

## Importance of *Dhikr* and the Metaphor of *Qalb* in “*Saif-ul-Mulūk*”

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### Abstract

*Dhikr* (remembrance) and *Qalb* (heart) are two important conventions used in Islamic mysticism. Both are interrelated as the practice of *Dhikr* originates in *Qalb*. These conventions are frequently found in mystic poetry and have multiple interpretations depending upon the purpose and context. This paper explores the usage of these concepts in *Miān Muhammad Bakhsh's Saif-ul Mūluk*. The paper brings to light the underlying meaning of these concepts and focuses on their particular use in the said poetic example. It shows how *Muhammad Bakhsh* explained one concept with reference to the other and through establishing the relationship unfolded the hidden world of spirituality.

**Keywords:** *Muhammad Bakhsh, Saif-ul-Mulūk, Metaphore, Dhikr, Qalb*

### Introduction

There were various prose and poetry works written by *Miān Muhammad Bukhsh*, but it was the *Saif-ul Malūk* which gained greatest recognition. Through the complexity of the symbolism he employed in his poems, he speaks to numerous emotional challenges and problems in a way that not only helps the reader but is also comforting and inspiring. Truly the entire

account of the Sufi man and his quest for unification with God can be seen as an allegory for the constant inner battle in man. The Sufi tradition is grounded in the belief that the aim of existence is to become one with God. The Sufi life is a spiritual journey in which the goal is to obtain a state where the individual purpose and the universe's purpose cannot be differentiated.<sup>1</sup>

*Saif-ul Mulūk* takes great care in mapping out this trip, utilising metaphor and the love story of a prince and a fairy in his writing. The trials the prince faces on his Sufi path represent the obstacles and sufferings endured by spiritual seekers on their journeys. Sufi Muslim Miān Muhammad Bukhsh guarantees that whenever an issue arises, the reader is made aware of Sufism's teachings, not only solving the problem but also promoting an understanding of Sufism as a whole. When one knows the specific, they see the bigger picture and, on the basis of this larger view, they see the specifics in a new light. When considered as an autobiographical account, the *Saif-ul-Mulūk* is a portrayal of Miān Muhammad Baukhsh's own spiritual path. This statement is supported by several references to the land and local culture. On top of that, it is impossible to write a parable in such minute detail without getting entangled in the events of the storey. He himself makes this claim, saying that I have created this blend of seekers' spiritual nectar to construct this story. As a result, he draws an analogy between the reader's experience of *Saif-ul-Mulūk* to a sword placed in a soft wooden sheath. The wise worldly individual understands the storey only at a superficial level, but the illuminated see the truth beneath it. For the less-fancy reader, the story gets engaging in the mythical sense, as it becomes fascinating and

exciting. But for the reader who has discerned, it gets far more nuanced, and reading *Saif-ul-Mulūk* is a life-altering event. The following study invites both readers to look into the importance of 'remembrance' and the metaphor of heart as it appears in Miān Muhammad Bakhsh's *Saif-ul-Mulūk*.

### The Importance of Dhikr

اول حمد ثنا الی جو مالک ہر بردا  
اس دانام چنارن والا ہر میدان نہ بردا

God's remembrance (Arabic: dhikr) is seen as having a direct correlation to the practicality of things and it is believed that if you remember God, then whatever you see for the result of an undertaking in a certain scenario is guaranteed to come to fruition. The cleverness of the concept is that it happens in the context of application, making a man aware of his own limitations and impossibilities.

Remembrance of God's name in Islamic mysticism has several definitions. They go over how the translations connect to calling on God or remembering God. For some reason, it appears associated with commemorating a historical event and God's name being uttered once more. Dhikr, which may be defined as the intricate movements of the heart in worship of God, is summarised as having an extraordinarily unique appearance. As a result, each of these translations emphasises a different component of the dhikr practice, even if they are not a complete depiction of the practise. Recollection is an accurate method, but it does not go far enough in appreciating the significance of dhikr in Islamic mysticism. It is wise to examine other in-depth definitions of dhikr, as

doing so will help you better comprehend the whole of the practice and see how it is connected to the weft.

Dhikr is covered in a larger explanation in Earle Waugh's book *Memory, Music, and Religion* and is associated to human heart.<sup>2</sup> Dhikr is a practise that increases spiritual awareness, incorporates spiritual energy, and opens the door to transcendence.<sup>3</sup> Dhikr, in this precise sense, is a spiritual instrument to support one on the path to self-realization or God-realization. In this way, Dhikr has been a significant component of Islamic mysticism for decades, both as part of a larger theory of mysticism and as a distinct practise in and of itself. The vehicle containing the soul of a mystic is bound to bring its passengers to an actual and intimate meeting with God. To sum up, in a more succinct manner, it can be described as how mystics themselves speak about it and the impacts it has on them.

