

PEARLS OF WISDOM

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of
WISDOM

M. Fethullah Gülen

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Erzurum, in eastern Turkey, in 1941, M. Fethullah Gülen is an Islamic scholar and thinker, and a prolific writer and poet. He was trained in the religious sciences by several celebrated Muslim scholars and spiritual masters. Gülen also studied the principles and theories of modern social and physical sciences. Based on his exceptional skills in learning and focused self-study, he soon surpassed his peers. In 1959, after attaining excellent examination results, he was awarded a state preacher's license (in Edirne), and was promoted to a post in Izmir, Turkey's third largest province, in 1966. It was here that Gülen started to crystallize his theme and expand his audience base. In his sermons and speeches he emphasized the pressing social issues of the times: his particular aim was to urge the younger generation to harmonize intellectual enlightenment with wise spirituality and a caring, humane activism.

Gülen did not restrict himself to teaching in the inner cities. He traveled around the provinces in Anatolia and lectured not only in mosques, but also at town meetings and corner coffee houses. This enabled him to reach a more representative cross-section of the population and to attract the attention of the academic community, especially the student body. The subject matter of his speeches, whether formal or informal, was not restricted explicitly to religious questions; he also talked about education, science, Darwinism, about the economy and social justice. It was the depth and quality of his speeches on such a wide range of topics that most impressed the academic community, and won their attention and respect.

Gülen retired from formal teaching duties in 1981, having inspired a whole generation of young students. His efforts, dat-

ing from the 1960s, especially in educational reform, have made him one of the best-known and respected figures in Turkey. From 1988 to 1991, he gave a series of sermons as preacher emeritus in some of the most famous mosques in major population centers, while continuing to deliver his message in the form of popular conferences, not only in Turkey, but also in Western Europe.

MAIN IDEAS

In his speeches and writings Gülen envisions a twenty-first century in which we shall witness the birth of a spiritual dynamic that will revitalize long-dormant moral values; an age of tolerance, understanding, and international cooperation that will ultimately lead, through intercultural dialogue and a sharing of values, to a single, inclusive civilization. In the field of education, he has spearheaded the establishment of many charitable organizations to work for the welfare of the community, both within and without Turkey. He has inspired the use of mass media, notably television, to inform the public, of matters of pressing concern to them, individually and collectively.

Gülen believes the road to justice for all is dependent on the provision of an adequate and appropriate universal education. Only then will there be sufficient understanding and tolerance to secure respect for the rights of others. To this end, he has, over the years, encouraged the social elite and community leaders, powerful industrialists as well as small businessmen, to support quality education. With donations from these sources, educational trusts have been able to establish many schools, both in Turkey and abroad.

Gülen has stated that in the modern world the only way to get others to accept your ideas is by persuasion. He describes those who resort to force as being intellectually bankrupt; people will always demand freedom of choice in the way they run their affairs and in their expression of their spiritual and religious values. Democracy, Gülen argues, in spite of its many shortcomings, is now the only viable political system, and peo-

ple should strive to modernize and consolidate democratic institutions in order to build a society where individual rights and freedoms are respected and protected, where equal opportunity for all is more than a dream.

INTERFAITH AND INTERCULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Since his retirement, Gülen has concentrated his efforts on establishing a dialogue among the factions representing different ideologies, cultures, religions and nations. In 1999, his paper “The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue” was presented to the Parliament of World’s Religions in Cape Town, December 1-8. He maintains that “dialogue is a must” and that people, regardless of nation or political borders, have far more in common than they realize.

Given all of this, Gülen considers it both worthwhile and necessary for a sincere dialogue to be established in order to increase mutual understanding. To this end, he has helped to establish the Journalists and Writers Foundation (1994), whose activities to promote dialogue and tolerance among all strata of the society have been warmly welcomed by people from almost all walks of life. Again to this end, Gülen visits and receives leading figures, not only from among the Turkish population, but from all over the world. Pope John Paul II at the Vatican, the late John O’Connor, Archbishop of New York, Leon Levy, former president of The Anti-Defamation League are among many leading representatives of world religions with whom Gülen has met to discuss dialogue and take initiatives in this respect. In Turkey, the Vatican’s Ambassador to Turkey, the Patriarch of the Turkish Orthodox Church, the Patriarch of the Turkish Armenian community, the Chief Rabbi of the Turkish Jewish community and many other leading figures in Turkey have frequently met with him, portraying an example of how sincere dialogue can be established between people of faith.

In his meeting with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican (1998), Gülen presented a proposal to take firm steps to stop the conflict in the Middle East via collaborative work on this soil, a place where all three religions originated. In his proposal, he also

underlined the fact that science and religion are in fact two different aspects that emanate from the same truth: “Humankind from time to time has denied religion in the name of science and denied science in the name of religion, arguing that the two present conflicting views. All knowledge belongs to God and religion is from God. How then can the two be in conflict? To this end, our joint efforts directed at inter-religious dialogue can do much to improve understanding and tolerance among people.”

Gülen released a press declaration renouncing the September 11th terrorist attacks on the USA, which he regarded as a great blow to world peace that unfairly tarnished the credit of believers: “. . . terror can never be used in the name of Islam or for the sake of any Islamic ends. A terrorist cannot be a Muslim and a Muslim cannot be a terrorist. A Muslim can only be the representative and symbol of peace, welfare, and prosperity.”

Gülen’s efforts for worldwide peace have been echoed at conferences and symposiums. “The Peaceful Heroes Symposium” (April 11-13, 2003) at the University of Texas, Austin, produced a list of peacemakers over 5,000 years of human history. Gülen was mentioned among contemporary heroes of peace, in a list which includes names such as Jesus, Buddha, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mother Teresa.

Gülen contributes to a number of journals and magazines. He writes the editorial page for several magazines. He writes the lead article for *The Fountain*, *Yeni Ümit*, *Sızıntı*, and *Yağmur*, leading popular and spiritual thought magazines in Turkey. He has written more than forty books, hundreds of articles, and recorded thousands of audio and videocassettes. He has delivered innumerable speeches on many social and religious issues. Some of his books—many of which have been best-sellers in Turkey—have been made available in English translations, such as, *The Messenger of God: Muhammad - An Analysis of the Prophet’s Life*, *Questions and Answers about Faith*, *Pearls of Wisdom*, *Prophet Muhammad as Commander*, *The Essentials of the Islamic Faith*, *Towards the Lost Paradise*, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*. A number have also been translated into German, Russian, Albanian, Japanese, Indonesian, and Spanish.

The educational trusts inspired by Gülen have established countless non-profit voluntary organizations—foundations and associations—in Turkey and abroad which support many scholarships.

Though a well-known public figure, Gülen has always shied away from involvement in formal politics. Gülen's admirers include leading journalists, academics, TV personalities, politicians, and Turkish and foreign state authorities. They see in him a true innovator and unique social reformer who practices what he preaches. They see him as a peace activist, an intellectual, a religious scholar, a mentor, author and poet, a great thinker and spiritual guide who has devoted his life to seeking the solutions for society's ills and spiritual needs. They see the movement he helped to nurture as a movement dedicated to education, but an education of the heart and soul as well as of the mind, aimed at reviving and invigorating the whole being to achieve competence and providing goods and services useful to others.

THE JOURNEY BEYOND BEING

O God, Most High!

We behold the spectacle that You have laid out before us, Your most original and striking works made in the most perfect form, to which You invite our gaze. We behold things and events that, in their interrelation, are the most brilliant and well-proportioned of Your dazzling pictures. The manifestation of all Your beauties draws out from the bosom of nature a variety of colors unfolding as if in a book of art. Bearing witness to You by the writing of Your Pen, and in accordance with Your Book which You have written with that Pen, our spirits have taken wing, and we have gained sight of the source of all things in the light of Your Names. Voices and music of celestial harmonies are heard everywhere, and our hearts are ravished by the mystery of the sacred archetypes, which are the fountain of all things.

Through the eye of the heart we have grasped the essential identity between the kernel of belief and the Toubra tree in Paradise (into which that kernel will grow). We have risen to make a journey extending far into the realms beyond being. On this journey Your holy Book has guided our spirits, setting out a vision of Your Names and Attributes, and leading to eternity. You have described to us the journey to Yourself, mapped it out in the minutest detail, and pictured it in the *mi'raj* (Ascension) of Your holy Servant, peace and Your blessings be upon him, his miraculous ascent through the Seven Heavens to Your Presence. That journey is possible for any man or woman who has knowledge of You through his or her spirit. If we have gone too far in touching the latch of the gates of Your mysteries, we ask forgive-

ness for the discourtesies of our coarse, immature souls that are ignorant of rules and proprieties.

O Creator, Most High and Most Beautiful, Who brought us into this existence and allowed us to feel the infinite pleasure thereof. You have opened to us vast worlds as a book. You have made our consciousness the shore at which Your Divine mysteries lap, and so enabled us to have a sense of those mysteries. If You had not unfolded to us as in a book these magnificent worlds, if You had not disclosed Yourself to us, according to our capacity to understand, by sending Prophets, we would not have known You at all.

If You had not established connections between nature and our inner experiences, and endowed us with an innate perception by means of which we might arrive at true knowledge and true gnosis, we could never hope to know Your Divine Essence or anything sure about You. How, then, could we have felt admiration for Your Path? We are Your bonded servants, and the recurrent flashes reflected in our consciousness are rays from Your Existence. Whatever we own is entirely by Your gift and favor. We declare this once more, confessing that we are Your obedient slaves, who never look for release, but rather long to renew our bonds.

O Ruler of hearts, on the remembrance and meditation of Whom hearts are fixed, we strive to determine the ways leading to Your Presence and the windows opening upon Your Existence. Sometimes we seek by delving into the reality of things and events, and sometimes by relying upon our intuition. Our goal is to communicate what we receive from You to those whose hearts are sick and whose minds are barren, and to remain faithful to the sublime truths that have been shown there in the clearest possible way.

No doubt we have committed errors and indulged our fancies and whims, for we have not been able to offer the most manifest truths in their essential purity.

If we have made mistakes, we made them while seeking You and trying to guide others. If we have made mistakes, we have

made them on the way to You. But a mistake is still a mistake. With broken hearts, spirits doubled up, and necks in chains, we appeal to Your generous judgment. We make this confession, knowing that Your unbounded Mercy always overcomes Your Wrath. It is not becoming for Your humble slaves, especially those You have favored, to commit mistakes. Yet since they do, graciously permit me to remark that mercy and forgiveness are becoming most of all to You.

O Ruler of my heart. To the Ruler belongs the Royal manner that befits Him, just as servitude befits a slave. If You forgive us, we should wish to study the book of Your universe anew so as to pay attention to the voices that tell of You. We should wish to witness the signs of Your Existence, and to be enraptured by the songs about You, so that we may reach Your holy realm. By Your Graciousness, assist those who are in need!

CHAPTER 1

The Spiritual Life

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

THE QUR'AN

In accordance with humanity's worth and value, and considering the human heart, spirit, mind, and physical being, the Qur'an descended from the Highest of the High. Containing the most perfect messages, it is a collection of Divine Laws.



Followed today by more than one billion people, the Qur'an is a unique book that, with its eternal and unchanging divine principles, guides everyone to the shortest and most illuminated road to happiness.



The Qur'an has been a source of light for the most magnificent and enlightened communities that have ruled the world, those that have produced thousands of scholars, philosophers and thinkers. In this sense, no other rule is equal to its rule.



Since the day it was revealed, the Qur'an has encountered many objections and criticisms. However, the Qur'an has always emerged unscathed and so continues to reflect its victory.



The Qur'an crystallizes in the heart, illumines the spirit, and exhibits truths from beginning to end. Only believers who can sense all the beauty of the universe in a single flower and see rainstorms in a drop of water can know and understand its real countenance.

The Qur'an possesses such a style that Arab and foreign linguists and literary men and women who heard its verses bowed before it. Those who recognized its truth and understood its contents bowed before this masterpiece of eloquence.



Muslims can reach unity only by affirming and believing the Qur'an. Those who cannot do so cannot be Muslim, nor can they establish any lasting unity among themselves.



Saying that "faith is a matter of conscience" means "I affirm God, His Prophet, and the Qur'an" with my tongue and my conscience. Every act of worship connected to this understanding manifests this affirmation.



When humanity was floundering in the brutality of ignorance and unbelief, the Qur'an burst forth in a flood of enlightenment that drowned the world in its light. The Qur'an engendered a revolution without parallel or equal. History is a sufficient witness!



The Qur'an teaches in a most balanced way the meaning and nature of humanity, and the truth and wisdom, as well as the Essence, Attributes, and Names of God. No other book can equal it in this field. Look at the wisdom of scholarly saints and the philosophy of true philosophers, and you will understand.



The Qur'an is the unique book commanding true justice, real freedom, balanced equality, goodness, honor, virtue, and compassion for all creation. It is also the matchless book forbidding oppression, polytheism, injustice, ignorance, bribery, interest, lying, and bearing false witness.



The Qur'an is the only book that, protecting the orphan, the poor and the innocent, puts the king and the slave, the commander and the private, the plaintiff and the defendant in the same chair and then judges them.



