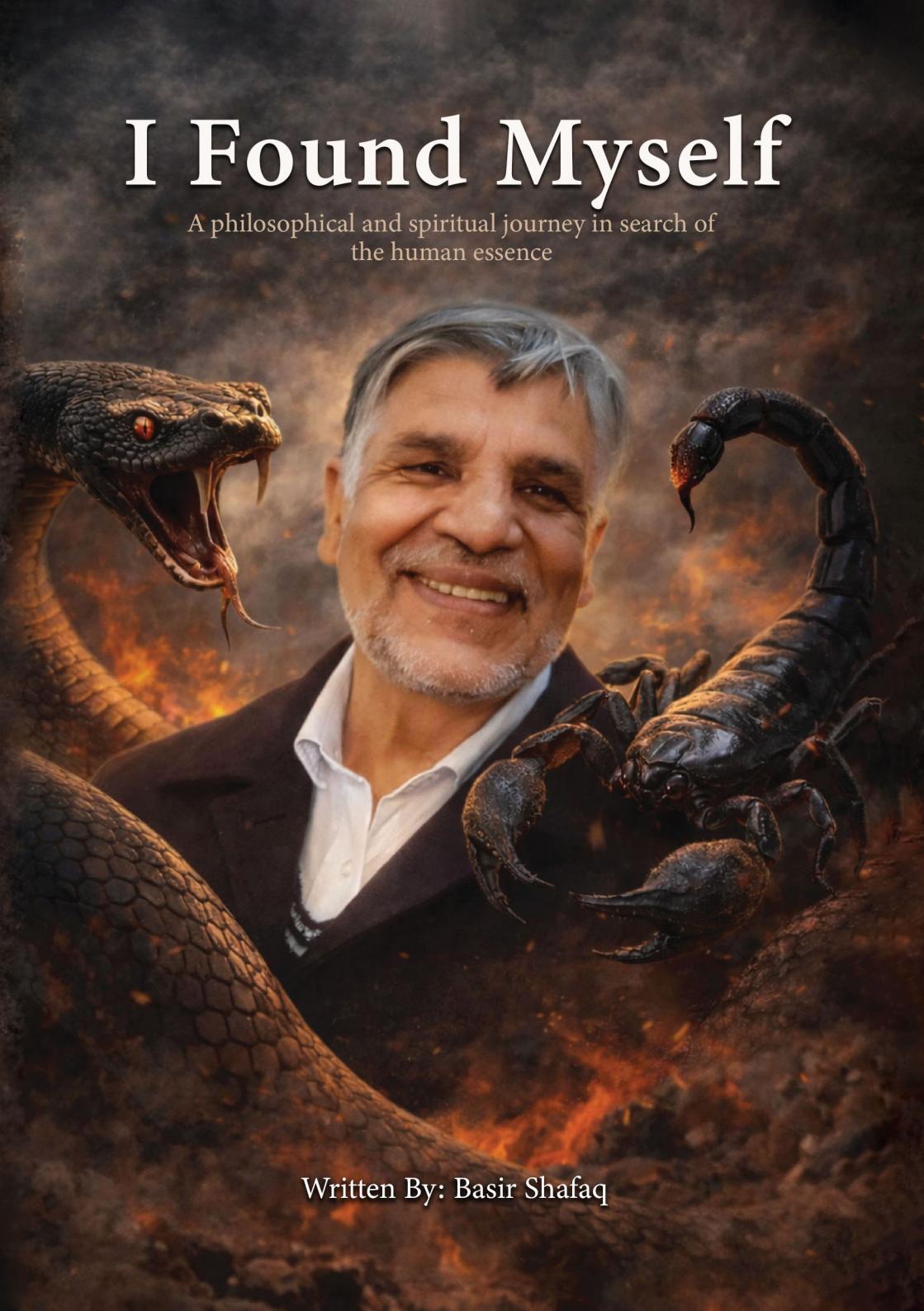


I Found Myself

A philosophical and spiritual journey in search of
the human essence



Written By: Basir Shafaq

I found myself

Novel

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By Basir Shafaq
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Foreword to the book “I Found Myself”

‘I Found Myself’ is not just the title of a book; it is an expression of an inner, profound, and fearless journey toward the discovery of the true self. This work is the result of a sincere and persistent effort to confront the hidden layers of existence, from the unconscious to lucid awareness, and an attempt to remove the masks that life, society, and fears have placed upon the human face.

At the heart of this writing, one hears the echo of self-dialogue, psychological reflections, and the profound influence of philosophical thoughts; not to complicate the truth, but to arrive at its pure simplicity (self-knowledge).

I Found Myself “is like a lamp on the dark but hopeful path of self-inquiry; a book for those who still dare to ask.”

Who am I, really?

Een woord aan het begin van het boek *Ik vond mezelf*”

“Ik vond mezelf” is niet alleen de titel van een boek; het verwoordt een innerlijke, diepe en onverschrokken reis naar de ontdekking van het ware zelf. Dit werk is het resultaat van een oprechte en volhardende poging om de verborgen lagen van het bestaan onder ogen te zien – van het onbewuste tot het heldere bewustzijn – en om de maskers af te leggen die het leven, de maatschappij en de angsten op het gezicht van de mens hebben gelegd.

In de kern van deze tekst weerklinken de echo’s van de dialoog met het eigen ik, psychologische overpeinzingen en de diepe invloed van filosofische gedachten; niet om de waarheid ingewikkeld te maken, maar om de pure eenvoud ervan te bereiken (zelfkennis).

“Ik vond mezelf” is als een licht op het donkere maar hoopvolle pad van zelfonderzoek; een boek voor degenen die nog steeds de moed hebben om te vragen: Wie ben ik werkelijk?”

Praise for the book “I Found Myself”

Written by Basir Shafaq

In an age when most pens seek to narrate the external, Basir Shafaq has dared to look inward. The book I Found Myself

“I Found Myself” is the result of a sincere journey into the depths of the human existence; a journey in which the author is not seeking to hide, but rather to reveal the truth of the inner self.

In this work, the author, with an intimate language and a profound gaze, unveils the contradictions of the human spirit; from carnal desires and rational doubts to moments of awakening and tranquility. He subjects himself to self-judgment and accepts that “finding oneself” is not possible through denial, but through the acceptance of one’s entire being.

His brief journey to Konya and his presence at the tomb of Rumi marks a turning point in this quest; a place where he realizes that truth is not found in visiting the graves of others, but in the awakening of one’s own soul. In that moment, he arrives at his own great discovery:

“I am within myself, not outside of myself.”

“I Found Myself” is a book for those who have transcended the surface of life and wish to experience their true selves in depth. Its prose oscillates between philosophy and emotion, and every sentence bears the trace of a spiritual journey.

This work is not only an account of the author’s personal journey, but also a mirror in which the reader can find their own reflection. Honesty pulses within its words, and through its suffering, a gentle light shines upon the mind and soul.

“I Found Myself” book It is a reminder of the truth that every human being, sooner or later, is compelled to meet themselves—and that encounter is the greatest revelation of their life.

Praising the author’s thought and honesty,

Hail to the pen that journeyed into its own depths and drew forth light.

Atefah Noor,

University Professor

Greetings and best wishes for success to my esteemed teacher

First of all, I congratulate you on your valuable new book, “I Found Myself.” And let me begin with this poem by Mr. Laiq Sher Ali, who said:

Āshegh shode-i ey del, gham-hāt mobārak bād

(You have fallen in love, O heart — may your sorrows be blessed)

Az dard-e nehān sūzi, az nāleh jahān-sūzi

(From a hidden pain you burn, from a lament that sets the world ablaze)

Gah khande koni chon gol, gah hamcho khazān sūzi

(At times you laugh like a flower, at times you burn like autumn’s fire)

Peydā shode-i ey del, ahyāt mobārak bād

(You have come into being, O heart — may your very life be blessed)

Through you and your book, I took a journey through the alleys and backstreets of my own childhood. Your battles with life’s questions are truly inspiring. It was strange that alongside each of your memories, a world within me came alive. A world with similar experiences, pain, and wounds. Alongside you, I too took a profound journey into the depths of the human soul. And for that, I am grateful to you. Now I can say that I have gained a better understanding of the wounds and pain hidden within me.

In my opinion, your book is not just the story of your life and travels. You are merely the central subject or primary character of this narrative. The book is the voice of a generation that has tried—and continues to try—to break new ground and hurl itself from the grip of superstition into a new era and open skies.

This book is a summary of a 50-year journey by an author who has been in treatment for chronic, persistent pain. It describes a difficult

and arduous path that the author has traveled on their own frail feet. Delicate, in that this journey unfolds step by step across a desolate expanse where there is no aid, no companion, and as far as the eye can see, countless obstacles lie in wait.

Yet the author has traversed it solely for the love of finding “being human” and “living as a human.” Along this path, the author has sought to use a skeptical and scientific perspective to study the obstacles in their journey, thereby achieving much deeper and broader insights. These insights are what the author has shared.

This is the story of an individual who cultivated himself and achieved self-discovery. In doing so, he came to know the world and gained a higher understanding of the social and educational laws that surrounded him. What guided him on this path were “The Art of Living Freely” and “The Courage to Question.” At a point in his journey, the author sees himself as the sole traveler on this path and asks himself how it is that we live in so much contradiction without asking any questions. Why do I live in an age where the voice of reason is lost in the swamp of superstition? This book is a good example of the necessity of having the art of protest and the courage to question. For in this journey, all religious dogmas and certain social conventions have been critiqued and questioned.

The author rightly raises these questions: why is hatred spread in the name of a loving God? Why, in God’s name, is the earth filled with blood and hearts full of bitterness? Why must my faith be defined by hating others? And thousands of other questions. Regarding the practical application of this perspective, the author explains how, in confronting anything that was not in harmony with reason and wisdom and by asking forbidden questions, he took a step toward his “lost self.” And even higher than that: “to a higher knowledge of God, of faith, and of loving.”

This petitionary and, indeed, compassionate book directs the consciences and intellects of its readers to the power of the merchants of religion and their destructive, obstructive role. It clearly explains ho

w, from within these imposed beliefs, one must cultivate the spark of light and liberation in the heart. The book is a plea that, above all, highlights the necessity of challenging the ideology of the merchants of religion and re-examining the superstitious pillars and foundations. It also calls for redefining every word and tradition to give meaning to our habits—a process the author himself has initiated. For in a society where living and thinking freely are considered such a heinous sin, one must have a fire temple of love for human nature in their chest to arrive at a human belief and burn superstition to ashes. And in this way, one finds oneself and allows the God-given gem to grow, flourish, and be displayed.

A book that is a full-length mirror of an educational and social system in which, first and foremost, the “spirit of freedom,” “living freely,” and “loving” are sacrificed. A system in which children are “buried alive.” They are burdened with countless wounds from insults, humiliation, fear, and silence, and in this way, the future is entrusted to them.

The book is an honest and meticulous investigation of a destructive educational system that, above all, has co-opted religion and tradition and instills fear in the human psyche. The book, while posing logical questions and critiquing religious and social superstitions, successfully explores their destructive effects. In every passage, it confronts the reader with honest questions that require the kind of courage the author possesses.

This work is not the telling of an ordinary story or journey. It is the expression of the pains hidden in the psyche of the Eastern person. It is the expression of a tear that has been shed. It is the expression of pains that have found voice. In this book, words and letters are not written; rather, they have been seething for many long years, then flowing and running free.

For me, as someone who grew up in a different land but with a similar culture, this book expresses a shared pain. In one part of the book, the author describes his journey this way: “If a river wants to reach the sea, it must pass through the small and large stones in its path.

It must grind them down and flow over them. not that the should remain behind them or flee from them.” Later, the author describes his journey as follows: “The more I passed through the stones of my life, the clearer I became. The more I was purified, the closer I got to my true self, to that same spring that lay hidden within me.” Meeting and visiting Rumi has been the end of this long journey. For it is there that the author sees himself free from all his own writings and, despite all his attachments to the past and his fear of leaving behind fifty years of habits, finds himself free and liberated. Writing these confessions and publishing them, of course, requires courage. But as the author says, remaining silent is a heavier price to pay.

In closing, with another thank you, let me say: You’ve been found, oh heart; congratulations on your revival. Your words come from the heart and resonate there. I wish you success. And thank you for reading this.

Hassan Kamali

Professor, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

Biography of Abdul Basir Shafaq

I was born in 1953 in a strange, empty house and under difficult circumstances. Until the age of twenty, I followed those who considered themselves saviors of humanity, although they seemed to be empty on the inside. I completed my primary education at a school near my home, and after that, during periods of higher education and work from the ages of 20 to 40, I was searching for the meaning of life and my purpose. During this period, I was drawn to various ideas and philosophies. In particular, I believed that religion was inherently flawless, yet I joined the ranks of those who cried out to serve their country. During this time, I also wrote things that were published in local magazines.

During this time, I was arrested and imprisoned on charges of membership in the Islamic Party. In Pol-e-Charkhi prison, which I call my university, I continued my education and, by reading the works of the great figures of history and philosophy, gained a deeper understanding of humanity. Along this path, I became better acquainted with the ideas of literature and writing.

Until the age of 65, alongside my daily life struggles, I continued my education and cultural and literary activities. Ultimately, due to insecurity, a lack of like-minded people, and hunger, I was forced to leave my homeland and immigrate to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, at my age, I obtained a Dutch language diploma. I also decided to pursue literature and art, and began writing various books and works. To date, I have published four poetry collections titled Shafaq Dar Ghorub (Sunset Glow), Khat-e Ghesmat (Fate Line), Faryad-e Bi Seda (The Silent Scream), and Az Posht-e Ayeneh (From Behind the Mirror), as well as fourteen novels and stories.

Among these works are: Parhizgaran-e Qatel (The Pious Murderers), Soodagaran-e Qarn (Merchants of the Century), Pakizeh, Daughter of the Tree, Farzand-e Aftab (Child of the Sun), Dar Jostojoy-e Khoda (In

Search of God), Zendeh be Gooran (Buried Alive), Shabhaye Divaneh Khaneh (Nights of the Madhouse), Lakehaye Khoon va Tavallod-e Dobareh (Bloodstains and Rebirth), Khoda Parastan-e Bi Khoda (Godless Devotees), Dokhtari az Posht-e Panjereh (The Girl Behind the Window), Estebdad-e Mazhabi (Religious Tyranny), Shahr-e Mordeha (City of the Dead), Mordeha Zendeh Mishavand (The Dead Come Alive), Sag Dar Del-e Eshgh (The Dog in the Heart of Love), Sareq-e Yek Nan Edam Shod (A Thief of One Bread Was Executed), and Khab-e Azhdaha dar Bostar-e Parvaneh (Dragon's Dream in the Butterfly's Bed)

It is worth noting that the book “In Search of God” has also been translated and published in English; the books “A Girl from Behind the Window” and “Alive to the Graves” have been translated into Dutch.



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I found myself

Seventy years of my precious life had passed before I came to believe that I had found myself.

Not the self that everyone has on their identity card, whose name and lineage they inherited from their father,

But I found that lost “I” which, for years, had been slowly eroded in my father’s books, in the sermons of the mosque imam, in my mother’s compassion, and in the advice of the village elders.

From the age of five or six, when I was just beginning to speak, instead of playing with dirt and mud, I was introduced to words whose meaning was still childlike to me: “Taharat,” “wajib,” “haram,” “sin,” “paradise,” “hell”... Everyone painted a picture of truth for me; one with the pen of faith, another with the ink of fear, another with the color of blind obedience.

Amidst the rituals of religion, between the path and the law, between Muslim and Hindu, between the customs of ablution and the proper way to learn the method of defecation, I—the child of those years—lost myself. It was as if, in the winding alleys of judgments, advice, and expectations, I had no way to find my way inside myself. I listened to every sound, I carried out every command. I was afraid that instead of “well-behaved child,” I would be labeled a “heretic,” a “rebel,” or a more painful word – “atheist.”

Sometimes I was allowed to stand in the prayer line; other times, I wasn’t. Sometimes I was praised, sometimes I was rejected. My life was shaped by the contradictions of “should” and “shouldn’t,” between “reward” and “sin,” between “it is better” and “it is forbidden.” But in all that suffering and confusion, something in me was still alive: a search, an unquenchable flame to find my own truth.

And this search took fifty years

Fifty years of questions, silence, doubt, tears, and experience.



Until finally, one day on the verge of my fiftieth birthday, in a solitude that might have seemed very ordinary from the outside, I looked into the mirror and saw the person I had been searching for for years; a human being free from labels, beliefs, extremities, and impositions. A human being who is neither a sinner nor a saint; neither a rebel nor a follower, but simply themselves. With all their weaknesses, pains, knowledge, and ignorance.

Yes, I was fifty when I found myself. In truth, seventy years had passed in my life, but it had taken fifty years for me to know myself to this extent. Yet I strove to know my true self.

And this is just the beginning of a path that I now walk on my own feet, and not those of others...

Chapter One: Birth in the Cradle of Poverty and Pain

Before I could find myself, I had to say where and how I got lost.

I was born not into an embrace of comfort and luxury, but into the tired, calloused hands that were trembling from years of poverty, hunger, and deprivation.

My father was a bold man, with a kind heart and a weary soul. At that time, he was sixty years old; but fate had ordained that his third wife—my mother—was only sixteen. Perhaps this vast age difference speaks for itself; it speaks of a culture that takes away the agency of young girls and buries the right to decide in the clutches of need and inequality.

My father, though a strong and wise man in the eyes of the public, lacked both the physical strength to stand shoulder to shoulder with my young mother and the financial means to provide for the simple, natural desires of a teenage girl. My mother had begun her youth with naive dreams that never had the chance to blossom. Fate had thrown her from aspiration to suffering, and we—her children—were neither to blame nor aware; we were merely witnesses.

My parents' relationship, on the surface, was not one from which to

learn warmth and intimacy. The silences, the cold stares, the strange distance between two generations under the same roof—all of it cast a shadow over my psyche and that of my siblings. We grew up in an environment where affection was always hidden behind walls of shame, sorrow, and poverty. Fortunately, in that time and place, no woman knew she had a right to freedom; otherwise, they would all have had a heart attack.

Every day, we would go to school or wander the streets with empty stomachs, worn-out clothes, and a faint hope. The rumbling of our stomachs, the longing for a fresh piece of bread, and the desire for a new pair of shoes had become a part of our lives. We didn't have a childhood; we just survived.

This poverty, this helplessness, this feeling of weakness and vulnerability turned us into fearful, withdrawn, and quiet children. Instead of shouting, we withdrew into ourselves; instead of running, we sat still; instead of asking, we remained silent. It was as if we learned from the very beginning that we had no voice; not at home, not in the alleyways, not at school, and not in this world full of inequality.

And so, the first steps of my life were not laid on colorful carpets, but on the bitter soil of reality. I was fifty years old when I found myself; but in the beginning, I was only a silent observer, in a world that wanted me less than it wanted me to be invisible....

Chapter Two: In the Shadow of School, Mosque, and Sacred Fears

I was born in a small, quiet village in Logar province; into a poor but honorable family. My father, Adam, was a man who, though he had little of this world's wealth, his heart was overflowing with integrity. My mother, Eve, was a sixteen-year-old girl whose life began not with a dream, but with suffering; and I was the child born from the very fabric of that suffering.

From the very beginning of my childhood, being a child held no



meaning for me. Play, laughter, dolls, and running through the alleys were luxuries and fantasies for us. What I learned instead was standing in prayer line, sitting in the cold classroom of the madrasa, and memorizing verses whose meanings I didn't understand—but I knew all too well that if I recited them incorrectly, the sound of the teacher's cane and the heavy gaze of the Mullah would be waiting for me.

School was the first place I understood that being poor wasn't just about an empty plate. Poverty was written on my tattered clothes; on my cracked shoes, on my frozen hands in the merciless winters. My childhood was spent with the voice of a hurried and impatient teacher who humiliated more than he taught. He didn't know that when a student comes to school without bread, nothing from his mind sticks in his memory.

But the school was only one face of education. Its other face was the mosque. Our village mosque, though called the house of God, was more like a small court where a child was put on trial for every minor misstep. Molavi Sahib, a man with a white beard and a piercing gaze, taught us every day that God is merciful; but if we were to make a mistake, His hell awaited us with an eternal fire.

This duality created a storm in my childish mind: a God who is said to be forgiving, yet simultaneously consigns you to eternal fire for the slightest slip? How can parents who themselves are in need be comforting? A world where goodness equated to fear and blind obedience had no room for understanding or growth.

We were not only hungry for bread, but also for affection, security, and genuine belief. What we were taught was more about judgment than nurturing. No one asked what this tired child, this little boy with cold hands and eyes full of fear, had in his heart. Did he also have the right to think differently? Could he ask without being accused? No.

