

## PSYCHOLOGICAL AND THERAPIC EFFECTS OF MURAQABA

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### Abstract

Muraqaba, is the method of 'controlling the emotions in heart', by focusing on emotions. Allah is the real owner of the heart. He constantly controls man's heart. Therefore, we may call man's effort to keep the feelings in his heart in a clear manner, worthy of Allah, as muraqaba. "Centre of man's earthly life, heart is also the centre of soul and the source of true life, the real centre of both faith and denial is the heart"<sup>1</sup>.

Keywords: Muraqaba, heart, soul, heart's control system, spiritual and divine love.

### Murakabenin Psikolojik ve Terapik Etkileri

#### Öz

Murakabe, insanın duygularına odaklanması vasıtasıyla 'kalbindeki duygularını kontrol etmesi' metodudur. Allah, kalbin gerçek sahibidir. O, kulun kalbini sürekli denetim altında tutmaktadır. Bu nedenle insanın kalbindeki duyguları, Allah'a layık hale ve en temiz şekilde tutma kontrolüne de murakabe diyebiliriz. "İnsanın dünya hayatının merkezi olan kalp, ruhun merkezi ve gerçek hayatın kaynağıdır. İmanın da, inkârın da asıl merkezi, kalptir"<sup>2</sup>.

Anahtar kelimeler: Murakabe, kalp, ruh, kalp denetim sistemi, ruhsal ve ilahî sevgi.

#### 1. Introduction

While feeding the heart, divine love feeds the spiritual world of man, as well as shaping his spiritual life. Muraqaba, on the other hand, observes the heart to see whether it points to the compass of Divine love or not. Man can only determine the recipient of the love in his heart by focusing and monitoring his heart. Muraqaba is to art to see the Divine love in the heart, by asking it to the heart. By doing this, heart can embrace the universe with its Divine love and integrate with the names and qualities of the Lord.

#### 1.1. Effect on divine love and fondness

"Heart is a mirror, where divine truths are reflected and wisdom is granted. Thanks to this power, man is able to recognize divine truths in a clear and undoubted manner"<sup>3</sup>. "Love is the password to the existence of this universe.

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<sup>1</sup> Ali Unal, Kur'an'da Temel Kavramlar, Nil Publishing, İzmir, 1999, p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> Unal, ibid, p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> Tahir Uluc, İbn Arabî'de Sembolizm, İnsan Publishing, İstanbul, 2007, p. 167.

Creation and existence are the result and reflection of this love and grace. God Almighty has created man because of His love for man. Because, loving someone is to desire his existence; and to feel joy of his existence"<sup>4</sup>.

An act can be understood as much as it could be seen from the perspective of the person committing the act. "In order to understand the actions of a person, it is necessary to know about his unique understanding and life, to enter his inner world and see with his perspective. This is called to see the person from within and to try to understand him in the style he is expressing himself"<sup>5</sup>. At this point, internal observation is; an individual reaching his internal world and expressing the depths of his soul to us.

In internal observation, man is analyzing his own feelings and thought through his own perspective, therefore it is possible for someone to deceive even himself. In *muraqaba* however, man says 'Allah is watching and controlling my heart, therefore I need to control the feelings of my heart', and therefore man cannot deceive himself and cannot 'act in favour of himself', because he is aware that Lord knows the true feelings in his heart.

Therefore, *muraqaba* is a much stronger method than 'internal view' method. In other words, in internal observation there is man's 'subjectivity and partiality', while in *muraqaba*, there is only the love of Allah.

Through *muraqaba*, man not only focuses to his mental and perceptive world, but also to the depths of his heart and the most secret emotions in his heart. He sees and controls them; hence there is only Allah, at the centre of his heart and feelings. Because it is Allah who is the true owner of the heart. Other loves come and go. Even the love for property, rank, human and children is temporary.

Man realizes that the only love which keeps growing each day is the love of Allah. *Muraqaba* method and understanding is more comprehensive than internal view method, and thanks to this, man realizes that the constantly growing love of Allah is the source of all loves, and provides him with an eternal feeling of existence, integrity and happiness. A man who can accomplish to control his feelings and thoughts through *muraqaba*, can also succeed in controlling his actions.

