

THE SPIRITUALITY OF ISLAMIC BEAUTY

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Abstract:

Anyone with the knowledge of Islamic culture knows that Islam has produced works of art and incredible architecture - Persian miniatures, the Taj Mahal, mosque, music etc. However, only a few people realize that this rich artistic heritage is rooted in a world view that underlines love and beauty. The relationship between love and beauty is quite clear. We love what we find beautiful. This article offers the meaning of beauty in Islam from the perspective of spirituality as seen in the Quran, Calligraphy, Arabesque, music, mosque, Mihrab, *The Alchemy of Light*, and finally the concrete expression of this beauty in the life of the human soul. The Prophet said, "God is beautiful and loves beauty." In understanding the beauty and love in Tawhid, the Oneness of God – "There is no god but Allah," the hope is that this paper will enable one to know *the All Beautiful One* - God in various manifestations. If God is beautiful, then nothing is truly beautiful but God. And if God is loving, then nothing really loves besides Allah.

Keywords:

*Beauty • spirituality • Holy Quran • Islam • love • truth • art
• contemplation • transcendence • human person • goodness*

Introduction

“God is Beautiful and loves beauty”

- Hadith

In Islam, one of God's Names is *al-Jamil*, the Beautiful. The above quoted *Hadith* reinforces God's love for beauty expressed in compassion, love and peace. Beauty is seen as a Divine Quality in Islam and in fact all these qualities are intertwined on the Divine plane. This reality is further reflected on the human plane as well by virtue of the fact that our hearts “love what it perceives as beautiful and sees as beautiful what it loves.”¹ Beauty has the power of radiation and emanation sharing therefore a basic characteristic with compassion and mercy. It has the potential to recollect the soul, gathering the scattered elements together in a state of calm.

This paper will offer the meaning of Islamic Beauty from the perspective of its Spirituality as seen in the Holy Quran, Calligraphy, Arabesque, Music, Mosque, Mihrab, The Alchemy of Light and finally its expression in very concrete and on going ways in the life of the human soul.

What is Beauty?

“There is a difference between one who is burned by His Majesty in the fire of love and one who is illumined by His Beauty in the light of contemplation.”²

In the Islamic universe, beauty is not simply a subjective state existing only 'in the eye of the beholder', but is a dimension of reality itself, and over the ages Islamic philosophers and mystics have confirmed in their own terms the Platonic dictum “Beauty is the splendor of the truth”. In this connection it is important to make a note of the Arabic word *haqiqah*, it means both 'truth' and 'reality' and the Divine Name *al-Haqq* indicates the union of the two in God who is both the Truth in its absolute sense and making us free in its absolute Reality. This is metaphysically speaking, since God is both Truth and Reality. Islamic metaphysics starts from the idea that all the Real is in the Invisible and that the Supreme Reality is Absolute and Infinite. It uses the word *Haqq* which as mentioned above literally means Truth or Reality in referring to the Absolute. The Absolute in its absoluteness is unknowable. It is Nameless and It has no signs by which It can be approached. It is beyond human perception, conception or imagination. No qualification or relation can be attributed to It for It even transcends transcendence. God cannot but

be beautiful. All Sufi poetry exalts beauty; for the contemplative whose vision is no longer disturbed by emotion and vanity, beauty, where it manifests itself, is the very face of God, Sufis would say, ultimately all beauty is the radiation on a particular level of reality of the Beauty of the Face of the Beloved. "Wherever you turn, there is the Face of God."³ Beauty and truth are inseparable. Divine Beauty shines forth at every level of existence and beauty is characterized by both outward and inward reality. And it is this beauty which is the essence of art and which is possible by virtue of contemplation of things. It is precisely this vision of things which the profane 'art' misses. Beauty is also related to peace and has an incredible pacifying power over the soul, a quality that is essential to Islamic spirituality, as reflected clearly in Islamic art.

