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The Healing Light of the Prophet Muhammad (sal)

By Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid

Bismillaahi-r-Rahmaani-r-Raheem

*Allahumma inna nasalaka mujibati rahmatika
Wa'aza'ima magfiratika, wa salamata min kulli
Itmin, wal-ganimata min kulli birrin, wal-fawza bil-jannati min-a nnar.*

*Oh Allah, we ask You for words that will make certain Your Mercy,
actions that will make certain Your Forgiveness,
freedom from every offence, a supply of every virtue,
entering Jannah and safety from the Nār.*

Asalaam alaykum wa Rahmatullahe wa Barakatuh

Introduction

- [We are] always working for the practical application of the teachings and example of the Prophet (sal).
- We all recognize the perfection of the Prophet (sal)'s character and example, but many of us also recognize that is very difficult to really live his example.
- Allah tells us in Qu'ran to follow the example of the Prophet (sal):

Truly, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for one who hopes for Allah and for the Final Day and who Remembers Allah abundantly. (33:21)

- Yet, we rely on the hope that formal practice will be sufficient to uplift our character,

instead of focusing on self- created barriers to our progress. Today I will speak very practically today about some of obstacles to progress on this path and how we can make better progress toward living a life that exemplifies the example of our Prophet, what I call living in resonance with the System of *mizan* (balance) that characterizes Allah's (SwT) Creation, and hence is in harmony with Rasulallah (sal).

- In particular, I want to speak to you about some of diseases we pick up along the way and the remedies to these ills. Note all the concern over physical ills, swine flu, etc. but not enough concern over spiritual ills
- By the Grace of Allah (SwT) and the with the *madad* of our Prophet (sal), I will speak as a person who has spent the last almost 40 years being trained and authorized to treat both the physical / mental and emotional ills of individuals, as well as the spiritual dis- eases, both in others and predominantly in my own self.
- I approach both the outer physical and the inner spiritual from an Islamic / Sufic values, based and uniquely effective practical point of observation and treatment (correctives). Which in most instances allow the body, mind and heart to progressively return to a state of well being and essential goodness.
- But I must point out that it takes the most sincere and constant effort to reach the progressive 'healing' / *maqamat* that opens our insight and view of the Divine Presence and the Nūr-i-Muhammad.
- Although what I will discuss will sound 'psychological' in some instances, I want you to remember that what I am saying and advocating is purely spiritually based. For it is the spiritual that encompasses all other forms and expressions.

- I will tell you the end before the beginning... the prescription is effort +*du'ā*+ regular practices enjoined for us as Muslims and by our *shaykh*. The result will be humility, love of Rasulallah (sal), *taqwa*, and love of all of Allah's creatures...an awareness of our place in the dynamic system of existence.

The diagnosis

There are two main possibilities to account for the lack of progress on the Path or in life. These two main possibilities even underlie the disinclination to make the effort to make progress. The first is the fear of change. This implies anxiety over situations, which are by their nature dynamic, and demand an inner as well as outer flexibility and confidence. The second is a history of negative and self-destructive circumstances that have fashioned a person's character, which can also indicate a lack of self-esteem and self-confidence; indeed, a lack of ability to be secure in one's self.

The symptoms of this state are many. To name a few: the reluctance to make decisions, or to have decisions questioned; the feeling that one is being judged by others, and that one is always being questioned; the fear of failure, or the inability to deal constructively with apparent failure (that is, the inability to see apparent failure as a learning experience or an incentive to reach higher and try harder). Other symptoms include the sense that others are better than oneself, or are more efficient, or are more sensitive to an issue, or more personable. If a person has these—along with the underlying attitude of uselessness, fear, and apathy toward making an effort to change or be inspired by others—they are certainly some of the symptoms of the two possibilities I mentioned that account for lack of progress. Before you identify yourself with all the symptoms that are listed, make sure you understand the previous sentence.

