

I knew Allah – He invited me to His Divine Grace

By

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I came from a respectful rich family. My father's family owned vast fertile lands in the country and were the chiefs of their village. They were religious and just people and handled the affairs of their people in equity. My father was a reputable man of law and an eminent Islamic scholar. He enriched the Islamic world with several precious books going around civil laws, enactment and legislation of Islamic statute and doctrines of the famous Islamic scholars.

My mother derived also from a rich family owning vast agricultural lands located in several governorates. In this environment I was blessed with proper upbringing.

In my youth I was a fine athlete. I participated in contests and was a fierce competitor and great rival. I won medals in freestyle swimming, water polo, discus throw, and 400m race. I was also a fine bodybuilder.

I finished all stages of education until I got my PhD in genetics; I conducted distinguished researches, supervised MScs and PhDs and established a sound scientific school of thought that was admired by eminent researchers here and abroad. I travelled the world attending conferences and workshops. My published scientific papers reached more than one hundred. At the same time I was successfully managing the family's large estate. I was happy and successful - I owned the world. At that time, I must admit, I was not much of a Muslim; I was only Muslim by birth.

A man living for only his successes and desires hadn't really lived a complete life. He must have a wife and kids, so I got married and was blessed with a boy. He was beautiful and cheerful; he was the apple of my eye. He filled my heart with joy and my home with happiness. I loved my wife more; she brought me a wonderful gift.

In the cold nights, I used to tighten the covers around my boy fearing that he might get cold, and then I sit for long moments beside his bed looking at his beautiful face.

Days have passed and the boy grew more beautiful. In a day of a long hot summer the boy caught a high fever; the doctor came and wrote a prescription. My wife and I stayed by the boy's bed for days nursing him. It was the first time in my life that I felt afraid. The boy was deteriorating in front of my eyes and I was helpless not knowing what to do. Seeing the tears in my eyes, the boy just smiled as if he were saying, "don't worry, it's just high fever." The boy then died and tore my heart apart. With a broken heart I took him to the tombs to bury him.

It was the first time that I saw our tombs. When the undertaker removed the dust underneath the tombstone, I saw steps going down to reach two chambers built of stone, one for men and the other for women. The undertaker carried my son in his arms and descended down to the room special for men. I descended with him unconsciously not believing what was happening to me. Terror seized my limbs when I saw three skeletons stretched out on the ground. The undertaker said, "The skeleton over there is your grandfather's and the other two are his sons, your uncles." I shouted in amazement, "My grandfather!" This man was extremely rich and owned lands, mansions and villages! Is this the end of man - decayed bones? And these are my uncles? They were elegant men journeying the city with their fancy cars. They were more handsome than movie stars.

The undertaker had to prepare a space for my boy, so with a shovel he gently pushed the bones toward the wall then placed the corps of my boy on the ground. Is this the end of these magnificent men, decayed bones to be shoved to the wall? I kept asking myself in utter bewilderment.

I looked at my boy lying motionless on the ground and I felt a great yearning for him, so I asked the undertaker, "would he catch cold?" The undertaker smiled sadly and a deep silence beclouded the chamber.

With a bleeding heart I climbed up the stairs with shaking legs. Before I reached the top a voice came to my ear like a thunderbolt, "This tomb is your dwelling place after a while, what did you do for this day?" I stopped, and said angrily, "I am well off, I am self-sufficient, and I have everything I need." The voice came again vibrating in my ear, "Your Lord's favors are showered on all – the just and the unjust, the deserving and the undeserving. Your lord's gift is not confined; but surely the world to come is greater in rank and more in excellence. Every soul shall taste of death and your Lord try you with evil and good for a testing, and then unto Him you shall be returned. Come to your Lord and follow His path. Hold you fast to Him and pray for His grace and mercy."

The veil was lifted from my eyes, and my soul was filled with divine ecstasy. What a price I had to pay to know Allah! It had to be the life of my boy!

