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PERCEPTION

PERCEIVING ALLAH WITH THE HEART'S EYE

The Intellect and the Heart's Eye

Bismillah Al Rahman Al Rahim
In the Name of Allah, The One Who Acts with Mercy,
The Source of Mercy

We rely heavily on our minds to understand the world. We gather information, study, observe and make decisions based on what we know. Allah gave us *'aql* [intellect], the power of understanding and discernment, for a reason. Through it, we investigate creation and begin to appreciate the greatness of Allah. This faculty develops as we continue to question and learn.

Yet understanding something intellectually does not always mean we have grasped its deeper meaning. We may examine a situation from every angle and still fail to recognize something important, particularly when it concerns ourselves. Is everything that can be known accessible through the mind alone?

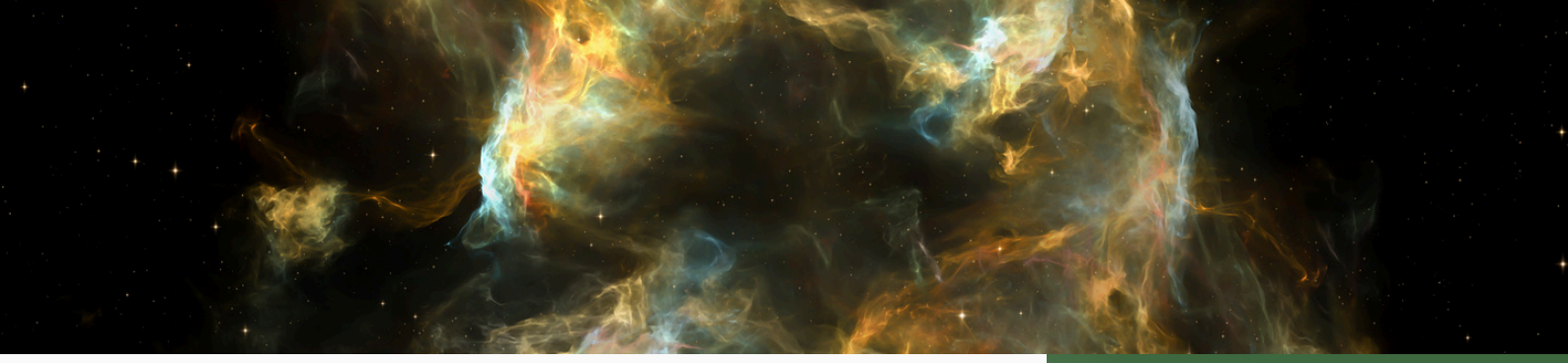
The Quran invites us to think rather than believe blindly. We acquire *'Ilm al Yaqin* [sure knowledge through research or written/verbal communication] through learning and study, and *'Ayn al Yaqin* [sure knowledge through observation and experience] through what we observe and experience. Both are valuable ways of developing our understanding.

But the Quran also draws our attention to another faculty of perception.

In *Sura* [chapter] *Al Nahl* [The Bee]: 78, Allah reminds us that He "brought you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and gave you hearing and seeing and *af'idah* [spiritual hearts; perception centers], to give you the opportunity to be thankful."

Every day our eyes gather thousands of images, yet somehow we still miss what is most important. The physical eyes can only see what is in front of them. But the heart has another kind of sight. The Quran refers to this inner faculty as the *fu'ad* [spiritual heart; perception center]. This is the place within us that truly perceives.

- Shaykh Nishaat Ahmed Siddiqi



Hearing and seeing are familiar to us. But why does Allah mention *af'idah* alongside them?

Af'idah is the plural of *fu'ad*, the spiritual heart. *Fu'ad* does not refer to the physical heart, but to a point of perception within the human being. As our consciousness develops and we draw closer to Allah, He can open these perception points, allowing us to communicate with and understand Him and His creation more deeply.

Here we encounter another way of knowing. *Haqq al Yaqin* [truth received directly from Allah] is the highest form of sure knowledge, connected with *'Ilm al Ladun* [Divine Knowledge received directly from Allah]. This knowledge is received through the heart, while *'aql* has an essential role in understanding it.

Our mind is therefore not something we must abandon. Its responsibility is to surrender to Allah, accept the knowledge received through the heart and act upon it. This is not about following our emotions, but about allowing our understanding to be guided by our connection with Allah.

We can see how this works in our spiritual development. As we do our *zikr* [repeated remembrance with contemplation] and maintain our connection with Allah, He can open the eye of our heart to weaknesses that others may have recognized but we have not acknowledged. The heart communicates this knowledge to *'aql*, enabling us to understand what is being shown to us.

We then have even more reason to praise Allah, because He is showing us where we are. We make the intention in our heart to change, and Allah brings about that change.

Perceiving Allah with the Heart's Eye is therefore not about choosing between the mind and the heart. Both have their place in our relationship with Allah. The mind helps us understand, while the heart connects us to Him. As we learn to surrender and remain connected, our understanding becomes part of how we live, bringing our heart and mind into connection with Allah.

- MURSHIDA SHAYKHA MUZEYYEN VARGONEN ANSARI & MURSHID SHAYKH TANER VARGONEN ANSARI

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