

Recognition of the Beloved

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Several years ago, at and during the *Jalsa Salana* (Annual Gathering) of the Ahmadiyya Community, an Ahmadi brother suggested that I write a paper concerning music. Shortly after, I had a *Mulikat* (meeting) with the then Khalifa (Spiritual Leader) of the Ahmadiyya Community, Mirza Tahir Ahmad (*Hazur*). During the *Mulikat* I informed *Hazur* of the brother's suggestion. *Hazur* then suggested that I should base the paper on the Holy Qur'an.

For years following that meeting with *Huzur*, I have, from time to time, contemplated writing the paper; however, it was not until sitting in this past *Ihtekaaf* (the 10-day period of solitude during the month of fasting or *Ramadhan*) that the paper come about. All praise belongs to Allah. My humble efforts follow.

In paraphrasing the Promised Messiah, Hadhrat Mirza Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him), I venture to say: "A person's love of wealth or offspring or wife or his soul being attracted towards a musical voice or (musical sound) are all indications of his search for the 'True Beloved'" (*The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, p. 52).

The Holy Qur'an says:

"Allah—there is no god save Him, the Living, the Self Subsisting and All-Sustaining. Slumber seizes Him not, nor sleep. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth" (Holy Qur'an, 2:256).

Therefore it is logical to conclude that when sounds of beauty are emitted or sustained through a human being, the sounds themselves may not be only lifeless vibrations, for the Holy Qur'an says:

"It is He Who brings the dead to life, and that He has power over all things" (Holy Qur'an, 22:7).

What I am suggesting here is that just as God has the power to make the dead and barren earth vibrate with new life when rain falls upon it, He also has the power over things other than this phenomenon of nature. Therefore, I postulate, in regards to the sounds mentioned above, that it is Al-Mighty God Who has bestowed the beauty which the sounds emit.

The reality here is that man cannot perceive with his physical eyes the Imperceptible Being, Who is latent like perfume in a rose. For example: A man cannot see the perfume within a rose, but yet he can perceive the sweetness of the rose through the God-given faculty of smell, which God (*Al-Razzaq*, The Provider) has provided man with, unless he has lost his God-given ability to distinguish odors. Likewise, a man cannot perceive with his physical ears the Imperceptible being Who is latent in the sound of beauty because Allah is *Al-Ghaibi*, The Unseen (Holy Qur'an, 2:4).

Also, if man can receive an impress of beauty from the Beloved, so can a musical sound be the recipient of an impress of beauty from the Beloved, i.e., be it the will of God. The inherent fact here is that Allah *"He is the Lord of all things"* (Holy Qur'an, 6:165), which includes man's ability to hear the beauty of a musical sound, and at the same instance, have the God-given realization that this hearing-beauty experience denotes an indication of the True Beloved.

However, "...among them are some who give ear to thee; but We have put veils on their hearts, that they should not understand, and deafness in their ears. And even if they see every sign, they would not believe therein..." (Holy Qur'an, 6:26). Moreover, it is not at all odd to ascertain that the beauty inherent in an unseen sound of beauty is an indication of one of the special functions of the True Beloved, for Moses (who upon be peace) said, "Our Lord is He Who gave unto everything its proper form and then guided it to its proper function" (Holy Quran, 20:51). And elsewhere the Holy Qur'an says: "And to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth...." (Holy Qur'an, 16:53).

To be able to perceive this beauty is no doubt a blessing from the True Beloved (*Al-Rahman*, The Gracious), for He has said: "And whatever blessing you have, it is from Allah..." (Holy Qur'an, 16:54). Consequently, the beauty of the musical sound belongs to the True Beloved because He has said:

"...All sublime attributes belong to Allah and He is Mighty, the Wise." (Holy Qur'an, 16:61).

And the ear and heart that understands this beauty of sound is due to be grateful to the True Beloved, for He has said:

"And Allah brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers while you knew nothing, and gave you ears and eyes and hearts that you might be grateful." (Holy Qur'an, 16:79).

It is religiously correct to say that the beauty of a musical sound belongs to the True Beloved because He has said :

"All grace is in the hand of Allah. He gives it to whomsoever He pleases. And Allah is Bountiful, All Knowing" (Holy Qur'an, 3: 74).

It appears that there are those who hear and those who do not hear the denotation of an indication of the True Beloved within a musical sound, for it is written:

"And be not like those who say: "We hear," but they hear not," (Holy Qur'an, 8:21). And

"Surely, the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are the deaf and dumb, who have no sense." (Holy Qur'an, 8:23).

The anomaly here is that Allah is telling man that he should hasten to listen and respond to the beauty fashioned by The Beloved because if one delays doing so unforeseen circumstances may intervene to make one's heart hard or rusty; one may then refuse to listen to beauty of any kind. Therefore it is important for the listener to embrace, as soon as possible, this Godly attribute of beauty provided by *Al-Rahman*, The Gracious, for this attribute is purely one of the Divine favours from the True Beloved.

"Therein, verily is a reminder for him who has an understanding heart, or gives ear and is attentive." (Holy Qur'an, 50:38).

The reminder to listen here means to listen with the heart, the soul, the conscience, and the mind, all of which signify the best part of a thing.

“Such is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of all things. There is no god but He. How then are you turned away?” (Holy Qur’an, 40: 63).

And are you aware?

“It is He Who makes people laugh and makes them weep.” (Holy Qur’an, 53:44).