Years have passed during which I followed the path of Allah. I read the Koran, the Sunna of the Prophet, and the books of our eminent scholars. In the end the truth appeared like a shining sun. The wisdom of creation is to worship the Creator alone and follow His path of salvation. We must believe first in the One God, Allah (strict monotheism), and then do righteous deeds based on the Koran. All believing nations before us did the same. They believed in Allah the one God first then followed the path of rectitude as mentioned in their divine Books i.e. the pages of Abraham, Torah of Moses, Psalms of David, and Gospel of Jesus.

Allah said in the Koran:

I have not created jinn and mankind except to serve Me (Al-Zariyat, 56).

This verse made me understand the purpose of creation, the reason for my existence. All Prophets were sent to call for one thing: Allah's oneness and to worship Him alone. Allah sent down the angels with inspiration of His command to whom of His slaves He pleases saying: 'Warn mankind that none has the right to be worshipped but I, so fear Me.'

I realized that true eternal happiness lies in believing in Allah's oneness and worshiping him alone. And that whosoever turns away from Allah to false deities, will suffer a life of hardship and on the Day of Resurrection the punishment of Hell shall be his terrible abode.

Believing in Allah's oneness and worshiping Him alone is the right of Allah upon His creation. When creation obeys and submit to Allah's will, they have the right not to be punished. Believing in Allah's oneness is the cause of forgiveness and the final reward is Paradise. Verily, only in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest, happiness and tranquility.

I walked along the road of salvation as taught by the Koran and the Sunnah of the prophet. I lived the joy of unconditional obedience to Allah. I enjoyed the fruits of believing that Allah is One without partners in His Kingdom; One without rival in His divinity and worship; One without similitude in His essence and attributes. I lived within the realization that Allah is the One lord of the universe, its Creator, Organizer, Planner and Sustainer.

Believing in Allah's oneness liberated my mind from delusions and myths. It filled my soul with tranquility and serenity. I put my trust in Him, relied on Him, accepted His fate, and dispensed with all creations but Him. My faith in Him became deeply rooted as a mountain that is not moved by incidents or ordeals.

Following the path of Allah and struggling to purify the soul from the temptation of life had its wonderful fruits. I saw light, signs, mercy, abundance and love of people, I saw dreams coming true and other spiritual gifts I can't reveal.

During my journey to Allah I found solace in nature, so I travelled to the most beautiful places to explore and enjoy the beauty of nature. At first I enjoyed observing nature with the eye of a romanticist, or maybe an expressionist. But after years of journeying, my eye was completely changed and I found myself observing nature in another light, the light of Allah.

I realized that nature has not been created to be painted by an artist or described by a novelist but for quite a different purpose. Allah has created nature for man in order for him to contemplate it so he could understand that Allah exists through His miraculous creation. Nature itself witnesses the oneness of Allah and praises His glory; it admits His sovereignty over all His creation.

Acquiring this new vision, I kept travelling frequently to discover the secrets of nature, why it is here, and how it functions?

In my journeys here and abroad, I climbed the mountains and crossed the seas and oceans. I flew to the skies and saw the clouds and the stars, the moon and the sun. Each time I contemplate a piece of nature; the secret behind it unfolds and reveals a part of the truth. The whole truth became clear when I put all the pieces together.

I looked up at the heavens; they are supported with no pillars! I contemplated the sun and the moon; each one runs its course for a term appointed as if Allah were explaining His signs so that we may believe with certainty with the meeting with Him.

The verses of the Koran came quickly to my mind:

Allah is He who raised up heavens without pillars you can see, and He set Himself upon the Throne. He subjected the sun and the moon, each one running to a term stated. He directs the affair; He distinguishes the signs; haply you will have faith in the encounter with your Lord (Al-Ra'd, 2).

As day follows night, I walked on extended lands and climbed high mountains. I crossed rivers with copious streams of fresh water flowing in channels. The fruit trees stood there proud of their produce and the palm trees stood high and proud searching for the sun.

I found myself whispering His verses:

It is He who stretched out the earth and set therein firm mountains and rivers, and every fruit He placed there two kinds, covering the day with the night. Surely in that are signs for a people who reflect. And on the earth are tracts neighboring each to each, and gardens of vine, and fields sown, and palms in pair, and palms single, watered with one water; and some of them you prefer in produce above others. Surely in that are signs for a people who understand (Al-Ra'd, 3).