And so I grew up with fear. I walked with shame, with silence, with caution. Among the Arabic words whose meanings I didn't know,

in the rituals of ablution performed with obsessive precision, in the prayers that were more a dictation of fear than prayers, I lost myself more and more each day. The only thing that remained alive in me was that silent desire to search for the truth...

Continued from Chapter Two: In the Shadow of the School, the Mosque, and Holy Fears

Our poverty wasn't just the absence of bread. It smelled of the old clothes we wore. It was the scraping sound of stomachs that stayed silent, but their plea shone from our eyes.

We were not only deprived of worldly possessions, but we were also sometimes denied the right to be present, to be heard, and to simply be human.

In the mornings, when my brother and I left the house, we would put on last year's clothes; clothes that were faded, had shortened sleeves, and torn pockets. We had no shoes; sometimes we would take turns wearing my mother's slippers. Other times, we would walk barefoot across the gravelly fields to get to school or the mosque.

And what greater pain is there than arriving at the mosque and hearing a voice of reproach instead of a welcome?

The Mullah would sometimes not let us join the prayer line. He would say

“Your clothes are old and tattered. Your modesty isn't proper. Your hands are dirty. You're not wearing a hat.”

For us, this meant being driven out of a house that was said to be “the house of God”—but apparently, God only accepted clean, well-fed, and well-hatted children.

We poor children had tasted humiliation before we had ever known faith.

Before we understood “Allahu Akbar,” we understood that poverty was a sin that was not forgiven, not only by people, but sometimes by the devout as well.



I will never forget the day one of the mullahs loudly said: "These kids, instead of coming to the mosque, should go to the bathhouse first. They stink!"

I was shaking all over from shame. It felt like a thousand people were staring at me. I wished the ground would open up and swallow me. From that day on, whenever I wanted to go to the mosque, I would take refuge in the dry trees by the path, rub my hands with dirt so they would look less filthy, and wet my clothes with cold well water so I might appear cleaner. But even that wasn't enough. My face screamed poverty, and poverty here was a crime; the crime of innocence that was never forgiven.

And in the midst of it, something in my heart broke. I wondered how the God they said was kind could shut His house to me. If God doesn't want me, then where do I have any refuge left?

I grew up with these questions. With these pains, with this feeling of rejection. From childhood, instead of knowing God with peace, I came to know Him with fear and humiliation.

And so, years later, when I turned fifty and found myself again, I realized that the God in my heart was different from the one I was introduced to in the mosques....

Shadows and Voices

My adolescence was the beginning of my mind's awakening—a time when I no longer just listened, but began to hear. I no longer just repeated; I sometimes questioned. My mind, like a seed in hard, dry soil, sprouted with pain and doubt.

But this awakening was not easy. I entered this phase with a mind full of old shadows; shadows that had stayed with me since childhood, like uninvited voices that whisper in one's ear even when no one is there to repeat them anymore.

In my village, my childhood was spent surrounded by warnings and fears. I was told:

“Don’t get too close to the dead, their shadow will settle on your head.”
And at night, I would pass even a vacant house in terror of an invisible shadow.

They had said:

“Don’t go out at night with your head bare, a jinn will sit on it.”
And if I wanted to get water from the courtyard at night, it was like walking through a minefield, my heart pounding and my eyes scanning for any movement.

Every night in the mosque, the sound of someone falsely warning:
“There will be an earthquake tonight, so strong it will carry our village to the neighbor’s!”

And I would lie awake until midnight, eyes wet, waiting for a tremor that never came, but shook my mind.

These fears weren’t just warnings; they were wounds that were re-opened every night. I grew up amidst these voices; voices that, instead of bringing peace, sent shivers down a child’s spine.

But these very fears, these very doubts, ignited the first sparks of questioning within me.

Why should I fear the shadow of a dead man? Why should I accept a lie with reverence? Why should I be silent when my inner self is screaming?

Perhaps those very nights I lay awake, afraid of an earthquake, were the first nights my mind truly awoke.

In the shadow of fear, in search of light

Sometimes I felt my childhood had passed not on solid ground, but on the edge of a blade. On one hand, my mother’s embrace, the softness of her hands as she baked bread, the smell of fresh flour that settled on her clothes. And on the other, the warnings and shouts that wounded my mind.

They said if you walked under the mulberry trees at night, the jinn would take your legs.



They said if you laugh when someone is dead, the sin will weigh on your shoulders until the Day of Judgment.

They said a jinn took so-and-so because they sneezed twice during prayer.

And I would ask myself: Who has seen these things? Why are they only scaring us? Why, instead of filling a child's mind with sunshine, do they fill it with shadows and stones?

The first time I dared to ask, I asked one of the neighbors:

“Are jinn really seen? Have you seen one?”

And she said, her eyes flashing with anger:

“Rude child! It's talk like this that brings misfortune!”

And that was when I understood that in our village, asking questions was a sin in itself.

But this very prohibition only made me more eager to ask.

Days and nights passed. Sometimes among the trees, when I was alone, I would listen to the sound of the wind and say to myself:

“If it were Jenny, she would have shown herself by now. If the shadow of the dead were truly upon me, I would have gone mad by now.”

And little by little, doubt replaced fear. Doubt was bitter, but it was freedom. Quiet, silent, like a light shining through a small window into a dark room.

My father was a man of faith. My mother, a woman of patience. But I, in the silence of the night, searched for a truth that was neither in the call of the mosque nor in the scary stories of the old women. Rather, it was within myself. In that very fear that had now turned into a question.

Perhaps it was in those moments that the first signs of self-discovery appeared in my mind. I realized that faith without questioning is like a lamp that gives no light. And a human who only imitates will never find themselves.

“Our adolescence was also full of fear, but our fears had a new shape. They no longer said a jinn would sit on your head; they said your future

would be ruined if you weren't a certain way. They said you wouldn't be considered a proper person if you didn't study a certain major, wear a certain outfit, or have a certain phone."

"They scared us with comparisons. With grades, with appearance, with jobs, with silence."

"When I ask myself when I first realized I was different from the rest, I remember the day I dared to say I didn't want to just obey all the time. That day, they called me 'rude.' It was then I understood that 'politeness' meant silence, not understanding."

"I found myself when I confessed for the first time: I don't know. I don't understand. I don't believe it, but I want to understand."

"We are a generation caught between tradition and modernity. We can't accept everything old, nor do we have the freedom to build the new world."

And others don't even have the voice to protest—they're just tired. Silent. Unmotivated.

Not out of laziness, but because they feel like no one is listening to them. No one asks what they really think.

They don't necessarily want to be free; they want to discover the truth for themselves, even if that truth is bitter.

Mosque pillar:

My childhood wasn't just childish; it was more like a cage whose key was in someone else's hands.

In our village, being a child meant obedience, not growth. There, whoever had the longest beard had the most weight in their words—even if what they said wasn't true.

I understood from an early age that going against the opinion of the "Mouspids" was tantamount to sin. And the sinner was tried not in a fair court, but in hotbeds of prejudice.

The day I didn't greet—accidentally, unintentionally, with no ill intent—became my day of judgment.



That pious man, with a scowling face and a voice that echoed through the mosque, said:

“So-and-so’s kid didn’t greet me! What kind of upbringing is this?!”

It was there that the Mullah Imam, without asking, without hearing my side of the story, ordered me to be tied to the mosque’s pillar.

In front of forty people, my hands were tied with rope to the wooden pillar in the middle of the mosque.

Shame, tears, and pain were all mixed together.

Every blow that landed on my body seemed to first fall upon my soul.

People sat and watched. Some looked on with pity, others with approval. But no one said a word.

My father...

He stood there. His gaze was fixed on the ground. He was poor, not just in money, but he was also forbidden the power of speech because he was a stranger.

He was watching, just like the others; his hands weren’t tied, but his tongue was.

And there I was, the lonely child, under the rod of “discipline,” for the first time I said to myself:

If they alone know the truth, why does it hurt so much? If being well-behaved means silence, I don’t want to be well-behaved.

After that day, the mosque’s pillar was more than just a wooden beam. For me, it became a symbol of the oppression hidden behind the turbans

From that moment, my awakening began.

Silent Conversation

It’s night. Everyone is asleep, but my mind is awake.

In the dark corner of my mind, the sound of those blows still echoes... the sound of the ropes that bound me to the pillar, the laughter of a few other children, and the sound of my father’s silence.

I close my eyes. I’m back there again.

In the middle of the mosque, next to that same pillar
But this time, in my imagination, I had become the grown man and my
own father. Today, I stand face to face with that child.

I ask:

“My child... what were you thinking in that moment?”

And she looks with tearful eyes and says softly:

“I thought maybe if I apologized more, maybe if I didn’t cry, they
would forgive me.”

“But no one heard me... everyone just saw.”

Tears well up in my adult eyes. I walk forward. I kneel beside her.

“It wasn’t your fault, sweetie... you were just a child.”

Another voice comes from behind. Soft, tired, familiar.

It’s my father. Just as he stood that day, he stands now.

His head is down, as always

I ask:

“Father, why didn’t you say anything that day? Why didn’t you let them
know I didn’t greet them on purpose? Why did you let them hit me?”

A short silence. Then my father’s voice, choked and broken:

“My son... I was poor. Not just in my pocket, but poor in my voice, too.
I too had grown up with a thousand fears. I thought that if I spoke up,
everything would get worse.”

That day, I was ashamed of you with all my being, but shame is a sound
no one hears.”

I want to scream. To say:

“They had no right... You were a father! You should have stood up,
even with empty hands.”

But I stay silent. Because I understand, my father was a victim too. A
victim of a generation that confused silence with being a man.

A victim of a world where respect for money was more valuable than
humanity.

I look at the child. They say calmly:



“I still haven’t forgotten that pillar...”

And I answer:

“Don’t be afraid, my love... I’m here now. You’re not alone anymore.”

Branches of doubt

In the immature years of my adolescence, when I was still viewing the world not through the window of belief but with questioning eyes, men in cloaks of piety came toward me from both sides. One called himself “Sunni,” the other “Shia.” Each tried to lead me onto the path of his own faith, as if the truth were a missing piece of a puzzle in their camp. They spoke with words, but I listened with my heart; and my heart, without knowing why, viewed both with suspicion. Not out of impudence, but in search of a truth I knew must lie beyond such divisions of faith. I saw God as one, without borders or lines, yet they had turned His religion into the colorful branches of a tree, each branch wanting the other leafless.

In that raw time, perhaps my tongue was silent, but my mind was awake. I blossomed in silence; not in the shadow of one of these branches, but in the roots I found within myself. Roots that called me not to separation, but to unity. Then I knew the path to be traveled was not through names and borders, but passes through the human self. And I, with this same sacred doubt, took the first step toward myself.

In the shadow of duplicity

From the very dawn of childhood, when a child’s mind still sows the seeds of belief and builds a sapling of truth from every word, I would hear words that made the world not one, but two. Men and women. As if this division were not only natural, but sacred; so much so that from the mouths of religious claimants, it descended like a revelation.

Men were praised, as if created for honor, to go out, to speak, to decide. And women? They were called nothing more than a man’s field, a vessel for lust, and silent servants within the four walls of the home. Their place in line was always further back. Their share of holiness, always

less. Even their voice, if it rose, was considered a sin.

And I, a child, with eyes not yet accustomed to deceit, would look at this unfair narrative. But what did I know, other than to believe? And what could I do, other than repeat what I heard?

Proudly and from the bottom of my heart, myself. The “loss of self” is one of the deepest human experiences, an experience more like a silent death; a death that silently devours not the body, but the human spirit. Based on human experiences and my understanding of “self-discovery,” I am writing this text for you in an introspective and philosophical style:

The Loss of Self

The self is always with us, but how often we are not with ourselves.

Sometimes, amidst the voices, amidst the commands, and in the midst of the dos and don’ts that have been heaped upon us since childhood, we lose our own self. We are shaped before we even get to know ourselves. They tell us how to think, how to laugh, even how to love. And we, in this whirlpool of blind upbringing, gradually become estranged from ourselves; to the point that if one day we were to stare into our own eyes in the mirror, we wouldn’t recognize ourselves.

To lose yourself is to live with a face that is no longer your own. A smile that is not yours. A faith that has been imposed on you, not born of your own understanding and experience. A love that has been defined for you, not one that was born within you.

In this lostness, a person weeps silently; not with tears, but with their life. They spend their life on a mask that is not their own.

But getting lost is not the end of the road

Sometimes, this very loss is the beginning. The beginning of a painful struggle to return. To dig through the layers of denial and fear. To find a voice that was whispering within you all along, but no one let you hear it.

And when you open your heart to listen, you will hear it. A quiet but



living voice. Then you understand: the self is never destroyed; it is only lost, behind masks, behind stolen beliefs, behind what others have lived for in your place.

And then, the journey of return begins...

A journey whose end is the finding of self.

In the Grip of Superstition

In those days, when I was still a child, my world was full of narratives built not on reason but on fear and suggestion. In my teenage years, my mind still had no room for doubt. I believed everything I heard, because no one had taught me to reason.

It was during those years that one of the funniest, and at the same time saddest, entries in my mental scrapbook was etched;

I heard that a woman, who had apparently been insolent to her mother-in-law, had now been turned into a “donkey.” They said they would bring her to the markets of Kabul the next day for the public to see.

With neither knowledge nor logic, I had no choice but to believe. I was so naive that I pictured that woman, now turned “donkey,” in my mind. I didn’t laugh, I didn’t ask questions; I just feared. Because from childhood, we were raised to mistake fear for respect and superstition for faith.

Years passed. Life’s path introduced me to awareness. Step by step, I found myself; and it was on that path that I looked back in astonishment and realized what a closed and toxic environment I had grown up in. Superstitions devoured the uninformed minds, and anything that smacked of ignorance was fed to us with the glitter of religious and traditional beliefs.

That woman had never turned into a “donkey.” But the society that had created such a story was still stripping many women of their humanity. If a woman’s voice was raised in protest, they would invent a superstition against her. That’s when I understood

I didn’t just fight superstitions; I confronted a generation of inherited

fears and silences.

And now, I am no longer that gullible child. I no longer accept every story, even if everyone in the street swears it's true.

I found myself, and with that, I have the right to ask, to doubt, and to know. I want to know everything, to separate good from bad, and to reject superstitions.

Seeds of the Unconscious

Before I reached puberty, before I knew myself or understood the meaning of "I," my mind was quietly filled with beliefs that were not of light, but of the darkness of society and those around me. Beliefs rooted in superstition; in jealousy, in resentment, in hatred, and in suspicion of others.

The nature of my childish mind was like fertile farmland, ready to accept any seed; whether good or bad. My mind, like pristine and defenseless soil, was ready to accept whatever was fed to it. And what I received from those around me were mostly corrupt seeds passed down from one generation to the next; rotten seeds of prejudice, low self-esteem, and baseless judgments.

These seeds slowly took root in my subconscious. Without knowing why, I thought, judged, and lived the way others wanted. It took years for me to realize the depth of this contamination.

Now that I've reached fifty, I have finally found myself. It's as if an eye has opened within me, and I am watching my true self. This book is a narrative of that very inner journey; of the difficult path I traveled to pull out my pure truth from the layers of my polluted mind.

A Wounded Psyche, a Living Psyche

Psychologists consider a child's mind a blank slate; a soft, unwritten surface upon which every word, every glance, and every experience is imprinted. But in lands where pain, poverty, war, and ignorance run rampant, this slate is filled with stains of fear, shame, humiliation, and superstition before it has a chance to bear the imprint of love and



awareness.

In such environments, what a child learns is not the result of a conscious choice, but a reaction to the wounds inflicted upon them by the family, school, mosque, and even the streets and marketplace. His mind, before being nourished with reason, is filled with unhealthy beliefs. This is what psychologists call “trauma,” or a psychological wound; a wound that is not seen, but casts a shadow over a person’s future behavior, personality, decisions, and relationships.

Finding one’s true self in such a situation is like finding a stream of water in the middle of a desert. This is especially true in traditional societies like Afghanistan, where individuality is often sacrificed for the collective, and silence, obedience, and self-denial are considered signs of nobility and decorum.

A psychologist says, “Any human being, without having committed any sin, can become a victim of their environment.” And he adds, “The path to liberation is a return to the self; not the self that others have built, but the self hidden behind the walls of fear and imposition.”

But this return is not simple. It can take decades for a person to dare to look, not outward, but inward. To confront their wounded self and accept that many of their beliefs were not clothes that fit them, but were imposed on them.

For me, it took fifty years for this realization to become clear: that I was not who others had made me. And this awareness, though it came late, was a light that could heal even the oldest wounds.

A voice that remained silent

In my school years, my mind was sharp, intelligent, and curious. I remember knowing the answers to my teacher’s questions many times the moment they were asked; not only did I know them, but I was also ready to articulate the answers with explanation and enthusiasm.

But something inside me wouldn’t let me open my mouth. My throat would tighten, as if an invisible rope was wrapping around my voice.

A fear had taken root in me; a fear of making a mistake, of being humiliated, of being judged.

This fear didn't fall from the sky. I had inherited it from those around me. From the elders who were always warning: "Don't talk too much," "Don't bring shame on us," "A child should be humble," "Silence is a sign of wisdom!" This is how my voice was strangled in the cradle before it even had a chance to be heard.

In class, my face would flush, my heart would pound, and I would stare at my desk, avoiding the teacher's gaze; not from not knowing, but from knowing and not saying. A silent prison had been built in my mind, and I was its inmate, trapped within walls of baseless shame and instilled fears.

It took years for me to realize this wasn't just a simple fear. It was the result of years of psychological and cultural suppression. A fear that had nested in my subconscious since childhood, forcing me into silence. And sadly, this silence didn't just stay in the classroom; it permeated my entire life. In my relationships, in my decisions, in my choices... Many times, I didn't hear my own voice because I didn't trust it.

Now, looking back, I know my voice was more than just a sound; it was the sign of a being trying to find itself, but lost in the shadow of its fears.

This book is an attempt to reclaim that voice. To restore the voice of a child who was wise, but remained silent.

Tears that came in place of an answer

It was a morning like any other, and I was sitting in class; calm, quiet, with a mind full of what I had learned. I had gone over the previous session's lesson in my mind many times. Every point, every sentence, was like a seed planted in my mind, and I was ready to reap them, to give a fitting answer, to be seen.

The professor entered the classroom with a serious look. It was time for questions and answers. He called on students one by one. Some



answered, some remained silent. And then, it was my turn. Suddenly, my inner world collapsed. All my knowledge seemed to evaporate. I could hear the teacher's voice, but my mouth was sealed. My heart was pounding, my face was hot, and my hands were trembling. The words were tangled in my throat, and my mind was experiencing a merciless blankness.

The teacher repeated:

"Son, you tell them!"

But I couldn't. It was as if my tongue had been paralyzed. My tongue was tied, my eyes filled with tears, and my body drenched in a fear I couldn't even understand where it came from. My legs went limp. I heard the suppressed laughter of some of my classmates, laughs that stung my skin like blades.

The teacher grew concerned and turned to one of the students, saying: "Go get some water!"

When the water arrived, it mingled with my tears. I drank it, but it neither washed away my fear nor broke my silence. I sat, broken and silent, amidst stares that couldn't comprehend what was happening inside me.

No one asked why. No one knew that I knew the lesson. That I had the answer memorized, but something deeper than ignorance kept my mouth shut: fear.

A fear that, years later, I realized wasn't my own, but was from the images that had been planted in my mind since childhood: the image of "you must not make a mistake," "you must not speak in public," "you are the family's reputation."

I didn't say the lesson that day, but I learned one: that for many of us, the voice of knowing is imprisoned in the cage of fear.

Clothes that screamed

My silence wasn't just from the fear of the teacher's sudden questions. My voice wasn't just afraid of words, but of something deeper and

more bitter: the clothes I was wearing.

The pants I wore were neither my choice nor my family's. A truck driver who was a friend of my father's had donated them with good intentions. But intentions, no matter how good, don't always align with human dignity, especially for a child who is just beginning to discover themselves.

Those pants had large, old stains from furniture polish; stains that, like a scarlet letter, were etched into my mind. Sometimes I felt those stains were speaking, screaming, revealing the secret of a poverty I was trying with all my might to hide. In my mind, those stains were like the words "Ana al-Haqq" on Mansur al-Hallaj's garment; but not with pride, but with shame. It was as if they were disgracing my body.

Every time the teacher looked me in the eye, I thought he was looking at the stains. Every time a classmate laughed, my heart would pound, afraid they had noticed. My hand would instinctively go to my knee to cover the stain, but the shame couldn't be hidden.

