

# Abbasgulu agha Bakikhanov



## Tahdīb al-Aḳlāq (Education of Morality)



## ***Abbasgulu agha Bakikhanov - Tahdīb al-Aklāq***

### **EDUCATION OF MORALITY**

“Education of Morality” is the main philosophical work of Abbasgulu agha Bakikhanov. It was written in 1248 AH (1832/33 CE) aiming to promote the improvement of education and upbringing of the younger generation. According to the author, this work is “a moral philosophy based on the teachings of sacred books, as well as Greek, Arab, and European philosophers”. The manuscript “Education of Morals” (“Tahdīb al-Aklāq”) was written by Bakikhanov in Persian and was published in Russian for the first time in 1983. This English version is translated by Chat-GPT4 from that edition. The initial chapters of this manuscript were published in 1888 in the original language without indicating the author in the Kəşkül newspaper, published in Tiflis in the Azerbaijani language.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See “Kashkul” issues: № 72, May 2, 1888, p. 120; № 73, May 14, 1888, pp. 127-128; № 74, May 25, 1888, pp. 135-136; № 75, June 20, 1888, pp. 142-143

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## Foreword

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate! Praise and thanks are due to the One<sup>2</sup> alone, to express gratitude to whom is a blessing, and whose mercy is the goal of attainment. Infinite greetings befit the trustworthy [man]<sup>3</sup>, who is [the measure] of the manifestation of the qualities of necessity and the beginning of the emergence of possibility; his offspring<sup>4</sup> also deserves reverence, possessing glorified character traits, being guiding lights and signs of favor.

Furthermore. The ultimate goal of all sciences and works consists in acquiring enlightenment and exploring needs. For without them, it is impossible to strengthen the affairs of the Sharia or to maintain the order of life.

Sanā'ī<sup>5</sup> [says]:

*Consider science the male, and action the female:  
From them are born religion and state.*

Therefore, I, the insignificant Abbasgulu, known as Qodsi, son of Mirza Muhammad-Khan of Baku, wished to compile in the year 1248 of the Hijra a small book, gathering in mental comparisons some of my research on theological books and works of great people of different nations - Muslim, Greek, and European philosophers. Although I myself am deficient and ignorant, and unworthy to give others instructions, as [says] some poet:

*Don't give instructions to others, being yourself uninstructed;  
Arrowhead is first fitted to the tip of the arrow, and then it hits the target.*

However, if this little book brings some benefit and some of its topics are recalled in the circle of intelligent people and influence others, then my effort will not be fruitless. Even if my composition is not worth that much, I still think it better to devote my life to this than to spend it in idleness, in the whims of passion and malice.

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<sup>2</sup> This refers to Allah.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to Muhammad.

<sup>4</sup> This refers to 12 imams, Ahl al-Bayt.

<sup>5</sup> Abul-Majd Majdūd ibn Ādam Sanā'ī Ghaznavi was a 12<sup>th</sup> century poet.

According to its content, I named my composition "Education of Morality." It consists of an introduction, twelve chapters, and a conclusion. I rely on Allah.

In the introduction of this book, it discusses philosophy; the first chapter is about the observance of moderation; the second chapter is about the superiority of virtue; the third chapter is about achieving well-being; the fourth chapter is about adherence to customs; the fifth chapter is about explaining glory; the sixth chapter is about the kingdoms of love; the seventh chapter is about the benefits of action; the eighth chapter is about the rules of communication; the ninth chapter is about the rules of modesty; the tenth chapter is about the exaltations of conscientiousness; the eleventh chapter is about the benefits of being content with little; the twelfth chapter is about the rites of hope, and the conclusion is about the mysteries of enlightenment.

## Introduction

When contemplating the purpose of goods and investigating the essence of things, a state arises in which the beautiful and the ugly are revealed; as a result, nothing will seem strange to a person, and consolation will be found in all difficulties; in the darkness of nature, the light of hope will shine, and in this way, a person will be able to learn science, explore needs, and, as far as possible, remove human-inherent passions. Therefore, such thinking itself is philosophy. According to the saying, "*He who misses out on philosophy deprives himself of great benefit,*" philosophy will help a person achieve well-being in this world and find good for the afterlife.

Sanā'ī [says]:

*If science cannot serve self-denial,  
Ignorance is a hundred times better than such science.*

The task of philosophy is not in determining [the positions] of celestial bodies and their orbits, but in acquiring enlightenment and exploring needs. However, instead of serving as a means of educating people, the task of determining [the positions] of celestial bodies and their orbits has become a sign of hindrance.

The author<sup>6</sup> [says]:

*Disputes and gossip in madrasas - many do not know;  
Ignorance is the cause of all this - it is astonishing.*

Thus, one spends time on *naḥw*<sup>7</sup>, another on *bayān*<sup>8</sup>, a third, ignorant of the essence, is attached to *uṣūl*<sup>9</sup>, the fourth is weak and powerless, but discusses *akbār*<sup>10</sup>.

Yes, all this [comes] not from understanding, but from the influence of

<sup>6</sup> This is Bakikhanov himself.

<sup>7</sup> Syntax, part of scholastic Muslim education, studying collocations of the Arabic language.

<sup>8</sup> Literature, part of scholastic Muslim education, studying the expressive means of the Arabic language.

<sup>9</sup> Part of the scholastic Muslim education, studying the basics of Islamic law.

<sup>10</sup> Name given to version of Shia *hadith* (sayings).

custom. For anyone who lives in any society will adopt the manners of that society, he will imitate it, seeing harm to himself in opposition to society and corresponding benefit in agreement with it, but he does not know that Allah has given him the power of distinction, endowed with reason to distinguish good from evil and thus be different from other animals. However, animals also experience this external benefit and harm, characteristic of humans. Consequently, the difference distinguishing man from animal essentially disappears. In such a case, how can one know without rational investigation what is truly a virtuous hope, how to discern the impending evil, how it should be avoided, and how such avoidance is possible? Therefore, many, not knowing themselves what they desire, demand [fulfillment] of their desires there and in such a form that it is impossible to achieve them. When the result is opposite to their desire, they lament their misfortune and blame others for it.

The author [says]:

*What does your heart desire?*

*If it does not desire, then why do you complain?*

Indeed, no one should be saddened without cause. Worst of all is that, believing Allah to be an obstacle to good, they say: "*My fate did not accompany my aspiration.*" Yes, the reason for all this is that they do not know their deficiencies. And, perhaps, they do not want to consider themselves ignorant and foolish. An example of this can be the explanation of my own situation.

In my youth, I fully trusted my mind, never admitting the thought of my deficiencies. A matter, inconsistent with my opinion, or a question with an undesirable outcome for me, I saw from others, blamed the people of my time, although they were not without fault. But their fault was not as much as I imagined. As my knowledge and experience increased, I began to doubt the degree [of perfection] of my mind. Gradually, unknown deficiencies began to be revealed. Finally, [one day] in a good mood, in solitude from others, I, making conscience my judge, glanced over all my behavior and actions. It became clear that my perceptions were distorted, full of my own desires and passions. What I considered good turned out to be bad, and my manners and my condition - contradictory. If my understanding had triumphed over my self-love, I would not have done those things which I now remember with regret. Furthermore, I

wanted to know the degree [of perfection] of my science, on which I relied most. After [some] investigation, I was surprised to find that my science was still not applicable to external matters. It turned out that I had adhered not to experience, but to coincidences and habits, guided not by reality, but by imagination, acquired many unnecessary means, and overlooked everything that was necessary.

Then, with the aim of contributing to education and enlightenment and for the purification of morals and the exploration of needs, I turned to the books of my predecessors. And here, I did not achieve my goal. I saw that some succumbed to hermitage and skepticism, while others, denying everything, stood aside even from the necessary demands of religion. One is eloquent but biased at heart, another, to gain glory for himself, displays his enlightenment. Among them, I saw few speaking the truth. Although their words are consistent with enlightenment and truthfulness, there are such new disagreements among them and they argue with each other so much that it is difficult to understand them without comparing their statements and analyzing their arguments.

Thus, I reviewed my condition day by day, changed my behavior, applied effort to thinking and researching the works of the world's leading people and great scholars of various nations. Having learned a little about them, I gained great benefit. My confusions somewhat settled. Now in many calamities, I find a path to consolation. I am less proud of wealth, less groan from misfortune. Hence, one can imagine what we can achieve if the degree of our knowledge and experience rises.



## Chapter 1 – On the observance of moderation

Allah has established an order of harmony in this possible world, which is identical to multiplicity and is the focal point of contradictions. He created the nature of each thing in opposition to another.

The author [says]:

*The inherent goodness of the world is given for all;  
From it come both disruption and order.*

Indeed, if disagreement were not necessary in the world, the Wise<sup>11</sup> would not have created it in vain. Since the cycle of the world is conditioned by completely opposite and perfectly harmonious causes, and no matter is possible to complete without mediation, it is necessary to observe each cause in its place so that through repulsion and attraction in matters, a certain stability arises, and from the opposition of things and the diversity of their qualities, a certain measure appears, for without measure no matter can be stable. This condition is observed even in the most external affairs. Earth's produce needs moisture, but excessive moisture will lead to their destruction. If it were not for the cold of the globe, the heat of the sun would burn the world.

Since everything in nature is established with necessity and sufficiency, it is necessary for a person, who is a whole world himself, to observe this law naturally acting in his body, and in the field of morals, to take care of it more than other moral qualities. For through this, he can correct others as well. The proverb says: "*Everything is good in moderation.*" Thus, his character will be glorified and bring benefit.

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<sup>11</sup> That is, Allah.

Sanā'i [says]:

*Be fair, for the fair person*

*Will rise in his heart to the level of prophecy.*

The act of a person who crosses the boundaries of moderation would contradict the world order and the characteristics of nature, and it is clear that by doing so, he would harm himself. A person with a chaste character is one who, in all matters, avoids the greatest and least extremes, adheres to the middle way and through this achieves his desire and attains well-being. The advantage of moderation is so clear that no one can deny it.

From brief consideration, it becomes clear that as miserliness is one of the bad traits of character, so is extravagance. Although gentleness is the best trait of character, sometimes things cannot be done without anger. Beneficence is a good thing, but doing good to the wicked means acting badly towards the good. Greed is condemned, but laziness is no better than greed. It has been repeatedly confirmed by experience that an action that exceeds the limits of moderation has the opposite result. Thus, for example, amusement gradually takes the form of a habit and, finally, like any [bad] act, leads to annoyance. Freedom, when it reaches its extreme degree, turns into arbitrariness. Ambition, if it takes over a person, makes him a slave to his own desire. Wit, if it succumbs to slander and vain dreams, turns into foolishness. Knowledge, if it cannot assert in representations and definitions, leads to wavering and doubt.

## Chapter 2 – On the superiority of virtue

Since the course of the world depends on the existence of causes, each particle has its own unique property, and each property is intended for a specific good deed. If an action is directed towards good, its result is also good. Thus, everything in the world is created for good, and evil does not have real existence. If relative evil is felt, it is also for the sake of good. It is clear that for the sake of a greater good, a lesser evil is purposeful and beneficial. For instance, to save the entire body, it is necessary to cut off a finger bitten by a snake.

