

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

[Building Blocks in the Construction of a Muslim](#)
Submitting One's Heart to Allah is the Foundation

Allah (swt) has given us guidance in the Qur'an in the following 'āyat:

O My Lord, give me wisdom and unite me with the righteous ones. Make the report of me to be truthful among people of the latter times, and make me be one of the inheritors in the Garden of Bliss. And forgive my father, surely he is from those who are astray. And do not disgrace me on the day when we shall be raised from the dead, on the Day when neither wealth nor sons will avail, save the one who brings to Allah a heart that is whole. (26:83-89)

Allah also says in Qur'an:

O servants of Allah! Allah has certainly commanded you to be kind and just toward the affairs of men, and render assistance to your kinsmen. Allah has forbidden you all kinds of shameful acts, and given you clear warning that you may take heed and tread the right path in remembrance of Allah, as the greatest of all actions. He is the Superior, the Elevated, the Glorious, the Honored, the Faultless and the Magnificent.

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah also says:

“It is the false gods besides Allah that you desire? What then is your opinion of the Lord of the Worlds?” He glanced at the stars and said, “Lo, I feel sick,” and they turned their backs and went away from him. Then he turned toward the gods and said, “Why will you not eat? What ails you that you do

not speak?” And then he attacked them, striking them with his hands. His people came toward him hastily, and he said, “Worship you that what you, yourselves did carve, and Allah has created you and what you make?” (37:89-96)

Continuing with the theme of the week, our hearts can always detect the essence of truth. I don't want to say our hearts will never deceive us, because certainly the heart can be deceived by the mind, and therefore it seems like the heart is deceiving us. But the truth is the truth of the heart that is put through the mind can be somewhat deceiving. The mind bends what it feels. Of course, traditions and cultural inclinations can also be deceptive. We find in the recitation of Qur'an today that it's very important that who is saved and who is acceptable to Him is the one who comes with a whole heart, and a heart that is true, and a heart that is pure, and a heart that is good. Allah tells us we need to look at the hearts of human beings, but at the same time, we need to use reason. I was engaged in meetings the whole morning on this subject, trying to make a reasonable decision that also includes the heart in terms of the safety and security of people who will be traveling.

The gods that are described in this *'āyat* that couldn't eat or speak seem to be so obvious to us, yet people worshiped these idols. [Today,] many people worship gods of money and power and preference, gods they have created themselves in their own wealth and egos. Then they reason out why these are worthy to be held in high esteem. They would not say they worshiped them, but they do. I'm sure some of us in this room over our lifetime have been caught in such worship at times. We see that we don't doubt that the people of Mecca worshiped their gods with some heart-felt sincerity in the Jahaliyya, but we see how their reason was set aside. How can you worship these things that don't eat and don't live and don't move and walk, when the one God created you and made you able to make these idols? Did they think the idols didn't speak to them because they didn't deserve it? We see the same problem all over the world.

I don't know how many times I put food in front of idols when I was in India 40 years ago. I remember putting the food on the mouth of the idol saying, "Here, eat this." I remember Shankaracharya throwing the food at the idols in Banares. I asked him why he did that. I wasn't supposed to be there, and he wasn't supposed to talk to *kafirs*. I said, "You are a Vendantan; you don't believe in idols." I won't even get into his answer. He was the 12th person selected for the job who finally took it. So they came back later and put the food in front of the idols, and then they ate the food because it was blessed. People do that a lot, don't they? The explanation to the people is the gods eat the essence of the food and leave the physical aspect for the poor people. I like that idea, except for all the essence being taken out of the food. But of course, it's really ridiculous. It's about belief, faith and trust—not about food.

There is no doubt that the people of Mecca had some kind of faith and belief and trust in these gods. But then something greater was presented to them: Allah Who dwells within their own heart, Who has Attributes that are manifest in their lives, through which goodness comes to everyone, where there is fairness and equity, love and understanding. It's only taken 1,433 years for people to still be struggling to understand that, but it's a much clearer message. Individuals who are really committed to Islam are like building blocks fused together to form a solid wall. Each individual, as Shaykh Ahmed Kaftaro Samahata Shaykh (ar) used to say, is like a brick that has to be strong and capable of withstanding the weight and stress that's called upon it to bear by the nature of the structure, yet it is distributed among all of the other bricks.

We know those bricks are created out of earth under pressure and fire, compressed. Even then there are some faulty ones. Sometimes you have to throw some of those bricks out. The constant metaphor for us is everything in this world that is strong, that is built under pressure and fire and testing of the elements they are created of: earth, air, fire, and water (which are what bricks are made out of) have to stand the weight placed upon them, like

we do. They are fired by Allah's great creation of fire, the great fire that fired the rocks that made the strong, that made jewels inside of them. Pressure and heat gave value to the minerals with which this world was created, that are so beautiful. They were purified in this huge kiln called the earth, just like we have to be purified within this creation of the body, which is a mixture of earth, air, fire and water.

