

C O N F E R E N C E

POWER OF DEVOTION, PRAYER AND WORSHIP

– Awareness of the Unseen

6-8 March 2009 – Centurion, Pretoria

We strive for survival, growth and to know the purpose and meaning of life. The pursuit of happiness is the ultimate goal of all human endeavours. Our needs and the ways and means to satisfy them, especially prayer, are keys to unlock the boundless treasure of divine grace that is ever-present.

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Contents

1. Introduction	- Iqbal Jhazbhay	pg 2
2. To See the Unseen	- Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri	pg 3
3. Prayer, Worship and Devotion	- Ebrahim David Stokes	pg 5
4. A Personal View of Faith and Prayer in America	- Hajj Mustafa Ali Sterling	pg 6
5. Meditative States of Mind in Buddhism	- Prof. Kobus Kruger	pg 8
6. Christian Prayer in Crisis	- Prof. Hansie Wolmarans	pg 9
7. Prayers in Islam and the Ways of Supplication	- Shaykh Hosam Raouf	pg 11
8. Panel on Personal Experiences of Prayer	- Paul Rischbieter	pg 13
9. Supplication (Du'a) amongst the Classical Sufis	- Dr. Ali Allawi	pg 14
10. Turning to God: Dimensions of Prayer	- Dr. Sadiyya Shaykh	pg 15
11. Consciousness and Prayer	- Dr. Adnan al-Adnani	pg 16
12. States of Mind and heart in Prayer	- Aliya B. Haeri	pg 23
13. Vibrational Medicine and Alternative Therapies	- Dr. Ashraf Karolia	pg 25
14. Panel on Personal Experiences	- Sadia Bundgaard	pg 27
15. Academy of Self Knowledge (ASK)	- Fadil Khan	pg 29
16. Good Start Foundation	- Ahmad Haeri	pg 31
17. Photo Gallery		

Introduction

Iqbal Jhazbhay

For the past decade, the splendidly-endowed Rasooli Centre in Pretoria, has hosted an annual Conference, led by the unparalleled and enlightened, Shaykh Fadhalla Haeri. Indeed, this is a key milestone in the journey towards self-knowledge and the universality of Oneness.

There is little doubt that the annual Conference has a distinctive and delightful sparkle. There is an unseen, unfathomable factor which gives each occasion a magic-like quality. The meeting of a network of hearts, the outstanding evening meditative sessions of Zikr, coupled with the high quality presentations and the sincere-loving camaraderie, are highlights of particular significance.

This year's theme on The Power of Prayer, Devotion and Worship: Awareness of the Unseen, helped participants to understand how we need to welcome the paradox of humanity and divinity within us.

May I add my voice of appreciation to Shaykh Fadhalla Haeri, for his unflagging efforts to inspire the annual Rasooli conference. May the Shaykh's ebullient shine continue -a radiance that leaves no doubt that he is in his prime! May the glow of the One and only Light continue!



Shaykh Fadhalla Haeri



Iqbal Jhazbhay

To See the Unseen

Shaykh Fadhalla Haeri

I thank Allah who has created the, visible and invisible realms, the Universe and I thank you for taking time off for your own sake to discover further that which is beyond the limits of discoveries. We are all on the same journey.

My talk is about seeing the unseen, which implies middle people, meaning we do not deny physicality, sensuality and realisations of matter, energy, what goes up and what comes down. We do not deny any of the experiences, whatsoever.

Then we also begin to have differentiations and appreciations and apply judgement as to this is good, this is not, this is appropriate, this is not; this is the right time in order for us to go to the horizon of the unseen so we are in the middle. We are between heavens and earth. We are in a barzakh.

We are currently living in a fantasy. There are all these helpful illusions that I exist, I am doing something good. There is no doer except the one.

The real progress in spirituality is coming more and more from astrophysics, from nuclear scientists, from quantum scientists, less and less from theologians. It is now fashionable for nuclear scientists to mention God in their discoveries because behind everything is this one unifying force.

We are all driven towards immortality because we are in love with that one entity which is eternal (Allah).

We have to be rational, we have to use our minds, we have to use reason, we have to learn compassion. We have to learn to co-exist with others so that we realize there is no otherness. Isn't that a paradox?

We have to survive. Human beings can only survive with others, with a community, with a society.

The progress of our evolvment is such that we have this notion of serving others for others sake or for God's sake. Often religious people use that to cow down others.

Religious superiority is deep in our psyche. The downfall of Adam about five thousand years ago is bread wheat. Once we have that we can have bread handy and the refrigerator we had the ultimate barrier. The food issue is a big issue because it is a diversion from uncertainty and therefore also supplication and prayers.

All prayers, all supplications are the hinges of the limited entity, you and I, and the limitless reality, Allah. It is the connector. So every one of us is endowed with needs which never end, some of which will be frivolous desires or stupid wants, but it never ends. And if you finished with yours, you say it is for other people's sake, for the community, for society, for mankind. Who appointed you? Who made you responsible for mankind? But it is nice and powerful. Or to say you are a huge religious leader.

Life many years ago was simple. There was no waste. People didn't live long.

Our current way of life is causing havoc in the more advanced countries. The more advanced they are, the less they procreate because they begin to care more about themselves. Who is this self? Where is this self? If I say to you that whatever you do is instigated by the self that statement will hold true at all times for the most selfish person, for the most selfless person, for the loving mother who dies during birth. All of it is the self. The self is a spectrum. One end of it is this identity which we call you and I as the sound does not change, but the entire cosmology and the context changes radically.

There is this lower self which gives us respect, status, etc which is important for us human beings. Do not deny the ego. Ego is what will lead you to egolessness or it will trap you and suffocate you.

If we deny our lower self which is greedy, selfish mean, we will be denied the second level of evolution which is spiritual evolution.



Ebrahim David Stokes



Hajj Mustafa Ali Sterling

Prayer, Worship and Devotion

Ebrahim David Stokes

Worship means to value.

Prayer means moving away from daily demands.

We do as we have been commanded to do for ourselves.

The Qur'aan says: 'Yu sabbihu lilillahi maa fis samaawati wal-ardh -

Everything in creation is in a state of worship.'

Prayer is a connection between the person praying and the object of prayer.

The Prophet (S.A.W) asked if anyone could keep their mind fixed on Allah (no thoughts and so forth). He said that if they could he would give his cloak to them.

The boldest of the lot volunteered to try.

The man succeeded for the first half, but during the second half he was thinking that the Prophet (S.A.W) has two cloaks and wondering which one he would get.

Ibn Arabi said: "Every prostration will be the last you make."

The power of the mind enables one to focus fully. If you pray as if you are praying for the last time, one's focus increases.

