

The Soul's Estrangement

Habib Muhammad as-Saqqaf

Translated by Muhammad Jawad



In the Name of Allah, the Most
Compassionate, Most Merciful.

The Soul's Estrangement

All praise be to Allah. Salutations and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah, his family, companions and those who follow him.

My Generous Lord honored me to be at the Ennobled Kaaba during the last part of the night on a Friday. Heralds of longing began to stir in my heart for the reality of what Allah has created us for. I penned some of that in the following words, which I ask Allah the Exalted to make a means to direct the reader with truth and sincerity to Him the Exalted. I ask you, dear reader, to read it in a calm and serene place.

I said, as my eyes gazed at the Kaaba:

In the Name of Allah, the Most
Compassionate, Most Merciful.

My God, to You is all praise for bringing me
to this scene and allowing me to witness it.

How glorious is Your Sacred House! How
sublime are these sacred places!

The hearts of creation long for them. When
lovers far away remember them, their hearts
come here out of longing.

And You have honored me with being here!

I, who am I?... I am a sinner... I am
negligent... I am heedless.

How close You are to me and how far I am
from You! You receive me with affection and
I receive You with alienation.

But...

How did I arrive here? What called me here?
What voice called out to me? What urge
stirred me?

I live concerned with trivialities and idle
things are my business. I wake up and go to
sleep in heedlessness.

The questions recur repeatedly as I gaze at
the House of Allah. The creation is turning
to their Lord. This one is circumambulating.
That one is busily engaged in devotion.
Another's tears are dripping.
And I am in perplexity!

As this thought recurs in my heart, a voice
comes from afar. I recognize it but I am
unable to identify it. Yes, it is a voice I am
familiar with. But it is as though there is a
great distance and space of time between me
and it. Suddenly, it says to me:

Yes, I... I am the one who stirred you. I
am the one who agitated you. I am the
one who made you perplexed.
Don't you know me?!

I said:

I know you... but I don't know you.
It's as though I've forgotten you.

It lamented to me:

Ah!... You have really worn me out.
Whenever I speak to you, you silence
me.

Whenever I call out to you, you turn
away from me.

I want rest for you but you want toil
for me.

I want freedom for you but you want
imprisonment for me.

I want light for you but you want
darkness for me.

I want a homeland for you but you
want me to be exiled.

I said:

Exile! What exile and which
homeland? I am now in front of the
Sacred House of Allah. I am drinking
Zamzam and praying behind the
Station of Abraham (peace be upon
him).

It said:

Nevertheless, you want me to be
exiled.

What is this coldness! Why this
hardness?

Will you not have mercy on me? Will
you not have pity on my state?

You have led me away from my
homeland for a long time. You have
greatly distanced me from my abode.

I said:

I don't understand what you're saying.

Your words are irrational.

I'm the one who always speaks to
people about helping strangers. I've
given lectures and written articles
about it, which many people loved.

It said:

Yes, I've heard and read all that you
said.

In fact, there's no one who knows
what you've said better than me.

I said:

Well, then! How can you accuse me of having exiled you from your homeland, when I pity strangers? I always strive to alleviate their pains, treat their wounds and lighten their sorrows. So how can you accuse me of hardness and coldness?!

It said to me:

Look... Where are you now?

I said:

In front of the Ennobled Kaaba.

It said:

How did you come?

I said:

My resolve stirred, so I came.

It said:

I am the one who stirred you to come.
And you really tired me. You
exhausted and depleted my strength.

I said:

Owner of the voice, my perplexity
about you has only increased!

Who are you?!

At times, I feel you're close... very
close. As though you're inside me.

At other times, I feel you are far... very
far.

It is as though the distance between us
is that between the heavens and the
earth.

I ask you by Allah, who are you?

Who are you?

It said:

Yes, I'm near to you... very near. But you distance yourself from me, and you distance me from you.

I said:

I asked you by Allah, who are you?!

So it said:

You asked me by the Tremendous One, my Lord... my God... my Protector... my Creator... my Benefactor.

I... I... I am your soul... I am the spirit Allah breathed into you... I am your essence and your reality. I am the one that was imprisoned in the cage of your body.

Have you heard?!

*O Soul, are you content
to permanently be close to this dark turbidity?
So where were you when there was no body you
dwelled in?*

*Weren't you in the presence of Holiness?
Recall!*

*You would betake to the heavenly host
and sip from a basin of intimacy just as you
would pick fruits.*

*Breezes of proximity would come to you,
gifting you with the fragrance of beauty.
Then you were placed by Allah's command in
a cage
to test you. So be a good testee!*

*When you saw wonders, manifest and
hidden,
issue from this body,
their splendor made you forget that you used
to witness
the holiness of your Lord! So recognize what it
is to waste life!*

It then said:

Look above. What do you see?

I said:

I see the sky.

It said:

And what?

I said:

I see birds.

It said:

Do you hear their chirping?

I said:

Yes. It's beautiful. It's wonderful,
especially here and now.

It said:

What do you say if you were to take
one of them from its home and place it
in a dark, desolate cage? What would
its state be?

Do you not see how a caged bird

*Breaks into song when it recalls its ancestral
home?*

I said:

That would be an indescribably
difficult state. I don't think it would
bear life thereafter.

It said:

Amazing!
You feel pity for this bird if you expel it
from its homeland and confine it, but
you don't feel pity for your lengthy
imprisonment of me and banishment
from my homeland. Don't you know
that by doing that you are committing
the greatest crime there is of
banishment and imprisonment?

