

Lesson No. 1: Latif of the Qalb

The human heart is located at a distance of approximately two fingers' width below the left breast within the human body. It is the heart that forms the focus of the first lesson.

After freeing himself from his worldly duties, the *murid* [seeker] should perform a fresh ablution and sit secluded, facing the Qiblah. He should empty his heart of all thoughts. With humility and respect he should focus his mind's thoughts on his heart, and focus his heart toward Allah, the Exalted, He who is perfect in every way, and is free and pure of all that is negative and on Whom we have testified our faith.

The *murid* should then imagine that the heart has formed an opening through which the light [*nur*] of Allah's ﷻ mercy is entering and illuminating it. Imagine that this light is cleansing the heart of the filth of sin, and the heart is repeating the word "Allah" in sincere gratitude. With this in mind the *murid* should try to mentally "pull" this light toward his heart and lose himself in *dhikr* [remembrance] to the degree that he becomes unaware of his own being and existence. This is called *istighraq* [submersion], and it is a good state. At the same time, he should not allow distracting thoughts to enter his heart and he should fight them off if they do, concentrating and trying to remain focused on *dhikr*. This struggle is better than *istighraq*.

The *murid* should sit either with his legs folded under him or as he sits in *tashabud*, while engaged in *dhikr*. The eyes should be closed, and he should breathe normally. He should do *dhikr* with rosary beads for some time and thoughts of Allah ﷻ should pass through his heart. The *dhikr* is silent and hence there should be no sound from the tongue. The neck may be bent in the direction of the heart and if tolerable, the *murid* should isolate himself so as to make concentration easier.

In this way the *murid* should perform a minimum *dhikr* of ten rosaries of the name of Allah¹. Ten rosaries means repetition of Allah's ﷻ name one thousand times. The *murid* should continue this to the maximum tolerable, or as instructed by his shaykh. He should then put away the rosary beads and sit for approximately the same amount of time² in the same position described, concentrating on his heart and the *faiḍ* [mercy] of Allah in the same way, doing the same *dhikr* as if his heart were calling the name of Allah ﷻ. This is called *Muraqabah*.

At the close, the *murid* should make supplication to Allah ﷻ. Always perform *muraqabah* by setting aside some time each day. Whether walking, talking, or sleeping, the *murid* should always be attentive toward his heart, which should be attentive toward Allah ﷻ. The goal is that his heart always be occupied in remembering Allah ﷻ while his hands work through the routine of daily life.

People usually feel the sensation of the heart remembering Allah ﷻ as a fast pulse or the ticking of a clock. Hidayat al-Talibeen says that this activity in the heart is recognized, or

¹ If such is not possible then the student should establish a set amount and fulfill this each day.

² At least five minutes.

“heard” by the mind, when it concentrates on the heart. We should work to attain this so that the *hadith qudsi*, “I am as my servant imagines me,” can be realized.

The heart is said to come alive when the word “Allah” is clearly heard by the human ear, along with activity within the heart. This poem of Hafiz Shaerazi (may Allah be pleased with him) points to this activity:

*No one knows of the Friend's House
all there is is the sound of a bell.*

The *salik* should work so hard on the *dhikr* that the *latifa* leaves its bodily prison and ascends to its reality in the heavens; an indication of which is that the *ruh* [spirit] becomes inclined toward what is beyond [the next life], and becomes forgetful of all except Allah. When reaching this state, the *qalb* [heart] is said to have left its bodily prison and reached its reality. The *salik* may or may not perceive this state as nowadays *kashf* [unveiling of realities] is received very rarely because of unlawful earnings.

Even if the *salik* is unable to attain the states referred to above, he should always beware of falling into forgetfulness, and must always follow the sacred law [*shariah*] in everything that he does. If the *salik* is careful about correcting his actions daily, then he will notice an improvement in his condition and a love for the *shariah*. This *latifa* is connected with the human passion of lust, which distracts the *salik* and hence keeps him forgetful of his true Lord. Only when this lust is checked and corrected can the *salik* begin to become inclined toward the love and pleasure of Allah.

Faiḡ [spiritual benefit] is begotten in different ways because characters and habits of individuals are different. The *salik* should not become distracted by all the possible ways and conditions of attaining this, but should keep focused on the *dhikr* of Allah.

In addition to this, and whenever time allows, the *salik* should recite the rosary of one hundred *salawat* [salutations on the Prophet (peace be upon him)], and one hundred *istighfar* in the morning and evening. This may be done all at once or divided during the day.

The shaykh assigns the next lesson in the *suluk* to the *salik* when he is convinced that the *salik* is sincere, and that the heart has become active through *dhikr* and has reached its reality in the heavens.