To use in a building, they have to pass at least a minimum standard. We have to pass through a process of training and development to be effective within the construct of human life and Islam to hold or carry the weight of the responsibility Allah (swt) has agreed to give to us, this *amanat*. Muslims find themselves, especially today, carrying the weight in many different ways and places. Because of the imperfection of some of the bricks that make up the structure of Islam today, [there is] low quality. Some are better constructed to carry a greater burden. In India, you see the ladies walking around, carrying the bricks and mortar on their heads, climbing up these rickety ladders made of bamboo, on high buildings. That's how they make their living, making these bricks and carrying them up on the ladders – building buildings they won't even be allowed into after they are built. Such is the system there.

What's involved in the construction of an individual, a Muslim, is what we have been talking about a lot recently. It is the construction of a person who understands what is love, what is contentment, understands who they are, what is sorrow, why is life, what is grief, understands where Allah has placed them and what is the strain and stress one has to go through in life, understands what is one's individual role and responsibilities. Understanding these and acting in accordance with the highest standards is the way we build the building of character, which the Prophet Muhammed (sal) came to reconstruct. It is a building that has become weakened from the inside, unfortunately, today through a lot of misunderstanding and misuse of religion.

When the Prophet (sal) came to build and make strong this structure, again symbolized by the reconstruction of the Ka'ba in his childhood, we find this construction of Islam has become weakened again and again. We have to turn back to the teachings and find out where the problem lies. The problem lies within human beings, whether it's [the religion] Islam we are talking about, or the *islam* that is the surrender (*taslim*) to a higher authority, to Allah, to God.

What has the individual to do in order to prepare themselves for their role in life as a Muslim, as a *mu'min*? These are very basic questions, but the questions have to be answered in order for there to emerge within the human community a viable and important and contributive Islamic society, a society of believers who are at peace and secure in Allah, and with one another, so they can become at peace and secure with others, for the individual character and self to be revived in this world. The beginning of this process we are told lies in *qalb* / heart. If we look at ourselves and look at what is inside of us, each one of us has a whole universe comprised of emotions, thoughts, desires, urges, instincts, intuitions, creativity, hopes and aspirations. A universe motivates us and drives us from within, but with reason and understanding of role and responsibility, culture and ideology, and Islam and Tasawwuf, if we mold our lives properly. But it's molded in the heart.

The heart/*qalb* doesn't just mean the physical organ that pumps the blood. It means the core, the center we have been talking about within the breast – *sadr, qalb, fu'ad, lubb*. The axial point being the center of our personality, the center of our motivations and desires, the center of our ideas, our sense of what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. What we want to do is not so much to be satisfied in our minds, but satisfied in our hearts; supported by our reason, but feeling love. The Qur'an explains that this is the key to the human being. I quoted that success depends not on what he or she wants physically, nor on his or her personality alone, but lies at the core of the individual's character.

Allah says, “**Except for one who comes to Allah with a sound heart, none will be successful in Allah’s eyes.**” What is a sound heart? The Prophet (sal) said, “***Beware, there is a piece of flesh in the human body that if it is right, the whole body is right; and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted. This is the heart.***” According to Qur’an, it is the foundation for happiness or misery. It is the foundation for rightness or corruption. It is the social institutions that can add to the benefit of society, but they can also corrupt society. We see in the world today institutions of terror and greed or punishment, institutions of war, institutions that exploit and abuse others through social and economic, military and political means. The basis of disease, as well as cures, lies as I spoke last night in *qalb*. We have to come to know our hearts: not to be moved, dissuaded or confused.

At the depth of our heart is a righteousness and a rightness we are looking for. What it is that stops a human being from seeking right, and hence doing wrong, turning us to blindness, has to be understood. The Qur’an explains it: “**It is not the eyes that go blind, it is the heart inside that goes blind.**” This is the basic starting point of view, the basis of *qalb*, the basis of *muraqabah*, the basis of *at-tazkiyat*, the basis for the building of social institutions, of charity. So many people do service, but the greatest way that service can be done is to do it in the Name of Allah. The basis of service is itself *khidmat*, whether to a country, a government, some political institution, another human being, or an educational institution. It can be creating a good produce, or helping other human beings. This is the way what is at the core of a good heart manifests itself.

There are those of us who say who we are and where we live as if we present ourselves through our name and our work. It’s dynamic work, and it is work that changes people. In a moment we can say very clearly, “Am I not committed to Islam? Look at what people do in the name of Islam. I’m committed to Islam because it is a way of security and safety and submission to Allah. It is not the *jihad* that I am committed to. It’s the

jihad al akbar I am committed to, the struggle within my own self.” We find we have to always be aware of our commitment, and always be aware of the words that express them. Our attention should always be riveted on keeping our hearts at the center of our being, of our choices, of our character, and keeping it pure. Our whole attention is we focus on this continuous striving in life, this sojourn I have been speaking about recently.

All the rights that have been prescribed by Qur’an reach out to purify the deepest regions of our being, and Al Qur’an states that it is not the flesh and the blood that reaches Allah, speaking of the sacrifice of Sidna Ibrahim, it is the piety and *taqwa* within your hearts that finds acceptance. This is very important for us to contemplate as we understand even in our own lives the sacrifices sometimes we have to make. If the individuals, each of us, realizes that we are a primary brick in society, if each is important and realizes we are integral in the structure of the life of humanity... yes, of course if we were removed, humanity goes on. We know life goes on... but somehow, it is weakened by our not being there. The lives and success of humanity depend on those bricks.

