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A HEART-BASED SUFI MINDFULNESS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE EMPLOYING SELF- JOURNEYING

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A HEART-BASED SUFI MINDFULNESS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

EMPLOYING SELF-JOURNEYING

by

Faruk Arslan

Master of Social Work Candidate, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2014

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual Psychology is the study and practice of the art and science of the human evolution of consciousness. The heart occupies an important place in Sufism and is considered to contain the divine spark that leads to spiritual realization. Fethullah Gülen's action-oriented Sufi methods described in his book series "*The Emerald Hills of the Heart*" provides the basis for a heart-based therapeutic intervention through self-journeying, which is the objective of this thesis. These self-purification and mindfulness-related transpersonal methods generate a form of treatment that is culturally sensitive. Through my reflections in this research, I transformed my personal experiences into a transpersonal narrative by writing 80 poems in 80 days, and this output, along with Gülen's teaching methods, techniques and spiritual practices formed the source of my intellectually generated data, and the basis for the new therapy model. It took two forty-day periods in two different cultures—Canada and Turkey—to reach the necessary divine knowledge for discovering the innate power of the spirit. The journey involved seeking freedom from the ego, or the lower self, in order to reach self-awareness and a conception of how to use the self. I also categorized seven different levels of development of the soul, representing the levels or stages of the self, ranging from absolutely self-centered and egotistical to pure spiritual human perfection. My examination of the two forty day periods revealed the seven categories of thankfulness, purity of intention, reflection, patience, truthfulness, trustworthiness and presentation. From these I developed a model for ten weeks of therapy for a specific population. This thesis presents my journey in Fethullah Gülen's Sufi path and an emerging model for a heart-based Sufi mindfulness spiritual practice. In this research, I propose a faith/spirituality-based model of heart-centred psychotherapy rooted in the spiritual philosophy, psychology and discipline of Fethullah Gülen's practice.

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SECTION ONE: RESEARCH BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents my journey in Fethullah Gülen's Sufi path and the emerging model for a heart-based Sufi mindfulness spiritual practice. In this research, I propose a faith/spirituality-based model of heart-centred psychotherapy rooted in the spiritual philosophy, psychology and discipline of Fethullah Gülen's practice. Many people suffer from mental and spiritual shortcomings among some Muslim populations, especially in the Hizmet Movement in Canada and abroad. In fact, humanity's spiritual nature and needs are often ignored; psychology and social work systems have traditionally had little positive regard for the concepts of soul and spirit in solving problems of depression, stress and anxiety (Cunningham, 2006, p 63). Clinicians, social workers, doctors and other health researchers and educators overlook experiential research based on the perspective of positivism and objectivism, and they mostly use the medical model to justify treatment of client needs. The legislation guides this intervention, but in a very constricted way and allows only a euro-centric theoretical perspective to guide social workers' interventions in this area. Existing theories address poorly the real problems that the client group faces. Current Canadian legislation and policy structure are unable to meet clients' needs. In my opinion, counselling changes are needed to address the impact of power relations on the service structure. The medical model must recognize and use an alternative talking cure, using in particular the Sufi mindfulness and spiritual practice models outlined in this thesis. These models should be included in policy, legislation and existing service structures, because of the way that spirituality can alter the world, client experience and the social worker. I

would like to offer a Sufi path and an emerging model for a heart-based Sufi therapy, and suggest its potential use in spiritual psychology and social work.

What is Sufism?

Sufism is a lovely, light-giving, and spiritual truth known under various terms: *tariqa* (spiritual order or way), sainthood (being God's friend), initiation, and following a spiritual order or way (Nursi, 2007, p. 426). Sufis are convinced, through the pleasure and enlightenment received and the ability of spiritual discovery acquired, that the *Sharia's* commands and principles are of Divine origin and the truth (Nursi, 2007, p.427). In Islam, "Sufism is the path followed by individuals who, having been able to free themselves from human vices and weaknesses in order to acquire angelic qualities and conduct pleasing to God, live in accordance with the requirements of God's knowledge and love, and experience the resulting spiritual delight that ensues" (Gülen, 2006, p. xii). Spiritual Psychology is the study and practice of the art and science of human evolution in consciousness. Spiritual practice is a prominent spiritual tradition, enhancing the socio-psychological well-being of a large number of people, not only in Islam, but also in Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and many other belief systems. In fact, many of our social work clients have spiritual beliefs that are of great importance to them, but Canadian human services, including social work, psychology and psychiatry, have become the places most commonly turned to in times of crisis, inheriting a role that was once reserved for priests and ministers. Social workers are being challenged to honor the spiritual issues woven into the concerns clients bring to them (McKernan, 2005). Spiritual orientations and practices provide freedom from the self and the ego. Spiritual psychotherapy has been gaining in popularity and acceptance within the mental health services, offering alternative healing methods and extending the range of therapeutic interventions in social work practice.

A modern day Sufi master, Fethullah Gülen, accepted afresh the thinking of Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi (the greatest Sufi master in the 13th century), and started a social movement called “Hizmet” in the 1960s. In this research, I provide a faith/spirituality-based model of heart-centred psychotherapy, which is rooted in the philosophy and practice of Gülen’s spirituality used within the Hizmet Movement.

The purpose of this research is to study the roots of Fethullah Gülen’s Sufi path as found in his Sufi masterpiece “*Kalbin Zumrut Tepeleri*” (hereafter referred to as *The Emerald Hills of the Heart*) in which preference is given to the well-being and happiness of the other, providing solutions to depression, stress and anxiety problems. Gülen doesn’t accept that he is a Sufi master, but Gülen’s way of living can be described as a Sufi life-style. As an individual he provides a transpersonal sincerity approach which is an inclusive, holistic model of practice, enabling the social work practitioner to provide clients “a bio-psycho-social-spiritual framework for personal empowerment, development, and growth” (Cowley, 1996, p.66). The research also includes an account of self-journeying experiences with a transpersonal narrative because Gülen’s Sufism texts are complex and complicated, difficult to understand, and need to be simplified to extract useful techniques and guidelines for spiritual practice and psychotherapy. My interpretation of Gülen’s teaching methods, techniques and spiritual practices offers spiritual-transformational work for the healing of soul and spirit.

My interpretation of Gülen’s Sufi writings includes the use of poetry as a social innovation method and mindfulness as a means of making use of my poetical writings for reflexive analysis. My contribution provides a context for Spiritual discipline in therapy, and extracts 40 key concepts of Sufism from more than 250 concepts, which can be related to this Sufi therapy and personal healing method. Examining Gülen’s action-oriented Sufi therapy

provides a heart-based intervention through true self-purification and mindfulness-related transpersonal methods, which in turn generate a form of treatment based on culturally sensitive methods of healing. Spiritual teaching as an Eastern therapy model has already found its place in the curriculum of many medical schools in the Western world (Sims 1994, Puchaski, 2001, p. 4-5). Sufi spiritual practice provides significant guidelines for social work among specific client populations because Sufism offers collected wisdom transmitted down through the centuries. Through use of this wisdom, a person can proceed towards a transformed mentality and obtain a deeper love, more positive character traits and courage in order to work for the improvement of society (Michel, 2005, p. 347).

Similar to Sufism, the science of Spiritual Psychology and social work concentrate on the heart, but Sufism also respects the body and mind. For Sufis, the heart is the source of human truth as it is the centre for all emotions, intellectual and spiritual faculties. Spiritual health of the heart is vital for the health of the whole body and that is the basis of the heart-based Sufi mindfulness therapy. Transpersonal, or “beyond the personal,” is a term apparently independently introduced by William James and C.G. Jung to refer to spiritual experience (Krippner, 1998). The transpersonal method pushes the boundaries of structural social work in ways that that can be seen as postmodern, possibly even as post-structural constructivism (Linehan, 1993). As a therapy approach or orientation, transpersonal practitioners are concerned with bridging psychology and spirituality, either by directly facilitating spiritual growth, or by attempting to facilitate the healthful integration of spiritually-referenced experiences into adaptive psychological adjustment (Hutton, 1994; Walsh, 1992). Expanded use of transpersonalism in social work practice may grow out of an understanding of the context, content, and process of transpersonal psychotherapy (Vaughan, 1979, p.144).

How does Gülen define Sufism?

Defining Sufism as the “science of esoteric truths or mysteries,” or the “science of humanity's spiritual states and stations,” or the “science of initiation,” does not mean that it is completely different from other religious sciences. Such definitions have resulted from the *Shari'a*-rooted experiences of various individuals, all of whom have had different temperaments and dispositions, and who lived at different times. Everybody is different and everybody can have different experiences. Gülen defines early Sufis as distinguished, saintly people who led upright, honest, austere, simple and blemish-free lives and considered Sufism as the science of humanity's inner world, the reality of things and the mysteries of existence (Gülen, 2009, p. xviii).

Gülen is considered one of the most influential Turkish Islamic scholars of his generation with his Sufi-oriented message of love and compassion. The movement he initiated in the late 1960s now has millions of participants. It has founded and runs hundreds of modern educational institutions, as well as having print and broadcast media outlets and dialogue-based organizations and societies. The author of more than sixty-five books, Gülen has dedicated a lifetime to promoting peaceful interrelationships within and between different communities, societies, cultures and religious traditions (Ahmed, 2009, p.x). The Hizmet (Gülen) Movement is centred on human rights-centred godly works of love, compassion, justice, respect and an enhanced quality of life for all of humanity. It inspires people across Canada, provides the values of the Divine, and is transmitted across the globe, with many objective individuals finding the work of Fethullah Gülen captures their hearts, much like the work of the Dali Lama or Mother Teresa (Jolly, 2010). Gülen's most significant contribution to Sufi literature is his emphasis on action. For Gülen, action is as vital as belief, and belief can be sustainable only if it is supported with

action. Action is an inseparable aspect of Sufism and contemporary Muslims who are willing to live according to the principles of Sufism should be actively involved in the community, sharing their experiences with others, and striving to help others and bringing peace to the community (Gokcek, 2006, p. 64).

The Hizmet Movement is based on a secular and modern education model which promotes cultural tolerance and moral values exemplified by role-model teachers. The form and structure of the Movement with its sub-organization is a new, modern manifestation of Sufism, and Gülen's form of Sufism itself offers a new paradigm (Yavuz, 2004, p. 370). Gülen aims to establish connections between various multicultural, ethnic, local and religious communities, emphasizing "tolerance, peaceful coexistence and religious broadmindedness through school, interfaith and intercultural dialogue activities" (Gokcek, 2006, p.66). The Hizmet movement has involved diverse people in Turkey and abroad in 180 countries, including Canada, mobilizing inactive positive energies and turning them into meaningful and mindful collective actions, and "his approaches embrace modernity without fear" (Cetin, 2009, p. 152).

Gülen refreshes personal spirituality in the lives of the Movement's members to aid their interaction with modernity. It reveals neither exclusive personal mysticism nor the communal experience found in *tariqas* (sect or order) (Yavuz, 2004, p. 374). Gülen's conceptualization of his embedded Sufi life is highlighted by four characteristics: "Islamic spirituality, Sufism without Sufi orders, socially engaged Sufism and dialogic Sufism" (Kim, 2008, p. 357). Gülen reformulates and represents Said Nursi's idea of 'Sufism without Sufi orders' whereas he sees Sufis as the seekers of spiritual progress in the happiness of others (Kim, 2008, p. 367).

How does his definition of Sufism differ from an Orientalist definition? Sufism refers to an Islamic science with its own methods, principles, and rules, and as pure esotericism and/or exotericism in that it satisfies those who are content with merely exoteric practices, but nevertheless also contains the deepest and most profound esoteric meaning for those who desire a closer, more mystical relationship with God (Koc, 2006).

Gülen sees Sufism as the humanitarian love that is the solution for providing inner peace to many individuals. Sufism requires strict spiritual self-discipline and the obligation that the individual's heart be purified and his or her senses and faculties employed in the way of God, which means that the traveler can then begin to live on a spiritual level (Gülen, 2006, p. xx). This is an ancient spiritual tradition of learning how to know your heart and to act, a discipline that adjusts to the needs of the individual, and the time and place in which the individual is found. Sufi practices are applicable to daily modern life regardless of one's spiritual direction and fits with modernity, according to Gülen's wisdom (Ladinsky & Ansari, 2012). Sufis focus on improving the quality of their hearts and share qualities like humility, asceticism, pietism and dedication to good deeds, and Gülen utilizes this religious language well in shaping the hearts and minds of his students along these lines. The intention is not to turn them into religious zealots, but into social workers who strive for the betterment of humanity in general. He describes his students as dervishes, angels, philosophers, ascetics, holy mentors, healers and similarly as the altruistic Companions of the Islamic Golden Age (Gülen, 2009, p. 12).

First of all, my study focuses on the way Gülen, as my Sufi master, facilitated my healing with his civil, moral, and holistic engagement model through his Sufi writings, which constitute a faith/spirituality based model of heart-centered psychotherapy rooted in spiritual philosophy and practice. My thesis is original - in other words, to my knowledge, this topic has never been

studied before in Canada or abroad. I want to make a positive difference to human systems, organizations and communities world-wide, based on the spirituality, values and social responsibility that emerge from my research. The new spiritual practice mindfulness model and guideline that I propose may offer a new pathway to social altruism with the potential to alter the culturally sensitive alternative and personal therapeutic approach for some individuals, thereby filling the gaps in social work practice for healing others.

My Relationship with Hizmet

Personally, I have belonged to the Hizmet Movement for thirty years as a student, teacher, journalist, writer and volunteer. I have read Gülen's books and listened to Gülen's teachings. I have been following Gülen for several decades and, knowing his spiritual practice personally, have sought to achieve in this research a model for Sufi Spiritual Guidance based on his understanding of Sufi practice. An advantage of the insider role is that it enables access to Gülen's perspective through "The Emerald Hills of the Heart" in both English and Turkish versions, and, as a result of my insider privilege and purity of intention, I am comfortably able to interpret concepts of Sufism and answer questions using a personal narrative and am also ready to experience the Sufi stages. To minimize the pitfalls of my insider position, I tried to manage my biases and guard against inaccurate distortions when analyzing any strong dissenting views, especially when considering the likelihood and impact of a potential risk. I engaged in debriefing my work with my supervisor and three of Gülen's students who I asked to examine my study and reduce any biases that resulted from me being an insider in this study.

On the other hand, as a researcher, my study is profoundly informed by Fetullah Gülen's philosophy. However, my relationship to the political aspects of the Hizmet movement led by Gülen does not impact my work, nor does my personal relationship with Gülen, and I was not commissioned to do this work by the Gülen movement. Rather, I draw on the deep wells of this teaching and show how they affect my self-journeying during two *Erbain* periods in Canada and Turkey, while experiencing the Sufi stages and writing poetry as a part of my reflection process. I conceptualize this process in simple poetry that provides applicable poetic quotations and thereby creates an effective Sufi therapy model for social work and spiritual practice. This journeying experience can be varied from person to person.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Sufi Tradition and Gülen's Perspective

Sufism is a form of Islamic mysticism, although there is a gap in the literature, particularly in terms of how to understand and interpret Sufism. There are numerous publications about the Hizmet Movement and Gülen himself, but these were mostly designed for popular consumption and a general audience, and not for academia. These publications thus lack objective positioning regarding Sufism. According to Gokcek (2006), “Gülen does not establish a Sufi order in its common meaning, but instead he lays down basic principles for a Sufi life in the modern world, with a Sufi conception of morality found at the centre of the Hizmet movement” (Gokcek, 2006, p. 64). A *tariqa* is a path or Sufi order and consists of a group of followers. A *tariqa* has a *shaykh*, a *murshid* or “guide” who plays the role of leader or spiritual director of the organization. The relation and the similarities that the movement has with the Sufi tradition, and the characteristics it shows distinguishing it from the Sufi *tariqahs*, have led some scholars to call the movement “quasiSufi,” “Sufioriented” (Kim, 2005) or “postSufism” (Yavuz, 2004). The term “postSufism” refers to a new individualistic Sufism model without belonging to any sect that is in a way the integration of every single personality into Sufi networks and circles regardless of their origin, ethnicity, race, religion etc. On the other hand, Williams (2005) and Yavuz (2004) define the followers of postSufism as a ‘social movement’ rather than a Sufi *tariqah*. Elisabeth Ozdalga (2005) claims that the movement’s social network is different from traditional Sufi lodges.

Sarioprak (2001) calls Gülen “a Sufi in his own way,” and says his approach helps social restoration and peace building starting from individuals, groups, and families to whole societies. This is a style of “bottom-up” social change which is similar to that of the famous Muslim

sociologist Ibn Khaldun, who has an understanding of building peace in which philosophy, individual efforts and sacrifices remain essential for the Sufi belief system. Khaldun says, “Peace in society is possible through willingness of an individual to subordinate to the group. Without this, peace and social development are not possible” (Saritoprak, 2001, 2007). Gülen’s modernist Sufi theology and philosophy is predicated on the rehabilitation and vernacular adaptation of modern science in new ways, appropriating its methods and potentialities to enable some Muslim subjects to achieve mastery of the world (Gulay, 2007, p.21). Gülen holds that the tendency toward factionalism exists within human nature and also within the Sufi culture through self-purification. A pointed goal should be to make this tendency non-threatening and even beneficial for the target Muslim population. Without a positive channel for its outlet within humans, this tendency develops in negative directions. This is especially the case when ignorance, uncivilized behavior and extremism contribute in fomenting social diseases such that societies come to fight each other, severely and incessantly (Saritoprak & Griffith 2005, p. 425). By contrast, as knowledge, gnosis and tolerance spread, society will approach the “line of peace” towards understanding and social reconciliation (Gülen, 1998, pp. 72-74).

In fact, Gülen’s Sufi philosophy directs the organic interconnectedness between one’s inner spirituality and outer acts of piety, which are to be reflected, enriched and perfected by the individual’s interaction with society. This is highlighted in his idea of a socially engaged Sufism, which is portrayed as a synthesis of sobriety, activity and sociality. Gülen is convinced, and tries to convince others, that genuine Sufis are the seekers of spiritual progress in the increased happiness of others (Kim, 2008, pp.366-367). Gülen stresses the inter-connectedness of ‘internalization and externalization’ in faith. This idea of socially engaged Sufism is a reactivation of the Turkish Anatolian Sufi tradition, distinguishing itself in a contemporary

context in which, as Michel describes, “many Sufis divorce themselves from real life and engage in useless metaphysical speculation” (Michel, 2005, p. 348).

The historical development of Sufism and Sufi practice in Islam can be periodized in many ways. The most common periodization is thus: following from the Age of Happiness (the time of the Prophet and His companions), the period of asceticism, period of *tasawwuf*, period of “unity of Being”, period of *tariqa* (orders), and finally, to the present (Kara, 1985, p. 77). Gülen refers to many examples connected with the Age of Happiness, but he also follows in his *Emerald Hills of the Heart* many other Sufi scholars who “mostly belong to the period of *tasawwuf*” and offers a positive psychotherapy and Sufi therapy model through his teachings (Gokcek, 2006, p. 67). Mohamad Shatii (1989) states that Sufism and psychotherapy both are distinguished between primary process and secondary process thinking, and he even talks about these phenomena in remarkably similar terms. Similar to psychotherapy, Sufi therapy places an emphasis on the relationship between the seeker and the guide. Both methods have the ability for the therapist to experience momentary oneness with the patient, the experience of serenity, security, competence and confidence (Shatii, 1989, p. 157).

Gülen’s writings are one of the best sources for discovering Sufi therapy and are worth studying, exploring and extracting data, for purposes of new knowledge production. In Gülen’s rationale, doing service for others’ happiness is an imperative way of reflecting and strengthening ‘Godconsciousness’ in daily life, as the vertical relation of one’s consciousness with God leads him/her to be humble in his/her horizontal relationship and enables him/her to love others. This humanitarian love motivates one to actively engage in ‘service for humanity’ (Kim, 2008, p. 367).

As human beings, our existence is beyond the limits of this body, and the reality of all our existences and bodies is in fact a shadow. Humans have become different from animals through reason, heart, light, and inner senses. According to Gülen, the rational side of human nature must conquer and control the carnal, lower self. There is an opposition between body and spirit, a kind of warfare and struggle between reason and the carnal self in which the body prevails in most people. Gülen's view of the limit of reason and the existence of God opens another path, not the one illuminated by reason, but one which Rumi says that a Sufi must follow in order to attain union with God within the hearts of hearts, which is the purpose of human existence (Casey, 2002, p. 31). There is a strong Sufi tradition in which God says, "I wanted to be known, therefore, I have created humankind." The desire to be known is hidden in the concept of love and God loves to be known and loved (Can, 2005, p. 155).

Soltes (2013) demonstrates in his book *Embracing the World: Fethullah Gülen's Thought and Its Relationship to Jalauddin Rumi and Others* that, as a practitioner of Sufism, Gülen is in part inspired by legendary mystics like Rumi and Muhammad ibn Ali al-'Arabi, but offers his own distinctive understanding of mysticism's role in the world. Gülen, like the early Sufis, is passionate about the concept of love—its strength, power and potential. Soltes describes Gülen's lifelong ambition of achieving world-wide peace through tolerance and also through altruistic actions. The Turkish word for service, *hizmet*, summarizes Gülen's charge to those who are inspired by him to turn words into deeds that serve towards shaping a better world (Soltes, 2013, p.12).

In fact, Rumi and Gülen offer a heart-based mindfulness but don't reject reason; instead their vision suggests that a person who uses reason wisely, that is, in a regulatory role, will discover the true path to human fulfillment in God. Reason that is allied to Faith is like a just

police inspector; it is the guardian and magistrate of the city of the heart (Can, 2005, p.182). The faculty of the material mind provides us with many benefits, and distinguishes us from the animals, but to finally attain God, we have to follow another path, the path of love. There is a “spiritual reason” superior to “material reason” and this faculty is really only a metaphor for a mystical love and understanding of God (Can, 2005, p.182). I explored Gülen’s clarifying concept of the relationship between love and reason, which suggests there is an even stronger light for the mind than material reason, and that is love, and the ultimate goal of the union of friends is to achieve union or oneness with the ultimate being, God (Casey, 2002, p. 31). A Sufi mystic finds ecstasy beyond words because love is ultimately ineffable, and is something that has to be experienced and to be understood (Chittick, 2005, p. 194).

Sufi Psychology

Islamic psychology, or *Ilm-al Nafsiat* (psychological sciences), refers to the study of the *Nafs* and is related to psychology, psychiatry, and neurosciences (Deuraseh and Abu Talib, 2005). *Al-ilaj al-nafsy* (psychological therapy) in Islamic medicine is simply defined as the study of mental illness and is equivalent to psychotherapy, as it deals with the curing/ treatment of ideas, soul and vegetative mind. The psychiatric physician is referred to as *alatabib al-ruhani or tabib al-qalb* (spiritual physician) (Deuraseh and Abu Talib, 2005). The modern discipline of psychology began in the 19th century. In the pre-modern Islamic context, the term "psychology" referred to the study of the human mind and behaviour, while the term "mind" referred to human intellect and consciousness.

Gülen’s books, sermons, and speeches support spiritual practice as a form of psychotherapy because he encourages Sufi mindfulness, dealing with the self and reaching self-purification based on the heart-based attitude of helping others. His thinking has certain key

attitudes similar to Rumi's teaching, including the so-called "attitudinal foundations: being non-judgmental and accepting or observing without evaluation; being patient; having "a beginner's mind," i.e., meeting every situation as if for the first time; trusting one's intuition; non-striving and experiencing the present moment without focusing on future goals; and letting-go, in the sense of neither grasping nor pushing away" (Mirdal, 2012, p. 1205). These principles are comparable to the five key concepts of Gülen's mindfulness morality: "observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging of inner experience and non-reactivity to inner experience" (Baer et al., 2006). Gülen's teaching resembles the teaching techniques of Rumi, since his writings and poems cover very similar theories and techniques of healing within the Sufi perspective. According to Gülen, mindfulness empowers an element of acceptance that differentiates it from other forms of treatment that also use meditation. Gülen's way of Sufi life and therapy offers a simple lifestyle with a Sufi order or can be practised without following any sect, cult or order.

Research question(s)

My main objective is to explore a faith/spirituality based model or guideline for a heart-centered psychotherapy that is rooted in the spiritual philosophy, psychology, discipline and practice of Fethullah Gülen's Sufi way. That is, I will expound upon the fruits of self-journeying. My main research question is: How do I immerse myself in Gülen's Sufi teachings to experience healing and extract healing principles from his Sufi interpretations? Then my sub-questions are:

- 1) What healing principles can I glean from my immersion in Gülen's Sufi practice model?
- 2) How does the Sufi path benefit therapeutic practice in social work as an alternative model?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Ontology

Ontology refers to the nature of reality and, in Sufism, reality is put in place by the Creator. In Sufism, there are numerous names and qualities of the Creator, and there are different metaphysical worlds for those names and qualities (which are manifest by means of theophanies) in different levels. According to Gülen, these worlds are *ʿlem-i Lahut*, *ʿlem-i Rahamut*, *ʿlem-i Ceberut*, and *ʿlem-i Melekut* (Gülen, 2000, p.120). *ʿLem-i Lahut* is the world of divinity. It is the world of *vahidiyet*, the unseen of the unseen, the hidden treasure, the limitless world, and the world beyond the worlds. It is bordered by the signs of *vahidiyet*, known by its names, and encompassed by its qualities. It is interesting that although Gülen acknowledges this world as the world of *ehadiyet* while he discusses his understanding of *ehadiyet* and *vahidiyet*, (Gülen, 2000, pp.130-140), he nevertheless prefers to explain it as the world of *vahidiyet* when he speaks of metaphysical worlds (Gülen, 2000, p.123).

Gülen emphasises the words *ehadiyet* and *vahidiyet* because it is important to understand the Daoist approach to Mystery, which Gülen describes as part of the Sufi elaboration of this, in conjunction with the Islamic emphasis on revelation. Richard K. Kuri (2007) looks at Gülen's Sufism, and continues with the Kantian retreat into Mystery in view of the modern aversion to religious authority and explicit religious discourse. He ends by agreeing with Gülen's synthesizing thought in the light of lessons learned both from the distant past and from the increasingly apparent shortcomings of modernity (Khuri, 2007). *ʿLem-i Lahut*, asserts Gülen, is the intersection of divine tasks, holy qualities, and beautiful names. It is the first entification and the first comprehensive mirror for the theophany of God, a theophany that includes every material and supra-sensory being, their attributes and qualities, their beginning and their end,

their development and changing. It is even the source of our being, senses, feelings, thoughts, and actions. It is the world which corresponds to the name Allah (Gülen, 2000, pp.123-124).

The second metaphysical world, which is located under the *'alem-i Lahut*, is the *'alem-i Rahamut*. The *'alem-i Rahamut* is the world into which the mercifulness and beneficence of God open. Therefore, the existence of all animals and plants, their life, their reproduction, their harmony, cooperation, and order in all the levels of life are reflections of this world. Moreover, the compassion, help, and kindness that humans receive through their spiritual and physical attributes are echoes of *'alem-i Rahamut*. In other words, the general compassion and mercy that the whole universe receives is the reflection of *'alem-i Lahut*, while the mercy and compassion that every single being receives according to his ability is the reflection of *'alem-i Rahamut* (Gülen, 2000, p.125).

The third metaphysical world is the *'alem-i Ceberut*. It is known as a mirror for the theophany of God's names and qualities. This world is also related to destiny. Therefore, it is related to the individuals who are the subject of destiny as well. It is in this world, the *'alem-i Ceberut*, where all beings and occurrences are processed, but in a general sense. In contrast, they are subject to being processed in the *'alem-i Meleket* individually (Gülen, 2000, pp.126-127). The *'alem-i Meleket* is the last metaphysical world in Gülen's cosmology. It is the last level of angelic beings and is the ceiling of the *'alem-i Mulk*. In fact, *'alem-i Meleket* is closely related to human perfection. If the heart of a human is open to the *Meleket*, it is vaster than the deserts. The spiritual bounties that come from the *'alem-i Meleket* are the power, the treasure, and the foundation of the spirit. Therefore, no one can neglect the value of *'alem-i Meleket*. Otherwise, they would be in danger of losing everything (Gülen, 2000, p.128). Besides this four-part structure of metaphysical worlds, there is another way to explain these metaphysical realms.

According to this second formulation, there are four worlds: *'lem-i Emr*, *'lem-i Halk*, *'lem-i Gayb*, and *'lem-i Şehadet*. In this manner, the things that are related with the order of God, like mind, spirit, self, consciousness, senses, and comprehension are considered in *'lem-i Emr*, the world of the [Divine] command (*emr*). On the other hand, physical beings and things related to time are considered to be in the *'lem-i Halk*, the world of creation (Gülen, 2000, p. 122). The *'lem-i Gayb* is the world of the unseen. The beings that cannot be sensed through our five senses are considered to be in this world. Therefore, the *'lem-i Gayb* includes *'lem-i Lahut*, *'lem-i Rahamut*, *'lem-i Ceberut*, and *'lem-i Melekut*, which are the hierarchically ordered worlds (from highest to lowest) at the different levels of the unseen realm (Gülen, 2000, p.122). The *'lem-i Şehadet* is the world of the seen. It is the world that we can sense through our five senses. The *'lem-i Halk* (The World of Creation), *'lem-i Madde* (The World of Matter), *'lem-i Cisim* (The World of Body), *'lem-i Suret* (The World of Form), and so many worlds that are mentioned with different names are representations of this world from slightly different perspectives and with slightly different emphases. Although the *'lem-i Emr*, *'lem-i Halk*, *'lem-i Gayb*, and *'lem-i Şehadet* are designated by distinctly different names, they are in fact intermingled worlds. The relationship between these worlds is the relationship of inner and outer. These worlds, however, as places of theophanies of names, qualities and even tasks of Lordship, are different from each other. Even their entification levels are different from each other (Gülen, 2000, p. 122). Everything is the Being of the Creator and the being of the creation.

Epistemology

Knowledge, as understood in the Sufi tradition within Islam, is generally described in terms of gnosis acquired through unveiling. And indeed, the writings of Fethullah Gülen are grounded in his multiple experiences of unveiling. Gülen points to these experiences in different

parts of his works through the use of a number of concepts and phrases such as *ilham* (inspiration), *sünihat* (accesses), *hads* (spiritual analogy), *tuluat* (offshoots) and *tahattur* (remembering). Besides these references to unveiling in the writings of Gülen, four sources of gnosis, namely Muhammad (pbuh), the Universe, the Quran and Conscience appear as other important aspects of Gülen's Sufi epistemology (Eris, 2006, p. 100).

In Sufism, knowledge is a type of information which can be obtained through the human senses or through the revelations and inspirations of God. A key understanding of Sufi life or a Sufi order means remove unnecessary needs from your life and solve the ego problem with your heart. Sufism emphasizes a spiritually meaningful life in contrast to a materialized and monotonous life style. Sometimes Sufism is understood as information that is relevant to an unseen reality or to gaining true understanding of a subject. Knowledge in Islam can be categorized in different ways according to different bases.

When categorized according to its methods, Gülen divides it into two groups: knowledge that is obtained through the intellect and knowledge that is obtained through transmission. Knowledge that is obtained by transmission is also of two kinds and that knowledge which is called discovered through Islamic spirituality and inspiration can be either abstract or direct (Eris, 2006, p. 103). Gülen states that at the beginning of unveiled knowledge, the inner faculties of the Sufi's heart begin to face toward God (Gülen, 2001). He explains that the Sufi begins his journey with abstract knowledge, and this knowledge leads the Sufi to belief. Then, belief generates detailed knowledge; and detailed knowledge leads to an intense spiritual life. Finally, this practice generates direct knowledge and perfect goodness (Gülen, 2006. p 59).

According to mainstream Sufi understanding and also Fethullah Gülen, there are five spiritual layers between us and Gods essence, and the realm of qualities ranks at the third level.

The first layer between us and Gods essence is Gods actions, followed, second, by His names. The third layer is his qualities. The fourth is Gods affairs (*şen*) and the fifth one is His essence. In this picture, each layer inclines towards the closest upper layer; and finally, all of them incline towards Gods essence (Gülen, 2005, p.321).

For Gülen, God's essence is unknowable to humans. The knowledge which we can obtain about His essence is through His qualities, names, and actions. God is known to us through His names, and He encompasses us with His qualities. This is the final point of human knowledge about Him. What is beyond this point can be known only by certain people who have been given the gift to understand Allah through their feelings, intuitions, and spiritual tastes. However, this type of knowledge is a special type of knowledge and is not attainable for most human beings (Eris, 2006, p. 130). For Gülen, the qualities of God are separate from Gods essence, and they are a curtain for His essence. Although Gülen accepts the statement of Sunni Muslim Theologians that Gods qualities are neither joined with him nor separate from him, in his Sufi approach he prefers to consider them separate from Gods essence. Therefore, according to Gülen, God is not alive because of the quality of *hayat* (life). Instead, He is alive because of His essence. Similarly, He is not a knower due to the quality of *ilm* (knowledge), but He is a knower due to His essence. On the other hand, His qualities are a curtain for His essence and thereby not His essence. As Gods inaccessibility necessitates making causes in nature a curtain for His actions, the radiance of His essence necessitates making qualities as a curtain before His essence too. Gülen also asserts that human qualities are a shadow of Gods qualities; however, there are some differences between the two. Although human qualities are reflections of Gods qualities, they have a beginning and an ending. Moreover, their continuation is dependent on Gods qualities (Eris, 2006, p.130).

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework is transpersonal spirituality based on a developmental perspective that acknowledges access to "higher" levels of being, that is, to the "unitive self or Real Self' beyond the personal" that is metaphysical and transcendent person (Cowley, 1993, p. 527). This is similar to Gülen's description of transcendent sincerity that leads me to transpersonal psychoanalytic approaches and incorporate diverse worldviews. Existential theory, for example, focuses on meaning-making, and it operates from a perspective that emphasizes that authentic meaning comes from personal experiences of a transpersonal or sacred nature (Canda, 2006). Transpersonal Psychodynamic Theories look at psychotherapy as healing for the soul (Cowley, 1993). Carl Jung's version explains the categories of preconscious, personal unconscious, and collective unconscious as universal potentials for meaning which he terms "archetypes" and synchronicity (Canda & Furman, 1999a, Canda & Smith 2001). Roberto Assagioli invokes misidentification with the sub-personalities of the lower unconscious and making contact with the higher conscious - that so-called "Transpersonal Self" (Assagioli, 1973, 1993, Robbins et al, 2006). Then there is Abraham Maslow, who developed the theory of Self-Actualization and Self-Transcendence based on the notion of living with dignity and worth, rather than living based on principles of acquisitiveness/materialism (Cowley, 1993).

There is no unified theory as yet, since 'transpersonal' is an umbrella term, covering a multitude of theories, and debates about them continue. Transpersonal social work literature is a newly developing area (Canda & Furman, 1999b). Spirituality/Transpersonal practices are not often taught as part of social work education. "Transpersonal content refers to any experience in which an individual transcends the limitations of identifying exclusively with the ego or personality" and captures the heart of truth (Vaughan, 1979, p. 104). Transpersonal content

encompasses the discussion of "paranormal" and/or spiritual phenomena (Boorstein, 1986, p. 123). Such experiences are not valued as the goal of therapy, but rather as potential resources for growth and empowerment. Gülen sees that sometimes a psychological difficulty may cause a physical illness as similarly an occurrence in the body may cause a psychological change in the spirit. All of these interactions occur through the self (Gülen, 2005, p. 254).

Transpersonalism provides an opportunity to enhance the worker's ability to respect and honour client self-determination, facilitates bio-psycho-social-spiritual growth and development, and empowers even the most vulnerable in our society (Cowley, 1996). It is a method inclusive of all spiritual traditions and holistic, and one which seeks to effect structural change by focusing on expanding individual, group, and societal consciousness to transcend the paradigm of modernity in order to attain non-dualism, oneness, and interconnectedness. Challenges to dualistic thinking mean that the personal and the political are one similar to feminist formulation, and are inextricably interconnected, rather than being seen as juxtaposed. Personal experience is validated and behaviour is legitimized rather than being pathologized. Social worker and client, as seekers, are empowered through a process of growth and development through mutual self-knowledge, self-care, and self-validation (Cowley, 1993, 1996). A transpersonal approach to client care encompasses realms of expanding consciousness, unitive social and spiritual connectedness, and human purpose and potentiality.

The reason that people are good or bad is commonly reduced to anthropological descriptions of human types and to the choices and life styles that correspond to these. According to Gülen, the 20th century interpreted humanity in terms of the body, focusing on biological transformations, and defining the human being as a thinking animal. Consistent with these

criteria, people began to seek fun, selfish advantages, carnal gratification, the pleasures of their body, and animal-like happiness. They forgot their souls, noble ideals, spiritual gains, and the pleasures of the heart (Gülen, 2006, pp. 11-12). As a result, a style of life in the service of carnal desires became popular. This caused the real human being to become lost, despite the fact that all were created to embody religion and strive to uphold moral values, noble merits, and art (Eris, 2006, p. 148).

A holistic model of practice is more comprehensive with the incorporation of the "phenomenological, the intuitive and the transpersonal" (Cowley, 1996, p. 668). A transpersonal approach affords the worker added context, content, and processes for addressing environmental, societal, and cultural stressors, non-pathologic transnational phenomena, and the grief associated with human existential suffering. Spiritual seeking is a valid and healthy human urge (Rowan, 1993, Cowley, 1993, Canda & Furman, 1999). Personal or personality development, in a psychotherapeutic context, is explained in terms of the "three forces" theory (Cowley, 1996). The First Force is psychoanalytic, the Second Force is behavioral, and the Third Force is humanistic. The First Force deals with unconscious drives and impulses mainly from a pathological viewpoint. The Second Force, with its empirical focus, speaks to the process of socialization and learning theory. The Third Force is associated with humanistic, experiential and existential theory. Often associated with Abraham Maslow, Third Force self-actualization forms the philosophical basis for a further Fourth Force of psychology which Maslow describes (Cowley, 1996, p. 667).

For Gülen, there are four forces for self-actualization, for instance, main core conscience (*vicdan*) is a mechanism that comprises four different faculties: will, lordly ability (*rabbaniye*), consciousness, intellect and senses. Will is a part of *vicdan* through which a human being

differentiates, and then chooses, right from wrong. "Lordly ability" is a dimension of the heart. Consciousness colored intellect is another tool of *vicdan*, and the senses are its hands. The human being feels through them. Human beings feel desire for belief, gnosis, love, and knowledge as long as the faculties of *vicdan* are alive (Gülen, 2003, p.290).

One of the functions of *vicdan* is to feel its poverty, helplessness, and its needs, in addition to recognizing that God is the only power who can help it fulfill its needs. Because of that function, *vicdan* can turn to its Lord with belief and thank the bounties of God by means of gnosis, love, and enthusiasm (Gülen, 2003, p.290). Spiritual intellect and senses takes the training of the ego as its primary discipline, and for this to occur, Sufi tradition has developed diverse spiritual practices. Gülen elaborately details various spiritual practices in his comprehensive study of Sufi terminology, *The Emerald Hills of the Heart*, to show the ways the heart is oriented toward love for humanity and divinity. Many of his writings, including *The Emerald Hills of the Heart*, refer to how this was accomplished by great Sufi saints like Jalal al-Din Rumi, Yunus Emre, Ahmad Sirhindi and Khalid al-Baghdadi. Gülen directs the readers to those who are appreciated not simply for their respective spiritual practices, but more as heroes or spiritual giants of love, tolerance and humanism, who demonstrate how "love is the ultimate station of the spiritual journey" (Gülen, 2003, p.153).

