# In Absolute Poverty God Appears

In the voice of Shams of Tabriz, drawn from his *Maqalat* (Conversations).

Kabir Helminski

Last night I was again looking for the friends.

Each of you, one by one, I visualized in front of me.

Some changes had come to each of you.

Changes to your faith, yearning, and understanding.

"Why is this happening like this?"

I said to myself and felt pity for your states.

"Protect this joy of heart so that these friends

may continue to be with us," I said.

And as for those whom I guide,

first, I correct their deeds, and then I watch carefully.

Maybe I said it a thousand times.

We cause some pain to anyone we love,

but when we see that he or she has fallen down even a little,

we will give them a hundred thousand kinds of help.

And we do not keep people indefinitely stranded on the mountain top.

But, on the other hand, whoever is lost, wandering in the desert,

It’s because they preferred their own ignorance over the Truth,

and made themselves a stranger to us.

And yet don't you see how far we sometimes go

to praise a person who isn't even worthy to carry your shoes?

How many times have we tolerated their bad behavior?

Don't you think that the tests that came

to the prophets and saints were like this?

It is because they were the pure servants of God.

Bravery is needed on the Way.

Faith and love turn human beings into heroes;

they remove all fears. One whose carnal passions die,

their Satan dies, and they reach God.

But this does not mean they become God.

It means they became a servant

And the servant understands that they have not reached God,

but that they have only reached the way of God.

Otherwise they have deviated from the way of God,

and their Satan can revive.

Real maturity is to please others' hearts.

What manliness is there in the one

who thinks only about pleasing his own *nafs*?

There is the hadith, "The world is the prison of the believer."

This always sounded a little strange to me.

I did not see a prison.

But he had said the prison of the *believers*,

not the prison of the *servants*.

I always lived with a joy of heart.

I always found myself blessed.

And if even an unbeliever would pour water

into my hands for ablutions,

God would forgive him,

and he would become one of the people of favor.

The worship and work of Muhammad,

may the peace and blessings of God be upon him,

was to be totally immersed in Divine contemplation.

And our prophet is all clean body.

Nobody else but this son of his from Tabriz can speak of this subject.

I have lived the pleasure and taste of this.

And yet my words are also for somebody else

and some other time, simultaneously.

The Truth is not bound to time. The Truth does not die.

Even the Prophet hasn't spoken as openly as I have.

This, however, is not a shortcoming of his.

Perhaps he didn't have the time to elaborate

and explain these meanings,

because he was occupied with so many other things.

For me there is no obstacle to my explaining it clearly.

The work is the work of the heart;

the service is the service of the heart,

and servanthood is servanthood from the heart.

But one can reach that universe of divine contemplation

only through annihilating oneself in God Almighty.

Our beloved prophet knew

that the happiness of divine contemplation

is given to very few servants.

He wanted the real work and worship for everyone.

He directed his community to do the five daily prayers,

and thirty days of fasting, and the tradition of pilgrimage,

so that the community might not be deprived of witnessing

the miracles and manifestation of God within the Unseen,

and might be liberated and come to understand

that they are superior to other communities in this regard.

The dance of the people of God is subtle and light.

They walk like a leaf on the water.

Yet on the inside they are like a mountain,

or like a hundred thousand mountains,

but outwardly they are like sweet grass.

The Truth is within my hand,

but it does not belong to me.

All the attributes mentioned by the preachers--

I see that they are all within me.

You see, the one in whom poverty is complete

is the one in whom God appears.

O Great God who turns the hearts and eyes

wherever You wants to,

keep my heart constant upon my spiritual work.