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Thursday

Title: [Learning to Perceive the Metaphors](#)

DVD title: The Heart that Comprehends Revelation  
Has the Capacity to Perceive through Metaphors

*Asalaam Aleikum.* In a sense, everything in Allah’s Swt creation is a metaphor for something else. In that sense, you can say that everything, therefore, is a metaphor. Everything that seems to be real is also a metaphor for something else that’s real—for example, your sight. Physical eyesight can be faulty. All kinds of diseases can attack the eye, aside from being farsighted, nearsighted, or myopic. We use that as a metaphor. Often we say, “That person is myopic in their approach.” Allah says in the Qur’an, **“...they have eyes with which they do not see...”** (7:179) It’s a metaphor.

Unless you have the capacity, you wouldn’t understand the metaphor. Unless you can see, you won’t know what not seeing would be. I was listening to a radio show and on the program was a blind woman. Her parents knew she was going to go blind when she was two years old, but they never told her. What they did was keep her in contact with beautiful things, paintings, museums, travel, and all the things she could see. Then she learned she was going blind. She thought that going blind meant she couldn’t see anything. It was a story about a blind woman who took other blind people climbing in the Himalayas. When she went blind, she realized that she could in many ways see better, because she had had the experience of being prepared and bombarded with so many things. There was less distraction.

We have many reasons to think of life, and aspects of our life, as a metaphor. We say for example, “*ain al qalbi* /the eye of the heart.” And we talk about insight. If the physical eye can be diseased and have cataracts or glaucoma, or problems with the retina, or be color blind, so too the eye of the heart and of the mind can also have diseases or imperfections. Human beings go to great lengths to create lenses through which we can see to correct our faulty vision. If everything is a metaphor, there must be lenses that can be created to correct the faulty vision of our mind and heart. Allah Swt tells us that in Qur’an. Allah says that you have eyes but you don’t see, and you have ears but you don’t hear. The metaphor goes to sound, and the same principle exists. And then it goes to: “You do not understand.” Intellectually, you can also have imperfections.

When we focus on the essential meaning of the Qur’an and the teachings of Rasulallah (sal) [we can see] what has been set forth clearly and repeatedly, directly and in analogies, metaphors, and parables; yet people see it, but don’t see it; read it but don’t hear it; and have a mind that doesn’t grasp it. We have the ordinary sight, and the insight. We have the ordinary mind that operates in normal language that we can all relate to, even though we speak different languages. But that’s not the mind of the revelation, or the sight of the revelation. The ‘*aql*, mind, in Qur’an is not a thing but actually a dynamic activity of an inner capability within each human being. That is what we call *qalb*, the heart. The mind is a receiver of the realities of what Allah Swt has revealed by means of love of the heart. Allah Swt reveals all this in Qur’an to the heart of Rasulallah (sal), not to the mind of Rasulallah (sal). What comes into the heart has to be put into a context with the capacity of the intellect (‘*aql*/mind). We have to comprehend it in that context.

For comprehension we can use the word *fiqh*. That is knowledge that arises inside the human being from their heart. We gauge things by our heart much more than we think, by our emotions, by our sight, by our human capabilities. That’s why we see justice as

blindfolded, so it is not influenced by anything. You see the three monkeys: hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil. The senses are negated. When we contemplate something, and respond to something, though we may think certain things about it, we find we respond most often from an emotional or heart point of view. Just look at today's news. The President sat down today with a police officer and a professor because... what happened? There was an emotional response to a circumstance.

You all know the story: a man came home and didn't have his keys. He broke into his own house. A neighbor called police, and the police came and arrested him. The man was black, the officer was white. So the whole topic of racism was brought up. But it is an issue, because it's a race issue. Where does that come from? Is it in the mind or the heart? It is in the heart. Do you think Allah Swt doesn't know this, that this has somehow escaped Allah Swt? This is the way the system is set up. If you are going to give a revelation, will you give it to the intellect? You will give it to the heart, where a person has to learn from day one to deal with their emotions. Whether you are on this path one year, five years, thirty years, fifty years, or a hundred years (insh'allah), the measurement of your progress will be made by your own self through how you deal with situations of the heart—not just emotions, but the love of the heart.

Allah Swt gives us the teaching of love, through Tasawwuf, [teachings] of the heart to deal with the first line of our reactions, the emotions, so that the mind / intellect can grasp the essence of the truth and take from the love something, and create new structures, new forms. How you overcome the raw emotional responses to things is when you have knowledge, and you really understand something, when you have knowledge of it. This is the use of *'aql*. We have methodologies. Allah gives us *tafakkur*/reflection and contemplation. Through contemplation, which begins with the heart (because everything begins with the heart) a person comes to think about something, and hopefully meditates

on it. When you meditate on it, you are not meditating on the emotional circumstance, but on the core of that circumstance, the essence of it. *Muraqabah* is meditating on the essence that gives rise to circumstances. Then you begin to see with your eyes and hear with your ears and know what is just and unjust, right and wrong.

