



The Three Approaches

Mansoor Ahmad

It is an accepted perception amongst the Sufis that there are three main approaches (Highways) to Allah: the Path of Fear, the Path of Love and the Path of Knowledge. The first one, that is the path of fear, is of rigorous abstinence and that of love is of ecstatic rapture but the third one is essentially of intellectual knowledge. These three aspects can also be seen as the three dimensions of a Muslim's Faith. In other words, the "Iman" is deployed in a space with Fear (Makhafa), Love (Muhabba) and Knowledge (Marfa) as the x, y and z axes of that space. In this way, for faith to be substantial (voluminous) no dimension (aspect) should be missing (no coordinate should be zero). That implies the presence of all three aspects of faith in every believer's heart although any one of the three may be predominant depending on the gift that Allah may have bestowed on a particular individual.

Islam can then be defined as Submission to the Will of Allah (fear), Charity for other human beings (love) and Awareness of the Divine (knowledge). These three aspects relates to three fundamental postures of 'Namaz'. The 'Qiaam' (standing) is related to the knowledge because it is in this posture that man is vertically upright ('Ahsan e taquveem'). This is his position of a vice-regent of Allah (Khalifatullah) and it is in this posture that man mouths the 'Sana' (praise) and 'tareef' (knowing) of Allah. 'Ruku' the second posture is related to fear. It is a horizontal dilation in the obedience of Sharia and Ordinance of Islam. It is breaking the back to obey His commandments. The third posture is that of 'Sajada' when the forehead is touching to the ground and the body is folded like it was in the mother's womb and man becomes a naught and because he is naught he is nearest to Allah. This is related to the love of Allah and all His manifestations (creatures) and that is why it occurs twice in each 'Rakat': one for love and relation with all creatures through Allah and a second one for love (nearness) of Allah alone. This perception also recalls the three aspects, Islam, Iman and Ihsan, mentioned in the replay of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) to the Angel Gabriel. Similarly, there are three minimum words (zikar) that also comes to mind; firstly the half of third Kalama (subhan allah e wallahamdulillahi...). This is related to Knowledge. The second one, which is related to love, is Darud (Allahuma salallah) and the third one is Astughfar (Astughfurlallh rabi min kule zumbin....), which is evoked by the fear of Allah.

Stillness of Mind

Transmitted by Mansoor Ahmad

A man asked Lord Buddha, "How can I see the Truth." He received the reply, "Truth is reflected in the heart, so see it there." The man tried but failed and came back to Buddha and explained his difficulty. Buddha understood the problem and asked the man to walk with him. It was a night and there was a full moon in the sky without clouds. They both walked away from the village towards a big pond of water. As they approached the pond Buddha picked up some pebbles and started throwing these in the pond and a lot of waves and ripples were formed on the surface of the water. Buddha asked the man, "Can you see the reflection of the moon in the water." The man replied, "I can only see some fractured images of a flickering, moving object, the shape and form is not visible, is that what a moon looks like?" "No, the moon is a perfect round shining and static object," replied Buddha. "What shall I do to let you see the reflection of the moon," asked Buddha. "Lord, if you stop throwing the pebbles, there would be calm on the surface and the reflection of the moon would become visible," replied the man. Buddha stopped throwing the pebbles and after some time a magnificent reflection of the moon was formed on the surface of the pond; then Buddha spoke, "That is how you shall see the Truth in your heart." The man understood and asked, "What are these pebbles?" "These are your desires, a heart without the disturbance of desires is like a pond of water without ripples and it is only then that the heart can reflect the Truth," replied Buddha