

Al-Hikam—Sufi Aphorisms

IBN 'ATA ALLAH AL-ISKANDARI

1

One of the signs of relying on one's own deeds
is the loss of hope when a downfall occurs.

2

Your desire for isolation,
even though God has put you in the world to gain a living,
is a hidden passion.
And your desire to gain a living in the world,
even though God has put you in isolation
is a comedown from lofty aspiration.

3

Antecedent intentions (*sawābiq al-himam*)
cannot pierce the walls of predestined Decrees.

4

Rest yourself from self-direction,
for what Someone Else has carried out on your behalf
you must not yourself undertake to do it.

5

Your striving for what has already been guaranteed to you,
and your remissness in what is demanded of you
are signs of the blurring of your intellect.

6

If in spite of intense supplication,
there is delay in the timing of the Gift,
let that not be the cause for your despairing.
For He has guaranteed you a response
in what He chooses for you,
not in what you choose for yourself,
and at the time He desires, not the time you desire.

7

If what was promised does not occur,
even though the time for its occurrence had been fixed,
then that must not make you doubt the promise.
Otherwise your intellect will be obscured
and the light of your innermost heart extinguished.

8

If He opens a door for you, thereby making Himself known,
pay no heed if your deeds do not measure up to this.
For, in truth, He has not opened it for you but out of
a desire to make Himself known to you.
Do you not know that He is the one who presented
the knowledge of Himself to you, whereas you are the one
who presented Him with deeds? What a difference between
what He brings to you and what you present to Him!

9

Actions differ
because the inspirations of the states of being differ.

10

Actions are lifeless forms,
but the presence of an inner reality of sincerity (*sirr al-ikhhlās*) within them
is what endows them with life-giving Spirit.

11

Bury your existence in the earth of obscurity,
for whatever sprouts forth,
without having first been buried,
flowers imperfectly.

12

Nothing benefits the heart more than a spiritual retreat
wherein it enters the domain of meditation (*maydān fikra*).

13

How can the heart be illumined

while the forms of creatures are reflected in its mirror?
Or how can it journey to God
while shackled by its passions?
Or how can it desire to enter the Presence of God
while it has not yet purified itself
of the stain of forgetfulness?
Or how can it understand the subtle points of mysteries
while it has not yet repented of its offences?

14

The Cosmos is all darkness.
It is illumined only by the manifestation of God in it.
Whoever sees the Cosmos and does not contemplate Him
in it or by it or before it or after it is in need of light
and is veiled from the sun of gnosis
by the clouds of created things.

15

That which shows you the existence of His Omnipotence
Is that He veiled you from Himself
By what has no existence alongside of Him.

16

How can it be conceived that something veils Him,
since He is the One who manifests everything?
How can it be conceived that something veils Him
since He is the one who is manifest through everything?
How can it be conceived that something veils Him,
since He is the One who is manifest in everything?
How can it be conceived that something veils Him,
since He is the Manifest to everything?
How can it be conceived that something veils Him,
since He was the Manifest before the existence of anything?
How can it be conceived that something veils Him,
since He is more manifest than anything?
How can it be conceived that something veils Him,
since He is the One alongside of whom there is nothing?
How can it be conceived that something veils Him,
since He is nearer to you than anything else?
How can it be conceived that something veils Him,
since, were it not for Him,
the existence of everything would not have been manifest?

It is a marvel how Being has manifested in nonbeing,
and how the contingent has been established
alongside of Him who possesses the attribute of Eternity!

17

He who wishes that there appear, at a given moment,
other than what God has manifested in it,
has not left ignorance behind at all!

18

Your postponement of deeds till the time when you are free
is one of the frivolities of the ego.

19

Do not request Him to get you out of a state
so as to make use of you in a different one;
for, were He to desire so, He could make use of you
as you are, without taking you out!

20

Hardly does the intention of the initiate
want to stop at what has been revealed to him,
than the voices of Reality call out to him:
“That which you are looking for is still ahead of you.”
And hardly to the exterior aspects of created beings
display their charms,
than their inner realities call out to him:
“We are only a trial, so disbelieve not.”

21

Your requesting Him is suspecting Him.
Your seeking Him is due to your absence from Him.
Your seeking someone else is because of your
immodesty toward Him. Your requesting someone else
is on account of your distance from Him.

22

Not a breath do you expire
but a Decree of Destiny makes it go forth.

23

Do not look forward to being free of alterities,¹
for that is indeed what cuts you off from vigilant attention to
Him in that very state He has assigned to you.

24

So long as you are in the world,
be not surprised at the existence of sorrows.
For, truly, it manifests nothing but what is in keeping
with its character or its inevitable nature.

25

No search pursued with the help of your Lord
remains at a standstill,
but any search pursued by yourself
will not be fruitful.