One who dies by Allah's will, one's borrowed time has come to an end, one's material world has also come to an end. Therefore, he said: 'Die before you die...'

Rumi said: If you could get rid of yourself just once, the secret of secrets will be open to you.

Self and soul cannot merge because the self always interferes. It was said: "I think' therefore I am. The 'I' is what keeps him from Allah.

It took 300 years for Des Carte's message to get through to another philosopher.

"That which thinks and that which observes the thinker are separate."

To be called a Muslim means: "one in true submission"

David then related some of his personal experiences.

The first was a time at Bait-ad-din in America relating to sajdah (prostration) where he said that if you are able to pray properly, then you would bow from this world into the next.

The second story was about his wife's last moments where he was not by her side at the end – something he really wanted.

The story ended by showing us that if you sincerely want something, Allah will grant it to you. David eventually saw his wife in a dream. He was given a vision of the last two minutes.

A Personal View of Faith and Prayer in America

Hajj Mustafa Ali Sterling

Today we are reflecting on the dual nature of experience, the unseen world, and that of the seen.

God speaks to the nature of mankind by saying on the tongue of the Prophet

I was a treasure-hidden wanting/loving to be known so I manifested creation to be known.

God also says:

The whole universe does not contain me, but the heart of the one with awareness, consciousness and, awake to the divine realities contains me.

We are destined to struggle with this paradox with the ultimate outcome, to realize we are both. We are tasked to yield to the divine within and tame and submit the transient self, becoming realized as a mirror of the divine spirit within.

All life is from one source and is wholly and constantly sustained by it.

This source within the heart, this oneness is the all-encompassing permanent reality that permeates the universe. That being the foundation, all and everything else has emerged from it.

This source has brought into being infinite cascading, overlapping and inter-connected patterns, communicating to the heart of mankind the meaning and purpose to this experience of life

Everything is encoded with the first and prime intention to know the source from which we came, are sustained and draw our potential to live as balanced, conscious beings.

At any given moment in time all of us are at the threshold of the ultimate discovery.

Our God, our source is never absent it only requires us to open our hearts and minds and awaken our consciousness becoming aware of the divine presence.

When we do that the heart becomes the medium of communication of His guidance and grace, with this awareness the signs and patterns of the original intentions are revealed and you begin to read and understand what you need to know to evolve your self along towards becoming the true reflector of the divine reality.

There is no better method to attaining awareness and communication with the divine then through prayer.

There are many facets and types of prayer that all divinely revealed paths promote and require from their adherents.

What is important to note is that it is one of the core tenets of every religion.

Recent scientific studies have shown that we share a common feature in the brain that becomes “lit” up and activated when we pray. It is already designed in our bodies to serve the performance of prayer to benefit not only ourselves’ but also others where our prayer may be specifically directed.

In some of these studies, prayer has been shown to increase the healing process and create conditions where the immune system is bolstered and helps increase the efficacy of treatment, and in some cases remission with no scientific or “reasonable” explanation.

In conclusion, in one of the traditions God says:

My servant draws near to me in prayer, and when he makes even greater effort to remember me beyond what is religiously required, I become the hand by which he grasps, the eye by which he sees and the feet that he walks upon.

This is our potential and I pray that we all take away from this gathering a renewed commitment to our path to know ourselves and to serve without personal agenda so that we become a true reflector of the divine purpose.

I pray for inspiration and Love to fill our days and nights and limbs that reach out to others in openness and gratitude for life.



Prof. Hansie Wolmarans



Prof. Kobus Kruger

Meditative States of Mind in Buddhism

Prof. Kobus Kruger

The higher states of mind, as set out in early Buddhist meditation, are the following: infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, neither-ideation-nor-non-ideation, and cessation of ideation and feeling. Each of these has a specific colour and content – or rather lack of content, on a scale of decreasing ‘content’.

These states of consciousness are related to the central concept of Buddhist mysticism and philosophy, namely non-substance/ontological emptiness. This latter notion (particularly as radicalized in Madhyamika Buddhism) and the scale of meditative states are suggestive of a radical notion of Absoluteness, transcending every conventional notion of ‘God’, particularly as laid down in massive, heavy social and cognitive structures of force.

The notion of ‘Absoluteness’, as pioneered by Buddhism a few centuries BCE but also as containing a general mystical reference and relevance, deserves careful attention. It is the key to understanding mysticism. Coming to terms with some of the important aspects of ‘Absoluteness’ is the heart of this presentation.

‘Absoluteness’ invites us to appreciate the hidden treasure in all religions. Although the paper cannot go into any historical depth, it does pay its respects to some of the peaks in the various mystical traditions, present in a number of religions. This radical depth is the secret, not only in Buddhism, but also in Sufism, Jewish Kabbalah, Christian mysticism, and Advaita Vedanta. Nagarjuna, Ibn Al-Arabi, Rumi, Isaac Luria, Nicholas of Cusa and Nagarjuna, and others sharing this same orientation even if they do not belong to any established religion, are peaks of the human spirit, sharing in and expressing Spirit, and the vanguard of true humanity.

The great mystics and mystical paths of humankind converge in this open space, beckoned by an open horizon.

Far from being abstruse escapism, the ‘mystical’ orientation, finding its End and Origin in Absoluteness, may be the only real solution to the social conflict and ecological catastrophe threatening human society and all life on earth.

Christian Prayer in Crisis

Prof. Hansie Wolmarans

In April 2006 an article on prayer appeared in the highly esteemed American Heart Journal. It supplies the results of a \$2.4m study sponsored by the Templeton Foundation. The article was titled “Study of the therapeutic effects of intercessory prayer (STEP) in cardiac bypass patients.” The study found that prayer made no difference whatsoever to the rate at which patients who had heart surgery, recovered.

A website, <http://whywontgodhealamputees.com/>, is also dedicated to the question of whether God does intervene in the operation of natural laws, and specifically whether there is any evidence which would withstand the test of scientific scrutiny that God reacts to prayer. It answers in the negative.

This debate about prayer is a result of the process of secularisation, that is, explaining phenomena in terms of itself, and not in terms of another dimension, or spiritual world. It seemingly makes the space for an intervening God intolerably small and contradicts the Christian bible. Evidence of a prayer experiment is indeed also found in the Old Testament, 1 Kings 18:16-45, where the prophet Elijah challenges the prophets of the fertility God, Baal, to a prayer contest. The results of this experiment vindicate Elijah when God answers his prayer immediately, and the prophets of Baal are slaughtered.

In the Christian New Testament, various injunctions to pray, as well as discussions of what prayer is, are given, for example:

- 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “Pray continually.”
- Matthew 7:7, “Ask, and it will be given to you.”
- Mark 9:23: “Everything is possible for him who believes.”
- Mark 11:23-24, A mountain can be moved through faith. “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”
- Matthew 6:10, “your will be done”

The New Testament seems to support that prayers are answered if connected with faith. Individual believers would give completely contrasting views about their own experiences of prayer (“It’s a waste of time” / “God answered it in God’s way.”).

