

THE PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL SPRINGS AND PROCESSES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOUR IN THE LIGHT OF THE QUR'ĀN AND THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

Manzurul Huq

Abstract

The paper purports to highlight the role, in the light of the Qur'ān and the prophetic traditions, of the transcendental 'heart', that is, the core spiritual entity of the human being, in determining the growth and nature of human personality and behaviour. The 'heart' is conceived of as containing a reserve of divine virtues which generally remain untapped, as they are submerged in the layers of the gross animal impulses of the human self. The faith and cognition of *Tawhīd*, that is, the transcendental unity of Allah (*subhānahu wa ta'ālā*),¹ the Almighty Master and Sustainer of the universe, liberates the heart's divine potentialities from the grip of animal impulses and triggers the process of the growth and maturation of these divine traits.

The paper attempts to elucidate the psycho-spiritual processes of nurturing the nascent divine potentialities of the heart to raise the human being to the status of a divine vicegerent, reflecting the Attributes of Allah, (*subhānahu wa ta'ālā*) in his personality and behaviour.

It further exposes the corrupting effects of the heart's disbelief in *Tawhīd*, in obstructing and stifling the process of growth and development of its innate divine qualities, and the growth and domination, consequent to that disbelief, of animal properties and instincts in human personality and behaviour.

Introduction

Ever since psychology broke away from its ancestral moorings by giving up its original definition of being a 'science of soul', it has consistently shifted its self-definition to keep up with the current mode and practices of the contemporary scientific world. In one phase of this shifting process, it not only lost its spiritual substance but also got emptied of its mental content at the hands of a group of hard-headed behaviourists who redefined psychology as a science of behaviour. Consequently, concepts of mind and mental processes remained banished from the domain of psychology for a considerable length of time.

However with the amazing success of modern computer technology in simulating many aspects of the human information processing system by using certain

mental concepts, mental processes were again recalled and rehabilitated in psychology by a group of cognitive psychologists who have emerged only lately. Due mainly to the accomplishment of their highly promising and ingenious experimental investigations in exploring the inner structures and processes underlying the surface of explicit behaviour, psychology has, in our time, begun to be redefined as the science of behaviour and underlying mental processes.²

Cognitive psychologists salvaged the 'behaviouristic' man from merely being an automaton – a passive and reactive man, pulled and pushed by a myriad of stimuli in his environment – and transformed him into a highly autonomous and proactive man, by asserting the principle of the active mediation of inner mental processes in the occurrence of behaviour. But since cognitive psychology is committed to a rigorous adherence to a framework of scientific operationism and empirical- experimental canons of modern science, the mental concepts formulated by it are still conspicuously unable to adequately capture and tap the supra-sensory elements and processes in man which mark him out as distinctly human, and make him immensely versatile and creative, capable of scaling the most sublime heights of personality development.

The belief that human nature is at its core purely spiritual clearly implies that the essential reality of human nature will ever remain inherently elusive to the grip of psychology, in so far as a tradition of hardbound empiricism continues to be followed. The inability of modern psychology to comprehend the spiritual base of human personality appears to be rooted in its characteristic tendency to remain confined to the artificial bounds of the laboratory, and to the sensory, empirical world of phenomena. The modern discipline thereby shuts, *a priori*, all doors to supersensory reality, evincing an exclusive reliance on observation and human reason to the total exclusion of even the possibility of any divine source of revealed knowledge.

The scientific tools used by modern science are no doubt adequate to achieve the goals for which they were originally designed, that is, to explore and understand the properties and relationships of objects and aspects of natural phenomena. These tools have indeed served their purpose with a highly impressive degree of success. But when these same tools were applied to explore the nature of human beings, on the assumption that they too were nothing but a complex system of physiochemical elements forming a part of the larger scheme of natural phenomena, the results produced a highly frustrating and humiliating image of man as nothing more than a being engaged in a continuous struggle to fulfil such needs and desires as are largely shared by animals in general.

According to this conceptual framework, the superiority of man over other animals seems to lie only in the sophistication of the means he adopts to fulfill his needs, which are however fundamentally animalistic in character. Though some psychologists often make mention of certain higher-order needs in man, they are not usually conceived of as occupying positions of primary importance and potency in the hierarchy of human needs. Of course, the more humanistically-oriented amongst modern psychologists put special emphasis upon those features of human nature which dignify man over and above other animals and distinguish him from them. However, their conceptions of the essence of human nature, barring a few exceptions, are not essentially spiritual. To reiterate, this aforementioned incapacity on the part

of modern psychology to realise the inner spiritual core of human nature may be said to have stemmed from the inherent limitations of the sensory-empirical tools of modern science in terms of their having any form of access to the supersensory realities of human beings.

However, the followers of revealed religion cannot exclusively trust and depend on such scientific tools. For such people believe that man has been created by Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta'ālā*) and sent by Him to this world as His vicegerent endowed with a divine 'spirit', with inherent divine potentialities. As such, they cannot exclusively trust and depend on the scientific tools that we have mentioned, unable as those tools are to discern and disclose the spiritual basis of human existence. These scientific tools consequently fail to provide any knowledge or direction pertaining to the promotion and development of the real human self. As a Divine representative, man must turn to Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta'ālā*), the Ultimate Source of his existence on this earth, in order to attain genuine knowledge of his true self and to receive infallible guidance for the full-scale elevation and development of his self. Such knowledge has always been provided by divine revelation, as communicated to mankind through the divine messengers. As the final revealed scripture, the Qur'ān is the perfect embodiment of revealed knowledge just as the life and traditions of the final prophet of Islam (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*)³ is the complete practical demonstration of the entire corpus of this Divine Knowledge.

Scientific methods and tools can, however, act as useful aids and secondary sources of knowledge, in order to further elucidate certain aspects of the human personality, guided by the direction provided by revealed knowledge. Therefore, for us to have a stable and secure foundation for raising human personality to its potentially towering heights by harnessing all its inherent aptitudes, we must have recourse to the Divine source of knowledge. In the following discourse, we therefore wish to make an attempt to highlight some of the basic and fundamental features of human personality and its potentials in the light of the Qur'ān, the latest Divine scripture, and the 'Sunnah' (the traditions of the Holy Prophet, *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*), which constitutes the practical elucidation of the Holy Scripture along with the interpretations of both, as provided by the righteous scholars of Islam.

Islamic views of human nature

In contrast to the soulless, lopsided and truncated views of human personality and behaviour advocated by the majority of modern psychologists, Islam presents a bio-spiritual, kaleidoscopic, and holistic image of human personality, and describes the highest peak of its development, as well as the lowest abyss of its degradation, a degradation that is a consequence of the innate spiritual potentialities of man remaining untapped. Most importantly, the Islamic traditions provide precise guidelines for ascending the stages of this development of the personality, and for averting the disastrous course of its degeneration. Based on the Divine Revelation and Prophetic Traditions, Muslim scholars and savants have worked out an adequately clear picture of various dimensions of human nature, properties and functions pertaining to different aspects of the human being, along with their interrelationships. Since in Islamic tradition *qalb* or heart is considered both the core and architect of human personality,⁴ the focus of our discussion, in the following sections, will be on the nature and role of the heart (*qalb*) in relation to man's behaviour and the development of his personality.

