THE OCCIDENTAL EXILE AND OTHER MYSTICAL RECITALS

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC AND PERSIAN

BY LALEH BAKHTIAR

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NOTE: These two volumes represent the completed work to date. An Introduction by Seyyid Hossein Nasr, illustrations, footnotes, the glossary of symbols and nine commentaries (one for each of the recitals, except the first, which is included) are being prepared. These translations presented here have been given to a few friends for comments and do not necessarily represent the final form.

THE RECITAL OF THE TOWERS OR WORDS OF MYSTICAL INTUITION

by

Shihab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi

translated from the Arabic by Laleh Bakhtiar

Part One: An Exhortation

Here are some words of mystical intuition and points of ardent desire which I have written as a result of the pleadings of some of my friends, the brethren in catharsis.

Know, oh brethern in catharsis, may God strengthen thee with the light of Unity, that the purpose of catharsis is to hasten the return to the original abode, to hasten contiguity with the Transcendent world. The meaning of the Prophet's words, peace and blessings be upon him, 'love of abode is an article of faith,' indicates this. The words of God, the Most High, intimates this, as well, *oh soul at peace, return unto thy Lord well-pleased, well-pleasing* (89:27-28) . The speed of the return is determined by the extent of 'preparedness.' One does not say, "Return to Egypt," to a person who has not seen Egypt. And God forbid if by abode thou understandest Damascus, Baghdad, etc. since these belong to this world. The Lawgiver has said: 'love for this world is the base of every sin.'

Having understood the meaning of thy abode, leave from *the city whose people are evildoers* (4:77). What is the purpose of catharsis and agility if their result is not union? A person who catharsizes his form from the attachments of nature and does not try to unite with the world of Reality is like a person who makes medicine for his own cure and the health of his constitution, but does not take it.

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Yes! Catharsis is a drawing out. If one opens a door from there and goes forth from the six, leaves aside the ten, cuts off the four, with an awareness of the world of Oneness, he deserves union and salvation. Complete salvation is for the brethren in catharsis because their catharsis is directed towards the light of Unity.

Certainly the rays of the sun of Divine nature shone upon the plane of possibility. How long will you remain in the darkness of the corners of material objects? How long will you worship physical forms as idols? How happy is he who has left the space of his body and has entered the Ka'bah of faith; who has migrated away from the darknesses of blindness and unlawfulness. Then thou becomest elevated to the 'door,' and fixed to the threshold. It is a door, the seekers of which have never sustained a loss; the traveler of which has never been rejected.

Peace be upon one who has left one's nest and has tended to one's Lord; has left the heaviness of bodies and has become happy with the lightness of spirits;has treaded the path of human nature and united unto the house of Divine nature; has rescued oneself from the ten chains; has gone above the lowest nadir towards the sacred zenith and then has reached something which no eye has seen, which no ear has heard, and which has entered no heart.

How happy is the group whose station is in the world of 'servant-ness', whose flight is in the space of the Eternal. Oh, God! make us more than just one who has a likeness to his Father, one who has broken the relationship to his parents, who has not relied upon the world of supports for his being; who has not confined himself to continued accidents.

Know that 'love of abode is an article of faith.' If thou art a man, then do not be satisfied with mere conversation. Do not lose thy precious breaths in demanding ignoble pleasures. For how long wilt thou descendenst into the dirt and let the rays of the sun pass by thee?

Certainly, lights emanated upon the receptive and rendered the temperments of the forms. Being blind from birth, he denies and does not witness illumination in its emanation except as corrosion. It is in the nature of scented ambergis to spread beyond reach, to perfume the gathering of friends and the elevated places of the seekers of the sacred. Even if one has a cold, its subtle fragrance still occurs.

If the thirsting within from sorrows becomes dispersed to the places of perdition, if the clouds of the wind of death become raised to the deserts, then thou shalt see things which thou hast never seen. Build a ladder which has 16 rungs and ascend to the sacred firmaments until from the spiritual thou unitest to the intelligences.

Turn towards the eternal Ka'bah and say: *I have turned my Face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth* (6:79).

Recite:

Transparent the glass and transparent the wine
Thus they resemble each other, they resemble
the Divine Command
Thus there is wine and no glass.
Thus there is a glass and no wine.

Part Two: The Examples of the Mystics

Know that certainly one who analyzes the symbol will then succeed to the treasure. First there is mystical intuition, then ardent desire, then love, then union, then annihilation, then subsistence. There is no city beyond Abadan, Abadan is without limit.

Know certainly, may God confirm thee with His sight, that the moon is a sincere lover of the king of the stars, the ruler of the illuminated planets as it crosses the squares of the heavens. The sun triumphs over the darkness with its own light. It preserves time and eternity. It spreads goodness. It brings forth the three kingdoms from possibility to actuality upon the earth. It tours existence. It preserves the songs of the loving Lord.

The essence of a humble lover is attending to the threshold of his Beloved and trying to attain union with the loved one. This is why the moon quickly draws its voyage to a close; it never remains in any one house for more than two days. It moves quickly so that from the lowness of being the new moon, it can ascend to the height of being the full moon.

When the opposition of the two stars is near, the rays of the sun reflect themselves upon the moon's essence. After a time of darkness, the moon is illuminated by the lights of the sun. Then, in contemplating oneself, the lover finds nothing in himself which is empty of the lights of the sun, and that is when he proclaims, "I am the Sun."

Thus Abu Yazīd Bastāmī and Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Hallāj and others like them of the brethren in catharsis were moons of the sky of Unity. When the shore of their hearts was illuminated by the light of their Lord, they revealed the secret, manifest and hidden. They were made to speak. *God makes everything speak (41:21).* The Truth always speaks through the tongue of His saints.

It is upon thee to dissolve the human talisman because the treasures of the spiritual world are there. If one dissolves that, one reaches the purpose, one unites with the Adored. From the descending of objects, ascend to the lofty spirits, from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high. One will come face to face with the Beauty of the One, liberated through perpetual union, saved from the web of idolatry.

Part Three: Ascension to the Towers

The means of the dissolution of that talisman is by clawing at the rope on the two branches with which thou shouldst shackle the leopard and the hyena. Then cross 360 rivers. After that, pass over 248 mountains which belong to four ranges which face six directions. Then,

after that, thou reachest a fortified castle resting upon the summits of the mountains, which has 10 towers. The castle moves from the motion of the large mountain.

In the first tower thou seest something eloquent, calling out, endowed with a clear and distinct voice. Various kinds of eatables and types of tastes are next to it.. Take care not to be deceived by its delicacies which thou seest. Payst no attention to sweetness when thou contemplatest it, because the result of its delicacies is sorrow. Its sweetness is ultimately poison. "How often have the desires of one hour been followed by a long sorrow?"

Once thou hast passed this, thou reachest the second tower. Thou seest that it has two small doors which run along the length of the castle. It is very difficult to climb this passage. It is only possible with a ladder of air. Once thou reachst the top thou seest two things which are sitting upon the cupolas of the castle. All kinds of good smelling things are near them. The quick and multiple dispersed smells of musk and ambergris rise from there. Beware that good, physical smells do not hold thee from the spiritual breezes.

Once thou hast passed this, thou reachest the third tower which is along the width of the castle. There is a view down the middle of two almonds. Around these are silk threads. In the middle of them is a little hill. From every view there is a bed made of ivory and ebony and upon each bed, something is sitting up very high with cheeks like rubies with a delicate form and fine disposition. It looks into the goodness of lights and it gives

good news. Do not be delayed when confronted with the beautiful view and the pleasureful gatherings. Leave like a lover of the beauty of the One.

When thou hast passed this, thou reachst the fourth tower which is on the sides of the castle. It has two fortified palaces. Muscular walls surround each palace. This fourth tower pulls in good sounds from the horizon towards itself and soft melodies and pleasurable chants gather around it. Try to leave it.

Then thou reachest the fifth tower which views over all the other towers. It discovers two opposite things:hardness and softness. From there, thou reachest the sixth tower, the first interior tower. Thou seest a chamber which is lit and made bright from the lights of the rays of the five towers. The seventh tower is the treasury of these towers. Then there is the eighth tower. The goods of the exterior and the interior chambers are gathered there. The distinction between friends and enemies occurs in there. The ninth tower is gold-embossed of which its name changes according to the reflections of the rays of the stars or the rays of the moon which fall upon it. The tenth tower is the treasury of some of the interior chambers.

Once thou hast passed these houses and thou hast measured these stages, thou reachest permanent and established cities. Then the first thing thou seest is a Shaykh of exhalted rank more handsome and more illuminated than the full moon. Contained in the space of possibility, no place contains him. He quickly contracts within himself without moving. He slowly becomes passive without resting.

His teeth laugh but he has none. He speaks eloquently without having a tongue. It is he who transmits the revelations and the inspirations to the great and generous Prophets and Saints. Thus, stay by his door and count his invaluable prizes, his sayings and those of his nine brothers. Know that these are the people the nearness of whom does not bring misery. The intimacy of them does not bring fear. They are the sum total of creation and they are near the Adored One. When thou hast joined with these ten generous and good people and thou hast imitated their disposition and hast seen their good deeds and hast risen from one to the other, so much more will the lights of the Almighty Lord and the treasures of Divine nature be illuminated upon thee. From the chains of servitude and difficulty thou wilt be freed and be joined to the primordial benefits. Because of seeing, needless of speaking. When reaching this stage of consciousness, leave speaking behind. Find where He says: *unto God all things come home (42:53) and unto thy Lord is the final end of it (79:44).* From then on, thou shalt speak with the 'tongue of the moment!."

These words are among those I do not usually speak about. Thus, have good intentions and do not follow the 'whys and wherefores.'

Here ends the Recital of the Towers
or Words of Mystical Intuition.

ON THE BELIEF OF THE THEOSOPHERS

by

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Translated from the Arabic by

Laleh Bakhtiar

After praise to God, the Most High and blessings upon His Prophet, Mohammad, and his family, the cause of writing this treatise was that I saw that the tongues of men were being directed against the people of knowledge, the theosophers. Their aversion towards the theosophers had become great. The motive for this was the evil opinion of the common people about the theosophers by their saying the following: "They are atheists who do not recognize the Maker, nor the Prophets, nor the day of resurrection, nor the return of God, nor the punishment and rewards after death." We seel refuge from God from these words and then we curse them who say these things and all the people who are friends of theirs.

At times, the evil opinion of the common people is correct and sometimes it is wrong. But this evil opinion about the people of knowledge, the theosophers is wrong. Nay, the people of knowledge who have a perfect grasp of Reality, do believe that the world has a Maker and He is One, Single and Everlasting; that He *has not taken to Himself either consort or a son (72:3);* and that He is the Living, the Knower, the Hearer and the Seer qualified by the attributes of Perfection with-

out being thereby diversified and without losing His fundamental unity.

They believe further that the Prophets are commanded by God, the Most High, to execute those things which are obligatory for them to execute and that punishment and rewards are realities; that happiness and misery are realities, fixed and conjoined to mankind; namely, that the person of happiness will find reward after death and the person of misery will find punishment after death. They also believe that this world is possible to exist and that every possible thing is contingent, for the reason that its existence depends upon something other than itself to come into being . Thus, the eternal *a parte ante* can only be something which is in need of none other than itself for its own existence. That can only be the 'Necessarily Existent', God, the Most High. This is a summary exposition of their beliefs.

Now to explain (their beliefs) in detail. They prove that the world is possible to exist. The easiest way to understand this point is as follows: accidents subsist in material objects. Thus an accident is 'possible' because it is dependent upon something other than itself for if its existence was necessary, certainly it would not depend upon another.

Their Proof of Necessary Being

As to material objects, they are the loci of 'possible' accidents. But the necessarily existent can never be a locus of accidents for otherwise it would be 'possible'. Furthermore, these material objects differ according to differences in accidents such as quantities, forms, colors, heat, cold and other various accidents. Therefore, there must necessarily be a creative Maker. But a material object cannot be the Creator of forms because forms are divergent while a material object, insofar as it is a material object, is not divergent. Thus a material object can not be the creator of different realities.

Accidents, for their part, cannot be the creators of material objects for two reasons: one is that accidents are divergent while a material object is one reality. Thus if accidents were the creators of material objects, certainly the material objects would accordingly be divergent insofar as they are material objects. The second reason is that accidents, in order to exist, are in need of material objects. How, then, could an accident be the creator of that thing which it itself needs for its own existence?

Thus a material object is not the creator of itself nor is an accident its own creator so there must necessarily be a creator who is neither material

object nor accident. If (it is established that) this Creator is from 'that which exists necessarily by itself,' then the problem has been solved. But if it is also to be a 'possible,' then it is required that the chain of causes should end up reaching what exists necessarily by itself, that is, the Creator, Most High. The intelligent ones do not doubt this. *Is there any doubt regarding God? (14:11)*. Moreover, this knowledge is something inborn in man, as a nomad said, "the camel's dung shows the path of the camel, the footprints of man show the path of man." Do not both a high form with its delicateness and a center of lowness with this filth point to the Omnipotent Maker? However, the theosophers hold: the Creator does not create material objects without any discrimination. On the contrary, a physical body is created in the form of fire or air or water or earth. And since it is this way, His act of creation most occur in various directions.

Such being the case, the first thing which God the Most High created was something intelligent, alive and knowing. As the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "The first thing which God, the Most High, created was the Intellect." However, it has three levels in the following

terms: first, its contemplating the Creator and conceiving Him; second, contemplating its own possibility and conceiving it; and third, contemplating its own essence and conceiving it. Thus as a result of its contemplating its Creator and 'conceiving' Him (this is the highest form of the matter) another intellect comes into being. And, as a result of its contemplating its own possibility and conceiving it (this is the lowest form of the matter), a sphere comes into being. And as a result of its conceiving its own essence, there comes into being the Soul of the sphere. And in the same way from the second intellect, a third intellect and a second sphere and the Soul of that sphere; and from the third intellect, a fourthe intellect, a third sphere and the Soul of that sphere; and from the fourth, the fifth intellect and the fourth sphere and the soul of the sphere; and from the fifth, the sixth intellect and the fifth sphere and the soul of that sphere; and from the sixth, the seventh intellect and the sixth sphere and the soul of that sphere; and from the seventh the eighth intellect and the seventh sphere and the soul of that sphere; and from the eight intellect, the ninth intellect, an eighth sphere, and the Soul of that sphere ; and from the ninth, the tenth intellect and the ninth sphere and the soul of that sphere. And from the tenth intellect, the world of elements and the souls of humans are brought into being. It is this which they call the Giver of Forms. The Prophets call it the Transcendent Spirit or Gabriel. It is that which has said: *I am but a messenger come from thy Lord to give thee a boy most pure (19:19).*

Furthermore, they say: all these creatures do not remain behind the true Creator in terms of time and place, since time and place come after these creatures. On the contrary, the remaining behind of these creatures from God, the Creator is in terms of essence, and that is (what is meant by) the remaining behind of creatures from the Creator. For creatures are always behind the Creator (in this respect) and the Creator is before them. Now, if a person refrains from using the words 'cause' and 'effect',we have no intention of getting into a discussion about words. If a person says the world is 'eternal' meaning thereby that between the world and its Creator there is no discrepancy in terms of time, place, rank or nature, again we have no intention of getting into a discussion with him about words as long as the purpose is the same. Yes, if a person says: "The world is eternal," meaning there is no Maker nor Creator, then this is disbelief and heresy.

(The Theosophers) also believe that God the Most High does not create a thing *ex nilio* according to His will, because will only exists when there is a choice between two things; either for the sake of some benefit for the benefactor himself or for the object of it. When in the

eyes of the benefactor, this benefit is better for the object than not giving it, only in such a case is the will actualized in him. This is a natural thing. Everyone knows for himself that he does not will to do something unless he or another will benefit and the benefit of another is better in his eyes than not (willing it). God, the Most High, is free of purposes and (free) from the dependence of this purpose upon something. Thus His actions do not depend on any purpose. On the contrary, His essence demands existence. Moreover, even if those sages were to come down to the plane of mere disputation and recognize (for the sake of argument) the existence of Will, even so their principle will remain completely intact because His Will, then, would have to be recognized as eternal and they would necessarily have to admit that the world can not be posterior to Him, whether in time or place or indeed any kinds of 'posterioity'.

They believe that the human being is the noblest of the earthly creatures and that the human being has an intellectual soul. The intellectual soul, from the point of view of the sage, consists of a single, intellectual substance which does not exist in the world of elements, the world of ether (that is, the world of the firmaments). On the contrary, the intellectual soul cannot be conceived of as existing in the world of material objects because if it were

in the world of material objects, it would not be able to conceive of the Unity of the first Reality, may His greatness increase, because the One can only be perceived by Oneness, thus it is a thing of oneness. As Hallaj said when he was being martyred: "It is sufficient for one to become one with the One." Whatever is in the world of material objects is not one, thus the soul can not be conceived of as existing in the material world.

The reason why (the intellectual soul) is not in the world of material objects nor is it an object nor does it have physical form is found in the Book, traditions and in other works. A verse of the Quran states: *in the presence of a King Omnipotent (54:55)*. This proves that the (intellectual soul) is neither object nor physical form , since material objects do not have these attributes. On the contrary, these attributes belong to the Spirit of God, the substance of which is free from the world of material objects. There is no difference between it and the angels except that (the intellectual soul) dominates the world of material objects. According to the traditions, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "I will pass the night near my Lord; He will feed me and give me drink." In the great works some of the sages have spoken about the quality of the Sufis: "A person who is with God will be without place." This indicates that (the intellectual soul) is not an object since an object is composed of other things

and divided into parts. There is nothing in this world which is not divided into parts whether in comprehension or in essence.