Claiming that the Qur'an is a source of superstition is nothing more than repeating the words uttered by ignorant Arabs fourteen centuries ago. Such a view ridicules wisdom and true philosophy.



If only those who criticize the Qur'an and the things it brought could produce something to guarantee the order, harmony, peace and safety of human life even in a short, temporary period... Actually, it's very difficult to understand this perversity and obstinacy when faced with the miserable and unbalanced civilizations based on principles foreign to the Qur'an, and the troubled, depressed, and moaning hearts of those deprived of its light.



The most orderly life for humanity is that breathed by the Qur'an. In fact, some of the beautiful things that are today universally commended and applauded are the exact things encouraged by the Qur'an centuries ago. So, whose fault is it if Muslims are in an miserable situation today?



Those who criticize the Qur'an as if it were their profession generally have only a vague and superficial knowledge of its contents. It is ironic that such people feel free to vent their opinions without researching the Qur'an or even reading it. Actually, there is no difference between their attitude and the obstinacy some ignorant people show in the face of (positive) sciences. It seems that we must continue to wait for people to awaken to truth.



Those who have faith in Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and the Qur'an have faith in God. Those who do not believe in the Qur'an do not believe in Prophet Muhammad, and those who do not believe in Prophet Muhammad do not believe in God. These are the real dimensions of being a Muslim.



The Qur'an enables people to rise to the highest level, namely the station of being addressed by God. Those who are conscious of being in this position hear their Lord speak to them through the Qur'an. If they take an oath that they speak with their Lord, they will not be among those who swear falsely.



Even though we are still in this world, when we enter the Qur'an's enlightened climate we feel that we are passing through the grave and the intermediate world (between this and the next), experiencing the Day of Judgment and the Sirat (bridge), shuddering at the horror of Hell, and walking on Heaven's tranquil slopes.



Those who have prevented Muslims from understanding the Qur'an and perceiving it in depth have thus removed them from Islam's spirit and essence.



In the near future, and under humanity's gazes of commendation and amazement, the streams of knowledge, technique, and art flowing toward the Qur'anic ocean will fall into their essential source and unite with it. At that time, scholars, researchers, and artists will find themselves in that same ocean.



It should not be too hard to see the future as the Age of the Qur'an, for it is the word of One Who sees the past, present, and future at the same moment.

PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Humanity came to know true civilization by means of Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and favored it. All efforts exerted after him for the sake of true civilization have been no more than practicing or trying to practice the principles he brought and adjusting them to new conditions. For this reason, he deserves to be called the founder of true civilization.



Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, rejected indolence and the lazy and esteemed labor as a mode of worship and applauded the hard-working. He directed his followers to horizons beyond the age in which they lived and taught them how they could be the element of balance in the world.



Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is unequalled in that he appeared as a sword of valor and eloquence against unbelief and savagery. He proclaimed the truth with the clearest voice and showed mankind the ways to true existence.



If there is ever a person whom ignorance, unbelief and brutality hate the most, it is Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings. Those who search for truth and thirst for true knowledge eventually will seek him out and embrace his path.



Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, proclaimed true freedom to humanity, and ingrained in human consciousness that all human beings are equal before the law. He established that superiority lies in virtue, piety, and morality. He regarded proclaiming the truth against all oppressors and oppressive thought as a kind of worship.



Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, called upon us to protect religion, life, reason, property and the integrity of family and lineage, and to strive for this purpose. In a remarkably balanced way, he proclaimed that no other duty could equal this struggle.



Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, unveiled the transitory nature of this world and death, and showed the grave to be a waiting room opening onto the realm of eternal happiness. He led every heart seeking happiness, regardless of place or time, to the fountain of Khadr, and enabled them to drink the elixir of immortality.

RELIGION

Since its appearance on the Earth, humanity has found true peace and happiness in religion. As it is impossible to talk of morality and virtue where people do not practice the true religion, it is also difficult to imagine real happiness, for morality and virtue originate in a good, clear conscience. Religion is what makes one's conscience good and clear, for it is a connection between humanity and God. Religion is the best school, a most blessed institution founded to inculcate in people good moral qualities. It is open to everyone, from the youngest to the oldest. Only those who attend it attain peace, satisfaction, and freedom. By contrast, those without religion cannot save themselves from losing everything, including their true identity.



Religion is the collection of Divine principles that guide people to what is good, not by force but by appealing to their free will. All principles that secure our spiritual and material progress, and thereby our happiness in both worlds, are found in religion.



Religion means recognizing God in His absolute and transcendental Oneness; acquiring spiritual purity by acting in His way; arranging relationships in His name and according to His commandments, and feeling a profound interest in and love for all creation on His account.



Sooner or later, those who do not recognize religion will come to despise such noble values as chastity, patriotism, and love of humanity.



Immorality is a disease caused by the absence of religion, and anarchy is a product of the same lack.



Do atheists, who devote their lives to attacking religion, not have some obligation to demonstrate the benefits, if any, and the good consequences, if any, of atheism?



Religion and science are two faces of a single truth. Religion guides us to the true path leading to happiness. Science, when understood and used properly, is like a torch that provides us with a light to follow the same path.



All the beautiful “flowers” of laudable virtues are grown in the “gardens” of religion, as are the most illustrious “fruits” of the tree of creation, such as Prophets, saints, and scholars of high achievement. Although atheists deliberately ignore them, regardless of how hard they try, they will not be able to remove them from the hearts of people and the pages of books.



Nothing in true religion is contrary to sound thinking, common sense, and knowledge. Therefore true religion cannot be criticized from any rational point of view. Those who do not

accept religion either are devoid of sound thinking and reasoning or have a wrong conception of knowledge and science.



Religion is an inexhaustible and blessed source that lays the foundation of true civilization. It is through religion that we are elevated so high in spirit and feelings that we make contact with metaphysical worlds, where we are “fed” to full satisfaction with all kinds of beauty, virtue, and goodness.



Virtues are to be sought in the practice of religion. It rarely happens that an atheist has laudable virtues, or that a religious person has none.



Men and women attain true humanity by means of religion, which distinguishes them from animals. For atheists, there is no difference between human beings and animals.



Religion is the way established by God, while atheism is the way of Satan. This is why the struggle between religion and atheism has existed since the time of Adam and will continue until the Last Day.

WORSHIP

Worship means one’s sincere acknowledgement of himself or herself as a servant, and God as the sole and true Object of Worship. It consists in a servant designing his or her life in accordance with the relations between a true servant and the True Object of Worship, in the light of the fact that one is the created and the other the Creator.



Worship means one’s thankfulness for the bounties with which he or she is endowed, such as life, consciousness, power of

perception and faith, while negligence of the duty of worship is crude ingratitude.



Worship is a road to travel, opened by the Being Who commands us to believe, and it is a set of good manners that He ordered us to observe, so that we could finally reach Him and obtain happiness in both this life and the next. It is not possible for those who cannot find this way and acquire these manners to reach God, the Truth.



Worship is the safest way to reach the most unshakable certainty in one's conscience about the greatest truth known only theoretically at the outset. In each station on this way along which consciousness seeks certainty on the wings of reverence and respect, a person experiences a different taste of catching glimpse of the Beloved.



Some souls, shut off to the truth, have spent their lives studying only certain theoretical matters; even if they live in the enchanting company of the most eloquent, articulate tongues and the most fascinating expressions about the truth, they cannot advance even a meter toward it.



Worship is a blessed, growing resource feeding a person's thoughts and deliberations of being good, righteous and virtuous, and a mysterious elixir which reforms the innate tendencies of selfhood toward evil. One who has recourse to this resource a few times a day with reflection on Divine truths and remembrance of God, has entered on the way to becoming a perfect one and taken shelter against the temptations of the carnal self.



Worship is developing the potential in a person to be like angels in order to be fitted for Paradise and bringing under control the bestial inclinations and potentialities. So far in

human history, by means of their worship many have surpassed angels, while many others, refusing worship, have fallen to the lowest of the low.



The most meritorious of the acts or services of worship is knowing and loving God Almighty and being beneficial to humanity. If there is something more meritorious and commendable than this, it is seeking God's approval and good pleasure in whatever one does and, moved by the command, "Be straightforward as you are commanded," always being in pursuit of what is the truest and highest ideal in life.

DREAMS

Dreams usually comprise images that are somehow related to past or future circumstances, seen either clearly or symbolically, through windows opening onto the world of truth. So long as the mind is free from certain impressions and preconceptions, every dream, like a light or a signpost from the worlds beyond, may remove a darkness and indicate a direction.



Since in dreams there is no need for eyes or light or other means or materials, and what is "seen" is perceived by insight and the spirit, dreams can sometimes tell people things more beautiful than they could imagine when awake. It is not uncommon for a single dream to impart more knowledge about the past, present, and future than is contained in many libraries.



Almost everyone has dreams, which are the visions of the spirit. Through these visions, people can experience dimensions outside of material or physical existence, and thereby penetrate some way into many of Destiny's mysteries.



So many dreams have proven to be true in actual life, that if everyone were to record their true dreams, the accounts would have to be bound together in huge volumes.



Some dreams bring scenes from the other world to purified souls. A soul refreshes itself in such dreams and, entering the “flower gardens” of that world, drinks from the pure waters therein to taste deliverance. “Seeing” through openings onto eternity, the soul is enraptured by scenes it cannot see with its human eyes, hear with its human ears, or imagine with its conscious mind.



Dreams make us aware of our two important faculties, the heart and the power of insight, and free us from the three-dimensional prison of our bodies. However, souls that unite with the truth do not need dreams to “see” the worlds beyond, for they live enraptured by the vision of beauty in both this and other worlds at the same time. However, this door opens only to those who have undergone strenuous and serious spiritual training and self-discipline, not to just anybody who knocks upon it.



For those who regard the human mind as a sort of rubbish dump, a container of the most abased things, who pursue their investigations into it (and draw conclusions) as if it were a swamp of animal impulses, dreams are a device through which the subconscious expresses itself. However, thousands of inspirations flow to the heart during dreams. As almost everyone from the time of Adam has received messages pertaining to future in their dreams, thousands of inventors and saintly people have received their earliest inspirations in them and have felt forever indebted to this radiant and blessed world of symbols or ideal forms.



The Most Noble Spirit, upon him be peace and blessings, who illuminated the world with his perfect light, sometimes returned to this first phase of his Prophethood (dreams) even while sailing in the ocean of knowledge of God. He drew attention to this blessed source, which is considered one of the forty or so aspects of Prophethood.

THE TRUE LONG LIFE

The really long-lived are not those who live long but those who can make their lives as fruitful as possible. In view of this standard, as there may be those who, though a hundred years old, are truly short-lived, it is also possible that there are those who, though only fifteen years old, have been able to attain to the highest degrees by dedicating their lives to giving as many fruits as possible.

VICTORY OF GOODNESS AND BEAUTY

Goodness, beauty, truthfulness, honesty, and being virtuous are the essence of the world. Whatever happens, the world will one day find this essence, for no one can prevent such an event.



CHAPTER 2

The Personal Life

THE PERSONAL LIFE

BALANCING THE SPIRITUAL AND THE PHYSICAL

The true life is the one lived at the spiritual level. Those whose hearts are alive, conquering the past and the future, cannot be contained by time. Such people are never excessively distressed by sorrows of the past or anxieties of the future. Those who cannot experience full existence in their hearts, and thus lead banal, shallow lives, are always gloomy and inclined to hopelessness. They consider the past a horrifying grave, and the future an endless well. It is torment if they die, and it is torment if they survive.



Establishing a sound relationship with a long, great past and a long, better future depends on your having a proper understanding of your heart's and soul's vitality. The fortunate ones live at this level and fully understand this life. They see the past as our ancestors' great tents and thrones, the future as roads leading toward the gardens of Paradise, and, while sipping inspiration from their inner conscience as if from the fountain of Kawthar (one of the rivers in Paradise), they pass on from the guesthouse of this world. But the unfortunate ones, those who cannot reach such level of understanding and endeavor, lead lives that are worse than death, and their deaths are a hell of darkness upon darkness. There is a mutually supportive and perfective relation between one's actions and inner life. We may call this relation a "virtuous circle." Attitudes like determination, perseverance, and resolve illuminate one's inner conscience, and

the brightness of this inner conscience strengthens one's willpower and resolve, stimulating him or her to ever-higher horizons.



Those fortunate ones, whose actions reflect the obedience of their spirits, will always seek to please the Creator and humanity, and will continue to acquire praiseworthy virtues. Their *qibla* (the direction in which a Muslim turns to when praying) pointer will always point to the same mihrab (an architectural feature found in every mosque to indicate the direction Muslims must turn to when praying), and their progress indicator will always show the same route. Although some straying may occur every once in a while, a truly sincere remorse and a heartfelt penitence will melt away the sin from their hearts and souls. After this, they will resume their roads, often with renewed vigor.



Those fortunate ones who fulfill their duties meticulously and thoroughly, who carefully attend every little detail, enjoy orderliness, harmony, and devotion to duty in their outer worlds. At the same time, they increase the pure light of their inner worlds and, on the wings of their prayers, attain a few times each day the rank of angels.



