

What is the mystery of life?

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If you want to understand a little about the talisman of the wisdom of the world and the riddle of man's creation and the mystery of the reality of the worship then consider this short comparison together with my own soul.

Once upon a time there was a king. As wealth he had numerous treasuries in which were diamonds and emeralds and jewels of every kind. Besides these he had other hidden and most strange treasuries. By way of attainment he had great skill in strange arts and encompassing knowledge of innumerable wondrous sciences and was most erudite in endless branches of abstruse learning. Now like every possessor of beauty and perfection wants to see and display his own beauty and perfection. That glorious king also wanted to open up an exhibition and set out displays within it in order to make manifest and display in the view of the people the majesty of his rule his glittering wealth the wonders of his art and the marvels of his knowledge. And also so that he could behold his beauty and perfection in two respects:

The First Respect: so that he himself could behold them with his own discerning eye.

The other: so that he could look through the view of others.

With this purpose in mind the king started to construct a vast and majestic palace. He divided it into magnificent apartments and dwellings and decorated it with every sort of jewel from his treasuries and with his own hand so full of art adorned it with the finest and most beautiful works. He ordered it with the subtlest of the arts of his wisdom and decked it out with the miraculous works of his knowledge. Then after completing it he set up in the palace broad tables containing the most delicious of every kind of food and every sort of bounty. He specified an appropriate table for each group. He set out such a munificent and artful banquet that it was as though the boundless priceless bounties he spread out had come into existence through the works of a hundred subtle arts. Then he invited his people and subjects from all the regions of his lands to feast and behold the spectacle.

Later the king appointed a Supreme Commander as teacher and instructor to make known the wisdom in the palace and the meanings of its contents; to describe its Maker and its contents to the people make known the secrets of the palace's embellishments teach what the arts within it were pointing to and to explain what the well-set jewels were and the harmonious embroideries; and to explain to those who entered the palace the way in which they indicated the perfections and arts of the palace's owner and to inform them of the correct conduct in beholding them and to explain the official ceremonies as the king who did not appear wished them to be. This teacher and instructor had an assistant in each area of the palace while he himself remained in the largest sphere among his students making the following announcement to all the spectators. He told them:

"O people! Our lord who is the king of this palace wants to make himself known to you by making this palace and displaying these things. So you recognize Him and try to become well acquainted with Him. And He wants to make Himself loved by you with these adornments. Also. He shows His love for you through these bounties that you see. So you love Him too by obeying Him. And He shows His compassion and kindness for you through these bounties and gifts which are to be seen. So you show your respect for Him through thanks. And He wants to display His transcendent beauty to you through these works of His perfection. So you show your eagerness to see Him and gain His regard. And through placing a particular stamp and special seal and inimitable signet on each of these adorned works of art that you see. He wants to show that everything is particular to Him and is the work of His own hand and that He is single and unique and independent and removed. So you recognize that He is single and alone and without peer or like or match and accept that He is such." And he spoke further fitting words to the spectators like these concerning the King and this station. Then the people who had entered the palace separated into two groups.

The First Group: Since these knew themselves were intelligent and their hearts were in the right place when they looked at the wonders inside the palace they declared: "There are great matters afoot here!" They understood that it was not in vain or some trifling plaything. So they were curious and while wondering: "I wonder what the talisman to this is and what it contains." they suddenly heard the speech the Master and Instructor was giving and they realized that the keys to all the mysteries were with him. So they approached him and said: "Peace be upon you. O Master! By rights a truthful and exact instructor like you is necessary for a magnificent palace such as this. Please tell us what our Lord has made known to you!" First of all the Master repeated the speech to them. They listened carefully and accepting it profited greatly. They acted as the King wished. And because the King was pleased at their becoming conduct and manners he invited them to another special elevated ineffable palace. And he bestowed it on them in a way worthy of such a munificent king and fitting for such obedient subjects and suitable for such well-mannered guests and appropriate to such an elevated palace. He made them permanently happy.