Christian prayer is therefore in crisis. RS Thomas wrote a poem about his inability to pray in a traditional way. He called it “Emerging”:

*Not as in the old days I pray,
God. My life is not what it was ...
Once I would have asked for healing
I go now to be doctored;
I would have knelt long, wrestling with you
Wearing you down. Hear my prayer, Lord hear
my prayer. As though you were deaf, myriads
of mortals have kept up their shrill
cry, explaining your stillness by
their unfitness.*

*It begins to appear that this is not what prayer is about,
It is in the annihilation of differences,
the consciousness of myself in you,
of you in me; the emerging
from the adolescence of nature
into the adult geometry
of the mind
Circular as our way
is, it leads not back to that snake haunted
garden, but onward to the tall city
of glass that is the laboratory of the spirit.*

On the other hand, popular Christian religion sticks to its guns. In 2000, Bruce Wilkinson published his *The Prayer of Jabez*. Within two years it sold more than six million copies, and created a small industry—the Breakthrough Series—based upon prayers that guarantee immediate results (“You name it, you claim it.”). The prayer of Jabez appears in 1 Chronicles 4:10: “Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!” According to Wilson’s *Gospel of Health, Wealth and Prosperity*, God wants us to be selfish in our prayers, and piety is rewarded with prosperity.

This tension between popular religion and science, Bible and modernity, experiment and experience bring one to reflect anew on prayer, reflection and meditation. It also forces the modern theologian to consider the different ways in which God has been pictured:

- Theistic, very similar to a Mediterranean king, who has to be petitioned, reminded and bugged in order to intervene (pre-modern period);
- Deistic, as a distant God who created the universe like a watchmaker would design and make a watch, and then sits back letting the watch wound down (modern period);
- Panentheistic (a God who cannot be experienced as a person, but as force for the good (Post-modernism));
- The dead or absent God (post-post-modernism), whose absence should be addressed in theology.

A variety of practices related to prayer is therefore developing, for example meditation, prayer as a way of expressing care for others and nature, and contemplation. Michael Quoist is famous for his contemplations. The following is called “Telephone”

“I have just hung up; why did he telephone? I don’t know ... O! I get it ... I talked a lot and listened very little. Forgive me, Lord, it was a monologue and not a dialogue. I explained my idea and did not get his; Since I didn’t listen, I learned nothing, Since I didn’t listen, I didn’t help, Since I didn’t listen, we didn’t communicate. Forgive me, Lord, for we were connected, and now we are cut off.” (Michael Quoist).

Prayers in Islam and the Ways of Supplication

Shaykh Hosam Raouf

Allah (SW) created us to worship Him. He also created this world in its entirety and dedicated it to us. Allah made it easy for us to fulfil our obligations by sending us prophets and messengers with books to show us the easy way to know Him, to love Him and worship Him because He is worthy of it.

Prayer in Islam is a vital aspect of worship. It is to re-establish the Covenant that confirms the statement of: Am I Not Your Lord? “Alastu Birabikum”. This Covenant gives the relationship between the Creator, the “Rub”, and the created, the “Abd”.

All the endeavour of worshipping, with prayer being the foundation, is to seek, to look for Allah in order to know Him. But where is He? Allah says in the Glorious Quran that He is closer to us than is our jugular vein, but we still can't see Him. Allah is the Ever Apparent “Al Dhahir”. His light engulfs and spreads all over the heavens and the earth. Allah is also The Hidden “Al Baatin,” the Unseen, but He is hidden from us by the veils that WE create ourselves.

The accumulations of these veils is the formation of the arrogant self, the “Nafs”. The more self-control we have, the nearer we are to Him, and the less self-control we have, the further away we are from Him. The struggle of removing the self - imposed veils is the story of mankind, some succeed and some fail. To win this battle we need to be alert, determined and divinely guided. Allah gave us all the attributes that we need to break down those dark walls that we ourselves put between Him and us.

It is an inborn urge in us, as in all creatures, to look for and seek Him by adoration and glorification. In their own way animals and inanimate objects also do the same. All the plants seek His light in the ground and above it. Allah gave intellect to us humans and therefore we do not need to move physically, we only need to seek for His knowledge, which is already within us.

To live in Islam is to be constantly, consciously aware of His presence. The life of a Muslim is always a struggle to confirm His Oneness in Lordship; that He is the only Creator, and the Oneness of His Godness; that we worship Him and Him alone, and the Oneness of His attributes and divine names; that all of them belong to Him alone.

The process of unifying everything to its origin, and the interconnectedness of everything is the science of “Tawheed”, a declaration that everything is created by Him, belongs to Him, is controlled by Him, and eventually returns back to Him. Modern science is crying for such recognition. In time, arrogant scientists will come to recognise that what they were seeking for in a Unified Theory of Everything is already there under their eyes. They only have to humble themselves and look at creation with the eye of Tawheed.

The science of Tawheed gives us the blessed way to Allah, it was taught to us by our beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He showed us the easy way. By his guidance and teaching we can overcome and

remove our veils and reach the shores of tranquillity and bliss. The Prophet showed us the way in which we can live and die safely and honourably. He conveyed to us the Noble Quran – which is an interactive manual of existence – as it was revealed to him completely in its entirety.

Another method of worship is by Dua, which is a direct approach and a direct appeal to Him, with no one in between. In the teaching and guidance of the Prophet we have a complete catalogue of Duas for every event and every occasion, from earthquakes to hearing the cockerels in the early morning. He gave us what we need to remove the fog and the veils and to clear the way to Allah's immense Rahma and forgiveness. Through prayer and supplication, the Prophet opened our hearts to doing good deeds and behaving honourably so that we can ultimately win the eternal ecstasy and joy of looking at His Noble Face in the Hereafter.



Adv. Hafez Abu Bakr Mahomed



Shaykh Hosam Raouf

Panel on Personal Experiences of Prayer

Paul Rischbieter

Shabnum Dharamsi, Mortaza Morton, Abdullah Mynard, Seleem McGroty, Orlando Rojas.

“Our lives are tapestries of the seen and the unseen, woven together into a divine pattern that leaves us with a smile. As we grow in this life we learn to observe the thread - and it is our awe for the divine wrapped into every moment of experience that leads us to the door of prayer.