This understanding and balance in human hearts, that is, the inward experience and meticulous practice of religion alongside a love and yearning for eternity, over time was replaced by dull formalism and mysticism that made us lazy. Since that time, those two ominous groups have regarded their own inspirations, which are no more than the light of a firefly, as equal to the bright and varied brilliance of Revelation. They block our way to new horizons of thought and darken the horizons of our aspirations by spraying fumes and dust onto our enlightened path.



By way of summing up, we may characterize soldiers of truth as follows: Soldiers of truth have a toughened structure, like tempered steel, that can withstand all pressures and assaults. Their intellect can combine, like an expert chemist, the Divine Word and all current knowledge in a pot and thereby obtain new syntheses. Their spirits have been perfected in the same crucible that perfected such spiritual masters as Jalal al-Din al-Rumi and Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani. They are so modest that they see themselves as just ordinary people among others. Finally, their altruism has reached such a level that they can forget their own needs and desires for the sake of others’ happiness.

LIFE, HUMAN CHARACTER, AND VIRTUE

When an animal dies, it is forgotten and its burial place is lost. However, this is not the case with a human being. Are the people who do not preserve the memories and tombs of their ancestors aware that they reduce them to the rank of animals? Respect for the dead means granting security to the living concerning their future.



One of the most important ways to conquer the hearts of people is that one always seeks an opportunity to do others good and once such an opportunity appears, makes use of it without delay. If only we could set our hearts on always doing good to others!



Good morals and sound conscience, and good manners and virtues, are like a currency universally acceptable and which is not affected by changes in the values of other means of exchange. Those provided with such qualities are like merchants with the highest credit who can do business wherever they want.



The more a person suffers in life and is conscious of the life he or she is living, the more profound his or her feelings become. Those who live unconsciously of the meaning of life and events and have experienced no suffering, can never develop their feelings and faculties. Nor can they feel themselves as parts of existence.



Those with strong willpower and good, sound character will not lose anything of their virtuous essence, even if they are made to suffer thousands of kinds of pains and sorrows and forced to change their views and ways. What shall we say about those weak ones who, without provocation, change their thoughts and ways every day?



Ignorance is like a veil drawn over the face of things. The unfortunate ones who cannot remove this veil, will never be able to penetrate into the truths of creation. The greatest ignorance is unawareness of God and if it is combined with arrogance, it becomes a kind of insanity impossible to cure.



A sensible person is not one who claims infallibility and therefore is indifferent to others' ideas. Rather, a truly sensible person is one who corrects his or her errors and makes use of others' ideas in acknowledgement of the fact that human beings are prone to error.



Life blossoms during childhood. During youth it grows through inward tension and spiritual struggle on the way of truth. During old age it holds its vital energy with the desire to reunite with the beloved ones who have already passed away. How wretched it is for the atheists that they perceive life sometimes as comedy and sometimes as tragedy, and thereby stifle the instinct for ardent hope and gratitude in humanity.



LOVE

Love is one of the most subtle blessings that the Most Merciful One has bestowed upon humanity. It exists in everyone as a seed. This seed germinates under favorable circumstances and, growing like a tree, blossoms into a flower, and finally ripens, like a fruit, to unite the beginning with the end.



Love penetrates, as a feeling, into our inner being through the inlets of our eyes, ears, and heart. It then swells like water behind a dam, grows like an avalanche, or engulfs our very being like a flame. It starts to subside only when it results in union. The flame goes out, the reservoir empties, and the avalanche melts away.



Love is a natural and essential aspect of our being. But when it is transformed into “true love”—love of the Creator—it acquires its true nature and color, and later becomes “pure” pleasure at the threshold of union.



One’s heart is a receptive port for Divine manifestations. Your love of the Creator and yearning to return to Him is the clearest sign of your being loved by God.



Love is the most direct and safest way to human perfection. It is difficult to attain the rank of human perfection through ways that do not contain love. Other than the way of “acknowledging one’s innate impotence, poverty, and reliance on God’s Power and Riches, and one’s zeal in His way and thanksgiving,” no other way to truth is equal to that of love.



Love is a mount, bestowed upon us by God, that carries us toward the Paradise we lost. No one who has ridden this mount has ever been stranded on this road, although we

sometimes find people on this celestial mount walking on the road side due to some boastful words they utter because of their intoxication from joy. However, this is a matter between them and God.



Neither the “flames” of the world nor the fire of Hell can “burn” those who already have been “burnt to ashes” by love. Those who burn with the fear of Hellfire while in this world will not go to Hell. The final abode of those who feel secure against Hellfire will most probably be Hell. Those who burn here in the flames of love and suffer Hell on earth by struggling against their carnal selves and the world will most certainly not be subjected again to the same suffering in the Hereafter.



Love makes us forget our own existence, and annihilates our existence in the existence of our beloved. It therefore requires the lover to always want the beloved, and thus to dedicate himself or herself, without expecting any return, completely to the desires of the beloved. This is, according to my way of thinking, the essence of humanity.



In the way of love, even a slight, imagined inclination of the lover to someone or something other than the beloved means the end of love. Such an inclination is forbidden. Love continues as long as the lover sees the beloved in everything around him or her, and regards every beauty and perfection as the manifestation of the beloved. If this is not the case, love dies.



Lovers cannot imagine any opposition, no matter how small, to the beloved. They cannot endure to see the beloved veiled by something that causes Him to be forgotten. Moreover, lovers regard as futile any speech that is not about the beloved, and any act that is not related to Him as ingratitude and disloyalty.



Love means the heart's attachment and the will power's inclination toward the beloved. It also means the feelings' being purified of anything or anyone else other than the beloved and all the senses and faculties of the lover being turned to and set on the beloved only. Every act of the lover reflects the beloved: his or her heart always beats with yearning for the beloved; his or her tongue always murmurs the beloved's name, and his or her eyes open and close with the beloved's image.



Seeing the beloved's traces in the blowing wind, the falling rain, the murmuring stream, the humming forest, the dawn-ing morning and the darkening night, the lover comes alive. Seeing the beloved's beauty reflected in everything, the lover becomes exuberant. Feeling the beloved's breath in every breeze, the lover becomes joyful. Feeling the beloved's occasional reproaches, the lover moans in sorrow.



Lovers who awaken to the dawn of the beloved's signs find themselves engulfed by a flood of flames. They burn therein, never desiring to escape this pleasant "hell." They are like volcanoes ready to erupt, and their groans are like lava, which burns everything it touches.



One should not confuse true love with the feeling felt for members of the opposite sex. Such love, although sometimes transformed into true love, is deficient, temporary, and has no inherent value.



It is impossible to express love with words, for love is an emotional state that can be understood only by the lover.



Lovers are intoxicated with their love, admiration, and appreciation of the beloved. Only the trumpet announcing the Day of Judgment will bring lovers to their senses.



Only true love will end the pain caused by being ephemeral, and extinguish the “flames” in which the afflicted “burn.” True love will cure all apparently incurable pain and disease, and answer the cries of the modern world.



If we do not plant the seeds of love in the hearts of young people, whom we try to revive through science, knowledge, and modern culture, they will never attain perfection and free themselves completely from their carnal desires.

MORALS

Morals are a set of noble principles that originate in high spirituality and govern human conduct. For this reason, people who neglect spirituality, and therefore lack spiritual values, cannot sustain conduct in accordance with these principles.



Preferring the interests of others over one’s own is high spirituality and liberality. Those who always do good without expecting any return will one day bow before God in wonder and admiration when, unexpectedly, they meet the accumulated results of their considerate nature and all the good they have done.



Just because you are a learned one does not mean that you are truly human. Learned people are freed from carrying the burden of superfluous information and attain greatness to the extent that they serve humanity and set a good example for others through their high morals and virtues. Otherwise, they are no more than people who have wasted their lives. Those with high morals and virtues, even if they lack learning and are as seemingly dense as iron, may sometimes prove to be useful and valuable as gold.



Never deceive anyone, even if they deceive you. Fidelity and uprightness are two of the highest virtues. Even if following this advice brings you loss, which it usually does, always be faithful and upright.



Morals were once thought of as virtues. Today, morals are regarded as a collection of rules for social behavior. I wish people would behave in accordance with those rules, even though they are not virtuous!



In the past, people would say: "The principles of good conduct are no longer practiced; we only see them written down in books." Today, they say: "The principles of good conduct are out of date; whatever remains of them is written down in old books." Whatever they say, those principles are worth the sacrifice of many new things, even though people try to present them as outdated.

CONSCIENCE

Conscience, which has a central position in a person's being and is the feeling that he or she is a human being, is a spiritual mechanism which wills, feels, perceives and is always open to eternity.



The willpower, feeling, mind and heart which are the "senses" or faculties of the perceptiveness of the spirit, are also the most important dynamics of conscience, by which a person is able to attain human perfection in this world and eternal happiness and vision of the Almighty in the next.



Conscience is a pure, bright mirror to the existence of God and is matchless in recognizing Him and making Him known to others, provided it has eyes to look with insight.



Since collective conscience serves as an unerring and undecieving judge, everyone should resign themselves to its verdicts and affirm it as a referee in their disputes.



Duty is what God commands and Prophets carry out and communicate to others. Everyone must accept it and set themselves to do it. God, the Truth, is the Absolute Judge and conscience is the purest mirror to Him. It reflects whatever it reflects with such clarity and power that only the dread of inability to live up to its truth can cloud it, and even that most rarely.



The more intellectually and spiritually disciplined one is, the more consistent and harmonious one's thoughts and actions are. The more open to the realms beyond one's conscience is, the more Divinely inspired and guided one's manners are.



Since conscience is the feeling and perceptive faculty of the spirit, it has always been regarded as open to the realms beyond, uncontained by space, having sound criteria and as pure as angels.



There are many judges and almost all of them issue verdicts based on the same sources, and yet their verdicts may differ. But the conscience is a judge with such penetrating insight that it can issue verdicts based on truths and its verdicts will deceive no one.



Collective conscience means the perception, discernment and insight of the great majority of people and therefore rarely errs, especially when its knowledge is corroborated by a Divinely inspired source.

HUMILITY

Humble and modest people are highly regarded by the created and the Creator. Haughty and self-conceited people, who belittle others and are arrogant, are always disliked by the created and punished by the Creator.



Self-conceit shows a lack of sensibility and maturity. Those who are more reflective and spiritually mature have the sense to attribute whatever gifts they may have to the Creator, the Most High, and devote themselves to Him with humble gratitude.



Humility makes people pleased with God's judgments, and steadfast in the face of reproofs and insults from others. Those who know their place and do not put on airs have truly secured and defended themselves against other people's contempt.



Humility is a sign of virtue and maturity, while haughtiness and self-conceit indicate an imperfect, lowly spirit. The most perfect human beings are those who are at ease and intimate in the company of others. By contrast, those who are too proud to join in with others and form warm friendships with them are the most imperfect human beings and only earn notoriety.



Those who do not seek or claim great prestige in their community sooner or later attain high ranks and are honored. Those who have a superiority complex are repudiated by their community and eventually become strangers in it.



Humility is a sign of one's having become truly human. One sign of humility is that one does not change after obtaining high status or wealth, learning or fame, or whatever is pub-

licly esteemed. If any of these circumstances causes the person to alter his or her ideas, attitudes, and behavior, he or she cannot be regarded as having attained true humanity or true humility.



Humility is like a key to all other virtues. One who is humble may have all other virtues, whereas one who lacks humility usually is deprived of other virtues as well. After his fault, Prophet Adam, upon him be peace, nevertheless recovered, through humility, all of his former connections to the worlds beyond. By contrast, Satan, undergoing the same test as Adam, became the irrecoverable victim of his self-conceit and haughtiness.



Humble people attain high (spiritual) ranks in the institutions of spiritual training. They benefit fully from a good education, whether religious or scientific, and prove useful to their communities. Those whose vainglory and pride do not allow them to benefit from the discipline of these institutions, or to be taught by others, have lost their way.



Since grandeur and pride are among the exclusive attributes of the Divine Being, those who act arrogantly and transgress the limits of modesty are seized and punished by Him. Those who know their true station and remain suitably humble and modest are honored with His Presence.

HOLDING ONE'S TONGUE

Talking too much is a personality defect stemming from mental and spiritual imbalance. Use precise words that will not confuse the listener's mind, and do not use more words than necessary to convey the intended message. Indeed, using many words may even be harmful,

for the more words you use, the greater the chance of contradiction, which will confuse the listener even more. This will not benefit the listener; on the contrary, it will work to his or her detriment.



Reasonable people prefer to let those people, whose words might be of more benefit to the audience, speak. If perfected individuals whose minds are saturated with science and whose souls are satisfied with Divine spiritual gifts are present, it is an act of disrespect to allow others to speak. In fact, the silence of such perfected individuals represents a loss to the society.



Speaking little and listening much are virtues and signs of maturity. The desire to make oneself heard at all times is a sign of spiritual imbalance and shamelessness, even if some explain it away as a form of insanity.



Any words spoken should be directed toward solving a problem or answering a question. In either case, the one who asks the question and the one who listens to the answer should not become bored.



It is natural that one speaks only when necessary, and keeps silent when words are out of place. However, it is always better that those words which are of great benefit to others should take precedence. Nevertheless, this depends on acquiring good manners and perceiving the virtue of keeping silent. Such wisdom is reflected in a beautiful proverb: Those who speak a lot make many mistakes.



