



True Vision

Allāmah
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True Vision

(Haqīqī Dīdār)

by

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Translated from Urdu into English

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Expression of Gratitude



Respected elders, brothers, sisters, friends and students! First of all, let me say that the present age is not the same as the old one, although some useful aspects were hidden in it too. You are aware that the age in which we live is an highly advanced age of science, art, wisdom and philosophy, therefore, it has become extremely important to prepare the next generation of our dear nation and *jamā'at* with useful knowledge based on intellect, understanding and meticulous research. However, it is true that this demands extremely hard work and diligence, as well as unity and mutual co-operation.

My dear brothers and sisters! This booklet before you, called "*Haqīqī Dīdār*" or "True Vision" is published within the Ismaili community. Although it is not an extensive work, it is very useful in the sense that through the provision of such small books, every educated Ismaili will be able to find time to read it completely. As for the importance and utility of this book, it is up to you to read it carefully and judge for yourself. If possible, give me some useful feed-back, so that I may have more strength in my work.

Truly speaking, in connection with this book "True Vision", I should thank, in the most appropriate and elegant words, those of my [°]*azīzān*, due to whose constant co-operation I am able to complete and publish it. It is due to their constant co-operation that I am able to continue my limited service for knowledge. The force of my ethic and faith persistently demands that I sincerely thank those who always encourage me and are my supporters in this sacred service. Alas! I cannot record all their names here. Nonetheless, it is necessary to mention briefly how this booklet was written. It was perhaps 16th January, 1976, that after an excellent *majlis* (assembly), my benefactor and dearest spiritual brother, Fath [°]Alī Habīb asked me to write such a book. This idea was welcomed by my intimate friend Nasrullāh Rā[°]ī Qamaruddīn also and together with Mr. Shamusuddīn and my [°]*azīz* Barkat [°]Alī, they discussed its importance and how useful it is to present some realities and recognitions of the subject of *didār* (vision).

Thus, I sincerely thank all those Ismailis who love knowledge and recognise the truth and as a *darwish* pray that may God enrich them and the entire community with the wealth of knowledge and bless them in both the worlds.

Your servant for knowledge,
Nasīr al-Dīn Nasīr Hunzai,

21st January, 1976.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Blessed Vision



God knows why my dear friends gave me this lovely suggestion to express my thoughts on the subject of vision. It was perhaps because of the fact that our beloved spiritual guide and leader, Hazrat Mawlānā Dhanī Salāmat Dātār Shāh Karīm al-Husaynī, *‘alayhi's-salātu wa's-salām*, was soon going to graciously come to our beloved country Pakistan, to bless us the Ismailis, with his sacred *didār*. Thus before describing its grace, blessings, results and fruits, I think it appropriate to present some easily understandable examples from the external world, so that everyone may easily cross this physical and material bridge and reach the city of truth and wisdom.

In this connection, it is important to give a cogent and easy answer to the question: Which of the five senses, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching, is the most superior? and what is the importance of the faculty of seeing? and how much happiness can man attain through it?

To respond, first we should pay attention to the word "vision", the Persian word for which is "*didār*", which is derived from the infinitive "*didan*". According to me and certainly according to others too, it is an extremely pleasing and lovely word. Why not, since it is used for the observation of the internal and external beauty of God and nature, and it is the name of the observation of the wonders of creation and traces of Divine mercy; it is used for the manifestations and observation of the world of spirituality, in addition to the world of imagination, the world of dream and the world of reflection and thinking, in which every beautiful thing is coloured in the colour of God (2:138) and above all in its ultimate meanings, it is used for the holy encounter with God.

It should be known that although our five external senses first relate to material things, some of them are superior to others, and the faculty of seeing surpasses them, because its reach is boundless and its pleasure unlimited. That is, the pleasure and happiness which it attains by observing the exquisite wonders of nature and the beautiful and attractive scenes of the world, never cease. If you go to an orchard and eat the various delicious fruits, how many can you eat? If you go to a rose garden and smell the fragrance of beautiful flowers, how much fragrance can you absorb? It is possible that after a while, you might have a headache, because physically the brain is limited and cannot contain the particles of fragrance beyond a

specific quantity. On the contrary, the beautiful scene of a garden is not such that it may tire your mind or you may be satiated or dejected by it. Also among the wonders of the eye is that it can contain within itself not only the earth, but also the heaven and can even compress very big things and make them small. This shows that the power of the eye is very close to spiritual forces.