By this process, as you realize you are meditating on the essence of the universe—especially when you are using all your faculties of the *latā'if*—it demonstrates to you the existence of Allah Swt. It is the proof within your own self. You find that you are seeing clearly and understanding; consequently, your emotional responses have shifted and changed. Your heart begins to operate with its knowledge and understanding. You have heard me quote the scientific study that reveals there are 50,000 brain cells in the heart. Human beings, all humanity (except for a statistically insignificant number of people who are so diseased, dysfunctional or aberrated in some way that they have no normality) share a common consciousness, a common mind. We know that because human beings aspire and attribute their own existence to some force or being or truth beyond themselves—a creator.

Allah Swt has fashioned human beings to be different. **“If God had so willed, He could surely have made you into one single community, but [He willed it otherwise]...”** (5:48) **“...and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another.** (49:13) [He made them] different, not just in terms of geographical location, but in color, language, and different in the way they identify themselves culturally, but sharing the same common human characteristics. Somehow inside of us we realize there is some small bit of the Divine Reality, the Divine Presence. Those people who think there is a lot of it, we call egocentric. They act like they are gods. There are certain attributes that give them that attitude, like power, wealth. They attribute to themselves god-like characteristics. But the rest of us, we resonate with that Divine

Presence, because it is within and without us. It comprises us.

That Divine Presence is also air, earth, fire, and water in the *'ālam al khalq*. We resonate with that Divine Presence, which is Love, Beauty, Majesty, Patience, Compassion, Mercy, Understanding. Because of that, there is a kind of passion that comes with compassion. It considers ourselves somewhat Divine. It, too, gets distorted because it's part of the metaphor of the metaphor. It has its desires, appetites, attitudes. If we use the tools that are given to us, it becomes clearer and clearer to us that the mind is in existence to serve the heart. The emotions are to alert us to a Divine Presence and to give us a means to measure our own progress.

A sense of service has something to do with timeliness. If someone is poor and starving, you give them food. Why? Because in a period of time, they will die if you don't give them food. Then there are subtleties of service: in war, we try to make the world a better place in time to save other human beings. Service, like we do here, has also to do with time. Then there's the interrelationship of things. Things have to be coherent and resonant. They have to be connected with what is here and now, in the world we live in, that we participate in as members of humanity. It also has to do with the Hereafter, beyond the veils, into the world of the unseen. We know there is a world of unseen, because we know there are boundaries.

You remember the example I used to give many years ago: you close your eyes and run your hands along a table. You come to an edge. If you are in the dark, you don't know what is out there. But you know you have come to a borderline—the unseen world. How do you learn from the unseen world? Allah Swt tells us this is through revelation that we learn: the message comes from the unseen world, from the *ghaib*, to us. At the core, at the center of reality, at the center of our body, at the center of the teaching is *qalb*, the

heart. *Qalb* is mentioned over 130 times in Qur'an. The Prophet (sal) is mentioned four times. And none of those times is talking about a fleshy organ. '*Aql*/mind is mentioned over 50 times in the Qur'an. At no time is it used as a term for a common tool: "the mind does this or that." Comprehension in terms of *fiqh* is mentioned over 20 times in the Qur'an. *Fikr*, as in *tafakkur*, is mentioned 18 times. In every case, it is mentioned in terms of the faith-related functioning of the heart. I think there is a message here.

You are dealing with language that is very exact, and concepts that are very profound, so there is a message here about the centrality of the heart in the teaching. At every time, it reflects a greater metaphor or another something that is analogically related. We receive certain knowledge through our senses. We seem to be wired, as we say, for certain instinctual responses. We have a capacity for logic and reasoning that develops from looking, watching, examining, asking questions, looking at the interrelationship between circumstances. But the perfected mind, the perfected heart receives its knowledge, its light, its capacity, its understanding directly from the revelation that comes from the unseen world. It streams. If you are working at your computer, you will stream information from this part of the world to another part of the world in a second. You can't see it, but it's streaming. You have a receiver on one end, a transmitter on the other. They are the same instrument: a computer and a computer. They are streaming information to each other, and you are receiving. You can't see it, but you are getting it. Allah Swt is telling you: I'm sending you a file called Revelation/Qur'an. And you pick it up.