People reveal themselves through their words, and manifest their spiritual rank through their manners. Those who act as though they are the only ones with the authority to speak

inevitably become disliked and are condemned by their friends. As a result, any valuable words they might express are rejected out of hand. As a corollary, these truths are not accorded the respect they deserve.



Holding the tongue, like eating and sleeping only a little, always has been a golden rule followed by men and women of perfection. Those who wish to develop their spiritual faculties are advised firstly to hold their tongue and to refrain from idle talk. They should not say whatever comes to their minds.



Few people are more pathetic than those who tell others to do that which they themselves do not do. Thus, in the words of the Most Truthful One, upon him be peace and blessings, holding one's tongue and preserving one's chastity by refraining illicit sexual relations are keys that open the door to Paradise.



The further away you are from drowning others in your words and from preferring your own words over those of other people, the closer and more lovable to the Creator and the created you become. If you cannot abide by this truth, you cannot fulfill your duties to God and other people.

RESPECT FOR THOUGHT

Criticizing and objecting to everything means an attempt to destruction. If you do not like something, try to make something better than it. Being destructive causes ruins, while being constructive brings about prosperity.



Give value to every word in a meeting. Do not immediately reject those that do not conform to your ideas. Think that

the idea might have been expressed from a different viewpoint, and be patient until the end!

PRUDENCE

Always exercise prudence, for it can prevent any remorse and regret engendered by loss or failure. So many who have initiated projects have regretted their actions or blamed fate, just because they failed to assess their situation prudently and competently. Such people are doubly in error: for inadequate deliberation and then for criticizing fate.



However great a project's goal, always take the proper precautions required to attain it. If you do not establish a realistic plan of action and carefully weigh potential advantages and drawbacks, either you are not serious or you are simply foolish. The efforts of such people are often more harmful than their inaction.



Prudence and safety measures are important resources for reaching your goal. It is a serious error to be careless and negligent of anything that eventually might cause you to fail or to be accused of various things by others. Smart people envisage all possible drawbacks and problems, and then figure out how to solve them or deal with them appropriately if they should arise. As one of our traditional sayings express it: "It is better to catch a burglar before he or she breaks into your home."



Embark upon every duty after you have carried out the proper planning activities and safety measures. Be wary of those steps that do not result in any material or intellectual benefit or add any value. Every project undertaken without adequate

precautions is triviality and nonsense, a sign of foolishness and childishness in the person preoccupied with it.



People demonstrate their own virtue and worth through the success they achieve after facing very tough trials and awkward circumstances. Their success under adverse conditions depends primarily on formulating a realistic plan and then sticking to it. Accordingly, a person's worth and virtue are proportional to the resulting success, and one's success is proportional to the degree of prudence exercised before setting out on the venture.



To carry out one's duties in an orderly, consistent way depends on both the initial measures and plans and on one's ability not to be thrown off the course by the actions of one's rivals. Such dedication demands great forethought and prudence. Many of those who set out with great noise and fuss are caught and delayed by rivals or enemies before they even reach the second step. They find themselves surrounded by the evils and vexations of which they had been warned, and for which they had not prepared themselves adequately. If only that were the sole negative consequence! Consider the effect on those who followed them—the loss of hope, the paralysis and apathy generated by failure.



Being prudent does not mean being fearful and withdrawing. Nor does action without proper preparation and planning have anything to do with being courageous and bold. Being excessively cautious may cause some damage, but people can recover from such damage. However, the indiscreet and heedless actions of those who think imprudence is heroism are very risky and dangerous.



Like many other bad habits, trying to manipulate the masses with deceitful crowd control techniques is a gift to us

from abroad. We reject such things, which remind us of a hen “announcing” loudly that it has laid an egg. Instead, we prefer the slow, peaceful road, even if it means a longer and painful travail.



Your true stature before the Creator is measured by your energy and the loftiness of your aims. The clearest sign of these two elements is that you willingly sacrifice your own comfort and desire for the prosperity of others. Can you imagine any greater sacrifice than undermining your own dignity for the sake of social well-being, controlling your temper even when you feel like shouting, limiting your own desire at a time of personal prosperity?



It is foolishness to consider only the courage of a victorious army and disregard the role of strategic planning. Similarly, it is stupidity to attribute success to heedless daring, thereby downplaying the critical importance of prudent planning and forethought.



Efforts to secure a goal, as well as precautions taken to realize it, are invitations for the Almighty’s help. These are two parts of the same reality. A misguided step in either preparing or enacting a project may cause that help to be withdrawn. If that happens, success will not be forthcoming. Safe, steady progress on the journey is possible for those who constantly remain discerning and vigilant. Fortunate are those who understand this fact.



CHAPTER 3

Family

FAMILY

MARRIAGE AND THE HOME

The purpose of marriage is not pleasure; rather, it is to establish a family, ensure the nation's permanency and continuation, save the individual from dispersed feelings and thoughts, and to control physical pleasures. Just as with many other matters related to our God-given basic nature, pleasure is a payment made in advance to invite to and encourage marriage.



One should not marry for reasons of dress, wealth, or physical beauty; rather, marry for spiritual beauty, honor, morality, virtue, and character.



If a couple wishes to divorce, the most intelligent criteria are of no use to those who did not (or could not) get married for the correct reasons. The important thing is not to escape from the fire in the home with the least harm, but to prevent a fire from ever starting there.



Some marriages based on logic and judgment were initiated by taking refuge in God. They are so sacred that, for a lifetime, they are like a school, and their "students" guarantee the nation's permanency and continuation.



Every union made in the name of marriage, but without careful thought, has left behind crying wives, orphans, and those who wound the family's heart.



The soundest foundation for a nation is a family in which material and spiritual happiness flows, for such a family serves as a sacred school that raises virtuous individuals. If a nation can make its homes as enlightened and prosperous as its schools, and its schools as warm as its homes, it has made the greatest reform and has guaranteed the contentment and happiness of future generations.



Nations are based on homes and individuals. If homes are good, the nation is good; if homes are bad, the nation is bad. If only those who want the best for the nation would first work to reform the homes!



The word home is used according to the people in it. They are considered happy to the degree that they share human values. We can say that people live humanly with their family members; a home becomes a home because of its inhabitants.



A home is a small nation, and a nation is a large home. One who successfully manages a home and who has raised its members to a level of humanity can manage a large organization with little effort.



A disorderly house means that its people are slovenly and unhappy. The dirtiness, disorder, and irregularity of houses, shops, and streets show the local officials' lack of sensitivity.



What is right is liked and esteemed even if defeated; what is unjust is loathsome and disliked even if victorious.



What is right is beautiful in character, and the one who is right is sweet. Even if the right falls into the mud, it remains

pure and upright. Even if the unjust is washed with musk, it remains impure and disgusting.



Color and shape may change, but essence does not. Name and title may change, but character does not. Such changes have fooled, and continue to fool, many people.



Those who oppress the weak are defeated even if they seem to be the victors; those who are right are victorious even if they seem to be the losers.

BRINGING UP THE YOUNG

The future of every individual is closely related to the impressions and influences experienced during childhood and youth. If children and young people are brought up in a climate where their enthusiasm is stimulated with higher feelings, they will have vigorous minds and display good morals and virtues.



Little attention and importance is given to teaching cultural values, although they are essential to education. When we give them their deserved importance, we will have reached a major objective.



Improving a community is possible only by elevating the young generations to the rank of humanity, not by obliterating the bad ones. Unless a seed composed of religion, tradition, and historical consciousness is germinated throughout the country, new evil elements will appear and grow in the place of each eradicated bad one.



Children's literature, whether prose or verse, must impart resolution to the spirit, soundness to the mind, and strength

to hopes so that we may raise generations with strong wills and sound ideas.



Educators who have not been apprenticed to a master and have not received a sound education are like blind people trying to light the way of others with lanterns. A child's mischief and impudence arises from the atmosphere in which he or she has been raised. A dysfunctional family life is increasingly reflected upon the spirit of the child, and therefore upon the society.



In schools, good manners should be considered just as important as other subjects. If they are not, how can children grow up with sound characters? Education is different from teaching. Most people can be teachers, but the number of educators is severely limited.



Good manners are a virtue and are greatly appreciated in whomever they are found. Those with good manners are liked, even if they are uneducated. Communities devoid of culture and education are like rude individuals, for one cannot find in them any loyalty in friendship or consistency in enmity. Those who trust such people are always disappointed, and those who depend upon them are left, sooner or later, without support.



Although it is fundamental that girls be brought up to be delicate like flowers and mild and affectionate educators of children, due attention must be given to making them inflexible defenders of truth. Otherwise, we shall have transformed them into poor, impotent beings for the sake of delicacy and mildness. We must not forget that female lions are still lions.



Our humanity is directly proportional to the purity of our emotions. Although those who are full of bad feelings and whose souls are influenced by egoism look like human beings, whether they really are human is doubtful. Almost everyone can train their bodies, but few people can educate their minds and feelings. The former training produces strong bodies, while the latter produces spiritual people.



The first school for children, whose souls are as bright as mirrors and as quick to record as cameras, are their homes. Their first educators are their mothers. Thus it is fundamental for a nation's existence and stability that mothers be brought up and educated to be good educators for their children.

CHILDREN

Adam, the first man, and Eve, the first woman, were created together at the very beginning of human existence. This indicates that marriage is natural. Reproduction is the most important purpose of this natural state. A marriage made for reasons other than bringing up new generations is no more than a temporary entertainment and adventure. The children who come into the world through such a marriage are the unfortunate products of a transient emotion.



A nation's durability depends on the education of young generations, upon their being awakened to national spirit and consciousness and spiritually perfected. If nations cannot raise perfect generations to whom they can entrust their future, their future is dark indeed. There is no doubt that the main responsibility for raising such generations falls upon parents.



Human generations come and go. Those who have attained high levels of spiritual attainment are worthy of being considered human. Those who do not develop their spiritual faculties,

due to their low level of education, scarcely merit being called human. They are nothing more than strange creatures, even though they have descended from Adam. And their parents, to whom they are a burden, are unfortunate to have nurtured them.



When trees are pruned properly, they produce fruit and their growth improves. If they are not pruned properly, they shrivel and become stunted. Given this, should not each human being, possessing so many talents and abilities, be given at least as much care as a tree?



Those of you who bring children into this world must raise them to the realms beyond the heavens. Just as you take care of their bodily health, so take care of their spiritual life. For God's sake, have pity and save the helpless innocents. Do not let their lives be wasted.



If parents encourage their children to develop their abilities and be useful to themselves and the community, they have given the nation a strong new pillar. If, on the contrary, they do not cultivate their children's human feelings, they will have released scorpions into the community.



Parents have the right to claim their children as long as they educate and equip them with virtue. They cannot make such a claim, however, if they neglect them. But what shall we call parents who introduce their children to wickedness and indecency, and cause them to break with humanity?

THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

A child has the same meaning for humanity's continuation as a seed for a forest's continued growth and multiplication. People who neglect their children

decay gradually, and those who abandon them to a foreign culture risk losing their identity.



Children form the most active and productive part of a community after every thirty or forty years. Those who ignore their young generation should consider how important an element of their own community's life they are disregarding, and then shudder.



The vices observed in today's generation, the incompetence of some administrators, and other social problems are the direct result of the conditions prevailing thirty years ago, and of that time's ruling elite. Likewise, those entrusted with educating today's young people are responsible for the vices and virtues that will appear thirty years from now.



Those who want to secure their future should apply as much energy to raising their children as they devote to other problems. While the energy devoted to many other things may go in vain, whatever is spent for raising a young generation elevates them to the rank of humanity. Such people will be like an inexhaustible source of income.



Those people in our community who are miserable and lost, such as drug addicts, alcoholics, and other dissolute people, were once children. We failed to educate them properly. I wonder if we are sufficiently aware of the kind of people we are preparing to walk on our streets tomorrow.



Communities that pay close attention to the family institution and their young people's education. Communities that neglect the family institution and the young people's education will be crushed by the pitiless wheels of time, no matter how advanced they are in sciences and technology.

YOUTH

Those who wish to predict a nation's future can do so accurately by analyzing the education and upbringing given to its young people.



Desires resemble sweets, and virtues resemble food that is a little salty or sour. When young people are free to choose, what are they likely to prefer? Regardless of this, however, it is our obligation to bring them up to be friends of virtue and enemies of indecency and immorality.



Until we help our young people through education, they are captives of their environment. They wander about aimlessly, moved by intense passions and far away from knowledge and reason. They can become truly valiant young representatives of the national thought and feeling only if their education integrates them with their past and prepares them intelligently for their future.



Think of society as a crystal vessel, and of its young people as the liquid poured into it. Notice that the liquid assumes the vessel's shape and color. Evil-minded champions of regimentation tell young people to obey them instead of the truth. Do such people never question themselves? Should they not also obey the truth?



A nation's progress or decline depends on the spirit and consciousness, the upbringing and education, given to its young people. Nations that have raised their young people correctly are always ready for progress, while those who have not done so find it impossible to take even a single step forward.



Young people are saplings of power, strength, and intelligence. If trained and educated properly, they can become "heroes"

overcoming obstacles and acquire a mind that promises enlightenment to hearts and order to the world.