For all human beings there exists an experience of the interaction with the unseen. An experience fuelled by the intention to plug in to the Divine. Prayer means different things to different people – but what is common, is the turning of the attention towards that which is not clearly manifest. It is common to all religions and all peoples and remains an appeal to that which is greater than ourselves. “

The afternoon panel was an opportunity for people to share their own personal experiences in prayer. The panel comprised a wonderfully diverse group of people and the experiences shared left everyone smiling with warmth and love.

Within the stories told, many aspects of prayer that are a part of our daily, divine lives were discussed. The feelings of hopelessness and loneliness we feel sometimes when we stand at the precipice of divine supplication and the overwhelming insights and breakthroughs that occur when least expected are experiences common to many. The concern we have as to whether our prayers are ever answered, and what it means to have them answered often permeates our every thought when times are testing and it is in the openings that follow these moments of doubt that we often find peace. A story was told of how desire and envy had been gnawing at the stillness of a prayer period and it was only at the moment of letting go of all the feelings of want and need that the need was filled, the door opened and the desired outcome was given as a gift. We were also fortunate to have a wide range of spiritual backgrounds facilitating the growing understanding of what it means to turn your attention to the unseen. The essence of Chinese spiritual practices and the opportunity Qigong provides us with, allows us to understand the perfection in many other prayer rituals and cultures.

After a heartfelt session the panel closed with a poem by Leyya Kalla:

Enlightenment

*Why do you seek so fervently,
when He made it so easy for you?*

*your quest has already been achieved,
you have only to believe
that you have all that you desire
already within you.*

*You have only to believe
with unwavering faith,*

*that your prayers
answered and granted
lies
already within you*

*All your answers will come
flooding through
the gate with no gate
when the key of belief is found.*

Supplication (Du'a) amongst the Classical Sufis

Dr. Ali Allawi

Dr Alawi focused on the word Classical. He said that the world has changed so much. There is false integration.

Many years ago, access to the unseen was part of people's seen life. The unseen was not something they had to work on. The unseen was something that influenced people's lives.

One of the side effects of modernism is the demolition of the access to the unseen. If we cannot access the unseen, it merely becomes a matter of mere lip service. This demolition is evident everywhere, except in semi-literate societies or where modernism has not set in.

There are barriers between the seen and the unseen. There is a reason for this. If you do not have a connection with the unseen, you cannot have a meaningful relationship with the seen.

The sacredness of rituals is that these rituals should enhance your today.

Deen is a way of life.

Ilm has to do with knowledge of the unseen.

The wants and needs of man are no longer moving towards something better. We do not have to evolve towards something better. We have to move away from something which takes us away. We have to devolve from something which is there.

The post modern mind is sitting with confusion, uncertainty and tentativeness. The seen world has kept us so busy we cannot access the unseen. We need to re- orientate ourselves to access the unseen. The rationalising of religion is also taking us away from the unseen. There is an aspect of non-reason to Islam.

We relate to the world and to people. Transcending the material basis of knowledge, transcending over-rationalisation is essential.

Turning to God: Dimensions of Prayer

Dr. Sadiyya Shaykh

In this paper, I have used the concept of “tauba” in Islamic literature, a particular form of worship, as a central site to explore notions of the God-human relationship, and the various dimensions of human spiritual endeavor as reflected in the Sufi tradition. The word tauba encompasses a range of meanings from the narrowest commonly understood notion of ‘repentance’ to the broadest signification of ‘turning to God’. Using this broadest conceptualization of ‘turning toward God’, this paper explores Sufi notions of Divine attributes, human nature and the self, social and communal engagement, and the complexities of human motivations on the spiritual path. I draw on the ideas and thoughts of a number of important Sufi thinkers in the Islamic tradition with particular attention to the insights of the 13th century Muslim polymath, Muhyi al-Din Ibn Arabi. With the assistance of his rich spiritual archetype of the “Complete Human” (al-Insan al-Kamil) as a manifestation of the perfect balance of Divine attributes, I explore the varying individual and social dimensions of spiritual journeying, turning and returning to God.



Dr. Ali Allawi



Dr. Sadiyya Shaykh

Consciousness and Prayer

Dr. Adnan al-Adnani

Introduction

From all eternity the beloved unveiled his beauty in the solitude of the unseen;
He held up the mirror to his own face, he displayed his loveliness to himself.
He was both the spectator and the spectacle; no eye but his had surveyed the universe.
All was one, there was no duality, no pretence of 'mine' or 'thine'.
The vast orb of heaven, with its myriad of incomings and outgoings, was concealed in a single point.
The creation lay cradled in the sleep of non-existence, like a child before it had breathed.
The eye of the beloved, seeing what was not, regarded nonentity as existent.
Although he beheld his attributes and qualities as a perfect whole in his own essence, yet he desired that they be displayed to him in another mirror, and that each one of his eternal attributes should become manifest accordingly in a diverse form.
Therefore he created the verdant fields of time and space and the life giving garden of the world, that every branch and leaf and fruit might show forth his various perfections.
The cypress gave a hint of his comely stature; the rose gave tidings of his beauteous countenance.
Wherever beauty peeped out, love appeared beside it; wherever beauty shone in a rosy cheek, love lit its torch from that flame. Wherever beauty dwelt in dark tresses, love came and found a heart entangled in their coils.
Beauty and love are as body and soul, beauty is the mine and love the precious stone. They have always been together from the very first; never have they travelled but in each others company.
- Jami

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ.

I have not created the jinn and humankind only that they should worship Me. [51:56]

Worship is a means and an end for creation to ultimate knowledge that is synonymous with the pure state of worship/submission/ surrender to truth (ubudiya).

Levels of worship correspond to levels of consciousness from the gross to the subtle.

Worship also means Adoration which cannot be without Knowledge of what is adored, and that is subject to the level of consciousness.

Consciousness

The One essential source of existence that is prior, within, and beyond everything is both immanent and the transcendent at one and the same time. Being infinite and absolute, containing the totality of possibilities, including the possibility of negation and bringing the relative into being. Therefore the

world exists because the source is infinite. Absolute in unity and infinite in multiplicity, this is the root of all diversities and opposites.

Creation begins with the One at the point when it has singleness. From this point arise Knowledge of Self within the One as there is movement toward manifestation. At this moment the Divine Names or Qualities appear in pure Consciousness. This marks the birth of multiplicity. Subsequent to this, there arises the Will, based on knowledge, to bring all from non-existence to phenomenal existence. On the basis of the Will, the Command ? Be! Is issued and the universe is created.

Pure consciousness can be defined as the eternal essential being, ever-present; one life beyond the myriad of forms of life that are subject to birth and death. Being is also deep within every form as its unseen indestructible essence.