I walked through the forest watching the entangled branches of the tall trees. The branches formed an umbrella hiding the sun. The sky was pregnant with heavy clouds gathering quickly and in an instant the rain issued forth heavily. I found myself reciting the verses:

Hast thou not seen how Allah drives the clouds, then composes them then converts them into a mass, then thou seest the rain issuing out of the midst of them? And He sends down out of Heaven Mountains wherein is hail, so that He smites who He will with it, and turns it aside from whom He will; well-nigh the gleam of its lightning snatches away the sight (Al-Nur, 43).

There was exquisite beauty in every place I went. I felt elated and I marched forward in confident steps. But the verses came warning me:

And not walk in the earth exultantly; certainly thou wilt never tear the earth open, nor attain the mountains in height (Al-Isra', 37).

I felt the universe is very much alive, it breathes, it sleeps, and it wakes up in the morning. Does it feel the existence of its Creator, I wondered?

The verses came resonating in my ear:

Hast thou not seen how to Allah bow all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth, the sun and the moon, the stars and the mountains, the trees and the beasts, and

many of mankind? And many merit the chastisement; and whom Allah abases, there is none to honor him. Allah does whatsoever to will (Al-Hajj, 18).

I walked along the lake bank, the water was crystal clear. I could see the colored fish pasturing. A question twinkled in my mind: without water man cannot live, what would happen if we woke up some fine morning to find our water supply had disappeared and gone down into the hollows of the earth?

Water is a gift from Allah and in order to preserve it we must thank Him for His generous gifts. And I remembered His words:

Say: 'What think you? If in the morning your water should have vanished into the earth, then who would bring your running water?' (Al-Mulk, 30).

The creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day are symbols and reminders of the glorious majesty of Allah and His goodness to man. Darkness and light are to help man to distinguish between the true from the false.

The Koran has clearly talked about this:

Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding (Al-Imran, 190).

Men of understanding contemplate the wonders of creation and say in their prayer: 'Our lord! You have not created all this without purpose, glory to you. Give us salvation from the torment of the Fire.'

The Koran says:

Surely in the creation of the heavens and earth and in the alternation of night and day there are signs for men possessed of minds who remember Allah, standing and sitting, and on their sides, and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: 'Our Lord, Thou hast not created this for vanity.

Glory be to Thee! Guard us against the chastisement of the Fire (Al-Imran, 191).

How can then man set up any of Allah's creatures as equal to Him? Allah is our Guardian Lord; He cherishes and loves us, how can we be so ungrateful as to worship something else?

I found myself talking to the Lord: 'But Allah you showered your servants with all these gifts, yet they reject your signs and associate with you in worship other deities?'

His reply came with the verse:

Thou shall not guide the blind out of their error neither shalt thou make any to hear except for such as believe in Our signs, and so surrender (Al-Rum, 53).

I continued asking: 'But Allah you furnished the disbelievers with wealth and influence, they don't fear your power or severe punishment!'

I got the answer:

To them We give enjoyment a little, then We compel them to a harsh chastisement (Luqmqn, 24).

In my trips it was amazing to see variations in languages and colors. All mankind was created of a single pair of parents; yet they have spread to different countries and climates and developed different languages and different shades of complexions. However, their basic unity remains unaltered. They feel in the same way, and are all equal under Allah's care. Then there are the variations in time. Old languages die out and new languages are evolved. New conditions of life and thought are constantly evolving new words and expressions, new syntactical structures, and new modes of pronunciation. Even old races die, and new races are born.

The verses came soothing my ears:

And of His signs is the creation of heavens and earth and the variety of your tongues and colors. Surely in that are signs for all living being (Al-Rûm, 22).

Allah dispersed all these nations with all their differences over the earth to get to know each other and not to boast their descent or rank. Before Allah all people equal, the one amongst them whom Allah values most is the most pious.

And I remembered His words:

O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most god-fearing of you. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware (Al-Hujurat, 13).