Mawlawi<sup>12</sup> [says]:

*In the world, there is nothing absolutely bad,  
Know that all bad is relative.*

Although in all particles of the world there is no real active force other than the essence of the necessary being, yet man is given will and power to perform actions. By doing one thing or another, a person can earn virtue or sin. For example, according to the world order, the egg cell has the ability for fertilization and conception; menstrual blood is established for nourishing the embryo. A certain path is set for its appearance in the light after the term expires. All this [happens] with divine power. But when a person commits adultery, contrary to His command, he bears responsibility. No thing in the world is free to act against its nature. Things cannot fail to perform functions arising from their existence. But man is an exception, for he has the freedom to do or not to do any action. Therefore, he can perform both good and bad deeds.

Since the true goal and real need in the world consist of virtue, man - the noblest particle of the world - should pay his debt and not forget the duties imposed on him, strive always to do good; he should know that the purpose of purifying and improving morals and acquiring enlightenment lies in virtue, for action without good is like a tree without fruit and is ineffective.

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<sup>12</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī was a 13<sup>th</sup> century poet lived in Sultanate of Rum.

The half-verse [says]:

*Sow the seed of virtue in this field!*

However, many act badly, imagining a bad deed as something good; instead of good, they do evil. Good is what brings common benefit to all. In such a case, for the sake of the common good, one must agree to individual harm. Since people of this world are biased in many matters, not every beneficial action can be called good, and not every harmful action can be called evil. Many good deeds by people represent evil. For by doing good to one person, they harm a thousand others. It's like warming a person with a cold by making a fire that burnt down a whole city. Therefore, each person should look at all his actions and deeds with the eye of conscience, not do good to those who intend to do evil to others. For inducing someone to any deed is equivalent to committing it oneself. Often it happens that someone, out of pity for the fate of a sinner or for personal gain, saves a person deserving legal punishment, and rejoicing, says that he did a good deed today. But he does not know that thereby he gives hope to other criminals to escape punishment and thereby falls into sin himself.

Interceding for the forgiveness of a sinner is the worst act, disturbing the general peace and order. A person who advocates for a sinner or considers the master of the deed cruel or wants to plunge him into sin: if the punishment is in vain, it is cruelty, but if deserved, not punishing him is sinful, and [this] will lead to the transgression of others.

Forgiving is a fine trait. However, this forgiveness should not give birth to cruelty. When cruelty is clearly allowed against an innocent person, people, outraged, will say of the tyrant that so-and-so acted badly, but if he forgives a sinner for some known reason, they praise him. They do not know that his cruelty towards one person, causing so much regret, was only in relation to one person, but his praised forgiveness will incite others to transgression, and this is cruelty in relation to thousands of people. It is good when the punishment of one person calms a thousand people. A person who acts out of personal gain or does good in anticipation of reward cannot be considered benevolent. For it is like trading, as he exchanges his goods for something else.

The poet [says]:

*Doing good in the hope of reward is not valor,  
Do it for someone you do not need.*

A person, remembering the good he has done, experiences such pleasure that cannot be compared with any wealth; a person who has done evil, on the other hand, is ashamed at the thought of a bad deed. Although the one who did evil will not reveal his deed, he will always reproach himself in his soul and will not be calm for fear of retribution for it.

Now let's compare the state of two people who have done good and bad deeds. The first one experiences peace and freedom in his mood, finds consolation in calamities, and his affairs are in order. When he encounters some misfortune, many will come to his aid, if even they cannot help, they will share his sorrow and regret. Even his enemies cannot deny his righteousness. Conversely, a person of evil will and vile deeds is always afraid of exposing his actions, and when he encounters trouble, he falls into despair; in need, he will resort to any baseness, but when he feels power, he will boastfully praise himself and enslave others; when he falls into trouble, he will hear nothing but reproach and blame; those he considered friends will turn away from him, instead of helping him, they will humiliate him, as his friends in their morals are the same people as he is.

If we look with the eye of conscience, we will see that even when the former are defeated by the latter's hands, they are still the victors. It is a pity for a person who can do good but does not; meanwhile, a person after doing good is worthy of deserved gratitude, standing on the same level with others, he appears as their benefactor.

Happy is he who possesses divine qualities and does not turn away from this inexhaustible wealth.

## Chapter 3 – On achieving wellbeing

Every person expects well-being from the actions they perform; but as knowledge and education of peoples are not without deficiency, many do not know what well-being is and how it can be achieved. Well-being itself is inseparable from the performance of good deeds. For a person who aspires to achieve these two qualities, a sound nature is necessary for beautiful morals, intelligence and knowledge for understanding the essence of things, justice for overcoming the greatest and least extremes, diligence and will to remove obstacles.

Well-being consists in [mental] state, not in wealth and rank. If well-being lay in rank and degree, then it would be most prevalent among the highly ranked. However, with the increase in rank and property, troubles and needs grow. Since well-being consists of a person's contentment with his [mental] state, every person, regardless of their rank or class, can achieve well-being. Perhaps a peasant with his family in his garden experiences joy. For him, that is well-being. Meanwhile, the *padishah*, due to turmoil in the country at that very hour, is engulfed in sorrow.

It is possible to imagine joy in various states. Thus, for example, it may happen that a sick person experiences joy while ill, a poor person when his pocket is empty, a prisoner when sitting in a dungeon. For them, this joy is well-being.

The author [says]:

*Even if my heart is in a castle, for it, it's free.*

*A prisoner chained in chains is also happy.*

The highest degree of well-being is moderation and balance. Just as material hardship leads to confusion, disorder, and sorrow, so too a high position serves as a cause of need and dislike. But in ignorance, we see tranquility in great wealth and high position and do not know about the difficulties and requirements necessary for achieving it.

The author [says]:

*Thinking about means of enjoyment is endless sorrow.*

*For a heart that shuns all this, there is joy.*

In short, a person should not act so that peers envy him, nor so as to degrade himself in their eyes. For every great and small deed, there is a certain middle line of balance, which is approved in all cases and necessary for well-being. The main condition for well-being is mental peace. A prosperous person is not troubled by events occurring in the world. After all, what phenomenon can disturb a person who has achieved well-being!

Looking at a person who is higher in rank than us and thinking about his appearance, we consider ourselves unhappy. This is wrong. We should not succumb to such a feeling but should look at those who are below us. Among our peers, we can find many who are poorer and more unhappy than us. If so, we should not complain but thank and rejoice. We should think about whether we are indeed unhappy and analyze who is the cause of this unhappiness - ourselves or others. If living together in the world is possible, why can't we be accommodating and carry out actions in the proper order. Meanwhile, in the world, there is no real misfortune, there are these usual phenomena. When any of them corresponds to our mood and position, we call it happiness, when it does not correspond - misfortune. Real misfortune would be if a person could not endure adversity, could not find a way of consolation. Every adversity that befalls us can have two causes, i.e., either we ourselves or others are the cause; if we are the cause, then we should complain not about others but about ourselves; if the cause is not in us, then it may have a good outcome. Often for the sake of great good, a person suffers minor harm and does not know whether it is beneficial to him or not.

The author [says]:

*Many are the evils from which good is born,  
Otherwise, the idolater would not have left the house of the fire-worshippers.*

If we look with the eye of conscience, we will see that there is a worse misfortune than the one that befell you. The day that went very badly for you may have been even worse, at least for a hundred thousand people, who nevertheless considered themselves happy. If you endure a little, your position will change, and perhaps many difficult matters will undoubtedly become easy; only the chimera of the day you spent in adversity or feasting will remain. But the difference is that the recollection of the day of feasting will breed regret and dislike, and the passing of the day of adversity will bring joy.

Interestingly, some people, taking many events occurring in the world personally, say: "*You see, this is my fate; as soon as I got on the ship, a storm arose, or such and such an event occurred. All this because fate does not smile on me, time is not favorable to me.*" This is a very erroneous thought. The poor thing does not understand: who he is and what the value of his being is, so that because of him, such discrepancies occurred in the world. This arises from the demand of all nature, and his presence or absence here is of no importance.

The poet [says]:

*The sea waves by its being,  
The twig thinks it's because of it.*

A person who desires well-being should try to prepare the necessary means depending on him, then entrust the outcome of affairs to the wisdom of Allah and avoid expectations and anxieties, which have no other benefit except disturbance and sorrow. When a ship is damaged at sea, everyone on it is frightened. An agitated person often gets lost and cannot find a means of salvation or, out of fear, prematurely gives himself up to death.



The author [says]:

*The lover should be patient; a bird caught in a net,  
By struggling, gets more entangled.*

But a well-off person will not be confused, clutching a piece of board, he calmly throws himself into the raging waves of the sea. Perhaps he will be saved, even if he is not saved, what is the use of fear and regret. Death is a commonplace affair.

The author [says]:

*Whatever comes from the beloved, life or death - I accept,  
Each of them is a decent good in its turn.*

Moreover, why fear the phenomenon of death, since it frees the benefactor from the torments of this world and carries him to a better world than this world, and the villain is saved from further transgressions, if he had lived a long life. But to seek death in life or to seek life on the deathbed contradicts the principles of well-being and is a sign of being overwhelmed by anxieties.

The author [says]:

*Anxiety leads to futile efforts,  
But the affair will go its own way.*

A person should be content, for the Wise<sup>13</sup>, who has power over everything, allows nothing without necessity. Thus, knowing life and death to be necessary and appropriate, He sends them in time to His servants.

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<sup>13</sup> That is, Allah.

## Chapter 4 – On adherence to customs

The highest degree of knowledge and enlightenment for common people is imitation. They simply cannot go beyond imitation. All their research and thinking depend on custom, not on shrewdness. Thus, the population of one country likes its own laws and customs, while the population of another country, having chosen different customs and traditions, reproaches them for this. It is strange that both nations defend their rightness and take pride in their customs.

There are actions considered bad by one tribe but recognized as some of the best behavior rules by others. For instance, those who worship dogs, cats, etc., consider a person who believes in a single Allah to be an infidel. They pay attention to the search for arguments but are unaware of their shortcomings. All this indicates that people are engaged in imitation and affirmation, not in research and investigation. Their arguments are also just an expression of the perceptions that are formed in accordance with customs.

Sanā'ī [says]:

*They believe in a bull, considering it a god,  
But they do not believe in the prophecy of Noah.*

They say that Socrates, when dying, said: "*People are confident in science, but I am in ignorance.*" Indeed, a strong argument for human ignorance is his trust in his own science. Authors of historical books have written a lot about the cruelties and bad deeds of many tribes and, presenting this with pride, they were ashamed [to write] about the opposite. Now we wonder: why didn't people know at the time about these bad deeds? And even in our age, what is customary in Persia looks bad in Europe. A deed approved in European countries is considered bad by Arabs. Even on the same continent, the English do not like the manners of the Germans, and the French do not recognize the actions of the Spaniards. Even the rulers of minds, not to mention the common people, are in the captivity of imitation. The leaders of Sharia, these zealots of hermitage, in addition to the necessary needs, also follow the reserve [for the afterlife] and do not acknowledge the transience of anything.

The author [says]:

*How many men of science, who, despite their superiority,  
In this regard, lack more understanding than the common man.*

Could the ancient scholars believe that a man could move through the air? Meanwhile, we see those rising into the air using the power of steam. Who knows what discoveries will be made in the world after this. Those who deny the science of astronomy do not believe in the influence of the Moon, the nearest [cosmic] mass to the Earth. They say that a mass located 51,353 miles from the Earth, how can it influence us. Meanwhile, it has been positively argued that the slowing down and acceleration of plant growth depend on the full moon and new moon. It also causes the tides and ebbs of the seas. The Moon is also the cause of uterine bleeding in women.

