

The Book of
APHORISMS

Being a translation of Kitāb al-Ḥikam

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh

Introduction



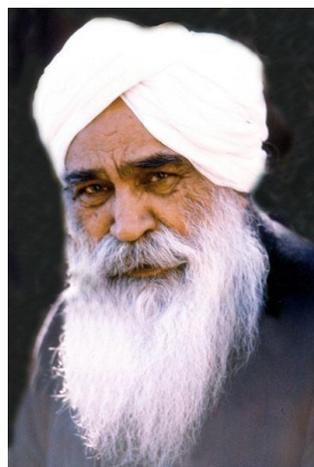
Ibn 'Ata 'illah (1259-1310), the author of *The Book of Aphorisms*, was a Sufi sage and saint of 13th century Egypt. His works loom large on the historical horizon as the earliest written documents of the Sufi order Shadhiliyyah. He was a spiritual master of that order.

The Book of Aphorisms is particularly noteworthy because of its universal value. It has a timeless quality that turns it into an ever-fresh affirmation of the life of the Spirit in man. It has about it the perfume of mystical realization that has endeared it to countless generations.

The book represents a joyous summation of the spiritual way by one who experienced it himself in all its directness and luminous nature, and who wished to make known to others the path leading to union with the Absolute. (Preface, Ibn 'Ata 'illah, *The Book of Wisdom*)



Dedicated to Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj



1894-1974

He will live in the hearts of His devotees forever.

1. One of the signs of relying on one's own deeds is the loss of hope when a downfall occurs.
2. Your desire for isolation, even though God has put you in the world to gain a living, is a hidden passion. And your desire to gain a living in the world, even though God has put you in isolation, is a comedown from a lofty aspiration.
3. Antecedent intentions cannot pierce the walls of predestined decrees.
4. Rest yourself from self-direction, for what Someone Else has carried out on your behalf you must not yourself undertake to do it.
5. Your striving for what has already been guaranteed to you, and your remissness in what is demanded of you are signs of the blurring of your intellect.
6. If in spite of intense supplication, there is delay in the timing of the Gift, let that not be the cause for your despairing. For He has guaranteed you a response in what He chooses for you, not in what you choose for yourself, and at the time He desires, not the time you desire.
7. If what was promised does not occur, even though the time for its occurrence had been fixed, then that must not make you doubt the promise. Otherwise your intellect will be obscured and the light of your innermost heart extinguished.
8. If He opens a door for you, thereby making Himself known, pay no heed if your deeds do not measure up to this. For, in truth, He has not opened it for you but out of a desire to make Himself known to you. Do you not know that He is the one who presented the knowledge of Himself to you, whereas you are the one who presented Him with deeds? What a difference between what He brings to you and what you present to Him!
9. Actions differ because the inspirations of the states of being differ.
10. Actions are lifeless forms, but the presence of an inner reality of sincerity within them is what endows them with life-giving Spirit.
11. Bury your existence in the earth of obscurity, for whatever sprouts forth, without having first been buried, flowers imperfectly.
12. Nothing benefits the heart more than a spiritual retreat wherein it enters the domain of meditation.
13. How can the heart be illumined while the forms of creatures are reflected in its mirror? Or how can it journey to God while shackled by its passions? Or how can it desire to enter the Presence of God while it has not yet purified itself of the stain of forgetfulness? Or how can it understand the subtle points of mysteries while it has not yet repented of its offences?
14. The Cosmos is all darkness. It is illumined only by the manifestation of God in it. Whoever sees the Cosmos and does not contemplate Him in it or by it or before it or after it is in need of light and is veiled from the sun of gnosis by the clouds of created things.

15. That which shows you the existence of His Omnipotence is that He veiled you from Himself by what has no existence alongside of Him.

16. How can it be conceived that something veils Him, since He is the One who manifests everything? How can it be conceived that something veils Him since He is the one who is manifest through everything? How can it be conceived that something veils Him, since He is the One who is manifest in everything? How can it be conceived that something veils Him, since He is the Manifest to everything? How can it be conceived that something veils Him, since He was the Manifest before the existence of anything? How can it be conceived that something veils Him, since He is more manifest than anything? How can it be conceived that something veils Him, since He is the One alongside of whom there is nothing? How can it be conceived that something veils Him, since He is nearer to you than anything else? How can it be conceived that something veils Him, since, were it not for Him, the existence of everything would not have been manifest? It is a marvel how Being has manifested in nonbeing, and how the contingent has been established alongside of Him who possesses the attribute of Eternity!

17. He who wishes that there appear, at a given moment, other than what God has manifested in it, has not left ignorance behind at all!