Thus the spirit of man - and that is the Spirit of God - is not in this world. Yes, it has a relationship to the body like the relationship of a king tohis subject and it dominates over all things. A person lives only while (the spirit) remains with the body. When desire is cut, the life of a person is cut. In the human body there is a subtle, steamy thing called the animal spirit. Desire is the cause of the subsistance of that and without it, it dies. If this were not so, how could one imagine the Divine Spirit - which is the intellectual soul - tearing apart the firmaments and ascending towards the above? The tearing apart of the spheres is beyond comprehension because the spheres are always rotating. One cannot comprehend (the sphere) taking a straight path since a straight motion is not within its nature. Thus, after being torn aprat, it heals; it is necessary that it move in a straight direction.

Motion brings 'preparedness.' The Giver of Forms gives existence as when water is heated very hot, the *materia prima* of it is ready to accept 'being air'. Thus the Giver of Forms gives 'being air'. When the disposition of the body is perfected, it is given to the intellectual soul. Thus, in the opinion of the sage, the intelligences and the spheres are eternal because of the permanence of their cause. Whatever is renewed in the world of generation and corruption is contingent because of its tempor-

ality.

Materia prima consists of a substance which at one time wore the form of fire, at another time, the form of air, and at another time, the form of water and then it wore the form of earth. The changing of water to air is obvious since a person sees the drops of rain one after the other. Air thus becomes water, and water, air. The four elements are fire, air, water and earth. Fire is the farthest distance from the center and earth is the farthest distance from the circumference.

The compounding of these elements gives birth to three things: metals-minerals, plants and animals. Animals are more noble than plants, more complete as to disposition. Plants are more complete than metals and minerals. Plants share some faculities with animals, but animals have more faculties than plants. Plants and animals share the faculties of feeding, growth and reproduction. They also share the faculties of attraction, retention, digestion and expulsion. That which animals have but plants do not is the faculty of comprehension. This consists of five outer and five inner senses. The five outer senses are: hearing, seeing, smelling tasting and touching. The five inner senses are common sense, fantasy, imagination, understanding and memory.

The human form is more noble than the animal form. They are separate exclusively because of the intellectual soul. Standing by itself, it has no place. Living, knowing, it is the master of bodies as the Transcendent indicated: *and those that outstrip suddenly (79:4)* and they are the intelligences. *Those that direct an affair (79:5),* are the souls. The theosophers believe that in the same way that our bodies have an intellectual soul, so the spheres, as well, have intellectual souls, living, knowing, in love with their Creator, longing, in constant ecstasy with successive pleasures. Their pleasures infect their bodies. Thus their bodies move like a person of catharsis in ecstasy. All spheres have a soul and that is the cause of the difference in their motion. The cause of their motion is the ecstasy of perpetual goodness in this world. This does not have any relation to the world of ether.

According to the theosophers, the world is divided into three parts: the world of intelligences, and that is called *jabarut*, the world of the souls and that is called *malakut*, and the world of bodies and that is called *mulk*.

They believe that the soul of man is eternal if he 'knows' God and His Angels, is imprinted with Realities, and is worthy of the imprinting of the Realities. Certainly, this is the termin-

ation of the perfection of the soul which, through the pleasures, finds something which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and has never entered any heart. If he is ignorant of God and His Angels, then after separation, he will be blind as it has been said: *And whosoever is blind in this world shall be blind in the world to come, and he shall be even further astray from the way (17:74).* A person who is blind is in darkness. *Shadows piled one upon another (24:40).*

They will suffer misery from the veiling of God, from the repose of life which they have lost and they will achieve ugly forms as God, the Most High, has said, *no indeed, but that they were earning has rusted upon their hearts (83:14).* This indicates distance and separation from God and the (attachment) to the desires and pleasures of this world. As God has said: *And a barrier is set between them and that they desire (34:53).*

And they believe that the Prophets, peace be upon them, were sent, in Truth, for the betterment of the order of the world. (They were sent) to remind men of the Day of Judgment since men are forgetful of the Judgment and justice in their worldly affairs. Thus there is no choice but that this person be a noble soul, a knower, full of strength towards that which no one else at that time is strong enough to do. If this soul is noble and sufficiently strong,it will have an affect in this world. It will have a great affect because it is joined to the Transcendent Spirit and the (intellectual soul) receives

knowledge from (the Transcendent Spirit). The characteristics of this effect are like hot iron which, when placed in a fire, receives illumination from the fire and the attributes of 'burning'. Sometimes this station will come upon Saints. Prophets have the distinction of a higher degree. They are leaders in improving creatures. They give their gift of prophecy whereas the Saints do not.

Know that when 'knowledge' comes to the ascetic, when the ascetic contemplates subtle thoughts about this knowledge (from the 'Cause of all causes ' and below that about His creatures) the faculties become weak due to the lessening of food. Thus the thoughts in the heart and remembrances of the tongue correspond. Occasionally they seek help from a soft sound, good smells and the seeing of proportioned things. Spiritual flashes occur until they become continuous and bring tranquility. Invisible things become manifest. The soul will join in spiritual union. This will affect the creative imagination to the extent that the imagination merits it and common sense sees it. Thus spiritual objects are seen in the best form in which forms can be imagined. Sweet words are heard and 'knowledge' learned from them. Sometimes hidden things are seen. The highest rewards and the highest station in this world and the next belongs to them. How happy is the person who finds 'Self' before death and who achieves in this world pleasure in the house of annihilation and is happy in the realm of subsistance.

I desire only scccess from God. Certainly He is strong, capable of answering. He is the Creator of all. Praise belongs to God. Blessings upon our Prophet and Sayyid, Mohammad and his family, all.

THE CHANT OF GABRIEL'S WING

by

Shihab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi

translated from the Persian by

Laleh Bakhtiar

In the Name of the Merciful and the Compassionate

The Majesty of the eternally subsisting Essence is worthy of Being without end, He and no other. Limitless glorification is proper to His magnificent presence which no one shares. Glory be to the essence by which one is able to proclaim 'He' which is derived from His Essence. The existence of all that deserves existence, exists by that existence whose non-existence is impossible. Benediction and glory upon the soul of the master, Mohammad. The ray of light of his purity effuses over the two horizons. The shining radiance of his Law reaches both eastern and western places. Benedictions upon his companions and friends.

One day, a person from among the group of people whose eyes and vision have become damaged by the opthalmia of prejudice, began to insult the proper dignity of the Lords and Imams of the mystic Way. As his knowledge of the ancient sages was very limited, he discoursed with impertainence. On that occasion, in order to heighten his accusation, he began to mock the technical terms of the moderns. He went so far as to retell an anecdote concerning the master, Abu 'Alī Fāramadī , may God have mercy upon him. He had asked the master, "Why is it that some of the 'wearers of azure blue' call some sounds, the chant of Gabriel's wing?"

The master had answered, "Know that most of the things which thy senses witness issue from the chant of Gabriel's wing." And he said to the questioner, "Of all the chants of Gabriel's wing, thou art one."

This denying pretender quarrelled without effect as to what meaning ., other than meaningless delirium, this could have. In truth, when his boldness reached this point, due to the extent of my anger, I attacked him. I threw off the skirts of consideration from my shoulder and folded the sleeve of patience. I sat upon the knees of cleverness and I began to swear and call him illiterate. I told him, "I myself will explain the chant of Gabriel's wing to you with firm resolution and pertinent judgment. You, if you are a man, if you possess any human quality, understand." This I call "The Chant of Gabriel's Wing."

Once I succeeded in penetrating out of the women's chambers, and thereby freed myself from some of the shackles and enclosures which imprison children, I was saved. The copper like twilight that night changed diffusing itself into the vault of the blue green sphere. Darkness, which is the handmaiden of non-existence, was scattered over the lower world. From the rushing upon of sleep, despair overcame me. Because of my anguish, I took a candle in

my hand. I directed myself towards the men's abode and I paced that night until dawn. After that, the desire to penetrate into my father's khanaghah reappeared. The khanaghah had two doors, one towards the city and one towards the desert and the garden. I proceeded; I firmly closed the door which opened to the city. Only after shutting that did I resolve to open the door to the desert. When I looked, I saw ten handsome sages who were arranged in an hierarchial order. Their appearance, their majesty, their dignity, their nobility, their splendor marveled me. From their gracefulness, beauty, snow white hair, and total character, a state of great wonder was manifested in me so that words ceased upon my tongue.

With great terror and total fear, I took a step forward and at the same time, took one back. Then I said to myself, "Be courageous and take the good fortune of serving them, whatever will be, will be."

Little by little, I went forward and I intended to greet the sage who was sitting at the first of the line. But due to the extreme subtleness of his nature, he took the initiative. With kindness, he smiled before me so that the form of his wisdom teeth appeared in my pupil. In spite of the natural disposition of his generous actions, a fearful respect for him remained fixed

in me as previously.

I asked,"Without being disrespectful, from which direction have the great ones honored us by their coming?"

The sage who was at the extreme of the line answered me, "We are a society of immaterial bodies. We come from the City of Nowhere ."

I was not able to comprehend that. I asked, "In which region is that city?"

He said, "It is from that region, the way to which the fore-finger does not direct thee."

I then understood that the sage is a 'knower.' I said, "By your mercy, tell me, what do you spend most of your time doing?"

He said, "Our occupation is to sew and we are all guardians of the Word of God, may He be glorified, and we make pilgrim-ages."

I asked, "Why are the sages who are sitting above thee silent?"

He answered, "It is because people such as yourself are not worthy of their intimacy. I am their tongue in conversation, they do not begin to communicate with your kind,."

I saw a ceramic vessel with eleven concentric sections laying

in a courtyard. It had some water in the middle of it and a bit of sand had come to reside in the middle of the water. Finally, some insects were circling in the sand. On each of the nine upper compartments (except the first) of the eleven of the vessel, an illuminated sequin was placed with the exception of the second section where many illuminated sequins were. It resembled the ribbons of the Moroccan turban worn by the Sufis. The first section had no sequins. With all of these, this vessel was rounder than a sphere. It had no fissures. There were no gaps or crevices on the surface. These eleven compartments had no color. From their extreme subtlety, nothing was hidden of that which was hollowed within them. One could not make a hole in the nine upper sections but the lower sections could be easily punctured."

I asked the Shaykh, "What is this vessel?"

He said, "Know that the mass of the first section is greater than that of the other compartments. The Shaykh who is sitting above all, ordered it and composed it and the second one, the second, until it reached me. These nine-fold disciples and friends through work and craftsmanship have produced each one of those. As to these two lower compartments, with water and sand, I have produced them. As the edifice of the nine higher Sages is more solid, their craftsmanship does not tear and perforate but that

which is from my craftsmanship is capable of being torn."

I asked the Shaykh, "What relation do these aged men have to thee?"

He said, "Know that this Shaykh whose prayer carpet is in front of all is the guide, master and regent of the second sage who is sitting next to him. The second sage has registered him in the registrar book. And in the same way, the second sage, the third, the third, the fourth until it reaches me. I am registered by the ninth sage who gave me a cloak of investiture and confered initiation upon me."

I asked, "Dost thou have children and belongings and things like this?"

He said, "We have no wife, however, each of us has a child and a mill. We have attached each child to one of the mills and he takes care of it. Until we built these mills we never took our eyes off of them. Each one of our children is busy above each mill maintaining it. One eye looks to the mill and one eye is always looking in the direction of his own father. My own mill has four compartments and my children are so numerous that even the most able of registrars cannot count all the small ones. At each instant, more children are produced by me. I send them each to their respective mill and to each a certain period is

fixed during which he is in charge of the maintenance of the mill. When their fixed time is finished, they come in my presence and they remain with me. Then new children are produced and each one goes to their mill and so on in this way. Because my mill is very tight and all around this region there are many terrifying and dangerous things, when my children's turn to rule comes, they are separated and they never have the inclination to return. But these other sages have no more than one child each who is responsible for the mill. They always remain permanently fixed in their own occupation. Each one of their children is stronger than the totality of all my own children. My mills and my children receive assistance from their mills and their children.

I said, "How is this begetting and generation renewed one after the other for thee?"

He said, "Know that I myself am immutable, I have no wife, but I have an Abysinnian slave. I never look upon her and no movement emmanates from me. In reality, it is thus: she resides in the middle of the mills and her attention has been pledged to her own mill and its revolution and rotation. When the millstones move, the rotation is reflected in her sight and in her pupil. Each time in the middle of the rotation when the pupil of the eye of the black Abysinnian slave and her sight falls upon me and she comes

in front of me, a child is conceived by me in her womb without my moving or changing."

I said, "How is her rotation, her sight and her facing thee conceived by thee?"

He said, "The meaning of these words is no more than apptitude and preparedness."

I said to the sage, "How didst thou descend into this khan-aghah after us since thou claimst motionless non-existence and yet change is manifested from thee?"

He said, "Oh, simple hearted one, the sun is always in the firmaments but if a limited person does not have the consciousness nor the perception nor the sensibility, the non-existence of his sensations is not the cause of the sun's non-existence, nor its fixity in its place. If this defect in a limited person is done away with, he does not seek the reason by saying to the sun, 'Why wast thou not continually in rotation before this?' Thou dost not understand the sun because it is always permanent in its revolution. The change is in the limited person, not in the state of the sun. We are also perpetually arranged in this order. Thou not seeing us is no reason for our not being and it does not indicate a change or a transfer in us. It is thy state which changes."

I said, "Do you give praise to God?"

He said, "No. Being immersed in the Divine Presence does not permit us to render praise to God. But if we would render the praises to God, the means would not be by the tongue nor the organs nor movement nor agitation."

I said, "Teach me the science of sewing."

He smiled and said, "Alas! It does not happen that this science be attained by those who resemble thee or those of thy species because our sewing is not contained in doing. However, I will teach you enough of the science of sewing so that when thy linen garmet and patched dress is in need of repair, thou wilt be able to repair it." And he taught me that much.

I said, "Teach me the Word of God."

He said, "The distance is immense. Since thou art in this city, there is a great deal that thou canst not learn from the Word of God. But that which thou art capable of attaining, I will teach thee."

He quickly took my Tablet. After that he taught me a wonderful alphabet such that with that alphabet I could know the meaning of any verse of the Quran that I wished.

He said, "Whoever does not comprehend this alphabet will not learn to understand the secrets of the Word of God in the way that God directs. Whoever becomes conscious of the states of this alphabet will appear as a firm person, certain in knowledge."

Then I learned the science of abjad . After completing that much I embellished my Tablet with the Words of the Creator, may He be glorified and exhalted in His magnificence, with signs, proportional to my elevated state and my ability of ascension. So many marvels of spiritual significance were made manifest to me which are beyond description. Whenever a problem occurred, I told the Shaykh and from speaking with him, it would be solved. Sometimes the conversation would be carried by the breathe of the Spirit. The Shaykh would indicate that they came from the Transcendent Spirit.

In this connection, a question arose. In answering it, he said,"Anything that comes to pass in the four quarters of the lower world, occurs from the wing of Gabriel. I talked about the inner essence of this order of the Universe with the Shaykh.

He said, "Know that the Absolute, Glory be to Him the Most High, has many Major Words which are luminous, emanating from the light of the rays of the Majesty of His perfect Face, some above others.

"The first Light is the highest; there is no Word greater than this. Its relationship to light and the theophany with other words is like the relationship of the sun with the other stars. This is certainly what is intended by the words of the Prophet, upon whom

 be peace, that is in the tradition, "If the face of the sun were made

manifest, it would be worshipped instead of God." From the radiance of these words, other words and in this way from one to another until the perfect number is found.

"The last of these Words is 'Gabriel, peace be upon him, and the spirits of men are from this last word as the Prophet, may he pour the blessings of God upon us, said in the long tradition about human nature: "God raises an Angel who blows in the Spirit." In the Divine Book, after it says, *And He originated the creation of man out of clay and He fashioned his progeny of an extraction of mean water, then He shaped him,* it says *and then breathed His spirit in him (32:6-8).* In the Verse, Mary , it says, *Then We sent unto her Our Spirit (19:17).* This Spirit is Gabriel. Jesus was called 'the Spirit of God'. He also called him 'the Word' and the 'Spirit.' Accordingly He said, *The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him (4:169).* Both Word and Spirit are mentioned. And since all mankind is one and the same species, anyone that is Spirit is a Word. Moreover, both Names are one Reality in that which relates to human beings.

"And from the Major Word which is the last of the Major Words, innumerable Minor Words are manifest which no one can count or

 explain as is indicated in the Holy Book, *yet would the Words*

of God not be spent (31:26). He said, *the sea would be spent before the Words of my Lord are spent (18:109).* All was created from the radiance of the Major Word which is the last of the tribe of the Major Words, in the way that the Torah has said, "I created from My light, the spirits of those who burn with desire." This light is the Transcendent Spirit. That which is said of Soloman Tamim is of the same meaning. When one said to him, "Oh! Magician!" He answered, "I am not a magician, I am certainly a Word of the Words of God."

"The Absolute, the Most High, also has intermediate words. As for the Major words where in the Divine Book it says: *by those that outstrip suddenly by those who direct an affair (79:4-5).* *Those that outstrip* are Major Words. *Those that direct an affair* designates the Angels who move the planets which are the intermediate Words. *We are the rangers (37:165)* is an indication of Major Words, and *we are they that give glory (37:166)* is an indication of intermediate words. This is why rangers are first in the Holy Book such as *by the rangers ranging and the scarers scaring (37:1-2)*. The profoundness of all this is so immense that it is not convenient to speak of it here.

"Word in the Quran holds another secret as in the verse,

And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words (2:118).

the meaning of which will be given in another place.

I said, "Tell me what Gabriel's wing is."

He said, "Know that Gabriel has two wings: one to the right and that is pure and absolute light. Considering it totally in itself, only the existence of that wing has resemblance to God; that is, when we compare the existence of Gabriel in relationship to God, this relationship is relative to its wing. And there is a wing on the left side; darkness is upon part of it like shadows upon the moon which also recalls the foot of the peacock. It is its possible existence which has one side turned towards non-being. If thou considerest Gabriel as to its existence, it has, by divine grace, a necessary existence; but if thou considerst it as to that which it is itself, by virtue of its essence, it is then a non-being and that is that which is connected to contingent existence. Here are the two meanings which are marked by the gradation of the two wings: the right wing is its relation with the Absolute; the left wing is the property which it carries within itself.

