

Abai Kunanbaev

Book of words

WORD ONE

Whether for good or ill, I have lived my life, travelling a long road fraught with struggles and quarrels, disputes and arguments, suffering and anxiety, and reached these advanced years to find myself at the end of my tether, tired of everything. I have realized the vanity and futility of my labors and the meanness of my existence. What shall I occupy myself with now and how shall I live out the rest of my days? I am puzzled that I can find no answer to this question.

Rule the people? No, the people are ungovernable. Let this burden be shouldered by someone who is willing to contract an incurable malady, or else by an ardent youth with a burning heart. But may Allah spare me this load which is beyond my powers! Shall I multiply the herds? No, I cannot do that. Let the young folk raise livestock if they need them. But I shall not darken the evening of my days by tending livestock to give joy to rogues, thieves and spongers.

Occupy myself with learning? But how shall I engage in scholarship when I have no one to exchange an intelligent word with? And then to whom shall I pass on the knowledge I will have amassed? Whom shall I ask what I do not know myself? What's the good of sitting on a desolate steppe with an arshin in hand trying to sell cloth? Too much knowledge becomes gall and wormwood that hastens old age if you have no one by your side to share your joys and sorrows.

Choose the path of the Sufi and dedicate myself to the service of religion? No, I'm afraid that won't do either. This vocation calls for serenity and complete peace of mind. But I have not known peace either in my soul or in my life—and what sort of piety can there be amongst these people, in this land!

Educate children, maybe? No, this, too, is beyond my powers. I could instruct children, true, but I don't know what I should teach them and how.

For what occupation, for what purpose and for what kind of community am I to educate them? How can I instruct them and direct their paths if I don't see where my pupils could usefully apply their learning? And so here, too, I have been unable to put myself to any good use.

Well, I have decided at length: henceforth, pen and paper shall be my only solace, and I shall set down my thoughts. Should anyone find something useful here, let them copy it down or memorise it. And if no one has any need of my words, they will remain with me anyway.

And now I have no other concern than that.

WORD TWO

In my childhood I used to hear the Kazakhs jeering at the Uzbeks:

«You Starts in wide skirts, you bring your rushes from afar to thatch your roofs! You bow and scrape when you meet someone, but you insult him behind his back. You are afraid of every bush; you rattle on without stopping, and that's why they call you Sart-Surts».

Encountering Nogais, the Kazakhs would ridicule and scold them, too: «The Nogai is afraid of the camel, he soon gets tired astride a horse and takes his rest walking. Runaways and soldiers and traders — all of them hail from the Nogais. Nokai is what you should be called, not Nogai!»

About the Russians they used to say:

«The red-headed Urus, once he spies an aul, gallops fit to break his neck towards it, permits himself to do whatever comes into his head, demands to hear all the rumours and gossip, and believes everything he is told.»

«My God!» I thought then with pride. «It turns out that the whole wide world has no worthier and nobler people than the Kazakhs!» Such talk rejoiced and entertained me. But this is what I see now: there is no plant that the Sarts cannot grow, no land that their merchants have not visited, and no such thing that their nimble fingers cannot contrive. Their laymen live in peace and seek no enmity. Before there were any Russian merchants around, the Sarts provided the Kazakhs with clothes for the living and burial robes for the dead, and they would buy up from the Kazakhs droves of cattle that father and son could not agree to divide between themselves. Now, under the Russians, the Sarts have adopted the innovations more quickly than others. Exalted beys and learnt mullahs, craftsmanship and luxury and courtesy—the Sarts have all these.

I look at the Nogais and see that they can make fine soldiers and that they bear deprivation stoically. They face death with humility, protect schools and honour religion — they know how to work hard and grow rich, and to dress up and have fun.

Not we Kazakhs, though: we labour for their beys for a crust of bread. They will not let our beys into their homes. «Hey, you Kazakhs,» they say, «our floor is not for your dirty boots to trample on.»

I will not speak of the Russians. We cannot hold a candle even to their servants. Where has all our erstwhile joyfulness gone?

Where is our merry laughter?

WORD THREE

Where lies the cause of the estrangement amongst the Kazakhs, of their hostility and ill will towards one another? Why are they insincere in their speech, so lazy, and possessed by a lust for power?

The wise of this world long ago observed: a sluggard is, as a rule, cowardly and weak-willed; a weak-willed man is cowardly and boastful; a braggart is cowardly, stupid and ignorant; an ignoramus has no inkling of honour, while a dishonourable person sponges on the sluggard — he is insatiable, unbridled and good-for-nothing; he bears no good will towards the people around him.

The source of these vices is our people's preoccupation with one thing alone: to own as much livestock as possible and thus gain honour and respect. Had they taken up arable farming or commerce, had they been interested in learning and art, this would never have come to pass.

Parents, having increased their own herds, will do their best to ensure that their children's herds grow ever fatter, so that the livestock can be left in the care of herdsmen and they can indulge in a life of idleness — gorge themselves on meat and koumiss, enjoy beautiful women, and feast their eyes on fast horses.

Eventually, their winter pastures and grassland become too small and, using their influence or position, they will by hook or by crook buy up, wheedle or seize pastureland from a neighbour. That person, fleeced as he is, will in turn put pressure on another neighbour, or else will have to leave his native region. Now, can these people possibly wish one another well?

The more poor there are, the cheaper their labour. The more numerous the destitute, the more abundant the free winter pasturage. My neighbour is eager for my ruin, and I am eager for him to fall into penury. Little by little, our concealed animosity grows into an open and bitter enmity. We bear malice, we litigate, we split into cliques and bribe influential people for support, so as to gain an advantage over our opponents, and we scramble for the emoluments of rank.

A loser will not toil and sweat — he will seek affluence in other, devious ways; he will show no interest in either commerce or tilling the land — he will side now with one, now with another party, selling

himself and existing in misery and disgrace. There is no end to pillage on the steppe. If there were unity amongst our people, they would never condone a thief who, making adroit use of the support of one group or another, continues his brazen robbery.

Honest sons of the steppes are the victims of criminal charges based on false accusations, and are subjected to humiliating interrogations. Witnesses are produced ready to swear to what they have never seen or heard. And all this in order smear an honest person and bar him from high office. If the persecuted man, to save himself, turns for aid to these same rascals, he will sacrifice his honour; if he refuses to bow to them, he is certain to be unjustly charged; he will suffer hardships and privations, unable to find a place and occupation worthy of him.

Having gained power by deceit and trickery, the head of the volost avoids honest and modest folk like the plague and seeks allies amongst people of his own kind, crafty and crooked, whom he is fearful of antagonising.

A new saying has gained currency now: It's the person, not the matter, that counts. In other words, success depends not on the Tightness of the matter in question, but on the cleverness of the person involved.

The volost chiefs are elected for a three-year term. They spend their first year in office listening to all kinds of grievances and complaints: «Don't forget that we elected you!» Their second year is given over to fighting possible future rivals, and the third year to their campaign for reelection.

What then is left?

Watching my people sink deeper and deeper into discord, I have come to the conclusion that the volost chiefs should be elected from among men who have had at least some Russian education, however little. If there are none, or only persons whom people do not wish to nominate, then let the volost chiefs be appointed by the uyezd authorities and the military governor. This would be beneficial in several ways. First of all, ambitious Kazakhs would have their children educated; secondly, the volost chiefs would no longer be dependent on the whims of local magnates, but take their orders from the higher authorities. To avoid the inevitable objections and denunciations, an appointee should not be subjected to any local control and verification.

We have had occasion to see the futility of electing biys in each volost. Not everyone is capable of dispensing justice. In order to hold a council «on the top of Mount Kultobe», as we say, it is essential to know all the laws passed down from our forefathers: Kasym-khan's «Radiant Pathway», Esim-khan's «Ancient Pathway» and Az Tauke-khan's «Seven Canons». But even these laws have become outdated with the passage of time and require amendment and infallible interpreters, of whom there are few, if any, amongst our people.

People who know Kazakh ways well say: «When two biys get together, there is sure to be four disputes». The lack of a supreme judge and the even number of biys hearing a case only complicates the adjudication of disputes. Why increase the numbers of biys? Would it not be better to elect three educated and intelligent men in each volost for an unlimited term of office, only replacing those whose behaviour is unseemly?

Let legal disputes be settled by two arbiters, one chosen by each party, and an intermediary acceptable to both. Only if they failed to ascertain the truth and come to terms would the dispute be taken to one of the three permanent judges. Then lawsuits would not drag on so long.

WORD FOUR

Observant people long ago noted that foolish laughter resembles drunkenness. Now, drunkenness leads to misbehaviour; a conversation with a soak gives one a headache. Anyone who constantly indulges in senseless merriment ignores his conscience, neglects his affairs and commits unforgivable blunders, for which he can expect to be punished, if not in this world, then in the next.

He who is inclined to meditation is always prudent and reasonable in his actions in this world and in the face of death. Prudence in thought and deed is the keystone of well-being. But does this mean that we should always be downcast? Should our souls know only melancholy, no joy and mirth? Not at all. I am not saying that we should be sorrowful without cause, but that we should stop and think about our heedless, carefree ways and repent, forsaking them for some useful occupation. It is not senseless merriment that heals the soul, but beneficial and rational work.

Only the weak in spirit will withdraw into themselves, abandon themselves to bitter thoughts, without finding the least consolation.

If you laugh at the stupidities of a fool, do so not rejoicing in his foolishness, but with a feeling of righteous anger. Such laughter should not be indulged in too often, for it is bitter.

When you see someone who leads a good life, whose kind deeds are worthy of emulation, laugh with a glad heart, with sincere joy. A good example teaches humility and restraint, keeping one from wrong-doing and drunkenness.

Not all laughter deserves approbation. There is also a kind of laughter that does not come from the heart, that God-given vessel, but bursts out in hollow peals just for the sake of forced jollity.

Man comes crying into this world and departs it in sorrow. Between these two events, without fully comprehending the value and uniqueness of the life bestowed upon him, he will burn it up thoughtlessly, squander it in petty quarrels and miserable wrangles, and never know true happiness. He will pause to think only when the sands of life are running out. Only then will he realise that no treasure on earth can prolong his life even for a single day.

To live by lies, deceit and begging is the lot of good-for-nothing rogues. Put your faith in the Lord, and trust in your own powers and abilities. Even the hardest earth will yield good crops to honest and selfless toil.

Word Five

Sorrow darkens the soul, chills the body, numbs the will, and then bursts forth in words or tears. I have seen people praying; «Oh, Allah, make me as carefree as a babe!» They imagine themselves to be sufferers, oppressed by cares and misfortunes, as though they had more sense than infants. As to their cares and concern, these can be judged from the proverbs: «If you will live no longer than noon, make provision for the whole day»; «Even his father becomes a stranger to a beggar»; «Cattle for the Kazakh is flesh of his flesh»; «A rich man has a countenance full of light, a poor man — as hard as stone»; «The dzighit and the wolf will find their food along the way»;

«The herds of exalted men are left to the care of others, except when such men have nothing better to do»; «The hand that takes also gives»; «He who has managed to get rich is always in the right»; «If you can't rely on the bey, don't count on God either»; «If you are famished, gallop to the place of a funeral feast»; «Beware of a lake with no shallows and of a people that knows no mercy». Such proverbs are legion.

Now, what do they tell us? It is not learning and knowledge, nor peace and justice, that the Kazakh holds dear — his sole concern is how to get rich. So he will twist and turn to cajole some of their riches from other people, and if he does not succeed, he will see the whole world as his enemy. He will have no scruples about fleecing even his own father. It is not customary among us to censure those who gain possession of livestock by trickery, lies, pillage or other crimes.

So, in what way does their mind differ from that of a child? Children are afraid of the blazing hearth, while adults have no fear even of the fires of hell. When they feel ashamed, children would like the earth to swallow them up, but adults know no shame at all. Is it this that makes them superior to children? If we will not give them what we own, if we refuse to let them ruin us and do not descend to their level, they will turn their back on us.

Is this the people whom we should love with all our heart?

WORD SIX

According to a Kazakh proverb: «The source of success is unity, and of well-being — life».

Yet what kind of people are they who live in unity and how do they achieve such accord? The Kazakhs are quite ignorant on this score. They think that unity resides in the common ownership of livestock, chattels and food. If this were so, then what use wealth and what harm in poverty? Would it be worthwhile working hard to grow rich without first getting rid of one's kith and kin? No, unity ought to be in people's minds and not in communal wealth. It is possible to unite people of different origin, religion and views simply by giving them an abundance of livestock. But achieving unity at the price of cattle — that's the beginning of moral decay. Brothers ought to live in amity not because

one is dependent on another, but by each relying on his own skills and powers, and his own destiny. Otherwise they will forget God and find no worthy occupation, but will scheme and plot against each other. They will sink to recrimination and slander, they will cheat and deceive. Then what kind of unity could there be?

«Life is the source of well-being...» What kind of life is meant here? Just existing in order to keep body and soul together? But even a dog is endowed with such an existence. He who treasures such a life, who is plagued by the fear of death, becomes an enemy to life everlasting. Fleeing for his life from the foe, he will be known as a coward; shirking work, he will pass for a ne'er-do-well, he will become an enemy of the good.

No, what the proverb refers to is another kind of life. One that keeps the soul alive and the mind clear. If your body is alive but your soul is dead, words of reason will not reach you, and you will be incapable of earning your living by honest work.