Those who have true knowledge know that, in addition to external senses, there are internal senses in man and among them, the faculty of the inner eye is most exalted and superior. Therefore, in the Qur'ānic wisdom, the topic which is selected to indicate all the spiritual pleasures of Paradise, is the vision (*didār, liqā'*) of God. Whatever may be the nature and reality of the vision of God, it contains within it Paradise with all its favours and delights. And wherever in the Qur'ān, Paradise is described and praised, it is an allegorical explanation of the vision of God or the Divine manifestations. This explanation should not arouse fear in someone about the existence of Paradise, rather he should be assured that Paradise and all its bounties are there, but in an intellectual and luminous form, not in a material and physical form, because there everything, every bounty and every pleasure is tinted in the Divine colour. Or, in other words, Paradise is the abode of the diverse manifestations of the absolute Light.

The vision thus, whether it is of the Holy Prophet or of the Imam of the time, is the only means for the vision of the Hereafter or Paradise. This vision is the source of satisfaction of the heart and the means of comfort of soul for the followers, because this belief and concept is consequent to the belief in the existence of God and yearning for His closeness. The purpose of vision is return to the religion of God and attachment to it, attainment of Divine guidance and fulfilment of obedience to Him and thus to receive a part of His mercies and affections and those of His Prophet, the mercy for the worlds. Vision is the means of attaining all these.

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The Divine Throne (‘Arsh) and the Imam



It should be known that to circumambulate a sacred place such as the Ka‘bah, is a great honour and reverence, as it is mentioned in *Da‘ā’imu’l-Islām* that the angels circumambulate the Supreme Throne. A meaningful question arises here: Is this circumambulation for the honour of the Throne or for the honour and servitude of God? If the answer is that it is for the honour and servitude of God, a further question arises: Why do they not circumambulate God alone, leaving aside the Throne and its bearers, because it is obvious that the Throne is not God, therefore, honour and worship should be due exclusively to God? The answer to this question is not possible except for the people of reality, i.e. the people of *ta’wīl*. Some *ta’wīlī* glimpses of one aspect of this exalted pearl are that the pure Imams are the bearers of the Supreme Throne and the absolute Light which they bear is the Divine Throne, the reality of *tawhīd* is Rahman (Compassionate), Who sits on the Light, and the souls of *mu’mīns* are the angels who circumambulate the luminous Throne, as Mawlānā ‘Alī (a.s.) says: "I am he who is the bearer of the Divine Throne with the righteous ones (i.e. the Imams) of my children."

Hazrat Ādam and Imam



It is clear and explicit from the Wise Qur'ān that the Spirit which God breathed into the first man of that cycle, i.e. Hazrat Ādam, was also breathed into Hazrat Maryam (see verses: 15:29; 21:91; 32:9; 38:72; 66:12). This shows that the Holy Spirit which had appeared in Hazrat Ādam has continued through the sacred chain of the Prophets and Imams. In fact, the light of this Spirit has been attained by the religious dignitaries, such as Hazrat Maryam, who was neither a Prophet, nor an Imam, but only a *siddiqah* (a truthful lady). Then you have to certainly believe that the same Divine or Holy Spirit, due to which Hazrat Ādam had become the object of the prostration of angels, is still in the Perfect Man. Therefore, every Prophet and Imam is worthy of veneration and honour and no sensible person would ever say that this is disbelief or polytheism, when we know that the veneration (i.e. prostration) which the angels had done to Hazrat Ādam, according to the command of God, was far greater than any veneration. This is a fundamental proof of the exalted rank of the Perfect Man. This will be followed by some other proofs and demonstrations from the Qur'ān, the *Hadith* and logic about the grandeur and veneration of the Holy Prophet and the Imam of the time.

