

Mushahada (observation) means using insight to see in Divine acts the Divine Names that give existence to them, and to become aware, in the manifestation of the Names, of the All-Holy One Who is called by those Names. In other words, observation denotes that those favored with Divine nearness reach the horizon where they leave the corporeal realm behind and observe like bright mirrors reflecting God's absolute Oneness.

Observation is seeing with insight or with the eye of the heart, and is therefore different from seeing. In his *Sharh-i Muhammadiya* ("The Exposition of Muhammadiya"), Ismail Haqqi Bursawi [1]

stresses this difference: Observation, a great Divine gift, is seeing with insight, not with the eyes. What is seen with the eyes is the shadow and manifestation of the Divine Light. As for what is seen with insight or observed, it is the truth of the Divine Light and the observation of the Truth Himself, seen with the eye of the heart, beyond all concepts of modality.

Observation is also different from disclosure. Disclosure is that an initiate acquires familiarity with certain meanings and abstract truths; the object of observation is beings, though not, of course, the Divine Being that absolutely cannot be comprehended. In other words, when the term "observation" is used with respect to the Divine Being as the object of observation, it means turning to Him with one's illumined and with illumining insight in such a way that one attracts Divine attention to oneself, while disclosure is the state in which one feels the Divine Names and Attributes.

Observation is made possible by a vigorous heart with keen sight and hearing. These senses are highly sensitive and receptive, completely connected to the realms beyond, and conducive to perfect concentration. The verse (50:37), *Surely in this is a reminder for one who has heart or give ears having a full capacity of seeing* , can be interpreted as referring to this fact.

Like disclosure, there are degrees of observation. One can think of these degrees as being assigned to different capacities in order to observe the truth. Everyone is favored and honored with observation according to the depth of their belief, the strength of their certainty, and the capacity of their heart.

The lowest of these degrees is observation through knowledge of God supported by knowledge

and belief. Initiates who have reached this point feel that by virtue of their strong certainty, they feel in their conscience that the lights of Divine Existence pour on the horizon of their perceptions in the form of Divine knowledge. Such persons begin to walk with a deep yearning to the point where they will see everything annihilated in God.

The second degree of observation is so clear that it is as if one were seeing with one's eyes. One favored with knowledge of God who has reached this point transcends His signs and the pieces of evidence provided by creation and, melting away in the originality of the Divine Names and Attributes, attains the observation of God's Oneness beyond His acts, Names and Attributes, which provide His signs and evidence in existence. Conscious of the fact that one's existence is only shadowy, the seeker fixes his or her eyes on Him exclusively. Concerning this station, the author of *Mizan al-'Irfan* says:

*Discovering the (Divine) Being is an elevated station,
Where the currency of speech is not valid nor in demand.
Whoever attempts to knock on the door at that station,
Always receives the answer, "You will never be able to see Me!"
If he is shown a sign like that resembling the one shown to Moses,
It will be only a single manifestation of His Majesty.*

The third degree is observing everything as being annihilated in God. Those perfected ones favored with knowledge of the Truth and who have attained this highest degree annihilate their material being and feel attracted by the All-Existent One with the All-Beautiful Names and All-Sacred Attributes by virtue of belief and a certainty that has been transformed into observation. With sight that has gained the keenness that it will have in the hereafter where the veils over the eyes will be removed, they know fully Who their Creator, Lord, Originator is, and the One Who has endowed them with the light of existence and Whom they worship. They are freed from any connection with all else save Him.

Junayd al-Baghdadi describes this station as the manifestation of the Unseen, which is perceived by means of the Divine lights in the time when hearts overflow with rejoicing. The author of *Mizan al-'Irfan* says concerning the same point:

*If the absolutely Sovereign Being manifests Himself,
The existence of the universe is no longer felt.
If the Truly Beloved One manifests Himself,*

*Will any trace be left of the shadow of darkness?
However, this point leads some to confusion;
They take His lightninglike manifestation for the Being Himself.*

What the author of *Mizan al-'Irfan* is reminding us of is not to confuse the original with the shadow, and to take an observation from the conscience and the heart in a state of pleasure for the observation of the True Being Himself. The following verses are only a few drops from the essence of such confusion:

*If you have been given two eyes to know the Truth,
Then see the two worlds-this and the next-filled with the Friend!
Though we are each a drop, we are drowned in the ocean;
Though we are each an atom, in fact we are the sun.*

O God! Show us the truth as the truth and enable us to observe it, and show us falsehood as falsehood and enable us to avoid it. And give peace and blessings to Your Messenger, the chosen one, and to his family and Companions, esteemed and faithful.

[1] Ismail Haqqi Bursawi (1653-1725) is one of the great Sufi guides and writers. He spent much of his life in Bursa, Turkey. His *Ruh al-Bayan* (a 4-volume commentary on the Qur'an) is very famous. *Kitab al-Natica* is his last work. (Trans.)