Prevalent conceptions in psychology tend to posit the brain as the central organ, receiving stimuli-inputs, analysing them, and making decisions for required actions. Scholars of Islam, while acknowledging the input-receiving function and some interpretative processes of the human brain, do not however ascribe to it the decision-making functions. Barring some automatic function of a reflexive nature, all other behavioural responses are ultimately controlled by the heart, and not by the brain. This view however does not totally negate the brain centre concepts of modern psychology, that have identified certain regions of the brain as centres for regulating specific psychological functions. Indeed, Imām al-Ghazālī, the illustrious Muslim philosopher and savant of the 11th century CE identified that the imaginative faculty was located in the frontal lobe of the brain, while the middle folds of the brain had been identified as the location of the power of reflection.⁵ But these seats or parts of the brain, or the whole of the brain, or even of the total nervous system, control and regulate human bodily functions and behaviour only as mediate systems and not as primary agents. According to Islamic tradition it is the *qalb* or heart, which occupies the supreme and autonomous status in the system of the personality, and which controls and rules over all the regions of brain and the whole of the nervous system. The heart has been said to be the master, the key entity in regulating diverse behavioural functions. It drives all human faculties along the entire course of personality development, both in the progressive and regressive courses of that development.⁶ Therefore, the construction and development of personality to its fullest range, or the corruption and degeneration thereof, all depend on the state and condition of the human heart. The heart, if sound and healthy, is the entity that drives and channels human potentialities to a positive course of growth and progress. Conversely, if the heart becomes sick and corrupt, the growth of all human potentialities becomes blocked, and personality turns towards a regressive course of ruination and self-debasement.

The above assertions and contents have been very succinctly and comprehensibly expressed in the following tradition of the Holy Prophet (*ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*):

In the body is a piece of flesh. If it is healthy, the whole body is healthy. If it becomes unhealthy, the whole body becomes unhealthy – and that is the heart.⁷

On the basis of this ḥadīth, Muslim scholars have likened the heart to a king, to which all the organs, faculties and senses have been subordinated, so that he might avail himself of their functions.

The meaning of the term ‘heart’ or ‘qalb’

Physiologically ‘heart’ or ‘*qalb*’ refers to a cone-shaped piece of flesh located in the left part of the chest. The term also has, however, a transcendental essence. Commentators of ḥadīth interpret the term *qalb* mentioned in the aforesaid ḥadīth to refer to the transcendental supersensory entity that is inextricably related to the physical heart. According to Imām al-Ghazālī, this transcendental *qalb* is the very essence of the human being. Certain other terms have also been used to refer to the

essential human substance, such as *rūh* (soul), *nafs* (self) and *‘aql* (intellect), each of which signifies a spiritual entity.⁸ This supersensory entity of *qalb*, in spite of being an independent and core transcendental entity, is inextricably related to the physical heart, whilst simultaneously transcending this physical organ.

Heart: Psycho-neurological functions and behaviour

By virtue of its direct connection with the physical heart, and through this physical medium, the spiritual heart rules over the whole body. All decisions for actions are made by the transcendental *qalb* and corresponding commands are transmitted through the physical heart through its arteries to particular muscles and organs for appropriate behaviour. This passage and transmission of the heart's commands for muscular actions or behavioural responses, according to some scholars, is conducted in two stages.⁹ In the first stage decision-carrying impulses ascend from the heart to the brain and then from the brain they descend down to the muscles of the body. In this way, the brain functions as an intermediary organ between the heart's judgement and its manifestation through behavioural actions.

Thus according to Islamic doctrine the heart is essentially a spiritual entity having a substantive independent status. While modern positivistic psychologists consider psycho-spiritual phenomena to be no more than epiphenomena, or 'shadows' of the physiological or behavioural processes, Islam holds just the opposite view: that behavioural and inner neuro-physiological processes are but the manifestations of psycho-spiritual events and processes occurring in the heart. Since the heart is the spring of all motivations and actions and is therefore liable to bear the consequences of all human deeds, it has become the addressee of Allah's (*subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā*) revealed communication in the Qur'ānic verses. For example consider the verses below:

Say (O Muhammad, to mankind): Whosoever is an enemy of Jibrā'īl, for he it is who hath revealed (this Scripture) to thy heart by Allah's leave. (2:97)

And Lo! It is a revelation of the Lord of the worlds, which the True Spirit hath brought down upon thy heart. (26:192-194)

Imām Rāzī argues that since both these verses clearly indicate that *tanzīl* and *wahy* (revelation) come to the heart, it is the heart that is addressed by Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā*), and hence responsible for behavioural consequences.¹⁰ He further mentions that the heart is also referred to in the Qur'ān as 'the seat of intellect and understanding', which are the bases of will and motivation for actions. Consider the following Qur'ānic verses:

Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts may thus learn wisdom ...? (22:46)

They have hearts wherewith they understand not. (7:179)

Lo! therein verily is a reminder for him who hath a heart. (50:37)

There are several other verses and sayings of the Holy Prophet (*ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*), which signify that the heart is the core of human personality and behaviour. Imām al-Ghazālī has, therefore, identified the heart or *qalb* as the essence of man. It is the spiritual entity which, as the king of the whole human system, controls man's organic and psychic functions. Muslim theologians, savants and Sufis have worked out rather an elaborate picture of the properties and functions of the heart, along with other entities closely related to it. Imām al-Ghazālī's views may be considered something of an epitome of Islamic thought with respect to issues pertaining to this domain. Following the relevant Qur'ānic verses and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (*ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*), al-Ghazālī asserts that all psychological phenomena spring from the *qalb*, and are directed and controlled by it.¹¹ In order to understand the nature, role and functions of the *qalb*, we should now contemplate the purpose of man's having been created and sent to the earth. Man has been sent to this earth, as articulated by Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā*) as His *khalīfah* or 'vicegerent' (Qur'ān, 2:30). As *khalīfah* of Allah, man has been endowed with a combination of innate qualities, which reflect the attributes of Allah in a finite and humanized form. As *khalīfah* of Allah, man has the inherent capacity to perceive the attributes of Allah, and to develop his latent qualities by partaking in Allah's 'colour', i.e., His attributes, as implicated by this Qur'ānic verse: '(We take our) colour from Allah, and who is better than Allah Almighty at colouring?' (2:138)

Attributes of the heart, its function and relationship with the senses, the psycho-neurological system and the bodily organs

As the essence of man, the *qalb* has been endowed with the capacity to perceive the attributes of Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā*) to whatever degree possible by its finite nature. The *qalb* has also been equipped with the ability to perceive the realities of all other created phenomena and their relationships with the Creator.

All the senses and the faculties of a human being have been subordinated and placed at the service of the *qalb* in order that he realises the existence of the Ultimate Reality, Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā*), along with the realisation of his relationship with Him and other created phenomena. It should however be remembered that a full knowledge of the reality of *qalb* is beyond the ken of human perception, because as mentioned in the Qur'ān, the spirit proceeds from the world of *amr* (command) and man has been provided with very little knowledge about it (17:85). Since the *qalb* is inseparably intertwined with the spirit (*rūḥ*) sharing common features between them, limitation of knowledge also applies to the *qalb*. However, an exact metaphysical knowledge of the reality of the *qalb* is not a necessary preliminary for attaining to the Divine vicegerency. Due portions of knowledge may be revealed to one according to the effort one makes in properly utilising the means and forces entrusted to *qalb*, as it is asserted in the Qur'ān: 'Those who strive in Our way, verily We shall guide them to Our paths.' (29:69)

Since human being has to strive to attain the goal of Divine vicegerency in this earthly span of life, his physical survival also serves as a necessary means to that end. In this context, man has been equipped with powers and faculties that help him sustain his physical existence, and at the same time qualify for achieving its ultimate goal. Al-Ghazālī has worked out rather a precise narrative of human being's system of fulfilling the bodily needs for its physical survival.¹² Survival or bodily needs are

fulfilled by man through two sets of powers: the motor and sensory powers. The motor power consists of propensities and impulses. Appetite (*al-quwwah al-shahwāniyyah*) and anger (*al-quwwah al-ghadabiyyah*) are two special types of propensities. The former drives the body to pursue and obtain what is perceived to be beneficial for it. These are such drives as hunger, thirst, sex, etc. The latter, anger, protects the body from harmful things by compelling one to avoid or repel them. While these propensities activate the body from more inner regions, the impulses are the powers which move the organs at the instance of appetite and anger by residing in the end-regions of the body, muscles, nerves and tissues.

