

The Sixteenth Word

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

*Indeed, His command when He wills a thing is, 'Be!,' and it is. * So glory be unto Him in Whose hand is the dominion of all things, and to Him will you all be brought back.¹*

[This Word was written to afford insight and understanding to my blind soul by pointing out four Rays from the light of the above verse – to dispel the darkness and afford me certainty.]

FIRST RAY

O my ignorant soul! You say, 'The Oneness of the Divine Essence together with the universality of the Divine acts, the Unity of Almighty God's person together with His unassisted comprehensive dominicality, His Singleness together with His unshared all-embracing disposal, His being beyond space and yet present everywhere, His infinite exaltedness together with being close to all things, and His being One and yet Himself holding all matters in His hand, are among the truths of the Qur'an. Yet the Qur'an is All-Wise, and that which is Wise does not impose on the reason things which are unreasonable. And the reason sees an apparent contradiction between these things. I would like an explanation of them which will impel the reason to submit.'

The Answer: Since that is the way it is and you want to be certain and reassured, relying on the effulgence of the Qur'an, we say: the Divine Name of Light has solved many of my difficulties. God willing, it will solve this one too. Choosing the way of comparison, which brings clarity to the mind and luminosity to the heart, like Imam-i Rabbani, we say:

*I am neither the night nor a lover of the night;
I am a servant of the Sun; it is of the Sun that I speak.*

Since comparison is a most brilliant mirror to the Qur'an's miraculousness, we too shall look at this mystery by means of a comparison. It is as follows:

¹ Qur'an, 36:82-3.

A single person may gain universality by means of various mirrors. While being a single individual, he becomes like a universal possessing general qualities. For example, while the sun is a single individual, by means of transparent objects, it becomes so universal it fills the face of the earth with its images and reflections. It even has as many manifestations as the number of droplets and shining motes. Although the sun's heat, light, and the seven colours in its light comprehend, encompass, and embrace all the things which confront them, all transparent things also hold in the pupils of their eyes the sun's heat, and its light and seven colours, together with its image. And they make a throne for them in their hearts. That is to say, with regard to Unity, the sun encompasses all the things which confront it, while with regard to Oneness, the sun is present together with many of its attributes in everything through a sort of manifestation of its essence. Since we have passed from the comparison to a discussion of representation, we shall indicate three of the many sorts of representation which will be a means to understanding this matter.

The First: This is the reflection of dense, physical objects. These reflections are both other than the thing reflected; they are not the same, and they are dead, without life. They possess no quality other than their apparent identity. For example, if you enter a store full of mirrors, one Said will become thousands of Said's, but the only living one is you, all the others are dead. They possess none of the characteristics of life.

The Second: This is the reflection of physical luminous objects. This reflection is not the same as the thing reflected, but neither is it other than it. It does not hold the luminous object's nature, but it possesses most of its characteristics, and may be considered as living. For example, the sun entered the world and displayed its reflection in all mirrors. Present in each of the reflections are light and the seven colours in light, which are like the sun's qualities. Let us suppose the sun possessed consciousness, and its heat was pure power; its light, pure knowledge; and its seven colours, the seven attributes: the single sun would be present in all mirrors at one moment, and would be able to make each a throne for itself and a sort of telephone. One mirror would not be an obstacle to another. It would be able to meet with all of us by means of our mirrors. While we are distant from it, it would be closer to us than ourselves.

The Third: This is the reflection of luminous spirits. This reflection is both living, and the same as the spirits. But since it appears in relation to the capacity of the mirrors, it does not hold completely the spirit's essence and nature. For example, at the moment the Angel Gabriel (Peace be upon him) is in the presence of the Prophet in the form of Dihya, he is prostrating with his magnificent wings in the Divine Presence before the Sublime Throne. And at the same moment he is present in innumerable places, and is relaying

the Divine commands. One task is not an obstacle to another. Thus, it is through this mystery that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him), whose essence is light and nature, luminous, in this world hears at the same time all the benedictions recited for him by all his community, and at the resurrection will meet with all the purified at the same time. One will not be an obstacle to another. In fact, some of the saints who have acquired a high degree of luminosity and are called 'substitutes' (abdal) have been observed in many places at the same time, and the same person has performed numerous different acts at the same time.