As for the birds, they attracted a lot of my interest. I watched birds of amazing colors. The colors are formed from pigments and light refraction caused by the structure of the feather. These delicate beautiful creatures were endowed with formidable strength in order to help cleansing the environment. Birds consume agricultural pests and medical insects in huge quantities. Without birds, many of these insects would become even greater pests, consuming agricultural and forestry crops and produce, and our own blood!

Birds serve to spread seeds of various plants, thereby helping in plant dispersal. Birds also pollinate many species of flowering plants. Seeds that pass undigested through the bodies of birds fall to the ground and introduce plants into new areas. Domestic birds such as the chicken, duck, turkey, and goose contribute meat and eggs to our food supply. The feathers of the ostrich, pheasant, goose, and other species are used for decoration. Eiderdown, duck, goose, and chicken feathers are used to stuff pillows, quilts, and outdoor clothing.

Birds are the greatest indicators of climate change. Their behavior and disappearance can help in evaluating the dangers of the environment. This is the value of only one of Allah's creatures.

And I thought of Allah's creative energy. He does not merely create and leave alone; He goes on fashioning, evolving new forms and

colors, and sustaining of all the energies and capacities which He has put into His creation. Praise be to Allah who instantaneously designs, makes, forms, shapes, produces and brings into being. All the wonderful things in creation are due to the artistry power, and wisdom of Allah such as the flight of birds in midair.

Have they not regarded the birds that are subjected in the air of heaven? Naught hold them but Allah; surely in that are signs for a people who believe (An-Nahl, 79).

All denizens of the heavens, such as angels, all denizens of earth such as man, animal, insects, fish, water, mountains, etc., and all denizens of the air, such as birds, celebrate the praises of Allah. It is not necessarily with words but actions and other modes of self-expression that declare the Glory of Allah.

Hast thou not seen how whatsoever is in the heavens and in the earth extols Allah, and the birds spreading their wings? Each one knows its prayer and its extolling; and Allah knows the things they do (An-Nur, 41).

The birds were flying in groups above me soaring with extended wings, and at times darting with them folded in. No one can maintain them at that level in the atmosphere but Allah who makes the terrestrial air subservient to them.

I remembered Allah's verses:

Have they not regarded the birds above them spreading their wings, and closing them? Naught holds them but the All-Merciful. Surely He sees everything (Al-Mulk, 19).

I found myself whispering, "Praise be to Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper. He shaped His creatures in the best form and gave each a form which was unique and distinctive.

The Koranic verses came confirming:

He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper. To Him belong the names Most Beautiful. He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise (Al-Hashr, 24).

‘Yes,’ I whispered to myself: ‘All that in the heavens and the earth magnifies Allah. His is the Kingdom, and His is the praise, and He is powerful over everything.’

Back home I relaxed on my couch trying to understand the lesson I learned from my frequent trips. The wonders and beauty of nature I have seen expressed Allah’s authority and unity. The universe with its beautiful nature had been created for man to contemplate. Allah’s signs indicating his unity and authority are not found only in His divine books but also in nature. The rivers, the oceans and the seas, the mountains, the lands outstretched, the animals, the plants and fruits, the sun, the moon, the night and day are all signs of His existence. The Koran urges people to contemplate the universe to see the miraculous creation of their Lord and the greatness of His overwhelming power.

All creation, chants Allah’s praises and celebrates His unity and glory. All nature bears witness to his power, wisdom and goodness. Yet the infidels who deny faith and prefer to incline to earth and follow their lust are blind to see that all creation proclaims with joy and pride the unity and glory of Allah. And yet Allah bears with them and forgives them if they repent and return to Him. Such is His goodness.

I smiled when I remembered the verses:

The seven heavens and the earth, and whosoever in them is, extol Him; nothing is, that does not proclaim His praise, but you do not understand their extolling. Surely He is All—Clement, All-Forgiving (Al-Isra’, 44).

My smile broadened further when the verses describing Paradise vibrated in my ear:

What, is he who is upon a clear sign from his Lord like unto such a one unto whom his evil deeds have been decked out

fair, and they have followed their caprices?