Gülen's writings, as noted earlier, are the most comprehensive source of information about Sufi therapy, and can be profitably mined in order to extract data and insight for the purposes of gaining new knowledge. An important characteristic of Gülen's approach to Sufism, however, is his tolerance about issues most often criticized by orthodox Muslims. Thus Gülen does not envisage a Sufi life as an ascetic one, living on the mountains. Today's ideal Sufi should live among the people and manage to be with God, that is, he or she should strive in the

way of God, while at the same time representing Islam in the best way (Gokcek, 2006, p. 64).

The Sufi life becomes very pure, as in the gardens of heaven; the heart becomes content with joy and serenity, and the Sufi feels as if he or she lives the life of the angels.

In every moment of this life, the Sufi comes face to face with his/her Lord, and every meeting contains a different joy from the previous one. Gülen explains this beautifully as follows: "Let the philosophers and scholars be content with their knowledge, the Gnostic drinks serenity in each moment from radiant cups of gnosis!" (Gülen, 2006, p. 199). According to Gülen, self-possession, steadfastness, seriousness, profundity and resolution are the main aspects of the gnostic. Therefore, in his Sufi teaching, there is no room for any laxity, impertinence, or conceit. For him, the more the Sufi knows and obtains gnosis, the more he follows self-possession and steadfastness (Gülen, 2009, p. 147). The methods of attaining gnosis consist of mind, conscience, heart, and reflection (Gülen, 2009, p. 148). Methods of attaining gnosis are generally considered to be comparable to faculties of consciousness in spiritual psychology.

Methods

Sufi poetry, music and dance have long been used for mental health intervention in order to heal and cure people who are experiencing anxiety, depression and stress (Mirdal, 2012, p. 1008). As a Sufi poet, I use a Sufi reflection method and a Sufi poetry technique. Poems talking about the pleasures of drinking bitter red wine and intoxication, or spending a long dark night of passion with a beautiful one are quite common in Sufi literature. I did extracting knowledge through poetry, but the methods I follow really are Fethullah Gülen's methods and techniques. This should be acknowledged for readers as I observed the linkages between the individual and the cultural (spiritual), and as I observed how I embody the culture (spirit). What I was doing was secluding myself and following the method in order to embody and experience the divine.

Gülen claims that the best way of understanding Sufi concepts, states and stations is writing poetry about all your senses and feelings at your heart while reading his book of Sufism and having transcendence experience (Gülen, 2013, p. 130). He is the greatest Sufi of this century, and his positive and curative sermons, speeches, books and poems contain a great deal of healing insight suitable for diverse populations. As a bicultural person, I study Gülen's Sufi texts and poems and construct a poetical healing narrative both in English and Turkish versions. As an interesting and unique aspect of this study, I wrote a self-reflection in my inner world within an extraordinary ritual over two forty day periods of seclusion - "*erbain*" periods - as part of my qualitative study. I sought to contextualize Gülen's ideas, poems and perspectives and his psycho-educational methods within his poetic Sufi therapy interventions and socio-psychological treatments. I transformed my personal experiences into transpersonal narrative by writing 80 poems in 80 days, which comprise my intellectually generated source of data. My first 40 days was in Kitchener, Canada started on May 21th, 2013 and the second 40 days was held in Gebze, Istanbul and Alanya Turkey, during the month of Ramadan from July 5 to August 15, 2013. I generate and extract data from its context, analyse Gülen's Sufi discourse, and incorporate my spiritual reflections in the poetic form. My target is to extract a new alternative intervention and psychotherapy model through thematic thick descriptions and personal reflexive analysis.

I will not, however, study the political, historical and social implications of the activities of the Gülen community in Canada and abroad, because these have been dealt with in various scholarly works. I focus instead on the holistic Sufi therapy healing model, because it is important for newcomers to a country to adapt to the structures and order of that country's social, economic, political and cultural landscape. This new model may have significant impact on the struggles of some multicultural Muslim communities, thereby also having an effect on mental

health intervention, and on reshaping current alternative healing techniques. Introducing concepts, images and metaphors based on Gülen's universal concepts and key principles could constitute a meaningful alternative to mindfulness-based therapy, and this is inspired practice in trans-cultural psychotherapy.

My methods consist of operationalized readings of Gülen's existing Sufi poems and texts, and the creation of Gülen's poetic healing methods and finally the creation of a journal based on a period of intense Sufi inspired reflection, that provided useful and applicable techniques for a therapeutic model. My qualitative research can thus use Gülen's philosophy as the main research tool, along with self-reflection as I personalize and draw on my own experiences to extend understanding of a Sufi discipline and culture. I consist of an intensely rich, full, and detailed narrative from the perspective of the person who lives and experiences the research phenomena, seeking to understand the meaning of Gülen's socio-psychological standing and the life-feeling that comes from being a Sufi Dervish. I use special "zikr" (reciting several God names in special numbers of time) and a special midnight prayers during two *erbains* based on Gülen's instructions on his texts.

Why the number forty?

I use thematic analysis of Gülen's texts, in tandem with a reflexive analysis based on my feelings from 80 days during two "Erbain" periods (one erbain of 40 days in Sufism X 2 - in total 80 days). The number forty is a significant number and denotes a sacred tradition that is used by God to represent a period of testing, healing or judgment in spiritual practice in many religions. Gülen explains Suffering (*chila*) in this way:

Suffering in this sense becomes, beyond our own spiritual progress, the dedication of our lives to the happiness of others in both worlds and living for others. In other words, we should

seek our spiritual progress in the happiness of others. This is the most advisable and the best approved kind of suffering: that is, we die and are revived a few times a day for the guidance and happiness of others, we feel any fire raging in another heart also in our own heart, and we feel the suffering of all people in our spirits. (Gülen, 2009, p.235) To this extent, *hizmet* for Gülen is to seek one's spirituality in, with and for the happiness of others. This is part and parcel of Gülen's humanistic approach to spiritual psychology.

The first step in privacy is completed in forty days, therefore known as the forty-day period of austerity. Bodily needs decrease and are disciplined, carnal desires are forgotten, and all time is dedicated to worshipping God, meditation, reflection, prayer, and supplication. In its aspect of the avoidance of people and austerity, privacy dates back to the early days of Sufism. The seclusion of Prophet Abraham, the forty-day periods of Prophet Moses, the austerity of Prophet Jesus, and the privacy of the prince of the Prophets have been practiced in different ways by many people, and have therefore undergone certain alterations (Gülen, 2006, p. 16). There are relevant stories demonstrating that this is the length of time necessary to accomplish some major part of God's plan in his dealings with various portions of mankind. For example, the 40 days of rain in the days of the flood were the judgment of God. The 40 day period of fasting, testing, and communing with God that faced by Moses in the mountain of Tur and by Jesus in the desert of Sinai were forms of God's judgment. Egypt was left desolate for 40 years because of God's judgment and the forty years that the Israelites spent in the wilderness were also a result of the judgment of God (Todd& Anthony, 2013). In Hinduism, some popular religious prayers consist of 40 *shlokas* or *dohas* (couplets, stanzas). The Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) became a prophet when he was 40, and his son-in-law, Ali, is described as the scholar of 40 doors of the divine

knowledge. While respecting differences between Sufis, as far as I know many Islamic *tariqas* are derived from Ali's Sufi practices, whereby 40 saints live at all times.

This is why I examine myself during each of 40 days, during which time I generate contextualizing reflections on these texts. I will combine thematic/reflexive analysis and self-reflection with my poetic writings to finalize the 40 rules or techniques of love in Sufism when analyzing them as data. In the first stage, a Sufi must struggle against the carnal soul, which involves the purifying of the body, tongue, mind and heart. The Sufi heart needs a time of seclusion for self-purification, and after this journey a dervish should live among the community and help others. The 40 day period, known to the Sufis as "*Chillah*" or "*Itikaf*" or "*Erbain*" thus serves as a source of purification (Anwarul-Haq, 1991, p. 37). This practice can be found in very similar forms in a variety of Sufi sects as simplified practices with three well-known prophetic Sufi principles: "eat less, sleep less and talk less".

Data Gathering Tools

Sufis can follow either of two ways: travelling in the inner world or in the outer world. Members of the first group begin from the carnal self and, without moving toward the outer world, head straight for the heart. They pierce and smash egotism and self-conceit and, by making a way through the heart, reach the truth. Such travelers must break their egotism and self-conceit, abandon whims and fancies, and destroy the carnal self (Nursi, p. 2007, p.429). The other travelers start from the outer world and, after observing the manifestations of God's Names and Attributes in all objects, enter the inner world. In their hearts, they witness to some extent the same lights that they observed in the outer world and follow the quickest way into the heart. They attain their goal only after perceiving that the heart is the mirror of God, the Eternally-Besought-of-All (Nursi, 2007, p. 429). I am drawing both approaches at the same time.

My spiritual guide is Gülen's sermons, books, poems, articles, techniques, teachings and his unique Sufi methods. Between May 21-June 30 in Kitchener, Canada was my first “*Erbain*” period, and July 5 August 15, 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey was my second “*Erbain*”. I observed several states, stations through manifestations of God names and Attributes during my two *Erbain* periods in Canada and Turkey, and I compared two different *Erbain* periods in the context of transnationalism between my previous home country and the current home and living between two different cultures. Also, I found out differences between self-journeying experiences and my spiritual life qualities in two countries in what Gülen conceptualized as a global citizen or a universal man. Gülen defends that the use of reflection is the best method to extract knowledge and understand Sufi stations as narrative to construct decolonizing lived experiences following the Sufi stages that are basically the systemic observations of the self (Gülen, 2013). Data come directly from my heart as alternative source of knowledge according to Gülen, Ibni Arabi and many other great Sufi scholars. I was not doing “intellectual masturbation” but discovering new knowledge for individual therapy within Sufi practice (Gallardo et al, 2009). Therefore I focused on selected 40 concepts and endeavoured to find out Gülen’s stance on these concepts within Sufism related to talking cure and refine my own understanding of his Sufi reflections. Gülen follows mainstream Sufi positions, while at the same time seeking to produce new meanings from his work for a healthy life in spiritual practice.

Forty Concepts

I wrote one poem for each of the 80 concepts in two periods but selected 40 of them to teach potential clients in therapy sessions and used those 40 poems as metaphors. Table 1 shows my selected forty concepts examined in two periods from four editions of *The Emerald Hills of the Heart*. Within an introduction to the heart and some of its accompanying dynamics, this

research provides a rich addition to the inner dimension of therapy rituals and also fosters a greater knowledge and love of the Divine (Gülen, 2009). Gülen follows in his personal life and in the context of Sufism which is love, sadness and sorrow. I follow his Sufi methodology of reaching God by experiencing these forty important therapeutic concepts. Gülen states that “Love is the most direct and safest way to human perfection.” It is difficult to attain the rank of human perfection through ways that do not contain love. Other than the way of "acknowledging one's innate impotence, poverty, and reliance on God's Power and Riches, and one's zeal in His way and thanksgiving, no other way to truth is equal to that of love" (Gülen, 2006, p. 134). Most profoundly, humanity is a creature endowed with the potential to reflect the nature of Divine Existence and the attributes of the Divine Names and thus to attain its perfection.

In Gülen's words: (as I am indenting the direct quote)

Humans, the greatest mirror of the names, attributes, and deeds of God, are a shining mirror, a marvelous fruit of life, a source for the whole universe, a sea that appears to be a tiny drop, a sun formed as a humble seed, a great melody in spite of their insignificant physical positions, and the source for existence all contained within a small body. Humans carry a holy secret that makes them equal to the entire universe with all their wealth of character; a wealth that can be developed to excellence (Gülen, 2005, p.112).

As the greatest divine mirror, Gülen asserts, “in truth and in God's sight, humanity is greater than the universe.” This conviction is linked to his reasoning toward the equality of all human beings in terms of divinity. As it goes, God's mercy does not discriminate. It allows every human being equally to reflect His manifestations, and therefore, all human beings, irrespective of religion, race, wealth and social status, are equal in their capacity and capability to mirror the Divine Light.

	Main categories			
	Purity of Intention	Reflection	Thankfulness	Patience
1	Divine Love	Expansion	The soul, the self, the spirit	Humility
2	Truthfulness	Freedom	The Spiritual Heart	Suffering or Sorrow
3	Trustworthiness	Journeying	Seclusion and Privacy	Confidence
4	Forgiveness	Decision	Perfect goodness	Hope
5	Remembrance	Resolution	Peacefulness	Modesty
6	Presentation	Certainty	Serenity	Piety
7	Resignation	Insight	Endeavor	Austerity
8	Journeying in/ toward/ from/ with Allah	Discernment	Openness	Contraction
9	The Universal Man/Women	Wisdom	The Special Knowledge	Intoxication
10	Unity and Multiplicity	Passion	Observation	Wakefulness

Table 1 : Selected Forty Concepts from *The Emerald Hills of the Heart*.

Process of Data Collection

Gülen contends that an individual practitioner of Sufism can use its practice to deepen his or her spirituality and reach their self-purification. The most important basis of sainthood and Sufism is sincerity (purity of intention), for this saves one from any implicit form of associating partners with God and the most effective penetrating way is divine love. Whoever has not acquired sincerity cannot travel in those ways in Sufism (Nursi, 2007, p. 433). Through the struggle with one's self, solitude or retreat, invocation, self-control and self-criticism, the veils

covering the inner dimension of existence are torn apart, enabling the individual to acquire a strong conviction of the truth of all of Islam's major and minor principles. Sufism mostly concentrates on the individual's inner world and deals with the meaning and effect of religious commandments on one's spirit and heart, and is therefore abstract. Gülen defends that it does not contradict any of the Islamic ways based on the *Qur'an* and the *Sunna* (Gülen, 2000, p. xv).

The first rule for being a dervish is to guard your tongue, your hands and your genitals before starting an *Erbain* period, and also in its aftermath. If I can open the place of gnosis and spiritual knowledge, the ears of the heart will open wide like an ocean, and then I can hear the truth hidden behind words. Many Sufis keep a daily journal in order to practice self-observation and self-awareness. The greatest Sufi Saints are recorded as maintaining self-observation and self-reflection of their actions. For example, Muhy al-Din ibn al-'Arabi, author of *al-Futuhāt al-Makkiya (The Makkan Conquests)* during the early centuries of Islam, recorded that righteous people would either write down or memorize their daily actions, thoughts, and words, and then analyze and criticize themselves for any evil or sin they had committed. They would do this to protect themselves from the storms of vanity and the whirls of self-pride. They would ask God's forgiveness after this self-analysis, and would repent sincerely so that they might be protected against future error and deviation. "Self-criticism may also be described as seeking and discovering one's inner and spiritual depth, and exerting the necessary spiritual and intellectual effort to acquire true human values" and developing the sentiments that encourage and nourish them. This is how one distinguishes between good and bad, beneficial and harmful, and how one maintains an upright heart (Gülen, 2006, p.6).

I kept writing and recording my poems and reflections on a daily basis for 80 days in Turkey and Canada. Analyzing my first period of *Erbain* in Kitchener, Canada, self-

understanding was half of the battle for my self-transformation, and other part was reflective analysis of my heart, mostly self-interrogation. I felt that my heart was alive, awake and filled with light as it is the source of the inner light of my inspiration, poetic creativity and compassion. Analyzing my second period of *Erbain* in Gebze, Istanbul, and Alanya Turkey, developed my Sufi way through asceticism, spirituality, and self-purification, my duty of practicing the spiritual life based on asceticism, regular worship, daily fasting and experience of religion. My *Erbain* type meditation was completely secluded away from all other eyes and ears, and allowed me to train my ego and ride it as a horseman rides his mount, but I was not completely isolated from the outer world. I obey traditional Sufi rules such as when you ride the ego, it can no longer control you, otherwise you will be overcome by your ego. On the other hand, diet for the soul doesn't mean only eating less; it also means preventing yourself from doing something originating in bad desires. These two forty days of *Erbain* provided me with a cure of spiritual dimensions and prepared me for this world and the afterlife. I learned how to stop being selfish, jealous, greedy, arrogant, self-gratifying, angry and envious after the Sufi meditation. This is something that I commit to continue doing on an ongoing basis, for this world and the afterlife.

I organize my analysis and present my findings in the oncoming chapters by instruction from my heart. I tried to reach the first rank of *ma'rifa*, which refers to spiritual knowledge of God. This means discerning the manifestations of the Divine Names surrounding us in order that I can gain this knowledge with special *Dhikr*, and travel in the amazing climate of the Attributes behind the door of mystery that is half-opened through these manifestations. During this traveling, in my first *erbain* period, lights flowed continuously from my eyes and ears to my tongue, and my heart began to direct those acts that serve as a tongue, confirming and

proclaiming the Truth. This began to be reflected on the screen of my conscience through several Sufi stations and stages.

Ethical considerations

My research falls into certain categories defined as "minimal risk" based on the Tri-Council Policy Statement definition. Chang (2008) claimed that protecting the privacy of others in autoethnographic stories and getting informed consents is much more difficult than in other studies involving human subjects (Chang, 2008, p. 68). Since I am not using human participants, except for myself, there are few ethical concerns arising requiring institutional approval from the Research Ethic Board of Wilfred Laurier University. However, the concept of spirituality may produce biases and nuances in my mind towards individual religions as part of the search for greater personal insight, development and growth.

The use of great, broad spiritual principles does not necessarily mean religious content, but offers instead new ways of thinking to enhance our social work profession. This is not to suggest that this area is free from legitimate ethical and other concerns, such as conflict of interest and becoming ethnocentric. I do not have conflicts of interest with respect to authorship and/or publication and receive no financial support for the research. I study the true self and will practice my research and writing according to the research code of ethics and also more personal ethical and moral guides for social workers and researchers - a useful sustaining ideology to guide our professional lives. Managing my own biases presents a larger dilemma during the study, although I was not commissioned to receive any benefits from the Hizmet institutions and movement for this research.

In fact, the periods of *erbains* may positively affect my spiritual and emotional well-being and growth as the researcher, because I try to reach different Sufi stages during the data

collection process such as experiencing real asceticism, sincerity and fleeing from the self. There are no other ethical concerns affecting my study, except the controversy surrounding spiritual journeying and using a personal method, which may be seen as biased in terms of developing a universal therapy model or a counselling spiritual guideline for everyone. My personal interpretation of a spiritual experience may create a problematic exclusive use of the self to produce research, with some accompanying implications of lack of objectivism and positivism.

My research does provide subjective knowledge, but I clearly identify the purpose of my research at the beginning, which is spiritual psychology and how it relates to social work intervention. I want to address why this new model is important and useful for certain types of clients among the Muslim population. I address several aspects of psychosocial issues such as anxiety, depression and stress-related problems which require a new model. However, this proposed spiritual guideline cannot be over-generalized for the broader population, nor can it provide universality within spiritual practice. My scope of study gives a crisp definition for 80 key concepts thereby clarifying Gülen's approach to Sufi spirituality within this particular spiritual tradition. I adhere to Gülen's work by defining Sufi concepts based on his understanding of Islam, Qur'an and Hadith within the Hizmet movement. Gülen uses quotes from many Sufi masters when he provides positive psychology methods and techniques. I was unable to compare these with other Islamic scholars' views due to the limits of my study. Gülen articulates his knowledge and deems it useful to take a short journey around the Sufi concept of spirit in the *Emerald Hills of the Heart*.

SECTION TWO: FINDINGS

CHAPTER 4: FIRST ERBAIN

During my first *erbain* period in Kitchener, Canada, I was trying to awaken my spiritual heart and have a transcendence experience through mystical love and recognition of the unity. What was I looking for in my heart? Sufism allows me to search using a discipline of remembering the divine within my heart. I explore in this chapter how to extract knowledge from the heart's six dimensions within seven different self-stages (Gülen, 2006, p. 128). Findings in this chapter provide several Sufi stations and stages including the State of Spiritual Heart, the Soul and the Self, the State of Divine Love, the Awakening Station, the State of Freedom, the State of Wisdom, the State of Humility or Suffering and Confidence and the Unity of Conscience. *Dhikr* is a type of meditation; it works by increasing your concentration. One remedy for hard-heartedness is remembrance of God. As for having the manner of reciting special names of God and special prayers, it is very important to speak these without contempt bred by familiarity, and with a love and enthusiasm that comes from the bottom of the heart. After experiencing several Sufi stations and states, I realized that Sufi psychology means growth, balance and harmony. I have undergone a profound inner transformation and have removed the veils that cover the light. I selected, classified and related these concepts to each other by heart after reading Gülen's book two times in Turkish and two times in English, relating them to each other.

Sufi psychology stresses the need to nourish and develop the heart. Sufism is the mystical dimension of all religions and has many branches within a giant tree, and the fruit of that tree is truth. During my self-journeying to my heart, my goal was the direct experience of the divine at

the threshold between self-awareness of this world and awareness of the divine in my heart.

According to the Sufi tradition, the heart holds the divine spark or spirit within each of us, since in effect the heart is a divine temple. Sufis respect every single human being, all animals, and even plants as divine temples, and they see everything as a creation of art from God. One of the main Sufi concepts suggests that the home of love is the heart and that the heart contains very deep intelligence and wisdom for freedom.

Meditation is an important tool to internalize my feeling through dīkr and prayers.

Gülen's book, *The Emerald Hills of the Heart*, provides me with the Sufi essentials and with guidance for freedom. A clear mirror is receiving and reflecting, weaving the tissue of all my thoughts and giving me the ability to turn to God with my being. My heart has started joyfully with Godly pleasure because I have submitted myself to God and have become free. Gülen opens my eyes with his definition of freedom, as he states that true freedom is attainable only by freeing one's heart from worldly worries and anxieties, and thus being able to turn to God with one's whole being in the emerald hills of the heart (Gülen, 2006, p.7). I wrote 40 poems from selected 40 different Sufi concepts during my first period of Erba'in in Kitchener, Canada, see Table 2.

	Main categories			
	Purity of Intention	Reflection	Thankfulness	Patience
1	Love	Self-supervision	The soul	Hope
2	Truthfulness	Freedom	The heart	Sobriety
3	Straightforwardness	Self-Journeying	Altruism	Sadness and sorrow
4	Sincere friendship	Fleeing	Perfect goodness	Repentance
5	Conscious	Self-criticism	Human poverty	Asceticism
6	Forgiveness	Presentation	Confidence	Dhikr and Prayer
7	Attention and regards	Self-purification	Revelation-Inspiration	Abstinence
8	One who reached& Dervish	Sainthood	State& Station	Helplessness
9	The power of perfection	Wisdom	Piety	Powerlessness
10	Unity	Self-possession	Knowledge	Wakefulness

Table 2- First Er bain- Selected 40 concepts

Dhikr and Prayers

During forty-days in Canada, I did two of the greatest forms of my formal remembrances were formal day and night prayers and recitation of the Names or Attributes of God in special numbers of time. In my daily routine, I recited 13 different names and attributes of God which are very popular in the history of Sufism, and which have been practiced in many Sufi lodges through many centuries, see Table 3.

Table 3 – The Daily Dhikr Schedule, Recitation of God's Names

Date and Time	English	Arabic	Times
	There is no god but God	Lâ ilâhe illallah	200
	God	Allah	66
	He	Hu	200
	The Truth	Hak	108
	The All-Overwhelming	Kahhâr	306
	The All-Powerful	Kâdir	314
	The All-Strong	Kaviyy	116
	The All-Compelling	Cebbâr	206
	The Master	Mâlik	90
	The All-Loving	Vedûd	20
	The Peerlessly All-Single	Vâhid	19
	The One	Ehad	13
	The Eternally Besought-of-All	Samed	134

This meditation can be passive and just help a person relax and clear their mind, or the meditation can be active, using the resulting relaxed state of mind to solve day-to-day problems or to direct concentration to some new meaning a person wants to add to their life. There are many remembrances that can be found that will give a person hope from asking Allah for guidance, health and provision. Table 4 shows why I added six more names into my daily meditation called “Sekine” (Peacefulness) list because of Gülen’s mentor, Said Nursi followed this six names all his life and Gülen himself recite these names in his life.

Table 4 – The Daily Dhikr Schedule, “Sekine” (Peacefulness), Recitation of God's Names

Date and Time	English	Turkish or Arabic	Number of Times
	The Unique	Ferd	33
	The All-Living	Hayy	14
	The Self-Subsistent	Kayyûm	156
	The Just	Adl	104
	The Judge	Hakem	68
	The Pure One	Kuddus	170

At the beginner level, the most comprehensive name of God is the combination of six divine names: the Most Holy (*al-Quddūs*), the Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*), the All Just (*al-ʿAdil*), the

Single (*al-Fard*), the Ever-Living (*al-Qayyūm*), and the Self-Subsistent (*al-Qayyūm*). Therefore, the reflections of these names can be seen all over the universe and these reflections display God's existence and oneness (Nursi, 1990, p. 399). The earth is like a big hotel. Every day, people come in to this hotel, stay for while, and then leave it. Similarly, animate beings come into this earth at birth, stay here for a while, and leave it. One might think that the earth should be filled with the dead bodies of animals, plants, and even people. However, we see that God's name, the Most Holy (*al-Quddūs*), is reflected in the universe and as a result, not only do animals live by eating dead bodies, but also insects such as ants and maggots work as cleaning employees who clean the earth. Similarly, the red and white blood-corpuses purify the blood while breathing refreshes the human body. On a larger scale, the clouds clean the sky, while on a smaller scale a small mosquito cleans its eye with its hands. This cleaning process in the universe shows that there is a Creator who knows every corner of it, and cleans it through the theophany of his name the Most Holy. The idea of cleaning the universe has one character. It is one type of action that is going on in every corner of the world. Therefore, it shows both God's existence and unity. Otherwise, we would need to accept the idea that everything from a single ant to gigantic clouds play a role in this awesome cleaning process act by themselves, in knowing their own roles in this complex action (Nursi, 1990, pp. 304-307).

The other name that reveals God's existence and oneness is the name the All Just (*al-Ādil*). When we look at the universe, we see that everything is laid out to a certain measurement and scale. From the cells of a human body to the red and white blood-corpuses that travel in these cells, from the mutual proportion and relation of the body's organs to the balance between the incomings and outgoings of the seas, from the births of animals, plants, and human beings to their deaths, from the balance of darkness and light to the portions of cold and heat, everything in

the universe is well proportioned and balanced. The *Quran* says “No single thing exists that does not have its source with Us; and naught do We bestow from on high unless it be in accordance with a measure well-defined,” (*Quran*, 15:21). The skies has He raised high, and has devised [for all things] a measure, so that you [too, O men,] might never transgress the measure [of what is right]: weigh, therefore, [our deeds] with equity, and cut not the measure short, (*Quran*, 55:7-9). All of these balances and measurements show not only God’s existence and oneness, but also that the judgment day will be governed by the All Just (Nursi, 1990, pp. 308-310).

The third name that signifies Gods existence and oneness is the Wise (*al-Ḥakem*). The All-Wise God created the universe as a being which includes many worlds. He created the human being as the center among these many worlds. He also created these worlds to fulfill the needs of the human being and to serve him. He created the human being as the center of the worlds, due to his consciousness. This consciousness is a reflection of the divine name the Wise; and the modern age’s sciences are reflections of human consciousness. If we go and ask the science of medicine the question, *what is this universe?* It will tell us it is a big and well-ordered pharmacy. If we ask the science of chemistry the same question, it will tell us that the universe is a magnificent and well-ordered laboratory. The science of industrial engineering will tell us that it is a perfect factory. The sum of this analogy indicates God’s existence and oneness. Otherwise we would have to accept that causes in the universe have wisdom, will, knowledge, power, and consciousness to create the universe (Nursi, 1990, pp. 313-315).

The fourth name is the name The Single (*al-Fard*). When we look at the universe, we see that the universe is like a body whose organs are unified. It is like a factory whose machines work together and in order. Every organ in this body and every machine in this giant factory

works together, helps each other, and leans towards each other. This is a reflection of the name the Single in two aspects: The first is that the universe is a unified and a single body with all parts. The second is that the owner of the universe can be the Single One because all parts of the universe are connected to each other. Therefore, owning a single part means owning the whole universe. In other words, one who does not own the whole body cannot claim ownership for even a single part of the whole universe because all are connected to every other part (Nursi, 1990, p. 318).

The fifth name is the Ever-Living (*al-ḥayy*) and the Life Giver (*al-Muḥyī*). The *Quran* invites its readers to reflect about the concept of life in the universe. It says “Behold, then, [O man,] these signs of Gods grace how He gives life to the earth after it had been lifeless! Verily, this selfsame [God] is indeed the One that can bring the dead back to life; for He has the power to will anything,” (*Quran*, 30:50). Reflection upon life, the life that we see in the universe is an indication of the Ever-Living and the Life Giving One. If we see reflections of the sun on the water of a river appearing and disappearing, we conclude that the sun is the source of these reflections; and it is ever-living although its reflections on the river appear and disappear. Similarly, through the births and deaths in the universe, we conclude that God is the one who gives life, and He is the ever-living. And the *Quran* says “God; there is no deity save Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being,” (*Quran*, 2:255) (Nursi, 1990, pp. 334-335).

The sixth name is The Self-Subsistent (*al-Qayyūm*). Nursi says the existence, continuance, and perpetuation of the heavenly bodies in the universe are tied to the mystery of Self-Subsistence. If the manifestation of Self-Subsistence was to avert its face for a moment, millions of globes, some of them a thousand times larger than the globe of the earth, would be scattered into the infinite void of space, and colliding with one another would crash into

nothingness (Gülen, 2006, p. 171). Therefore, the existence and continuance of the universe is a sign for God's name The Self-Subsistence.

I followed special numbers for each name and attribute of God from Gülen's recommended prayer book called *Al-Qulub al-Daria (Imploring Hearts)*. The collection of litanies, *al-Qulub al-Dariya* from *Majmu'at al-Ahzab*, prepared by the Turkish *shaykh* and scholar, Gümüşhanevi, was issued by the Hizmet movement for purposes such as these individual and collective devotions (Gümüşhanevi, 2005). The original work was compiled by the famous Ottoman scholar Ahmed Ziyauddin Gümüşhanevi (1813-1893). Being a Sufi master himself, Gümüşhanevi compiled his three-volume work *Majmuat al-Ahzab* after meticulous research. The prayers in *Imploring Hearts* are selections by Fethullah Gülen from Gümüşhanevi's compilation. Gülen made recollection of prayers and formulas of remembrance which were developed in many Sufi traditions under the guidance of great Sufi masters (Schimmel, 1975, p. 200).

In *Imploring Hearts*, I found invocations of Imam Ghazali, Abd al-Qadir Jilani, Ahmad Rufai, Hasan Shadhali, Shah Naqshband, Muhyi al-Din ibn Arabi, Imam Rabbani and others. Gülen recommends his followers to having a perfect sainthood life style. Exploring that Chodkiewicz provides a more detailed discussion of Ibn Arabi's theories about these ranks of sainthood and the divine knowledge (Chodkiewicz, 1993, p. 107). How I must chant dhikr was part of my struggle. Chanting your *dhikr* and prayer aloud or repeating it silently both offer great benefits to your heart and soul. Such people attach more importance to reciting God's Names in dervish circles than to performing the daily prescribed prayers, concentrate more on daily supererogatory recitations than on religious obligations, and are more careful to avoid opposing Sufism's good manners than to the major sins (Nursi, 2007, p. 435).

With the literal meaning of mentioning, remembrance, and recollection in the speech of the Sufis, *dhikr* denotes regular recitation of one or some of God's Names in the same recitation session. Some spiritual or Sufi orders prefer to recite "Allah" (the proper Name of the Divine Being); others recite "There is no god but God," the declaration of Divine Unity; and others recite one or a few of the other Names according to the preferences of the order's master. Like thankfulness, such recitation is a duty of servanthood, to be performed both verbally and actively, and also with one's heart and other faculties of conscience (Gülen, 2006, p. 128).

After reciting on a daily basis 19 special names which were selected from Gülen's writing, I reached the profundity of recitation that was proportional to the depth of feeling for God. Sufis call this stage the level of the "peace of heart" or "witnessing." Recitation signifies a journey toward Him. When I started to mention Him or recited His Names, both verbally and through feelings and actions, as well as in my heart as a chorus, it became a mysterious internalized lift ascending to the realm where spirits fly. Through the slightly opened doors of the heavens, indescribable scenes are beheld. Recitation, irrespective of its style, is the safest and soundest way leading to God. Without it, it is difficult to reach God. When the traveler remembers Him in his or her conscience and puts this remembrance into words with his or her tongue and other faculties, an inexhaustible source of support and (spiritual) provision is tapped (Gülen, 2006, p. 131).

After reciting 19 divine names in 40 days in Canada, Unity is more crystalized after the early morning and evening prayers. Each phrase is equal in worth to God's Greatest Name, and conveys good tidings to humanity by displaying and manifesting a different aspect of the Lordship's Unity. This is equal to manifesting one of the Greatest Names, a ray of Divine Singularity's magnificence, and a perfection of Divine Oneness. Each phrase affirming Divine

Unity bears good tidings to believers. Each message offers a cure, and each cure contains a spiritual pleasure (Nursi, 2007, pp. 239-240).

I discovered this knowledge in Gülen's writing and found several holy prayers belonging to different prophets and saints from the past. Allah directs and disposes of all things, from the heavens to the human heart. The Prophetic saying is as follows: "The heart is between the two Fingers of the All-Merciful; He turns it from state to state and gives it whatever form He wishes reminds us of this fact." The ways leading to God are almost beyond number. Recitation of God's names is one of them. Reciting God's Names sometimes causes the reciter to enter a trance-like state in which the self is lost. Recitation, irrespective of its style, is the safest and soundest way leading to God. Without it, it is difficult to reach God. When travelers remember Him in their conscience and put this remembrance into words with their tongue and other faculties, an inexhaustible source of support and (spiritual) provision is tapped. Recitation signifies a journey toward Him. There is no restriction of time or manner in reciting God's Names. The profundity of recitation is proportional to the depth of feeling for God. Muslims call this the "peace of heart" or "witnessing." Allah (the proper Name of the Divine Being) is one of the important elements of *Dhikr*; others recite: There is no god but God, the declaration of Divine Unity; and others recite one or a few of the other Names according to the choice of the order's master (Gülen, 2006, p. 130).

The first way, based on the main invocations recited by followers of this way, is that of the Seven Names: There is no god but God, God, He, the Truth, the All-Living, the Self-Subsistent, the All-Overwhelming. By reciting these Names, one seeks to pass through the carnal soul's seven steps: the Evil-Commanding Soul, the Self-Condemning Soul, the Soul Having Inspiration, the Soul at Rest, the Soul Well-Pleased (with however God treats it), the Soul

Pleasing (to God), and the Purified or Innocent Soul. To these seven Names, some add such Names of Majesty as the All-Powerful, the All-Strong, the All-Compelling, the Master, and the All-Loving; others add such Names of Grace as the Unique, the One, the Peerlessly All-Single, and the Eternally Besought-of-All. Reciters can recite as many names during the day according to the orders of the master (Gülen, 2006, p. 128).

Gülen advises that the second, brighter, as well as more secure way of self-journeying should be based on strict adherence to the *Qur'an* and the *Sunna*, and the encouragement of certain recitations. Those who follow this way strive to comply with the *Sunna* in whatever they do. Rather than reciting certain Names, they follow the methods used by God's Messenger to worship, invoke, and pray; meditate on His acts and creatures; and mention Him with all of His Names. Joining these activities with a meticulous following of the commandments of *Shari'a*, they are firmly attached to their guides or teachers and abandon themselves to the tides of *'ashq* and (spiritual) attraction toward God (Gülen, 2006, p. 129).

Gülen's description of the most correct standard of a good spiritual life, one that Sufism uses to describe or qualify a person, is good nature. One who has taken a few steps forward in good nature may be regarded as having advanced in the spiritual life. Although miracles, dazzling stations, and superhuman actions may be acceptable when they issue from good nature, they are worthless if not combined with good nature. The signs of good nature have been summarized as follows: a person possessing this quality does not hurt anybody by either word or deed, overlooks those who hurt him or her and forgets the evils done, and returns evil with good. Many people seem to be good natured, mild-mannered, and humanitarian, although good conduct and mildness are no more than affectations. When they experience a little irritation, anger, or harsh treatment, their true nature will be revealed. One who has good nature does not

change his or her manners even when in a hellish state, but remains mild and shows no harshness. A heart open to good nature is like a very broad space in which one can bury one's anger and rage. As for those intolerant and impatient ones who display bad conduct, they are, like Cain, more stupid than the raven, and can find no place to bury their anger, hatred, and ill feelings (Gülen, 2006, pp. 74-75).

Gülen makes Sufi humanism pertinent to some of today's problems, ones that differ markedly from those of the past. He rethinks existing Sufi ways and proposes his own "Another Way of Journeying and Initiation," which proceeds from one's awareness of poverty toward actualization of love. For Gülen, by being conscious of one's poverty before God, one feels an absolute dependence on Him, thereby becoming absolutely rich and no longer feeling any need. With this degree of richness, one feels "as if he or she has found a credit card that is valid everywhere" (Gülen, 2006, p. 172). In Gülen's conviction, this is the best spiritual way to realize love especially against the backdrop of the contemporary, materialist world. According to him, one's awareness of poverty and nothingness before God leads him/her to be humble. In one's relationship with all existence, living or non-living, he/she "is to be loving and tolerant toward everyone, to see the universe as a cradle of brotherhood/sisterhood" (Gülen, 2006, p. 170).

State and Station

Sufism enables believers to attain the station of reliance on and absolute submission to God, and the rank of being approved and loved by Him. These are the means for true pleasure and consolation without grief, and familiarity and communion without loneliness and separation (Nursi, 2007, p. 439). I was developing my heart so that it could chant and pray through a sincere, patient, steadfast practice of prayer, and was also performing other spiritual exercises such as reading *Qur'an* regularly, using the "eat, drink, sleep and talk less" tradition and closing

my ears to unnecessary news and worthless information. In a sense, if my heart feels my capacity for action residing in the *nafs*, (the Arabic word for the self), the self might act truthfully and follow the path that brings me closer to God. To be a dervish, I have to be soft, vulnerable, and sensitive, have a true honesty, be an integrated person with inner peace, and have a sincere compassion, purity of intention and know my own heart and the self. My body, my heart and my self must be connected and unified as a whole. When our heart's creativity misuses the self, the result is many creative individuals who are nevertheless still arrogant, worldly and egotistical.

Gülen defines what is state and station, with state denoting experiencing in one's inner world: the “breaths” blowing from the realms beyond the world, and feeling the difference between “night” and “day,” as well as “evening” and “morning,” that occur in the heart. Those who understand these as alternate waves of rejoicing and grief, and contraction and expansion invading the heart without the believer's special effort, call the stable continuation of those waves “station” and their disappearance “sensuality.” A state consists of the Divine manifestations occurring at times determined by the absolute Will. These manifestations are reflected in the heart and in the believer's perception and consciousness, which pursue and cast them into a mold. For this reason, while a station signifies stability and subsidence after the waves of state, a state can be likened to packets of waves of different lengths and colors coming from the Sun, appearing and then disappearing, being dependent on the absolutely dominant Will (Gülen, 2006, p. 20-21). However, Gülen warns that if you have not corrected the imbalance of your hearts, and thus live disconnected from the Almighty, you may regard these waves of state as illusions and fancies, while those who see existence with the light of the Truth view them as manifest, experienced realities. A person should ask God's forgiveness seventy times a day as Prophet Mohammad did in his life. Otherwise it is impossible for your soul to reach and become a

perfectly pure soul as the seventh self, and your spiritual journey toward the Infinite Being never ends (Gülen, 2006, p. 21).

