

IDENTITY

by Shaykh Taner Ansari

Bismillah er Rahman er Rahim [In the Name of Allah, The One Who Acts with Mercy, The Source of Mercy]. All praise belongs to Allah. He owns everything. All power belongs to Him and not to us. May His peace and blessings be on His Prophet Muhammad and his family and on all the other prophets and their families.

Hold onto your Shaykh; it's a tricky road

“I have the power to do it and I'm me, the one who's going to benefit by it.” Who am I thinking of? I am thinking of *me*. If you think this way, you'll never get there and it will never be easy. It's just such a complex and a tricky, tricky road that you have to walk on. That's why you need to hold onto the shaykh and get out of the way. That's the only way that I know of, otherwise you are always in the *process* and you'll always be thinking of *you*.

You are not going to get to Allah by thinking of yourself. You're going to get to Allah by thinking of Allah. Whether it is good or bad or you're hurting or not, even if you are victimized, abused, whatever. When you moan, complain, who are you talking about? You are talking about you. At that point, the distance between you and Allah is like this: you are closer to yourself. When you are closer to Allah, you don't talk about yourself and it will be easy, but as long as you are in this body and in this world there is no easy thing. The sooner you accept this, the better it is. Then it will be easy because you are in surrender

How can I know Allah if I am nothing?

They keep asking these questions and I guess I cannot answer them really well, in a satisfying way: “If I am going to think of Allah, and I am going to be nothing, then *who* is going to know Allah? Will I have an identity? What is my identity then? If I die, then how can I know Allah? If I am nothing, how can I know Allah? What's going to happen to me when I am nothing? How will I know Allah and how will Allah love me?” I have to be me and Allah has to be He, She, It.

Identity is something limited, incomplete

Allah created everything. “Created” means He put them in a form from His essence, the Truth. He created everything with Truth. That means that His energy is in the base of everything. When He put His qualities into the universe in certain amounts, He gave them a form, a package. This package stands for this concept, this identity, which is not God, but it reflects a little bit of this and a little bit of that. Because it doesn't represent the *whole* and because it's *limited*, we call this thing whatever we call it. All the qualities of Allah are manifested in the material universe and the unseen part of the universe. There is chemistry, physics, geometry, biology and all the sciences that follow. Shapes and forms and these sciences all carry the 99 Names of Allah. His qualities are manifested in these objects. Iron is iron, whatever iron represents: power, strength. But Allah doesn't have only chemical and biological qualities. Allah also has living qualities – persona qualities: like love, compassion, will power and patience. Where are they going to be manifested?

Allah's powers exist in two ways: as potential energy and as kinetic energy. We need

motion to express some of His powers. In other words, somebody has to act. In order to understand this, the opposite of Allah also needs to be represented, so that you can compare. Justice has to be enacted and at the same time, injustice has to be enacted, so that you can see the difference. “This is just. This is unjust. Allah is just. I am not.”

So that’s why *nafs* is created. “Created” means put into a recognizable form – elements combining and coming up with different qualities, different manifestations, so different *life* qualities can also be manifested with different combinations of actions and understandings. For example, if you don’t fall into a desperate situation, you will not feel the desperation, the lack of power, the lack of control. This feeling will not come about unless you are in a situation like that.

Living with Allah by recognizing His manifestations

As you can see, Allah has created us as witnesses. How are we witnessing all these things? We are witnessing them in our lives. Tomorrow we have a soccer game. We don’t know if we are going to win or not, but when you win there is a different feeling, “I beat someone!” You cannot feel that feeling unless you are in a situation like that. You side with a team, that team wins and you yell, “Raiders won!” This is what fans are all about. Are *you* playing for the Raiders? No. Are they paying you a salary? No. I am paying them money so they can play. How can we have a feeling like this? It’s because of our incompleteness. We side with somebody.

Allah puts you into certain situations so that these different manifestations of living life can be recognized by you. You can get to Allah by being with Him, by living with Allah at all times, by knowing mentally that all this is a manifestation of Allah. This is self-education. Allah is manifesting partly as *nafs*. We have to recognize it as *nafs*. If it refers to you or somebody else, it is *nafs*; if it is referring to the whole, it is Allah.