26

Among the signs of success at the end
is the turning to God at the beginning.

27

He who is illumined at the beginning
is illumined at the end.

28

Whatever is deposited in the invisible world
of innermost hearts
is manifested in the visible world
of phenomena.

29

What a difference between one who proceeds from God
in his argumentation

¹ “Altérations” is Nwya’s rendering for the Arabic *aghyār*, a rather technical term among Sufis and philosophers. It refers to all the internal or external contingencies befalling man, considered in their “alterity” or “otherness” in relation to God.

and one who proceeds inferentially to Him!
He who has Him as his starting-point knows the Real
as It is,
and proves any matter by reference to the
Being of its Origin.
But inferential argumentation
comes from the absence of union with Him.
Otherwise, when was it that he became absent
that one has to proceed inferentially to Him?
Or when was it that He became distant
that created things themselves will unite us to Him?

30

Those who are united with Him:
“Let him who has abundance spent out of his abundance.”

Those who are voyaging toward Him:
“And whoever has his means of subsistence straitened....”

31

Those who are voyaging to Him
are guided by the lights of their orientation,
whereas those who are united to Him
have the lights of face-to-face confrontation.
The former belong to their lights,
whereas the lights belong to the latter,
for they belong to God and to nothing apart from Him.
“Say: Allah! Then leave them prattling in their vain talk.”

32

Your being on the lookout for the vices hidden within you
is better than your being on the lookout for the
invisible realities veiled from you.

33

The Real is not veiled from you.
Rather, it is you who are veiled from seeing It;
for, were anything to veil It,
then that which veils It would cover It.
But if there were a covering to It,
then that would be a limitation to Its Being:

Every limitation to anything has power over it.
“And He is the Omnipotent, above His servants.”

34

Among the attributes of your human nature,
draw away
from every one that is incompatible with your servanthood,
so that you may be responsive to the call of God
and near His Presence.

35

The source
of every disobedience, indifference, and passion
is self-satisfaction.

The source
of every obedience, vigilance, and virtue
is dissatisfaction with one's self.

It is better for you to keep company with an ignorant man
dissatisfied with himself
than to keep company with a learned man
satisfied with himself.

For what knowledge is there in a self-satisfied scholar?
And what ignorance is there in an unlearned man
dissatisfied with himself?

36

The ray of light of the intellect
makes you witness His nearness to you.
The eye of the intellect
makes you witness your nonbeing as due to His Being.
The Truth of the intellect
makes you witness His Being,
not your nonbeing, nor your being.

37

“God was, and there was nothing with Him,
and He is now as He was.”

38

Let not the intention of your aspiration shift

to what is other than He,
for one's hopes cannot outstrip the Generous.

39

Appeal to no one but Him to relieve you of a pressing need
that He Himself has brought upon you.
For how can someone else remove what He has imposed?
And how can he who is unable to free himself
of a pressing need
free someone else of one?

40

If you have not improved your thinking of Him
because of His ineffable nature,
improve it because of His treatment of you.
For has He accustomed you to anything but what is good?
And has He conferred upon you anything but His favours?

41

How astonishing is he who flees from what is inescapable
and searches for what is evanescent!
“For surely it is not the eyes that are blind,
but blind are the hearts which are in the chests.”

42

Travel not from creature to creature,
otherwise you will be like a donkey at the mill:
Roundabout he turns, his goal the same as his departure.
Rather, go from creatures to the Creator:
“And that the final end is unto thy Lord.”
Consider the Prophet's words
(God bless him and grant him peace!):
“Therefore, he whose flight is for God and His Messenger,
then his flight is for God and His Messenger;
and he whose flight is for worldly gain
or marriage with a woman
then his flight is for that which he flees to.”
So understand his words (upon him peace!)
and ponder this matter, if you can.
And peace on you!

43

Do not keep company
with anyone whose state does not inspire you
and whose speech does not lead you
to God.

44

You might be in a bad state; then,
associating with one who is in a worse state,
you see virtue in yourself.

45

No deed arising from a renouncing heart is small,
and no deed arising from an avaricious heart is fruitful.

46

Good works
are the result of good states.
Good states
arise from the stations wherein abide
those who have spiritual realisation.

47

Do not abandon the Invocation
because you do not feel the Presence of God therein.
For your forgetfulness of the Invocation of Him
is worse than your forgetfulness in the Invocation of Him.
Perhaps He will take you from an Invocation with
forgetfulness
to one with vigilance, and from one with vigilance
to one with the Presence of God, and from one with the
Presence of God
to one wherein everything but the Invoked is absent.
“And that is not difficult for God.”

48

A sign of the heart's death

is the absence of sadness
over the acts of obedience you have neglected
and the abandonment of regret
over the mistakes you have made.