The State of Spiritual Heart

The Sufi concept of heart is far richer and more complex. In Sufi terminology, “heart” signifies the biological heart's spiritual aspect as the center of all emotions and (intellectual and spiritual) faculties, such as perception, consciousness, sensation, reasoning, and willpower. Sufis call it the “human truth”; philosophers call it the “speaking selfhood” (Gülen, 2006, p. 22). Gülen’s heart-centred positive psychology defends the notion that an individual's real nature is found in the heart with respect to this intellectual and spiritual aspect of existence, and it is through this that one is able to know, perceive, and understand. Spirit is the essence and inner dimension of this faculty; the biological spirit or the soul is its mount. The heart can function as bridge by which all good and blessing comes. For instance, Gülen refers to prophetic words such as: “O God. O Converter of hearts! Establish our hearts firmly on Your religion,” (Al-Tirmidhi, 1969) which remind us of the absolute need to preserve the heart (Gülen, 2006, p. 24).

Gülen explains the state of the spiritual heart with many verses in the *Qur’an*, telling of humankind’s superiority among all creatures and the infinite gift Allah has bestowed upon humankind: “We are nearer to him/her than his/her jugular vein” (*Qur’an*, 53: 9). “God is the light of the earth and the heavens,” and we do not need any telescope or anything else to see everything.” This idea suggests that may God open our hearts so that we may feel His Existence in ourselves without the need for telescopes. It means the self can find Him in our souls and hearts. Nobody needs to look around neither on earth nor in the heavens to find Him, for He is nearer to us than our jugular vein. Gülen uses one of the famous Turkish Sufi poets, Niyazi

Misri's words to clarify and simplify this idea. This is Misri's quote from 17th century, the Halveti Sufi Order 's *shayh*:

“I looked around left and right,
In order to see the face of the Beloved,
I searched for Him outside
When He is the Soul within my soul.” (Can, 2005, p. 277).

Gülen memorizes thousands of poems from Sufi saints. He approves the popular well known Sufi poet, another famous Turkish Sufi named Ibrahim Haqqi of Erzurum from the 19th century. In the words of Ibrahim Haqqi: “The heart is the home of God; purify it from whatever is other than Him. So that the All-Merciful may descend into His palace at night.” This is vividly expressed in a narrated Prophetic Tradition, which Ibrahim Haqqi relates as follows: God said: "Neither the heavens nor the earth can contain Me." He is known and recognized as a "Treasure" hidden in the heart by the heart itself (Gülen, 2006, p. 24). Gülen enjoys quoting from another famous Sufi poet from the 13th century in the following couplets. The well-known Sufi saint Rumi writes this:

“The Truth says: I consider the heart,
Not the form made from water and clay.
You say: I have a heart within me, whereas
The heart is above God's Throne, not below.” (Gülen, 2006, p. 28)

These three Sufi quotes are my guidance and light. It is not easy to enter the city of the body and witness the Sovereign therein, and travel from yourself to yourself and search for yourself in yourself. The light of the heart is like a lamp that becomes visible after polishing the heart with many prayers, recitations, *dhikr* and special holy quotations day by day. The spiritual heart's lamp started to open with mysteries at the beginning, as reflected in this poem:

Reflection is the light in the heart. Think on the spirit of knowledge. The spirit's food becomes essence. Reflection begins with awareness as a vital step to the truth. Without it, the heart is darkened. A key opens the door of experience where the trees of truth are planted. Choosing beauty over ugliness is the key. What is good and evil in great detail? Looking for good, and finding the positive. Even seeming badness becomes good. Discover the Divine mysteries everywhere. Presenting all in the book of the universe are the peculiarities of its letters and words. Evoking reflection upon its appearances and finding perfection, universal humanity. The goal and the fruit of reflecting is the way of guidance and righteousness.

As far as objective truth goes, Gülen defends the approach of the greatest Sufi saint from the 12th century, Ibn Arabi and Said Nursi from the 20th century scholar, who were argued there are other sources of knowledge rather than just those our brains can capture, and in these are found the inner spirit and the innermost heart with the heart's six dimensions within seven different self-stages (Gülen, 2006, p. 128). I was looking for those six dimensions and seven different self-stages in my heart. Sufism provides a discipline of remembering the divine within your soul, heart and mind. The divine is fully present within us, even if we cannot experience it as present. My heart burns with fervour and fire, many emotional depths and conscious thoughts. My ego seeks freedom from selfishness because love without hatred is the Sufi's belief. A Sufi must find the truly beloved in the heart. Love is a treasure, waiting to be found. My soul was trapped in such "a barrel" forty days long during my first *Erbain* in Kitchener, Canada, until human perfection could be found. Love elevates us above the animals, even above the angels. As a Seeker, I knew that the path to Truth was within me. There would be no arriving or leaving. What is there other than God? Again the *Qur'an* says: "He is with you wherever you are and God sees whatever you do." (*Qur'an*, 39:22).

Devotion to God is one of the most basic Sufi practices. I was moved by the good news in this verse and my heart was gladdened greatly. This devotion is reflected in the heart-warming poetry I have written as a Sufi poet and is reflected in this quotation:

My destiny is the Divine Love as Ashq. Allah is with me wherever I come from God. My heart has gladness bliss and hope. If you have not found peace and joy because you have not known yourself, it is inside of you. Sincere intensity is the only path to truth. Spending a long dark night of passion with a beautiful One, mysterious One. Being freed of all worries, all wishes. Setting the heart wholly on the Beloved. Every moment is travelling to my heart, a deep and irresistible heartfelt is my desire.

What does self-journeying mean to me? To be a Sufi, I would like to free myself from a life of restriction and turn to God within the horizon of the heart. Gülen provides a short description of this process: “Journeying toward God, journeying in God; whatever you do, it is journeying from God” (Gülen, 2009, p.9). During this spiritual journey, I felt nearness in my spirit and could not but utter such unceasingly. There was no longer any space, neither in the heaven nor in the earth. My Journeying passed beyond time and space, in unending efforts to turn to God in my heart. My journeying began with reflection on the world. Later on, my inner world perceived manifestations of God and observed His unique stamp in journeying to our Lord. I perceived my own innate poverty, helplessness, and experienced the protection and direction of the Divine. Journeying in the native (spiritual) land, while resident in the real land was not an easy process, but I simplified these feelings and experiences with my poetic reflections. Others see the journey with all its stages as unrealistic. My subjective truth may be objective to me, but others don't know my state. Conscious of what I was doing, and that God sees my every breath, I was careful always of the place I put my feet, of each step I took. I am not a saint, as far as I know, but a hero of spirituality in peak, aware of the many Divine Names. If I am drowned in such knowledge of God I can't distinguish between the Names and the One who is called by these Names. This is the peak of the state where I belong, uttering the Names of God in my heart.

The Soul and the Self

Gülen says that Sufis view the creation as a shadow of the original. The meaning, the origin, is in the Knowledge of God as a believer journeys in heart and in spirit. Creation refers to this action of the heart, of the spiritual intellect within the origin of the self and the soul. Sufis consider everything in the world as no more than a drop, even a mirage, taken from an ocean. Material existence and pleasures are regarded as having the meaning and worth of a drop, while the other world and spiritual pleasures come from Divine knowledge and love which corresponds to the ocean. The concept of the self is different and it must be free. Gülen asserts that the most advanced in knowledge and love of God and in piety flee from Attributes to Divine Being or Essence, and from the Truth to the Truth Himself. They say: I take refuge with You from You, and are always in awe of God (Gülen, 2006, p.14).

As a matter of fact, love exists in our spiritual heart within our pure soul. The physical heart regulates bodily functions and the spiritual heart regulates the psychological functions. Gülen says that each of us is carrying a pharaoh within us and each of us has also a Moses, a divine messenger, who can lead us from slavery to freedom (Gülen, 2010). Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, a loyal devotee at the door of the Truth, how one fleeing to and taking shelter in God is rewarded: “Then I fled from you [Pharaoh] when I feared you, and my Lord has granted to me the power of judging (justly and distinguishing between truth and falsehood, and right and wrong) and has made me one of His Messengers” (*Qur’an*, 26:21). Prophet Moses states that the way to spiritual pleasure and meeting with God and Divine vice-regency and nearness passes through fleeing. Our *nafs* is a frozen Pharaoh dragon, it is never dead for it is a bloody tyrant. The only real solution is to transform the tyrannical self by sacrificing the ego. Each of us has to become one with the inner heart of Moses and spirit heart of Jesus, and the innermost heart of

Mohammad, and we have to nourish and honour that liberator and divine servant. The self needs to convince our heart and mind of the truth of spiritual principles and ideals, and vow to live in grace to overcome the power of the tyrannical self.

At the first stage, my ego satisfaction and power is important for everything outside of me, because there is no inner love of God in my heart. The self needs a sense of an inner relationship, for not having a sense of inner restraints, or of our sins, kills our soul inch by inch, making our heart a darker place every day, until there is no inner reality and morality left in our life. In the lower self, this is the stage of having a regular untrained self like everybody else, my *nafs* is a slave to pleasure, an addict in denial, refusing to recognize that even I have a problem regarding selfishness, arrogance and greedy behaviour. The self wants everyone to notice it and to think well of it. My *nafs* always wants more, it never steps back, nothing is good enough for it. For instance, I am like a fish that does not know what water is, because the self never knows anything else. It is an expert at hiding from consciousness. This selfish *nafs* does not want anyone to receive anything from anybody.

The self is also like a fire, representing potential unlimited anger. When it is at the point of being extinguished, it always flares up somewhere else. If the *nafs* calms down in one area, the self can ignite in another. This is a Sufi technique for therapy, the lower self has many negative attributions, but these can be replaced by positive attributions. True transformational change is a process of literally turning our back and moving away from our old way of life and bad habits. The self puts its feet sincerely into options of change through God's grace and our attractive past loses its charm. It takes time. The self should begin with its undisciplined, unfocused collection of thoughts, feelings and actions. Our negative ego and pleasure is forcing us to disobey Sufi discipline and prayers because it is still a powerful force within us.

The *nafs* is persistently obsessed with people's opinions regardless of whether God may approve or disapprove. In fact, the lower self always turns to increase of possession and pride therein, as well as arrogance, self-importance and contempt. Our heart is changing every single second and our *nafs* is never constant, wanting only to finish everything quickly. These quick movements are arbitrary and unreliable; it is in a hurry to fulfill its desire, and it acts arrogantly. This negative attribute can only be removed from the *nafs* through patience. God provides a cure for this disease of the self which is spiritual poverty, neediness and helplessness. Our spiritual heart contains many of God's attributions to cure our stress, anxiety and depressive feelings. The spiritual heart is located in between the lower self and the soul. If our spiritual heart is infected with the negative characteristics of the lower self, we become spiritually ill. Our spiritual health dies when we do not wipe out or clean the dust in our heart. The heart is polished when the veil of dust is cleaned. After polishing my heart, I am destined to reflect the light of divine secrets. My heart is directly responsive to my everyday thoughts and actions. Although, my emotions are like anger, fear and greed continue to come from the lower self. The poem that I wrote entitled the Speaking Soul is as follows:

Self-journeying in the valley of my heart, I was seeking gifts from the Owner of the heart. I seek refuge in You from carnal thoughts. I seek with You a soul content in You. My companions both the heart and the spirit, my soul has grown refined in purity, maturity. The purified soul is the double of my spirit, but true humanity equals the Perfected Soul. The mission was in essence a powerful tool. I was constantly seeking avoidance of evil for purification and perfection of self. Inspired with the knowledge of words from the spirit, I was following the heart - the spirit reaches out to God. The entire horizon to the spiritual intellect, the Ultimate Truth is heading to consciousness because my spiritual journey targets the Ultimate Truth. I was wishing to reach the Soul, Pure and Innocent. I requested wings for human beings to rise to perfection. The speaking self turns to the soul resting peacefully. The soul knows delight when well-pleased in Him.

According to Gülen, the heart houses the light of faith and the light of the practice of the outer form of any religion. The inner heart holds the light of gnosis or knowledge of spiritual truth as two important lights or aspects. These are the light of unification and the light of uniqueness (Gülen, 2009, p. 97). I follow Gülen's instructions and believe that in the inner heart is the locked treasure, our heart is God's house, surrounded by walls and kept secure with many locked rooms.

Gülen describes many stations associated with different stages and different levels of knowledge and stations in Sufism, including seven levels of the self. Each station of the self is named as a city nested one within the other. Sufism provides powerful and effective tools for understanding and transforming the tyrannical self which is called *nafs*. These tools include self-observation, self-discipline and being oneself with others. My target was to go through these seven levels or stages of self in Sufism. Sufism is a process of deep self-searching. One of the goals of Sufism is that daily life itself becomes a profound spiritual practice. Most people have and live with the lower self and have an inner struggle their whole life to reach the second stage. At the other extreme, the highest level of *nafs* is known as the pure *nafs* or the perfected/innocent soul. I couldn't reach this stage in Kitchener as far as I know, since in this stage the personality is truly "pure and perfect crystal" and "reflects God's light with almost no loss or distortion" (Gülen, 2006, p.128). The highest states of spiritual development are beyond rational description and very rarely do people achieve this level because the rational separate ego must be dropped completely. This is "unity of personality" and a very advanced level or state. Of course, I realize that "true inner unity is a very hard achievement" (Frager, 1999, p. 40). The final stage is when our religion becomes a religion of love according to Gülen's Sufi philosophy.

Being a Sufi Dervish

The poem that I wrote regarding my feeling about Canada, named “The Land of Nobility” refers of the concepts of altruism in the Table 2 as follows:

Forgetfulness of all our concerns. When doing a good deed for others. This is perfect goodness or excellence. Dependent upon the happiness of others. Ensuring no one’s rights are despoiled. Is a virtue belonging to saintly people? Giving some of their belongings to others. Without feeling any unease in their heart. Showing warmth, speaking soft, kindly words. Allowing others to take from one’s knowledge. Preferring the temporal welfare of others. Not as a first but a third degree of nobility. Considering one’s own happiness becomes duty. Without expecting any rewards or anything in return. Altruism is death to the self and is moral. What is the opposite: being selfish and stingy. It is easy to show generosity with gold. Harder to show generosity with soul. Feeding others at the cost of one’s hunger. Neglecting self for others as a second degree. Sacrificing one’s soul for God’s way and sake. Putting belief and the good of the believers first. This dervish has the highest degree of nobility. Of kind generosity and flowing benevolence.

Sofi is used to designate the followers of Sufism, particularly by speakers of Persian and Turkish. Others use Sufi. I think the difference arises from the different views of the word's origin. Those who claim that it is derived from sof (wool), safa (spiritual delight, exhilaration), safwat (purity), or sophos (a Greek word meaning wisdom), or who believe that it implies devotion, prefer Sufi. Those who hold that it is derived from suffa (chamber), and stress that it should not be confused with sofu (religious zealot), also use Sufi (Gülen, 2006, p.xx).

Suddenly, I discouraged myself and said to my heart: you cannot be a Dervish! Stage one started that the dervishes seek to be pious, they seek to be modest. Horizons of sincerity, perfect goodness and purity are needed. Imitation, experience, verified truths started the journey toward piety, to meet the Almighty, who waits in the Garden. Stage two was supposed to the Dervish is in harmony with existence. His heart is surrendered to the Almighty alone. Love is the road,

repelling hostility and evil without patience and tolerance, you cannot be a dervish. Stage three was more difficult than the dervish has peace and spiritual vision, seeing, feeling, knowing, and faithful friend of Him whether good comes from friends or evil comes from enemies. A second nature gained in secret, free from all that's not needful. Open to all, is the door of the way, the door of the way to becoming a dervish. No-one's denied, but the way has requirements. Open is the door to the one who is wakeful, who can sacrifice soul. Ready to enter is the convent of dervishes, ready and willing to sacrifice for truth. Being a dervish dominates essence, one captive to ego cannot be a dervish. Adopting love as a guide, learn the secrets of God from your heart. Not drinking, but knowledge of God is true pleasure. Take refuge in your heart of seclusion, for the world beyond is not nearly as spacious! The following is the poem that I have written:

Being a dervish is based on humility and nothingness. For a spirit that's contaminated, only Divine grace can clean it. A luxurious life is a shame upon dervishes; it's a burden of hearts, and bodies, and minds. Luxury hurts the feet of the dervish, breaking in two the journey toward the Beloved.

My individuality was suffering and will last for two forty days in order to needful for discovering innate power of the spirit within divine of the self. During first *erbain* period, I died several times daily for the happiness of others and felt the Lord with all my being, through half-opened door of the heart. Individuality was the first rank and goal of the journey. The second rank is the favor of His Divine voice with the rays of His "Face" and the lights of His Existence. Dervish is a hero of truth, who feels in the hills of his heart. The heroes of this rank feel in Dervishes inner worlds by fully displaying faithfulness, faith and sincerity as well as make the Truth known to the first two rank's folk (Gülen, 2006, p. 191). I was raising the spirits to meet the One manifest Truth. A true dervish patiently abstains, is pious and righteous, loving tolerantly, and steadfastly, severing relations from the heart, devoted to service with the intention of reaching Him. Love of

God with spiritual pleasures was the rank of individuality. Love of God with spiritual pleasures was the rank of individuality below is the poem which reflects this rank:

The world means heedlessness of God; not silver and lace.
Praising wealth earned in lawful ways for a righteous one!
Without the love of wealth in your heart, reviving uplifting.
Swimming safely the ocean of spiritual initiation and journeying.

Repentance is the result of the rank of individuality. Pure, sincere repentance perfectly improves feelings and purity of effort no longer opposes the Divine Essence. A Sufi is a believer who turns to God in truth with his/her heart. Eyes sleep, but not heart, heart wide awake. The stage of repentance engages in self-renewal, and is eradicating injustice, supporting justice and right. Being frightened remembering past sins and regrets, reforming the self by removing spiritual defects (Gülen, 2006, p.4). I have repented and turned sincerely contrite to God, not breaking my penitence till my soul leaves my body. I will be freed from deviation and error wherein I've fallen if I move away from God, my repentance will be lies. The following poem reflects my station:

My first station repentance, the second sincere penitence. Ascension through the stations of journeying in God. O Dervish! With contrite heart you come, the beginning. Excellent the servant turning ever-contrite to his Lord. This station not for the ecstatic saints of the Unity of Being. But for the scholarly saints of the Unity of the Witnessed. Who accept and witness the true existent one beyond the creation. Progressing in the light of the peace and its blessings.

A mysterious key was piety right after the station of repentance. The self accepts that you cannot be the noblest saint. If you cannot be a sincere servant with piety and obey who created you,

those going before you, the traveler will be stuck there. A Sufi must be most honorable of person in his/her piety. Piety is the conscious performance of good, the source of all good and all blessing. It is preventing you from joining the lowest of the low, and advancing you on the path of the highest of the high (Gülen, 2006, p. 42). I realized with piety His aims in both worlds prosperous and guided, and truly not wretched. Lifeless with respect to the truth is not living; only one who has found a way to God is alive without guide. Invaluable treasure is piety, a jewel that is matchless Priceless treasure of precious stones, and it is a mysterious key. Opening all doors of good, a mount toward Paradise where enter whose hearts God has tested for piety. The Opening all doors of good, a mount toward Paradise where enter whose hearts God has tested for piety. The Poem is as follow:

Tested in remembrance of death, in life conscious knowledge. Not considering oneself higher or better than the rest. Pursuing only God, not seeking any conditions. Renewing self continuously, controlling spirit with action. Piety heavenly water of life, a pious one the best. Fortunate are the few who have discovered this key. God Almighty says: great among you are the pious. Paradise their last abode and their drink will be kawthar

During my first erbaïn, I learned how to beg only from Allah. Abstinence leads to the fear of God, who desires love without, the claim of love and friendship is false. Uprightly follow the way of abstinence, for His sake. Feeling the company of the "Hidden Treasure" in my heart and then trapped by the ego, carnal self, and desires. I have ever been refraining from begging from others and being straightforward and steadfast in beliefs and in acts because I beg only from Him, the One Allah, the All-Munificent. Engaging in what is necessary and useful because real nature is useless, desires fleeting and transient. This is the beauty of a good of no use, renouncing worldly pomp and luxury as the convict. As a traveler, I was in abstinence, reaching the peaks of

my piety as strict observance of all His commands, His prohibitions. My actions were all for God, advancing till reaching Him. My heart and feelings purged of all that is outside of Him. My heart and feelings purged of all that is outside of Him. The poem which reflected my high emotions and moods follows:

Remembered sole glance at something forbidden, I wept for a day. In the station, during the period, shed tears for my lifetime. Not heedless of God, not even for eye's twinkling. Desiring His nearness, through abstinence and asceticism.

The Sufi way requires friendship, deepest and closest to God. Self-sacrificing friend is the most appreciative companion and great magnanimity the basis of this heartfelt sincerity. Who destroys this sincerity falls from the pinnacle and who is my intimate friend in both world and eternity? Loyal friendship is rare as the spiritual intellect (Gülen, 2009, p.268). Love invades the pupil and the seed of the heart. Giving its own colour and speaking its own language. Sincere friendship is pure loyalty as love is with sorrow. There is passion, yearning, and consumption or burning. It's marked by enthusiasm and thankfulness with sadness. Love is beyond measure seeks no station, no honour. A sincere friend is a companion sharing the secret. Feeling love in my heart with loyalty and devotion and my transcending knowledge of God, reaches intimacy with Him. Horizon of perfection was my feeling, thought, endeavor and preaching. Sainthood is marked with sincere friendship of God because He is infinite, there's no limit to nearness (Gülen, 2006, p. 64). I am human with limits to perfection and capacity. There are limits and boundaries to where the traveler can go. This poem targets this capacity:

My whole being is submitted to God with all followers.

My inner senses have reached the horizon of unity.

My perceptions consider, rationalize, evaluate.

My mind, consciousness and heart bear the stamp of the One Maker.

The State of Divine Love or *Ashq*

Sufis believe that their teachings are the essence of every religion, and indeed of the evolution of humanity as a whole. The central concept in Sufism is love (Can, 2005, p. 274). Gülen makes a clear distinction between worldly love and divine love, and clarifies this concept differently from many other philosophers. In Arabic, *Mahabba* means fondness, tender and kind feelings, inclination, and love. Love that affects and invades one's feelings is called passion; love that is so deep and irresistible that it burns for union is called fervor and enthusiasm. Sufis have defined love as the relation of the heart with the Truly Beloved One, the irresistible desire felt for Him, the struggle to comply with His desires or commandments in all acts and thoughts, and the state of being enraptured and intoxicated without “sobriety” until the time of union or reunion. These of Gülen’s definitions can be summed up as “standing” in the Presence of God, as being freed from all transient relationships and worries. True love means that a lover is set wholly on the Beloved, is always and inwardly with Him, and has no other desire and wish. The heart of a person who has such a degree of love always beats with a new consideration for the Beloved at every moment. His or her imagination always travels in His mysterious climate, his or her feelings receive new messages from Him at every moment, he or she takes wings with these messages, and passionately desires to meet Him. When a lover transcends him or her self with the wings of love and reaches the Lord at the points of passion and enthusiasm, and in such a condition, and carries out his or her responsibilities toward the King of the heart, that same heart is set on His vision (Gülen, 2006, p. 149).

Fleeing is necessary to understand that the creation is a shadow of the original. The meaning, the origin is in the Knowledge of God. The Sun signifies Him, the Origin of manifestations through the piece of glass denotes the Divine manifestations. Run away from the

truth refers to fleeing the shadow. Self-adoration melts in the rays of the Truth. Everything in the world is no more than a drop, for instance, a mirage even, taken from an ocean. Flee to God in your heart is the spiritual intellect, journeying in heart and in spirit, this is called fleeing (Gülen, 2006, p. 13). Flee for refuge in God's forgiveness and shelter and escape from life's tumults and pains comes through fleeing. This poem reflects on fleeing and in ecstasy, repeating: O Known One is Allah:

I took refuge with Him from the evil I have done. I accepted my penitence, for we are mere humans. Unable to know You as knowing You requires. I have illusions that are traps, whereas in reality. The reflections with radiant faces in the garden of God. Are manifestation of Unity, manifestations of many. I caught all the many Divine Names and Attributes. Divine Names with radiant faces throughout the universe. Denote the Divine Names and Attributes of the One. The Lord Ruler, Sustainer, and Master of the universe. Making a garden of renewable beauty and charm.

'Ashq means intense love of and fondness for perfection, beauty, or physical charm. Sufis usually call this sort of love figurative or metaphorical love, such as love for the opposite sex. Real love, the love of the Eternal Monarch, is felt for His Grace and Beauty manifested within His Majesty, and for His Majesty manifested within His Grace and Beauty (Gülen, 2006, p.153). The real, intense love felt for God is a wing of light granted to us by Him so that people can use it to reach Him. Feeling such love can be described as the spirit being like a moth drawn toward the Light, the essence of existence. This intense love is the most basic and mysterious cause of the creation of the universe. God has created the universe in order to be known and loved, and so that those souls awakened to truth will feel and manifest a deep interest in His Essence, Attributes, and Names. *'Ashq'*, which the spirit feels without the intervention of free will, cannot be controlled by the person so affected, for its real source is God, Who loves Himself in a way special to His Sacred Essence, and which is essentially independent of the created. In addition, it

is essentially different from the love felt by the created for the created or the Creator. This sacred, essential love of God for Himself, including His Attributes and Names, is the reason why He created the universe and why He caused humanity to appear in the world. It is also this love that manifests itself in human beings as love of God, as the most essential center of humanity's relationship with God. '*Ashq*' is the final step leading to God, and a lover who has reached it has no further steps to take. God manifested Himself first as this sacred, essential love required by His being God. This love must not be confused with the love a person feels for either the created or the Creator Himself. As there is no other word more appropriate to express it, I feel obliged to use "love" (Gülen, 2006, p.153).

The children of love and our mother is love. Romantic love is a gift to humanity. Union of man - woman is no fake desire. Love is not forbidden for Sufis, adultery only. Seeking relationship is beyond life that's material between matching soul, spirits, loving each other. Biological desires are dangerous for perfection but love as real or metaphor, takes you to God. I seek to escape self in order to reach love and save myself from myself, I escape from my ego.

The following poem shows this:

Duality vanished, I become You, and you I. Your love does not empty while my ego is tamed. I stuck in my foot, halting union with You O King, Master, Lover. Walking your path is my life's only comfort. Romance is only a bridge to Your love. Humans have the same soul, but our bodies are millions. Many languages there are, but they all mean the same. Our minds and heads one, reality's essence is one also. Liberation from selfishness, reconciliation is kindness.

I throw away meaningless words, thoughts and desires. My spirit sends news to my heart when it's opened. I felt that we are God's holy light, we're God's mirror in the truth. Why do we struggle, as light running from light? As a lover, I listen to the sounds of music, creation. I hear from the strings of guitar chants of unity. Everything says God is Great and forgives us. Uniting

Love of God is in love of humanity. Allah is the origin of deeds good and evil. He's established what's right and what's wrong. God will reward or will punish, bringing the universe into existence and non-existence, according to His command. Below is the poem that demonstrates this:

You have neither eyes, nor ears, nor organs, nor limits. O Exalted One! No time, no space, no beginning or end. No equals or likenesses in Your Oneness, last without end. No relation with eating, drinking, dressing, or sleeping. Unity is the foundation of eyes solely upon Him. Sufi views unity at both its beginning and its end. Reaching deeper perceptions, experiences, indications. Observing truths through witness to the One who is Witnessed.

The stage of divine love is unconditional submission to God. Without reaching this stage, the seeker will be stuck. There must be purity of intention and sincerity to stay in this stage in your heart. For example, I was expecting nothing, nor seeking of pleasure. All the knowledge of Him turned to a reason when I was filling my heart with the light of His Existence. Real wisdom means to learn something well and then to apply it. A Sufi heart is empty of attachment to anything other than God. The individual realizes that all is God, that nothing and no one is separate from God. This is the ultimate goal for Sufism and for a Sufi heart: unity (Gülen, 2006, p. 27). Real success for me is to develop a level of inner peace and communion with God that cannot be shaken by the ups and downs of temporal events.

Who is the Beloved one and how do I perceive my love? I found and answered this difficult question in my heart. I have neither a fear of hell, nor a desire for paradise, but only love, joy of heart. God is God for happiness. For this, "I love Allah, not because of His gifts, but for Himself. My being melts in Allah by turning within oneself" as a famous Turkish Sufi, Yunus Emre was saying 800 years ago when he said that "who knows himself knows his Lord" (Gülen, 2013). Gülen uses this phrase many times on an almost daily basis. I wrote a daily

journal with poetry as well as reflective thoughts about this divine love, as portrayed in the following extract:

Ultimately through love all is brought into existence in the unity of Being. Continuing journey towards union with the Beloved only, I should act with sincerity, purity of intention and oppose my lower self: the only foe. I cannot lie or deny my Lord and never speak to Allah, except with sincerity, whatever language is spoken, kept and upheld. I realize that mindfulness of speech and its purity, following the way of love and of Truth, weeping intimate closeness toward Allah and dizzy in light of His radiant glory. In love there is nothing between breast and Breast. Speech is born and arises from longing because true description is born from true taste. Tasting is knowing the best explanations are lies. How can I describe the true form of something? In whose presence you are erased, but in whose being you still exist, and who lives as a sign for your journey. In fact, little by little, we die towards the Merciful, dissolve into Love, become love, God willing. At the end, there is no longer lover or Beloved. Only Unity of Being, Allah is love.

My self-journeying provided me with an opportunity for the inner work of cleansing my breast and opening my heart at the awaking state, and that continued for almost 21 days in Kitchener. I couldn't sleep for more than two hours in a day, feeling more energetic and like a super human being, even though I was not eating anything or drinking. My dreams were colourful and educational even though I slept only two hours a day. I was writing poetry in my dreams, somebody was reciting for me and I recorded in my journal as soon as I woke up. This station is also called *Ashq* or divine love. My "Ashq" poem ends with this quote:

O Sufi! How can you truly come to love God?/When you know just the Name, not the Named/Give Glory only to God night and day without ceasing/There is no god but God, He is One, has no partners.

The Awakening Station

How did I reach the awakening station or divine love and what happened to me during 21 days during June 2013? A common Sufi tradition is the forty-day retreat, a time to be away from the world and close to God in order to reach a transcendence experience. During these days, old habits of thinking and acting can be gradually replaced by new, healthier habits. The Prophet Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai and Jesus Christ stayed forty days in the desert to feel transcendence experiences and a deep connection within their spiritual hearts. Prophet Abraham and Prophet Mohammad are two examples of those who taught the unity of the inner and the outer discipline, known as the hearts of the heart. Jesus brought us the inner spirit behind the law, which resembles a spiritual heart. By contrast, Moses portrayed a clear consciousness, showing the clear boundaries of law in order to restrain and liberate one's *nafs* - that is, liberate the self from slavery (Frager, 1999, p.31). A Sufi must believe in and respect all prophets and saints' words and see them as models. A famous Turkish poet and Sufi, Yunus Emre, served his Shyakh Taptuk Emre over forty years in order to integrate his inner heart, and for the next forty years he was a wandering traveller who became the greatest Sufi dervish in Turkish history. Yunus Emre was going in and out of this awakening state by his will, while reciting his poems, mostly unintentionally.

Even while I was observing my awakening state very intently for 21 days, I would describe my transcendence experience as consisting in quite delightful feelings from which I never wished to return. I learned that transcendence is a joyful state that involves a sense of integration between oneself and something infinite that is outside the self. I lost my sense of boundaries when I was writing and reciting my new poems, and I couldn't discern where I began and ended. My forms of consciousness were waking, sleeping, dreaming and enjoying my

transcendence sincerity. Gülen categorizes this stage as “transcendence sincerity,” and explains that “I wish the people of the world could see true integrity, profound belief, transcendent *ikhlas* (sincerity), exalted *ihsan* (God-consciousness), amazing *marifah* (spiritual knowledge of God), and such a love of God and zeal and ecstasy that it would blow their minds. I wish they could see awesomeness at its every level” (Gülen, 2013).

During the awaking state, my emotions and thoughts were more often than not associated with transcendence serenity and bliss, which is a feeling of total calmness and peace; a touch of heaven in a zone where time doesn’t exist. It was a sweet feeling, as though the soul was sucking up honey in a state of inner wakefulness. There was no object of thought or perception left, just pure consciousness beyond the division of subject and object, and a state I would name as similar to “Transcendence Consciousness” or “Cosmic Consciousness” (Rosenthal, 2012, p. 43).

During this wakefulness period, I cannot sleep, eat or drink as the beginning until the end. Does sleeping in heedlessness behave a humble servant? I call to God based on conscious insight and sure knowledge. I travel on the horizon of thought, reflection, and pondering. The deepening of insight was the revival of reason as having sound, sincere intention and viewpoint by the rank. I was being free from all prejudices among the high conditions as spiritual heart is in the following reflective poem:

O All-Living, O Self-Subsisting One, there is no deity but You. Having a wakeful heart and eye is dependent on awareness. Wakeful travelers are conscious that the Truth always sees. Always turn in humility, with utmost poverty and helplessness. Your heart should never falter, should remain steadfast in place. A Wakeful one has a connection with "goodness that is perfect". O Sufi! Seen always by God and is behaving as if seeing Him. Like hunters who keep a close, secret watch on their prey. Journeying to God is in constant expectation of His gifts. All goods come from Him, but you should never blink. In perfect reliance there is no power or strength. You are saved toward God and with God and in God. Find ways that lead to Him, who never leaves you helpless or alone.

I was enjoying a boundlessness that slipped into my mind, the mind beyond the mind, and I reached the state of mindfulness. This state can only be experienced by the divine love and the light of the divine as it is a delightful bonus. It should not only involve perception and mind, also the heart which must be overflowing with love. It is direct connection with God; there is no middle person, veil, barrier or curtain blocking you out. This unity of consciousness I felt, and can describe with a famous Sufi quote from Yunus Emre's poem says that "We are all one, you and I are not we but one" (Gülen, 1999). Gülen invented a new term for the stage of "**transcendent *ikhlas* (sincerity)**" (Gülen, 2013). This continued progression of consciousness also intensifies a connection with your fellow human beings. This type of unity of consciousness is found at the heart of all religions, though differently expressed.

Being connected to transcendent *ikhlas* (sincerity) makes a person stronger than a normal human being and purity of intention makes the person's small deed the biggest deed, and one that will be nourished in the heaven as a giant tree. This is a level deep within the mind and the heart, and one that is known by many different God names and attributions. The source of knowledge and thought unified and filled within the fully conscious mind is called "transcendental consciousness, the self" (Rosenthal, 2012, p. 43). It exists within every single human being, but it is hidden through four doors, and 40 thousand stages and stations, according to Sufi tradition. The experience of transcendence is a silent and settled process, but it is also restful and fully alert, as well as involving an expanded level of the mind and the heart and the soul.

The State of Freedom

After my transcendence experience, my self-journey became all about seeking freedom from the ego, my lower self. Gülen states that "Free-will is a pillar of conscience and the most

valuable gift for humanity. True freedom is fleeing from the ego” (Gülen, 2006, p.14). In fact, this was the single goal of my period of eighty days *erbain*. The freedom inherent in Islamic Sufism, being one of the most significant fruits of austerity, is that a person does not submit or bow to any power other than God, thus indicating that the heart of that person has become a clear mirror receiving and reflecting the manifestations of God. The person who has reached this point on the way to God, through austerity and by God's special help, severs inward relations with all things and beings other than God, and with emotions pulsing with freedom, heart beating joyfully with a yearning for freedom, and having broken all the restrictions around the selfhood, that person sets for him or herself this single goal (Gülen, 2000, p. 7).

My questions were “What are the true sources of human rights?” and “Where is the self enslaved and encaged?” True freedom is attainable only by freeing one's heart from all care. The leaders of the Sufi way say: be free. The following poem was written with many questions in mind: “How long have we remained enslaved? We are always anxious about the things of the world. How can we be free from such worrying?” It seems that I found the answer by writing this quotation: “Taste freedom when you are free. Leave out your gold and silver, bonds. O Sufi! Undo the bonds of servanthood. The essence of freedom: be slave to God.” It was clear to me that if a person would like to reach true freedom, then one must free oneself from slavery to others. I have answered the question about what the spiritual heart is in the following reflective poem:

The heart is the center of home for God. Purify it from unwanted evils for Him. Human truth-speaking selfhood is Home. The spiritual heart is a palace day and night. My heart is becoming the polished mirror with His love. Divine knowledge is reflected only to heart. Soul and mind are like the eye of the spirit. The heart both perceiving and being perceived. True humanity's center turns on one feeling. Spiritual delight and love there for lovers. O Sufi, you are looking to the spiritual, the other to the earthly. The heart receives gifts through the world of the spirit. If the heart is diseased, elements sound

strange. If it is corrupted, all the body is too. If it is not healthy, there's no humanity or reason. If the heart is infected, it is difficult to restore. The heart itself hides a "Treasure" within of intention, belief and wise closeness to God. You are pursuing His pleasure by seeking to please Him. Spiritual existence is found in the heart. The heart must guard and keep safe from infection. Feelings and emotions take shelter, need guidance. Consider the heart, not as water and blood. It is within me, above and not under God's throne.

The State of Wisdom

Gülen gives different explanations of Wisdom as referring to meaning, knowledge, the understanding of Divine commandments, to philosophy, to the real reasons for the existence of events and of things, and to grasping the goals and benefits in religion. Wisdom has been interpreted by the exacting scholars of truth as the ability to combine useful knowledge and righteous deeds in life. Righteous deeds are the willed outcome of knowledge applied, and the beginning of new Divine gifts (Gülen, 2000, p. 26). Starting from the perspective of the description above, it could be that some scholars deal with wisdom in two categories, namely practical and theoretical wisdom, as they have done with reason. Theoretical wisdom is the effort that one makes along with a God-given ability to observe things and events as if they were an exhibition. It is also an attempt to penetrate the meaning behind and purpose for such events in order to study and read them like a book, to listen to them like a symphony, and to study and try to understand the mysterious relationship between the physical and metaphysical realms of existence (Gülen, 2000, p.26) As for practical wisdom, it is worshipping in order to discover and turn to the Owner of this exhibition, the Author of this book, the Composer of this symphony, running to Him in love and yearning, and deeply experiencing the awe and amazement of being in His Presence. So, to sum up, wisdom begins with reflection, curiosity, wonder, and the zeal to

study and search, and continues with obedience and worship, ending in spiritual pleasures and eternal happiness (Gülen, 2000, p. 26).

I was looking for my inner heart, that is, the place of inner vision and a key opener for the light of gnosis. Gülen considers gnosis as “inner wisdom” and “knowledge of spiritual truth,” since the heart knows and the inner heart sees or has vision or knowledge combined which complement each other. As a result the unseen becomes seen and “I” becomes certain, turned to “we” and then “Him” only (Gülen, 2006, p. 29). The inner heart’s perception is true perception. True wisdom comes from inner knowing combined with inner vision. Knowledge combined with action is an important dimension of wisdom. Although action is not a part of belief or, in other words, neglecting to practice religion in daily life is not a sign of unbelief, it is certain that action is an important aspect of religion. Putting knowledge into practice or practicing the religious commandments in daily life after learning them is an essential aspect of Islam based on Gülen. (Gülen, 2000, p. 30). The following poem about wisdom seeks to articulate this truth:

Wisdom is a God-given ability to observe things. Righteous deeds are the willed outcome of gifts. It is an attempt to penetrate the meaning behind the mysterious Book of the Universe. There is a relation between the two worlds. The physical and metaphysical realms of existence as divine gifts are to study and read like a book. Sufis can hear them, just like a symphony. The Author of the book is this symphony’s Composer and discovering and turning to the exhibition’s Owner. Wisdom begins with reflection and wonder, curiosity and love. Wisdom starts with obedience and worship, with the end spiritual pleasure. Correct judgment is befitting the right time and right place. You must make a right decision and judgment without reaching extremes such as wise ones, saints, sages, all owners of wisdom. Keeping spiritual lives cleansed and free of viruses. Wisdom is unity of thought, will, action. The artist's zeal and ability shows wisdom and pursuing the best goals in life, to prevail. You must put knowledge into practice by balancing it out. Sources of wisdom are Divine Revelation and inspiration. Wisdom is the subtleties and mysteries of the Qur'an, believing all Prophets, angels, holy books, and obeying these Messengers while carrying out truthfulness. Exhorting and preaching is the way of your Lord.

