

Unveiling or Self-Disclosure of God
(PDF version of Candle Posting No. 119)



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June 5, 2013

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

Ya Ali Madad. On the occasion Mi'raj, the commemoration of the journey in which our Holy Prophet (s.a.s.) attained the status of fana fi'llah and baqa bi'llah using ism-i azam (symbolized by Burraq, the mystical horse), please accept our heartfelt felicitations! May Noor Mowlana Hazar Imam grant peace, prosperity, happiness, barakat, higher spiritual enlightenment, spiritual & luminous tayid (help) and empowerment to you, your family, your Jamat and the worldwide Jamat. Ameen.



Introduction

Since the establishment of SalmanSpiritual.com in 1999, we have published on religious practices for higher spiritual enlightenment. The emphasis was on the purification of soul through the submission of dasond, regularity in compulsory daily prayers, performance of abundant dhikr in congregation and personal space, practice of bandagi between 4 and 5 a.m. every morning, unconditional service to Noor Mowlana Hazar Imam and his global Jamat, service to humanity at large and search for pertinent spiritual knowledge. It is quite clear that the purification and the recognition of one's soul is the first requirement of our spiritual journey.

Through this posting, I am enhancing the above Tariqah practices package with knowledge on the topic of **kashf** (unveiling or self disclosure) which is described in our Holy Ginans. I am then going to augment this knowledge with Ibn al-Arabi's viewpoints from a book entitled 'Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination: The Sufi Path of Knowledge', written by William C. Chittick, published by State University of New York Press, Albany, 1989.

In the above mentioned book, Chittick has systematically presented the vast literature of Al-Shaykh al-Akbar, the "Greatest Master", 'Ibn al-'Arabi and given his commentary on each topic. The key concept that I am going to explore in this posting is **kashf** (unveiling or self-disclosure).

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Part 1: Wisdoms of Pir Shams on Kashf (Unveiling or Self Disclosure)

In the following verses from the ginan, Ab teri mahobat laagi mere Saheb, Pir Shams (r.a.) supplicates to the Holy Imam to unveil his luminous face and quench his thirst through the didar of his luminous face. Here the Holy Pir desires an entirely luminous (noorani) experience of the manifestation of Noor Mowlana Hazar Imam's Light in his forehead and heart. The key words are '**veil**', '**thirst**', '**face**' and '**vision**'. These concepts have been addressed by Ibn al-Arabi in great detail.

Kholo **parda**, sanmukh **dekho**
Has has mukh **dikhlaavo** mere Saheb
Ab teri mahobat laagi

O my Lord! Open the curtain and look at me face to face.
Bless me with the sight of Your smiling face. 2

Teri suratka Pir Shams piyaasa
Darshan **daan dilaavo** mere Saheb
Ab teri mahobat laagi

O my Lord! Pir Shams is thirsty for (the vision of) your face.
Bless me with the grace of Your Vision, O my Lord! 3

Part 2: Ranking of Knowledge According to Ibn al-Arabi

"The sciences are of three levels. [The first] is the **science of reason**, which is every knowledge which is actualized for you by the fact that it is self-evident or after considering proofs, on the condition that the purport of that proof is discovery ...

The second science is the **science of states** (ahwal), which cannot be reached except through tasting. No man of reason can define the states, nor can any proof be adduced for knowing them, naturally enough. Take for example knowledge of the sweetness of honey, the bitterness of aloes, love, ecstasy, yearning, and similar knowledges. It is impossible for anyone to know any of these sciences without being qualified by them and tasting them ...

The third knowledge is the **sciences of mysteries** (asrar). It is the knowledge which is "**beyond the stage of reason.**" It is knowledge through the blowing (nafth) of the Holy Spirit (rûh al-quddus) into the heart (rû'), and it is specific to the prophet or the friends of God ...

The knower of this last kind—the science of mysteries—knows and exhausts all sciences. The possessors of the other sciences are not like that. So there is no knowledge more noble than this all-encompassing knowledge, which comprises all objects of knowledge. (I 31.11)" (pp.169-170)

There are a very large number of Ismailis who have gone to secular universities for their advanced education and are now working in a wide variety of fields and professions. The faculties of reason and reflection are the basis for knowledge in the fields of science, engineering, technology and related fields. However, in order to be blessed with superior, holistic knowledge, it is necessary to explore other dimensions of the human potential. This is addressed below.

Part 3: How is True Knowledge Revealed?

"**True knowledge** is unveiled by God, without the intermediary of reflection or any other faculty. According to a saying often cited in Sufi texts, "Knowledge is a light which God throws into the hearts of whosoever He will."