As the Absolute, the Most High said, *who appointed the angels to be messengers having wings two, three and four (35:1).* It would appear from that, that two is closer to resembling unity, then three, then four. Certainly, that which has two wings is more

noble than that which has three or four. All this exists in the metaphysical sciences and in the multiple details of the sciences of mysteries, the understanding of this not everyone can reach.

"Then the radiance from the Transcendent Spirit descended. This radiance is the soul which one calls Minor Words. Look where the Sublime Truth said, *He made the word of the unbelievers the lowest; and God's word is the uppermost (9:40)*. In effect, the infidels themselves are also a word because they also are the soul except that their word is only an echo, a mixture. It is the left wing of Gabriel which has a bit of darkness where a shadow fell which produced the world of mirage and illusion. It is this which is expressed in the words of the Prophet, peace be upon him, "Certainly God the Most High created the creatures in darkness then sprinkled His light upon them." "Created the creatures in darkness" indicates the blackness of the left wing and"then sprinkled His light upon him," indicates the radiance from the right wing. The Holy Book says, *and appointed the shadows and light (6:1)*. These shadows which He related to 'creating' could be attributed to the origin of the world of mirage.

"That light which follows the darkness is the radiance of the right wing because each ray which falls upon the world of illusion is provided by His light. As to the meaning of the words,"then sprinkled His light upon him," *to Him good words go up...(35:11)*.

That Word issues, in effect, from that radiance. *A good word (14:29)* means that the Minor Word is noble and luminous. That is to say, if this Minor Word did not possess the maximum nobility, how could it make the ascent to the Sublime Truth? The sign that the Word and the Spirit are one and the same contents is that here, *to Him good words go up*.. He said here and elsewhere, *to Him the Angels and the Spirit mount up (70:4)*. Each of these two 'Him's' returns towards Him, may His power increase. The quiet soul has the same meaning because He said, *oh soul at peace, return unto thy Lord, well-pleased, well pleasing (89:29)*.

"Thus the world of illusion is an echo and the shadow of Gabriel's left wing, while the illuminated souls issue from its right wing. The pure spiritual realities which God projects in the conscience, as when He said, *He has written faith upon their hearts and He has confirmed them with a Spirit from Himself (58:23)*, and the sacred cry such as, *Abraham thou hast confirmed the vision (37:104)*, etc. all issue from its right wing. On the contrary, oppression, shreiking and calamities of the world of illusion all are from its left wing. Blessings and peace be upon Gabriel."

I asked the Shaykh, "These wings of Gabriel are finally what form?"

He said, "Oh simple hearted one, dost thou not know that these are all symbols which if known in their manifested form would be simply vain fantasys."

I asked, "Is there any word which is fixed night and day?"

He said, "Oh negligent one, dost thou not know that the Words ascend themselves to the presence of God according to what is written, *to Him good words go up*. In the presence of the Sublime Truth there is neither night nor day. *Near your Lord there is neither afternoon nor morning (4:77)*. In the direction of the Divinity there is no time."

I said, "What is the meaning of that city of which the Sublime Truth said, *Bring us forth from the city of evildoers ( )*."

He said, "That is the world of illusion which is the usual place for the Minor Word and the Minor Word is itself also a city with its own mysteries just as the Sublime Truth said, *that is of the tidings of the cities we relate to thee (11:102). Some of them are standing and some stubble (7:99)*. That which is hidden is the Word and that which is apparent is the form of the Word. It is the form which deteriorates. Whatever has no time, has no place and that which is beyond this are the Words of the Absolute, Major and Minor."

Finally, when the day fully came to the khanaghah of my father, they shut the door of the interior and they opened the door to

the city. The merchants passed going to their businesses and the group of sages disappeared from my eyes. From the regret of their companionship, I remained in a state of sorrow . I cried in vain. I wept a great deal. It was to no avail.

The"Chant of Gabriel's Wing," upon whom be peace, is finished.

THE FIERY GOLD LIGHT

by

Shihab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi

translated from the Persian by

Laleh Bakhtiar

Praise be to the Soverign who dominates both of the worlds. The existence of whoever is, is from His existence. The existence of whoever will be, will be from His existence. *He is the First and the Last, the (Manifest) and the (Hidden) and He has knowledge of all things (57:3).* Benedictions and blessings upon his messengers to humanity, especially to Mohammad, the Chosen, with whom God sealed prophecy, and to his Companions and religious scholars, may the blessing of God be upon all of them!

A friend from among my close friends asked me, "Do the birds understand each others language?"

I answered, "Yes, they do."

He asked, "How has it become known to you?"

I said, "At the beginning when the Giver of Forms, in truth, wished to manifest me, he created me in the form of a hawk. In the country where I was, there were other hawks. We talked to each other and we listened and we understood each others language."

He asked, "How was the state of that station reached?"

I said, "One day the hunters of destiny and decree spread the net of predestination and they readied the seeds of inclination in it. In this way, they imprisoned me. They took me from that country where our nest was to another country

They bound both of my eyes and they tied me with four different shackles. Ten people were appointed guardians over me. Five faced me with their backs out and five with their backs towards me facing out. These five, which were facing me with their backs out, imprisoned me in the world of confusion so that I forgot my nest and that country and whatever was apparent. I imagined that I always had been as this.

After a time elapsed, they opened my eyes a bit and with just that much vision I looked out. I saw things I had never seen before and I was surprised by them. Gradually they opened my eyes everyday a little more and I saw things which astonished me. Finally, they totally opened my eyes and they showed me the world in this form that it is. I looked at the shackles which were placed around me and at the guardians and I said to myself, "Will it ever that those four shackles will be removed from me? These guardians turned away from me? My wings spread so that I would be able tofly in the air for a moment and be delivered from bondage."

At last, after a time, I found the guards inattentive. I said, "I will never find a better chance than this. " I crept into a corner and with the shackles still around me,

limping, directed myself to the desert. In that desert, I saw a person was coming. I went forward and I greeted him. He answered me in the most gentle manner. When I looked at him closely, I saw that his beard and his face were fiery gold. I sensed he was young. I asked, "Young man, where do you come from?"

He answered, "Son, this address is wrong. I am the first child of creation, and you call me young?"

I asked, "Why has your beard not become white?"

He answered, "My beard is white for I am an illuminated sage. But he who imprisoned you and placed these various shackles around you and put these guards over you, kept me in a black well for a long time. The fiery gold color you see is from that, otherwise I am white but luminous. Every whiteness which to itself attracts light, when mixed with black, seems fiery gold. Like the first light of dawn at the beginning of the morning, when it is white and the light of the Sun belongs to it, one side of it is towards the light which is white and one side of it is to the left which is black, thus it seems fiery gold. The body of the full moon, when rising -although it has borrowed light - it assumes the quality of light - one side of it is towards day and one side of it is towards night, and yet it seems fiery gold . A lamp has the same quality, the

bottom is white and the top is black smoke, between the fire and the smoke appears a fiery gold and there are many forms of this.

I then asked,"Sage, where are you coming from?"

He said, "From beyond Mt. Qaf where my station is. Your nest was there as well, but you have forgotten."

I asked, "What have you seen from the wonders of the world?"

He answered, "Seven things: first is Mt. Qaf which is our country; second is 'the night illuminating jewel;' third, the Cosmic Tree; fourth, 12 workshops; fifth, David's coat of chain mail; sixth, a sharp sword and seventh, the Source of Life."

I said, "Tell me about them."

He said, "The first is Mt. Qaf. It surrounds the world. It is made up of 11 mountains. When you are free of your shackles, it is to there that you shall go, because they have brought you from there and everything that is, in the end, returns to its original form."

I asked, "How can I find the way there?"

He answered, "The way is difficult. First, there are two mountains (part of Mt. Qaf) in front of you, one is of a hot climate and the other is of a cold climate and the heat and cold of that station has no limit."

I said, "It is easy. I will spend the winter in the area of

 the mountain of the hot climate and at the mountain of the cold

climate, I will spend the summer."

He said, "You are wrong. The climate of that country does not change, no matter what season."

I asked, "What is the distance to this mountain?"

He said, "As far as you go, you will return to the first station, like a compass. One point is at the center, and the other point on the circumference, and as far as it turns on the circumference, it will come back to the point from which it has begun."

I asked, "Can one make a hole in these mountains and leave through these holes?"

He said,"It is not possible to make a hole in them, but he who has the ability will be able to pass through instantly with out making a hole just like balsam oil. If the palm of the hand is placed in the Sun until it is warmed and a drop of balsam oil is dropped on the palm, it will come out of the back of the hand because of its special properties. Therefore, if you acquire the ability to pass through that mountain, you will pass both mountains instantly."

I asked, "How can I acquire that ability?"

He said, "It will be in my words if you understand."

I asked, "After I pass these two mountains, are the others easy or not?"

He said, "It is easy only for those who know the way. Some of the seekers are always imprisoned in these two mountains and some reach the third mountain and remain there, some to the fourth and fifth and so on until the eleventh. The more agile the bird, the further he goes."

I said,"Since you have explained about Mt. Qaf, speak now of 'the jewel which illuminates the night.'"

He said, "The jewel which illuminates the night is also at Mt. Qaf, but at the third mountain. It is through its existence that the dark night becomes light, but it does not always remain the same. Its light is from the Cosmic Tree. Whenever it is opposite the Tree, from the side that you are on, it gives full light. It is like a sphere, round and luminious. When a part of that falls at a distance which is near the Tree, a part of the circle appears black and the rest luminous. Whenever it gets nearer to the Tree, a part of the light becomes dark on this side where you are, but on the side of the Tree, half of it remains luminous. When in its entirety, it falls in front of the Tree, it is luminous. Again, when it passes the Tree, a small part of it appears luminous to you. However much farther it gets from the tree towards you,it will appear more luminous, not because the light is ascending but because its body receives more light . The darkness becomes less and less until again they are opposite one another

and the total form receives light. If you were to take a transparent sphere and if you made a hole in it, and passed something through that hole, then filled a vessel with water and placed this sphere at the head of the vessel so that one half of the is in water. And now, water will reach around all of the sphere at a rate of ten times a second, but if one were to look at that from underneath the water, one would only see half the sphere. Again, if one looking directly underneath were to look a little to one side of the middle of the vessel, one would not see one half of the sphere in water. When one inclines to one side, one will see part of it empty of water and more emptiness until one looks at the sphere directly above the vessel. There one will see the sphere in emptiness. If someone were to say that beneath a vessel one could see neither water nor the sphere, we would assume that we could see if the vessel were made from glass or something more subtle. Now, the onlooker must turn around the sphere and vessel . so that he can observe, in the manner described, where the 'jewel which illuminates the night' and the Cosmic Tree are. They, also, in this manner, turn around the onlooker."

Then I asked the Sage, "What is the Cosmic Tree and where is it?"

He said, "The Cosmic Tree is a magnificent tree. Whosoever is paradiscal will see the Tree when he goes there, and among these 11 mountains of which we have spoken, there is a mountain and it is in that mountain."

I asked, "Does that Tree have any fruit?"

He said, "Whatever fruit you see in the world, you can find on this Tree. The fruit which is in front of you is from this Tree. If it were not for that Tree you would have neither fruit nor trees nor good smelling greens nor plants."

I asked, "How do fruit, trees and flowers depend upon that?"

He said, "The Simurgh has his nest at the top of the Cosmic Tree. In the morning, the Simurgh leaves its nest and spreads its feathers upon the earth. From the effect of its feathers comes the fruit on the trees and plants in the earth."

I said to the Sage, "I have heard Zal was brought up by Simurgh and Simurgh helped Rustam to kill Esfandiyar."

The Sage said,"Yes that is right."

I asked, "How was that?"

He said, "When Zal was delivered from his mother, the color of his hair and the color of his face were white. His father, Sam, ordered that he be thrown into the desert. His mother had suffered a great deal in the delivery of him. When she saw that her son was ugly, she gave her consent. They threw Zal into the desert.

It was winter time and cold. Nobody expected him to remain alive for a moment. When several days had passed, and his mother recovered from the pain of the delivery, affection for the child arose in her heart. She said, "I must go once to the desert and see how my son is." When she reached the desert she saw her son alive and she saw that Simurgh had taken him under its wings. When he glanced at his mother, he smiled and she took him into her arms and nursed him; she wished to take him home. But she said to herself, "Until it be made known how it is that Zal has stayed alive for these few days, I will not return home." She left him in the same place under the wings of Simurgh and she hid herself near him. When night came, and Simurgh withdrew from that desert, a deer came to Zal's side and gave him her breast. When he had been nursed, she placed herself near to Zal so that no harm would come to him. His mother stood up and chased the deer away from her son and she brought him home."

I asked the Sage, "What was the secret?"

He said, "I asked the Simurgh about this and Simurgh said, 'Zal was born under the care of the Cosmic Tree. We did not allow that he perish. We gave the faun to the hunters and we put affection for Zal in the deer's heart so that at night she brought him up and nursed him and during the day I myself had him under my wings!."

I asked, "What about Rustam and Esfandiyar?"

He said, " It was this way. Rustam was defeated by Esfandiyar.

Due to exhaustion, he returned home. Zal, his father, lamented before Simurgh. Simurgh has the property that if a mirror or something similiar is placed opposite of it, every eye that looks at that mirror will become fixed. Zal made a coat of polished mail and he put this on Rustam and a polished helmet on his head and attached polished mirrors onto his horse. Then he sent Rustam in front of Simurgh onto the battlefield. Esfandiyar had to come before Rustam. As he neared, the rays of Simurgh fell upon the armour and mirrors. The reflection of the armour and mirro fell upon Esfandiyar's eyes, his eyes became fixed, he saw nothing. He imagined that an injury had happened to both eyes because such a thing had never happened before. He fell off his horse and was killed at the hands of Rustam. It seems that the two arrows of the tamarisk tree were the two wings of Simurgh."

I asked the Sage,"It seems as if there has been only one Simurgh in the world."

He said, "He who does not know, thinks so, but in reality every moment a Simurgh falls upon the earth from the Cosmic Tree and at the same instant, that one which was upon the earth disappears. Every moment, a Simurgh comes, and that which was, will no longer be As it comes to the earth, Simurgh passes from the Cosmic Tree in the direction of the 12 workshops."

I asked, "Sage, tell me, what are these 12 workshops?"

He said, "First, know that our King, wishing to make his kingdom habitable, created our world first and then he put us to work. He built 12 workshops and in each workshop he placed some apprentices. He put the apprentices to work so that under the 12 workshops another workshop appeared and he placed a master in this workshop. He put the master to work so that beneath the first workshop another workshop appeared. And then ordered the second master in the same way to work then another workshop and another master under his tutelage and so on until there were seven workshops and in each workshop, a master was appointed. Then the apprentices who were in 12 houses, were each given a cloak. The first master was given a cloak in the same way and two of the workshops of these 12 were entrusted to him. The second master was given a cloak in the same way and from the rest of the 12 workshops two were given to him; the third in the same manner and the fourth master was given a cloak, a coat more beautiful than the others and he was given one workshop from the above 12. But he was ordered to supervise the 12; the fifth and sixth were given workshops and cloaks just like the first and second and third. When it was the seventh one's turn, there was one left of the 12 workshops, he gave it to him and he did not give him any cloak. The seventh master began to complain that each master has two workshops and I only have one, and they all have a cloak

and I have none. He ordered two workshops built under his workshop and the rulership was given to him and under all workshops a garden was laid and the care of the garden was given to the seventh and it was decided that from the brocaded garmets of the 4th master, always half should be given to the seventh master, and their garmets are changing at every instant just like Simurgh as we explained above."

I said, "Sage, what is woven in these workshops?"

He said, "They mainly weave brocade and other things which nobody understands and David's mail is also woven in these workshops."

I said,"Sage, what is David's coat of chain mail?"

He said, "David's coat of chain mail is made up of the various bonds which they put on you."

I said, "How is this done?"

He said, "In every three workshops of the 12 , they make a link and in the 12 workshops, four unfinished chains. Then the four links are given to the seventh master so that he may act upon each one. When they reach the seventh master, they will be sent to the garden and they will remain unfinished for a long time. Then the four links will be put into one link and all the links are firmly bound. After that, they imprison a hawk like you and put the chain mai on its neck. It is done in such a way that it is completed upon his n

I asked the Sage,"Each mail has how many links?"

He said, "If one could say how many drops are in the Sea of Oman, then one could count how many links there are in the chain mail."

I said, "How can one remove this mail from oneself?"

He said, "With a sharp sword."

I asked, "Where can one find a sharp sword?"

He said, "In our country there is an executioner, the sharp sword is in his hand and it is known for how long the mail lasts. When its time comes to an end, the executioner strikes the sword so hard that all the links separate from each other."

I asked, "Sage, is there a distinction in the injury which comes upon those who wear the chain mail?"

He said, "There is. For some people the injury is such that if one lives for 300 years and all during his lifetime continually thinks about the most severe of pains and whatever pain that is possible enters his thoughts, he will never imagine the pain of the injury of the sharp sword but for some it is easier."

I asked, "Sage, what can I do so that the pain becomes easy for me?"

He said, "Find the Source of Life and from that source pour water over your head until this mail of your body falls apart and becomes immune from the wound of the sword, because this water makes the mail subtle and when the mail becomes light the wound of the sword will be easy."

I asked,"Sage, where is the Source of Life?"

He said, "In the darkness. If you seek that, like Khizr, put on sandles and take the road of abandonment until you reach the darkness."

I asked, "In which direction is this road?"

He said, "From which ever direction you begin, if you tread the path, you will find the way."

I said, "What is the sign of darkness?"

He said, "Blackness and you yourself are in darkness, but you do not know it. He who takes this road, when he finds himself in the dark, he will know that he has been in darkness before and that he has never seen light. Thus the first step of those who tread the path is this and from here it is possible to ascend. Now, if someone reaches this station, he can go forward from here. The seeker of the Source of Life will suffer much bewilderment in the darkness. After the darkness, if he is from that Source he will finally see light. He must not seek that illumination because that illumination is a light from heaven falling upon the Source of Life, If he reaches there and if he cleanses himself in the water, he will be immune from the wound of the sharp sword.