Propensities are guided in their actions by the sensory powers (*mudrikah*), or the power of apprehension, which perceives what is harmful and what is good for the body. There are two kinds of senses, outer and inner. Outer senses are sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch with their special sense organs. The inner senses are common sense (*al-hiss al-mushtarak*), imagination (*takhayyul*), reflection (*tafakkur*), and memory (*ḥāfiẓah*). Later, al-Ghazālī included another sense called *al-quwwatu'l wāhimah* which raised the number of the inner senses to five. The partial function of this sense is to perceive the tangible meaning of sensory objects.

Takhayyul (imagination) refers to that sensory capacity which enables one to hold the sensory image of an object after its having being perceived. Crudely, this can be said to correspond to 'sensory memory' in terms of modern information processing theory. *Tafakkur* is the power which works on relevant thoughts, and forms appropriate associations or dissociations among them.¹³ This seems to fairly correspond to what is called 'working memory' in modern terminology, with a limited number of activated information. In this form of processing, some elements in the working memory are said to be ignored while others are supposed to yield new combinations and relationships.¹⁴

Al-Ghazālī makes a distinction between memory (*al-ḥāfiẓah*) and recollection (*tadhakkur*). While memory is said to store the sense impressions of the outer form or the pattern of objects, the function of *tadhakkur* is to recollect the meaning, which is intangible and unavailable to the senses. Though meaning is recollected by *tadhakkur*, the attribution of meaning to sense impressions is carried out through a synthesis of these elements, by way of a special faculty called *al-hiss al-mushtarak* (common sense). Though these inner senses described above have no special organs, unlike the five special senses, they are however believed to have specific seats in brain regions as mentioned earlier. While the external senses enable the organism to receive momentary stimuli and act in present-moment situations, the five inner senses are responsible for one's being able to learn from past experiences, and for providing the organism with a behaviour plan in anticipation of future situations.¹⁵

Finally, the decisions related to choosing particular response patterns and behaviours over others are made by the *qalb* which activates the corresponding brain regions and centres, resulting in the energisation of specific muscles, nerves or tissues with specific action impulses, which finally appear as behavioural output. One would be inclined to feel that this description of the *qalb*'s overall function matches the features of the 'central processor' which is conceptualised as the decision making, structure controlling, all-embracing single entity in the whole information processing system.¹⁶ Though there is no definite claim as to the location of this structure by the cognitive theorists, they seem prone to think of the brain as its most likely seat.

Though the *qalb* referred to above is a spiritual transcendental entity, according to Islamic doctrine this is said to be closely connected to the physical *qalb* or heart which is situated within the breasts, as indicated by the following verse:

Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not their eyes, rather it is their hearts in their breasts that are blind. (22:46)

In the foregoing description of the inner senses, al-Ghazālī has referred to *al-ḥāfiẓah* (memory) as one of the inner senses that he has preferred to locate in the hinter lobe of the brain.

Modern cognitive research reveals that, besides permanent memory, memory has another closely related stage called working memory. We have noted earlier that the concept of working memory has common features with al-Ghazālī's concept of *al-ḥāfiẓah*, which he has located in a region of the brain. A region of the brain seems to be an appropriate seat for this kind of memory, which conducts the thought processes usually associated with the brain in carrying out necessary analytical processes. But once the raw sense-data, as well as other activated contents of memory are processed in the working memory, they may be conceived as being filtered through it in order to find their stable and final resting place in the vast reservoir of the permanent memory, the locus of which is the heart. That the processed information is stored in the heart as 'knowledge' may be thought to be implied in the following ḥadīth:

Whoever reads the Qur'ān secures the knowledge of prophethood within his ribs (heart), though Divine revelation is not sent to him. It does not befit one endowed with the Qur'ān that he should be indignant with those in anger, nor should he indulge in any act of ignorance with those who are ignorant, while the Qur'ān is in his heart.¹⁷

Though this ḥadīth pertains to the process of storing the Qur'ānic messages in the heart, this process of securing knowledge contents in the reservoir of heart may be thought to be generally applicable to all forms of messages and information. It is this permanent memory belonging to the heart from which the working memory gets its supply of all necessary ingredients and tools for processing various types of incoming information in terms of fundamental convictions, values, goals and guidelines stored up as knowledge contents in its vast reservoir.

Heart: 'aql (intellect) and irādah (will)

Regulating and controlling bodily functions for physical survival is not, however, the ultimate object of the human being. Physical survival is necessary only to provide a pre-required base for launching man's higher-order efforts to realise his ultimate goal of attaining spiritual perfection, in order to qualify for the status of being a Divine vicegerent. For this purpose, besides the animalistic propensities of appetite, anger and apprehension, the *qalb* possesses two special qualities which distinguish human beings from all other animals, namely '*aql* (intellect) and *irādah* (will). '*Aql* or intellect is the fundamental inherent rational faculty through which *qalb* can

realise and comprehend the real significance of things and phenomena as well as recognize the ultimate Truth and Reality, i.e., Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta'ālā*) as the Ultimate, Absolute Being and His Attributes as reflected in the phenomenal world and the human being himself. The vast and varied store of systematised information held in the permanent memory is due to the ability of the human intellect to generalise and form hierarchical patterns of concepts. That the faculty of intellect belongs to the *qalb* has been categorically confirmed by the Qur'ānic verses, as has been mentioned earlier.

The ability of certain animals to generalise and form concepts, e.g., chimpanzees, etc., has been reported by certain modern psychological research, and especially in the sphere of animal language.¹⁸ These reports constitute examples of extremely limited forms of symbolic concept formation, generally restricted to their uses in the domain of basic physiological or survival needs related to the phenomenal world, quite unlike the higher-order conceptual meanings associated with human beings, such as purpose, and the significance of existence, along with the cognition of perennial values underlying life, extending beyond this worldly life, and including the realisation and recognition of the nature of Ultimate Reality and so forth. The Qur'ān also mentions the abilities of animals to communicate, for example, the warning address of an ant chief to its community (27:18) and the dialogue of the bird *hudhud* with Sulaymān the prophet (*'alayhi al-salām*), informing him about the engagement in polytheistic worship of a queen and her people (27:22-25). According to the Islamic perspective, animals, and indeed all other creations, possess an innate consciousness of their Creator, as implied by the following Qur'ānic verses:

The seven heavens and the earth and all therein praise Him, and there is not a thing but that it hymns His praise; but yet ye understand not their praise ... (17:44)

Hast thou not seen Allah, He it is Whom all who are in the heavens and the earth praise, and the birds in their flight ...? (24:41)