After reaching this wisdom, the awakening stage became unnecessary, and I returned from the unseen spiritual world to the visible material one. I realized the state of humility because I suffered a lot during the 21 days of my transcendence experience, but I survived with confidence. Straightforwardness requires being steadfast and true. A Sufi must fix one of his/her legs in the center of Earth, and let the free arm of the compass his/her other leg encircle. Inner self becomes straightforward by following the truth and its spirit. Maturity is to say: Be straightforward as you are commanded. Eternal happiness is straightforwardness: "I have believed in God and being closed to wrong actions and thoughts are the end of this state. A servant should seek straightforwardness, not working of wonders and not demanding the power of spiritual unveiling or discovery. God demands straightforwardness, sell your soul to the light. A servant should die purified of all the dirt of human nature. This is reflected in the following poem:

The last step on a three-step stairway to God. The first consistency, where strive practice and theory. Success in this effort controls the self that is carnal. The second step tranquillity, purification of inner self. Show, fame, and vanity, cannot be reconciled with servanthood. The third step is straightforwardness, to doors of Divinity and creation. Slightly opened to the Divine gifts, bestowed, not desired or sought. Not deviating from loyalty, under God's protection to the last.

The State of Humility or Suffering and Confidence

In addition, I witnessed that heart knowledge is deepened by experience with great humility and suffering for happiness. Sadness is as the opposite of rejoicing and joy. A Sufi suffers while fulfilling their duties and ideals. The journey is through the intermediate world of the grave. Feeling sorrow is until the Truth is breathed in all corners. Among hearts, Almighty

considers the sad and the broken ones. Honors their owners with His presence, as stated in this poetic narration:

I am near those with broken hearts on the path of perfection. Sadness protects your heart from rust and decay. Sorrow an effective medicine that wipes away sins. Enables the eternalization of what is temporary in this world. The expansion of your "droplike" merit into an ocean, O God! Put grief away from us, Bountiful Lord, become manifest.

Sorrow is like a ruler, settles in a place where others don't. A country with no ruler is in confusion on every side. The weeping of a broken-hearted one is with lovely heart of mercy. Sorrow arises in a sincere heart, one that feels no sorrow is ruined. Mind, conscience, purifies then maintains your purity and cleanliness (Gülen, 2006, p. 31). Pertaining to the inner dimensions of reality is the meanings of events. That's why prophets and saints are always sorrowful-looking, deeply thoughtful. These are the purified ones responsible for guidance of the people All holy books say when God loves His servants, Noah, Abraham. Moses, Jesus and Mohammed, He filled their hearts with the feeling of weeping. When angry with another, filled their hearts with foolish play in this case, greatest of the Prophets and followers will be tasted greatest woe. After forty days spent in austerity and self-discipline, I discovered that suffering is the pure source and feeding spirit of the dervish as described in the poem that follows:

Austerity is a powerful path leading to the Truth and eternity. Suffering prepares me for new spiritual life. Each grief of heart is like a dear guest. I welcome as friend each emissary of grief. It comes as no stranger, we're already acquainted. I was becoming addicted to suffering and misfortune. This is the way of positive thinking, such that if grief and sorrow come upon you, take its poison as sugar for the sake of the Friend. Whatever comes from the Truth, accept it with warm welcome. Sorrow is a guest, I am happy with affliction. Whatever comes from God, it can be good or ill, joy or woe. Welcoming with thankfulness and serving Him zealously is my main target.

Gülen explains this concept differently from other Sufi scholars. Reliance, surrender, commitment, and confidence are the four steps or stations of a spiritual journey, beginning with reliance on (or trust in) God, continuing in full awareness of one's helplessness and destitution before God, and ending in entrusting all of one's affairs to God Almighty in order to attain absolute peace and tranquillity of heart. Reliance (*tawakkul*) means total confidence in God, and feeling troubled or uneasy when it occurs to one that there may be other sources of power (that one can resort to). Without such a degree of confidence, it is wrong to talk about reliance. Moreover, one cannot attain reliance so long as the doors of the heart remain open to others (Gülen, 2006, p. 67).

Many great Sufis prayed in the past to the Lord, requesting sorrow as a means of testing their patience. This is a common practice, such as saying “Be kind to me! Do not abandon the destitute” (Gülen, 2006, p. 32). To be a Sufi, giving thanks with great piety and abstinence shows sincerity to God. Suffering then becomes a means for the happiness of others. Both worlds’ spiritual progress are sought in this way. Sufis die and are revived daily for guidance. Dervishes feel another’s fire rage in their hearts. Suffering is portrayed in proportion to the resistance of the sufferer (Gülen, 2006, p.66). I feel the suffering of all in my spirit and am not only aware of my own selfish thoughts, but also endure the afflictions of those who are round me. There are four steps for confidence. God is sufficient, He knows my condition. My poetic reflection mentioning this confidence is expressed in the following poem:

Be patient and agree with whatever He does. All turns to good, even evil becomes good. Commit to Him your affairs and find peace. For see, Allah does well whatever He does. These are for steps: Reliance, surrender, commitment, and confidence. The four steps and stations of my spiritual journey began with trust in God with full awareness, attaining total peace and tranquility of heart.

According to Gülen's description, reliance means full confidence solely in God. If troubled, you can resort to The Powerful. Without confidence, there is no reliance. The doors of the heart remain open to others. Surrender comes after reaching reliance. As you are before God's Power and Will, your will is as a corpse in the hands of a mortician (Gülen, 2006, p. 67). There is a famous Sufi's quote: "First fasten your camel and then trust in God." Then commitment comes leaving all behind, all affairs unto God, and expecting everything from Him. There is no power or strength without God. I was always asking Him in my prayers to: "Hold fast my hand, for I'm lost without You" (Gülen, 2006, p. 66). As a result, reliance starts the journey, surrender is its end. Commitment is its result as full awareness of power. I rely on the All-Merciful in all things because I rely and confide in Him, never is this loss. Coloring and Self-Possession is taking on a color, painting, presenting different views. As a Sufi, I was seeking to change my state for ones higher and gain stability in the ranks I reach through the journey. I was staying a day, or part of a day, then flew from one rank to another. The Poem reflected on these feelings is as follow:

I have given up all existence for the sake of Your love. I have orphaned my family so that I could see just You. Let me not attain certainty, lead me to unsteadiness. My heart is the home of God; purify it from all other. I never avert my eyes from the goal of my heart. I'm satisfied with the magnificent charm of the goal. Favored with gifts, granted in advance, bearing the colors. Breathe self-possession in sense coloring; Divine imprint. Every moment a new manifestation is leading me to truth. Thankfulness, reflection and helplessness are my stairways. A wind may blow away a piece of straw, but how can it blow away a mountain? I am deepening in straightforwardness, gaining stability in peacefulness. This is the state I've experienced of coloring, of advancement to perfection. Taking steps toward higher stations: new views, and new colors. Promoted from one rank up to another is forward from one attribute to the next. Constantly I was worried on a slippery ground, but I cross it without stopping at all.

The Unity of Conscience

The Unity or *Tawhid* in Arabic derives from *wahda* (oneness), which means unifying, regarding as one, believing in God's Oneness or Unity, and sincerely accepting the reality that there is no deity but God. The Sufis add to these meanings the ideas of seeing only He Who is the One, and knowing, mentioning, desiring, and calling Him alone, and conducting relations with any other than Him only because of Him (Gülen, 2009, p.97). The beginning of unity is admitting that the Divine Being is beyond and above all concepts that occur to the mind concerning Him. The result of this is that there is no room for anything else save Him in one's heart, according to the depth of one's spiritual state and pleasures, and in fixing one's eyes on Him alone. In this meaning, unity is both the foundation of Islam and its fruit. Sufism considers unity in respect to both its beginning and end. Those who are not included in the fold of Sufism have regarded it slightly differently (Gülen, 2009, p.207).

In fact, the innermost heart or heart of the heart is infinite in its scope and radiance, and that is the inner understanding in which is found the true foundation of all religions. There are four stages to reach this station of innate reason: reason of evidence, reason of experience, the understanding of the eye, and direct vision through direct experience. I have undergone a profound inner transformation and have removed the veils that cover this light. The main veil was my ego which was a barrier to unity and oneness, but I was able to open the light of the heart. It was like a lamp that allowed me to see some levels of the divine source. The light of the truth has existed in all the prophets and all great saints, spiritual leaders and teachers. All light is a reflection of single source, divine light. My own *nafs* is the dark house of the tyrannical self, which was cutting all light and preventing me reaching the station of heart, inner heart and the innermost heart. I targeted reaching the highest state of human experience, "the state of unity"

with the divine. “The reality of unity” transcends our language just as it transcends our everyday experience, based on the description of the state of unity of al-Tirmidhi, one of the great scholars of *Hadith*.

“Union” in Sufi terminology should not be confused with communion with or participation in the Divine Being, as in some philosophies or mistaken Gnostic traditions. The fundamental relation between God and humanity, regardless of whether that person is the greatest of humanity, namely, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, is the relation of the Creator to the created (Gülen, 2000, p. 130). In the Sufi context, union means coming together again after parting. The world is the realm of separation for humanity, and all men and women burn inwardly with the desire to return to their true home (Gülen, 2009, p. 140). This return will be realized when the person dies, for that is the beginning of his or her passage into the other world. Although a Sufi finds God in his or her heart while in this world, true re-union will only take place in the Hereafter in Paradise.

Gülen explains this stage from the *Hadith* as “God Most High said, when I love a servant, I, The Lord, am his ear so that he/she hears by Me, I am his/her eye so that he/she speaks by Me, and I am his hand so that he takes by Me, and it is qualified as “Holly Absorption” (Gülen, 2009, p, 100). I have attained the level of unification and have drowned in the divine ocean, thinking only of God during my divine love stage. My reflection in this stage is described in the following poem:

Your heart never lies. Tells emotions desires. Love has varying degrees where innate nature is. Ending up with the fruit is Inner light seeking Oneness. Toward inward purification is the self-removed narration. In every moment I breathe, Chanting of the heart is Hu. Every being is Hu in reality. Reality is in it but it is not in identity. Heart is the being of the beings. Where is the essence of beings? Hu is One, only essence in heart. The unity of His existence is art. Heart contains a blueprint of truth. The core evidence

reveals the truth. All universes are a tree of being: Love. Light upon Light my heart heard Love.

However, this stage of “the unified” cannot be understood by reason or logic alone, because God has become friend, help, and support as this state is beyond the comprehension of reason. Many of the stages and stations that I reached were changing based on my spiritual heart’s condition and my spiritual health. Many stations cannot be stabilized in my life or many Sufi’s lives, but some stages are permanent and will not change easily, such as unity. I felt the breezes flowing from the self and the world. This stage of journeying to unity was from God and with God.

Sufi psychology of the heart is the center of personality. It does not ignore our negative tendencies, but it does put them in a positive perspective or replace negative thoughts with positive ones. It is much wiser to identify with the far greater light and truth within us, to follow its guidance and to actualize it in our own lives (Frager, 1999, p 50).

The power of conscience is a mechanism for choosing good or evil in Sufism. What is good suffers from and is grieved by what’s evil? The senses of the spirit have four basic elements: Spiritual intellect, will, mind and power of perception. The conscience is a conscious observer and interpreter. A Sufi is aware of innate powerlessness, needy poverty of humanity. The conscience is a source of knowledge leading to truth. True nature transcends matter, truth in purity and profundity. The "secret" is a palace in the heart for God to "visit", so long as it’s purified, it can host its "Guest" continuously (Gülen, 2009, p. 202). The faculties of consciousness must be purified of carnality. A Sufi must be ashamed of pollution, for the Monarch dwells not in dirtiness.

The spiritual intellect is like the pupil in the eye, the center of sight in the brain. It is the living room in a house, the core in a seed, the wick in a lamp, like the Ka'ba. Belief diffuses its light from the horizon of knowledge of God. Reverence, piety, love, wakefulness grow on its slopes. The "universal will" is a potential power of choice, created with ourselves. Responsible for our will and deeds whether we use it or not: it's ready to use of this potential power for action is described as the "particular will" and use for a particular activity - "intention," "tendency," "resolution," or "choice"(Gülen, 2000, p. 195). The poem captured the inner perceptiveness as follow:

O Sufi! A soul aware of itself, this is the inner perceptiveness. Mind a library with consciousness, the weakest stage of knowledge. Until established in the mind, it is a seed not fully known. The mind fed always through channels of consciousness, records for use. The power with which people perceive, sense, or feel things. O Sufi! A person has two powers or faculties of perception. The outer power of perceptiveness is beyond the Divine Realm. The inner power of perceptiveness is the conscience as Wijdan (conscience). External or internal power has sensations and inner experiences. Objective sensations are the material of science. Inner experiences are subjective, differ from one to another. Candidates for visions are beyond the observable horizons.

A Sufi is establishing a balance between fear and hope. All human beings are responsible for their error, avoid entrapment in faults. All good deeds, actions, virtues originate from God's Mercy. For Sufis, hope and expectation are not the same as a wish. A wish is a desire that may or mayn't be fulfilled. Hope or expectation is an initiate's active quest through all lawful means, for the desired destination. God's Mercy exceeds Wrath even for the unforgivable (Gülen, 2006, p.39). The following poem reflects forgiveness, fear and hope:

When my heart was hardened and my ways they were blocked. My hope was a ladder to Your forgiveness for great sins. When I weigh my great sins, and errors against Your forgiveness. Your forgiveness is much greater than they - that's my hope. My heart's feeling when I sin is greater than my hope. My fear is great even after the most perfect of deeds. "Impaired" with flaws and imperfection are never sinless and infallible. Relying

not on deeds but Your forgiveness, O Generous One. O God. You will treat your servant in the way they hope and expect. My sincerity, my altruism, is from my good opinion of my Lord. Fear and hope in my heart, two great gifts God implants. Balanced between fear and hope - two wings of light for reaching God.

Balancing fear and hope, awe and reverence leads to revelation and inspiration stages. Revelation and inspiration is the metaphysical, angelic side of humanity. Revelation is the necessary foundation for the intellectual and spiritual life (Gülen, 2006, p. 34). Inspiration flourishes over time to meet the intellectual needs of every age. Human nature purified of vices and directed towards virtues. By God's breathing, revelation is into realms where spirits fly. Revelation is spiritual communication as God's guiding and conveying knowledge, information into someone's heart. God sent a messenger, speaking to someone so privately. No one else can hear, directing actions in a certain way. Between God and His Prophets, God is inspiring many saints. The Spirit of Holiness has been breathed into many spirits (Gülen, 2009, p. 72). God conveys His noble servants, in one of three ways. Directly through His messages placed in their hearts. From behind a veil through their internal and external senses or through an obedient, trustworthy angel embodied in a form. Transcendent interaction is especially for prophets inspiration with the saints and sharing the same heavenly table, favored with metaphysical interaction. Revelation is an objective address clear in meaning, Divinely binding Witnessed, confirmed by the Sender, as well as the conveyer.

Inspiration is of a particular nature, open to interpretation, not conveyed by an angel, neither witnessed nor confirmed (Gülen, 2009, p. 77). The special Divine regard and attention brings honor and the manifestation of knowledge opens the door to consideration. The special knowledge from God's Presence is for an initiate. Nature changes suddenly, a person becoming as an angel (Gülen, 2009, p. 240). The body takes on the quality of the spirit, fire changes and

cools. Peaceful place, salty seas are transformed as rivers of Paradise, This is the last poem of my first erba'in before going to Turkey:

O Sufi! Everything turns good, even poison becomes antidote. The horizon of true humanity guides mercy, wisdom, care, and justice. I seek always service from the initiate and breathe from the guide! Please lend me a hand, O guide; render your efforts O child! Attentions or regards are returns for those being shown. I ask from you royal attention to the horizon of the attention-step. As a traveler fixing my eyes on my steps and my distances. This is the final point in my spiritual journey: all attention turned to God. Responding with thankfulness for the forty days' gifts – and asking for more such to come!

CHAPTER 5: SECOND ERBAIN

The month of Ramadan hadn't started when I arrived in Turkey on July 4, 2013. My poetic reflections in Gebze, Istanbul and Alanya, Turkey, were both descriptive and explanatory about who might be the perfect man or woman, and according to whom? This journey of the heart or the imagination lasted for another forty days in Turkey. I was fasting about one month in the month of Ramadan in Turkey and what follows is a summary: The animal world appeared very gloomy, for animals are impotent and weak, have innumerable needs, and suffer severe hunger. But the Divine Name the All-Merciful suddenly appeared like a shining sun above the tower of the All-Provider and thoroughly illuminated that world with the light of Mercy (Nursi , 2007, p. 385). However, I recited that verse on behalf of all creatures and, awakening, returned to Earth saying: All praise be to God for the light of belief and the Qur'an. I selected, categorized and made a linkage from one concept to other by heart. This is not a random selection without a reason in mind, but I do not know why I prefer one concept to other when they relate to each other.

As a matter of fact, great Sufis observed as many as 1001 divine names are like an illuminating sun to this world. In my vision, a Divine Name suddenly manifested and enlightened each world appearing to me in darkness because of heedlessness. Those who are alert can see the order and balance, and the clearly visible acts of ordering and balancing, all of which demonstrate, together with His absolute Unity. Everything contains an aspect of unity, and unity points to One. For example, the world is illuminated by one lamp (the sun), and so the world's Owner is One (Nursi, 2007, p. 247). This simple proof and belief leads to the universal man. I wrote another set of 40 poems from selected 40 different Sufi concepts during my second period of Erbain in Istanbul, Gebze and Alanya Turkey, see Table 5.

	Main categories			
	Privacy and Seclusion	The Universal man	Humility	Expansion
1	Resignation	Decision&Resolution	Endeavor	Certainty
2	Intoxication	Uniqueness	Distinguishing	Insight& Discernment
3	Fear and Reverence	Will, Willing One	Absorption	Trustworthiness
4	Austerity	Absolute oneness	Perfect goodness	Peacefulness
5	Secret	The Willed One	Human poverty	Contraction
6	Isolation	Conversation	Rejoicing	Unity& Multiplicity
7	Disclosure	Communion	Striving	Openness
8	Passion	Observation	Another Journeying	Poverty& Richness
9	Guidance and the Guide	Time and Life	Gift and favor	Special knowledge
10	Silence	Modesty	Verification	Manifestation

Table 5. Second Erba'in - Selected 40 Sufi Concepts

The Universal Man

A Sufi must believe that his or her religion is the religion of love for the purpose of loving God. This unconditional love is a universal love and a Sufi aims to become a universal man/woman. In Sufism, the perfect man, the universal man (*al-Insan al-Kamil*) means and the Sufi's approach to the universal man is that he/she is the brightest mirror of God's acts, Names, Attributes, and even of those Essential Qualities that qualify Him as God (Gülen, 2000, p.286). Gülen's full description idealizes the universal man, when he states,

The universal man is such a polished mirror that God's Essential Qualities qualifying Him as God are reflected in him at almost every moment, beyond all concepts of modality, and the earth becomes more valuable than the heavens because it is his residence. The universal man functions in effect as the intellect, heart and spirit of existence, without whom nothing can be understood correctly, no information can be developed into knowledge about God, and the mystery of the life of any thing cannot be perceived. The whole physical realm when not viewed from his perspective is devoid of spirit, and any part of time which is not enlightened by him is in darkness. So, those who

live in such a realm and at such a time are deprived of the light and the true life with respect to the heart and spirit, and cannot develop their human nature to its true and full potential (Gülen, 2000, p. 287).

Understanding this Sufi concept of “the universal man” involves a very different rubric that I reflected on this concept by saying:

In the mirror of the Divine Existence, the two worlds of the intellect, and the heart and spirit of existence, are polished. All being is immanent in the mirror of being. Finding the Divine Being as hidden treasure is in the heart. Perfection lies in purifying the spirit, in cleansing the carnal self, developing human faculties or overcoming animal appetites. Those who have known this have followed in the truth and penetrated and observed their inner world. The Face of the Truth leads to transparency of heart and of spirit, in pursuing ways of helping others grow in the knowledge of God. Having perfect compassion, embracing everyone needing attention, and feeling support is maintenance; compassion toward everyone is natural. Compassion in society is like blood through the body. Protecting against harmfulness is to meet the needs of the soul. One who exists can seem non-existent; another does not exist as existent beyond the world’s holy soul, and is the pride of humanity. Dazzled and intoxicated with love of Him, there is pure faithfulness and delight. The mysteries of Divinity are in the universal man as a mythical bird. They are heroes of journeying on the way to God, alive with a soul other than that which is known as soul. Birds that fly on the air that “emanates” from Him have nests other than the nests known. Do not try in vain to see them with those eyes of yours; with those you cannot see them. Like a heavenly bird, they dwell beyond this world and the next.

Gülen provides much forgotten knowledge and culture from Abd al-Karim ibn Ibrahim al-Jili (1365-1417) who was the writer of the famous book, *al-Insan al-Kamil (The Universal Man)*. He was from Baghdad and his Sufi teachings were generally followed by Muhy al-Din ibn al-'Arabi. Gülen defends the idea that each universal man is perfect according to his capacity and the degree of his knowledge of God. All of them have combined in themselves the knowledge of Divine Revelation, scientific and theological, or intellectual and spiritual proofs, and a knowledge of God in certain degrees. Lacking in one of these would be an important defect or imperfection in the name of perfection. Gülen extracted this wisdom from the *Qur'an* and *Sunna*

(Revelation) which are two important foundations of Islam. Reasoning and logic or intellectual activities are the means by which one approaches the goal, and knowledge of God and wisdom are the fruits of walking straightforwardly on the way (Gülen, 2000, p. 298). I could not explain or internalize this concept sufficiently in my heart and mind, but it is a primary target for any human life, and so I memorized one Sufi poem from Gülen's writing belonging to Niyazi Misri: "O ascetic, do not think that everything is finished with fasting, prayer and pilgrimage; What is necessary to be a perfect one is knowledge of God and wisdom" (Gülen, 2000, p.298).

Expansion, Decision and Resolution

When I entered the month of Ramadan in Gebze and Istanbul, and my previous home town Alanya in Turkey, and started fasting on a daily basis, my heart's expansion was becoming larger and deeper, and spreading in my spirit. The relaxing of my heart was expanding, embracing everybody and making them well pleased with gentle words and pleasant behaviour. Expansion is a spiritual state that combines fear and hope and results in right decision and resolution. One is awed by being in the joy that is blowing, and one finds exhilaration on the breezes of delight while inhaling, and feels delight when exhaling. There are two categories when dealing with expansion: the relationship with the created and the relationship with the Creator. In this station, I was starting to treat people at the level of their understanding, because one's heart becomes like a mirror of God's consciousness. I felt much solemnity, and often, and was completely freed from carnal desire and passion. After increasing my recitation, chanting and prayers, my heart looked like a bright "mirror" reflecting God's Names and His Attributes. I was the traveler who is experiencing God's Existence and Unity, but my soul was forgetful of self and became filled with ecstatic love of God. If you cannot be freed from the restrictions of this worldly life, how can you know the stations of annihilation? How can you know about

drunkenness, and expansion? In fact, receiving and assuming “colors” is unknown by all others. In fact, receiving and assuming “colors” is unknown by all others. Here’s my poetic reflection capturing this truth:

Servants of the body cannot know the states of the spirit. To be imprisoned in the body is to be unaware of spirituality. Ask those souls who have burned in the fire of the love of God. The pains of a heart as cleft open, expansion, contraction.

Gülen shares a similar idea that this station, whether it is called the Station of Combination (where the traveler experiences God's Existence and Unity) or Annihilation (where the traveler's annihilation of self causes forgetfulness of self when in the throes of ecstatic love of God and perception of God's Existence and Unity), is a mysterious point. It is impossible for such people to conceal their expansion, while it is insolent of those who have not attained it to talk about it (Gülen, 2006, p. 116).

Decision means confidence, determination, choosing, and advancing straight toward a destination, thinking and reasoning moderately and deliberately, and living a moderate and balanced life. For Sufis, this term represents an initiate's pursuit of love and the pleasure of God, the Truly Beloved One, and the intention is to realize this goal: “Expresses the intention of obtaining true love and His pleasure, and tells how to realize it. It concisely describes the way between decision and resolution and from resolution to destination” (Gülen, 2006, p. 117).

Decision and resolution are two functions of willpower. During the long journey, one must stop at both stations and at both receive the permit given by God. Sufis believes that there are many ways to God and respect the ways of others. As many as there are breaths of people, there are many different true rituals of the spiritual paths and sects. Decision first appears, develops in the heart, then grows firmer and stronger as a feeling, becoming a powerful drive. A

Sufi heart must be toward the final destination in which the heart is without the Friend, but seeking Him. My intention targets obtaining true love, as the way between decision and resolution. From resolution to destination the intent becomes a goal. The heart is the home of God, cleansed of all others. The following poem reflects this intention clearly,

Decision resembles a seed sown in the heart's soil. Resolution is the first step towards surrender. Put your trust in God, and the road becomes easy. You travel it as if flying through the air.

As a result, God becomes your eyes, ears and tongue to be with Him.

Certainty, Insight and Discernment

Yaqin (certainty) means having no doubt about the truth of a matter and arriving at accurate, doubt-free knowledge is through exact verification. It is also used to mean verification, seeking certainty, examining, and exerting strenuous effort to arrive at certainty. Certainty is a spiritual station that a traveler on the path has reached and experienced. It is obtained only by those who have an innate capability to progress and develop inwardly (Gülen, 2006, p. 123). Certainty is about abstract truths of the nature of God's Names. All His Attributes come from direct observation and pertain to personal experience in a person's heart. It is beyond my ability to explain the nature of certainty. The heart overflows with the desire to reach eternity, such as the desire to live austerely, and to think and speak with wisdom. The self never forgets what the end will be, thinks always of the afterlife and always feels God's company, even while with other people. Actually, the Divine Being neither doubts nor needs verification. A degree can be gained through study and verification.

However, a spiritual station on the path must be reached and experienced by a Sufi in practice and not in theory. If you have only the innate capability to progress and develop inwardly, you will be stuck there. The heart reaches the horizon of the hill if it's capable. One is

traveling in the material and immaterial realms where light and the truth are contained in the Supreme Sign with His Seal. I felt the manifestation of the Hidden Treasure in my heart.

Certainty is a gift with which God favors those near Him and this divine gift comes from the outer world to the inner. It comes from knowledge through correct observation and leads a person to study the relevant signs and evidence. It sometimes comes from direct observation through unveiling and observing the immaterial truths invisible to the ordinary.

If certainty comes from direct experience, a person is being favored with God's constant company without veils, in a way that only the one receiving can perceive. It is self-annihilation in God and gaining subsistence from Him. I tried to reflect this gift as much as I could in my quote,

Even if the veil between seen and Unseen is lifted, my certainty would not increase by so much as an inch. A few steps further on in the pure realm of Divine gifts, which eyes have not seen, nor ears heard, minds conceived.

My insight and discernment were opened right after certainty. In Sufi terminology, insight (*basira*), literally meaning perception, intelligence, discretion, evidence, and witness, is defined as having an eye of the heart open, deep perception, an ability to see consequences at the beginning of an act, or foresight. Insight acquires a different, deeper dimension among Sufis. It is considered the sole source of spiritual knowledge obtained through reflective thought and inspiration, the first degree in the spirit's perception of the reality of things. It is a power of conscience that discerns and establishes values originating in the spirit, whereas reason becomes entangled in colors, forms, and qualities. Insight is also a power of perception so sharpened by the light of nearness to the Divine Being that, when other powers of perception become exhausted by imaginings, it acquires great familiarity with mysteries lying behind things and,

without any guide or evidence, reaches the Truth of the Truths, where reason is bewildered. In addition to perception and understanding, discernment (*firasa*) denotes the deepening of insight when perception becomes a source of certain knowledge. Those who discern the manifestations of the light of God, the Truth, own such radiance that they see everything, every issue, in its full clarity (Gülen, 2006, pp. 136-137).

Insight and discernment are important to me and are helpful tools for my positive mind therapy. This means having an eye of the heart open, a deep perception, the ability to see and foresee a different, deeper dimension. The first degree is the spirit's perceiving the reality of things. Power of conscience is fixing values from their origins in the spirit. Then, reason entangles everything in colors, forms, and qualities. Reaching the Truth of the Truths is important, where reason is confused. The Divine declaration is clear to me that I am on the true path. I call to God on clear within my prayers through manifestations, by insight, and wherever I follow points to the greatness. The following poem finalized my thoughts:

Existence has a book of countless pages, animate or inanimate. Part of creation a word shines with thousand meanings. The face of existence expresses hidden realities. True spirituality sees what the greatest minds don't.

Serenity, Hope and Peacefulness

In the language of Sufism, serenity means that a heart gradually comes to rest as a result of experiencing gifts from the Unseen. Such a restful heart always expects breezes to come from the realms beyond, and thus travels around in a state of *itmi'nan* (peacefulness) in the most complete care and self-possession. This rank is the beginning of the rank of certainty coming from direct observance. The resulting confusion over gifts coming through knowledge with gifts

“obtained” through insight clouds the horizon of observing secret truths, which gives rise to wrong conclusions [about the reality of things] (Gülen, 2006, p. 139).

Having a Sufi mind, my heart was gradually coming to rest, as it was a restful heart of tranquillity, calmness, and silence. Enthusiasm is the thankful fruit of serenity. I was completely relieved and unshaken by worldly fear, grief, and anxiety. I found finding real peace, integrity, and harmony, between the world within and the one without. Awareness of helplessness and destitution before God is a necessary step in sending this serenity to the hearts of the believers. This is so that you may have more faith added to your faith, and become dignified, balanced, confident, and careful. Egoism, vanity, and pride are abandoned in self-criticism because every spiritual and worldly gift is attributed to God. Humility and self-discipline is exhibited while thanking Him. Dissatisfaction and unease can be ascribed to personal weakness, but a positive Sufi mind solves depression, anxiety and stress.

Furthermore, a peacefulness is realized which transcends material causes and means. Reason's trans-natural journey ends, and spirits are freed from cares. Here, feelings find what they seek: a deep, wide, calm ocean. This rank finds the greatest peace only in the company of God and the soul traveling through, sees in every station the truth, as demonstrated in my poetic reflection that reads:

I wish to set my heart at rest, rewarded with gifts. No fear shall come upon them, neither shall they grieve; Fear not, nor grieve, rejoice in good news of Paradise. After full satisfaction is the state of being at rest. Without any serious lapse is a spiritual state far beyond serenity. Leading eternal forgiveness, worldly life is but the Eve of the Festival. Bringing peacefulness because the next is the Festival Day.

Endeavor, Contraction and Openness

Endeavor is the priceless tool that enables me to reach this point in Sufism. It is also a useful tool to make my life colourful, because endeavor refers to a person's honor. In my Turkish culture, a person's honor is everything. It means making every effort of concern, and being alert in striving, for chastity, honor, and esteem. However, this Sufi concept signifies being on the alert in respect of religious prohibitions. Gülen explains in a very straightforward way that "God is limitless in His concern for the purity of His servants and is infinitely pleased with the care they show and the endeavors they make in preserving it. For this reason, He has made some things, including indecencies and evil acts in particular, unlawful. So His servants, at least, must respond to His concern by being as careful as possible not to commit such acts" (Gülen, 2000, p. 56).

Sufism tells us there is no disunity, and that we should look at the universe. I captured this idea in my poem very briefly,

The craving for One, the invoking of One. The seeking of One, the seeing and following of One. The knowing of One, and the mentioning of One. I seek a bosom split in parts by separation, towards the One. Whoever falls far from their origin, it is painful yearning! Longing is for the day of reunion with the Beloved. Wherever you turn, there is only one "Face" of God.

There are three layers or steps in this the station of Endeavor. The first is weaving often with threads of piety and righteous deeds. The slightest error causes pangs of conscience for a lifetime. The second is setting hearts on God, the Truth, from state to state. Travel is from love to pleasure and into ever deeper yearning. Your concern requires fulfilling with great zeal what God wishes and determining not to commit any deed He dislikes. It also requires loving from the heart's depths, the Essence, and desiring all people love Him of whom I speak of and love. A

Sufi has no rival to the Beloved, no alternative to love. All attention must be on the Beloved. There is none more concerned than God from His concern. He prohibits all indecency, whether in public or in secret. Sufis turn to Him in all circumstances and with all their faculties. A Sufi always desires God's forgiveness and seeks to please God. After two stages, a Sufi says at the third degree: "O God, lead me to what You love and pleases You! We have not been able to know You as Your knowledge requires" (Gülen, 2000, p. 59).

Qabd (contraction) and *bast* (openness), felt by almost everyone during their lives, relate especially to those who live their lives consciously. Literally meaning being caught, being in straits or distressed, and being grasped by the hand, Sufis use *qabd* to mean that the link between an individual and the source of his or her spiritual gifts and radiance has been severed for a certain period. This causes distress and makes the person suffer from spiritual obstruction and blockage. On the other hand, *bast* can be described as openness, expansion, development, relief, and being freed from spiritual blockage, and as developing inwardly or spiritually to the point that the seeker becomes a means of mercy and embraces all things or beings in existence (Gülen, 2006, p. 167).

Fear and hope represent anxiety about the future for any individual. In Sufi language, fear and hope or expectation are deliberate attitudes, and are a first station for a traveler on the way to God. Contraction and openness are mysterious "bargains" that have been made without the will or intention of the traveler. Hence the Prophetic saying: The heart is between the two Fingers of the All-Merciful; He turns it from state to state and gives it whatever form He wishes to remind us of this fact (Gülen, 2006, pp. 167-168).

My Sufi feeling was contracting with gloom, and expanding with joy in Gebze and Istanbul, Turkey during the month of Ramadan in July and August 2013. I was in God's hand,

and as part of free will: God contracts and expands. I truly believe that contraction can occur through God's Majesty; openness by His Grace. The heart is contracted tightly till satisfied, extended till it needs nothing. The whole of existence is in His grasp, and at His free disposal. From the heavens to the heart, He directs, disposes all things. If I am caught in contraction, I can feel it in my conscience. My need is only the absolute need for the Almighty, so I turn to Him sincerely. In my poem I reflected this request as

Hold me! Lest I should fall! and, escaping the spiritual waste, the Almighty's help reaches beyond, during periods of openness. A true believer can judge each state experienced. Achieving as it is, with all its aspects, made fruitful. Contraction and openness manifestations from Him for you to know. The servant thanks Him for such openness, and is alert to contraction.

Perfect Goodness, Modesty and Austerity

According to truth-seeking scholars, perfect goodness is an action of the heart that involves thinking according to the standards of truth; forming the intention to do good, useful things and then doing them; and performing acts of worship in the consciousness that God sees them. Consciousness of goodness is like a mysterious key that opens the door of a virtuous circle. An initiate who opens that door and steps into that illuminated corridor enters the “spiral” of a mysterious ascension, as if climbing on an escalator. In addition to being endowed with this virtue, the correct use of one's free will enables one to do good and refrain from evil (Gülen, 2006, pp.132-134). Gülen advises perfect goodness because it is a sound heart that leads one straight to God without any deviation, and goodness is the heart's greatest and most rewarding action. In Sufism, goodness is the safest way to ascend the slopes of sincerity, the most secure means to reach the peaks of being approved by God, and the consciousness of self-possession

before the Eternal Witness (Gülen, 2006, p.135). My poetic reflection on this concept resulted in the following,

Doing perfect deeds as if second nature. An action of the heart involves thinking the truth. Forming the intention to good leads to usefulness. Performing acts in awareness that God always watches. Do good deeds to others just for God's sake without expectation of gifts or returns. Train your heart to receive gifts only from God. Doing good is a greater good, higher than happiness. With the consciousness of goodness invading your heart. Doing, there is no fault in sincere act and intention. Divine Unity and goodness is nothing but Paradise. To a circle of virtue is an illuminated corridor, Illumined with the light of His pure manifestations. To a mysterious ascension, a spiral, an escalator.

Perfect goodness must be related to the Sufi's use of *haya*, which literally means shame, bashfulness, and refraining from saying or doing anything improper or indecent, and describes one who, out of fear and awe of God, seeks to avoid displeasing Him. It urges one to be more careful, self-possessed, and self-controlled, for such restraint, if originating in feelings of modesty, results in paying God the respect He deserves. If these feelings are absent or lost due to familial or environmental influences, it will be difficult to develop them (Gülen, 2006, p.89). In the light of Gülen's explanation, modesty can be divided into two categories: an innate or instinctive feeling of shame, which prevent people from engaging in what is considered shameful and indecent, and modesty originating in belief, which constitutes an important, deep dimension of many religions. Gülen describes modesty as a Divine quality and mystery. If people knew to whom it essentially relates, they would act more carefully and sensitively. "*Hayiy* (All-Modest) is one of the Divine Names, so strive and acquire modesty" (Gülen, 2006, p. 93).

My thought about modesty is clear, as it is a division of belief, and Sufi belief has seventy steps with limitless divisions. If you have no modesty, do whatever you wish but do not forget that Allah watches over you, all Seeing, all knowing, all your actions and thoughts. Self-

control produces great wariness of spirit and the self will feel guilty until he has forgiven.

Modesty provides self-supervision for your good and bad deeds. Having anxiety from disloyalty is a lack of sincerity. All modesty is striving to reach perfect modesty. The following poem is related to this concept:

Understand what being in his presence may mean
O Dervish! He is with you wherever you may be
The first and second degree of those see and nearest Allah
Controlling body, mind, soul and all of their contents

Sufi's life is by God: in life and in the world
There is nothing good without modesty
Feeling the absolute divine disposal of all
As the final destination, certain goal in your Lord

As a traveler, becoming as good slave and good servant
The demand of the eternal your wish, your compassion
Living life in utmost humility and modesty,
Asking God to forgive you, reward you with mercy

A Sufi must live the life of austerity. Austerity refers to renouncing worldly pleasures, resisting the self, and carnal desires and involves indifference to worldly appetites. Everyone has two important innate senses and needs: the sense of reliance and the sense of seeking help. As a Sufi I was paying heed to the voice of the inner reliance on God and seeking help and relying on the All-Merciful, the All-Helping. Austerity is in manners, being freed from weaknesses and listening to the inner voice, and having goals in this world. The wisdom is in hurting the body while training the reason and the soul confirms this approach with its consciousness. The training of the carnal self always resists changing thought, and disciplining life, appetite, and thirst. Even sleeping is not easy, as shown in the following poem:

O Sufi! Holding back from carnal pleasures. Discover the hidden realities of existence. The Divine truths need piety, righteousness. The best way is taking refuge in spiritual life. Reaching Godly “pools” by feeling and living. In the world of the spirit within the love of God. His good pleasure is possible because of austerity. Train the carnal self, enhancing with virtues. Realize true humanity and make the love of God. The source is human feelings, thoughts and behavior. Testing faith is loyalty in relation to the Creator. The Truth is also in relation to the created. This is the natural state for austerity as the goal. Liberate yourself from all worldly ambitions, anxiety. Humiliate the carnal self, devoted to the Truth. Be free from self-conceit and selfishness. O Dervish! Die before you die! Be soil, fertile soil. Sow your seeds of virtue so that roses can grow. Bring goodness into flower by giving water and heat. Soil has the honor of growing roses with austerity.

Isolation, Seclusion and Privacy

Austerity will lead a Sufi to a period of isolation, seclusion and privacy in her\his life. As a Sufi I performed my retreat at my sister-in-law’s home, at the house of a vacationing friend in Gebze, a city of industry, 45 km from Istanbul, Turkey. I unplugged the telephone and television, and did not reply to any emails or phone calls. I removed all books, magazines, newspapers and other distractions from my life. I began to retreat, seal myself in the room, visualize my energies and consciousness and remain contained and concentrated within my place of retreat.