This is the similitude of Paradise which the god-fearing have been promised: therein are rivers of water installing, rivers of milk unchanging in flavor, and rivers of wine – a delight to the drinkers, rivers too, of honey purified; and therein for them is every fruit, and forgiveness from their Lord – are they as he who dwells forever in the Fire and be given to drink boiling water, that tears their bowels asunder? (Muhammad, 14, 15).

We Muslims are near to our Lord; we disdain not to do Him worship, we celebrate his praise and to Him we bow. Praise be to Allah Who guided us to His path.

With this powerful religion we Muslims are the knights of Allah on earth. We defend His religion and struggle in His cause. We deliver the Message of mercy without compulsion. Allah has fastened every man's deeds to his neck, and on the Day of Resurrection, Allah shall bring out for him the book of his deeds. It will be said to him: 'Read your book! Your soul sufficed you this day as a reckoner against you.' Whosoever is guided is only guided to his own gain, and whosoever goes astray, it is only to his own loss. Islam rejected the doctrine of vicarious atonement. No soul leaden bears the load of another.

Those who refused to see the many signs of Allah which clearly witness His oneness and complete authority over His creation will see the consequences fully brought up before them in the Hereafter. Their worldly works are of no avail; their loss is all the greater because they had a misplaced confidence in their own deeds or in the assistance of false protectors. Allah is the only protector; no one else's protection is of any use.

Based on the teachings of the Koran, Muslims purpose in life is different from that of other people. Their main goal in life is not to amass wealth but to please their Lord by strictly abiding to His laws.

Muslims believe that this materialistic world is perishable, and what counts are the good deeds they have been ordered to do to themselves, to their families and to others. To them Allah is always there, looming in their horizon. Their attention is

directed to an infinitely greater reward, the Kingdom of Heaven. This is why they live in strict forwardness. Because Muslims combine materialism with spiritualism while crossing the road of life to the Hereafter, they believe that money and power are not important goals in life. Allah's blessing to Muslims in the form of money and power is but a tool for enabling them to construct the world and inhabit the earth and not to tyrannize or oppress others. This blessing from Allah is also a test. Would they use their wealth properly as Allah has ordered them to do, or will use it to cause injustice and rise over others?

Allah is the heart of Muslims' purpose and to His blessed will they submit. Muslims believe that conveying the Message of Islam to the world is a great mercy, because by doing so they save people from eternal punishment in Hell fire and guide them to the road of paradise.

If men had not cultivated the habit of contention and obstinacy, they would have found that the parables of the Koran had fully met their difficulties, and they would gladly have obeyed the call of Allah.

We have indeed turned about for men in this Koran every manner of similitude; man is the most disputatious of things (Al-Kahf, 54).

As we read in the Koran:

And upon that day We shall present Hell to the unbelievers whose eyes were covered against My Reminder (the Koran), and who could not bear to hear it.

What, do the unbelievers reckon that they may take My servants (angels, Messengers, Jesus as God or son of God, priests, pope, animal, stone, idol etc.) as lords, apart from Me? We have prepared Hell for the unbelievers' hospitality.

Say: 'Shall We tell you who will be the greatest losers in their works? Those whose striving goes astray in the present life, while they think that they are working good deeds. Those are they that disbelieve in the signs of their Lord and the encounter with Him; their works have failed, and on the Day

of Resurrection We shall not assign to them any weight. That is their recompense – Hell for that they were unbelievers and took My signs and My Messengers in mockery (Al-Kahf 101-106).

People therefore should not miss the path of rectitude and stand penitent to Allah, their Creator, before they are confronted with the retributive punishment and no one can defend them or afford them help.

If Truth is rejected, Truth does not suffer. It is the rejecters who suffer and perish in the end. The Koran teaches that Allah is a witness of all that He has revealed to Muhammad, and enough is Allah Himself to be the witness.

But Allah bears witness to that He has sent down to you; He has sent it down with His knowledge and the angels also bears witness; and Allah suffices for a witness (An-Nisa, 166).