18. Your postponement of deeds till the time when you are free is one of the frivolities of the ego.

19. Do not request Him to get you out of a state so as to make use of you in a different one; for, were He to desire so, He could make use of you as you are, without taking you out!

20. Hardly does the intention of the initiate want to stop at what has been revealed to him, than the voices of Reality call out to him: "That which you are looking for is still ahead of you." And hardly to the exterior aspects of created beings display their charms, than their inner realities call out to him: "We are only a trial, so disbelieve not."

21. Your requesting Him is suspecting Him. Your seeking Him is due to your absence from Him. Your seeking someone else is because of your immodesty toward Him. Your requesting someone else is on account of your distance from Him.

22. Not a breath do you expire but a Decree of Destiny makes it go forth.

23. Do not look forward to being free of alterities [otherness], for that is indeed what cuts you off from vigilant attention to Him in that very state He has assigned to you.

24. So long as you are in the world, be not surprised at the existence of sorrows. For, truly, it manifests nothing but what is in keeping with its character or its inevitable nature.

25. No search pursued with the help of your Lord remains at a standstill, but any search pursued by yourself will not be fruitful.

26. Among the signs of success at the end is the turning to God at the beginning.

27. He who is illumined at the beginning is illumined at the end.

28. Whatever is deposited in the invisible world of innermost hearts is manifested in the visible world of phenomena.

29. What a difference between one who proceeds from God in his argumentation and one who proceeds inferentially to Him! He who has Him as his starting-point knows the Real as It is, and proves any matter by reference to the Being of its Origin. But inferential argumentation comes from the absence of union with Him. Otherwise, when was it that he became absent that one has to proceed inferentially to Him? Or when was it that He became distant that created things themselves will unite us to Him?

30. Those who are united with Him: "Let him who has abundance spend out of his abundance." Those who are voyaging toward Him: "And whoever has his means of subsistence straitened...."

31. Those who are voyaging to Him are guided by the lights of their orientation, whereas those who are united to Him have the lights of face-to-face confrontation. The former belong to their lights, whereas the lights belong to the latter, for they belong to God and to nothing apart from Him. "Say: Allah! Then leave them prattling in their vain talk."

32. Your being on the lookout for the vices hidden within you is better than your being on the lookout for the invisible realities veiled from you.

33. The Real is not veiled from you. Rather, it is you who are veiled from seeing It; for, were anything to veil It, then that which veils It would cover It. But if there were a covering to It, then that would be a limitation to Its Being: Every limitation to anything has power over it. "And He is the Omnipotent, above His servants."

34. Among the attributes of your human nature, draw away from every one that is incompatible with your servanthood, so that you may be responsive to the call of God and near His Presence.

35. The source of every disobedience, indifference, and passion is self-satisfaction. The source of every obedience, vigilance, and virtue is dissatisfaction with one's self. It is better for you to keep company with an ignorant man dissatisfied with himself than to keep company with a learned man satisfied with himself. For what knowledge is there in a self-satisfied scholar? And what ignorance is there in an unlearned man dissatisfied with himself?

36. The ray of light of the intellect makes you witness His nearness to you. The eye of the intellect makes you witness your nonbeing as due to His Being. The Truth of the intellect makes you witness His Being, not your nonbeing, nor your being.

37. "God was, and there was nothing with Him, and He is now as He was."

38. Let not the intention of your aspiration shift to what is other than He, for one's hopes cannot outstrip the Generous.

39. Appeal to no one but Him to relieve you of a pressing need that He Himself has brought upon you. For how can someone else remove what He has imposed? And how can he who is unable to free himself of a pressing need free someone else of one?

40. If you have not improved your thinking of Him because of His ineffable nature, improve it because of His treatment of you. For has He accustomed you to anything but what is good? And has He conferred upon you anything but His favors?

41. How astonishing is he who flees from what is inescapable and searches for what is evanescent! “For surely it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are in the breasts.”

42. Travel not from creature to creature, otherwise you will be like a donkey at the mill: Roundabout he turns, his goal the same as his departure. Rather, go from creatures to the Creator: “And that the final end is unto thy Lord.” Consider the Prophet’s words (God bless him and grant him peace!): “Therefore, he whose flight is for God and His Messenger, then his flight is for God and His Messenger; and he whose flight is for worldly gain or marriage with a woman then his flight is for that which he flees to.” So understand his words (upon him peace!) and ponder this matter, if you can. And peace on you!

43. Do not keep company with anyone whose state does not inspire you and whose speech does not lead you to God.

44. You might be in a bad state; then, associating with one who is in a worse state, you see virtue in yourself.

45. No deed arising from a renouncing heart is small, and no deed arising from an avaricious heart is fruitful.

46. Good works are the result of good states. Good states arise from the stations wherein abide those who have spiritual realization.