You are connected to Allah

What does it mean to dissolve in Allah? Poof? It doesn’t mean that you should lose your identity. It means that you know that you have no power. All power belongs to Allah. You are just there because Allah drew you there. That’s who you are. Do you exist? Yes, I hope that you will always exist, but how? Your existence is completely dependent upon Allah. If it weren’t for the paper, there would be no drawing on the paper. You are just His line.

So when you say *fakir*, you mean that you have nothing; you are poor. *Fakir* means you have nothing because everything you have belongs to Allah. Allah has taken a certain amount from Himself to create you and to give you a name. In this way, Allah is sharing His being with you. Whatever power you get is His power. He just wants to do things through you.

Dissolving in Allah is in the head, and knowing that my identity is only on the paper. I have an identity. Allah wants me to have this identity. I carry Allah’s understanding power here and there. That’s where you and Allah are one, because whatever you understand, Allah understands. Whatever you see, Allah sees. Whatever you pursue, Allah pursues. It is because you are connected to Him. His understanding power, His cautiousness is in you, but not *all* of it, as much as He wants. That’s why you

are a different person than someone else.

WHO IS ME? A Story

A guy dashes into this shop, sweating and everything, his eyes are wide open. He says, “Is this me?” The shop- keeper says, “Yes.” The guy says, “Have you seen me before?” The shop- keeper says, “No.” Then the guy says, “How do you know it’s me then?”

The poor guy lost himself. This happens. It happens to everybody. He says, “I lost myself! I kept going from shop to shop, trying to find myself.” He lost himself. “Is that me? I’m not sure. I look in the mirror. I don’t know if it’s me or not. So where is me?”

Your identity allows you to witness Allah

Allah has given you an identity. You need this identity so that you can witness Allah. He says, “I will show my things to Chris, for example.” If He didn’t call you Chris, who is He going to talk to? “I’ll show it to Me.” Allah made you like Himself: He gave you His understanding, His seeing. He gave His perceptions to you so you can perceive. Spirit is Allah’s energy, just like water in the sea. Until you put it in a cup, it has no identity; it’s just the sea. When you put it in a cup, it’s a glass of water. That’s what you are. Spirit earns its identity in this cup, which is this body. And this combination we call Chris and you earn your identity as Chris.

If Allah didn’t give me the opportunity, I wouldn’t be able to explain this in this way. I don’t know why you guys are the lucky ones, but Allah wills it. If He didn’t want you guys to know this, he would not have explained it. I’ve been trying for a long time to be able to explain. Knowing something is one thing and trying to explain it to somebody else is another matter.

Remembering our purpose

In the beginning, the whole thing is the purpose. You are here. I don’t know how many, five billion people are out there and only five people are here. And why are you here? Who gave you this purpose? Where did you get this purpose? Why? What is the purpose? The first thing is to be able to be conscious of the purpose – universal purpose. You need to believe in that purpose. Once you believe in that purpose, then you won’t mind the road that you need to travel on, because this purpose is the very heart of the matter. This is what is true and this is what you must do.

I keep giving this example from American history. How many months, how many years with their carts and horseback the pioneers traveled. “Go West!” They came here. The ones who gave up ended up in Iowa. The ones who didn’t give up came all the way to Utah and then they said, “OK, that’s enough. This is West enough for me.” The ones that said, “I’ll never give up until I see the Pacific Ocean,” came here, because nothing else mattered for them. The focus was there. “This is what I want and I’ll get there no matter what!” Through all kinds of trials: Indian attack, snow, mud, mountains – up the mountains, down the mountains, they made it. This what we’ve got to do. First of all, you all have it very easy. You haven’t been tested like some, like Abraham, pbuh, for example. If we are not hurting, we must be doing something wrong or doing a really good job. The hardest point was keeping me on this path and being so patient as not to kick me out. This is the only place I’ve stayed for a

long time. I love Sufism. I thank Allah for putting me on this path and keeping me there although I don't deserve it.

Call of the Divine

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