49

Let no sin reach such proportions in your eyes
that it cuts you off from having a good opinion of God
for, indeed, whoever knows his Lord
considers his sin as paltry next to His generosity.

50

There is no minor sin when His justice confronts you;
and there is no major sin when His grace confronts you.

51

No deed is more fruitful for the heart
than the one you are not aware of
and which is deemed paltry by you.

52

He only made an inspiration come upon you
so that you would go to him.

53

He made an inspiration come upon you
so as to get you out of the grip of alterities
and free you from bondage to created things.

54

He made an inspiration come upon you
so as to take you out of the prison of your existence
into the unlimited space of your contemplation.

55

Lights are the riding-mounts of hearts
and of their innermost centres.

56

Light is the army of the heart,
just as darkness is the army of the soul.
So when God wishes to come to the help of His servant,
He furnishes him with armies of lights
and cuts off from him the reinforcements
of darkness and alterities.

57

Insight (*kashf*) belongs to Light,
discernment (*ḥukm*) to the intellect (*baṣīra*),
and both progression and retrogression belong to the heart.

58

Let not obedience make you joyous
because it comes from you;
but rather, be joyous over it
because it comes from God to you.
“Say: In the grace of God and in His mercy,
in that they should rejoice.
It is better than that which they hoard.”

59

He prevents those who are voyaging to Him
from witnessing their deeds
and those who are united with Him
from contemplating their states.
He does that for the voyagers because
they have not realised sincerity toward God in those works;
and He does that for those united with Him because
He makes them absent from contemplating those states
by contemplating Him.

60

Were it not for the seeds of ambitious desire,
the branches of disgrace would not be lofty.

61

Nothing leads you so much like suspicion (*wahm*).

62

In your despairing, you are a free man;
but in your coveting, you are a slave.

63

Whoever does not draw near to God
as a result of the caresses of love
is shackled to Him with the chains of misfortune.

64

Whoever is not thankful for graces
runs the risk of losing them;
and whoever is thankful,
feters them with their own cords.

65

Be fearful lest the existence of His generosity toward you
and the persistence of your bad behaviour toward Him
not lead you step by step to ruin.
“We shall lead them to ruin step by step
from whence they know not.”

66

It is ignorance on the part of the novice to act improperly,
and then, his punishment having been delayed,
to say, “If this had been improper conduct,
He would have shut off help and imposed exile.”
Help could be withdrawn from him
without his being aware of it,
if only by blocking its increase.
And it could be that you are made to abide at a distance
without your knowing it,
if only by His leaving you to do as you like.

67

If you see a servant
whom God has made to abide in the recitation of litanies (*awrād*)
and prolonged His help therein,
do not disdain what his Lord has given him

on the score that you do not detect the signs of gnostics on him
nor the splendour of God's lovers.
For had there been no inspiration,
there would have been no litany (*wird*).

68

God makes some people remain in the service of Him,
and He singles out others to love Him.
“All do we aid—these as well as those—out
of the bounty of thy Lord,
and the bounty of thy Lord is not limited.”

69

It is rare that divine inspirations come except suddenly,
and this, so that they be protected
from servants' claiming them
by virtue of the existence of receptivity on their part.

70

Infer the presence of ignorance
in anyone whom you see answering all that he is asked
or giving expression to all that he witnesses
or mentioning all that he knows.

71

He made the Hereafter an abode
to reward his believing servants
only because this world cannot contain
what He wishes to bestow upon them
and because He deemed their worth too high
to reward them in a world without permanence.

72

Whoever finds the fruit of his deeds coming quickly
has proof of the fact of acceptance.

73

If you want to know your standing with Him,
look at the state He has put you in now.

74

When He gives you obedience,
making you unaware of it because of Him,
then know that He has showered you liberally with His
graces both inwardly and outwardly

75

The best that you can seek from Him
is that which He seeks from you.

76

One of the signs of delusion
is sadness over the loss of obedience
coupled with an absence of resolve to bring it back to life.

77

The gnostic is not one who,
when making a symbolic allusion,
finds God nearer to himself than his symbolic allusion.
Rather, the gnostic is the one who,
because of his self-extinction in His Being
and self-absorption in contemplating Him,
has no symbolic allusion.

78

Hope goes hand in hand with deeds;
otherwise, it is just wishful thinking.

79

That which the gnostics seek from God
is sincerity in servanthood
and performance of the rights of Lordship.

80

He expanded you so as not to keep you in contraction;
He contracted you so as not to keep you in expansion;
and He took you out of both
so that you not belong to anything apart from Him.

81

It is more dreadful for gnostics
to be expanded than to be contracted,
for only a few
can stay within the limits of proper conduct in expansion.

82

Through the existence of joy
the soul gets its share in expansion
but there is no share for the soul in contraction

83

Sometimes He gives while depriving you,
and sometimes He deprives you in giving.