Prophets and Imams



According to our doctrine, time is divided into two parts. The first is that of Prophethood and the second that of Imamat. In the cycle of Imamat, no Imam becomes a Prophet or Messenger, but in the cycle of Prophethood, some of the Prophets were Imams also. In the following are mentioned the names of those famous Prophets who were also Imams in their respective times:

(1) Hazrat Shīth (2) Hazrat Hūd (3) Hazrat Ibrāhīm (4) Hazrat Ismā'īl (5) Hazrat Ishāq (6) Hazrat Ya'qūb (7) Hazrat Yūsuf (8) Hazrat Ayyūb (9) Hazrat Shu'ayb (10) Hazrat Hārūn (11) Hazrat Yūsha' bin Nūn (12) Hazrat al-Yasa' (13) Hazrat Dā'ūd (14) Hazrat Sulaymān (15) Hazrat Zakariyyā (16) Hazrat Yahyā and (17) Hazrat Sham'ūnu's-Safā' (see *al-Imāmah fi'l-Islām*, pp. 145, 147, 149, 151, 153).

The point is that the Imam is extremely close to the Prophet and no other has received the rank which the Imam has received from him. This means that the perfect attributes of the Prophets which are mentioned in the Qur'ān are also related to the Imams. Thus, it is a fact that there are many favours and blessings hidden in the

blessed vision of the Imam of the time, from which every *mu'min* benefits according to his courage.



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The Qur'ān and the Imam



The Holy Qur'ān is the wisdom-filled speech of God, the glorification and veneration of which is incumbent upon every pious Muslim and in this connection all appropriate manners, rendered in words and deeds, are commended. Similarly, the respect and veneration of the Imam of the time is also incumbent and necessary, because by the command of God, he has not only the exalted rank of the teacher of the Qur'ān, but also of the speaking Qur'ān.

It would be a glaring audacity against the sanctity and honour of the Qur'ān if someone denies the honour and veneration of the Qur'ān just because it cannot remove a fly when it sits on it. Similarly, if someone objects to some human aspect of the exalted Imam and on that ground says that he should not be respected and venerated, then this would definitely be a weakness of his intellect and a grave error indeed.

The example of the Qur'ān, according to Islam, is that first, it should be accepted with devotion and love and kept with oneself, whether travelling or at home and to read and understand it and then act upon its teachings. Similarly, first of all, one has to accept the exalted Imam with sincerity and certainty, then to create within oneself

friendship and love for him and full zeal for his vision, then as a consequence is attained the light of his teachings and guidance, in the illumination of which, acting upon the commands of God and the Prophet, eternal salvation is attained.



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The Ka'bah and the Imam



The Ka'bah is the sacred and venerated house of God and the adequate proof of this is that He called it His house (2:125; 22:26; 106:3). Now, if someone, according to his particular intellect and defective logic, considers revering it as idolatry and does not believe in its *ta'wili* wisdoms, it will be his misunderstanding and great ignorance, because he does not at least believe that some wisdom and expediency of God is contained in it.

Similarly, at the level of *haqiqat*, the Imam of the time is the exalted house of God, in proof of which there are numerous bright proofs in the Qur'an, the *Hadith* and reasoning. One of the proofs is that according to verse (57:3) Allah is the First, the Last, the Apparent and the Hidden. That is, Allah is present and living in every world. Thus, if in the world of *shari'at*, His house is the Ka'bah, in the world of *haqiqat* His house is the pure personality of the Imam of the time, because the *shari'at* is the exoteric (*zahir*) and *haqiqat* is its esoteric (*batin*) aspect. It is impossible to think that in *zahir* God should have a specific house, but not in *batin*. Rather, the fact is that the Ka'bah is a symbol (*mithal*) and the exalted Imam is the symbolised (*mamthul*) and there is no doubt that

both the symbol and the symbolised of God are extremely sacred, blessed and venerable.