Thus, everything in nature has its own feature, every action has its quality, which the Arranger of affairs has established for the good of the world, and conceals His wisdom from vain dreams and bad thoughts. However, everything that exists in the world is created for man, the noblest particle of the world. To achieve his true desire, he is given the ability to learn with the help of science and knowledge about these hidden secrets. Everyone knows this. However, very few are thoughtful and achieve the benefits of science and practice.

After a person has learned about the inadequacy of his knowledge and that his sensual inclinations have crossed their boundaries, he should not rely on his own science and faith, undertake a deed without thoroughly and comprehensively considering it. He should compare his mental research with the opinions of the great people of the world and outstanding scholars of the nations and not be ashamed to recognize a deed that has common benefit. Since none of our actions is without imitation, at the very least, one should imitate not what leads to bad and harmful, but what is useful to all.

The poet [says]:

*If you do not have an eye capable of seeing Allah,  
At least be a sun worshiper, but not a bull worshiper.*

## Chapter 5 – On explaining fame

Improvement of status and lifestyle in the world is for the sake of fame and so that others have a good opinion of us. For the same reason, many observe rites of beneficence and respect towards each other; but if this quality exceeds its limits, it will lead to the downfall of a person, gradually causing them to lose their noble character and become perplexed in their actions and deeds. Avoiding fame, just like being partial to it, will cause regret; however, a moderate degree [of fame] is admirable and will lead a person to their goal.

Assume that a good opinion of talented people about us can bring us fame. However, how stable can the phenomenon [of fame] be, which depends on various opinions? The slander and invention of one person can disrupt it [fame]. Since every person has their own opinion and everyone reasons according to their own understanding of the quality of things, believes in this quality based on their knowledge and perception, it is very likely that someone, out of their own ignorance, instead of praising another, will slander him, attributing to others those qualities that please themselves but which, in the opinion of others, are very bad and vicious.

Moreover, agreeing with the opinions of people disapproved of by wise people indicates your similarity with them and brings shame upon you. Therefore, a person should not be obsessed with fame but act according to the requirements of their humanity. Among people who consider malice to be cunning, impiety as cleverness, and trickery as skill, there may be those who do not exhibit acts of virtue for fear of their reproach and criticism. However, those who value reputation and virtue above fame are not afraid of the reproach of slanderers and, possibly, the slanderers will always envy them. He will be satisfied with the slanderer in two respects: if the slanderer is an unworthy person, then he will rejoice, knowing that he is not his equal; if the slanderer is worthy, then, knowing about his deficiency, he will be glad to try to correct it.

Too much attention should not be paid to the words of slanderers. Everyone knows that a person cannot avoid the reproach of slanderers, they will find fault with at least one of your actions. And, possibly, they will present good as evil. We see those prophets, representing universal reason, were considered mad.

Many do not approve of laws, events, and phenomena that are necessary and consistent with wisdom, when they are contrary to their opinions. If they could, they would even reproach Allah himself. Thus, rejection or recognition by the common man should not deter a person from their cause. Therefore, as much as possible, a person should try to ensure that their actions and deeds outwardly do not contradict the customs and laws - the laws of the people. For when a person's actions and deeds contradict the customs and laws of the people, the people will turn away from him, and he will not be able to perform acts of virtue. If outwardly he does not oppose them, he can gradually bring them to understand even the good and bad sides of their own actions.

It has been repeatedly experienced that after being overcome by vanity, it is difficult to succeed in matters. For as a result of vanity, a person himself will lag behind the matter, and others, out of envy or partiality, will want to hinder him. Therefore, a person should not display their superiority to such an extent as to arouse envy in others, or during a dispute and investigation, should not defeat anyone in such a way that their ignorance becomes known to all present. This will cause him shame, arouse hatred in him, and he will start to harbor enmity towards you.

Many people think that winning a dispute creates ambition in a person, and they take pride in this. And it is even stranger that many people, not fully possessing rational and established norms of behavior in society, look for an opportunity and occasion to express some novelty or open an incomprehensible controversy. Often, an ignorant person enters into a dispute with a knowledgeable person to show their awareness, but in reality, they show their ignorance.

## Chapter 6 – On realms of love

A person possesses two types of character: one is innate, given by nature, and the other is acquired, which is born out of science and habits. It is difficult for a person to reject or accept their innate character, although it is possible; but it requires effort and diligence. However, the acquired character can initially be rejected or accepted with little effort. Over time, this acquired character becomes entrenched, as the saying goes, "*Habit is second nature*," and takes root in one's nature as if it were an innate character.

The primary need of human nature is love. No nature is devoid of love, but only has degrees of it. The order and harmony in the world also consist of love or are themselves love. For without love, nothing can exist, and without it, no action can be accomplished. This quality appears in various forms depending on the differences in natures, natural substances, degrees of knowledge, and repetition of habits.

1<sup>st</sup> form is gravitation, present in all of nature, in all three kingdoms, including even minerals and plants. Examples include the attraction of iron to a magnet, thistle to amber, etc.

2<sup>nd</sup> form is attachment, which is exclusive to living beings. Attachment is a higher degree of gravitation and arises from repetition over a long period. For example, every living being, due to gender or some other reason, becomes attached to other living beings, such that they derive pleasure from meeting them and sorrow from their absence. Since humans are the most perfect of creations, their attachment is more complete than that of other animals.

3<sup>rd</sup> form is inclination, consisting of desires for domination, where the human nature, without intellectual prompts, shows an inclination for everything required by natural needs and habits. This characteristic, like running, jumping, vocalizing, eating, sleeping, engaging in sexual intercourse, and satisfying other similar needs, is inherent in animals. However, given the special gift to humans, their inclination is executed at a higher degree than in other creatures. Yet when something similar occurs, people, as the saying goes, "*are like cattle, even more astray*,"<sup>14</sup> becoming the lowest of all creations. But humans can gradually

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<sup>14</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah al-'A'rāf – 178/179

conquer the sensual desires of inclination using their intellect, their distinguishing feature, and elevate themselves to the level of true humanity. Then, as the saying goes, "*we honored the sons of Adam*,"<sup>15</sup> a person will achieve inexhaustible blessings and discover divine qualities in themselves.

4<sup>th</sup> form is passion, exclusive to humans and absent in other living beings. Passion is what predisposes a person either consciously or habitually to an action they like or from which they expect benefit. Indeed, passion is a blessing given to achieve a goal. Without it, a person cannot reach their desire. Passion is so powerful that when perfected, it overcomes all obstacles and brings each person to a position within their capacity. Passion is always a suitable tool for action. The acquisition of knowledge and skill is also associated with it. Sin and bad actions are again committed thanks to it. However, since passion arises from the wants of nature and the desire for benefit, a person, using their intellect to distinguish good from bad, will keep it from nefarious intentions and direct it towards acquiring education, enlightenment, and virtuous qualities.

5<sup>th</sup> form is love, the highest degree of attachment. It is born out of infatuation from the heart. Infatuation from the heart is of two kinds: first, as a continuation of interaction through friendship and relations practiced among people, or as an attachment to property and rank, with the aim of obtaining pleasure in the hope of interest and benefit; second, as love nurtured by nature's command for offspring, relatives, and siblings. This characteristic is present throughout nature. We see this bond and attachment also among animals, as without it, all consolation in the world would cease. The same bond is the reason for a person entering into marriage and continuing their lineage. Attachment, and as its highest degree – love, arise from the correspondence of kinship, morality, and habit. Without such correspondence, there can be no love. For example, there can be no love bond between a good and an evil person, between a just and a cruel person; similarly, a wise person cannot be friends with a fool, a noble person with a base one. It can be said that one can judge a person's character by the character of their friends. As the saying goes, "*A friend of a person is an indicator of their mind*," people with whom one is friends are their equals in nature and upbringing.

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<sup>15</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' – 70

6<sup>th</sup> form is amorous ecstasy (*aşk*). Amorous ecstasy is the highest degree of love. When love reaches its extreme degree, a person finds themselves in such a state that their heart is freed from dreaming about anything else, presence or absence becomes indifferent to them. This condition manifests in two forms. The first is gradual, [where] love for someone for their beautiful face or character over time takes root in the heart and it progressively grows as a result of meeting [them] or dwelling in dreams.

The author [says]:

*Gradually, the desire of the heart turns into passionate love,  
Accumulating drop by drop, it finally forms a sea.*

The other form is sudden love, [where], upon seeing the face of a beauty or for some random reason, the ruler of love conquers the estate of the heart so that there is neither time to recover nor the possibility to get angry.

Mohtasham<sup>16</sup> [says]:

*The beauty of love is such a partner that, when it finds an opportunity,  
It will spill the blood even of Azrael himself.*

Love is the need of the soul. Since in the natural world there is a special connection between souls and elements, due to the giftedness of substances and the needs of characters, amorous ecstasy in its existence can be incomplete or complete. It can be unknown or sober thanks to the senses. At the beginning of the affair, we must understand whose love we are intoxicated by and what we can have from love. If amorous intoxication is reasonable and beautiful, then it is equivalent to happiness and desirable.

Sa'di<sup>17</sup> [says]:

*Love is humanity, if you do not have this pleasure,  
Then you only share food and sleep with quadrupeds.*

In other circumstances, it is possible, at least, to understand its harm, because when amorous ecstasy takes over the heart, it will subject all senses and character traits [of a person] to itself and deprive them of the opportunity to turn to reason. As the saying goes, "*Amorous ecstasy is a fire that burns everything,*"

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<sup>16</sup> Ali b. Ahmad "Mohtasham" Kashani (1500–1588) was a Safavid-era poet specialized in Ashura *marsiya* poetry.

<sup>17</sup> Sa'di Shīrāzī (1210-1291) was a famous Persian poet and author of "Bustan"



the lover sees nothing but the beloved. Although the wise find no remedy against the suffering from amorous ecstasy, apparently, in the early stages of intoxication with love, the fire of love can be extinguished by engaging in various activities, maintaining contact with others, or through abstinence or removal of whims. Although the nature [of the intoxicated] is inclined to nothing but the beloved, it must be made to wean more and more so that the fire of ecstasy gradually fades.

In short, whatever it may be, amorous ecstasy, although externally harmless [to health], is approved.

The author [says]:

*Let the head whirl from ecstasy of love for the black, musk-scented curls,  
even though we lose our head from this amorous ecstasy.*

Among the countless benefits of love, it is enough to note that it frees a person from the worries of this world, the source of all lowly character traits, and leaves no other dream in the lover's head but the dream of the beloved.

Yaghma<sup>18</sup> [says]:

*Throwing a lasso of her curls around my neck, the beauty  
Pulled so that I broke hundreds of my chain bonds.*

The well-known proverb says: "If grief were one, then its cure would be easy." The pleasure of love, although figurative, is true, as it eases for the lover the difficulties of the deathbed and teaches his nature to forget everything except the beloved. As they say, "Allegory is a bridge to the truth," it will be a guide to true love and will eventually lead to the lover renouncing himself [life]. Indeed, this is amorous ecstasy, and all our statements are a preparation of means to achieve it.

The author [says]:

*I am proud only of the feast of love,  
For after the intoxication from the goblet of any other feast,  
only a hangover follows.*

But since our goal is to interpret morals and education, to avoid misunderstanding, we have not gone beyond the issues of allegorical amorous ecstasy.

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<sup>18</sup> Abolhasan Yaghma of Jandagh (d. 1860) was a Qajar-era poet.

## Chapter 7 – On benefits of action

The world, being a center of contradictions, is conditioned by the existence of causes, meaning all its particles are connected to each other by a special bond. Despite their different properties, these contradictions are inseparable from each other in nature.