The Spiritual Significance of Islamic Art:

"Islamic Art is perhaps the most accessible manifestation of a complex civilization that often seems enigmatic to outsiders. Through its brilliant use of colour and its superb balance between design and form, Islamic art creates an immediate visual impact. Its strong aesthetic appeal transcends distances in time and space as well as differences in language, culture and need."

- Dr. Linda Komaroff⁴

The approach of Islamic art to human life and spirituality is to some extent different from that of other religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity. There is no objective or representation of the Supreme Reality in the Islamic art-world to be painted or portrayed as in case of other religions. On the other hand, the consequent Void (*'adam*) has its distinctive implication in the Islamic art-world. *Al-Tawhid* (Unity of Being) is the real meaning of Islam and this metaphysical belief of Unity is the spiritual significance of the Void which is the only aspiration and soul of Islamic art.

Allah (God) is not seen like an entity but He is realized as the Supreme Creator of everything. Islamic Art is one of the best means of understanding the heart of Islam. The art of Islam, is essentially a contemplative art, in the sense that it expresses above all a state of the soul that is open toward the interior, toward an encounter with the Divine Presence. The essence of art, we can safely say is beauty. Beauty is at once very much interior and very much exterior. It attaches itself to the appearances of things and at the same time reconnects in its qualitative limitlessness the Divine Being Itself,

something like a bridge that goes from the tangible world toward God. However, for an art to be contemplative it must reflect beauty objectively. The metaphysical reason why something in the material world made of brick, stucco, or stone can play such a role is that, according to the famous Hermetic saying, "That which is lowest symbolizes that which is highest." The highest level of reality, which is the Divine Realm. Islamic art is a central manifestation of the Islamic religion. As in all Islamic Spirituality, Islamic art too is a witness to (*shabadab*) or a contemplation of (*mushabadab*) Divine Unity. On the level of forms, Unity manifests itself the most directly as beauty. That is why the consciousness of Unity and the love of Beauty are closely related in Islamic gnosis.⁵

In Arabic the words used for art are *fann* and *sina'ab*, the latter, like the original Greek term *techné* and the Latin *ars*, means to make something according to the correct principles, however, the former means the know-how in doing or making anything correctly and must be combined with wisdom, or *hikmah*, to function as an art. It is interesting to be aware that in Islamic society art is life itself and not a particular activity, and everything from dressing to cooking to playing music or composing poetry has its own *fann*.

While each civilization has its own art and own hierarchy of arts based on the formal structure of the religion that created that particular civilization, Islam too has its own hierarchy of arts, the highest art being none else than the HOLY QURAN, the art of dress, both male and female, follows, because after our body nothing is as close to our soul as the clothing we wear. After the dress come the articles of the house, minor arts, such as carpets, textiles, utensils which has its own effect on the soul. Then there is the art of the book, which includes paintings called miniatures. However, paintings do not occupy the same position in Islamic art as it does in Western art.

Islamic piety tries to avoid setting before the believers any images that might negatively affect the imaginative faculty.⁶ The painting and the sculpture of the Divine or Prophet is forbidden and the Quran and Hadith are never illustrated. Besides this, there is also the whole area of music and poetry, both of which are sonoral arts and must be considered separately from the hierarchy listed above.

The Holy Quran:

“In dealing with any aspect of Islamic civilization, its final *raison d’etre* and creative base must be seen as resting on the Quran, the Holy Scripture of Islam. Islamic culture is, in fact a ‘Quranic culture’.”⁷

The writing of the word of God, that is, calligraphy, and chanting of it, that is, Quranic psalmody, stand at the top of the hierarchy of arts. The language of the Quran is omnipresent in the world of Islam. Quranic verses, formulas, prayers, litanies, invocations in Arabic and the Names of God fill the life of a Muslim. In the eyes and ears of Muslims the central theophany of their religion, namely the Quran, has always been associated with beauty. The ubiquity of the Quran works like a spiritual vibration determining the modes and measures of Islamic art. It is difficult to grasp the principle by which this art is linked to the text of the Quran, not on the narrative plane of the text but on the level of formal structures, since the Quran obeys no laws of composition, neither in the strangely disconnected linking together of its themes, nor in its verbal presentation. Its rhythm, powerful and piercing as it is, follows no fixed measure; entirely unpredictable. Arab art-poetry and music as well as the plastic art love to repeat certain forms and to introduce sudden and unforeseen variants against this repetitive background.

