

Translator's Foreword

In the Name of God the Beneficent, The Merciful

The human being is the most complicated and astonishing creation of God–Almighty, the creation who in addition to having its primordial animalistic desires also possesses their peculiar nature and spiritual personality. The creation that has been assigned the Divine Viceregency upon earth, [1](#) accepted the Divine Trust [2](#) when heavens, the earth and the mountains shrank from bearing it, and in its upward heavenly ascent [3](#) even surpassed the God's Favorite Angels.

A creation that selects and thinks, and through combination of his mental power and physical endeavors is capable of removing all obstacles from his path for betterment of his life. The one who creates his own life history through enrichment of knowledge inherited from his predecessors and makes, the path smoother for further advancement by the coming generations in the future.

But unfortunately, in the midst of man's struggle with nature for improving the quality of his living environment, the most precious reality that has been forgotten is the self and the jewel of human personality. Or in other words, what has been forgotten is the man himself, his training and self-purification and making him an ideal or perfect human being.

A human being who has been called by God–Almighty, the Most Superior Creation, [4](#) and about whose identification the authentic commentators of the revelations have said:

“Whoever has recognized his self –in reality has recognized his Creator.” [5](#)

Self-forgetfulness, negligence shown towards recognizing the infinite dimensions of human celestial soul and under estimation of human inner potential for attaining self-purification or moral perfection is the pain which has inflicted plenty of suffering upon the modern human societies.

The domination of technology, fast pace of modern life, usurpation of power by materialists and world-worshippers over vast regions of the world on one hand and the failure and incompetency of various school and ideologies in presenting a clearly illuminated path and satisfactory interpretation of human being on the other hand have made this journey of retrogression and self alienation further complicated.

But in the Islamic Ideology, the greatest aim in the life's struggle is to become victorious over the self. In the Holy Qur'an the God Almighty after repeated oaths has emphasized the importance of spiritual purification as follows:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

“He is indeed successful who causeth it to grow, (the self) And he is indeed a failure who stunteth it.” (91: 9–10)

In accordance with Divine Islamic Ideology, the most exalted aim is training and guidance of human beings in their spiritual journey from the earthly temporary abode towards the Celestial Kingdom.

The aim consists of creation of a society and environment where only God–Almighty is worshipped; in which the light of servitude, devotion, and manifestation of faith towards the unseen will destroy the darkness of selfish whims and passions, thus, enabling the human eyes to witness God's Infinite Glory all over upon his existence and introducing the rule of Monotheism (*Tawhid*) and its relevant vast dimensions over all human relations and transactions. Of course, this is not possible without self-purification.

The Western people and the Muslim immigrants now settled in Western countries in general are curious to know more about Islamic Mysticism or Gnosticism (*Irfan*). Therefore, I had always desired to translate a suitable book dealing with the Islamic Gnosticism. Thanks God–the Almighty that He bestowed upon this humble servant His Special Grace for completing this translation of Ayatullah Amini's Persian Book –*Khud Sazi, Tazkiyeh wa Tehzibe Nafs*.

The book presents a detailed description of special deeds as per formed by God's most devoted sincere servants during their lives, the self-restraint and asceticism practiced by them during these worships, and the spiritual purification achieved by them. In their spiritual migration towards God–Almighty the more they endeavored to advance forward the more nearer they reached to God's Countenance (*Laqa*).

In Islamic Mysticism [6](#) the gnostic journey is called ‘*sayr wa saluk*’ and the wayfarer who undertakes this journey is called ‘*salik*’, who strives to utilize all his energy, strength and courage in his spiritual migration towards God–Almighty; takes all necessary precautions to remain purified in his march; is not tired of restrictions and limitations; guards his breaths day and night lest he transgresses and becomes deviated; strictly supervises all entries leading to heart's domain lest illicit desires, forbidden thoughts make their entries thus, making his beloved's promises contaminated with alien's presence.

The most famous mystic poet of Iran, Hafiz al-Shirazi [7](#) has so beautifully summarized the wayfarer's above mentioned endeavors in his following verse:

“I remained vigilant guarding the heart's premises every night. So that no alien thought (except my

beloved's) could make its entry.”

After endeavoring the hardships of his gnostic journey, those who succeed attain the nearness of their beloved (i.e. God–Almighty); the Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) have described this gnostic stage in the following tradition:

“Truly when a wayfarer (salik) succeeds in making his wisdom alive and in letting his self die, his body becomes gradually weaker and thinner, his heaviness turning into slimness. A Divine illumination whose manifestation was intermittent becomes clearly visible for him, thus making his path clearly brightened, guiding and moving him through it; passing through various gates (of asceticism) he eventually reaches to the permanent abode of prosperity and with a tranquil and contented heart places his feet in a place of ease and comfort. This is because, he had utilized his reason properly and had made his Creator pleased.”⁸

A gnostic after attaining God's Learning (*marefah*) becomes some one whose physical body is with the people but his heart is always engaged in God's Remembrance. A gnostic is the trustee of God's Trust and is the treasurer of Divine–Mysteries; is the source of His Light and proof of His Blessings upon the mankind; is the carrier of Divine Knowledge and Scale of Divine Mercy and Justice; is needless of mankind, desires and world; does not have any other companion except God–Almighty; and does not have any indication, speech and breathing but by means of God, for the sake of God, from the God and with the God.