47. Do not abandon the Invocation because you do not feel the Presence of God therein. For your forgetfulness of the Invocation of Him is worse than your forgetfulness in the Invocation of Him. Perhaps He will take you from an Invocation with forgetfulness to one with vigilance, and from one with vigilance to one with the Presence of God, and from one with the Presence of God to one wherein everything but the Invoked is absent. “And that is not difficult for God.”

48. A sign of the heart’s death is the absence of sadness over the acts of obedience you have neglected and the abandonment of regret over the mistakes you have made.

49. Let no sin reach such proportions in your eyes that it cuts you off from having a good opinion of God for, indeed, whoever knows his Lord considers his sin as paltry next to His generosity.

50. There is no minor sin when His justice confronts you; and there is no major sin when His grace confronts you.

51. No deed is more fruitful for the heart than the one you are not aware of and which is deemed paltry by you.

52. He only made an inspiration come upon you so that you would go to him.

53. He made an inspiration come upon you so as to get you out of the grip of alterities [otherness] and free you from bondage to created things.

54. He made an inspiration come upon you so as to take you out of the prison of your existence into the unlimited space of your contemplation.

55. Lights are the riding-mounts of hearts and of their innermost centers.

56. Light is the army of the heart, just as darkness is the army of the soul. So when God wishes to come to the help of His servant, He furnishes him with armies of lights and cuts off from him the reinforcements of darkness and alterities.

57. Insight belongs to Light, discernment to the intellect, and both progression and retrogression belong to the heart.

58. Let not obedience make you joyous because it comes from you; but rather, be joyous over it because it comes from God to you. "Say: In the grace of God and in His mercy, in that they should rejoice. It is better than that which they heard."

59. He prevents those who are voyaging to Him from witnessing their deeds and those who are united with Him from contemplating their states. He does that for the voyagers because they have not realized sincerity toward God in those works; and He does that for those united with Him because He makes them absent from contemplating those states by contemplating Him.

60. Were it not for the seeds of ambitious desire, the branches of disgrace would not be lofty.

61. Nothing leads you so much like suspicion.

62. In your despairing, you are a free man; but in your coveting, you are a slave.

63. Whoever does not draw near to God as a result of the caresses of love is shackled to Him with the chains of misfortune.

64. Whoever is not thankful for graces runs the risk of losing them; and whoever is thankful, fetters them with their own cords.

65. Be fearful lest the existence of His generosity toward you and the persistence of your bad behavior toward Him not lead you step by step to ruin. "We shall lead them to ruin step by step from whence they know not."

66. It is ignorance on the part of the novice to act improperly, and then, his punishment having been delayed, to say, "If this had been improper conduct, He would have shut off help and imposed exile." Help could be withdrawn from him without his being aware of it, if only by blocking its increase. And it could be that you are made to abide at a distance without your knowing it, if only by His leaving you to do as you like.

67. If you see a servant whom God has made to abide in the recitation of litanies and prolonged His help therein, do not disdain what his Lord has given him on the score that you do not detect the signs of gnostics on him nor the splendor of God's lovers. For had there been no inspiration, there would have been no litany.

68. God makes some people remain in the service of Him, and He singles out others to love Him. “All do we aid—these as well as those—out of the bounty of thy Lord, and the bounty of thy Lord is not limited.”

69. It is rare that divine inspirations come except suddenly, and this, so that they be protected from servants’ claiming them by virtue of the existence of receptivity on their part.

70. Infer the presence of ignorance in anyone whom you see answering all that he is asked or giving expression to all that he witnesses or mentioning all that he knows.

71. He made the Hereafter an abode to reward his believing servants only because this world cannot contain what He wishes to bestow upon them and because He deemed their worth too high to reward them in a world without permanence.

72. Whoever finds the fruit of his deeds coming quickly has proof of the fact of acceptance.

73. If you want to know your standing with Him, look at the state He has put you in now.

74. When He gives you obedience, making you unaware of it because of Him, then know that He has showered you liberally with His graces both inwardly and outwardly.

75. The best that you can seek from Him is that which He seeks from you.

76. One of the signs of delusion is sadness over the loss of obedience coupled with an absence of resolve to bring it back to life.

77. The gnostic is not one who, when making a symbolic allusion, finds God nearer to himself than his symbolic allusion. Rather, the gnostic is the one who, because of his self-extinction in His Being and self-absorption in contemplating Him, has no symbolic allusion.