However, such consciousness is limited to a bare awareness of the Creator as their Master and Sustainer,¹⁹ not at all comparable to the immensely generative kind of consciousness of Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta'ālā*), that has been bestowed upon man, capable of attaining to boundlessly illuminating transcendental form of cognition of Allah's Being and Attributes. This type of higher cognition is possible due to man's unique property of higher intellect, pertaining to his *qalb*. This sublime form of transcendental consciousness has been alluded to in the following *ḥadīth qudsī* (*ḥadīth* in which sayings of Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta'ālā*) are reported in His direct Speech):

The heavens and the earth cannot contain Me, but the heart of My believing slave hath room for Me.²⁰

It is for this salient and unique characteristic that man has volunteered to accept the burden of revelation, which all the heavens and the earth refused to accept as has been referred to in the following Qur'ānic verse:

I have placed this trust upon the heavens and the mountains, but they all refused to carry it and feared it, but only man has borne it ... (33:72)

The Arabic word '*aql*' is a highly comprehensive term which includes the whole range of intellect, including reason. However, some Muslim scholars make a distinction between intellect and reason. For example, M. Hasan Askari uses the term '*aql kullī*' (total and general intellect) to mean intellect, and '*aql juz'ī*' (partial or specific intellect) to refer to reason. Reason is conceived to be a delegate of intellect. As an agent and conscious projection of intellect, reason is said to distribute the light of intellect to the faculties of the imagination and the emotions, as well as the faculty of sense. knitting their functions together, all the while keeping them, normally, under its control.²¹

In terms of modern concepts, reason seems to be functionally more related to the thought process associated with the brain, though it fundamentally stems from the intellect from where it draws the knowledge of the higher principles and makes necessary derivations for applying them to practical affairs. Reason, or '*aql juz'ī*', may be said to be the faculty of discursive and analytical thought, which transmits and converts the general flow of illumination developed from the perception of the meaning and significance of phenomena by the heart into appropriate mode of behaviour in a particular situation. Due to this innate quality of the intellect, heart is the real seat of knowledge. Knowledge is not mere accumulation of information. Knowledge here means an understanding of the real nature and significance of the practical affairs of this temporal world as well as the affairs of the eternal world of *ākhirah* (the hereafter), along with the underlying rational principles governing all of them. Obviously such knowledge cannot be acquired by the senses alone, untreated and uninterpreted by the light of the intellect.

Another crucially important property of the heart is *irādah* (will). When, through knowledge, a man perceives the significance or the value of an object, ideal or goal, a desire for that object, ideal or goal is aroused and he feels motivated to achieve that through appropriate means. This desire or yearning is *irādah* (will). This will in man is generically and qualitatively different from that of animals. Human will is processed and conditioned by knowledge developed through the intellect, while the animal will is the direct expression of animal propensities of appetite and anger. Due to its rational origin, human will at its best is conditioned by a full range of cognition of past and immediate situations as well as awareness of ultimate reality and goal of life. Though all human wills are conditioned by intellect in various degrees, they may also be initially triggered by appetite and anger.

Personality stems from the heart's perception of reality

Thus, intellect and will, the two distinctive qualities of the heart, operate in combination in forming general judgements and arriving at decisions about particular responses and courses of action leading to the attainment of a goal or succession of goals leading to a final goal. There may be a whole series of intermediate goals all of which are tied to an ultimate purpose, as determined and conceived by the heart, on the basis of its realisation and perception of the Ultimate Reality and its relationship with the human self. In the final analysis then, the whole behaviour pattern, and human personality itself for that matter, are inextricably anchored in the heart and

stem from its perception of Reality. It is through '*aql*' or intellect that the heart comprehends the meaning of information gathered and analysed through the outer and inner apprehensive senses. Through '*aql*', the heart can also perceive the Ultimate Reality transcending all sensory phenomena, which governs all the systems of the totality of the universes. Whatever may be the contents and nature of the heart's perception, these provide the foundation from which the heart constructs its structure of values and life-goals using the intellect. Values and goals then generate corresponding desires and willpower in the self to achieve them, and again, the reason, which is said to be a projection of the intellect, is called into operation to form an appropriate plan of action. The 'will' of the heart is then conveyed and converted into an appropriate form of response in the brain chamber, which is finally actualised as behavioural output. Thus the heart, from genesis to maturation, and through the collaboration of intellect and will, nurtures and shapes the nascent form of a response pattern, and projects it to final fruition as manifest behaviour.

It seems relevant here to clarify an important aspect of human will, i.e., the question of freedom of will. The evident fact that human character can be changed and modified certainly implies that man possesses a significant degree of free will. Al-Ghazālī points out that if humans were not free to change or improve their character and personality, all moral imperatives, instructions and exhortations in the Qur'ān and Sunnah would cease to have any meaning.²² It is exactly because he is free in forming his belief and behaviour that man is held responsible for the acceptance or rejection of faith and the consequences of his behaviour. For example, the Qur'ān says:

Say, the Truth is from your Lord. Let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject (it) ... (18:29)

Despite the necessary degree of freedom of will required for belief and behaviour, man's freedom, according to Islamic doctrine, is not absolute and its limits are determined by Divine Laws and Will.²³ This is obvious and does not need much explanation.

'*Aql* and *shayṭāniyya* working through *shahwah* and *ghaḍab* for constructive or destructive purposes

'*Aql*' and *shayṭāniyya* (satanic tendencies) occupy positions at opposite poles in the human self and both of them struggle to get hold of *shahwah* (appetite) and *ghaḍab* (anger), working through them for constructive or destructive ends respectively. '*Aql*', the divine element, tries to control and regulate these forces, diverting them to constructive ends, for the growth and development of the self. If it succeeds in subordinating them to the self, and making them useful to it, the devil within the person also becomes subdued and its malignant forces are rendered ineffective. Once the mischievous tendency of the devilish element has been neutralised and the animal forces are made to work in harmony with the '*aql*', its struggle comes to an end. This state of constant harmony enables the human being to make unimpeded progress towards actualising his inherent potential to qualify himself for the status of Divine vicegerency. In the Qur'ānic phrase, this state of human being, in which harmony has been realised, is referred to as *al-naḥs al-muṭma'innah*, or 'the tranquil self' (89:27).

On the other hand, if these animal forces overpower the divine element at the instigation of *shayṭāniyya*, the evil tendencies dominate, and reign over the self, '*aql*' becomes weakened, and its functions blocked and paralysed. As a result, all of the other faculties of the self become subservient to animal forces and eventually '*aql*' may also become their captive. All these faculties are then used to fulfill the impulses of the passions, anger and lust, and eventually reason is also made to serve them by making plans and schemes for the gratification of these impulses. In the end, veiled over by animal passions and desires, the heart becomes totally blind, so that in gratifying animal desires and lusts the individual loses sight of the real and ultimate good of his own human self. Since all these take place at the constant instigation of the evil tendency as the active principle behind them, this state has been named *al-nafs al-ammārah bi'l-sū'*, i.e., 'the instigating self' (12:53), in the Qur'ān.

There is however an intermediate state between the two mentioned above. It seldom occurs that the divine element is completely smothered to death, totally giving up its struggle against its evil tendencies. Often the divine element remains engaged in sustained struggle against satanic instigation and animal impulses. Al-Qur'ān has denoted this state as *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*, 'the admonishing self' (75:2).