Sufi scholars relate isolation to the *Qur'anic* statement, *Take off your shoes* (20:12), and interpret this as the purifying of the heart, which they call the home of God, of all worldly and otherworldly considerations, and preparing it for the visit of the Holy Sovereign (Gülen, 2000, p. 188). Gülen clarifies that “some go a step further and regard this as turning to the Light of Lights with all one's heart and setting one's heart totally on Him without leaving any room for anything else in one's feelings, according to one's capacity. From another perspective, isolation has been approached as resistance against all carnal or bodily appetites and impulses and against

the attractions of the world with whatever is in it where Sufi travelers have not been able to isolate themselves from carnal appetites, the attractions of the world” (Gülen, 2000, p. 188).

I have chosen all alternative perspectives that have isolated me from every occupation and engagement with worldly things, have abandoned all carnal desires, become freed from attachment to wealth, and to status, and have set my heart on Him without expecting return until purifying my heart. My heart became the home of God and it was ready for the Holy visit, while I was turning with all my heart to the Light of Lights, cleaning the heart from dirt and dust, save only Him. My poetic reflection was that,

The way of isolation is a home requiring full renunciation. O Sufi! Sacrifice please to settle there, abandon whatever. Leave worldly things behind, and do not have a house. Purify your heart from everything other than Him.

This is a rank where many initiates live in a daze and ecstasy. A Sufi could say this as I experienced myself:

Let everybody come and plunder my existence, own being lost. See in everything only He Who is the One, know only the One. Mention only the One, call only the One, turn only to the One.

This rank leads me to open the eyes of my heart and awake from intoxicated sleep. As a Sufi, there is no choice, but to say:

His Unity has become manifest; I have seen Him with all certainty. Polytheism I have banished, doubting no longer: a Godly gift. I cannot know, or describe how to honour this gift of such secrecy.

In these forty days of the seclusion period, I was only a role player in the Divine drama, constantly speaking to myself and having a lot of dreams. In some Sufi orders, “work with

dreams is an important aspect of spiritual counselling” (Frager, 1999, p. 126). I have been interested in dream interpretation since my childhood and have vast knowledge of how to interpret other people dreams, while using many valuable books such as Imam Nablusi’s famous books of dream interpretation according to an Islamic perspective. Dream is also accepted as one of the holy revelation and inspiration sources for all prophets, saints and people of good spirit in many religions. My poems contribute to this view as follows:

O Sufi! Play well on the stage of this world. You have no right or authority to interfere with the quality. Whatever happens to an individual, only God can decide. The first degree is free will and belief in His Unity. The second degree must be acquired, a continuation of the first. The basis of the third degree, leads to nearness to God.

As a matter of fact, a Divine gift is not a station attained by will or by effort. However, a Sufi must reach at least the basic level of station of feeling as described in Rumi and Gülen’s writings: Return to my Lord, soul at rest, well pleasing, well pleased. I have called this the main pillar for a heart-centred Sufi mindfulness behavioral therapy model. However, a Sufi must reach at least the basic level of station of feeling as described in Rumi’s and Gülen’s writings: Return to my Lord, soul at rest, well pleasing, well pleased. I have called this the main pillar for a heart-centred Sufi–mindful, behavioral therapy model. The following poem was extracted from this knowledge or from an ordinary person’s Sufi station:

Whatever You do with me or however you treat me, is good. I am a suffering lover, O dear One, You I’ll not abandon. Even cut through my chest with a dagger, I’ll not abandon. Even burnt and blown as ashes, You I’ll not abandon. I am in love with both His torment and His favor; How strange to be in love with things opposite each other. By God, if I leave thorn of affliction for garden of delight. As a nightingale, singing the melody of both thorn and rose. I return to my Lord, soul at rest, well pleasing, well pleased. To enter among His servants and His Paradise well pleased. Encompass all degrees of resignation, containing responses. Deserving only if my desires bent to Divine Will and Destiny. Retreat your life for purification, from false beliefs, imaginations.

Seclusion is one dimension of privacy. A Sufi must have at least one forty day period of austerity. It means eating and drinking little in the room of seclusion. Secondly, one must quietly pray for one's heart's transformation. Thirdly, disciplined carnal desires must be forgotten and will add to this period more meditation, reflection and supplication. Seclusion changes undesirable moods, temperaments, and spiritual capacities. The self becomes like earth so roses can grow in it. The lower self, as soil, turns into a medium for the growing of roses. My poetic writing describes this situation as:

You are a butterfly of the celestial worlds. Not just a moth straight from the cocoon. Spend your life among other spiritual beings. With sincerity, courtesy and pure intention. Clean your soul until perfectly pure. Eyes on your heart till your heart becomes eye. When doubts leave, God doubtless comes to His home. Never let the devil-robber enter the home of your heart. Your heart is "emerald hills", always ready to receive, the waves of His manifestations as gifts. Seclude yourself from others, not the Beloved. Do not forget! Fur is worn in winter, not in spring.

Journeying in/ toward/ from/ with Allah

The aspect of Gülen's mission or personality as a trainer of the human carnal soul has only one target: A hero of spirituality must reach the final point that attains perfect knowledge of God and this is the highest point on the horizon of the heart. I can formulate this main goal simply as "journeying in/ toward/ from/ with Allah" and dealing with the concepts of "journeying toward God," "journeying in God," and "journeying from God" (Gülen, 2000, p. 9). *Safar dar watan* (journeying in the native land) is used when a traveler toward God is freed from bad morals and the influence of carnal desires, being equipped with angelic attributes. Some of the Sufi elders regard the beginning of journeying as "journeying," and its end as "residence."

Others approach both the beginning and end as “residence,” while still others see the journey, with all of its stages, to be “journeying” (Gülen, 2000, p. 13).

Gülen explains that turning to God or journeying on His way begins with a person’s conscious decision and continues along the bridges of belief, practice in daily life, and attaining all good deeds in awareness that God always sees us whatever we do and wherever we are (Gülen, 2000, p. 9). From all these studied concepts, I aimed to provide a safe way to a positive Sufi psychology in which what is required is sincerity, purity of intention in faith, and the practice of the Sufi way with austerity, asceticism, righteousness and piety. Journeying can occur at various levels and take various forms, according to how the initiate has been prepared for it, the extent of his/her own spiritual capacity and how close a Sufi is to One who can do favor for a Dervish. In Sufism, *Eren* refers to a matured one with perfect attainment. In Arabic it is a *wasil* who is sincerely and continuously drawn toward God. This poem explains the point, giving a reflective analysis of this journey,

O Sufi! A hero of truth has the effort of turning to God. All the days of my life were passing in darkness. One day with perfect attainment came to my aid. I live glorious days, and experience happy ages. In spiritual raptures that programming your will to reach. Meeting with the Ultimate Truth, observe my duties. A guide who leads others to God is without deviation. My star was dim and my fortune did not smile on me. I love him, I become his power of hearing with senses. Which he hears, his power of sight with which he sees as the *wasil* is full grasp of the things pleasing to Him.

Journeying toward God begins with reflection on the outer world and the human inner world. Many of God’s overall manifestations of His Names in the light of belief in Divine Unity must be brought into feelings in your inner world with pleasure. Divine knowledge continues by observing His unique stamp on whatever there is in the universe, from the earth to the farthest galaxies (Gülen, 2000, p. 10). If you are a Sufi and want to set off on this journey, never set your

heart on anything other than God, but spend unending efforts to turn to God in your heart. The following poem demonstrates this:

Enabled to travel toward and meet with God. I am becoming free of bodily and animal appetites. Searching for ways to reach, obey principles. The heart leads a life at the level of the spirit. Connotations are with regard to the Divine manifestations. Your journeying has been dealt with in two categories. Journeying downward: for a restricted, conditioned. Transient existence emerging that manifests itself.

In the second stage of journeying, or in the second journeying, initiates free themselves from different pieces of information that have been collected from different sources and proceed toward unity in thought on the horizon of knowledge of God, exhibiting this unity through all their faculties (Gülen, 2000, p. 10). My poem captures this stage as:

God does so universally, with all His Names, Allah. God is giving existence to, maintaining, beings and things. First stage is followed by in the realm of the manifestation. Continues through, and ends in reaching the Name. Many start on this journey, few can continue it. The first thing God created is my light from here. All degrees of existence are in the whole of the universe. Finally God is to the realm of humankind, beings and things. Journeying upward is the spirit seeking its original Home. Humanity is comprehensive fruit of the tree of creation. Respect the spirit in its primordial purity, find the Home with all will-power, consciousness, the core of the heart.

Gülen explains the third type of journeying or the third stage of journeying as “going beyond the difference between the outward and the inward in existence and the Religion, and being favored with the unshakable conviction and experience of God's particular manifestations on oneself and relations with oneself as an individual, as well as the overall manifestations of His Names throughout the universe. This highest point in journeying corresponds to the horizon of feeling absorbed in Divine Existence” (Gülen, 2000, p. 11).

This is the journey that is dealt with in four steps: The first stage of journeying toward God is the beginning and is made in the outer world, through reflection on God's works. It is also through self-purification, and journeying in the inner world. As a form of minor sainthood, the second stage is journeying in God. This is absorption, freedom from evil morals, and mortal attributes. This knowledge is from the Divine Presence which flows into your heart and melts away, a full perception belonging to, and subsisting in God. I reached and felt the third stage of the journey as shown in the poem that follows:

With the company of God, the third, together with absorption. This final point is only seeing Him beyond all concepts of modality. Knowing and feeling Him is encompassed by lights of knowledge of Him. All opposites are lost in the sight of a traveler, absorption itself. The place I am in has developed into no-space; the place of intimacy. This body of mine has become wholly a soul; He is the faithful one! God's Sight has manifested itself to me; and He has become my lover! I have seen myself intoxicated with His presence, now I know the Truth.

The fourth stage is journeying from God, coloring after self-possession. It refers to meeting with God, turning towards the realm of multiplicity with new unity. After reaching the unity, the self has ascended as high as God's Presence. I felt and experienced some degree of meeting and reunion with God. However, this is the state of the special apprentices of the Prophets and it is subsistence in God. Unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity are two depths with one dimension. Journeying in God, in journeying toward Him, from God in journeying in Him, could be a state of having both found and lost Him, feeling both nearness and distance. My final poetic quote is on this complicated concept and contains some advice for Sufi travelers,

O Sufi! The most perfect of travelers, the greatest of guides, and the masters. Make God loved by His servants, loving, both love God and are loved by Him. The Divine gifts lead good actions originating in good nature and virtue. Every lover of Divine light takes refuge in guidance, traces of perfection in you.

This highest point in journeying corresponds to the horizon of feeling absorbed in Divine Existence. This absorption must never be thought of as Incarnation or Union, both of which are false beliefs. Incarnation means God taking the form of a human being and being seen in this form, while Union means a person joining Divinity or being one with God (Gülen, 2000, p. 12).

Gülen uses one of his Sufi masters' Sufi quotes in saying that "One drowned in such knowledge of God cannot distinguish between the Names and He Who is called by these Names; The disciples of the guides of the Order of Jilan are cognizant of such mysteries" (Gülen, 2009, p. 11). His name is Muhammed Lutfi Efendi (1868–1956), and he was one of the Sufi masters who lived in Erzurum He has a *Diwan* containing many beautiful, lyrical poems and guided Gülen until the age of 18. Gülen's second biggest Sufi master is Jalalu'd-Din ar-Rumi (1207–1273), one of the Muslim saints and Sufi masters most famous in the West. He is regarded as the founder of the Mevlevi Order of the whirling dervishes, famous for his *Mathnawi*, an epic of the religious life in six volumes. He lived in Konya, Turkey.

The Spirit, the Special Knowledge (*Ilm ladun*) and Intoxication

The Spirit, the Special Knowledge (*Ilm ladun*) and Intoxication are three of the hardest concepts in Sufism: there are many contradictory answers given throughout human history, from the many who have discussed this matter, from philosophers to the sacred Scriptures. However, both religious and philosophical approaches have generally agreed on the fact that the spirit is the sole source of life, motion, perception, feelings, and consciousness. Gülen articulates his

knowledge and deems it useful to take a short journey around the Sufi concept of spirit in the *Emerald Hills of the Heart*. He uses existing knowledge such as that based on *al-Milal wa'n-Nihal* (*The True and False Ways of Belief and Thought*) by ash-Shahristani, *Tahafut al-Falasifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*) by Imam al-Ghazzali, *Mawqif al-'Aql wa'l-'Ilm wa'l-'Alam* (*The Place of Reason, Science, and the Created World*) by Mustafa Sabri Efendi, *Falsafa-i 'Ula* (*The Ancient Philosophy*) by Şemseddin Günaltay, and *al-Ba'th wa'l-Khulud* (*The Resurrection and Eternity*) by Ali Arslan. In the *Qur'an*, the *Qur'an* itself—the Divine Revelation—and the angel who brought the Revelation are both called *ar-Ruh* (the Spirit), (Gülen, 2009, p. 134).

The spirit which I study here is the non-material essence of human existence, motion, perception, feelings, and intellectual and “spiritual” development based on Gülen’s description. Gülen states “The Sufis have defined the spirit as a manifestation or shadow of Divine life, and an immaterial substance; God Almighty has not enabled anybody to have perfect knowledge about its exact identity. The body is the mount of the spirit, and the physical heart is the base of what we call the (spiritual) heart. The spirit essentially belongs to the Realm of the Transcendental Manifestation of Divine Commands. The *Qur'an* declares, All that is on the earth is perishable (55: 26). Based on God's declaration in the *Qur'an*, “I have breathed into it (the body) out of My Spirit” (15:29) (Gülen, 2009, p. 173).

According to this, in addition to the spirit's being the essence of human existence and nature, the perfection of humanity is possible through spiritual perfection, which one can realize by journeying in the heart on the way to God. The spirit is also an important means for the human relationship with God. “It is only through the spirit that a human being can travel toward and through the metaphysical realms, feel a relationship with God Almighty, and observe on the

horizon of the heart and other inner faculties numerous marvels which are impossible for the body to observe” (Gülen, 2009, pp. 172-175).

According to the Sufis, like the three separate but interdependent faculties of a complete entity, the spirit is an immaterial entity that has three dimensions as the object of three separate Divine favors. Gülen explains the first is what they call “the spirit itself.” It is the first manifestation of the all-encompassing Divine Mercy in the name of bringing the spirit into existence. It appears to be subsisting as the result of the mutual, interdependent relations and positions of the elements that form a living being (Gülen, 2009, p.186). The second is the “spirit breathed.” This is what they call “the speaking soul,” which is favored with reason, willpower, spiritual intellect, certain inner senses, and consciousness, and with the capacity for developing through learning and belief. In fact, confusion arises from being overwhelmed by spiritual intoxication and absorption. Sufis have concentrated on Divine Existence as the real existence, and have been annihilated in It, regarding contingent existence as something imagined. The others concentrate on the corporeal existence, either ignoring the Divine Existence or viewing the former as the incarnation of the latter (Gülen, 2009, p. 187). The third dimension of the spirit is the “biological spirit,” which the Muslim Sufis call the “animal spirit.” It is an element of connection between the breathed spirit or the speaking soul and the body. This may also be regarded as a veil of the spirit's subtlety, purity, and dignity that is related to the Divine Name the All-Outward. The spirit breathed by God is an abstract, non-biological substance. The tides of humans between guidance and straying, good and evil, and happiness and misery, occur in relation to the animal spirit. If it were possible to listen to the spirit breathed, we would always hear it singing tunes of happiness. The sufferings and pains of the animal spirit in those whom the real human spirit dominates are means of perfection for the spirit breathed. If, by contrast,

they are weak in respect of their spirit breathed—those who are not alive in respect of their conscience, who are dead in their relationship with God—they gain nothing in return for their sufferings and pains. The most important mechanism of the spirit is the conscience, which is an observatory for the “observation” of God (Gülen, 2009, p. 187).

As a Sufi traveler into my heart and spirit, even if I come to the stage of special knowledge, I am not the Sultan of *'ilm ladun'*, who has come as the source of the knowledge of Divine Oneness. This is knowledge of the Unseen or of mysteries from Him and I extracted knowledge mostly from Gülen's writings because I am unable to provide such details. Inspiration can be knowledge which God imparts into your heart along with the truths occurring in it. The special knowledge from God's Presence is the “unique one” of time. Also space is the perfect treasurer of this knowledge of secrets as related by the greatest of those who have drunk out of this pool of deep knowledge. Neither the other Prophets, nor the Messengers, nor the saints were thus favored and the knowledge may not always be in line with *Sharia's* (laws) decrees. It refers to spiritual discoveries and must balance out with the basic rules of the Religion, otherwise a saint may fall into error and cause followers to err (Gülen, 2009, p. 33).

Observing this world and the others as an entity with two faces, I offer sweet “waters” of Divine gifts from the physical and heavenly worlds and the knowledge God taught Khadr, a well-known mystic figure in Qur'an, who had special knowledge based on Sufi beliefs which was special knowledge from His Presence. I saw Khadr in my dream one night and he inspired or sort of dictated one of my poems to me. It was guidance for helpless people: Khadr asked me to help people without questioning as shown in the following poem:

With a green headscarf, white clothing Khadr says
Run fast like a Khadr and help others urgently

Do not ask question who I am, Salam to human
Do not wait Khadr will come, say with wisdom
Open your heart like a beautiful bird, fly on the sky
Do not stop or look back, ask question by heart
Saying your words straight forward, rise by heart
Do not bothered by bad-eyed people, pray as Khadr
Never expect return from any who seek help from you
Do not discriminate any human being, be patient
Help all needy immediately, seek social justice
Do not answer who Khadr is, run, wording concisely
Advising peace, present trustworthiness and be truthful
Do not stay anywhere long, transfer position to the loyal
Love the truth, spread out, fills up, help, become a Khadr
Do not expect any benefits, survive with a purified heart

This dream is unforgettable, his wisdom is irresistible. Sufis are not practicing with dreams, however, dreams symbolize some meanings and show directions. Khadr or Al-Khiḍr, also transcribed as Khidr, Khizr, Khyzer, Qhizyer, Qhezar, Khizar, Xızır, Hızır is a revered figure in Islam, who is believed to be described in the *Qur'an* as a righteous servant of God and he possessed great wisdom or mystic knowledge. According to the *Qur'an*, "Khidr" has a special wisdom and esoteric knowledge (*hikmah and ilm al-ladun*). In different Islamic and non-Islamic traditions, Khidr is variously described as a messenger, prophet, *wali* or in some cases, as a "non-abstract" deity who takes the place of the God (*Haq or Heq*) as a *deus otiosus*. The figure of al-Khidr has been syncretized over time with various figures including Vishnu in India,

Sorūsh (*Avesta Saraosha*) and Mithra in Iran, Saint Sergius the Warrior and John the Baptist in Armenia, Saint George in Asia Minor and the Levant, etc. (Wikipedia).

Such knowledge has great beauty, is enchanting and desirable for happiness. Searching for secrets of Ultimate Truth, I needed special knowledge from His Presence. Such knowledge cannot be obtained through mere study or effort, for this knowledge occurs only in pure hearts as a Divine gift in the form of sacred power, and comes directly from God's Presence through spiritual discovery and inspiration. Some cannot continue spiritual journeying because of the suggestions of Satan. I was not confused about the fact that revelation came to the Prophets; it is absolutely beyond all doubt. Inspiration occurs to saints, and is a broad channel for manifestations of God's Knowledge. If an inspiration manifests itself in the heart of a human, this is an occurrence without any interference from Satan; in conformity with the *Qur'an* and the *Sunna* (Gülen, 2009, pp. 32-33). Coming from God's Presence, there echoes in the heart occurrences from the Ultimate Truth, while those known to come from the angels are occurrences from the angels. The “sparks” from Satan invading the spirit are carnal suggestions to the carnal soul, and discerning between these occurrences is the elevated *Sunna* of the Prophet (Gülen, 2009, p. 35).

It was the last day of month of Ramadan in August 8, 2013, and I had gone to my father's and brother's home town of Alanya, Antalya. I was climbing the mountain the day before the religious holiday of *Aid* and wrote my poem on “Intoxication”, which is a state in Sufism, whereas sobriety is a station and refers to objectivity, security and straightforwardness. Sobriety is the condition when you are favored with knowledge of God with some intoxication. As a result, I was experiencing an absence of feelings and consciousness, but I will spend my lifetime

in wakefulness and consciousness, which is the opposite of intoxication. The poetry that came to me was amazing:

O Sufi! Beware, O cup-bearer, bring a cup and pass it around! O cup-bearer, pour wine into the cup, it is time to break the fast; Restore this ruin; it is time to display the favor we receive deeply. A heart boils with extraordinary joy when it feels the All-Beloved One. Enraptured by the rays of the manifestations of God's "Face". Then you're returning to your former, normal state of sobriety. O Heart! There is relation between intoxication and absence. I have always seen Mustafa in the wine which intoxicates me. If the inner world of seekers after the Truth feel intoxication, are not satisfied with the Divine gifts, lack something in delight. Suffering irregular tides with respect to the state of absence, it is coloring, rather than self-possession, witnessing only He. He hears by Me, and sees by Me, holds by Me, and walks by Me. The lights of my eyes are He, and the direction for my reason is He; My tongue always utters He is He, and I sigh and groan with He. My heart goes on an excursion in He, the love of my soul is He.

The gifts come in showers and invade the whole being into your spirit and heart without informing you. Perhaps it is feigned intoxication rather than being actually so. Sometimes it arises from strong belief, strong knowledge of God. It should be balanced by fear and awe, becoming felt in a broader sense. The spirit overflows with zeal and joy, feels excessive excitement. You are honored with the light of the manifestation of the "Face" of God. Sobriety is an undeniable part of the journeying toward the Almighty and burnt away like a dried, flammable object, your nature has changed. The feeling I experienced was profound, getting me wander in the valleys of amazement and astonishment, upon which I wrote this poem,

The fruit of heart sings like a nightingale, made sing by Him; My eyes, which see, see by Him, and have heard speech from Him. Favored with speech, with which He brings mysteries to light. My heart is overpowered by love, joy and pleasure in the gifts. From the Unseen World, myself lost in the depth of love and ecstasy by the all-brilliant Light of God. My heart made exceedingly bright, and by the light of Muhammad, I have become one with a pleasant heart. My heart falls in love with the Eternally Beloved One, invaded by ecstasies. Diving into the cataracts of love, flowing abundantly like a river swelling with rains. Sometimes overflowing my limits; let into the huge waves of love from the

rejoicing. Originating in feeling in His company, and always living in wonder, uttering "He!"

In summary, verification is the final step of the journey I reached after 80 days of *erbain* in Canada and Turkey. The rank of being loved by the All-Beloved is either journeying to God or journeying from God, or Journeying toward God. A Sufi must have a visible sign of this invisible Love of God. As a reflection of this love, a Sufi lives by the inhabitants of heaven in both worlds. Sufis must always be with people with sincere hearts, living for His sake and feel the Truth, "seeing" Him, walking toward Him, upholding truth. In life, the Truth declared: He hears and sees by Me. This refers to a Sufi having to become a God servant. Anything, anyone that is lovable from the heart, catches the eye. The people of heart and truth have found Unity in multiplicity because the human soul is the Pure Light of Truth, and is near indeed to creation. A Sufi belongs to neither East nor West, because he\she becomes the lamp of this Light. Truth can be felt differently at each step of the journey, because the level of the belief, knowledge, love and yearning are different for each traveler. Truth is in direct proportion with love of God and certainty. The object of belief and certainty belongs to the unseen world. Everyone has a relative horizon and final point of certainty in heart. Everyone needs rest and contentment based on individual horizons. Certainty is greater and stronger when you hear a call. A call from the Truth:

Come, O lover, have intimacy with Us! Heroes of verification bear all suffering, resist all carnality. Rising without stopping toward heaven with "He" as the sole goal. Sufis are welcoming with different manifestations, having approval at every station and stage. Feel the lovely true melodies echoing in senses, in outer and inner worlds. This is truly such a rank that you've reached your belief from Him. Just as knowledge, love and zeal are from Him, the impressive one. Neither union nor incarnation is true; true existence belongs only to God. All else is a shadow of Your Light: my spirit tastes the virtue of best pattern.

As a final note for chapter 4 and chapter 5, I intentionally did not analyse some of the concepts, because seven categories and seven levels of self-capture are mentioned specifically in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 and later on Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 covers all of concepts. There is no discrepancy between the concepts in the table and the discussion that follows. I did not follow the order given in the tables in a systematic way, and while it may seem my discussion of them is arbitrary, it is not. I did choose each of the 40 concepts by heart, out of 250 concepts, after reading Gülen's book four times. The selection, classification and relationship of the concepts have been made by my heart-eye and feelings, concerning which concepts should be connected or related to each other, or which station and stages must be followed by which. Everybody is different and I cannot over-generalize these findings and relationships for other researchers or Sufi practitioners.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS OF THE TWO PERIODS OF ERBAIN

Comparing two forty days periods of *Erbain* and categorizing the findings tells me that there is an 'I' in me that is beyond me, and that is different in two separate cultures, but the findings are nevertheless the same, categorized in two different areas: God's names on my personality and the seven levels for the Sufi therapy. I have sought to explain in detail the stages and stations of this journeying of the soul which the Sufis experience, in both Canada and Turkey as a bi-cultural person, under the following titles as the seven levels of the self: the Carnal, Evil-Commanding Soul, the Self-Condensing or Self-Accusing Soul, the Soul Receiving Inspiration, the Soul at Rest, the Soul Well-Pleased (with God, with however God treats it), the Soul Pleasing (to God), and The Perfected Soul, or the Purified or Innocent Soul (Gülen, 2009, pp. 219-220). After experiencing two *Erbains* and comparing the two periods, I came to realize and understand that the love of friendship is a common value and transient, and must open the way to the unitive love with God that is eternal. Union with the ultimate beloved, God, is every Sufi's goal for their maturity, as we all share the same spark of the divine. Naturally, a Sufi must continue to seek understanding of faith through reason and the divine creative force of love through manifestations of God's names and attributions. In the final analysis, only divine love can create and give the faithful one true understanding.

The final path to God is not through the mind, but through the heart, because the simple faithful love of God trumps all efforts of reason to understand God or to articulate the elements of one's faith. However, Gülen doesn't believe that achieving oneness with God should be the end goal. Rather, the ability to love that is so wholeheartedly embraced by Sufism should be channeled into the service of humankind. God is best served when we direct our love for God back to the world in which we live. Because love transcends all other human attributes, we

should be tolerant of all people, since we were all created by God. Even wrongdoers must be loved: one can hate stealing, untruthfulness and even unbelief, but not the perpetrators of these activities—he or she is only misguided and not to be hated. The manifestation of divine love should be service to mankind, not just the quest of finding favor with God through total devotion to Him (Soltes, 2013, p. 22).

My Personality with God’s Names and Attributions

Chittick (2006) explains that Ibn Arabi’s description of achieving perfection depends upon knowing oneself, and to know oneself is to know Allah, because a perfect person contains all the realities of God and all His universe (Bayrak & Chittick, 2006, p. 19). In other words, Allah has a Divine Face turned toward the creation of both macrocosm and microcosm. For instance, the human is the most perfected creation of the Divine Form, or Forms of God. For the perfect person, one who becomes the absolute servant of God, everything is a divine self-disclosure of Allah (Chittick, 1998). Allah’s various powers are described by His Names, and that is why the entire creation manifests Allah’s Names, the attributes of Allah’s objects manifest some power of Allah. According to the three main religions that have holy books, the first human being is Adam. *Qur’an* says “Adam taught all the names of everything (*Baqarah* 31), which means the Names of Allah were implanted within Adam’s own self (Bayrak & Chittick, 2006, p. 28). Knowledge of self is identical to knowledge of God, and that is why the heart-based Sufi therapy focuses on personalities in order to explore which of God’s names and attributions appear in the person’s character, the self.

I discovered some of God’s names dominantly shown in my personality and character after two *Erbain* periods. It is important to realize why and how my personality, the self, shapes, and reacts and what kind of tools I need to polish myself. The 99 Names of Allah, also known as

the 99 Most Beautiful Names of God (in Arabic transliteration: *Asma' Allah al-ḥusnā*), are the names of God which Muslims believe are revealed in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. The *Qur'an* refers to the attributes of God as God's "most beautiful names" (*Qur'an* 7:180; 17:110; 20:8; 59:24). They are traditionally enumerated as 99 in number to which is added as the highest name (*al-ism al-aḥḥam*), the supreme name of God. Islamic theology makes a distinction between the attributes of God and the divine essence. Among the ninety nine names of Allah, my heart tells me that there are five names having a stronger appearance in my personality than others, namely *Al-Adl* (The Utterly Just), *Al-Hakam* (The Judge), *Al-Quddus* (The Most Pure), *Al-Khabir* (The All Aware) and *Al-Ferd* (The Individual or the Unique One). Some of these names are mentioned previously as part of my meditation as a well-known *Dkhir*, because I recite 6 of God's names for peacefulness regularly. Some names became part of my personality, incorporating God's names and attributes. Table 6 shows when my personality is in complete communion with God, following God's names that were dominantly shown in my personality and character after two *Erbain*. My interpretation of these names is personalized by my reflections, feelings and emotions.

Table 6- God's names dominantly shown in my personality and character after two *Erbain*

God's Names Shown	Turkish or Arabic	English
	<i>Al-Adl</i>	The Utterly Just
	<i>Al-Hakam</i>	The Judge
	<i>Al-Quddus</i>	The Most Pure
	<i>Al-Khabir</i>	The All Aware
	<i>Al-Ferd</i>	The Individual, the Unique

Al-Adl (The Utterly Just) refers to the One who rectifies and sets matters straight in a fair, impartial and equitable manner. Justice is the opposite of tyranny (Bayrak, 2006, p. 90), and belongs to the One who always acts justly and who delivers absolute justice. This is the One whose wisdom of justice is based upon complete knowledge of past, present and future. This characteristic of Allah should help us realize the importance of being just to people, knowing that if we wrong someone, we will be accountable to the Most Just. Out of respect for *Al-Adl*, as a Sufi, I learn to exercise *shukr*, *tawakkul*, thankfulness to God, and acceptance. All human beings must be thankful for the good, and accept without personal judgement or complaint whatever falls to our lot that does not seem to be good. In doing so, Allah's justice will be revealed to us, and we will be happy with the joy and the pain coming from the Beloved (Bayrak, 2006, pp. 91-92).

Al-Hakam is the One in whose promise there should be no doubt at all, in whose action there is no fault at all. He has decreed that hearts must be contented and pleased with Him, that souls must be submissive, obedient, to Him. He separates the truth from falsehood. In *Surat al-Ana`m*, "Shall I then seek a judge other than Allah? He it is who has revealed to you the Book (which is) made clear" (*Quran*, 6:114). In *Surat Yunus*, "Follow what is revealed to you and persevere till Allah gives His judgment, and He is the best of judges" (*Quran*, 10:109). This name tells me my destiny is on the way and there is none stopping it. There is no need to worry about what will happen, neither is there reason to regret whatever has happened, for regret will change nothing. As a Sufi, I accept reality; God's servants will be rewarded with satisfaction and peace. Instead of questioning Allah's judgement, be a true judge of yourself, then judge others as

you judge yourself. *Al-Hakam* taught me that a Sufi must have a strong ability of judgement, and neither tyrannize him or herself, nor excuse and pamper him or herself (Bayrak, 2006, p. 89).

Al Quddus means the One who is Free from and Above any *sharr* (evil), any *naqs* (deficiency) and any *'ayb* (fault). The One who is Very Pure, Absolutely Pure, the unique purity, He is far and above anything that does not befit Him. His justice is devoid of all blemish (Bayrak, 2006, pp. 54). In other words, He is High Above what does not befit Him. He is the Pure One. He doesn't have any deficiency or fault. The second meaning of this root is *barakah*, great goodness. Allah looks at our hearts, intentions and actions. This name tells me that Allah deserves those actions that are pure. Our actions and intentions should be good. As a Sufi, I must try to cleanse my heart by abandoning bad habits, because bad habits are garbage and thorns on our hearts which are supposed to be God's house. If my heart is filled with Allah, contain nothing but Allah, it is a safe place from everything else. The manifestation of the name *Ya Quddus*, the Most Pure, can only appear in the pure heart described by Allah in Holy tradition, "I do not fit into heaven and the earth, but I fit within the heart of my faithful servant" If a Sufi has *Quddus* in his\her heart, his\her heart will become free of all thoughts and concerns by which we cause ourselves trouble, worry, and pain (Bayrak, 2006, p. 55).

Al-Khabir refers to one who is aware of the hidden occurrences in everything. Only Allah reaches the deepest, darkest, corners of His Kingdom, where neither human intelligence nor His angels can penetrate (Bayrak, 2006, p. 93). Allah is aware of all knowledge inside and out, from its very beginning until its end, in infinite detail. There is nothing one can hide or do in secret or think of doing that is not known by *al-Khabir*. Based on Ibni Arabi's description, occurrences that are not yet actualized, but in a state of formation, or are being planned, or are hidden, like secrets within secrets, are manifest to Him. None can escape His attention (Bayrak, 2006, p. 93).

This name gives me total understanding of the conditions and consequences of events as well as their nature. The prerequisite of this gift is to know oneself; to be one's own doctor. First of all, as a Sufi, I must diagnose own sickness of arrogance, hypocrisy, envy, selfishness, anger, excessive love of the world, and other negativities which we all have. And then as a Sufi I must heal myself at the same time as healing others. If one is afflicted with certain bad traits of character and is sincerely ashamed and wants to get rid of them, it helps to recite "ya Khabir" as often as one can. If a faithful person is worried about the outcome of an action, this person will see the result of his\her actions in his\her dreams. *Qur'an* mentions this name: "Does the one who created not know? And He is the Gentle, the Aware (*Surah Mulk*, 14) (Bayrak, 2006, p. 94).

Al-Ferd refers to the individual, the single one. Allah is oneness, singleness, without a second or likeness. *Al-Ferd* as the one is Absolutely One, God's Uniqueness and none is comparable to Him. Unity is used to emphasize, confirm His Oneness as *Wahidiya*. The existence of any attribute is comparable to the Divine Being. The Divine Being has absolute freedom from having resemblance. *Ahadiya* denotes a sacred reality, nothing to do with multiplicity, encompasses all existence, and contains all the truths of Divinity (Gülen, 2009, p. 120). As a Sufi, *Al-Ferd* gives me strengths and freedom, and provides me individuality, because Allah is absolutely free from restrictions of time and of space. Nothing exists by itself, for everything exists only as a mirror of God. Gülen conceptualizes the individual as one who feels in their inner worlds that the whole universe has been annihilated in God, attaining the Divine Favor and His Face of Existence, since the Divine Being bears no resemblance to any other being or thing. Allah is unique, infinitely beyond all conceptions; God's Unity is a sun (Gülen, 2000, p. 193).

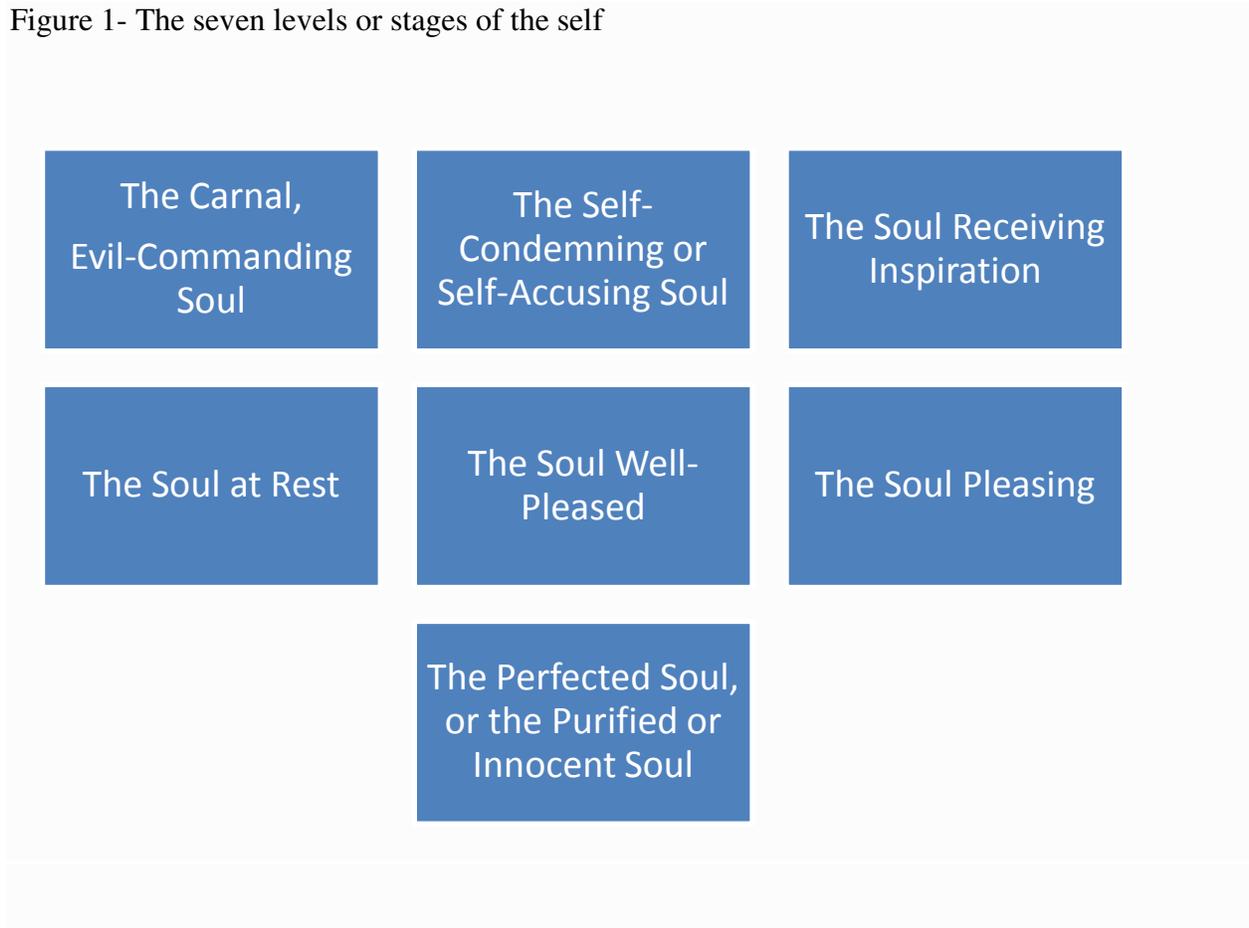
His Oneness becomes apparent with all its clarity for whoever is feeling it. Found in the state of wonder or amazement at the manifestation of Majesty, God is the All-Great in His incomparable, incomprehensible Greatness. Allah is forever, all glory be to Him in the morning, evening at all times. Look at the works, ponder the acts, reflect on the Names, and contemplate (Gülen, 2009, p. 194). As a Sufi, I try to study the mysteries, grace, harmony, and meanings beyond nature. The book of the universe is replete with messages, experienced by spirits. Take your home in the shelter of the All-Independent Single, the Unique One if you want to see the face of Unity amidst this multiplicity of the Divine Throne. If your personality has *Al-Ferd*, you are in trouble because you have to fight against your selfishness, arrogant behavior and the Carnal Self all the time.

