



Annual ASK Conference Held in Pretoria, South Africa on April 23 – 24, 2005

Introduction *by* Iqbal Jhazbhay



Gathering of Art in the Heart & the Banquets of love and profundity!

When some day in the future, the historic annals of developments are written of the Academy of Self Knowledge at the Rasooli Centre in Tshwane (Pretoria), the dates 22 to 24 February 2005 will stand out as profoundly memorable milestones.

In this context, youth, mothers and fathers viewed the Allah-given opportunity to care and share, and to bond with each other, at the 6th International Gathering on *Voices of*

Wisdom from Our Past, as a banquet of love and profundity. Reflections and recitals of poetry led one to conclude that the *art* is in the *he-art*!

In attendance, from many corners of the globe, was the beloved son of Karbala, Shaykh Fadhalla Haeri; the grandson of the valiant Sudanese Al-Mahdi, Imam Sadiq Al-Mahdi; the hugely popular and astute South African Education Minister Naledi Pandor; and the strong Dr. Maryam Al-Mahdi.

With inspirational clarity Shaykh Fadhalla Haeri defined wisdom:

**“Wisdom is sustained goodness and ease...itself is the noble offspring
Brought up by modesty, courage and justice
Foundations for transformation, it can bring
The ecstasy and awesomeness of the present”**

A splendid range of presentations were made at this gathering on luminaries such as Abdur Rahman Al-Mahdi, ZK Mathews, Abdul Qadir Al-Jazaa`iri, Abdul Qadir Jelani, Rumi, and grand poets. Bold and real evaluations were also made by elders and the youth on what went wrong?

In this respect, many in attendance at this embracing gathering, concluded with modesty and courage:

- a. “a gigantic death” was been given to inertia, when it comes to being honest of our predicament, that the effulgent Prophetic heritage cannot be left to those who want to hijack it and, dry up its humanity (*tajfifaat*).
- b. “an enormous birth, of a mighty moment in timelessness” (Ben Okri), is emerging in many corners of the world, such as the emerging visionary programme of the Academy of Self Knowledge and the rising oasis of fresh thinking and action in Sudan’s Umma Party.

On Friday, excellent discourses were presented by Shaykh Fadhalla Haeri and Imam Sadiq Al-Mahdi, who took on squarely the burning issues of the day, from the obnoxious events of September 11, to the use of the correct language as an effective medium of communication. Here, many recalled when listening to this Friday discourse, the narrative of the respected mother of Jesus, Maryam, when she was asked in the Qur'an to shake up the trunk of the palm-tree in order to receive "fresh ripe dates" (*rutabun ganiya*, Qur'an, Surah Maryam, verse 25).

During this gathering, many leaders in the Indonesian city of Bandung gathered to chart with Asia, a new beginning to achieve sustainable development of Africa. In Tshwane's Rasooli Centre, the shape of development wisdom as "sustained goodness and ease" was being internalized in the hearts of participants in "flashes of frozen light". People's dignity as carriers of the Ruh of Allah, the principles of equality, non-racialism, and role of women in society, were principles, highlighted in the journey of transformation to the Higher in us (*Ruh- Allah*).

Indeed, 22-25 April 2005, will be remembered as a challenging and joyful return to the principles of "wisdom as sustained goodness and ease".

Iqbal Jhazbhay

University of South Africa

Tshwane, 25 April 2005

Poem – Opening Address by Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri



Past, Present, Future

Welcome to all present here

The past is a window closed

The future is a sight not yet visited

The present conceals and reveals all

Its roots, boundless and eternal,

Its fruits defined by space-time

Captured in flashes of frozen light

In ceaseless flight.

Wisdom is sustained goodness and ease

Appropriateness leading to harmony and peace

Like time and space it has no fixed face.