Die with the sword of love so that you find eternal life.
Since the sword of this life does not give one eternity.

He who cleanses himself in that water will be preserved from pollution. He who discovers the meaning of Truth has reached the Source. When he leaves the water, he will have skill, as when balsam oil was poured onto the palm of the hand and the palm of the hand was held in the sun and some drops of that oil were poured upon it, it will come out from the back of the hand. If you become Khizr, you can easily ascend Mt. Qaf."

When I had told my dear friend this story, my friend said, "You are like the hawk who is in the trap and you hunt, attach me to your saddle because I am not a bad hunt."

I am the hawk the hunters of the world perpetually seek
My prey is black eyed deer
Wisdom diffuses from their eyes like tears
When near us they are far from words.
Near us they carve spiritual meanings from this.

So ends the Recital of "The Fiery Gold Light"

A DAY WITH A GROUP OF SUFIS

by

Shihab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi

Translated from the Persian by

Laleh Bakhtiar

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

One day, I was sitting in a khanaghah with a group of Sufis. Each one completed a story about his own Shayhk. When it was my turn, I told the following story. Once when I was sitting in his presence, I spoke to my Shaykh, "Today I was passing by the lapidary bazaar. I saw a lapidist with a wheel in front of him. He had a jewel in his hand. From the working of that jewel upon the wheel, he made beads in the form of round balls. I thought to myself, if this wheel which now turns vertically, were to turn on the ground horizontally like the miller's stone, and the jeweler were to put a bead in motion and take away his hand, would the bead on the wheel move from the motion of the wheel or not? I cannot answer this."

The Shaykh said, "Put the bead on the wheel counterclockwise so that if the wheel moves from the left towards the right, the bead moves from right towards the left. In the same way, if you took a table and put a round sphere upon it, then pulled the table towards you, the round sphere would fall away from you but the table would come towards you."

I asked, "If one were to put more than one bead on the wheel, would the rotation of all of them be the same or different?"

He said, "If you were to draw ten circles upon the

wheel so that those lines would be the place in which the beads moved, in such a way that the beads would not fall out, then put one bead on each line and turn the wheel. The bead which is closest to the center would reach completion in less time, on condition that the beads are equal in size. If a bead is small, it takes longer than a large bead. If you have a small bead and one ten times that size, the small bead will rotate ten times in comparison to the large bead which would complete one rotation."

I said to the Shaykh, "What a strange craft is that of the lapidist."

The Shaykh said, "There is a famous story about their craft. But no one tells all of that story and no one knows its meaning."

I asked the Shaykh, "What is that story?"

He said, "Once a lapidist had a jewel. He wished to work his craft upon it. From that jewel, he made a cup in the form of a round sphere. From the scraps which had come from the inside of that cup, he made another one and placed it in the middle of the first one. From the scraps of the second, yet another one was made in the same way until nine cups were formed. After that, from the bits and pieces remaining, he fashioned a jewel. He wrapped that jewel inside two cloths: one had no color and one was nearly white. He put this enveloped jewel inside the smallest cup.

He then polished the first cup. Upon the second, some folds were painted and it was gold embossed. As to the third and fourth to the ninth, one fold was fashioned upon each. All of these were gold embossed except for the ninth. After that, this embellished form was thrown into a lathe. The form turned from right to left at the same time that the folds that had been fashioned on each, moved from left to right. One looking at the middle of the ninth cup, seeing the first, would think that there is only one and that all the folds were fashioned upon the one cup.

Due to the motion of the cups, that jewel which was in the torn cloths, in the middle of the ninth cup was suspended, such that it could turn in any direction. "

When I heard these words of the Shaykh, I said, "I think that I am also suspended in the middle of those cups. But that which you have told me, I do not understand. Explain to me clearly so that I may gain from this."

The Shaykh said, "When the Creator, may His greatness ever increase, created these heavens, in order to beautify them, He sent a light to the first heaven. The first heaven, due to the extent of its subtleness, could not carry the weight of that light since this heaven is between being and non-being. On one side, it is the neighbor of existence and on the other side, non-existence. Thus there is something between existence and non-existence, near nothingness. It is close to non-being from the

point of form; but from the point of attribute, it is more thing than any other thing. For example, thou dost not take air into account. Thou sayst that it is nothing since it does not have the power of motion to be able to carry particles of things. This is from the extent of its subtleness. Thus, the first heaven is near to nothingness which that world is and it is more subtle than all things. From the extent of the subtlety of light, it could not bear the burden. When light reached the second heaven, it carried it. Light diffused upon the second heaven. Every particle of it became a star. Thus the scraps of these stars reached the third heaven. From the scraps of that heaven, Saturn appeared. Again, when the scraps of Saturn reached the fourth heaven, the body of Jupiter came to be. In the same way, from the scraps of Jupiter, Mars and from the scraps of Mars, the Sun and from the scraps of the Sun, Venus and from the scraps of Venus, Mercury and from the scraps of Mercury, the Moon."

I asked the Shaykh, "Why is the Sun larger and full of more light than the other stars?"

He said, "Because it fell in the center. No matter which way thou countest the seven planets, the Sun is in the center. It is also true if thou wast to consider the two other spheres above the seven, since there are two more spheres below them. One is ether and the other, the most distant sphere from heaven (considered to be extremely cold). So, according to all accounts, the Sun is

in the center. In the same way, take, for example, a stream which flows in the wilderness. If the water does not change its course due to a large stone or difficult terrain, both sides of the water will become narrow and the center, deeper, because the dominating force is in the center. Its strength lies in this dominating force. So it is for this reason that the Sun must be larger and full of more light."

I asked, "Why are the stars in the second heaven not full of light since there are many stars there? Light reaches there first; these other stars are all from the scraps of that heaven?"

He said, "The second heaven is close to the first. It also does not have great force. The analogy of the stars is the following. If there were a painter who wished to put shapes into physical forms, first he would put a center. This could be blue, red or green or whatever color we wish to imitate. Let us take blue. After that center point, some whiteness is mixed with the blueness. Lines are then drawn upon those lines and each line that is made has more white until there is no blue left. All is white, gradating from blue to white. Now imagine that the earth is the first blue point. Each heaven that is above it is more white until the first heaven in which there is so much white that the line which is above that heaven is all white. Now see the purpose of this whiteness as unlimited subtleness, not color. The second heaven,

which is near the first heaven, is subtle and the star is also subtle. Know that in whatever container you pour water, the water assumes the color of the container. Thus, since the second heaven is not in a state of force, the stars, in the same way, are not powerful."

I asked the Shaykh, "Why are there so many stars around the second heaven, whereas there is no more than one around the other heavens?"

He said, "If thou wast to take a large, round tray and thou wast to put several handfuls of mercury upon it, and then thou wast to find the center of the tray, and thou wast to put something under it and thou wast to turn the tray, the mercury would separate into pieces from the motion of the tray. But if thou wast to put the pieces of mercury upon a small tray and thou wast to turn that small tray upon its center, the pieces of mercury would join together from the motion of the small tray. Our example is the same. In the beginning, the second heaven accepted the light of the first heaven. The breadth of the second heaven was immense. Consequently, the light was diffused. Since from there to each heaven below, when light reached it, the breadth of the heaven was less and the light less, consequently, these heavens became more dense."

I asked the Shaykh, "Why is the Moon not light?"

He said, "Whatever star there is exists between two heavens, the supply of the light of the star is also from that heaven. The relationship of the star to the

heaven is the same as life in the human form where the supply of the power of life is from the power of the body and the supply of the power of the body is from the power of life.

"Then this side that the moon has to the earth is empty of the heaven. These are two heavens but these heavens are related to the world of the elements. Just as the first and second heavens are more subtle, these two are more dense as in the example of the painter which we have seen. These two heavens which are underneath are closer to blue than white and the first and second heavens are closer to white than to blue. And with this whiteness and blueness we mean subtleness and denseness. But the planet of the sun is in the middle and that is the middle station between subtleness and denseness. Therefore, the sun took all the light and the moon was left deprived of light."

I asked, "If the Moon is not in an area of light, why is it that the light of the Sun shines upon it?"

He said, "If the rays of the Sun reach a mirror or a glass sphere or some similar thing, the light will be made to appear and will return from there in the same way as the mass of the Sun. Now these things are loci and receipiants of the light of the Sun. The mass of the Moon primarily has this quality."

When these sorts of questions and answers passed between us, the Shaykh said, "These questions are all pointless. It is not necessary for a person to ask, 'Why

is this star full of light and that star not?' or 'Why is there more light here and less there?' because this sort of person who opens the way in this manner will ask, 'Why are there not 15 heavens, or 11?' 'Why do they move?' 'Why do they not reverse themselves?' They are like this. It is not necessary for a person to tell the secret of that. One who knows, knows self."

I asked, "How can one know that?"

He said, "There are three groups of people who observe the stars and the heavens. One group looks with the physical eye and they see a blue page with a few white spots upon it. This group is common. The beasts themselves also see this much.

"One group sees the sky with the eye of the sky and this group consists of the astronomers. The eye of the sky is the star and they see the sky through the stars. They say, 'Today such and such a star is in such and such a constellation, therefore the result is this. In such and such a constellation, this is in conjunction. It is a constellation of air, earth or fire. It is the first conjunction, air dominates or water dominates. Such and such a year when the Sun reaches Aries at that time, such and such a constellation will appear. The forturne of that year is that constellation. His sign is such and such a star. If God gives good fortune, a person will receive benefits. At such and such a time when the knots of the tail stands in front of the Sun or the Moon, the Sun or Moon will be eclipsed. They consider those stars. They

see the sky with the eye of the sky.

"But people who do not see the secrets of the stars and the sky with the physical eye nor with the eye of the sky but with the eye of proof, are the scholars."

I said to the Shaykh, "I do not have that vision. What should I do?"

He said,"Thy stomach is too full. Thou must diet for 40 days. After that thou shouldst eat a purgative until thou willst throw up so that maybe thy eyes will be opened."

I asked, "What is the prescription for that purgative?"

He said, "The ingredients are those that thou shalt thyself find."

I asked, "What are those ingredients?"

He said, "Whatever is dear to thee are ingredients for this purgative from wealth and land and things, desires of the soul and lusts and so forth. Thou must for 40 days be satisfied with a little congenial food which is without doubt; food which nobody desires.

"Then thou shouldst put these ingredients into a mortar of trust and with the hand of eagerness, thou shouldst pound it. From that thou must make a purgative and thou shouldst eat it all at once. If thou shouldst quickly reach the toilet, then the drug has been effective. Thy eyes will be illuminated. If the need does not arise, it has not been effective. Thou shouldst remain another

40 days and once again thou shouldst eat that same purgative so that this time it will be effective. And if this time it is not effective, once again in the same way and again thou shouldst eat it until it becomes effective. Be not like a dog who returns to his scraps. If those ingredients from which the purgative was made and was eaten has been effective and scraps remain once again, and thou shouldst return to those scraps, the disease will be recreated. Pain will come. No doctor will be able to cure thee."

I asked the Shaykh, "When the eyes are opened, what does the viewer see?"

The Shaykh said, "Once the inner eye is opened, the outer eye must be closed to all and lips sealed to everything. These five outer senses must be put out of reach. Instead, put the inner desires to work in a way that if this sick one takes something, it is taken with the inner hand and if one sees, one sees with one's inner eye and if one hears, one hears with one's inner ear and if one smells, one smells with one's inner nose. The mystical intuition and spiritual taste should come from one's soul. Once the meaning of this becomes clear, one will always be seeking the secrets of the heavens. One will be, at all times, aware of the hidden world. Thou hast asked, What would one see? One's self sees what one sees, and what one should see. Another cannot relate what the things are that one would see, since one comes to know through one's own spiritual taste and mystical intuition.

Few people succeed to that world, because the leaving of this world for an unfit person is difficult. Fit people are few in this world. Every morning, a licentious person is afflicted from the after effects of drinking. The extent of his extravagence with wine affects his brain and that person whose brain is weakened is frightened by all things. In that condition, he disapproves of what he did and he tells himself, 'May the day come when I will be able to leave aside these sinful things and return to God because this world and the next will be destroyed due to this.' Now his thought is correct, but once again when night comes, his negligence takes him again to the tavern and he becomes drunk. While drunk he says, 'That which I thought about this morning was nothing. The world is the world of the drunk.'

Leaving this world has that same quality. Negligence comes in the way and does not allow a person to go upon the right way. The wine of deceivement always keeps the people of the world drunk. If a person knew the pleasure of the khalwat changed existence into non-existence, then rode upon the horse of contemplation and galloped in the public square of the hidden world, one would have such pleasures from the invisible mysteries that one would never be able to express them; one would be removed from the world of opacity. The insane would call one insane. Whatever one would do would seem without purpose to thee, but one, at the same time, would be empty of thought about thee because

the place to which one goes, does not recall thee."

When I told that group about the words of my Shaykh, they said, "What a noble Shaykh thou dost have. He is kind to thee because he hides no secrets from thee."

I said, "He has not hidden anything from me, however, all that he says, I cannot tell!"

Whether I say something is a tree or an arrow,
I become weak in difficult tasks.

This recital is finished. Praise belongs to God and the goodness of His Grace. Blessings upon his Prophet, Mohammad, and his family, all.

ON THE STATE OF CHILDHOOD

by

Shihab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi

Translated from the Persian by
Laleh Bakhtiar

Once, during my childhood, I was playing on a side street, as is the habit of children. I saw some students moving together in a group; the group was coming towards me. I was surprised by their gathering.

I went forward and asked them, "Where are you going?"

They answered, "To the maktab to learn knowledge."

I asked, "What is knowledge?"

They answered, "We do not know the answer to that. You must ask our Shaykh."

They said this and left.

After a time, I asked myself, "What is knowledge and why did I not go with them to see the Shaykh to learn knowledge?"

I went after them but I could not find them. I saw a Shaykh standing in a desert. I went forward and greeted him. He answered me and offered me all the goodness that is possible to come from kindness.

I said to him, "I saw a group of students going to the maktab. I asked them 'What is the purpose of going to the maktab?' They said, 'You must ask our Shaykh.' I became inattentive; they left me. After their departure a desire arose in me and I followed them. I did not find them then; I am still looking for them now. If you know anything about them and their Shaykh, tell me."

The Shaykh said, "I am their master."

I said to him, "You must teach me knowledge."

He brought forth a tablet and on it wrote the ABC's and he taught me.

He told me, "Be satisfied with this for today. I will teach you more things another day and each time more until you become a 'knower'."

I went home and practiced the ABC's. Two days later I went to him and he taught me another lesson. I learned that as well. Then it became such that I would see him ten times a day and each time I learned something. It reached the point that I never left his side and I learned a great deal of knowledge.

One day I was going to see the Shaykh when an unfit person came with me. I could not get rid of him. When I reached a certain distance from the Shaykh, he held up the tablet opposite me. I looked at the tablet and saw a sign written upon it which changed my state as a result of the taste of the secret upon the Tablet. I became selfless to the extent that I repeated all that was upon the Tablet. My companion was unfit. He laughed at the words and called, "Alas!" and began to make a fool of himself. Finally he threatened to slap me.

He asked me, "Have you gone crazy? It must be so, for no intelligent person whould say these things."

I suffered great pain and my spiritual taste became cold. I left the unfit person and went forward. The Shaykh was not at his place. My pain became greater and distress overcame me. I traveled over the earth for a long time; I did not find him.

One day I went to a khanaghah and saw a sage sitting at the head of the room wearing a bright cloak, half white and half black. I greeted him; he answered me. I related my story to him.

He answered, "Truth was with the Shaykh. The secret, by the taste of which spirits of the past great ones dance in the sky, thou toldest someone who did not know day from night. Thou shouldst be struck and the Shaykh should not accept thee."

I said to the sage, "At that time I was in another state and anything I said, I said selflessly. Thou must try and with thy trying perhaps thou wilt reach the Shaykh."

The sage took me to the Shaykh.

The Shaykh, when he saw me, said, "Hast thou not heard about the lizard who went in the fall as a guest to visit the duck? The lizard was extremely cold. The duck did not know about the state of the lizard and described the pleasure of the cold water and the pleasure of water in a pool during winter. The lizard became gloomy. He irritated the duck and said, 'If it were not for the fact that I am a guest in thy house and I am afraid of those around thee, I would not let thee live.' He left the duck. Now thou dost not know that when thou talkst to unfit persons, thou shouldst be struck. When they do not understand the meaning of something, they take it as heresy and other things. A thousand things will be born from this."

I said to the Shaykh, "Since my faith and religion is pure, why should I fear the slander of the unfit?"

He said to me, "Saying everything everyplace is wrong and asking all questions from all people is also wrong. Do not withhold words from the fit. The unfit themselves, from the words of people, become weary. As an analogy, the heart of the unfit and strangers towards truth is like the wick of a lamp which has received water instead of kerosene. No matter how many times you light it, it will not light. But the heart of the friend is like a candle which draws and mixes fire from a distance. Now, the sayings of the people of traditions are never empty of light. Therefore, take light from a candle, not a wet wick.

"The candle sacrifices its form due to its inner fire but when the candle no longer remains, neither does the fire. The seekers of the meaning in things also sacrifices their form to inner fire. But when the body no longer remains, the light increases and it brings 'knowing'."

I asked the Shaykh, "Is it possible for the heart of a stranger to become aware and illuminated?"

He said, "Every stranger who knows that his heart does not see, may possibly learn to see. The analogy is like the example of the afflicted one who suffers from delirium. The afflicted one, as long as he is a prisoner of his suffering, has no knowledge of himself and his suffering because the delirium reaches his brain and weakens him. The power of perception is for the most part from the brain. When the

brain has been distrubed, the sufferer is without knowledge of it. Then when he is recovering from sickness, he comes to himself and he realizes he is afflicted and his brain improves, otherwise thou still dost not know ..