THE RIGHTS OF PARENTS

Respect of parents is a primary and sacred obligation. If you do not respect your parents, you are disobeying God Almighty. Those who treat their parents badly eventually are treated badly by others.



From the very moment of conception, a growing and developing child is a care and responsibility for its parents. One cannot estimate the depth of attachment and compassion parents feel for their children, or calculate the troubles and hardships they endure because of them. For this reason, respecting parents is a debt of human gratitude as well as a religious obligation.



Those who value their parents and regard them as a means to obtain God's mercy are the most prosperous in both worlds. Those who regard their parents' existence as a burden or who become weary of them inevitably suffer the most severe hardships in life.



The more you respect your parents, the greater the respect and awe you feel before your Creator. If you do not feel and show respect to your parents, this means that you feel no fear, awe, or respect toward God. Yet, it is a curious thing today that both those who disrespect God and those who claim they love God disobey their parents.



Children should respect and obey their parents as much as possible. Parents should give as much importance to their children's moral and spiritual education as they do to their

physical growth and health, and should entrust them to the care of the most honorable teachers and guides. How ignorant and careless are those parents who neglect their children's moral and spiritual training, and how unfortunate are the children who suffer such neglect and are so victimized.



Children who are inconsiderate of their parents' rights and disobey them are "monsters derived from a deteriorated human being." Parents who do not secure their children's moral and spiritual welfare also are merciless and cruel. Most brutish and pitiless of all are parents who paralyze their children's moral and spiritual development after their children have found their way to human perfection.



Families form a society's foundation. The reciprocal respect of rights and obligations within a family results in a healthy and strong society. When such familial relationships disappear, the society loses its compassion and respect for others.



CHAPTER 4

Knowledge

KNOWLEDGE

SCIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

Avoiding the positive sciences fearing that they will lead to atheism is naivety, and seeing them as contradictory with religion and faith and as vehicles for the rejection of religion is prejudice and ignorance.



Science and technology are beneficial to the degree that they guarantee human happiness and help us attain true humanity. If they are developed to harm humanity, they become devils blocking our road.



At the beginning of this century, some short-sighted materialists made science into an idol and sacrificed everything to it, while the most famous scientist of the century was criticizing this tendency in a pleasant way by saying: “Science without religion is blind; religion without science is lame.” What would they have said if they saw those of today who are both blind and lame?!



Claiming that the positive sciences are of no value is ignorance and bigotry; rejecting everything else outside their fields is a crude fanaticism. Realizing that there is still a great deal to be learned signifies true scientific mentality and sound thinking.



All of us are travelers, and the worlds are multicolored exhibitions and rich and colorful books. We were sent to study

these books, increase our spiritual knowledge, and uplift others. This colorful and pleasurable journey is a one-time event. For those whose feelings are alert and whose hearts are awake, this journey is more than enough to establish a Paradise-like garden. But for those whose eyes are covered, it is as if they have lived but one breath.



One who profoundly thinks about and evaluates nature and the laws of life will see the coquetry of eternal beauty in everything, and hear the consecration of Infinite Power in every sound—from flowers' shining colors to swaying of tree branches, from frightening thunderclaps to sparrows' harmonious songs. Such people see the traces and works of a Divine source manifested in the phenomena and laws such as light and heat, gravitation and chemical reaction, and the directing of animate beings.

WHAT WE EXPECT OF SCIENCE

Since “real” life is possible only through knowledge, those who neglect learning and teaching are considered “dead” even though they are still alive, for we were created to learn and to communicate what we have learned to others.



Right decisions depend on having a sound mind and on sound thinking. As science and knowledge illuminates and develop one's mind, those deprived of science and knowledge cannot reach right decisions and are always exposed to deception and misguidance.



Those who are truly human continue to learn, teach, and inspire others. It is difficult to regard those who are ignorant and have no desire to learn as truly human. It is also

questionable whether a learned person who does not pursue self-renewal and self-reform, and thereby set an example for others, is truly human.



Science and knowledge should seek to uncover the nature of men and women and the mysteries of creation. Any knowledge, however scientific, is not true knowledge if it does not shed light on the mysteries of human nature and the dark areas of existence.



Status and merit acquired through knowledge and science are higher and more lasting than status and merit obtained through other means. This is true for two reasons: Knowledge will enrapture its possessors, when they reach the other world, with the pleasure of the positions acquired while in this world. In addition, it will keep its possessors away from bad morals in this world and help them attain many virtues.



Parents should feed their children's minds with knowledge and science before they become engaged in useless things. Souls devoid of truth and knowledge are fields in which all kinds of evil thoughts are grown and cultivated.



The purpose of learning is to make knowledge a guide for your life, to illuminate the road to human perfection. Any knowledge that does not fulfill these functions is a burden for the learner, and any science that does not direct one toward sublime goals is only deception.



*Science is to perceive the reality of science,
Science consists in knowledge of the self;
If, then, you do not know your self,
I wonder what kind of education you have had.*



Appropriate language is an inexhaustible source of blessing for the learner. Those who possess such a source are always sought, like a source of fresh water, and lead people to what is good. Knowledge consisting of empty theories and unabsorbed pieces of learning, which arouses suspicions in minds and darkens hearts, is like a “pile of garbage” around which desperate and confused souls flounder.



Although science and all branches of knowledge are beneficial to almost everyone, one cannot possibly acquire all of them, for people’s lifespans and resources are limited. Therefore, learn and use only that which benefits yourself and humanity at large. Do not waste your life.



True scientists base their study and research on true reports, correct expositions, and scientific experiments. As a result, they have peace of mind and solve their problems with ease. However, those who do not know the truth are buffeted constantly by changing aims and methods, and so are always disillusioned.



People are esteemed and appreciated in proportion to the profundity and content of their knowledge. The knowledge of those who spread gossip and idle talk is nothing more than gossip and idle talk. On the other hand, truly valuable indeed are those who use their knowledge as a prism to perceive things and events, as a light to illuminate “space” to the darkest points, and to reach the most transcendent truths.

PROGRESS

Anation’s development and progress depends upon the intellectual and spiritual training given to the people who live within its borders. A nation whose

members are lacking in intellectual and spiritual development should not be expected to develop and progress.



Nations begin to move backward when they allow once-cultivated fields to be neglected, and turn vineyards and gardens into rubbish heaps. Fertilizing barren soil and then cultivating it so that it becomes a vineyard and a garden is progress. A developed country's lands consist of gardens, its mountains have vineyards, and its places of worship are like magnificent palaces. In contrast, the cities of an underdeveloped country are ruins, its streets are rubbish heaps, and its places of worship are left to decay as moldy halls.



When something has been improved, it becomes cleaner and brighter, better and more orderly than it formerly was. Accordingly, being content with the way things are indicates a lack of effort, while true progress is the realization of improvements.



Each advance forward appears first as a concept. Then, the masses are persuaded to accept it. Finally, it is put into practice by those united in heart and mind. Any attempt to make progress that is not based on reason and science is futile.



National development only occurs when a nation's people have the same goal. It cannot develop and progress, although it shows great activity, if some of its members say "black" and others say "white" for the same thing.



A community that has not educated its people in a shared tradition eventually splits into different groups based on their diverging knowledge and upbringing. These groups will be hostile to each other. It is impossibly difficult for such a fractured community to progress.



Although education is undeniably important for a country's development, the expected results will never be achieved if the young people are not educated according to the country's traditional values.



For true and beneficial progress, people must evaluate the present conditions and use the experience of former generations intelligently. If coming generations do not learn from the experience of their predecessors, and each generation follows its own way, the nation will begin to move backward instead of forward.

CULTURE

Culture is an important resource that must be used by those seeking to develop their community in the most beneficial and appropriate way. There is a vital link between the cohesion and strength of a community's direction and the authenticity of its cultural resources.



Culture is a stable mix of such fundamental elements as language, education, tradition, and art, all of which form a community's structure and lifestyle. It is a kind of blindness to ignore the reality that these fundamental elements have (and ought to have) unique features, and different characters and temperaments, for they reflect the people to whom they belong. A community that has broken with its essential cultural values inevitably loses its identity and collapses as a distinct society.



The existence of distinct and unique cultures does not mean that there can (or should) not be any intercultural exchanges of ideas and people. Rather, it means that each culture should demand a "visa" from a foreign cultural element

seeking entrance. Its right of entry should be questioned and granted only after prudent consideration of what effect it might have upon the indigenous culture. Foreign elements should be “distilled” before being absorbed into the indigenous culture. Otherwise, a cultural and civilizational crisis will occur.



A distinctive culture evolves in the crucible of true religion, high morality and virtues, and well-digested knowledge. Where religion and morality are opposed and rejected, and ignorance is widespread, a high or advanced culture cannot be formed.



People who seek their own continuance or survival by blindly accepting the culture and civilization of others are like trees upon whose branches are hung the fruits of other trees. They deceive not only themselves, but also lay themselves open to ridicule.



Cultural values have the same meaning and worth for a people as blossoms and fruits have for a tree. A community that has failed to produce a distinctive culture, or has lost or forsaken it, may be likened to a barren tree or to one whose fruits have dropped off. Today or tomorrow, that tree will be cut down and used as wood.

CIVILIZATION

Civilization does not mean being rich and putting on fine airs, nor does it mean satisfying carnal desires and leading a luxurious, dissipated life. What it really means is being civil and courteous, kind-hearted, profound in thought, and respectful to others.



Savage people are usually cruel, oppressive and bloodthirsty, as they usually live by plundering ... However, what about those civilized savages equipped with modern weaponry, who are always seeking and finding subtle, deceiving ways of shedding blood?



Communities based on the joining of science and morality have always established true civilizations. For this reason, Western civilization remains paralyzed because it is based mainly on science, and Eastern (Asian) civilizations are not “true” because, in their present conditions, they have no scientific background. The civilization of the future will have to be founded upon a combination of Western science and Eastern faith and morality.



Civilization means more than scientific advancement, modern means of transportation, and living in large cities with skyscrapers. While such things may be adjuncts to civilization, it is folly and ignorant to identify civilization solely with them.



If a given civilization is not based on morality and virtue and nurtured in the pool of intelligence and conscience, it is no more than a passing flash of illuminations that serves a couple rich people and excites some thrill seekers. What a pity for those who are fooled by its blinking lights.



One becomes truly civilized only when all human virtues and potentialities have been developed to the degree that they become second nature. People who think that civilization means indulging all kinds of desires, and who identify it with outward forms and modern fashions, are those lacking in sound judgment and who have given in to their bodily desires.



CHAPTER 5

Society

SOCIETY

HUMANITY

When interacting with others, always regard whatever pleases and displeases yourself as the measure. Desire for others what your own ego desires, and do not forget that whatever conduct displeases you will displease others. If you do this, you will be safe not only from misconduct and bad behavior, but also from hurting others.



Considering that favors received make you feel a liking, affection, and attachment for those who bestowed the favor upon you, you should understand how to make others like you, and feel affection and attachment for you. It is said that “people are the slaves of the favors done to them.” Therefore, doing others a favor and being good to them is a reliable defense against any harm that may come from them.



Maturity and perfection of spirit is being just in your treatment of others, especially with those who have done you an injustice. Answer their evil with good. Do not stop doing good, even to those who have harmed you. Rather, treat them with humanity and nobility, for harming someone is brutish behavior. Returning evil with evil implies a deficiency in character; returning good for evil is nobility.



There is no limit to doing good to others. Those who have dedicated themselves to the good of humanity can be so

altruistic that they will even sacrifice their lives for others. However, such altruism is a great virtue only if it originates in sincerity and purity of intention, and if it does not define “others” by racial preferences.



Our humanity and nobility are directly proportional to our closeness to our friends and our maintenance of these friendships. Talking of nobility and kindness without expressing warmth and intimacy in relationships is mere assertion. Doing good in return only for good received, or sometimes ceasing to do good to others in order to punish them, implies moral imperfection and immaturity.



It is a sign of great generosity and goodness to others if you ignore some of their faults, improprieties, or bad manners, and tolerate their imperfections. Prying into others’ affairs and finding fault is rude and uncivil, and publicizing such affairs is unforgivable. Declaring them to the other’s face is a severe blow to the bonds of unity between people, a blow from which, sadly, it is almost impossible for friendship to recover fully.



Those who regard even the greatest good they have done for others as insignificant, while greatly appreciating even the least favor done to themselves, are perfected ones who have acquired the Divine standards of behavior and found peace in their conscience. Such individuals never remind others of the good they have done for them, and never complain when others appear to be indifferent to them.

HUMAN BEINGS

Each individual is equipped with sublime emotions, has a natural disposition toward virtue, and is fascinated with eternity. Even the most wretched-looking

person has a rainbow-like atmosphere in his or her spirit comprised of the thought of eternity, love of beauty, and virtuous feeling. If people can develop these most basic, inherent elements of their being, they can rise to the highest ranks of humanity and attain eternity.



People are true human beings not in the mortal, material aspect of their existence, but rather in the attraction of their spirits to eternity and in their efforts to find it. For this reason, those who disregard their innate spiritual aspect and concentrate only on their physical existence will never find true peace and contentment.



The happiest and most fortunate people are those who are always intoxicated with ardent desire for the worlds beyond. Those who confine themselves within the narrow and suffocating limits of their bodily existence are really in prison, even though they may be living in palaces.