78. Hope goes hand in hand with deeds; otherwise, it is just wishful thinking.

79. That which the gnostics seek from God is sincerity in servanthood and performance of the rights of Lordship.

80. He expanded you so as not to keep you in contraction; He contracted you so as not to keep you in expansion; and He took you out of both so that you not belong to anything apart from Him.

81. It is more dreadful for gnostics to be expanded than to be contracted, for only a few can stay within the limits of proper conduct in expansion.

82. Through the existence of joy the soul gets its share in expansion but there is no share for the soul in contraction.

83. Sometimes He gives while depriving you, and sometimes He deprives you in giving.

84. When he opens up your understanding of deprivation, deprivation becomes the same as giving.

85. Outwardly, creatures are an illusion; but, inwardly, they are an admonition. Thus, the soul looks at the illusory exterior while the heart looks at the admonitory interior.

86. If you want a glory that does not vanish, then do not glory in a glory that vanishes.

87. The real journey is when the world's dimensions are rolled away from you so that you see the Hereafter closer to you than yourself.

88. A gift from man is deprivation; but deprivation from God is beneficence.

89. Our Lord is far above the servant dealing with Him in cash, and His repaying him in credit.

90. It is reward enough for worship that He has accepted you as worthy of it.

91. It suffices as a reward for the ones who do good that He has inspired obedience to Him in their hearts and brought upon them a state of reciprocal intimacy with Him.

92. Whoever worships Him for something they hope from Him, or obeys Him to keep chastisement from coming to themselves, has not given His attributes their due.

93. When He gives to you He shows you His kindness and when He denies you He is showing you irresistible power. So in both He is disclosing Himself to you, and drawing nigh with His loving kindness unto you.

94. Deprivation hurts you only because of your incomprehension of God in it.

95. Sometimes He opens the door of obedience for you, but not the door of acceptance; or sometimes He condemns you to sin, and it turns out to be a cause for union with God.

96. A disobedience that bequeaths humiliation and extreme need is better than an obedience that bequeaths self-infatuation and pride.

97. There are two graces that no being can do without and that are necessary for every creature: the grace of existence, and the grace of sustenance.

98. He bestowed His grace upon you, first, through giving you existence, and, second, through uninterrupted sustenance.

99. Your indigence belongs to you essentially, for accidents do not abolish essential indigence: The trials that arrive in this world are but reminders to you of what you ignore of indigence.

100. Your best moment is the one wherein you witness your actual indigence and, through it, reach the reality of your lowliness.

101. Whenever He alienates you from His creatures, realize that He wants to open for you the door of intimacy with Him.

102. Whenever He releases your tongue to ask, know that He wants to give to you.

103. The duress of the gnostic never departs, and he finds no rest in anything but God.

104. He illuminated exterior phenomena with the lights of His created things; and He illuminated the innermost hearts with the uncreated lights of His attributes. For that reason, the lights of exterior phenomena set, whereas the lights of hearts – and of the innermost hearts – do not set. That is why it is said, “Verily, the sun of the day sets at night, but the Sun of hearts never sets!”

105. Let the pain of tribulation be lightened for you by knowing that it is He Most Glorious who is making trial of you; for Him from whom you are faced with the blows of fate is He who has accustomed you to His choosing well.

106. Whoever thinks His loving kindness is ever separated from His ordaining fate, does so out of shortsightedness.

107. It is not to be feared that the paths will confuse you, but only that whims will defeat you.

108. Praise be to Him who has hidden the inner reality of holiness by manifesting the quality of human nature, and who has appeared in the sublimity of Lordship by manifesting the attribute of servanthood.

109. Take not your Lord to task that what you seek is slow in coming; but take yourself to task that your manners are slow in coming.

110. Whenever He makes you obedient outwardly to His command and bestows you surrender inwardly to His irresistible power, He has shown you largesse beyond thanking.

111. Not all who are most certainly among the chosen go on to perfect their liberation.

112. Only the ignorant man scorns the recitation of litany. Inspiration is to be found in the Hereafter, while the litany vanishes with the vanishing of this world; but it is more fitting to be occupied with something for which there is no substitute. The litany is what He seeks from you; the inspiration is what you seek from Him. What comparison is there between what He seeks from you and what you seek from Him?

113. The arrival of sustenance is in accordance with receptivity, while the raying-out of lights is in accordance with the purity of the innermost being.

114. When the forgetful man gets up in the morning, he reflects on what he is going to do, whereas the intelligent man sees what God is doing with him.

115. The devotees and ascetics are alienated from everything only because of their absence from God in everything. Had they contemplated Him in everything, they would not have been alienated from anything.

116. He commanded you in this world to reflect upon His creations; but in the Hereafter He will reveal to you the perfection of His Essence.