A man who is successful in controlling his feelings first, and then his thoughts and actions, can integrate with Allah and the universe, through the love of Allah. "In fact, internal view is love. When a man is viewing his internal self, he will become aware that all the struggle and tensions have an end, and he is reaching beyond his boundaries, as he is ready to love everything, carefully

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<sup>4</sup> *Hokelekli, Hayati* Hokelekli, Ailede, Okulda, Toplumda Degerler Psikolojisi ve Egitimi, Timas Publishing, Istanbul, 2011, p. 256.

<sup>5</sup> Feriha Baymur, Genel Psikoloji, Inkilap ve Aka Publishing, Istanbul, 1978, p. 304.

perceived by his emotions. In such case, his whole personality is dominated by an absolute integration, and he will get an eternal happiness out of this"<sup>6</sup>.

In internal view, there is love, and also a high level of existence and eternal happiness. Muraqaba is the scale and the true indication of the love at heart, and it shows the codes of love and universe, when we focus to the heart in its true sense. We can ensure the sincerity and truth in love only by focusing to the feelings and conditions within the heart. As Allah is constantly monitoring the heart, purifying the heart from bad thoughts is one of the main purposes of muraqaba.

Heart is joyful of Allah's constant existence and desires His existence. Love of Allah is better if the severity and magnitude increases. However, if the love of others is extreme, than it would lead to disappointment. Because man's mental state keeps changing all the time, it does not indicate any consistency. We may develop some negative thoughts about people whom we love dearly. When someone is loved too much, he would almost be made too great, and he would be expected to keep that greatness all the time. But this is impossible. In such case, the mind of the person would become a mess.

The only love which does not lead to disappointment, mental confusion in a man, is the love of Allah. The only love which provides undisturbed peace is also the love of Allah. And the home of this love is the heart. Muraqaba provides the opportunity to monitor and comprehensively analyze the emotions and variations at the heart by focusing on the heart, and it also acts like a mirror to display the feelings and states of the heart. And this is the most important advantage and therapy effect of muraqaba.

## 1.2. Effect on attention focusing

"By thinking that God is constantly watching the heart, muraqaba protects the heart from all kind of thoughts that come to the heart. Muraqaba, in one way, is to focus to Allah by mind and by heart. It is to intensify the thoughts of the heart around the name and idea of Allah"<sup>7</sup>. "Through muraqaba, bad thoughts are scraped and thrown out. Because a man who took his thoughts under his control, granted the necessary goodness to his body and feelings. And thanks to muraqaba, the roots of ugly thoughts are removed from the heart"<sup>8</sup>.

At this point, Ebu Hafs told Ebu Osman: "When you go up to the rostrum to preach, first advise your own nafs and heart. Do not be fooled by the fact that people are gathering around you. Because they see your outer face, while Allah

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Lauster, *Ask ve Askin Psikolojisi*, (trans. Nurettin Yildiran), Doruk Publishing, Ankara, 2000, p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> Hasan Kamil Yilmaz, *Anahatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, Ensar Press, Istanbul, 2002, p. 165.

<sup>8</sup> Ebu Hafs Suhreverdi, *Avarifu'l-Maarif, Daru'l-Kitabi'l-Arabiyyi*, Beyrut, 1966, p. 618.

is overseeing your inner self"<sup>9</sup>. This is called the state of muraqaba, as man focuses on the thought that Allah constantly watches his heart, knowing that Allah sees everything.

This state of mind ensures an intensified focus to Allah and to the heart; so much so that this focus reveals the true emotions and feelings of man. Such a long state of attention and focusing uncovers an effective state of attention in man. Such kind of attention which we may call 'attention focusing' or 'effective attention', is the result of intensified effectiveness of the willpower of man. This kind of attention makes perceptual selective a necessity.

Focusing means not to think of a second thing, while busy, doing something. The experience of focusing on Allah, heart and emotions, gradually focuses the will on the main issue and ensures that effective attention can be used all the time. Such kind of an experience has a curing effect for people who suffer from lack of attention and focus.

"People who suffer from lack of attention usually cannot focus their attention onto details or they make careless mistakes. Such people with lack of attention usually cannot concentrate on their works. When being directly talked to, they frequently look like they are not listening"<sup>10</sup>. Muraqaba focuses to make man's attention and the feelings in his heart worthy of Allah, as such; it also has a curing effect for lack of attention in daily activities.

### 1.3. Effect on self realization and behaviour control

State of Muraqaba is to be aware that Allah is constantly watching our inner thoughts and feeling; and hence purifying our hearts from bad thoughts which would refrain us from citing the name of Allah. In the Hadith of Gabriel, it is stated that ihsan (perfection) is to keep worshipping as if Allah is constantly watching over us. This kind of worshipping is said to be an indication of *muraqaba*.