A loafer and a sycophant,

A hanger-on and an impudent fellow,

Valiant in his looks but craven in his heart,

Has no sense of shame...

If you are like that, do not imagine yourself to be alive. A righteous death will then be better than such an existence.

WORD SEVEN

Born into this world, an infant inherits two essential needs. The first is for meat, drink and sleep. These are the requirements of the flesh, without which the body cannot be the house of the soul and will not grow in height and strength. The other is a craving for knowledge. A baby will grasp at brightly coloured objects, it will put them in its mouth, taste them and press them against its cheek. It will start at the sound of a pipe. Later, when a child hears the barking of a dog, the noises of animals, the laughter or weeping of people, it gets excited and asks about all that it sees and hears: «What's that? What's that for? Why is he doing that?» This is but the natural desire of the soul, the wish to see everything, hear everything and learn everything.

Without trying to fathom the mysteries of the universe, visible and invisible, without seeking an explanation for everything, one can never be what one should be — a human being. Otherwise, the spiritual life of a person will not differ from the existence of any other living creature.

From the very beginning God separated man from beast by breathing the soul into him. Why then, on growing up and gaining in wisdom, do we not seek to gratify our curiosity, which in childhood made us forget

about food and sleep? Why do we not tread in the path of those who seek knowledge?

It behoves us to strive to broaden our interests and increase the wisdom that nourishes our souls. We should come to realise that spiritual virtues are far superior to bodily endowments, and so learn to subordinate our carnal desires to the dictates of our soul. But no, we have been loath to do that! Raving and croaking, we have not moved farther than the dunghill next to our village. Only in our childhood are we ruled by the soul. When we grew up and gained in strength, we rejected its dictates, we subjugated our soul to the body, and contemplated the things around us with our eyes, but not our minds; we do not trust the impulses of the soul. Satisfied with outward appearances, we make no attempt to uncover inner mysteries, in the vain belief that we shall lose nothing by such ignorance. To the counsel and advice of wise people, we reply: «You live by your own wits, mine are good enough for me.» Or: «We'd rather be poor in our own wits than rich in yours.» We are incapable of recognising their superiority and grasping the meaning of their words.

There is not a flicker of fire in our bosom nor any faith in our soul. In what way, then, do we differ from animals if we perceive things only with our eyes? It seems that we were better in our childhood. We were human then, for we sought to learn as much as possible. But today we are worse than the beasts. An animal knows nothing and has no aim in life. We know nothing, but will argue until we are hoarse; defending our obtuseness, we try to pass off our ignorance as knowledge.

WORD EIGHT

Will anyone heed our advice and listen to our counsels? One man may be a volost chief, another — a biy. If they had had the least desire to become wise and learn sense, would they have sought such posts? These people consider themselves quite clever enough and seek power so as to teach and give guidance to others, as if they themselves had attained the heights of perfection and had nothing further to do but instruct others. Are they the kind who would have the inclination or spare the time to listen to us? Their minds are filled with other concerns: not to offend their superiors inadvertently; not to provoke the anger of a thief, not to cause trouble and confusion among the people, and not to land on the losing end, but to gain some personal advantage. Besides, they must be always helping somebody, getting someone out of trouble. They are always too busy...

The rich? They want for nothing. Be it only for a day, they have wealth and they think they possess the treasures of well-nigh half the world, and they can pay in livestock for whatever they lack. They set their sights high and their ambitions even higher. Honour, conscience and sincerity are no dearer to them than their herds. They are certain that if they own livestock they will be able to bribe even the Most High. Their herds take the place of everything else to them — their native land, people, religion, family and learning. Why then should they listen to other people's advice? Some fellow might be inclined to lend an ear, but he

has no time for that. He must feed and water his livestock, sell it at a premium, protect it from thieves and wolves, shelter it from the cold, and find someone to do these chores. No, this man is too busy to heed good counsel. When he has seen to all this, he will be boasting and bragging, so he has no time left for anything else.

As for thieves and scoundrels, they obviously would not listen anyway.

The poor, meek as sheep, are only concerned about getting their daily bread. What good is advice, wisdom and learning to them when even the rich do not want it? «Leave us alone, speak to those who are cleverer than we are», they say, as though knowledge were of no use to poor folk. They don't care about anybody, the poor. If they had what other people have, they would know no worries.

WORD NINE

I, too, am a Kazakh. But do I love the Kazakhs or not? If I did, I would have approved of their ways and would have found something, however slight, in their conduct to rejoice or console me, a reason to admire at least some of their qualities, and keep alive a glimmer of hope. I But this is not so. Had I not loved them, I would not have spoken to them from the heart or taken counsel with them; I would have not mixed with them and taken an interest in their affairs, asking, «What are people doing there? What`s going on?» I would just have sat back quietly — or

wandered off. I have no hope that they will mend their ways or that I may bring them to reason or reform them. So I feel neither of these emotions. But how come? I ought to have opted for one or the other.

Even though I live, I do not consider myself to be alive. I don't know why: maybe because I'm vexed with the people or dissatisfied with myself, or for some other reason. Outwardly alive but completely dead within, that's what I am. Outwardly irate, I feel no anger. Laughing, I am unable to rejoice. The words that I speak and the laughter that I utter seem not to be mine. Everything is alien.

In my younger days it never occurred to me that anyone could forsake his own people. I loved the Kazakhs with all my heart and believed in them. But as I came to know my people better and my hopes began to fade, I found that I lacked the strength to leave my native region and form kinship with strangers. This is why there is a void in my heart now. But then I think, perhaps it's for the better. When dying, I will not lament: «Alas, I have not tasted this or that joy!..»

Not torturing myself with regrets about earthly things, I shall find solace in the life to come.

WORD TEN

People pray to God to send them a child. What does a man need a child for? They say that one ought to leave an heir, a son to provide for his parents in their old age and to pray for them after their death. Is that all?

Leaving an heir — what does it mean? Are you afraid there will be no one to look after your property? But why should you care about things you will leave behind? What, are you sorry to leave them to other people? What kind of treasures have you gained to regret them so much?

A good child is a joy, but a bad one is a burden. Who knows what kind of a child God will bestow on you? Or haven't you had enough of the humiliation you have had to swallow all your life? Or have you committed too few misdeeds? Why are you so eager to have a child, to rear yet another scoundrel and doom him to the selfsame humiliations?

You want your son to pray for you after your death. But if you have done good in your lifetime, who will not utter prayers for the repose of your soul? And if you have done only evil, what will be the use of your son's prayers? Will he perform good deeds in your stead — those you have failed to accomplish?

If you beg for a child who will experience the joys of the next world, it means that you wish him an early death. But if you want him to secure for yourself the joys of this world, then can a Kazakh beget a son who, on growing to manhood, will show care and concern for his parents and protect them from suffering? Can such a people and a father like you raise a worthy son of this kind?

You want him to feed and clothe you in your decrepit old age? A vain hope, too! First of all, will you live to reach your dotage? Second, will your son grow up so merciful as to care for you in your old age? If you happen to own livestock — there will always be someone ready to look after you. If you have none, who knows who will provide for you and how. And who knows whether your son will increase your wealth or squander what you have gained by your labour?

Well, supposing God has heard your prayers and given you a son. Will you manage to educate him well? No, you will not! Your own sins will be compounded by those of your son.

From the very outset of his life you will be telling him lies, promising him now this, now that. And you will be glad when you manage to deceive him. Then whom can you blame when your son grows up a liar? You will teach him bad language and revile other people, you will condone his misdeeds: «Now, don't touch this obstinate lad!» and encourage his cheekiness. For his schooling, you choose a mullah whom you pay little, just to teach him to read and write; you teaching him to be cunning and underhand, you make him suspicious of his peers and graft on bad inclinations. Is that your upbringing? And you expect kindness from a son like that? In the same way, people pray to God for wealth. What does man need wealth for? You have prayed to God? Yes, you have, and God has given, but you won't take! He has endowed you with strength to work and prosper. But do you use this for honest labour? No! God granted you the power to learn, a mind capable of assimilating knowledge, but who knows what you used it for. Who will fail to prosper if he works hard, perseveres without tiring and makes good use

of his mind? But you don't need that! You pray to get rich by intimidating, cheating and begging from other people. What kind of prayer is that? It is simply plunder and beggary on the part of a person who has lost his conscience and honour.

Supposing you have chosen this path and gained possession of livestock. Well, use it to get an education! If not for yourself, then for your son. There can be neither faith nor well-being without an education. Without learning, no prayers or fasts or pilgrimages will achieve their purpose. I have yet to see a person who, having acquired wealth by dishonest means, has put it to good use. Ill-gotten gains are likewise ill spent. And nothing remains of such wealth save the bitterness of disappointment, anger and anguish of the soul.

While he has wealth, he will boast and swagger. Having frittered it away, he will brag about his former affluence. Impoverished, he will stoop to begging.

WORD ELEVEN

How do our people make living? There are two ways. One is by stealing. A thief hopes to grow fat on what he has stolen, and a bey seeks to increase his herds by recovering what has been stolen from him and more besides. Those in authority will fleece both the bey and the thief by promising the former to help recover his stolen livestock and the latter to evade justice. Your average man will inform on the thief to the authorities, at the same time aiding and abetting him by buying up the

stolen goods for a song. Then there is another way: ordinary people are persuaded by crooks to resort to tricks they would otherwise never have dreamt of. Do this or that, they say, and you'll be rich and famous, you will be regarded as invulnerable and your opponents will fear you. Fanning evil passions and setting people against one another, the swindlers hope to be of service to someone and profit by this.

That's the way they live: the grandee by aiding the bey and abetting the thief, and the poor man by sucking up to the powers that be and backing them in disputes, siding now with one, now with another party, and selling dirt-cheap his honour, his wife, his children, and his kith and kin.

If there were no thieves and swindlers, our people would think carefully. They would be only too glad to work honestly and seek goodness and wisdom if the bey could make do with what he has, and the poor man, without losing hope and faith, could earn what he lacks.

Despite themselves, the common people get involved in dirty business. Who is strong enough to uproot this evil? Will honour and pledges, loyalty and conscience sink into oblivion?

There might be a force capable of taming the thief. But what about the bey who out of greed connives with the swindler — who will make him see reason and how?

WORD TWELVE

When someone teaches the Word of God, whether he does it well or badly, we would sooner bite off our tongue than forbid his preaching, for there is nothing reprehensible in good intentions. He may lack sufficient enlightenment, but let him preach. However, this man ought to remember two essential conditions.

First of all, he must be certain in his faith; then, he must not be satisfied with what he knows, but continually improve his mind. He who abandons learning deprives himself of a divine blessing, and you will look in vain for any benefit from his teaching. Indeed, what good is it if he winds a turban around his head, keeps the fasts rigorously, offers up prayers and affects piety, but does not know where in a particular prayer is the right place to repeat or pause?

A person who is negligent, who is not strict in his ways and is not capable of compassion cannot be considered a believer: without self-discipline and consistency one can not keep iman, the faith, in one's soul.

WORD THIRTEEN

Iman — this is the unshakeable faith in one, all-powerful Creator, about whose essence and existence it is ordained to us to learn from the revelations of His Prophet, may Allah bless his name.

There are two ways of believing. Some simply accept the faith, perceiving the vital need for it and its truth, and strengthen their belief by means of reasonable arguments. We call this yakini iman or true faith.

Others believe by drawing wisdom from books and from the words of the mullah. Such people need special dedication to the object of their faith and spiritual strength in order to withstand thousands of temptations and not waver even in the face of death. This is the taklidi iman or traditional faith.

To keep iman within one's self, a person must have a courageous heart, firm will and confidence in his powers. But what about those who lack the knowledge to be among the adherents of yakini iman, or those who have no firm belief, who too easily succumb to temptations and cajolery who for gain will call black white, and white black, who will perjure themselves by passing off lies as truth and so cannot be called taklidi iman believers? May Allah preserve us from such people! Each and every one of us should remember that there can be no other iman save these. Let apostates not reckon on infinite divine grace; they deserve neither Allah's forgiveness nor the Prophet's intercession. Cursed be the man who believes in the false proverbs: «The edge of the sword is sharper than an oath» and «There is no sin that Allah will not pardon».

WORD FOURTEEN

Has man anything more precious than his heart? Calling someone a man of brave heart, people respect him as a batyr. They have but a poor idea of any other virtues of the human heart. Mercy, kindness, the capacity to treat a stranger as a dear brother and wish him all the blessings one would wish one's self — all these are the commands of the heart. And love likewise comes from the heart. The tongue that obeys the heart will tell no lie. Only hypocrites forget about the heart. Yet those «men of brave heart» often prove to be unworthy of praise. Unless they value courtesy and honour their vows, are averse to evil and lead lost souls along the straight and narrow path, not following the crowd like a miserable cur, unless they stand up in defence of a righteous cause in the face of all difficulties and not turn from the truth when this is so easy to do — then the heart that beats in the breast of those respected as batyrs is that of a wolf, not a human being.

Indeed, the Kazakh is also a child of mankind. Many of the Kazakhs stray from the path of truth not through any deficiency of reason but because they lack the courage and staunchness in their heart to accept and follow wise counsels. I do not believe many of those who argue that they have done evil through ignorance. No, they have enough knowledge, but their shameful weakness of will and laziness cause them to ignore it. Having stumbled once, few will be strong enough to mend their ways.

Those who are praised as stout dzhighits, brave and clever, will more often than not put each other up to dark, sordid deeds. Their blind aping of one another and daredevil capers are a frequent cause of misfortunes.