Qāsem-e Anwār<sup>19</sup> [says]:

*The particle and the whole need each other here.*

*A single spider can serve as a gatekeeper for a prophet.*

Humans, being the noblest of particles and the sovereigns of this possible world, are most in need of these matters. For from the mixture of [four] elements and the composition of the body, forming the human being, arise the needs of the soul, and from human knowledge and insight, the choice of ways to acquire benefits. Further from them, many types arise. All of them, both collectively and individually, are either interconnected or diverge from each other.

As people differ from each other in figure and appearance, so do they differ in character. No two people in the world are identical in character; each person has their individual opinion on any matter; each person sees the same thing differently. However, this divergence can be overcome with knowledge. When overcoming is impossible, it is necessary to regulate the differences to establish a connection and satisfy needs. This connection, arising out of necessity, is called the household system.

Every person has their own character and appropriate means for which they were created. From this arise differences in spiritual qualities and external degrees. This is required by the world order itself. For equality is a state of no need, and the possible [world] cannot be without need.

The author [says]:

*The lover will not deviate from disgrace, nor the hermit from abstinence.*

*Each has set a corresponding task for themselves.*

Not knowing the circumstance, we should not object why such and such a thing is done this way and another that way. If we consider Allah to be wise,

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<sup>19</sup> Mo‘in-al-Din ‘Ali Shah Qāsem-e Anwār (1356-1433) was an Azerbaijani Sufi poet from Sarab.

there is no more room for objection. The "Gospel" states that a potter will make vessels of various forms for use in different purposes. Can clay say to the potter: why do you make me in this form? In Chapter 12 of the "Gospel," it is also noted that if the whole body were an ear, where would the eye be? If, however, the whole body were an eye, where would the ear be?

Allah created each body part at His discretion. If all were one member, then there would be no body. There are many members, but the body is one. The eye cannot say to the hand that it does not need it. Likewise, the foot cannot say that to the hand. For the weakest member of the body, thanks to its miraculous [purpose], relieves the needs of other members. When one member is in pain, all members suffer; likewise, all members share joy.<sup>20</sup>

From this, it is clear that all objects in the world, considered one body, need each other. Thus, each of the types and kinds is necessary in its place.

Mohtasham [says]:

*Who gave the rose its beautiful scent, the clay - a soul,  
That one, by His wisdom, gave each what it deserves.*

Every person in their household should coordinate their behavior, conversations, will, and actions with the general opinion, act so as not to stain themselves; they should always provide others with the benefit they expect from them.

In short, due to the fact that the world order is connected with the existence of causes, no action is possible without effort and diligence. Although the outcome of actions depends on the wisdom of Allah, according to the verse, "*Man only [achieves] what he strives for,*"<sup>21</sup> a person must work hard. Wheat does not grow on unplowed and unsown land. Without effort, you can't thresh wheat and make flour and bread from it. So, think about how many people work for a single piece of bread.

Physical and spiritual goods, as well as the interests of this world and the afterlife, depend on action. And science, being the main dignity and inexhaustible wealth [of a person], is acquired through action and for action.

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<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:17-20

<sup>21</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah an-Najm – 39/40

Sanā'ī [says]:

*A deed without science is like a seed thrown into a salt marsh,*

*Science without a deed is like a dead man in a grave.*

The skill and craft acquired by a person will never be wasted; the time will come when they will be needed. Interestingly, some people, not working, say: "*If Allah wills, He will give.*" But they do not know that Allah, by revealing to every person the cause of any good, thereby gave him this very good. But because this person did not work, he missed this good.

Not working, not trying, expecting good from Allah, means to chain oneself with the chain of wandering and to give a reward undeservedly - is mistaken. "*Allah does not change what is with people until they change what is with them.*"<sup>22</sup>

Through work, health, knowledge, and experience are acquired. Through work, well-being in life and reward in the afterlife are achieved. A person who shirks work violates the general order of the world and thus acts against the command of Allah. It has been repeatedly proven that most slander comes from idleness. Although laziness does not appear externally as a vice, in reality, it is worse than all vices. For a lazy person is ignorant of the reasons for creation. The benefit expected from his existence [as a person] is wasted in vain, his existence becomes a heavy burden on the necks of others. He is even worse than inanimate objects, for at least stone and clay are useful in construction.

According to the laws of the Athenian tribes, who were one of the ancient nations, idlers, like thieves who disrupt the household part of the good produced by others, were sentenced to death. If laziness takes root in a person's nature, it will lead him away from work; further, it will increasingly disrupt the health of the body and external senses; since physical qualities are connected with spiritual qualities, it will also harm the powers of the mind and internal senses, resulting in indecision and inertia of nature. [Human] nature will not be able to decisively and purposefully, with reasonable arguments, take up any matter and try to bring it to an end, will doubt everything and be afraid of everything; finally, such a nature will be disgusted with its own existence, for a fearful person is deprived of the pleasure of life.

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<sup>22</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah ar-Ra'd- 11/12

One of the main causes of laziness is [excessive] concern for one's body. If the pleasure of desire and physical pleasures become a habit for a person's nature, it will be difficult for him to give them up. And as a result, he will not be able to take on a bold task and, to achieve his goal, will adopt various vile guises; he will get used to dishonor and unprincipledness, lying and idle talk, and will suffer losses from these vile qualities.

No one will believe a person who has become known for his shamelessness. When he is in need or needs something, no one will help him. Conversely, an honest person is always respected; even his enemies respect him; people who do not know him will try to befriend him. A person accustomed to lying will quickly disgrace himself, and, very likely, they will not believe his true word; people will avoid his conversations, stop meeting him, and he, considering others to be the same as himself, will not believe the true word said to him; due to an excess of doubts and indecision, he will not find peace. A person accustomed to telling the truth will always be calm from confusion and fear, will find consolation in the hope that his rightness will be revealed. As the saying goes, *"The true word is bitter,"* truthfulness in many cases may not be pleasing to human nature; externally, it may seem contrary to a person's interest, but in reality, it contains his true interest. A self-conceited person, when he learns the essence of the matter, although due to his self-love will not admit his misunderstanding, but in his soul will confirm the truth. Truthfulness is bitter and beneficial like medicine. One sage says: *"Tell the truth to elders, even if they do not believe, at least you will not be accused."* They say: *"In a lie, there is destruction, in truthfulness, salvation."*

If the true word is not accepted or it causes harm, there is no other way out except silence, because in many cases, it is considered more useful to be silent than to speak. Although [the ability] to speak precisely means wisdom, where it is not worth speaking, it is necessary to be silent, just as it is harmful to be silent where it is worth speaking. So, a person must know where it is worth speaking and where it is worth being silent. In a conversation, one should not rush, for an unsaid word can be said, but a spoken word cannot be taken back. It is better to say late than to say and regret.

There are also different rules of conversation. The same thought can be

expressed in different forms. One can say it so that the listener finds it rude or moderate. It is known that idle talk comes from a weak character, for a weak-willed person's weakness of discerning ability leads to the inability to distinguish a good word from a bad one; their nature lacks the strength not to say what should not be said. For many, this is the most dangerous trait [of character]. For people do not know the secret of the heart and someone's intentions cannot be known in a short time from their actions. What is good and what is bad in him, what divergence in his actions - this can be known from his words.

Mawlawi [says]:

*Therefore, the great [people] said:*

*The tranquility of a person in the world is in restraint of the tongue.*

In a word, if idle talk takes root in human nature, then gossiping, looking for flaws in others, and saying bad things about others will gradually become a habit. It often happens that one, wanting to get closer to another, tells him about other people's flaws and various gossip, but does not suspect that by these actions he reveals his inner ugliness. It is known that this appearance is a consequence of habit, and there are no words that he will also tell others about his flaws. Many people, as a rule, speak badly about others and consider this a kind of virtue; By saying bad things behind a person's back, they obviously show him trust and friendship, but they do not know that their action shows their meanness. It is known that such an action, that is, acting outwardly differently from what [a person] thinks in his soul, is a consequence of fear and need.

## Chapter 8 – On rules of communication

Pleasant communication, consisting of friendship, is one of the best pleasures. The meeting of friends provides such a pleasure that there is no equal in any other good, not to mention its other benefits. A friend will be your companion in boredom, share your sorrow in trouble, help you when you face material difficulties, find means for your rescue, point out your flaws and defects, and warn you against bad deeds with various instructions. What could be better? Therefore, the one who has many friends is fortunate.

Sanāṭī [says]:

*He who has few friends, count him as a bad person.*

*Even worse is the one who befriends but quickly forgets the friendship.*

Enmity, on the contrary, is the seed of harm and the source of repentance. In enmity, seeing an enemy or remembering a person whom you hate in your heart, your mood changes and deteriorates, your nature is enveloped in sadness, which disturbs your peace. Let's say you defeated an enemy and can cause him great harm. However, how do you know that your enemy, waiting for an opportunity, cannot cause you at least some minor retaliatory harm sooner or later? In this case, both sides will be equal in harm, and thus the effort and time spent on plotting against others and seeking revenge will be wasted. Suppose your enemy is weak and has no support. But where do you know that he has no friends or influential people who can come to his aid? Moreover, it has often happened that a significantly weaker enemy has defeated the power of rulers.

A wise person should always carefully think about the manners of his conversation and behavior. He should act in such a way as to not cause suffering to others, not allow himself to do to others what he would consider bad if done to him, support his friends, and treat his enemies courteously. Often friends become enemies due to a matter that does not suit them, forgetting a thousand [rendered] good services because a request was not fulfilled once. At the same time, your enemies may want to befriend you due to your pleasant sociability and circumstance. However, one should not take friendship to the extreme and not entrust one's will to another, revealing one's secrets, for when a friend becomes an enemy, the latter can render you powerless. Likewise, a person should not be too zealous in enmity, so that, if this enemy becomes a friend one

day, he is not embarrassed by the offenses inflicted. Friendship based on bias and self-interest cannot last long and will be disrupted as soon as the need is satisfied. However, the friendship of people towards a person who has earned the love of the people with his good behavior can be constant, and probably enemies will not deviate from conscience in relation to him.

Knowing the conditions of friendship is one of the most important issues. For many people, for various intentions and due to circumstances, claim friendship; however, in reality, very few people are capable of true friendship. In short, it is erroneous to expect friendship from others until one has made oneself worthy of friendship. Friendship among people is threefold:

1. The first is friendship according to known rules of courtesy, intended for official ceremonies. With such a friend, one should interact in the same manner, not forgetting the ceremonial acquaintance, so that he is pleased with you.
2. The second is friendship for gaining external benefits. And with such a person, you should also interact in the same way; to satisfy his wish as much as possible to make him pleased with you.
3. The third is the friendship of people who know and are informed about the true state of affairs in the world and therefore seek a real friend. Such friendship is rare. But if you find such a friend, you can give not only wealth but even life for him.

In a word, you should always befriend knowledgeable people. A knowledgeable person, since he thinks about the outcome and the situation of affairs, will always observe the rules of behavior and goodness of action. On the contrary, an ignorant, dark person, thinking he is doing a useful deed, will perform an act that brings not benefit but harm. What can a person who does not know the benefit of his own deed do for others? Yes, it is well said: "*A smart enemy is better than a foolish friend.*" You should always keep in mind: does the person who wants to befriend you have ulterior motives, is he thinking of using the name of a friend to achieve his goal? Often an enemy, with the intention of deceiving and harming you, will pretend to be a friend, or if he is weak, will wait for a chance to gain strength.



