

# The heart of Riḍā

*Teḥsīn Riḍā Ḥamdānī*



# THE HEART OF RIDA

*A lengthy and detailed exegesis of a couplet by the Great Imam*

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## Introduction | Heart of a True Believer

Spirituality is the path in which the spiritual heart is activated. When the spiritual heart is alive, then it can see and understand those essentials which the rationality of mind is unable to perceive. The function of the physical eyes are dependent on the external physical light, similarly the soundness of the spiritual heart is reliant upon the spiritual light (*Nur*). The source of this *Nur* is the Lord of Power but it is dispensed by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ; which is obtainable from those who possess it with a spiritual link down the path of generations (*Silsila*).

Allah ﷻ says in the Holy Qur'an:

﴿يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ﴾

*“The day when neither wealth nor sons shall avail”*

﴿إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ﴾

*“But he who comes before Allah ﷻ with a sound heart”*

[Surah Shu'ara, 88-89]

The physical heart is centred slightly to the left of the mediastinum of a human being. The people of insight have stated that the centre of a person's quest for knowledge should be towards the heart which

will develop into fruits of wisdom if the *Nur* of Allah ﷻ has become it common soil. This is the reason that during circumambulation of the House of Allah ﷻ, in the Esteemed Makkah, is essentially done with the left side facing the House because of the inclination of the heart in that path. A sound heart is a heart that is free from blemish and defect. A sound heart which is referred in the above verse is in relation to the spiritual heart which rests within the physical heart. The focus of the Divine Light is on the platform of a spiritual heart. Sayyidina Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilaani (May Allah ﷻ sanctify his heart) states in his classical manuscript, '*Sirr al-asraar*' under the introduction:

*“The sound heart is as a lucid mirror. Cleanse the mirror from the layer of dust, so that the heart becomes the focal point where the Divine Light strikes”*

It is fascinating to note that the heart does not require the nervous system to initiate itself. The students of embryology should observe this point during the development of a human being in the womb. All the medical practitioners should note that the patients who are declared as 'brain dead' have their hearts actively pumping volumes of life (blood) into every nook of the anatomical body. So how is this controlled? It is controlled and initiated by the Sublime Lord. The heart is the centre of understanding and consciousness of human

beings even though many believe it is the mind. The Creator of hearts and minds states in the Holy Qur'an:

﴿هُم قُلُوبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَهُمْ﴾

*“They have hearts but are unable to understand therewith”*

[Surah A'raf, 179]

﴿أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا﴾

*“Have they not travelled in the land that they should have hearts with which to understand?”*

[Surah Hajj, 46]

How is this understanding achieved? Through the gnosis (*Ma'arifa*) of Almighty Allah ﷻ which requires the “activation gaze” from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is in *Kashf al-Mahjoob* of Shaykh Ali ibn Uthman Hujwari (d. 469 A.H) as he narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

*“If you knew Allah ﷻ as He ought to be known, you would walk on the seas, and the mountains would move at your call”*

(*Kashf Al-Mahjoob*, Chapter 15, Kitaab Ma'arifatullah, pg 267, Darul Ishaat, Pakistan .2004)

However, the gnosis of Allah ﷻ, Who is infinite, is unfeasible for a finite creation. The gnosis of an Eternal Deity for a transient creation is like a dissimilar parable of the manifest universe within the yolk of an egg. His Light of *Ma'arifa* which is Absolute requires a perfect chamber of a direct and incessant connection. A chamber which yields enough for its dazzling brilliance and sturdy enough for its enormous weight of divinity. Such a spirited chamber is honoured in the Eternal Words of the Holy Qur'an:

﴿لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَىٰ جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةٍ

اللَّهِ وَتَلَكَ الْأُمْتَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾

*“If We had sent down this Qur'an upon any mountain you would certainly have seen it humbled and split asunder for fear of Allah ﷻ. We profound for mankind that they may reflect”*

[Surah Hashr, 21]

Reflect the power of the profound heart of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ which was steady for the continuous inflow of the Divine infusion of Gnosis. The Gnosis of the Sublime Lord is in this very power-house which is expanded by Almighty Allah ﷻ Himself:

﴿أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ﴾

“Have We not expanded (O Beloved) your breast?”

[Surah Inshirah, 1]

Henceforth, the heart which shall understand will be the one which receives the gnosis of Allah ﷻ through His Messenger ﷺ. Gnosis of Allah ﷻ is the true objective and nature has set a path for every object, and the path of gnosis is the unconditional love of Muhammad Mustafa ﷺ.