At any period or stage of human life, human behaviour and personality can be said to be a reflection or manifestation of one of these three states currently prevailing in the self. Obviously the progress of the human self is characterised by its upward movement from the lowest state of *al-nafs al-ammārah bi'l-sū'* (the instigating self) through the state of the reproaching self (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) to that of *al-nafs al-muṭma'innah*, or the tranquil self. The 'tranquil self' represents the optimal state of power distribution amongst the basic aspects associated with the self i.e. divine, animal and demonic. In this state the heart, as the king, holds the reins of control guided by the wise counsel of the intellect. Since in this state the rebellious tendency of the demonic element remains curbed to an innocuous level and both the animal instincts of appetite and anger are fully made to align themselves with the natural disposition and functions of the heart in order to achieve its ideal through the mediation of intellect, a state of equilibrium prevails in the self, which is most conducive to the growth and actualisation of the innate divine attributes of the heart.

Since, as it says in the Qur'ān, man has been destined to function as the vicegerent of Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta'ālā*), it is easily conceivable that within his inner nature man has a reserve, in finite measures, of the qualities and virtues mirroring the Attributes of Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta'ālā*), the Sovereign Sustainer, whom he represents. A ḥadīth mentioned by Imām al-Ghazālī in his *Kīmīyā-e Sa'ādāt* seems to confirm this. The ḥadīth states that Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta'ālā*) has created man according to His Own Attributes.²⁴ Commentators have interpreted this ḥadīth to mean that man has been created by Allah with qualities resembling the Attributes of Allah Himself. In another ḥadīth, reported in *Mishkāt*, man has been likened to a mine.²⁵ This also implies that beneath the surface of his animal structure, man possesses in the depth of his nature an immense reserve of untapped potentialities. If we take the former ḥadīth into consideration, these potentialities may be reasonably construed to be the humanised version of the Divine Attributes that may then be harnessed by taking appropriate measures.

The domination of animal or demonic qualities in the personality

Now, which of these qualities – animal, demonic or divine – will, in actual fact, be harnessed and thereby come to dominate human personality and behaviour, depends on the nature and content of an individual's perception of his own self, the external world, and the Ultimate Reality. A man has to enter into interactions with his environment to fulfill his various kinds of needs – physical, psychological and spiritual. The mode of behaviour and 'style' of personality leading to the fulfillment of these needs vary according to the perception that a man has of the nature of his self and of the world around him. For example, if someone was to perceive himself as being composed of biological elements only, he would remain insensitive to the inner voice of his heart demanding satisfaction of his spiritual needs, and would pay attention only to the prompting of his biological needs. Being aware only of his animal needs, such a person would find himself being driven to gratify these needs through his interaction with the environment. Since the voice of the heart remains unattended, the intellect would also remain ineffective, and the layers of sensuous deposits gathered by the heart through the gratification of animal passions and desires would make the heart blind to the abiding, transcendental principles and systems underlying the events and the phenomena of the world. The eye of his heart having been veiled by passions and desires, such a person will be hindered from seeing the signs and manifestations of *tawhīd*, the ultimate Unity and Reality, governing the events and affairs of the universe. Bereft of the wisdom and insight of the heart, the individual's vision and realisation remains blocked and locked into a world composed of sensory events and reality, his behaviour remaining confined to gratifying his bio-physical needs, in a restricted territory of a spatio-temporally bounded phenomenal world. Because of the absence of the heart's insight, he would fail to learn from the past, and would be unable to foresee the ultimate consequence of his impulsive actions and needs.

Such a narrowed and distorted perception of life and reality gives rise to a corresponding set of delusional goals, and an utterly distorted and detrimental sense of values. Being guided solely by sensory perception, and deprived of the inner vision of the heart, such people see their pleasure, happiness and success in material objects and in the social positions of this phenomenal world. Their only goal of life remains to achieve these gross, materially tangible benefits, without any regard to the ways and means of their acquisition. Practical expediency becomes their only guide, and all other values of truth, honesty and humanity are sacrificed at the altar of delusional material goals that have turned into virtual gods in their perception.

Often, at the prompting of the lower self, such people are forced to develop fully the art of guile and treachery in order to succeed and secure more and more of these earthly gods. The Qur'ān refers to this self-state in the following verse:

They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle; nay even more misguided for they are heedless (of the warning). (7:179)

Thus, those who base their behaviour on the perception of their animal selves, and respond only to the immediate and apparent meanings of sensory inputs, preferring to remain insensitive to the wisdom of the heart, are not able to see the signs of Allah's Unity, Providence or Wrath, manifested in nature and in the history

of nations. Consequently, such people often reject the truth and the message revealed by Allah through His messengers. Fed by the unchecked gratification of passions and lusts, deprived of the wisdom of the heart, and provoked by the demonic element of the self, the animal self comes to dominate the personality. Thus, if the animal component, *shahwah* or 'appetite' gains dominance, bestial characteristics such as gluttony, greed, wickedness, hypocrisy, jealousy, etc. are bred in the self.

On the other hand, if the animal component, *ghaḍab* or 'anger' comes to predominate, the characteristics of ferocious animals are bred, such as enmity, hatred, contempt, pride, love of aggrandizement, etc. If both *shahwah* and *ghaḍab* combine to predominate, devilish characteristics come to appear in the character, such as treachery, deceit, cunning, exciting enmity, and so on. In fact, it is the *shayṭāniyyah*, the demonic tendency, which gains ascendancy at this stage, and all the other faculties become subordinated to it. Even reason becomes subdued to such a degree that it starts serving this pseudomaster by making plans for realising its evil designs. However, the above mentioned 'bestial' characteristics are often manifested in disguise, in order to avoid the censure of the residual voice of the intellect that survives in the heart, as well as to make them appear acceptable to the society at large.

Mawlana Rūmi, the illustrious Sufi theologian of the 13th century CE, has given a precise picture of the behaviour typically encountered from one in such a state, i.e., that of the full dominance of *al-naḥs al-ammārah* or the instigating self, in terms of the concomitant manifestations of animalistic lusts and passions.²⁶ Devoid of the perception of Allah as the Absolute Sovereign Sustainer, the self assumes as its gods a multiple of things which appear to it as being capable of catering to its lusts. In this state, the self turns into a virtual worshipper of such things as wealth, women, position and power. Often power becomes the most potent idol to be sought. To satisfy the undying passions of this power-seeking self, rulers are found to commit utterly inhuman kinds of atrocities to their fellowmen. Innocent lives are sacrificed at the altar of their power god, all in order to stabilise and secure their positions. Yet continued recklessness in the use of power breeds enmity and hatred against such tyrants, and ultimately gives rise to feelings of insecurity in their minds. To seek relief in such situations, men feel compelled to adopt measures to force each and everyone into unquestioning obedience, by making threats and creating fears in the minds of the people.

While in power, such men may even pretend to be championing the objectives of the people and guiding their religious sensibilities. If they succeed in winning the trust of their ignorant people, they will in time design strategies for dividing people and creating rivalries among leaders with a view to ultimately eliminating them. However, through these self-defeating measures such people increasingly alienate themselves from others, their inner divine selves, and finally from Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta'ālā*), the Absolute Divine Self, the Reality.

The above narrative has not intended to give the impression that the human heart is overpowered by the animal and demonic elements compulsively, as their helpless victim. The heart is always free to choose, and opt either for a progressive or a regressive line of exertion with respect to personality development. At any stage of its development, it can change and make necessary reversals in its developmental programme. Such changes, of course, may be with relative ease or difficulty depending on favourable or unfavourable conditions currently prevailing within the human self, and indeed outside of it.