The Seven Levels of Self

I explain in detail the stages of this journeying of the soul, which the Sufis experience in my spiritual journeying, under the titles of the Carnal, Evil-Commanding Soul, the Self-Condemning or Self-Accusing Soul, the Soul Receiving Inspiration, the Soul at Rest, the Soul Well-Pleased (with God, with however God treats it), the Soul Pleasing (to God), and the Perfected Soul, or the Purified or Innocent Soul. Gülen states that as the soul passes through these stages upward, the veils of darkness that veil human nature are torn apart one after the other. According to the degree of each, the rays of spirituality begin to shine on all sides of a human being, and an initiate or traveler thinks that they are floating in the elevated horizons of the inner, immaterial dimensions of existence. Figure 1 shows each of the stages mentioned above has a gift, pleasure, horizon, manner of expressiveness, and perception particular to itself. Sometimes my guide, Gülen's writings tells me at which stage I am in, and sometimes sensitive,

self-supervising initiate such as I was aware of myself and lending an ear to the voice of my spirit is informed of my stage in a special way. (Gülen, 2009, pp. 219-220).

Figure 1- The seven levels or stages of the self



The Arabic term *nafs* is related to words for “breath,” “soul,” “essence,” “self,” and “nature.” It refers to a process that comes about from the interaction of body and soul. When the soul becomes embodied, it forgets its original nature and becomes enmeshed in material creation. This creates the self (Frager, 1999, p. 48). Gülen states that “the soul is also of great importance for humans to maintain a metaphysical tension. The soul is similar a mainspring allowing them to rise from being only potentially human to true humanity” (Gülen, 2009, p. 219). He defines the soul (*an-nafs*) as a substance that is essentially free of matter, but which is in close

connection with it in its acts and functions; it is the origin or essence of something or its self. There have been those who have used it in the sense of the spirit or the heart or the body, or in the sense of lusts or the mechanism through which Satan penetrates humans, or even in the sense of reason. In religious terminology, *an-nafs*, or the soul, is the origin or center of certain states or faculties such as lust, anger, ill will, grudging, hatred, and irritation, and it is a transformable, reformable, and refinable mechanism connected to human corporeality (Gülen, 2006, p. 216).

The soul has a constant, experienced connection between the body and the spirit. It is through this connection that humans receive, recognize, and distinguish their outer and inner sense-perceptions and go beyond the corporeal realm into metaphysical worlds. It is again through this connection that any state, experience or gift that occurs in the spirit leaves its imprint upon the body and provokes it to move in a certain direction. Just as every influence on the spirit makes itself felt on the body, so too every state and effect on the body shows itself on the horizon of the spirit (Gülen, 2006, p. 216). Gülen categorizes seven different levels of development of the soul, levels or stages of the self-ranging from absolutely self-centered and egotistical to purely spiritual and founded on references in the *Qur'an*. A Sufi will go through all these steps to reach a final point: the purified soul is the double of the spirit, continuously trying to keep away from evil, and always advancing toward good (Gülen, 2006, p. 219).

The Commanding Self—The Carnal Lower Self

The lowest level of the self, the ego or lower personality, is made up of impulses or drives to satisfy desires. These drives dominate reason or judgment and are defined as the forces in one's nature that must be brought under control. The self is a product of the self-centered consciousness—the ego, the “I.” The self must be transformed —this is the ideal. The self is like a wild horse; it is powerful and virtually uncontrollable. As the self becomes trained, or

transformed, it becomes capable of serving the individual (Frager, 1999, p. 48). The self is not bad in itself. Never blame your self. Part of the work of Sufism is to change the state of your self, transforming the self and finding God.

The lowest level of the self is dominated by pride, egotism, and totally self-centered greed and lust. This level is the part within each person that leads away from Truth. The lowest state is that of being completely dominated by your wants and desires. At this level, I am like addicts in denial. My life is dominated by uncontrollable addictions to negative traits and habits, yet I refuse to believe I have a problem. I have no hope of change at this level, because I do not acknowledge any need to change. Each level of self needs a specific one or more of the names or divine attributes of God. I discovered the divine name connected with the first stage is unity, and needs “*La ilaha illallah,*” which means “there is no God but God” (Frager, 1999, p. 50).

The beginning of real freedom is fleeing from the tyrannical self. Our tyrannical *nafs* is addicted to worldly pleasures and suffers lack of faith. One cure for this self is the realization that God exists and life is colorful, and that there is more to life than pleasures. I suggest “*Hu*” also refers to God without attributes, an intimate way of addressing God, which can be translated simply as “Thou” (Frager, 1999, p. 51).

Gülen warns that even though the soul is mainly characterized by always commanding evil, when it undergoes an effective process of purification and is directed to obedience to its Lord, it can be transformed into a source of bright light, like the full moon receiving light from the sun. If, on the other hand, it is not purified, the fog and smoke of the lusts invade its horizon, and it suffers corruption under the influence of carnal thoughts and considerations, becoming so blind as not to be able to see into the transcendent dimension of existence (Gülen, 2009, p.220).

The Self-Condemning or Self-Accusing Soul—The Regretful Self

The next state is to struggle with myself, to seek to act according to reason and higher ideals and to criticize myself when I fail. If I am a Sufi and have not developed beyond the first level I am unaware and unconscious. As the light of faith grows, insight dawns, perhaps for the first time. The negative effects of a habitually self-centered approach to the world become apparent to the regretful self. I was stuck at the second level in both countries back and forth, however I do have the ability to change my old way of life in a significant way. For example, I saw my faults more clearly after the awakening state in Kitchener, I did have still regret and but desire for change grows. The ruler of this stage is still worldly cleverness, and the prime minister is still egotism and self-love (Frager, 1999, p. 67).

The self is still resisting wrongdoing, but is softer than the tyrannical self. Because the self is witness to the regretful self it asks forgiveness from God after becoming conscious of wrongdoing. The self blames the *nafs* and comes to realize by the light of the heart. The self enters the house of many animals and understands that the human is different from animals. However, the self wants to be ruler of the city, of his\her castle without having the Supreme Judge, Allah. Arrogance, hypocrisy, bigotry and fanaticism of loving myself was continued and struggling in every day of my life. All strong negative tendencies lead me to confusion. At this level, I am like addicts, is beginning to understand the pain I have caused myself and others. The addiction is still far too strong to change. That requires far stronger medicine.

Gülen portrays this level of soul as no different from the faculties mentioned above with respect to its duties and its fulfilling or not fulfilling them properly. If the soul is purified and preserved from working like a telephone exchange for Satan, from being, by its primordial nature a reptile- like creature crawling on the ground, it becomes like a dove flying over our heads, as if

it has undergone a mysterious metamorphosis, and it is praised by the words of God Almighty: I swear by the self-accusing soul (75: 2) (Gülen, 2009, p.222).

The Soul Receiving Inspiration—The Inspired Self

This was the beginning of the real practice of Sufism for me. Before this stage, the best anyone can accomplish is superficial outer understanding and mechanical outer worship. As the seeker, I began to take genuine pleasure in prayer, meditation, and other spiritual activities in Istanbul and Gebze Turkey during the month of Ramadan. Only now does the individual taste the joys of spiritual experience. Now as the seeker, I am truly motivated by ideals such as compassion, service, and moral values. While as a Sufi, I was not free from desires and ego, this new level of motivation and spiritual experience significantly reduced the power of these forces for the first time in Gebze, Turkey. There were new motivations for my life; these values become part of a way of my life, but these values will nevertheless wither and die away. Behaviors common to the inspired self include gentleness, compassion, creative acts, and moral action. Overall, I am at the stage of the inspired self seems to be emotionally mature, respectable, and respected (Frager, 1999, p. 72).

The heart is already dead because of ignorance and ill-guidance through disbelief previously. Liveliness comes to life through belief, as do knowledge and love of God. Set for yourself a light by which you move among people without deviation. Freed from imprisonment, raise the level of the life, heart and spirit. Respond to God and to the Messenger, calling you to that which gives life. God sends down from the sky a kind of water and therewith for me. The mindful heart revives the earth after its death with water: a dead land is coming forth. As a Sufi, I follow God's way of acting: surely their morals are of the best. In this rank or level of self, I noticed that the essence of true life appears, there was neither death nor decay. Death and decay

only strike the corporeal and the carnal self. There is permanence with respect to the heart, spirit, faculties. This permanence is viewed as “self-annihilation in God” or “subsistence by Him” (Gülen, 2009, p. 219). There are three breaths in the life of as an initiate. I have reached this degree: the breath of fear, the breath of expectation, and the breath of love. Fear, expectation, and love are each important for my life of the spirit and heart. I attain pride through poverty, supplication to the Truth, uttering, O All-Living, O Self-Subsistent!

The Soul at Rest—The Contented Self

The seeker as a Sufi is now at peace and finally the struggles of the earlier stages are basically over, and it seems that the old desires and attachments are no longer binding. The ego-self begins to let go, allowing as the individual to come more closely in contact with the Divine. This level of self predisposes one to be liberal, grateful, trusting, and adoring. One feels serenity, but it is not complete. If one accepts difficulties with the same overall sense of security with which one accepts benefits, it may be said that one has attained the level of the contented self. Developmentally, this level marks a period of transition. The self can now begin to “disintegrate” and let go of all previous concern with self-boundaries and then begin to “reintegrate” as an aspect of the universal self (Frager, 1999, p. 76).

However, the carnal self is like a sleeping dragon, a hard-natured substance, more harmful than snakes and scorpions, and is described by the Divine statement as follows: “Surely the carnal, evil-commanding soul always and insistently commands evil” (12: 53). At this stage, I was asking from God increasingly for forgiveness in awareness of sins, avoiding faults due to repugnance, trying to keep distant from unbelief, hypocrisy, vice, and transgression, and by shuddering with fear.

Gülen suggests this level of the soul, where the favors are coming when it is in an agreeable state, may be a means of perdition, and, in a further attempt, by finding its true purification through always seeing itself as impure, this primordially hard-natured, evil-commanding substance can rise to great heights and approach the heavenly beings (Gülen, 2009, p. 222). The soul at this level, which philosophers call “the speaking self or soul,” and which the *Qur'an* describes as “the soul at rest,” has become an earthly being able to rise to the horizon of the heart and the spirit, and possessing angelic manners, it begins to take pleasure in religious responsibilities, which previously it did not like and which were difficult for it to fulfill. The things which it found bitter up until this point have become sweet, and parallel with attaining this station, the cloud of dust and smoke over the spiritual intellect and the secret that was produced by corporeality have been completely removed. Things and events appear differently to its view, and time and again it experiences raptures. With the call to Him it hears from every thing and event, thinking itself to be among the pure spirit beings in great joy (Gülen, 2009, p. 223).

The Soul Pleasing (to God)—The Self Pleasing to God

I reached the next stage and realized that all power to act comes from God, that one can do nothing by oneself. I no longer feared anything or asked for anything. The Sufi sage Ibn 'Arabi described this level as the inner marriage or self and soul where the self is feminine and the spirit is masculine ((Frager, 1999, p. 82). The self pleasing to God has achieved genuine inner unity and wholeness. At earlier stages, people struggle with the world because they experience multiplicity. A broken mirror creates a thousand different reflections of a single image. If the mirror could be made whole again, it would then reflect the single, unified image. By healing the multiplicity within, the Sufi experiences the world as whole and unified (Frager, 1999, p. 83). At this level of self, I come right back to the heart of the matter, to the core of the

whole thesis and reflect on how I am transformed. I state these seven levels as my experiences of self through my self journeying, but I use Gülen's methods to express myself as the rest of my discussion reverts to teaching, not reflecting on my experience of self.

Gülen explains this stage in detail: a time comes when reason becomes like the heart, and its products take on the color of those of the spiritual intellect. An initiate with such a level of reason feels stunned by awe of God and advances full of the feeling of modesty; he sometimes becomes exhilarated with the showers of Divine gifts. The heart beats "God! God!" combining this with the breaths of reason that utter, "O the All-Forgiving! O the All-Veiling (of His servants' sins and shortcomings)!" (Gülen, 2009, p. 223).

The initiates at this level of reason hear the whole of creation mentioning God by His Names, and their breaths resound with Him. While on the one hand, signals come to them from the horizon of the spiritual intellect, arousing them to the worlds beyond, on the other hand they feel great anxiety that the gifts may be interrupted and unexpected obstacles may come between them and the Source of these gifts, causing them to turn to Him more frequently and more intimately, admitting that whatever good visits them is essentially from Him (Gülen, 2009, p. 223).

The Pleased Self—The Soul Well-Pleased

At this stage, I am an individual who is not only content with their lot, but pleased with even the difficulties and trials of life, realizing that these difficulties come from God. The state of the pleased self is very different from the way I usually experience the world, focused on seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. When a person's love and gratitude to God reach a level such as this, they have reached the stage of the pleased self at peace, or the serene self as *Qur'an* mentions (Frager, 1999, p. 80). It is honored with the breezes of appreciation: O, you soul at rest! Return

to your Lord, well pleased (with Him and His treatment of you), and well-pleasing to Him (89: 27-28), and establishes itself comfortably next to the spirit, the pure soul. However, I believe that most ordinary people can reach this level of self, although it is not easy to gain the perfected soul. Gülen describes the Soul Well-Pleased as follows:

The zeal they feel is the zeal of the heart, and the sorrows they suffer are the sorrows of the sincerely penitent ones. While looking at their past with repugnance, they are revived and refreshed with the hope of a brighter future and the hope that they will be able to compensate for their past defects with future opportunities. They try to fill their past voids with heartfelt sighs and groans and with reflection and remembrance. While others are busy with a life of ease, thinking that they have already lived so before, they always try to do whatever they must on the way to God. (Gülen, 2000, p. 223)

The Perfected Soul, or the Purified or Innocent Soul—The Pure Self

Unfortunately, only a few people who attain the final level have transcended the self entirely. I didn't feel that I had reached this level in both countries, because there was no ego or separate self left, only union with God. I couldn't completely erase my ego yet. At this stage, the individual has truly realized the truth, "There is no god but God." The Sufi now knows that there is nothing but God, that only the Divine exists, and that any sense of individuality or separateness is an illusion. This is the state called "to die before dying" (Frager, 1999, p. 80).

Gülen states such people always feel themselves to be in the presence of the Lord. They stand before Him in awe, bow before Him in utmost modesty, prostrate before Him with utmost humility, and sit before Him in self-supervision. They advance with utmost awe and care, and try to fulfill what is required by having reason in the company of the heart. They never rely on themselves, their labor, or their deeds; they do not approve of their acts, and treat them with disdain. They are always troubled and shake like a tree in a storm with the worry that hypocrisy and expectation of others' acceptance and appreciation have found, and do find, a way into even their best deeds. These considerations follow them ceaselessly along the way, until finally the

soul is welcomed with the compliments, “O you soul at rest! Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with Him and His treatment of you), and well-pleasing to Him! Enter, then, among My servants (fully content with servanthood to Me)! And enter My Paradise!” (Qur’an 89: 27–30); while those who have dropped halfway groan with deep regrets, “Would that I had forwarded (some good deeds) for my life (to come)!” (Qur’an 89: 24). They are honored with surprising bounties of the Hereafter, and favored with many different gifts from the horizon of the heart (Gülen, 2009, p. 224).

I don’t know whether I reached this stage of the pure self during two erbain periods. I wrote a poem to finalize my thoughts a day before ending the Turkey’s period in Alanya, Antalya with the following:

Divine mysteries and lights making you a perfect human being
Felt in hearts with certain signs, numerous unknown states
The Unseen coming to be known through the conscience
Seen with the eye of the heart, spiritual light in four ways

The manifestation of the Divine Being, Essence,
The manifestation of Divine Essential Qualities,
The manifestation of Divine Attributes, Names,
The manifestation of Divine works, and acts

O Sufi! Dawning, enlightening, illuminating
Every object becomes God’s modifier for you
Uncovered, coming forth, appearance, development
Within a certain framework and to a certain extent

When His universal manifestations of Oneness revealed Himself to me,
I began to observe Him in every face, reflecting His own impression.
Whoever goes and enters that glorious Ka'ba,
O Sufi! O Heart! Can turn in all directions to face Him

Every moment of every day, He is in a new manifestation
The Almighty Divine Being has limitless manifestations,
Those are observable, invisible, universal or particular,
Only a few can see this truth, can perceive these manifestations

He supposes the spirit to be the Divine Being Himself all the sudden
Such a confusion saying: "I am the Truth," echoes in my utterances.
Whoever utters, "I am the Truth," without being a saint like Mansur,
Becomes an unbeliever in God in spirit and body, Sufi be careful!

Your heart as a mirror or receptacle to the unheard—a great living favor
Beyond the limits of this nature, achieving transcendent accomplishments
Being a lover, I find myself sighing again, the veil from my eyes lifted again,
From my heart the veil of ignorance, the All-Beloved calls me with a transcendental call.

When God manifests Himself with His favor, He makes everything easy;
He creates the means for attainment, and grants it instantly, opening my heart
My tongue is silent; it is something beyond expression. O saintly one!
This is a spiritual state, only those aware of the states of a heart can understand.

I choose modesty and nothingness in the face of the Eternal One
Attribute to Him all my attainments, my words become beautiful:

You do not manifest Yourself while I am appearing on the screen;
My non-existence is the condition for Your manifestation of existence

Perception of the Divine Essence admission of incapacity to perceive Him
Perception of transcendent matters is too high for incapable reason,
For these scales cannot weigh such a load, since His image engraves in my heart,
His Names and Attributes everywhere, I am drowned in the ocean of His Oneness

In summary, Gülen believes that going through all these levels of experiencing self, and experiencing God is not enough, that this self should be put to the service of humanity. Sufi-oriented spirituality as in Gülen's interpretation of Islamic life and teaching has become very popular, and the emergence in Europe and North America of interest in the thought of Gülen is a phenomenon that demands explanation.

Gülen, and the activities of the Hizmet movement associated with his name, appear in universities, community centers, churches and mosques. Several American universities, such as Rice and Georgetown, have held academic seminars to study the various aspects of his thought. In Europe, in the Netherlands, for example, at least four universities (Nijmegen, Tilburg, Erasmus in Rotterdam, and Amsterdam) "Forerunners for Peace," plus Carleton, University of Toronto and Wildrid Laurier University, Lutheran Seminary in Canada have all hosted seminars, panels, conferences on such as "Religions and Social Innovation" which prominently feature the views of Gülen or and his Hizmet movement (Michel, 2012).

CHAPTER 7: SEVEN CATEGORIES OF MAIN CONCEPTS

The Sufi training enables the Muslim to confront modernity critically without falling into the snares either of unreflective acceptance or angry refusal. The question all modern people face is how to develop humane qualities, good behavior, love for others, enthusiasm for self-improvement, and an active desire to serve others, make a difference in the world, and to persevere in this desire in the face of setbacks and failures. “For the Muslim, according to Gülen, it is the Sufi thinkers who, down through the centuries, have thought through these questions and have followed the experimental method of dealing with them” (Michel, 2012).

I needed a strong debriefing after completing my data collection and writing up my first early findings, I attended the International Conference on Religions and Social Innovations on October 26, 2013 in Toronto at the University of St. Michael’s College, the University of Toronto, and presented a poster presentation about Sufi therapy. This event is co-sponsored by the University of St. Michael’s College, the Intercultural Dialogue Institute, the Focolare Movement, and the University of Toronto Multi-Faith Centre and University of Toronto Centre for Community Partnerships. I received valuable responses from conference participants.

I intended to feedback on my first draft in December 2013, so I contacted three of the best students of Gülen, namely Dr. Ahmet Kurucan, Mehmet Enes Ergene and Cemal Turk. They are well-known students of Gülen in the Hizmet Movement, and have been educated directly by Gülen for years. Cemal Turk studied the *Emerald Hills of the Heart* series, which brings out a comprehensive and unique examination of concepts and terms associated with Sufism in Islam. Turk provided me with his ten-page interpretation in Turkish, but it was not useful for me because it was insufficient and pitched at a basic introductory level. I talked by phone to Ergene,

who wrote a book called *Tradition Witnessing the Modern Age: An Analysis of the Gülen Movement* in 2008. His book addresses the sociological, cultural, and religious aspects of the Gülen Movement. This insider's look also explores the failure experienced by many other Islamic movements that have attempted to combine traditional values with the modern world. However, Enes doesn't know English, and couldn't provide me with in-depth feedback, but he was appreciative of my study and agreed completely with Gülen's mindfulness therapy model. I met with Dr. Ahmet Kurucan in December 2013 in London, Ontario regarding my data, and talked face to face with him in February 2014 in Toronto after I had written my first draft. Kurucan has many books and understood my research well, and he provided me with plentiful oral feedback. I had found five main categories to teach in therapy sessions at this time; he advised me to add two more: Trustworthiness and Presentation.

Furthermore, I wondered why Kurucan insisted on seven categories, and Dr. Ahmet Kurucan explained the reason is that in the prophetic tradition there are seven human qualities needed to reach the Perfected Soul. Kurucan also pointed out that Gülen replaced the stage between the soul-pleasing to God and the soul well-pleased for a reason. I also feel that the soul must be pleasing to God first, and then God will please the soul as part of the next stage. Kurucan agreed with use of special prophetic *ism-i azam* prayers in therapy sessions, but advised me to get confirmation from Enes Ergene. I received confirmation from Ergene through email. Furthermore, I met with Dr. Dogan Koc on March 14, 2014, in Kitchener when he came to talk about the Strategic Defamation of Fethullah Gülen. Dr. Koc is the executive director of the Gülen Institute in Houston, Texas. Dr. Koc gave me feedback orally and encouraged me that my research results could lead a renaissance in alternative spiritual practice and therapy models among some Muslim populations. Finally, I communicated with Osman Simsek through email in

order to introduce this therapy model to Fethullah Gülen. Simsek has been staying with Gülen for over 15 years, and informed Gülen about my research, but I was not able to meet with Gülen personally to ask questions about my study.

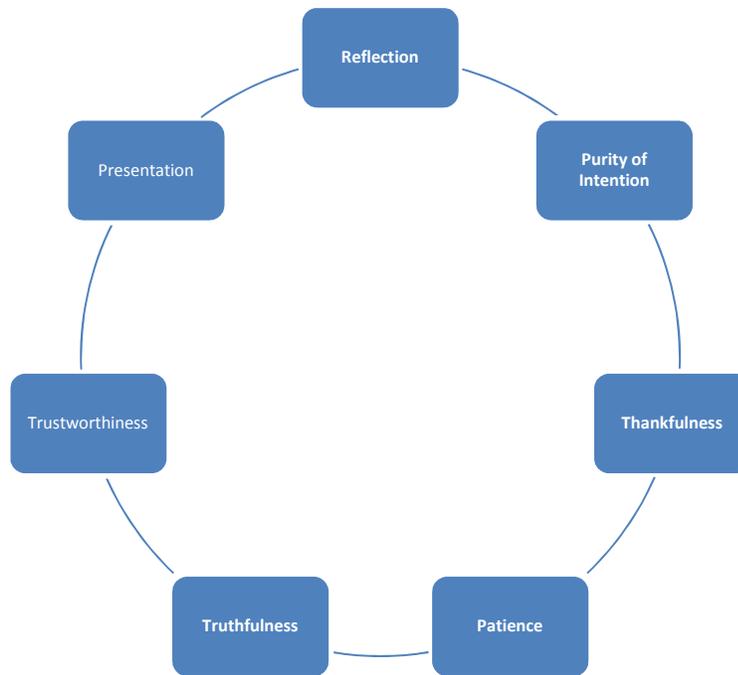
Therefore, in order to teach Gülen's wisdom through forty selected concepts, my findings consisted of the seven categories of thankfulness, purity of intention, reflection, patience, truthfulness, trustworthiness and presentation, covering 40 concepts in my 80 poetic writings through which I established ten weeks of therapy as a Sufi therapy model. Sufis use *shukr* to mean using one's body, abilities, feelings, and thoughts to fulfill the purpose of their creation: being thankful to the Creator for what He has bestowed. Such thankfulness is to be reflected in the person's actions or daily life, in speech and in the heart, by admitting that all things are directly from Him, and by feeling gratitude for them (Gülen, 2006, p. 94). Faithfulness, patience, truthfulness and sincerity are intrinsic and essential to the perfect human being, since loyalty is regarded as a source, and sincerity as a sweet water originating from this source. These are as air and water and one who drinks uninterruptedly from this water for forty days will find channels of wisdom opened from his or her heart to his or her tongue, and such a person will always speak truth and wisdom (Gülen, 2006, pp. 60-61).

The editor of *Essential Sufism* and author of *Heart, Self & Soul*, Robert Frager, mentioned that “the heart houses the light of faith, and also the traits of love, piety, calmness, fear of wrongdoing, humility, softness, tranquillity, submission, patience, refinement and purity. God had mercy on us by placing the heart beyond the authority of the nafs. Neglect, forgetfulness or disobedience may veil the light of the heart, thus lessening its power over the lower self” (Frager, 1999, p. 31). Balance begins with the self, for the self is the root of all spiritual troubles. Purity is the state of a heart that's at peace. A Sufi must be the most purified,

chosen, and godly one and become pure essence, extract or the cream of what's fine. My goal is becoming a sign of transcendence, because purity of knowledge is the first stage for the traveler. Gülen states that there are two ways that you can travel safely in this path.

First, The Book and the ways of Prophethood must be followed strictly when facing all hardship and difficulty through the journey. A Sufi never neglects them if he/she seeks to continue. The second advice is that the Rose-Garden of Divine Oneness needs a wise Guide. Prophethood or sainthood will open your heart, solve your problems, put your heart, spirit, and reason under the command of the sun as you go in search of such knowledge. In the Sufi tradition, the second path is love of the truth, and it is also the second stage for the traveller. A Sufi is full of God's awe, the heart opens and closes. "Sufism offers the collected wisdom transmitted down through the centuries by which one can move toward a transformed mentality, deeper love, positive character traits, and courage to work for the improvement of society" (Michel, 2012). However, love is a very important concept, but a confusing term in Sufism. I felt that some qualities are more important to learn before getting into deeper concepts. During two *erbain* periods, I discovered seven main concepts that form the seven categories most suitable to simplify in order to teach Sufism to ordinary people. See Figure 2

Figure 2- The seven stages, concepts or main categories for the traveller



Reflection or “*Tafakkur*”

The number one concept is reflection, which is *tafakkur*, and is also known as *muraqabah* in Arabic. It refers to what the self can achieve by contemplation in Sufism. *Tafakkur* is to achieve what the soul cannot normally achieve in a whole life, even if performing voluntary worship for seventy years. This quote or description belongs to Prophet Mohammad, all saints and Sufis follow his path of *tafakkur*, and try to reach the fruit of meditation. This divinely gifted talent becomes available and is unattainable through worship alone. Traditionally, this meditation cannot be performed amongst other people. It must be conducted in isolation, or in a secluded place for forty days’ *Erbain*.

However, Gülen is not totally in agreement with this “*Halveti*” opinion, because he offers an “action-oriented” individual Sufi model without *tariqa* that is more likely similar to the “*Celveti*” idea of openness in modernity (Kim, 2005). *Halveti* means completely closing yourself

off from society, and growing inside until becoming the Perfected Soul, whereas *Celveti* suggests being with God and being with people at the same time, even if you're a sinner. Gülen practiced and combined both traditions in his life and followed the *Naqshi (Halveti)* order and the *Qadiri (Celveti)* order when he was a young Sufi. My reflective poem clearly inspired by this type of Sufi meditation regarding "Self-Interrogation" is as follows:

A believer reviews all their thoughts and their deeds. Hoping correcting them will bring them closer to God. Seriously attempting to assert personal loyalty. Seeking spiritual depth is to develop, and to nourish them. Righteous people write down or recall daily actions. Their thoughts and words are to critique on their own. Discovering and amending through penitence and remorse. Protecting against vanity and worse is whirls of pride. O Sufi! Your spiritual and daily life, be not indifferent to criticism. Distinguishing good from bad, beneficial from harmful. Maintaining an upright heart, making amends for past wrongs. Constantly realizing self-renewal in your spirit. Self-criticism opens doors to great peace and tranquility. It is creating peacefulness, fear and the horizon of hope. Inspires anxiety in the heart, is heavy awareness of great duty. O Dervish's anxiety: If only I were a tree cut into pieces. Planning life to reach the horizon of perfect is universal humanity. Conscious of this life and spending every moment struggling. Demanding password or visa from all thoughts of the heart is knitting the "lace of life" with the "threads" of self-criticism. Such humility is the station of intimacy for the faithful one. Every day honored with a heavenly journey in the spirit. God swears by such a purified soul in: Nay, I swear by the self-accusing soul! Come! The doors of heaven are thrown open and an invitation given!

Sufi meditation is not prayer in the form of a request, nor does it have a structure. In truth, it is universal thought you are thinking, it is your contemplation, but you are not contemplating. Sufi meditation is like a ladder: if the ladder is lost while you are climbing, you will fall down. Once the object is reached, the meditative process is no longer properly called meditation. Meditation is only a means of reaching step by step (Kabbani, 2006, pp. 129-130). If there is anything that you are seeking from the Sufi meditation, it will never end. Steps on any ladder of meditation are endless. When your meditation is increased to leave your bad

characteristics, then meditation becomes like a ladder you climb that helps you reach higher positions. A Sufi never asks for anything in return for meditation and worship. Meditation in itself is not a struggle against the ego and that's why it does not provide the highest rank in Sufism, but it opens many doors with sincerity and with Purity of Intention.

Purity of Intention

If a Sufi doesn't have purity of intention and a sincere heart, this person cannot complete the spiritual journey. Inner knowledge is the understanding of reality, but it needs outer practice to support and sustain and deepen it through experience. However, there is one barrier called bad intention within the lower self, and it can be removed from the *nafs* only through sincerity and purity of intention. The prophet Muhammad said, "Actions are only according to intentions and no action is attributed to one who has no intention" (Gülen, 2004). The value of any outer action is given meaning and value only through the sincere intention of the heart. Reflection and observation about purity of intention has been the target in the following poem:

When I was being upright, sincere, and pure, being distant from show and ostentation, I was seeking purity of intention and loyalty as well as straightforwardness always in thought. I pursue no worldly purposes, gains when worshipping and fulfilling all my duties. I was always keeping my sincerity, most faithful one and being close to the heart that is my home. My tongue and heart were speaking only wisely. If I drink loyalty uninterruptedly from God, the water for forty days during the Erbain, I find channels of wisdom, while obeying. There are two wings or deep oceans: One is faithfulness, the other sincerity. One who can sail in these oceans or fly with these wings will reach harbour. No matter what the quantity of deeds, Sincerity is an attitude of the heart of Sufi. Sincerity is the wing of the bird of the acts. A deed in body, sincerity is its soul of worth.

Expressing its anxiety in pleading and entreaty, the Almighty removes lonely gloom and deep stress from a Sufi's heart. In my poem, I describe how sincerity with purity of intention can come to fruition:

Witness self-possession of other spiritual beings/Dumbfounded without speaking, what state could that be?/You transcended the limits of humanity to reach here/Invoke Allah as the name of the Supreme Divine Being/Feel the manifestations of God's Existence and Knowledge/Purity of meeting with God, the third stage/Occurs when the servant becomes nothing, like zero/The eye of the heart sees the other world as visible.

Reaching the state of certainty is a direct experience that gives rise to certainty. It is befitting capacity, just His Self-Subsistence remains. As a drop becomes an ocean, everything becomes nothingness. Gülen explains this stage as “With me, He hears, and He sees, He holds, and He walks” (Gülen, 1999). There are shortcoming in your deeds and so withhold your tongue from backbiting against your brother and sisters, let your sins be yours. Do not make your brother and sisters carry on your sins. Describing pure meeting with God in words is difficult using the words ‘Incarnation’ and ‘Union’ to communicate these states. My interpretation was confused, but I saw the light of the Sun and was saying that I am as a single drop of wave in the ocean of mysteries with this poem:

Qualify yourself with the qualities of God/ You are the microcosm of the macrocosm of Him/ Where God’s attributes are manifestly reflected/God is infinite greatness, praise Him with abundance.

Thankfulness

I noticed from the very beginning that thankfulness must be a main category and wrote this Sufi quote in Kitchener, Canada:

The duty of thankfulness holds great emotion. I am using my helplessness and destitution. Very few people live in a truly full awareness. Feeling deep need to be grateful and thankful.

Literally meaning gladness felt about and gratitude shown for the good done to one, Sufis use *shukr* to mean using one's body, abilities, feelings, and thoughts bestowed upon one to fulfill the purpose of his or her creation: being thankful to the Creator for what He has bestowed. Such thankfulness is to be reflected in the person's actions or daily life, in speech and in the heart, by admitting that all things are directly from Him, and by feeling gratitude for them (Gülen, 2006, p.94). True thankfulness in one's heart is manifested through the conviction and acknowledgment that all bounties are from God, and then ordering one's life accordingly. One can thank God verbally and through one's daily life only if personally convinced, and if one willingly acknowledges that his or her existence, life, body, physical appearance, and all abilities and accomplishments are from God, as are all of the bounties obtained and consumed. This is stated in: Do you not see that God has made serviceable unto you whatsoever is in the skies and whatsoever is in the earth, and has loaded you with His bounties seen or unseen? (Qur'an 31:20), and: He gives you of all that you ask Him; and if you reckon the bounties of God, you can never count them (Qur'an 14:34) (Gülen, 2006, p.95). Gülen explains how bodily, verbal and practical thankfulness happen in this statement:

Bodily thankfulness is possible by using one's organs, faculties, and abilities for the purposes for which they were created, and in performing the duties of servanthood falling on each. On the other hand, some have stated that verbal thankfulness means daily recitation of portions of the Qur'an, prayers, supplications, and God's Names. Thankfulness by the heart means that one is certain or convinced of the truth of the Islamic faith and straightforwardness. Practical or bodily thankfulness, according to others, means observing all acts of worship. Since thankfulness relates directly to all aspects or branches of belief and worship, it is regarded as half of the faith. With respect to this inclusiveness, it is considered together with patience, meaning that according to some people, thankfulness and patience are considered as the two halves of religious life. (Gülen, 2006, p.95)

Gülen also categorizes and divides thankfulness into three categories: The first category consists of thankfulness for those things that everyone, regardless of religion or spiritual

attainment, desires. The second category consists of thankfulness for those things that, although apparently disagreeable or displeasing, reveal their true nature to those who can see them as favors requiring gratitude. The third category of thankfulness is that kind performed by those who are loved by God and view favors or bounties from the perspective of the One Who bestows them (Gülen, 2006, p.98).

Patience

Sabr literally means enduring, bearing, and resisting pain; suffering and difficulty; and dealing calmly with problems. In more general terms it means patience, which is one of the most important actions of the heart mentioned in the *Qur'an* (Gülen, 2006, p.99). In the long history of the Sufi tradition, many Sufis accept that patience is very important by saying that patience is regarded as half of one's religious life, the other half is thankfulness. The *Qur'an* orders patience in many verses, such as: Seek help in patience and prayer (Qur'an 2:45) and: Endure, vie with each other in endurance (Qur'an 3:199), and prohibits haste in verses like: Show not haste concerning them (the unbelievers) (Qur'an 46:35) and: When you meet in battle those who do not believe, turn not your backs to them (Qur'an 8:15). In many *Qur'anic* verses, God praises the patient, declares that He loves them, or mentions the ranks He has bestowed on them: The patient and steadfast, and the truthful and loyal (Qur'an 3:16); God loves the patient (Qur'an 3:145); and Surely God is with the patient (Qur'an 2:153) (Gülen, 2006, p.99).

Patience is an essential and most important dimension of Sufi therapy as it is crowned with resignation, the highest spiritual rank in the sight of God in Sufism and Islam. "It is the source of power for those advancing toward this final point." Moreover, patience has an important characteristic of those believers who are "the most advanced in belief, spirituality, nearness to God, and who guide others to the truth" (Gülen, 2006, p.100).

My self-reflection on this concept was remarkable. First, I observed how remarkable a believer's affair is. Always it is to his or her credit. Such a condition is only there for believers. Divine aid is always given in turn for your patience. If something good is happening to you: Saying thanks to God will be your advantage. If something is bad, then simply endure it. This too is advantage—the role of the servant. If you are a lover, do not complain of love's afflictions. Others should not be informed of your woe. Embody instead the perfection of patience. This highest spiritual rank or position is not reached through actions. God causes suffering, but equips you with patience. Subjected to sorrow, one should remain silent. Rising through patience is the rank given by God. Being steadfast is in holy duty, enduring displeasure, God's servant must suffer, and of aloe wood burn. God's travelers should burn and boil with His love. Consumed by affliction, is uncomplaining of love's relation. Crushed by difficulty or duty, is heavy as mountains. The Dervish or Sufi should never complain says Rumi who told a story.

My poetic way of explaining this tale is as follows:

It is strength for the knees, light for the eyes. A substance is given for maintaining life: A wheat grain is buried. In the bosom of the earth, germinating beneath, then rising above. It must come into the air after a fierce struggle below. Be sown and threshed, and fresh ground in a mill. After that, it must be kneaded, baked in an oven, and chewed then by the teeth, by stomach and by bowel. To attain true humanity, all must be 'sieved' or 'distilled.' Many times I did over in search of true essence. Else; potential is stunted, full humanity unreachable.

There are other definitions of patience. Gülen simplified this definition in his statement, "For example, preserving one's manners in the face of misfortune; being steadfast when confronted with events, and showing no sign of being deterred; never giving in to one's carnal desires and the impulses of one's temperament; accepting the commandments of the Qur'an and the *Sunna* as a sort of invitation to Paradise; and sacrificing all possessions, including one's soul and beloved ones, for the sake of the True, Beloved One" (Gülen, 2006, p.100).

If a Sufi doesn't have patience, he or she will be stuck somewhere during the spiritual journeying to God. Gülen explains reasons why patience is an essential characteristic of those believers. The greatest saint and Sufi will be facing the most advanced in belief, spirituality, nearness to God, those who guide others to the truth. Gülen provides a famous Sufi quote from Fuduli who says beautifully: "You say you are a lover, then do not complain of the affliction of love; By complaining, do not make others informed of your affliction." Gülen opens the secret of this quote with further explanation:

Travelers on the path to God should know how to burn and boil with love or be consumed with affliction, but never complain to others of such love and affliction. Even if crushed by difficulty or responsibility as heavy as mountains, they should not complain to others. To attain true humanity, each individual must be 'sieved' or 'distilled' many times to discover his or her true essence. Otherwise, the ability to develop one's potential to its fullest, to be truly human, is not possible: It is expected of God's servant to suffer, And of an aloe wood to burn. Patience is an essential and most important dimension of servanthood to God, and is crowned with resignation, the highest spiritual rank in the sight of God, to whatever God has destined (Gülen, 2006, pp.102-102).

Truthfulness

Meaning true thought, true words and true actions, *sidq* is reflected in the life of a traveler on the path to God as follows: He or she does not lie or tell a falsehood, lives according to truthfulness, and strives to be a trustworthy representative of loyalty to God. In other words, he or she never deviates from truthfulness in all thoughts, words and actions and, in obedience to the *Qur'anic* command: Be with the truthful (Qur'an 9:119), always seeks truthfulness on both an individual and a social level. Such people are so careful about being truthful that they never give false evidence or tell lies even in jest. As related in a Prophetic saying mentioned in the famous *Hadith* book *Al-Bukhari*, "one who is truthful to that degree is recorded as a truthful one by the Supreme Court, while one whose thoughts, words, and actions are contradictory and who deceives others is recorded as a liar" (Gülen, 2006, p.84). Gülen provides the full description of a

Sufi dervish saying that the initial and lowest degree of truthfulness is sincerity and behaving the same whether in public or in private. This is followed by being true in all thoughts, feelings, actions, and intentions. The truthful are those valiant people whose feelings, thoughts, and actions do not contradict one another; the most truthful are those heroes who are absolutely true in all of their imaginations, intentions, feelings, thoughts, actions, and gestures (Gülen, 2006, p.85).