84

When he opens up your understanding of deprivation,
deprivation becomes the same as giving.

85

Outwardly, creatures are an illusion;
but, inwardly, they are an admonition.
Thus, the soul looks at the illusory exterior
while the heart looks at the admonitory interior.

86

If you want a glory that does not vanish,
then do not glory in a glory that vanishes.

87

The real journey
is when the world's dimensions are rolled away from you
so that you see the Hereafter closer to you than yourself.

88

A gift from man is deprivation;

but deprivation from God is beneficence.

89

Our Lord is far above the servant dealing with Him in cash, and His repaying him in credit.

90

It is reward enough for worship that He has accepted you as worthy of it

91

Reward enough for workers is what He disclosed unto their hearts in His worship, and that which He shows them of His kindness.

92

Whoever worships Him for something they hope from Him, or obeys Him to keep chastisement from coming to themselves, has not given His attributes their due.

93

When He gives to you He shows you His kindness and when He denies you He is showing you irresistible power.
So in both He is disclosing Himself to you, and drawing nigh with His loving kindness unto you.

94

Deprivation hurts you only because of your incomprehension of God in it.

95

Sometimes He opens the door of obedience for you, but not the door of acceptance;
or sometimes He condemns you to sin, and it turns out to be a cause for union with God.

96

A disobedience that bequeaths humiliation and extreme need is better than an obedience that bequeaths self-infatuation and pride.

97

There are two graces that no being can do without and that are necessary for every creature: the grace of existence, and the grace of sustenance.

98

He bestowed His grace upon you, first, through giving you existence, and, second, through uninterrupted sustenance.

99

Your indigence belongs to you essentially, for accidents do not abolish essential indigence: The trials that arrive in this world are but reminders to you of what you ignore of indigence.

100

Your best moment is the one wherein you witness your actual indigence and, through it, reach the reality of your lowliness.

101

Whenever He alienates you from His creatures, realise that He wants to open for you the door of intimacy with Him.

102

Whenever He releases your tongue to ask, know that He wants to give to you.

103

The duress of the gnostic never departs,
and he finds no rest in anything but God.

104

He has illumined outward appearances
with the lights of His created vestiges;
And illumined inmost hearts
with the lights of His attributes.
This is why the lights of created vestiges set at night,
but the lights of hearts and inmost souls never set.
And why it has been said:
“The daytime sun goes down at night,
But the sun of gnostic hearts never goes down.”

105

Let the pain of tribulation be lightened for you by knowing
that it is He Most Glorious who is making trial of you;
For Him from whom you are faced with the blows of fate
is He who has accustomed you to His choosing well.

106

Whoever thinks His loving kindness is ever separated
from His ordaining fate,
does so out of shortsightedness.

107

It is not to be feared that the paths will confuse you,
but only that whims will defeat you.

108

Glorious beyond ken is He who has veiled the secret of electhood
in the appearance of humanness, and who is manifest through the
mightiness of Lordship in the very showing of one's slavehood.

109

Take not your Lord to task that what you seek
is slow in coming; but take yourself to task
that your manners are slow in coming.

110

Whenever He makes you obedient outwardly to His command
and bestows you surrender inwardly to His irresistible power,
He has shown you largesse beyond thanking.

111

Not everyone truly of the elect has yet been freed of shortcomings.

112

Only the ignorant man scorns the recitation of litany.
Inspiration is to be found in the Hereafter,
while the litany vanishes with the vanishing of this world;
but it is more fitting to be occupied with something
for which there is no substitute.
The litany is what He seeks from you;
the inspiration is what you seek from Him.
What comparison is there
between what He seeks from you and what you seek from Him?

113

The arrival of sustenance
is in accordance with receptivity,
while the raying-out of lights
is in accordance with the purity of the innermost being.

114

When the forgetful man gets up in the morning,
he reflects on what he is going to do,
whereas the intelligent man sees what God is doing with him.

115

The devotees and ascetics are alienated from everything
only because of their absence from God in everything.
Had they contemplated Him in everything,
they would not have been alienated from anything.

116

He commanded you in this world
to reflect upon His creations;
but in the Hereafter
He will reveal to you the perfection of His Essence.

117

When He knew that you would not renounce Him,
He made you contemplate that which issues from Him.

118

Since God knows the occurrence of weariness on your part,
He has varied the acts of obedience for you; and since
He knows of the occurrence of impulsiveness in you,
He has limited them to specific times, so that
your concern be with the performance of ritual prayer,
not with the existence of the ritual prayer
Not everyone who prays performs well.

119

Ritual prayer is a purification for hearts
and an opening-up of the door of the invisible domains.

120

Ritual prayer is the place of intimate conversations
and a mine of reciprocal acts of purity
wherein the regions of the innermost being are expanded
and the rising gleams of light shine forth.
He knows of the existence of weakness in you,
so He made the number of ritual prayers small;
and He knew of your need of His grace,
so He multiplied their fruitful results.