Consciousness may cover a variety of meanings. Awake, Thoughtful, Self-awareness, and the capacity for inner experience. The faculty of consciousness can be likened to the light from a film projector. The projector shines the light onto a screen, modifying the light so as to produce any one of infinity of images. These images are like the perceptions, sensations, dreams, memories, thoughts, and feelings that we experience, they are the forms of consciousness. We know all the images are composed of this light, but we are not usually aware of the light itself. Our attention is caught up in the images and the patterns they form. In the same way we are usually aware of the various sensations feelings, and thoughts that appear in the mind, but not aware of consciousness itself.

Identification with the body and mind creates a veil of concepts, images, words, judgments, and definitions that block all true relationships. It comes between you and your self, between you and people, between you and nature. The veil of thoughts creates the illusion of separation that leads to the loss of feeling oneness as self-evident reality. You may believe it to be true, but no longer know it to be true. Only through experience it becomes liberating.

The faculty of consciousness can vary in various creatures; animals may have various degrees consciousness but may not have the same degree of self-awareness as humans.

Consciousness as a fundamental quality of nature does not arise from some particular arrangement of nerve cells or processes going on between them, or from any other physical phenomenal; it is always present. The nervous system is like a lens of a projector that localizes, and sharpens the image displayed on the screen. The faculty of consciousness must be present all the way down the evolutionary tree, and manifested at various degrees culminating with the human experience.

The earliest living organisms had the most basic sensory organs that detected general changes in the environment. Specific sense organs emerged with complex multi-cellular organisms, detecting energies at various level of quality from light, sound, and pressure. Nervous systems evolved to form a more coherent image of the world integrating the different sensory modalities into a single conscious image (common sense).

Brains evolved to add new features to the image appearing in consciousness, like the ones associated with feelings of fear and desire. Other features emerged such as memory, imagination, and speech. Speech meant communicating experiences which lead to the accumulation of knowledge about the world.

A newborn child emerges from pure consciousness not aware of a separate self. The self is like a clean sheet with the potential to accept a wide variety of imprints that needs guidance so that not to overload and cause imbalance and confusion. The self then is at its highest sensitivity because there are no memories, no thoughts, and no concepts to block the flow from the soul. Its just needs the right stimulation through relationships with the outer environment for creativity, and other attributes in the soul to express itself. The soul manifests through the colour of the vessel, the clearer the vessel the brighter the soul shines through.

Manifestation of absolute qualities of the soul in the domain of multiplicity, the limited self also gives rise to their opposites. It is like manifesting an object by shining light on it, which also produces a shadow. So the absolute qualities are accompanied by their opposites in the energy field of the self. That is why creation or existence can only be experienced or rooted in opposites. However the opposite of divine qualities/virtues have no objective reality, they states of lack, like a shadow that can be seen but has no physical existence. Confusion results when the shadows are mistaken for realities and are given value and identified with.

The soul is gathered, whole. When the part refers to the whole everything is harmonious. When the part starts existing on its own, there is discord, conflict, and confusion. When the self is not fused with the whole there is confusion. If the fusion is not happening with the whole there is bound to be confusion.

Prayer

Modes: petition – refuge – praise – humility – sacrifice – intercession – devotion – remembrance – surrender – meditation - contemplation.

Prayer is communication between the temporal and the eternal domains. The outer meaning implies a petition of the individual before the creator.

Meditation is a deepening and continuation of prayer, where individual interests are superseded by a focusing of attention upon divine qualities for their intrinsic worth and pre-eminent reality.

Contemplation could be called the act where the higher communes with himself across our intellectual centre, the heart, the juncture between pure consciousness of the soul and the conditioned individual conditioned. In truth it is not we who contemplate God, but it is God Himself who contemplates himself in his qualities for which the human being is the support for their manifestation.

The perfect human becomes the prayer, the meeting place of earth and heaven, his consciousness thus contains the universe, and the universe prays with him.

Quintessential prayer in islam (Surat alFatiha): Recognition (Bism) – Praise (Hamd) – Humility (Mulk) – Annihilation (Na'bud) – Subsistence (Nasta'een) – Guidance (Ihdina)

Prayer is a secret call exchanged between God and the adorer; it is, then also an invocation (dhikr). But whoever invokes God finds himself in the presence of God.. and he who finds himself in the presence of He whom he invokes, contemplates him, if he is endowed with intellectual vision.

- Ibn Arabi

At that moment your body is like Ishmael and your soul is like Abraham. When your soul says 'Allah is Great' your body gets rid of all sensuality and passions. And when you say 'In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, and the Most Merciful', they get sacrificed.

- Rumi

For us as creatures the, the divine creative prayer or desire to be known is an emergence out of non-existence, into the infinite multiplicity of the cosmos. Kalima or word in Arabic also means wound, a split from the unity of pre-manifestation to the duality of temporal existence through the divine command Be (Kn). Prayer is a two-way process: He prays over us as well as us praying to Him.

God's generosity is not in abrogation of his wisdom. From that it follows that he does not grant every request.

- Imam Ali bin abi Taleb

Let not thy requesting be a seeking for his giving, lest thy understanding of him should diminish. Let thy requesting be for manifesting thy servitude and establishing the rights of sovereignty. How can thy subsequent seeking be a cause of his prior giving? A predestined decree is exalted above being referred to causes.

- Ibn 'Ata'illah

O Lord, bring me close to You with the closeness of those who truly know You.

- Ibn Arabi

Evil eye and consciousness

ويدع الإنسان بالشر دعاءه بالخير وكان الإنسان عجولا (الأسراء)

Human beings pray and call for evil to himself as he ought to pray and call for good.

Human being is ever hasty [17:11].

The "evil eye" is a metaphor for the duality consciousness. The "single eye" is a metaphor for the unified vision of the soul, through which you see yourself as being unified with the higher. Only then can you be in unison with the truth of every situation.

Although there is an ultimate limit, there is a long way that a soul can descend into these self-created illusions of duality. In reality, Hell is a state of consciousness, a place in consciousness, that is the ultimate creation of the duality consciousness. Yet many people in physical embodiment have descended so far into the duality consciousness that they are essentially creating their own private Hell right here.

When you are trapped in duality, you become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The universe functions as a mirror. Whatever human beings send into the universe, the cosmic mirror reflects back to them.

The self which has become trapped in the duality consciousness. Such a self thinks it is the doer and that it can actually create something without God and without using God's energy. The self thinks it is creating by using matter and the laws governing matter, and it fails to see that matter is simply an expression of God's energy. This illusion of being the doer is the core effect of the consciousness of separation.

Because the self no longer sees itself as part of the whole, and therefore affected by the laws that govern the whole, the self might begin to believe that it is a law unto itself. It might think that it is affected only by the laws that visibly affect matter. In other words, if it does not see an immediate negative consequence of its actions, it begins to think that it can get away with anything.