A wise act of yesterday

Could be the ultimate folly of today

But wisdom itself is the noble offspring

Brought up by modesty, courage and justice

Foundations for transformation, it can bring

The ecstasy and awesomeness of the present

Where no open or closed window matters

When the light of lights rendered all shattered

And revealed the loving embrace of opposites

As a threshold to the Divine treasury of His presence

Welcoming creation to the timeless present

The abode of beauty, majesty and eternity

Enhanced by the earthly illusion of absence.

Again, welcome to all present here.

Summary of Jum'ah Kutbah by Imam Sadiq al-Mahdi



God made the enemies of Islam support Islam eg. The upbringing of Moses in Pharaohs house, such contradictions are the ways of Allah.

September 11 cannot be condoned, there were however 2 important consequences. Firstly it stirred Muslims who were stagnant and secondly non-Muslims have a greater concern about Islam and Muslims. These 2 aspects are positive even though the event itself is most unacceptable.

The umma is under siege because extremists are speaking on our behalf in a very aggressive manner, provoking retaliation from a very powerful enemy. The ummah can be divided into, sunni, shi'ite and sufi's. The sunnis have a form of fiqh that has put them in a straight jacket by arguing by analogy. They have landed up with a corpus of knowledge that they believe must be applied for all Muslims in all places, they have encapsulated our present and future into their past. We have to use other means to break out of this. There are many other ways, including rationality, intuition and inspiration, to discover the truth.

The shi'tes need to move out of walayat al-faqih, which establishes a kind of theocracy. We should shift from walayat-al-faqih to walayat-al-umma so we can move forward.

The sufi's have done Islam a great service under aggressive circumstances but they need to move from sufi individual salvation to sufi social salvation. This is a necessary step forward so that the umma with all its limbs move together.

Jihad is only fighting under aggression and is a continuous struggle/engagement and is not limited to war, it is also fighting against social evils.

Part 2

Our Prophet (pbuh) is an example of an excellent human being but he has been dehumanized by biographers. He has been misrepresented in his role as a statesman, military man and family man.

This incorrect portrayal of the Prophet (pbuh) is unacceptable. If our people look carefully we can be proud and realize that he was the Prophet of Humanity. There have been non-Muslims who are dedicated to their own faiths who have shown the true nature of Muhammad (pbuh). This shows that Islam should not be seen as the sectarian belief of Muslims but as the religion of humanity. This is necessary in a world where there is a spiritual famine.

What Went Wrong? by Sidi Hosam Raouf



For centuries the world of Islam was in the forefront of human civilization and achievement. In the course of the seventh century, Muslim armies conquered Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Persia and North Africa. In the eighth century from their bases in North Africa, Muslims conquered Spain and Portugal and reached the French border. In the ninth century they conquered Sicily and invaded the Italian mainland.

Islam not only had a powerful military power, it was the foremost economic power in the world, trading in a wide range of commodities. It had achieved the highest levels in human history in the arts and sciences of civilization. It excelled in medicine, chemistry, mathematics, optics, architecture and astronomy. Inheriting the knowledge and skills of the ancient Middle East, of Greece and of Persia, it added to them new and important

innovations, such as the use and manufacture of paper from China and decimal positional numbering from India.

Islam gave dignity and meaning to drab and impoverished lives, it taught men of different races to live in brotherhood, and people of different creeds to live side by side in reasonable tolerance and harmony. It inspired a great civilization in which others besides Muslims lived creative and useful lives, and which by its achievement, enriched the whole world.

And then, suddenly, everything began to change, Europeans started to make significant progress in the civilized arts. They advanced by leaps and bounds, leaving the scientific and technological and eventually the cultural heritage of the Islamic world far behind them. Muslims for a long time remained unaware of this happening. The technological and industrial revolution of the West passed virtually unnoticed in the lands of Islam, when they were still inclined to dismiss every thing outside their land as inferior and barbaric.

During the last three centuries the Muslims lost all the lands they had in Europe, they lost control of the seas both militarily and commercially. The Muslim world lost its dominance and its leadership and fell behind both the modern West and the rapidly advancing and modernising Far East.