If a man who has indulged in evil and in unbridled bragging cannot stop and chasten himself, and does not attempt to cleanse himself before God or his own conscience—how can he be called a dzhighit? One may well question whether he can be called a man.

WORD FIFTEEN

There is an essential difference, in my view, between intelligent and stupid people.

Coming into this world, man cannot live without being attracted and excited by the fascinating things around him. Those days of questioning and passionate interests remain in a person's memory as the brightest period of life.

A sensible man will interest himself in worthy and serious matters, he will steadfastly pursue his objectives, and even his recollections of his past struggles to attain them will be heard with pleasure and warm the hearts of his listeners. Such a person will not betray even a shadow of regret over the years he has lived.

A frivolous man dissipates his time in worthless, futile and absurd undertakings. When he comes to his senses, he realises that his best years have swiftly passed in vain, and his belated regrets bring no consolation. In his younger days he behaves as if youth were eternal, never doubting that even more captivating delights are in store for him. Yet all too soon, losing his former strength and agility, he becomes good for nothing.

Another temptation lurks in the path of passionate souls. Success — attained or within their grasp — intoxicates their senses and makes them dizzy. The flush of success clouds their reason and causes them to commit blunders; a man like this attracts attention even against his will, he becomes an object of gossip and a butt of ridicule.

Reasonable people keep their wits about them even in such critical moments; they will not lose their senses but rather show restraint and not expose their feelings to all and sundry.

But a stupid person is like a horseman galloping on a steed without a bridle: lifting his eyes to the sky as if crazy and having lost his cap in his frenzy, off he goes and does not see that the edge of his chapan covers the horse's rear...

This is what I have observed.

If you wish to be counted among the intelligent, then ask yourself once a day, once a week, or at least once a month: «How do I live? Have I done anything to improve my learning, my worldly life or my life hereafter? Will I have to swallow the bitter dregs of regret later on?»

Or perhaps you don't know or remember how you have lived and why?

WORD SIXTEEN

The Kazakh does not worry whether his prayers please God or not. He does what other people do: he gets up and falls face to the ground in supplication. He treats God as though He were a merchant who has come to collect a debt: «That's all I have, take it if You will, but if You will not — don't ask me to get livestock out of nowhere!» The Kazakh will not take trouble to learn and purify his faith: «Well, that's all I know, I can't get any wiser at my age. It's enough that people cannot reproach me for not praying. And if my speech is uncouth, that doesn't matter in the least.»

But is his tongue made differently from other people's, I wonder?

WORD SEVENTEEN

Will, Reason and Heart once asked Knowledge to settle their argument about who was the most important among them.

Said Will: «Hey, Knowledge, you ought to know that nothing can attain perfection without me: to know one's self, one has to persevere in learning, and this is impossible without me; only with my aid can a person serve the Most High and worship Him tirelessly, achieve wealth and skill, respect and a successful career. Do I not preserve people from unworthy passions and curb them? Do I not caution them against sin, envy and temptations? Do I not help them to hold back, at the last moment, from the edge of an abyss? How can these two argue with me?»

Said Reason: «I am the only one capable of discerning which of your words are useful and which harmful, whether in this life or the next. I alone can comprehend your language. Without me, no one can avoid evil, acquire knowledge or benefit himself. Why do these two argue with me? What use would they be without me?»

Said Heart: «I am the master of the human body. I am the source of its blood and the soul resides in me; life is inconceivable without me. Those who lie in soft beds I deprive of their slumber; I make them toss and turn, thinking about the destitute with no roof over their heads, famished and freezing. I bid the young to honour their elders and be tolerant to little ones. But people do not seek to keep me pure and therefore suffer. Were I pure, I would make no distinction among people. I admire virtue and rebel against malice and violence. Self-respect, conscience, mercy, kindness — all these proceed from me. What are these two worth without me? How dare they argue with me?

Having heard all the three out, Knowledge replied:

«What you say is right, Will, and you have many other virtues you haven't mentioned. Nothing can be achieved without your participation. Yet you also conceal cruelty equal to your strength. You are resolute in the service of good, but you can be just as resolute in serving evil. This is what is wrong in you.

«You, too, are right, Reason! One cannot do without you in this life either. Thanks to you people learn about the Creator, and are initiated into the mysteries of the two worlds. But this is not the limit of your possibilities. Cunning and wickedness also come from you. Both good and bad people rely on you, and you serve both faithfully. Therein lies your fault.

«My mission is to reconcile you. It would be good if Heart were the arbiter in this dispute of yours.

«You have many paths before you, Reason, but Heart cannot take all of them. It rejoices at your righteous undertakings and will gladly assist you in them, but it will not follow you if you plot mischief and evil; it will even turn from you in disgust.

«Now, Will! You have plenty of energy and courage, but you, too, can be restrained by Heart. It will not hinder you in a well-meaning deed, but it will bind your hand and foot if your goal is futile and wicked.

«You should join hands with Heart and obey it in everything! If all three of you live in peace within a man, the dust of his feet will open the eyes of the blind. If you two cannot reach accord, I shall give preference to

Heart. Prize humanity above all! The Most High will judge us by this. So it is set down in the Holy Scriptures,» said Knowledge.

WORD EIGHTEEN

Man should dress modestly and keep himself clean and tidy. Only fops I spend more on their clothes than they can afford and worry too much over their appearance.

Fops show off in various ways. One will pay great attention to his face, cultivate his moustache and beard, pamper his body and swagger—now lifting an eyebrow languorously, now tapping his fingers or strutting with arms akimbo; another will adopt a studied carelessness in his foppery and, in an offhand way, affecting to be «a simple fellow», will drop hints in passing about his Arabian horse or his rich raiment: «Oh, it's nothing in particular!» He goes out of his way to attract the attention of his betters, arouses envy among his equals, and is regarded among his inferiors as the acme of refinement and luxury. They say about him: «What has he got to complain of with a such a horse and clothes like that!»

But this is absurd and shameful.

No one should get carried away by such nonsense, for otherwise he will find it hard to look like a normal human being again.

In the word kerbez [fop] I discern a relationship with the words ker [conceited] and kerden [haughty]—something that ought to warn people against a vice of this kind. A human being should distinguish himself by virtue of his reason, knowledge, will, conscience and goodness. Only a fool thinks he can gain distinction by other means.

WORD NINETEEN

A child is not born a reasonable being. It is only by listening and watching, examining everything by touching and tasting, that it learns what is good and what is bad. The more a child sees and hears, the more it knows. One may learn a good deal by listening to wise men. It is not enough to be endowed with a brain—only by hearing and memorising the teachings of the learnt and by avoiding vices one can grow up a complete person.

But if one listens to wise words either with excessive enthusiasm or, conversely, paying too little attention, without asking what may not be clear, trying to get to the heart of the matter or drawing one's own conclusions, even though one may feel the wisdom and justice of such good counsels— what is the use of listening?

What can you talk about with a man who does not know the value of words?

As one sage put it: better to teed a pig that recognises you...

WORD TWENTY

All of us know: nothing can overrule fate. A feeling of satiety is characteristic man; it does not come of one's own volition, but is predestined by fate. Having once experienced satiety, one will no longer be able to get rid of it. Even if you do your utmost and manage to shake it off, it will pursue and overwhelm you nonetheless.

A good many things cause satiety and surfeit There is nothing more or less with which a man cannot be sated: food, amusements, fashion, feasts and parties, the desire to excel others, and women. Sooner or later, discovering the vanity and viciousness of all that, he will become disenchanted and indifferent. Like everything else in this world, man's life and his destiny are subject to change. No living creature on earth can remain quiescent. So where could the constancy of feelings come from?

Satiety is the lot even of clever people who seek perfection in life, who know the worth of many things, who are fastidious and can perceive the vanity of human existence. He who has realised the transitory nature of earthly joys will grow weary of life.

I think to myself blessed is he who is silly and carefree.

WORD TWENTY-ONE

It is hard to avoid at least a small degree of self-satisfaction and complacency. I have identified two kinds: pride and boastfulness.

A proud man has a high estimation of his own worth. He will do his utmost to ensure that he is not regarded as an ignoramus and an unreliable person who doesn't keep his promises, as ill-mannered, arrogant and a shameless liar, a spiteful critic and a crook. Aware of the baseness of these vices, he will aspire to be above them. This quality is peculiar to a man of conscience, reasonable and high-minded. He dislikes to hear people singing his praises but, on the other hand, will allow no one to sully his name.

A braggart, on the other hand, does his best to be talked about as much as possible. Let everyone know that he is a batyr, rich and of noble of descent...! Yet what he overlooks is that people may also say things about him that he would not in the least like to hear. But, to tell the truth, the other kind of fame—notoriety—doesn't much bother him. Such braggarts are usually of three types.

The first is eager to gain fame abroad, amongst strangers. This is an ignorant fellow, but he still retains some human virtues.

The second wants to be famous in his own tribe. This type is a complete ignoramus and scarcely human.

The third one shows off before his family or in his native village, for no outsider would ever approve of his boasting. This one is the most ignorant of all, no longer a man.

He who strives for praise among strangers will seek to distinguish himself amongst his own tribe. He who desires acclaim from his tribe will strive for plaudits from his nearest and dearest. And he who is after the praise of his family is sure he will get it by extolling and praising him-self to the skies.

WORD TWENTY-TWO

I wonder whom amongst the Kazakhs of today I could possibly love or respect.

I would have respected a bey, but there are no true beys any more; even if there is one, he is not the master of his will and his wealth. At bitter enmity with some, he will, as a precaution, give away his livestock to others and eventually finds himself beholden to a good hundred people. He believes, in his stupidity, that he has shown generosity by responding to their humble requests, but in fact he becomes dependent on them. You would call him neither generous nor merciful. In his native land he struggles against his own people, squandering his wealth and currying favour with unworthy men. When the beys are at loggerheads, rogues of every kind appear, and they intimidate the beys and live at their expense.

I would have respected a myrza, but now you cannot find a truly generous one; as to those who give out their livestock right and left, they are as many of these as stray dogs. Some part with livestock of their own

free will in a bid to gain some advantage, while others do it reluctantly — these often do so just to make a show to gain the reputation of a myrza, running around as if he had salt on his backside; yet, more often than not, they become the prey of wicked people.

I would have respected a volost chief and a biy, but on our steppe there is neither divine nor human justice. Power bought by servility or with money is not worth much. I could have respected a strong man, but I see that everyone among us has the strength to do evil deeds one cannot find anybody prepared to do good.

I wish I could find a clever man to honour. Yet there is none ready to use his intelligence to serve the cause of conscience and justice, while one and all will be quick to guile and perfidy.

I might have respected a feeble beggar, but he is not without sin either. It does not matter that he can't even climb on the back of a prostrate camel. If he had the strength, he would find the dexterity to pilfer a thing or two.

Who is there left? The cunning and grasping! There is no stopping these until they ruin others completely...

Whom, then, shall we love and pray for? The stinking volost chiefs and biys cannot be considered. There remains only the peaceable bey who, by virtue of his meekness, lives by the saying: «If you want to prosper, avoid discord!» Such a man incurs the displeasure of all and sundry, even though he may give away half of his wealth and tries, to no avail, to protect the other half from thieves and ruffians.

There is nothing to be done: him shall we pity and pray for.

As it is, I have found no one else.

WORD TWENTY-THREE

There is but one joy and one consolation which, like a curse, hangs over the Kazakh.

He rejoices when he meets a wicked man or sees some wicked deed, saying, «May Allah preserve us from that! Even he considers himself a worthy man, and compared to him, others are as pure as babes.» But did Allah say that it is enough for him to be better than such-and-such a person? Or perhaps clever people promised he would not be counted among the wicked if he should find someone more ignorant and vicious than himself? But can you become better by comparing yourself with a scoundrel? Good is learnt from good people. In a race it is understandable to ask yourself how many runners are still ahead of you, not how many fast horses are behind. Does it make to a loser any happier whether there were five or ten Arab steeds behind him?

Now, in what does the Kazakh find consolation? Says he: «We are not the only ones like that, everybody does it. Better not to stand out from the crowd and to stick with the majority. A feast that you celebrate with everyone is the greatest feast.» But did Allah bid him to live only in the

midst of a crowd? And has Allah no power over multitudes? Has the Most High not chains enough to fetter the throng? Can everyone attain the highest knowledge, or is it accessible to only a chosen few? Are all people equally endowed with genius, or just one in a thousand? Who says that the multitude cannot be humbled? If the people are stricken by disease, is it not good if half of them remain healthy? Don't you need someone with a good knowledge of the lie of the land when thousands who lack it are wandering in the wilderness? Which is better for a traveller: if all his horses starve to death all at once, or only half of them? Which is better: if all of the people suffer from dzhut or at least half of them survive? What consolation is it to a fool if there are thousands of other dolts around him? Will a suitor win his intended bride if he tells her that all his family suffers from bad breath? Will his betrothed be comforted by the thought that he is not the only one?

WORD TWENTY-FOUR

There are more than two thousand million people living on earth now, I they say. We, Kazakhs, number more than two million.

The Kazakhs are unlike any other people in their desire for wealth and in their quest for knowledge, in their appreciation of art, in showing their friendliness and strength, and in boasting or enmity.

We fight with each other, we ruin each other and spy on each other before our neighbour has time to blink.

The world has cities with a population above three million. There are people who have travelled three times round the world.