Sound knowledge is not given by reflection, nor what the rational thinkers establish by means of their reflective powers. Sound knowledge is only that which God throws into the heart of the knower. It is a divine light for which God singles out any of His servants whom He will, whether angel, messenger, prophet, friend, or person of faith. He who has no unveiling has no knowledge [i.e., this type of sound knowledge] (man lâ kashf lah lâ 'ilm lah). (I 218.19)

There is no knowledge except that taken from God, for He alone is the Knower. He is the Teacher whose student is never visited by obfuscations [complications] in what he takes from Him. We are those who follow His authority, and what He has is true. So we are more deserving in our following His authority of the name "learned masters" ('ulamâ) than the possessors of reflective consideration, those who follow the authority of consideration in what it gives to them. Necessarily they never cease disagreeing in knowledge of God. But the prophets, in spite of their great number and long periods of time which separate them, had no disagreement in knowledge of God. So also are the Folk and Elect of Allah: The later ones affirm the truthfulness of the earlier one, and each supports the others. (II 290.25). " (p.170)

The **unveiled knowledge** can also be called gifted knowledge. It is given above and beyond all the bounties which are obtained through the practice of faith. The true or sound knowledge given by unveiling leads to the completion of the development of the spiritual and intellectual universe which is hidden in man. This hidden universe within man is beyond time and space, and is filled with all encompassing knowledge and wisdom through kashf (unveiling). Al-Hamdulillah!

Part 4: The Mi'raj of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.s.)

The Holy Prophet's visit to the heavens is described in the following verse of the Holy Qu'ran:

"Glory be to Him Who carried His servant (Apostle Muhammad) by night from the Holy Mosque (of the Ka'ba) to the Farthest Mosque, which We have blessed its environment that We may show unto him, of Our signs; Verily He, is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing." (Holy Qur'an 17:1, S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali's translation, p.876)

Here is an excerpt from Mir Ahmed Ali's commentary on this Surah:

"The chapter opens with a reference to Mi'raj, the ascension of the Holy Prophet Muhammad into the heavens at the invitation from the Lord, where he was shown the wonders of the Universe and the high positions of unique excellence in store for him and the distinctive status of his Vicegerent Ali-ibne-Abi-Taleb and his divinely chosen issues and the blissful abode of his faithful followers." (S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali's translation, p. 876)

In the ayat 17:1 mentioned above, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.s.) is referred to as the servant of God. There is a great wisdom in the status of servanthood. In his chapter 'Safety in Servanthood', Chittick has linked servanthood to unveiling (kashf) as follows:

"Through following the Law the servant employs his innate character traits in the positive and praiseworthy manner that conforms to God's approval. As he continues on this path, more and more of his noble traits will be attributed to him. But if he sees these traits as belonging to himself, he faces the grave danger of setting himself up as a rival to God, in practice if not in theory. Satan is always lying in wait, ready to ambush the man of piety by stirring up self-satisfaction and pride. The servant's only protection is to cling to his own nothingness, the fact that in the last analysis, he remains forever nonexistent. Nothing belongs to him except those attributes which manifest nonexistence, evil and ignorance. Everything that manifests Being [i.e., existence] belongs to God. The servant must flee from every ontological attribute, since these are properties of God's Lordship. He must dwell in his non-ontological attributes, proper to servanthood.

The more perfect the actualization of servanthood, the more perfect is man. Paradoxically, the more perfect man's nothingness, the more perfectly he manifests God's attributes. The greatest "servant" of God is His greatest locus of disclosure. Hence the first sobriquet [i.e., appellation] of Prophet Muhammad is "His servant" ('abduhu)—only then is he "His messenger" (rasûluhu). Thus, in the general Islamic view, a human being can aspire to be nothing higher than being a servant. Prophecy has come to an end, so no one can imitate Muhammad in his role as messenger. Adhering to the Prophet's Sunna is to imitate him as a servant." (pp.309-310)

In our ginanic literature, we encounter words such as 'das', 'dasi', 'nari', 'sevek', and 'gulam'. For example, here is a verse from Pir Hasan Kabirdin's ginan, Aash **Tamari** Shri Ho Kayam Sami, in which the Pir supplicates as a humble servant (slave):

Eji Pir Hasan Kabirdin sevek em vinve
Sami maara ham tere sharañ muraari Ya Shah
Hi joog kud kapat jal bhariya
Satse-**thi** paar **utaaro**

O Lord! Pir Hassan Kabirdin, the humble servant supplicates:

O my Lord! I seek Your shelter.

This age is full of evil and deceit;

take me across (this evil and deceitful ocean) by the way of Truth.

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I hope that the trait of servanthood described by our Pirs in their Ginans will motivate us to adopt the attitude of utmost humility in our personal search for higher spiritual enlightenment.