117. When He knew that you would not renounce Him, He made you contemplate that which issues from Him.

118. Since God knows the occurrence of weariness on your part, He has varied the acts of obedience for you; and since He knows of the occurrence of impulsiveness in you, He has limited them to specific times, so that your concern be with the performance of ritual prayer, not with the existence of the ritual prayer. Not everyone who prays performs well.

119. Ritual prayer is a purification for hearts and an opening-up of the door of the invisible domains.

120. Ritual prayer is the place of intimate conversations and a mine of reciprocal acts of purity wherein the regions of the innermost being are expanded and the rising gleams of light shine forth. He knew of the existence of weakness in you, so He made the number of ritual prayers small; and He knew of your need of His grace, so He multiplied their fruitful results.

121. When you seek recompense for a deed, the reality of sincerity in it is demanded of you in return. As for the insincere, the feeling of security from chastisement suffices him.

122. Do not seek recompense for a deed whose doer was not you. It suffices you as recompense for the deed that He accepts it.

123. When He wants to show His grace to you, He creates states in you and attributes them to you.

124. Were He to make you go back to yourself, there would be no end to the reasons for blaming you; and were He to manifest His beneficence toward you, there would be no end to the reasons for praising you.

125. Cling to the attributes of His Lordship and realize the attributes of your servanthood!

126. He has prohibited you from claiming for yourself, among the qualities of created beings, that which does not belong to you; so would He permit you to lay claim to His Attribute, He who is the Lord of the Universe?

127. How can the laws of nature be ruptured for you so that miracles result, while you, for your part, have yet to rupture your bad habits?

128. The point at issue is not the fact of searching; rather, the point at issue is that you be provisioned with virtuous conduct.

129. Nothing pleads on your behalf like extreme need, nor does anything speed gifts to you quicker than lowliness and want.

130. If you were to be united with Him only after the extinction of your vices and the effacement of your pretensions, you would never be united with Him! Instead, when He wants to unite you to Himself, He covers your attribute with His Attribute and hides your quality with His Quality. And thus He unites you to Himself by virtue of what comes from Him to you, not by virtue of what goes from you to Him.

131. Were it not for the kindness of His veiling, no deed would be worthy of acceptance.

132. You are more in need of His forbearance when you obey Him than you are when you disobey Him.

133. Veiling is of two kinds: veiling of disobedience, and veiling in it. Common people seek God's veiling in disobedience out of the fear of falling in rank among mankind. The elect seek the veiling of disobedience out of the fear of falling from the sight of God, the True King.

134. Whoever honors you honors only the beauty of His veil in you. Therefore, praise is to Him who veiled you, not to the one who honored and thanked you.

135. No one is a friend of yours except the one who, while knowing your defects is your companion, and that is only your generous Master. The best one to have as a friend is He who does not seek you out for the sake of something coming from you to Him.

136. Were the light of certitude to shine, you would see the Hereafter so near that you could not move toward it, and you would see that the eclipse of extinction had come over the beauties of the world.

137. It is not the existence of any being alongside of Him that veils you from God, for nothing is alongside of Him. Rather, what veils you from Him is the illusion of a being alongside of Him.

138. Had it not been for His manifestation in created beings, eyesight would not have perceived them. Had His Qualities been manifested, His created beings would have disappeared.

139. He manifests everything because He is the Interior, and He conceals the existence of everything because He is the Exterior.

140. He has permitted you to reflect on what is in created beings, but He has not allowed you to stop at the selfsame creatures. "Say: Behold what is in the heavens and the earth!" Thus, with His words, "Behold what is in the heavens" He opened up the door of instruction for you. But He did not say, "Behold the heavens," so as not to lead you to the mere existence of bodies.

141. The Universe is permanent through His making it permanent, and it is annihilated by the Unity of His Essence.

142. People praise you for what they suppose is in you; but you must blame your soul for what you know is in it.

143. When the believer is praised, he is ashamed before God that he should be lauded for an attribute he does not see in himself.

144. The most ignorant of all people is the one who abandons the certitude he has for an opinion people have.

145. When He lets praise of you burst forth, and you are not worthy of it, praise Him for what He is worthy of.

146. When ascetics are praised, they are contracted, for they witness the praise as coming from mankind; but when gnostics are praised, they are expanded, for they witness the praise as coming from the True King.

147. If when given something, the giving expands you, and if when deprived of something, the deprivation contracts you, then take that as proof of your immaturity and the insincerity of your servanthood.

148. When you commit a sin, do not let it make you despair of attaining righteousness before your Lord, for that might be the last one decreed for you.