Life is a continuous and dynamic process, and as such, is a challenge. For a human being to be as free and as divinely motivated as possible, one must know how to meet that challenge. The life of the Prophet (sal) is full of wisdom and guidance on how to meet the challenges of life. But

often, we create unreasonable expectations as the basis for progress toward his example, which allow us to avoid effort, change, and challenges. As a result, conditions develop internally spiritually, which then manifest outwardly, and signal to oneself and others, the fear, the unwillingness to change, and the anxiety over change. Individuals choose many avenues of avoidance: retreat into near total inactivity, or retreat into a rigid schedule, or frenetic activity. Others retreat to compulsive behaviour, or venture out less and less frequently into any new areas: creatively, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and certainly, spiritually. Taking fewer and fewer new responsibilities, one loses one's taste for life, or becomes entrenched in narrowness, and in a detachment from the *Trust (the Amanat)*, and thus, from the nearness to one's Creator and purpose for existence. Surrounded by opportunity, one is unable to see the good of life, the unlimited storehouse of knowledge that is at one's beck and call. Or, equally as destructive, one becomes more and more distracted by the worldly desires and less aware of the *ayat'ullah* that characterize the Divine Presence in the world...(the beauty of nature, the compassion in the hearts of beings)..

In this state, the mysteries of life, the beauty and majesty of life go unseen and unfelt. One begins to question their purpose, their lifestyle, their relationships, their goals, and their destination. Along the way, each seeker is given hints and warnings of this state when it is approaching, often from those who have gone through the process of awakening/ healing. More often, the warnings come as one is lulled into a sleep-like state of indolence and self-absorption. The question is, "Who will wake up such a person, and what will awaken him or her?" What will instill a love for growth and knowledge, for personal success and achievement, as opposed to the conditions I've just described?

What is needed, in every instance, is to touch the heart and the source of an individual's internal energy, and to awaken the desire for participation in this world, in the activities of life, which will be fulfilling and supportive of our essential *fitra*. Only when one does that can one have the dignity that is necessary to make the journey and to fulfill life's purpose. In Arabic, the word for *dignity* comes from the root "WQR." "Waqar" means also "burden, or heavy load." It also

means "**waqarah: to revere or to have reverence.**" To have dignity, one has to have reverence, and exude that reverence for the Creator, and to carry, to be willing to carry, and to have the ability to carry a heavy load.

This was the dignity and humility of the Prophet (sal), even at the most difficult times. In the battle of Uhud, when the Prophet (*s.alla-llaahu calayhi wa sallam*) was struck in the face and his teeth were broken, he said:

O, Allah! Forgive my companions for abandoning me. They are ignorant. I remain with them, because I am your servant and slave, in order to illumine their hearts.

If we aspire to be counted among the lovers of Nebi Muhammad (sal), then surely we must contemplate, humbly and sincerely, where we stand in the long shadow of the Prophet (sal). How do we act towards our families and neighbors, let alone our enemies? How do we respond when we see others in pain, misery, grief, loss, and disbelief? What emerges naturally from us and what is constructed or limited to certain times and places?

The Hakim

The negative circumstances and symptoms that I have described to you block our ability to remember and emulate the example of the Prophet (sal), our ability to let our hearts be illuminated by his light. Certainly, psychologists and therapists have labeled categorized these symptoms, and traced their onset to numerous issues: from broken homes to a deeply competitive to society, from the breakdown of the extended family and loss of values to biogenetic anomalies. We recognize that some of these explanations may have some truth to them, but the Sufic doctor (the *shaykh*) is looking at these conditions as a specialist, a heart specialist. The *shaykh* has at his beck and call remedies that are rooted in the deepest memories of the *soul (rūh)*: recitations, prayer, invocations, accompaniment (*mayy'iat*), patience (*sabr*), love (*hubb*), *suhbat*, and *bāraka*. These come from the pharmacy of Rasulallah (sal).

It is the responsibility of the *shaykh* as the doctor (*the hakim*) to provide the prescription, to perhaps administer the first doses, and to wait for a progress report, not to force the medicine on the unwilling patient, nor to chase them down to administer each dose thereafter, nor to constantly call them to find out their state. He makes house calls thorough transmissions to the *latā'if*/the subtle organs of perception. This creates subtle changes in character, in the body, and in the heart and soul.

A few words about the *latā'if* is called for. The *latā'if* were initially luminous. When Allah (SwT) connected them to the body, their light began to be filtered through the influences of the physical world (i.e. the human beings' tendency to identify with materiality became stronger and that light began to dim).

Surely We created the Human being of the best stature, then We reduced him to the lowest of the low, except those who believe and do good works, for they shall have a reward unailing. (Qur'an 95:4-6)

As you see, inner and outer states/ actions are required (belief) and 'good works'. Through practices that involve concentrating on the *latā'if*, one who sincerely aspires to awaken to the Divine Presence through the example and Nūr-i-Muhammad, will find the potential within themselves to build a resistance to the diseases of this world and yet fulfill ones duties within it.