Indeed, just as things like glass and water act as mirrors to physical objects, so the air and ether, and certain beings of the World of Similitudes are like mirrors to spirit beings; they become like means of transport and conveyance of the speed of lightning and imagination. The spirit beings travel in those pure mirrors and subtle dwellings with speed of imagination. They enter thousands of places at the same time. Despite being restricted particulars, through the mystery of luminosity impotent and subjugated creatures like the sun and semi-luminous beings restricted by matter like spirit beings may be present in numerous places while being in one place, thus becoming like absolute universals, and with a limited power of choice being able to perform many matters simultaneously.

Thus, what thing may hide itself from address of Oneness which is within the manifestation of the attributes and acts of the Most Pure and Holy One through His universal will, absolute power, and all-encompassing knowledge? The Most Holy One, Who is far beyond and exalted above matter; free and exempt from any restriction or limitation and the darkness of density; of the sacred lights of Whose Names all these lights and luminous beings are but dense shadows; and of Whose beauty all existence and all life and the World of Spirits and the World of Similitudes are semi-transparent mirrors; Whose attributes are all-encompassing and Whose qualities, universal? What matter could be difficult for Him? What thing can be concealed from Him? What individual can be distant from Him? What person can draw close to Him without acquiring universality?

Although by means of its unrestricted light and immaterial reflection, the sun is closer to you than the pupil of your eye, since you are restricted, you are truly distant from it. In order to draw close to it, you have to transcend numerous restrictions and pass over many universal degrees. Simply, in effect you have to expand to the size of the earth and rise as far as the moon, then you may be able to approach directly to a degree the sun's essential level, and meet with it without veil. In just the same way, the Glorious One of Beauty and Beauteous One of Perfection is infinitely close to you, and you are infinitely distant from Him. If your heart has strength, and your mind, eminence, try to put the points in the comparison into practice.

SECOND RAY

O my senseless soul! You say that verses like,

Indeed, His command when He wills a thing is, 'Be!', and it is,²

and,

*It will be no more than a single blast, when lo! they will all be brought up before Us!*³

show that the existence of things is instantaneous and merely through a command, and that verses like,

*[Such is] the artistry of God, Who disposes of all things in perfect order,*⁴

and,

*Who has created everything in the best way*⁵

show that existence of things is gradual, through a vast power within knowledge, and a fine art within wisdom. What is the point of agreement between them?

The Answer: Relying on the effulgence of the Qur'an, we say:

Firstly: There is no contradiction. Some are like the former, like primary creation. And some are like the latter, like the repetition of creation...

Secondly: The infinite order and extreme skill, fine art, and perfect creation together with the ease, speed, multiplicity, and extensiveness which are observed in beings testify decisively to the existence of the truths of these two sorts of verses. Since this is so, proving it to be true outside this and making that the point of discussion, is unnecessary. It should rather be asked: 'What is the wisdom in them? What is their meaning and purpose?' Thus, we shall point to this wisdom with an analogy in the form of a comparison.

For example, a craftsman like a tailor creates something artistic with much difficulty and employing many skills, and makes a model for it. Then he can make others similar to it quickly and without difficulty. Sometimes, even, it becomes so easy they are as though made at a command, and they acquire a powerful order in that way; like a clock, they function and work as though at the touch of a command.

In just the same way, after making this palace of the world and all its contents originally, the All-Wise Maker and All-Knowing Inscrber gave everything, particular and universal, the whole and the parts, a specified measure

² Qur'an, 36:82.

³ Qur'an, 36:53.

⁴ Qur'an, 27:88.