The words of the Quran are filled with harmony but it does not satisfy; it gives and at the same time takes away. It expands the soul by lending its wings, then lays it low and leaves it naked; for the believer, it is both comforting and purifying, like a shower of heavy rain!. Purely human art does not possess this virtue. In other words, there is no such thing as a Quranic style that can simply be transposed into art, but there does exist a state of soul that is sustained by the recitation of the Quran. However, the most profound link between Islamic art and the Quran is of another kind: it lies not in the form of the Quran but in its *haqiqah*, its formless essence, and more particularly in the notion of *tawhid* with its contemplative implications. The Quran is the fountainhead of all Islamic calligraphy.

Calligraphy:

“The significance of transcendence is particularly evident in Arabic calligraphy, where the vertical strokes transcend and regulate the undulating flow of the connecting strokes.”⁸

Arabic calligraphy contains within itself decorative possibilities of infinite richness. Its modalities vary between the monumental *Kufic* script,

with its rectilinear forms and vertical breaks, and the *naskhi*, with its line as fluid and as serpentine as it could be. The richness of the Arabic script comes from its fully developed two dimensions, the vertical which confers on the letters their hieratic dignity, and the horizontal, which links them together in a continuous flow, similar to the warp and weft of fabric. Written from right to left; this is as much as to say that the writing runs back from the field of action toward the heart. Arabic manifests Unity by the breadth of its rhythm: the broader the rhythm, the more its unity becomes evident. This rhythm is also seen in the arabesque designs.

The Arabesque:

“The Islamic spirit has a much more direct affinity with this vast current of archaic forms, for they are in implicit correspondence with its conscious return toward a primordial order, toward the 'primordial religion' (*din al fitrah*).”⁹

The typical creation of Islam where geometrical genius meets nomadic genius is seen in the arabesque. The arabesque is a sort of dialectic of ornament; in which logic is allied to a living continuity of rhythm. There are two basic elements, the interlacement and the plant motif. The elements of Islamic decorative art are drawn from the rich archaic heritage and the Islamic spirit has a much more direct affinity with this vast current of archaic forms common to all the peoples of Asia as well as those of the Near East and northern Europe. Islam assimilates these archaic elements and reduces them to their most abstract and most generalized formulations. It levels them out in a certain sense and thereby eliminates any magical qualities they may have. In return, it endows them with a fresh intellectual lucidity – one may also say, with a spiritual elegance. The carpet in its formal repertoire is in a way parallel to that of the arabesque and is a vehicle also of an archaic heritage. Every Islamic dwelling has the nomadic life present through the carpet!

Music:

“We rarely hear the inward music, but we're all dancing to it nevertheless, directed by the one who teaches us, the pure joy of the sun, our music master.”¹⁰

The traditions of music in the Islamic world are among the richest in the world. Over the years they have not only enriched the lives of numerous

Muslims and played an important role in Sufi practice, they have also had an effect and influenced Western music. When one hears flamenco music one may very well call it classical Arabic or Persian music. The Western lute was adapted from the Arabic *'ud* as the name itself reveals, and the guitar is the child of the Persian *tar*. In the traditional Islamic world, one always heard and still hears to a large extent the sound of spiritual songs (*mashid*) in Egypt; the *ney* of the *Mawlawis* in Turkey; the *tar* and *santur* playing the *dastaahs*, or systems of classical Persian music, in Persia; the *Andalusian* orchestra in Morocco; the *qawwali* (made famous in the West by Nusrat Fatih 'Ali Khan) in Pakistan and the Muslim India, rhythmic drumbeats in Muslim Black Africa; and many other forms of spiritual music. The art of music in the Islamic world is one of the most powerful and universal means of expressing what lies at the heart of the Islamic message, which is the realization of the beauty of the Divine Face and surrender to that Reality which is at once Beauty and Peace, Compassion and Love.