Shall we, indeed, continue to live like this, lying in wait for one another, remaining the meanest people on earth? Or shall we see happier days when people forget theft, deception, backbiting and enmity, and turn their minds to knowledge and crafts, when they learn to obtain their wealth in honest ways? I doubt if such days will ever come. Nowadays, two hundred people hanker after a hundred head of livestock. Will they live in peace before they have destroyed one another in this scramble?

WORD TWENTY-FIVE

It would be good if Kazakh children could get an education. To begin with, it would be enough to teach them Turkic letters. Yet such is our irreligious land that before we send our children to school, we have to acquire wealth; besides, they ought to learn the Persian and the Arabic languages. But can those who are hungry keep a clear mind, care about honour and show diligence in learning? Poverty and quarrels within tribes and families breed thievery, violence and greed. If you have livestock, your belly will be full. A craving for knowledge and a craft

will come next. Then people will start thinking about getting an education and teaching their children at least something.

One should learn to read and write Russian. The Russian language is a key to spiritual riches and knowledge, the arts and many other treasures. If we wish to avoid the vices of the Russians while adopting their achievements, we should learn their language and study their scholarship and science, for it was by learning foreign tongues and assimilating world culture that the Russians have become what they are. Russian opens our eyes to the world. By studying the language and culture of other nations, a person becomes their equal and will not need to make humble requests. Enlightenment is useful for religion as well.

He who lives his life fawning and cringing will be ready to sell his mother and father; he will sell his family, his faith and conscience for the sake of a condescending pat on the back from a superior. Some fellow will bow and scrape, not caring that he shows his bare behind, and all to win an approving smile from some official.

Russian learning and culture are a key to the world heritage. He who owns this key will acquire the rest without too much effort.

Some of the Kazakhs who have their children taught in Russian schools will do so just so they can use their children's literacy as a proof of their own superiority when quarrelling with their kinsfolk. This should not be your motivation. Seek to teach your children to earn their bread by honest and purposeful work, and let other people follow your example; then we shall not endure the arbitrary ways of Russian grandees, for they have no law that applies equally to all. We ought to educate ourselves,

learn what other people know so as to become their equals and be a shield and a pillar for our people. As yet no outstanding individuals have appeared among the young people who have received a Russian education, but this is because their parents and kin spoil them and lead them astray. Even so, they are far better than those who have received no education at all. Yet it is a pity that all their learning goes no further than interpreting other people's words. Well-to-do folks rarely send their children to school: they would rather send the children of paupers to be chastised and humiliated by Russian teachers. But what can these unfortunate ones learn there?

Quarrelling with their kinsfolk, some will exclaim, 'Rather than suffer your insults, I'd send my son off as a recruit and let my hair and beard grow!' Such people have no fear of divine punishment or sense of shame. What will the offspring of such a person achieve even if he attends school? Will he derive much benefit from it? Will he go further than others? He doesn't give a rap for learning: he goes to school, sits for a while and then he goes away. Not a sign of eagerness or diligence! His father hardly agrees to his son getting an education unless someone else foots the bill. Will such a man part with his wealth for his child's schooling?

Here's a piece of advice for you: you don't have to get a wife for your son or leave him ample wealth, but you must give him a Russian education without fail, even if you have to part with all you have earned. This is worth any sacrifice.

If you honour God and have any shame, if you want your son to be a real man, send him to school! Don't begrudge the expense!

For if he remains an unlettered scoundrel, who will benefit? Will he be a solace to you? Will he be happy himself? And will he be able to do any good for his own people?

WORD TWENTY-SIX

The Kazakh is elated if his horse wins a race, if a wrestler on whom he has wagered wins a bout, or if his hound or falcon does well in the chase. I wonder if there is anything in life that gives him greater joy? I doubt it!

But what great pleasure is there in seeing one creature excel another in agility or speed, or one wrestler flinging another to the ground? It is not the man himself, nor even his son for that matter, who has been successful! By going into raptures for the most trifling cause, he wants to annoy his neighbour and make him envious. Truly, the Kazakh has no worse enemy than another Kazakh!

It is common knowledge that to provoke envy on purpose is contrary to the Shariah laws, one's own interests and sound reason. What comfort has the Kazakh from stirring up other people's animosity? Why does he

enjoy it? And why are people so vexed at the success of the more fortunate, considering themselves humiliated?

Fast racehorses are found now in this village, now in that; a good falcon or hunting dog comes into the hands of now one man, now another. And the strongest men don't all hail from the same aul either. All these qualities are not man's handiwork. Those who have once come first and once triumphed, will not remain the fastest and strongest forever. Why then, knowing that, are people as vexed as if some dark scheme or vile deed of theirs had come to light? Why do they suffer as though they had been brought low?

The reason is not hard to find: ignorant people will rejoice over any trivial, foolish thing. Out of their minds and intoxicated with delight, they don't know what they are saying or doing. They feel ashamed of what is not in the least shameful, but behave in the most scandalous fashion without blushing.

These are the marks of ignorance and recklessness. If you say that to a Kazakh, he will listen and assent: «Yes, that's true!» But you should not be taken in by his words—he is just like the majority. Though he sees and understands all that, he is like a stubborn creature who cannot give up his wicked ways. And no one will be able to dissuade and check him, or bring him to his senses. Having made misdeeds his law, he will never renounce them. Only great fear or death can wean him from his bad habits.

You will not encounter a man here who, admitting his errors, will try to curb himself.

WORD TWENTY-SEVEN

Here are the words of the great Socrates about serving the omnipotent Creator, spoken in conversation with his pupil, the scholar Aristodemos, who frequently ridiculed believers.

«Well, Aristodemos, do you think there are people in the world whose creations are worthy of admiration?»

«There are many of them, master,» replied Aristodemos.

«Name at least one of them.»

«I admire Homer and his epic poems, the tragedies of Sophocles, the ability of some people to be reincarnated in other forms; I also admire the paintings of Zeuxis.» (Here Aristodemos cited several other great names.)

«Who, do you think, is more worthy of admiration: one who creates a lifeless image of man, or the Most High, who created man endowed with reason and a living soul?»

«The latter, certainly. But only if his creations are the product of reason, not pure chance.»

«The world has many useful things. The purpose of some is obvious, while the purpose of others cannot be divined by their outward form.

What do you think: which of them have been wrought by reason and which by chance?»

«Certainly, the things of which the purpose is obvious are created by reason,» replied Aristodemos.

«Good. Creating man, the Most High endowed him with five senses, knowing they would be necessary for man. He gave him eyes to see and enjoy the beauty of the world. He provided eyelids to open and close the eyes, lashes to protect the eyes from wind arid dust, and eyebrows to divert the sweat trickling down from the forehead.

«Without ears,» Socrates went on, «we would have been unable to hear either harsh or sweet sounds, and we would have been unable to enjoy singing and music. Without a nose, we would have been incapable of distinguishing different smells, we would have never been attracted by sweet fragrances and repelled by foul odours. Lacking a tongue and the roof of the mouth, we would have never been able to tell what is sweet from what is bitter, what is soft from what is hard.

«Is it not for a good purpose that all this has been granted us?

«Our eyes and our nose lie close to the mouth to enable us to see and smell what we are eating. The other essential, but repugnant orifices lie far from the noble organs that are found on the head.

«Does it not attest that God has created us with thought?

Pondering for a while, Aristodemos acknowledged that the Creator was truly omnipotent, and He wrought His works with great love.

«Then tell me,» said Socrates, «why does every living creature have a tender love for its progeny, why does it hate death and endeavour to live as long as possible, and why is it concerned to perpetuate its kind? All living beings are created for the purpose of life and its continuation. Was it not out of love that God has made them capable of loving life and giving life?

«How can you believe, Aristodemos, that none save yourself, a man, can possess reason?» Socrates continued, «Does not the human body resemble the earth on which man treads? Is not the water of your body a drop of the earthly water? Where does your reason come from? What - ever its origin, it is thanks to the soul granted to you that you have become a vessel of such high intelligence. You perceive the perfection, wholeness and harmony of the law whereby nature is created, you see and wonder, but you cannot comprehend what you see.

«Now, what do you think, is nature the purposeless outcome of chance or begotten by the possessor of infinite reason? The mystery lying beyond human ken can be explained if not by the will of reason, then by the force of immutable laws, which wisely coordinated the purpose of all creation.»

«You have spoken truly, master,» replied the pupil. «It is clear that the Creator possesses sublime intelligence. I do not doubt His omnipotence. Yet I do not cease to wonder why the almighty Creator should need my prayers.»

«You are mistaken, Aristodemos! If there is someone who cares for your well-being, you are beholden to him. Must such a simple truth be explained to you?»

«But I do not know whether he cares about me or not,» said Aristodemos.

Then look at the animals and look at yourself. Do we perceive reality in the same way? Man is capable of thinking about his past, present and future. An animal has but a vague idea of past and present, and it cannot think of the morrow. Compare the outward appearance of man and beast. Man stands upright on two legs, the better to see what surrounds him. He can subjugate any animal to his will. The animals, however, rely only on their limbs and wings, they are unable to subdue their own kind. Had God created man as helpless as animals, he would have been good for nothing. Man has been created the master of all living things upon earth. Even if animals possessed human intelligence, their outward form would have hardly matched the capacity to toil, or teach oratory and virtue. Think, can a bull build a town, make tools and become a skilled artisan? The fact that God has endowed man with high intelligence and has placed this intelligence in such a perfect body, combining both spiritual power and moral beauty, is proof that God made man with loving care. All that considered, is not humankind obliged to worship God?»

Thus the master concluded his speech.

WORD TWENTY-EIGHT

Muslims! The world is peopled by the rich and by the poor, the healthy and the sickly, the wise and the stupid, the good and the wicked. If someone asks why this is so, you will reply: «Such is the will of Allah.»

It sometimes happens, however, that Allah bestows riches upon a despised loafer, while some person who worships God and toils honestly lives from hand to mouth and can barely feed his wife and children. A quiet, harmless man is often sick and feeble, while some scoundrel or thief enjoys excellent health. The same parents may have one clever and one stupid son. Allah exhorts everybody to be virtuous and live righteously. He directs the righteous along the right path, and sinners long the crooked path, rewarding the righteous with the bliss of paradise and sinners with the torments of Hell. Does this not contradict divine mercy and justice? Both people and their goods belong to Allah. And He disposes of His property as He wishes.

How to understand His actions?

To grant that the Creator is infallible, while ascribing imperfections and errors to Him, means that we keep silent from fear of Him. If this were the case, what would a mortal gain by all his labours and efforts? If everything comes by the will of the Creator, then people bear no blame. Whether doing good or evil, are they not fulfilling the Lord's will?

A reasonable man should know that it is the duty of a believer to do good. A just cause need not fear the test of reason. If freedom is not bestowed upon reason, then what about the truth: «Let him who possesses reason know me»? If our religion has a flaw, why then forbid a reasonable creature to think about it? What would religion have rested upon if there had been no reason? Good wrought without faith—what is it worth? You should understand and believe that good and evil were created by God, but it is not He who performs them. God has created wealth and poverty, but it is not He who makes human beings rich or poor. God has created diseases, but it is not He who makes people suffer from them. For otherwise everything would be dust and ashes.

WORD TWENTY-NINE

Some Kazakh sayings merit attention and some do not, for they do not carry anything divine or human in them.

The Kazakhs say: «If you live in need, forget your shame.» Cursed be the life that knows no shame! But if the proverb counsels one not to shun any hard work, however lowly, there is nothing shameful in such work. An upright man should earn his bread honestly, not live on alms or sit back in indolence.

«A clever fellow can set even the snow on fire», «You can get anything, if you know how to ask». These are words condemned by God! Is it not

better to get riches from the earth by the sweat of your brow rather than rely on cunning and beg for crumbs from another man's table?

«If your name is unknown, set the field on fire.» But what need do you have of notoriety?

«Better one day as a stallion than a hundred days as a gelding.» But what's the good of one day spent in wild dissipation that leaves only ravages in its wake? «Even an angel will stray from the path at the sight of gold.» What does an angel need gold for? By this saying people merely try to justify their avarice.

«A treasure chest is dearer than father and mother, but your own life is dearer than a palace of gold.» Now, what price can be placed on the life of the scoundrel who values a treasure chest more than his parents? Only a person without reason and honour can exchange father and mother for gold. Parents work to get rich for the good of their children, and he who equates his parents with treasure commits an ungodly deed.

One should be cautious about repeating proverbs born of bigotry and thoughtlessness.

WORD THIRTY

What we call «boastful windbags» are found amongst our people, even if you put forty of them to the test, you won't find one who can be of

help. What are they good for? They lack good sense and self-esteem, they are narrow-minded and shallow, without valour, humanity or conscience.

Some fellow will fling over his shoulder: «Don't bother me! Am I not better than others? Is my head strung to another man's saddle? Does he put meat into my pot or give me livestock for milk?»

Or he may speak out sharply with reckless resolve, «Why should I spare myself life? Is my life really worth much? I'm ready to brave bullets or exile for a noble cause! We die but one death!»

Have you ever encountered a Kazakh whose deeds are in keeping with such words? For myself, I have never seen anyone who was resigned to death, but no one will admit their fear of it. At times, true, any of them will make as if slitting his throat with the palm of his hand in a gesture of sacrificial readiness: «Let me be slain on this very spot!» Had these words been sincere, their speaker could have felled us if not by his intelligence, then by his incredible courage. Yet what shall we call one whose threats are directed only at cowards all set to creep into the nearest hole if trouble is brewing? This is nothing more than bogus bravery to scare the faint-hearted into admitting: «His wrath is terrible indeed!»