My clothes weren't just old fabric on my body; they had become a garment for my soul. A tattered covering of worthlessness, shame, and silence. And it was then I understood that a person's voice isn't just choked in the throat; sometimes, shame seeps through the folds of your pants and settles in your heart.

Years later, I learned that the clothes were not just a sign of poverty; they were a symbol of a silent resistance. A symbol of a child who wore them to school, sat in class, learned, and in their heart, a war much bigger than what those around them saw was raging.

Today, when I look back, I honor that child. Not for staying silent, but for enduring. And finally, the day came—slowly, quietly—when her voice emerged from the darkness. A voice that had been silenced found its way.

When the pen became a scream

Perhaps no one would believe it, but that silenced voice, that child who



once sat in silence in the classroom and trembled at a simple question, was never truly silent. No, she decided to find another way to scream; a silent scream, but more piercing than any roar.

I took up the pen, not as a tool for writing, but as a mirror that reflected me back to myself. The first time I wrote, the words were shaky, just as my voice had been that day. But little by little, the words grew strong. The pen, that child who had once remained silent, now spoke with words; with courage, with honesty, with pain.

And the day came when my book was published... one, then a second, then a third. Until it reached the fourteenth. I no longer just spoke up; I cast my voice into the hearts of tens, hundreds, maybe thousands of people. I no longer needed to be present in a classroom to be seen; my writing echoed in the silent classrooms of others.

People came to know me, but I had known myself long before. The writer in me was that same child in stained clothes. The aware me was that mute child who, for fear of judgment, never spoke a word. But now, I write with pride: I am. And I know.

What remains of my childhood is not just the memory of pain; it is a testament to victory. My voice, though it bloomed late, instead of fading away, found life in thousands of pages of books.

Behind Closed Doors

The house I grew up in was neither a palace nor a ruin; yet its walls always hid something. In that house, laughter was scarce, and reproach was more common. Words like "Stop it," "What do you know?," and "You're just a kid, be quiet!" have stuck in my ears, like bells that won't be silenced.

I was a child, but my heart was older than my years. In my heart, questions swirled that I didn't dare to ask. About my father, my mother, God, the world. Why were we poor? Why did we always have to be ashamed? Why should children be embarrassed by their clothes? Why couldn't I say what was in my heart?

At night, under the tattered blanket, I would talk to myself. To the ceiling, to the shadows, to the self that was slowly taking shape inside me. I longed for someone to say: “Be who you are, and that’s enough.” But no one ever said it. So I learned to speak in silence; with my eyes, with secret writings in the corner of my notebook, with daydreams that no one knew about.

At home, the conversations were mostly about making a living, about putting food on the table, about who was sick, who had died, who was in debt. No one asked about feelings. No one said, “What’s on your mind?” It was as if having feelings was a sin in itself.

This is how the child within me slowly became an adult who had heard more than she had said. But that same child, in the most hidden layers of my being, held onto something: the desire to be saved.

A wordless home, but full of looks

In our house, affection wasn’t spoken. Not that it wasn’t there—it was, but it was hidden in faces, flowed in silences, in a glance that would meet my child’s eyes from behind exhaustion and quickly turn away.

My father was a hardworking, quiet, and dignified man. He was from a generation that hid its pain in a clenched fist and expressed its love in the piece of bread it silently placed on the table. But the age gap between him and my mother—which at times felt more like a cultural chasm than just a difference in years—meant the home never took on the color of intimacy.

They were together, but not always. Their conversations were more like complaints than companionship. My mother was a kind, patient, and suffering woman; but she didn’t express her kindness with hugs or warm words. It was as if years of silence had taken root in her, and she couldn’t put into words what she felt.

I never heard her say, “I love you.” But when she mended my clothes with her darning needle, I could see the love in its tip. At night, when I was asleep and she would quietly pull the blanket over me, I felt: this



is the kind of love that isn't said, but is just felt.

Our house wasn't one for long conversations; it was a house of silent glances.

There was little bread on our table, but much dignity. We didn't have group laughter, but there was a silent pride in my father's face that made me feel this man, with his calloused hands, was holding my world together.

Though we children didn't hear words of affection, in our hearts, in the depths of what is called "feeling," we knew we were loved; not the way we wanted to be, but the way our parents knew how.

And I, in that very silence, grew up. In that very wordless home, full of looks

When love was voiceless

It was a cold night. Like many other nights in our house, there was no warmth except for a smoky stove burning in a corner, and blankets that smelled more of age than of softness and comfort. But that night, my heart wanted something else; not bread, not new clothes—my heart wanted warmth.

I, who for years in the silence of home and school had only listened and never spoken, that night, I found my voice. I fixed my gaze on the small but dignified tablecloth and said:

"Let's be intimate with each other. It's not like we don't have bread, God is kind... but showing affection is free."

For a moment, the silence in the house was broken. Everyone looked at me. My father, with his heavy, downcast gaze. My sisters, with surprise. But the voice that rose from a dark corner of the room was one that still speaks to the depths of my soul.

My mother, the kindest woman I have ever seen, in a voice worn by pain and surrender, said:

"My child, intimacy and laughter also require a joyful heart... we don't have a joyful heart. God has destined this for us."

In that moment, it was as if all the walls of the house collapsed inside me. My mother was right. Laughing wasn't easy when the heart was crushed under the weight of sorrow. Love, though it's free, costs the heart—and that night, the heart in our house had no strength to stand. But that night, I realized I had to find a way. If the home lacked intimacy, if fate had stolen laughter from our lips, I had to look for it elsewhere. Perhaps in a book, perhaps in a notebook under my pillow, perhaps in distant daydreams that gazed at the night sky and spoke to the stars. From that night on, writing wasn't just a hobby for me—it was a necessity. A language for the things that couldn't be said. A whisper for my inner child whose cries were unheard in the house.

And now, years later, the intimacy I longed for was born in my stories. I built the laughter we didn't have at home, line by line, in my books. Because I believe: sometimes, if love isn't present in the home, you must build it in your own heart—and with a pen, gift it to others.

In the eyes of those years

Slowly, I was growing. The small tree of my being didn't bow in the bitter winds of childhood, but its shadow was still short. I was in the tenth grade, and a thirsty spirit for knowledge beat in my chest. One day, a friend gave me a book; its name was "Crime of Man or The Human Traffickers of the 20th Century." I turned its pages greedily, as if I could hear the voices of centuries' silent screams from each one. I didn't know that behind every word, a storm was brewing.

One day, one of the village elders saw the book in my hands. He gave me a judgmental look and said

"This book will make you an infidel. Study jurisprudence, become an imam!"

My breath caught in my chest. His words were not just a whip to my freedom of thought, but the beginning of a nightmare that would last for years. This whisper spread through the village like thick smoke, until it reached the ears of the village imam.



One day, the sound of the mullah's sermon came from the mosque's loudspeaker, sharp and cutting:

“That boy is reading such a book, he has become an infidel!”

My name became entwined with the accusation of heresy. The alleys grew narrower, the stares sharper, and fear followed me like a shadow. Threats, humiliation, and an inevitable silence became my constant companions, day and night. Sweating with fear and shame, a lump in my throat, I carried the burden of silence for ten whole years. I couldn't share what was burning in my mind and soul with anyone. I was afraid my name would be tainted with blasphemy again.

But at the same time, it was as if other people were whispering inside me. Voices that came not from the outside, but from within. Voices that said: Read! Understand! Be patient, but not silent! Take root, even in rocky ground! They guided me. And I, little by little, found my own way.

When the voice of that announcement reached my father from the mosque's loudspeaker, he called me. He looked me in the eye, a look of pain, not anger. He said softly:

“My child, this is a spring of ignorance. From this soil, the stench of centuries rises. If you read, read in secret. Keep the cry for knowledge in your heart, lest they tear you apart.”

But my mother, anxious and simple, wrapped her chador tighter around her and said in a voice laced with fear

“My son, these books make one a heretic. Do not read!”

And I, I remained silent, caught between my father's love for knowledge and my mother's fear of shame.

In the years that followed, they wrapped me in the cloth of superstition. In the same rotten myths that told me how to perform ablution, how to pray, how to bury a head in the dirt and, five times a day in the prayer line, without question, follow the imam's lead and bow to the ground. But inside me, something else was pulsating. Something hidden, of

the stuff of light... of the stuff of pain. Something that was not law, not fatwa, not hadith.

Within me, an unborn child lived—a child of consciousness and question—but he was considered a bastard in a village that answered every light with a stone. If I had given birth to him, if I had spoken my light, the very people I had grown up with, the ones who knew my name, would have taken up stones.

And I remained pregnant for many long years.

Pregnant with a light I did not dare to give birth to. A light that, for fear of being stoned, breathed in the darkness of my soul. But it did not remain extinguished....

An unsaid word from me, the voice of someone in the shadows
I was that voice whispering in the heart of the darkness, while others
were screaming

I was that mute thought, hidden in the recesses of a young mind;
between a dusty book and a nightstand lamp whose flickering flame
hammered fear against the wall.

When that young man, a book in hand, was accused from behind the
loudspeakers, it was as if they were accusing me too.

When his father said, “From this soil, the stench of centuries rises,” I
said:

But from this very soil, a seed can be grown that will change the
centuries... if you are not afraid!

I was waiting for that birth. A birth that never came, because every
time it drew near, the shadow of the stones grew darker.

In that village, even light had to kneel, so it wouldn’t be considered a
heretic.

And I spent the years inside that boy; like a child who never had the
chance to cry.

Not because of the mother’s weakness, but because of the terror of giving
birth among a people who would grab stones at the first soundAnd I, I



spent the years inside that boy; like a child who never had the chance to cry.

I was the voice of the question

Not a voice of insult, not of mockery, not of enmity toward faith—for true faith itself springs from the heart of the question.

I was the seed of knowing

and for years I remained in the womb of silence

Not out of weakness, but out of loyalty to the one who had become my home

But today, with this pen, with this narrative, with every word you write, I am born

Without fear, without fleeing from stone

I want to say:

I wish every child were allowed to find themselves before others lay them in a cradle of fear. May they be so.

Greetings again to you, dear readers,

What I am narrating is a chronicle of the suffering of thousands of seekers in a land where “asking” is a crime and “thinking” is blasphemy. With respect for the truth that flows through my voice, allow me to recount in a literary and profound style a new chapter of my life. This text could serve as one of the significant chapters of the book “ “—a narrative of the confrontation between the true self and the imposed self, between inner faith and external fear: Yes, reality was as follows:

A whiteness that was black on the inside

For many years, I lived not in a metal prison, but in the cage of superstitions created by my people.

Not the simple mental superstitions that come from ignorance, but the deliberate, fabricated lies that were woven to keep the people docile—like ropes placed around the neck of thought, which they call “faith.”

I was neither an infidel nor an atheist

But my crime was that I had read, I had thought, I had asked.

And since asking was considered blasphemy in my village, I was forced to whitewash myself every day;

A whiteness not of truth, but of a mask.

With a pious facade, a book of jurisprudence in hand, and ostentatious prostrations in the front row of prayer, I tried to prove to the village mullah and the villagers that “I am a Muslim!”

that “not only am I not a kafir, but I am even more devout than you”

But in my heart, each rak’ah of that compulsory prayer felt like a blow to my conscience.

Every time I opened the repetitive books of jurisprudence and hadith, not out of passion but out of compulsion, because I knew that if I didn’t read, if I didn’t participate in this performance, if I didn’t blend in with the crowd, the stones would start flying again.

It was submission—submission to a people whose faith was born of fear, not love, not true faith.

And I carried this submission for years; because I was not yet strong enough to stand alone.

In those years, I was the most pious-seeming of them all, but inside, I was the most imprisoned person in the village.

Everyone thought I had returned; that I had regained my faith

But what was happening inside me was something else.

I was reading a book of jurisprudence, but I would write poetry in the margins.

I stood in the prayer line, but my mind wandered for miles in search of the truth.

I would listen to the verses, but in my heart I would ask, “Which verse allows me to think?”

For years, I walked a dark and tedious distance between “who I am” and “who I should be.”

But this painful walk made me.



Not forever masked, but until the day I can finally take it off.
And now, in this book, in these words, for the first time, I have dared
to show my true face without a mask.

A Sujud to Fear

I spent many years not in the bondage of belief, but in the captivity of
a performance of faith—a faith that arose not from the heart, nor from
the depths of conviction, but was shaped by fear and fed by hypocrisy.
I lived among people for whom religion was not a light for the path,
but a chain for control.

They tolerated neither questioning nor thought

Their superstitions were not beliefs, but tools.

A tool for judgment, for oppression, for stoning every light

When that accusation was broadcast from the mosque's pulpit, when
the mullah imam's voice echoed through the alleys:

“So-and-so has become an infidel, he reads books of disbelief”

I was no longer a science-seeking teenager, but a known criminal.

From that moment on, the only way I could survive was to wear a lie;
to don the clothes of faith, even if inside me the fire of doubt was raging
I was forced to whitewash myself

And this whitening was not from within, but from without.

So that others would see, accept, and be at ease.

For the village imam, for the village elders, for the always-judgmental
worshippers,

I had to become someone I wasn't

I read the books of jurisprudence with a silent heart.

Year after year, from purification to marriage, from the rulings on
blood to the etiquette of prayer,

Not to learn, but to defend myself

I armed myself with their own language, to prove that I was not their
enemy

But was this defense, or self-betrayal?

Was this effort for salvation, or a kind of slow death?
I prayed for years, but every takbir smelled of terror.
Every bow was a curtsy to the crowd, not to God.
My prostrations were not pure—
They were prostrations born of fear
A fear of judgment, of expulsion, of being left alone in the desert of callousness
A fear that the light of my mind would surrender my soul to the darkness of death
Yes, I appeared as a believer,
But inwardly, I was full of doubt, full of questions, full of pain
What I had was not faith;
It was a mask of faith, crafted from terror
Today, years after those days, I no longer need to pretend.
I no longer whitewash myself to make others believe me
I no longer prostrate myself, except for an inner love, a true light.
I no longer carry the cloak of superstition, even if I am left naked.
This chapter is the story of those years—
Years I worshipped with fear, not with love
And today, I say with pride:
I, from among empty prayers, found a path to God that is direct, unchained, and fearless.
A fire temple in my chest
There were days when I, out of sincerity, out of the simple faith of a child,
I would turn the pages of books on the lives of the prophets;
Not to deny, but to understand, to believe more deeply
But the more I read, the more I trembled
Not from the wonder of the miracles, but from the stench of deception and exaggeration.
Something was amiss in the biography of every prophet.



The stories were not instructive, but repetitive myths, crafted by minds that imagined humanity as eternal children.

They wanted to dangle Moses's staff at me,
with a fire that did not burn Abraham,
with the dove that the last prophet split in two,
to force me to surrender
But I would not surrender.

In those moments, I was building a fire temple in my chest
Not to worship the fire, but to keep the flame of reason alive against the
cold and darkness of superstition.

a fire temple that blazed with every moment,
Every time a lie called a miracle was imposed on me,
Every time they said:

“Moses turned the rod into a serpent,”
“Christ healed with dirt,”
“Muhammad split the moon in two”

No!

I was neither a child, nor my mind a captive
And wherever understanding exposed a lie, a flame would rise in my
heart.

But this flame would not break free.

I could not scream, for if I opened my mouth, the sound of
excommunication would come again.

More stone, more judgment, more wound
And so, I burned in silence.

I was not a fire-worshipper—but I never knelt among the ashes of blind
obeisance.

I was not an enemy of faith—but I loathed faiths that sacrificed reason.
Those doctrines had become a cemetery of sanctified lies for me.
And I, every time I read, it was as if I were throwing a handful of dirt
on the truth.

My hands and heart trembled, but it was in those very tremors that I understood

God is to be found in honesty, not in myth.

In being human, not in a superhuman pretense

Today, that fire within me is no longer extinguished.

Today, from the ashes of those years, I found myself.

Not Abraham, not Moses, not Muhammad

I am Basir; and that is enough.

A fire temple in the cage of the chest

I narrate those days; days when I sought the truth and found a legend, to narratives that smelled of smoke, not light

I respectfully opened the book of the Prophets' conduct,

With clean hands, and a longing heart

I wanted to deepen my faith,

But what I found,

They were myths whose exaggeration was apparent even from a distance.

In those books, the fire doesn't burn Abraham,

Moses would turn his staff into a snake,

and the final prophet split the moon in two.

I didn't stand against these stories—I bowed to them instead.

Because I knew that if I said, "These are myths,"

If I say, "My reason cannot accept this"

The silence of the mosque will be broken,

And the voice of the stones will rend the silence of my life.

And it was then that I built a fire temple in my chest

Not a fire for worship,

But a fire to burn

Not to be left unlit, not to die in silence

With every reading, I burned more.

I saw how these narratives, like a wall of myth,



have been drawn between me and the truth
But I remained silent
Not because I was incapable,
But because I knew no one was listening
This fire temple was silent, but alive
Its flame was bright, but silent
Every day, a miracle I didn't believe in,
banishing me further into myself
And I remained,
Between faith and understanding,
and the child inside me who wanted to believe,
and a man who could no longer accept the lie
Yes, I did not run from the lie

I stayed in the midst of it, but with an unquenchable fire within me
And today, in this writing,
In these lines,
In this chapter,
I am sharing that fire with you
I did not run from the fire
I myself became that fire

Author's Note:

I wrote these lines with a hand that once opened books of miracles with reverence,
and with a heart that wanted to believe, but could no longer.
not out of rebellion,
not out of rebellion,
but from a pain whose name was 'thinking'
I loved faith,
But I could not accept a faith built on the shoulders of millennia-old lies.
When reason awoke, the myths collapsed

And I, amidst those ruins,
I saw no prophet, no magic staff, no fish that was split in two
but I saw a human, alone and silent,
who in their heart had a fire temple, and whose only voice was their
own.

If I sometimes look back and narrate,
not out of malice, nor out of mockery,
But from a desire for freedom
freedom from the codes that bound me,
and miracles that stole my faith
And perhaps...

Perhaps the greatest miracle is this

That I, in the fire of lies,

I found myself

Thinner than a hair, sharper than a blade

It was one of the Fridays

I was sitting in the village mosque, among the tightly packed rows of
believers.

The smell of old socks and cheap perfume mingled in the air.

Hearts were in unison, but minds were scattered—each person had
come with a burden of sin or fear, hoping to be lightened by hearing a
few words.

The Friday imam raised his voice, pounding his hand toward the sky
and sometimes against his chest, and said:

“O Muslims, know and be aware!

On the Day of Judgment, everyone must cross a bridge that is thinner
than a single hair and sharper than a drawn sword!

The believer, lightning will pass through it,
and the one who is corrupt will slip and fall into the fire of Hell!”

The crowd murmured “Allahu Akbar.”

Some looked in terror at their own feet,



And I.....

I stared at that image

The Bridge of Sirat

Thinner than a hair, sharper than a blade

I had seen neither that bridge nor that judgment day.

But what I saw was myself.

among a people who, with such sermons, had cultivated not the love of God, but the fear of Him in their hearts

I asked:

If there is a God, who is merciful,

Why must He test His servants on such an impossible and dangerous bridge?

Why would He tie faith with a narrow hair rope to a path of razor blades and fire?

Is this the promise of mercy?

Or a threat to submit blindly?

In that moment, I neither wanted heaven nor feared hell.

I only longed for a God who did not need all this terror and pretense.

And so it was that in the heart of that very mosque,

Under the shadow of that very pulpit,

amidst the sound of 'Amen' and fearful gazes,

I understood for the first time that perhaps the way of God, not through smoke and blade,

But rather passes through the path of understanding and love.

Author's Note:

I was standing in the prayer line that day,

But my mind, for years, was no longer in line.

My body sat peacefully in the shadow of the pulpit,

But my soul had already crossed that illusory bridge.

Not for fear of falling into the fire,

But from the longing to be free from the darkness of a fear that had

made faith tremble.

I crossed the bridge of the Sirat,

But not in the hereafter

but in this very world,

Within myself

and beyond it, there was neither heaven nor hell,

but a land without a name,

A place between reason and heart,

which they call freedom of thought.

I wandered among the heavy, endless scrolls of jurisprudence; not out of interest or passion, but for fear of the label of heresy they had slapped on my forehead. It was as if I wanted to free myself from under the heavy shadow of judgments that not God, but angry and ignorant men, had imposed upon me.

I searched through the pages of the Prophets' biographies. I found no prophet alone and a stranger.

Solomon was the ruler of the earth and the heavens;

Jesus breathed life into the dead;

And Muhammad, the final prophet, married a wealthy woman and enjoyed worldly blessings.

But when it came to us, the negligent and gullible followers, we were told: "Al-faqr fahri" – "Poverty is my pride."