Shaykh Sumnun Al-Muhibb states:

*“Love (of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ) is the foundation and principle of the way to Allah Ta’ala”*

(Kashful Mahjoob, Kitaabul Hubb, Chapter 19, Darul Ish’at, Pakistan, 2004)

﴿قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ

وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾

*“O beloved! Say you, ‘O people, if you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your sins and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful”*

[Surah Ale Imran, 31]

This verse indicates numerous articles and secrets for those who seek the *Ma'arifa* of Allah Ta'ala. Firstly it is seen that love has dual pathways: 1. Love that the creation has for Allah and 2. Love that Allah has for the creation; from these the latter signifies *Ma'arifa* and the former promotes faith. The objective of *Ma'arifa* has one route which is to pursue the obedience to the Messenger of Allah SallAllahu Alayhi Wasallam so that one's love for Allah may become validated. Obedience to the Messenger of Allah SallAllahu Alayhi Wasallam is implementing upon his Sacred Law (*Shari'ah*) and devotion to his Sacred Life (*Sunnah*). Both these entities of obedience may only emerge with true love which a devoted heart may generate.

Secondly, forgiveness and mercy is certain for such a blissful heart. Shaykh Ali ibn Uthman Hujwari states:

*“Repentance is the first station of pilgrims on the way to the Truth, just as purification is the first step of those who desire to serve the Creator”*

(Kashful Mahjoob, Chapter 14, Kitaabul Maghfirah, Darul Ishaat, Pakistan, 2004)

Bear in mind, repentance is returning to Allah ﷻ whereas according to the Qur'anic verse Allah ﷻ shall forgive readily the one who loved His Beloved ﷺ and sought forgiveness through him. The following Qur'anic verse is the glad tidings for the sinners:

﴿لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمْ

الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيمًا﴾

*“And if when they do injustice unto their souls, then O beloved, they should come to you and then beg forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger should intercede for them, then surely, they would find Allah Most Relenting, Merciful”*

[Surah Nisaa, 64]

Attaching oneself to the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ is the cornerstone of *Ma'arifa* of Allah ﷻ. Every sense and thought will turn into a dazzling vision of the beloved. This cup of *Ma'arifa* is for the fortunate heart of a true believer which enables him to visualise the Glory of Allah ﷻ being manifested in the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Glory of the Messenger becomes manifest within the Words of the Creator. This is the reason when Shaykh al-Islam AlaHadrat Imam Ahmed Rida Al-Qadiri scrutinized the Verses of the Holy Qur'an then the *Ma'arifa* of Allah ﷻ allowed him to catch a glimpse of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

کَهِیَعَصَّ اُنْ کَا هَے چَہرَہ نَور کَا  
 لَکَ گَیَسو ہ دَہن ی ابرو آکھیں ۶ ص

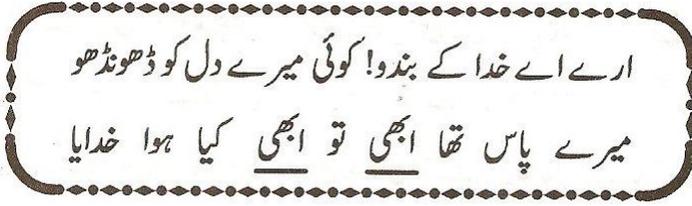
In another instant, when he placed his pen on the parchment to eulogise the Glory of Allah ﷻ then the praises of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ became manifest within them:

وہی رت ہے جس نے تجھ کو ہمہ تن کرم بنایا  
 ہمیں بھیک مانگنے کو تیرا آساں بتایا، تجھے حمد ہے خدایا

Glory be to Allah! Amongst the unwary public there is confusion in relation to Imam Ahmed Rida. They do not deem him to be a spiritualist, but merely a verdict-lover *Mawlana*. In the sense of verdicts, Imam Ahmed Rida is highly well-known amongst his lovers and critiques. However, there is another perspective of this great personality which is overlooked: his zealous love for Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. His spiritual marvels are deliberately concealed and his wondrous saintly expeditions are calculatingly shifted aside from public view. In order to survey the ocean of *Ma'arifa* in the sacred heart of Imam Ahmed Rida let us pursue his single poetic stanza in which the spiritual heart of Rida becomes manifest!