149. If you want the door of hope opened for you, then consider what comes to you from Him; but if you want the door of sadness opened for you, then consider what goes to Him from you.

150. He often benefits you in the night of distress, what you have not benefited in the dawning of the daytime of elation: You know not which of them is nearer in benefit to you.

151. The hearts and the innermost centers of being are the places where lights arise.

152. There is a light deposited in hearts that is nourished by the Light coming from the treasuries of the invisible realms.

153. There is a light wherewith He unveils for you His created things, and there is a Light wherewith He unveils for you His Attributes.

154. Sometimes hearts stop at lights the same way souls are veiled by the opacity of things besides Him.

155. He has veiled the lights of inward souls with the coarseness of outward appearances out of reverence for them; lest they be made low and common by being divulged, or be called on aloud by the tongue of fame.

156. Glory be to Him who has not made any sign leading to His saints save as a sign leading to Himself, and who has joined no one to them except him whom God wants to join to Himself.

157. Sometimes He reveals to you the invisible domain of His Realm but veils you from knowing the secrets of His servants.

158. Whoever gets to know the secrets of servants without patterning himself on the divine mercifulness finds his knowledge a tribulation and a cause for drawing evil upon himself.

159. The ego's share in disobedience is outwardly clear, while its share in obedience is inwardly hidden. To cure what is hidden is hard indeed?

160. Perhaps showing off in good works has penetrated you in such a way that no one notices it.

161. Your desire that people know your particular distinction is a proof of insincerity in your servanthood.

162. Make mankind's looking at you disappear by being content with God's looking at you! Slip away from their approach to you by contemplating His approach to you!

163. Whoever knows the Truth witnesses Him in everything. Whoever is annihilated in Him is absent from everything. And whoever loves Him does not prefer anything over Him.

164. Only His extreme nearness to you is what veils God from you.

165. Only because of the intensity of His manifestation is He veiled, and only because of the sublimity of His Light is He hidden from view.

166. Do not suppose your supplication will cause Him to give, lest your understanding suffer. Rather, supplicate to Him to show your servanthood and to fulfil the rights of His Lordship.

167. How can your subsequent asking be the cause of His prior giving?

168. A pre-eternal command is high above needing an external cause.

169. His special concern for you is not due to anything you have done. Where were you when His special concern and care took charge of you? There was no sincerity in actions in His pre-eternity nor the presence of spiritual states. At that time, there was only mere benevolence and great gifts.

170. He knew that His servants would want to know whom His special concern is for. So He said, "He chooses for His mercy whom He wills." But He knew if He left them at that they would leave performing actions depending only on the pre-eternal command. So He said, "Indeed the mercy of God is closer to the doers of good."

171. Everything depends on the Divine Will, but It Itself depends on nothing at all.

172. Sometimes virtuous behavior leads some to abandon asking because of trust in His Providence or because concern for the Invocation of Him stymies their asking of Him.

173. Only he who can forget is reminded and only he who can neglect is told to be attentive.

174. Times of need are the celebration days of the disciple.

175. Sometimes you will find more benefit in states of need than you will find in fasting or ritual prayer.

176. States of need are gift-laden carpets.

177. If you want gifts to come your way, then perfect the spiritual poverty you have. "Alms are only for the poor."

178. Become realized in your attributes and He will strengthen you with His: Realize your humility and He will strengthen you with His pride. Realize your incapability and He will strengthen you with His ability. Realize your weakness and He will strengthen you with His power.

179. Sometimes a charisma is bestowed upon someone whose righteousness is not perfect.

180. A sign that it is God who has put you in a certain state is that He keeps you in it while its fruits mature.

181. He who holds forth from the standpoint of his own virtuous behavior will be silenced by misbehavior toward God; but he who holds forth from the standpoint of God's virtuous behavior toward him will not be silenced when he misbehaves.

182. The spiritual lights of sages travel faster than their words. Wherever the light falls, there understanding is reached.

183. Every statement spoken has a covering describing the heart from which it emerged.

184. Whoever has been given permission to speak out will find that his expression is understood by his listeners and that his symbolic allusion is clear to them.

185. Sometimes the lights of inner realities will appear eclipsed when you have not been given permission to express them.

186. Their expression is either because of the overflow of ecstasy or for the purpose of guiding a disciple. The former case is that of those who are voyaging; the latter case is that of those who possess a function and have realization.

187. Spiritual instruction is nourishment for the listeners, and your share in it is only what you can eat thereof.

188. Sometimes the beginner describes a station of which he only has had a small taste and sometimes the advanced describes it after having in it realization. And only the one with insight can distinguish.