"*Mohammad states, "[Ihsan is] to worship God as though you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, then indeed He sees you*"<sup>11</sup>. There is a reference here to the state of muraqaba.

"Because the state of muraqaba is, for a man to be aware that God is controlling him everywhere and in all conditions"<sup>12</sup>. A man who thinks that Allah sees him all the time and watches and control his heart, can realize self-realization and behaviour control.

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<sup>9</sup> Abdulkarim Kuseyri, Risaletu'l-Kuseyri, Daru'l-Hayr, Beyrut, 2003, p. 315.

<sup>10</sup> Ibrahim Yildirim, Egitim Psikolojisi, Ani Publishing, Ankara, 2010, p. 245.

<sup>11</sup> Buhari, Iman 37; Muslim, Iman 57.

<sup>12</sup> Kuseyri, ibid, p. 316.

The thought that Allah is in command of our feelings and our hearts, would keep us away from bad thoughts and negative behaviour patterns. Through behaviour control, man will be in command of his own emotional and mental thought processes. When man is in command of his own emotional and mental acts/behaviours, then he would know himself better. As such, a true education starts with knowing yourself first. The main purpose of education is for a man to know himself and to educate himself.

“The state of realizing your own motivations and actions is called ‘insight’. Therefore, the related therapies are called ‘insight therapies’. And the therapies which aim to change behaviours, rather than putting an insight onto them, are called ‘action therapy’. Insight takes place when man discovers important things about himself, his behaviour, motivational system or his unconscious state”<sup>13</sup>.

Through muraqaba, which is more comprehensive than the insight method, man will be in command of his heart and the depths of his emotions, and by becoming in command of his feelings; he will also be able to control the thoughts and actions of his mind. In conclusion, muraqaba method, which ensures behaviour control through emotion and mind control, is the most powerful type of action therapy, aiming to change behaviour.

When a man knows himself and forms a relationship with the emotional and mental processes in his internal self, he would reach an understanding about them. Knowing himself is to become a human, to realize what it means to live like a human. An advancement and maturity in humanitarian terms is dependent upon completing the self-realization processes, as well as controlling self behaviours.

A man who feels his psychological integrity is being degraded and suffers greatly with the feeling of losing his control, is able to reduce his anxiety when he can find a mental refuge for himself. In this sense, muraqaba has a treating and curing effect, by ensuring man that Allah is constantly watching over him, and by giving him the ability to self-realize and self-control himself. As such, man is not faced with the fear of losing control.

A man who sees himself from the window of Allah’s names and titles, which are reflected from his heart, will know himself and will do his best to keep his heart clean, as he would be aware of the fact that Allah is constantly watching over heart. “Therefore, man should keep his heart clean, the spiritual home of Allah, just like he is keeping Allah’s home Ka’baah and the mosques clean. It would be a mistake to clean the physical homes, but not the spiritual

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<sup>13</sup> J.F.Yalom, *Theory and Practise of Group Psychotherapy*, Paulist Press, New York, 1965, p. 42.

home.”<sup>14</sup> “At the same, Kâ’baah is a place covering the sins at the heart of man”<sup>15</sup>.

The aim of the worships of Islam is to keep man mentally and physically strong, and to protect him against spiritual and physical diseases. The treasure which turns the heart worthy of Allah, and which makes man realize the Divine core is muraqaba.

For a true knowledge about himself, man can avail of psychological and mystic techniques such as deep thinking called ‘tafakkur’, self questioning called ‘muhasaba’, and self monitoring called ‘muraqaba’. Self monitoring means the state of man monitoring all his attention onto his own deep self.

“Similar to looking for a quiet and peaceful place to sleep, we need to isolate ourselves from the outside as much as possible, and completely eliminate all foreign feelings and thoughts, in order to focus our mind. We need to feed such thoughts in loneliness and quietness, by focusing our attention on them”<sup>16</sup>.

At this point, through muraqaba, man will know better about himself by recognizing the Divine core within himself and he would also be able to direct his attention and mind towards the necessary thoughts. This way, the self-control mechanism will be developed, which anticipates self control of emotion, thought and behaviour. In this context, religious beliefs and values, worships and rituals have an effective power which prevents individuals from committing sins, and which increases their self control power.