## Exegesis of the Couplet

*“My heart envies mine eye the pleasure of seeing,  
And mine eye envies my heart the pleasure of meditating”*



*“O Servants of the Lord! Find the heart of mine!  
Close to me it was, now what has occurred O Lord!”*

According to the lexicon the following words have the possible shades of description:

دل

*Heart, an internal organ, an epicentre of an object,  
encouragement, courage, bravery, and so forth*

(Feroz-ul-Lughat, pg 633)

پاس

*close, nearby, within proximity, within reach, in command*

(Feroz-ul-Lughat, pg 264)

ابھی

*in the present moment, immediately, a few moments  
ago, here-still*

(Feroz-ul-Lughat, pg 54)

In this stanza, Imam Ahmed Rida expresses profound and enigmatic love for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. His substantial love is observed with the sense of dynamism which has peaked into the ecstatic waves of ambitious search for his Beloved. These tremendous forces of waves have caused his heart to be dislodged from its former anchor. Within this ocean of love, Imam Ahmed Rida's attempt to recover his heart has agitated his very essence, and upon his missing of his heart; his appeal for dire assistance is acknowledged by some extraordinary servants of the Sublime Lord, and their assistance; through the Will of the Almighty Allah ﷻ, has rendered them an attentive ear to the agitated Rida!

A point to note is in the second line of the stanza in which the word ابھی has been utilised twice. The first instance directs us to the definition of "a moment ago". For example, Zaid is sitting in an orchard with his friend Bakr. After a few moments, Zaid runs off for an errand. His younger brother arrives and questions Bakr about Zaid's whereabouts. Bakr will say, "Zaid was here a moment ago, now I do not know where he proceeded to". Hence, the second word

in the stanza refers to the present time frame, that is, 'now'. Another interesting fixation is the expertise of using one word twice for the purpose of dissimilar contextual assertions. In the view of Urdu lexicologists, such a stanza attains the station of equivocation of brilliance.

Let us now return to Imam Ahmed Rida's ecstasy. He has expressed profound devotion for his Beloved Master ﷺ in his condition of a misplaced heart. Therefore, he appeals for help from the servants of Allah as dictated in the stanza as *اے خدا کے بندو!*

The question that arises is: who are these servants of Allah ﷻ? The reply is that these are the elite servants of Allah ﷻ. Which elite servants? What is their calibre in the spiritual domain? The answer rests within the plea of Imam Ahmed Rida. What is the plea? The heart of Rida is lost. It is not in any human's capacity to re-trace a misplaced heart because a heart is missing, not a human. There are various mediums through which human being may be tracked, but how will you track a missing heart? Such an entity is misplaced which was unseen 'a moment ago' and 'now' it is vanished a moment later. A bizarre episode has transpired! An object is lost that has the probability of nadir in its misplacement. Neither such an entity may be stolen nor traded for a monetary value. An entity is lost which is of precious value for its owner and priceless in its essence; for which neither a safe-house is immense enough for its residence, nor a

treasure-chest solicitous enough for its safety. An entity is lost which triggers an emotional turmoil for its owner who attached to this fact that everything has been lost. He has come to ruins. He has become senseless and lifeless. Neither the entity has dimensions nor is it discernible. It is a portion of a flesh that is known as the heart.

Nu'man ibn Bashir رضي الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah صلوات الله عليه stated:

*“Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoiled the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart”*

(Sahih Al-Bukhari, Kitaabul Iman, Volume 1, Hadith 50)

It is no ordinary task to search for a lost heart, even more so, the heart of Rida. When the heart is lost, it transcends vast distances even though it does not possess the necessary limbs for locomotion or any wings for a flight. This vessel (heart) possesses a single medium of transportation which supersedes the speed of a thunder clap. It is the medium of love which is assumed as the *Buraaq of Love*, however, no sight is able to entertain such an escapade. Only the people of insight have the capability to formulate a route plan therefore tracing the path of this speeding vessel towards the unknown. Only those who are swift in speed may be able to seize an entity of swiftness, the cripple have no concern in this matter. These people of insight are applauded in the Prophetic Narrations.