Everything we receive in revelation, whether you look at the Qur'an carefully or without much care, has its analogical reality in the physical world; otherwise, we wouldn't understand it at all. We'd have no way to relate to it. In Qur'an, Allah is telling us about kith and kin and family, mountains and rivers and all the rest. We know it is very often a

metaphor for something else. There are people who do take a lot of it absolutely literally, and those who understand it to be perhaps literal but also metaphorical. The information comes as an analogy to something, and we grasp it because we see it. We know what a river is, so we can imagine a river of milk. We know what beauty is, so we can imagine beautiful people. We know what gold and jewels are, so we can imagine those things. When you lose sight is when you close the eyes of common capability, when you become incapable of learning from the world around us.

When we neglect the tools that we are given, they rust, just like any other tool. It's another metaphor. If Mustafa leaves the tools out in the garden all winter, he will come back to rusty tools. If you don't use the *latā'if* and mind and heart properly, if you don't use your insight, it becomes use-less. You use it less and it becomes useless. (Even English has some meaning to it). You can pick it up and think you can work with a rusty tool—no problem. But the wooden handle rotted over the winter, and it breaks. You can't achieve the capability, the capacity, the mastery over the worldly things if you allow your worldly capabilities to be useless. If you can't see, and don't get glasses, you can't operate in the world. If you sit, lazy and idle, or if you sit in the company of lazy and idle people, of wrong people, not only do you get in trouble if what they do is wrong, but you lose your capability because you are with incapable human beings. What does that mean?

Ultimately, it means you don't get the message, and you are not hearing the revelation of Allah Swt. It means you are not at all understanding the essence, the reality, and the metaphor of Qur'an and the life of Rasulallah (sal), which are all three. Allah Swt made this universe subservient to us, and gave it to us as an *amanat*, then gave us, **“the ships that move in the seas,”** the ability to move around the earth. [Allah Swt] gave us the responsibility not just to dwell in the earth, but to compete with one another in doing good. Why? Good spiritual capitalism: if you compete with one another you will

improve. If you compete with one another, you develop better means and tools, piety/*taqwa*. How do you do that unless you struggle and strive to learn how to use the instrument that Allah Swt gave us called the heart and mind? How do you do that if your mind is not perceiving, and your heart is rusty? How can you make progress? This is why Allah Swt says you become blind. “You have eyes but you don’t see.”

That blindness negates real insight, real *basīr*, and you don’t see the Divine Presence. You don’t even think about it. You don’t hear the Divine Guidance or Commandments, if you will, from the ‘*alam al amr*. You have no sense of the here or the Hereafter, and the mind becomes paralyzed, and the heart becomes cold. The human being becomes useless and impotent, if you will; dysfunctional—unable to function with its potential. Impotent means without potential. That means that if you only live your life religiously, but you don’t pay any attention to the things of the world, even the Prophet Mohammed (sal) said this is the wrong things to do. You are warned about the person who is excessive in their religion to the degree that person is remiss in their worldly responsibilities and duties.

If you close one eye to the world, and turn away from competing with one another (or your *nafs*) in doing good, one loses the capability of their mind and their heart. When the mind (meaning *qalb*—as I said at the beginning, the mind of the heart) is blind, it is ipso facto averse to the revelation of Allah Swt, and it wanders astray. One who wanders astray is one who cannot see, cannot hear what Allah Swt has revealed. This is one who has wandered off the path. This person cannot perceive the guidance that is being offered. If they cannot perceive the guidance, they cannot accept it. Because they have wandered astray in distraction, they don’t miss the guidance. What is the guidance to? To a very specific, unique objective that just happens to determine your eternal destiny and fulfill it.

There is no way of getting to that place that we call Jannah, because people have gone off on the road leading this way, and the road to Jannah is that way. People can take that literally, or figuratively and metaphorically. There is no way to tranquility, bliss, *nafs mutma'inna*, serenity. There is no way there because you are going in the other direction. This blindness/*a'mā* is mentioned 33 times in Qur'an. Three of those times it refers to the blindness of the senses, and 30 of those times refer to the blindness of the heart. There seems to be a message here. As a result of the proper functioning of the operations of the hearing and sight, one is on the *siratal mustaqim* headed in the right direction.

When they are silenced, obscured or restricted, they become ineffective. So you listen, but you don't hear. You look, but you don't see. As this happens, things become rusty. Disbelief, which becomes unbelief, comes between the human being's heart and the light of Allah by which things are revealed; and the beauty of the hearing of the Qur'an by which things are heard, until doubt cuts the connection, and you can no longer hear. You can ask him, because he can't hear out of one ear, and cannot smell through his nose. Obviously, the physical senses being cut don't stop you from being a Sufi, a believer, or a good human being. It's strictly a metaphor.