⁵ Qur'an, 32:7.

and proportion through an ordering of Divine Determining, like a model. So, look! Making every century a model, the Pre-Eternal Inscraper clothes them with bejewelled new worlds through the miracles of His power. And making every year a scale, He sews skilfully fashioned new universes through the wonders of His mercy according to their stature. And making every day a line, He writes the decorated, constantly renewed beings in them through the subtleties of His wisdom.

Furthermore, just as that Absolutely Powerful One makes each century, each year, and each day a model, so He makes the face of the earth, and the mountains and plains, gardens and orchards, and trees each a model. He continuously sets up new universes on the earth and creates new worlds. He removes one world and replaces it with another, well-ordered world. Season after season He displays the miracles of His power and gifts of His mercy in all the gardens and orchards. He writes them all as wisdom-displaying books, establishes them as kitchens of His mercy, and clothes them in ever-renewed garments full of art. Every spring He arrays all trees in raiments of brocade and adorns them with fresh jewels like pearls. He fills their hands with the star-like gifts of His mercy.

Thus, the One Who performs these matters with infinitely fine art and perfect order and changes with infinite wisdom, bounty, and perfection of power and art the travelling worlds which follow on one after the other and are attached to the string of time, is certainly All-Powerful and All-Wise. He is All-Seeing and All-Knowing to an infinite degree. Chance cannot interfere in His works. He is the All-Glorious One Who decrees,

*Indeed, His command when He wills a thing is, 'Be!', and it is,*⁶

and,

*And the decision of the Hour is as the twinkling of an eye, or even closer,*⁷

and both proclaims the perfection of His power, and that in relation to His power the resurrection and Great Gathering are most easy and free of trouble. Since His creational command comprises power and will, and all things are entirely subjugated and obedient to His command, and He creates with no difficulty or hindrance, in order to express the absolute ease in His creating, the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition decrees that He does this through a mere command.

To Conclude: Some verses proclaim the extremely fine art and infinite perfection of wisdom in beings, especially at the start of their creation. Others describe the extreme ease and speed and infinite obedience and lack of difficulty in the recreation and return of things in particular.

⁶ Qur'an, 36:82.

⁷ Qur'an, 16:77.

THIRD RAY

O my soul full of doubts and evil suggestions and exceeding its bounds! You say that verses like,

*There is not a moving thing, but He has grasp of its forelock,*⁸

and,

*In Whose hand is the dominion of all things,*⁹

and,

*And We are closer to him than his jugular vein,*¹⁰

show that God is infinitely close to us. And yet, the verses,

*And to Him shall you return.*¹¹

and,

*The angels ascend to Him in a day the measure of which is fifty thousand years,*¹²

and, the Hadith which says: 'God is beyond seventy thousand veils,'¹³ and truths like the Prophet's Ascension show that we are infinitely distant from Him. I would like an explanation which will bring this profound mystery closer to the understanding.

The Answer: Then listen to the following:

Firstly: At the end of the First Ray we said that although with regard to its unrestricted light and immaterial reflection, the sun is closer to you than the pupil of your eye, which is the window of your spirit and its mirror, since you are restricted and imprisoned in materiality, you are extremely distant from it. You can make contact with it only through some of its reflections and shadows, and meet with it through a sort of its minor and particular manifestations, and draw close to its colours, which are like a category of attribute, and to its rays and manifestations, which are like a class of its names. If you want to approach the sun's essential level and meet with the sun's essence directly in person, then you have to transcend very many restrictions and traverse very many levels of universality. Simply, after abstracting yourself from materiality, becoming enlarged to the extent of the earth, expanding in the spirit like the air, rising as far as the moon and resembling the full-moon, only then can you claim to meet with it in person without veil and to draw close to it to any degree.

In just the same way, the All-Glorious One of Perfection, the Peerless One of Beauty, the Necessarily Existent One, the Giver of Existence to All

⁸ Qur'an, 11:56.