Tabraani in his *Mu'ajam Kabeer* narrates from Ibn Umar رضي الله عنهما that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stated:

*“Verily, there are certain servants of Allah ﷻ who are ordained by Allah ﷻ to fulfil the needs of the creation. The unfortunate present their needs to them. These servants are in security from the wrath of Allah ﷻ ”*

(Al-Mu'ajam Kabeer, Vol.12, pg 303)

Tabraani in his *Mu'ajam Kabeer* narrates from Abdullah ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهما and in his *Mu'ajam Awsat*, he narrates from Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه, and Bazaar narrates from Jabir ibn Abdullah رضي الله عنه and ibn Hibbaan narrates from Abdullah ibn Umar رضي الله عنهما. Ibn Najjaar narrates from Ali ibn Abi Talib رضي الله عنه. Imam Tabraani also narrates from Imam Abu Hanifa رضي الله عنه in his *Kabeer*, Imam Bukhari in his *Taaarikh*, Abu Bakr ibn Abi Dunya in *Qada-e-Hawaaij*, Abu Ya'ala in his *Musnad*, Aqeeli; ibn Adi and Bayhaqi in *Shu'bul Imaan*; and ibn Asaakir narrates from the Mother of Believers, Sayyida Ayesha binte Abu Bakr رضي الله عنها that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

*“Seek virtues and desires from those with a beautiful face”*

(Al-Mu'ajam Kabeer, Hadith 11110, Al-Maktabatul Faysaliyah, Beirut, Vol.11, pg 81)

These beautiful faces are of the *Awliya-Allah* due to their extensive worship and enlightened faith bound within their essence. Amongst these *Awliya*, the *Abdaal* are inclusive. Who are the *Abdaal*?

Tabraani narrates in his *Mu'ajam Kabeer* from Ubaada ibn Saamit رضي الله عنه, through an authentic chain of transmission, the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

*“The Abdaal in my nation are thirty. Due to them the earth is stable, and it is through them that you receive rain and it is through them you acquire aid”*

(Tafseer ibn Kathir, Vol.1, pg 448 & Jaami'us Saghir of Suyuti, Hadith 3033, Darul Kitaabul 'Ilmiyah, Beirut, Vol.1, pg 182)

An alternative narration suggests the *Abdaal* are forty in number.

Tabraani narrates in his *Mu'ajam Awsat*, through a sound chain of transmission, from Anas ibn Malik رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم declared:

*“The earth will not be empty of forty men (of Allah) who will be the manifestation of the friend of Allah (Ibraahim Alayhis Salaam). Through their medium you shall receive rain and through them you will acquire aid”*

(Al-Mu'ajam Al-Awsat, Hadith 4113, Maktabatul Ma'arif, Riyadh, Vol.5, pg 65)

Tabraani in his *Mu'ajam Al-Awsat* narrates from Ali ibn Abi Taalib رضي الله عنه and in his *Kabeer*, it is narrated from Auf ibn Malik رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم stated that the *Abdaal* are in Shaam. Through their blessings the people acquire assistance and through their medium they obtain sustenance.

(Al-Mu'ajam Kabeer, Hadith 120, Maktabatul Faysaliyah, Beirut, Vol.18, pg 65)

Sayyidina Abdullah ibn Umar رضي الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

*“There will always be forty men (of Allah) until the Last Day, through whom Allah Ta’ala will protect the earth. When any of them pass away, Allah Ta’ala will substitute another in his place; and they are scattered throughout the lands”*

(Kanzul Ummal, Hadith 34612, Beirut publication, Vol.12, pg 190)

It is quite evident from the above reliable narrations that there are certain elite servants of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم in duty to provide assistance to mankind in times of afflictions. Due to their appeal in the Majestic Court of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم, Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم fulfils the needs and desires of His servants. These pious servants of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم are blessed with the divine Mercy of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم and therefore they approach mankind with tenderness and kindness.

Tabraani, Ibn Hibbaan, Kharaiti, Qadee, Aqeeli, Mousali (May Allah be pleased with all) narrate from Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri رضي الله عنه; and Haakim narrates in his *Mustadrak* from Ali ibn Abi Talib رضي الله عنه, respectively; that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

*“Seek your desires from the tender-hearted persons of my Ummah, you shall receive sustenance and fulfilment of your desires”*

*“Seek excellence from the tender-hearted people of my Ummah. Live close to them because you will find my mercy in them”*

(Kanzul Ummal, Hadith 16806, Beirut publication, Vol.6, pg 519)

Herewith, some people may provide an excuse of this nature that the narrations are in relation to the *Awliya-Allah* meanwhile Imam Ahmed Rida has proclaimed “O servants of Allah عبيد الله” in his stanza which indicates the servants of Allah عبيد الله in general and not in particular. Let us be blessed with another Prophetic Tradition in which the Beloved Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم taught us the method of appealing to these *Awliya*.