The author [says]:

*Many honorable people have been lowered from the height of their position  
into the well by envy;*

*Do not rely on others, even if they are your brothers.*

There are many who, for their own benefit, will say to you: "Welcome!" or perform the ceremony of acquaintance in every way and call it the human law and say: so-and-so is of noble origin or wise and skilled, or they have been related to him for a long time. This is not true; it is possible that with these words they cover their intentions. Many people in the world behave like this - when they need you, they are ready to pray for you, but when you need them, they put themselves in the position of deity. I have experienced all this myself in various cases.

Sanā'ī [says]:

*I have not seen any fidelity among people.*

*If you see [a loyal person], pass on my greetings to him.*

Therefore, a person should not think that others respect him because of his ability; he should be aware of such tricks. Flattering words deceive a person the most. Many great people and rulers are susceptible to this disease. Yes, as well said in the half-verse:

*Whoever I said a flattering word to, liked me.*

Do not believe everyone who says: "I am your friend." Maybe he has a friend who is a friend of your enemy. Do not reveal your secret to anyone, the disclosure of which will harm you, saying: "I trust so-and-so, he is my well-wisher, he will not disclose." If you cannot keep your own secret, what do you expect from others? How do you know that, not to mention other reasons, he will not disclose your secret to his friends with the same intention?

It is not appropriate to befriend a person who is biased towards status and rank. For such a person will violate all human norms when it is beneficial to him. Conversely, the nature of a person with a good and kind character always tends towards friendship, and his enmity is also not long-lasting. For the latter is by the demand of time.

However, the nature of a person with a merciless and cruel character tends towards enmity, and the friendship he starts is not long-lasting, as has been

repeatedly proven by experience. A modest, generous, and good-natured person always has many friends.

As for modesty, many people, being submissive to self-love, seeing modesty [of a person], will rejoice and befriend him. On the contrary, everyone hates a boastful person, refrains from the benefits expected from him.

As for generosity, people of this world, being prone to derive benefit, seeing the hope of profit and gain, will involuntarily lean towards it, even if sometimes they cannot derive the desired benefit, they will be satisfied with the hope. On the contrary, even if a miser wants to show generosity and present a gift, most people will not believe him and think that he gives out of a hopeless situation.

Regarding good nature, it should be said that whoever is naturally given this character has many friends, for he does not bother anyone without reason, also does not pay special attention to the fact that another bothers him. On the contrary, an evil nature, offended by its own character, will provide people with torment, will be content with nothing, will start offending people without reason, and they will become enemies of such an evil nature.

Despite the favorable outcome of friendly relations, one should avoid the company of a bad companion, eviler than an evil snake. Hence the saying: "*Well-being lies in solitude.*" Not to mention the various harms that come from a bad companion, it is enough [just] that the evilness of his nature, through interaction, will influence you and gradually corrupt your good nature.

Sanā'ī [says]:

*Communicate little with bad people, otherwise you will become bad.*

*Human nature is susceptible to temper.*

But since we know that actions require reasons, one must observe restraint in the rules of interaction. No one can distance themselves from people, nor be in no way in need of them. One should maintain connections with both acquaintances and strangers, with both friends and enemies. Therefore, one should act in such a way as to live in harmony with different natures and to eventually escape the evil of an enemy.

The best way of conduct is to observe prudence and devotion. An action that starts with the requirement of reason will have a favorable outcome. Thus, if

you perform an action according to the rules of reason, even if time does not allow you to complete it, at least you will be remembered as: "*A person who knew his business.*" Conversely, about a person who acts against reason, even if he achieves a certain result, people will say that he was lucky, otherwise the task would have been beyond him.

It is rightly said that a wise person is always respected. The result of devotion is also that it does not lead to suffering. Devotion is never separate from reason. For reason will prevent [a person] from an action with a bad outcome, and will require devotion that has a successful outcome. Hence, it is clear that deceit is a sign of stupidity. If they say, how can a swindler, being unwise, resort to means that amaze people, I answer: scholars and sages unanimously affirm that intellect is a distinctive feature of humans, while animals lack intellect. However, we observe actions in various species of animals that cause amazement. For example, when a fox is plagued by fleas, it takes a bunch of grass in its mouth and gradually dips its tail in the water; fleas, fearing the water, jump upwards. Thus, the fox submerges part by part of its body in the water. The fleas, which were on its body, move onto the grass, which the fox holds in its mouth above the water. Then, the fox suddenly submerges its head, diving in, comes out of the water in another place, and thus, all the fleas along with the grass remain on the water. Many tricks are observed. All these are not from intelligence, but from judgement. The same is true for the cunning trickster.

If they say that "*the mind is a tool applicable in all cases and when a person is overcome by the urge of desire, then his intellect will dissipate according to the need for desire*", I answer: although when the urge of desire overcomes a person, then it defeats his mind too, but this victory is still transient; later, the mind will again clarify the bad side of his action, and its bearer will soon repent. However, the action of the trickster is constant, and he considers it a superiority for himself. If they say that "*the trickster, thinking that he performs his cunning out of his quick-wittedness and resourcefulness, being confident that no one will catch him, may not fear a bad outcome*", then I answer: this exactly testifies to his stupidity. How can a person guided by intellect imagine that among so many people there is no one who knows more than him. His faith in his own knowledge is also a sign of ignorance.

In short, since it has been proven that every swindler is foolish, it is clear that loyalty and devotion are inseparable from intelligence.

Sanā'ī [says]:

*Do not consider the mind that guides your cunning as intellect:  
it is your desire.*

*Learn to distinguish between intellect and desire,  
so, you can differentiate completeness from swelling.*

The rules of conduct also require interacting with each person according to their capacity. According to the proverb "*Among people be humane,*" one should be considerate with everyone.

We need all kinds of characters. Sometimes it happens that an ignorant person is more suitable for a job than a wise person. Do not think that you do not need any person at all. Do not consider any enemy insignificant, powerless. Sometimes it happens that a small matter gives rise to a great discord, difficulties are resolved where it was not anticipated.

In insignificant matters, show yourself as simple and magnanimous as possible. However, keep major matters secret, find out in time about everyone's actions. Check and outwardly show as if you trust him, but do not end up being considered completely ignorant, and perhaps because of this, he will deviate from his loyalty and harm you. Carry out all your affairs yourself or monitor their execution, do not entrust them entirely to others, for no one will put your benefit above their own. Everyone deals with matters according to their own desire, in line with their taste and knowledge. Therefore, no one can carry out your task the way you want.

At the same time, in major matters, a helper is definitely needed. One person without the help of others cannot carry out all matters; on the contrary, due to being busy with minor tasks, he will be unaware of major matters. Assigning minor details of tasks to someone you like, you yourself should oversee everything. If one person could handle all tasks, then *emirs* and *sultans* would not need *viziers* and *vekils*.

The Creator of the world, despite His perfect power, linked the execution of the task to the existence of means and reasons. However, do not leave the helpers to their own devices, so that they cannot become arrogant and rebel; and

also, do not show yourself so detached from minor matters that it causes annoyance and leads to betrayal and rebellion.

The main thing in matters is knowledge of people's abilities. Whoever selects and determines someone for a job according to their merit can consider that he himself is doing this job. One should not be ashamed that "such-and-such a matter is the merit of such-and-such an assistant", not to leave any kindness and significant service unrewarded, for this will be the reason for diligence on the part of others as well. It is also necessary to punish the guilty so that others refrain from wrongdoing. All actions whose wickedness has not yet been proven should be interpreted as good, and all means suitable for proving innocence should be considered. For it often happens that when investigating a matter, they believe that it happened differently, not as it was assumed. Forgive the sin that is not directed against the common interests, even if it is proven.

Especially forgive the enemy the fault after victory over him. This is useful in some respects. Firstly, the enemy, noticing your magnanimity at such a moment, will be ashamed of your good nature and his own audacity. Secondly, other enemies, convinced of non-punishment, will give up the idea of resisting you. Thirdly, a magnanimous person will be respected among the people and earn a good name. He who wants revenge does not deserve victory. When doing good to someone, do not mention it by hint or openly, for by reproaching, you will ruin your kindness, and instead of gratitude, enmity will take its place.

The poet [says]:

*Generous is he who, having given a heap of treasures,  
does not break the back of an ant with the burden of a loan for them.*

Avoid talking about what bad you did to others or others did to you, for by talking about it, you renew it. The commander of the faithful Ali<sup>23</sup> (bless him) deigned: "*To dredge up an apology is to remind [one] of sin.*"

When talking to someone, give them the advantage of speaking, and speak yourself only when necessary. Often, a cunning person during a conversation accidentally reveals what is in their soul, informing you about the situation of their affairs. If you talk a lot, you will find yourself in his position.

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<sup>23</sup> 'Alī bin 'Abū Ṭālib (600-661) was fourth Islamic caliph, first Shia imam, as well as a cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad

Baba Afzal<sup>24</sup> [says]:

*Two ears and one tongue were given to you at first,  
So that you would hear twice and speak once.*

When meeting someone, consult with them, but do not talk about what you need to keep secret; it is to your advantage if you hear a good word from them yourself. Often an unwise person will say a wise word, or an enemy will inadvertently speak of your benefit. To understand the benefit of a matter, measure with your mind what others tell you. Even if you do not hear a word corresponding to the interest of the matter, at least you will understand the degree of intelligence or what is in this person's soul.

Bearing in mind people's words and actions, their abilities and knowledge, one should not say that someone is smart and will not do such-and-such, or that he is not smart and will not be able to do it. Often, smart people do things that ignorant people would be ashamed to do, and an ignorant person will do something that amazes the wise. Since human nature is constantly changing and the inclinations of desire undergo changes, such cases should not be surprising.

Have a habit of saying good even about an enemy, because, hearing this, the enemy will reduce their hostility, and your friend will believe in your good nature. The conversation of those who tell anecdotes with a refined taste is often approved, and the opinion of people who are only attracted to appearance leans towards them. However, it is necessary to avoid turning cheerfulness into senseless mockery, and a fondness for anecdotes into ridicule, as the bearer of these traits will gain nothing but harm. Those offended by his anecdotes will begin to harbor enmity against him, while others will consider him frivolous, worthless.

If friends mock and laugh at each other, one cannot believe in sincere love between them, because a wound inflicted by the tongue is worse than one from a sword. It will gradually affect both of their hearts, harm their pure friendship, thus breaking love over some trivial cause.

In all cases, measures should be taken not hastily but swiftly

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<sup>24</sup> Afzal-al-Dīn Moḥammad Maraḡī Kāšānī a.k.a. Bābā Afzal was 13<sup>th</sup> century Persian philosopher and poet, translated ancient Greek philosophy.

implemented. One should take on a task not by the desire of lust but by one's strength and ability. Often, by demanding more, a person deprives themselves of less. If you want to be at peace, do not interfere in others' affairs. Consider the deeds of the past as examples for the future. Endure losses bravely.

Ḥāfez<sup>25</sup> [says]:

*If they lead you to the gallows like Mansur<sup>26</sup>, hold firm, for the world is  
impermanent.*

*Regret will not bring back what is destroyed.*

Complaining and talking about your sorrows unnecessarily will bring no benefit, only harm. If you tell an enemy, you will cause their joy and increase their strength and your own regret. If you tell a stranger, you will appear humiliated and helpless in their eyes. If you tell a friend, it will cause their sorrow and, consequently, renew your misfortune. Despite all this, where is that true friend to whom you can reveal the sorrow of your soul?