"The state of the stranger is like this. At the moment when he realizes his heart does not see, he sees a little. One must see a doctor for either physical sickness or sickness of the heart. The doctor will prescribe many syrups for the physically sick; those which relate to the humors. For the sick at heart, the doctor will prescribe many syrups which relate to spiritual things so that one will recover from sickness. When one recovers, one must think about regaining one's strength. It is possible for either type of sickness to go through hierarchial stages according to the degree of sickness.

"To the physically sick, the doctor first says, 'Eat some barley water.' At the second stage he says, 'Eat gruel.' At the third stage he says, 'Eat meat.' Up to this point it is the place of the doctor to be. After this, the person who was sick should know what he should or should not eat for his own good.

"To the sick at heart, the doctor says, 'Thou must first go to the desert and seek.' There is a worm in the desert. This worm never leaves itshole during the day, only at night does it venture out. This worm has a certain pecularity. When it breathes, illumination appears from its soul, like the spark of fire that can occur between iron and stone. Then in that desert, the worm is entertained by that light

and finds its own nourishment there.

" They asked the worm, 'Why is it that thou dost not appear in the desert in the day time?'

"It said, 'I myself am illuminated by my own soul. Why should I become obligated to the sun and its illuminated light.'

" A traveler who cannot conceal his secrets is hopeless. The worm does not know that the light of its soul is from the sun. When the sick at heart finds the worm,he will see from its light which plant is the worm's food. He will also eat the same food for a time so that that quality will appear in him and his breath will become illuminated. This is the first stage.

" After that, he goes to the great sea and contemplates. There is a bull in the sea which appears at night on the shore of the sea, who grazes by the light of the 'jewel which illuminates the night'. That bull is hostile to the sun because of the jewel which illuminates the night. In other words, during the daytime the bull veils the illumination of the jewel which illuminates the night and neutralizes the illumination of its soul. The hopeless one does not know that each light is succoured by the sun. Therefore, the sick one must seek with the light of the jewel which illuminates the night to see what plant it is that the bull eats. He must eat of the same until the time that in his heart as well, the love for the jewel which illuminates the night appears. This is the second stage.

"And then, he must go to Mt. Qaf and there is a tree upon which Simurgh has his nest. Find the tree, eat of the fruit of that tree, and that is the third stage. After this, one would have no need of a doctor because he himself has become one."

I said to the Shaykh, "Does the sun have all that power so that the jewel which illuminates the night and then illuminates the soul is from it?"

The Shaykh said, "It has great power and it confers many favors upon the world but no one has the right to confer a favor upon it. If a person were a garden and from itself were to give a bunch of grapes to a beggar, he would place a thousand obligations upon the poor during his lifetime. The sun each year fills its garden with grapes and other fruits. The gardner will never reach the favors that the sun confers. What is it that does not come from the sun? If you were to bring up a child in a house of darkness so that he grew up never having seen the sun, when in him the power of discernment is seen and the sun is made apparent to him, it is possible that he would know the strength of its illumination."

I asked the Shaykh, "When there is a full moon and the sun and moon are in conjunction, it is apparent that a sphere is in the middle. Why is it that the sphere does not become a veil to the light like the tail of a comet does as it nears the sun or nears the moon and becomes a veil?"

The Shaykh said, "You are wrong. If you wish to know

what the form of it is, draw a circle so that from the center point to the circumference is fifty and one-half gaz (104 cm) and from the center of the large circle draw another circle so that from the center to the circumference is one-half gaz. Draw a straight line from center to center so that each circle is divided exactly in half. Four points are created on the straight line, two points on the line inside the large circle, one at the beginning of the circumference and one at the upper edge and the other two points on the line in the small circle one from this side and one from that side. Now draw two more circles, one around the first dot outside of the circle and one above the upper point outside the circle so that from the last circle each one from the center to the circumference be two gaz.

"Now, suppose that the large circle is the celestial sphere and the small one is earth and of the two smaller circles, one is the moon and one is the sun. Now from the point that belongs to the moon draw a line from the right side of the earth so that the line is to the right and not inside and not outside. In the same way, draw another line from the left side of that line. Now the beginning of these two lines is a point and there is no distance between them (at the first point) and at the end of both lines it measures one gaz. Now if these two lines which are drawn to the earth are drawn until the celestial sphere, in the middle of the two lines until where the circle of the sun is, it measures

two gaz and the diameter of the sun was four gaz. Then two gaz of the mass of the sun is outside of the circumference, one gaz from the right and one gaz from the left. Now if instead of the one gaz, it was just a little bit so that the light came to the beginning of the first point which belongs to the moon from both sides and the shadow of the earth is night so that in the middle of these two lines, outside of the circumference until the point all is in the light of the sun. This analogy which thou hast drawn is so that thou dost not think that the relation of the earth to the heavens or from the conjunction is such as that of the heavens and the stars with the earth. In comparison to the example we gave, it is 100,000 times greater.

"The circumference of the earth is 96,000 farsang and the habitable part is 24,000 farsang. Each farsang is 1000 gaz or feet, both of which have been measured and the earth is no more than this. See how many kings there are for that much of the earth which is habitable. Some rule cities, some provinces and some countries and each one claims to be a kingdom. If they realized the truth, certainly, they would be ashamed of their claim.

"Bastami made this decision. Thus, whatever he had, he put aside. He forsake it all at one time. Consequently he found everything. Comforts, ambition and wealth are veils upon the way of men. As long as the heart is busy with these sorts of things, it is impossible to traverse the road. Whomever frees himself from bondage and puts aside

ambition like a darvish, he will accrue to the world of purity."

I asked the Shaykh, "Has it ever happened that one could leave all of the bonds he had? "

The Shaykh said, "That person is a person."

I asked, "Since they have no means of living, how do they manage?"

The Shaykh said, "He who thinks this way will leave nothing but he who leaves all things will not think thus. The world of faith is a happy world and the mystical intuition of that world will not be reached by all people.

" There is a story of a very rich man who had a great deal of wealth. The desire fell upon him to build a more luxurious home, more elegant than any before seen. He ordered craftsmen from all over to come and undertake the construction. He promised to undertake this and leave nothing to be desired. They were worthy of their pay. They laid the foundation and the building began to appear. When it was half finished, people came from all the surrounding areas to see what was being built. Great walls were raised and beautiful designs glorified the walls. The roof was so beautiful that it deserved the jealousy of Mani. The porch was more glorious than its twin, that of Taq-i-Khosrau. The house was not yet completed when the owner fell ill from a disease which had no cure. His condition worsened and he neared death. Israil, the Angel of death, appeared at his side. The owner of the house realized this.

" He pleaded with the Angel of death, "Is it at all possible for me to be given a few moments more to complete this house, as this is the only desire I have inall the world."

"He answered, '*When their term comes, they shall not put it back by a single hour, nor put it forward (7:32 & 10:49).* This is not possible. But imagine that you have a few moments more, the house is finished, won't your anguish be more since you suffered and your soul was surrendered and others will enjoy it? Now since it is unfinished it will not be possible to finish.' Since his soul found peace and security , he surrendered. Now, the house is completed, but to the rich man it is still unfinished and it would never be finished since in that state he was thinking about this and he stated his wants."

I asked the Shaykh, "When do good manners become a virtue?"

He said, "It is as in this story. One day there was a merchant who had endless comforts. He decided to board a ship and take his goods from the city where he was to another for trade. When he reached the seaside, he placed all the comforts that he had on the ship. Then he boarded the ship. The sailors turned the boat towards the open sea. When the boat reached the center of the sea, an angry wind came and threw the boat into a whirlpool. The sailors threw their treasures to the bottom of the sea. They frightened the merchant as was their habit and they lorded over him. This merchant, full of wealth, was helpless and powerless. Every instant, illusions

and with every breath, a wish. Worst of all, he could not bear the sorrow he felt. Sometimes it was sorrow for his wealth and sometimes it was sorrow for his life. There was no combat and there was no escape. His state reached to the point where he almost died. Life became bitter and joys of his wealth did not remain.

" Finally, the wind grew calm. The boat stabilized and they reached the shore. When the merchant saw the shore, he reached into his pockets and threw all that he owned into the sea.

"People exclaimed excitedly, 'Hast thou gone mad? And if not, this action is not right. When thou wast near death, plunged in the whirlpool, and thou wast afraid for thy life, thou didst not do these things. Now that thou hast come to a safe place, why dost thou do this?'

"The merchant said, 'Whether or not at that moment I had thrown all that I owned overboard, it would not have made any difference for the reason that is the ship had safely reached shore both my wealth and my life would have been saved. If we had drowned, neither wealth nor life would have remained so it did not matter. But now that I have reached the shore, I feel as if I have felt no anger nor pain and now that I have calmed down and safely reached shore, it seems as if I saved myself. Now I think to myself, 'I have forgotten the anguish so quickly. All the discomfort I have forgotten.' Then

The anguish grows older and nothing remains of the memory. With my wealth I saw abundant profit in the greed of the world. May it never be that I sit in a boat and that that calamity come to me again. This time I may not live. By whatever means it may be, one earns one's bread, life is better than wealth. I forsake my wealth and until I have nothing left I should not board a boat. I should not engage in trading since that requires wealth. Bread with health are better than treasure or kingship.' "

The Shaykh was saying,"He was taken upon the road to Truth. He who has this certainty may receive the right place. Whosoever finds anything in that world must remove a bond in this world. If someone sees in a dream that something has grown more, an interpreter of dreams would say that something will lessen and if he saw that something had lessened, the interpreter of dreams would say that something will increase. Many things are hidden in this meaning. Now, this is a sure principle since that which dreams is the soul and the soul sees in the next world. So that whatever is less in that world will increase in this world. In the same way, if someone were to see that he had another child, one child would die. If the interpreter of dreams sees that so and so died, one's life would be extended because it comes from there to here and this is obvious. Now, whosoever truthfully leaves something in this world with the intention of the other world, in search of the mysteries, one will find
85 something in the other world. This will be known when a state

appears to one. Throw away whatever one sees one has because this state is a gift from the other world. So that one who gives from this world will gain in the next. In that order will one be purified. All one leaves here, on one will gradually find there."

I said to the Shaykh, "Tell me about the states of people."

He said, "It is not possible to tell about them."

I said to the Shaykh, "Before this, I looked at the tablet that thou placed before me and I received no mystical intuition, but now each time that I look upon the tablet, my state changes and from the mystical intuition and spiritual taste, I become such that I no longer know how I have become."

The Shaykh said, "At that time thou had still not reached puberty. Now this has an analogy: a boy who has not reached puberty, who has sexual intercourse, will not have his desire fulfilled. But when he reaches puberty and becomes occupied with sexual intercourse, he receives pleasure from it. If at the time of the descent of the sperm, his loved one holds him back, she will be counted as an enemy. He will lose himself in that pleasure. If the taste of that state is told to an old man, he would not perceive because only a person with ecstasy can know what the state of ecstasy is, and an old man is deprived a share in this. Now, this is not pleasure. When pleasure reaches the soul, this is the state joy. In that world, thou wast

still in puberty. Thou didst not know the meaning of that pleasure; thou didst not know the pleasure of that meaning. Now thou hast reached puberty. The sexually mature may reach their own kind . A person of unlimited power plays in the hidden world and has secret discourses in the veil of mysteries with those of that world who are covered in mystery. Look at the difference between this pleasure and that ecstasy."

I said to the Shaykh, " Through the spiritual dance, the Sufis reach a state. Where does it come from?"

He said, "In the melody of some harmonious sounding instruments like the drum and the flute, sorrowful notes are heard. Then the singer who is in the same state begins to to lament with the most beautiful of sounds. Within the notes, the singer sings poetry which is the state of the grief stricken. In the center of hearing sorrowful, sorrowful sounds, one encounters one's own spiritual form (like the Indian when he remembers the elephant) and one then gives the state of one's soul to one's soul. Then the soul takes the mystical intuition from the ears and says, 'Thou art not fit to hear that.' The ear is deprived of hearing. Self listens but in that world, since hearing is not the work of the ear in that world. "

I said to the Shaykh, "Where does dancing take one?"

He said, "The soul desires the heavens like a bird who wants to free itself from the cage. The cage of the body is a barrier. The bird of the soul gathers its strength and lifts the cage of the body from its place. If the bird has

great power, it will break the cage and flee. If it has not that power, it wanders and the cage will wander with it. In the middle of that wandering, once again the desire to rise higher will appear. The bird of the soul desires a higher heaven and because it cannot free itself from the cage, it takes the cage with itself. No matter how much it desires it can go no higher than one span. The bird takes the cage to the heavens and the cage falls to the earth."

I asked the Shaykh, "What is the meaning of the waving of the hand?"

He said, "Some say squeeze the sleeve of all it contains. In other words, we received something from that world and we left everything we owned in this world. We became solitary figures. However, it means that the soul can only raise the foot one step at a time. The hand is told, 'take your load up one gaz so perhaps we can go one stage further.' "

I asked the Shaykh, "What does it mean to throw down the cloak?"

He said, "It means, 'I have received news from the other world and must throw off something from here.' However, whosoever throws off the cloak must put it on again so that he who squeezed the sleeve may put his goods back into the sleeve."

I said, "If the Sufi, in the middle of the circle, falls down upon the ground, he is fined. His authority for begging is from that group , whether or not he wishes to do the

spiritual dance or to beg, this or anything else, decision is from the group. What is the secret of that?"

He said, "The men who have fallen down in the middle of the circle, they have not risen again. The bird has reached a strong state, has broken the cage and has run away. Now the judgment of the body is from the group, whether they wish to purify him then or later, whether they want the kaftan to be blue or white, whether they want to bury him in this graveyard or another, the decision is from the group, thus the decision of this person is the decision of that person."

I said to the Shaykh, "What is it from when another person gets up once again and with the people of the states accompanies the dance?"

He said, "He claims companionship and con-spiration."

I said, "After the states, the people of the states rise and give thier hands to each other and say nothing."

He said, "The whole body is the tongue and because of this nothing is said.of With the tongue of the moment, he offers his own state because the tongue of speech cannot tell of that state. But the people of the encounter must know what to say."

I said to the Shaykh, "When they finish the spiritual dance they drink water. What meaning is there behind this?"

He said, "They say the fire of love has affected the heart and from the movement of the dance the stomach becomes empty. If they do not pour water on it, it will burn. They

do not know the power of hungry pleasure. If they knew how much, they would not busy themselves with breaking the fast and they would not be a Sufi. There are many donkey riders looking like Sufis who prance in the square as men of decision but they remain thus from an injury which reaches them from a warrior who ascertains the truth. Everyone who dances does not necessarily reach a state. The state brings on the dance not the dance a state. Struggling with this heart is the work of men. The waving of the sleeve is the work of Sufis. Not everyone who wears azure blue is a Sufi. As it has been said:

Those who wear azure blue are many
Qualified Sufis are among them
They are all body empty of soul
What do the others want with body because they
are all soul. "

ABOUT THE NATURE OF LOVE

or

THE LOVER'S FRIEND

by

Shihab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi

Translated from the Persian by

Laleh Bakhtiar

In the Name of the Merciful, the Compassionate, from whom we receive help. *We narrate unto thee, the best of narratives in that We have inspired in thee this Quran, though aforetime thou wast of the heedless. (12:3).*

If Thou wast not, we would not know about love
If love were not, we would not know about Thee
If love were not, and if the sorrow of love were not,
Who would hear and who would say all of these good things
If it were not for the wind which blows aside the lock of hair
Who would show the features of the Beloved to the Lover?

Know that the first thing created by God, the Transcendent and Divine, was a brillant jewel which was called Intellect. "The first thing which was created by God was the Intellect" (haidith). To this jewel, three qualities were given: knowledge of the Absolute, knowledge of one's self and knowledge of that which was not and then became. From the quality of knowing the Transcendent Absolute, beauty came into being. We call this 'goodness'. From the quality of knowing one's self, love came into being and we call this 'light'. From the knowledge of that which was not and then became, sorrow came into being and we call this 'grief'.

These three, which come from one essence, are thereby related to one another. Beauty, which was the first of the three to be conceived, looked and found Self magnificent. Joy

within was born. With one smile thousands of archangels were conceived. Love, which was the second conceived, was so close to beauty that the separation between them was hardly visible. However, when the smile of beauty appeared, anxiety occurred in love. Love became disturbed and desired to move. Sorrow, the last of the three was conceived as it clung to love. From their intermingling, heaven and earth were born.

When the first man of dust was born, upon whom be peace, a great shout from the plenum went up in the heavens that from the four opposites a vice-gerent was born. Suddenly, the image maker of destiny turned the compass of fate upon the bed of earth. A beautiful face was created. These four humors which were enemies of one another were given to seven messengers, the special guards who were to place them in the prison of six directions. After that, the sun-king revolved around the center and when 40 mornings were completed, they clad him with the robe of humanity so that the fourfold became one. When news of the creation of Adam, upon whom be peace, was made known in heaven, there arose among the inhabitants of the spiritual world a desire to see him. This desire was transferred to beauty. Beauty, as king, said, "I will ride alone first. If he appeals to me, I will inhabit him for a few days, then you follow me."

Then the king of beauty jumped upon a magnificant horse and turned towards the city of Adam's being, finding a happy place and an attractive pleasure ground. Descending, beauty so intermingled with Adam that nothing of Adam was left unaffected. When love sensed that it had left, it enveloped sor-

row and intended to go to beauty. As the rest of the inhabitants of the spiritual world became aware, they immediately followed. When love reached the kingdom of Adam, beauty was seen with a glorious crown upon its head, resting upon the throne of Adam's being. Love wanted to contain itself there as well. Its forehead hit the wall of terror and it became senseless. Beauty took the hand of love while it was in this state. When love opened its eyes it saw the inhabitants of the spiritual world nearing it. It turned to them and they surrendered themselves to it and gave it their kingship. All of them then turned their faces to the threshold of sorrow. When they neared, love, who was the commander of the army, deputized sorrow and ordered everyone to bow from a distance because they could not withstand nearness. When the inhabitants of the spiritual world glanced at beauty, all of them prostrated themselves and kissed the earth. *So the angels fell prostrate, all of them together (15:30). And when I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit, then fall down before him prostrate (38:73).*

A long time had passed since the time when beauty had left the city of Adam's being and turned to its own world awaiting a sign of some place which would deserve its glory. When Joseph's turn came, they brought the news to beauty. Beauty left immediately. Love took the sleeve of sorrow and followed beauty. As love neared it saw that beauty was so intermingled with Joseph that between the two there was no separation. Love ordered sorrow to pick up the knocker of humility and knock. From beauty came a cry, "What is

it?"