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The Holy Prophet and the Imam



Here the specific principle of Divine wisdom should be remembered that wherever in the Wise Qur'ān, God says something to the Holy Prophet about religious matters, He takes into consideration all those means of knowledge, wisdom and guidance by using which he was going to guide the people of the world in the present and in the future, as it is clear from the following examples:

1. In verse (42:52) God says: "(O Prophet!) Verily you guide to the right path." This verse shows decisively that the Holy Prophet will be responsible to fulfil the sacred duty of continuous guidance of Islam till the Day of Resurrection. And it is obvious that this is possible only if he were to do so through the Holy Qur'ān and his successor, the Imam of the time. Praise belongs to God, he does so. And this is the reason that today, the Ismailis obey the Holy Prophet through the *farmān* of the Imam of the time.

2. In verse (9:73) God says: "O Prophet! Do *jihād* against the infidels (with sword) and the hypocrites (with tongue), and be severe with them." It is obvious that this command of *jihād* is literally given only to the Holy Prophet, but by this God does not mean that he alone will do it against the

infidels and the hypocrites, rather in this command are implied all those means of *jihād* with which he was able to do so, such as the commanders of the army whom the Holy Prophet used to appoint. This clearly shows that the successor of the Prophet, i.e. the true Imam is mentioned in many Qur'ānic verses in such a way that the common people are not aware of it. Thus, it follows from this that the veneration of the Imam after the Prophet, is incumbent in Islam.

3. A wisdom-filled part of the Verse of Light "light upon light" which consists of only three words, contains so many wisdoms that by knowing them, many realities of light can be evident. First of all, it alludes that the light transfers from one personality to another, because this is the meaning of "light upon light". This is true not only in the sense that the Prophet was light in his time and after him the Imam also, but also in the sense that its chain of personalities has continued from the time of Hazrat Ādam. Thus, it is clear that the veneration of the Imam of the time is unanimously accepted according to the Qur'ān and Islam. Thus, this belief is a fact that the vision of the present Imam represents the vision of the Prophet and the vision of the Prophet that of God.

Means of Guidance



In the preceding examples, the Divine law has been explained that the Holy Prophet was the guardian and guide of the religion of God, but he, by the command of God, also kept the fountainhead of knowledge, wisdom and guidance continuing forever in this world by means of the heavenly Book and the true Imam. This means that the guidance of the Imam of the time is that of the Prophet and his guidance is that of God, as it is clear from this verse (25:31): "And your Lord is sufficient as a guide and helper." The purpose of this wisdom-filled teaching is that the system of guidance which God has ordained for mankind according to His *sunnat* (law) and habit is acceptable to Him and praised here. And that system is that His guidance and help always continue by means of the True Guides. Thus, it is certain that the guidance of the Prophets and Imams is the guidance of God, because it is they who are commanded by and merged in God (*wāsil bi'llāh*).

Ahl-i Bayt and the Imam



The Holy Prophet has said about his holy *ahl-i bayt* (the people of the house): "By Him in Whose hand is my soul, faith does not enter the heart of a person until he loves you for the sake of God and His Messenger." (*Miftāhu Kunūzi's-Sunnah* on the authority of Tirmidhī and *Musnad* of Ahmad bin Hanbal).

This *Hadīth* enjoins not only the friendship and love for *ahl-i bayt*, i.e. the *panj tan-i pāk*, but also that of the Imam of the time, because the very purpose of *ahl-i bayt* after the Prophet is the Imam of the time. Having established the necessity of friendship and love for the Imam of the time, we can also say that its natural consequence is his blessed vision, so that thereby this pure religious love may increase progressively.

Similarly, the Holy Prophet has said about Mawlānā ʿAlī (a.s.): "Nobody except a *mu'min* loves him and nobody except a hypocrite hates him." (*Ibid.*, and Ibn Mājah). Here it is necessary to know that just as the Qur'ān is the criterion (*furqān*) to distinguish between true and false, the exalted Imam ʿAlī is also the criterion to distinguish between a *mu'min* and a hypocrite. (*Ibid.*, *Musnad* of Ahmad bin Hanbal). The Prophet has said: "ʿAlī loves

Allah and His Messenger and Allah and His Messenger love him." (*Ibid.*, Ibn Hanbal). The Prophet has also said: "I am the house of wisdom and °Alī is its door." (*Ibid.*, Tirmidhī).