Yes- *“And by the soul and its perfection”.* (Holy Qur’an, 91:8). One meaning of this verse is that all the great heavenly bodies devoted to the service of God’s creatures, such as the sun, the moon, etc., bear witness to man having been endowed with similar qualities to a high degree. In fact, man is a universe in miniature and in him is represented, on a small scale, all that exists in the external universe. For example, while visiting Copenhagen, Denmark during the early sixties, I had the privilege of hearing the late Ben Webster perform the Beatle’s composition “Yesterday” on tenor saxophone for primarily a Danish audience. Like the moon, as he illustriously articulated the composition, he transmitted to those who were in the dark the light of the Beloved, which he borrowed from the Great Original Source - The Beloved. I say this because before he finished the first chorus approximately 90% of the Danes, having heard the ways of beauty, were quietly weeping, and as I have quoted above: “It is He (The Beloved) who makes people laugh and makes them weep.”

I am suggesting that in the above event there was a possibility that the illustrious and pervasive sound coming through Ben Webster’s saxophone was extolling the glory of the Beloved and at the same time the Danes and myself, being affected through listening, became part of the collective evidence that the whole universe bears to the Unity of God. The following verse alludes to this possibility:

“The seven heavens and the earth and those that are therein extol His glory; and there is not a thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you understand not their glorification. Verily He is Forbearing, Most Forgiving.” (Holy Qur’an, 17:45).

The above narrative tells us that man has been created to serve a great purpose: to develop and reflect in his person Divine Attributes.

“What did you think that We had created you without purpose....” (Holy Qur’an, 23:116).

“He has been endowed with a Divine personality and is manifestly the central figure in the whole creation or at least that part of the creation which is related to our universe.” (Holy Qur’an, Commentary 2022, p. 706).

In order to throw more light on the Websterian event that I have previously mentioned, I venture to say that there was another force involved other than Ben Webster’s intelligence. The following explains what I mean by this statement:

“Holy is He Who created all things in pairs, of what the earth grows, and of themselves, and of what they know not” (Holy Quran, 36:37).

Commentary:

“The verse reveals truth, viz, that God has created all things in pairs, which was simply inconceivable at the time the Qur’an was revealed and among the people to whom it was revealed. Science now has discovered the truth that pairs exist in all things, in the vegetable kingdom and even in inorganic matter. It has yet to unfold this truth in all its various details. Even the so-called elements do not exist by themselves. They depend upon other things for their sustenance. This scientific truth applies to human intellect also. Until heavenly light descends, man cannot have true knowledge which is born of a combination of Divine revelation and human intelligence” (*Holy Qur’an, Commentary 2337*, p. 2196).

From this commentary I conclude that it was the Beloved Who bestowed the beauty which the sounds emitted. And further evidence that it was the Beloved Who was responsible for the beauty is that approximately 90% of the audience wept as the result of listening, and, as I have cited previously:

“It is He Who makes people laugh and makes them weep.” (Holy Qur’an, 40:44).

By the grace of the Beloved I shall, be it the will of the Beloved, venture to interpret the following Quranic verse in its relation to musical sounds.

“And He it is Who has caused the two seas to flow, this palatable and sweet, and that salt and bitter; and between them He has placed a barrier and an insurmountable partition.” (Holy Qur’an, 25:54).

Taking two waters in the verse to represent first the sounds that emit beauty bestowed by the Beloved and second lifeless sounds, the verse signifies that both the sounds tempered by the Beloved and the lifeless and bitter sounds still continue to exist in the world, side by side, the former yielding sweet sound-nectars and quenching the thirst of spiritual listeners and the latter barren and bitter, incapable of producing any good results. The reason being:

“Evil things are a characteristic of bad men, and bad men are inclined towards bad things. And good things are a characteristic of good men, and good men are inclined towards good things” (Holy Qur’an, 24:27).

The Arabic word for evil in this verse is *‘Khabithat,’* meaning evil deeds or obscene words or expressions; the verse purports to say that evil persons do evil deeds or indulge in obscene and foul talk and scandalmongering, while nothing comes out of good and virtuous persons but righteous deeds and pure and noble expressions.

When the sounds bestowed by the Beloved are mixed with the lifeless sounds, the resulting mixture is bitter. As long as these two sounds keep themselves separate, they maintain their respective qualities. Therefore, in order for one to position one’s self as a candidate hoping to produce sounds tempered by the Beloved, I suggest that they continuously strive to become a good and virtuous people. This is suggested in that God has said :

“Whatever of good comes to thee is from Allah, and whatever of evil befalls thee is from thyself....” (Holy Qur’an, 4:80).

And it is gratifying to know:

“We will provide for (you) every facility for good” (Holy Qur’an, 92:8).

And:

“Surely it is for us to guide” (Holy Qur’an, 92:13).

And Allah says concerning the soul:

“And He revealed to it the ways of evil and the ways of righteousness” (Holy Qur’an, 91:9).

And it is also gratifying to know that:

“God has implanted in man’s nature a feeling or sense of what is good and bad and has revealed to him that he could achieve spiritual perfection by eschewing what is bad and wrong and adopting what is right and good” (Holy Qur’an, Commentary 3360, p.1270).

The purpose of this brief exposition has been to induce in the reader the realization that the beauty of anything is not due to the thing itself. Things only reflect beauty, but themselves are lifeless. It is almighty God the Beloved, Who has bestowed upon them the beauty which they reflect:

“And truly We have set forth for men in this Qur’an every type of parable. (Holy Qur’an, 30:59).