⁹ Qur'an, 36:83.

¹⁰ Qur'an, 50:16.

¹¹ Qur'an, 36:83.

¹² Qur'an, 70:4.

¹³ al-Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, i, 101; *Musnad*, iv, 401, 405.

Beings, the Eternal Sun, the Monarch of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity, is closer to you than yourself. Yet you are infinitely distant from Him. If you have the power, put the fine points in the comparison into practice...

Secondly: For example, *And God's is the highest similitude*, among many names, a king's name of 'Commander' appears in many spheres, one within the other. It has a manifestation and appearance in spheres extensive and narrow, universal and particular, from the universal sphere of Commander-in-Chief, to those of Field Marshal and General, then those of captain and corporal. Now, in his military duties, a private soldier holds as his authority the minor point of commandership manifest in the rank of corporal; he is in touch with and connected to the Commander-in-Chief through this minor manifestation of his name. If he wishes to get in touch with him through his essential name and meet with him through that title, he will have to rise from the corporalship to the universal rank of Commander-in-Chief. That is to say, the king is extremely close to the soldier through his name, decree, law and knowledge, his telephone and regulations, and if he is luminous like a saint who is an abdal, with his presence in person. Nothing at all can be an obstacle or obstruction for him. Whereas the soldier is extremely distant. Thousands of degrees form obstructions, and thousands of veils intervene. But sometimes the king is compassionate, and contrary to his practice, receives a soldier into his presence and favours him with his grace.

In just the same way, although the All-Glorious One, the Lord of the command of, 'Be!', *and it is*, for Whom the suns and stars are like His soldiers under orders, is closer to all things than they themselves, all things are infinitely distant from Him. If you want to enter the presence of His grandeur without veil, you have to pass through seventy thousands of veils of darkness and light, that is, material and physical veils and the veils of the Divine Names and attributes, rise through the thousands of particular and universal degrees of manifestation of each Name, pass on through the most elevated levels of His attributes, and ascend as far as the Sublime Throne, which manifests His Greatest Name, and if you are not the object of favour and attraction, work and journey spiritually for thousands of years. For example, if you want to draw close to Him through His Name of Creator, you have to have a relationship through the particularities of your own Creator, then in regard to the Creator of all mankind, then through the title of Creator of all living creatures, then through the Name of Creator of all beings. Otherwise you will remain in shadow and only find a minor manifestation.

A REMINDER: Because of his impotence, the king in the comparison put means like Field Marshal and General in the degrees of his names. But the Absolutely Powerful One, in Whose hand is the dominion of all things, has no need of intermediaries. Intermediaries are only apparent; a veil to His dignity and grandeur. They are heralds and observers of the sovereignty of His dominicality within worship, awe, impotence, and want. They are not His assistants, and cannot be partners in the sovereignty of His dominicality.

FOURTH RAY

O my lazy soul! Like the soldier in the previous comparison was received into the royal presence as a pure favour, the reality of the five daily prayers, which are like a sort of Ascension, are a being received into the presence of the All-Glorious One of Beauty, the Beauteous One of Glory, Who is the True Object of Worship, as an instance of pure mercy. Declaring 'God is Most Great!', it is to traverse the two worlds either in fact, or in the imagination, or by intention, be divested of the restrictions of materiality, pass to a universal degree of worship or a shadow or form of universality, and being honoured with a sort of presence, it is to manifest the address of 'You alone do we worship!' (everyone according to his own capacity); it is a most elevated attainment. The repetition of 'God is Most Great! God is Most Great!' in the actions of the prayers indicates rising through the degrees of spiritual progress, and ascending from minor particulars to universal spheres, and is a concise title of the perfections of Divine sublimity which are beyond our knowledge. It is as if each 'God is Most Great!' indicates traversing a step in the Ascension. To attain to a shadow or a ray of this reality of the prayers either in fact, or by intention, or with the imagination, is a great happiness.