Thus, it should be known that the status which °Alī (a.s.) had, is held by the Imam of the time, because it is the same light of *walāyat* which was in Mawlānā °Alī which manifests now in the living and present Imam.

The above-mentioned and many other *Ahādith* show that the veneration, excellence and honour of the pure *ahl-i bayt* and the Imam of the time is unanimously and universally accepted, and they also explain the verses about the *walāyat* of Mawlānā °Alī. How is it possible then for a *mu'min* to doubt the consequences and fruits of the friendship and love for the Imam of the time and his holy vision? However, questioning is valid and useful for the sake of knowledge. In any case, *al-hamdu li'llāh*, the true *mu'mins*, according to the aim and object of God and His Prophet, befriend and love the Imam of the time and always yearn ardently for his blessed and sacred vision.

The Heart of the Mu'min and the Imam



According to an *Hadith*, the heart of the *mu'min* is the Throne of God. The point worth reflecting on here is that the *mu'mins*, with respect to increase and decrease of the light of faith (*īmān*), are on differing levels, therefore, it is absolutely correct to say that it is the heart of the Prophet and that of the Imam which in true sense is the Throne of God, as they are on the perfect level of the light of faith. And there is no doubt that in reality it is their heart which is His Throne of spirituality, luminosity and recognition. This shows that numerous blessings are hidden in the sacred vision of the Imam of the time.

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Obedience, Love and Vision



It is evident from verse (4:59) that first, obedience is to God, then to the Prophet and then to *ulu'l-amr*, i.e. the pure Imams. However, everybody knows that obedience to God without the Prophet is impossible and similarly, obedience to the Prophet without the Imam of the time is impossible. Accordingly, it is said in the language of wisdom that love for God is attainable through the Prophet and love for the Prophet through love for the Imam of the time. From this it logically follows that this example is not confined only to obedience to and love for God, but is also applicable to His vision. That is, it is through the blessed vision of the present and living Imam that the vision of the Prophet and God can be attained.

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Means and Prayers

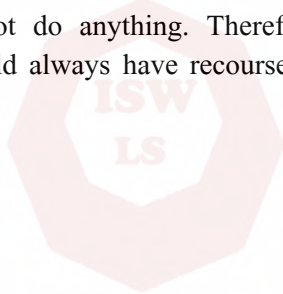


1. In verse (4:64) God says about certain people during the time of the Prophet: "And had they, when they had done injustice to themselves, come to you and asked Allah's forgiveness; and the Messenger (also) had asked pardon for them, surely, they would have found Allah forgiving, merciful."

2. This Divine command clearly shows how important is the presence of the true Imam and how necessary is the means of his pure prayer for the *mu'mins*. This is a clear indication of the fact that when the *mu'mins* have the vision of the perfect Guide, the Imam of the time, their hearts melt miraculously and tears flow automatically from their eyes. The external and internal state of such fortunate *mu'mins* is presented in the presence of God not only as repentance and special prayer, but also as a practical gratitude for this enormous bounty. All these blessings and felicities are, in reality, due to the pure vision.

3. In order for a *mu'min* to engage in the worship of God and His glorification and sanctification, he depends on the help of ordinary things, such as the voice for which first he has to fill his lungs with air through respiration, then

from this collected air he makes letters and words with the help of his throat, tongue, palate, teeth and lips. This means that man who himself is created, creates letters and words in this way and with their help he worships God. This means that whether in religion or in the world, at every level, he is in dire need of a means and without a means he cannot do anything. Therefore, in religious matters he should always have recourse to the Imam of the time.