Freud's views of instincts compared

At this point we may pause, to have a comparative look into Freud's views of instincts. Freud classified instincts into two broad classes, i.e., life instincts and death instincts. Life instincts, which serve the purpose of individual survival and racial propagation, include, hunger, thirst, sex, etc. This comes very close to the animal element *shahwah* (appetite) as described by al-Ghazālī. The 'death instincts' are conceived by Freud to be destructive in nature. An important derivative of the death instincts is the aggressive drive. Though the precise description of the functions of this drive does not match well with al-Ghazālī's concept of *ghaḍab*, that is, the animal component representing destructive forces, it does however share an overall similarity of significance with it. The point to which we wish to call attention is Freud's image of human personality represented by his concept of instincts. Freud conceived human beings as being constituted totally by physical and biological elements. Therefore, as depicted in his theory, human personality is wholly energised and propelled, at every stage of its development, by these two instincts alone. These instincts belong to the primordial component of personality called id, are operated and moderated by ego and superego, and emerge in the course of the id's interaction with the physical and social environment of the individual in order that the needs and desires of the id be fulfilled in a realistic manner. Throughout the whole course of personality development, and during its multifaceted dealings with the socio-physical environment, personality remains out and out a bio-physical creature at core, though wearing multifarious disguises. At no state of its development has the self any chance to rise to the higher echelon of the spiritual domain, as the id, the Freudian essence of human personality, contains no spiritual element whatsoever. This is a crucial difference between the Freudian concept of personality and the Islamic concept thereof. The essence of personality, according to Islamic belief, is the spirit or soul, variously termed *rūḥ*, *qalb*, or *naḥs*, which is spiritual and divine in nature. Therefore, the development of personality signifies the stable ascendancy of this spiritual core of personality over all other faculties, ensuring an unimpeded growth and development of the inherent drive and potentials of the human self, and their manifestation in personality and behaviour.

Opening of the heart's eyes

According to the Qur'ān, the ultimate object of all sensory observations is to open the eyes of the heart to enable it to perceive the Reality that is beyond all doubts. This critical function of the heart has been mentioned in many Qur'ānic verses, two of which have been stated earlier (see pages 30 & 35). These verses imply that though the sense organs function physically, their purposes are not achieved unless the heart's eyes are opened. This is confirmed in the following verse from the Qur'ān: 'Lo! The hearing, the sight and the heart – all of these will be questioned about that.' (17:36)

In the context of the above verse, Imām al-Rāzī says that since the ears and the eyes have no other function but to make their contents reach the heart, any question put to them must, in reality, therefore be a question put to the heart, the heart being the judge and governor concerning all that is delivered to it by the ears and the eyes.²⁷ It is then the heart which is ultimately responsible for the interpretation and meaning it ascribes to the sensory information received. The Qur'ān thus emphasises this

crucial function of the heart in interpreting the meanings and messages contained in natural phenomena as well as in the events of human history.

Islamic concepts of the psycho-spiritual process of the heart's cognition (*ma'rifah*) of Allah's unity

In this context it seems pertinent to present an outline of the Islamic concept of the psycho-spiritual processes through which the heart is gradually awakened and illuminated to the cognition of Transcendental Reality, as expounded by al-Ghazālī on the basis of his interpretation of the following Qur'ānic verse:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The Parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a Lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass: the glass as it were a brilliant star: Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it: Light upon Light! Allah doth guide whom He will to His Light: Allah doth set forth Parables for men: and Allah doth know all things. (24:35)

In his excellent elucidation of this 'Light verse', al-Ghazālī has mentioned five phases of the *qalb*'s illuminative faculty, which exists in order that it should perceive Reality through different levels of its manifestation, from that which is sensory at the surface, to that which is transcendental at the innermost core. These five faculties or spirits have been symbolised as the Niche, Glass, Lamp, Tree and Oil in the above verse. The Niche is the sensuous faculty, whose light comes through the sense organs. The Glass, Lamp, Tree and Oil stand successively for imagination, intelligential spirit, ratiocinative spirit and finally transcendental spirit. Sense data processed and elucidated through these five grades of light results finally in the perception of the Ultimate Transcendental Reality.²⁸

It is only when the self recognizes the Ultimate Transcendental Reality as the Divine Unity encompassing and sustaining the whole universe with absolute sovereignty and omnipotence, that the human personality can overcome and free itself from all kinds of influences alien to its real human nature, be it within or without his being or personality. At this stage of the realisation of *tawhīd*, personality begins to absorb the Divine colour, and the untapped treasure of the divine attributes start to surge up from the submerged region of the heart's unconscious layers, in order to manifest themselves in overt behaviour. Consequently, human personality starts to reflect the character of Allah (*subhānahu wa ta'ālā*), the Universal Sustainer, Who destined it to represent Him as His vicegerent.

***Tawhīd* energizes the heart and subordinates lusts and passions to the intellect and revelation, activating latent divine qualities conducive to growth and maturation**

As *īmān* settles down into the depths of the heart, it frees the mind and all of its psychic functions from all manners of cognitive bondage which arrests and cripples the growth and development of the heart's treasure of divine potentialities. Intellect, the pivotal divine property of the heart, becomes illuminated by the transcendental

light of *tawhīd*, and rises to complete ascendancy over all other components of the self, thereby effectively subordinating all animal drives and passions, and making them consistent with the divine nature of the real human self. Instead of being guided by the senses, the heart, the king of human personality, takes into its trust the counsel of 'aql or 'intellect', that has been illumined and nurtured to maturity. Realising that Allah (*subhānahu wa ta'ālā*) is the absolute source of all success, 'aql turns to the knowledge revealed by Him, in order that the heart be furnished with this infallible guidance, personality and behaviour, thereby being made to conform to Divine Will. As one acts upon the truth and instructions communicated through the Divine Scripture, the Qur'ān, dimensions of the real human self and its relationship with the Ultimate Reality and the universe, that remained so long unattended, become revealed to one's heart. The self enters into an active interaction and communion with the Being of Allah, the Ultimate Reality, leading to a continuous exploration of the heart's latent divine qualities and an active adorning of the personality with them.

These are the qualities which reflect the Attributes of Allah in a humanised form. This is the principle which according to many scholars is being referred to in a ḥadīth which states that man has been created according to the Attributes of Allah (as cited by al-Ghazālī in his *Kīmīyā-e Sa'ādāt*.²⁹) These divine virtues lie dormant for most people in the unconscious vault of the self, awaiting to be tapped and brought to the surface by the experience of supersensory consciousness. It is because of this hidden treasure that human beings have been referred to as 'mines' in a ḥadīth mentioned in *Mishkāt*.³⁰ Through the gradual maturation of the perception of *tawhīd* and other essentials of *īmān*, the identity of the human self as a supra-animal, endowed with divine qualities representing the Absolute Divine Being in this world, becomes crystallised in human consciousness. Equipped with this novel identity and a perception of the unique relationship it now has with Allah and the universe, the personality becomes poised to develop and behave in a manner harmonious with its newly-emerged identity and relationships.

As *īmān* (faith) continues to expand its sway to wider spheres of the heart, it increasingly captures the domain of emotions, and uses them to facilitate the growth of inner personality, protecting it from the corrupting effects of lower drives and passions by restricting their satisfaction to only those limits as are laid down by the Divine.