Upon seeing the preceding explanation, it is very clear that dhikr is performed across the entirety of the being. I believe dhikr to be a point in which something is begun, and it progresses to become something else. In the latter situation, you have found your whole human spiritual potential. While it is true that all dhikr forms incorporate sound, it is also true that some do not. While executing this strategy, silence might be taken into consideration. The peaceful *duā'* is accomplished at the heart's cadence, while frequent practise subjects it to an independent system. A personal dhikr is considered equivalent to a group dhikr. In Sufism, collective dhikr became an established practice. By employing poetry, music, and dance, participants are able to visit the world of spiritual joy.

Ernst claims that repeated mentions of God's name help people to move from the physical to the spiritual state.<sup>4</sup> Dhikr (remembrance of God) is

among the most significant deeds in Islamic mysticism. Sufism strives to empower practices of Sufism by diving underneath the skin of human existence. Tawhīd is the Islamic term for Oneness of God or Oneness of all of existence. To capture the essence of human existence, we might examine it from the perspective of an ethereal existence that is disconnected from the soul. Getting closer to one's oneness is the goal of all spiritual practices. The phrase "a circular movement," in other words, is a good description of dhikr, but when a transitional step is inserted, it becomes a spiral one. For mystics, reconnecting with the Divine essence is the ultimate goal. Because they feel that they have some form of 'esoteric insight' that is not readily available to others, those who are first learning Sufism have great reverence for Sufi gurus. These teachings have been transmitted in a way that demonstrates their impracticality. The Sufi literature can also be viewed from another perspective as an esoteric language. Everything has an inner and an outside component, and every layer has an exterior look that matches the layer.<sup>5</sup> To truly understand the Divine truth, one must understand it on a deeper level and that is only done by saints. In essence, Dhikr is about the material expression of the activity. Creative experience begins with this. First you build a body, and then a person figures out who they are, forms a personal identity, and develops their own awareness. The gesture appears in the first dimension, but only in the physical sense. Sufi tradition differentiates people's identities by classifying their nafs or ego as a separate entity. The nafs is closely related to the body in the first dimension. The nafs struggles to have its way and tries to seize control, using this link as a weapon. In disciplines such as fasting, celibacy, and sleep deprivation, a guidebook

on bridging the gap between the self and the body can be discovered. Students in the second dimension explore how they govern their own emotions, motives, and subconscious minds, as well as other parts of the nafs (also known as the subconscious minds), through their bodies. This level teaches that the body serves as a means for a multi-dimensional connection between one's inner thoughts and the real world. When you look at the third dimension, you are seeing an overlap of the ego and the physical body. Once it has taken control of the body, it acquires an exterior expression. It is time to begin reciting dhikr while meditating. This realm's nafs experiences spirituality until it no longer has an identifiable identity. The primary purpose of the religion's overarching mission is to join with God. There is a state of oneness, or an expansion of self, in the fourth dimension. While the body is considerably slower than the soul, it cannot hinder it. Dhikr here has reached its perfection. Both on the one hand, and on the other, it is possible to perceive the individual as being a body, as well as seeing him as a soul that has developed beyond his physical body. When the traveler has completed the four-dimensional journey from the individual to the communal to the Divine self, he or she has completed the process of transformation. The second important element of the art of remembering is that practitioners remember their earlier movements and experiences while doing each movement. One state moves into another as a result. We keep both our physical and spiritual memories of the motions in our beings. According to this component of dhikr, every portion of an individual's spiritual development is linked in the past and in the future. You will never be able to find a single ingredient of change because it is part of a greater whole.

Everything that happens following an event shapes the next occurrence and explains the prior. Even if you examine each one of these events individually, you will find something hidden. When all of the pieces are assembled, something completely unexpected will emerge. Having faith in God in this context is understanding God's will and then making one's own will coincide with it. It is said in the Qur'an:

“Have you seen ‘O Prophet’ those who have taken their own desires as their god? ‘And so’ Allah left them to stray knowingly, sealed their hearing and hearts, and placed a cover on their sight. Who then can guide them after Allah? Will you ‘all’ not then be mindful?”  
(45:23)

A maxim from Nahj al-Balāghah also asserts the same theme:

“I recognized God through revoking the determinations and breaking the intentions. When I determined and I was prevented from achieving my determination and I intended and the fate contradicted my intention, I realized that the administrator was other than me.”<sup>6</sup>

Keeping in view of the fact that nothing can happen without the Will of God is quite understandable that whatever actions we plan can only be successful in the true sense of the word, if they are according to Will of God. The fundamental idea in this couplet is a stress on understanding the Will of God in every situation. Knowledge becomes jeopardous if during the course of its development gives rise to fundamental falsehood. Ignorance is understandable, because it means that one does not know. But falsehood

means opposing the facts (reality) ie., being ignorant deliberately. In fact, in such a situation one starts thinking of the rest of Nature as one's subordinate, which is fundamental falsehood. Because, we are nothing but a part, a product of Nature. And we are that product of Nature which is mortal.