The main contents of the book as mentioned earlier are the etiquette and instructions of gnostic journey, ways and manners of servitude, detailed descriptions of deeds and worships that must be performed by a wayfarer, and what sort of behaviors and restrictions they must practice in order to attain the desired results. The book consists of preface and three parts covering the following topics:

Self–purification, Human Virtues, What to Be?, Heart in Qur’an, Hard–heartedness, Self–refinement, Self–struggle, Egotism, Wordliness, Piety, Characteristics of the Pious, Repentance or Self–cleansing, Training and Perfection of Self, Faith, Means of Achieving Perfection and God's Nearness, Invocations, Instructions, Obstacles of the Path, Nourishment of Moral Virtues, Righteous Deeds etc.

The most prevalent misunderstanding ⁹ about Islamic Mysticism which must be clarified is that relinquishment of worldly involvement, seclusion, and monasticism are not prerequisites for undertaking a spiritual migration towards God–Almighty; on the contrary, as it would be shown in the later part of this book, Islam demands from its followers that while living among the people a normal social life discharging the individual and collective obligations, they should not be negligent of their own selves and must pay special attention towards their spiritual purification.

I wish to thank all those who have contributed to the realization of this translation. I am indebted to Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini and Mr. Ansariyan for support, valuable suggestions, and guidance. I am sincerely indebted to my wife Fatimah Razavi for proof reading Arabic text and Mr. Soulat Parviz for his

painstaking efforts in type-setting.

For the sake of convenience of readers who are not familiar with Arabic language the recital of important supplications have been written in English. Elucidatory footnotes and chapters added by the translator are identified with [Tr]. Due to pressure of time, as I am leaving tomorrow for Hajj pilgrimage there might be errors and omissions for which I apologize to my readers, and welcome their suggestions and comments.

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1. And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth. (20: 30)

2. Lo! We offered the trust unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it. (33: 72)

3. When he was on the uppermost horizon

Then he drew nigh and came down

Till he was (distant) two bows' length or even nearer

And He revealed unto His slave that which He revealed. (53: 7-10)

4. So blessed be God, the Best of Creators! (23: 14)

5. A narration from the Infallible Imams (a.s.) of the Holy Prophet's (S) Ahlul Bayt.

6. In order to provide a further glimpse of Islamic Mysticism, the translation and commentary of a famous mystical verse of Imam Khomeini (RA) –the most eminent gnostic of our time, has been included at the end of this book.

7. Khuwaja Shamsuddin Hafiz-i-Shirazi the most eminent mystic poet of Iran, was born in the year 726 A.H. in Shiraz. All the Gnostics of the world humble themselves before the exaltedness and sacredness of Hafiz who is considered as their Qibleh-Gah (patron). His contentment, surrender, absolute freedom from wants, and truthfulness had bestowed a unique sacredness upon his poetry.

After passage of more than six hundred years his poetic work Diwan of Hafiz is widely used for Estekhara (consultation), but only those who have purified their souls thoroughly may receive guidance from his poetry. Following are some examples of his poetry:

شکر خدا چه طلب کردم از خدا برمنتحمای مطلب خودکامران شدم

“Thanks God whatever I requested from God, eventually my wishes were granted.”

هرگنج سعادت که خدا داد بحافظ از یمن دعای شب ووردسحری یود

“Each treasurer of prosperity which was bestowed upon Hafiz by God was due to the blessings of night prayer and dawn supplications.”

Upon knowing Hafiz, Goethe wished to be one of his disciples. He said: Oh Hafiz, your word is as great as eternity for it has no beginning and no end. Your word as the canopy of heaven solely depends upon itself. It is all signs, beauty and excellence.”

After studying the lyric poems of Hafiz, Hitche wrote:

“O Hafiz, you have created a tavern of philosophy greater than any worldly palace. In it you provided a wine of grace and

world beyond the capacity of the world to drink. The highest pinnacle of any amount is but a sign of your greatness and the unfathomable depth of any vortex is just a mark of your perfection, and the excellence of your world.”

Hafiz, after blessing the humanity with precious gift of his poetic works died at the age of 65 years in the year 791 A.H. His tomb is located in Shiraz. His verses like immortal sign still show light to the world’s deviated ones whose hearts are full of intense darkness.

[8.](#) Sharh Nahjul Balagha, Ibne abi al-Hadid, p. 111–127

[9.](#) Regarding these misunderstandings Imam Khomeini (RA) in his last testament writes:

“Among the noticeable conspiracies during the present century and especially during the last few decades and since the victory of the Islamic Revolution is the vast worldwide propaganda for dismaying nations and especially the self-sacrificing people of Iran with a view to making them lose their confidence in Islam and eventually renounce it.

Sometimes they do it directly, albeit crudely, suggesting, for example, that the edicts of Islam which were established one thousand and four hundred years ago cannot possibly be relied on as laws on the basis of which to administer countries in the present century, that Islam is a reactionary religion opposed to every innovation and to the manifestation of modern civilization, or that in the present era the countries in the world cannot discard the world's civilization and its manifestations.

And similar foolish and occasionally malicious and vicious propaganda nicely wrapped and offered in the form of pro-Islamic propaganda and under the pretext of support for the sanctity of Islamic ways, among other things, that Islam and other divine religions are concerned about the spiritualities, about the moral rectification of mankind, that they invite them to resign earthly pursuits, that they invite man to renounce the material world and engage himself in acts of worship, saying prayers and devotions which, they argue, bring man nearer to God and distance him from the material world; that involvement in the administration of state and government and politics is against that lofty and spiritual goal because the latter activities are solely for this material world, which is against the teachings of the great prophets.” Imam's Final Discourse, pp. 22–23.

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