Gülen contends that the rank, or rather, station of truthfulness stands much higher than the station of *iman* (belief in God), than that of *ihsan* (God-consciousness), than that of *ashk* (love of God), and than that of *marifah* (knowledge of God) because it is unconditional loyalty, and to be sincere and altruistic is to sacrifice personally important, luminous and vital things for that cause (Gülen, 2013). A Sufi's path from this world to the other world should be entered by truthfulness, exited by truthfulness, remembered for truthfulness, stepped and acted truthfully, and settled with truthfulness. The path should constantly revolve around truthfulness. This term uses a route frequently, as in a route of safety, by which Gülen refers to acting carefully, against the groups of heretics, of unbelievers, of envy and of rivalry. In this way you can advance smoothly. The route of safety, in this sense, should always be maintained (Gülen, 2013).

Gülen's mentor, Said Nursi, in his book *Münazarat* (The Discussions), answered the question, "What do we need the most?" by saying *sidq* (truthfulness), and repeated it three times. And he promotes truthfulness both as an individual virtue, and also as the elixir of social advancement. Then he supports his statement, saying "Unbelief is a lie, while belief is truth. Is this not proof enough that our survival is possible through belief, truthfulness, and solidarity?"

What do these bring to your mind? (Gülen, 2013). My poem named “Be With the Truthful,” describes what it is:

Truthfulness sought is the solidest path. In all my thoughts words and deed on levels both social and individual. Truthfulness profits the truthfulness path. The truthful are fortunate travelers on it. Truthfulness of spirit and essence of action is the true standard of straightforwardness in thought. Truthful one changes states forty times a day. The truthful are heroes behaving the same. In public and private, not opposing each other with intentions, feelings, thoughts, actions, and gestures. Forty days, forty years, high ideals and high loyalty. Truthfulness unlocks the journey for travelers. Lovers who are truthful can save the ones who are lost. Entering and exiting, being remembered for truth. Shining with beauty, the moon’s face and sun. Life is for truth and to gain God’s approval. Aware of the defects and faults of the self. Truth in the conscience governing all life. Taking pleasure in God, tasting delight in belief. Truthfulness works as the "elixir" of God's Name. The Name becomes Greatest, wherever uttered truthfully. What befits man is truthfulness through threat, stress and fear; At the Throne of His Mercy, God aids the truthful.

Trustworthiness

Humans have both animal and angelic characters; the angelic one is innate, but is hidden. God willing, “InsAllah”, means that our effort will make our imitation real. A Sufi always supports God’s servant and defeats troops of the enemies of God because His Divine Attributes connect the Sufi with the Pride of Humanity. Seeking forgiveness is always on a Sufi’s tongue through words that are beautiful and actions that are useful. On the one hand, it is our angelic character, the promise of security, and the promises of trustworthiness and trust. Hence, stating what we see, hear and feel without altering the truth is truthfulness. Moreover, a Sufi must gain trustworthiness through reading the laws of creation properly, reading the Divine messages properly, and comprehending them, and reading them in accordance with their true essence and confirming them by saying ‘Yes, it is true’. This is also truthfulness, and it reaches a statement of trustworthiness which has its own levels. “For commoners like us; honesty has a very basic

significance. For many noble great saints, however, it is fully represented. For the Pride of Humanity, Prophet Mohammad, we do not possess the tools to measure his truthfulness. We do not have any measurement system or criteria for his truthfulness. Any human tool would collapse if used to measure it” (Gülen, 2013).

My popular and regular prayers during two forty days appear in this poem,

I recite: My God, forgive the followers of Muhammad!/Surely I too have been one of the wrongdoers/ Forgive all believers; Most Merciful of merciful/ O my Lord! I try to keep my covenant with You/I seek refuge in You from the evil I have done /I acknowledge Your favors, acknowledge my sins /So, forgive me, for truly none forgives me but You/O the Living, the Self-Subsistent, for the sake of Your mercy/Make right all my states and leave me not alone/ Not even for a moment or the blinking of an eye/Increase my knowledge, keep my heart safe from straying.

Gülen uses a quote from the Turkish Sufi poet Rezaizade which says, “The entire universe is a great book of God; whichever letter you study, its meaning will spell His Name.” Gülen and his mentor Said Nursi focused on this too. On the one hand, in “Ayat al-Kubra” (The Great Sign), Said Nursi asks, “Isn’t there more?” and talks about the hero who has aimed for the highest of the high, about the hero of “Isn’t there more?” (Gülen, 2013).

The ideal Sufi making others feel secure is a consequence of their adopting Divine morality with respect to two Divine Names: “As-Salam” (the Supreme Author of peace and salvation) and “Al-Mu’min” (the Supreme Author of safety and security Who bestows faith and removes all doubt). They appear consecutively at the end of the Surah al-Hashr (59:23). As a Divine Name, As-Salam means He who is absolutely immune from imperfections and who grants wellbeing to His creatures. Al-Mu’min means God is the one who creates the faith in people’s hearts and promises them deliverance, and who fulfills His promises. Therefore, if God Almighty makes a promise to His servants, it must be trusted. Actually, this belief is the source of the feeling of hope (raja) in a believer’s heart. Therefore, a person who seeks to adopt Divine

morality, or in other words, a person who strives to manifest a shadow of the Divine Names and Attributes should always inspire trust in those around him or her; no one should feel any anxiety of possible harm from that person. One must possess a heartfelt belief in God and inspire trust in others to such an extent that they would comfortably entrust their most valuable possessions with this person, walking away without any worries whatsoever (Gülen, 2013).

Presentation

The fact that *sidq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness) and *teblig* or *irshad* (presentation) are among the properties of God's Messengers is important in indicating the significance of this issue. Gülen's philosophy is of a holistic educational system which promotes spiritual enrichment and critical thinking for men and women, proper training of all mind, heart and soul aspects of the human condition in concert. This philosophy promotes the holistic development of the individual—spiritually, morally, rationally, and psychologically—by blending faith and science. This learning for the higher purpose of serving the Almighty (*hizmet*) and not for material gain or worldly glory is presentation. *Hizmet*, service to God through one's work, particularly one's teaching, is a central crucial tenet of Gülen's educational philosophy and has been taken to be indicative of "worldly asceticism" on his part (Afsaruddin, 2005).

Allah provides happiness to a Sufi when He gives an obligatory order of *irshad* and fills the heart of the soul with goodness completely, and dismisses all of the darkness from the soul's heart. Allah becomes a shelter for spirit, gives a golden throne for the spirit at His stage and cleans all of the calamities from the soul's heart. This is the most superior level of sainthood.

Gülen shares a similar idea with Ibn Arabi, who proposed the genius idea of the Universal Tree in which is observed a diverse unity based on the multiplicity of beings rooted together in one Divine Being as presentation. A Sufi must provide service or *hizmet* for humanity

regardless of their origin and without gaining any benefits. The tree and four feathered creatures that sit upon its branches bring forth a type of mystical grounding, fostered in unity for dialogue among religious traditions. The types of dialogue revealed within the tree are the dialogues of life, of study, of prayer, and of spirituality, all of which, if followed in an atmosphere of mutuality, have the potential to facilitate people toward the dialogue of action—an action bringing forth a vision of justice for all. From this vision Ibn Arabi came to develop his philosophy of Diversity within Unity (Jaffray 2011, 1). Author Angela Jaffray (2011) says, “Ibn `Arabi clearly acknowledges the monotheistic sense of God, but acknowledges Diversity among the different religions, but in Diversity, God wills unity,” and Gülen also follows this path (Jaffray 2011, p. 2).

A Sufi must provide presentation (*irshad*) to others concerning the fact that in Diversity, God wills unity. Gülen advises that, “We should clear the way to unite people; this is one of the greatest ways in which God grants people success in the world, and how He transforms this world into a Paradise. It is in this way that the door of Heaven will be opened wide in order to give us a warm welcome. Hence, we should remove all ideas and feelings that pull us apart, and run to embrace one another” (Gülen 2010, p.7).

Upon meeting the Universal Tree, Ibn `Arabi greeted it and the tree responded by saying: Listen, O wayfarer, O king. I am the Universal Tree of synthesis and likeness. I have deep roots and my branches are lofty. I am the synthesis of the divine words (Jaffray 2006, pp 35-37).

The Tree consists of unity and multiplicity. The well-rooted trunk represents unity, and multiplicity is reflected in the leaves. The leaves represent human beings, and the branches a synthesis of all the Divine Names and Attributes manifested to the leaves [humankind] (Jaffray

2006, pp 82, 83). The Tree demonstrates the universality of God's all-inclusive infinite ways in which He manifests Himself to creation. Ibn `Arabi writes, "People of God say there are as many ways to God as the breaths of the creatures..." (Twinch 2011, p.3). In other words, there is one Divine Being, but God manifests Himself in infinite ways to each person. My last poem was about this unity and multiplicity in Alanya, Antalya on August 13 2013,

Allah is nearer to you than your own self; So never remain distant from Him; Give up multiplicity, find unity, and look through knowledge of Him in your heart. O Sufi! Like the Divine Names the First. Then the All-Outward and the All-Inward, opposite to one another, but in reality, complements associated with one another. Attribute all things, events to God in origin, creation; Observe His Attributes like His Knowledge, Power, Will. In every thing, state, or movement is in the book of the universe. Perceiving the manifestations of the Divine Names behind after reaching a life at the level of the heart and the spirit. Let's set up their thrones at the peaks where spirit beings to fly. Escaping from the restrictions of time, space, day, night neither multiplicity nor unity a problem for a Sufi. With respect to its inner aspect, everything turns and transcends. The horizon of the perception of most of us; it is transparent. Displaying unity, causality has a part of its own in its coming. Time is His relative mirror, the Unique One of Unity important. God is One, Unique, and absolutely free of all partners, has absolute Knowledge, Power, Dominion, and Rule. Of course, every thing and being is in constant need of Him. The truth is absolutely independent of all, He is the Sacred Being. The unity in multiplicity says, "There is no existent being save He." As for multiplicity, all existent things and events have the stamp. Putting His seal of an all-encompassing Knowledge is to the universe. The Ultimate Truth: An all-overwhelming Power, all-dominating Will. God is the Creator, Administrator, and Sustainer of everything. Wishes to see Your All-Beautiful Face through innumerable faces and reflecting on, split into numerous parts like broken mirrors. Feel before the door of beholding Him, a new never-ending observation. God is absolutely One and Unique; there is none who resembles Him. Every thing, every state, is connected with Him, dependent on His Will. Unity of the Original Source following the way bound to end in Him. Multiplicity is the manifestation of the unfolding of the Unique, All- Hidden Treasure. All the things are an exhibition brought into existence by God's Will and Power. Observers; and humanity an official charged with observing all things to know. The undulation of multiplicity through the universe, experience the spirit of unity. O Sufi! Wakeful souls have always followed the way that leads to the Ultimate Truth.

SECTION THREE: EMERGENT SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

CHAPTER 8: FOUNDATIONS OF SUFI THERAPY

The heart has an important place in Sufism and is considered to contain the divine spark that leads to spiritual realization. Sufis cherish the revelation by God that “I, who cannot fit into all the heavens and earths, fit in the heart of the sincere believer” (Frager, 1997). For the heart to reflect the truth as it is, it has to be cleansed of the rust of worldly influences. The Sufi therapy offers the greatest human relatedness with the soul, a greater transparency with the self and a deeper relationship with Divine truth, the heart. In the next three chapters, I explain the foundations and components of the proposed new Sufi therapy model at the beginner’s level, by simplifying seven main concepts and forty simple teachings in new emergent spiritual practice. The model is actually offering the Sufi Mindfulness Therapy as a way of addressing the broader “So what?” question. So, after the self-journeying and explorations I accomplished in my research, I come out and offer my ten-week Sufi therapy as a result. Gülen’s spirituality and Sufi practice could be a tool for the usefulness of meaning in the alliance between some client and therapist, especially when newcomers belong to different cultures, but it may not be a universal model for everyone.

Discussion

A Sufi soul rises through a spiritual struggle, the veils before the pure spiritual realms are opened slightly and familiarity is gained with the things unseen behind the veils. In Sufi belief, if Allah is your intimate friend, He discloses secrets to you in the heart. His knowledge comes to

your heart because He is the only One who knows all the things hidden in creation. Feeling His names, some things are but mere illusions. He discloses some of His secrets to His friends who are unburdened, but the veils between different travelers and the ultimate truth differ. According to one's relation with the Truth, the Absolute Hidden One, the heart's turning to some object other than God creates another veil. Being closed to the truth of the Names and Attributes is a veil.

The traps laid by these veils are arranged by the carnal self, Satan. The world looks on our desires, our weaknesses and shortcomings, and in our endeavors to rise in rank, we suffer separation on the way to meet God. As the first step of disclosure for those who fulfill the requirements to travel, Sufis will feel a manifestation of the knowledge of God, witnessed in their hearts. If you are steadfast on the way, you can advance to the final point. When the journey ends in contemplation of the All-Holy One, that is fortune indeed. Seeing the Most Sacred Names with the eye of the heart is insight, with the clearest disclosure supported by self-possession and wakefulness. The Source of light is felt beyond what is demonstrated by His proofs and signs. Spending time at the highest of all ranks and at the summit of all virtues, I continuously traveled from closure to observation, according to my capacity. I felt and experienced the mysteries of belief, keeping the way open for others. Especially during ascension, I gained certified familiarity with all of the mysteries, and I felt that I belonged beyond Paradise, Hell, and angels, and the sounds of the Pens of Destiny. In the ranks I progressed without my eyes swerving or my mind being perplexed. I said in my final poem,

O my God! Now it is the time to go to the Highest Friend! Even if the veil of the Unseen is removed, certainty of belief won't increase. Be hopeful! The highest voice in the future, to be heard worldwide is the truth.

Gülen refers to both the universe and a single human being with the words

macrocosm (*alem-i kebir*) and microcosm (*alem-i sagir*), and says that is why there is a great similarity between the universe and a single human being, whose purpose is to reflect all God's names, as an initiate who seeks the ways to reach Allah (Gülen, 2006, p. 40). Therefore it is appropriate for me also to name them as the macrocosm and the microcosm. In my poetic reflection I wrote that the following: "Qualify yourself with the qualities of God. You are the microcosm of the macrocosm. Where God's attributes, manifests are reflected, your angelic character is innate but hidden in you."

For Gülen and his mentor Said Nursi, the pen of divine power has written the content of the entire universe in a single human being. Therefore, if the universe could be miniaturized, it would seem like a single human being. Similarly, if a single human being could be enlarged, then he would seem like the enormous universe because the universe is like a tree and a single human being is its fruit (Gülen, 2006; Nursi, 1996).

Therefore God has written the program of this tree in its fruit. As a result, it can be said that the relationship between the universe and a single human being is like the relationship between a single human being and his DNA. For Gülen and Nursi, the relationship between the universe and a single human being is a sign of God's oneness, because the one who has included the content of the entire universe on the face of every single human being must be the one who created the universe. No one can build the being of a single human as a miniature of the giant universe other than the Creator of the universe (Gülen, 2006; Nursi, 1996). In this context, as I have noticed, two aspects of oneness emerge: *vahidiyet* (differentiated oneness) and *ehadiyet* (undifferentiated oneness). God manifests his names in the universe through differentiated oneness and He does the same thing in a single human being through undifferentiated oneness. As a result, two types of oneness display themselves in the being of man: the oneness that we see

in the system of the universe and the oneness that we observe in the system of a single being. In Sufi terminology, the ego of a human being corresponds to nature in the universe. Gülen talks of the principle sources of wisdom being the Divine revelation (*vahiy*) and inspiration (*ilham*), as he asserts that dedicating oneself sincerely to God for forty days is another way to open wellsprings of wisdom from the heart to the mouth (Gülen, 2000, p. 259)

Stupor (*heyman*) is the state of the Sufi which usually follows amazement. Literally, it indicates a thirst that drinking water increases instead of decreasing. It also means deep love which causes a lover to fall madly in love. As a Sufi term in the discourse of Gülen, “stupor” denotes the state in which the Sufi loses his self-control with wonder, appreciation, and spiritual pleasures because of surprising theophanies and spiritual gifts of the journey (Gülen, 2006, p. 40) Gülen examines stupor in three categories: At the beginning of the journey, the Sufi receives extra spiritual gifts although he thinks that he does not deserve them because of his helplessness, poverty, and insignificant value. Then, the Sufi begins to say “Is there yet more?” (*Quran*, 50.30). Finally, these bounties of God make him feel stupor. Secondly, along the journey, a time may come when the Sufi begins to receive unbelievable bounties and presents because of his current sincerity, upcoming spiritual features, and goodness. At this junction of the journey, the Sufi begins to view these extraordinary spiritual occurrences with new comprehension, fresh spirit, and developed will; and then, the Sufi starts to say “O our Sustainer! Cause this our light to shine for us forever” (*Quran*, 66:8). In this level of stupor, the sight and feelings of the Sufi intersect, and he begins to experience what he used to see. In this stage, the Sufi sees the world as temporary and mortal. Then everything changes through the theophanies of subsistence with God (*beka billah*), and the Sufi begins to see nothing other than God. In this stage, his life is the life of perfect goodness (*ihsan*) (Gülen, 2006, pp. 40-41). According to Gülen, in the states of

amazement and stupor, the Sufi needs to strictly follow Muhammad (*pbuh*) and feel his guidance. Otherwise, extraordinary issues that occur in both states may cause him to deviate from the right path (Gülen, 2006, p. 42).

Components of heart-centered Sufi therapy

Sufis regard the soul as the agency for communication with God. It is the higher soul, as Sufis believe, created before any human being came into existence, consisting of heart (*qalb*), spirit (*ruh*), and conscience (*sirr*) that has the ability to know God. The *sirr* is regarded by many Sufis as representing the “secret shrine of God himself, wherein he knows man and man can know him” (Al-Sarraj, 2007). As a term, *akıl* points to the intellectual faculty of human beings which understands and comprehends the meanings that cannot be recognized through the five senses. In English, *akıl* corresponds to mind. Mind is the primary meaning of *akıl* in Sufism. However, Sufi texts sometimes use intellect (*zihin*) or self (*nefis*) in the definition of *akıl*.

According to Gülen, these differences represent different functions of the same faculty, rather than indicating different faculties. In other words, according to Gülen, mind is one faculty that has different functions; therefore, it is sometimes called intellect (*zihin*) to refer its function of sensing, or is called self (*nefis*) to refer its function of acting (Gülen, 2003). Thus, for Gülen, mind has different functions. It distinguishes right from wrong, good from evil. It also recognizes the necessary and the unnecessary, as well as theoretical and practical knowledge. If it can protect itself from the influences of the carnal self, it can reflect, remember, and comprehend under the management of the heart and the soul, and, thereby, encourage its owner to spirituality (Gülen, 2003).

Although mind is the light and the radiance of Godly knowledge and can comprehend itself, beings, and occurrences, it is still limited in its comprehension. There are many subjects

which mind is not able to grasp. Therefore, in order to enlarge the comprehension of mind, one should make his mind follow a few steps behind the heart. In this way, mind passes beyond its limits and begins to share spiritual gifts that *latife-i rabbaniye* (Lordly ability), which I will discuss in the next section, receives from God and gives to people (Gülen, 2003).

In order to acquire knowledge, mind uses two main methods. In its first method, mind progresses gradually, acts slowly, and finishes its duty over a relatively long period of time. This method is named *tefekkur* (reflection). In its second method, mind leaves aside the concept of time and reaches its aim in its first and sudden attempt. This second method is called *hads* (intuition). The Sufi can reach the level of intuition either after intense effort or long experiences. For Gülen, a Sufi must reach certainty, which is a level of assurance that is beyond the point that can be reached after using all of the sources of knowledge, including every way of disclosure and self-supervision. Therefore, even the least degree of certainty can fully enlighten the heart, clean it of the “dirt” of doubts, and give joy and satisfaction (Gülen, 2006, p. 173).

Gülen explains certainty on three levels (common to traditional Sufi discourse):

1. *İlme-yakin* (the knowledge of certainty): to reach the strongest belief and conviction of all the essentials of faith by means of proofs.
2. *Ayne-yakin* (the eye of certainty): to reach the indescribable gnosis through unveiling, disclosure, and feelings.
3. *Hakkal-yakin* (the truth of certainty): to reach the unity with God without any Veil (Gülen, 2006, p. 173).

Certainty is a process, and Gülen approaches it in the following way: In the beginning, certainty requires effort from the Sufi; while in the end, it appears as grace from God. In the beginning there might be unease, while at the end, unimaginable serenity replaces it. Certainty

also may begin with unveiling; then disclosure (*mukāṣefe*) follows it; and, finally, disclosure gives way to observation (*muṣāhede*); and all of these levels indicate a different stage in the process of certainty (Gülen, 2006, pp 173-174).

According to Gülen, self-possession, steadfastness, seriousness, profundity, and resolution are the main aspects of the gnostic. Therefore, in his Sufi teaching, there is no room for any laxity, impertinence, or conceit. For him, the more the Sufi knows and obtains gnosis, the more he follows self-possession (*tamkin*) and steadfastness (Gülen, 2000, p. 147). The results of gnosis are not restricted to this world. According to Gülen, there will be another result of gnosis in the hereafter, which is to see God himself, according to the Sufi's level of gnosis.

There are different ways of extracting knowledge of gnosis. In Sufism, *hads* (spiritual analogy) is the instant and natural transition of thought from premises of mind to conclusions in the heart (Eris, 2006). *Hads* (an Arabic and Ottoman word, literally meaning “supposition” or “conjecture”) is a term frequently used in Risale-i Nur and Gülen's writings to describe another way of gaining esoteric knowledge. Some scholars think of *hads* as intuition or feeling, yet I prefer to call it spiritual analogy. There are two reasons for this. First, *hads* occurs in the heart, and therefore is explicitly spiritual.

In this regard, Nursi and Gülen use the term *hads-i kalbi* (*hads* of the heart). Second, *hads* is not a type of knowledge lacking bases and premises; it corresponds instead to a type of logical structure more like an analogy. In many parts of Risale-i Nur, he talks about underlying premises which denote the analogical aspect of *hads* and Gülen wrote his poems mostly through inspiration. A careful reading of Nursi and Gülen's writings draw me to the following conclusions about spiritual analogy: *Hads* brings certain knowledge and it depends on indications, observations, and premises which naturally compel the person to draw conclusions

from the analogy. For instance, from the observation of the resurrection of plants in springtime, one concludes that there is necessarily resurrection in the hereafter. The most intense form of spiritual analogy is inspiration (Eris, 2006, p.11).

Gülen provides “the self-supervision without a guide” model in Sufism which is ideal for the heart-centred Sufi mindfulness therapy. A Sufi must have three implications for the self: self-supervising, self-criticizing and self-control. The main idea in Sufism is Allah who sees, knows you best, hears your speech. The Sufi Meditation targets perfect goodness, worshipping as if seeing God: though you don’t see him, He surely sees you. A Sufi should guard the self against the desires of the flesh and supervise the mind with unwavering sincerity and meet God in the private place deep in the heart. Reflection focuses on thinking of the depth of God’s Mercy with love whatever your state, this is the first step. In any deeds, day or night, you must open your heart, for God constantly watches while you observe nature.

Accepting the self as worthless is what He decrees, and thus self-supervising sets up a screen against evil thoughts and passions, and all acts attend to God’s rights. Willing submission to the Will and the wishes of Him will develop your *nafs* from the lower self to the pure soul if you have an open-eyed heart, and not simply blind flesh.

My poem points to the source of power Sufis rely on as follows:

The All-Seeing warning against evil actions/ The All-Hearing admonishing care in your speech/ The All-Knowing informing, He knows full your nature/God watches over all things, corrupt considerations/Then turn to God with a heart that’s at rest/ Reciting God’s names patiently within/ Physical or spiritual attachment not needed/God can be reached without aid of a guide.

The Sufi Assessment in Mental Health

Depression is a major public health problem, in part because, like other chronic conditions it tends to run a relapsing course (Judd, 1997; Keller et al., 1984). Without treatment,

people suffering recurrent depression experience relapse at rates as high as 80% (Frank et al., 1990; Kupfer et al., 1992; Prien & Kupfer, 1986). I suggest that depression, anxiety and stress can be healed by self-acceptance and keeping the focus always on what is good for patients. My experience suggests that the processes mediating against depression, anxiety, stress, relapse/recurrence become more autonomous with repeated experiences of depression. Sufi therapy can change negative to positive thinking patterns. Sufi therapy is designed to achieve these aims with the Emergent Spiritual Practice.

In fact, what the Sufi Psychiatry calls “spiritual journeying” is one of the significant ways of advancing toward and reaching the certain events which touch the spirit, rouse distress and may cause physical ailments that we call psychosomatic illnesses (Gülen, 2000, p. 216). Sufi experiences are diverse and include the domains of thought, perception, and feeling. The satanic characteristics such as haughtiness, arrogance, egotism, jealousy, injustice, and enmity, all break the wings of the spirit (Gülen, 2000, p. 218). The Seven Sufi themes of reflection, by contrast: patience, purity of intention, thankfulness, truthfulness, trustworthiness and presentation, and God as the ever-forgiver, may have a significant impact in changing the negative cognitive schemas and coupled with the Sufi practices of remembrance of God (*zikr*) and thankfulness (*shukr*), may provide an appropriate framework for spiritually augmented cognitive behavior therapy for the Sufi believers. Based on this new therapy model, every single person needs to reach the purified soul which is the double of the spirit, continuously trying to keep away from evil, and always advancing toward good until it finally comes to this point: human perfection.

The assessment of Sufi beliefs and practices has to be tailored to the individual patient. The assessment may best be deferred in an acutely-ill patient unless Sufi concerns contribute to the acute condition. As a routine, a brief assessment may be followed by a more thorough one on an

as needed basis. Several brief assessment methods have been proposed for the assessment of spirituality in general that may help screen the patients for further in-depth assessment (Koenig & Pritchett, 1998, p.323). The four spiritual areas suggested by Koenig and Pritchett to be screened in any psychiatric evaluation seem a good starting point, but need to be modified for assessment of Sufi beliefs and practices. The initial assessment should include:

1. Faith: What is the importance of faith in day-to-day life? An increasing number of people from different religious faiths, besides Islam, are following Sufi beliefs and practices and hence considerable admixtures of beliefs and practices should be expected.
2. Influence: What is the influence of faith on life, past and present? The Sufi practices of self-mortification may, apart from influencing the belief system, lead to significant changes in the practical life, which needs to be understood in proper perspective.
3. Community: Are there affiliations with any religious or spiritual community? Almost all Sufi believers belong to one or other lineage (silsila) which may significantly differ in terms of beliefs and practices from one another. An exploration of the lineage would provide a framework to understand a particular individual's view point vis-à-vis health and illness.
4. Address: Are there spiritual needs to be addressed? The Sufi teacher with whom the given individual has held the oath of allegiance may need to be incorporated in the treatment plan to fulfill the spiritual needs.
5. An in-depth interview, from a clinical as well as a spiritual perspective, may follow this depending upon the needs of the patient as uncovered during the screening (Josephson & Petet, 2004, pp. 15-17).

After an initial individual orientation session, the Sufi therapy program must be delivered by an instructor, or a guide, in 10 weekly sessions at the beginner level, involving two hour group-training sessions with up to 10-12 depressed patients. During that period, the program includes daily homework exercises, prayers, and meditation as dhikr. Homework invariably includes some form of guided (taped) or unguided awareness exercises directed at increasing moment-by-moment nonjudgmental awareness of bodily sensations, thoughts, and feelings, together with exercises designed to integrate application of awareness skills into daily life for self-control, self-purification and self-realization/ Spiritually augmented mindfulness behavior therapy is primarily a cognitive behavior therapy which incorporates the individual's belief system, specifically the spiritual, to focus on the existential issues. The therapist works with the individual's spiritual beliefs and practices such as meditation, prayer, etc., but at no point attempts to instill his own beliefs or any beliefs not held by the patient into the therapeutic process. The therapy spans 10 sessions, each session lasting 120 minutes, conducted once a week. The Sufi model is discussed in depth in the next chapter in order to offering forty teachings for Sufi therapy, and it is there that I offer my ten-week long Sufi therapy.

Offering Forty Teachings for Sufi Therapy

Gülen's mentor Said Nursi, who died in 1960, was one of the pivotal Muslim scholars of the twentieth century to establish positive psychology and psychiatry, and the idea of dialogue and alliance within our soul, mind and heart in his work *The Risale-i Nur Collection*. *Risale-i Nur* illustrates the importance of a faith-based approach to concepts of vicegerency and trust, expanding on the meaning of vicegerency and how this significant role is developed and nurtured, particularly in response to the human ego or self (Markham, 2009, p. 179). Furthermore, in the Twentieth Gleam, Nursi advises the following principle to resolve

psychological conflicts within ourselves. I will explain these sections by paraphrasing Nursi's conflict resolution principles in the context of human nature in general.

I used spiritual analogy through inspiration when I was writing my poems, and that wisdom led me to select forty Sufi techniques from both Gülen and Nursi's wisdom:

Sufi Technique One: The human self is prone to make mistakes and deviate from the right path. Therefore, while dialoging with the self, you should not trust yourself, but God, and always seek his help and forgiveness (Gülen, 2006). *Qur'an* says: Yet I do not claim my self free of error, for assuredly the human carnal soul always commands evil, except that my Lord has mercy (which saves us from committing evil acts). (*Qur'an*, Yusuf 12:53)

Sufi Technique Two: All your actions should always be based on positive motives: remove all negative thoughts, moods and aspects. That is to say, what motivates your actions should be the love of your own outlook, not the enmity of others' outlooks. You represent your outlook not to diminish the outlook of others (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2009).

Sufi Technique Three: You should only aim for our Lord's good pleasure, not the acceptance of other people, because "if Almighty God is pleased, it is of no importance even should the whole world be displeased" (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2000).

Sufi Technique Four: God commands in the *Qur'an* (*Qur'an*, Baqara 2:41), "...do not sell My Revelations for a trifling price" (such as worldly gains, status, and renown). Therefore, in your

daily activities, you should not water down your beliefs, rules and dignity (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2009).

Sufi Technique Five: If you want to dialogue with the members of other communities, you should accept them in their position and not criticize their religious beliefs and practices. If you like to be respected in your own beliefs, you should respect the beliefs of others. Similarly, you should not excite the envy of the members of other cultures by displaying or implying superior virtues (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2009).

Sufi Technique Six: Your primary aim in daily activities is God's good pleasure and his help. Seeking faith alliance is your secondary aim. In other words, you seek faith alliance with your soul because it attracts God's help and support to you. Therefore, if you cannot establish faith alliance with the members of other faculties of your conscience and the heart after all of your sincere efforts, you should not be disappointed. For God is the helper of his sincere servants and no alliance can be superior to God's alliance. God is enough (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2006).

Sufi Technique Seven: In daily activities, by focusing on commonalities such as a shared land, a shared language, our common humanity, universal needs and fears, and so on, you will recognize again that what you have in common far exceeds what sets you apart from others (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2006).

Sufi Technique Eight: You need unity and inclusion within your soul and among the People of the Book far more than division and exclusion. For now leave aside discussion of the issues that divide you (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2009).

Sufi Technique Nine: In your daily activities, you should keep in mind that unity among believers and the People of the Book attracts for you the help of our Creator against irreligion (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2009).

Sufi Technique Ten: The aim of your daily dialogue within yourself is not to argue with the carnal self, or selfishness. In order to refrain from argumentation, you should know that one who prevails in an argument finds himself in a dangerous position with tyrannical *nafs* because you might fall into arrogance in your heart. You should learn new knowledge of God and your heart must remain safe from arrogance (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2006).

Sufi Technique Eleven: In your daily activities, you should be truthful and sincere towards other people because the people who are sincere in their heart will most probably be sincere in their dialogue within their soul (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2006).

Sufi Technique Twelve: If you wish to defeat your enemy, the carnal self, respond to this evil with good. For if you respond with evil, enmity will increase, and even though the bad deed will be outwardly defeated, you will nurture hatred in your heart, and hostility will persist. But if you respond to the carnal self with good, the tyrannical self will repent and become your friend (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012, Gülen, 2009).

Sufi Technique Thirteen: You should keep in mind that you have a unique personality and people all have different characters, and that one bad character in a group does not mean that all the people of that group have a similar character (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2009). In other words, it would be wrong to generalize one person's mistake to the whole community. The *Qur'an* says, “no soul, as bearer of burden, bears (and is made to bear) the burden of another” (Qur'an, Fatir 35:18).

Sufi Technique Fourteen: Do not forget! You could have negative aspects attached to your soul. Similarly, one negative aspect of a person does not necessitate that the person is bad as whole (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2009).

Sufi Technique Fifteen: In your daily activities, all that you say should be true, but you should not say all that is true. For one of insincere intention may sometimes take unkindly to advice, and react to it unfavourably (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2006).

Sufi Technique Sixteen: In times when evil actions prevail, you need more than unity, friendship, and inclusion. You need to ally with good people, do not stay alone with your carnal self for a second (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2009).

Sufi Technique Seventeen: In times of conflict of opinions you should act in a positive way, not a negative one. That is to say, you should strive to promote and diffuse your own belief, not

seeking to tear down and destroy that of the other, but rather to improve and reform it (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012, Gülen 2000).

Sufi Technique Eighteen: Keep in your mind that you should remember that insisting upon consensus in your methods and approaches after finding agreement upon your aims and goals might be a fruitless hope and wish (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2006).

Sufi Technique Nineteen: At every stage of your daily activities, the following principle must be your guide: Love for the sake of God, dislike for the sake of God, judge for the sake of God (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Gülen, 2006).

Sufi Technique Twenty: The principle of justice runs like a red thread through life. Whoever strives for justice will have to develop ample patience and forbearance, and whoever does this has done justice to the cause of religion and has led a life of good repute. The *Qur'an* is rich in references to justice: to Divine Justice as one of God's attributes, and to the justice that it is incumbent upon humans to respect. So central to Islamic belief is justice that *al-'Adl*—“the Just”—is one of the ninety-nine names, or attributes, of God (Gülen, 2009).

Sufi Technique Twenty-One: As one's faith increases in relation to one's knowledge, one's certainty and humility also increases towards his Lord (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Markham, 2009; Gülen, 2000).

Sufi Technique Twenty-Two: Faith, heart, soul, and intellect must function synergically to empower people of faith and knowledge fully. Do not get so much education that you lose your faith. There is sometimes an assumed tension or even conflict between learning and faith. When you become aware that connection is needed between the mind and heart and soul you can be an ally of faith in that you can strengthen your faith by strengthening your mind (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Markham, 2009; Gülen, 2005).

Sufi Technique Twenty-Three: The more solidly rational and educated is the support for the faith, the stronger the faith will be and the more powerful the witness will be to an increasingly educated, skeptical, seeking, needy world. You must actively promote the use of reason and intellect in building, and as a tool in the philosophical battles of the modern world (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Markham, 2009; Gülen, 2005).

Sufi Technique Twenty-Four: Integrating truth provides the world with meaning and coherence. Integration itself is embodied in such thinking and processes as the inclusion of the whole person—heart, soul, and mind—in all activities, worship, work, thinking, feeling, studying, deciding and interpreting (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Markham, 2009; Gülen, 2004).

Sufi Technique Twenty-Five: Without integration, faith tends to become an emotional commitment and response, relying exclusively on feelings which can change more easily than an intellectually-grounded and reinforced belief (Eris, 2009; Nursi, 2012; Markham, 2009; Gülen, 2010).

Sufi Technique Twenty-Six: Be certain of this, that the highest aim of creation and its most important result is belief in God. The most exalted rank in humanity and its highest degree are the knowledge of God contained within belief in God. The most radiant happiness and sweetest bounty for *jinn* and human beings is the love of God contained within the knowledge of God. And the purest joy for the human spirit and the sheerest delight for man's heart is the rapture of the spirit contained within the love of God. Indeed, all true happiness, pure joy, sweet bounties, and untroubled pleasure lie in knowledge of God and love of God; they cannot exist without them (Gülen, 2000; Nursi, 1995, p. 265).

Sufi Technique Twenty-Seven: Humans have been created with the “delicate senses” and “sensitive faculties” in relation to two main goals set for humanity. First, that they would use these faculties to give thanks and worship God in a comprehensive way; with knowledge, awareness, and appreciation of His numerous and diverse bounties. Second, that they would employ these senses and faculties to witness the manifestations of God's attributes and believe in them, responding to God's desire to make Himself known to humankind. Humanity's perfection can be achieved only through these aims. Through their attainment, “*insan* [human being] becomes a true human being” (Gülen , 2006; Nursi, 1995, p. 139).

Sufi Technique Twenty-Eight: To be a true human being is to have faith; to come to know the Divine through His attributes, and worship God; adoring the Almighty through acts of love, such as prayer. The *Qur'an* declares that human beings are created for the worship of God alone. Knowledge of Divine attributes is the vital element in the journey of human beings toward

becoming a perfect adorer of their Creator. Ask for pardon through Divine forgiveness, and by realizing your deficiency be glorifiers of Divine perfection (Gülen, 2009; Nursi, 1995, p. 563).

Sufi Technique Twenty-Nine: Belief is the highest aim of life. True happiness is only found in belief enriched with the knowledge of God, through reading His signs in everything, and enriching it by loving all for the sake of God. With this perception, true enjoyment, pain-free pleasure, grief-free joy, and life's happiness are only to be found in belief and in the sphere of the truths of belief (Gülen, 2009; Nursi, 1996, p. 163).

Sufi Technique Thirty: When God granted self-knowledge as a component of measurement it served as a key to unlock the hidden treasure of the knowledge of the Divine names. Expanding on 'I' as the unit of understanding God's immense attributes, as examples of a person's insight, "Like I am the owner of this house, so too is the Creator the owner of the universe." And with its partial knowledge, it may understand His knowledge, and with its small amount of acquired art, it may understand the originative art of the Glorious Maker. For example, the 'I' says: "As I made this house and arranged it, so someone must have made the universe and arranged it," and so on. Thousands of mysterious states, attributes, and perceptions which make known and show to a degree all the Divine attributes and functions are contained with the 'I'. That is to say, the 'I' is mirror-like, and, like a unit of measurement and tool for discovery, it has an indicative meaning; having no meaning in itself, it shows the meaning of others (Gülen, 2005; Nursi, 1996, p. 558).

Sufi Technique Thirty-One: The ‘I’ as “a unit of measurement” with which “the attributes of dominicality and functions of Divinity might be known.” The ‘I’ helps human beings “draw a hypothetical and imaginary limit.” The ‘I’ imagines in itself a fictitious dominicality, ownership, power, and knowledge: it draws a line. By doing this it places an imaginary limit on the all-encompassing attributes, saying, “Up to here, mine, after that, His”; it makes a division. With the tiny units of measurement in itself, it slowly understands the true nature of the attributes (Gülen , 2009; Nursi, 1996, p. 559).

Sufi Technique Thirty-Two: A human being is such an unique work of art of Almighty God. He is a most subtle and graceful miracle of His power whom He created to manifest all His Names and their inscriptions, in the form of a miniature specimen of the universe (Gülen , 2009; Nursi, 1996, p.320).

Sufi Technique Thirty-Three: The human being is the choice result of the universe and the most important creature in the view of the Creator. A human is “the summary and result of the universe, and God’s vicegerent on earth, and its delicate fruit.” The position of vicegerency, with the acceptance of the Trust, exalts human beings to an elevated rank over the rest of creation and charges them with the duty of caretaker of other beings in the universe (Gülen , 2000; Nursi, 1996, pp 42-43).

Sufi Technique Thirty Three: God’s names are real, their reflections should be real too. The philosophy of the “oneness of being” is wrong when there is no being except God; because the universe, which is the most comprehensive mirror for the names of God, is real. Especially,

names like The Merciful, The Sustainer, The Crusher, The Compeller, and The Creator need to have a real mirror, which is the universe, so that they can be reflected therein. Without a real and needy being, The Merciful and The Sustainer cannot be reflected (Gülen, 2009; Nursi, 1996, p. 384-385).