My God! If he were good at heart, generous and unselfish, if he were brave and true to his word, could his good points be not seen in his face?

This fellow is one of those dishonorable types of whom it is said: «A brazen face has tireless jaws.»

WORD THIRTY-ONE

We can name four means that promote the perception and memorization of what is heard:

First, you should acquire spiritual firmness and determination;

secondly, you should heed wise counsels attentively and with an open heart, eager to grasp the meaning of what is said;

thirdly, you should ponder over these wise words and repeat them over and over again so as to imprint them in your memory;

fourthly, you should avoid harmful states of the mind and resist them even in the face of temptation.

These states of mind are: careless sloth, indifference, senseless amusement, the inclination to morose reflection and destructive passion.

These vices can destroy both your mind and your talent.

WORD THIRTY-TWO

Those who seek learning should know certain essential conditions without which they cannot achieve their goal.

First, do not attempt to do so for the sake of profit. You should love learning for its own sake and strive for it. If you value knowledge as a

supreme blessing, each new truth you uncover will bring peace and satisfaction to your soul. Memorise well what is new to you, and you will feel the desire-for new quests, and a love of knowledge will be born in your heart. Then your memory will absorb whatever you have seen and heard.

But if you have another purpose in mind, seek knowledge only with the aim of getting rich, your attitude to learning will be the same as that of a woman to her stepson. If your soul and your mind are well intentioned towards learning, it will be benevolent in turn—it will surrender to you readily. But it will show half-hearted benevolence to a half-hearted person.

Second, study with clear and noble aims, not to acquire learning so as to be able to argue with other people. Now, arguments within reason help to strengthen one's convictions, but, excessive zeal for them can only spoil a man. For lovers of wrangling will launch into disputes not for the sake of ascertaining the truth but rather to show off their knowledge and get the upper hand of other people. Such arguments breed envy, add not a whit of humanity, and do not serve scholarship—on the contrary, they simply confuse people. This is the vain occupation of troublemakers. He who leads hundreds astray from the right path is not worth the little finger of one who has brought just one man back to the path of truth.

True, disputation is one of the paths to knowledge, but a person who gives himself entirely to this runs the risk of becoming conceited and arrogant, an envious gossip. Such a person will be not averse to slander, backbiting and vituperation, which only lowers human dignity.

Third, if you have succeeded in your pursuit of a truth, do not turn back from it even on pain of death. But if you are not convinced of your knowledge, do not imagine that someone else will appreciate it. If you do not value your own knowledge, how can you expect recognition from utter strangers?

Fourth, there are two tools that aid the acquisition of knowledge. One is *mulakhaza* [the subtle art of polemics] and the other, *mukhafaza* [firmness in defence of one's views]. It is necessary to strive constantly to perfect these, for without them it is impossible to reinforce and develop your knowledge.

Fifth, I spoke previously of four harmful attitudes of mind, and among these we named careless sloth or idleness. My soul! I enjoin you, to beware of this evil! It is pernicious both for God and for man, both for reason and for honour. It is the arch enemy of everything! But there is no place for this evil where conscience resides.

Sixth, human character is a vessel containing intelligence and knowledge. Develop your character therefore! By indulging in envy and frivolity, by allowing yourself to be influenced by the words of others and momentary passions, you may forfeit your strength of character. Learning will be of no avail if the vessel that receives your knowledge is not sound.

To attain your goal and be faithful to your duty, you should foster constancy of purpose, determination and strong will, for these help preserve the sobriety of your reason and the purity of your conscience.

Everything should serve the cause of reason and honour.

WORD THIRTY-THREE

If you want to be rich, learn a trade. Wealth diminishes with time, but a skill does not. He who sells the fruits of his labour without trying to deceive is considered saintly by the people. Yet those on whom God has bestowed some skill will not avoid certain vices either.

First of all, they may not endeavour to improve their skill by seeking to learn from better artisans. Content with what little proficiency they have, such people indulge in indolence.

Second, one must spare no effort in one's work. But there are those who, having acquired a few livestock, imagine themselves to be rich, and become lazy, boastful and careless in their work.

Third, should someone approach him with the request, «You are a capable man and a generous one — it won't cost much to you to do this or that for me,» he will swell with pride and think he has become an important fellow whom other people approach for help. Succumbing to flattery and hubris, he wastes his valuable time and lets a sly flatterer take advantage of him.

Fourth, such people are eager to make friends of any kind. If some swindler presents them with a trinket, they will promise their help and

feel glad someone needs their friendship. That's where their gullibility and poor knowledge of life come to light. Ready to trust a lying tongue and rejoicing at the salutations of a false friend, they will do their best to help him get what he allegedly lacks; they will share their goods with him and forget about their own needs, their concerns and obligations; if need be, they will, run about and borrow right and left. Trying to please others, they will waste their time and run up debts, they will get involved in quarrels because of these debts, they will lose face, and live in want and disgrace.

Why does all this happen? Because those inclined to deceive others often themselves fall prey to deception.

WORD THIRTY-FOUR

Everyone knows that humans are mortal, that death comes not only for the aged and that, having taken someone away, will never give him back. The Kazakh is aware of this, but not through deep reflection.

The Kazakhs say they believe in a God who calls everybody to account when they die; He requites good with good and punishes those who do evil. They believe that His rewards and punishments differ from those on earth: His rewards are infinite in their generosity, and the penalties He metes out are immensely harsh. But I do not trust their words, for they do not hold their faith sincerely and consciously. If they truly

believed what they say, they would act according to their faith and would not know sorrow. Is it possible to convince such people of some other things if they are feeble in their faith even in regard to these truths? How to correct their ways? Can they be called true Muslims?

He who seeks to avoid torments in this world and the next should remember one thing: there cannot be two joys, two passions, two doubts and two sorrows in one's heart simultaneously. This is impossible. He who places earthly joys and sorrows above the cares and joys of the world to come is not a Muslim.

Now judge for yourselves what kind of a Muslim the Kazakh is. If he came upon two things, one designed for life eternal beyond the grave and the other for this life, and had to choose between the two, the Kazakh would certainly opt for the latter, hoping to get the former on another occasion, and believing that in any case Allah, in His magnanimity, will forgive him for making the wrong choice. Before the judgement of death, however, this man will swear that he has never exchanged worldly pleasures for the joys of life eternal. How can you trust him after that?

Man should be a friend to man. For everything in this life—birth, upbringing, satisfaction, hunger, sorrow and grief, the form of his body, the way in which he comes into this world and departs it—are common to all. In the other world, too, the same things await us all: death, burial, decay of the flesh and judgement. How do you know whether you will live another five days or not? All people are each other's guests; man himself is a guest in this life. Is it good, then, to speak maliciously and

quarrel because of wealth, envy another's happiness and give offence for mere trifles?

Reverencing man but not God, praying not for one's own labour to be blessed but for the good things of life to be wrested from others—should one turn to Allah with such a request? Will the Creator humiliate and deprive one person for the sake of another?

To have no sound reason, no education and be unable to put two words together, obstinately insisting on one's own way and trying to compete with the sage—is this worthy of the name of man?

Is this really a man?

WORD THIRTY-FIVE

Calling to His Judgement the Hadjis, Sufis, Mullahs, Jomarts and Sayyids, the Most High will demand much of them. He will set aside those among them who, during their earthly span, served and did good works only to earn respect and the good things of life. He will separate them from those who desired only to serve and please Allah.

To those who praised Him out of selfish interest He will say: «During your earthly life you served me only for the sake of being addressed with deference. But this will no longer be so. Your happy life has come to an end, and so has your power over people. You will not be honoured

here, but called to account for all you have done. You will answer for all this. I granted you life and bestowed wealth upon you, but you used all that to your own benefit; you have deceived people under the guise of concern for the other world.»

But to those who served Him truly, the Most High will say: «By all your life and all your deeds you have endeavoured to please me. I am content with you. A place of honour has been made ready for you, so welcome! Perhaps you will meet friends whom you have helped or those who have supported you by their good intentions. So rejoice!»

WORD THIRTY-SIX

In the words of Our Prophet, may Allah bless his name, recorded in the Hadith: «He who is without shame is also without faith.» Similarly, our folk saying declares: «He who has shame also has iman.» It is obvious therefore: shame is an integral part of iman. But what is shame?

There is a shame born of ignorance. It is akin to the timidity of a child who is shy of uttering a word or approaching a stranger even if it has done no mischief. He who is guiltless before the Shariah and his own conscience but is ashamed of what he should not be ashamed displays a sure sign of stupidity and low breeding.

But true shame is that felt by a person who commits an action contrary to the Shariah laws, human conscience and human dignity. Such shame is of two kinds.

One is when you are ashamed not of yourself but of another man's misdeeds. You are ashamed because you feel for the wrongdoer, and you think, «Heavens! What has happened to this man? How could he commit such an unworthy act?» And you blush for him.

The other kind of shame comes from your own wrongdoing before the Shariah, before your own conscience and humanity, which you may have committed in error or inadvertently. Perhaps no one except yourself is aware of your fault, but your mind and your being are in anguish and punish you. You worry, you are unable to look others in the eye, and you suffer.

People capable of feeling such kind of shame lose their appetite, cannot sleep, and in despair may even commit suicide. Shame is a feeling of human dignity that compels a man to admit his guilt to himself and mete out his own punishment. At such times you are incapable of thinking and at a loss for words. You have not time enough to wipe away the tears as they pour down. You feel like a snivelling cur. Unable to meet other people's gaze, you are blind to everything around you. The person who knows about such torments but, instead of magnanimously forgiving the offender, only makes his suffering worse is lacking in humanity and mercy.

The people I see around me nowadays are ashamed of nothing and incapable of blushing. «I've admitted my fault, what else do you expect

me to do?» they say. Or they make excuses: «Yes, I've behaved badly, but don't you ever do the same?» Or they may argue: «Such-and-such people have done this or that, but they're still walking the earth as if nothing happened. Compared to them, I've done nothing wrong. Besides, I had good reason to act like that.» Instead of being ashamed of their action, such people set out to whitewash themselves.

What shall we call such people: shame-faced or shameless? The Hadith and the words of the sages do not allow us to call them shame-faced.

Now, have such people iman or have they not?

WORD THIRTY-SEVEN

1. Judge a man's qualities by the intentions of his action and not by its outcome.
2. However good a thought, it is tarnished by passing through human lips.
3. You may find solace by saying wise words to a conceited fool but, more often than not, they vanish into thin air.
4. Render good to a wise man; a fool will only be spoilt by it.
5. A father's son is an enemy to other people. But a son of mankind is your dear brother.

6. A good man may ask much, but will be content with little; a despicable one will ask much, but will be dissatisfied even if he gets more than he asked for.

7. He who works for his own benefit alone is like an animal that grazes to fill its own stomach; but he who works to fulfil his human duty, the Most High will distinguish by His love.

8. Who poisoned Socrates, burnt Joan of Arc, and crucified Jesus? Who buried our Prophet in the carcass of a camel? The masses, the multitude! The multitude is devoid of reason. Seek to direct in onto the path of truth.

9. Man is a child of his time. If he is bad, his contemporaries are to blame.

10. Had I the power, I would cut out the tongue of anyone who asserts that man is incorrigible.

11. To be left alone is like dying. The lonely person suffers misfortunes of every kind. The world knows many a vicious thing, but also pleasures and joys. Who will endure the former in dignity? And who will not be corrupted by the latter?

12. Who among us has not known trouble? Only the weak lose hope. Nothing in this world is immutable, and misfortune cannot last for ever. Does not the bountiful and blossoming spring follow the harsh winter?

13. He who keeps silent in his anger contains his fury within himself. He who spits abuse is either a braggart or a coward.

14. Success and good luck make a man drunk. Only one in a thousand can keep cool and reasonable.

15. If you want your labours to be successful, start the job in hand wisely.

16. High office is like a high cliff. The slow snake will crawl up it and the hawk will swoop down on it. Ill-wishers start praising those who have not yet reached the top, and the latter, being credulous, will rejoice at such praise.

17. The world is an ocean, time is a breath of wind, early waves are elder brothers, and late waves are younger brothers. Generation succeeds generation, even though things seem immutable in their quietude.

18. A common man renowned for his cleverness is greater than a king who has been raised up by good fortune. A youth who sells his handiwork is worthier than an old man selling his beard.

19. A beggar with a full belly is the devil incarnate; a lazy Sufi is nothing but a hypocrite.

20. A false friend is like a shadow: when the sun shines on you, you can't get rid of him, but when clouds gather over you, he is nowhere to be seen.

21. Be frank with those without friends; keep on good terms with those who have many. Beware of the careless man; be a shield to the destitute.

22. There is no use of anger without power, love without fidelity and a teacher without pupils.

23. While you are seeking happiness, everybody wishes you well; but once you have attained it, your only well - wisher is yourself.

WORD THIRTY-EIGHT

My dear children, the solace of my heart! I have just written a few words on human actions, and I bequeath what I have written to you as a memento. Read carefully and try to understand the meaning of these words, and your hearts will be full of love. Now, human love is inseparable from human reason, intelligence and loving kindness. The source of these virtues are the perfections that are bestowed on man from his birth: sound health and a beautiful appearance; the rest depends on the nobility of soul of one's father and mother, on wise mentors and kind friends. Love engenders aspiration and understanding, while reason, intelligence and loving kindness kindle an interest in learning.