Noor Mowlana Hazar Imam has given a firman that no one has a right to the Light and one must remain humble in personal search. Here the word 'humble' is used in the sense of 'nothingness' and the since the Light is being self-disclosed, it is not a right of a servant to lay a claim on it. Everything which manifests in us through the practice of faith and self-disclosure (i.e., unveiling) is a blessing and it does not belong to us! The Light is given to us as a baraka and should be considered as a trust (amanat) of the Holy Imam in our personal worlds. The concept of light as an amanat is covered in Part 8 of this posting. If we adopt a position of submission, humility and trustworthiness, we build a shield of protection from the traits of our lower instincts!

Part 5: What is an explicit Definition of Unveiling?

We have often heard about the four stages of religion: Shariat, Tariqat, Haqqiqat and Marifat. What is Marifat and what is the difference between 'ilm and ma'rifa? According to Chittick, "When discussing knowledge as a human attribute, many Sufis placed ma'rifa at a higher stage than 'ilm, and in this context it would be fair to translate the first as gnosis and the second as knowledge. Then ma'rifa is equivalent to the direct knowledge called unveiling, witnessing and tasting' (p.148). Thus, Marifat is the recognition of God within one's soul.

Unveiling is described more explicitly by Chittick as follows:

"In many passages Ibn al-'Arabi explains the difference between two basic kinds of knowledge: That which can be acquired by the rational faculty, and the "gnosis" which can only come through spiritual practice and the divine self-disclosure. In general, he refers to this second kind of knowledge as "unveiling" (kashf), "[direct] tasting" (dhawq), "opening" (fath), "insight" (basira), and "witnessing" (shuhud, mushada), though he employs other terms as well, and often distinguishes among various terms." (p.168)

Part 6: How to Enter into the Presence of God?

Now let us synthesize knowledge of humility, servanthood and enlightenment and relate it to the spirituality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.s.). Also, let us attempt to understand why it is better to enter into God's presence as a servant rather than a lord through the following explanation of Ibn al-'Arabi:

"He who enters into the Exalted Side with his lordship is like him who enters in with a burning lamp, while he who enters in with his servanthood is like him who enters with a wick without flame, or with a handful of smoldering twigs. When the two of them enter like this, a breath from the All-merciful blows against them. The lamp is extinguished by that wind, while the twigs flame up. The possessor of the light comes out in darkness, while the possessor of the twigs comes out with a light from which illumination can be sought. So look at what his preparedness has given to him!

Thus everyone who flees from there fears that his lamp will be extinguished. He is afraid that his lordship will disappear, so he flees to the place where it is manifest. **But he only comes out after his lamp is extinguished.** If he came out and it was still lit, such that blowing of the wind has no effect upon it, then he would be right to claim lordship. But that still would have been through God's preserving him.

He who enters in as a servant has no fear. When his wick becomes ignited there, he knows who lit it and he sees His kindness in that. **Then he comes out as an illuminated servant.** Thus God said, "Glory be to Him who carried His servant by night" (17:1), that is, as a servant. But when he came back out to his community, **he came "calling unto God by His leave, and as a light-giving lamp" (33:46)**, just as he entered in as a lowly servant, knowing that into which he was entering and to whom he was entering. (I 276.19)" (p.323)

Chittick's comment on the above example is as follows:

"Through seeking refuge in his own servanthood, the perfect servant manifests God's attributes almost in spite of himself. He seeks refuge in his own nothingness, but others perceive the attributes of God reflected within him. " (p.323)

In the above example, a humble servant is one who has detached from this world and has attached himself to his Lord. In contrast, the person who enters into the presence of God with his lamp is a person who is carrying his ego with associated status into the Divine presence. This is the reason that his lamp gets extinguished. Now let us read another teaching of Pir Hasan Kabirdin (r.a.) in which he teaches us how to extinguish our lower instincts.

Part 7: How to Sacrifice the Ego?

In the sixth verse of the ginan, Abdhu man jite, Pir Hasan Kabirdin has also presented the concept of completely sacrificing the ego through the following wisdom filled words:

Abdhu âshâ mâro chinitâ jâro
anê hu(n) khudi karo rasoi
âsan jito nindrâ jito,
kirtâr karê so hoi,
abdhu kirtâr karê so hoi.

O Saint! Shun desires, control your thoughts
and sacrifice your ego (nafs-i amara).
Control your posture during bandagi and discipline your sleeping patterns.
Whatever you do will happen;
O Saint! Whatever you do will happen.

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Part 8: Returning the Amanat of Light to God

Under the heading, 'The Exaltation of Lowliness', Chittick has written the following commentary for Ibn al-'Arabi's explanation:

"Man can only stay safe from making claims by clinging to his own root, which is lowliness and servanthood. In effect, the divine names whose traits he assumes become a heavy burden upon him. Ibn al-'Arabi points this out while explaining one of the senses of the Koranic verse, "God commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners" (4:58)." (p.317)

Here is Ibn al-'Arabi's explanation:

"Do you not see that when someone deposits a possession with a person, he finds that it weights him down? Guarding and preserving it are a burden for him. But if its owner says to him, "I give this to you and it no longer belongs to me", the carrying of the possession becomes easy for him, and he becomes tremendously happy, honoring the person who gave it to him. In the same way the attributes of the Real are a trust with the servant.

