

Halqa Meeting of October 18, 2015

Abdul Hayy: In Sufism, we turn to God with supplication and need. Our earthly soul observes its own weakness and dependence on God's grace. This is how we begin zikr and prayer. After a time of this, however, we should also let go of such supplication because it will become a barrier to our completely transcending self-regard. Rumi explains this in the story of the harper (Masnawi, Book I, 2200). In that tale, God sends the Caliph Omar to guide a wretched harper who has become too involved with his own feelings:

Then Omar told him, "Your crying
Is also a sign of your self-awareness.
The way of effaced souls is another way
since self-awareness is another sin.
Self-awareness is from recalling the past;
Your thoughts of past and future veil God.
Set fire to them both; How long will you
be clogged by these two knots like the reed?
While knotted the reed won't become intimate;
it won't be the companion of That lip and melody."

Elsewhere, Rumi writes:

We are like the reed, and the melody in us is from You.

In other words, the attuned human being becomes a showplace of the Divine Qualities. This brings us back to our study of 'mutual seeing' which is the shared experience of the Divine Names—shared between the Lord [the particular aspect of Divinity] and His servant. This experience has been compared to a mirror image—an image essentially other than the Viewer and the mirror but appearing between them without duality. The comparison informs the aspirant about the nature of mystical experience. This is done by withdrawing one's attention from the senses and the usual personal fixations. The aspirant is made ready for God's Self-manifestation, called *tajalli* in Arabic, which effaces him or her through its stunning power and beauty.

The Sufis point to the legitimacy of such a personal experience of God in the Qur'an's account of God's rendezvous with Moses:

And Moses came to Our meeting, and his Lord spoke to him. Moses said, “My Lord, grant me a vision of You.” His Lord replied, “You cannot see me, but look at the mountain. If it remains standing [when I show Myself to it] then you will be able to see Me.” His Lord then appeared in glory to the mountain which became dust, and Moses fell unconscious. When he came to, Moses said, “Glory be to You, my Lord—I turn to You! I am foremost among those of realized faith.”