A child does not aspire to learning of his own free will. He has to be persuaded through coercion or inducement until he acquires a thirst for knowledge. A child seeking knowledge may be considered a true human being, and you may hope that he will later strive to know God, to understand his own self and the world around him, that he will do well, but not at the expense of his honour, and will shun evil. Otherwise he will be doomed to live in ignorance or, at best, acquire only superficial knowledge. It is disgraceful that many parents, having raised their

children badly, then leave them to the care of mullahs; but such learning will come to no avail. Children spoilt from infancy will show no interest in learning and religion, or respect for their tutors. They will never grow up to become worthy men, righteous mullahs and true Muslims. The most difficult thing is to instil humanity, loving kindness, in them. For Allah is the way of truth, and sincerity and truthfulness are the enemies of evil. Will a friend accept an invitation sent through an adversary? Truth cannot be attained unless the soul has a love of it. Human knowledge is gained by means of love of truth, through a thirst to discover the nature and essence of things for one's self. This is not, of course divine omniscience: human curiosity and a striving for knowledge give learning only commensurate with man's reason.

But, above all, one should come to love Allah. It is known that Knowledge is one of the attributes of the Most High, and therefore a love of Knowledge is a sign of humanity and integrity. Those who pursue it for gain and for base, selfish aims can never attain the heights of Knowledge. Let wealth, general respect and fame find a man of their own accord, only then will they become worthy ornaments of his person. But undue regard for them can only lower a man.

If you are possessed by love of truth and a desire for learning, listen attentively and be diligent. Those who profess Islam should know wherein the truth of the iman lies, for faith is not simply blind worship. Suppose we have come to believe in God, that the wisdom of the Qur'an expresses His will, and that Mohammad Mustafa, blessed be his name, is His messenger. What is to be gained by such faith? Do you believe in God for His sake or for your own salvation? Allah is great, and He will

not suffer from your lack of faith. If you say that your faith is necessary for your own self—good, it means that you believe indeed. But if your faith is for the sake of faith alone, you will gain nothing from it. Your faith will prove truly righteous and bring you good only if you desire this. You should know by what efforts conscious, reasonable faith is achieved...

You say you believe in God, in his attributes and names. Then you should know His names, you should understand the greatness of each of His eight attributes, once you call yourself a Muslim and consider yourself a servant of the Most High, and try to subordinate your thoughts and designs to His divine will. Do not say in your ignorance that you cannot liken yourself to God. Indeed, the creations of the Most High cannot be exactly reproduced, but you can follow in His paths in all your deeds. These are the most radiant attributes of Allah: Life, Knowledge, Power, Will, Sight, Hearing, Word or Speech and Creation.

The Creator has endowed man with these eight attributes of Himself, though not in the same absolute perfection.

Now, can we call ourselves Muslims if we do not employ the bestowed attributes, puny though they be, according to their design and to please the Most High? We should know how to act in accordance with the eight supreme attributes of Allah, for Allah's nature is such that it does not need any description on our part; however, our mind ought to have a clear idea of God in the eight aforementioned attributes. Otherwise, we can have no conception of the Most High. But since we know of Allah only what He manifests to us, none of us can know Him in His

completeness. Even the wisest among the wise will never understand the inner meaning of His deeds, let alone the essence of His nature. Allah is almighty, but our powers are finite. It is impossible to measure the infinite with the finite. Eager to fix the idea of Him in our minds, we repeat, «There is no god but Allah, Allah is one and unique.» Yet the very notions of «is» and «one» cannot express the essence of Allah, which is beyond human understanding, for no phenomenon in real life cannot escape the measure one». This measure likewise applies to the entire universe within Allah's dominion, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, where mention is made of His eight invariable attributes and ninety-nine Beautiful Names expressing His inimitable image and His deeds.

But here I would wish to dwell on only four of Allah's attributes; the first two are Knowledge and Power, while the other ones are an integral whole augmenting and supplementing the substance of these two. And I would like to single out yet another of the divine attributes—Life.

We say: «There is no god but Allah, Allah is one and unique.» We perceive and apprehend Him as the Power of Knowledge. But let us ponder, whether the notions «is», «one», «power» and «knowledge» are really potent. There cannot be any doubt that the power of knowledge is a real force: where there is Life, there is Will. But where Knowledge is, Will is likewise inevitable. By itself Knowledge will not give anything. Everything on earth is set in motion by the omnipotence of the Almighty. One of the intrinsic properties of Will is the Word, that is, Speech. Can the Word dispense with written letters and the voice? Only Allah's word is without letters and without voice. But since there is the

need to speak, there must be the ability to hear what is said and see what is visible. Allah does not hear and see not like us, with ears and eyes; this faculty to see and to hear without eyes and ears is an overwhelming advantage, it is the Power of Knowledge.

Another attribute of Allah is Creation, which means substantiation. If we consider that Creation, as one of Allah's attributes, persists in the act of substantiation without end and does not liberate itself from it in its own right, as do Knowledge and Power, but is subordinate, obedient to substantiation, then we shall have to admit the impotence and submission of Creation. Yet subservience is not proper to Allah. Creation is the tool of Power. It follows hence that Knowledge and Power bring together all the eight attributes of Allah. Knowledge is boundless and perfect. Power is omnipotent and infallible. A craftsman is judged by his works. It is not given to any mortal to comprehend what colossal labour and what omnipotent force have created and united everything that we behold and perceive.

If reason is the master of man, and strength serves him in all of his actions, does it not follow that the same qualities serve Allah as well? The notions of Knowledge and Power ought to be perceived conjoined as Omniscient Power, for otherwise one will lead the other, which is also contrary to Allah's teachings.

But, then, can it be that the eight attributes of Allah do not merge into a single image but are different and independent entities? All these properties issue from one Creator and, taken together, they personify the integral and inimitable image of Allah. We shall fall into error by

ascribing some premeditation to their union and believing it to be forged for the express purpose of forming an almighty image.

Man's strength resides in his reason and in his knowledge. The power of the Most High is expressed in Knowledge and in Compassion and Mercy. Although Mercy and Compassion are not mentioned amongst His eight attributes, they are present in His names: Most Gracious, Merciful, Compassionate, All-Merciful and Forgiving, Loving, Protecting, Condescending, Beneficent... These names of Allah bear out my arguments. The logic of my reasoning is likewise confirmed by the wondrous harmony of the created universe. Indeed, everything is designed for mutual benefit. Inanimate bodies feel no pain and serve as food for animate creatures; animals sustain the life of intelligent beings, humankind; the beasts are exempt from the Last Judgement, while man is endowed with reason and has dominion over everything upon the earth. That God has created man capable of answering for his deeds on the Day of Judgement bear witness to His justice and love for mankind. He has created man not after the image of worms, birds of the air or other living creatures, but put man on two legs, He has placed man's head high so as to enable him to behold the surrounding world, and not let him crawl on all fours, as the beasts do, to get his food; God endowed man with two arms and two hands in the service of the head; He gave him a nose to enjoy fragrant scents; He provided him with eyes so as to see and behold, eyelids to protect the eyes, lashes to stop the eyelids rubbing together, and eyebrows to stop the sweat trickling down from the forehead; the tongue has been given to allow humankind to communicate, understand one another and work together. Does this not

testify to God's love for man? But if someone loves you, are you not obliged to reply in kind?

Just stop to think: the Sun sucks up moisture and turns it into the clouds that let fall the life-giving rain for seeds, grasses and flowers which gladden the human eye and heart; all kinds of fruit and sugar cane ripen to sustain life upon the earth; the rivers that flow into seas and lakes quench the thirst of birds and beasts and serve as the home offish. The Earth is the giver of bread, cotton, hemp, fruit and berries; its bowels contain mineral wealth; birds provide man with down, eggs and meat; livestock give milk, wool and hide. The waters yield fish, the fish — caviar, the bees—honey and wax, the silkworms—silk. Nobody in the world can say of these riches, «This is all mine!» All is meant for the good of man. Factories and machines, made by immense labour, are likewise intended to benefit man.

Is that not proof of the love of the Most High for man? Is it not man's duty to requite love with love?

To keep humankind from exterminating animal species out of sheer greed and thus harming succeeding generations, Allah made the selfsame human greed and cupidity serve the preservation of animals. Animals rely on their strength and speed, finding refuge in deep waters, high up in rocky mountains, in the depths of forests; every living being has the urge to multiply, is endowed with the instinct of self-preservation and of rearing its young. It is in the scheme of things that the animals should not become man's equal but should provide man with

nourishment. All that is the manifestation of divine kindness and justice to us.

We will not stop to think that kindness and justice are the commandments of the Shariah. Considering ourselves Muslims and faithful to Allah, do we follow His commandments without fail? Do we need other proof than these testimonies, bright as the heavenly bodies, of Allah's care and concern for man?

We like to see the good deeds of other people. But we won't burden ourselves with too much concern for our neighbour. Is this not sinful?

He who permits evil and does not oppose it cannot be regarded as a true Muslim. At best, he is a half-hearted Muslim.

Where is the right way that the Most High has indicated? Many do not know it. I have never seen a Muslim who has absorbed the words of the Prophet: «Think of the deeds of Allah' or followed the words of the prayer: «Love Allah, and He will love you.»

«Do good unto people, for Allah loves those who do good.»

«Believers perform good deeds, and their place is in Paradise.»

The Qur'an abounds in such verses, yet none of us will look deeply into their meaning; we lack both the will and sufficient knowledge to comprehend these truths.

«There are people who believe in Allah, who deem it their sacred duty to do good to others, for they know that Allah does not love those of ill will.» Proof of this are these words of the Prophet, may Allah bless him:

«He who is unjust, has no conscience. He who is without conscience is also without faith.»

Hence we see that faith cannot come by itself it is born of justice and good will. But justice and virtues are not to be gained by prayer and blind adoration alone. I think no proof is needed here: you see Muslims zealous in their prayers and rigorous in their fasting, but this is not enough.

Justice is the mother of all good deeds. Conscience and honour come from justice. A just man will surely stop to think, and he will ask himself? «Why do I approve of the good deeds of others but do not hasten to share in them?» Does this not indicate his justice and honesty? Is this not the beginning of good works? But why, in his concern for other people, does he not show the same concern for the Creator?

The desire to do good is born of the ability to be content with little. Do not lose your sense of justice and never tire of doing good. There can be neither faith nor humanity , loving kindness, without justice. As Allayar Sufi teaches us, one sin begets a hundred others.

We conceive of the Most High in our mind as the Omniscient, All-Merciful and Just. If signs of Knowledge, Compassion and Justice are present in you, this means that you seek learning, you are a true Muslim and are endowed with great humanity. It is common knowledge that zhauan-mart [nobility of soul] embodies three virtues: truthfulness, good intent and sound reason. Truthfulness personifies Justice, good intent— Compassion and Mercy, and Reason, as we know, is one of the names of Knowledge. These qualities, albeit in small measure, are proper to man,

and it is his duty to strive to perfect them, to use them for good, and to remember and cherish them in his heart. This can only be achieved with sincere desire and tireless effort. The Prophet possesses the above three qualities, and so do the saints, savants and true Muslims; these qualities are intended for the service of the Most High, they were preached by the Prophet and espoused with love by the saints. Yet the saints' love is concerned only about life eternal beyond the grave. They have either forgotten about earthly joys or never paid any attention to them.

The savants, however, think of and care about life in this world. The judgements of the saints and the learned men are contradictory, though they are not far apart in their views, and both support Allah's teachings. But should not any argument end to mutual satisfaction?

Like human nature, Knowledge and Reason brook no violence against them, they are averse to duplicity, they teach us to be kind, honest and good in our deeds, that is to say, they teach us Compassion.

But I think that both the saints and the savants seek satisfaction in dispute just to gratify their vanity.

Had humankind chosen the path of tarikat, the path indicated by the saints, the world would have fallen into desolation and decay. Who would have then grazed the livestock, who would have repulsed the enemy, who would have made clothes, and who would have sown wheat and extracted the riches from the bowels of the earth?

In renouncing the good things granted unto us by the Most High, do we not run the risk of being discourteous, unreasonable and ungrateful, and so commit a grievous sin?

Those who have chosen this way may be doomed to disappear, or they may become an easy prey for unbelievers, and the weakest among them will abandon their path in disgrace.

If this path is predestined for only half of the Muslims, the question arises: is there such a thing as a truth that applies to only half? Truth ought to be the same for each and everyone. Can there be a selective truth? Or a selective justice? In this is so, there can be no life for the people at all. For life is the supreme and ultimate truth. There can be no perfection without life.

Yet not all the saints have disdained the good things of this world. We know that three close adherents of the Prophet—Hazret Gusman, Gabdurahman ibn Gauf and Sahid ibn Abdukas—were renowned for their wealth.

We may explain the strict abstinence of the saints by their lack of confidence in their strength, by their fear of being tempted by earthly joys, which would undoubtedly have weakened their faith. Or perhaps this self-denial comes from their desire to turn people from cupidity by example, in the hope that common people, seeing their humility, would abandon evil passions and selfish aims, and would choose the path of love and charity? If all this is undertaken solely out of selfless love for people, their sacrifices are not justified, this path is wrong and dangerous. For much more is needed. Only people wholly committed to

their faith, who have gained the highest knowledge, who have great spiritual strength, and possess exceptional courage and firmness will see the light of truth. It is next to impossible to find all these qualities in a one person; or their putative possessor may turn out to be an arch charlatan and impostor.