Islamic art in its many forms is of the greatest import for the understanding of the essence of Islam and a central means of transmitting its message to the contemporary world. When one thinks of Islam, it may be helpful if one goes beyond the repetitive scenes on televisions of wars and battles, which unfortunately abound in today's world, to behold the peace, beauty and harmony of Islamic art seen in the great traditional urban settings and gardens, the rhythm and geometry of calligraphy and in the great mosques.

The Mosque:

“Once built, the mosque belongs to no human owner.

**Its owner is literally God, making the expression “House of God”
not only figuratively but legally true.”¹¹**

The Islamic hall of prayer has no center toward which worship is directed. The grouping of the faithful around a center can only be witnessed in Islam at the time of the pilgrimage to Mecca, in the collective prayer around the *Kabab*. In every other place believers turn in their prayers toward that distant center, external to the walls of the mosque. The *Kabab* itself does not represent a sacramental center comparable to the Christian altar, nor does it contain any symbol that could be an immediate support to worship, for it is empty. Its emptiness reveals an essential feature of the spiritual attitude of Islam. A Muslim's awareness of the Divine Presence is based on a feeling of limitlessness. Muslims reject all objectification of the Divine,

except that which presents itself in the form of limitless space. Nonetheless, a concentric plan is not alien to Islamic architecture, for such is the plan of a mausoleum roofed with a cupola where it symbolizes the union of heaven and earth. The rectangular body of the building corresponds to the earth, and the spherical cupola to heaven. A mosque generally comprises a court with a fountain, where the faithful can make their ablutions before prayer. The fountain is often protected by a small cupola shaped like a baldaquin. The court with a fountain in the middle, as well as the enclosed garden watered by four runnels rising in its center, are made in the likeness of paradise, for the Quran speaks of the gardens of Beatitude, where springs of water flow, one or two in each garden and where celestial virgins dwell. It is in the nature of Paradise (*jannab*) to be hidden and secret; it corresponds to the interior world, the innermost soul. This is the world the Islamic house must imitate, with its inner court surrounded with walls on all four sides or with a sacrum (*haram*) of the family, where the woman reigns and the man is but a guest.

The Mihrab:

“The *mibrab* niche, which indicates the direction of prayer in a mosque, is an aid to the worshippers wherever they live or work.”¹²

The *mibrab* is the niche oriented toward Mecca and is the place where the *imam* who recites the ritual prayer stands in front of the rows of believers who repeat his gestures. The acoustic function of the prayer niche, by virtue of its reverberation of the Divine Word during the prayer that the mihrab symbolizes the Presence of God and for that reason the symbol of the lamp becomes purely accessory or one may say 'liturgical'. The primary function of the niche is acoustic, to echo the words directed toward it; but at the same time its form is reminiscent of that of a choir, the “holy of holies”, the general shape of which it reproduces on a smaller scale.

This analogy is confirmed in the field of symbolism by the presence of the lamp hung in front of the niche of prayer. The lamp recalls the “niche of light” of which is said in the Quran “God is the light of the heavens and of the earth. His light is like a niche in which there is a lamp; the lamp is in a glass, which is like a shining star. . . .” (24:35)

The Alchemy of Light:

**“Light again, and the one who brings light!
Change the way you live!”¹³**

The artists who wish to express the idea of the “unity of being” or the “unity of the real” (*wahdat al-wujud*)¹⁴ has actually three means at their disposal: geometry or, more precisely, the infinity inherent in regular geometric figures; rhythm, which is revealed in the temporal order and also indirectly in space; and light, which is to visible forms what Being is to limited existences. Light is indivisible, not altered by its refraction into colours nor diminished by its gradation into clarity and darkness. Similarly, nothingness does not itself exist except by its illusory opposition to Being; so also darkness is visible only by contrast with light, to the extent that light makes shadows appear. “God is the light of the heavens and earth,” says the Quran (24:35). The Divine Light brings things out from the darkness of nothing, symbolically, to be visible signifies to exist. Just as shadow adds nothing to light, things are real only to the extent that they share in the light of Being. There is no more perfect symbol of the Divine Unity than light. Colors reveal the interior richness of light. Light viewed directly is blinding; it is through the harmony of colors that we define its true nature. For, these reasons, Muslim artists seek to transform the very stuff they are fashioning into a vibration of light. This art is compared to alchemy, the well known theme of which is the transmutation of lead into gold. In the spiritual order, alchemy is none other than the art of transmuting bodily consciousness into spirit: “body must be made spirit” say the alchemists, ‘for spirit to become body.’