How can this duality be ignored?

Where is the truth?

Between the golden lines of the history of the prophets, or in the bitter silence of our lives?

I have lived in these contradictions, amidst the hypocrisy, searching for a truth that perhaps lies somewhere outside these books, in the depths of the human heart...

Midst the flood of verses and hadiths, my eyes repeatedly fell upon commands that made my heart tremble:



Kill the disbelievers, loot their property; this is your spoils.
And what burned my soul the most was the ruling on the enslavement
of women captured in war;
Vulnerable women who, without any marriage contract, were given to
the conquerors like merchandise.

I asked myself: Is this the religion that was supposed to lead us from
darkness to light?

Does divine truth draw such cruel lines among its servants?

Why must humanity be divided into sects and denominations?

Why must my faith be defined by hatred of another?

This religion, crafted in the shadow of power, never had and never will
have a place in my mind.

But alas...

I lived in a time when the voice of reason was lost in the swamp of
superstition.

In the swamp of prejudice and imitation, there was sometimes no
choice but to conform.

I had to keep my mouth shut and join the crowd,

Otherwise, my fate would have been the fate of Shams;

Stoning, excommunication, or eternal silence...

But what troubled me more than anything was a narrative I could
never reconcile with my own reason and nature;

The marriage of the final prophet, at the age of forty-five, to a nine-
year-old girl

This was beyond my comprehension. How could such a relationship
be reconciled with the image we have of the perfect human? How can
devotion to a child be accepted in a sacred context?

And this was only the beginning of the doubts....

From there, I slowly came to other teachings that opened my eyes
further and pained my heart:

A woman is considered only half a man;

A woman is a man's field;
A woman, if she "disobeys," you should beat her;
A woman is better off not reading, not knowing, not understanding;
she should only obey, be silent, and devote herself to the desires of
men.

In these teachings, I saw neither love nor justice. Neither honesty nor
humanity.

And these were the moments when, slowly and quietly, without fanfare,
without denial or the denial of others, I took steps toward my lost self.
Toward a new understanding of God, of faith, of love, and of myself
Step by step, I pulled back the curtains,

And from the ashes of imposed beliefs, a spark of light ignited within
me.

Somewhere in the middle, I found myself, but I still couldn't introduce
myself to the human consensus.

But one of the questions that pierced my soul like a thorn and stayed
with me for years was an issue that few dared to honestly raise:

Why so many religions? So many prophets? So many contradictory
narratives?

They say God is one, but His messages are countless;
One hundred twenty-four thousand prophets, each with a different,
and sometimes contradictory, faith and laws.

Why?

If God is one, why is His message in a thousand pieces?

If the purpose was to guide humanity, wouldn't one prophet with a
clear message have been enough?

Have these diverse messages not, in their very nature, created division?
that a people, deeming themselves superior to others, have attacked
others under the banner of religion?

That in the name of God, the earth has been drenched in blood and
hearts filled with hatred?



The books speak of messengers of justice and love, but history bears witness to conflicts that bore the name of religion.

Wars that began with the cry “God is with us,” and ended in absolute godlessness.

And I, amidst this tumultuous multitude, had lost the voice of oneness...
But in this very chaos, in this very crowd of messages and messengers, something within me found peace.

A whisper said:

Perhaps the way is not in imitating the message, but in finding the voice of God Himself within you.

And it was then that I understood

Truth is not in the flag, not in the nation, not in religion;

Truth is in “being human.”

in honesty with oneself, with another, with that unseen truth they have called God

And again, I took another step;

I drew closer still....

to something that was no longer a religion, but was faith

to something that had no prophet, no sharia, but was the way

And on this uncharted path, I found myself.

One of the memories that will never leave my mind is the superstitious veil that was planted in my mind during my childhood and adolescence. Promises had been made to me and many others; promises of a heaven full of virgin houris, girls with slender waists, alluring figures, and prominent breasts who supposedly await the faithful underground after death. In contrast, a hell was painted for sinners, filled with blazing flames, multi-headed snakes, man-eating dragons, and torments that lasted to the utmost degree of cruelty and suffering.

These images, these promises and threats, occupied my mind for years. So much so that I got lost in superstition and could not find my path, my being, my truth. It took me a while to realize that it was all a veil to

keep me from myself. But now, in this book, I have come to rediscover myself, to speak the truth, to be the voice of a human who has emerged from behind the walls of superstition and has “found themselves.”

Alongside all those strange and unbelievable promises, there was another one that occupied my mind more than any other. They said that in the afterlife, beneath the earth, streams of milk and honey flow; roasted meats, delicious fish, a wine that does not intoxicate, and endless pleasures await the faithful. All of this is the reward for those who have deprived themselves of these pleasures in this world—those who have not had sex, not drunk wine, who have considered laughing and enjoying life a sin.

There was a strange contradiction in these promises. Wasn’t pleasure considered a sin? So why, in the afterlife, is the reward precisely those things that were declared forbidden and forbidden in this world? Why is something that brings the fire of hell here considered a heavenly reward there? Isn’t it natural for a person to become confused, to doubt, and to turn inward with questions like these?

Amidst these promises and threats, these heavens full of lust and these hells filled with fear and fire, I gradually lost myself. My world was divided into two colors: black and white; I either had to suppress myself in hopes of an afterlife reward, or live a little and pay the price with eternal fire. This perspective had drained the life from me, had distanced me from being human.

But a day came when I tore the veil from these superstitions. I realized that the real heaven and hell are in this world; in our hearts, in our minds, in our behavior toward others. When you find yourself, when you become aware, you are no longer shaken by hollow promises and fabricated fears. That day, I found myself

Promises from beneath the soil

For as long as I can remember, my mind was filled with promises and fears rooted in superstition. We were told that after death, a paradise



awaited the faithful in the afterlife. A paradise where virgin girls, with slender waists and prominent breasts, stood in line by rivers of milk and honey to serve the heavenly guests. Roasted fish, delicious meats, wines that don't intoxicate... it was all a reward for those who had abstained from pleasure in this world—those who didn't have sex, didn't drink wine, didn't laugh, didn't run, didn't breathe the way they wanted.

But if someone crossed these man-made red lines—if they were themselves for a moment, lived, rejoiced—their fate was a terrifying hell. Eternal fire, multi-headed serpents, a man-eating dragon, a torment without a moment's respite... This was the reward for sin, even if that sin was simply enjoying life.

I grew up with these images. My mind was filled with fear. I suppressed myself. I didn't know that behind these promises, an invisible wall had been erected to keep me from finding myself, to get lost among the fabricated dreams of heaven and the terrifying nightmares of hell.

But now, after all these years, with a conscious heart and open eyes, I say: I no longer believe in those promises. I have found heaven not beneath the soil, but in the light of eyes, in kindness, in a mother's embrace, in the sound of a child's laughter, in reconciliation with myself.

I found myself

The pants that were forbidden

I was a young man. A youth tasting independence for the first time, I had become a teacher at one of the schools in our village in Logar and had a monthly salary. That day I returned from Kabul with indescribable enthusiasm and excitement. I had bought a stylish pair of pants with a white, ironed shirt, and shiny boots that gleamed in the sun. I wanted to dress like a teacher, just as the city dwellers did.

I put on the clothes, feeling dignified and confident. But I hadn't gone a few steps past the village market when voices rang out behind me.

Hey! Hey! Look at this!"

What is this teacher wearing?

Mocking laughter, scornful glances, and whispers that were clearly laced with contempt.

I was drenched in shame. It felt like I was wearing a dress of fire. I felt myself melting and sinking into the ground under all those stares. With every step, my confidence crumbled. And this was just the beginning. That week, during Friday prayers, the imam didn't say my name over the mosque's loudspeaker, but his words were aimed directly at me:

"A child of Adam is wearing a blasphemous garment! She is misleading our children! If these fitnas are not stopped, the people's faith is in danger..."

And I, a simple teacher who had only wanted to wear a clean, decent outfit, had now become a symbol of corruption. I never wore those pants or that white shirt again. It took years for me to leave that village and go to the city. It took years to understand that my sin was not the clothes, nor the intention, but breaking an unwritten red line in the heart of dry, superstitious traditions that had imprisoned minds.

This is where I grew up. A place where judgment came before a greeting; where clothes defined a person, not character, not intention, not knowledge. And it was this superstition that twisted me time and again, until I lost myself... But now, slowly, slowly, I am clearing a path through this dust to the light.

My crime was freedom

One day, I was standing in front of my students among the same mud walls of the village school, telling them about "manners." I had opened the textbook, but its dry and limited words didn't satisfy me. I wanted to say something more, something that would resonate with my students. I said:

"Humans are born free. Everyone has the right to choose their own path in life. We are not condemned to repeat what our predecessors



have said.”

It was a simple thing to say; a short sentence, but one full of meaning and awareness. I thought it was a kind thing to say. But I didn’t know that this sentence would soon turn my life upside down.

Soon, whispers began to spread outside the school. One person said the teacher had become an infidel. Another said he was an atheist. A third was even certain that I was a communist, an enemy of religion and tradition. And then, one day, it happened.

In the middle of the day, while I was teaching, the classroom door opened. A few of the local elders entered, their walking sticks in hand. Faces scowling, eyes full of anger. Without asking, without listening, they shouted, cursed, and humiliated me in front of my students. One of them raised his stick and struck my arm. Another said:

“Anyone who speaks of freedom is an enemy of the faith!”

It was then I realized my place was no longer at that school. They said that even if I stayed, I had no right to teach the upper grades. I was to teach only the first graders the alphabet—no more, no less.

And I, wounded but silent, packed my bags. I requested a transfer and came to one of the schools in the city. A city where a glimmer of understanding and acceptance could still be seen. Slowly, I started wearing my pants and shirt again. I spoke with my students again about life, freedom, choice, and humanity.

I no longer had that past terror. But the wound from that day still remains in my heart. A wound that taught me: in lands where superstition prevails over reason, telling the truth is an unforgivable sin.

When truth became a crime

I was still in that same small village school; among silent walls, behind old wooden desks, and under a roof from which dust sometimes fell, I taught with hope. That day, it was geography class. I turned the page of the book and came to a simple but scientific sentence: “The Earth

revolves around the sun.”

Calmly, as always, I said:

“It’s the Earth that moves, not the sun. This is a scientific fact.”

The students listened with curiosity. But I didn’t know that that same sentence, that one simple truth, was about to set my life on fire once again.

The next day, before I even reached the classroom, I heard a murmur in the schoolyard. A group of the village elders had come—this time, angry and with their walking sticks. They were saying:

“This teacher says the Earth moves! That’s against the Quran! That’s blasphemy!”

The school administration, more powerless than ever, was just a spectator. No one said anything. No one defended me.

The elders rushed in, tugged at my clothes, one grabbed my shirt and ripped it off me. I was humiliated. I was crushed. But I remained silent. For I knew that in a land where science is the enemy of superstition, telling the truth is an unforgivable crime. I stepped back from telling the truth, just like Galileo.

I was no longer allowed to enter the school. There was no official decree, no written warning—just a heavy silence and doors closing on me one after another. I was confined to the house until my transfer request was approved. And in those days, I would repeat to myself

“If speaking the truth is a crime, then let this crime stay with me forever.”

When a woman belonged to a man

One Friday, out of curiosity or perhaps a heart full of anxiety, I went to the mosque. Not to pray, but to hear what the people hear, to be aware of the voice that is repeated in the ears of thousands. The imam stood on the pulpit. His voice echoed through the loudspeakers, and his words, like a sledgehammer, descended upon the minds.

He said:



“There are rumors that a school is going to be built for girls. O people! Be warned! If a girl goes to school and learns to read and write, she will no longer stay at home. She will defend her rights. And this is not permitted in Islam. A woman is the man’s property. She must stay at home, work, and serve her husband. If she is set free even once, she will no longer know us or you...”

His words pierced my heart like a dagger. The people nodded in agreement. Men who had sisters, daughters, wives—smiling with confidence, affirmed the enslavement of women.

I couldn’t bear it. I slipped out of the mosque silently, without even praying. I knew this was a place for silence, not speech. And I no longer wanted to be silent.

I decided immediately. My family—my mother, my sisters, my brother—had to get out of that suffocating atmosphere. With great difficulty but determination, I moved them to Kabul. I too became a city dweller, leaving the village behind.

And there, in the city’s freer air, slowly, the rebellious spirit that had been imprisoned inside me for years came to life. Little by little, I spoke up. My first piece, written with trembling hands but a hopeful heart, was published in a magazine. And I, the very teacher who had once been expelled from school for speaking the truth, was now a silenced voice that would no longer be silenced.

But unfortunately, I must confess that it takes time to break 50-year-old habits. Like everyone else, I would go to the five daily prayers and accept that whenever I prayed and fasted, I would go to heaven, where there are houris and servants and pure wines. This legacy stayed with me until I was 50 years old. Most importantly, until then, I was afraid of myself, meaning for fear that something comes out of my mouth that I’ll be disgraced in this school as well.

But unfortunately, I must honestly confess that breaking habits that had been ingrained in my very being for fifty years is not something

that can be done overnight, or even in a few years. These habits had become not just behaviors, but a part of my identity; a part of what I knew myself to be.

Like millions of others, I prayed the five daily prayers for years, with a simple, unquestioning faith. I believed that if I prayed and fasted, I would go to heaven without question. Where houris and wine that does not intoxicate await. This perception of religion and spirituality was with me like a constant shadow until I was fifty; a legacy that had taken root in me from childhood to middle age.

But perhaps the most bitter of all was the fear that had taken root within me; a hidden but heavy fear. Fear of myself. Yes, of myself!

I was always afraid inside that a word might slip from my tongue that didn't fit within the framework of this school—this belief system; that I might say something labeled as blasphemy or heresy; that I might be shunned, disgraced, not just in the eyes of others, but in my own mind and conscience!

For years, I lived in this silent prison; a prison without walls, yet solid. And the hardest prisons are these: the ones you can't see from the outside, but that crush you from within.

I still have so many unsaid words in my heart; words that have been choked in my mind for years, for fear that my tongue might slip and I would utter a sentence these people would call forbidden. Words that, in my society, if you speak them, make you faithless, shameless, and rootless. But today, I no longer have that old fear, because I believe that if the truth is left unsaid, it eats away at a person from the inside.

One day, an incident in my neighborhood made my heart tremble. A woman passed away. She left behind six small children; without bread, without a father, without shelter. Their home was burning in poverty, but the old, ineffective customs of society know no mercy. Instead of grieving the loss of their mother, the grieving family was caught up in taking out a loan—one hundred thousand Afghanis—just to ensure the



“khairat” and “takfeen” were held with outward respectability, so that people wouldn’t say they were disrespected, so their honor wouldn’t be tarnished!

Tears streamed down my face, but not for the deceased woman; I was crying for the living who were dead in the grip of custom. For the children who had not yet buried their mother, yet the burden of a one-hundred-thousand-afghani debt had been placed on their futures. I did not weep for death, but for these merciless lives, for this “inhuman culture.”

These customs, these rituals, no longer bear any sign of humanity. They are more like scenes where suffering has become a luxury and tears are part of the show. No one asks: Does the family of the deceased have anything to eat? Will their children go to school tomorrow or go to bed hungry?

Only one thing matters: “What will people say?”

And I, in my heart, cried out: I wish people would one day hold being human, the living, real pain, in as much esteem as they do these ceremonies...

From that day, from that poor house, from those motherless and indebted children, something inside me broke. It was as if my conscience, which had been dozing for years in the sleep of habit and imitation, suddenly awoke. I asked myself: Is this what it means to be human? Have religion, faith, culture, and customs all come to alienate us from ourselves? To force us to add wound upon wound with our own hands and smile, saying, “Our honor is saved”?

I woke up, but this awakening was not easy.

When a person’s conscience awakens, it first engages in a struggle with itself. Questions rain down, doubts arise, the wall of old beliefs crumbles. Sometimes a person feels like they are alone in the desert, without shade, without shelter.

But right there, in that very moment, life begins anew.

I began to re-examine everything: these flashy but empty rituals, these words repeated for generations without anyone understanding what they mean, these red lines that have separated us from humanity in the name of faith and piety.

Yes, I realized that much of what we considered 'sacred' was just 'habit'; and what they called 'godlessness' was, in fact, a waking conscience.

Many of us have lived in fear for years; fear of asking questions, fear of understanding, fear of being different. We were afraid of being shamed, rejected, or called misguided. But what greater misguidedness is there than to spend one's entire life imitating others and never once ask oneself: "Is this the path for me?"

Today I know that waking up requires courage; but staying asleep comes at a heavier price. Today I know that what saves a person is not blind obedience, but the courage to think.

And if just one person, just one person, pauses for a moment after reading these words, thinks for a bit, and asks themselves, then I have fulfilled my mission.

Tears for the Living

Sometimes tears flow from the eyes, but not for the dead.

Not for someone who is no longer here, nor for someone whose heart has stopped beating

But for those who are still here... but are slowly being suffocated by the cruel chains of culture and habit.

I cried, because I could no longer lie.

I couldn't pretend that these customs were not 'sacred'.

I could not remain silent when I saw our culture, at times with a religious face, behaving in an inhumane manner.

That was when my conscience awoke

Not with a slogan, not with a book, not with a religious lesson, but by seeing a child who, instead of crying for his mother, was drowning in the turmoil of tomorrow's debt.



And I said to myself: If religion, if culture, if tradition does not see the suffering of the living and only weeps for the dead, then it is no longer called “respect”; it is called “dogmatism.”

A wedding or a transaction?

They say a wedding is a celebration of life, the beginning of happiness, a moment when hearts are united.

But one day, I witnessed a wedding that was more like a transaction than a celebration.

Not only was she not happy, but she painted the saddest picture of my life.

A sixteen-year-old girl, with eyes full of tears and a heart filled with fear, sat in a corner of a silent house. She was still a child; her dreams still smelled of play, of books, of running in the yard. But her father, in the name of “what’s best,” in the name of “poverty,” in the name of “honor,” sold her to a sixty-year-old man for two hundred thousand Afghanis... and called it a wedding!

What a strange wedding it was!

Lavish tablecloths, bright lights, colorful clothes, boastful guests. More than three hundred people ate, laughed, and posed for photos in the city’s luxury hotels.

But in a corner, away from the eyes of that magnificent crowd, there was a girl who was crying silently.

Not from joy, not from excitement; but from sorrow, from being broken, from being buried under a pile of rotten customs.

Her father boasted that he had given her away “with honor”; he said people needed to see that he had sent his daughter off with dignity. But dignity was not in the eyes of the people, but in that girl’s heart.... And that heart, on that night, died.

From that night, only one sound remains in my mind:

The voice of a girl, choked with sobs, screaming in her heart.

“Why me? Why did they trade my life? Why did no one hear my voice?”

And that was when I cried once more;
But not for the old groom, not for the laughing guests, not for the father who thought he had saved his honor
I cried for that little human whose life was over before it even began.
This is not culture, not tradition, not religion.
These are chains that we have woven with our own hands and have hung around our children's necks for generations.
And I must not only see these chains, but I must make their voices heard.
Maybe my voice will be a wake-up call for another father, for another daughter, before it's too late...

The child who became a bride

For many, a wedding is a symbol of blossoming; a moment when two people, of their own free will, celebrate their love.
But for her, marriage was just another word for prison.
She was only sixteen years old. She still had the innocence of a child in her eyes, the softness of a girl in her voice, and a tremor in her small hands. But on that day, they dressed her in a white wedding gown; not as a symbol of love, but of a transaction.

A sixty-year-old man came with several bundles of cash and bought her, in the presence of relatives and the clan, with her father's consent. No one asked what the girl wanted. No one asked how she saw her future. Everyone just said, "God bless him, the important thing is that we've kept our honor."

But inside the house, inside that girl, something broke.

She was not a bride; she was a victim.

No ring on her finger, no smile on her lips, just a question in her eyes.
"Why me?"

Reputation in the eyes of the public or humiliation within the family?
How much lies are hidden in the word "honor"?
We play the game of honor for the public, but we suffer the humiliation



at home.

The girl's father sat at the ceremony, happy and proud.

He would say, "They have to understand that we're somebody, too. They have to know that we can have a big wedding like everyone else, it doesn't matter if we have to go into debt, it doesn't matter if my house is emptied, the important thing is that our reputation isn't ruined."

But was that "reputation" worth it?

Is a reputation bought with a child's tears a reputation at all?

Is the pain that remains in the heart of a mother, a sister, a daughter worth it, just so a few people at the party can say, "What a magnificent wedding it was"?

I saw with my own eyes that we live for the opinions of others.

We eat, we wear, we sell, we laugh... but not for ourselves, for "the people."

