

A reflection on the love between the Muslim and ALLAH

I would like to take this year's opportunity of the Id- ul- Azha festival and relate a short story to you, to inspire you to reflect on man's relationship with his Creator. The following story is true, and it was passed down to me from my family from Afghanistan.

Many years ago, in the first half of the last century pilgrims going for Hajj did not enjoy the luxury of air travel, air-conditioned buses or tents. Nowadays the Hajj has become a very comfortable journey especially for us the European Muslims, with nights spent in the elegant hotels in Makkah and Madina, food and water supplied in abundance, transportation in buses and accommodation in ready-to-use tents which you need not bring from home and build up yourself. In short, the modern pilgrim is spared to the greatest possible extent the physical and mental efforts which pilgrims were exposed to in earlier times.

My great-great-grandfather was a well-known and very respected religious scholar in Afghanistan. When the gift of Hajj was granted to him so many decades ago, he traveled along with his family, his entourage and much luggage by road from Kabul to the port city of Karachi and from there by ship across the sea to Jeddah. Also accompanying him was his trusted trusted custodian, a man from the western part of Afghanistan, from the country's cultural capital, the city of Herat. Herat is a city of lush gardens, historic buildings and above all, a city where the people have a very well maintained and cultured lifestyle.

The Hajj did pose a notable challenge for the trusted custodian of my great-great-grandfather. Following the completion of the rites and the return from the plains of Arafah to Makkah, he found himself in the tent of my great-great-grandfather. He was exhausted, tired, and the hardships of the long marches had taken their toll on him; the intense heat and the dust turned out to be almost unbearable for him. His sweat must have been running down in streams on his body and he was so tired, that he almost passed out, he literally sank to the carpeted floor of the tent and stretched out. After several minutes of silent recuperation he started, softly at first and then more and more audible to complain about his sufferings. Finally he turned around and addressed his Creator loud and clear and for everybody around him to hear:

"O Allah, why did you have to choose this sandy and hot place as a home for your house? Was there really no better place on this earth for you? If you had asked me for advice I could have shown you a much nicer place. That place is near my beautiful hometown of Herat, it is the lovely village of Jagartan . Oh, what a wonderful place Jagartan is, where the trees offer shade, where the streams flow, where the cool water quenches the thirst, and where nature invites you to stay on and on and on. To this place I would always have loved to return as your devoted servant to praise and thank you for your grace over and over again.

But here, there's nothing here. Oh my Creator, why did you have to choose this place for your house?"

When my great-great-grandfather heard this litany of his trusted friend and student, he rebuked him sharply and called to him: *"In your Creator's name, stop it, please stop it, remain silent! Are you out of your mind? It borders on blasphemy what you have just said! "*

These words did not have the desired effect on his trusted custodian, quite to the contrary, he became even more forceful in his lamentations: *"Yeah, yeah, you with your wise sayings. All your life you have always taught me to tell the truth, the truth only and nothing but the truth, and now while I stick to this dictate, this teaching of yours and tell the truth you dare accuse me of blasphemy! This is just unbelievable. How can speaking the truth ever be called blasphemy?"*

I do not know if the trusted custodian calmed down and relaxed, and whether he did ask his Creator later in the day to forgive him for his emotional outbreak. However, when my mother told me this story many years ago for the first time, I was rendered speechless in the face of this man's act towards his Creator. An act which I considered absolutely disrespectful and deep inside I was in total agreement with my great-great-grandfather that this emotional outburst was nothing but an act of blasphemy and anyone who expresses himself in this manner would have to ask for forgiveness .

Over the years I recalled this story in my quiet moments again and again and the little story did make its round in the family every year during the Hajj season. But the more I listened to this story, the more I felt sympathy for my great-great grandfather's trusted custodian, so that with the passage of time my initial rejection of his behaviour diminished, it disappeared and I replaced it with a benevolent smile for this man, and the little story made me think.

I do invite the reader to share my sympathy for this man! Because, this man opened his heart to his Creator, in a manner that one can only do with a very good friend, a person whom one can trust blindly, who guards one's secrets. Our Creator knows what is in our hearts, HE knows our secrets however big and small, nothing is hidden from HIM. This is the very essence of any relationship based on love. Man needs this kind of relationship in his life. Man needs a relationship which allows him to unburden himself. Therefore can there be anything better in life for man than to entrust his innermost thoughts with his Creator? Isn't the Creator the best of all listeners?

In the 50th Surah of the exalted Quran, that bears the name " Qaaf ", the 16th , 17th and 18th verses read as follows:

"And WE have already created man and know what his soul whispers to him, and WE are closer to him than [his] jugular vein. When the two receivers receive, seated on the right and on the left. Man does not utter any word except that with him is an observer prepared [to record]."

Our Creator tells us that HE is closer to us than our own jugular vein, what an imaginative, perfect and comforting thought. Certainly, no one can imagine any worldly creature to come this close to him. Can there be any greater love than this kind of love that Allah offers HIS creation? Hence, can there be anyone more trustworthy than Allah, to whom we can open up and reveal what touches and moves us deep inside?

ALLAH has bestowed HIS love on us, and we should recall this valuable gift in these days of the Feast of Sacrifice, in these days when we remember the prophet Ibrahim and his son Ismail, the prophet Ibrahim who carries the title "Khalilullah", the loving friend of ALLAH.

I wish all my friends a joyous Id -ul Azha, and pray that they experience the love of ALLAH and that they maintain and caress this love even in times of weakness and deprivation in the certainty that HIS love will carry them in times of need.

I am grateful to my great-great-grandfather that amongst other things he brought this little story of his trusted custodian home from his pilgrimage and that he shared it with his family. I pray that it will inspire others in the years to come to ponder over this little piece of food for thought.

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