The Master of the Faithful Ali (blessings be upon him) said about the people of this world:

*Those who are friends with you when you are rich,  
become enemies when you are in trouble.*

Do such deeds when you are powerful that will benefit you when you become powerless. Do not waste your life on something you will eventually have to leave behind. Strive to be true to every promise you make. The Master of the Faithful Ali (blessings be upon him) also said, "*A man is free until he makes a promise.*" It is necessary to fulfill your promise. A person in debt cannot consider themselves free. A person who breaks a promise may suffer significant loss, not to mention failing to fulfill the conditions of humanity. One of the losses is that no one will believe his word, and he will not receive help from anyone when needed, even if he gives the necessary promises.

All donations and promises should be made according to the character and natural inclination of each person so that they are as pleased as possible and

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<sup>25</sup> Šams-al-Dīn Moḥammad Ḥāfez Širāzī (1325-1390) was a Timurid-era Persian lyric poet who is famous for his *divan*.

<sup>26</sup> Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (858-922) was a famous Sufi poet who was executed his saying: "*I am the Truth*" (*Ana'l-Ḥaqq*)

eagerly start working. Often a very small matter, which is to someone's liking, may seem larger to them than even more significant matters.

Generally, in human nature, one trait is stronger than others at different times of life. For example, it is experienced that children exhibit stubbornness and laziness, youth - arrogance and love, the elderly - vengefulness and a craving for greatness, and the elderly - mercilessness and envy.

Most lowly character traits harm their bearer and deprive them of their ideals. A debauchee quickly loses strength and falls behind in action. A careerist seeking dominion becomes a slave to his own desire. A miser, out of fear of material difficulty, will lead a difficult life. A boaster, fearing shame, becomes a target of mockery. An arrogant person, in pursuit of honors, will degrade himself. An angry person torments themselves over another's sin.

In short, the brave one sees more flaws in themselves than in others, considers their skills insignificant, and does not waste time nitpicking others' actions.

The poet [says]:

*Since both acceptance and rejection are hidden behind an unknown veil,  
Beware! Do not point out someone else's flaw, lest it becomes a flaw.*  
A wise man said that one who sees themselves clearly is truly observant.



## Chapter 9 – On the rules of modesty

Modesty can be an adornment of a person's being and a source of their external and spiritual blessings.

External good comes from well-mannered people choosing the modest person as a friend, while self-lovers and egotists, encountering respect and not feeling their pride wounded by him, are kind to him. Thus, he has many friends and few enemies. Likely, even enemies might want to befriend him, or at least, will not hasten to offend him.

The spiritual good lies in the person recognizing their own shortcomings and helplessness, ceasing to boast. Thus, the modest person will constantly monitor themselves, improve their flaws, and thereby be acknowledged at the threshold of Allah, achieving inexhaustible blessings.

Truly, a person who doesn't even have control over a weak part of their body, what right do they have to be conceited and boastful!

It's interesting that many consider themselves great due to rank, wealth, lineage, or perfection. Yet, rank brings many worries and needs. The sorrow a ranked official feel when demoted exceeds the joy of being promoted.

Ḥāfez [says]:

*The pattern of a mat, poverty, and peaceful sleep - glory to them  
Such a pleasure is inaccessible even to kings.*

As for the wealth of this world, it constantly shifts hands and is prone to loss.

The author [says]:

*If forgotten, human nature will rebel  
because of wealth, leading to misfortune.*

Regarding lineage, it's disgraceful for the living to boast about the dead, thereby admitting their own lack of worth. A worthy son does not need it, while a degenerate is a stain on their ancestors.

Sādi [says]:

*Suppose your father was a worthy man.  
What use is his dignity to you?!*

Speaking of perfection, if we reflect carefully, we realize that no matter how much a scholar studies, they admit their ignorance. Why then rely too much on it?

Sanā'ī [says]:

*Good is the knowledge through  
which you can admit your ignorance.*

When a person recognizes their flaws and helplessness, they will shun haughtiness and arrogance, and the flaws and shortcomings of others will not seem significant in their eyes. Therefore, they become gentler, less angry, realizing that anger only leads to self-torment. Anger takes a person out of their natural state, often leads to various diseases, and results in actions ending in regret in this world and the afterlife. Here, universally approved moderation is most needed.

At the same time, one should avoid being so meek that it turns into helplessness, or so modest that it becomes humiliation. However, when necessary, anger and pride should be used as tools for self-preservation. Many, seeing someone helpless, hasten to offend them.

## Chapter 10 – On elevation of Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is a pure character trait, born from the purity of nature and the sensitivity of the soul. It acts as a mirror in which one can see their good and bad deeds. A person with this trait can gradually improve other aspects of their character; even if they cannot fully perfect them, they won't act wildly. A conscientious person will always critique the bad traits of their character and actions, striving to correct mistakes and flaws emanating from them. The harm done to them by others, as a punishment for their actions, won't lead to hatred or enmity.

As conscientiousness is born from the sensitivity of the soul, a conscientious person cannot be heartless and won't overstep the bounds of moderation, as overstepping does not match their nature. Therefore, they will be virtuous and inclined towards good. Conscientiousness is not arbitrary. Although it requires the cognitive ability of the mind, it is often linked to customs among people. That is, a person, no matter what tribe they belong to, won't act against its customs if they find them bad, but the conscientiousness of another person, accustomed to the opposite, might allow it. For example, no matter the nation, a person's conscientiousness won't allow them to insult their religious rituals, even if they want to. But other tribes might see the absence of insult as contrary to conscientiousness.

Conscientiousness in the literal sense means fairness, as maintaining justice here relates to both parties: fairness and conscientiousness have the same requirements. The difference is only between the general and the particular. Fairness can be non-innate. A person, observing fairness and prudence, refrains from oppression. However, conscientiousness comes from human nature, and a conscientious person is not inclined to oppression or enslavement. Thus, every conscientious person is fair, but not every fair person is necessarily conscientious. Despite its innate nature, conscientiousness without intellectual investigation cannot be stable; desires, doubts, and fluctuations can destroy it. Often a person will approve of a bad act out of habit, mistaking oppression for good.

Indeed, conscience is the beauty of human nature, leading to prosperity and remarkable results in affairs, keeping a person from oppression, the source

of many evils. Know that every wrongdoing occurs due to a weakness in conscientiousness. When a person's conscience reaches perfection, they won't allow themselves or others to oppress. Hence, no evil emanates from them. The prescriptions and limits of all *shariat*, the strengthening of laws in every country, aim to eliminate oppression. There is no sin, whether *shariat* or legal, that does not involve some form of oppression, either overtly or covertly.

Ḥāfeẓ [says]:

*Do what you want, but do not resort to oppression,  
for in our shariat there is no sin like oppression.*

Since there is a specific retribution for every wrongdoing, a wrongdoing committed against another will return to the perpetrator.

A proverb [states]:

*Deed and retribution stand side by side everywhere.*

Often, committing wrongdoing against another, a person sees it as a source of benefit and prosperity, forgetting about the retribution for it. When they suffer some wrongdoing, they complain, trying to prove their innocence, not realizing that it may be retribution for their act against someone else.

Since the whole world resembles a single body, it is not surprising that retribution for a wrongdoing committed against someone may come from others. Nature is the same for all; therefore, wrongdoing against one contradicts the common interest. However, since retribution for an act may be delayed or change qualitatively due to obstacles and interests, a person, being unaware of the true reason, interprets their punishment differently.

Indeed, since the creation of the world is not without reason, and people's actions will not be without retribution. Being so flawed and imperfect, we want to distinguish the beautiful from the ugly and do not consider retribution for actions as a requirement of justice. How can the Lord of the worlds, with His perfect power and remarkable wisdom, not differentiate between good and evil, not set retribution for people's actions in this world and the afterlife? Meanwhile, representatives of all religions, even idolaters, do not deny retribution for actions. Without it, the *shariat* of the peoples would not hold up, and the laws of the world would be disrupted.

## Chapter 11 – On the benefits of contentment with little

Contentment with little is a lofty character trait, an inexhaustible wealth, and a constant good.

A proverb says:

*If you desire eternal wealth, accustom yourself to contentment with little.*

Among the countless benefits a person gains from contentment with little, the most important are four:

1. Respect and pride: As expressed in the saying, "One content with little is esteemed," a person who is content with little becomes respected and honored among people.
2. Freedom from futile labor: This person is freed from unnecessary toil. Being calm in domestic affairs, neither the pursuit of wealth nor the fear of poverty will throw them into despair or danger, nor will they hear insults, mockery, or reproach from their peers.
3. Escape from the agony of greed and sorrow of avarice: Greed is one of the greatest misfortunes; the greedy are eternally sorrowful. No matter how much they possess, they always want more, always thinking about increasing their wealth and willing to harm others for their own benefit. Those far from this nature will always be happy and may be considered righteous by Allah.
4. Protection from envy: Envy burns the barn of religion and the heart. There is no fiercer fire than the fire of envy. An envious person can never live in peace. The joy and sorrow of others both bring them despair. It is known that among countless tribes, thousands of people may be happy at one moment, but the envious person grieves at their rejoicing. In truth, there is no benefit from envy. It is an internal filth that manifests externally. If envy brought the anticipated benefit, then in reason and faith, which are the main virtues and best qualities, there would be some trace of envy. But in both, there is none. Indeed, everyone believes they are unique in their reason, and they consider other beliefs, except their own, to be fictitious.

Sādi says:

*If reason were to vanish from the earth,  
no one would think of their ignorance.*

In reality, envy shows a lack of ability. A skilled person would regret wasting precious time on this abhorrent trait, would engage in their abilities, and strive to acquire more than others. However, the unskilled, not believing in their capability, will envy and wish for the demise of others' good fortune, not realizing that the destruction of others' good will bring them no benefit.

The author [says]:

*The unskilled wish the skilled to be deficient.  
Why don't they wish to become skilled, to be better?*

The miserly envier will take nothing from their accumulated wealth but sorrow. Their wealth will either be destroyed by some mishap, or it will go to their heir. The outcome in both cases for the miser is regret. Wealth is amassed for tranquility and joy. But for the miser, it has the opposite effect.

The author [says]:

*People chase tranquility and desire,  
But do not know that pleasure in this is not permitted.*

For to accumulate and preserve wealth, one must not allow oneself tranquility. Meanwhile, no one knows whether the remainder of life will be in abundance or scarcity, or will it last as long as have needed! Suppose that the prolongation of life or [getting out] of trouble is secured for you, but how do you know your wealth will not be lost? The world's affairs are wisely arranged by the power of Allah. Even if being rich is considered better, there is no need to under-eat for fear of poverty. If a person lacks the ability to acquire wealth and the right to good, then this wealth will slip away for some random reason, and nothing but destruction and regret will remain for him. If wealth is accumulated for offspring, it is also in vain. For it has been repeatedly experienced that the children of the wealthy have become poor, while the children of the poor have attained wealth and greatness.

The means of subsistence are allocated to everyone, but the ways of acquiring them are different. A father has wealth for himself: he accumulated it by his ability; the son is not allowed a share of this wealth. The estate left to the

heir will go to strangers, for the wife will squander her share with a new husband, the daughter will take it to her husband's house, the son will give it to another's daughter. Tell me honestly, what benefit do you get from this? If you say that charity will be done for the repose of your soul, that's uncertain. For another will not honor you as you honor yourself. If you yourself have not done good deeds, how can another do them? Suppose, for appearance's sake, they squander part of your estate [on this]. And the benefit from this, consisting of worldly fame and afterlife goodness, will go to the one who performed the charity. So, it's not worth spending your precious life accumulating worldly goods and erecting money as your idol.