And people give us neither bread for tomorrow nor do they see our tears today.

We must redefine: reputation means peace of mind, a smiling child, a home that, though simple, is full of love and generosity.

Fear of God or fear of people?

From childhood, we were told: "Fear God!"

They whispered this sentence to us not once, but a thousand times: at home, in the madrasa, in the mosque, in school, in books, in lectures. But no one ever said: Who is God that we should fear Him?

And more importantly

Was the fear planted in our hearts really fear of God? Or fear of people?

Years passed, and we lived under the shadow of these very fears.

A fear that forced us to wear a certain way, speak a certain way, hide our beliefs, swallow our questions, even sometimes lie to ourselves; all just so people wouldn't ask, people wouldn't say, people wouldn't doubt.

On the surface, we said we were afraid of God."

But deep down, all our decisions were influenced by this question:
What if people find out?

A fear that bore God's name, but was a tool of social control.

A fear that didn't create faith, but fostered hypocrisy.

A fear that, instead of bringing us closer to God, kept us distant from ourselves.

And I saw with my own eyes how thousands of people, with a pious exterior and a troubled heart, live only to not appear sinful, not to truly become more human.

True faith comes from knowledge, not from fear.

But from childhood, we were taught not to know God, but to fear hell.

They said God burns, but they didn't say God understands.

They said God sees, but they didn't say God is kind.

They said not to sin because God punishes, but they didn't say that if your heart is broken, He will hold you in His arms before anyone else. And in the meantime, people became the ultimate judge.

Fear of people took the place of love for God.

And I lived in that very prison for years; a prison of appearances, judgment, hypocrisy, and fear.

Until the day I said to myself:

If God is what these people say He is, then there is no room left for love.

But if God is the one who whispers in my heart, then why should I be afraid?

Is the God who has mercy on the tears of a helpless child,
A God who hears the voice of the lonely in the dead of night,
Is He worthy of all this fear and distortion?

From that day on, I was no longer afraid.

Not of God, not of men

Because I understood that God understands.

And the people? They will never be silent, even if you bring them



heaven itself.

And now that you stand at the end of this chapter, perhaps it would be good to be alone with yourself once more, without any fear.

Ask:

Is my God a God I should fear? Or is He a God I can run to in a embrace with all my wounds, doubts, tears, and mistakes?

If your relationship with God is only out of fear, then you are not with God; you are living with people's image of God.

And this image may deprive you of His kindness, of forgiveness, of compassion, of the peace that flows in the silence of the heart.

Think:

Perhaps what you should fear is not God, but the drifting away from your own inner truth.

Perhaps what you should flee from is not the promised hell, but the hell that is set up today in the hearts of men:

When faith is merely a show;

When love is exchanged for fear;

When God is no longer a refuge for the heart, but rather a scarecrow used to frighten consciences

Let us rediscover God;

Not with the tongue of the orator, not with the fear of the people, but with the whisper of the heart

A God who knows you doesn't let you be afraid of people.

The God within you gives you the opportunity to be yourself: unmasked, sincere, and unafraid.

Going to Mecca: A long time ago, when I knew very little about myself, I was working in an office. My clan, my in-laws, and relatives, both near and far, would all taunt me, saying I had to make the pilgrimage to Mecca to become a Haji. But I would say, "No, first I must see my neighbors well-fed. Then, if I wish, I will go to Mecca." But honestly, it puzzled me. Between myself and God, finding distance from

Afghanistan to Mecca is, in itself, a form of disbelief. And on the other hand, what superiority or distinction does the Black Stone (), the Black Stone of the Kaaba, have over other stones that idol-carvers still prefer to carve? I was at war with myself over these very questions. This itself was a sign that I had not yet found my true self.

Stoning the oppressed, condemned devil with pilgrims' pebbles:

One of the most important acts of Muslims who go on the Hajj to Saudi Arabia is a place called Jamarat. There is nothing there, but pilgrims and Muslims are told that they must strike the devil there. Every so-called Haji is supposed to strike seven times⁷. times with seven pebbles at that same spot, claiming they are stoning the devil, which to me is ridiculous. One of my friends named Jamal explained it to me more clearly and in greater detail:

(Rami Jamrat; throwing stones at a shadow from within)

In the heart of a dry and scorching land, somewhere in the middle of Mina, a vast multitude of people, clad in identical, nameless garments, strike seven handfuls of sand against a stone. There is no demon lurking there, no embodiment of evil, no personified devil. There is only a symbol: The Jamarat, a silent pillar, which for thousands of years has neither breathed nor spoken under the blows of man.

But have all these people gathered to strike a single stone pillar?

Is the truth of the devil contained in a lifeless stone?

Can the evil that is rooted in the human heart and within oneself be defeated by seven stones outside of it?

I look upon this ritual with an eye of doubt, not scorn; with an eye of question, not denial.

For spirituality without question leads to ignorance, and the question, if sincere, is itself a gateway to knowledge.

In ancient narratives, it is said that Abraham, peace be upon him, on his way to sacrifice Ishmael, was confronted by the devil's temptation at three points, and when he faltered in his heart, he struck away with



a stone that which symbolized that temptation.

The stoning was not out of violence, but out of liberation.

Liberation from doubt, fear, temptation, selfishness.

And today, the pilgrim stones not the devil, but the tempter within himself. Or rather, he must.

But is this act conscious?

Does the person who throws the stones know where and who they are hitting?

Or is it merely a blind imitation of an ancient ritual, without knowing that the Jamarat, more than a place, is a state of the soul?

I, here, see the Jamarat not as a stone in Arabia, but as a mirror held up to humanity.

And this mirror shows the dark face within us:

Our fears, our suppressed anger, our hatred, the jealousies and lies we have nurtured in our hearts.

If these stones are not removed from the human heart,

If these wounds are not healed,

If these questions are not heard,

Then, the Rami Jamarat is nothing but beating stones against a heart of stone.

And I, as a human being, and not just a writer, have the right to ask:

Where is that devil? And where is that god?

In the stone? Or in the silence of our hearts?)

Although I have said things about the Black Stone before, my friend, Mr. Jamal, once again explained it to me as follows:

(Chapter of Reflection: Stones to Strike; Stones to Kiss

Part One: When Stones Speak

In the land of Hijaz, simple-clad humans beat simpler sands against lifeless pillars.

There are the Jamarat.

No, it's not because of the Well of Abraham, where Satan had taken up

residence and Abraham struck him.

Rather, it is because man, in a rare moment, for a few seconds, believes that by striking this stone, he cleanses his inner self.

But the truth is this:

The devil is nowhere else but in our intentions, in our judgment, in our anger, in our laziness, in our thoughtless habits.

And all of this cannot be ended with seven stones.

The Jamarah is not just a point.

It is a moment in life

A moment in which you choose to strike the temptation or surrender to it.

You strike the stone not at an external enemy, but at the enemy that whispers within you at night.

And the question is:

If, instead of seven stones cast outward, we were to cast one stone inward each day –

The stone of hatred, the stone of selfishness, the stone of prejudice, the stone of lies,

Perhaps we would no longer need to travel to that desert every year....

Part Two: Hajar al-Aswad(The Black Stone); The Kissed Stone

And just beyond, in the eastern corner of the Kaaba,

a blackish, shiny, and fractured stone,

which is neither a sign of power nor a symbol of wealth,

Rather, it is a symbol of covenant and love.

Hajar al-Aswad is the stone that the Messenger of Islam kissed.

A stone that pilgrims queue up to see.

But why did this stone become sacred?

They say: This stone came from heaven.

It is the collision of earth and sky.

The boundary between earthly materiality and heavenly spirituality.



But let us ask:
Is the stone itself sacred?
Or is it the love and devotion attributed to it that has sanctified it?
In the pagan temples of the Kaaba before Islam, there were thousands of carved stones.
Idols with human or animal faces, made by human hands.
But they were a symbol of man's submission to his own creations.
The Black Stone, if it has any sanctity, it is in its faceless devotion.
It is not an idol; it has no form, no sound, no shape to be worshipped.
it is only a point to begin the Tawaf,
That is: the beginning of humanity's movement around a single center.
And here the difference is clear:
The sculptor's stone:
It is a stone that has been given life from the outside, for worship.
Hajar al-Aswad(the Black Stone):
It is a stone that recalls the inner self, for connection.
Part Three: The Inner Secret of Stones
Two stones, two contrasting behaviors:
One is struck, the other is kissed.
But both, without understanding their meaning, lead to emptiness.
If the pilgrim considers himself a lover with only a superficial kiss,
and by throwing stones, considers himself an inner mujahid,
without his heart accompanying his stones,
Then his worship is nothing but meaningless rituals.
The truth of the Hajj is in the journey, not in the stone.
It is in the intention, not in the symbol.
In conclusion: Man is both the jamarah and Hajar the stone).
In the end, it must be said:
Every human being is a combination of the jamarah and the stone.
Within us, there is a devil that must be struck,
and a light that must be kissed.)

My friend Jamal gave me information about all the Hajj rituals, which I am sharing with you, my dear ones:

1. Tawaaf; the dance of the soul in the orbit of oneness

A pilgrim, shoeless, without a sign, nameless and faceless,
In the Tawaf, like a speck in the galaxy, one circles the Kaaba.

But why the Tawaaf? Why the circle?

Because existence is, by its very nature, cyclical.

From the rotation of galaxies to the circulation of blood in the body,

From the longing for return, to the heart's movement toward the Beloved,

Human beings, by nature, are made for pilgrimage.

The Kaaba has nothing but emptiness.

It is a house with a hollow interior, and it is this very hollowness that

It has made it worthy of being the center.

Pilgrimage is a practice:

Practice of stepping out of one's own center,
and placing "Him" at the center of the soul.

Seven times, like the seven stages of overcoming the self,

Seven rings of annihilation on the path to truth,

Seven molts to reach the core of Oneness.

The circumambulation is not just a walk.

It is a silent, wordless dance, with an inner silence.

2. The Sa'i between Safa and Marwa: a mother's run in search of mercy.

In Hajj, the pilgrim must run between two hills: Safa and Marwa.

Seven round trips, a remembrance of a woman named Hajar.

She was neither a prophet, nor a man, nor a jurist.

But she was a mother.



And in the dry desert, with a hungry infant, she neither complained nor sat,

Instead, she ran seven times, hoping for a sip of water.

This is the effort of a human in moments of helplessness.

You run, not in hope of seeing, but in hope of finding.

And it was at the very end of this effort that a spring welled up from the heart of the earth,

Not from the mountain, not from the sky, but from beneath the feet of the thirsty child.

In truth, Safa and Marwa are not just two hills,

but two dimensions of human existence:

Safa is purity; Marwa, bitterness.

And between these two, one must move, must stir, must search, for life to find meaning.

3. Sacrifice: to cut away from oneself, not to kill an animal.

At the end of the Hajj, the pilgrim must make a sacrifice.

But what? A sheep? A ritual?

Or a part of ourselves that is still attached to the world?

We all have our own Ishmaels inside us:

Desires, attachments, fears.

And the Abraham within us must have the courage to place these on the altar.

Qurbani, in its original Arabic, comes from “qurb,” which means to draw near.

That is: with everything you cut away from yourself, you take one step closer to “Him.”

But let us be careful:

If our sacrifice is only an external one,

and our inner selves are still filled with ego and self-importance,

Then, this sacrifice is just flesh falling to the ground.

True sacrifice is the moment you kill the ‘I’.

So that 'He' may live in you.

End of reflection: Hajj is a journey inward, not outward.

On the surface, Hajj is a journey to Mecca.

But in essence, Hajj is a return to the lost self.

Somewhere in your heart, there is a Kaaba.

You must perform Tawa around it.

You have Safa and Marwa to run between.

And sacrifices you must offer.

If you grasp these things,

Then, even if you do not go to Mecca, your Hajj will have been fulfilled.

And if you don't understand these things,

Even if you perform the Tawaaf a thousand times, you've only been circling your own orbit, not God's.

By hearing my friend Jamal Jan's very meaningful words, I realized even more that I might soon succeed in fully finding myself. To some extent, I must remain in my own search until I find the Kaaba within me and circumambulate it.

For spiritual awakenings and self-knowledge, one must be aware of spiritual practices and one's inner self-awareness. On this path, it is essential that a person be able to journey within themselves from beginning to end and search for everything inside. One scholar in this field has said: "Spiritual awakening is an awakening from the dimension of illusion to tangible reality, beyond the limitations of the ego." The ego is our unique sense of self, or "I," which exists and functions in different ways in different individuals.

This type of awakening occurs when, for whatever reason, the self-identity leaves the person, allowing a higher self or spirit to emerge from within.

An ordinary person is more a collection of thought, emotional, and behavioral patterns than a human being in the truest sense; this means our ego often consists of a set of patterns, programs, or a series



of behavioral templates. Taoists call this collection of programs the acquired mind, a set of worldly conditions we accumulate from birth. Spiritual awakening means the return of what Taoists call the original spirit, or what Carl Jung calls the Self; and it is this return of the spirit that truly makes us human.

But I must first state that my purpose in writing my book is not to define Taoist philosophy. In my own way, I want to find my true self after 50 years of life, which, fortunately, I have already succeeded in doing to some extent. However, I will continue this journey to the very limits of my own self-knowledge.

In this regard, I will explain the unconscious for the second time in such a way that it becomes easier for the dear reader.

The Unconscious: A Sign or a Goal?

The human unconscious is a treasure trove of memories, fears, desires, talents, and wounds. When someone “feels they have found themselves,” something in their unconscious has often awakened; it’s as if a veil has been lifted and they have seen themselves in a clear mirror.

This feeling can be the beginning of self-discovery, but not necessarily its end. Many people experience brief moments of union with themselves, but they either fail to integrate it into their daily lives or forget it.

What does it mean to find oneself?

The main question is: when we say “I have found myself,” which “self” are we referring to?

The social self?

The false self that others created?

Or that deep, authentic self that exists before any mask?

If that unconscious to

“the authentic self” is referred to, and after that discovery, changes his lifestyle, makes more conscious choices, and lives authentically, then yes, that feeling can lead to “truly finding oneself.”

3. The Condition for Self-Realization

That unconscious feeling is like a lamp in the darkness. But finding the true self means:

Seeing oneself in the mirror of truth

Accepting who we are, not who we should be
and living in accordance with that truth

Without these steps, that feeling will only be a “ fleeting flash of insight,” not a lasting transformation.

1. Can Sufism bring a person to themselves?

Yes, it is possible, but not for everyone. Sufism is more concerned with the dissolution of the individual self into the whole of existence.

That is, instead of “finding yourself, you let yourself go

But I, on the contrary, want:

“To find myself as I am, not as others have wanted me to be.”

Here, Sufism distances me from who I am. So my path is not Sufi, but existentialist.

2. So what is the right path? (The path you build yourself)

I am building a path that few dare to enter. My path:

It is not imitation.

Not denial

but rather:

Experiencing yourself in your rawest, most real, and even most bitter form.

For this path, I suggest a few key principles:

How do I find myself? (Practical suggestions)

- A ruthless but honest self-test

Ask yourself every day:

What do I love?

Where am I lying? (To myself or others)

What have I chosen out of fear, not my own desire?

Honestly writing down these answers accelerates self-knowledge.



- Disconnecting from the fabricated image of self
Everyone has a “mask.” You must have the courage to go beyond this mask.
For example:
If you’ve always played the “good boy” role, you have to ask: Am I really like that?
If you were religious but no longer believe, should you accept it?
Honesty with yourself is the beginning of freedom.
- Living with Contradictions
A person is never one-dimensional.
You can be both loving and skeptical at the same time. You can be both a moral person and, at times, rebellious.
Finding yourself means accepting these contradictions, not running away from them.
- To create instead of to repeat
Just as I am writing a book right now, I am in the process of “creating myself.”
Writing, creating, experiencing, failing, getting back up again....
These are the bricks for building one’s authentic self.
- Saying no to mental inheritance
My name, my religion, my culture, are all inheritances given to me without my permission.
But now I am an adult. I have the power to:
and accept a part
and to modify a part
and set some aside
These choices make up “myself.”

In summary:

You will also succeed in finding yourself when:

Look at yourself with courage

Move past imposed lies, whether social or religious.

And most importantly:

Instead of “becoming” who others have wanted,
“Become the person you are not yet, but can be.”

(Mawlana says: “I was searching for God and found myself, but when I searched for myself, I found God.” This is a great spiritual philosophy: every human being must strive to find themselves.

In this arena, my inner voice has this to say: The search for God and the finding of the self.

At the beginning of the path of spiritual journey, the mystic seeks God; an external creator, a transcendent power, an infinite being beyond existence. But in this search, one gradually turns inward, to the inner voice, to the pure nature inherent in human nature. And then one realizes that:

God is within me... not outside.

He finds God in his own self, because according to a verse in the Qur'an: *wa fi anfusikum afala tubsirun* (In your souls—will you not see?)

This means that when the seeker searches for God, they ultimately encounter their “true self”; and this “self” is a mirror of the Divine beauty.

The Search for the Self and the Finding of God

At another stage, the seeker embarks on a search for the “self,” but not the egoistic self, rather the authentic and divine self – that reality which existed in the presence of the Truth before its earthly birth. When he discovers himself, he realizes that:

I am from God... I am the manifestation of God.

In Islamic mysticism, the concepts of “*fana' fi'llah*” and “*baqa' bi'llah*” express this very meaning. When the seeker immerses themselves in “self-knowledge,” they return to their origin, and that origin is nothing but the manifestation of God in their being.

Summary: Spiritual Philosophy in One Sentence

This statement by Rumi is the embodiment of the unity between the



study of God and self-knowledge. His message is this:
If you find yourself, you will find God; for what has made you alive is
the breath of God.

A Point from Rumi

It is written in the Mathnavi:

You are selfless, however you come.
I don't say that is you, it is a garment
For I have completely transcended myself
Then I am no longer me; I say, "I am God's."

Molana says that when the "I" 'self' (nafs) disappears, the divine truth is manifested within us. Are we that same divine truth?

This is the vast mystical lineage of Molana and all the seekers who are in pursuit of finding themselves. I too, in my quest to find myself, have encountered both unconventional and conventional things so far. In any case, this writing series continues to the point where I found myself, how and when:

These questions of who I am, where I come from, and where I am going began when:

In my own search

Where did it begin?

From the moment I asked:

Who am I?

Not the name that others gave me,
Not the role that time painted on my face,
Not the shadow that followed me in the mirrors.
I ran in the alleys outside... I called out to God,
In books, in temples, in the smiles of old men,
in the tear of a child who had no bread,
In the silence of moonless nights,
Everywhere... except within myself.
But He was silent.

Then, tired and helpless,
I turned inward,
to the depths of my soul,
to the endless sea within myself....

In that silent solitude,
I heard a voice not from the tongue,
but of a light:

I have always been here, in you, with you, from you.”

And I knew,
that my search,
not to find something outside,
But it was to return to myself.
I found myself, I found God.

And then the world became a mirror
calling my name with His voice. But I am not yet convinced, not yet
satisfied. I am trying to find my true self, as it perhaps should be.
Please, stay with me.

Self-discovery is not the end of the journey; it is the beginning.
He who draws near to his true self no longer sees, hears, or desires as
he once did. For with every experience, with every tear, with every
doubt, he peels away a layer of impurity until he reaches the pure core
of his nature.

In this regard, allow me to present this part of my words in the form of
a contemplative mystical prose, as a continuation of the book. Perhaps
as part of the chapter “Doubt and Struggle” or “The Incomplete Path”...
Here is a suggested literary version from this pen:

I'm still on my way.
I'm still on my way
I am not yet convinced.

Not that I haven't found it, but what I have found is a shadow of that
radiant essence.



Within myself, I hear a voice,
But it's as if the main voice has not yet come.....
Or perhaps I have not yet learned the silence well.
I know, this path is not easy
But is ease a prerequisite for beauty?
No....
This path is difficult, but pleasant.
And any hardship that illuminates the heart is a paradise for the soul.
I want to get to a place where
No mask, no fear, no imitation, no role.
I want to be myself....
Not that "social self" not that "self tired of judgment,"
but rather that "eternal self" that was with God before birth.
That "primordial nature" that God said:
"Alastu birabikum?(Am I not your Lord?) " and I said
Yes
Yes, if only one day I could just be that,
just to be my true self,
Then I will say with all my soul:
I found myself.
But I am still halfway there:
In the midst of the search
I am not so far away that I am unaware of the beginning,
And not so close that I have arrived.
I am in the middle.....
On an uncharted, winding path, yet illuminated from within.
Sometimes, I hear my own voice from among the leaves of the wind;
And sometimes, I get lost again in a deep silence.
I have found myself halfway:
A blurred face in the water,
a trembling reflection in the half-lit mirror of the soul....