From our point of view, over time, the distance from the Prophet (sal) caused deterioration and seekers have lost a large degree of dedication, passion, and courage, as well as yearning for the *madad* of Allah (SwT). To correct this, a way was established to build immunities to this world and recover that state of nearness in the presence of Rasulallah (sal). This ways begins with first purifying the heart (*qalb*); not just resisting the ego (*nafs*). In this way one gets a taste of the vision through the heart before undertaking the complete journey. "***Indarajun nil hayyat fil bidayat***. Where others end, there marks our beginning."

This is a natural healing remedy, a treatment that uses the light of the *latā'if*, and the natural qualities of love and compassion to regulate the perceptions and inner functions, without austerities and great hardships. It brings a quick healing / awakening to one who sticks with the prescription. It gives hope and light by which to travel. Our companion, we discover, is none other than the Prophet Mohammad sal and his companions, our *shuyukh/ shaykh*.

The Importance of Attitude

But we must also do our part. Even the allopathic doctors now recognize that the attitude of the patient is a part of, if not at least half of the cure. Without the inner motivation, or the opportunity for that motivation, there can be no cure, no good health, no lasting happiness and no purpose.

How important is attitude? We need only look at the example of the Prophet (sal) to see. Once a group of Jews in Medina greeted Nebi Muhammad (sal)) by saying, "*As Samu alaykum*," which means, "Death be upon you." Aisha (raa) grew angry and retorted, "May death be upon you, and curses!" The Prophet (sal) disapproved of what Aisha (*radiy Allahu Tacaalaa anha*) had said, commenting,

Innallaaha yuh.ibu-r-rifqa fi-l-amri kulih.

Truly Allah loves kindness in everything.

Allah (SwT) loves kindness in everything, from everyone, in every circumstance. Even if there is no kindness in return, still, there should be kindness

We may say to ourselves that such attaining the goal of that frame of mind and heart is unattainable, but most important is our aspiration to that goal. To aspire is natural (*himma*); but to have positive results (i.e. contentment, fulfillment, sense of progress), it is necessary also to extricate oneself from the grips of disillusionment, fear and self-doubt. To identify these symptoms, we must genuinely ask ourselves whether or not the "I" wants to change. Every one of us says we do; but it is normal to question whether our aspiration and intention (*niyyat*) can be

transformed into something of a higher nature, something that is lasting (a *maqam*), not a momentary experience. Regular appointments with the spiritual doctor can assure us of progress toward full health and well being, but there is more to understand. The doctor prescribes or gives methods to practice that assists our body, heart and soul to regulate themselves (like the immune system does for our physical body).

One Sufi master said that,

No one may be transformed into something greater or higher than the ordinary man by any act or will from the Teacher. Yet, somehow this expectation is fostered by some Teachers (and students), and certainly hoped for by indolent mureeds and mureedas. It is not the role of the teacher to be a miracle worker, although to the receptive heart, many apparent miracles transpire between the teacher and the student.

The guide certainly can help to mollify our reactions to circumstances, and can give us new perspectives, better tools, inspiration, good guidance, and the continuous blessings of his knowledge and his power, developed through his efforts, meditations, prayers, and the blessings of his *shuyukh*. But, for the radical change that is necessary for the transformation from sleep to wakefulness, from illness to health, from fear to courage, from doubt to belief, from otherness and blame to selfness and responsibility, it requires totally sincere, practical effort and an active, participatory life in the good works of society, and of the Order, and of the enterprises of the *shaykh*, with more than equal attention to inner development, prayer, meditation, service, and community responsibility. It requires that attitude of Nebi Muhammad (sal) and openness for the *fā'id* (divine energy) to flow over our hearts, as it did with Rasulallah (sal). Obviously, to achieve this it requires a unique individual with a burning desire to achieve a deep level of spiritual awakening.

By looking at Nebi Muhammad (*s.alla-llaahu alayhi wa sallam*), we see the best example of an awakened individual, of someone living the Attributes of Allah, with a deep awareness of his nearness to Allah. In a *hadith qudsi*, Allah (*Subh.aanahu wa tacaalaa*) said:

...My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him, I am the ears with which he hears, the eyes with which he sees, the hands with which he strikes, and the feet with which he walks.