The perception of Allah (*subhānahu wa ta'ālā*) as the sole Being Who provides sustenance, gives success, and both rewards and punishes, generates deep emotions of love and fear of Allah. When these two major emotions of love and fear of Allah become paramount in the heart, they completely reorganize the universe of values for the believer. Love of Allah attributes positive value to all those virtues and deeds which are approved and appreciated by Allah, and the fear of Allah attributes a negative values to all traits and behaviour which are disliked and condemned by Him. Together, these two emotions crucially contribute to constructing a highly sensitive and stable conscience, making all overt and covert behaviour conform to the sanctions and injunctions of the Divine Will. They thus become highly potent factors in directing the innate divine qualities to realise their maximal capacity for growth.

For example, believers will restrain themselves from drinking alcohol, which is *ḥarām* (forbidden), thereby protecting themselves from losing their sanity and indulging in vulgar and anti-social behaviour. At other times, in consonance with

Divine pleasure, the conscience will induce believers to serve the hungry with food, though they themselves may well have to remain without food, thereby developing the divine virtue of generosity and benevolence. In fact the growing potency of *īmān* ultimately culminates in integrating all emotions and drives into an all-comprehensive and enduring yearning to achieve the pleasure of Allah.

Once the motive of attaining Allah's pleasure gains stability through the maturation of cognition and faith in *tawhīd*, it can effectively make the heart take unshakable decisions to act and develop in line with the primordial spiritual nature of personality, by unstintingly following the Divine instructions. The maturity of *īmān* also equips the personality with an irresistible determination to boldly overcome all resistance from within and without in a way that supports its fullest growth and development. This arch-motive exerts its prime effect upon the heart's decision-making functions. This motive effectively induces the heart to make all its behavioural decisions in order to reflect Divine will and pleasure. To make decisions conform to Allah's will, believers turn to Divine revelation and its practical elucidation in the Sunnah (the traditions of the Prophet, *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

A special reference may be made here to the development of the divine virtue of altruism, that is, selfless service to others. The burgeoning spark of divine altruism was regularly nourished among the early Muslims through their nurturing of *īmān* in their hearts. The later stages of the all-out strivings of the growing *ummah* facilitated the growth of this *īmān* to its final fruition as a nation constituting vicegerent personalities representing Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta'ālā*) on this earth. The progress of the inner cognition of *tawhīd* through *da'wah* and related endeavours, and the consequent increase in the heart's potency and mastery over all aspects of the self, energized the votaries of the new faith to explore more deeply the layers of their hearts, through the all-pervading light of *tawhīd*, to tap and thereby bring more and more of the divine virtues to surface, now ready to manifest themselves through appropriate behaviour. As a result, egoistic animal instincts were being effectively regulated or suppressed, in order that they be harmonised with the emergent divine qualities gushing out from the deeper beds of hearts.

Thus the unique striving necessary to make the cognition of Allah the sole determiner of personality and behaviour, turned the heart into the live springboard of virtues and qualities representing Allah's Attributes. As the *ma'rifah* (cognition) of Allah took firm root in the hearts of the believers through the appropriate labours of the Makkan period, their personalities started to bear the most succulent fruits of altruism as expressed in their behaviour in helping others. This characteristic trait of altruism developed to even higher levels later in the Madinan years, as the hearts of the Muslims continued to attain higher states of maturity in the conviction and cognition of *tawhīd*. There are several instances in which the Madinan Muslims were observed helping and serving others, while they themselves were in states of dire necessity. Recognition of such characteristic behaviour is found in the following verse: 'They prefer others above themselves, though poverty became their lot.' (49:9, 4th year A.H.)

This spirit of self-sacrifice became a conspicuously dominant trait of the entire Muslim community. This was developed to such a level of excellence that several events of sacrificing even the last drinks of water by dying warriors in favour of their fellow brothers have been reported in the books of *sīrah*, i.e., biographical accounts.³¹

However, at the peak of its development, the deep-rooted concern and the burning zeal to strive for the welfare of the whole of mankind turned into a cardinal virtue that reigned supreme over all other divine traits of the *ummah*'s personality. Though the development of this virtue was triggered by the *da'wah* endeavor in every individual member of this *ummah*, its ascension to the very highest echelon of personality organisation required constant subordination of all egoistic passions and concern to the supreme drive of striving for the welfare of the whole of mankind. As a result of sustained and relentless struggle against all inner resistance as well as various external odds and ordeals in the earlier period of Islam, the hearts of the Muslims attained control over their lower egoistic drives and passions, and their desire to strive for the welfare and salvation of mankind assumed a magnificent state of stability and an all-pervasive magnitude within their personalities. In appreciation of this personality trait, Allah declared this *ummah*, during the first lap of their Islamic striving in Madina, and after they had successfully passed through the formative period in their Makkan years, as 'the best of people' in the following verse: 'Ye are the best of the people that hath been raised up for (the welfare of) mankind ...' (3:104, 3rd/4th yr. A.H.).

The history of the *ummah* bears out the fact that the early Muslims proved themselves wholly worthy of this Divine laurel by harnessing all the divine virtues of the heart to their fullest range of development, and all for the total welfare of mankind.

Disbelief anchored in the heart is the source of all corrupt and perverted personality traits

In contrast to the foregoing constructive course of personality development, the Qur'ān also depicts an opposite course of personality regression, ascribing its source to diseases of hearts. The diseases of hearts, according to the Qur'ān, induces people to reject the truth, which often make them fall into a vicious circle, from which it becomes difficult to escape. Referring to them Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta'ālā*) says:

In their hearts is a disease, and Allah increaseth their disease. A painful doom is theirs because they lie. (2:10)

But as for those in whose hearts is disease, it (revelation) only addeth wickedness to their wickedness, and they die while they are disbelievers. (9: 125)

This 'disease' consists of a combination of symptoms such as lying, arrogance, zealotry, hatred, vacillation, breach of trust, withholding from spending for the public good for the sake of Allah, treachery, deceiving others, etc. Of these, lying and arrogance may be considered to be the source traits from which all the other symptoms stem. While the fundamental lying of the disbelievers (*kāfirūn*) consists in rejecting the truth of *tawḥīd* and matters associated with it, the lying of the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*) consists in a double-folded falsifying of the truth: they reject the truth at heart and also seeks to hide this rejection through a false profession of belief, as mentioned in the following verse:

And of mankind are some who say, 'We believe in Allah and the Last Day', when they believe not. (2:8)

Such lies only aggravate their inner disease, that manifests itself in such other perversions as habitual lying in conversations, breaching of promises, and breaching of trust, as has been mentioned in a ḥadīth in *Mishkāt*.³² A little thought will reveal that all these practices are actually different forms of lying. Needless to say, the seat of disbelief, i.e., the falsification of truth, is the heart. Therefore, by harbouring disbelief, the heart turns into a base for all those corrupt and perverted traits of personality that stem from disbelief.

Special mention should also be made of pride, a highly destructive trait, which works in the heart insidiously to distort the perception of Reality and push the personality to a level of degeneration from which it is often impossible to recover. To characterise its devastating influence some Muslim savants have even diagnosed it as the mother of all diseases.³³ This is the trait which led Satan to rebel and disbelieve as mentioned in the Qur'ān: 'He refused and became arrogant, and so became of the disbelievers.' (2:34).

Indeed these two traits, i.e. pride and disbelief, seem to function reciprocally, augmenting each other's strength to aggravate the heart's diseases and the perversion of the personality. Self-pride obliterates the heart's awareness of Allah's Awesomeness and Majesty and puts a veil over the heart, keeping one confined to one's ego-centric vision of the self and the world. Being thus blocked, the inner eye of the heart cannot transcend its self-imposed limits of perception and therefore fails to realise the transcendental Truth of Allah's Absolute Sovereignty and Unity.