121

When you seek recompense for a deed,
the reality of sincerity in it is demanded of you in return.
As for the insincere,
the feeling of security from chastisement suffices him.

122

Do not seek recompense for a deed whose doer was not you.
It suffices you as recompense for the deed that He accepts it.

123

When He wants to show His grace to you,
He creates states in you and attributes them to you.

124

Where He to make you go back to yourself,
there would be no end to the reasons for blaming you;
and were He to manifest His beneficence toward you,
there would be no end to the reasons for praising you.

125

Cling to the attributes of His Lordship
and realise the attributes of your servanthood!

126

He has prohibited you from claiming for yourself,
among the qualities of created beings,
that which does not belong to you;
so would He permit you to lay claim to His Attribute,
He who is the Lord of the Universe?

127

How can the laws of nature be ruptured for you
so that miracles result,
while you, for your part,
have yet to rupture your bad habits?

128

The point at issue is not the fact of searching;
rather, the point at issue is that
you be provisioned with virtuous conduct.

129

Nothing pleads on your behalf like extreme need,

nor does anything speed gifts to you quicker than lowliness and want.

130

If you were to be united with Him only after the extinction of your vices and the effacement of your pretensions, you would never be united with Him! Instead, when He wants to unite you to Himself, He covers your attribute with His Attribute and hides your quality with His Quality. And thus He unites you to Himself by virtue of what comes from Him to you, not by virtue of what goes from you to Him.

131

Were it not for the kindliness of His veiling, no deed would be worthy of acceptance.

132

You are more in need of His forbearance when you obey Him than you are when you disobey Him.

133

Veiling is of two kinds: veiling of disobedience, and veiling in it. Common people seek God's veiling in disobedience out of the fear of falling in rank among mankind. The elect seek the veiling of disobedience out of the fear of falling from the sight of God, the True King.

134

Whoever honours you honours only the beauty of His veil in you. Therefore, praise is to Him who veiled you, not to the one who honoured and thanked you.

135

No one is a friend of yours
 except the one who, while knowing your defects is your
 companion,
 and that is only your generous Master.
 The best one to have as a friend
 is He who does not seek you out
 for the sake of something coming from you to Him.

136

Were the light of certitude to shine,
 you would see the Hereafter so near
 that you could not move toward it,
 and you would see that the eclipse of extinction
 had come over the beauties of the world.

137

It is not the existence of any being alongside of Him
 that veils you from God,
 for nothing is alongside of Him.
 Rather, what veils you from Him
 is the illusion of a being alongside of Him.

138

Had it not been for His manifestation in created beings,
 eyesight would not have perceived them.
 Had His Qualities been manifested,
 His created beings would have disappeared.

139

He manifests everything
 because He is the Interior,
 and He conceals the existence of everything
 because He is the Exterior.

140

He has permitted you to reflect
 on what is in created beings,
 but He has not allowed you to stop at the selfsame creatures.
 “Say: Behold what is in the heavens and the earth.”

Thus, with His words, “Behold what is in the heaven.”
He has opened up the door of instruction for you.
But He did not say, “Behold the heavens.”
so as not to lead you to the mere existence of bodies.

141

The Universe is permanent through His making it
permanent,
and it is annihilated by the Unity of His Essence.

142

People praise you for what they suppose is in you;
but you must blame your soul for what you know is in it.

143

When the believer is praised,
he is ashamed before God that he should be lauded
for an attribute he does not see in himself.

144

The most ignorant of all people
is the one who abandons the certitude he has
for an opinion people have.

145

When He lets praise of you burst forth,
and you are not worthy of it,
praise Him for what He is worthy of.

146

When ascetics are praised, they are contracted,
for they witness the praise as coming from mankind;
but when gnostics are praised, they are expanded,
for they witness the praise as coming from the True King.

147

If when given something, the giving expands you,

and if when deprived of something,
the deprivation contracts you,
then take that as proof of your immaturity
and the insincerity of your servanthood.

148

When a sin is committed by you do not let it
make you despair of attaining uprightness with your Lord,
for that one may the last ever destined for you to commit.

149

When you want Him to open you the door of hope,
behold what is from Him to you.
And if you want Him to open you the door of fear,
behold what is from you to Him.

150

He often benefits you in the night of distress,
what you have not benefited
in the dawning of the daytime of elation:
You know not which of them is nearer in benefit to you.

151

The horizons whence illuminations ascend are hearts and souls.

152

A light is repositied in hearts that is maintained by the light
coming from the treasuries of the unseen.

153

There is a light by which He shows you His effects,
and a light by which He shows you
His Attributes.