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Vision of God



1. Although it is a fundamental Qur'ānic reality that God is incomparable and has no resemblance with His creatures, it is also a Qur'ānic fact that His vision is possible not only in the Hereafter, but also in higher spirituality in this world. Here we are not discussing how the Divine vision is possible, indirectly or directly, in any case, it is a fact according to the Qur'ān, as it says:

2. "Some faces, that Day, will beam (in brightness and beauty) looking towards their Lord." (75:22-23). According to this sacred teaching of Islam, it is clear that the blessed vision of the Prophet and the Imam is important because of the fact that just as their obedience and love are God's obedience and love, their sacred vision is the vision of God and in this respect, the Holy Prophet has said: "He who has seen me, has indeed seen God."

3. In verse (7:79) in the language of wisdom, it is said that not loving the True Guide results in the rejection of advice and guidance. This is because it is the characteristic of human nature that the teaching of a teacher or the advice of a counsellor is received only if he is believed and loved, particularly, in religious teaching. Guidance cannot advance if a wall of enmity is erected in front of it.

4. According to religious teachings, love for God cannot be directly attained without the mediation of the Prophet, and that for the Prophet without the mediation of the Imam of the time. The Imam of the time is present and living in this world. Love for him is the root and foundation of the entire religious love(s), which leads to the love for the Prophet and then for God.

5. The Qur'ān says that God has granted *mu'mins* the love for faith. That is, He has made the faith cherished and beloved to them. This implies that the Prophet and the Imams, who are the embodied faith (*īmān-i mujassam*) must be befriended and loved.

6. The Holy Prophet has said: "He who has seen me, has indeed seen God." This *Hadith* is full of great wisdoms. One of them is that he was the face of God in his time, as according to verse (48:10) he was undoubtedly the hand of God in his time. And as the Holy Prophet was the face of God in his time, the pure Imams are the face of God in their respective times. Thus knowing this fact will give great happiness to true *mu'mins* that the more they yearn for the sacred vision of the Imam of the time, the more the light of their faith will increase.

7. In *Khutbatu'l-Bayān* Mawlānā [°]Alī says: "I am the face of God in the heavens and the earth." The *ta'wil* of this *farmān* is that the Prophet and the Imam are the face of

God in the sense that, in the world of religion, they are the vicegerent and deputy of God and God is recognised through their recognition. Because the vision of God is attained through their vision and in their love is hidden the love for God. Thus the certain means of Divine vision is its first stage, and representative of the second stage. Thus the vision of the Prophet and the Imam is the representative vision of God.

8. If it is accepted that man is the most noble of creatures, because he is given excellence and honour over all things of the universe and existents, then it also has to be accepted that the Perfect Man is the most noble and excellent of mankind and the souls of righteous people are angels and spiritual beings (*ruhāniyyīn*) according to their ranks, then the Prophet and the Imam who are Perfect Men, are extremely close to God. In other words, they are in the state of *fanā' fi'llāh* (annihilation in God) and *baqā' bi'llāh* (survival in God). Had they not been so and had there remained the slightest distance in the path of God, they would not have been True Guides of the people. Thus, it is evident that the Perfect Man is completely merged in God. Therefore, the bliss of the gracious vision of the Imam of the time is essential, so that the *mu'mins* may be able to completely attain the blessings from his presence.

"Anā" and "Fanā'"



At the end of the attractive and pleasing subject of "True Vision", it is appropriate to explain some realities of "*anā* (I)" and "*fanā'* (annihilation)". Because the most useful result of the blessed and sacred vision of the spiritual or real beloved is that the "I" or "ego" of the true lover should be effaced and annihilated in his reality. And this supreme bliss is attained by a wise *mu'min* only if he or she takes the complete help of knowledge and good deeds.

The subject of *anā* and *fanā'* has many aspects, therefore a lot can be written about it. However, keeping in view the facility and interest of readers, we want to present that aspect of the subject in which abstruse and difficult terms are not involved. Thus, *anā* in Arabic means "I" or "ego", which is indicated by saying "I" and *fanā'* in Arabic means to efface and annihilate this *anā* according to the special rules of religion, so that the *mu'min* may get rid of every kind of defect and short-coming and merge in "Companion-on High (*rafiq-i a'la*)".