#### 1.4. Effect On Personality Integration

“If a man is in a state of muraqaba with Allah, against the thoughts which come to his heart, then God Almighty will protect his organs from committing sins and mistakes. Ebu’l-Hossain b. Hind was asked: “When would a shepherd lead his heard away from a dangerous meadow with weeds?” He replied: “When he realizes that there is a comptroller watching over him”<sup>17</sup>. “And the muraqaba of Lord’s servant is, for him to know and closely comprehend that all the things in his heart are constantly being watched over by Allah”<sup>18</sup>.

In this way, servant will control his heart to avoid bad thoughts which would prevent him from citing the name of his Lord. When man reaches a state of awareness that all the emotions and thoughts in his heart are known by his Creator, than the wicked thoughts and emotions could be more rapidly

<sup>14</sup> Suleyman Uludag, *Tasavvuf Terimleri Sozlugu*, Marifet Publishing, Istanbul, 1999, p. 110.

<sup>15</sup> Ismail Hakki Bursevi, *Ruhul-Beyan*, (trans. Communication), Erkam Publishing, c. I-V, Istanbul, p. 995.

<sup>16</sup> *Hokelekli*, *ibid*, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> *Kuseyri*, *ibid*, p. 316.

<sup>18</sup> Ebu Nasr Serrac Tusi, *el-Luma fi Tarihi’t-Tasavvufi’l-Islamiyyi*, Daru’l-Kutubi’l Ilmiyyeti, Beyrut, 2001, p. 53.

eliminated from his heart. Through muraqaba, man not only eliminates wicked thoughts, but he can also direct them towards positive deeds.

The dangerous meadow in the above example can be likened to a man's naf's, and Satan. Man can avoid these, at the moment when realizes that his Lord is watching over his heart and is controlling him. This way, man will be inclined to make a choice between positive and negative thoughts and feelings.

If the right choices are made, man's life style will be in line with the expectations and goals of the 'programmer'. And this life style will lead to a spiritual unification between Allah and his Servant. In turn, this unification will lead to a balance between life and hereafter, and the good thoughts to prevail over the perverted ones.

The prominent lovers of Allah connect their hearts to the Almighty through muraqaba. They beg Allah to protect themselves with regards to muraqaba. As people in state of muraqaba connect their hearts to the Lord, and are in constant communication with Him, it is very likely for them not to make mistakes, when they are left alone.

They keep away from inconsistent personality traits, and from actions which degrade their personality integration. In conclusion, when man attains closeness and unification with Allah, this will disperse into his feelings and behaviours. Personality integration is the state of the feelings and actions being coherent and consistent, and this state of mind supports the closeness and integration formed with Allah.

Believers with muraqaba who have realized their personality integration have been addressed separately. It goes like this: "Muslim believer, in moments of loneliness, do not turn into mistakes, by thinking that you are on your own. Because, Allah is watching over you. So work with sincerity. Know well that you are never on your own. When you rebel against God, be sure that your Creator sees you everywhere.

At this point, muraqaba is to keep the heart free from bad thoughts and to protect it. In fact, it means being aware that Allah is watching over us both in our physical world and internal world"<sup>19</sup>. Personality integrity is only seen in humans, and when it is degraded, we can say some deviations occur in consciousness. Such people have problems in their social relations, as well as their problems related to their consciousness.

In Sufism, heart is the home of Allah. Allah always visits His home, the human heart. To Express this, Sûfis say: "Oh, man with beautiful heart, did you not know this; him, who walks to Ka'baah, circumambulates Ka'baah, him, who

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<sup>19</sup> Ismail Ankaravi, *Minhacu'l-Fukara*, (prep. Saadettin Ekici), Insan Publishing, Istanbul, 1996, p. 250.

willingly arrives at Ka'baah, Ka'baah circumambulates him"<sup>20</sup>. A man who circumambulates Ka'baah with a real and effective love in his heart, is so valuable that Ka'baah almost visits this heart, which is the real home of Allah.

"The predominant feature of effective love is to give. According to this, true love starts with giving from one's self and continues so. A man enriches another, as much as he gives from his inner joys, sorrows, knowledge"<sup>21</sup>. Through muraqaba, man shares all his feelings and richness with the universe. Hence, he spiritually enriches himself, as well as the universe.

### 1.5. Effect On De-Personalization And Self Alienation

State of muraqaba means a man feeling that Allah is always close to him, and is watching over him, because Allah is everywhere. What a man walking on the path of Sufism requires is, to know that Allah is watching over him all the time.