***Ihsan*: Virtuous Beauty, Beautiful Virtue:**

**“Is the reward of beauty but beauty? Is the reward of the soul
beautified through *ihsan* but the Beauty of the One?”¹⁵**

The highest form of beauty in this world is the beauty of the human soul, which is related to *ihsan*, a term that means at once beauty, goodness and virtue. To possess *ihsan* is to have virtues of generosity and love and to live at peace in one’s Center, where God resides. In the words of the Quran “Surely, We created man and woman in the best of stature” (90:4). The word ‘best’ in this verse is *absan*, which comes from the same root as *ihsan* and also means ‘beauty’. The verse could therefore also be translated as “in the most beautiful stature.” To embellish the soul with beauty, or *ihsan*, through

spiritual practice is therefore to realize the original beauty of the soul and to return it to its primordial state of “the most beautiful stature”. To gain and practice *ihsan* is able to respond with the beauty of one's soul to the Creator, Who is called the best or most beautiful of creators in the Quran (23:14) and to Whom belong the most beautiful Names (7:180). The goal of human life is to beautify the soul through goodness and virtue and to make it worthy of offering to God Who is the Beautiful. Those who possess *ihsan* think through *ihsan* and act and create with *ihsan*. Their thoughts are based on the truth of which beauty is the aura and splendour, their actions are always based on *ihsan*, as goodness, and what they create reflects the beauty of the object “written by God upon its face” as well as the beauty of the soul of the artisan.

To possess *ihsan* is to be open to the Divine Compassion and Mercy and to be compassionate toward others. It is to love God and His creation in Him. It is to live at peace in the Center of one's being in a state of equilibrium and harmony with the worlds within and without. To realize *ihsan* is, according to the *hadith* of Gabriel, to worship God as if we were to see Him, and if we were not to see Him, He would see us. It is therefore to live in Divine Intimacy, where the perfume and vision of God's Compassion, Love, Peace and Beauty are most evident.

Beauty and love are intimately linked. Both point towards the same reality by reflecting the Inward in the outward. The Divine Essence assumes the form of the personal Divinity which makes love possible. It is important to note that in the context of Islamic metaphysics there is neither profane beauty nor profane love. Beauty is Divine and like Divinity it is all-embracing. All that is beautiful cannot exist outside the realm of this Divine Quality. The Prophet says: 'God is beautiful and He loves beauty' (Hadith). This means that God loves His own manifestation in the world. Likewise, not loving with a divine love simply amounts to not being sensitive to the beauty that awaits us in the other.

The core concept of the tradition, *ihsan*, that is living in the constant consciousness of God's presence is described in a famous and authentic prophetic tradition where a stranger¹⁶ appearing as a traveler sits down close to the Prophet and asks him three questions:

[The stranger] said: “Tell me about *iman* (Faith).”

[The Prophet] said: “It is that you affirm God, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day...”

[The stranger] said: “Muhammad, tell me about *Islam* (Submission to God).”

The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said:

“Islam is that you bear witness, testifying that there is no object of worship aside from God, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God; and you establish the ritual prayer; and you give the alms-tax; and you fast in the month of Ramadan; and you perform the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to find a way to do so.”