Within each one of us is *qalb*, which is the foundation of the building we call our self, and it beats happily and sweetly and gaily in acceptance of Allah (swt). We know when it skips a beat. The most important question may very well be, “How should we go about preparing the basic building blocks of our own self so we can guarantee the basic building blocks of society in the future.” The answer is how we prepare ourselves, how we prepare those who come after us is of the utmost importance. We have to understand that the heart has to be at the forefront of our thinking, totally submitted to Allah. We cannot have two agendas, being pulled in different directions. We have to trust in Allah. We have to submit to Allah. We have to dedicate ourselves to Allah, and part of us has to step back and let it all work.

[The Qu’ran] tells us about the *mushrikun* who sacrificed animals, and said that one part of the animal was for Allah, and another was for the sake of the other idols. But Allah

does not accept what is divided, and the verse asks us to remember that. Whatever is assigned to Allah is also in reality assigned to the idols because Allah does not accept what is divided. He wants us to be undivided. So it doesn't really work. You can't say this is for Allah, and that is for the idols, covering your bases. It's all for Allah because it all comes from Allah. What does it mean to us as human beings? Don't have two agendas; have one agenda. Don't try to appease others just for the sake of your own self-aggrandizement. Have one agenda and trust in that agenda. It's what we were talking about today. We have to sacrifice everything for Allah, and Allah distributes the wealth and the blessings.

As long as we remain divided within ourselves, with our eyes looking here and there, wanting this and wanting that, seeing the grass over there is greener; as long as our destination is always over there, not in our own self or our own heart, down there, around the corner, next week, some other time, we will never be able to achieve the very first condition of building a strong, pure character. Why do we have divided loyalties and agendas? Why do we allow our hearts to be captured in so many different ways? We realize intellectually that nothing of this world will be useful to us as we lie on our death beds, however hard we strive for whatever we have gotten. It will not have any worth to us. We have to recognize that the real goal, the real reward, the real prize to be won is not in worldly possessions revealed from worldly human beings, but only from Allah. We look and we think about those people who understand that, who love the love of Allah.

We were talking about the trip and the potential dangers today. Grandma's comment was a number of times, "I made my *du'ā*; everything will be all right. You all shouldn't be so scared." We look and think about Grandma Lora, who I always think about when I think about such things. What is the real reward for all the things in her life? It's her daughters and their love, and her love for them. It's her Lord whom she loves, Allah. That's her reward, her blessing. That's why she can continue to strive and struggle, and have this part replaced and that part replaced, and walk and not walk, all this. She knows that Allah

gave her life, and gives her the comfort of her daughter, her eldest daughter especially who serves her so well, and her youngest daughter who gives her joy and whom she serves. She keeps her joy and sense of humor. When we went to the school the other day she said, “I climbed the steps!” She got up those steps. I use her as an example because she obviously has some disability; yet she says, “Thank God! I’m here. I climbed the steps.” Allah gave her the will to do that, *irāda*.

The first step toward Allah, which will deliver us from the struggle and the pains of life, the torment and the punishment, is what we place upon ourselves. I think that we probably torment ourselves much more in most cases than others torment us. In some cases that’s not true. If we commit ourselves wholly and undividedly to Allah, we will be willing to sell ourselves for the sake of Allah; our *ba’iat* through our *shaykh* is to Allah. My hand is over your hand, and **“whomsoever has fulfilled their pledge to you has fulfilled their pledge to Allah.”** If we are willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of Allah, we have to make the first step. That is, build something like I have been describing; build a strong heart. The second step is another *khutbah*. Allah says:

Know that this life of this world is only a play, idle talk and pageantry. And boasting among you and rivalry in respect of wealth and children are like the likeness of vegetation after rain, wherein the growth is pleasing to the husbandman. Afterwards, it dries up, turns yellow and becomes like straw. In the Hereafter, there is grievous punishment but also forgiveness from Allah and His good pleasure; whereas, the life of this world is only a matter of illusion.

So let’s try to remember that and understand the root of what we were speaking of today, which is purification of the heart and the love that gives us a faith that will sustain us and protect us, *inshā’a-Llāh. Asalaamu aleikum.*

O Allah, we continue to ask for Your Blessings upon those who are ill, and those who are suffering, and those who have passed. We ask You, Allah, to keep our minds open and to understand and be independent of the personal grief we feel or the illnesses we suffer under. They are also to make us aware of the suffering of others, the losses of others, and the illnesses of others. And give us the means, Allah, to serve You by serving Your creatures. Give us the means to be understanding, and the capacity to be humbled by the blessings You send upon us, even the trials and the tests. Take the time to ask Allah for what you need. We ask Allah that wherever we are going be a place of safety for us, and that good work can be done, and that we return healthy and safe home again, *inshā'alla-*
Llāh.