189. The traveler should not speak about his spiritual experiences since that will decrease their effect on his heart and detract from his truthfulness with His Lord in them.

190. Do not stretch your hand to take something from people unless you see that the Giver through them is your Master. And in such a state, take what is in agreement with external knowledge.

191. Sometimes the disciple is ashamed of submitting his urgent need to his Master, being content with His Will. So why should he not be ashamed of submitting his urgent need to a creature of His?

192. When you are confused about two matters, follow the one harder for the lower self. For only the rightful duty seems hard for it.

193. Among the signs of following one's desires is speeding towards nonessential acts of worship while being lazy about obligatory acts of worship.

194. He laid down specific times for acts of obedience so that procrastination did not divert you from them, and He made each time span ample so that you would have a share in making the choice.

195. He knew that most of His servants are not self-motivated in seeking Him, so He obligated for them obedience to Him. He pushed them towards Him with the chains of obligation. Your Lord is amused by a people who are pushed to Paradise in chains.

196. He made the service of Him obligatory upon you, which is as much as to say that He made entry into His Paradise obligatory for you.

197. Whoever finds it astonishing that God should save him from his passion or yank him out of his forgetfulness has deemed the Divine Power to be weak. "And God has power over everything."

198. Perhaps He engulfed you in darkness (after being in light) so that you recognize the tremendous blessing He has given you.

199. Whoever does not recognize blessings in their presence is reminded of them in their absence.

200. The inspirations of grace should not so dazzle you as to keep you from fulfilling the obligations of thankfulness, for that would indeed bring you down in rank.

201. Lust engrained in the heart is a disease hard to cure.

202. Lusts are not driven from the heart except by terrifying fear or restless longing.

203. Just like He does not like an action done for others along with Him, He does not like a heart with others in it along with Him. The insincere action, He does not accept. The insincere heart, He does not approach.

204. Some light is granted permission to reach and some light is granted permission to enter.

205. Sometimes spiritual light descends but finds the heart filled with images of physical things and thus goes back to where it came.

206. Empty your heart of others and He will fill it with divine knowledge and secrets.

207. Do not deem His giving to be slow, but rather, deem your approaching to be slow.

208. It is possible to fulfill some obligations at times, but it is impossible to fulfill the obligations of every moment, for there is no moment wherein God does not hold against you a new obligation or a definite matter. So how can you fulfill therein someone else's obligation when you have not fulfilled God's?

209. That part of your life that has gone by is irreplaceable, and that which has arrived is priceless.

210. You have not loved anything without being its slave, but He does not want you to be someone else's slave.

211. Your obedience does not benefit Him and your disobedience does not harm Him. It is only for your own good that He commanded the one and prohibited the other.

212. His might is not increased by him who approaches and His might is not decreased by him who turns away.

213. Your union with God is union through knowledge of Him. Otherwise, God is beyond being united with anything or anything being united with Him.

214. Your nearness to Him is that you contemplate His nearness. Otherwise, what comparison is there between you and His nearness?

215. Inner realities arrive synthetically in the state of illumination, and after retention comes their explanation. "So when we recite it, follow its recitation. Again on us rests the explaining of it."

216. When divine spiritual experiences come over you, they destroy your bad habits. "Surely the kings, when they enter a town, ruin it."

217. Spiritual experiences come from the Presence of the Omnipotent. As a result, nothing opposes it without being smashed to bits. "Nay, but we hurl the Truth against falsehood, and It prevails against it, and lo! falsehood vanishes."

218. How can God be veiled by anything, for He is apparent and has actual being in that wherewith He is veiled?"

219. Do not lose hope in the acceptance of an act of yours wherein you found no awareness of the Divine Presence. Sometimes He accepts an act the fruit of which you have not perceived right away.

220. Attest not to the validity of an inspiration whose fruits you know not. The purpose of rainclouds is not to give rain; their purpose is only to bring forth fruit.

221. Do not wish that a spiritual experience had remained with you after it has already spread its lights and placed its secrets. You have in God independence from everything but nothing can make you free of need from Him.

222. The proof that you have not found Him is that you strive for the permanency of what is other-than-His; and the proof that you are not united to Him is that you feel estranged at the loss of what is other-than-His.

223. Pleasure even if manifest in many forms is only through viewing His closeness. Pain even if manifest in many forms is only through being veiled from Him. The cause for pain is the presence of the veil. The perfecting of pleasure is by viewing His Noble Countenance.

224. That which hearts find in the way of worries and sadness is due to that which prevents them from having inner vision.

225. Part of the completeness of grace accorded you lies in His providing you with what suffices and holding you back from what makes you exceed bounds.