Ḥāfeẓ [says]:

*Jamshid took nothing from this world but the story of Jam<sup>27</sup>  
Beware! Do not attach your heart to worldly goods.*

Since contentment with little consists in maintaining the degree of moderation, a person should not completely refuse their well-being. For one who goes beyond the degree of moderation, transgressing the general order of the world, forgets the benefit of their own existence.

From the verses [of the *Qur'ān*] and *akbār*, it is clear that engaging in public affairs is necessary. However, excessive attachment to this occupation is bad. People of various professions strive for the world order and much benefit is expected from the results of their actions. However, many, driven by their desire, seeking to acquire external goods, seek wealth and rank. With the intensification of this desire, they become captives of the pursuit of wealth. Meanwhile, many *akbār* and verses [of the *Qur'ān*] indicate that this should not be done, so that, as the saying goes, "*Attachment to the world is the source of all transgressions*," not to be constantly in danger.

Even if many people closed their eyes to worldly goods and refused acquisitions, but in any case, they would encourage people to work, so that, following the content of the verse "*Monasticism they invented*"<sup>28</sup>, they would not put themselves, without working, outside the human degree. The brave one,

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<sup>27</sup> Jamshid, a legendary Iranian king, who supposedly had a magic cup – jam – that showed everything in the world he wished.

<sup>28</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥadīd - 27

occupying [a position], behaves like one who has left the service and does not consider the means of promotion, appearing as traps for people, a source of honor and pride. When you leave the service, try not to show yourself in a hopeless position, not to humiliate yourself in front of others; do not turn your heart, this chamber of Allah, with senseless desires into a temple of idolatry disputes, do not think about the life and being of the world.

Mawlawi [says]:

*If the spirit and the heart leave us, let it not be scary;  
Oh, you, whom I know only as pure, do not leave us!*

When you distance yourself from service, it's easy, perhaps, and necessary to turn your face to the threshold of Allah and beware of causes [that lead to] intrigue.

Naziri<sup>29</sup> [says]:

*Unable to endure the caprices of beauties, the hermit secluded himself,  
And excused himself by pretending to fear Allah.*

One must observe moderation not only in acquiring wealth but also in spending it. Prodigality is as bad as stinginess. The harm of prodigality is clear from the verse: "*Profligates are brothers of Satan*"<sup>30</sup>. For a person, because of prodigality, having lost the pleasure of beautiful goods, will not perform the good deed, the creation of which is entrusted to him. And possibly, by squandering wealth inappropriately, he will do evil and commit a deed contrary to the common interest. For what is given to each is given for benefit, and benefit is only for good; and good is nothing but the common good. Thus, wealth should be spent for the common good. He who squanders it harms himself.

The poet [says]:

*Among noble people  
stinginess is better than wastefulness.*

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<sup>29</sup> Moḥammad Ḥosayn Naziri Nišāpuri (1560-1614) was a Safavid-era merchant, later poet.

<sup>30</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' – 29



The unfortunate one who acquires wealth, squanders it, transfers it to an heir and someone else spends it for their benefit, will worry about both the world and the afterlife. Happy is the true man who does charity in his place and achieves the wealth of both worlds. Such a person will always be respected, all his needs will be satisfied, and he will find salvation from any difficult matter.

One sage said: "*Generosity is the key to locked doors.*"

## Chapter 12 – On the rituals of trust

Oh, unruly desire! Oh, bewildered mind! How long will this insubordination last? How long will these erroneous thoughts continue? It's time to awaken from the intoxication of arrogance and ignorance. It's shameful for us to speak of faith while dwelling in disbelief and disobedience.

Sanā'ī says:

*On the path of monotheism, one cannot face two qiblas;  
you must choose either your desire or the consent of the Friend.*

Is it not uttering ignorance and darkness to think that the execution of deeds depends on us, without knowing their true causes? We expect the source of harm and benefit from the people of the era. Why don't we recognize that belief in our ability is disbelief, and belief in the power of others is polytheism!

Let's reflect and see: what power do we possess by ourselves? What is our will in accomplishing deeds? If we examine those, we consider to be powerful, we find that each is plunged into a thousand miseries and powerless to avert these calamities.

The author [says]:

*If the heart is attached to this ruin [the world],  
how can it be free from sorrow?*

If they cannot do anything for themselves, what can they do for others? Experience has shown that many efforts remain fruitless. A matter not even thought of unexpectedly comes to pass.

According to the proverb "*The greedy will be left destitute*," they cannot achieve what they desire. I have seen that many laypeople day and night pursue ranks and constantly live in turmoil. Fate compels people who have withdrawn from worldly affairs and become recluses to engage in the affairs of the country and the people. It is well said: "*Fortune is an obstacle to every desire*." Since the essence of deeds is hidden from us, how can we know what we want and how to ask for it? According to the saying "*He who overexerts himself harms himself*," we often engage in activities that harm us. However, if such an endeavor does not succeed, it is only to our advantage. In such cases, it is best to entrust the affairs to that Wise One who knows their essence and does not allow errors in His actions.

The Seal of the Prophets, the Messenger of God, declared: "*All who say 'There is no deity but Allah' will enter paradise.*" Who is there, regardless of nation, who does not utter this phrase? Thus, it's not just that. Everyone, possibly through reliance and submission, can bring themselves to the point where hope for gain and fear of harm is seen only in Allah. If one, according to the saying "*Love with the love of Allah,*" doesn't turn the *Ka'ba* of their heart into a temple of selfish desires, they will enter paradise, meaning they will have access to happiness in this world and the next; no event will sadden them; thus, the flow of all worldly affairs will align with their desire.

Našāṭ<sup>31</sup> [says]:

*When I, forsaking my own desire, chose*

*His consent, I found that the world and all in it conformed to my wish.*

The one who is content with [divine predestination] can be considered knowledgeable of the Greatest Name.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps contentment itself is the Greatest Name. Though Allah has countless attributes, due to the limits of our concepts, we have reduced Allah's names to a thousand and one. The word *riḍā*<sup>33</sup> [contentment] adds up to a thousand and one in *abjad*<sup>34</sup>, representing the sum of beautiful names, possibly the Greatest Name itself.

Without understanding the essence of the Necessarily Existent<sup>35</sup>, without inwardly perceiving the attributes of His<sup>36</sup> majesty and glory, it is impossible to reach the state of trust and contentment. While we must adhere to rationality on this path, the division of reason into various branches and types due to the diversity of subjects and phenomena means that reason can have degrees of perfection and imperfection. Therefore, without a guide on the true path, one might wander in this desert, like a ship without a rudder or compass, soon to be swallowed by a perilous abyss.

<sup>31</sup> 'Abd-al-Vahhāb Mo'tamad-al-Dawla Našāṭ (1759-1829) – Qajar official and poet

<sup>32</sup> That is, Allah.

<sup>33</sup> Islamic term that means perfect contentment with Allah's will or decree

<sup>34</sup> 'Abjad are a decimal alphanumeric code, in which the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet are assigned numerical values.

<sup>35</sup> That is, Allah.

<sup>36</sup> That is, Allah.

Hāfez [says]:

*Do not venture into this dark station without Khidr<sup>37</sup>;  
fear the danger of getting lost on the way.*

Prophets and righteous individuals serve as intermediaries, and their guides are the laws established for the world's welfare through revelations and inspirations. We call this assurance religion, and these laws - Sharia<sup>48</sup>. Any effort expended without their observance will lead to loss, and all endeavors will remain fruitless.

The author [says]:

*I didn't take my feet off the path of my own desire in vain;  
I wandered thousands of deserts but never reached the destination.*

In other words, no one can devise a better path than the *Sharia*, established by the will of Allah.

Thus, anyone who deviates from the *Sharia* is lost, for, being deluded themselves, they lead others astray. Meanwhile, those adhering to the *Sharia*, being perfect individuals and true connoisseurs, will not stray from this path and zealously observe the fulfillment of *Sharia*'s conditions. Why shouldn't others do the same? The ignorant, deviating from the care of Allah's commands and prohibitions, undermine the foundation of *Sharia*, chaining themselves in the shackles of delusion. Wise is the one who, imitating the true guide, adorns his appearance with the attire of *Sharia* and polishes his spiritual mirror with the shine of enlightenment, not turning desires, which are like a dark veil, into a barrier obscuring the soul's path, refraining from forbidden acts, debauchery, and depravity that lead to ignorance of pleasing Allah. According to the verse "*Perform prayer for My remembrance!*"<sup>38</sup>, obedience to Allah's commands and maintaining the endorsements of *Sharia* are considered means of enlightenment.

The essence of man is built on the basis of soul and body; from the former arises intellect, from the latter - desire. Everyone who refrains from the passions of desire, consisting of various forbidden actions and sins, and nourishes their

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<sup>37</sup> A mystic figure in Islam who is not mentioned by name or precisely described as human, angel or any other being. According to legend, he found River of Life and drinking from there became immortal.

<sup>38</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah Ṭā Hā – 14

intellect with the fruits of enlightenment, will elevate themselves to the status of "*We have created man in the best composition*"<sup>39</sup> and embody the attributes of Allah, achieving inexhaustible blessings. Whoever succumbs to lust, empowering their desire, allows animality to triumph over spirituality, degrading themselves to "*They are the worst of creatures*".<sup>40</sup> If viewed through the lens of justice, we see nothing worse than descending from the honor of the noblest form of existence, due to the whims of desire, back to the level of an animal. For no animal loses the benefits of its nature.

According to the verse "*There is nothing that does not sing His praise*"<sup>41</sup>, we must know the decrees of Sharia so that hermitage does not become a trap on our path, ensuring our actions are not hypocritical or customary. For hypocrisy in hermitage is worse than hidden polytheism and open disbelief. Idolatry surpasses such hermitage, as the former is due to conviction, while the latter is for gain. If hermitage is due to habit, it becomes a requirement of animality and does not lead one to the goal.

Sanā'ī [says]:

*There is no difference between faith and disbelief  
if they keep you away from the Friend.*<sup>42</sup>

*There is no difference between beauty and ugliness  
if they lead you away from the path.*

Although everyone knows that wickedness is bad and deserving of hatred, it is still better than self-serving hermitage. This can be proven by several arguments:

1. hermitage involves vanity and arrogance, while wickedness involves repentance and confusion. The essence of all beings [the Prophet] (may Allah bless him) said: "*Distressing bad [deed] is better than deceptive good [deed]*"
2. The bias of hermitage is permanent, while wickedness is transient;

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<sup>39</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah at-Tīn – 4

<sup>40</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Bayyinah – 5/6

<sup>41</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' – 44

<sup>42</sup> That is, Allah.

3. A wicked person faces censure from admonishers, while a hermit, proud of his deed, reproaches others;
4. A wicked person faces hundreds of calamities and is threatened with torments and humiliations, but a hermit, enjoying respect among people, sometimes secures material well-being;
5. Hermitage without hypocrisy is rare, but wickedness requires concealment;
6. Due to public favor, hermitage can become a trap for debauchery, while a wicked person is free from such guise; seventhly, a wicked person often hopes for Allah's help, while a hermit relies on his own deed.

In its literal meaning, hermitage (*zuhd*) means disinclination. It would be remarkable if a hermit truly reflected his name, renouncing all and submitting to the guidance and obedience of Allah. For through this, he would have traversed the path of contentment and reached the abode of annihilation (*fanā'*)<sup>43</sup>.