154

Hearts sometimes halt with lights, just as selves are veiled
by the opacity of things besides Him.

155

He has veiled the lights of inward souls
with the coarseness of outward appearances
out of reverence for them;
lest they be made low and common by being divulged,
or be called on aloud by the tongue of fame.

156

Glory be to Him Who does not guide to His friends
except whom He wills.
And He does not make any one reach His friends
except he whom He wishes to make reach Him.

157

Perhaps, He let you see the unseen metaphysical world
but veiled you from seeing the
secrets of His servants.

158

Whoever sees the secrets of the servants
and does not try to imitate divine mercy, his seeing such
is a trial for him and a reason for misfortune to befall him.

159

The portion of the lower self in acts of disobedience
is plain and known while its
portion in acts of worship is hidden and secret.
And treating a hidden [disease] is difficult.

160

Perhaps showing off in good works has entered upon you
from where people do not see you.

161

Your wanting people to know your specialness
is a proof for your lack of truthfulness in
your slavehood.

162

Vanish from sight the eyes of people on you
with the eye of God on you. And be absent from their coming
towards you by seeing God approaching you.

163

Whoever knows the Truth witnesses Him in everything.
Whoever is annihilated in
Him is absent from everything.
And whoever loves Him does not prefer anything over
Him.

164

The Truth is only veiled from you
due to
His being extremely close.

165

He is only veiled [from you] due to His being too obvious
and He is hidden from physical sight
due to the tremendous light [of His Entity].

166

Do not suppose your supplication will cause Him to give
lest your understanding suffer.
Rather, supplicate to Him to show your slavehood
and to fulfil the rights of His lordship.

167

How can your later supplication be a cause
for His predestined giving?

168

A pre-eternal command is high above needing an external cause.

169

His special concern for you is not due to anything you have done. Where were you when His special concern and care took charge of you? There was no sincerity in actions in His pre-eternity nor the presence of spiritual states. At that time, there was only mere benevolence and great gifts

170

He knew that His slaves would want to know whom His special concern is for. So He said, "He chooses for His mercy whom He wills" [Qur'an 2:105]. But He knew if He left them at that they would leave performing actions depending only on the preeternal command. So He said, "Indeed the mercy of God is closer to those who act excellently." [Qur'an 7:56]

171

On His volition depends everything and His volition depends on nothing.

172

Sometimes manners dictate for them to leave supplication relying on His pre-decided division and due to them being busy with His remembrance.

173

Only he who can forget is reminded and only he who can neglect is told to be attentive.

174

Times of need are the celebration days of the disciple.

175

Perhaps, you gain benefits in times of need which you do not gain in fasting and prayer.

176

Having [hard pressed] needs is the domain for divine gifts.

177

If you want divine gifts, rectify your feeling of need.

“Charity is only for the poor”. [Qur’an 9:60]

178

Become realised in your attributes and

He will strengthen you with His:

Realise your humility and

He will strengthen you with His pride.

Realise your incapability and

He will strengthen you with His ability.

Realise your weakness and

He will strengthen you with His power.

179

Perhaps a person who has not obtained constant rectitude
[in beliefs, actions, and states] may be given miracles.

180

The sign that the Truth has established you
in a state is that it is always present and
you are able to reap its fruits.

181

Whoever instructs gaining strength from his good deeds
is silenced by bad deeds.

Whoever instructs gaining strength from God’s goodness
is not silenced by misdeeds.

182

The spiritual lights of the wise men travel faster
than their words. Wherever the light
falls, there understanding is reached.

183

Every statement spoken has a covering

describing the heart of the one uttering.

184

Whoever has permission to instruct,
his explanations are understood by the ears of
people and his allusions appear to them lofty.

185

Perhaps spoken higher realities
appear with a loss of light if you do not have
permission to express them.

186

Their explanations are from sudden overflowing states
or for guiding a disciple.
The former happens to the beginners
and the later is for the well-established and realised.

187

Spiritual instruction is nourishment for the listeners.
And you will not get except that
which you [are ready] to imbibe.

188

Sometimes the beginner describes a station of which he only
has had a small taste and sometimes the advanced describes it
after having in it realisation. And only the one
with insight can distinguish.

189

The traveler should not speak about his spiritual experiences
since that will decrease their effect on his heart
and detract from his truthfulness with His Lord in them.

190

Do not stretch your hand to take something from people unless
you see that the Giver through them is your Master.

And in such a state, take what is in agreement with
[external] knowledge.

191

The knower of God often is shy from asking his Master
to relieve His need sufficing himself with His will.
So, why would he not be shy from
asking His creation for his needs.

192

When you are confused about two matters,
follow the one harder for the lower self.
For only the rightful duty seems hard for it.

193

Among the signs of following one's desires
is speeding towards *mandūb* acts of worship
while being lazy about *wājib* acts of worship.