Love answered revealing its state:

The heart sore servant returned to thee
The poor one went with its feet and returned
with its head

Beauty turned contemptously away from love. Love, with a sorrowful voice, continued:

I swear that I have nobody but thee
Do not be oppressive as I cannot bear
cruelty from thee.

Beauty, upon hearing this song, answered at leisure:

Oh, love, gone are the days when I was happy with thee
Today I do not remember thee.

Love, disappointed, took the hand of sorrow and went towards the desert of wonder, whispering to itself:

May it be that no one be successful
in uniting with thee
No soul except mine be burned by
thy sorrow
Know that in waiting and expecting
my day is past
I have departed but may it be that
nobody fall into this misfortune.

Sorrow remained separated from beauty. It said to love, "I was with you in the service of beauty and we have a cloak from it and it is our master. Now that we are not allowed to enter, the best thought is for us to each go a different way and for the sake of asceticism we should begin a jour-

ney. Let us persevere under the footsteps of time, draw our head under the collar of surrender and on the colorful prayer rug of destiny and fate, pray. It might be that with the help of these seven solitary masters who are the teachers of the world of generation and corruption that we may return to the presence of the master. When they agreed, sorrow turned towards Cannan and love turned towards Egypt.

The way of sorrow was short. In one step it reached Cannan. Entering the city through the gate, it sought a master in whose company to spend a few days. Hearing about Jacob, the Cannanite, it entered from his temple door. Jacob's eyes fell on sorrow. He saw a traveler who looked familiar; the vestiges of kindness were apparent in it.

He said, "Greetings. You come with much happiness. Without too much explanation, from where have you honored us with your presence?"

Sorrow answered, "From the clime of Nowhere ., the city of the pure."

Jacob opened the prayer rug of patience with the hand of humility and sat sorrow down upon it and he sat next to it. After a few days together Jacob found love and friendship in sorrow to the extent that he could not leave it for one moment. He gave everything he had to sorrow. First, he offered the blackness of his eyes, *and his eyes were whitened with the sorrow that he was surpressing (12:84).* He named the temple (in which they were sitting) the house of sorrow and he gave the trusteeship to it.

Why should I fear the enemy when thou art
my friend?
Yes, in the sorrow of separation thou art
my dear friend.
Tell the enemy to fill his skirt with the
blood of his liver
Since thou art beside me, as I wish.

For the other part, love in a disturbed state, set out for Egypt. It made two stops into one until it reached Egypt. The dust of the way upon it, it entered the market place.

Love came to the market place of the Universe
The turmult of the beauty of that beloved
became known.
What is reason now that love has entered?
What is patience now that the friend has come?
The name of my heart which was lost for years,
Appeared from the curl of that musky lock.

Love appeared as a qalandar, unveiled. It strolled past at every view and looked each beautiful youth over and in each corner it sought dear ones. Nobody seemed to suit it. Seeking the sign of Potiphor, it put its head head into Zulikha's chamber.

When Zulikha saw this happen she jumped to her feet and she faced love and said, "Oh, may 100,000 precious souls be sacrificed for thee. From whence cometh thou and where goest thou? What is thy name?"

Love answered, "I have come from Jerusalem, from the

district where the Spirit flows, from the gate of beauty.
I have a house next to sorrow. My trade is traveling.
I am a solitary darvish. Every now and then I turn my face to a new direction. Each day I am at one station and each night I have a different abode. When I am among the Arabs they call me love and when I am among the Persians, they call me light. In heaven I am known as the cause of motion and on earth I am famous as the cause of rest. Although I am primordial, I am still young and if I am without riches, I am from a great family. My story is long. My story is long and thou art tired. We were three qualities which grew up in luxury, never seeing the face of need.
If I describe the condition of my city and I describe to you the wonders which are there you would not understand and you would not be able to perceive them. But there is a city which is the last city in our country. People of your city who know the way can reach there in nine stations from your city. I will describe that city to you in a way that you will come to understand.

Know that above this nine storied castle there is a vault which is called 'the city of the soul'. This has a city wall of glory and a moat of grandeur. Upon the gates of this city a young-old man is guard. The name of this guard is 'Everlasting Wisdom'. He is always in motion, yet never moves from his place. He is a good keeper and he reads the Divine Book. He has great eloquence, yet is mute. He has many years, yet has not yet seen a year. He is very ancient yet no weakness afflicts him.

Whosoever wishes to reach that city must cut loose the six ropes from the four vaults; make a lasso of love; put the saddle of intuition on a steed of spiritual desire; draw, with the rod of hunger, a line of wakefulness from collirium on the eyes; take the sword of knowledge in the hand; ask about the way of the microcosm; orient the self towards the north (left); and seek the inhabited quarter. Once one reaches the city one will see a three story castle.

The first story consists of two chambers and in the first chamber there is a bed laying on water and something is leaning back on that bed. It has a humid temperment. It is very clever but forgetfulness dominates it. Whatever difficulty you offer to it, it solves immediately but it also forgets. In this neighborhood of the second chamber, a bed of fire is laid out and something is leaning on the bed. Its temperment inclines towards dryness. It is clever but evil. It discovers mysteries late, but once it understands it never forgets. When it sees one, it starts to flatter. It deceives by colorful things and every minute it presents itself in a different form. One must not pay any attention to it, turn away from it. One should cry to one's horse to move on and go to the second story.

There one will also see two chambers. There in the first chamber a bed of air is laid out and something is reclining on that bed. Its temperment inclines towards coldness and it likes to lie, to accuse unjustly, gossip, killing and leading one astray. It judges from things it does not know. Next to it in the second chamber there is

a bed made of steam and on that bed something is leaning back. Its temperment is inclined to heat. It experienced much good and evil. Sometimes it shows the quality of angels and sometimes of demons. One can find many strange things with it. It knows witchcraft well and one learns the science of magic from it. When one sees it, it starts to flatter. Grip its bridle and try to murder it. It will show its sword and frighten one with it until one escapes.

When one reaches the third story, one will see a joyful chamber and in that room, a bed of pure earth is laid out. Something is leaning back on that bed. Its temperment approaches moderation; contemplation dominates it; many things are entrusted to it. No matter what you entrust to it, it will not deceive you. Whatever plunder one has acquired from this group, one should entrust to it and it might be of use to one at some further time. When one is finished there and intends to leave one is confronted by five gates.

The first gate has two doors. Inside each door is a bed laid out oblong like an almond seed with two curtains, one black and the other white. Hung in front, many threads are fastened to the gate. Something is leaning back on both beds. It is the sentry. It can see a distance of many years. It is traveling most of the time yet it does not move from its place. It goes wherever it wants and though it be a long distance, it covers it in a glance. When one reaches it, one should order it not to let anyone

in and if a leak appears anywhere, it should inform one immediately.

One should move to the second gate. The second gate has two doors. For each door there is a long, winding vestibule which has been talismaned. At the end of each door, a circular bed is laid out. Something is sitting on both beds. It is the knower and it has a messenger upon upon the way who is continually moving. This messenger receives and conveys to it each image that is created. It perceives it; it orders that whatever the messenger hears should immediately be reported. It admits no form; it is not distracted by every trivial thing.

From there one goes to the third gate. The third gate also has two doors. From each door, there is a long vestibule. These two join and lead to a chamber. There are two kursis laid out in that chamber. Something is sitting on both kursis. It has a servant who is called air. This servant travels all around the world every day. The servant brings back a share of every good and every bad which it observes. It is taken and spent. One should tell it to lessen the transactions and stop seeking that which does not concern it.

From there one reaches the fourth gate. The fourth gate is wider than the other three. Inside this gate, there is a spring of pure water. Threre is a wall of pearls around this spirng. In the middle of the spring is a moving

 bed. Something is sitting on that bed. It is called the

taster and it can distinguish between the four opposites. It can separate and arrange all the four. It is busy with this work day and night. Order it to leave that work except when necessity demands it.

From there one reaches the fifth gate which is on the perimeter of the city and everything which is in the city is inside this gate. A carpet is spread all around this gate. Something is on the carpet such that it is filled with it. It rules over eight opposites. It can distinguish between all eight. It is not negligent of this job for one second. It is called the distinguisher. One should order it to pick up its carpet and close the gate.

When one gallops past these five gates, one arrives within the city and one should direct onself to the forest of the city. When one reaches there one sees a burning fire. Something is sitting there cooking something over the fire. A second one is feeding the fire and a third, holding it tightly until it cooks. A fourth is separating the light from the heavy. All that remains in the bottom of the cauldron is separated and divided among the inhabitants of the city. That which is more subtle is given to the subtle and that which is more dense is given to the dense. Something tall is standing and whenever one finishes eating, it takes the ear and pulls one up.

A lion and a bear are standing in the forest. The former is busy night and day with killing and tearing apart and the latter is busy with stealing and eating and drink-

ing. One should take the lasso from the strap of the saddle and throw it around their necks. Pull tightly and leave them right there. Jerk the rein of the horse and shout to the horse. With one jump leave these nine narrow mountain passes and reach the gate of the city of the soul. One should take oneself to the gate. Now an old man will greet one and cherish one and call unto one. There, there is a spring called the Source of Life. He will order one to cleanse oneself in that spring and when ones finds eternal life, he will teach one the Divine Book.

Above this city are several other cities. He will show one all the paths and he will teach one all the knowledge of them. If I were to tell you about these cities and explain them to you, you would not be able to understand. You would not believe me. You would be drowned in the sea of wonder. This much is sufficient. If you understand what I have said, your soul will be safe.

When love had finished the story, Zulikha sasked," What was the reason for leaving thy country?"

Love answered, "We are three qualities. The first is called beauty. It has brought us up. The last is called sorrow and it mainly serves me. We three were happy. Suddenly a shout rang out in our district that in the earthly world one was created. Strangely enough that which was created was both terrestial and celestial, both physical and spiritual. The terrestial and physical world were given to him and a corner of our celestial and spiritual land was named for him. The inhabitants of our country desired to

see him. They all came to me and consulted me. I reporeted this state to beauty, our leader. Beauty said, 'You wait until I go and cast a glance and if I am satisfied, I will summons you.'

"We all answered, 'We will obey your order.'

" Beauty reached the city of Adam in one stop. It found a joyful place and it built a station there. We also followed in its footsteps. As we neared beauty we did not have the capability of union. Everyone was exhausted. We had all fallen in a different corner. When it was Joseph's turn, they gave the sign of beauty to Joseph. The last of us, whose name is sorrow, and I, turned towards beauty. When we reached there, beauty had arrived before us. It did not let us in. The more we cried, the more unneeding it grew of us.

Be cruel since it suits you.
Kill since wrong becomes you.
You are much better than you were.
Not seeing us is becoming to you.
Endeavor to give a cold sigh and cry.
This water and air suits you.

" When we knew it was tired of us, we each went a different way. Sorrow went to Cannan and I took the road to Egypt."

When Zulikha heard this story, she surrendered her house to love and revered love more than her own soul until Joseph arrived in Egypt. All of Egypt gathered together. The news reached Zulikha. Zulikha told love of the event. Love grabbed Zulikha's collar and together they went to

see Joseph. When Zulikha saw Joseph she wanted to draw near. The stone of wonder struck the bottom of her heart. She left the circle of patience. She extended the reproaching hand. She tore her veil of blessedness and suddenly she became melancholic. The entire town of Egypt began to gossip and she said to herself aimlessly:

There is no wound as the wound on me.
And this can not be hidden.
They imagine that I verily love you.
My debt is more than they can imagine.

When Joseph became the King of Egypt, word reached Cannan. Desire dominated Jacob. Jacob told sorrow of this state. Sorrow thought it advisable for Jacob to take his children and go to Egypt. Jacob gave the leadership to sorrow and with all of his children left for Egypt. When they reached Egypt, they entered the king's door. Suddenly, he saw Joseph with Zulikha sitting on the throne of kingship. From the corner of his eye he motioned to sorrow. When sorrow saw love, it knelt before beauty. Sorrow immediately prostrated itself on the ground. Jacob and his children did the same as sorrow. They all prostrated themselves. Joseph turned to Jacob and said, "Father, this is the interpretation of the dream which I had told you about. *Oh, father, I saw eleven stars and the sun and moon prostrating themselves before me* (4:4).

Know that of the meanings of beauty, one is beauty and the other is perfection. According to the prophetic tradition, "God is beautiful and he loves beauty." What-

ever has existence, physical or spiritual, seeks perfection. You find no one not desirous of beauty. If you consider it well, all are the seekers of beauty and perfection. All endeavor to attain to these. Beauty and perfection, which are the desired of all, are difficult to attain. Attaining to them is only possible through love. Love does not admit everyone. It does not take shelter every place. It does not show itself to every eye. If it finds the sign of someone who deserved good fortune, it sends sorrow, who is the doorman, first, to clean out the house and to make sure no one enters. Sorrow announces the coming of the Solomon of love. It cries out, *"Ants! Enter your dwelling-places, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you, being unaware!"*; until the ants of the internal and external senses take their deserved place so they will be safe from injury from love's army. Otherwise, madness would insue. Love must first circumambulate the house, watch all and then fall into the chambers of the heart. Some places are destroyed and some are built. Somethings are changed from their previous order. This will take a few days and then love leaves for the threshold of beauty and perfection. Since it is obvious that it is love which unites the seeker to that which is sought, one should make every effort to prepare oneself for love. Recognize all stops and stages of lovers. Surrender self to love and after that one will see wonders.

Remove idle thoughts from your mind.
Be less coquettish and increase your supplication.
Your master is love - when you reach there,

Love, with the tongue of the moment, will tell you what to do.

When friendship reaches its limit, it is called love. 'Love is extreme friendship.' But love is more special than friendship because all love is friendship but every friendship is not love. Friendship is more special than knowledge. Every friendship is knowledge but every knowledge is not friendship. Knowledge produces two opposites: friendship and hostility. In as much as the object of knowledge is proportioned and gentle, spiritual or physical, it is called pure goodness and absolute perfection. The soul of man seeks it, desires to reach it. Then perfection occurs. If the knowledge be a thing which is neither proportioned nor gentle, neither physical nor spiritual, which is called pure evil, or absolute imperfection, the human soul will always flee from there. It has a natural hatred towards it. From the former comes friendship and from the latter, hostility. So the first stage is knowledge and the second is friendship and the third is love. One cannot attain to the world of love, which is above the other world, unless one makes of knowledge and friendship, two rungs of a ladder. The meaning of 'when you reach the crossroads' is this. The world of knowledge and friendship and their origin is the final end of learned scholars and theosophers. Hence they have said:

Love is not meant for all creatures.
To be a lover is meant only for those
who are prepared.

The word love comes from the word meaning climbing,

clinging vines. That is, a plant which grows in a garden at the bottom of a tree. Its roots first harden in the ground and then its head appears. It coils itself around the tree until it encompasses the whole tree. It otorments it so much that there remains no humidity in the veins of the tree. Whatever food reaches the tree from water and air, is plundered until the tree dries up. The same is true in the world of man, the essence of all creatures. There is a tree of very erect stature. The tree is attached to the seed of the heart. The seed of the heart grows in the spiritual world; whatever is there has a soul. They say:

Whatsoever resides in that place
Its foot rests upon the stone and clod of the soul

The seed of the heart is a seed which the primordial-eternal gardner has taken "from the storehouse of the souls who are attracted to one another," and planted in the garden of the spiritual world. *Say, the Spirit is of the bidding of my Lord. (17:87)*. He brings up the seeds, so that "the hearts of the servants of God are between the two fingers of the fingers of the Compassionate and He changes it as He will." When, with the aid of the water of knowledge (*from water fashioned every living thing. (21:31)*, the breeze *(Verily, God sends down his Mercy during the days of your worldly existence ( )*, when the Mercy of His right hand, reaches the seed of the heart, a hundred thousand spiritual branches and wings shoot up. The meaning of the happiness and moisture is in the tradition: "Verily, I find the Breath of the Compassionate from the direction of the light of the

Yemen." The seed of the heart is also called a good word. It becomes a goodly tree, so that, *Hast thou not seen how God has struck a similitude? A good word, is as a good tree (14:29).*

From this tree, a reflection appears in the world of generation and corruption. It is called a 'shadow' or 'body' or 'a tree of erect stature'. When this tree begins to grow, to wax great, and nears perfection, love appears in a corner and begins to wind itself around the tree until it reaches a stage where no dew of humaness can remain in it. As the vines of the branches of love increase on the tree, its reflection, which is the tree of erect stature, becomes weaker and more pale until all at once desire is destroyed. Then that tree becomes absolute spirit and becomes worthy of being placed in the Divine garden. As it is said, "*Enter thou among My servants! Enter thou My Paradise! (89:30)*"

Since this worthiness will be found from love, love is a virtous action. It takes one to these heights as in the Quran, "*To Him good words go up and the righteous deed - He uplifts it (35:11).*" Qualifying is to possess the capability of reaching this station. When they say so and so is virtuous, they mean he is prepared. Even so, love takes the soul to the world of subsistence and the body to the world of annihilation, because nothing in the world of generation and corruption can bear the burden of love. A great man has said it in this way:

The enemy who desires to attain to union

May he not have one moment of joy.
No! No! Henceforth, I will not reproach him.
Even if the enemy is made of iron, your love is
sufficient to melt him.

Love is a servant born into a family. It has been cared for in the primordial city. The primordial-eternal Sultan has entrusted the guardianship of the two worlds to it. This guardian each moment turns a different way. Every moment it casts its glance in another region.