It is strange to say that the Koranic words “Alfawz al Azeem” translated in English as “the great success” or sometimes as “the mighty triumph” have been mentioned in the Koran to describe only one thing – winning Paradise.

Allah has promised the believers, men and women gardens underneath which rivers flow, forever therein to dwell, and goodly dwelling places in the Gardens of Eden; and greater, Allah’s good pleasure; that is the Mighty Triumph (Al-Tawbah, 72).

Worldly gains had never been considered by the Koran as a success. Worldly gains are a test, and must be treated according to what Allah has decreed. Money belongs to Allah and man is delegated to deal with Allah’s money according to certain rules based on piety and equity.

There are limits set by Allah that must not be crossed, and whosoever transgresses his limits, Allah will cast him into the Fire to abide therein and he shall have a disgraceful torment.

Beautified for men is the love of things they covet; women, children, silver, gold, wealth etc. This is the pleasure of the present life; but Allah has the excellent return – Paradise.

Decked out fair to men is the love of lusts – women, children, heaped-up heaps of gold and silver, horses of mark, cattle and tillage. That is the enjoyment of the present life; but Allah – with Him is the fairest resort (Al-Imran, 14).

Each Friday my children and my grandchildren come to have lunch with me and my wife. After lunch I left the family gathering and found refuge under my beloved acacia tree. As an old man I feel the end is near and I am about to meet my Lord. I sat silent, quiet and still contemplating the journey of my life.

Lost in my thoughts I remembered how Allah with His own special ways leads people astray to His path of rectitude. It is part of Allah's wisdom that He tries His servants with worldly calamities in order that they repent and also increase in their belief. The final penalty is to come in the hereafter there is no doubt about it. But before that happens, a minor penalty comes in this very life. It may be in some kind of misfortune, or it may be in the pangs of a tortured conscience or secret sorrow. But this minor penalty may be really a mercy, as it gives Allah's servants a chance of repentance and amendment.

Allah says in the Koran:

And We shall surely let them taste the nearer chastisement, before the greater; haply so they will return (As-Sajdah, 21).

People must not think that they will not be tested because they say, "We believe." Mere lip profession of faith is not enough. It must be tested in the real turmoil of life. Allah is All-knowing and He needs no test to increase His own knowledge, but the test is to burn the dross within ourselves.

True repentance repels afflictions. The believer must exercise patience and seek Allah's reward for the calamities he suffered. Persisting on doing sins despite the occurrence of

punishment is a sign of weakness and lack of faith. The hard hearts continue with their sins because they are deceived by the delay of Allah's punishment. They devote themselves to their whims and desires and pay no attention to threat or warning.

The Koran says:

Allah says in the Koran:

Do the people reckon that they will be left to say 'We believe,' and will not be tried? We certainly tried those who were before them, and assuredly Allah knows those who speak truly, and assuredly He knows the liars. Or do they reckon, those who do evil deeds, that they will outstrip Us? Ill they judge! Whoso looks to encounter Allah, Allah's term is coming; He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing (Al-Ankabût 2-5).

These thoughts took me to the story of Malik ibn Dinār's repentance.

Malik ibn Dinār was from the generation of the prophet's companions. He is mentioned as a reliable source transmitting from such authorities as Malik ibn Anas and ibn Sirin. He was the son of a Persian slave from Kabul who became a disciple of Hassan al-Basri. Malik ibn Dinār died at the age of ninety in Basra.

Malik ibn Dinār narrated the following story about himself:

"I was a man who indulged in fun and enjoyment and suffered from an overwhelmingly addiction to wine. I bought a slave girl with whom I was very happy. She later gave birth to a beautiful girl who I loved dearly. I saw her progress from crawling to walking. Whenever I sat down for a drink, she would come and take the cup from my hands and spill the wine on the ground.