### The Metaphor of *Qalb*

بال چراغ عشق دامیر روشن کر دے سیناں  
دل دے دیوے دی روشنیائی جاوے وچ زیناں

Mystics believe that the human heart (*Qalb*) is the seat of intelligence. Poetry interpretation: The first two lines can be regarded as a direct allusion to the particular manner of mystical perception. In contrast to the philosopher, the mystic does not depend on the cognitive process, but rather on the emotional and visceral processes. Empathy is a scientific fact; it is known that feelings comprise value judgments that are necessary for rational decision-making. In every book on mysticism, the common theme is to be discovered. Mysticism defines God as an internal, introspective, and emotional experience, which means the mystic must delve into their heart in order to see God. Miān Muhammad Bakhsh uses the term "heart" to indicate emotional insight or non-verbal perception, the characteristic of mystic intelligence. The Qur'an discusses the function of the heart in various verses.

The following description refers to the heart being a place of faith in humans. An unprecedented personal perspective of faith is that it is not found in the mind, but rather in the heart. When regarded from an emotional perspective, faith can be understood as a choice, as opposed to a complex of concepts. Emotional preferences are a once-and-for-all decision. Since it does not vary or modify based on the situation, this is



why it is considered a guiding principle. The heart continues to support the guiding principle in remembrance of God so that it might remain at peace. Only if the will of humans and that of God are aligned, can the serenity of the heart be realized. The most comforting source of solace for the heart and soul is the remembrance of Allah:

“And know that among you is the Messenger of Allah. If he were to obey you in much of the matter, you would be in difficulty, but Allah has endeared to you the faith and has made it pleasing in your hearts and has made hateful to you disbelief, defiance and disobedience. Those are the [rightly] guided.” (49:7)

A call is issued to people who believe in Allah, the unseen, and it arouses excitement in the hearts of believers because of the connection between believers and Allah. The above verse tells us that we form our hearts through experiencing lovely things. As this enhances the previous statement, it is demonstrated once again that it is the human heart or the emotional process that is most important in grasping God and faith is merely a preference. This is also proven in other words where the blindness of heart is considered to be the reason why one lacks insight:

“Have they not, then, traveled on earth so that they should have had hearts to understand with, or ears to listen with? The fact is that it is not the eyes that turn blind, but what turns blind is the hearts contained in the chests.” (22:46)

The Qur'an explicitly makes plain that it is the human heart, which houses human understanding of God, which is most valuable. It is also where the

aesthetic of believing is grounded. The seat of understanding and consciousness is the heart, thus what believers are directed to achieve is their spiritual purity. In the poem above, the Lord God implores me to cleanse my heart of worldly desires so that I may educate others on the subject of wisdom. As all mystics, on their own personal road of love and understanding, must all validating this request. To get a full emotional awareness of the divine reality, mystics are not governed by logic or rationality but they stimulate their emotions and move their thinking to the level where they can uncover the truth. Truth is understood, not sensed. According to the first couplet, this is the way that is highlighted.

You should understand that while science, philosophy, mysticism, and religion are all various pathways to understanding the same reality, they are all different ways of seeing the world. In order to understand the divine truth, each of these disciplines utilises its unique tools, methods, and procedures. To arrive at conclusions, philosophy relies on a mixture of rational reasoning, concepts, and inferences. the researcher looks to experimentation and observation to demonstrate that the theoretical structure is viable When it comes to religion, faith becomes the means through which one understands. the literal sense of scripture includes the understanding of what is believed to be true According to mysticism, the divine truth is discovered by connecting with the inner essence of things. To understand mystical truth, a person must have a particular level of emotional maturity and a quality of character that permits them to comprehend reality as it really is.

In the aforementioned scenario, the metaphor of the heart describes the preferred perceptual modality for mystics. Emotions and feelings are

critically important in this setting. Also, this insight of divine truth must be shared with others in order to realize the objective of divine reality. As a result, Mian Muhammad Bakhsh stated in the second line of the selected piece of poetry that a mystic's understanding of God should be made public so that individuals who are unable to experience this truth on an equal level can benefit from a guide. When discussing mystical poetry, one of the main functions of metaphor is to communicate a spiritual concept in a conventional language. In this scenario, the lamp represents enlightenment, which is the process of gradually and painstakingly altering the self to find the truth.

### **Conclusion**

The function of the heart is the most profound when it comes to mystic intelligence. The heart, which is the seat of emotions, is the capability to understand reality at an intuitive plane and since God is also invisible and hidden therefore intuitive perception becomes the ideal means to understand divine reality. Remembrance in this context is not only about memorization but in Miān Muhammad Bakhsh's opinion, it is a mode of self-awareness, or a way of understanding God in every situation a man is confronted with. The way these concepts have been used in his poetry explain this very relationship between Qalb and Dhikr and invite the reader to explore these dimensions of the spiritual self.

### **References**

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<sup>4</sup> Carl W. Ernst Ph.D, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam*, Reprint edition (Boston ; London: Shambhala, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations* (Routledge, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, *Nahjul Balagha* (Createspace Independent Pub, 2015), 1196.