The lower "I" of man can be annihilated only when, enraptured in true love, he succeeds in offering sacrifices of body, soul and intellect for the sake of the completion of religious goals, because the lower "I" subsists on

human existence which consists of these three things and hence in this respect sacrifice and annihilation is of three kinds: physical, spiritual and intellectual.

If a true *mu'min* always strengthens religion through his physical services without any show or ostentation, his lower "I" and egoism come to an end or become weak. Similarly, the lower "I" can be effaced and sacrificed by worship (*'ibādat*), spiritual exercises, remembrance, reflection and shedding of tears in true love and this is through the soul. The same purpose can also be achieved through sincere intellectual sacrifices. That is, serving the nation and the community with mind and intellect and considering oneself humble and insignificant. Thus, these three kinds of sacrifices result in effacement of the lower "I" and revival in the communal and universal soul.

One great and special mercy among the unbounded Divine mercies which are available in Islam is that the lower "I" can be effaced and annihilated with unselfish monetary sacrifices also, like those of the above-mentioned sacrifices. It is so important because of the fact that contrary to it, the desire for the plenitude of wealth, parsimony and avarice cause many vices, such as self-conceit, egoism, selfishness, worldliness, voluptuousness, disobedience, which stop the growth of any zeal for altruism, sacrifice, effacement and annihilation. Thus, the prevention of these spiritual

diseases and their cure are possible only through monetary sacrifices.

The Holy Qur'ān says: "Everything is perishable save His Face. His is the authority, and to Him you shall all return." (28:88). According to the wise people, this wisdom-filled verse means that a *mu'min* can only become revived in his origin, namely the higher "I" (*anā-i 'ulwī*) and have the Divine vision (of the face of God) if everything of his existence is annihilated either by willing annihilation or unwilling annihilation (i.e. death), otherwise everything (such as body, soul and intellect) which is not purified and dissolved becomes a veil in front of him. Therefore, it is said: "Die (spiritually), before (physical) death", so that by voluntary annihilation you may merge in God.

According to Sufis, there are three levels of effacement and annihilation, which are: *fanā' fi'sh-shaykh* (annihilation in the Shaykh), *fanā' fi'r-rasūl* (annihilation in the Prophet) and *fanā' fi'llāh* (annihilation in God). This concept is very pleasing according to the people of *haqīqat* also. However, there is a fundamental difference that the pure *Shaykh* in whom the *mu'min* should annihilate himself is only and only the Imam of the time, as the verse of obedience (4:59) commands: "O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Messenger and the *ulu'l-amr* from among you." In this command of

obedience there is a clear logical indication to love them and to annihilate in them step by step, because annihilation is the corollary of love and love that of obedience.

The purport of verses (55:26-28) in which annihilation is mentioned is that annihilation of everything on earth and the ever-abiding of the face of the Lord Who is full of majesty and honour is His greatest favour for both *jinn* and mankind. This shows that the annihilation of one's ego or lower "I" by effacing it with humility, and reviving and abiding eternally in the real beloved, is the greatest bounty.

Hazrat Mawlānā Imam Sultān Muhammad Shāh, *salawātu'llāhi 'alayhi*, in his Memoirs has mentioned love, effacement, self-forgetting and annihilation succinctly but extremely comprehensively, meaningfully and in a wisdom-filled way. If one reflects in the light of this blessed and sacred guidance of the Imam, he or she can come to know the great secrets of the purpose of life and the indication of the final destination.

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He is the author of over a hundred books related to the esoteric interpretation of the holy Qur'an. He writes both prose as well as poetry. He is the first person to have a Diwan of poetry in Burushaski, his mother tongue, and is known as "Babā-i Burushaski" (Father of Burushaski) for his service to that language. He also composes poetry in three other languages: Urdu, Persian and Turkish. His contribution to spiritual science has been widely recognised. His works include "Qur'anic Healing", "Balance of Realities", "Du'ā' - Essence of 'Ibādat", "What is Soul?", "Recognition of Imam, Parts I, II & III", as well as being co-author of a German-Burushaski dictionary published by Heidelberg University and "Hunza Proverbs" published by Calgary University.