Suddenly, the self goes through a rude awakening in which it realizes that the matter universe will no longer conform to its desires and beliefs. Yet because of the duality consciousness, the self fails to draw a cause-effect connection between its current attitude, its past actions and what is happening to it right now. And because of the duality consciousness, the soul cannot accept that it has sown what it is now reaping. Consequently, someone or something else must be to blame.

How can a self break this downward spiral? Through the faculties of higher reasoning, that most people call intuition but which is really your higher self.

The Whispered Prayer of the Knowers

– Imam Zayn Alibideen

In the Name of God, the All-merciful,
the All-compassionate

I Lord,
tongues fall short of attaining
praise of Thee proper to Thy majesty,
intellects are incapable of grasping
the core of Thy beauty,
eyes fail before gazing
upon the glories of Thy face,
and Thou hast assigned to Thy creatures
no way to know Thee
save incapacity to know Thee!

2 Lord,
place us among those
within the gardens of whose breasts
the trees of yearning for Thee have taken firm root
and the assemblies of whose hearts
have been seized by the ardour of Thy love!
They seek shelter
in the nests of meditation,
feed upon the gardens
of nearness and disclosure,
drink from the pools of love
with the cup of gentle favour,
and enter into the watering-places
of warm affection.
The covering has been lifted

from their eyes,
the darkness of disquiet has been dispelled
from their beliefs and their innermost minds,
the contention of doubt has been negated
from their hearts and their secret thoughts,
their breasts have expanded
through the verification of true knowledge,
their aspirations have ascended
through precedent good fortune in renunciation,
their drinking is sweet
from the spring of devotion to good works,
their secret thoughts are delicious
in the sitting-place of intimacy,
their minds are secure
in the place of terror,
their souls are serene
through the return to the Lord of lords,
their spirits have reached certitude
through triumph and prosperity,
their eyes have been gladdened
through gazing upon their Beloved,
their settling place has been settled
through reaching the request and attaining the expectation,
and their commerce has profited
through the sale of this world for the next!

3 Lord,

how agreeable for hearts are
the thoughts inspiring Thy remembrance,
how sweet
travelling to Thee through imagination
upon the roads of the unseen worlds,
how pleasant
the taste of Thy love,
how delightful
the drink of Thy nearness!
So give us refuge from Thy casting out and Thy sending far,
and place us among
the most elect of Thy knowers,
the most righteous of Thy servants,
the most truthful of Thy obeyers,
the most sincere of Thy worshipers!
O All-mighty, O Majestic,
O Generous, O Endower!
By Thy mercy and kindness,
O Most Merciful of the merciful!

O God whatever punishment thou mayst inflict upon me, do not punish me with the humiliation of being veiled from Thee, because if I am not veiled from Thee my torment and affliction will be lightened by the recollection and contemplation of Thee; but if I am veiled from Thee, even Thy bounty will be deadly to me. There is no punishment in Hell more painful and hard to bear than that of being veiled. If God were revealed in Hell, sinful believers would never think of paradise, since the sight of God would so fill them with joy that they would not feel bodily pain. And in paradise there is no pleasure more perfect than unveiledness . If the people of there enjoyed all the pleasures of that place and other pleasures a hundredfold, but were veiled from God, their hearts would be utterly broken. Therefore it is the way of God to let the hearts of those who love him have vision of him always, in order that the delight thereof may enable them to endure every tribulation; and they say in their visions; 'We deem all torments more desirable than to veiled from thee. When thy beauty is revealed to our hearts, we take no thought of affliction.'

- Sari al-Saqati



Aliya B. Haeri



Dr. Adnan al-Adnani

States of Mind and heart in Prayer

Aliya B. Haeri

“Pray to Me, I will answer you.”

- Qur'an 40:60

Today's talk explores the personal experience of prayer within the context of the whole of the person – body, mind and spirit.

We will consider the role of belief in healing prayer. We will visit the cosmology of consciousness for an understanding of how the universe mirrors our intent in answered or unanswered prayers.

The session will cover the many ways to pray and what we bring of ourselves to the prayerful moment. Finally, if indeed our prayers are answered as God reveals in the Qur'an, then why is it we often experience what appears to be failure?

- What happens when we pray?
- Are our brains and our bodies spiritually wired for prayer?
- How powerful is prayer in healing the sick?
- Studies show that the “placebo effect” can relieve pain in 55% of the subjects.
Why did these subjects benefit while the others did not?
Did faith play a role in the outcome?

“Reality (haqq) is everything, and you have everything because you are real.”

Prayer is a practice and it is also an end. Remembrance of the One is also both a practice and an end. Where the practice can take us is to a state of continuous and ongoing prayer and remembrance, thereby infusing your every moment with devotion and worship.

A Sufi Cosmology of Consciousness



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STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS		
Self		
Time-space realm	Beta	Active thinking state Conditioned consciousness
Non-time Non-space Realm	Alpha	REM Dream
	Theta	Twilight state
	Delta	Universal consciousness

Soul

Vibrational Medicine and Alternative Therapies

Dr. Ashraf Karolia

Present day conventional medicine is based on the Newtonian Model of reality and is now approximately one hundred years old. The state of the art in hospital medicine is synthetic drug therapy based on knowledge of billiard ball mechanics, molecular biology, drug receptor interactions and pharmaco-kinetics. For example the heart is viewed as an ultimate biological mechanical pump and the kidney is seen as the greatest filtration system there is to ultimately balance the fluids and filters the blood which is eventually involved in homeostasis. If this eventually fails then the sick individual is placed on dialysis and the vital fluids are balanced with the removal of toxins. This science also views the surgeon as the greatest bio-mechanic. This science has contributed significantly to mankind but has changed very little since. Orthodox medicine has been a necessary and important step in the evolution of our modern healing sciences. Newtonian physics was also an important stepping stone towards the eventual recognition of Einsteinian Model of relativity and energetic field theory. In America during the 19th century the predominant medicine practiced in hospitals was believe or not homoeopathic medicine which then changed, by the dominant political powers that were present, to old fashion Newtonian conventional medical model.

There are many forms of energy that make up the electromagnetic spectrum. Modern physics tells us that the major difference between these forms of energy is that each oscillates at a different frequency or rate of vibration. Hence Vibrational Medicine refers to an evolving viewpoint on health and illness that takes into account all the many forms and frequencies of vibrational energy that contribute to the multidimensional human energy system. The most basic form is the composition of matter that composes the physical body. According to the new perspective of Einsteinian and quantum physics, the biological chemical molecules that make up the physical body are actually a form of vibrating energy. Albert Einstein came to the conclusion that matter and energy were actually interconvertible and interchangeable. Einstein said that matter and energy were two different forms of the same thing.