The frequent declaring of 'God is Most Great!' during the Hajj is for the above reason. For the blessed Hajj is worship at a universal level for everyone. Just as on a special day like a festival a soldier goes to the king's celebrations like a General in the sphere of General, and receives his favours, in the same way, a Hajji, no matter how lowly, is turned towards his Sustainer under the title Mighty Sustainer of every region of the earth, like a saint who has traversed all the degrees. He is honoured with universal worship. For sure, the universal degrees of dominicality opened with the key of the Hajj, and the horizons of the tremendousness of Godhead which are visible to his eye through its telescope, and the spheres of worship which gradually unfold to his heart and imagination through its observances, and the heat, wonder, awe, and dread of dominicality caused by the levels of sublimity and last stage of manifestation, can only be quietened by 'God is Most Great! God is Most Great!', and those observed or imagined unfolded degrees can only be proclaimed by it. After the Hajj, this meaning is found in various exalted and universal degrees in the Festival ('Eid) Prayers, the prayers for rain, and those recited at solar and lunar eclipses, and in prayers performed as a congregation. Thus, the importance of the marks and observances of Islam, also even if of the category of Sunna, lies in this reason.

Glory be unto the One Who has placed His treasures between the Kaf and the Nun.

So glory be unto Him in Whose hand is the dominion

*of all things, and to Him will you all be brought back.*¹⁴

*Glory be unto You, we have no knowledge save that which You have taught us; indeed You are All-Knowing, All-Wise.*¹⁵

*O our Sustainer! Do not take us to task if we forget or unwittingly do wrong!*¹⁶ *
*O our Sustainer! Let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us, and grant us Mercy from Your presence, for You are the Granter of bounties without measure.*¹⁷

And grant blessings and peace to Your Most Noble Messenger, the manifest of Your Greatest Name, and to his Family, and Companions, and brothers, and followers. Amen. O Most Merciful of the Merciful!

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A Short Addendum

The All-Powerful and All-Knowing One, the All-Wise Maker, shows His power and His wisdom and that chance can in no way interfere in His works through the system and order His rules and practices in the universe demonstrate in the form of laws. So too, through exceptions to the laws, the wonders of His practices, superficial changes, differences in individual characteristics, and changes in the times of appearance and descent, He shows His volition, will, choice, that He is the Agent with choice, and that He is under no restrictions whatsoever. Thus, rending the veil of monotony, and proclaiming that everything is in need of Him every moment for everything in every way and is obedient to His dominicality, He dispels heedlessness, and turns the gazes of man and jinn from causes to the Producer of Causes. The statements of the Qur'an look to this principle.

For example, in most places some fruit-bearing trees produce fruit one year, that is, it is given to their hands from the treasury of mercy, and they

¹⁴ Qur'an, 36:83.

¹⁵ Qur'an, 2:32.

¹⁶ Qur'an, 2:286.

¹⁷ Qur'an, 3:8.

offer it. Then the following year while all apparent causes are present, they do not take it and offer it; that is, they do not produce fruit. Also, for example, contrary to other necessities, the times rain falls are so changeable that it has been included among 'the Five Hidden Things.'¹⁸ For the most important position in existence is that of life and mercy. And rain is the source of life and pure mercy. Thus, the water of life and rain of mercy does not enter under a monotonous law, which is a veil and leads to heedlessness, rather, the All-Glorious One, Who is Most Merciful and All-Compassionate, and the Bestower of Bounties and Giver of Life, holds it in His hand directly, without veil, so that the doors of supplication and thanks will all the time be left open. And, for example, the giving of sustenance and determining of particular features are works of special favour, and their occurring in unexpected ways shows in excellent fashion the will and choice of the Sustainer. You may make further comparisons with other Divine acts, like the disposals of the air and weather and the subjugation of the clouds.

¹⁸ *Bukhari*, ii, 41; ix, 142; Ibn Hibban, i, 144.