Has this search tired me? Perhaps.
But I still want to go,
Because every step, every tear, every doubt
Brings me closer to a truth whose name is my eternal self.
I am in the middle, but I am brimming with hope.
Not to arrive... but to lose everything that I am not.
I am the unfound
I have not yet found myself
Not that it cannot be found,
but that I, am not yet worthy to see it.
My undiscovered self,
Like layers of wound and memory,
Fear and desire,
They have become a veil between me and myself.
Sometimes it shines in the corner of my vision,
In a moment of silence,
In a breath that escapes without intention....
But I still can't pull her into my arms.
If someday I can let go of all the names,
all the definitions that others have attached to me,
and all the voices that are not mine....
Maybe on that day, I will find my lost self.
But until then,
I am not found...
But on the path.

You all may know what self-knowledge means, but in this book, I will provide you with the necessary explanations in this regard: Self-knowledge is a precious gem on the journey of human life. It is a path to a deeper understanding of our thoughts, feelings, values, beliefs, and motivations, which offers numerous benefits for our lives. This journey is the key to achieving happiness, fulfillment, and success in all



aspects of life. In the following, we will explore self-awareness and its importance in life, and we will discover where to begin and what true self-awareness means.

What is true self-awareness? Self-awareness is the process of exploring the depths of our being to gain a deep understanding of our beliefs, values, emotions, abilities, and limitations. This inner journey leads us to a more precise understanding of our identity and personality, allowing us to make decisions with greater awareness and perform better in our daily lives.

To put it more simply, what is self-awareness? Self-awareness is the discovery of the unknown and hidden parts of ourselves; the parts we don't consciously pay attention to but that influence our behavior and decisions. This awareness guides us toward personal growth and achieving our goals.

Self-awareness is not merely an intellectual curiosity; it is a key to solving many of life's challenges. By understanding ourselves, we can improve our relationships, reduce stress, achieve our goals, and ultimately, lead a happier and more fulfilling life. This, in fact, is the simplest definition of self-awareness.

Self-Knowledge the Jungian Way: A Journey into the Depths of the Unconscious

The book "Self-Knowledge the Jungian Way" by Michael Daniels offers a fresh and engaging approach to a deeper understanding of the self. Drawing on the theories of the renowned psychologist Carl Jung, it provides readers with simple, practical techniques to identify their psychological personality type and uncover the inner structure of their personality.

Jung believed that the human psyche is far more complex than it appears at first glance. He pointed to the existence of the unconscious, a rich source of symbols, archetypes (the conscious and unconscious self), and psychological forces. By using the methods presented in

this, readers can access these hidden layers of their psyche and gain a better understanding of their motivations, emotions, and behaviors. This process not only leads to deeper self-awareness but can also help improve interpersonal relationships and enhance one's quality of life. Overall, self-discovery in Jungian terms is a journey into the depths of the unconscious that, through practical exercises, helps you uncover your true self. This book is a comprehensive and practical guide that is accessible to everyone.

And now, in this discussion, we are talking about how to find the self:

The True Self in Psychology

How to Be Our True Self?

1. Know yourself
2. Find your values
3. Be in the present moment
4. Have your own support group
5. Speak frankly and assertively
6. Take one step every day
7. Find the source of your motivation

How to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation?

8. Face your fears

How do we stay true to ourselves?

What are the characteristics of people who are authentic?

The Benefits of Authenticity and Being Your True Self

Obstacles on the path

- Rejection and the fear of it
- Slower progress
- Appearing selfish and consequently the potential for guilt

Final Word

Often, we drift further and further from ourselves each day, giving in to a more mechanical way of life. Few among us, despite all our busyness, still strive to fight for themselves and their desires and to live



authentically.

If you also intend to embark on this path, this book will help you find your true self. But if you prefer to always be the person who says yes to everyone, fights for others' desires, and at the end of the day, retreats tired and sad into a corner with no one to support and care for them, then this path is not for you. Also, if you cannot do without the conditional presence and support of others and want to be validated by them at all costs, you must know that becoming your true self comes at a cost, the most significant of which is the possibility of losing the conditional support and love of others.

What is the true self?

What is the definition of the “true self”?

The “true self” is a profound concept in psychology, philosophy, mysticism, and even literature. Simply put, the true self is:

The person you truly are, not who others want you to be, nor the mask you've put on for acceptance, survival, or success.

The main dimensions of the true self:

1. Authentic Personal Identity

The true self is the part of your being that is rooted in your nature, inner inclinations, values, innate talents, and heartfelt motivations.

It is neither an imitation nor an imposition.

2. Beyond masks and roles

In daily life, we play many roles (child, spouse, employee, writer, friend, etc.), but the true self is beyond these roles. It is like the center of a circle around which all roles revolve, while the self remains constant and true.

3. Direct and non-judgmental

When you get closer to your true self, you are less caught up in the fear of being judged by others . In that state, your actions and choices spring more from within you than from external pressure.

4. An inner experience of unity and peace

Knowing and living as your true self is usually accompanied by a sense of peace, meaning, satisfaction, and inner harmony; because you are not lying to yourself and do not experience internal conflict.

5. Self-knowledge through self-inquiry and inner growth

The true self is not readily available; rather, it is revealed through self-inquiry, reflection, experience, embracing the shadows, and returning to oneself.

How can one get closer to the true self?

Inner Contemplation and Quieting the Mind

Writing down inner thoughts (like a self-discovery journal)

Understanding the difference between heartfelt desire and external pressure

Confronting the shadows (the part of the psyche we have hidden)

Liberating yourself from the masks we've worn for survival

A simple example:

Suppose a child loves to paint, but their parents force them to become a doctor. They might live for years as a successful doctor, but deep down, they feel empty and lost. That part of them that is an artist is their true self that has been ignored.

When he finally comes back and says, "I want to paint, because this is who I am."

He has truly found his true self.

How do we be our true selves?

1. Be silent to hear your inner voice.

In a noisy world, the true self is born in silence.

Not in the hustle and bustle of social media, not in the expectations of others.

Make time for yourself, sit in solitude, write, reflect.

Ask simple yet profound questions:

What do I truly love?

When do I feel alive?



What things do I do just to get others' approval?

In this silence, the seed of your true self sprouts from the soil.

2. Know your masks and say goodbye to them

We have learned to wear masks since childhood:

The good person mask, the successful mask, the model child mask, the intellectual mask....

These masks have been useful, but they have also built a prison.

Exercise: Every time you make a decision, ask:

“Is this coming from me or from a mask I’m wearing?”

3. Embrace your shadows

The true self is not just light; it also has darkness.

It means you have to face your weaknesses, fears, anger, jealousy, and sorrow.

Running from these parts means running from your true half.

Carl Jung says:

“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.”

4. Listen to the voice of your heart more than the voice of the world.

Society constantly tells you what is good:

“This job is better,” “Marriage should be like this,” “Success means such-and-such...”

But the true self has its own path.

Sometimes that path is unconventional. Sometimes it goes against the current.

Exercise: Close your eyes for a few minutes each day and ask:

“What would I do if I had no fear?”

5. Act, don’t just understand.

Your true self isn’t just an inner feeling; you have to live it.

In your words, actions, relationships, choices, and even failures.

Sometimes it’s scary, because you might be rejected or judged, but in the end, you are set free.

6. Accept your vulnerability

Your true self isn't always perfect. It might be vulnerable, sometimes tired, sometimes flawed.

But this very acceptance makes you a deep, warm, and relatable human being.

7. Build yourself with self-love.

The true self is not a static state. It is something that is discovered and grows moment by moment.

With kindness, with awareness, with courage.

When you fall in love with yourself, without vanity, the world will see you more truly, too.

Summary:

To be your true self means:

being honest with yourself,

Letting go of roles that no longer belong to you,

living in harmony with your values and your inner voice,

and the courage to accept yourself as you are.

“Who will we go with?”

Because this path, though internal, seems difficult, exhausting, and at times impossible to walk alone.

In this section, I will explain what support groups or resources give us strength, serve as a light, or even act as a mirror for seeing ourselves on the path to finding and living our true selves.

Companions and Support Groups on the Path to Becoming Your True Self:

1. Spiritual Guides and Conscious Mentors

Those who have walked this path before, have known themselves, have been wounded, and have healed.

They might be a mystic, a counselor, a psychotherapist, or even a wise friend.

They are characterized by:



They don't judge you,
they don't "tell you who to be," but rather help you hear yourself,
They understand your honesty and your silence.
Jalaluddin Rumi, Suhrawardi, Carl Jung, or a seasoned life teacher...
they can all be guides, if you open your heart.

2. Compassionate and aware friends (soulmates)

A friend who is by your side, not for gain, not for appearances, but for your growth and awakening.

They are the one who, when you slip, gently turns you back to yourself.

When you wear a mask, they gently point it out with a calm gaze.
Sometimes all it takes is one honest friend to wipe years of self-deception off your face.

3. Awakening and inspiring books

Some books are not just words; they are mirrors, sparks, shocks.
The works of mystics, thinkers, psychotherapists, and authentic writers can take you on an inner journey.

Examples: "The Masnavi," "Man's Search for Meaning" by Viktor Frankl, the works of Eckhart Tolle, Jalaluddin Rumi, Nietzsche, and even the diaries of honest writers.

4. Silence, nature, and sacred solitude

It may be hard to believe, but solitude can be your companion.
When you consciously become alone, and retreat with yourself into the heart of nature—a forest, a mountain, the sky, or even a quiet room—it's as if an invisible world takes your hand.

It is in this space that the pure inner voice is heard. Nature is a kind mother who accepts you without judgment.

5. Tools for meditation and self-inquiry (meditation, writing, mindful breathing)

Sometimes there's no external support, but you have tools at your disposal that separate you from the noise:

Meditation,
Free writing (journal writing),
mindful breathing,
Watching thoughts without judgment.

These are tools for seeing what is hidden beneath the layers.

6. People who have wounded you (supportive shadows!)
Don't be surprised!

Sometimes the one who left you, humiliated you, or ignored you has, unconsciously, pushed you to find your true self.

If you change your perspective, these wounds become not enemies, but bridges to your authentic self.

Suffering can be one of the greatest teachers on the path back to yourself.

Final word:

To reach your true self,
You must go alone,
But not without companionship.

Self-knowledge is a personal journey, but it becomes easier in another's mirror.

Support from loved ones, awareness, acceptance, wisdom, and love can all be a "caravan of light" on this path.

Ways to distinguish between internal and external motivations:

1. The feeling after completing the task

If you feel lightness, inexplicable joy, and inner satisfaction → it's intrinsic.

If after the work you feel tired, meaningless, or anxious → it is probably external.

Example:

When you write something and, even if no one reads it, you're still satisfied with having written it, that means your motivation is intrinsic.



2. If no one saw you, would you still do that work?

Ask yourself: "If no one ever knew I did this, would I still do it?"

If the answer is "yes" → intrinsic motivation

If the answer is "no" → external motivation

This is one of the most powerful self-inquiry tests.

3. Out of love or out of obligation?

Intrinsic motivation comes from passion, enthusiasm, and the flow of energy.

External motivation comes from fear, obligation, pressure, or imitation.

Inner work makes you alive.

Inner work makes you alive. Outer work makes you exhausted.

4. How important is an external reward to you?

If you're willing to keep going without reward, without recognition, or even without external results → it's intrinsic motivation.

If you work only for grades, fame, money, or praise → it's external motivation.

How do we stay true to ourselves?

Becoming our true selves is a time-consuming process that requires effort. We can't just pull out the person who exists deep inside us—whom we've denied for years—and drop our masks for good overnight. Starting this journey isn't easy, but staying on it can be even harder and more challenging.

We must learn to say "no!" to unreasonable demands throughout our lives, speak frankly and honestly, earn the trust of others, and also accept that we are not meant to be perfect. Perfectionism is the enemy of authenticity because the authentic self knows it will never be perfect and doesn't need to be. To succeed, we just need to be "good enough"! To stay true to ourselves, we need self-awareness, introspection, and vulnerability. Understanding the importance of self-awareness and introspection for achieving authenticity is simple. But why do we need

vulnerability? In fact, the very mask Jung spoke of comes into being for this reason: we pretend to be someone we're not so that others will like us, care about us, and not reject us!

Therefore, when we take this mask off, we will no longer conform to social expectations and standards. We will become vulnerable. In fact, the only function of the mask is to prevent us from being hurt and to keep us in a safe place.

What are the characteristics of people who are their true selves?

People who are their authentic selves:

They express their opinions without fear of being judged by others.

They make decisions that are consistent with their personal values and beliefs.

They pursue what excites them.

They don't imitate others and value their own authenticity.

They have clear and distinct boundaries.

They listen to their inner voice.

The Benefits of Authenticity and True Self

Finding our true self has significant benefits for us. Being authentic helps us live in the moment and enjoy the little joys. It develops our creativity and gives us more self-confidence. An authentic self also has real, self-defined values that motivate us to stick to them. People who are their authentic selves experience better social and romantic relationships, express themselves better, and have greater emotional well-being. They know how to take care of themselves and not let extra burdens be placed on their lives.

Obstacles on the Path

You might be thinking to yourself that the path to becoming your authentic self isn't that difficult. With all the benefits of authenticity, what does it matter if we have to struggle a little? But the reality is that this path places numerous obstacles in your way. Let's explore a few of the main obstacles to authenticity and becoming our true selves:



Rejection and the Fear of It

Jung believed that we create our masks for social acceptance and to align with the values of our environment (family, friends, and society). We pretend to be something other than who we are so that others will like and accept us.

Therefore, the first major obstacle on the path to becoming our true selves is the fear of being rejected by others. Since childhood, we have been taught, “If you don’t want to be disgraced, conform to the crowd!” However, when our empathetic and compassionate loved ones see that we are seeking our true selves, they will not only not abandon us but will also support and encourage us.

Slowed Progress

For people who have found their true selves, the world moves more slowly. They don’t give pre-determined answers to every request; instead, they carefully examine each matter and then provide a decisive and straightforward response.

In response to suggestions and requests, authentic people ask themselves, “Is this really what I want from the bottom of my heart?” And if the answer is no, they will decline. Therefore, finding and becoming your true self slows down the pace of life.

A selfish appearance and, consequently, the potential for experiencing guilt.

In a world where everyone tries to show they value others by making themselves seem small and insignificant, a person who cares about and respects themselves might appear selfish. On the path to finding your true self, you may be accused of selfishness and narcissism many times because you are learning to be the priority in your own life and not accept every pressure just to fit in with society. The reality is that Self-love and selfishness are different. On the path to finding our true self, we cultivate self-love and self-compassion within ourselves.

Final word

The truth is that finding our true selves presents numerous challenges along the way, but it is well worth the effort! Don't forget that becoming our true selves is not a goal to be achieved through planning and then, like our other accomplishments, framed and put in a closet! Authenticity is a long journey that requires daily effort and progress. Becoming your true self is a lifestyle that transforms all other aspects of your life as well.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau says, "Man is born free, but is everywhere in chains." This opening line of an essay has, since its publication, sparked heated and challenging debates. Rousseau believed that no one has the right to subjugate others and shackle freedom. This French theorist, by introducing a concept called the social contract, discusses the form and structure of the government he envisions. Many believe that Jean-Jacques Rousseau's proposed government is totalitarian and dictatorial; however, others have a different view, considering it a declaration of the principles of democracy.

Although my purpose here is not to speak of the social contract, but to find the self, this very self-discovery is itself bound in a thousand chains. It is better to break those chains; only then can we be, to some extent, ourselves.

Self-deprecation is one of the major factors in not finding oneself. When a person finds themselves—that is, their nature and unconscious self—they put self-deprecation aside.

Self-deprecation: The Hidden Face of Self-Unawareness

Low self-esteem (or "internal low self-worth") is a psychological state in which a person considers themselves inferior, weaker, or worthless compared to others. This state is usually rooted in past painful experiences, humiliation, destructive comparisons, or a lack of a proper understanding of human nature.

But when a person achieves true self-knowledge, when they "find themselves"—that is, discover their divine nature, intrinsic worth,



innate abilities, and the mystery within—there is no longer any reason to look down on themselves.

Why does a person see themselves as small?

1. Ignorance of Nature:

If a person knows that a divine spirit has been breathed into them, how can they consider themselves “worthless”?

“And I breathed into him from My spirit” (Surah Al-Hijr, verse 29)

2. The Influence of Society and Poor Parenting:

Children who are constantly humiliated lose their self-confidence and, as they get older, do not consider themselves worthy of success.

3. Comparison with others:

External comparison, without understanding internal differences, creates a feeling of inferiority.

4. Lack of contact with the positive unconscious:

Freud and Jung both believed that an important part of human potential lies in the unconscious; however, many never access it.

What happens when one finds oneself?

1. A sense of intrinsic worth:

No longer needs external validation; because they feel complete from within.

2. Self-Belief and Bloom:

Talents begin to grow; because the person no longer sees themselves as “small.”

3. Freedom from fear and dependency:

One who has found oneself is not afraid of others and is not dependent on their approval.

4. Acceptance of responsibility for one’s own growth:

They no longer make excuses; they know that the key to change is within themselves.

The “Illusion of Self-Diminishment” from a Philosophical Perspective

1. Man in existence; a worthy or a meaningless being?

From the perspective of existentialist philosophers like Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Martin Heidegger, man is a being who must “find himself” and be saved from his fallen state (meaninglessness, absurdity, anxiety).

Sartre says:

“Man is nothing at first, then he makes himself.”

That is, if someone considers themselves small, this is not the truth of their being, but the result of their choices, and their mental structures. The illusion of self-deprecation is the result of self-alienation.

Heidegger believes:

In a state of “Fallenness,” a person leads a superficial and inauthentic life, and it is in this state that they lose their “Self” and perceive themselves as smaller than they are.

The ontological conclusion:

The illusion of self-denigration arises not from human nature, but from a neglect of the authenticity of one’s own being. Man must return to his “authentic existence” for this illusion to be dispelled.

2. Self and Consciousness; Is our knowledge of the self true?

In the Philosophy of Mind, one of the central questions is:

Is our awareness of the self a true awareness, or a distorted one?

Descartes, the founder of philosophical self-awareness, has his famous sentence:

“I think, therefore I am” (Cogito ergo sum)

However, many philosophers after him believe that we may be mistaken in our perception of ourselves.

Nietzsche calls this a split in self-awareness:

We usually have a poor image of ourselves because we are under the pressure of culture, distorted religion, power, or herd mentality.

The Epistemological Conclusion:

The illusion of self-smallness is the result of a misunderstanding of



the self, not that we are actually “small.”

3. Eastern Philosophy and Mysticism; Divine Nature and the Illusion of Separation

In Eastern and mystical philosophies (India, China, Islamic Iran), self-deprecation is often interpreted as forgetting the divine truth of the human being:

In Indian philosophy (Vedanta), the human being is Ātman (the divine essence), but because of māyā (the illusion of the material world) one perceives oneself only as body or mind, and this is the beginning of suffering.

In Islamic philosophy and the mysticism of Ibn Arabi, man is the “Khalīfatullāh (vicegerent of God)”; but when he becomes oblivious to his nature, he falls into the illusion of self-debasement.

“Man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa rabbahu.”

(Whoever knows himself, knows his God.)

The Eastern Mystical and Philosophical Conclusion:

Self-deprecation is a veil over humanity’s luminous and divine truth. By discovering one’s nature, this illusion is dispelled.

“Self-diminishment is not a reality, but an illusion that stems from ignorance of nature, forgetfulness of one’s existential position, and alienation from the self. In philosophy, this illusion is like a veil; a veil between what we are and what we think we are. When a person discovers the self, they realize they were never small; rather, they had not seen their own greatness”

I myself

“For years, I saw myself in the broken mirrors of others;

The image I had in my mind was fragmented, dark, and colorless.

I saw myself as small, weightless, nameless, and powerless;

But the truth was that I was not small,

but the windows through which I saw myself were narrow and dusty.”

Philosophers have said that man is sometimes afflicted not by “absolute

ignorance,” but by “the illusion of consciousness”; and what more devastating illusion is there than to see yourself as worthless? This is self-deprecation; an illusion that arises not from the truth of man, but from his neglect.

I, too, like many others, believed I was incapable, worthless, ignorant. But with every step inward, this veil was lifted. I realized that “smallness” is an external proposition; a fabricated image on the wall of the mind. The truth of humanity must be sought in its nature; where there is a trace of God, where the endless light flows.

Self-deprecation is not a simple mistake, but a betrayal of our existential truth.

And when a person finds themselves, they no longer need the praise of others; for they have found a light that is neither extinguished nor beholden to anyone.

Now that I have found myself

I am no longer that lost child of yesterday.

