

## Halqa Meeting of December 13, 2015

Abdul Hayy: Jim Morris visits and we share our views on life's changes. I present some related poetry by Mahmud Shabistari and commentary by Lahiji:

**At times my heart is rapturous as Her drunken eyes,  
at times moved to agitation like Her wavy hair.**

Lahiji writes:

Because of its changes of state, the heart is sometimes like the Beloved's drunken eyes. From the ecstatic integration of oneness, and presence [with God], and witnessing [God's grandeur], it then becomes hung-over in the 'ruined' states of the world of fragmentation and multiplicity. It is sometimes like Her disheveled hair—restless, agitated, and distressed in the world, because of these contradictory states that make for a disheveled heart. Since the contradictory nature of states necessitates unhappy states giving way to happy ones, [and vice-versa] Shabistari writes:

**At times, my heart is luminous as Her moonlike Face,  
Sometimes it darkens to the blackness of Her curls.**

Lahiji:

The heart, because of its changing states, is sometimes like the moonlike Face of the Beloved, bright and shining. At times, because of the darkness of alienation and isolation, it is dark and turbid like the black tresses. It doesn't remain more than two moments in one state. Because there are different kinds of contradictory states, Shabistari writes:

**My heart is a holy mosque then a synagogue;  
Sometimes it's a hell and then paradise.**

Lahiji:

The heart, with its ever-changing states is every moment in a new articulation, despite having attained to the station of obedience, worship, and faith. It is sometimes overwhelmed by spiritual intimations, and this is the Muhammadan level (pbuh), which is why Shabistari associates this with the 'mosque'. Sometimes the heart shifts to the level dominated by the apparent forms of things, which is the 'station of Moses', upon him peace. The poet associates this level with the 'synagogue' for that reason. Sometimes because of the effects and characteristics of multiplicity and selfish qualities, the heart becomes a hell. It is held in the grips of the viper of lust, the mouse of greed, the scorpion of stinginess, the dragon of fame, and hell-guardians of the lower self's faculties. At other times, it is overwhelmed by spirituality and the angelic qualities. It

becomes the paradise of spirit, fragrant herbs, celestial beauties and lads, gardens and angelic guardians. Since at the highest level of spiritual journeying and perfection, there is nothing kept from the Completed Human's heart, Shabistari writes:

**At times my heart soars above the seven heavens  
then it falls to beneath this heap of dirt.**

Lahiji:

The human heart, having gained comprehensiveness, sometimes frees itself to transcend the blameworthy ethics and characteristics. Advancing on the straight path with the help of a perfect guide, the person attains to the praiseworthy Muhammadan station, that greatest and highest level. At other times, dominated by selfishness and the lower nature while following Satan, he or she becomes dejected and inverted. Dominated by alienation and separation, the person is lacking in the truly human qualities. Since the the changing states of the heart are the source of *talween*, changeability, Shabistari writes:

**After a time of renunciation and humble devotion,  
it is time for wine, the candle, and the Witness.**

Lahiji:

Because the heart travels both the rising and descending journeys through the various spiritual levels, this couplet may be taken to refer to them both. In the descending journey, the person first becomes pious and endowed with qualities of renunciation and humble devotion. Then, being dominated by the desires of the self and the lower nature, he abandons piety and devotion to seek out [this world's] wine, candle, and witness of form. From this elevation the person descends to the lowest level and this is all due to the changing states. On the upward journey however, things are such that the traveler on the path of God first engages in asceticism through obedience and worship in order to become qualified by renunciation and humble devotion. After meeting the conditions of spiritual journeying—meaning after passing through the levels and stations of the seekers' journey—the person seeks the spiritual wine, candle, and Witness. He then experiences the various levels of God's manifestation and the light of gnosis. He witnesses his ultimate desire, the Beloved's presence. These too are inherent in the contradictory and changing states of the heart. The seeker progresses incrementally from state to higher state, and moves from the outer to the inner, and from the form to the spiritual meaning, never bound by any one of the levels of perfection, and not content to remain in any of them.