Allah Swt in Qur'an talks about what happens to a person who doesn't believe because the inner senses have been cut. There is an inability to see and hear. Like a cosmic vasectomy, you can't make anything anymore (ie. can't see anything anymore). Gone—the natural ability to create something has been stopped. The capacity was there, but there are no means anymore. It's a metaphor.

Allah says, addressing Rasulallah (sal), “**And among them are some who listen to you. But can you cause the deaf to hear? Even though they do not comprehend? And**

**among them is he who looks toward you, but can you guide the blind even though they do not see?” (10:42-43) (Reads in Arabic). Then what does he say? (Arabic)**

**Surely Allah does not oppress the people in any way, but it is the people who oppress their own selves. And on that day He shall gather them together: it will seem as if they have lingered on the earth but an hour of a day, and they will know one another. Truly the losers are those who deny the meeting with Allah and were not guided. And whether We show you in this world something of what We promise them, or We cause you to die before showing you what We have promised, to Us is the return, and it is Allah Who is the witness of all we do. (10:44-46)**

Then He says, **“Every community has been sent a messenger.”** (10:47) [These ‘āyāt are from] Sūratu Yunus. These people hear and they see the elements of the universe that are all around us. They see the stars, flowers, food, and all the things that happen. They see life and death and birth and see wars and peace. They are us before we started to see; and we could be them again if we stop looking, if we leave our tools out all summer, winter, spring, and fall. They see, and yet, as the Qur’an tells us, **“Deaf, dumb, and blind so they do not understand.”** (2:171) The mind, willingly or unwillingly, lazily or not, in effect rejects the revelation of Allah Swt, which are the living utterances as they manifest from the *ghaib* into the *dunya*, as they pass from the world of the *‘ālam al amr* to the *‘ālam al khalq*, through the *latā’if*. If they are awakened you see it and remember it. If the *latā’if* are not awakened, you see with your eyes and hear with your ears but you don’t see or hear it. In effect, you reject the revelation. You don’t believe it. So this arrogance comes, and the person themselves claims a kind of self-appointed divinity, and becomes like an animal. Allah Swt even says that human beings took pride in being an animal.

Allah describes people who are deaf, dumb, and blind. **We have already created for hell many of the jinn and men having hearts with which they do not understand, having eyes with which they do not see, and having ears with which they do not hear. Those are like cattle. No, they are worse: those are the heedless.** (7:179) I sit here, or stand here, four times a week talking, and I worry that I'm heedless. If I were you, I'd be really worried. At least I have to prepare this and say it. All you have to do is listen to it one time and go home and forget it.

The heart cannot be just merely the organ that can get diseased, and captured by the temptations of this world, or the power of desires, or the madness of this world. We cannot allow ourselves to be the kind of person whose heart cannot comprehend the revelation of Allah Swt, whose ears can't listen to those words of Allah Swt, whose eyes don't enjoy the beauty and magnificence of Allah Swt. Allah Swt says He deafens those people and makes their eyes blind. **“What, do they not ponder the Qur'an? Or are there locks on upon their hearts?”** (47:24) Their hearts are sealed. What are these locks made out of? They are made out of our distractions, stubbornness, laziness, arrogance, stupidity, assumptions. How do you pick that lock? What is the combination to that lock?

Allah Swt grant us help and refuge, please, to understand this, *insh'allah*, and try to have *taqwa*. Why is *taqwa* called “fear” by some as opposed to piety? This is why. When you understand this, it's scary. The answer is to become a pious human being. Is a pious human being someone who just prays all the time and puts their head on the ground? No. It's a person who fulfills their duties in the world, perceives the revelations, embraces science and technology, embraces the human capabilities, extends them and expands them, and who makes your children better, builds better computers and does better things

with them, while you are still seeing that it is all within the revelation of Allah. It's not some historical, hagiographic following of some kind of ritualistic behavior from 5,000 or 12,000 years ago, or even 500 hundred or 100 hundred years ago. It's not some personal identification with the culture just because I wear a thobe. "I'm a *shaykh* because I'm wearing a thobe." No. It's something living and real. It's a means. You have to get and stay serious about it. Mustafa could forget and leave the tools out in the garden this winter. If you don't have the means to buy new tools, you can only dig in the ground so much with your fingers. Then your fingers get tired and bloody, and you can't do it. You will only have as much food to eat as you can plant with your fingers. Then you will go out and steal or beg because you can't do it anymore—everything brings you down. This will bring you up. *Asalaamu aleikum.*