"At the tender age of two years she died and left me grieving. It was the night of the fifteenth of Sha'ban and I fell asleep drunk. I saw in my dream that it was the Day of Resurrection

and I came out of my grave with a huge serpent chasing me. I began to run but serpent chased me over and over. The faster I ran, the faster it came chasing me. I passed by an old man dressed in clean garments who was very weak. I called out to him "O Sheikh, please save me from this monster!" He replied, "O my son, I am a very old man and this monster is too powerful for me, I cannot confront it. Perhaps if you seek the help of someone else he might be able to help you."

"I continued to run, with the serpent still following me. I passed by a pit of blazing fire and was about to fall into it, but someone said, "You are not its inhabitant," On hearing this I turned and ran towards the mountain, I found that there were many gates to it and each gate had guards. A voice called out, "Let this wretched man in before his enemy captures him."

"The gates opened and I saw a group of children, their faces shone like the moon, and among them was my little girl! She came towards me like a beam of light and with her right hand hit the serpent, which then fled. She sat by me and said, "O my father, has not the time arrived for the heart of those who believe to submit to Allah's reminder (Dhikr) and the truth (Koran) which has been revealed?" I replied, "O my child, do you know the Koran?" She answered, "I learnt it from you." I then asked, "O my daughter, what are you doing here?" She said we are Muslim children who have died and we will live here until the Day of Resurrection and wait for our parents."

"At this I said, "O my daughter, who was that monster chasing and trying to kill me?" She said, "O my father that was your bad deeds, which you accumulated and could have destroyed you." I then asked, "And who was that weak old man?" She said, "He was your good deeds, which you weakened to such an extent that they had no power to defend you. Therefore, O my father, repent and turn to Allah, and be not among those who will perish."

"Suddenly I woke up. I repented for my sins and turned to Allah."

I looked before me and saw my wife, sons and daughters sitting at a table in the garden sipping tea. My grand sons and daughters were playing around the table. I smiled and whispered to myself, 'Allah's bounty to me was ever great.'

I then prayed to Allah: 'My Lord, you gave me all that I asked for. If I count your blessings never will I be able to count them. You have blessed me with a good wife and offspring; they are indeed the comfort of my eyes. Praise be to Allah. I bear witness that there is only one God who has no partners beside Him, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. Praise be to Allah who guided me to Islam. Praise be to Allah whose Mercy encompasses everything. Praise be to Allah who knows our needs and answers our calls and brings peace to our hearts. Praise be to Allah who breathed into us of His Spirit and placed the light of His guidance in our inmost being. Whomever Allah guides, no one can misguide, and whomever Allah misguides, no one can guide. I put my trust in Allah and seek His forgiveness, aid, and support.

Allah I seek refuge in You from hearts that are not humble, and egos that are never satisfied, and eyes that do not weep, and prayers that are not answered, and works that are not elevated.'

Allah, bless me with wholesome heart, grateful tongue, and obedient body. Do not let me forget You. Do not deny me loving You. Allah, preserve me and protect me. Be merciful with me.'

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Originator of the darkness and the light. I bear witness that nothing is worthy of worship but Allah, Who is Alone, with no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad - peace and blessing of Allah be upon him - is His slave and prophet. Oh Allah, let your peace be upon Muhammad, the final Prophet and Messenger, his family, his companions and all those who followed him and upheld his traditions until the Day of Judgment.'

My eldest daughter is the nearest to my heart. She observed my loneliness so she came to give me company. She asked me with a broad smile on her lovely face: “Why you look so sad?” I said: “I am not sad; I was just contemplating my journey with Allah. It was hard but I think I managed to walk along the right path.”

After a period of short silence I recited aloud the Koranic verses:

‘And those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness – We charge not any soul, save according to its capacity, those are the inhabitants of paradise, therein dwelling forever; We shall strip away all rancor that is in their breasts; and underneath them rivers flowing; and they will say, ‘Praise belongs to Allah, who guided us unto this; had Allah not guided us, we had surely never been guided. Indeed our Lord’s Messengers came with the truth.’ (Al-A’raf 42, 43).

My daughter said while patting on my shoulder: “You have been always a good father. You are a shining example for all of us.”

I smiled and looked at her in compassion.

She then asked: “What is the best thing that has ever happened to you?”

She looked surprised when I answered: “That I was born Muslim.”