226. In order that your sadness over anything be little, let your joy over it be little.

227. If you wish not to be abandoned, do not seek protection from things that do not last.

228. If beginnings make you desirous, endings will make you abstinent; if their exteriors invite you, their interiors will hold you back.

229. He has only made the world a place of otherness and a mine for troubles by way of inducing detachment towards it in you.

230. He knew that you would not accept mere advice, so He made you sample the world's taste to a degree that separation from it would be easy for you.

231. Useful knowledge is the one whose ray of light expands in the mind and uncovers the veil over the heart.

232. The best knowledge is that which is accompanied by fear of displeasing God.

233. If fear of displeasing God is united with knowledge, then it is for you, if not, then it is against you.

234. When you are pained by people turning away from you or directing blame towards you, suffice yourself with the knowledge of God in you. But if the knowledge of Him in you does not satisfy you, then your affliction at not being content with that knowledge is greater than your affliction at the pain coming from people.

235. He only made affliction come at the hands of people so that you do not repose in them. He want to drive you out of everything so that nothing would divert you from Him.

236. When you know that the devil does not forget about you, do not forget about Him in whose Hand is your destiny.

237. He made the devil your enemy so that, through him, He could drive you toward Himself, and He stirred up your soul against you so that your drawing near to Him would be permanent.

238. Whoever asserts that he is humble is in reality arrogant — as humbleness is a high state. And if you assert for yourself a high state, you are arrogant.

239. The humble person does not see himself above what he does but sees himself below what he does.

240. Real humility issues forth from witnessing His tremendousness and lofty attributes.

241. Only the contemplation of His Attribute can dislodge you from your attribute.

242. The believer is he who is diverted from extolling himself by the praise of God, and who is diverted from remembering his good fortune by the fulfillment of God's rights.

243. The true lover is not he who hopes for compensation or seeks his own aim from his beloved. Rather, the lover spends himself on his beloved. The lover is not he who expects his beloved to spend on him.

244. If it were not for the battlefields of the lower selves, there would be no travel for the travelers on the Path since there is no distance between you and Him that your journey would shorten and there is no separation between you and Him that your reaching Him would eliminate.

245. He placed you in the middle realm between His physical world and metaphysical one to teach you the majesty of your rank among His created beings and that you are a jewel wherein the pearls of His creations are hidden.

246. The cosmos is large in respect to your body but is not large in respect to your soul.

247. So long as you have not contemplated the Creator, you belong to created beings; but when you have contemplated Him, created beings belong to you.

248. You are with created things as long as you do not witness the Creator. When you witness Him, created things are with you.

249. It is not necessary that specialness entails one has no rough human characteristics. Specialness is like the light of the sun filling the horizon, whereas the horizon has no light in itself. Sometimes He takes away the trait of specialness from you and makes you return to your rough human limits. Thus, the light of day is not from you and does not belong to you; rather, it is merely being put over you.

250. It is only in the invisible world of the Realm that the value of the lights of hearts and innermost centers of being is known, just as the lights of the sky do not manifest themselves except in the visible world of the Kingdom.

251. For those who do good, finding the fruits of the acts of obedience in this world is glad tidings of their reward in the Hereafter.

252. How can you seek recompense for a deed He bestowed upon you out of charity? Or how can you seek recompense for a sincerity He gave you as a gift?

253. For some, their spiritual lights precede their remembrances. For others, their remembrances precede their spiritual lights. For others yet, their remembrances and spiritual lights occur together. Still others have no spiritual lights nor any remembrances—and we seek refuge with God from that.

254. The exterior of invocation would not exist were it not for the interior of contemplation and meditation.

255. He made you witness before He asked you to give witness: Thus, the outer faculties speak of His Divinity while the heart and the innermost consciousness have realized His Unity.

256. He has given you three gifts: (1) He has let you remember Him; if it were not for His bounty, you would not be worthy to engage in His remembrance, (2) He made you mentioned along with Him as He has affirmed your relation to Him, and (3) He made you remembered by Him and thus He has perfected His blessing on you.

257. Many a life is long in years but meager in fruits, and many a life is short in years but rich in fruits.

258. He who has been blessed in life attains, in a short time, to such gifts from God that no expression or symbolic allusion could describe.

259. It would be disappointing – really disappointing! – if you were to find yourself free of distractions and then not make toward Him, or if you were to have few obstacles and then not move on to Him!

260. Contemplation is the journey of the heart through other than God.

261. Meditation is the lamp of the heart; so when it goes away, the heart has no illumination.

262. Meditation is of two kinds: the meditation of belief and faith, and the meditation of contemplation and vision. The first is for the adepts of reflective thought, the second is for the adepts of contemplation and intellectual vision.



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