As for the Second Group because their minds were corrupted and their hearts extinguished when they entered the palace. They were defeated by their evil-commanding souls and took notice of nothing apart from the delicious foods; they closed their eyes to all the virtues and stopped up their ears to the guidance of the Master and the warnings of his students. They stuffed themselves like animals then sank into sleep. They quaffed elixirs which had been prepared for certain other matters and were not to have been consumed. Then they became drunk and started shouting so much that they greatly upset the other spectating guests. They were ill mannered in the face of the Glorious Maker's rules. So the soldiers of the palace's owner arrested them and cast them into a prison appropriate to such unmannerly people.

O my dear friends who is listening to this story with me! Of course you have understood that the Glorious Creator built this palace for the above-mentioned aims. The achievement of these aims is dependent on two things:

The First: The existence of the Master (the Messenger) whom we saw and whose speech we heard. Because if it was not for him all these aims would be in vain. For if an incomprehensible book has no author it consists only of meaningless

paper.

The Second is the people listening the Master's words and accepting them. That is to say the Master's existence is the cause of the palace's existence and the people's listening to him is the cause of the continuation of the palace's existence. In which case it can be said that if it was not for the Master the Glorious King would not have built the palace. And again it may be said that when the people do not heed the instructions of the Master the palace will of a certainty be transformed and changed.

My dear friend! The story ends here. If you have understood the meaning of the comparison come and see its reality face to face.

The palace is this world. Its roof is the heavens illuminated with smiling stars and its floor the face of the earth adorned from east to west with multifarious flowers. As for the King he is the Most Holy One the Pre-Eternal and Post-Eternal Monarch. Whom all things in the seven heavens and earth glorify and extol each with its particular tongue. He is a king so omnipotent that He created the heavens and earth in six days then abided on the Throne. One of Power and Majesty. Who alternating night and day like two threads one white and one black writes His signs of the page of the universe; One to Whose command the sun moon and stars are subjugated. The apartments of the palace are the eighteen thousand worlds each of which has been set in order and decorated in a fashion suitable to it. The strange arts you saw in the palace are the miracles of Divine Power you see in this world and the foods you saw there are signs to the wonderful fruits of Divine Mercy in this world especially in summer and above all in the gardens of Barla. The stove and kitchen there is the earth here which has fire in its heart and the face of the earth. While the jewels of the hidden treasures you saw in the comparison are the similitudes of the manifestations of the Sacred Divine Names. And the embroideries there and the signs of the embroideries are the well-ordered and finely worked beings and the harmonious impresses of the pen of Power which adorn this world and point to the Names of the All-Powerful One of Glory.

As for the Master he is our Master. His assistants are the prophets and his students the saints and purified scholars. The ruler's servants in the palace indicate the angels in this world. And the guests invited to the banquet and to spectate in the comparison are the Jinn and mankind in this guesthouse of the world and the animals who are the servants of mankind. As for the two groups one of them here is the people of belief who are the students of the All-Wise Book the interpreter of the verses and signs of the book of the universe. The other group is the people of unbelief and rebellion who follow Satan and the evil-commanding soul; deaf and dumb like animals or even lower they form the group of the misguided who recognize the life of this world only.

The first group: These are the felicitous and the good which listened to the Master. 'the Possessor of Two Wings'. He is both the worshipping servant of God; in regard to worship he describes his Sustainer so that he is like the envoy of his community at the Court of Almighty God. And he is also God's Prophet; with regard to prophethood he conveys his Sustainer's decrees to men and the Jinn by means of the Holy Book.

This happy community heeded the Messenger and listened to the Book. They saw themselves invested with the prescribed prayers which are the index of all the varieties of worship and numerous subtle duties within elevated stations. Indeed they saw in detail the duties and stations which the prayers point to with their various formulas and actions. It was like this:

Firstly: Since they observed the Divine works and in the form of a transaction in the absence of the person concerned saw themselves in the station of observing the wonders of the sovereignty of Dominicality they performed the duty of extolling and glorifying God declaring: "God is the Most Great!"

Secondly: Through being seen in the station of herald of His brilliant and wonderful works which are the manifestations of the Sacred Divine Names exclaiming: "Glory be to God! All Praise be to God!" they performed the duty of hallowing and praising God.

Thirdly: In the station of perceiving and understanding with their inner and outer senses the bounties stored up in the treasures of Divine Mercy they started to carry out the duty of thanks and praise.