We see this most clearly in Nebi Muhammad (*s.alla-llaahu alayhi wa sallam*). The Prophet was a conduit for the Attributes of Allah (*Subh.aanahu wa tacaalaa*) as they are expressed in Allah's Creation. From his light and life we learn to live in the realm of possibilities, not just linear probabilities.

To the Sufi, as with the Prophet (sal), all circumstances are essential for developing the qualities necessary to attain higher goals. After all, what is the Divine Intention behind creation/life as far as we can understand? Is it not to develop the highest potential in human beings, to realize their divine origin? Is it not the reality of 'understanding' the Names of Allah? Yet, since the names are endless, one needs to focus on the *latā'if* as a means of developing the natural vision or perception from within themselves.

This prescription is progressive and builds inner and outer health and well being, just as the revelations to Rasul'llah (sal) were progressive and timely, and built his inner and outer strength and well being. To take the daily outer activities and attribute spiritual significance to them is desirable; it is desirable to weave the outer and the inner aspects of life together. Certainly, the interactions with others in the workplace, the home, or social realms are always opportunities for affirming the Divine Names and the Divine Attributes, what I refer to as Universal Spiritual Values (i.e. compassion, tolerance, perseverance, patience...). They are always an opportunity for refining one's own self, seeing one's weaknesses, and developing compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, and patience.

As one advances on the spiritual journey, the truth is revealed about our real state and place—*“Man 'arafa nafsu faqad 'arafa Rabbahⁱ*. Whosoever knows his self, knows Allah.” The result

is automatic: the more one develops a detachment from physical ailments and previous mental fears, the more one is free.

Affirming Unity in Diversity

As we come to know our self better, we see that we are both unique and alike in our state and our challenges. We must know the right approach to the problems and challenges of life. Ibn Araby (ra) wrote,

The Divine relationships are diverse only because of the diversity of the states. So there is a remedy for each state... The ill person calls out, "O Cure-Giver! O Healer!" Another one who is hungry calls out, "O Provider!" Another who is drowning calls out, "O Helper!"

These ‘differences’ illustrate the mercy of the diversity within the Unity that is Allah (Swt). The Prophet himself said, **“The differences among my followers are a mercy.”**

This tolerance for diversity amidst unity is the core of the love of the Prophet (*s.alla-llaahu alayhi wa sallam*). Everything in Creation is a reflection of what is found throughout it, not only the Universes but also a reflection of the essential attributes and relationships within the dynamic reality (Allah Swt). Therefore, we can posit that there is relatedness (*nisbat*) between the names/attributes that are describing Allah (Swt) to His Creation/Creatures.

Just as we realize that Allah (Swt) responds appropriately to circumstances depending on the circumstance or individual, even differently to the same circumstance at different times or in different individuals, so too we see the same thing reflected in nature and especially human communication. It is precisely these parallel characteristics that affirm the continuity, coherence and balance, and that affirm the verity, the absolute Truth of the Creator, of Islam.

Striving to ‘overcome’ differences does not mean to end them, but to incorporate them into our understanding and thinking. Indeed in diversity we find commonality. Take for example, animal

behavior. As I prepared this lecture I was watching a woodchuck outside my window. He was no more than 10 feet from me; if I open the window to speak to him, to tell him how beautiful he / she is, he will run. But I sit and watch and marvel at his beauty and attentiveness. The longer I look the more I see, the more I feel relatedness to him/her. He/she stands on his haunches... arms folded, small beard coming from his cheeks like ‘mutton chops’ of the 1700’s. He looks calmly, turning left then right, peaceful... I am relating to him by my human characteristics and values.

When we naturally see such things, reflect upon them:

“...Kadhalika Yubayyinu llahu lakumu-l-ayati la-allakum tatafakkarun...

Allah makes clear the signs to you in order that you might reflect.” (Qur’an 2:219)

“...inna fi dhalika la-ayatil-li-qowminy-ya’qilun...