In its destiny, it is written that in each city, to which it turns, news must be given to that city that a cow should be sacrificed for it, as it says in the Quran: *God commands you to sacrifice a cow (2:64)*. Until the cow of the animal soul is not killed, love will not take a step into that city. The human body is like unto a city. Its organs are like districts and its veins like streams flowing in the small streets.The senses are like crafts-men, each busy with their own work.

It is the animal soul which brings havoc to this city. It has two heads: one is greed and the other is lust. It has a pleasing color, a deceiving light yellow. Whoso-ever looks upon it, *a golden cow, bright her color, glad-dening the beholders (2:64)*, becomes happy. It is not old according to the saying, 'Blessed are the old,' so that one should seek blessedness from it. Nor is it young so that according to the saying, 'Youth is a branch of madness.' Remove the pen from obligation to it. The
110 animal soul is neither grasps the Law nor does it understand

the Way, neither does it brag about heaven nor is it afraid of hell as it is in the Quran, *neither old, nor virgin, middling between the two (2:63).*

Not science, not knowledge, not Truth,
not certainty.
Like a charlatan darvish, having neither
the world nor religon.

It does not furrow the land of the body with the iron of annihilation so that the seed of piety may grow in the prepared body, nor does it draw water with the pail of contemplation from the well of comprehension so that by the known it can reach the unknown. Always in the wilderness of arrogance with a broken halter, it wanders, *not broken to plough the earth or to water the tillage, one kept secure, with no blemish on her (2:66).* Not every cow merits this sacrifice. Every city does not have such a cow. On the other hand, not everyone has the ability to be able to sacrifice this cow. This ability does not come to everyone.

It takes many years until a real stone
through the Sun,
Becomes a ruby in Badakhshan,
Or an agate in Yemen.

And this recital is finished. Praise belongs to God, the Almighty, the Lord of the world. His blessings upon the best of the creatures and his family, all.

THE WORDS OF THE ANTS

by

Shihab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi

Translated from the Persian by

Laleh Bakhtiar

"My Lord, increase my knowledge."

Thanks be to the Creator of all, whom, in reality, from all the evidence, existence is worthy, according to the witnessing of the creatures. Blessings upon the Sayyid of the son of mankind, Mohammad, the Chosen. Peace be upon him and his family and upon their spirit.

One of the group of dear ones, whose direction it was necessary that this poor creature observe, beseeched me to say a few words about treading the path. Upon the condition that they withhold them from the unfit, with the will of God, we called them "The Words of the Ants," and in God we trust.

A few, fast running ants decided that from the depths of the darkness of their hidden place, their first settled abode, they would turn towards the desert to look for food. Accidently, as it would happen, a few stems of green plants came into their view. Drops of morning dew were sitting upon the planes of the leaves. One of them asked the other, "What is this?"

It answered, "These drops originate from the earth."

Others said, "They are from the sea."

They continued to exchange words. One of the ants among them, pushed himself forward. It said, "Wait a few moments until we see to which side it inclines, because everything is pulled towards its source. All things desire to join their origins.

"Everything is attracted to its own kind. Hast thou not seen a clod of earth when thrown from the center, returns downward because its substance is lowly and 'everything returns to its Source'. It is proven that the clod of earth finally returns to the earth. Whatever is pulled towards complete darkness, its origin is there in relationship to the Divine Light. This order is more apparent when we look at the noble jewel, the intellect. This does not refer to any sort of immanence whatever. Whatever seeks light is from light."

The ants were thus until the hot became hot and the dew upon the stem of the plant attempted to rise. The ants realized that it was not from the earth. Since it came with the air, it returned with the air. *Light upon Light; (God guides to His Light whom He will.) (And God strikes similitudes for men...) (24:35). The final end is unto thy Lord (53:43). To Him good words go up and the righteous deed - He uplifts it (35:11).*

Some turtoises were living on the seashore. In their free time, however often it was possible, they would look upon the sea. A colorful bird was playing at the edge of the water as is the habit of birds. At times, it plunged into the water and at other times it surfaced. One of the turtoises watching this, asked, "Is this beautiful form water or air?"

A second one asked, "If it itself is not water,

what could it possibly want in the water?"

A third one said, "If it is of the water, it cannot be without water."

The pure, law-giving judge said, "Wait and see what it does. If it can remain without water, it is neither of the water nor dependent upon it. A fish is proof of this. If it leaves the water, its life no longer continues."

Suddenly, a strong wind came and rolled the waters. The bird sat upon the highest point of air. They said to the law-giver, "Give us proof of your law-giving ability, or we will punish thee."

The law-giver recited the words of Abu Talib of Mecca, may God satisfy his soul, who said, concerning our Prophet, peace be upon him, in his chapter on happiness and fear: "When God clothed the Prophet with Himself, he took his intellect from him and made him forget his becoming and his place." The law-giver said, "While in the state of happiness, they took 'place' from the Prophet. And concerning Hasan ibn Saleh, they said, in the chapter on kindness, during the station of friendship, 'The manifest became evident to him and place was put aside.' The great ones count passion, place and body among those things that veils the intellect. Husayn ibn Mansur said, regarding the Chosen one, peace be upon him, 'he closed his eyes to place,' and he said, 'the Sufi is beyond being and becoming and

above the two worlds.' And all agree that unless the veil is removed, mystical intuition will not occur. This jewel (the intellect) which replaces intuition, is created and causal."

All the turtoises cried out, "How does this jewel which is in place, leave it? How does it separate itself from direction?"

The law-giver said, "I related these stories in this extensive manner in order to show you just that."

The turtoises cried out, "We replace you, oh, law-giver; you are removed." They threw dirt upon it and directed themselves towards their homes.

All the birds were ready in the presence of the Prophet, Solomon, peace be upon him, except for the nightengale. Solomon named one of the birds, as a messenger, to tell the nightengale, "It is imperative that we all join each other." When the message of Solomon, peace be upon him, reached the nightengale, it had still not left its nest. With its friends, it started to leave, because, Solomon, upon whom be peace, ordered it in this way; and the messenger does not lie. Solomon invited us to join. If Solomon is outside and we are inside, it will not be possible to meet. Solomon cannot fit into our nest; there is no other way.

There was an old one among the birds. It called, "*The day they meet Him (9:78), they shall every one of them be arraigned before Us (36:32), truly, to Us is their return (88:25) in a sure abode, in the presence*

of a King Omnipotent (54:55). " If this invitation is correct, it is such that when King Solomon does not fit in our nest, we must then leave our nest and draw unto him, otherwise, a meeting is not possible. They asked Junayd, may the mercy of God be upon him, "What is Sufism?" He said these words:

He sang to me from the bottom of His heart
And I sang to Him in the same way.
We were in the place where they were and
They were in the place where we were.

Kai Khosraw had a magical piece. Whatever he wanted, he would look for it there. He became aware of beings and he became conscious of the invisible. They say that it was a sheath of leather made in the form of a cone. Ten opened chains were placed there. When he wanted to see something from the invisible world, he threw the sheath into the place of the lathe. When all of the chains were opened, it would not come out. When all of them were closed, it would enter the factory of the lathe worker. Then when the sun was at the equator, he held it opposite it. When the light of the great star reflected upon it, all the images and lines of the world were manifested upon it. *When earth is stretched out and casts forth what is in it, and voids itself, and gives ear to its Lord, and is fitly disposed! O Man! Thou art labouring unto thy Lord laboriously, and thou shalt encounter Him (87:3-7). Not one secret of yours concealed (69:18) then*

a soul shall know its works, the former and the latter (82:5).

When I heard about the magic piece from the teacher
I myself was the mirror of the universe.

They recall the mirror of the universe
That magical piece is the hidden treasure of our wool.

These lines are from Junayd:

A person became friends with one of the jinn. He said to it, "How can I see you again?"

It said, "If you wish to see us, put some resin from the mastic tree upon a fire. Throw whatever scraps of metal are in the house upon it. Whatever has sound and noise from the seven bodies *and défilement flee! (74:5).* With peace and benevolence, put aside all sounds, *yet pardon them, and say, 'Peace!' (43:89).* Sit within a circle and then look at a window. Then, once the resin of the mastic tree is burned, you will see me. "There is a bad image for other than them."

They asked Junayd, peace be upon him, "What is Sufism?"

He said, "They are the people of a house in which people other than themselves do not enter."

Khawji Abū Saʿīd Kharrāz, peace be upon him, said,

Thy qualities all appeared in front of the King.
My qualities were hidden when He left.
Became Hidden the person for whose sake I was hidden.
Thus this is my annihilation, understand, oh person of the senses.

In answer to this verse, one says:

To become mad from madness so that I don't know who I am
Except what people say about me and my origin.

One of the great ones said, "Cut all interests, separate youself from all barriers until you see the Lord of the Creatures." He said, "Once you have done that, and all conditions have been met, *the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord....and justly the issue be decided between them (39:69)* and it was. *Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being (39:76).* Greetings of God to these places to which one returns. Surely these are my places of gathering water and the catchers of the north wind.

Once, some bats and a lark became enemies. They began to abuse each other to each others face. Their arguments

exceeded the limits. The bats agreed among themselves to descend and attach when the darkness of night dominated the concave sky in front of the stars in the sacred place where the sun descended. They gathered together and and directed themselves towards the lark and with war-like manners,captured the lark and punished it to their hearts content and took revenge to the extent that they desired. All at once, they stopped. They pulled the poor lark, with the aid of each, into their dirty house and jailed him for that night. In the morning they said, "How shall we chastize this lark?" They all agreed to kill it and they discussed among themselves the means of doing so. They all agreed that no punishment was greater than seeing the rays of the sun. Of course, they knew no worse punishment than nearness to the sun. They compared the lark to themselves and they threatened to put it in front of the sun. The poor lark wished to God that it would be so. It desired to be killed in this way. As Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Hallāj, said,

> Murder me, oh, my trusting friends.
> Verily in death there is my life.
> My life rests upon my death.
> And my death rests upon my life.

When the sun arose, they threw the lark out of their unlucky home so that it would be punished by the rays of the sun. That punishment restored its life. *Count not*

 those who were slain in God's way as dead, but rather

living with their Lord, by Him provided, rejoicing in the bounty that God has given them (3:163-4). If the bats only knew what a favor they had done for the lark by their punishment; if they only knew the imperfections which existed in them, because they do not take pleasure from the sun, they would have died from grief. Solomon Darani said, "If the negligent ones knew what they miss from the pleasures of gnostics, they would die from grief."

Once a hoopee fell into a group of owls. Passing by, he descended into their place of abode. The hoopee is famous for his keen sense of sight. The owls, on the other hand, are blind by day so much so that their story is famous among the Arabs. That night, the hoopee remained with them in their nest and they asked him all of the news they wished to know. In the morning, the hoopee prepared to leave. He was ready to depart. The owls said, "Oh, poor one, what is this heresy which thou hast brought?Do people move in the daytime?"

The hoopee said,"This is a strange story.All movement is in the day.
The owls said, "Are you mad? In the day of darkness, when the sun becomes darkened, how can one see?"

It said, It is the opposite of this. All the lights of this world which you use are the parasites of the light of the sun. All the illuminated take and derive their own light from it. They refer to it as 'the fountain of the sun,' because it is the source of light."

The owls then told it why no one can see by day. The

hoopoe said, "Don't compare everything by analysis to your own essence. Everybody sees in the day. I see right now; I am in the world of witnessing; I am observing; the veils have been removed. I am perceiving the gradation of the lights through unveiling without any doubt."

When the owls heard these words, they immediately cried out and caused a commotion and they said to each other, "This bird during the day, which is the time of blindness, claims that it can see." At that moment, they descended upon the eyes of the hoopee, with their claws and beaks and they swore at it and they said, "Take this! Oh, one who sees by day." Blindness during the day was an art of theirs.

And they said, "If you don't change your words, you will be murdered."

The hoopee thought to itslef, "If I don't appear blind, they will kill me because they are wounding my eyes the most. Death and blindness will come at the same moment. It was inspired by 'speak to people according to their intellect.' It immediately closed its eyes and said, "Now I have reached your level and I am blind." When the owls saw his condition, they withdrew from the blows and the inflicting of pain. The hoopee knew that the problem of revealing divine mysteries to the owls was heresy. The revealing of the

mysteries of destiny is a sin and making apparent the mysteries of disbelief is notorious. Until it left there, it suffered a thousand discomforts; it falsly pretended to be blind and said:

Many times I said make apparent
Whatever the world's secrets are
But from fear of the sword in the neck,
A thousand nails were upon my tongue.

It sighed deeply and said, "Verily between my two sides, there is abundant knowledge. If I were to bestow them upon somebody, I would be killed. If the veil were to be lifted, nothing would be added to my certainty."[9]

A king had a garden which, of course, no matter what the season, was never empty of greens, flowers and places of gathering. Much water flowed there. Many kinds of birds chirped all kinds of songs upon the tops of the

branches. The garden contained all the possible benefits and ornaments to carry the imagination. Among those things, there was a group of peacocks. The most subtle and adorned were placed there, beauty mingling with pride. They had chosen this as their country. This king took a peacock, from among the group, and ordered it to be sewn in leather so that through its own efforts, it could not see its beauty. He ordered them to put a basket over its head which had no more than one hole. A few seeds were placed there for its sustenance and its continued existence. Much time passed. This peacock forgot itself, the King, the garden and all the other peacocks. It looked at itself. The poor thing saw nothing except dirty leather and an extremely dark and crooked house. It grew accustomed to it and this place so established itself within it, that no earth was larger than the base of the basket. It came to believe, that if one were to claim that beyond this is a life, a residence and perfection, it is absolute disbelief, complete deviation and pure ignorance.

However, whenever a morning breeze blew and the smell of the blossoms and the trees and a flower, a violet, a jasmine, and all kinds of greens, reached him from that hole, the peacock received much pleasure and a disturbance appeared in it. Fleeting happiness occured within. A desire was found in it, but it did not know where the desire was coming from because it did not know any dress other than leather, nor any world other than the basket,

nor any food other than the millet seeds. It had forgotten all things. Once it heard the sounds and notes of the peacocks and the songs of the other birds. Desire and wishes both appeared in it but it did not awake from the sounds of these birds and the morning breezes. Once it remembered the happiness of its nest :

Morning breeze blew upon me, ready to tell,
Verily, I am a messenger from thy lover to thee.

It remained in that thought for awhile. What is this sweet smelling wind and from where are these happy sounds?'

Oh lights that shine, from
which concealed place do you flash?

It did not become evident to the peacock, but at that time, an uncontrolable happiness appeared in it.

This ignorance was from that, it had forgotten itself and its country, *those who forgot God (59:19)*. Whenever wind or sound came out of the garden, it fell into wishing without knowing the reason why or being aware of the cause.

For awhile it remained in that perplexity until one day the King ordered, "Bring that bird and free it of the basket and leather. For it is only *a single scaring (37:19). They are from their tombs unto their Lord (36:51). Then that which is in the tombs is overthrown, and that which is in the beasts is brought out - surely, on that day their Lord shall be aware of them ( ).* " When the peacock came out from behind the veil, it saw itself in the middle of a garden, the blossoms and the views and the space of the world and the road to take, flight and sounds, voices and views, images and things; it became perplexed in the quality of that state and it sighed for that which it had missed. "*Alas for me, in that I neglected my duty to God (39:57),*" it said. *"We have now removed from thee thy covering, and so thy sight today is piercing (50:21). Why, but when the soul leaps to the throat of the dying and the hour you are watching (and We are nigher him than you, but you do not see Us) (56:82-4). No indeed; but soon you shall know. Again, no indeed; but soon you shall know (102:3-4).*"

All the stars conversed with Hermes, peace be upon him. He asked the moon, "Why is it that sometimes your light is strong and sometimes weak?"

It said, "Know that my form is black, pure, polished. I have no light. But, when I encounter the sun, depending

upon the extent of that encounter, an image upon the mirror of my form appears from the light of the sun, like other forms in a mirror. When I reach the apex of the encounter, I progress from the nadir of the new moon to the zenith of the full moon."

Hermes asked, "How deep is your friendship with the sun?"

The moon replied, "It is such that whenever I look upon myself at the time of the encounter, I see the sun, because the image of the sun is apparent upon me. All the smoothness of my surface and the solidness of my face is prepared to accept its light. Then, whenever I look at my essence (Self), I see total sun. Hast thou not seen that when a mirror is placed in front of the sun, the form of the sun is reflected there. If you were to assume that the mirror had an eye and at the time when it is opposite the sun, the mirror looked upon itself, it would see all of the sun. If it is iron, it would say, 'I am the Sun,' because within itself it had nothing but the sun. Therefore, if it says, "I am the Sun' or 'Glory be to me, how great is my station', it should not be condemned." "Until I imagined, because I was so near, that Thou art I."

If a person who resides in a house and that house has an orientation, but that person does not have orientation, then it is necessary to negate the direction of the house. "I am within those whose heart is broken." God is above

 place and direction and empty of error. Will depends upon

the measure of the person it comes from. "Everything depends upon the head of the household." *Like Him there is naught, He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing (42:9).* The house is never the same thing as the head of the household.

Whatever is a barrier to goodness is bad and whatever is a veil to the Way is disbelief of men. Misery is to be satisfied with wherever the soul goes and to contrive with it during the way of seeking. To be happy with one-self is corruption and if also the goal is the Truth, turning completely towards the Truth is salvation.

A foolish man held a light to the sun. He said, "Oh, Mother, the sun has hidden our light."

She said, "If one leaves by the door in order to reach the sun, nothing will remain, not because the light of the lamp disappears, but when the eye sees something great, small things appear contemptible in comparison to that. One who leaves from the sun to a house, even if it is light, will see nothing."

All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid (55:26-7). Be aware, everything except God is in vain ( ). He is the First and the Last, the (Manifest) and the (Hidden) and He has knowledge of everything (57:3).

Praise belongs to God of both worlds and blessings upon the best of his creatures, Mohammad and his family, all.