Finally, he said: “Tell me about *ibsan* (Virtue).”¹⁷

[The Prophet] said: It is ... that you worship God as though you see Him, for though you do not see Him, truly He sees You.¹⁸

The Spirituality of Islamic Beauty in the Human Person

This section is an attempt to look at three possible expressions of the spirituality of Islamic Beauty in the human person. These can perhaps lend themselves well to the human person living in an increasingly diverse world. These are the concepts of 'The Human Being: A Mirror of God, Non Violence and Commitment to Serve.'

The Human Being: A Mirror of God

Every human is seen as a mirror of God in three aspects: In the first aspect, a human is seen as a masterpiece of art of the Master Artist, the Creator and Fashioner of everything. The face of the human is a display of beauty, order, function, compassion and wisdom. The eye or the brain of a human are equally impressive works of wonder. In every detail of a human's creation, a spiritually oriented Muslim sees opportunities for reflection.

The second way a human becomes a mirror of God is through their reliance on God. When a person becomes hungry and is fed, he/she becomes a mirror of God as the sustainer. When a person becomes ill and is then healed, she becomes a mirror of God as the Healer. When a person seeks knowledge and is bestowed with knowledge, he becomes a mirror of God the Knower of All, the Owner of Infinite Knowledge.

The third way of mirrorship is through actions. For instance, God is compassionate toward His creation. A compassionate person, therefore becomes a mirror of God the Compassionate. God helps all creation regardless of their belief and even their non-belief. God's sustenance is indiscriminative. When a person helps every human in need, she becomes a mirror of God the Helper. God forgives the sins of humans who sincerely repent and turn toward Him. When a person forgives the mistakes and mistreatments of others, he/she becomes the mirror of God the Merciful. A target state in the spiritual tradition is to become a person such that when people see him or her they remember God. They can not help but say that

“there must be a Compassionate God that such a person walks this earth.” It is noteworthy that only the third of these three ways of mirrorship is voluntary while the first two are involuntary. Therefore, every human, regardless of their creed is a mirror of God in those two aspects. This is a powerful paradigm and influence for peaceful coexistence in religious diversity. The words of the famous Anatolian Sufi poet Yunus Emre, resonates in the Turkish population even after eight centuries: “We love the creation due to the Creator”.¹⁹ In another poem he points out the inherent inconsistency of those who claim to worship God but disregard the dignity of the most precious of God's creation, the human: “If you have broken a heart, then what you are doing is not prayer.”

Non-violence

The second influence of God's Beauty is the inclusive, emphatic and compassionate perspective that naturally lends itself to non-violence, going beyond tolerance to hospitality, love and friendship. A quote from Gülen illustrates the non-violence stance of a contemporary scholar who also represents the balanced spiritual tradition of Islam. The context of the quote was the era of ideologically driven armed conflicts in Turkey during the 1970s. Clashes among the youth groups claimed the lives of thousands of youth as well as members of security forces, intellectuals, teachers and politicians. Armed groups would attack each other, demand the students to boycott classes, and the shopkeepers to close down shops to disturb normal life in the country. “My audience know that when anarchy was everywhere in our country, I have called for calmness and controlling of anger. I had received death threats, yet I requested from my audience to continue working for peace, 'If I am assassinated, despite all your angers, I ask you to bury my body and seek for order, peace and love in our society. Regardless to what happens; we believers should be representatives of love and peace.’”²⁰

Representing love and peace in times of adversity and violent conflict requires a level of *pious transcendence*, which could also be seen as holistic understanding of religious law. A prophetic tradition illustrates this concept: A Muslim man was wounded in a battle. The next morning he needed to have a bath but water could not touch the wound so as to help it heal. The people around him were confused. Would they wash the whole body or leave the wound aside? Washing of the whole body being a requirement of ritual, they did so and the man died. Upon hearing the incident the Prophet declared “You killed the man. Could you not just wash the rest of his body and only slightly touch the wounded area?”

This pious transcendence enables a Muslim to choose and apply the

appropriate religious law and organize their priorities more in conjunction with the spirit of Islamic faith, especially at times of hardship.