Surely in that are Signs for a people who use their intellect...” (Qur’an 13:04)

Success Come to Those who Make Sincere Effort

In conclusion, let me speak to the importance of sincere effort in awakening our hearts and reframing our thoughts. If you can awaken your heart, you will find that in your heart, you are standing in the presence of the Prophet (sal), of the *auliya*, of the ‘changer of hearts.’ In your heart, you are standing in the presence of the *abdals*, (deputies of Allah); you are standing in the presence of the *shuyukh*. You will be strengthened and you will be liberated. By concentrated focus and meditation on the heart, and then on the other *latā’if* under the proper direction, one becomes attuned to the subtleties of the light and its diverse manifestations in the outer realms and in the inner realms, and progress is made quickly. There is no replacement for reframing one's mind through the verification of the hearts’ submission. There is no replacement for reframing one's heart through the turning of attention: *Main mutawajjeh qalb ki taraf, qalb mutawajjeh hay zat pak ki taraf.*

"Reframing" in this context means not only putting things that happen in a positive form and approaching them in a positive way, but also requiring that they are consistent with the *mizan*/harmony of the inner and outer worlds / systems. There is no place better to do this than in meditation, association, and accompaniment with love (*mayyat-i-hubb*) with the *shaykh*. There is no better effort than respect and trust, service and practice, and more practice. I will leave it to another talk or private conversation what that really entails. Suffice it to say that the key is love, and our subject today really is about being open to develop love, reflect the light of love, and receive it in return.

There is no better resonance than the heart of the Beloved, to be entered into in prayer and meditation, so attend to yourself. Be attentive to the guides. In the mid-fourteenth century A.D. Khwaja Allaudin Attar (ra), was asked the question, "Can one give up things by one's own will?" He replied:

It is desirable that there should be a guide with the spirit of Mohammed in him, so that the heart can lose its own existence in the existence of the guide.

The great teachers have said that success comes only to those who make sincere effort. My beloved guide, Hazrat Azad Rasool (ra), spoke constantly about sincere effort and progress. The help that a teacher can give is dependent upon the readiness of the student to obey the instructions that he or she is given. Without zealous work, the deeper meanings will never be found. The accomplished man or woman that is guiding can only influence a pupil for a few days at a time. There is a saying: "*Perseverance cannot be given.*"

Khwaja Allaudin (ra) said,

When we took part in the groups of Khwaja Bahaudin Naqshband(ra), we tried to hold on to remembering our aim from morning to night. Nevertheless, among all the companions, there were very few who were capable of holding on for one day until nightfall.

What does this do to you when you hear this? Does it inspire you, or does it give you an excuse to remain distant from yourself? Love alone is the key to inspiration and freedom, effort and progress, studentship, and *maway'iat* (accompaniment). It is effort that is going to make the difference.

There is no way, without putting our spiritual life first and working at it, we can escape the fear of change and the anxiety that we all have. There is no way, without doing this, we can get beyond the negative and destructive history that fashioned our character and life circumstances, and our lack of self-esteem and self-confidence, or its reciprocal: arrogance. Fear and arrogance are the same: a lack of ability to be secure in one's self. I do not think there is anyone in this room who does not have a spark to ignite the fire of realization; *bi ithni 'llah*. As we fan that small spark, it is the light of Rasul'llah that will grow in our hearts and our lives. As we free ourselves from fear and arrogance, we will be more and more open to the Prophet (sal), who Allah tells us in Qu'an, is our light:

O Prophet! Truly We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings, and a warner, and as one who invites to Allah by His leave, and as a lamp spreading light.

Yaa ayyuhaa-n-nabiyyu innaa arsalnaaka shaahidañw-wa mubashshirañw-wa nadheeraa. Wa daa'iyana ilaa-Llaahi bi'idhnihi wa siraajam-muneeraa. (33:45- 46)

Closing Du'a.

Wa Llaahu lahu-l-h.aqqi wa huwa yahdii-s-sabiil.

H.asbunaa-Llaahu wah.dahu wa nicma-l-wakiil.

Wa s.alli calaa sayyidinaa Muh.ammadin wa aaalihi wa s.ah.bihi ajmaciin

wa-l-h.amdu li-Llaahi rabbi-l-caalamiin.

Truth belongs to Allah; it is He who shows the way.

Allah, alone, suffices us, and what a fine guardian is He!

Blessings upon our Master Muhammad
and his family and Companions altogether
and praise is due to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

ⁱ As reported from Ibn al- Sam`ani's Qawa'id fi Usul al-Fiqh by al-Zarkashi in al-Tadhkira (p. 129), al-Suyuti in the Durar (p. 258 §420) and in the fatwa entitled al-Qawl al-Ashbah fi Hadithi Man `Arafa Nafsahu fa-qad `Arafa Rabbah in his Hawi lil-Fatawi (2:412) as well as al-Sakhawi in the Maqasid and al-Haytami in his Fatawa Hadithiyya (p. 289).