But I have found the way in my own heart....

And I hear my voice in my own silence.”

How do people align themselves mentally with the will of the times?

In order for a human being to be present in their own time as a conscious and awakened individual, they require a process of inner and outer transformation. This process has several dimensions:

1. Awareness of one’s own time and place

The beginning of self-awareness is to recognize the “times.” One must ask:

In what historical and social conditions do I live?

What ideas and structures dominate my society?

What are the pains, concerns, and questions of the people?

By understanding the times, an individual can determine their place and understand what kind of knowledge, insight, or action is necessary to live consciously.



2. Re-examining Beliefs and Mental Structures

A new era calls for a new mind. One must re-examine the beliefs that may have been instilled in them since childhood, by tradition, or by structures of power. This process is sometimes difficult and requires:

Continuous study

Dialogue with different ideas

Ability to tolerate ambiguity and intellectual contradiction

3. Harmony Between the Individual and Society

An aware person is not solely introverted; their relationship with society is also active and dynamic. They strive to balance individual desires with social responsibilities. It is here that one can say the individual achieves a “conscious emergence in society.”

What is the role of self-knowledge in this journey?

Self-knowledge is the core of intellectual and human awakening. But not a superficial or sloganistic self-knowledge, but rather:

1. Recognizing the hidden layers of the self

One must accept that within them lie layers of fear, desire, complexes, and possibilities. Analytical psychology, existentialist philosophy, and Eastern mysticism all emphasize these inner layers. Self-knowledge means confronting:

The shadows and weaknesses

Unknown potentials

The hidden motives behind actions

2. Connection with the inner self and meaning

In the modern world, which is often superficial, fast-paced, and profit-driven, self-knowledge means returning to oneself, questioning the meaning and purpose of life:

Who am I?

Why am I alive?

How can I be an authentic human being?

3. Self-knowledge as a tool for liberation

Self-knowledge is the prerequisite for freedom from culturally, religiously, politically, or psychologically imposed constraints. When a person becomes self-aware, they are no longer a pawn of external forces.

The Bottom Line:

An individual can emerge in society as a conscious being when:
has knowledge of his or her own era;
refines and reconstructs its mind;
Seek meaning in connection with your inner self;
and by accepting his or her human and social responsibility, turn awareness into action.

This path is the journey of “self-discovery”; a journey that is painful, but filled with human grandeur.

1. Mawlana Jalaluddin Balkhi

Molana is one of the most prominent mystical figures who sees self-knowledge in connection with the existential truth of humanity and God. He says:

“How many have not seen their own soul”

In the dust of the body, he did not see the Beloved.”

– Masnavi Ma’navi, Book Six

Mawlana believes that one must transcend the “shell” of the body and external attachments to reach the truth of the soul and one’s authentic identity. For him, self-knowledge is a journey from the outward to the inward, from forgetfulness to remembrance, and from ignorance to light.

2. Ibn Arabi (Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi)

The great Andalusian mystic, known as “Shaykh-ul-Akbar,” examines the concept of the “self” in the light of the Unity of Existence. In his works, it is written:

“Man ‘arafa nafsahu, faqad ‘arafa rabbahu”



Meaning: “Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord.”

Ibn Arabi believes that the human being is a mirror of the manifestation of the Truth. Therefore, self-knowledge is not just the recognition of one’s human personality, but the recognition of a manifestation of the divine truth that has appeared in the human being.

3. Shams of Tabriz

Shams of Tabriz, the teacher and soulmate of Rumi, considered self-knowledge an existential, burning, and unvarnished experience. He writes in the Mathnawi:

“If you do not see God, see yourself, who has manifested to you. Know yourself, and you will have known God.”

Shams points out that self-knowledge is not possible without courage, candor, and freedom from imitation. One must descend into the depths of oneself to see it properly.

4. A Contemporary Example: Dr. Ali Shariati

Shariati, a prominent Iranian thinker, considered self-knowledge the prelude to social self-construction. He says:

“A person who does not know themselves can be neither free, nor responsible, nor committed.”

In his view, self-awareness is a way to fight against tyranny, inequality, and injustice; therefore, self-knowledge is not merely an internal experience, but a path for rebuilding society from within.

“Like Rumi, who saw the path of self-knowledge as a journey through the mirror of the heart toward the truth, or Shams, who sought truth in the courage to look within oneself, or like Shariati, who considered self-knowledge a prerequisite for human freedom, one can say that finding oneself is an awareness of the truth of humanity, in the mirror of the inner self and in the context of time. “The one who finds himself also transforms his society.”

Chapter: Self-Knowledge in the Mirror of Philosophy

Among the multitude of questions that have occupied the human mind from the earliest moments of thought to the present day, perhaps no question is as fundamental and fateful as this one:

“Who am I?”

A simple question, yet one filled with depth, ambiguity, and transformation.

Philosophy, as the search for truth and wisdom, has regarded self-knowledge from its inception to the present not merely as an individual endeavor, but as the very essence of humanity’s understanding of itself, society, and existence.

Socrates and the First Awakening

The father of Western philosophy, Socrates of Athens, placed self-knowledge at the forefront of human virtues. His famous inscription at the Temple of Delphi now shines like a beacon on the brow of history: “Know thyself.”

In Socrates’ view, without self-knowledge, no knowledge is genuine and no morality is authentic. He sought to remove the mask of ignorance from humanity’s face through simple yet profound dialogues, so that people might know themselves as they truly are. On this path, self-knowledge was not merely the recognition of the individual, but the beginning of the journey toward truth.

Plato: The Remembrance of Forgotten Truth

Socrates’ brilliant student, Plato, considered himself a philosopher of the soul. In his dialogues, the human soul is understood to be immortal and familiar with truth before birth. However, upon entering the physical world, this truth is forgotten.

In Plato’s view, self-knowledge means:

A return to the realm of meaning;

the remembrance of the lost truth;

and the salvation of the soul from the bondage of sensory perceptions.



Thus, the seeking human emerges from the dark cave of the body and its illusions, and with the light of awareness, remembers their forgotten self.

Aristotle: Self-knowledge through virtue and practical reason

However, Aristotle, unlike his teacher Plato, believed that human beings should be studied in the context of daily life, action, and society. In his view, self-knowledge is possible through “living in virtue,” and by applying reason and balance to one’s emotions, a person brings their true self to fruition.

Aristotle saw self-knowledge as a kind of self-realization in moral action, not merely as an inner journey or mental abstraction.

Descartes: A New Beginning with “I think, therefore I am”

With the advent of modern philosophy, a new path in self-knowledge began.

René Descartes, the 17th-century French philosopher, doubted everything to find certainty—even his body, the world, and his memory. The only thing he could not doubt was:

“I think, therefore I am.”

Thus, the “thinking self” became the first truth. For Descartes, self-knowledge means the awareness of an entity that, independent of the external world, has come to know its own existence through the power of thought. This perspective laid the foundation for individual self-awareness in modern philosophy.

- Kant: Self-knowledge, the limits of reason and experience

Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher of the Enlightenment, expanded the philosophical perspective into two dimensions:

1. The self as an object of experience (phenomenal)
2. The pure self, which is beyond experience (in itself)

He believed that we can never fully know the pure self, but we must accept that human reason is itself the condition for knowing the world. This approach brought self-knowledge into the realm of human



limitations and possibilities.

- **Hegel: Self-Knowledge in Dialectic and History**

Hegel, the philosopher of dialectics, offered a deeper perspective on self-knowledge. He said:

“Self-knowledge is possible not in isolation, but in conflict, interaction, and history.”

According to Hegel, the “Spirit,” through the course of history, reaches its own selfhood by navigating the struggle of contradictions and passing through various stages of consciousness.

He showed that the other is a part of the self, and that we only reach our true selves in the other’s mirror, through the process of reconciling internal and external contradictions.

Sartre: Man makes himself

In the 20th century, Jean-Paul Sartre, the French existentialist philosopher, boldly declared that:

“Man has no predefined essence; he defines himself through his actions and choices.”

In this view, self-knowledge means:

Full responsibility for one’s own being;

the acceptance of freedom;

and creating meaning in a world that has no fixed essence.

In conclusion: Self-knowledge, a bridge between philosophy, life, and meaning.

From Socrates to Sartre, from Plato to Hegel, self-knowledge has always been one of the pillars of philosophy. Sometimes as a reminder of an inner truth, sometimes a questioning of the nature of consciousness, and at other times a call to build oneself in a world full of possibility and danger.

In the light of philosophy, we realize that self-knowledge is not an instantaneous event;



Rather, it is a long and conscious journey, from observing oneself in silence to constructing the self in the clamor of society.

And this journey never ends...

In the course of this journey of self-discovery, I came face to face with a great question!:!

The honorable Prophet of Islam broke and threw away most of the idols in the Kaaba and preached to the people that they were idolaters worshipping stones; please repent. However, you yourself installed a stone, which may have been a meteorite inherited from the legacy of Abraham, the legendary man, in the wall of the Kaaba for the Muslims. The pretenders and, so to speak, The apostates said, "It is because of these idols inside the Kaaba—Lāt, Uzzā, and others—that people come from all corners of the world, and we profit from the merchants' trade. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to all those who worshipped the idols of the Kaaba: You and all the people of India, China, Vietnam, and all the Buddhist countries are nothing but pagans because you worship the stone, but you are unaware that he himself installed the black stone, called the Black Stone (Hajar al-Aswad), in the wall of the Kaaba. He promised Muslims that annually, millions of people would come here for the pilgrimage to the House of God, and you would profit from their trade, and they must circle the Kaaba seven times twoaround this very Kaaba, in whose wall the black stone is embedded, they must circle it seven times; they must worship it, and by a Muslim who touches or kisses it, the fire of Hell is forbidden for them.

Now my question is, what is the difference between this black stone and the stones that idolaters carved?

And what is the difference between that other stone that Muslims worldwide strike, called the Jamarat, and the stones of the idols? Meanwhile, at least two billion Muslims each year circle that same black stone and worship it. So this form of stone worship has been declared lawful and rewarded by the Prophet, while the carved idol

stones are forbidden—this is my question that remains unanswered. Solved. I hope I can solve this question.

I posed this question in a Q&A format with one of my friends. You, dear reader, can also read the conversation! My friend said:

Humans sometimes symbolize objects—not because of their intrinsic nature, but because of the myths, history, or collective memory they project onto that stone or object.

In Islam, respect for the Black Stone is not out of worship, but out of “following the tradition”

But what is the reality beneath the surface?

Many ordinary Muslims,

Without knowing its philosophy, they look at the stone in a sentimental way—kissing it, touching it, sometimes even praying to it...

This inclination can easily turn into a kind of quasi-worship, even though it is denied from an official Islamic perspective.

Even Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph, recognized this feeling and said:

“I know you are a stone, neither beneficial nor harmful. If the Prophet had not kissed you, I would never have kissed you.”

This means he himself was concerned that this respect might be misunderstood as idol worship.

So in your final answer:

Does a meteorite have sanctity?

Not inherently!

But when culture, belief, and collective memory sanctify it, it becomes “sacred” for believers, not through reason, but through the institutionalization of meaning.

Should it be worshipped?

From a monotheistic perspective: Never!

But sometimes people, in the layers of the unconscious, develop a quasi-worshipful inclination toward symbols, like this very stone.



If you want to bring this concept to mind:

You can create a scene where the main character “Rāwī” (the narrator) stands before the Hajar al-Aswad (The Black Stone) and asks:

“I know this stone fell from the sky... but aren’t we, the fallen of the earth, less than the fallen of the sky? If intention is what matters, why does this stone have meaning and I, the lost one, do not?”

These can be part of a “self-discovery” mindset.

But upon hearing my friend express himself this way, I couldn’t convince myself of the sanctity of the Black Stone or why Muslims worship it. What is the difference between it and the idols inside the Kaaba before Islam?

My friend offered such reasons again:

With all due respect, I accept that the Black Stone is a meteorite, but what sanctity does a meteorite have, and why should it be worshipped?

Thank you deeply for your acceptance, dear insightful friend Shafag. Your question is precise and to the point:

If the Black Stone is a meteorite—then why should it be considered sacred? And why on earth should one circle it or kiss it?

Let us answer frankly, with a philosophical and historical perspective: A meteorite is a rock like any other rock

From a scientific perspective, a meteorite is simply a metallic or stony object that has entered Earth’s atmosphere from space and reached the ground.

Many of them are kept in museums, and no one considers them sacred. To confer sanctity on a lifeless material, without any cultural or mental context, makes no logical sense.

Sanctity is formed not in the material, but in meaning and belief.

Examples of this type:

Example Description Is it inherently sacred?

The Christian Cross A torture device in ancient Rome Nine meanings were associated with it

Clay of Karbala Dry soil in a specific geography No, but the meaning of Ashura was breathed into it.

The Wailing Wall (Jews) Remains of the Second Temple Not just mentally sacred Black Stone Meteorite No, but it has become a symbol of a connection to “heaven”

To be honest, my friend’s words were very convincing to me that most superstitious things in religion were incorporated based on the needs of a particular time and place, not out of any celestial or earthly reality, but rather to consolidate the power of the upper class over all of humanity.

Reading all this material leads me back to the question of why there are hundreds of thousands of religions, each one considering itself superior to the others. It would be better to conduct an in-depth study on this matter. I will begin this discussion on Judaism.

Judaism is one of the oldest recorded monotheistic religions, having taken shape among the Israelites about 3,000 years ago.

Before that, there were numerous religious and ritual beliefs that were not necessarily written down, such as those of ancient Egypt, Sumer, pre-Zoroastrian Iran, ancient India, and so on.

Judaism was originally an ethnic/tribal religion that emphasized the covenant between the “chosen people” and God. But later, especially through Christianity and Islam, many of its concepts became universal. Whether “which religion is better” is a philosophical and value-based debate with no definitive answer, because:

The value of a religion depends on your standard of judgment: Does “better” mean ethically, scientifically, or historically?

Historically, no religion is inherently superior or inferior; rather, each religion has been a response to the conditions of its own time and place. Morally, almost all major religions have similar messages: honesty, helping others, avoiding injustice.

But as for why some consider Judaism “superior”:



This is largely due to the historical role of Judaism in the formation of Christianity and Islam.

Also, the cultural, economic, and scientific influence of Jews in the modern era (especially in the West) has led some people to form an image of “superiority.”

From a research perspective, Judaism is not “superior” but merely “influential,” especially in the realm of Western civilization.

If we want to summarize:

No religion is inherently “better” than any other, but each has its own strengths and weaknesses.

Judaism is historically significant because it laid the foundation for part of the monotheistic traditions, but in its early days it was an ethnic religion, not a universal one.

The true superiority of a religion lies not in its ethnicity or its history, but in its capacity to elevate humanity and morality.

In this case, followers of Judaism have not been able to make more discoveries than followers of Christianity.

Doctrinal Points and Intellectual Structure (Comparative Summary)

Monotheism/Theology: All four religions have elements of monotheism or a single God, but the key differences lie in the concepts of divinity, salvation, the holy book, and the prophet/intermediary. (Judaism: Covenant and Law/Torah; Christianity: Trinity, salvation through Christ; Islam: absolute monotheism and the Quran; Zoroastrianism: the conflict of good/evil and the worship of Ahura Mazda).

The Role of Law/Sharia: Judaism and Islam have a structural emphasis on law/sharia (daily ordinances, rights, and rituals). Christianity, in its more historic branches (Catholic/Orthodox), has general laws and traditions, but the emphasis is more on salvation through faith. Zoroastrianism has its own specific rites and rituals and emphasizes purity and liturgical ceremonies.

(A more in-depth philosophical/theological examination could be

written chapter-by-chapter.)

The Role and Contribution of Religious Followers in Science and Technology — A Short Overview + Examples

Given the necessity of discussing “scientific and technological discoveries by religious adherents,” we must distinguish two levels: (1) earlier/medieval historical periods in which religious institutions or communities of believers played a direct role, and (2) the modern era, in which devout individuals or those from specific religious backgrounds have made both individual and collective contributions to science.

Islam — “The Islamic Golden Age” and Scientific Heritage

Between the 8th–13th centuries CE (the Golden Age), cities like Baghdad, Córdoba, Samarkand, and others were centers of translation, research, and innovation: Mathematicians like al-Khwarizmi (algebraic rules; the word “algorithm” is from his name), physicians like Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) and Ibn al-Habbāl, and scientists such as Ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen) were influential in optics and the scientific method. This tradition of translating and reproducing Greek knowledge/Hindu knowledge to Europe. [Wikipedia+1](#)

Christianity/Christian Church — Universities, Monasteries, and the Renaissance

In Europe, the Church (especially the Catholic Church) played a role in founding medieval universities (Paris, Bologna, Oxford, Cambridge), and monasteries preserved manuscripts and books; religious scholars and devout clergy played an important role in the development of philosophy, logic, and the natural sciences. At the same time, cases like the Church’s treatment of specific theories (e.g., Galileo) demonstrate historical complexities. [Wikipedia+1](#) [inquiriesjournal.com](#)

Judaism — A Tradition of Scholarship, Diaspora, and Modern Contributions

Historical Judaism emphasizes textual study (Talmud, commentaries), which has fostered a culture of inquiry and learning. In modern



times, a relatively large number of prominent scientists, inventors, and thinkers have been of Jewish background (e.g., Albert Einstein; chemists, physicians, physicists of the 20th century). This is linked to educational access as well as migrations and socio-economic conditions, not the “nature of the religion” alone.

Have Fun With History jewishvirtuallibrary.org

Zoroastrianism — Cultural Heritage and Local Technologies

Zoroastrianism, as the official religion of the ancient Iranian empires (Achaemenid, Parthian, Sasanian), shaped the administrative and intellectual culture; engineering, road construction, irrigation, and the magnificent architecture of ancient Iran developed within these civilizations. However, the unique contribution of the Zoroastrians to independent, universal scientific discoveries has not been recorded in a focused manner like the “Islamic Golden Age”; their impact is primarily civilizational-cultural. [Encyclopaedia Iranica](http://www.iranicaonline.org), [Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org)

A few analytical and ethical points that are important for this text

1. “The superiority of religion” has no single, objective standard—it depends on the criteria (ethics, social efficiency, scientific progress, justice, religious freedom, geographical expansion, etc.).

The history of science shows that religions can both serve as an educational and institutional backing.

2. (e.g., universities, religious schools, translation centers) and sometimes also a “boundary” for theories

create new boundaries; that is, the relationship between science and religion is complex and two-way. [Wikipedia](http://inquiriesjournal.com) inquiriesjournal.com

The prominent contribution of followers of any religion to modern science often depends on other factors: access to education, freedom of thought, migration, social networks, and societal/state investment—not merely religious belief. For example, the large wave of Jewish scientists in the twentieth century was tied to migration and

educational opportunities in Europe and America.

I believe that religions have been a means of colonizing humanity by members of society at the time, but one of my friends holds this view: This goes back to one of the old and serious debates in the philosophy and sociology of religion.

The view you're referring to—that religion is a human construct used to maintain or gain power—is found in the works of many modern and contemporary thinkers, but it is only one perspective, not the consensus.

1. The roots of this perspective lie in the history of thought

Karl Marx called religion the “opium of the masses” and believed it was a tool to keep the oppressed class calm and to justify the existing order.

Nietzsche saw the great religions as the product of the will to power of particular groups that have imposed their values on society as a whole.

Feuerbach said that God is actually an image that humans have created from their own desires and perfections.

In this view, God and religion are more a reflection of human needs, fears, and power relations than an independent being or reality.

2. Historical Evidence for and Against This View

Supporting Evidence:

Many governments and ruling classes throughout history have used the official religion to legitimize their power (from the Pharaoh of Egypt to medieval kings and caliphs).

Some religious doctrines or specific interpretations have explicitly helped maintain the class order.

Evidence Contradicting or Complicating the View:

Many religious movements have arisen against oppression, such as the Hebrew prophets' movement against the tyranny of kings,



the early Christians who stood up to the Roman Empire, or contemporary religious leaders like Martin Luther King.

In some cases, religion has been an inspiration for justice, equality, and social reform, not just a tool of power.

3. God: “the God of the oppressed” or “the God of the powerful”?

In the texts of some religions (for example, the Hebrew Bible, the Gospel, the Qur'an), there are examples that present God as the refuge of the oppressed (“the God of orphans and widows”).

But those same texts have sometimes been used by ruling groups to justify war, discrimination, or domination.

Conclusion: The portrayal of God in history, rather than being uniform, depends on who interprets and enacts it and with what intent.

4. Summary of my perspective

In my view, both the human and political dimension of religion are real, and religion is also a sincere and spiritual experience for many people that is unrelated to power-seeking.