Today the Muslims have lost their focus, they are divided, they are weak and humiliated. To humiliation was added frustration as the various remedies, most of them imported from the West, were tried and one after the other failed to make any significant improvement.

So what went wrong and why ?

What is the sickness and what is the remedy ?

What Our Great Women Would Say *by* Bara M Baker



**“In the view of intellect, heaven is the man
And earth the woman.
Whatever the one throws down,
The other nurtures.”**

Rumi, Methnawi

We must recognize that in society today women in general around the world have often faced prejudicial treatment because of their gender. Within Islamic society as well as within Western Society, difficult treatment of women has occurred -- in some cases obvious, in some cases insidious. In Islamic society the unjust treatment of women is

compounded by the rigid adherence to redundant cultural attachments combined with male dominated Islamic jurisprudence in certain area.

However, the oppressive treatment of women is entirely at odds with the teachings of Islam and the Qur`an, and the Qur`an in fact enjoins mutual respect and valuation of the human being regardless of gender or social situation.

The Prophet Muhammad brought a message of integration of spirit (inner) and matter (outer), of essence and everyday life, of recognition of the feminine as well as the masculine. The Prophet Muhammad conferred upon women a dignified status comparable with their feminine role and responsibilities. The Prophet said, “The best among you is the one who who acts best towards his wife, and I am better than any of you towards my wife”,

This message was manifest through the teachings in the Qur`an and the way in which the Prophet himself treated the women around him. In particular there are three members of the Prophets family who were living symbols of what it meant to be a Muslim woman and reflected how highly esteemed Muslim women should be in society; simultaneously, their lives teach us much about the roles and responsibilities of a Muslim wife and mother. These women were the Prophets wife Khadeja, Khadeja’s daughter Fatima and Fatima’s daughter Zainab.

These women lived at a time of great danger, when the true message of Islam was first being formed and then teetering on the brink of survival, yet their message of courage, mercy, humanity and unwavering faith in Allah reverberates timelessly through the ages. We, modern day women have much to learn about adhering to the true message of Islam in spite of the difficulties thrown at us in modern day life. But moreover, there is a greater message for Muslim men about the way in which women should be treated and that the realization may dawn upon every Muslim person that the future of this

community, the future of Islam lies in the hands of its womenfolk – for the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.

Rumi's Eternal Voice By Aliya B Haeri



Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi

During the last decades of the 20th century, the spiritual influence of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi was emerging and being strongly felt by people of diverse beliefs throughout the western world. He was being recognised in the West, as he has been for eight centuries in the Middle East and Western Asia, as one of the greatest literary and spiritual figures of all time. In the United States alone, he has become a beloved best selling poet, whose profound wisdom and universality speak to the minds and hearts of seekers of all backgrounds, religions and cultures.

Jalaluddin Rumi was born in 1207 in Balkh in what is today Afghanistan. At an early age, his family left Balkh because of the danger of the invading Mongol hordes and after

travelling through different cities, eventually settled in Konya, Turkey. His father, Bahauddin, was a great religious teacher and Sufi master, who tutored his son in the theological sciences and mystical practices.

At the age of 37, Rumi encountered the central event in his life – the meeting with the spiritual dervish, Shams of Tabriz, who became the catalyst of Rumi's awakening to the radiant light of Truth. Transformed by this light, consumed by this fire, Mevlana Rumi saw the world with new eyes; everything was charged with God's grandeur and Grace, and he reminded his followers, in unforgettable verses that ring eternally true, that true life is possible only by surrendering to love.

Prior to this encounter, Rumi had been an eminent theologian and highly attained mystic. After this, he became an inspired poet and a great lover of humanity. His magnum opus, the Mathnavi, comprises over 25,000 verses, in the whole of six books.

The poetry of Rumi will forever be a phenomenon. He, like no one else, has taken life and made it divine; he has taken one vision and made it universal; he has taken all of God's glory and made it his own – but more than this, Rumi has made it our own. For at the deepest level of his Mathnavi, he tells only one story: the soul's search for the Beloved. In his search for self realisation, he discovered that man and woman has always had the same illness, and he has rarely faced it; for he has found it easier to live partially than to fulfil his potentialities and live his destiny as a full human being.