Since all energy vibrates and oscillates at different rates, hence at the atomic level, the human body is really composed of different kinds of vibrational energy. Vibrational medicine comes from this fact. (all matter is a kind of frozen energy!) By using a vibrational-medicine approach, it is possible to diagnose different types of illnesses based on the knowledge of the different frequencies of energy that can be measured coming from the body. This premise is even used in conventional medicine, for example – the electrocardiogram, the EEG(electro-encephalogram), the EMG- but all of these use the Newtonian model to interpret the dysfunctions that may be apparent. In actual fact these are a form vibrational –medical diagnoses!

The molecular basis of medicine assumes and suggests that physicians could treat all illnesses if only they knew the specific molecular cause of diseases. This assumes that all illnesses have a purely physical molecular basis. The old-world view, Newtonian model of medicine lacks an appreciation of seemingly intangible things such as emotions, consciousness, and the energy and life force of the body which gives its vitality and character.

The vibrational or energetic model does not deny the validity of the discoveries in molecular biology or the biomechanical function of the body's organs but it merely puts them into the perspective of the bigger picture. To illustrate, we know that the cells are fed by various nutrients derived from the food that we eat as well as oxygen from the air we breathe. But our cells are also fed by a continuous stream of life force energy. We are energetic beings whose ills may be healed not only by surgical procedures and synthetic drugs but also by different forms and frequencies of energy. It is this energetic viewpoint of human beings, as more than just flesh-and-blood mechanisms, that is embraced and described by the vibrational model of human functioning.

In the vibrational model we know that the cells emit weak pulses of light or energy. These emissions are one the communication systems that help to coordinate the function of the cells in each organ. Our cell communicate with each other by sending messages via hormones and biochemicals, as well as through electrical signals, The cells in the body appear to have their own inherent intelligence that allows us to maintain the body in a state of health. The energy systems we have been describing are within the realm of conventional electromagnetic, electrical and chemical energy systems. Soon the bioelectronic and biophotonic, or light based energy systems will be evaluated by further scientific research. In my talk we will focus predominantly on the subtle energetic systems which explain the the fields of acupuncture, homoeopathy, chakra systems. psychic healing ,gem elixirs and flower based essences. In this presentation I will also take you trough a journey on diagnostic and therapeutic tools utilized in vibrational healing and will confine the talk to energy based medicine, homoeopathy and acupuncture. These energetic devices are able to work on the subtle energy levels of the human body to diagnose various imbalances and even to treat these imbalances thus restoring the body to health. Some of these devices can work for you from great distances! – if you feed this device with your signature – for example you give the practitioner your name, date and time of birth and your physical location ,it is able to do an energetic evaluation on you and even treat your various dysfunctions. This is equivalent to each person having their individual cell number which will only reach you.

Obviously it is better to have a few sessions. Some of these devices are able to home into acupoint imbalances which indirectly gives rise organ pathology. One such device called the Voll Dermatron is able to restore balance to these acupoints and restore the body to a system of health. Another such device which we all will have the pleasure to experience during our lecture breaks is called the SCIO – short for Scientific Consciousness Interface Operating System. Please book so that you can benefit both from the talk and this wonderful device

These are very interesting times. We are living during a historical period that will someday be characterized as one of the greatest philosophical and spiritual shifts in human thinking to come along in nearly a thousand years. Within this millennium, the knowledge of vibrational or energetic medicine may allow us to extend modern medicine to a golden age of healing. Perhaps, vibrational medicine may provide us with the tools to reestablish our harmony with the planet we live in.

Panel on Personal Experiences

Sadia Bundgaard

Sadiqa Lake, Hajj Bilal Lukhele, Yusr, Hajj Mustafa Sterling

Opening Remarks: We've all had experiences that cannot fully be explained through logical thought. Experiences that go beyond the visible reality and are difficult to put into language and yet are not completely in the realm of the unseen. And this is the space in which prayer and supplication fall. Over the last couple of days, we have heard amazing and truly inspiring narratives that showcased how prayer and supplication connect the seen with the unseen. I have asked some of my dear friends to kindly share some of their personal experiences with prayer.

Sadiqa: Empty yourself and let go. Surrender leads to openings. During six-month break in SA, prayed for a life companion one day. Soon after that met Hajj Bilal. No logic, came into it – I just knew it was the right decision. A stone fell off my chest. This has led to healing on many levels. So the clear intention was followed by the deep need for your needs to be for your best interest. And when that is in place, it will become manifest.

Yusr: Desperate period with no one to turn to. Persistent du'a. So many attachments I had developed, would be taken away. Allah provides for us when He desires it (story of Zacharia). It was when I let go that I got what I needed. Soon after that, the fear returned and I lost what I had gained. Soon after this I returned to my old school for a reunion and as I walked into one of the classrooms, I recovered a Qur'an that I had been given 13 years earlier, which I had lost. On that day, I walked to the shelf and the first book I picked up was my Qur'an that I had lost, with my name on it.

Bilal: 1989 – arrested for a crime I had not committed. Sentenced to ten years in prison. There is no God and was angry – got worse and worse. First was in an isolation cell, then sent to a prison far away from family. At night he decided to ask God 'if it is You who put me here, I will accept it. But if it is these men who have done it, then I will not accept it'. Soon after this he was released and left prison and realised that both in Christianity and Islam, it is said that it is by God that all is done.

Hajj Mustafa: Narrates a story from his days in Pakistan, with Shaykh Ikram. He was with his previous wife who was very ill and in need of immediate help. Events took place, which could not rationally be explained but were put in motion by the power of prayer and following Shaykh Ikram's instructions.

Concluding remarks by chair: Everything in Creation is already in 'ibadah – it is us who are not able to see or hear it.



Dr. Ashraf Karolia



Sadia Bundgaard



Paul Rischbieter

Academy of Self Knowledge (ASK)

ASK is based on the teachings of its founder, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri, a writer-philosopher who combines knowledge and experience of the spiritual teachings of the East with a keen understanding of the West. He was raised in a family of several generations of Islamic spiritual leaders in the Holy City of Karbala. Educated in Europe and America, Shaykh Fadhlalla was active in the oil industry and international business, which he later abandoned in pursuit of spiritual knowledge. His re-discovery of the universality of the true Islamic heritage enables him to understand and relate to the spiritual quest wherever it may arise, irrespective of culture or ethnic diversity. Shaykh Fadhlalla established a charitable trust with activities in several countries, in education, health and publishing. One of his main aims is to make accessible to younger generations the Prophetic way of life, through the discovery of the root and foundation of the Divinely revealed message and its ever present perfect Creator.

