

ALI 655: Esoteric Foundations of the Shia Faith Session Three

The spiritual (*ma'navi*) in Islam is that which pertains to inner meaning, as opposed to the outward literal form. Spirituality (*ma'naviyyat*) is the quality of being inwardly meaningful.

<https://www.al-islam.org/spirituality-shii-islam-overview-muhammad-legenhausen/spirituality-shii-islam-overview>

While the Prophet sealed the age of formal revelation, by means of the divine concession of the *wilāyah* and the Imāmate to his descendants, a new age of profound “revelations” was opened. Just as the pleroma of the Twelve Imāms represents the fullness of the Muhammadan Reality, their teachings and doctrines are flashes from the sole Muhammadan Light, the logophonic effusions and manifestations of the Qur'ānic revelation: its perfect synthesis and exact formulation.

Shi'ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy, Ch.5

Finally, in order for there to be a living branch from the Islāmic trunk, a favorable doctrinal terrain was required, a spiritual identity with its own characteristics which were qualitatively different from the other ideological options of its age. With such an understanding, the historical appearance of Shī'ism seems to be completely inevitable.

Shi'ite Islam: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy, Ch.5

The equivalent of 'spirituality', in Islamic terminology, are two words;

- 1) *Ruhaniyyat* – from the word *Ruh*
- 2) *Ma'naviyyat* – from the word *Ma'na*

Finding inner meaning is to;

- 1) Cater to the needs of the soul.
- 2) Engage wholly in a particular action.
- 3) Achieve fulfillment and peace.
- 4) Attain higher levels of God consciousness
- 5) Reflect more of God's names

My God, grant me the utmost absorption in You
and illuminate the vision of our hearts
with the light of Your vision
until the sight of the hearts can penetrate
the curtains of light
and reach the source of greatness
and until our spirits get anchored
to the threshold of Your sanctity.

Munajaat al-Sha'baniyyah

From the Prophet (s)

The Prophet (s) once told his companions that sometimes a person goes to the mosque to perform his salaah and includes many recommended acts to beautify the salaah, with a lot of focus and attention. But his Ibadah may not be worth even the wing of a mosquito. Another person goes to the mosque and performs Salaah which is equivalent to the Mount of Uhud!

People asked what the difference between these two examples was. The Prophet (s) said that the difference was because the second one had intellect and the first one did not have any understanding or depth and was simply stuck in rituals!

People then asked how they would be able to determine whose intellect is sharp and whose is defective?

The Prophet (s) said the one who has greater powers of abstaining from Haram and is always greedy to do good for others is the one with sharper intellect!

Islamic civilization as a whole is much like a traditional Muslim city. The outer walls make it appear dull and sombre and it is not easy to gain access to the world behind the walls. But if one becomes an intimate with the city's inhabitants, one is shown into delightful courtyards and gardens, full of fragrant flowers, fruit trees, and sparkling fountains. Those who write about Islamic history, political events, and institutions deal with the walls, since they have no way into the gardens.

Some of the gardens are opened up through the study of Sufism, art and architecture, poetry, and music, but since all of these have appeared in specific historical forms influenced by the surrounding environment, their deep Islamic roots can easily be lost to sight.
(cont.)

The most traditional and authentic gardens of the city, and the most difficult of access, are the hearts of the greatest representatives of the civilization. It is here that the supplications handed down from the pillars of early Islam can open up a whole new vision of Islam's animating spirit, since they provide direct access to the types of human attitudes that are the prerequisite for a full flowering of the Islamic ideal.

William Chittick, Introduction to The Psalms of Islam (al-Sahifat al-Sajjadiyyah)