The desire to distinguish oneself and raise oneself above all others spoils human nature. An ignorant man who says he has embarked on the path of tarikat acknowledges thereby his own immorality.

The thinker and the savant are essentially the same, but they differ in their paths of cognition. The outward knowledge, recognised by the world, is delivered to us in the form of precepts. Teachers who have succeeded best in their precepts are called savants.

Nothing is created without a reason. It may be that the savants are possessed by the yearning to fathom the mysteries of Allah's might, which is not prohibited to anyone; or do they pursue learning out of an infinite love of Allah Himself? But is it appropriate to speak of such love if it is not given to man to know Allah?

Only a love born of clear understanding, infinite faith and a sense of gratitude to Allah for creating human beings with much love and endowing them in turn with the capacity to love and feel pity - only this can be called the true love for the Most High.

Only those who seek to know Allah according to their lights and who look for the first cause of all phenomena and objects are worthy of the savant's name. They seek truth, justice and good in the interests of

humankind, for them there is no other joy or satisfaction in life but their work. Had there been no such thinkers pursuing the right path, the whole world would have gone to rack and ruin. These true savants are the backbone of all that is wrought by human hand; their minds set in order everything that is on earth. Their activities are directed towards well-being in this life; for, as it is said, earthly life is a field tilled for the life hereafter.

Not every savant is a sage, but every sage is a savant.

The traditional faith is gained with the help of precepts from scholarly minds, but it is by enlightenment from the sage that it is transmuted into the true faith. This is achieved by the wise men who have understood the supreme meaning of Islam. The scholars of worldly knowledge, however, do not know the principles of religion, even though they may be in search of truth and may have succeeded in unravelling the enigmas of the universe and of human existence for themselves. Of the seven conditions of the Shariah they are capable only of recognising Allah, but they cannot tell Allah's friends from His enemies. Although such scholars cannot be our spiritual shepherds, they deserve our gratitude: for, as the Prophet says in the Hadith, those who do good to others are considered the best of men.

Such men know neither sleep nor repose nor diversions; they persevere in a tireless quest for discoveries that might be useful to humankind. They have given man electricity, the power of lightning, they have learnt to communicate with one another over immense distances, they have compelled fire and water to perform colossal work that even thousands

of men cannot do. They improve the human mind, they teach us to distinguish good from evil, and we are certainly indebted to them for many things. The present-day mullahs are against learned men, a fact that attests either to the ignorance of the clergy or to their bad intentions; for it is said: man by his very nature is inclined to sin. Many of their pupils, having learnt by heart a few prayers in Arabic or in Persian, consider themselves capable of taking part in disputes and are proud of this; instead of good, they do people harm, and lead them astray by their loud-mouthed appeals and empty boasting. Some of them do harm not with malicious intent but by obeying their natural instinct. It is pleasant to see a few who have heeded wise counsels return to the fold of their conscience. But can you call someone who obstructs the truth a man of conscience? Conceit, let alone unfounded conceit, spoils man. If truth be still called truth, and the truth is Allah, one ought not to oppose it, but try to understand it and reason correctly. For delusion carries the danger of becoming alienated from religion.

When the great Prophet, blessed be his name, said, «There will come a day equal in length to a year,» the learned ulemas enquired, «How many prayers will there be on that day?» And they received the reply, «The learned men of that time will know». Did not the Prophet imply by these words that the canons of religion would change and take new forms with time?

Nowadays, the methods of teaching at the madrasah are hopelessly out of date, and have proved to be not useless but even harmful. Accordingly, new schools have been opened in Turkey where, along with divinity, military and other sciences are taught. Our youth wastes

too many years in empty memorising at the madrasah and come out ignorant, unreasonable and incapable of working, who will live only by fraud and deception. The teachings of mullahs do nothing but harm.

The beauty of the created universe ennobles the human mind. It may happen that man, finding himself in misery and want, will lose his human form and turn into an animal. To have no desire to understand world science and scholarship is a sign of ignorance condemned in the Qur'an as well.

There is a world of difference between the wealth laid up in order to become high and mighty and the wealth accumulated for the sake of helping the needy and not to be dependent on others.

We should not seek to gain knowledge for the sake of profit. On the contrary, we should use wealth to acquire knowledge. Art is an inexhaustible treasure, and there is nothing more noble than to learn it. Knowledge ought to serve justice and conform to the demands of the divine law. Man must not only admire the good deeds of others, but perform good deeds himself.

Speaking of the mullahs, I should like to warn you against the ishans in particular. Their teachings are false and dangerous. Many of them are ignoramuses who do not know the real laws of the Shariah but chose the way of service nonetheless. They attempt to teach others in spite of the paucity of their own knowledge; the doctrines of these seducers of mankind are harmful even for the pseudo-religions. They find support among fools and their words are false; the signs of their learning are rosary beads, a turban and nothing else!

You should know, my children, that the path of the Most High is infinite, and it is given to no one to traverse it to the end. He who is resolved to follow this path is considered a true Muslim. But if your aim is to acquire wealth, in your narrowness of mind you do not follow the path of God. Why this incomprehensible greed and covetousness for the riches of the entire world? If you intend to share with people your money, livestock, learning and other good things you have, you are on the path of the Most High, the only path without end. Those who have chosen it are considered His true servants, they can cherish the hope of approaching God. What hope can there be on another path?

With some people their abilities and intentions are directed towards improving their appearance, they pay too much attention to their clothes and the way they walk, considering this to be a laudable occupation. Such persons are eager to show off, as if they were in the market place, and they arouse envy amongst fools whose wits are only in their eyes. Looking at them, some are consumed by jealousy, while others wear themselves out trying to copy them. Who stands to gain from this? How much effort has been expended just to impress others with their appearance? But man's merits lie not in his appearance, but in the purity of his mind, in his spiritual essence, for it is by this that Allah distinguishes amongst us. Will these devotees of the looking-glass add so much as one jot to their wits? The human mind is improved by the infinite, inexhaustible love of good.

By His consummate art Allah created the universe and man, so that he could grow and procreate. It is a sacred duty of each of us to increase the number of our friends. This depends on our good will and warmth of

heart towards other people, something that must evoke a response in kind. At least do not wish ill to others, do not try to put ourselves above them by your words or deeds.

But one may elevate oneself spiritually, and this can be done in diverse ways.

First, the ability to preserve human dignity even at the time of great trials ennobles man.

Second, self-praise and extolling your good points can do you only harm.

Third, maliciousness, injuring the self-esteem of others and causing them humiliation breed animosity in turn.

Boasting, which is a frequent consequence of the desire to show off, arouses envy, and one envy engenders another.

The absence of these vices brings peace to the human soul, and in the soul at peace with itself aspiration is born.

There are three things that can cause disgrace to the whole of humankind, things you ought to avoid, and these are ignorance, sloth and wickedness.

Ignorance means lack of knowledge, in the absence of which nothing can be achieved; lack of learning makes man no better than the beasts.

Sloth is the worst enemy of the arts; mediocrity, lack of will power, shamelessness and poverty—all these are born of laziness.

Wickedness is the enemy of humankind: by doing evil to others, man alienates himself from his own kind and becomes like a wild beast.

The antidote to these vices is the love of man, the desire for general well-being, firmness of spirit, justice and deep and broad knowledge. Direct all of your knowledge in the way indicated by Allah. As He spared no effort in creating the harmonious and perfect world, you, too, should carry out your work with as much industry and good intent. Whatever Allah has created has its purpose; the fruits of your labour should always serve people's good, otherwise any work will be useless, and your faith will be in vain.

It is common knowledge that Allah's creations have not been wrought without difficulties, and nothing has been made without a purpose. Everything has its aim and its reason. A man yearning for knowledge ought to remember that work should be done for a purpose.

The Prophet, may Allah bless his name, has left us these words: «Before undertaking anything, you should have a purpose and an aspiration.»

Now, you have decided to make your ablutions, to say your prayers and observe the fasts henceforth. Good, but will it not be sinful to concern yourselves only with outward appearances in observing the rites? If your soul is pure, observation of the holy rites will reflect your spiritual life, and outward orderliness will but adorn and ennoble your faith. Is it not for this reason that the wise men have said that there is but one faith, that it is hallowed by great patience, and that without your restraint it tarnishes or may even be doomed to perdition. This has been said lest

the ignorant, concerned about outward rites alone, should forget about the main goal: faith.

I have reason to believe that the ignorant are convinced it is enough to perform the obligatory rites to be considered Muslims. But this is not so, for the rites are only the guardians of faith. But what good is a guard who just wakes people up but is not concerned about the safety and preservation of a precious object he is in charge of?

What shall become of faith without constant vigilance? Preserving the treasure in your custody pure and intact—is that not the real purpose?

You who are blind to the deeper meaning of ritual signs and acts, take heed! Their most essential part is namaz. But before saying your prayers, you must make your ablutions. These are performed after you have discharged the waste matter from your body. Remember that! The ceremony of ablution must end by passing your wet hands over your feet—some of these ritual acts are of symbolic significance.

After freeing your body from waste matter, you perform your ablutions by washing the parts of your body invisible to the eyes of others. This is surely of no interest at all to strangers; but by these actions you show people that your soul is pure, and that you want your outward appearance to accord with your inner condition. In the state of complete purification and peace of mind, you proceed to your namaz.

Namaz means prayers and incantations.

The light touch of your wet fingers on your neck and feet means that you have purified yourself.

Beginning your prayer, touch your ears with your fingers, to show that you dare not raise your hands higher than that before Allah. This movement attests to your belief There is no God but Allah! It attests to your fervent supplication unto Him: «Do not let me sink into worldly vanity, stretch out a helping hand!»

Your bowed head and arms folded on your breast indicate that you stand not just like a slave before a master, not like a common man before a king, but like one who acknowledges himself to be a weak, humble creature and commits himself to the justice and omnipotence of the most wise Allah.

The face turned toward the qiblah signifies worshipping the place of the supposed visitation of the Most High, even though we know that there is no place on earth worthy of His sojourn. This is in the hope that our prayers will reach the ear of the Most High.

Saying your prayers, begin with the Fatihah. This is a long prayer rich in meaning. Genuflections made with the hands resting on the knees are a sign that the Muslim supplicant has appeared before Allah's face.

The first obeisance, touching the ground with the forehead, signifies that man comes from the dust of the earth, and the second—that unto dust he shall return. Turning your face to heaven is a sign of the hope and fervent supplication for resurrection after death.

End your prayers in yet another prostration and utter words of salutation to the Most High and His Prophet, may Allah bless his name, and wish peace, unity and prosperity to all Muslims!

Now, what have we learnt from this Word?

WORD THIRTY-NINE

Yes, our forefathers were certainly inferior to the present generation in learning, civility, neatness and tidiness. Yet they possessed two merits which we have not. Overcoming, little by little, the shortcomings that we inherited from our forefathers, we have lost those merits. Had we possessed determination in our character and done our utmost to safeguard the old virtues while acquiring new qualities, we might have been the equal of other nations. But since we lack resolve and force of character, we have let the newly acquired qualities foster demonic, rather than human, properties in us. This is one of the main reasons why we have forfeited our national virtues. What character traits do I have in mind? In olden times there used to be people known as yel-basy and top-basy, who judged disputes and governed the life of the community. The common people somehow managed to look after themselves. They were not accustomed to dispute the rulings of the yel-basy and top-basy, or run from one to another of these dignitaries with complaints. We say: «Take a stick if it fits your hand, and then make it into a bat.» Or: «When everyone is his own judge, people cannot live together even in a boundless land; when a community has a chief, no one gets burnt even in a fire.» Acknowledging this truth, people would bring their offerings

to the holy spirits and, having uttered their prayers, would hand the reins of government to one they had all elected, thenceforth supporting him in all his undertakings, even to the extent of hushing up his faults and praising his merits. They showed due respect for him, they heeded his words and obeyed him without fail; then even influential men did not transgress the bounds of reason. How could they fail to care for people when all were brothers and wealth was held in common?

And another point our people treasured their unity as the holy of holies. If someone called on others for help, invoking the names of the forefathers, everyone would rush in, forgetting all offences and quarrels, to lend a hand, ready to make concessions and sacrifices. As people used to say:

«He who cannot forgive the fault of his neighbour will be offended by a stranger.»

«Brothers may quarrel, but not forswear each other.»

«If six men are in conflict, they lose whatever they have in their hands; but if four are in accord, heavenly grace will descend upon them.»

«He who seeks the right path will find treasure, but he who seeks quarrels will find woe.»

Where is that noble community spirit and concern for honour?

These were safeguarded by staunchness, good conscience and valour. We have them no longer.

Among people today, friendship has nothing to do with friendliness; it is but breach of trust and perfidy.

Enmity stems not from the love of truth, but from our inability to live in peace.

WORD FORTY

How, this is what I would like to ask I you, honoured men.

How come that we speak no ill I of the dead but find no worthy people among the living?

Why do old folks live in peace with the young but constantly quarrel among themselves, even though their contemporaries grow fewer with every passing day?

No sooner does someone happens to leave for foreign parts than everybody starts loving him like a brother. But when he comes back, we compel him to flee from us. Why?

Why is it that seeing some good man from another tribe, people will put themselves out on his behalf and praise his qualities, while among their own kin they will not notice those who surpass the stranger in wisdom and nobility?

When in an alien land, we praise our aul to the skies; on our return, we have nothing but praise for the foreign village. How come?