Our first and foremost duty is to discover ourselves and then turn toward God through the illuminated prism of our nature. Those who remain unaware of their true nature, and who therefore cannot establish any contact with their Most High Creator, spend their lives like coolies who are ignorant of the treasure they are carrying on their backs.



All human beings are essentially helpless. However, they discover an extraordinary competence by depending on the Infinitely Powerful One, for this dependence transforms them from a drop into a waterfall, a particle into a sun, and a beggar into a king.



Our familiarity with the “book” of existence and events, and our establishment of a unity between ourselves and that

book, causes sparks of wisdom to appear in our hearts. We begin to recognize our essential nature and obtain knowledge of God through the light of those sparks. Finally, we reach God. To attain this goal, however, we must not set out this (mental) journeying with a mind conditioned by (biased and prejudiced toward) atheism and materialism.



Those who are truly human interact with other living beings in the consciousness of personal duty to them and within the limits of need. Those who abandon themselves to bodily desire and pleasure go beyond what is allowed, and therefore cannot maintain the proper distance or balance between duty and desire.

WOMEN

Women train and educate children, and establish order, peace, and harmony in the home. They are the first teachers in the school of humanity. At a time when some are in search of a new place for them in society, we would like to remind them once again of the unique position God bestowed upon them.



A house that contains an honorable, well-mannered woman loyal to her home is a corner from Heaven. The sounds and breaths heard there are no different from the musical voices of the young people of Paradise and the burbling of the Kawthar stream in Heaven.



A woman's inner depth, chastity, and dignity elevate her higher than angels and cause her to resemble an unmatched diamond. A disreputable woman is a false coin, and an undignified woman is a puppet to be ridiculed. In the destructive atmosphere of such women, it is possible to find neither a healthy home nor a sound generation.



A woman awake to virtue in her inner world resembles a crystal chandelier that, with every movement, sends light throughout the house. The most important thing a woman should know is social breeding.



Women often have been used as objects of pleasure, means of entertainment, and material for advertising. However, until now all these unfortunate periods have been a starting point for women to become renewed and find their true essence (like nights followed by days).



In the past, a son was called “makhdum” and a daughter, “karima.” Meaning “pupil (of the eye),” this word expresses a member that is very valuable, as necessary as it is valuable, and as delicate as it is necessary.



A good woman speaks wisdom, and has a delicate, refined spirit. Her behavior inspires admiration and respect. Familiar looks sense this sacred side of her, and turn instinctive feelings to contemplation.



Like a flower worn on the breast, a beautiful woman may receive admiration and respect for some short period. But, if she has not been able to get the seeds of her heart and spirit to blossom, she will eventually fade and, like falling leaves, be trampled underfoot. What a sad ending for those who have not found the path to immortality!



Each woman is a precious, exalted jewel that must not be violated and thrown into a sewer. We hope that fortunate future generations will awake to knowledge, spirituality, and truth so that women may once again become “the apple of their eye.”



Our women are the soundest foundation stone of our national honor and nobility. Their part in forming our long and glorious past is equal to that of the warriors who struggled with our enemies.



Most champions of women's rights and freedom only excite women with physical pleasures and then stab their spirit.



Thanks to the good successors she raised and left behind, the home of a spiritually mature woman constantly exudes a scent of joy like an incense burner. The "heavenly" home where this aroma "blows" is a garden of Paradise beyond description.



A woman whose heart is illuminated with the light of faith and whose mind is enlightened with knowledge and social breeding builds her home anew each day by adding new dimensions of beauty to it. A dissolute woman who does not know her true self destroys existing homes and turns them into graves.

FREEDOM

Freedom means that the spirit voluntarily limits itself to nothing other than sublime feelings and thoughts, and serves no principles other than goodness and virtue.



Many people who are actually imprisoned or in chains remain free in their conscience and so do not feel their imprisonment. Many others, however, do not taste the true meaning of freedom although they inhabit the vast spaces of palaces and gardens.



True freedom is civilized freedom. It wears the diamond chain of religion and morals, and the golden collar of sound thinking.



True freedom is the freedom of the human mind from all shackles that hinder it from making material and spiritual progress, as long as we do not fall into indifference and heedlessness.



Freedom allows people to do whatever they want, provided that they do not harm others and that they remain wholly devoted to the truth.



Freedom that does not acknowledge religious ideas and feelings, and that does not serve as the ground for virtue and morality, is like the desire to scratch oneself. Communities afflicted with this desire eventually become restless and wander off the common road of humanity.



Those who regard freedom as absolute liberty confuse human freedom with animal freedom. Animals have no moral questions asked of them, and so are free of moral constraints. Some people desire this kind of freedom and, if they can, use it to indulge the darkest desires of the flesh. Such freedom is worse than bestial. True freedom, however, the freedom of moral responsibility, shows that one is human, for it motivates and enlivens the conscience and removes impediments from the way of the spirit.

ART

Art is the spirit of progress and one of the most important means of developing emotions. Those who cannot make use of this means are unfortunate indeed, and live a numbed, diminished life.



Art is like a magical key that opens hidden treasures. Behind the doors it opens are ideas embodied and imaginings given substantial form.



It is art which inspires human beings to travel in the depths of oceans and heavens. By means of art, humanity sets sail for the outer limits of the Earth and sky and reaches feelings beyond time and space.



Art shows human sentiments and feelings the highest goals and incites sensitive souls to profound depths. Without art, we would see no beauty in the realm of existence where we act, and all those great abilities and the works they have produced wouldn't have come to surface.



It is art which manifests and defines the power and deepest potentials of the human psyche and soul. It is by means of art that the most profound emotions and thoughts, the most striking observations and discoveries, and the most heart-felt desires have been preserved as if recorded on a tape and gained eternity.



It was by means of art combined with faith that, with its magnificent places of worship, slender minarets pointing to the realms beyond; sacred designs and intricate patterns carved in marble each of which served as a distinct message; diverse kinds of calligraphy, brilliant gildings; and embroideries as beautiful and fine as butterfly wings, that this once magnificent world of Islam became a gallery of invaluable beauty.



True knowledge shows itself through art. If one has never produced anything in the name of art, how can we say that he or she knows very much?



The vitality of a person's natural capabilities is closely related to the artistic spirit. One devoid of the spirit of art may be regarded as little different from a corpse.



Art makes iron more valuable than gold, and copper more valuable than bronze. Thanks to art, the most worthless metals become more valuable than gold, silver, and diamonds.



It is the same whether one without the spirit of art exists or not. Such people comprise crowds that are of no benefit, and might even actually harmful to, themselves, their families, and their nations.



All the fine arts are eternal gifts of blessed souls to humanity. The products of technology, combined with the spirit of art—clocks telling us the time; glasses to compensate or correct weakened sight; telecommunicative devices that shrink space, conveying sounds and images over unbelievable distances; trains, buses and planes that transport us from place to place—all these tools and objects in use in ordinary life can be the work of, and can inspire, sensitive, artistic souls.

LITERATURE

Literature is the eloquent language of a nation's spiritual make-up, world of ideas, and culture. Those who do not share this "language" cannot understand each other, even if they belong to the same nation.



Words are one of the best means to convey ideas to others. Those who are able to use this means in the best way possible can quickly find many representatives of the thoughts they planted in others, and so attain immortality through

their ideas. Those who cannot do so die without a trace, along with the mental pain they suffered while alive.



With the material it uses and its particular way of expression, each type of literature is a unique language. Even if everyone understands something of this language, only poets and writers use and speak it with its real meaning.



Just as dealers of gold and silver are experts of gold and silver, only dealers in words truly understand literary jewels. An animal will eat a flower on the ground and the inappreciative ones will step on it and go on their way. Only one who is truly human will smell a flower and place it in his or her lapel or hair.



Noble thoughts and lofty subjects must be explained with a style to penetrate minds, excite hearts and receive acceptance from spirits. If not, people will only see the torn and miserable “clothing” over the meaning, and thus will not seek the inner jewels.



Meaning is the essential element in literature. Thus, words should be kept to a minimum while being rich and propound in meaning. Some people tend to explain their thoughts with similes, metaphors, allusions, allusive metaphors, and puns. However, the most meaningful word is to be sought in exuberant, inspired spirits, profound imaginations that embrace all existence, and believing, analyzing and synthesizing minds able to attain the vision of this world and the Hereafter as two faces of one truth.

POETRY

Poetry is the poetic expression of the universe’s hidden beauty and symmetry, and the heart-ravishing, smiling view of existence by sensitive, inspired souls.

Among them are those whose hearts have become inkpots and whose ink is the breath of the spirit of holiness.



Poetry is the sound heard while delving into the beyond, and the moan coming from those so engaged. Its sounds and tunes are sometimes uproarious and sometimes fine, for they depend on the poet's spiritual condition and inner depth. For this reason, poetry's every word and sound can be comprehended fully only if the hearer knows the poet's spiritual state at the time of his or her poem's conception.



Poetry is born and takes shape according to the belief, culture, and style of thought affecting the poet's view and sensitivity. Only inspiration deepens it and causes it to transcend consciousness. In a heart that is exuberant with inspiration, an atom becomes a sun and a drop becomes an ocean.



Regardless of how great the role of intelligence and thought is in poetry, the human heart has a deep direction of its own. In Fudûlî's⁵ words: "My word is the carrier of standard before the army of poets." When thoughts growing in the heart put on the wings of imagination, they begin to force the doors of infinity.



Poetry, like entreaty, expresses the ups and downs as well as the enthusiasm and sadness of the individual's inner world. To the extent that the poet concentrates on exalted truths, the resulting poems become like breaths from realms beyond. Every supplication is a poem, and every poem is a supplication, provided the poem flutters wings toward infinity.



A poem that grows in the thought of infinity and flies in the skies of pure thought with the heart's wings and the spirit's strength does not pay too much attention to positive thought.

It uses the material, concrete world only as a vehicle. It aims only to find and catch the abstract.



Poetry is far more than rhymed speech, for many non-metrical phrases attract the spirit and awaken wonder and amazement in the heart with their meaning and way of expression. Each is a monument of poetry in itself.



Like every branch of art, poetry that has no connection with the infinite is barren and dim. The human spirit fascinated with infinite beauty, the human heart obsessed with infinity, and the human conscience longing for the eternal and eternity plead with artists to delve into the beyond. An artist who resists this plea spends a lifetime imitating the external face of things but is never able to see beyond this curtain of lace.



A poem that considers form and meaning in the relationship resembling that between the spirit and body, without sacrificing one to the other, will attain a harmony that everyone will like and find natural. Even the imagination will be unable to suggest an alternative motif for such a poem.

THE MEDIA

The media enlightens people and voices their sentiments and ideas. However, under oppressive rules, it is either a prisoner or a flatterer.



Every writer should be well-mannered in words and behavior, refined in language and writing. Otherwise, much damage can be done for the sake of an illusory good.



Journalists and writers who do not write according to national sentiment and thought represent Babylonian enslavement.



The media should avoid serving individual fancies, for their main purpose is to enlighten and serve the nation as a whole.



Many cranial bones now decaying in graveyards contain books that could not be written because of oppression or censorship.

CHAPTER 6

Social Interaction

SOCIAL INTERACTION

TOLERANCE

Be so tolerant that your heart becomes wide like the ocean. Become inspired with faith and love for others. Offer a hand to those in trouble, and be concerned about everyone.



Applaud the good for their goodness, appreciate those who have believing hearts, and be kind to believers. Approach unbelievers so gently that their envy and hatred melt away. Like a Messiah, revive people with your breath.



Remember that you are on the best path and follow an exalted guide, upon him be peace. Be mindful that you have his guidance through the most perfect and expressive revelation. Be fair-minded and balanced in your judgment, for many people do not enjoy these blessings.



Return good for evil, and disregard discourteous treatment. An individual's character is reflected in his or her behavior. Choose tolerance, and be magnanimous toward the ill-mannered.



The most distinctive feature of a soul overflowing with faith is to love all types of love that are expressed in deeds, and to feel enmity for all deeds in which enmity is expressed. To hate everything is a sign of insanity or of infatuation with Satan.



Accept how God treats you. Make it the measure by which you treat others, so that you may represent the truth among them and be free from the fear of loneliness in either world.



Only those who do not use their reason, or who have succumbed to plain stupidity and desires of the flesh, are convinced that believing men and women might harm them. Apply to a spiritual master to stir up your heart, and fill your eyes with tears.



Judge your worth in the Creator's sight by how much space He occupies in your heart, and your worth in people's eyes by how you treat them. Do not neglect the Truth even for a moment. And yet, "be a human being among other human beings."



Take note of and be attentive to any behavior that causes you to love others. Then remind yourself that behaving in the same way will cause them to love you. Always behave decently, and be alert.



Do not allow your carnal self to be a referee in any contention, for it will always rule that everyone but you is sinful and unfortunate. Such a judgment, according to the word of the most truthful one, upon him be peace and blessings, signifies your destruction. Be strict and implacable with your carnal self, and be relenting and lenient toward others.



In sum: In order to preserve your credit, honor, and love, love for the sake of the Truth, hate for the sake of the Truth, and be open-hearted toward the Truth.