Tabraani narrates from Utba ibn Ghazwaan رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم declared:

*“When any of you loses something and require help in a remote place where there is no help, then call out: ‘O servants of Allah! Assist me! O servants of*

*Allah! Assist me! O servants of Allah! Assist me!'; because there are some servants of Allah Ta'ala whom you cannot see"*

(Al-Mu'ajam Kabeer, Hadith 290, Maktabatul Faysaliyah, Beirut, Vol.17, pg 117)

Ibnus Sunni narrates from Abdullah ibn Mas'ood رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم states that when your animal runs away in the jungle then this is how you call out:

*"O servants of Allah! Catch it!"*

(Amal-al-Yaum wal Laylah of Ibn Sunni, Nur Muhammad Kutub, Karachi, pg 170)

The phrase 'O servants of Allah يا عباد الله' is in relation to the Awliya through whom Imam Ahmed Rida seeks help.

Let us revert to the now very ecstatic Rida and the journey of his heart. Upon calling for assistance by proclaiming, "O Servants of Allah يا عباد الله", these Elite Servants of Allah يا عباد الله are now engaged in searching for Rida's lost heart. They search from the zenith of the highest firmament to the nadir of the lowest lands. They investigate every nook and corner of this universe to trace the chamber of spirituality but to no avail. They are baffled. Now they approach Imam Ahmed Rida and observe his inclinations and habits. Why? It is logical to know certain things about a person's habitual traditions to perceive his lifestyle. For example, it is customary for Zaid to visit a

certain café now and then. If Zaid’s friend does not locate him at his house then this friend will not search for him here and there. Rather, he shall immediately search the place where Zaid is known to visit frequently.

The search party of Imam Ahmed Rida perceived the reality that his heart is an extraordinary heart infused with an unshakeable devotion and inflamed with an immense love for Muhammad Mustafa ﷺ.

Anas ibn Malik رضي الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

*“None of you will have Imaan till he loves me more than his father, his children and all mankind”*

(Sahih Al-Muslim, Kitaabul Imaan, Volume 1, Hadith 44)

It is futile to search for the heart of Rida here and there. If there is one place in this universe where the heart of Rida may be traceable then such a place is none other than Al-Madinah!

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

*“Verily, Imaan returns to Al-Madinah just as a snake returns to its hole”*

(Sahih Al-Muslim, Kitaabul Imaan, Volume 1, Hadith 147)

The solace and focus of this chamber of *Imaan* is Al-Madinah, under the Green Dome, near the Golden Rails. Let us proceed there and establish this reality. These elite servants of Allah ﷻ arrived Al-

Madinah only to find themselves drowned in utter astonishment. All of them proclaim:

ہمیں اے رضا تیرے دل کا پتا چلا بھشکل  
درِ روضہ کے مقابل وہ ہمیں نظر تو آیا، یہ نہ پوچھ کیسا پایا

*O Rida! We have discovered your heart with much arduousness,*

*Manifest before us, near the Court of Highness!*

*Do not ask about its plight.*

What did they see? What was manifest before them? After a while, they reveal:

کبھی خندہ زیر لب ہے کبھی گریہ ساری شب ہے  
کبھی غم کبھی طرب ہے نہ سب سمجھ میں آیا، نہ اسی نے کچھ بتایا

*Sometimes it beams with delight, sometimes it cries in entire night,*

*Times were in bliss and misery. Neither the conditions are unravelled,*

*nor did it reveal anything!*

The readers should be acquainted with words which are mentioned in the poems of Imam Ahmed Rida are fully recorded in *Hadaaiq e Bakhshish* (Gardens of Forgiveness). In this entire poem, Imam Ahmed Rida has explored the realms of his heart and its arcane zones. He mentions the 'losing of his heart' and its circumstances in

the world of contemplation. This contemplation is an inspiration from the depth of the immaculate heart. The readers of these inspirations always fall into a trance of spirituality which is expounded with the love of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Imam Ahmed Rida, thereafter, supplicates to the Lord of Power to transform this contemplation into realism:

یہ تصوراتِ باطل ترے آگے کیا ہیں مشکل  
تری قدرتیں ہیں کامل انہیں راست کر خدایہ، میں انہیں شفع لایا

*These contemplations of spurity, what is difficult before Thee!*

*Your Powers are Absolute with Eternity; allow them (contemplations)  
righteousness O Lord!*

*I present him (Muhammad ﷺ) as my intercessor.*

-End-

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