Because the divine attributes are a trust with the gnostic, he never ceases being weighed down by examining them. How should he employ them? Where should he put them to use? He fears to employ them in the way that the Owner might employ them. When he is weighted down in this way, he returns them to their Owner and remains happy and burden-free in servanthood, which is his own possession, or rather, his reality, since everything in addition to that may disappear from him. God praises him for delivering the trusts back safely. So he who does not transgress his own measure will prosper, just as is said in the proverb: "No one who knows his own worth will come to ruin." (II 631.4)

The highest of waystations with God is for God to preserve His servant in the constant witnessing of his own servanthood, whether or not He has bestowed upon him any of the lordly robes. This is the most eminent of waystations given to a servant. It is indicated in His words to Moses, "I have made thee well for Myself" (20:41), and His words [concerning the mi'raj of Muhammad], "Glory be to Him who carried His servant by night" (17:1). Note how He links "His servant" with the declaration of incomparability [through the term "glorification"]. (III 32.9)

No one is a servant but he who is uniform in his servitude. If the servant deviates from this attributes through the slightest lordly description—even if that praise is praiseworthy, like an attribute of mercy—he has left the level for which he was created and is deprived of the perfection and knowledge of God to the extent that he is qualified by the attributes of the Real. (II 616.7)" (p.317-318)

If one is blessed with the unveiling of the light in bandagi, one should fully realize that this is a blessing and a trust which is placed in him by the Holy Imam. As the person is entrusted with the light, he/she should use the energy of that light in the way the owner of the light would use it. This demands the highest standards of ethics and servanthood.

The act of witnessing the light was experienced by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.s.). Since the Holy Prophet was the most humble and devoted servant of God, he maintained the highest standard of servanthood during these experiences. Although the Holy Prophet was endowed with heavenly knowledge, he still maintained his servanthood. Thus, the endowed Prophet—who became a lamp for humanity— still remained a servant in his relationship with God. The servant remained as a servant and the Lord is the Lord. The servant embraced nothingness while the Lord is the Being, i.e., the Lord is everything!

Part 9: Conclusion

In this posting, I have presented key concept of unveiling as the final step in one's spiritual journey and have supported this with references from our Holy Ginans, teachings of Noor Mowlana Hazar Imam, and the citations from Chittick's book on Ibn al-'Arabi's 'Metaphysics of Imagination'. This knowledge has opened a new door in my personal search.

The topic of 'Unveiling' is difficult and I am humbled by what has come in front of me. The content presented above has only been possible through the tremendous tayid that came from Noor Mowlana Hazar Imam otherwise how can a Soil Scientist touch Ibn al-Arabi's Metaphysics? Praise is to our beloved Noor Mowlana Hazar Imam for working in mysterious ways! Al-Hamdulillah!

In the light of the above knowledge, it is absolutely necessary to change one's own code of conduct. Although, I have taken the first few steps to incorporate recent changes, the journey is long and time is short!

May Noor Mowlana Hazar Imam guide and sustain us in servanthood as we move towards enlightenment. Ameen!

Part 10: Links:

1. [Click here](#) to download the PDF version of Candle Posting 119 :: Unveiling or Self-Disclosure of God ::
2. [Click here](#) to download the PDF version of Candle Posting 118 :: Spiritual Dimensions of the Alid Tradition ::
3. [Click here](#) to download the PDF version of Candle Posting 117 :: Harnessing Barakat in Your Spiritual and Material Worlds ::
4. [Click here](#) to download the PDF version of Candle Posting 116 :: Enlightening Wisdoms of Noor Mowlana Murtaza Ali (a.s.) ::
5. [Click here](#) to download the PDF version of Candle Posting 115 :: Harnessing the Power of Sura Ikhlas ::

Ardent Supplications:

Ya Ali, Ya NOOR Mowlana Shah Karim Al-Hussaini Hazar Imam, create Sunshine in our hearts, light in our foreheads, and bless us all with the inner vision of the Truth!

Ya Ali, Ya NOOR Mowlana Shah Karim Al-Hussaini Hazar Imam, grant the global Jamat luminous (noorani) and spiritual (ruhani) tayid (help) to advance materially, spiritually and intellectually. Ameen.

Haizinda – Qayampaya
(Our Present Imam is Living and His NOOR is Eternal)

Archives:

[Candle Posting Index Vol. 1](#)

[Candle Posting Index Vol. 2](#)

[Candle Posting Index Vol. 3](#)

Rakh Mowla je Noor te Yaqeen (Certainly, we trust in Mowla's Light only),
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Wednesday, June 5, 2013