Commitment to Serve

Another expression of beauty that is conducive to religious plurality and world peace is the commitment to *serve*. The beauty of God shines forth in the action of human beings. This can be summarized in the doctrine 'Serving people is serving God'. Connected with the principles of humility, and chivalry - *futuwwah* this principle encourages to serve public, regardless of their creed, in various ways, and especially in ways that are unexpected of one's social rank. *Futuwwah* is a composite of such virtues as generosity, modesty, purity of heart, trustworthiness, loyalty, mercifulness, knowledge, humility, and piety. This can be summed up in the four virtues mentioned by Haydar Karrar Ali, the fourth Caliph and cousin of the Prophet, upon whom be peace and blessings. They are: forgiving when one is able to punish, preserving mildness and acting mildly and gently when one is angry, wishing one's enemies well and doing good to them, and being considerate of others' well-being and happiness first, even when one is needy.

Conclusion

Islam is the religion of beauty, and never separates from goodness. In today's world goodness and beauty have been separated from each other and even more than this, the human being separates himself or herself as well from this goodness and beauty. Goodness corresponds to the outer dimension and beauty to the inner dimension of things, not that there is no outward beauty or inward goodness. Beauty and goodness complement and are inseparable from each other. In the Islamic perspective the role of religion is not only to teach the practice of goodness, but also to disseminate beauty on all levels, spiritual, intellectual, physical thus taking one to the true meaning of *tawhid*, Oneness – unity with Allah. In being united to Allah we can be united to each other despite differences, we can have the courage to go beyond what limits us and we can drop the scales of hatred, stereotypes and prejudices to see the Beauty of the Face of Allah in the other. It is contemplating this beauty in oneself and the other can we travel the road to peace and sense the All-Beautiful One in different manifestations.

“The water of the basin in my center is like the soul of a believer who rests in the remembrance of God.”²¹

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Endnotes

- ¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002).
- ² Annemarie Schimmel quotes the Hadith 367 in “*Mystical Dimensions of Islam*” (Chapel Hill, USA: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 6.
- ³ Al Quran 2:115.
- ⁴ Assistant Curator of Islamic Art – America.
- ⁵ Titus Burckhardt, “The Spirituality of Islamic Art”, in Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality – Manifestations* (New York: SCM Press, 1991).
- ⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *op. cit.*, 230-231.
- ⁷ Ismail R. Al Faruqi and Lois Lamaya al Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986), 162.

⁸ Burckhardt, *art. cit.*, 517.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 518

¹⁰ John Moyne, Arberry and Nicholson, *The Essential Rumi* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1995), 106.

¹¹ Ismail R. Al Faruqi and Lois Lamy al Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986), 152.

¹² *Ibid.*, 423.

¹³ John Moyne, Arberry and Nicholson, *op. cit.*, 38.

¹⁴ The complementarity between transcendence and immanence is further visible in the doctrine of Oneness of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*). It accepts the idea of 'the Indivisible One_and_Only' but goes on to assert that 'the One—and Only is the One and All'. It is not merely a doctrinal truth but has effective means of realization..

¹⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *op. cit.*, 235.

¹⁶ In the continuation of the tradition we learn that this was ArcAngel Gabriel who appeared in the form of aman to facilitate a learning experience for the companions.

¹⁷ Please note that the English word virtue is only an indicator of one of the meanings embedded in this loaded concept.

¹⁸ This famous prophetic tradition is related in multiple trusted books of Hadith, namely, Muslim, Iman, 1; Nesai, Iman, 6; Ebu Davud, Sunnet, 17; Tirmizi, Iman, 4. For a digital collection of important books of Islamic prophetic tradition, see *Hadith Encyclopedia* (Cairo: Harf Information Technology, 1996).

¹⁹ Emre, Y., K. Helminski, R. Algan, E. Helminski (trans.), *The Drop That Became the Sea: Lyric Poems of Yunus Emre* (Shambhala Publications, 1999).

²⁰ Saritoprak, Z., "An Islamic Approach to Peace and Nonviolence" in *The Muslim World*, 95, no.3 (2005).

²¹ In one of the halls of the Alhambra, there is a basin of water to which an Arabic poem inscribed on the wall refers.