CONSULTATION

*Ask someone who knows; two lots
of knowledge are better than one.*



Consultation is the first requirement to reach the right decision. Decisions reached without due reflection or proper consultation usually come to nothing. Individuals who depend only on themselves, are disconnected from others and uninterested in their opinions, even if they happen to be geniuses, are at considerable risk of error, as compared to those who offer and receive opinions.



Consultation is the first condition for obtaining good results. Paying attention to the opinions of friends and well-wishers is an important means of avoiding mistakes.



Tasks undertaken without due preparation and consideration of possible consequences and ramifications, apart from making little progress, bring discredit upon those who undertook them. Whoever begins something on a whim and then follows his or her own ideas about how the task should proceed will end up going down many roundabout or misleading roads.



Wise people know whom to consult and how to get the most benefit from their opinions. It is a pleasure to work with such people. Others, however, are so insensitive, thoughtless, and complacent about their own knowledge or competence that they intimidate others into accepting their opinions. Such people are always unbearable to their co-workers.



Before initiating a task, consult with the other people involved so that everyone's responsibilities are clear. Then, if something

goes wrong in the future, only the person directly responsible will be blamed. Unless possible consequences of proposed actions are properly discussed in advance with experienced people, regret and remorse will be the outcome.

CLARITY ABOUT AIMS AND MEANS

We must be as precise as possible about the aim and object of any project that we undertake. If we do so, we will not, so to speak, fall between the objectives. In our particular service, if we do not direct our spirits to a definite aim, our thoughts will collapse into a whirl of confusion and we will become their powerless playthings.



Our objective must be the result of clear thought. Indeed, we must clearly define our objective if we do not want to become lost in the flood of thoughts. So many ambitious ventures failed to bear fruit or result in any benefit, and indeed left behind much hatred and rancor, for their aims and means were not clear.



The Exalted Creator and seeking His approval must have the first and foremost place in every activist's perspective. If not, that which is not for God's sake can intervene, falsehood can present itself as truth, and whims can show themselves as real ideas. Although this task is being done in the name of a struggle for faith, such an oversight allows many abuses and crimes to be perpetrated.



As for works undertaken to seek the Almighty's approval: A particle can have the worth of the sun, a drop the worth of the sea, a second the worth of eternity. Therefore, even if the world could be turned into gardens of Paradise by means of which He does not approve, the final result would be com-

pletely worthless. Moreover, those responsible would be questioned about it. So, the end does not justify the means.



The worth of means and instruments are in their ability to realize the desired objective and to do so with ease. Thus, means that do not lead to the objective, especially those that hinder such progress, are regarded as cursed. Based on this logic, the world may be cursed insofar as it intervenes between men and women and their real object in life, but loved and applauded for reflecting the grace of a thousand Glorious Names of the Creator and exhibiting His magnificent works.



Truth can be established and supported in many ways. The worth of such ways is proportional to how much they enhance our respect for the Creator, Who is the Truth, and make us consider what is right and true. If parents are educating their children properly, if a place of worship is rousing its community with thoughts of eternity, if a school is awakening hope and faith in its pupils, we can say that they are serving their purpose and are therefore sacred. If this is not the case, they are no more than devilish traps that divert us from the truth. We may apply the same standards to unions, trusts, political institutions, and societies in general.



Founders and directors of institutions should frequently remind themselves of why the institutions were established, so that their work does not stray from its objective, but remains fruitful. If they do not do this, they begin to forget the purpose for establishing the homes, hostels, schools, and other institutes, and so start to counterwork, just like a person who forgets the purpose of his or her creation.



Claiming a monopoly on good ideas and asserting that only your side is right are signs of utter dependence on material

causality and ignorance of the objective. And feelings of rancor and hatred for those who share the same belief, sentiments, and ideas—is this anything other than a lack of sufficient commitment to the ultimate objective? Ah, those base, self-enslaved ones who imagine that they can administer the universe according to their decayed reasoning!

FRIENDSHIP

Those who hold their friends in good esteem and treat them with respect gain many supporters against their enemies.



Having faithful friends is just as important as satisfying the vital necessities of life. Being among a secure and peaceful circle of friends means finding safety against many hazards and dangers.



Wise people, upon seeing that a friendship has become damaged, immediately remove the cause of discontent and restore good relations. Even wiser are those who strive to avoid or prevent disagreement with their friends in the first place.



Love and good relations between friends continue as long as they understand each other, practice self-denial, and make sacrifices within permissible limits. Friendship between those who cannot renounce their interests and preferences for the sake of their friends cannot endure.



We are loyal and faithful to our friends to the extent we share their troubles as well as their joys. If we cannot weep when our friends weep and rejoice when they rejoice, we cannot be regarded as faithful friends.



Those who maintain a friendship with one who has fallen on hard times are true, loyal friends. Those who do not support their friends during their misfortune have nothing to do with friendship.



Those who tend to disagree and struggle with their friends have few friends. One who desires to have faithful and numerous friends should not disagree with them on trivial matters.



Friendship pertains to one's heart and sincerity. Those who think they can gain another's friendship through deception and hypocrisy only deceive themselves. Even if some simple-minded people are taken in by their hypocrisy and flattery, they will not be able to sustain a long-lasting friendship.

KEEPING SECRETS

Guarding a secret is the same as guarding one's chastity. Those who keep a secret, whether personal or a friend's, keep themselves chaste. Conversely, those who spread secrets damage their honor and reputation by leaving them unguarded.



If you want to tell someone a secret, be sure that you could trust him or her with your honor. He or she must be as meticulous about keeping your secret as he or she would be about his or her own honor. An unreliable person, one who is ignorant of the value of chastity, should not be entrusted with keeping a secret.



Keeping a secret and respecting the secrets of others, as opposed to prying into them, is a virtue related to self-discipline and sensitivity. Those who lack understanding cannot

guard a secret, and those who do not care about the consequences of words and actions cannot be considered discreet.



It is usually wiser not to tell your private concerns to others, especially if they are unattractive, offensive, or lacking in merit. To do so can embarrass loved ones and delight enemies, and have other unpleasant consequences as well.



Hearts are created as safes for keeping secrets. Intelligence is their lock; willpower is their key. No one can break into the safe and steal its valuables if the lock or key are not faulty.



Bear in mind that those who carry others' secrets to you might bear yours to others. Do not give such tactless people any chance to learn even the smallest details of your private concerns.



If you entrust another secret to someone who previously disclosed one, your lack of perception and poor judgment in choosing a confidant is plain for all to see. One whose own heart is firm on this matter and who is vigilant cannot be deceived and seduced repeatedly in this way.



There are secrets related to the person, the family, and the nation. By disclosing a personal secret, you are interfering with a person's honor; by disclosing a family secret, you are interfering with the family's honor; and by disclosing a national secret, you are interfering with the nation's honor. A secret is a power only as long as it stays with its owner, but is a weapon that may be used against its owner if it passes into the hands of others. This is the meaning of one of our traditional sayings: "The secret is your slave, but you become its slave if you disclose it."



The details of many important affairs can be protected only if they are kept secret. Often enough, when the involved parties do not keep certain matters secret, no progress is achieved. In addition, serious risks might confront those who are involved, particularly if the matter concerns delicate issues of national life and its continuation.



If a state cannot protect its secrets from its enemies, it cannot develop. If an army reveals its strategy to its antagonists, it cannot attain victory. If key workers are won over by the competitors, their employers cannot succeed.



Explain what you must, but never give away all of your secrets. Those who freely publicize the secrets of their hearts drag themselves and their nation toward an inevitable downfall.



CHAPTER 7

Government

GOVERNMENT

POLITICS

Politics is the art of managing a nation's affairs in ways that please God and people. As long as a government protects people from evil and defends them from oppression, it can be considered successful in politics and full of promise. If a government does not do so, it can no longer remain in power, leaving behind turmoil amidst the protests.



Good administration and politics are characterized by acknowledging rights, the rule of law, and consciousness of individual responsibility. Also placing responsible people in crude/difficult jobs and skilled and experienced people in refined/delicate jobs is essential.



Rather than a government's saying "My nation," it's more important that the nation says "My government." If the nation sees the government as a host of parasites, it means that the body has long since broken off from the head.



Government means justice and public order. We cannot speak of government where these do not exist.



If the officials running a good and virtuous state are chosen because of their nobility in spirit, ideas, and feelings, the state will be good and strong. A government run by officials who

lack these high qualities is still a government, but it is neither good nor long-lasting. Sooner or later, its officials' bad behavior will appear as dark spots on its face and blacken it in the people's eyes.



Public officials should be kind, follow the law, and have soft hearts. These characteristics will protect their esteem and honor and those of the law and the state. Remember that extreme harshness causes unexpected explosions, and extreme softness causes the rapid breeding of harmful ideas.



Laws should be effective all the time, everywhere, and for everyone. Those who enforce them should be brave and just so that the masses will have some fear of them, but not to the extent that they no longer trust or feel secure under the law's enforcers.



Magnificent nations produce magnificent governments. It is the generations with high spirituality, scientific advancement, financial opportunities, broad consciousness, and the individuals struggling to be "themselves," that form magnificent nations.



Unity of feeling, thought, and culture are essential to a nation's strength; any disintegration of religious and moral unity weakens it.



There is a policy for everything. The policy for renewing a nation is to ignore your own pleasure, to feel joy only with the nation's pleasures, and to feel sorrow only with its pain.



Mature people never make difference of opinion a means of conflict. However, no one has the right to tolerate those views

that separate people into camps and destroy society. Tolerance of division means tolerance of the nation's extinction.



People who do not think like you might be very sincere and beneficial, so do not oppose every idea that seems contradictory and scare them off. Seek ways to benefit from their opinions, and strike up a dialogue with them. Otherwise, those who are kept at a distance and led to dissatisfaction because they don't think like us will form huge masses that confront and smash us. Even if such dissatisfied people have never achieved anything positive, the number of states they have destroyed is beyond counting.



People must learn how to benefit from other people's knowledge and views which will be beneficial to their own system, thought, and world. Especially, they should never neglect benefiting from the experiences of the experienced.



Those who understand politics as political parties, propaganda, elections, and the struggle for power are mistaken. Politics is the art of management, based on a broad perspective of today, tomorrow, and the day after, by seeking people's satisfaction and God's approval.



Power's dominance is transitory; while truth's and justice's dominance is eternal. Even if these do not exist today, they will be victorious in the very near future. For this reason, sincere politicians should align themselves and their policies with truth and justice.

REPUBLIC

Republic means rule based on people's election and consultation. The first book to teach this principal fully is the Qur'an. Saying that republican rule is con-

trary to the Qur'an, if done without purposeful bad intentions, shows a lack of knowledge. Supporting the republic but refusing to see its source is just plain stubbornness and ignorance.



The Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, did not claim kingship, and his four immediate political successors followed his example. Kingship appeared when people grew remote from the Islamic spirit, and eventually this digression became a vehicle for oppression and despotism.



Based on true freedom and justice, a true republic is a noble and safe form of rule. However, it is also an extremely vulnerable system. If this aspect is not considered properly, atheism and anarchy will appear and grow in its heart.



A true republic is a form of rule by elevated spirits and is the most suitable for humanity's honor. Immature spirits and those with no understanding of the ways to human perfection consider it a mirage, a temporary bower that offers no shelter.



The republic can be the mother or governess of freedom, for it nurtures and raises the generations in love with freedom. It is a government of freedom, virtue, and morality, and not a rule of "loose" freedom.



The republic provides a foundation that elevates us with uplifting values. Later it leaves us alone with our elevated morality and alert conscience. Finally recognizing ourselves as human beings with will power, we always think good and virtuous thoughts and follow high human values at home and at work.



As our spirit, which has an innate desire for freedom, rejects all forms of domination, it reacts to any limits to be placed on

its freedom of thought, behavior, and expression. For this reason, while a republican government allows individuals broad rights and freedoms on the one hand, it must, on the other, educate them as people of elevated morality and virtue, and sound thinking and strong will.



The republic is obligated to protect its citizens' religious faith, feelings and thoughts. If it does not do so, but rather holds people in contempt because of their religious feelings and thoughts, violates their rights, and taints their good names, in reality it is holding the republic in contempt and violating all that it represents.



The republic needs people who fully identify with its principles. Its governing body should be dignified and wise, and its works should be fair and just.

NATION

Individuals who have sincerely resolved to be pillars of their nation never allow themselves to neglect even the smallest concern to the nation, even though there may be times when they forget about their personal problems.



The nation with the best standing consists of people who are unified on all public matters and respect the majority view. It hardly needs to be said that the nation's people should have received a common education of shared values in religion, language, and historical awareness.



If we cannot accept the criticism of those we love and who love us, we may lose our friends and remain unaware of our defects.



Do not remember the promises that others have failed to keep; instead, remember your own promises that you did not fulfill. Do not blame others because they do not do good to you; instead, remember the chances you missed of doing good to someone else.



One of the most important things that weakens us as a nation is that we are simple-minded toward those who deceive us while pretending to be our friends. Do not believe every promise, and do not be misled by everyone who gives advice with a smile.



If people consider cheating and trickery to be prudence and intelligence, their nation is suffering from something like the terminal phase of cancer. All that is seen as signs of recovery in such a nation are deceptions, like the swelling of a tubercular gland being taken for healthy growth.