*You've committed wrong and none other than
yourself did you wrong.*

*You committed wrong, and wronging one's
soul is a most ugly wrong.*

*Yes, the world of souls, the spiritual realm, is
better than the world of the body*

*And loftier, and this is not obscure to anyone
who possesses knowledge.*

*So what's with you that you've exhausted your
life striving*

In service of this body and skeletal form

So I said:

And what should I do? What is to be
done?

O Lord! O my Source of succor! What
have I done to myself? What have I

perpetrated? Was I lying to myself and to people?!

It said:

Ah! How much I called out to you and how much I tried to make you hear my voice, but I couldn't!

I would say, "What's the matter with him! I call out to him from within him, but he doesn't hear me!"

I said:

And how did I hear you now?

It said:

This is due to grace from Allah. You seized this moment. You saw the lights of the truth shining. Divine breezes blow in this arena and at this time.

Allah made the Kaaba a portal for the souls. Above it is al-Bayt al-Ma'mur (the Frequented Celestial House), which the angels circumambulate. The soul is from the celestial realm. So over here, it gravitates to there. For it is a magnet for the souls.

And that is why the Knowers of Allah yearn for it.

I said:

Praise be to Allah! All praise be to Allah who made me hear this voice!
But all my life has gone... I have been in a lengthy sleep... I have committed sins and disobedience. My heart has darkened. So what is the use?
I fear that when I return from this place, I will return to my previous state

and I will lose you and you will lose
me.

It said to me:

No... Do not despair of God's mercy.

Do not lose hope in His mercy.

*{Do not despair of God's mercy- only
disbelievers despair of God's mercy.}*

Listen...

Who brought you here?... Isn't it Him?

I said:

Of course!

It said:

Who empowered me to address you
right now?

Isn't it Him?

I said:

Of course!

It said:

Who said: {Say, “O My servants who have been prodigal to the detriment of their own souls! Despair not of God’s Mercy. Truly God forgives all sins. Truly He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful”}?

I said:

Allah... Allah... How merciful He is!
How generous He is!... He ascribes us to Him despite our transgressions against ourselves... and He calls out to us, “O My servants!” How vast is His generosity!

It then said:

What ummah (nation) are you from?

I said:

From the ummah of our Master
Muhammad bin Abdillah.

It said:

Do you know who he is?

I said:

My master... my Prophet... my
Messenger... my Beloved... the Light of
my eyes... and my grandfather.

It let out such a powerful cry that shook my
entire being. It moaned such an intense
moan that burnt my insides and pained my
chest.

It said:

Don't you know that his light is my nourishment? And that love of him is the water of my life? Don't you know that he is my qibla? And the face of my orientation? And he is the Imam of the People of the Holy Presence? And he is the secret of my existence?

Don't you know that he is the one who tied stones to his stomach out of hunger, for our sake?

Don't you know that he is the one whose forehead was wounded and his blood spilt, for our sake?

Don't you know that he is the one who was pelted with stones, for our sake?

I said:

Of course... of course, I know all of that. In fact, I teach it to people.

It said:

So what has this knowledge done to
you? Show me the tears of your eyes.

I found my eyes dry. No tears came.

It said:

Show me your sleepless nights away
from your bed.

But I slept a lot on a cozy bed.

It said:

Show me the paleness and yellowness
of your face and your emaciated body.

I ate a lot and was stout.

There was no trace of sorrow or worry on my
face.

So it said to me:

So what is the sign of your relationship
with him?!

What is the indicator of your
connection to him?!

I said:

I love him... I swear, I love him... I
swear, I love him.

It said:

That love is only with me. You only
feel a very minuscule portion of it.
I am the rope of your connection to
him... and the apparatus of love for
him... and the eye by which you see
him... and the ear by which you hear
him... So do not deprive me of nearness
to him.

Do not prevent me from witnessing
him.

I said:

How?!

It said:

Whenever I want nearness to him and
seek his connection, your ego that
incites to evil and satan's whisperings
overwhelm you.

So you deprived me of nearness to him
and expelled me from his presence.

Whenever I want to anoint my eyes
with the light of the beauty of his face,
your eyes stretch to what Allah has
forbidden or to the finery of this lower
world.

So you veiled me from him.

I said:

La hawla wa la quwwata illa biLlah.

It then said:

What do you feel while looking at this
Kaaba?

I said:

I feel and taste incredible intimacy.

It said:

I doubt what you say. But despite that,
these feelings you have are nothing but
an atom of what I feel... And the
pleasure I feel when I gaze at the Kaaba
is minuscule compared to what one
experiences when they gaze at the face
of the Beloved of Allah... for whose
sake the Kaaba was made the qibla.

Haven't you heard the saying of Allah
the Exalted:

*{Certainly We have seen you often
turning your face to heaven. So We will
surely turn you towards a Qibla (prayer
direction) that pleases and satisfies you.}*

Do you see what you are doing to me?
And now please do not confine me.
Do not cause me to be banished from
my homeland.

I said:

La hawla wa la quwwata illa biLlah.
What is this confusion in my thinking?
What is this covering on my sight?
I have lived my life with a shallow,
superficial understanding of
estrangement.
I have only learned today what
estrangement is.

Estrangement is that your soul lives trapped in your body that is darkened by disobedience and sins... estranged from its original world.

What a pity that my life has passed!

{Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, wipe out our bad deeds, and grant that we join the righteous when we die.}

May Allah send abundant salutations and blessings upon our Master Muhammad, the Chosen One, and upon his pure family and excellent Companions.

All praise be to Allah, Lord of all worlds.