Their physical organs of sight and hearing are unimpaired and are able to perceive the physical phenomena, but due to the blindness of their hearts, they do not perceive the physically intangible Transcendental Truth. (Qur'ān – 7:179, 22:46). Thus it is evident that as an inevitable consequence of disbelief and pride the heart loses its innate capacity to realize the Transcendental Unity of Allah. By restricting the heart's domain of perception to only the narrow bounds of the physically tangible world, disbelief paralyzes the higher intellectual function of the heart and makes the self dissociated from the Being of Allah. Disassociated from the absolute Being of Allah and deprived of the guiding light of the heart's intellect, the self falls an easy prey to the promptings of the passions of the animal self and the instigation of Satan, which makes the self degenerate into the state of *al-naḥs al-ammārah bi'l-sū'* (the instigating self), with its concomitant vices. A brief description of the typical traits of this state has been given in the opening section of this discourse. In the foregoing passages, we have thus made a humble attempt to elucidate in brief, the theme contained in the following ḥadīth, that we also mentioned in the beginning: 'In the body is a piece of flesh. If it is healthy, the whole body is healthy. If it becomes unhealthy, the whole body becomes unhealthy – and that is the heart.'³⁴

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in the foregoing pages, in the light of revealed knowledge, to bring into focus the reality that the transcendental heart is the core and spring from which all genuine human virtues reflecting the attributes of Allah (*subḥānahu wa ta'ālā*) stem and develop. Though the heart carries these divine imprints from the

transcendental world, they remain untapped and wrapped up in layers of gross sensory perception of the phenomenal world. The gross sensory-phenomenal perception of the empirical world hinders the cognition of Allah's Transcendental Unity, as well as the inner divine potentialities and thus keeps a spiritually insensitive man preoccupied with the tasks of fulfilling purely psycho-physiological needs and desires, blocking the emergence of his real spiritual self as the determiner and master of his behaviour. This process turns man into a creature resembling the lower animals in general and smothers the possibilities of the growth and emergence of his genuine human self.

It is only when the heart perceives the Transcendental Being of Allah as its exclusive Lord and Sovereign Sustainer that the heart is freed from the overriding influence of all false gods appearing in the form of various phenomena of the sensory-material world. This light of transcendental cognition guides the human self firmly through the challenging expedition of exploring and harnessing the inherent divine properties, in order to transform himself from a bare animal to a divine vicegerent.

The Islamic perspective thus unequivocally asserts that, in order to avert the process of the degeneration of human beings to the state of animals, and instead to raise them to the coveted status of divine vicegerent, all efforts should be directed to liberate human hearts from the crippling and corrupting effects of the various forces of the phenomenal world, shattering the myths of their power and lordship through implanting and nourishing firm and perfect cognition of the Transcendental Unity and Sovereignty of Allah (*subhānahu wa ta'ālā*) in the hearts of people, and thus equip them with the master-key to unlock their inner reserves of divine treasures, so that they might flourish and blossom into vicegerent personalities.

Notes & References

1. *Subhānahu wa ta'ālā* is an Islamic Arabic phrase that can be translated in English as 'glorified and exalted be He'.
2. See Crider, A. B., Goethals, G. R., Kavanaugh, R. D., Solomon, P. R., *Psychology*, Scott, Foresman & Company, 4th ed. 1993, p. 4.
3. *Ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* (abbreviated as s.a.w.) means: 'May Allah bless him and grant him peace'; often translated as 'peace and blessings be upon him', abbreviated as p.b.u.h.
4. See Absar Ahmad, 'Qur'ānic Concepts of Human Psyche,' in Zafar Afaq Ansari (Ed.), *Qur'ānic Concepts of Human Psyche*, 1992, Lahore, pp. 15-37; Manzurul Huq, 'Heart: the Locus of Human Psyche' in *Qur'ānic Concepts of Human Psyche*, pp. 56-67.
5. Umaruddin, M., *The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazali*, Aligarh, 1962, p. 61.
6. Ibid.
7. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Vol. 1; ḥadīth No. 47.
8. Al-Ghazālī, A. H., *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Book III, English tr. Maulana Fazlul Karim, Kitab Bhavan, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 2-4.
9. Al-Rāzī, Imām Fakhr al-Dīn, *Ilm al-Akhlāq*, English tr. M. Saghir Hasan Masumi, Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad, 1985, pp. 135-140.
10. Al-Rāzī, *Ilm al-Akhlāq*, pp. 119-120.
11. Al-Ghazālī, *Kīmīyā-e Sa'ādat*, Bengali tr. Maulana Nurur Rahman, Emdadia Library, 1971, pp. 85-87.
12. Umaruddin, *Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazali*, pp. 59-61.
13. Umaruddin, *Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazali*, pp. 60-61.

14. Dodd, D. H., White, R. M., *Cognition*, Alyn & Bacon Inc. 1980, 16-17.
15. Umaruddin, *Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazali*, p. 61.
16. Dodd, D. H., White, R. M., *Cognition*, p. 14.
17. Zakariya, Muhammad, *Fazāil-e A'māl*, section 'Virtues of the Holy Qur'an,' English tr. Azizuddin, Kutubkhana Faizi, Lahore, pp. 77-78.
18. Reynolds, A. G. and Flagg, P. W., *Cognitive Psychology*, Little Brown & Company, 2nd ed. 1983, pp. 370-382.
19. See Mufti Muhammad Shafi, *Ma'āriful Qur'an*, abridged Bengali tr., Maulana Muhiuddin Khan, King Fahd Qur'an Printing Project, pp. 5-6.
20. As quoted in Naumana Amjad, 'Psyche in Islamic Gnostic and Philosophical Tradition', in Z. A. Ansari (Ed.), *Qur'ānic Concepts of Human Psyche*, pp. 39-56.
21. Ibid.
22. Umaruddin, *Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazali*, p. 59.
23. Mustafa, Achoui, 'Human Nature from Comparative Psychological Perspective', *The American Journal of Islamic Social Science*, Vol. 15, pp. 70-95.
24. Al-Ghazālī, *Kīmīyā-e Sa'ādat*, Bengali tr. Maulana Nurur Rahman, p. 87.
25. *Mishkāt*, Bengali tr. Maulana Nur Muhammad Azmi, Emdadia Library, Dhaka, 1967, Vol. 2, p. 6.
26. Arasteh, A. Reza, *Rumi the Persian, the Sufi*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965, pp. 92-103.
27. Al-Rāzī, *Ilm al-Akhlāq*, Eng. tr. M. Saghir Hasan Masumi, Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad, 1985, p. 123.
28. As noted in Manzurul Huq, 'Heart: the Locus of Human Psyche,' in *Qur'ānic Concepts of Human Psyche*, pp. 57-67.
29. Al-Ghazālī, *Kīmīyā-e Sa'ādat*, Bengali tr. Maulana Nurur Rahman, Emdadia Library, Dhaka, 1971, p. 87.
30. *Mishkāt*, Bengali translation, Vol. 2, p. 6.
31. Zakariya, Muhammad, *Fazāil-e Sada'qāt*, English tr. Abdul Karim & Malik Haq Nawaz, Dārul Ishā'at, Karachi, p. 658.
32. *Mishkāt Sharif*, Bengali tr. Maulana Noor Muhammad Ajmi, 1971; Vol. 1, p. 97.
33. See Muhammad Zakariya, *Umm al-Amrāḍ* (Urdu), Maktabah Dīniyāt, Lahore, p. 8.
34. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Vol. 1; ḥadīth No. 47.