Why do parents show tender care and kindness to their children so long as they are small, but are cold toward them when they grow up?

Why is it so hard to bring our relatives together on a joyous or sad occasion, yet they will turn up in a body at the first whiff of thievery or brigandage?

Why are your kinsfolk vexed if your horse comes first in the race?

In the old days people would remember someone who had helped them along the road, be it only once, and recall him with gratitude till the end of their days. But nowadays people soon forget about good deeds. Why is that?

Why is it that a bey's son, on growing impoverished, is not ashamed of stealing, but considers it a disgrace to serve another bey?

Why is it that two good men in the same family are unable to get on with each other, while two rascals always make friends?

Why does someone you consider your friend, to whom you have given a good steed, turn away from you as soon as he gets a foal from your enemy?

Why does someone not value a friend with whom he lives in harmony, but is ready to lay down his life for an enemy who has just once rendered him a service?

Why do many of us not wish our friends well, and should one of two friends has a run of good luck, they become bitter enemies?

Why do people seek a person to give them advice, and shun the counsels of those who know them well?

Why do some guests behave as if they had brought all their herds with them, but when they are your hosts, pretend that their herds have all been driven far away?

People yearn for peace and tranquillity, but should peace come to stay, they grow weary of it. Why on earth?

Why is our people ruled by smart alecs, and why are they poor as a rule?

Why is it that junior wives get shrewish? Why are scoundrels bold? Why are some of the poor so conceited?

Why do people who show restraint and live in peace pass for weaklings, while those who are depraved, boastful and trouble-makers are considered bold and daring?

Why will the Kazakhs not hearken to righteous words and find no time for that, but are ready to listen to all kinds of gossip, dirt and slander and won't go away until they hear it out to the end, even if all of their affairs go to pot?

WORD FORTY-ONE

Anyone who plans on teaching and reforming the Kazakh must possess two advantages.

First of all, he must wield great power and immense influence that would enable him to inspire fear in adults and take away their sons to send them to school, where they I would be guided along different paths of knowledge, with the parents shouldering the expenses. It would suffice if girls were taught Islam so as to make at least strong in their religion. In that case, when parents, growing feeble with age, abandoned their regular pursuits, the younger generation would embark on the right path.

Second, he must possess enormous riches, so as to bribe parents into sending their children to school, as we have just said.

Yet no one has sufficient power to inspire fear amongst the people of today. And no one has enough wealth to win over all parents.

It is impossible to persuade the Kazakh, convince him of something, unless you frighten or bribe him. The ignorance inherited from his forefathers and imbibed with his mother's milk has reached his marrow and killed all humanity in him. Such people, when they get together, can think of nothing better to do than make strange grimaces and behave affectedly, whisper and throw out ambiguous hints. Even if they try to think, they are incapable of concentrating on one idea. If you talk to them, they can't even listen to you attentively; their eyes glance here and there and their thoughts wander off.

However shall we live?

What will become of us?

WORD FORTY-TWO

One of the causes of people's inclination to vice is indolence. If the Kazakh had worked the land or engaged in commerce, would he have lived an idle life? But instead he rides from aul to aul on a horse he has begged from someone else, he sponges off other people, spreads gossip and rumours, by guile and duplicity he leads people astray or is himself under the thumb of other scoundrels; he drifts about and does nothing. Anyone who wants to live well and is accustomed to working will consider such life humiliating. Will this person abandon his business and live like a vagabond without any aim or purpose?

He who manages to acquire even a small herd will not be content with his way of life and will not take good care of it; no, he sets off in search of pleasure, leaving his livestock to the care of his herdsmen and children. His animals will thus become an easy prey for all kinds of thieves and predators, and will die in bad weather. The fellow will get over this loss, but he will be unable to overcome the temptation of taking part in secret plots, gossip and petty squabbles. Out to gain importance in the community, he will engage in all kinds of nasty intrigues and dirty tricks.

Others who have attained some affluence also leave their property to the care of strangers — "Now, keep an eye on that!" — and give themselves up to idle chatter, scrounging and roaming around.

Today people do not value high intelligence, a good reputation or wealth; the ability to scribble complaints and the cunning to twist somebody round one's little finger— this is what is respected. He who succeeds in that, poor and destitute though he may be, will be given a place of honour at the table, a fat chunk of meat and a stout horse. Such a scoundrel can easily ingratiate himself with a simple-hearted bey by a bit of blarney—"You just say the word, and I'll go through fire for you!" And this will be enough: without lifting a finger he will be well fed and clothed, ride a fine horse and enjoy general respect.

The bey does not regret his lost peace; he does not count his expenses. Before having a talk with anyone, he seeks advice from this rogue who bows and scrapes for fear of losing the bey's confidence, scared lest other counsellors turn up. «Allah be with you,» the rogue will say obsequiously, «how couldn't you think of such a simple thing?' And off he will go, suggesting vile tricks, one worse than the other, and he will implant suspicion of other people in the bey.

At length the bey himself will no longer be trusted by the people. If some clever man disagrees with the bey and turns away from him, the scoundrel will always be there. «See? Didn't I warn you about them?» And the credulous bey will become putty in his hands.

It is to this the present generation dedicate their minds and will. This is what they live by.

WORD FORTY-THREE

Man is endowed by nature with a body and a soul. One should know which of their properties are innate and which are acquired by toil.

The need for food, drink and sleep is natural, instinctive. The desire to see and learn something comes from a natural instinct, too, but intelligence and learning are gained through work. By hearing with his ears, beholding with his eyes, touching things with his hands, tasting with his tongue and inhaling through his nose, man gets an idea of the surrounding world.

The sensations, pleasant or unpleasant, thus received by the five organs of the senses are ordered in the human mind according to a definite pattern and produce a certain imagery.

To be pleased with the good and to be repelled by the bad are aptitudes natural to man. At first these shoots are very frail. Man must cultivate and amplify these aptitudes, for without due care and attention, they wither and become useless or die. A person who looks and listens a good deal, drawing knowledge from the external world gains much: he will be able to reason lucidly and tell what is useful from what is harmful. A person capable of analysing facts and events is counted among the intelligent.

An ignorant person who cannot think and is unused to work will shift the blame for his idleness to God. «What can I do if God has not given

me brains?» or «God has not made us equal, you and me!» That's how he will try to justify himself.

But did not God enjoin him to look and listen, and to remember what he sees and hears? Did God say: eat your fill, enjoy yourself, be content with boasting and turn into a beast, having lost all spiritual riches?

Other people will argue: «Well, a good mind comes with time, but nature endows us with aspiration. He who is endowed with aptitudes acquires good mind as well. Those who lack aptitudes will remain stupid anyway.» Yet this is wrong, too.

Indeed, small children may have aspiration, that's certain. As we have already said, man's aptitudes, at first weak, should be cultivated and improved. Even a craftsman's skill improves from day to day if he works with enthusiasm. Unless you practise your skills, you may lose them and turn into a different person without even noticing it. Will skill and aptitude, forsaking you, warn you of that in advance? Greater effort is needed to regain them than to preserve them.

Now, mental aptitudes are so varied and diverse that they defy description. The vigour of the human soul can preserve the skills of an acquired trade for a long time. Yet without due care these skills will diminish and in time the very power that helps retain them may run out. It will be impossible to regain this vigour.

The power of the human soul possesses three special properties which must be treasured and cherished, for without them a man becomes an animal.

The first one is called the «driving element». What is it? This force helps us not only to comprehend and hear, but also to vividly perceive cause and effect. Voracious reading is useless without this quality of the mind, for it produces no result. Not having done this or that in good time, not having thought about and said something at the right moment, and being late everywhere, you will fret and be vexed all your life: «What a pity! I should have done this or that at such and such a moment!»

Another is called the «attractive force of the like». Learning something new to you, you start comparing it to similar things. Are they similar in every way or only in some respects? Until you elucidate all the causes of similarity for yourself, enquire about them and verify your suppositions, your mind cannot rest.

And the third property of the human soul, called «sensitivity of the heart». Should you manage to keep your heart from four vices: conceit, cupidity, frivolity and carelessness, the impressions that you receive of this world will be clearly reflected in the mirror-like chastity of your heart. These impressions will provide nourishment for the mind and will be long remembered. But if you do not preserve the purity of your heart, the mirror of your soul will grow dim, and everything will be blurred and distorted in it. And your notions of this world will be warped.

Everything that is gained by work and lies outside you is called wealth. Unless you know all the problems and details of managing a household, you will find it hard to keep your goods. But it is equally hard to keep the spiritual wealth that you have gained—intelligence and learning, which, incidentally, may cause considerable harm as well. Not knowing

of that and losing your vigilance, you may easily forfeit what has been acquired.

There is a measure to everything on earth, the good things of life included. It is a great blessing to have a sense of measure. The ability to think is praiseworthy, true, but some people know no measure in this: carried away, they get lost in their thoughts and lose their common sense.

One ought to show the right measure in eating, drinking, amusing one's self and getting rich, in seeking what is power and even in practising caution and vigilance in order not to be tricked. All that is excessive is evil.

The wise men of old used to say: «In what we seek too persistently we find evil.» You should know that the two qualities of spiritual power which we have defined as «the attractive force of the like» and «the driving element» conceal both the good things and the evil things of this world. Lust for power, selfishness, anger and deception, everything that defiles man, springs from the same source. Therefore man's spiritual vigour should be directed towards improving his good and useful points and nipping in the bud whatever is vicious.

Reason distinguishes the beneficial from the harmful; yet even the force of reason cannot vanquish evil. Only he who unites in himself the force of reason with the force of will can succeed in that. A man combining reason and willpower will be like a swift Arab horse, he will have dominion over everything.

But if these qualities are feeble, or one of them is present and the other is not, your spiritual might will carry you like a wild, unruly steed, flinging you now against the rocks, now into the water, now down into the abyss. You are powerless. Off you dash headlong, pell-mell, with the edges of your chapan flying, and your eyes uplifted to the sky... And till the end of your days you will not wipe out this disgrace.

WORD FORTY-FOUR

He is the most miserable among men who has no aspiration. Yet there are aspirations of different kinds. Those who aspire to something are not all alike in their abilities and strength of will. Talented or not, all of them like to hear praise and are eager for praise, whether merited or not.

People mix with their own kind and sometimes confide their innermost thoughts to them. More often than not, they expect praise from those who live among, but not from complete strangers.

Some long for honour and respect, others yearn for wealth, no matter how they get it, whether by avarice or cunning. «He who has gained wealth has no sin.» Or, «He who is well-off has a beaming face.» This is what they say, knowing that no one is going to censure them for that. They see their honour and merit in wealth. Judging by their perverted ways, this is indeed so. Yet from the standpoint of humanity, this is one of the most obnoxious vices.

Some people are anxious to be lauded as brave men, saints or beys, while others don't mind being called clever tricksters. They will take a pride in notoriety and will try to gain some advantage even from this.

Everybody aspires to something or other, is eager to read, not books though, but people's faces. They watch intently, as if trying to feel your pulse, and reckon: «Well, this must be in favour today, and I could make some profit on that.»

Before gaining knowledge from books, it is first necessary to cleanse the soul and thoughts of filth and only then get down to reading.

If you prefer to read people's faces, there is no point in trying to purify your soul, for no one can see what you have in your soul. It is said: the more folds and notches your soul has, the more solid and invulnerable your prosperity will be. So, judge for yourself what to learn and what to aspire to.

WORD FORTY-FIVE

The proof of the existence of one I God, unique and omnipotent, is that for thousands of years people of different tongues have spoken of God, and, however many religions there might be, all consider that love and justice are the attributes of God.

We are not demiurges, but mortals who know this world by the things created. We are the servants of love and justice. And we differ from one another in how well we comprehend the creations of the Most High.

Believing and worshipping, we must not say that we can force others to believe and worship.

The source of humanity is love and justice. They are omnipresent and decide everything. They are the crown of Divine Creation. Even the way a stallion takes possession of a mare is a manifestation of love.

He who is swayed by the feelings of love and justice is a wise man and a learned man. Unable to invent science and learning, we can only behold and perceive the created world and understand its harmony by our reason.

VOCABULARY OF UNFAMILIAR WORDS

aga: an elder

arshin: an old measuring rod equivalent to 28 inches

aul: village, nomadic community

ay at: quotation from the Qur'an, verse of a surah

batyr: brave warrior, hero

bey (bai): in Central Asia, a wealthy owner of land and livestock

biy: local judge among the Kazakhs

chapan: horseman's cloak or mantle

dombra: stringed musical instrument

dzhigit: expert horseman in the Caucasus and Central Asia

dzhut: mass starvation of cattle in winter resulting in famine Fatihab al-kitab. the first surah of the Qur'an

Hadith: account of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, second only to the Qur'an

hazret: Muslim priest

iman: faith

ishan: lowest rank of clergy

jomart: generous man who does charitable deeds

khadi (cadi): Muslim judge

kobyz: stringed musical instrument

koumiss: mare's milk

myrza: nobleman vested with power, philanthropist

Nogai: Kazakh name for Tatars

nokai: dull, stupid

qibla: orientation towards Mecca and the Black Stone of the sacred Kabah building in that city, to which Muslims turn when praying

surah: chapter of the Qur'an

Surt-Sart: rattle, overtalkative person

tarikah: here, a religious doctrine preaching spiritual self-perception through strict abstinence and complete humility

top-basy: tribal elder

uyezd: larger administrative district

volost: small rural district

yel-basy: tribal chief