The awakened individual who dies to his phenomenal self (called fana, in Sufism) has come to understand his relation with the cosmos and saves his own soul, but in his passive state of knowing merely solves the relations with the universe and saves his own soul, but to Rumi, this is only the start of the journey, for it is with ongoingness in integration (called baqa, in Sufism), that one takes the further step and discovers the joy of being active in creation as a mirror to other men and women who may also discover the light within. And the way to that discovery is only through love.

Rumi was an Ocean of Love, an Ocean of Unity. Just as we walk along the shore, and find treasures in the sand, so shall we find in the great writings of Rumi, the treasures that

are sought by the heart, mind and soul of seekers
Everywhere.

For Rumi said,

Lovers themselves do not seek – in the whole world, there is no seeker but He.

**Lovers must seek the Beloved, running on their faces and heads like a torrent in His
stream,**

**But He alone is the seeker, and we are like shadows. Oh, our words are all the words
of the Beloved!**

**Subhanallah! The Beloved is with you in the midst of your seeking! He holds your
hand wherever you wander.**

Through his radiance, stones become rubies.

Though His seeking, seekers reach the Sought.

Love is the bottomless Ocean of Life

Everlasting life is the least of its gifts.

O my Beloved!

Take me,

Liberate my soul

Fill me with your love

And release me from both worlds.

If I set my heart

On anything but you,

O fire, burn me from inside!

O my Beloved

Take away what I want

Take away what I do

Take away everything

That takes me from you.

Knock,

And He'll open the door.

Vanish

And He'll make you shine like the sun.

Fall,

And He'll raise you to the heavens

Become nothing

And He'll turn you into everything!

**In closing, we ask Allah for light on the resting place of Rumi, to protect his secret,
and to help us all to recognise**

The place of Oneness

The Ocean that has many harbours,

Yet where there is no division

Between man and man, or woman,

But only a unity of souls

In the process of return to their Creator,

Whose breath lives inside each one

And helps to guide us home.

Thank you.

Vision Perfection *by* Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Welcome to all present here.
Outer sight is just a small prelude
To universes of insights
Hearing, seeing and connecting with any entity
Are messages pointing towards the real and true identity
For every form conceals a meaning
As there cannot ever be an outer without its core of inner
And all earthly matters indicate their heavenly origin.

Vision in itself is not what we seek.
What it may reveal is love beyond bounds
Bridging all distances and divisions
Unifying shadow and noise to the original silent sound
Before all movement and change
And the dance of pluralities
On the canvas of the existential show
Where the ridiculous points to the sublime
And vices hide under virtues
And where all transient creation
Is a signpost leading to its eternal root
The ever-present supreme perfection
Dressed up as the impostor imperfection
To be discovered (uncovered) by visions,
Sights, insights and flashes of frozen light.
Again, welcome to all present here.

The Great Poets Speak *by* Adnan Al-Adnani



**Verily everything except Allah is false
And every bounty no doubt will be extinct**

Lubayd ibn Rabia

Surely there is much wisdom found in poetry

Muhammad

**What is poetry? The song of the bird of the soul.
What is poetry? The likeness of the world of eternity.
The value of the bird becomes clear through it,
And one discovers whether it comes from the oven of a bath house or a rose garden.**

**It composes poetry from the Divine rose garden.
It draws its power and sustenance from that sacred place.**

Abdel Rahman Jaami

A proper understanding of the poetics of the Arabs can only be reached by viewing it in its social, cultural, and political context. In a world of intense heat, aridity, and insecurity. Nothing is certain but change, and change is less apt to be gradual and orderly than sudden and unforeseen.