"Ordinary man's muraqaba is to fear Allah, while prominent man's muraqaba is to expect from Allah. It is said that the most obvious indication of muraqaba is to choose Allah's choice, to glorify, what He has glorified, and to dispraise what He has dispraised. Being in ikhlas for Allah, both in the open and in seclusion has been deemed the muraqaba of prominent people.

In naqshbandi tariqa, it is emphasized that this should be like the turtle cubs, which sit still and watch their mother taming them. Our heart is like our mother. With grace, she expects us to be worthy of her. His holiness Junaid likens the state of muraqaba to a cat, who carefully awaits the mouse to come outside its hole"<sup>22</sup>.

Like the cat focusing to the mouse with utmost attention, man, through muraqaba, focuses to his heart, and his Lord, the owner of the heart. If mouse is a prey and target for the cat, then reaching the heart, and Allah, the owner of the heart, is a target for a man in state of muraqaba.

Through muraqaba, man can hunt the negative feelings and thoughts in his heart, and make them worthy of Allah. The awareness of Allah constantly watching over and controlling our hearts brings a hope to the hearts of the prominent servant of Allah. Because, Allah has seen the love, grace, and hope for forgiveness in their hearts. This makes the servant happy and hopeful.

A man who looks at the future and Allah's grace with hope through muraqaba, cannot avoid himself and cannot become alienated to himself. "In

<sup>20</sup> Tahir Hafizalioglu, *Bostanu'l-Kuds, Gayb Sirlarından Hikayeler*, Furkan Pub., Istanbul, 2006, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> *Hokeleki*, *ibid*, p. 84.

<sup>22</sup> Feriduddin Attar, *Tezkiretu'l-Evliya*, (prep. Mehmet Zahit Kotku), Dilek Publishing, Istanbul, 1986, p. 148.



fact, most man lives in a state of having forgotten their own selves. There are so many people who do not have any serious thinking habits, or purpose or ideals. They are scattered around like leaves in wind. Clearly, such a culture is an instrument for self alienation. This isolates man from himself, his friends and the real world. It will seduce his worldly desires, so much so that he will be constantly expecting and dreaming about things that will never happen"<sup>23</sup>.

Muraqaba makes man to turn his heart, expectations and hope towards his Lord. This way, man saves himself from following empty delusions and expectations, as well as becoming self alienated. Because, when a man is alienated to himself, he would also become alienated to his Lord. However, a man who opens his heart to Allah, and who knows that He is constantly overseeing him, would stop running away from himself.

There is a strong connection between muhasaba and muraqaba. "It is almost impossible to reach muraqaba, before completing muhasaba. Man interrogates his nafs for the sins committed in the past, questions his mistakes, immediately straightens himself up, walks determinedly in the path of Allah, carefully inspects his heart for his relations with Allah, and in every breath, thinks about the approval of Allah. A man doing all these would realize that Allah is controlling his heart in every situation. In conclusion, man would know that Allah is the controller over his heart, He is close to his heart, sees his actions and hears his words"<sup>24</sup>.

A man, who can successfully interrogate his nafs and question himself for his mistakes, would know that his Lord is constantly watching over his heart and is controlling it. So, when his Lord is looking at his heart, man would like to be in the presence of Allah, with a heart worthy of Him. Such a man would be trying to control and amend his feelings first, then his thoughts, and then his actions.

## 2. Conclusion

A man who is trying to control and amend his feelings first, then his thoughts, and then his actions through muraqaba, looks at himself and events with a perspective dominated by his mind, heart and soul. "As such, people look at themselves and at events with three eyes: the eye of the heart, the eye of the mind, and the eye of the spirit. Mind always searches for the cause and effect relation in every situation, and asks himself the question 'What am I thinking?'

The question of the heart is, 'What am I feeling?'. And the spirit tries to make sense of the things he has seen. Creatures other than humans think and learn at certain limits, but humans answers events and situations through these

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<sup>23</sup> Hokelekli, *ibid*, p. 27.

<sup>24</sup> Kuseyri, *ibid*, p. 317.

three abilities"<sup>25</sup>. A man who is able to look at himself with such a deep and wide perspective through muraqaba, can also turn to his Creator with a deep heart, by feeling His Grace and embrace.

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<sup>25</sup> Nevzat Tarhan, *Inanc Psikolojisi-Ruh, Beyin ve Akil Ucgeninde Insanoglu*, Timas Publishing, İstanbul, 2011, p. 160.