

Gems of Mysteries: Wilmette Institute faculty notes

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The Gems of Mysteries was written before Kitáb-i-Íqán; in the latter, Bahá'u'lláh has referred to it as the "Arabic Tablets", as Gems of Mysteries is entirely in Arabic. Its English translation would probably comprise about 130 pages, if we were to compare it to Íqán in terms of number of pages. The first portion of it is similar to Íqán in style: Bahá'u'lláh quotes from the Bible, the Quran, and traditions in order to prove the new Revelation, explain pre-requisites for searching truth, etc. For instance, He explains the meaning of the coming of the Son of Man in clouds, accompanied by angels.

From the content, we can guess the type of questions that Hájí Siyyid Muhammad Isfahani, to whom this Tablet is addressed, must have asked. He was concerned about the signs of the coming of the Promised One, the stages of search, distortion of Holy books, and other concepts similar to those treated in Íqán.

Bahá'u'lláh must have been surrounded with enemies at this time, as He makes references to enemies who were actively plotting against Him. Next Bahá'u'lláh describes the calamities heaped upon the Manifestations of God from non-believers, who in their ignorance, think that by doing this they are defending the religion of God. It is possible that Siyyid Muhammad has had mystical tendencies; Bahá'u'lláh's language in this tablet is more mystical than in Íqán, even in the first section where He deals mostly with theological issues. For example, we come across terms such as Veiled Maidens, Black Dust, Crimson Earth, Thrones of Lahot & Jabarot, Egypt of Ama', and others.

Similar to the verses at the beginning of the Book of Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh says that the standard for judging truth from falsehood is the Word of God which is brought to people by His Manifestations. Should one fail to recognize the Manifestation of God and obey Him, he has gone astray, even though he be the author of every good (because the measure of goodness and badness, again, is the Word of God in every age).

In the second portion of the book, which is similar to the Seven Valleys, Bahá'u'lláh says that in response to Siyyid Muhammad's questions He will briefly address the pre-requisites and stages of the mystic path. (I should mention at this point that I have arbitrarily divided this Tablet into two portions based on the contents, viz., theological & mystical, otherwise the Tablet itself does not have such a division). In this section The Blessed Beauty describes the seven valleys, but the names and orders of valleys

are slightly different from those found in the book of Seven Valleys. Here is a list of valleys or stages, which you can compare to those in the book of Seven Valleys:

The GARDEN of SEARCH: the steed of this valley is detachment. In this valley the seeker will experience all sorts of change and transformation.

The CITY LOVE and ATTRACTION: in this city the winds of love and breezes of spirit will waft over the seeker and occupy him such that he will not know the left from the right, and the land from the sea, and desert from mountain. At once will laugh and cry; he will tremble and stay calm at the same time. In the heat of fire he shall be found cool and calm; in the midst of water he shall be found dry; he walks but not in the physical realm.

The CITY of UNITY: (this is the largest segment of the book, comprising about 40% of the entire Tablet. In this section Bahá'u'lláh addresses mystical subjects from theological perspective. Some of the topics of this section are:
The wayfarer should see everything with the eye of unity.
"Knowledge is one point (letter); the ignorant have multiplied it."

Oneness of Manifestations of God.

God, an unknowable essence.

Station of Manifestations of God.

meaning of Hell & Heaven, resurrection & re-birth.

Two

types of life: Physical & Spiritual.

The meaning of Sword in the Bible and in Islamic traditions.

Manifestations of God are not bound to fulfill the prophecies of the past; however, they do that out of their bounty so that people will not fall victim to their expectations.

The GARDEN of WONDERMENT: The wayfarer upon entering this stage will experience bewilderment due to the majesty of God and complexity of His creation. This is a dangerous city and many a seeker will fail to pass this stage.

The CITY of ANNIHILATION: This is the annihilation of self, body, soul, essence, and in sum, everything. It is as if the wayfarer does not exist. The Beloved at this point appears to the lover; how can the lover exist when the Beloved reveals himself?

The CITY of LIFE or PERMANENCE: The seeker will find himself in the state of contentment above any annihilation; he will drink from the spring of eternal life, will soar in the air of permanence, eat from the fruit of permanence, walk on the earth of permanence, and associate with the people of eternal life.

The CITY WHICH IS BEYOND ANY NAME, DESCRIPTION, MENTION, OR SOUND: Oceans of eternity flow in this city and the Sun of unseen shines from its horizon. No one except God and His Manifestations have any knowledge of this city.

Finally, Bahá'u'lláh tells Siyyid Muhammad to ponder upon these Words in order to gain all the knowledge and reach the station of true understanding.

Briefly, these are some of the main topics of this important Book of the Blessed Beauty.

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