The root of the Arabic word for poetry (*Shi'r*), the verb *sha'ara*, commonly translated as 'to feel'; It originally means 'to know', 'to understand', 'to perceive'. A poet (*Sha'ir*) is someone who knows, has insight, he perceives that which others do not perceive. In contrast, the root of the word *fikr* (thought) originally concerned the soul and heart and not reason. *Khatir* signifies a feeling or an idea or a notion that passes through the heart. To think is to contemplate through the heart. *Aql* (reason) was originally connected with morals, reason prevented a being from abandoning himself to his passions.

The assumption is that pre-Islamic poetry was the depository not only of Arab songs, but also of truths and knowledge. This implies that the poets not only sang but 'thought' in their poetry as well, and that it was therefore a source of knowledge. Arabic poetry at the time of the Pre-Islamic Era (*Jahiliyya*) was rooted in the oral and developed within a vocal culture. The voice in this poetry was the breath of life.

The concept of naturalness (*badaha*) in poetry which was synonymous with spontaneity and instinct. The pure Bedouin Arabs are considered the essence of perfect eloquence (*fasaha*), and the characterization of naturalness as what differentiates them from other peoples. It is the opposite of intellectual activity.

Poetry was not only a conscious application of speech but also a conscious participation in the act of existence.

Poetic talent was judged by the poet's ability to invent something which would leave its mark on the listeners souls. The poets basic preoccupation was therefore that his poem must correspond to what was in his listeners soul because his eloquence was evaluated in terms of how much the listener understood of what is said. All poetry contains a paradox theirs is: Unity of content and diversity of expression.

The Qur`an was not only a new way of seeing things and a new reading of mankind and the world, but also a new way of writing. The Qur`anic text was a radical and complete departure. It formed the basis of the switch from an oral to a written culture. The Qur`an conveys a vision both of the transcendental and of the human culture. It is the transcendental situated in time and space.

[69:38] No, I swear by what you see

[69:39] and by what you do not see

[69:40] That it is the speech of a noble messenger.

[69:41] It is not the speech of a poet - little do you believe!

[69:42] Nor the speech of a soothsayer - little do you remember!

[69:43] It is a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds.

Surat Al-Haqqa (Reality)

A prophet is sent from within his people to challenge their concept of knowledge and truth. In the prophet Muhammad case it's the knowledge represented by the poets. In contrast to prophets before him, Prophet Mussa had to challenge the magic, and prophet Issa has to challenge the healers. A prophet is not a man who foretold, but a man who told forth. He is not a soothsayer; he is a guide, a reminder of the ultimate truth within.

Higher Islamic poetry is a mode of the search for the Self, and the return to the Self but by means of a perpetual exodus away from the lower Self. The difference between poetic and factual language is the that the former is associative (gather) and the latter dissociate (separate). The one makes an active connection between objects over and above their temporal concurrence. The other likes to keep clear distinctions between things which are not causally related. The vision of the world described in factual language is therefore

dim and dusty because it is a view of life deadened by concern to live. It is a vision that does not divide a human being into thought and feeling, or emotion and intellect but considers him as an indivisible whole, a force of unified consciousness.

Metaphor in Islamic poetry is more than an expressional device; it is in the structure of the language itself, and indication of a spiritual need to transcend reality. This indicates that metaphor is linked to a vision of the truth. The aim of what we know is to arouse a desire in us for what we do not know, a desire to increase our knowledge until it is perfect.

Modern poetics is indicative of a cultural crisis of identity. This is linked both to an internal power struggle and to external conflict against foreign powers. The return to the past is more eagerly pursued whenever the internal conflict has intensified or the danger from outside has grown.

In this talk the origins of poetry and its development is explored with examples from the great classical poets of the various Islamic periods reflecting the timeless wisdom within their own social, cultural, and political environments.