THE SONG OF SIMURGH

by

Shihab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi

translated from the Persian by Laleh Bakhtiar

Thanks be to the Giver of Life, the Creator of creatures. Blessings upon the highest of prophets and the great imams of prophecy especially upon the holder of great nobility and leader of the Supreme Way, Mohammad the Chosen, may he pour blessings of God upon us.

And now, here are a few words about the Brothers in Catharsis. It is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with the beginnings and the second part with the ends. This treatise is named "The Song of Simurgh." There is no harm in recalling in the preface, the states of this great bird and its permanent abode.

The enlightened ones relate how at every moment, in the springtime, a Hoopee leaves its nest. With its beak it pulls its feathers and wings and begins the journey to Mt. Qaf. The shadow of Mt. Qaf falls upon him for 1000 years of our time because *surely a day with thy Lord is as a thousand years of your counting* (22:46). This thousand years, in the calendar of the people of Truth, is one break of dawn, from the Divine nature of the East. During this time, the hoopee becomes a Simurgh. Its song awakens the sleepers. The Simurgh's nest is on Mt. Qaf. Its song reaches all, but only a few hear it. All are with him but most are not aware.

Thou art with us and yet not
Thou art the soul and art therefore invisible.

To the sick caught in the Divine abyss who are always thirsty and fainting, its shadow is the cure. The disease benefits from the shadow. It destroys the multiplicities of colors. The Simurgh takes flight without moving and

flies without wings. It nears without traversing places. All images are from it. It itself has no color. Its nest is in the East but the West is not empty of it. All are busy with it, but it is delivered of all. All are full of it and it is void of them. All sciences are from its song and emanate from it. Strange instruments like the organ and others are from its whispering voice bringing forth a song.

Since thou never sawst Solomon
What dost thou know about the lang-
uage of the birds?

Its food is fire and if one puts a feather on one's right side and then jumps into a fire, one will be immune from the burning fire. Morning breezes are from its breath; for this reason lovers tell it the secrets of their heart and their inner being. These words that are written are from the Divine Breath and they are concise and from it and its cries.

Part One: On the Beginnings

The first part is in three sections: the first section concerns the superiority of this knowledge; the second section concerns how the beginnings become manifest to neophytes and the third section is about tranquility. The second part is on the ends and it has three sections: the first section is about annihilation; the second is about "he who is a better gnostic is more perfect;"the

third is the proof of the pleasure and affection of the slaves for God.

Section One: On the Superiority of this knowledge among 'knowledges'

In the opinion of the enlightened ones, it is obvious why this type of knowledge is superior to other types: first, the known is more noble. One knows that it is superior to work with gold than to make leather goods for an ass, because one deals with gold and the other, wool and wood. The second reason is that this knowledge gives more strength than other 'knowledges.' The third reason is that it is better to busy oneself in this as it has more advantages. All the signs of superiority exist in this knowledge in comparison to other 'knowledges.' With regards to the ends and the 'known,' it is apparent that in this knowledge, the ends, the thing sought and the known are God, Sublime in his station and other existents cannot be compared to his Glory.

And now, with regard to ascertainment of arguments and corroboration of proof, it is evident that witnessing is more powerful than reasoning. The elite among the theologians accept the fact that the Sublime Truth gives the necessary knowledge about himself, his qualities and so forth. Thus, because it is agreed that some find this knowledge, there is no doubt that it is preferable to that which implies the necessities of hardship, speculation, labors of reasoning, the falling into doubt and suspecious areas. A Sufi was asked, "What is the proof of the existence of the Creator?"

The answer came, "For me it is seeing the morning instead of a lamp."

Another one said, "A person seeking the Absolute with reason is like a person who is trying to see the Sun with a lamp."

The elite among the theologicans accept and agree that perhaps on the Day of Judgment the Sublime Truth will give to the eyes of creatures a perception, a sense of sight so that they will see the Truth without reasoning and proof. Admonition is not necessary for the people of Truth. Perhaps due to the principles, the images of this perception will be created in the heart, so that you see His world without proof or veils. It is from this that Omar, may God be pleased with him, said, "My heart saw my Lord," and Ali, may God beautify his face, said, "Even if the veil were removed, nothing would be added to my certainty." Many secrets are hidden in this which are not proper to be dealt with here.

With regard to importance, there is no doubt that man will never find anything more important than the ultimate happiness. The total of things sought in relation to this, are small. The greatest means of access is gnosis. Therefore from the totality of forms it has been proven that gnosis is nobler than the totality of other 'knowledges.' Junayid, peace be upon him, said, "If I knew that there was a knowledge under the Sun nobler than that which the elite of gnostics plunge themselves in, I would not have busied myself with anything but that and I would have taken the most direct road to achieve it."

Section Two:How the Beginnings become manifest to the Neophytes

The first lightening which comes from the Presence of the Lordship onto the souls of the seekers is the light of the rising Sun and the inner light of the heart. The light which comes from the sacred world illuminates the way of the seeker and they are delicious. The on rushing of this light is like a dazzling flash of lightening. It comes suddenly and it leaves quickly. *It is He who shows you the lightening for fear and hope* (13:13)., fear it will perish and hope for its continuted existence. From the point of view of the second, it indicates the 'times' of the brothers in catharsis. The Sufis call these lights, moments. And it is because of this that one said, "The moment is swifter than a sword." In the Divine Book there are many indications of this, such as, *well nigh the gleam of His lightening snatches away the sight* (24:43).

Wasiti was asked, "Wherefrom is the restlessness in the states of some poeple in the spiritual dance?"

He said, "There are lights which appear and then are folded." He recited some lines like this: "From them a flash came to the heart. The flash of the lightening appeared and then dwindled away."

They shall have their provision at dawn and evening (19:63). These flashes do not always come, there are times when they are cut off. When asceticism increases, the lightnings increase so that whatever the pupil of the eye looks at, it is reminded of the states of that world, and suddenly these lights become continuous. And it may happen that following this the organs are shaking. The Prophet, upon

whom be peace, said in expectation of this state, the following which among his words is famous, "In times of your worldly existence your Lord sends His breath of Compassion. Be sure to catch it."

Those disciplined in subtle contemplation and remembrance, free from carnal desires, should take advantage of the idleness of his senses to return to the state. It may happen that he who is not an ascetic will attain this state but he will be unaware of it. If there is a contemplative man of sound mind who always remembers the spiritual states, and he is waiting for the holy feasts when people go to places of prayer and sounds are exhalted and 'Allah Akbar' is heard on high, he will be effected at that time from these sounds, a very beautiful effect will occur.

In the same way, during a war, when one comes face to face with the warriors and the clamour, horses neighing and the sound of the drum is heard on high, the war becomes difficult and men begin struggling and the swift swords are unsheathed and if someone has a pure heart and even if he is not an ascetic, he will receive news of the state only if at that moment he remembers the spiritual states, and envisions the essence of the spirits of the ancient saints and visualizes the magnificence and line of the plenum.

Similarly, if one mounts a stead and starts it galloping and imagines that he leaves his body aside, with his purified soul he will be on the threshold of the Almighty Lord. He will be subdued by the line of angels.

He will be effected even if he is not an ascetic. Here there are many secrets which only a few today reach. And if this lightening appears to the pupil of the eye and from that reaches the brain, it may appear it is in the brain, in the shoulders, in the back. A very strong veil leaps and the state is delicious. Seek aid in the spiritual dance, it makes it more complete and this is only the first station.

Section Three: On Tranquility

Then when lights of the secret reach the utmost limit and do not pass over quickly and remain there for a long time, they call this tranquility and its pleasure is more perfect than those of any other flashes. Those who return to humaness from this tranquility feel great regret at having been separated. Regarding this one of the pious ones has said:

> Oh, nearness of the morning breeze, how sweet are thee.
> Anyone who enters unto thee tastes the food of intimacy.
> What a happy life for those people who have approached thee.
> They have drunk of the sacred in thy drinking place.

And in the Holy Book, tranquility is mentioned many times: *Then God send down on him His tranquility* (9:40) and in another place, *It is He who sent down the tranquility into the hearts of the believers* (48:4), that they may add belief unto

their belief. He who finds tranquility reports of the inner states of men and informs of what is hidden and he knows all of physiognomy. And the Chosen One, God bless and keep him and his family, gave the following report. "Fear a believer's penetration of the mind, for he perceives with the light of God." The Prophet, upon whom be peace says about the truth of Omar, may God be pleased with him, "Tranquility speaks with the tongue of Omar," and also , "Certainly there are among my Companions theologians and scholars of traditions. Omar is one of them."

He who attains tranquility will hear endless, subtle summons from the high Paradise and spiritual discourse are given to him. He will become certain. So that as the Divine revelation says, *In God's remembrance are at rest the hearts of those who believe and do righteous deeds (13:28)*, very fresh and subtle forms through union in high stations.

This station is the middle of the stations of those who are on the path of love. In the state between sleep and wakefulness, he will hear frightening noises and strange cries. At the time of the veiling or tranquility, great lights will be seen and it may be that at the end of taking this great pleasure one will become weak. These events are upon the path of the seekers of Truth and not to the group who retreat and close their eyes and are playing games of fantasy. If thou hast benefited from the lights of the sincere ones, thou shalt experience great sorrow in their leaving, *then the vain-doers shall be lost.(40:78)*.

This tranquility becomes such that if a man wished to hold back, it would not be possible. It becomes such that any time that he wishes to flee his mould, with the intention of gaining the world of Divine Majesty, the macrocosm, he will ascend to the high spheres. It will be easy and possible for him whenever he likes to do so. Therefore, whenever one looks at one's own essence, one will be happy because one will see the radiance of God's light falling upon oneslf and this is still imperfection.

When one immerses oneself, one will pass from this station also. Of course, it will become such that one does not upon one's own essence. One's consciousness of the selfhood of self is destroyed. This is called 'greater annihilation.' When one forgets oneself and one forgets to forget, that is called 'annihilation within annihilation.'

While a person is happy in learning, that person is still imperfect. As long as one continues to take delight in gnosis, one is still imperfect. This is known as latent polytheism. One only reaches perfection when one loses knowledge in the thing known. One who is happy in knowledge and the thing known, as well, has two purposes in view, and one will become purified only when one immerses one's knowledge into the thing known. When the human form is destroyed, that is the state of complete annihilation and it is the station of: *all that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid* (55:26-27).

Some of the people of Truth say, "There is no divinity but the Divinity," is the unity of the common people; and "There is no he but He' is the unity of the special people. This division is too simple. There are

five stages of unity. First, "There is no divinity but the Divinity," and this is the unity of the common people which negates a godhead from all except God and these are the commonest of the common.

Beyond this group is a group which in relation to the former, is special. But in relation to the next group which has a higher station, they are also common and their unity is "There is no he but He." Their station is higher than the first group because they negated divinity from what was other than Truth.

But this group did not sufficiently negate Truth from what is other than God. They negated all quiddity as against the quiddity of the Sublime Truth and they said, 'Heness belongs to Him.' Others can not be called He because all Heness emanantes from Him so that absolute Heness belongs to Him.

Beyond this group there is a third group whose unity is 'There is no thou but Thou' and this is higher than those who say the Truth is 'He.' 'He' is addressed to those absent (third person singular and plural). The third group negate all the thou's on the path of 'Thouness' of their Beloved. Their direction is towards the second person present.

There is another group above this one and it is higher. They say, since others have said Thou, they have separated Him from themselves proving duality and dualism is far from the world of Oneness. They lost themselves and felt lost in seeking the Truth.

The fifth group has said that dualism and egoism and quiddity are all unnecessary additional illusions added to the essence of the Almighty. They drown all three words in complete annihilation. Phrases vanish and references disappear and *Everything perishes except His Face* (28:88). Their station is higher. One who is attached to the world of human nature will never reach the world of Divine nature. The There is no station higher than this because it has no end. A great one was asked, "What is Sufism?" and he answered, "The beginning is God and the end has no end."

Section Two:The More of a Gnostic a Person is, the More Perfect

A famous tradition states, "God has never taken an ignorant person as a friend." The owner of the great Law, with all his perfection, was ordained to increase knowledge. The Sublime Truth said to him: *Say, oh my Lord, increase me in knowledge* (20:113). The following are among the Prophet's blessed words, "Beware of each day in which thy knowledge hast not increased because that morning has no divine grace."

Since the Messenger was in this state, what can the state of another one be compared to this? For the knowledge which the gnostic discovers through mystical intuition, it is not necessary that he be divorced, ransomed, tax payer or purchaser since that is knowledge of the manifest world. Rather, it is the knowledge of the states of the Almighty, the Magnificent, the Lordship that one comes to know through

mystical intuition. Know the system of order, know the existence of the spiritual world, know hidden mysteries of the universe, and of this world, as it has been said: *Say: He sent it down who knows the secret in the heavens and earth* (25:7).

To make known knowledge of the mystery of predestination is forbidden. In the words of the Prophet, it is forbidden to reveal them, such that he said, "Destiny is a secret of God, then do not reveal it." All of the seekers of Truth agree that the revealing of secret mysteries is infidelity. In the same way, it is not necessary that all that has been made known to the seekers of Truth be formulated in sentences so that everybody may begin to understand. The Majestic Beauty of Oneness is more than the place of entry of every enterer or the desire of every desirer or the thing sought by every seeker. *Few indeed are those that are thankful among My servants* (34:12).

In the primordial nature of man, with the multiplicity of the organs of his body, there is no more than one point which deserves to be opened to the sacred. *But We found not therein except one house of those that have surrendered themselves* (51:36). The structure of the individual is like this; that is, from the many faculties and the various organs and the mixing of 'humaness' with the multiplicity of the elements no more than one is capable of ascent. The composition of a developed town is analogous to this. Thus indirect examples are more preferable.

These lines are mine:

In the corner of the khanaghah there are many men
Who from the tablet of existence read many mysteries
Outside the camel-cat knows of the states of the planets
And is in a state of wonder but drives a donkey.

The man of speculation must always discourse on the strange mysteries and truths. Descend upon as much as the memory deserves. Hossein Mansur Hallaj, upon whom be peace, said, "The friendship of two people becomes firm when no secrets are concealed between the two." So when love becomes perfect the secrets of the Hermetic sciences and mysteries and all the angles of creatures are no longer veiled. Since the ultimate perfection of the slave lies in this, that is, to become like the Transcendent Absolute and Perfect knowledge is among his Qualities, ignorance is an imperfection of the slave. So it follows that whoever is a better gnostic is more noble. In summary, ignorance is ugly.

Section Three: Proof of the pleasure and affection of the slave for God.

The genreral belief of the theologians and the men of jurisprudence is that it is not possible for the slave to have affection for the Creator. This is because loving is a passion of the soul and the passion of the soul is towards one's genus and God the Almighty is more transcendent than to be of the same genus as his creatures.

Affection consists of the obedience of the slave towards God the Almighty. Gnostics have proven the possibilities of affection and pleasure in creatures for the Creator. There is no necessity for homogenity because men love color or forms notwithstanding the fact that they are not of the same genus. The affection of God the Almighty does not belong to the animal faculties, but to the point of divinity which is the center of the divine mysteries within man.

This affection belongs to spiritual tasting. Affection is the inner self becoming happy through conceiving the presence of another inner self. Homogenity is a condition of this.

Love consists of affection which has exceeded its boundaries. Love does not remain upon finding the desired thing and desire does not remain, therefore each desirer necessarily has found something, and yet, has not found something. So that if one were to find all the beauty that one desired, desire would not remain, and if nothing were ever found or perceived, one's wish would never be conceived. Thus every desirer is an attainer and unattainer. In desire there is imperfection because it is necessary not to attain to it.

As to the subject of proving that pleasure consists of each thing acheiving perfection and becoming aware of this attainment, if perfection is achieved and the attainer is not informed, it is not perfection.

When the eye achieves perfection, it is the faculty of sight. It perceives and enjoys subtle things. The ear has a pleasure and it is the faculty of hearing subtle sounds like a happy song. The sense of smelling achieves pleasure in the smell of good things. The same is true of the other senses. The perfection of the rational soul is the knowledge of God and eternal truths. Therefore when the soul finds perfection, its supreme perfection is from divine illumination taking the shape of magnificent perfection so that the pleasures of it are greater because the perception of them is greater. The noblest among the perceivers is the human soul and Truth is the greatest knowledge, therefore the pleasures of man are more perfect and more abundant. An impotent man

has no news of the pleasures of copulation. He hears also that men have totally gained from that. An old man said it well, "He who has not tasted does not know."

These words are proof of pleasure and affection. It was said by a Sufi at the time of Junayd, upon whom be peace, when Gholam Khalik and a group of theologians and jurisprudents said unkind things about the brothers in catharsis and they passed verdicts concerning their atheism and they witnessed and attested to it. Junayd closed his eyes to the situation. The beloved King, Abul Hossein Nuri, and Katonie, Zaghagh and a group of elders were brought to the place for punishment. Swordsmen intended to kill them. This story is famous that Abul Hossein Nuri intended himself to be killed first. They asked him about this. He said, "I wished to sacrifice my remaining moments to my brothers." These words were told to the Caliph and they were the reason for their being saved.

Epilogue

A divided essence does not deserve the knowledge of the indivisible because the deserver of gnosis becomes divisible. From the divisibility of gnosis, the divisibility of the thing known follows. Mansur Hallaj, upon whom be peace, said, "A Sufi does not go forward nor does he fall behind. Nor is he divisible." When being crucified, he said, "It is enough for God to become One with the finder."

He who wishes to remove the spider's web from himself must put 19 grips far from himself. Of these, five are apparent birds, five are hidden birds, two are fast walkers

whose movement is apparent and seven are slow walkers whose movements are hidden. It is difficult to remove these birds from oneself because whenever someone wishes to fly, the birds fly first and prevent one from flying. The most difficult to remove are the hidden birds. In the middle of them is an island where are four legged animals and each moment that man moves forward, they put their legs around his neck, suddenly, and prevent him from moving so he will not find the water of life. I have heard that if one sits in Noah's Ark and holds Moses' rod in one's hand, one will be rid of them.

The end of the Song of Simurgh