Sufi Technique Thirty-Four: God's names are everlasting. Therefore, they desire to eternally be reflected on behalf of God's holy essence. As a result, their mirrors should be everlasting, because if there is no everlasting mirror, then there is no place (i.e. no place at all times) for the names of God to reflect. Moreover, there is never ending action going on in the universe caused by the ongoing reflections of the names of God (Gülen, 2009; Nursi, 1996, p. 452).

Sufi Technique Thirty-Five: Even the calamities that human beings experience in their lives are results of God's names, so that life can become purified and developed (Gülen, 2006; Nursi, 1996, p. 366).

Sufi Technique Thirty-Six: Every name of God has layers in it. For instance, there is a difference between the creation of a single human, on the one hand, and the enormous universe, on the other; and this difference refers to the difference between the layers of the names of God, the Creator. Therefore, to be able to reach the highest layer of the name of the Creator, one needs to pass beyond the whole universe and see God as the Creator of everything (Gülen, 2009; Nursi, 1996, p. 143).

Sufi Technique Thirty-Seven: The spiritual treasures of God's names are hidden in the earth and the sky. You are helpless, but rich in poverty by saying, "I am transient, so I don't desire one who is transient. I am humbly helpless, so I don't desire one who is humbly helpless. I submitted my soul to the most Merciful, so I don't desire any one else. I desire nothing but only a Beloved who is eternal. I am nothing, but I desire everything" (Gülen , 2006; Nursi, 1996, p. 116).

Sufi Technique Thirty-Eight: The lover is the happiest and the saddest person in the world. When he\she is excited with the idea of union with his Beloved, he\she could refuse even paradise and choose to be with Him instead. In this case, there can be no happier person than him. On the other hand, when he\she is burning with the fire of separation, even the rivers of the paradise could not extinguish his burns. In this case, there can be no person sadder than him. Another feeling that closes the doors of human heart to everything other than God is sadness. Sadness is the sorrow that the Sufi feels due to his responsibilities, duties, and goals (Gülen, 2006).

Sufi Technique Thirty-Nine: The close relationship with the pure self is also an indication of the closeness of human beings to the Creator, because the whole of creation is created by God for the needs of human beings, and because human beings are deeply in need of God. This correlation indicates a very strong relationship between human beings and God. Therefore, it can be said that human beings and their servanthood are the purpose of creation (Gülen, 2000, p. 40).

Sufi Technique Forty: A human being who has discovered the meaning of servanthood and instantiated it in his\her own life is a witness of the Real and a guide to others. One whose thoughts are as pure as his\her beliefs and whose conduct is fully consistent with his/her true

nature as servant of God always reminds people of God and becomes a witness for His Presence wherever he or she goes. And he\she becomes a fountain from which others around may imbibe (Gülen, 2000, p. 30).

CHAPTER 9: TEN-WEEK LONG SUFI THERAPY

I offer ten-week long a specific model of Sufi therapy that intended for specific type of people, in which the processes mediating against depression, anxiety and stress. It is not universal model for everyone; target population is some Muslim immigrants, refugees and Canadians. I suggest that Sufi therapy can change negative to positive thinking patterns (Nurbakhsh, 1992; Gülen, 2006; Nursi, 2007), and is designed to achieve these aims with the Emergent Spiritual Practice. This Sufi model demonstrates how the Sufi path benefits therapeutic practice in social work for a therapist to a client. A method of practice, special prayers and this discipline can be formulated and tailored for each client after a therapist makes a Sufi assessment based on client's needs. Increased use of Fethullah Gülen's model of mindfulness is relevant to the prevention of the relapse/recurrence of depression stress and depression. I focus instead on the holistic Sufi therapy healing model, because it is important for newcomers to a country to adapt to the structures and order of that country's social, economic, political and cultural landscape. This new model may have significant impact on the struggles of some Muslim multicultural communities, thereby also having an effect on mental health intervention, and on reshaping current healing techniques.

I suggest that depression, anxiety and stress can be healed by self-acceptance and keeping the focus always on what is good for patients. After an initial individual orientation session, the Sufi therapy program must be delivered by an instructor, or a guide as a therapist or social worker, in ten weekly sessions at the beginner level, involving two hour group-training sessions with up to 10-12 depressed patients. During that period, the program includes daily homework exercises, prayers, and meditation as *dhikr*. Homework invariably includes some form of guided

(taped) or unguided awareness exercises directed at increasing moment-by-moment non-judgmental awareness of bodily sensations, thoughts, and feelings, together with exercises designed to integrate application of awareness skills into daily life for self-control, self-purification and self-realization. The therapist works with the individual's spiritual beliefs and practices such as meditation, prayer, etc., but at no point attempts to instill his own beliefs or any beliefs not held by the patient into the therapeutic process. The therapy spans ten sessions, each session lasting 120 minutes, conducted once a week. The therapist can see patient individually separately from the group therapy and tailor his/her intervention based on their needs.

Session One: Remembrance of God

Harmonizing your seven souls and learning seven main categories is not an easy process; the Sufi therapy begins with developing a deep inner peace by calming and brightening your mind so that everything is within you, and all you need to do is to uncover it. The battle with our negative ego is an inner struggle; we have to fight on the spiritual path. A good human being is one who remembers God no matter what happens. The world is designed to make us forget, our job is to remember (Frager, 1999, p.131). Conscience is one of the proofs for God's existence and oneness.

The therapist must explain that one of the great Sufi practices is that of remembrance of God. Remembrance is the repetition or invocation of a mystical formula or divine name which allows the patient to practice, and which leads to sincerity of intention, awareness, and concentration. Remembrance provides a temporary inner state (*hal*) and a stable inner station (*makam*) in which invocation and mindfulness have become constant. A Sufi's tongue, heart and soul must attain to the state of constant inner prayer ((Frager, 1999, p.160).

Each prayer, I recite 99 times Al-hamdu li-llah (All praise be to God) is a Qur'anic sentence meaning, according to Arabic syntax and semantics, that every praise that has been or ever will be uttered by any being to anyone else is, in reality, for and deserved by the Necessarily Existent Being: God. (Nursi, 2007, p. 385). I also recite 99 times, "HasbunAllahi Wani'mal wakeel" Allah (alone) is sufficient for us (Qur'an 3:173). By leaving your affairs to Allah, by depending upon Him, by trusting in His promise, by being pleased with His decree, by thinking favourably of Him, and by waiting patiently for His help, you reap some of the greater fruits of faith and display the more prominent characteristics of the believer. When you incorporate these qualities into your character, you will be at peace concerning the future, because you will depend on your Lord for everything. As a result, you will find care, help, protection, and victory.

When Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) was placed in the fire, he said, "Allah (Alone) is sufficient for us, and he is the best disposer of affairs (for us)." Thereupon, Allah made the fire to be cool, safe, and peaceful for Prophet Abraham. No person by himself is capable of fighting against the current of misfortune, nor can he fend off the blows of disaster when they strike. This is because man was created weak and fragile. However, when in times of difficulty, the believer places his dependency and trust with his Lord; he knows that all difficulties can be overcome. "And put your trust in Allah if you are believers indeed" (Qur'an 5:23). The verse: God is the All-Provider, the Possessor of Strength, the Steadfast (51:58) is so strong and firm a proof that all vegetation, animals, and babies announce it (Nursi, 2007, p. 404). The Qur'an constantly urges people to reason and investigate, as seen in such verses as: Will you not use your reason? Will they not ponder? Will they not reflect? It gives people of reasoning and knowledge a very high and important position. Each week, the therapist provides a special homework to patients, follow up them next week in which are including reading, dhikr, prayers and concepts, Table 7.

Table 7- Homework for Session One

Reading	Sufi	Dhikr	Reflection	Self-Criticism
Meditation	13 Names Dhikr	6 Names Dhikr	Special Dua	Memorize Dua
Sufi Technique	Sufi Technique One	Sufi Technique Two	Sufi Technique Three	Sufi Technique Four
Prayers	Morning	Afternoon X2	Evening	Night
Concepts	Remembrance	Self-Journeying	Sincerity	Purity

Session Two: Protection

This session starts to teach the memorization of one important short prayer for a life time: “*Bismillahillazi la yadurru ma’asmihisyai’un fil ardi walaafissama’ii, Wa huwassami ul ‘alim.*” The translation is “In the name of Allah, by whose name nothing is harmed! Neither on earth nor in the heavens and He is the all-Seeing, the all-Knowing.” According to *Hadith*, Prophet Mohammad said whoever recites this prayer (*dua*) three times in the evening and the morning: “He/she will not suffer affliction until the morning and if anyone says this in the morning, he/she will not suffer sudden affliction until the evening” (Abu Dawud, Sahih 5069). There is another *hadith* that also suggests reciting this prayer whenever you use any transportation three or seven times, in order to seek protection from Allah.

Gülen provided this prayer to me personally in a handwritten note in December 1991 in Istanbul, and I have been reciting it on a daily basis for over twenty three years myself. I do not recommend any prayers to my patients if I do not use them myself. I have been following several verses from Qur’an as the nearness of the mystery to those who do not know it is like God’s nearness to His servant, as proclaimed in His words, “We are nearer to Him than you, but you do not see”(Qur’an 56:83) and His words, “We are nearer to Him than His jugular vein” (Qur’an

50:16) Despite this nearness, the servant does not perceive or know anything; no one can know what is within himself until it is revealed to him moment by moment.

Gülen always talks about the changes and alterations at the levels of nature, divine law, social life and personal life, and sees all of these changes as the reflection of the tablet of effacement and confirmation. At the level of nature, ecosystems, species, and the face of the earth, all the worlds are subject to changes and alterations. The mind is always fed through the channels of consciousness, and it has an important source of information: the power of perceptiveness. This power is there when people sense, feel, or perceive the things around them (Gülen, 2000, p. 202). Homework, see Table 8.

Table 8- Homework for Session Two

Reading	The Soul	Spiritual Heart	The spirit	The Self
Meditation	13 Names Dhikr	6 Names Dhikr	Special Dua	Memorize Dua
Sufi Technique	Sufi Technique Five	Sufi Technique Six	Sufi Technique Seven	Sufi Technique Eight
Prayers	Morning	Afternoon X2	Evening	Night
Concepts	Protection	Freedom	Fleeing	Hope

Session Three: Forgiveness

If you are going through very difficult things in your life right, a way to cope is found through special prayers, and the only way is turn to Allah. Gülen’s advice to me was from a prophetic supplication as follows: The Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “The supplication of my brother Dhun Nun (Yunus, peace be upon him), who called on Allah while in the whale’s belly: ‘There is no deity but You. Glory be to You! Verily, I have been among the wrongdoers’ (*Quran* 21:87). No Muslim person says it, for any situation whatsoever, except that Allah Most High answers his call.” [*Tirmidhi*] In Arabic is “*La ilaha*

illa Anta, Subhanaka, inni kuntu mina z-zalimin.” I recommend memorizing the Arabic version and saying this prayer seven times in a day.

As a Sufi, when I am hurt, insulted or face injustice, I have three options in dealing with these feelings: I can forgive, ignore and forget. Some individuals may choose to hate, harbour grudge and rancour, and live to seek revenge. Both choices are hard. But their results are opposite. Hatred, bitterness and hostility intoxicate your body (Hallowel, 2004). Negative feelings can throw you into frustration, stress, anxiety, depression; they can weaken your system and make your nerves tense. Anger, rancour and revenge are debilitating sentiments that poison the soul and add nothing but pain. Harboursing animosity and bitterness consumes a tremendous amount of valuable energy. Sufi therapy uses forgiveness as a tool that transcends the soul and frees you from your destructive negative energy.

Forgiveness heals you not only emotionally, but also physically and mentally (Ayad, 2008, p. 331). It is worth it to get rid of the burden of anger, hatred and in order to receive support. Forgiveness is a prevailing feature of Sufi therapy, one that promotes a person’s positive emotions, reduces anxiety and stress and readjusts hormonal balance, blood pressure and heart rate. As a matter of fact, lots of people refuse to forgive, thinking it a sign of weakness; they think that by forgiving they are surrendering to their offenders. On the contrary, by forgiving you cease to be the victim of hatred and anger, and you triumph over your own evil. Sufis believe that whosoever is patient and forgives, indeed is of the steadfast heart of things. Whoever worries too much sickens their own body. A Sufi keeps imploring until he or she reaches to the highest rank where the self is really purified. God deposited within human beings knowledge of all things, and then blocked them from perceiving them; this is one of the divine mysteries that

reason denies totally and thinks impossible (Harvey & Hanut, 1999, p. 35). The best test of faith lies in showing forbearance and forgiveness.

I sought forgiveness through the most beautiful words during my *erbain* period. I recited several prayers from the Sufi tradition such as: “My God, Surely I have been one of the wrongdoers, have mercy on me,” “Forgive all believers; you are the Most Merciful of the merciful,” “O my Lord! I try my best to keep my covenant with You,” “I seek refuge in You from the evil of what I have done,” “ I acknowledge Your favors upon me, acknowledge my sins,” “So, forgive me, for truly no one forgives sins except You, ” “I beg for help. Rectify all my states and leave me not to myself. Even for a moment shorter than the blinking of an eye! I am helpless. Increase my knowledge let not my heart stray after You have guided me.”

Homework, see Table 9.

Table 9- Homework for Session Three

Reading	Humility	Suffering	Sorrow	Confidence
Meditation	13 Names Dhikr	6 Names Dhikr	Special Dua	Memorize Dua
Sufi Technique	Sufi Technique Nine	Sufi Technique Ten	Sufi Technique Eleven	Sufi Technique Twelve
Prayers	Morning	Afternoon X2	Evening	Night
Concepts	Forgiveness	Freedom	Fleeing	Hope

Session Four: Purity of Intention

The Prophet Mohammad said: Have compassion. God shows compassion to those who show compassion to others. Show mercy to those on earth, so that God in heaven may show mercy to you (Hadith). Every soul fears death, but must come to the end. Cherishing ambitions strengthens the desire to live. Time obliterates the ambitions of humans. The soul multiplies ambitions, but death brings an end. A Sufi needs to purify his\her life intentions and goals, by

seeking the abode of the Hereafter in what God has given you. Forget not your portion of the world, avoid traps in the world's journeying that conceal much destruction. The enjoyment of this world is short; the Hereafter is eternal for those who obey God's commands, filled with His fear. The soul weeps in desire for the world even though salvation lies in renouncing it. There is no such abode after death, therefore renounce it before. The first step is the will and intent to avoid what has been forbidden and what is deviant, engaging only in what is allowed. The second is care even with what is allowed. A Sufi shows no pull toward worldly attractions, and prefers to serve God over every other thing. The carnal self is our the real enemy. Humility is the opposite of arrogance, haughtiness and pride. A Sufi must know him or herself to be ordinary, others good, the self bad. I encourage patients in therapy to write poems, paint or play music to find their expression as part of the Art therapy model and homework is given to patients every week. Reading about each concept will lead them to think, and provide a reflective basis for their perception of the depression or problems. Prayer: The Prophet Jacob said in Qur'an: He said, "I only complain of my suffering and my grief to Allah, and I know from Allah that which you do not know. (Qur'an; Yusuf, 86). In Arabic: "Kâle innemâ eşkû bessî ve huznî ilallâhi ve a'lemu inallâhi mâ lâ ta'lemûn(ta'lemûne)"

Homework, see Table 10.

Table 10 - Homework for Session Four

Reading	Commitment	Expansion	Decision	Resolution
Meditation	13 Names Dhikr	6 Names Dhikr	Special Dua	Memorize Dua
Sufi Technique	Sufi Technique Thirteen	Sufi Technique Fourteen	Sufi Technique Fifteen	Sufi Technique Sixteen
Prayers	Morning	AfternoonX2	Evening	Night
Concepts	Sincere Intention	Endeavor	Contraction	Openness

Session Five: Patience

Patience is almost half of the therapy target, as is showing no rebellion against misfortune in life. Accepting one's entire destiny without complaint is better done peacefully, even though these events are filled deep with distress and with terror. Having pleased acceptance of all God's treatment is the first rule of the Sufi therapy. Observe patience when you are tormented by rage. Forgive one who harms you. These two qualities will, in due course, help you and God will give you protection. You will find your depressive events agreeable or disagreeable: you are only role players in the Divine drama. Everybody must play well on the stage of this world. You have no right or authority to interfere with the quality of whatever happens to an individual, only God can decide. The first degree is free will and belief in His Unity. The second degree must be acquired, a continuation of the first. The basis of the third degree leads to nearness to God. A Divine gift is not a station attained by will or by effort. Patients will be encouraged to think about God in the way that I wrote in my poem, as follows,

Make me feel Your ever-present company near me and do not let things cause me to fall distant from You.

Narrated from A'ishah radi Allahu anha, "When the Prophet *sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam* saw something that pleased him, he would say: *Alhamdulillahil lathee bi ni'matihi tatimmus saalihaat*, and when he saw something that displeased him, he would say: *Alhamdulillah 'alaa kuli haal*. (Narrated in Sunan Ibn Maajah, classified as Saheeh according to Shaykh Albaani rahimahullah in Silsilatus Saheehah hadeeth 265). *Alhamdulillahil lathee bi ni'matihi tatimmus saalihaat* means: All praise and thanks are only for Allah, the One who, by His blessing and favor, perfected goodness/good works are accomplished. *Alhamdulillah 'alaa kuli haal* means: All praise and thanks are only for Allah in all circumstances. Prophet Noah has two

special prayers for patience as, “Do not give up and do not be downhearted. You shall be uppermost if you are believers” (Qur’an, Surah Al ‘Imran, 139). Prophet Noah lived for 950 years among his people (Qur’an 29 14). He became very discouraged when not many people would listen to him. He then received a message from Allah, “None of your people will believe except those who have believed already: So don’t worry about the wrongdoers any more. Build a ship under our guidance. Those who are in sin will soon be destroyed. He called upon his Lord: "I am overwhelmed, so help me!" (Qur’an, Surat al-Qamar: 10) as this his second special prayer. In Arabic: “*Fe deâ rabbehû ennî maglûbun fentasır*”

Homework, see Table 11.

Table 11- Homework for Session Five

Reading	Will	The Willing One	The Willed One	Certainty
Meditation	13 Names Dhikr	6 Names Dhikr	Special Dua	Memorize Dua
Sufi Technique	Sufi Technique Seventeen	Sufi Technique Eighteen	Sufi Technique Nineteen	Sufi Technique Twenty
Prayers	Morning	AfternoonX2	Evening	Night
Concepts	Patience	Love	Divine Love	Wisdom

Session Six: Truthfulness

The concept of truthfulness reveals that there are two sides and two choices: the Willing and the Willed One. Will is living a spiritual life, overcoming carnal desires, and resisting animal appetites. The Willed one always prefers obeying God's wish and pleasure over their own will, in complete submission to His Will. A willing disciple never relies on their power alone, but is absolutely submitted to the Will of the All-Powerful who holds all of creation in His Grasp, His pleasure. The one who has willed has become a favorite of God. Will is the first station on the path towards God. The first harbor for a Sufi setting sail for eternity is journeying toward purity

of intent with the force of the inner desire to embark on this voyage. Your willpower is only a shadow of the One who does whatever He wills in whatever way He chooses. You are just a shadow dependent on the original. Any created will is dependent on the Creator. It is difficult to distinguish between a shadow and the original.

Sufi do not be grieved, God is in them. At the start, loyalty, faithfulness, and resolution are important. Solemnity, self-possession, and mannerliness come later. Who has erred in the beginning cannot advance to reach God. Who has erred in the end is reproved, their will fed by God. Prayer is one of famous Prophet Mohammad’s words: “None of you are believers until you love for fellow human what you love for yourself” (Hadith). [Who say], "Our Lord, let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us and grant us from Yourself mercy. Indeed, You are the Bestower (Qur’an, Ali Imran, 8). In Arabic: “*Rabbenâ lâ tuziğ kulûbenâ ba’de iz hedeytenâ vehab lenâ min ledunke rahmeh(rahmeten), inneke entel vehhâb(vehhâbu).*

Homework, see Table 12.

Table 12 - Homework for Session Six

Reading	Modesty	Austerity	Piety	Asceticism
Meditation	13 Names Dhikr	6 Names Dhikr	Special Dua	Memorize Dua
Sufi Technique	Sufi Technique Twenty Nine	Sufi Technique Thirty	Sufi Technique Thirty One	Sufi Technique Thirty Two
Prayers	Morning	AfternoonX2	Evening	Night
Concepts	Truthfulness	Resignation	Seclusion	Privacy

Session Seven: Thankfulness

Thankfulness is the other half of the therapy target and reveals that the real richness is the richness of the heart. Your heart is a God-treasure and a credit card that is valid everywhere; such mysterious capital is neither poor nor powerless. Poverty is your pride, showing neediness

unto God. A Sufi looks upon poverty as the real core and meaning of existence. Do not despise poverty, it is the essence, all else form. Poverty is the mirror reflecting the independence of others. It is a remedy for all diseases of vanity and conceit. Increasing awareness of poverty engenders high degrees of dignity. Such awareness before the Absolutely Wealthy One is richness itself, feeling in your conscience God is the sole source of power and wealth. His help sought, it is to Him that you turn, needing nothing. It is His is power, by which we are powerful. We are well-known by His Name or His fame. We go beyond peaks and continue our way. We overcome all difficulties with ease. We possess nothing worldly, but are rich, dignified and respectable due to His Dignity. We follow the way of contemplation, so whatever exists is a source of knowledge of God.

The Sufi way of poverty severs relations with all and thankfulness is a result. Poverty is the goal, a most manifest sign of God's love. The Almighty has placed poverty in the hearts of His friends. Poverty is a key of light to open the heart's eye to the treasure. Poverty is the door to riches, this key is for the richest. You pass through this door in your conscience to the infinite treasuries. The Owner of All is clear; poverty is identical with wealth. Wealth is no more than the perfection of poverty. Prayer: "Search for God among poor, because it is the poor who render help and provide food" (Hadith).

My Poem about thankfulness is as follows,

The duty of thankfulness holds great emotion. Using my helplessness and destitution.
Very few people live in true full awareness Feeling deep need to be grateful and thankful.
Our weakness prevents us meeting our needs. Everyone has the need to be thankful,
Whatever our level of spiritual heights or desires, Since thanking you is a blessing itself.
O Lord. How can I be thankful to You? Unable to thank You as thanking requires.
Deepen my belief, love, gratitude towards. My net of sight filled with your fine gifts. If
you are thankful He adds more unto you. It is a half with respect to this inclusivity.
Patience two halves of life that is thankful. O God! Include us among those whom You
love. Make me sincere, and bring me near to You. O God. Help me mention You, thank
You. I worship You in the best possible way.

Prayer: Surah Al Anbiya verse 83, it is the *dua* that Prophet Ayyub made when he was sick:

“Waayyooba ith nada rabbahu annee massaniya alddurru waanta arhamu alrrahimeena”

Translation: *"And Ayyub, when he called to his Lord, (saying): "Indeed adversity has afflicted me, and You are the Most Merciful of those who are merciful" (Qur'an, Anbiya, 83).*

Homework, see Table 13.

Table 13- Homework for Session Seven

Reading	Universal Person	Insight	Discerment	Serenity
Meditation	13 Names Dhikr	6 Names Dhikr	Special Dua	Memorize Dua
Sufi Technique	Sufi Technique Twenty Five	Sufi Technique Twenty Six	Sufi Technique Twenty Seven	Sufi Technique Twenty Eight
Prayers	Morning	AfternoonX2	Evening	Night
Concepts	Thankfulness	Perfect Goodness	Peacefulness	Wakefulness

Session Eight: Passion

People are lonely and live in boredom with their place in the world and the surrounding conditions. They feel discomfort as if in prison or captivity. Why is it that you stay in such a sorrowful mood? Why is there sadness in your blessed inner world? Self-possession will lead you to passion in which is intense love, more than desire for Paradise, more intense than the lover's love for the beloved. You've exhausted your power to endure such love. Your heart beating above all is God's pleasure with you. Burning endurance to ashes with desire of union in words refers to worrying much if the beloved is loved by others. Who is my lover, who casts me in worry and distress? In this session, group members will bring their artistic talents to conceptualize what being trustworthy means. Prayer: Mohammad said, “Say the word of ‘*La hawla wala kuwwata illa billahi'l aliyyl azim*’ because it is a treasures of *Jannat* (heaven)”

(Hadith-i Sharifm Sunan-i Tirmidi). Translation: there is no power no strength but from Allah as is very effective means of beseeching Allah’s help and it has a lot of power in it.

My poetic expression is as follows,

A Sufi must feel that I am afraid someone else is in love with my beloved. The fire is so great that I see none other than Him. I did not know myself as I see myself now, I wonder whether He is me or I am Him? There is no longer any possibility of rescue or escape. Nothing more than meeting is with the Truly Beloved One. The lover is at the same time as a lover and the beloved. A willed one is at the same time as being one who wills. O Sufi! You’re at the same time as one who is sought. My heart is in love and desire; my soul is on fire why are these tears coming from my eyes, O Dear One! Losing my patience is coming to the end of my endurance. O my Beloved! I have no strength to bear all that occurs.

Prayer: Now, if they turn away from you, (O Prophet) say: "Allah is all-sufficient for me. There is no god but Him. In Him I have put my trust. He is the Rabb of the Mighty Throne." (Qur’an, Taubah, 129). In Arabic: *“Fe in tevellev fe kul hasbiyallâh(hasbiyallâhu), lâ ilâhe illâ hûve, aleyhi tevekkeltu ve huve rabbul arşil azîm(azîmi).”*

Homework, see Table 14.

Table 14- Homework for Session eight

Reading	Individuality	Verification	Striving	Life and Time
Meditation	13 Names Dhikr	6 Names Dhikr	Special Dua	Memorize Dua
Sufi Technique	Sufi Technique Twenty One	Sufi Technique Twenty Two	Sufi Technique Twenty Three	Sufi Technique Twenty Four
Prayers	Morning	AfternoonX2	Evening	Night
Concepts	Passion	Love	Divine Love	Wisdom

Session Nine: Trustworthiness

A spiritual faculty is deposited in the heart as Divine trust, as spirit for the body, will-power, feelings and mind. Each of the pillars of conscience has a function and goal. Feelings of love of God mean having a vision of God's Face. Lordship manifests in the heart: the seekers feel its manifestation in a deeper manner, till the point where Divine Names are everything, and where witnessing opens Divine secrets, the secrets of manifestation. A Sufi must have a clear relationship with the world of the spirit. God knows best what's in your inner world, your heart. The secret of being lies in a pure bosom of faithfulness and loyalty. The secret is rising when God prepares a heart to hold these qualities. The people of truth whose eyes do not see any save for God, always pursue His good pleasure, resist the carnal self and reach to the Pure Soul. Making every effort of submission, preventing worldly desire, our eyes and the universe are fed with the pure water of secrets. Faithful souls try to hide their rank with God from others, and keep the Divine gifts granted them concealed from others. They guard their chastity, though each is a star in the heavens. They have no expectations in this world, appearing as if just fireflies. These heroes do not spend even a moment without Him and use every event, thought and consideration to mention Him. They are self-annihilated in His company, living unaware of themselves.

Whatever good is done for others, and rendered God's way, conceal it. Hide your good deeds, not only from others, but even from your own self. Even if you sometimes feel pride in yourself, seek escape. Spend your life amidst ecstasy in His perfect help and care, unknown among people, remaining hidden, enclosed by secrets. Prayer: "Wish for other men what you would wish for yourself and you will become an obedient subject of God" (Hadith). As known as Prophet Shu'ayb prayer's in Qur'an as follow:

“Indeed we shall have forged a lie against Allah If we go back to your religion after Allah has delivered us from It, and it befits us not that we should go back to it, except if Allah our Lord please: Our Lord comprehends all things in His knowledge; in Allah do we trust: Our Lord! decide between us and our people with truth; and Thou art the best of deciders” (Qur’an, A’raf, 89). In Arabic: *“Kadiftereynâ alallâhi keziben in udnâ fî milletikum ba’de iz necceynallâhu minhâ, ve mâ yekûnu lenâ en neûde fihâ illâ en yeşâallahu rabbunâ, vesia rabbunâ kulle şey’in ilmen, alallâhi tevekkelnâ, rabbeneftah beynenâ ve beyne kavminâ bil hakkı ve ente hayrul fâtiyhîn(fâtiyhîne)”*

Homework, see Table 15.

Table 15- Homework for Session Nine

Reading	Unity	Multiplicity	Silent	Intoxication
Meditation	13 Names Dhikr	6 Names Dhikr	Special Dua	Memorize Dua
Sufi Technique	Sufi Technique Thirty Three	Sufi Technique Thirty Four	Sufi Technique Thirty Five	Sufi Technique Thirty Six
Prayers	Morning	AfternoonX2	Evening	Night
Concepts	Trustworthiness	Journeying in	Journeying from	Journeying with

Session Ten: Presentation

Presentation refers to explaining to others what you have learned and are open to, how you are innately charged with discovering Divine secrets. Developing Sufi Observation and Seeing with insight, the eye of the heart makes you happy. The eye is the shadow and manifestation. This is a great Divine gift, the Divine Light and bright mirrors reflecting absolute Oneness. Beyond all concepts of modality, without eyes respect the observation of the Truth Himself. The Divine Being is as an object of observation. A Sufi feels the Divine Names and Attributes in such a disclosure—there are degrees of observation. Needing a vigorous heart with

keen sight and hearing, these senses are highly sensitive, for receptiveness is based on the heart's capacity, belief, hearing and certainty. Walking with a deep yearning to where there's no existence, where the currency of speech is not valid or demanded. Whoever attempts to knock on the door at that station will receive the answer, "You are not able to see Me!"

The third degree is everything annihilated in God. The existence of the universe no longer felt, the One manifest. The Divine lights are in the time when hearts overflow with rejoicing and take His lightning-like manifestation for Being Himself. This point leads you to confusing the original with the shadow. Take an observation from the conscience and the heart in a state. Observing True Being Himself is a shadow that yields no more confusion. Two eyes see two worlds—this and the next—filled with the Friend!

The time comes when the Divine gifts invade the inner world with Divine quality. The Truth appears when you're nearest to Him. Gifts come with fear, sorrow or rejoicing. If the gifts come with an air of fear and sorrow, a Sufi comes to embody fear and sorrow. If they come with exhilaration and rejoicing, there's peace without loss of self-possession. I was consciously expressing resignation with such words in my poem: "Your favor is welcome, and so too Your resentment." Acting in peace and contentment, attain confidence in the valleys of reliance, surrender and commitment. The travelers are punished according to their rank. Your heart has lost some degrees in its relation to ranks of perfect godliness and nearness to God. For a purified saintly scholar is free from both time and state. The true heroes of time always take the present day into account and try to use it the best possible way. One who does not taste, does not know or perceive. As time serves like rain pouring down from the heavens, as a fertile field bursting with vegetation, you think of the past. Increase your devotion with prayer: "Should I not become a thankful servant?" My expression about ending the journey is in the following reflection,

The absolute Owner of Time shows everything annihilated in Him. His Names and Attributes manifesting, Himself in different forms. See a drop as if it were an ocean, a particle of light as if the sun. Nothing as if everything, uttering such words as: I am the true One. His being, there is nothing that exists, that truly exists, save God.

This absorption is the final state of the spiritual journey. It refers to all feeling, seeing, consciousness of the Truth and the heart cutting off relations with all save God. Thirst for the Divine Being is flying round His Face. Everything is a shadow of the light of the Existence of Truth. For a Sufi, it is shadows of the shadow of His Existence's light, related to the absorption within absorption, and to seeing the rays of holy absorption. This is the rank of nearness to God: do supererogatory prayers. The greatest capital in being favored by God is absorption. He is the First, and the Last, the Outward, and the Inward. A Sufi becomes a polished mirror that reflects manifestations, observes deeply and clearly with inner external senses. This is the farthest point you must be to travel in God. My poetic reflection captured the moment my heart experienced as:

Now rotate around yourselves like the North Star. You are turning around your axis in your heart, while being in your body among people, worshipping alone. Absorption can never mean the unity of being, the unity of God. The universe or God's being cannot be coincident with the universe. The One Who is the Eternal is eternal, different from mortals. Humans have both pure, transparent aspect and one that is tangible, dense. O Heart, being acts according to its own standard of measure. Worship your Lord until that certain event, death comes to you. Meeting with God based on experience at your own.

Muhyiddin Ibn al-`Arabi, said: "If anyone is in need of something, let him/her read surah "al-Fatiha" forty times after evening prayer and two raka`ats of optional prayer." Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), said: "Surah al-Fatiha" is open for appealing to believers in Allah, with their wishes. Who reads "surah al-Fatiha" over clean water 70 times for 7 days, and then, after blowing on it, drinks it, God, by His mercy, bestows knowledge and wisdom, cleans his heart from pervasive thoughts, and grants him such an exceptional memory and ability to grasp everything on the fly, that he never forgets anything even if he heard it once"

(Hadith). This is shown in one of Gülen’s books. *Sirr* (secret) or “Discussion of *al-Fatiha*” (*Fatiha Uzerine Mulahazalar*) is Gülen’s only work solely dedicated to *surah* interpretation, and in it Gülen focuses on the miracle aspects of Quran and examines this from different points of view. He says poetry was central to the way of life at the place and time the Quran was revealed. The mystical and magical expressions of Quran sounded like neither the poems nor hadith of the time; however it astounded everyone with its poetic originality. Sufism has a certain place in his interpretation method. It is also seen that Gülen makes some references to canon law of verses (Tuncer, 2006). Gülen speaks of the secret of Fatiha and the special properties inherent in this *surah*, as a prophetic healing tradition.

Prayer is *surah* “*al-Fatiha*” forty times in a day recommended for everyone.

In the name of God, the infinitely Compassionate and Merciful.

Praise be to God, Lord of all the worlds.

The Compassionate, the Merciful. Ruler on the Day of Reckoning.

You alone do we worship, and You alone do we ask for help.

Guide us on the straight path,

the path of those who have received your grace;

not the path of those who have brought down wrath, nor of those who wander astray.

Amen” (Qur'an 1:1-7)

In Arabic: “*Bismillaah ar-Rahman ar-Raheem. Al hamdu lillaahi rabbil ‘alameen Ar-Rahman ar-Raheem Maaliki yaumid Deen. Iyyaaka na’abudu wa iyyaaka nasta’een Ihdinas siraatal mustaqee. Siraatal ladheena an ‘amta’ alaihim. Ghairil maghduubi’ alaihim waladaaleen. Aameen*”

Table 16 shows final Homework.

Table 16- Homework for Session Ten

Reading	Observation	Poverty	Richness	Manifestation
Meditation	13 Names Dhikr	6 Names Dhikr	Special Dua	Memorize Dua
Sufi Technique	Sufi Technique Thirty Seven	Sufi Technique Thirty Eight	Sufi Technique Thirty Nine	Sufi Technique Forty
Prayers	Morning	AfternoonX2	Evening	Night
Concepts	Presentation	Disclosure	Rejoicing	Absorption

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I was not trying to be a positivist or an objectivist as in the traditional way. The greatest impediment to the study of transcendence experiences is the subjective nature of this experience and moving from “transcendent sincerity” to transpersonal theory using Fethullah Gülen’s perspective. My transcendent experience was unique and my discoveries were based on my observations. Discovering the Divine mysteries will be disclosed in the Divine truths. I was able to swim safely the ocean of spiritual initiation and journeying, and found a useful Sufi mindfulness therapy model through Fethullah Gülen’s writings. At the beginning of this journey, as a Sufi, I may know some truths; however, I was not able experience them yet. Therefore, I am not able to grasp the inner realities of the truths that I know intellectually, because experiencing is very different from knowing. For instance, belief, love, and spiritual taste are practical concepts; and their realities cannot be known until they become a dimension of the Sufi’s very nature. When they are experienced and practiced by the heart of the Sufi, the Sufi’s attitude predominates over his knowledge, and that knowledge begins to become immersed in the attitude; then it melts and finally perishes. This is called the immersion of knowledge in the attitude of the Sufi, since a Sufi never claims knowledge but claims he/she is zero and knows nothing. I provide a new research methodology from Fethullah Gülen’s methods and techniques which is one of important contributions for this research.

From the starting point of Fethullah Gülen’s spirituality, this Sufi therapy is designed to teach patients in remission from major depression ten Sufi concepts of categories and forty rules of Sufi teachings in order that they might become more aware of, and relate differently to their thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations. The program teaches skills that allow individuals to

disengage from habitual (“automatic”) cognitive routines, in particular depression-related ruminative thought patterns, as a way of reducing future risk of relapse and recurrence of depression, anxiety and stress. It is the invention of a new Sufi model targeting greater connection with the spirit, the mind and the heart, and connecting all of these for the unity and discovery of seven levels of souls in the self.

This finding is consistent with Sufi therapy: increased use of Fethullah Gülen’s model of mindfulness is relevant to the prevention of the relapse/recurrence of depression stress and depression, as it allows early detection of relapse-related patterns of negative thinking, feelings, and body sensations and provides 10-week phase of Sufi therapy. This paradigm conceptualizes the healthy person as an individual who can pilot his or her own existential fate in the here-and-now, and who has far greater self-regulatory control over his or her own body, mind, soul and heart than heretofore imagined. Concomitant with this new paradigm is an attempt to develop and improve techniques by which people can self-observe their behavior, change it (if desired), and then continually modify and monitor it according to their spiritual needs.

The Sufi spiritual practice and therapy composes a perfect individual in the crucible of striving, and such a striving is based on controlling carnal desires and impulses. The Self needs to possess an operative mechanism of conscience in Spiritual Psychology. According to people of the heart, doing what is right requires use of the will-power that has been endowed in order to struggle against the carnal self and seek ways to defeat it. A Sufi strives in God's way, in the way that striving for His sake requires, consisting in struggles against Satan, and against impulses of the carnal self, with all his/her inner senses, consciousness, perception, and heart.

In summary, I gleaned healing principles, techniques and invented a new therapy approach from my immersion in Gülen’s Sufi spiritual practice model, and demonstrated how

this Sufi path might benefit therapeutic practice in social work for some Muslim populations as a Spiritual Guideline. It is not a universal model suitable for everyone; I acknowledge that it may not even work for some Muslim populations. I provide a spiritual practice guideline for social workers and psychotherapists working within a culture of Sufi spiritual practice, and promote a wisdom-based individual culture based on Fethullah Gülen's methods, teachings and my own interpretations of Sufism. I explained and analyzed how I was transformed during the study and how I am going to help others with this Sufi therapy. It is a heart-based healing method for some Muslim individuals at the beginner level and is a therapy model that fills in gaps between some existing spiritual practice in Sufism and scientific methods.

As part of further research, this particular mindfulness spiritual practice and guideline can be moved and shifted to the next stage of developing possible intermediate and advance levels. The intermediate level of Sufi therapy focusing on how to manifest God in personalities is work best conducted at PhD level, and will add 10 more weeks of therapy sessions. I have not tested this therapy model as group therapy yet, I simply tested it at an individual level through my self-journeying. It might be biased to implement such a model for all Muslim population. However, it does fit the needs of Hizmet Movement followers. Individuals may need specific sessions to follow up this therapy model, and the therapist or social worker must tailor the therapy to each client to meet their spiritual practice needs.

In conclusion, the heart plays an essential role in self-purification, self-awareness, and self-criticism, understanding others and how to use the self. However, none of the scholars mentioned above have studied Gülen's Sufism writings, poems and his positive thinking pathways in order to address solutions in social work and spiritual practice for some Muslim populations in need of an alternative heart-based psychotherapy.

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