194

He tied down *wājib* acts to specific times so that
you would not be deprived [of their reward] from procrastination.
And He expanded your free time so that some choice
[in performing actions] would remain for you.

195

He knew that [most of]His slaves are not self-motivated
in seeking Him; so, He obligated for them obedience to Him.
He pushed them towards Him with the chains of obligation.
Your Lord is amused by a people
who are pushed to Paradise in chains.

196

He has obligated you to serve Him but in doing so
He has only obligated you to enter His Paradise.

197

Whoever finds it impossible that God will save Him

from his lusts and take him out of his heedlessness
has declared divine power impotent.
“And God is able over all things.” [Qur’an 18:45]

198

Perhaps He engulfed you in darkness
[after being in light] so that you recognise
the tremendous blessing He has given you.

199

Whoever does not recognise blessings in their presence
is reminded of them in their absence.

200

Do not let showers of blessings stun you away from
being thankful for them as that will lower your rank.

201

Lust engrained in the heart is a disease hard to cure.

202

Lusts are not driven from the heart
except by terrifying fear or restless longing.

203

Just like He does not like an action done
for others along with Him,
He does not like a heart with others in it along with Him.
The insincere action, He does not accept.
The insincere heart, He does not approach.

204

Some light is granted permission to reach
and some light is granted permission to enter.

205

Sometimes spiritual light descends but finds

the heart filled with images of physical things
and thus goes back to where it came.

206

Empty your heart of others and He will fill it
with divine knowledges and secrets.

207

Do not find slow His giving
but find slow your approaching [Him].

208

Duties assigned to specific times can be made up for
when missed but the rights of the moments of time
cannot be made up for if missed.
In every moment, God has on you a new right
and important matter. How will you discharge
a previous right when you are busy
discharging God's current right?

209

What has passed of your life cannot be replaced
and what you have used well cannot be priced.

210

You do not love something except that you become its slave
and He does not love that you be a slave to other than Him.

211

Your obedience does not benefit Him
and your disobedience does not harm Him.
He has only ordered you to do this and prohibited you
from doing that for your own gain.

212

His might is not increased by him who approaches
and His might is not decreased by him who turns away.

213

You reach God by reaching knowledge of Him;
otherwise, our Lord is high above that something
be connected to Him or He be connected to something.

214

Your closeness to Him is by your seeing His closeness to you.
Otherwise, where are you that you would be close to Him.

215

Higher realities dawn upon you at once
and after you have received them, they are explained:
When We recite, follow the recitation. Then, We will explain
[the meaning]. [Qur'an 75:18-19]

216

When divine spiritual experiences come over you,
they destroy your habits: Indeed
when kings enter cities, they ruin them. [Qur'an 27:34]

217

Spiritual experiences come from the presence of the Subjugator.
For this reason, they do not collide with anything except
they knock it out: Rather, we hurl the truth at falsehood;
so, it knocks it out until falsehood vanishes. [Qur'an 21:18]

218

How can the Truth veil Himself with something
when He is apparent in that thing and
He is [also independently] present and existent.

219

Do not despair of the acceptance of an act which you perform
without feeling His presence.
Many a time He accepts an act whose fruit you do not taste now.

220

Do not give purity value to a spiritual experience whose fruit you do not yet know. The benefit from rain clouds is not the rain but the fruits [which grow thereafter].

221

Do not wish that a spiritual experience had remained [with you] after it has already spread its lights and placed its secrets. You have in God independence from everything but nothing can make you free of need from Him.

222

Your wanting something (other than Him) to remain [when it is departing] is a proof that you are not present with Him. And your feeling sad for losing other than Him is a proof that you have not reached Him.

223

Pleasure even if manifest in many forms is only through viewing His closeness. Pain even if manifest in many forms is only through being veiled from Him. The cause for pain is the presence of the veil. The perfecting of pleasure is by viewing His noble Countenance.

224

What the hearts find of sadness and depression is from their being denied the vision [of Him].

225

From the perfecting of His blessing on you is that He give you that which suffices and prevents you from that which will cause you to transgress.

226

Let the things that make you happy be fewer and the things that make you sad will be fewer.

227

If you wish not to be abandoned,
do not seek protection from things that do not last.

228

If the beginning entices you, the ending repulses you.
If the external invites you, the internal bars you.

229

He has only made the world a place of others and a mine
for troubles so that you would not love it.

230

He knew that you would not accept mere advice;
so, He made you taste its [bitter] taste
to ease your separation from it.

231

Useful knowledge is that whose light rays spread in the chest
and tear away the veil from the heart.

232

The best knowledge
is that which is accompanied by godfearingness.

233

If knowledge is accompanied by godfearingness,
it is for your favour; else, it is to your detriment.

