism means partly or totally including anyone or anything else in the godhead.

Whenever anyone discovers God in the capacity of One Who gave him existence out of nothing, Who gave him a sterling personality, Who placed him on a rare unique planet like earth, Who arranged for his life support system, etc. he starts regarding God as his own, and has immeasurably elevated feelings for God. This is the basis for man’s intense love for God.

Then when man discovers that all things he has are unilateral gifts of God, and that God can take away these things any time, and that every gift is linked with accountability, it makes him apprehensive that if he does not do justice to all these divine gifts, he will be taken to task. These produce that state within him which has been described in the Quran as akin to that of believers who: “stand in awe of none but God” (9:18).

Moreover, man discovers that, in this world, God alone is Omnipotent. No one has any similar power, even in a partial sense. God gives and God takes away. The certainty of this reminds us of our total helplessness. The believer can do nothing other than surrender himself fully before God.

Realization is another name for this discovery. When with this discovery such a person makes God his all in all, who lives in God's remembrance, whose thinking is God-oriented, he is in terms of the *shariah*, a monotheist. On the contrary, one who has not made God his sole concern, but has rather made other things his concern, in terms of the *shariah* he is guilty of polytheism. The personality of the monotheist is an integrated personality, while the personality of a polytheist is a split personality.

According to the *shariah*, God is man's real goal or purpose of life, other things are only his need. Both monotheism and polytheism relate to reality and not just to appearances.

IN THE COMPANY OF GOD

When a man discovers his Lord, he repeatedly feels that he has come very close to his Lord. Finding one's Lord at the spiritual level, his heart trembles and his eyes are filled with tears.

Many articles and books are published in Arabic with this title: Time Spent with a Particular Person (*Saa-atun ma-aa-fulanan*). Such a title is apparently well-chosen, but it is strange that no writer has ever written an article with this title—Time Spent in the Company of God (*Saatun ma Allah*). This is a proof that our writers have set a value upon the company of man, but they have not done so for the company of God.

As mentioned in a Hadith, such moments when the believer must be whispering with his Lord should be a part of his life (*Sahih Ibn Hibban*, Hadith No. 361). Whispering suggests such an experience when man finds himself so very close to God that he starts speaking to Him in undertones.

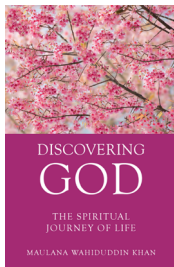
Although there is evidence in the Quran that, “God is very close to man.” (2:186) The Quran also tells us: “Prostrate yourself and come closer to God.” (96:19)

This is no simple matter. When a man discovers his Lord, when he reflects deeply on the Heavens and his own self, he repeatedly feels that he has come very close to his Lord. At that time his heart trembles, his eyes are filled with tears, and he feels that at the level of divine inspiration he has come very near to God. At that time, unexpectedly, his lips utter divine words, and his whole existence is immersed in spiritual experiences. He starts seeing God who is in the unseen, he starts speaking to God without God being visible. In spite of the apparent distance, he comes very close to God—in this world closeness to God means finding one's Lord at the spiritual level.

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BOOKS

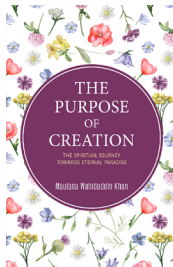
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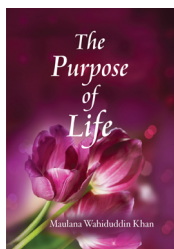


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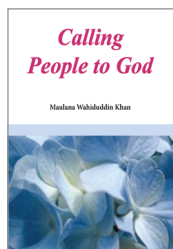
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The leaflet explains that according to the Quran, the Book of God, God is One. He alone is the Creator and Lord of man and the universe: He is, moreover, the Sustainer of the entire universe. Man has to discover and submit to Him of his own choice.

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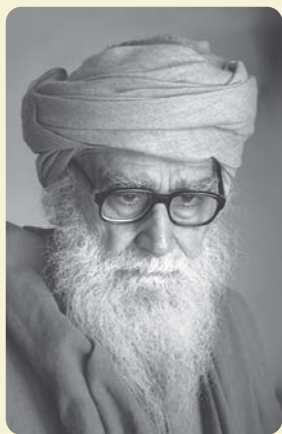
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In the book entitled *Love of God: Making God One's Supreme Concern*, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan writes that the strongest human feeling or emotion is that of love. When man makes something his supreme concern, it naturally happens that a feeling of love becomes associated with that thing. In religious terminology, this is called "deification". The thing one loves the most is one's deity, (*mabud*) whether or not one utters this word.

Faith in God is for man to discover God to the extent of loving Him more than anything else. The Quran says that "those who believe love God most."(2:165) One who loves God the most is one who has made God his object of worship.

Belief in God begins with the discovery of God. In the Quran this discovery is called *maarifah*. *Maarifah*, or realization of God, in the real sense, becomes a part and parcel of one's existence. When this happens, all those high and noble manifestations expressed in such words as love, gratitude and remembrance of God come into evidence.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was an Islamic scholar, spiritual guide and an Ambassador of Peace. Having received international recognition for his work, the Maulana authored over 200 books and recorded thousands of lectures giving the rational interpretation of Islamic concepts, prophetic wisdom and the spiritual meaning of Quran and Islam in the contemporary style. His English translation of the Quran is widely appreciated as simple, clear and in contemporary style. He founded *Centre for Peace and Spirituality International* in 2001 to re-engineer the minds of people towards God-oriented living and present Islam in the modern idiom based as it is on peace, non-violence and spirituality.

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