If the people of a nation can establish relationships as strong as those among family members, their nation will develop quickly. On the other hand, a nation whose people do not love and confide in each other cannot be considered a nation in the true sense of the word, and its future holds no promise.

WAY OF THE NATION

We applaud every good deed and attempt made in the name of the nation, and stand behind the fortunate people who serve it. We do not retaliate against the accusations of deviation and apostasy; nor do we say “amen” to curses and anathema.



CHAPTER 8

Traps

TRAPS

ADDICTION TO COMFORT

Every noble cause and truth will gain constancy and a universal identity by its adherents' determination to protect it and their devotion to it. If those who have embraced that cause and truth are not perceptive, faithful, and persevering, that which they have embraced will eventually be erased from human memory due to the hostility of its determined enemies.



Just as stagnant water stinks and putrefies upon losing its fluidity, the source of its life, so do those lazy people who abandon themselves to comfort and ease inevitably begin to rot and become losers. Desire for comfort is the first alarm and sign of death. However, those whose sensitivity has been paralyzed cannot hear the alarm or understand the sign, and do not heed the warnings and advice of friends.



Laziness and attachment to ease and comfort are among the major reasons for deprivation and humiliation. Inactive people who have abandoned themselves to (indolent) comfort one day will fall so low that they will expect even their basic necessities to be supplied by others.



Once the extreme addiction of staying at home is added to that of indolent comfort, the “front lines” will be abandoned and people will become cowardly. If this decline is not rec-

ognized, and the situation is not handled intelligently and properly, the result will be deviation and something horrid.



Those who leave the “front” because they are addicted to the comforts of their homes or their lust usually encounter the exact opposite of what they expected. They may even lose their nice homes and lovely children! How true is this accusation made by a mother to her son, a commander who did not fight courageously when he should have: “You did not fight like a man on the battlefield, so now at least sit and cry like a woman!”



For a human being, change and decay are usually slow and silent. Sometimes even a little heedlessness, a slight straying from the “caravan,” can cause a complete collapse and a total loss. However, because those who have fallen see themselves as still on the same line and in the same situation, they do not realize that they have plunged to the bottom of a deep well from a minaret-like peak.



Some people who leave the line of exertion and struggle with a feeling of guilt, which every fugitive and truant is bound to feel, are likely to defend themselves and criticize their friends who continue to serve. It is almost impossible for such people to escape their deviation and return to their original line. Prophet Adam, upon him be peace, recovered his previous rank with a single deed, namely his confession of fault, after he had fallen into forgetfulness. By contrast, Satan, despite the gravity of his sin, tried to defend himself and fell into eternal frustration.



People who have lost their resolve, willpower, and endeavor affect the courage and devotional strength of those around them. Sometimes only a little hesitation or a bit of reluctance displayed by an irresolute individual causes a shock and loss

of hope as great as the death of a hundred people. Such a disaster only encourages the enemies of the nation to attack us.



The attractiveness of children, family, and worldly property is seductive and a burdensome trial. The successful defendants at this trial are those determined, resolute, strong-willed, and fortunate people who, every morning and evening, renew from the depth of their hearts their oath of attachment to the truth to which they have devoted themselves.

LOVE OF STATUS

Each individual has the seeds of virtue as well as the potential for evil. Such undesirable characteristics as passion and the desire to show off exist alongside such good qualities as sincerity, altruism, and self-sufficiency. We should take all these qualities into account when considering human nature so that we will not be disappointed.



It is natural for every person to entertain love of status and fame to some degree. If these desires are not satisfied in acceptable ways, those without self-control may harm both themselves and their community. The ambitions of such people may have to be diverted into harmless channels, otherwise their frustrated and unsatisfied desires will cause harm.



It may be harmful for some unrefined souls to satisfy their desire for prominence by seeking status. Nevertheless their pursuit of this may be good, for it will prevent them from doing greater evil. For example, it is preferable for a singer who wishes to make use of his or her God-given ability to sing hymns rather than obscene songs.



Sincerity or purity of intention determines the quality of the deed and of the one who performs it, and whether or not

God will accept it. However, as it is not easy for everybody to serve the faith with complete sincerity, consideration should be given to whether the good in them exceeds the evil. Many deeds performed for show, and without sincerity, should not be judged as absolutely harmful. People sometimes may contaminate their deeds by their egos and their desire, and may not always be seeking God's approval and repenting of their mistakes. But, we have no right to claim that they are not on the side of the truth.



If each individual in a group tries to impose himself or herself as the only authority in a certain field and some others imitate him or her, discipline is destroyed, confusion is engendered, and the community is divided against itself. Ultimately, this destroys order due to the confusion over who is really in charge and the ensuing power struggle between the rulers and the ruled.



If the successful members of a government or efficient executives of a state or institution demand the lion's share of benefits in consideration of their abilities, the government is paralyzed, the state collapses, and the institution descends into chaos. A government subsists on discipline particular to itself, a state is maintained by its principles, and an army is founded upon structures of command and obedience. Anything contrary to this signifies neglect of those vital elements that traditionally have ensured the cohesion of human societies.



If only people's hearts were content with what the Sublime Creator bestows upon them! If only they would seek His Divine pleasure! Some self-seeking people turn their backs on the sun's light and are content with the dim light of the lanterns in their hands. With these, however, they will never find the door to eternal light.

AVOIDING EXTREMES

One should avoid going to extremes in one's thinking and actions. Going to extremes is a lethal poison. As it is wrong to seek simplicity and sincerity in poor clothing or a life being lived in a miserable house with a few, broken old things, so too its wrong to see and seek sophistication, civilization and prosperity in the modern style of expensive clothes and other luxuries.

THOSE WHO ARE MAKING MERRY TODAY

Those who do not increase in dedication to worship of God as they grow older, are really unfortunate because they are making a loss at a time when they could be making a profit. If those ones understood this, they would weep for what they find amusing today.

SINFUL SOULS

People usually view others through the mirror of their spirit and see them like themselves because of the stain and dirt on that mirror. Therefore, their judgment of others is completely wrong and unfair. Although such sinful ones with a foul spirit see others at loss, it is they who are really at a loss.



CHAPTER 9

Ideal People

IDEAL PEOPLE

PEOPLE OF SERVICE

People of service must resolve, for the sake of the cause to which they have given their heart, to cross over seas of “pus and blood.” When they attain the desired object, they must be mature enough to attribute everything to its Rightful Owner, and be respectful and thankful to Him. Their voices and breaths glorify and magnify God, the Sublime Creator. Such people hold everyone in high regard and esteem, and are so balanced and faithful to God’s Will that they do not idolize those whom they praise for their services.



First of all, they understand that they are responsible and answerable for work left undone, must be considerate and fair-minded to everyone who seeks their help, and must work to support the truth. They are extraordinarily resolved and hopeful even when their institutions are destroyed, their plans upset, and their forces routed.



People of service are moderate and tolerant when they take new wings and once again soar to the summits, and so rational and wise that they admit in advance that the path is very steep. So zealous, persevering, and confident are they that they willingly pass through all the pits of hell encountered on the way. Such people are so faithful to the cause to which they have devoted themselves that, deeply in love with it, they willingly sacrifice their lives and whatever they

love for its sake. So sincere and humble are such people that they never remind others of their accomplishments.

ESSENTIALS OF THE WAY

Preferring the sacred cause over all worldly and animal desires; being steadfast in truth, once it has been discovered, to the degree that you sacrifice all mundane attachments for its sake; enduring all hardships so that future generations will be happy; seeking happiness, not in material or even spiritual pleasures, but in the happiness and well-being of others; never seeking to obtain any posts or positions; and preferring oneself to others in taking on work but preferring others to oneself in receiving wages—these are the essentials of this sacred way of serving the truth.



Those who lead the way must set a good example for their followers. Just as they are imitated in their virtues and good morals, so do their bad and improper actions and attitudes leave indelible marks upon those who follow them.



One who represents any stage of the truth must try to embody it with honesty, trustworthiness, consciousness of duty, a high degree of perception, awareness of circumstances, farsightedness, and absolute chastity. People who hold high office but lack one or more of these virtues must be seen as having one or more serious defects. This is a clear misfortune for those who follow them.

HEROES OF LOVE

Only those who overflow with love will build the happy and enlightened world of the future. Their lips smiling with love, their hearts brimming with love, their eyes radiating love and the most tender human

feelings—such are the heroes of love who always receive messages of love from the rising and setting of the sun and from the flickering light of the stars.



The anger and fury of the heroes of love, who are distinguished with love in treatment of others, are for discipline. Therefore, they serve to improve others and to bestow benefits upon the community.

PERSONAL INTEGRITY

Those who want to reform the world must first reform themselves. If they want to lead others to a better world, they must purify their inner worlds of hatred, rancor, and jealousy, and adorn their outer worlds with virtue. The words of those who cannot control and discipline themselves, and who have not refined their feelings, may seem attractive and insightful at first. However, even if they somehow manage to inspire others, which they sometimes do, the sentiments they arouse will soon wither.

IDEAL SPIRITS

Those who strive to enlighten others, seek happiness for them, and extend a helping hand, have such a developed and enlightened spirit that they are like guardian angels. They struggle with disasters befalling society, stand up to “storms,” hurry to put out “fire,” and are always on the alert for possible shocks.

PEARLS OF WISDOM

Opposing the majority is a mistake. This is true if the majority represents the truth, otherwise consent is a mistake. It is alright to oppose an engineer in

matters of medicine, just as it is alright not to consult with a doctor on a construction project.



Helplessness is not only a lack of strength and power. Many strong and talented people are seen as helpless because nobody has ever thought to have recourse to them to benefit from them.



Neither “darkness” nor another light can defeat those whose light comes from them. Such sources of light will burn on throughout their natural lifespan in spite of everything, and will illuminate their surroundings.



Those who act according to what they have seen are not as successful as those who act according to what they know. Those who act according to what they know are not as successful as those who act according to their conscience.



Poverty is not only the lack of money, for it can assume the form of a lack of knowledge, thought, and talent. In this respect, wealthy people who lack knowledge, thought, and talent can be considered poor.



Glasses are a vehicle for the eyes, the eyes are a vehicle for the mind, the mind is a vehicle for insight, and insight is a vehicle for the conscience. The conscience is an outlet through which the spirit can observe, and a vehicle through which it can see.



Humanity is a tree, and nations are its branches. Events that appear as heavy winds hurl them against each other and cause them to clash. Of course, the resulting harm is felt by the tree. This is the meaning of: “Whatever we do, we do it to ourselves.”



Nights are like arenas in which people discover, develop, and prepare for human happiness and serenity. Great ideas and works have always developed in the womb's darkness and been offered for the benefit of humanity.



The stomach expels food that cannot be digested and has no benefit, and then spits in its face. Time and history does the same to useless people...



Rust is the enemy of iron, lead the enemy of diamonds, and dissipation the enemy of the spirit. If it does not cause its decay and ruin today, it will definitely do so tomorrow.



Every flood comes from tiny drops whose existence and size are neglected. Gradually, it reaches a level that cannot be resisted. A society's body is always open to such types of flood.



Even if explaining knowledge and truth to those ill-mannered and inexperienced is as difficult as dealing with crazy people, enlightened people must do this duty eagerly.



Since everyone cannot understand clear truths on the same level, abstract description was abandoned in favor of demonstration, representation, and personification.



People usually complain of time and space, whereas the fault always lies in ignorance. Time and fate are innocent, whereas humanity is ungrateful and ignorant.



Some sunny, grassy, bright roads adorned with flowers eventually lead to valleys of death, while other steep, thorny paths intersect with the edge of Heaven.



One of the wisest sayings is: “Each person is hidden under his or her tongue.” An even greater one is: “If you want a friend, God is enough; if you want a companion, the Qur’an...”



We know the act and object of perception but not the perceiver. The spirit knows; the mind is a vehicle. The spirit sees; the eye is a vehicle.



If an action results from the mental or natural instincts, it is animalistic; if it results from the will or the conscience, it is spiritual or human.



Non-existence is a dreadful nothingness, such an infinite and mind-boggling field that not even one atom of existence can be found there.



Today, people label as “fanatical” those who are devout. Fanaticism means insisting on false and blind persistence. Insistence on what is right is a virtue, and such behavior by a believer cannot be considered fanaticism.



Sometimes the sun appears in an atom, a flood in a drop, and a book in a sentence. For such a profundity, the eye (meaning sight) is as important as the word.



The pen is a golden channel for the light of thought. This light descends from the mind to the arm, and therefrom to the finger, and finally comes out from the pen.



Even if the number of blind people increases, they still cannot determine an item’s color. Two sound eyes destroy their consensus.



Every tree is made up of wood. A tree is differentiated by its fruit, and people are differentiated by their piety.



Every mind is like a separate knife made from the same steel. Any difference among them derives from their sharpness.



In great and magnificent nations, dervish lodges and even gravestones are ornamented. One can read a nation's concept of beauty and art on its places of worship and its tombstones.



Matter has no comprehension, consciousness, feeling, or will. It is comprised only of some laws and particles (used to form things). What an embarrassing mistake it is to count it as the essence of existence.



True philosophy is only a spiritual and mental trouble (trial, suffering) that appears when God arouses us to seek wisdom.