234

When you are pained by people turning away from you
or directing blame towards you, suffice yourself
with God's knowledge of you. If you are not satisfied with
His knowing of you, then your not being satisfied with His
knowing is a greater misfortune than people hurting you.

235

He only made injury flow from their hands onto you so that

you would not find rest in them. He wants to push you away from everything so that nothing busies you away from Him.

236

When you know that the devil does not forget about you, do not forget about Him in Whose Hand is your forelock.

237

He only made the devil an enemy so that he would drive you towards Him. And He made your lower self move you [to do bad] so that your approaching and repenting to Him would never cease.

238

Whoever asserts that he is humble is in reality arrogant — as humbleness is a high state. And if you assert for yourself a high state, you are arrogant.

239

The humble person does not see himself above what he does but sees himself below what he does.

240

Real humbleness issues forth from witnessing His Tremendousness and lofty attributes.

241

You cannot leave [your] attributes without seeing [His] attributes.

242

The believer is busied by the praise of God from being regardful of himself. And he is busied by the rights of God from remembering his selfish shares.

243

The true lover is not he who hopes for compensation or seeks his own aim from his beloved.

Rather, the lover spends himself on his beloved.
The lover is not he who expects his beloved to spend on him.

244

If it were not for the battlefields of the lower selves,
there would be no travel for the travellers on the Path
since there is no distance between you and Him
that your journey would shorten
and there is no separation between you and Him
that your reaching Him would eliminate.

245

He placed you in the middle realm between His physical world
and metaphysical one to inform you of the loftiness
of your rank among His creatures.
You are a gem enclosed by the shells of created forms.

246

The cosmos is large in respect to your body
but is not large in respect to your soul.

247

He who lives in the physical world locked out
of the unseen world is imprisoned by his surroundings
and encircled by the frame of his body.

248

You are with created things as long as you
do not witness the Creator.
When you witness Him, created things are with you.

249

It is not necessary that specialness entails
one has no rough human characteristics.
Specialness is like the light of the sun filling the horizon,
whereas the horizon has no light in itself.
Sometimes He takes away the trait of specialness from you
and makes you return to your rough human limits.
Thus, the light of day is not from you and does

not belong to you; rather, it is merely being put over you.

250

His actions point to His names. His names point to His attributes.

His attributes point to His Entity since it is impossible

for an attribute to be existent all by itself.

Subjects of divine attraction have His Entity revealed to them.

Then, He makes them see His attributes.

Then, He makes them return to deep understanding of His names.

Then, He makes them see His actions.

Those traveling the Path under a teacher

experience these things in the reverse order.

The place where the second group ends up is where

the first group started.

And the place where the second group starts is where

the first group ends.

But, each experiences the stages slightly differently.

So, perhaps the two groups may meet on the Path,

these going up and those going down.

251

The lights of the heart and innermost beings

are only fully perceived in the unseen

metaphysical world similar to how the light of the sky

is only seen in the physical world.

252

Finding fruits of one's worship in this life

is a glad tiding of the reward in the next life.

253

How can you ask for a reward for
the action He has bestowed on you?

How can you request reward for
the truthfulness He has given you?

254

For some, their spiritual lights precede their remembrances.

For others, their remembrances precede their spiritual lights.

For others yet, their remembrances and
spiritual lights occur together.
Still others have no spiritual lights nor any
remembrances—and we seek refuge with God from that.

255

Some people perform dhikr to gain an illumined heart.
Other people gain an illumined
heart and as result perform dhikr.
For others, dhikr and illumination are simultaneous;
this last group has dhikr which guides
and lights which are followed.

256

True dhikr on the outside is only from the vision of God's Entity
and contemplation on the inside.

257

He made you witness before He asked you give witness.
Thus externally, one speaks of His divinity
and in one's heart and innermost being,
one realises His all-encompassing oneness.

258

He has given you three gifts: (1) He has let you remember Him;
if it were not for His bounty, you would not be worthy
to engage in His remembrance, (2) He made you mentioned
along with Him as He has affirmed your relation to Him,
and (3) He made you remembered by Him and thus
He has perfected His blessing on you.

259

Sometimes a long life is fruitless.
And sometimes a short life is extremely fruitful.

260

Whoever is blessed in his age, he is able to reap much
from the blessing of God in a very short time.

So much so, that one cannot explain [the immensity]
nor even allude to it.

261

A sign of abandonment is that you become free from things
that busy but still do not turn towards Him,
and that your barriers
become fewer but still do not travel to Him.

262

Contemplation is the journey of the heart through other than God.

263

Contemplation is the lamp of the heart.
When it goes away, there is no light for it.

264

Contemplation is of two types:
(1) contemplation of belief and faith and
(2) contemplation of witnessing and seeing.
The first is for those who are apt to learn lessons
[from what they see] and the second is for those
that experience the vision [of God]
and have insight.