Fourthly: In the station of weighing up with the scales of their spiritual faculties the jewels in the treasures of the Divine Names they began the duty of praise and declaring God to be free of all faults.

Fifthly: In the station of studying the missives of the Sustainer written with the pen of power on the plan of Divine Determining they began the duty of contemplation and appreciation.

Sixthly: With beholding the subtle delicate fine beauties in the creation of things and in the art in beings in the station of declaring God to be free of all defect they took up the duty of love and yearning for their All-Glorious Creator their All-Beauteous Maker. That is to say after looking at the universe and works and performing the duties in the above-mentioned stations through transactions in the object of worship's absence they rose to the degree of beholding the transactions and acts of the All-Wise Maker too whereby in the form of a transaction in the presence of the person concerned they responded with knowledge within wonder before the All-Glorious Creator's making Himself known to conscious beings through the miracles of His art and declared: "Glory be unto You! How can we truly know you? What makes You known are the miracles of all the works of Your art!"

Then they responded with love and passion to that Most Merciful One's making Himself loved through the beautiful fruits of His Mercy. "You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help!" they declared.

Then they responded with thanks and praise to that True Bestower's showing His mercy and compassion through His sweet bounties and exclaimed: "Glory be unto You! All praise is Yours! How can we thank You as is Your due? You are utterly worthy of thanks! For all Your bounties spread through the entire universe hymn Your praises and thanks through the clear tongues of their dispositions. And all Your bounties lined up in the market of the world and scattered over the face of the earth proclaim Your praises and extol You. And through testifying to Your munificence and generosity all the well-ordered and well-proportioned fruits of Your mercy and bounty offer You thanks before the gazes of Your creatures." Then they responded saying: "God is the Most Great!" before the manifestation of Divine Beauty. Glory. Perfection and

Majesty in the mirrors of beings ever changing on the faces of the universe; they bowed reverently in their impotence and prostrated in humility with love and wonder.

Then announcing their poverty and need they responded with supplication and beseeching to the Possessor of Absolute Riches' displaying the abundance of His wealth and breadth of His mercy and declared: "From You alone do we seek help!"

Then they responded appreciatively to the All-Glorious Maker's displaying the subtleties and wonders of His antique art in the exhibition of creatures exclaiming: "What wonders God has willed!" Observing and applauding them they declared. "How beautifully they have been made! What blessings God has bestowed!" Holding everyone witnesses they said in wonder: "Come! Look at these! Hasten to the prayers and to prosperity!"

And they responded with submission and obedience to the Monarch of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity's proclamation of the sovereignty of His Dominicality in every corner of the universe and the manifestation of His Unity. Declaring: "We hear and we obey!" they affirmed His Unity.

Then before the manifestation of the Godhead of that Sustainer of All the Worlds they responded with worship and humble veneration which consists of proclaiming their poverty within need and with the prescribed prayers which are the summary of worship. Thus through performing their various duties of worship in the mighty mosque known as the abode of this world they carried out the obligations and duties of their lives and assumed 'the finest of forms'. They ascended to a rank above all creatures by which through the suspiciousness of belief and assurance and 'the Trust' they became trustworthy Vicegerents of God on the Earth. And after this field of trial and place of examination their Munificent Sustainer invited them to eternal happiness in recompense for their belief and to the Abode of Peace in reward for their adhering to His religion of Islam. There. He bestowed on them out of His Mercy bounties so dazzling that no eye has seen them nor ear heard them nor have they occurred to the heart of man - and so He does bestow these on them and He gave them eternity and everlasting life. For the desirous mirror-bearing lovers of an eternal abiding beauty who gaze upon it will certainly not perish but will go to eternity.

As for the other group the sinners and the wicked when they entered the palace of this world at the age of discretion they responded with unbelief to all the evidences of Divine Unity and with ingratitude towards all the bounties and by accusing all creatures of being valueless insulted them in an unbelieving manner. And since they rejected and denied all the manifestations of the Divine Names they committed a boundless crime in a short time and became deserving of endless punishment. Indeed the capital of life and the human faculties were given to man for the duties mentioned above.