Sanā'ī [says]:

*Everything you find outside of desire,  
that is religion, instill it in your soul!  
Everything you see, except Allah,  
that is an idol, break it, destroy it.*

In short, perfect is the one who openly avoids hermitage, secretly avoids wickedness, and lets neither of them become a barrier between himself and his desired goal.

Ḥāfeẓ [says]:

*Oh heart! I give you good guidance on the path to salvation;  
do not take pride in wickedness, nor speculate in hermitage!*

At the same time, [a person], bearing in mind the hadith 'Avoid blame,' should be wary of a position of reproach. For because of public advocacy for wickedness, as well as due to harsh accusations, a person may promote the adultery of public women and may lead others astray.

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<sup>43</sup> Fanā' is a Sufi concept that means death before one die – concept denoting annihilation of ego to merge with Allah.

## Conclusion on the mysteries of enlightenment

Although words cannot fully capture meanings and the exposition of the latter requires explanation and interpretation beyond language, as

Sheikh Mahmud<sup>44</sup> says:

*Meanings never fit into letters,  
Just as a vast sea cannot be contained in a vessel.*

Yet, through rational investigations and narrative works, it has been elucidated that the possible is born from the necessary, and the many from the one, according to the verse, "And Our command is but one".<sup>45</sup> And by [the saying] "From the One<sup>46</sup> nothing but the one can emerge," there came into existence a being from which, in terms of fully encompassing all things, reason was derived: "the first creation of Allah is reason." And in terms of the harmony [order] of phenomena, "the first creation of Allah is the *qalam*"<sup>47</sup>. And in terms of the beginning and return [of all things], "the first creation of Allah is light."

Despite the contradictory nature of these statements, they all express the same meaning. This being is perfect since it is the cause of all causes, but in terms of phenomena, it is imperfect. From its perfection and imperfection stem the contradictions inherent in all phenomena and qualities. Repulsion and attraction arise for harmony. Despite the existence of multiplicity, it continues to exist in its unity, with only its external definitions undergoing changes, while its essence remains unperishable. The verse "*Everything perishes except His face*"<sup>48</sup> testifies to His<sup>60</sup> eternal existence. "*With Him is the decision*", to ensure harmony in affairs. The verse "*To Him you will be returned*"<sup>49</sup> declares the stages of beginning and return. In Being, there is no non-being. By non-being, we refer to undergoing changes and transformations from one state to another. All things perish to

<sup>44</sup> Mahmūd Shabestari (1288-1340) was Ilkhanate-era Sufi poet

<sup>45</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Qamar – 50

<sup>46</sup> That is, Allah.

<sup>47</sup> Qalam was a reed pen that was used as a symbol for enlightenment in literature.

<sup>48</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ – 88

<sup>49</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ – 88

transition from one form to another, except His face, which represents Being itself. The hadith "*O sons of Adam, We created you to live forever, not to perish*" supports this idea.

Generally, this is true for all individuals in the world and the worlds that are individuals of the absolute world. Their birth is the beginning, and death is the resurrection. According to the verse "*On the day when the Earth will be replaced by another earth*"<sup>50</sup>, it will transition from its form to another. However, this change will not exceed the order of the absolute world. Some astronomers believe that all "fixed" stars are suns. In the Milky Way, besides them, there are also many "fixed" stars. Thus, all these stars have their planets. Each planet represents a separate world. And our world is one of these planets. Hence, Allah's creations appear infinite. This is also confirmed by a *hadith*, which states that Moses (peace be upon him) was shown 70000 Turs<sup>51</sup>, and on each of them one Moses spoke in his world: "*O God, show Yourself to me!*"

Since we recognize that each world is an individual, then [it follows that] each individual is a world.

Mariz<sup>52</sup> [says]:

*What is generally characteristic of fire,  
Is characteristic of each spark.*

And because the heart by its nature is equal to other organs, but due to the delicacy of its various constituents, it becomes the site of divine light descent and the means of grace, embracing all that is akin to it. The perfect human being, fully reflecting Being, and being the noblest particle, like the heart, represents a means of goodness and can embrace others. This Being, the source of all existing beings and non-beings, governing the world, exists self-sufficiently, self-existent. What truly affects the particles and the whole is only the Necessary Being itself.

Mawlawi [says]:

*Although we heard the Quran from the lips of the prophet,*

<sup>50</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah Ibrāhīm – 19

<sup>51</sup> Mount Sinai, where Moses spoke to Allah.

<sup>52</sup> Mirza Muharram "Mariz" Hajibeyov (d. 1848) – Azerbaijani poet and translator from Karabakh. Co-worker and a friend of Bakikhanov.



*He who claims it is not the word of Truth is misguided.*

However, we cannot know the nature of His [Necessary Being's] influence on them and their relationship to Him. If there is no essence, how can there be quality? The verse: "*Praise be to your Lord, the Lord of Majesty, above what they attribute to Him*"<sup>53</sup> is all-encompassing. Allah's essence is far from those attributes that believers acknowledge or the infidels attribute to Him. Therefore, the crown of all creation (may Allah bless him)<sup>54</sup>, in humble acknowledgment, said: "*We do not know You as You ought to be known.*"

Sanā'ī [says]:

*The path you deem as the ultimate is  
but the limit of your mind, not Allah.*

However, since action indicates the existence of the doer, as per the saying, "*He who knows himself, knows also his Allah,*" self-knowledge can lead to this goal. This is unattainable without rational investigations and the correlation of narratives. When the schemes of passions intensify, these investigations and correlations also lack credibility.

Sanā'ī [says]:

*You won't be a servant [of Allah] if you're not free,  
As a filled vessel cannot be filled again.*

On each step of this path lies a thousand dangers, and the peril exceeds what you can imagine.

Mir Fendereski<sup>55</sup> [says]:

*Reason is the ship, fantasy - the abyss, knowledge - the sail,  
Supreme Truth - the shore, and the whole world - the sea.*

Although reaching the shore from the sea depends on the [favorable] wind, which is beyond human power, one cannot sail the sea at all without a ship and a sail. Hence, it's clear that without the ship of reason, it is impossible to journey across the tumultuous sea. And if this ship lacks the sail of science and action, it will be lost. When both are combined, the favorable wind of Divine

<sup>53</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah aṣ-Ṣāffāt – 180

<sup>54</sup> That is, Muhammad.

<sup>55</sup> Sayyed Amir Abu'l-Qāsem b. Mirzā Beg b. Ṣadr-al-Din Moḥammad Ḥosayni Astarābādi Mirfendereski (1562-1640) was a Safavid-era mystic and philosopher

Goodness and absolute love of the Scripture<sup>56</sup> will blow as needed, and the ship, without the knowledge and effort of the passengers, will sail from the abyss of desire to the shore of well-being, to this first sign of the perishable world.

Ḥāfez [says]:

*Rise, O favorable wind, we are on the ship;  
Perhaps we will see our friends again.*

This discussion confirms that the Prophet's (peace be upon him) physical ascension to the heavens signifies the stages of spiritual guidance, that the Prophet is the perfect man, Gabriel is the ultimate desire, *Buraq*<sup>57</sup> is the intellect, and the ascension is the elevation in the knowledge of the Scripture. When he reached the utmost boundary of the heavenly kingdom, all fell behind [him], and then with the help of *Rafra*<sup>58</sup> - a symbol of absolute love - crossing the veil of essences and attributes, he himself attained his true station, i.e., *Qab Qawsayn*<sup>59</sup>, the beginning and return.

Thus, everyone can have their ascension according to their level, the explanation of which depends on desire and mood and does not need lengthy statements.

The author [says]:

*There is no other way to the knowledge [of Allah] but through love,  
One can ascend to any position by following this path.*

The hadith that says, "*I was a hidden treasure, and I wanted to reveal Myself*," indicates that love was the cause of beginning, so it will be the cause of the return. Thus, love is the actual connection in all simple and complex [things]. This is indicated by the saying, "*Love for Ali is good and will not lead to any sin.*" This idea is also expressed in the verse: "*Woe to me if I don't take so-and-so as my friend.*"<sup>60</sup> Through love, everything converges with its own kind, which is not

<sup>56</sup> That is, Qur'ān.

<sup>57</sup> Buraq is nickname of the horse Muhammad supposedly rode to heaven.

<sup>58</sup> Rafraf is nickname for the wings of divine love that took Muhammad when Buraq was exhausted.

<sup>59</sup> Distance of from the end of a bow to middle of its arc or string. Muhammad supposedly approached this distance with Allah.

<sup>60</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Furqān – 28

strange. The relationship of the possible to the necessary is also due to this reason. Love has such a state which cannot be explained, nor can it be touched by rational investigations. For reason needs the data of the senses. [The] senses [in turn] arise from the substances of nature. The abode of love, representing the very Being or cause of existence, is the heart.

Mawlawi [says]:

*Reason is silent here or has gone astray,  
For the heart is with it, or it is the heart.*

Just as the body is based on the soul, so the soul is based on love. The essence of these subtleties is known from the verse "*Allah is the light of the heavens*".<sup>61</sup>

The author [says]:

*The light of love in the heart is like a ray in the eyes.  
The passion of love in the soul is like the spirit in the body.*

The mirror of the heart is so clean that when it is washed from the rust of hatred, it reflects the essence of all things and turns into a mirror showing the Truth.

Ḥāfeẓ [says]:

*For years the heart demanded from us Jam-e Jam<sup>62</sup>,  
It asked others for what it itself had.*

The senses and limbs are in any case submissive to the heart, they cannot disobey its commands. If the heart is purified from the evil inclinations of desire, it will serve as the abode of the light of Allah, and since it embraces everything related to it by kind, it will manifest goodness as an independent ruler, causing the lower and upper layers of the population to execute its commands.

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<sup>61</sup> Qur'ān, Sūrah an-Nūr – 35

<sup>62</sup> Cup of Jamshid, see note 26

Sanā'ī [says]:

*If the heart perishes, the body will certainly not remain.*

*The army will become lawless due to the weakness of the padishah.*

Just as the regulation of the country's interests is connected with the strengthening of political affairs, so the acquisition of enlightenment and the purification of morals serve as the cause of the heart's independence in managing the body.

This is evidenced by the *maṣnavī*<sup>63</sup> of the author<sup>64</sup> of "*Mishkāt al-anwār*" ["The Niche of Lights"]:

*In a reliable hadith I read this,*

*That "angels do not wander where a dog steps."*

*But a dog entered the cave with the aṣḥāb al-kaḥf,  
And was considered one of them, the fourth or eighth.*

*So why shouldn't angels enter there,*

*Where is the argument, what is this [hadith] talk about?*

*In reality, the dog is the base desire of man,  
The filthiest of the filthiest in the world.*

*For the heart, it is a veil that covers the light of Truth,*

*No one saw the sun at night.*

*Oh, Qodsi! There is no benefit from the absolute name,*

*For your destiny will not be made happy by it.*

*Ask for attraction from the holy world, so that*

*Your soul corresponds to your nickname<sup>65</sup>...*

<sup>63</sup> A *maṣnavī* is a poetic collection of anecdotes and stories derived from the Quran, hadith sources, and everyday tales.

<sup>64</sup> That is, Bakikhanov himself. *Mishkāt al-anwār* (The Niche of Lights, 1829) is an almanac of fables, parables, as well as some quotes from the Qur'an and references to Sufi mysticism overall aimed at preserving social values and morals within society. The book was written in Persian.

<sup>65</sup> Qodsi (Holy) was Bakikhanov's pen name.