Courses Offered Outline

A traveler needs appropriate maps, the means for traveling, for example a vehicle, fuel, and provisions. He also needs a wider understanding of the terrain and environment of the journey. He must know his self and the world outside, and read the environment appropriately before he embarks on the journey. Self-knowledge, divine knowledge and enlightenment, are indeed the purpose of this journey, from the Creator unto Him. This is the purpose of this course.

Course I : Cosmology of the Self

Human beings are all travelers in time and space. We experience diverse situations, and whatever is attractive to us we wish to preserve and prolong, and whatever is not desirable we wish to repel. Yet what we desire in childhood may be most undesirable in adulthood. Thus, our mind changes constantly, as does the outer situation. Yet we wish to bring about constant harmony, balance and on-goingness. Life's paradox is based on transient realities and permanent truth. We experience changing realities, and yet hanker after the absolute truth. The life we experience draws all its energies and patterns from the absolute truth, manifesting in infinite ever-changing realities.

If we are to attain knowledge, we need to start by reading and following the map of existence. This map gives you a broad scale, as well as minute details of the different cities. It relates to the oceans and space above the earth. It encompasses forms, actions, meanings, and the energy source behind it all. You need to qualify to read the map, and highlight the appropriate parts that are relevant for your journey at any particular time. The outer map of existence can only be comprehended as a projection of the inner map within the heart of man. That is the meaning that the human being is a microcosm, and within him lies the entire pattern of the macrocosm. Self-knowledge is based on reading the map and applying it, by traveling along the highways and bye ways, making mistakes and correcting them.

Course II : Prophetic Prescriptions

Having studied the map, and gained the ability to read it appropriately, now you need to be kitted out to travel. It is like going to the driving school for life, and it is here that wisdom and religious training is required. It is here that you learn the highway code, traffic rules, basic understanding of the vehicle, its fuel requirements, and other related necessities for a journey. It is also in this course that you see how mistakes and vices can lead you to virtues and correct actions. It is also here that you need role models, and to learn from successful drivers, who avoided major disasters and steered an optimal course in their lives.

In this course you learn how all religious practices transform the individual from an existential, functional entity, to an enlightened being. He then deals with the change of terrain, yet has his sight on the ultimate horizon of the ever-present light. This course teaches the student to function within the limitations of this world, and yet constantly refer to the limitless zone of absolute perfection that produced this world. It shows the seeker that no one can stop worshipping perfections, and yet no one can attain them for any durable time.

Course III : The World as IS

Having got the map and its details, and the qualification to drive, you also need to have an idea about the local conditions that relate to outside factors, such as weather, safety, security, and other related issues. You'll be foolish to take your car out of the garage if it is likely to hail, or if you know there is a big forest fire a mile down the road, or there are land mines all around you. Besides the foundations of self-knowledge, and self-grooming and accountability, you need a clear understanding of the world you are living in. You need to know how the present local as well as prevailing global cultures have come about. Who are the role models, and what are considered as desirable and sought after activities amongst people? What is the trend in the changing value systems, whether to do with behaviour or material goods? The Prophetic model relates to appropriateness and living the moment. How can you do the right thing in the right way at the right time, if you don't understand the different waves of cultures and civilizations prevalent at the time?

This third course gives you a foundation in history, geography, philosophy, and other aspects of human life, to equip you appropriately, at an age that is very different from previous times, and yet similar, in that all of us seek happiness and contentment no matter who we are, or where we are.



Good Start Foundation

Dear Friends,

Many of you may have heard of my current undertaking in trying to assist abandoned and vulnerable children. My interest in such a project has come as a direct result from working as a medical intern in an underprivileged community. Towards the end of last year I found myself in the Department of Paediatrics at Tembisa Hospital.

On my first day in the Premature Unit I was put in charge of what must have been more than 20 or so newborn babies. One of my newly assigned patients had as her name (written on the file and medical bracelet) – ‘Abandoned Baby Girl Blessing.’ Baby Blessing was a 2,2 kg prem. with a history of having been found at one of the local clinics in the Tembisa region, her mother never having been identified. She was a newborn, with a fresh umbilical cord, and had been admitted to the hospital on 30 October to be treated for respiratory distress. She was also found to be HIV exposed – meaning that her mother was HIV-positive and had passed on her antibodies, but not necessarily the virus, to her. After a week or so of intravenous antibiotics, and having started anti-retroviral therapy in an attempt to prevent mother to child transmission, she was fit for discharge. Wishing to clear the ward, and so reduce my workload, her discharge papers were duly signed with the expectation that she would be shortly removed by the local social services.

She was never removed. Weeks passed, and although favored by many staff members Baby Blessing failed to thrive. Having called Tembisa Child Welfare I was informed that there were no social workers available to work on her case. This being so she would have to stay in hospital until the new year when new social workers were expected. I must say, I was neither surprised nor did I think very much of the situation. However, as a few more weeks passed it dawned upon me that perhaps I could do something. I’m not quite sure how this most obvious and natural realization came to be, but I was suddenly struck with the simplicity of the situation - that here was a vulnerable child with very little prospect of being provided for with the most basic necessities and yet here I was having the ability to assist her in this regard. On Monday the 15th of December her DNA-HIV test (PCR) came back negative, meaning that she is most probably not infected with the virus. Tuesday the 16th of December was a public holiday. With the Children’s Courts being closed I removed Baby Blessing from hospital with an affidavit statement and a form stamped by a policeman allowing me to do so. Since that date Baby Blessing, whom I call Baby Jamila, has been at the home of an extraordinary couple, Yusuf & Tahiyya Hassim, who care for abandoned and vulnerable children. Following-up regularly with Baby Jamila, it has been the most rewarding experience to see her thrive. Now more than 4,265 kg she is full of life – she smiles, laughs, gurgles and is most responsive. She has been an incredible Blessing, and the joy I have experienced by simply picking her up is something I wish to share.

Over the past few months I have met a number of like-minded and like-hearted professionals, individuals who wish to give of their time and expertise free of charge. With the hope of establishing some sort of structure to assist the more than 1,5 million maternal-orphans in South Africa we are currently registering a Section 21 Company (NGO). Having worked for a number of years amongst underprivileged communities I have realized that within the current South African context there is not so much a shortage of resources, good will and expertise to confront the unnecessary suffering and destitution of children, but rather a lack of professional coordination, integration, and implementation of the various resources available - be it financial aid; medical, nutritional, educational and psychosocial support; or

Ad Hoc volunteering. By identifying and coordinating between potential and available resources with the needs and requirements of various organizations and individuals, GSF hopes to address this fundamental imbalance and hence assist in the establishment a more just society.

Essentially, we wish to create the necessary organizational structures that can facilitate in the distribution and effective coordination of available resources in an equitable and accountable manner.

Please feel free to contact me should you wish to learn more about the Good Start Foundation.

Furthermore, any input, advice and assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ahmad Haeri

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