Love for Him *by* Zainab Hussain Haeri

**Love is to love
Love for Him.**

**Seeing is seeing
sights for Him.**

**Hearing is to hear
sounds for Him.
Speaking is to speak
words for Him.**

**Knowing yourself
is to know Him.**

**Knowing is to know
Him.**

**Giving is to give
for Him.**

**Being is to be
for Him.**

**Take the hand of His
Beloved Prophet.
and you will be lead to Him,
your home, your life, your source.**

Amir Abd Al Qadr of Algeria: A Life of Diverse Jihad by Muneerah Haeri



Amir Abd Al Qadr of Algeria (1808-83 CE) was one of the main leaders of Algerian resistance, following the French invasion of 1830 CE. The Amir became celebrated not only for his prowess as a leader of Jihad against the superior military might of France, but also for his spiritual qualities and chivalry towards his enemies.

His opponent the French general, Bugeaud described him as resembling “ the way that Jesus Christ is often portrayed” at a time when French commanders were offering rewards for the ears of Arabs, the Amir only rewarded the delivery of live prisoners, whom he treated better than did his French counterparts their captives.

Today, the issue of the outer Jihad and the rules that govern is a topic of international concern. It is, therefore, timely to look to the life of the Amir for an uplifting reminder of

the impact made on friend and foe alike by one who strove to follow the Mohammadi model whether fighting an outer Jihad in war or struggling with the inner Jihad of the Nafs.

The Amir's father Sidi, Muhyi Ad-Qin, was a descendent of the prophet and a Qadiri Shaykh with a strong following in Western Algeria. He was elected as a leader of resistance against the French in his area. He delegated this office to the twenty-four year old Amir in 1832 CE. Thus a young man who had from youth been trained to follow his father as head of the family Zawiyah, found himself propelled by destiny into fifteen years of intense military Jihad. The period was punctuated by short intervals of peace in which he organised the semblance of a modern state and attempted to rally the various Arab and Berber tribes under the banner of Islam.

The Amir was forced to surrender to the French in 1847 CE. The latter had committed their army to a scorched earth policy, which devastated the land and destroyed the Algerian resistance. The French, despite having promised the Amir free passage to a Muslim land, imprisoned him until 1852 CE. His captivity became his Khalwa! There is evidence to indicate that the Amir was attached to the Akbarian Silsila from youth and thus dedicated transmitting the teachings of Ibn Arabi, Al Shaykh Al Akbar. During his years of exile in Damascus the Amir devoted himself to teaching and to his inner unfoldment. He financed the first edition of the Futuhat of Ibn Arabi and his own Kitab Al Mawaqif, illustrating his indebtedness to the great master.

During the druze rebellion of 1860 the Amir sheltered thousands of Christians and Jews from the Muslim mob. A rioter asked why the Amir, who had himself killed so many Christians, was preventing others from following this course of action. He replied that he had only fought the invaders of his homeland. The Muslims of Damascus on this occasion had no justification under Shariah for their aggression. Imam Shaml of Daghestan, a Naqshbandi, Shaykh, who had defended his country against Russian invaders wrote to the Amir after this event congratulating him on showing the world how a true Muslim behaves.

Thus the valiant Muslim warrior became the man of knowledge with compassion for all beings who respected the plurality of beliefs. In one of his commentaries the Amir wrote that as the “Creator” is the essence of all that is worshipped in a certain respect every worshipper worships none other than Him.

Theatre of life by Adil Nchebeleng



Thee ultimate moment

The art of dying lies in war.

Because in war dead or alive, defeated or victorious

You attain victory anyway,

The end gratifies the beginning

For this moment precedes time.

Yes we take shelter in days and nights, hours and seconds,

But what really matters is defined in the moment.

Live joyously for this moment will never be recaptured and repeated.

One take is all you get.

Live this moment as if it was your last

Then time will not matter.

Give gratitude to the greatest of host [Time and Space]

You might never get this opportunity again.

Breathe, and really take a deep breath

This (breathe) is all that matters now.

You know why? No breathe is ever the same.

Theatre of life

All will be known as your role unfolds.

Self where are you at my moments of despair

Yes you entice me when I stand reassured

From the womb to the tomb.

Why waste more than you have

In life there is only one exit > death

You and I hold keys to our own freedom

It's all up to you, if it was for me,

I would say take your role seriously!

ASK and Be free