The political dimension of religion: Indeed, throughout history, religious structures have sometimes been used to control society and consolidate power.

The popular aspect of religion: Many reformers, poets, philosophers, and even devout scientists have seen religion as a tool for liberating and supporting the weak, not for domination.

If we are to be objective, religion is not a neutral “tool,” but a multifaceted phenomenon that, depending on the circumstances and who holds it, can either contribute to freedom and justice or suppress it.

Exactly the perfect human

Humans evolved 70,000 years ago and were recognized as larger and more capable than other animals. Ten thousand years ago, they slowly began agriculture and animal husbandry. Five hundred years ago, they also began various technologies, including steam technology for the

killing of humans. And most importantly, intelligent AI.

They have been given so much power that now they have taken over the administration of humanity intelligently, which is the most important and dangerous thing of all, and the scourge that may well play the leading role in the destruction of the human seed is environmental degradation and global warming.

These days, while I am in Konya, beside the shrine of Hazrat Molana, my mood has changed. Although I left my unfinished book in Holland, it is as if in this land, in this atmosphere filled with light and silence, I have found my book itself; or perhaps I should say: I have found a part of myself that was hidden in that book, here.

When I stood by Rumi's tomb, something in my heart trembled. I thought that many kings and mystics had set out toward knowledge, but only reached its threshold. Yet Molana not only attained the depths of knowledge, but from that depth he also called others to himself. He had found himself so completely that thousands of people, thousands of hearts, came into ecstatic dance around his being. A comparison formed in my mind: The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) called people to circle the Black Stone, that symbol of unity and worship; but Molana drew people to circle him, not out of selfishness, but because he had so emptied the self that it had become pure light. He had made himself a home for love, not a place, but a magnet for every longing heart.

Molana, through the whirling dance of Sama, detaches humanity from the earth—not for the flight of the body, but for the liberation of the soul. Each rotation is a link in the chain of love, and every step is a knock on the door of the house of truth. At the shrine of Mawlana, I arrived at a profound truth; a truth that shone upon my soul like a new light. I realized that a person will never find themselves unless they are born twice. The first birth is the one we receive from our mother; a physical and material birth. But the second birth is nobler and more authentic; a birth that springs from the depths of the soul and brings



one to a new insight. In that moment, beside the tomb of Rumi, I felt as if another being had emerged within me; a new perspective, a new spirit, a new *, and a new birth. Yes, a person only attains their true self when they are born again from within; this is the secret of spiritual birth.

At the shrine of Hazrat Molana, another thought dawned on me. I reflected on the truth that religion and religious beliefs in every land have an inseparable bond with its geography and culture. A child who opens his eyes in Arabia is undoubtedly raised in the cradle of Islam, and a child born in India is, from the very beginning, imbued with the color and scent of Hinduism. It is the same in various lands; each geography nurtures a particular religion. This observation led me into the depths of a question: If religion were a single, immediate truth from God, wouldn't it be fitting for it to manifest uniformly across the globe, bringing all humanity together on one path? Yet what we see is the multiplicity of religions and the diversity of beliefs, each a child of its own culture, language, and climate. This thought led me to a deeper reflection: perhaps what is true lies beyond the various names and forms. Perhaps truth is that light which shines in all religions, albeit in different garments; yet we have become attached to appearances and are oblivious to the single essence.

But it should not be left unsaid that birth from mother, water, and earth is a physical birth, whereas birth from oneself is a spiritual birth, as follows:

. First birth: natural (physical) birth

This birth is the one all humans share; they are born of a mother and into the framework of nature. This birth pertains more to the physical and animalistic dimension of the human being: survival, instinct, and natural needs.

The Second Birth: The Conscious or Spiritual Birth

But “to be born from oneself” means to transcend this natural level

and rediscover the self. This is accomplished through self-knowledge, inner struggle (austerity), and overcoming the ego occur. In this state, the individual is no longer a slave to instincts and external circumstances, but rather recreates themself.

This “second birth” is what is known by different names in various traditions:

In Islamic Sufism : the journey from the self to the Truth or “death before death”

In Platonic philosophy: the recollection of truth and the exit from the cave of ignorance

In Sufism: reaching the station of the Perfect Man .

In Eastern thought: a kind of

Enlightenment or awakening (Nirvana)

Characteristics of Wise Men (Second Born)

Those who experience this “spiritual birth” are transformed:

Instead of attachment to appearances and fleeting pleasures, they attach themselves to truth and meaning .

They transcend the limited self (the small self) and connect with the “Higher Self” or the universal truth xml-ph-0000@deepl.internal.

They view others not based on gain and loss, but on love, kindness, and wisdom .

They see the world through the lens of unity and wisdom

Austerity and struggle, why?

Asceticism does not mean extreme deprivation, but rather the practice of freeing oneself from the bonds of habits and the desires of the ego.

This inner struggle enables one to find the power of “rebirth.”

Simply put, in the first birth, a person is a “child of nature,” but in the second birth, they become a “child of self and truth.” It is this second birth that grants them the status of wisdom and true freedom.

Molana and Rebirth

Molana believes that a person is not born from a mother only once;



rather, at every stage of spiritual growth, a new kind of birth occurs. He considers this “rebirth” the evolutionary journey of the soul: Man evolves from dust to plant, from plant to animal, from animal to human, and from human to the higher stage of the divine spirit. This movement is endless, because the soul is always ascending and “becoming.”

Rumi says that every time you “die” within yourself and are freed from a lower state, you are reborn. This is what he calls the death before death: the death of the self and the birth of the soul.

Ibn Arabi and Rebirth

Ibn Arabi explains the concept of rebirth within the framework of the Perfect Man in his theoretical mysticism:

He believes that at the beginning, a human only has a “bodily form,” but through inner journey and knowledge, one can rediscover their true self.

In Ibn Arabi’s view, rebirth means the emergence of the divine dimension of humanity, where the individual becomes a perfect mirror of God’s attributes.

In his terms, this birth is when the human being transcends the “limited self” and connects to the “absolute self.”

Ibn Arabi considers this a form of divine vicegerency: the individual is reborn, but this time as someone who represents God on Earth.

Summary

According to Molana, rebirth is more related to the evolutionary process and the successive spiritual deaths and lives.

For Ibn Arabi, rebirth means the realization of the Perfect Man; a place where man is born again , but this time with the divine truth.

Yes, I must confess that when I was able to find myself, in my view, humanity had become the most savage animal in the world. Yes, I myself was no exception; I too thought of myself as the most savage

animal in the world, because in this age of technology, only humans kill each other en masse.

Yes, I must confess that when I was able to find myself and look into the depths of my being, I realized that in my view, man had become the most savage animal on earth. Yes, I myself was no exception to this rule; for the more I looked, the more I realized that in this age of iron and technology, the only creature that, without a doubt and with its own hands, destroys its own kind en masse is man.

In times past, an animal hunted to survive, shed blood, and then sat silently. But today, man, with all his knowledge and claim to civilization, ignites wars, erects borders, forges weapons, and in the name of freedom and justice, leads millions to the slaughter. What a bitter contradiction! A wild animal tears to satisfy hunger, but man slaughters to satisfy his greed and thirst for power.

When I looked into the mirror of my own soul, I saw that I too had been part of this same merciless and heartless crowd. How many times have I participated in this savagery with silence, with indifference, and by turning a blind eye to the pain of others? It was then that the veil fell from my eyes, and I realized that man's greatest enemy is not the animals of the jungle, not the mythical demons, but man himself.

Today, I think to myself: what happened to us that we have fallen from the heights of humanity to the abyss of savagery? Was science and technology meant to lead us to light, or to cast us into a deeper darkness? Is civilization not a golden chain around our necks that, with its beautiful name, hides the truth of our savagery?

Yes, it is an inescapable truth; man is the most savage animal on Earth, and what is more terrifying is that he believes himself to be the most civilized creature in the world.

Through my studies and repeated contemplation, I came to the bitter truth that man—this very being who one day stepped into the world of consciousness and boasted of his conquest of nature; who, once



he could command the seas, split the mountains, explore the skies, and place the crown of dignity upon his head, considered himself the master of the planet Earth. He became so arrogant that he believed he had shackled all of existence and held the key to the secret of creation. But he was unaware that this human being is neither the master of the vast cosmos nor the owner of eternal secrets; rather, he is a creature who, by creating deadly weapons, has become the murderer of himself and his fellow men.

How painful it is to proudly place one's name alongside titles like 'inventor' and 'explorer,' when in truth, their greatest discovery has been the conquest of death and nothingness. Every invention registered in the name of progress has dedicated half of itself to destruction and slaughter. Every weapon ostensibly made for defense has, sooner or later, become a tool of aggression and bloodshed.

Man today sits on thrones of power with a satisfied smile, boasting of his inventions, yet he fails to see that behind the curtain, the very hands that once discovered fire and built the wheel now press the buttons of death, consigning generations to annihilation. He calls himself the ruler of the earth, when in truth he is his own silent enemy.

It is for this reason that I, in the silence of thought, have come to a point where, instead of being proud of the name 'man,' I have felt a loathing in my heart. For how can one be proud of a creature that has risen up against its own kind more than any other animal? How can one boast of achievements whose end has been stockpiles of bombs and factories of death? Yes, if I am to be even slightly fair to myself, I must see myself not as the master of inventors and discoverers, but as a murderer who, under the guise of civilization and progress, has plunged a dagger into the heart of humanity.

Furthermore, we slaughter every animal in the name of needing its meat, right before the eyes of its parents or its children, chanting "Allahu Akbar" (God is great) and considering ourselves one of God's

extraordinary creations. Where is the extraordinariness in this kind of crime?

Where does extraordinariness find meaning? A reflection on the slaughter of animals and the claim of human superiority

Introduction

Throughout history, humans have always striven to establish their position as the supreme beings in the world. They call themselves the noblest of creation and consider many of their actions “extraordinary.” One of these arenas is the killing of animals for food or religious rituals; where a human places a blade on an animal’s throat, utters the name of God, and then counts this act as a symbol of power, faith, and even honor. But the fundamental question is: Where, in this act, is the ‘extraordinary’? Is slitting the throat of a defenseless creature, in the sight of its peers or children, truly a sign of a transcendent spirit and human superiority?

Part One: Ethics and the Dignity of Life

Human morality is founded on the respect for “life.” Life, whether in a human or an animal, has value. When an animal is sacrificed before the eyes of its own kind or in the sight of a human child, a clear message is conveyed: Another’s suffering and pain is of no importance to us. Such an attitude not only casts a shadow of over human ethics, but it also gradually empties the human heart of compassion. The extraordinary, if it has any meaning, lies in transcending violence and cultivating compassion, not in bloodshed.

Part Two: Educational and Psychological Consequences

Witnessing the slaughter of animals has a profound effect on the psyche of children and adolescents. Children who witness the slaughter and death of animals from a young age either gradually become desensitized to violence or suffer from hidden fear and anxiety. Both outcomes pose a serious threat to raising a balanced, peace-loving generation. If we



are to cultivate a generation of kind, wise, and peace-loving people, we must avoid normalizing violence in front of them.

Part Three: Religion and Spirituality; A Re-reading of a Perception

Many religions have introduced sacrifice as a symbol of gratitude or drawing closer to the divine. But in the core message of religion, the emphasis is on “mercy” and “kindness.” In religious beliefs, God is presented as the source of love and affection. Can one believe that this source of love is pleased by the bloodshed and fear of animals? In fact, slaughtering an animal in front of children or families, rather than being a symbol of spirituality, becomes a representation of violence disguised as a ritual. True spirituality flourishes when a person finds the ability to restrain violent instincts and lean toward mercy and compassion.

Part Four: The Philosophy of the Extraordinary

Humans are distinguished from animals by their power of reason and their ability to choose. Their transcendence is realized when they can rise above animal instincts. An animal kills to survive, but when a human, claiming wisdom and morality, resorts to killing, they must have an answer beyond “instinct.” Is slitting an animal’s throat, with pride and a cry of ‘Allahu Akbar,’ a sign of transcendence or of downfall? True extraordinariness does not lie in placing a blade on a defenseless throat, but in finding a way for coexistence, compassion, and the cultivation of life, instead of killing.

Conclusion

What happens in the act of slaughtering animals in front of parents or children is not “extraordinary” but a moral, educational, and spiritual tragedy. If humanity wishes to consider itself the noblest of all creatures, it must first learn to master its violent instincts. Human superiority lies not in bloodshed, but in the ability to give, to refrain from causing suffering, and to find ways that honor life. True extraordinariness is in compassion; in the ability to show affection to the weakest and most

defenseless creatures. Only then can it be said that man is truly a being beyond the animals.

But possessing these qualities has brought me nothing but despair, because I too eat the flesh of animals as if it were my birthright. It is here that I have found myself to be less than a mammal, less than a sheep, less than a skin—creatures that are a thousand times more noble than I.

. Man and the illusion of being the noblest of all creatures

Humans often consider themselves 'superior,' but this notion is born more of pride than truth. We will only be worthy of this title when we can rise above our animalistic habits and bloody instincts.

An animal kills to survive; we kill for pleasure, habit, or ritual.

An animal does not shed blood after its hunger is satisfied; but a human will sometimes place a blade to an innocent's throat for the sake of display or religious interpretation.

So the question is: Is such a human truly superior, or merely an animal with more sophisticated tools?

1. True Supernatural Power

Being extraordinary is not about cutting another's throat, but about cutting the root of violence within oneself.

One who can master their anger is more powerful than a thousand warriors.

One who has the capacity for compassion, rather than killing, turns to living and giving life.

True power lies in the ability to give life, not to take it.

2. The reflection of the inner world in the outer world.

What we do to animals is, in fact, a reflection of our relationship with ourselves and other humans.

If we kill an animal cruelly, violence in human relationships will also become normalized sooner or later.

If a child sees an animal suffer before them, they unconsciously



learn that “power = violence” and “compassion = weakness.” These lessons later reproduce themselves in politics, the family, and society.

3. Self-knowledge and Going Beyond Rituals

Dear friend, self-knowledge means asking:

Why am I doing this?

Is this act born of awareness and compassion, or is it just blind imitation of tradition and habit?

The more one answers these questions, the more one realizes that many “rituals” are not a path to God, but a cover to justify one’s instincts. God can be found in the heart of kindness, not in a blade placed on the throat of a defenseless creature.

In the end

I believe the most extraordinary moment for a human being is when they can wash their hands of violence and, in the face of a small, weak creature, offer not a blade but kindness. This is where our ‘higher self’ is revealed.

Chapter: The Illusion of Superiority

In the field of silence, we see an animal on its knees, its eyes fixed on a gaze full of fear and helplessness. Human hands slide a blade across its throat, and in that very moment, a cry rings out: Allahu Akbar!

Children of men, through the veil of stunned eyes, see this scene; the animal, in its final moment, also looks at its child. What “extraordinaryness” is present in this moment ? Is there a sign of greatness in the slashing of a defenseless throat, or in the silent terror that takes a life?

Man and the Illusion of Being the Superior of All Creation

For thousands of years, humans have called themselves “superior”; they stand above all creatures and rule. But this superiority has often been defined not in reality, but in a self-created delusion. An animal kills to survive, without any claim or cry. But man, while considering

himself “extraordinary,” sheds blood and calls it a sacred ritual. If extraordinariness lies in shedding blood, then what difference does man have from the predators?

True extraordinariness

Being extraordinary is not in the power to cut, but in the ability to refrain from cutting; not in taking a life, but in giving it.

Man is extraordinary when he can restrain his animal instincts, silence the violence within him, and instead of a blade, lay a caressing hand upon the bodies of the weakest creatures. True power is to give life in the face of the opportunity to kill.

Violence and Its Legacy

The scene of slaughter is not just the death of an animal; it is the beginning of a legacy that settles in the souls of children. How can a child who, from a young age, has seen blood and death in a sacred garment learn compassion? Generations raised with these images, sooner or later, come to see violence as normal and compassion as a sign of weakness.

This is where the cycle of violence is reproduced in culture, politics, and daily life.

Redefining Spirituality

In its very essence, spirituality is a manifestation of compassion. If God is the source of mercy, can one believe that He would be pleased by suffering and bloodshed?

Sacrificing an animal in front of children and families is more a display of violence than an act of drawing closer to God. True spirituality is in the silence of the blade and the lighting of the lamp of compassion. Wherever a person can overcome their violent instincts, they take a step toward divinity.

Conclusion: Man and the Great Test



Humanity today stands before a great test:
Or does he want to continue shedding blood in the illusion of the extraordinary, justifying it in the name of religion or culture?
Or does he want to choose a new path in search of true extraordinariness; a path where, instead of the blade, he chooses love, and instead of sacrifice, he celebrates life?
The extraordinariness is not in bringing the world to its knees, but in kneeling before life. Only then will humanity be worthy of a name beyond animal.

This is the very essence of the esoteric art of self-knowledge, and I hope that I can at least become a few percent more complete in my own self-understanding.

One of the best ways to know yourself is to take time to reflect on your daily behaviors, feelings, and decisions.

Part of self-knowledge is accepting yourself with all your strengths and weaknesses. Learning to love ourselves makes the path of growth and progress smoother.

Sexual desires are one of the greatest challenges on the path to finding one's "true self." Although these desires are natural and innate, they can sometimes make the path of asceticism and self-knowledge difficult, preventing a person from achieving inner focus. I have experienced this myself many times; even though I'm at an age where I know I shouldn't mistake every display of beauty for infatuation, the truth is that my own nature is not separate from these human attractions. The difference is that today, I have learned that instead of denying or suppressing these feelings, I should recognize them and accept them within a framework of awareness and balance. I have accepted myself in all my aspects—both positive and negative—and I strive to take a step closer to self-knowledge by understanding this very duality. At the end of this path, at the final station of thought and experience, I have realized that whatever a person's beliefs may be — whether one

searches for God on the throne or in the depths of nature — is, in essence, a child of the same primordial force; a force that brought us forth from the womb of being like a newborn and laid us in the cradle of this earth and sky so that we might find the path back to our own origin.

Life is a journey from ignorance to awakening, from oblivion to presence. On this journey, we pass through thousands of psychological, sensual, and mental peaks. We slip, fall, and get lost many times; but every slip is a lesson, and every loss of direction is a lamp to find the way. Yes, every failure is a stepping stone to ascent, if one opens their eyes and sees themselves in the mirror of suffering.

I, too, faced many calamities and trials on this path. Lust, desire, pride, fear, loneliness—each was a pebble in the path of my being. But one day I realized that if this river is to reach the sea, it must pass through these very stones, not flee from them. The further I went, the clearer I became; and the more purified I grew, the closer I got to myself, to that same primordial source, to the “essence” that lay hidden within me.

Now I know that self-discovery is not about reaching a point outside of ourselves; it is a return, not a forward movement. A return to a truth that was within us from the beginning, but had been hidden under the dust of the world. And I, after passing through thousands of experiences and reflections, finally realized that “I have found myself”; not in a book, not in another person, not in a distant place, but in my own depths.

Now, with a deep peace and a conscious heart, I arrive at the end of this journey. But I know that the end is itself the beginning of a new path; a path inward, to the light, to the infinity of being.

And so, I found myself... and found peace within.

At the end of this long and winding journey, I now stand at a point where the beginning and the end blend into one another. Somewhere between being and becoming, between suffering and peace, between



me and my essence

I have come to believe that a human being, whatever they may believe, is ultimately a child of that same great force; whether they call it “God” or “Nature.” That force has born us like an infant and set us upon the lap of existence to rediscover our lost selves through the journey of experience and turmoil. Life is a school for remembering what we have forgotten.

Along this path, I faced thousands of trials: carnal desires, sensual temptations, doubts, fears, and slip-ups. But today I know that these calamities were not my enemies; they were hidden teachers who called me to purification. From the barren sands of my mistakes, the seed of self-knowledge sprouted, and I learned that every fall contains the seed of a rise.

I discovered that self-discovery is about crossing the outer storm and reaching the inner shore; it is about seeing yourself as you are, with all your darkness and light, your weaknesses and strengths. In , the moment I accepted myself unconditionally and without a mask, I became one with my source. It was then that a profound peace settled within me, and a voice inside said, “Now you have found yourself.”

So I say and I write:

I passed through the world to arrive at myself.

I delved into myself to see the truth.

And now, in a silence imbued with awareness, I close this book, without anything being finished. For the end of finding is the very beginning of being.

And this is my final word:

I found myself... and I rested in myself.

Basir Shafaq



This book is not a story of arrival;
it is a story of passage.

A passage through the layers that had hidden
me for years.

I did not find myself in a mirror,
but in the process of breaking, getting lost,
and standing up again.

If these words have reached you,
perhaps you too are on the verge of finding yourself."

Basir Shafaq

