

Seven steps to spiritual intelligence. By Musharraf Hussain. Markfield, UK: Kube Publishing Limited, 2015, pp. 104, ISBN: 978-184774078-6 (Kindle version).

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The book under review, *Seven Steps to Spiritual Intelligence*, is an attempt to provide spiritual guidance to the citizens of wealthy nations who are immersing themselves in materialistic excesses. The topic of spirituality is typically explored outside the realm of religious precepts, and this work offers a much-needed contribution to the literature explaining the concept in light of Islamic teachings. The author, Musharraf Hussain, argues that spiritual intelligence is the means to gain an enhanced understanding of God, which grants the individual serenity of the heart and peace in the mind. He explains this through a brief guidebook consolidating fourteen centuries of spiritual wisdom extracted from Islamic literature.

The author is a British-Pakistani Islamic scholar, scientist, and educator. He is the founder and director of the Karimia Institute, which specialises in a wide range of social welfare projects in the UK. He has authored several books including the inspirational prequel to the book under review, *Seven Steps to Moral Intelligence*. He has written ten books and over seventy articles that aim to guide Muslims seeking to practice their religion better.

Chapter 1 provides the scope of spiritual intelligence and its meaning as understood in Islamic texts. The book begins with framing the problem that exists in contemporary societies in the context of materialistic abundance and the void of spirituality. Hussain asserts that this text will attempt to provide some direction to those looking for solutions. He develops his argument using contemporary references and carefully chosen metaphors that are effective in supporting the central thesis. Hussain then provides a solution for these problems via the understanding and usage of one's spiritual intelligence. He uses the definitions of Sufism and spiritual intelligence to provide examples as to how the possessor of spiritual intelligence will benefit from it in various

ways. He concludes the chapter with a small collection of the actions that enables one to be spiritually intelligent. The end of this chapter, along with every other chapter, includes a summary of the key points made in the previous pages.

Chapter 2 outlines the seven internal states that individuals must have to possess spiritual intelligence. The individual desiring high spiritual intelligence must develop him/herself to acquire these states to reach the level of *ihsān* (excellence or perfection). They are *taqwā* (God-consciousness), *shukr* (gratitude to God), *yaqīn* and *tawakkul* (certainty and trust in God), *taslīm* and *riḍā* (submission to and satisfaction in God), *khawf* (fear of God), *rajā'* (hope in God), and *tawbah* (repentance to God). These seven essentials are supported by primary references from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah in accordance with the understanding of Sufi scholars from many different lands past and present. Unfortunately, the quotes found within this chapter, as with the remainder of the book, do not cite their exact sources, so the reviewer is unable to cross-reference the sourced materials.

Chapter 3 provides an insight into the life of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), who the author argues was the most spiritually intelligent man in history. The chapter gives practical examples as to how the Prophet had put the above-mentioned disciplines into practice. A few aspects of the Prophet's life are portrayed such as his simplicity, his time spent in worship, his lifelong dedication to learning and teaching, and his balanced nature. These details are a good introduction for those who are new to learning about the character of the Prophet, and they act as a beneficial reminder to those familiar with him as an individual.

Chapter 4 structures the seven steps one must follow to obtain spiritual intelligence. The chapter begins with an example of Pir Muhammad Karam Shah (the author's spiritual guide), who, in the 1970s, insisted on having his books with him during his detention as a political prisoner in Pakistan. This illustration acts as the foundation for the chapter to show that knowledge is the key to spiritual growth regardless of one's physical circumstance. Hussain goes on to explain how we as humans learn, and he ties that into his suggestion that the reader teaches this material to others. He then explains that individuals must consciously prepare for this path of drawing closer to God because it will ultimately change him from his former nature.

Hussain says that people cannot attain the desired without the practice of S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Manageable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goals. He then goes on to provide the second step, which is to pursue these goals under the direction of a spiritual guide. Other Sunni scholars may contest this recommendation. The book suggests that the seeker must give *bay'ah* (a pledge of allegiance) to his/her spiritual guide. Hussain justifies this act by providing the example of the Prophet taking *bay'ah* from his companions. However, some may argue that this example is not applicable to the context of spiritual development because the Prophet was the political leader of the Muslims, and *bay'ah* can only be given for that type of leader.

The author cites a Sufi scholar who explains an *āyat* (verse) in the Qur'ān to say that people are encouraged to give *bay'ah* to spiritual guides. This recommendation is followed with supporting quotes that attempt to convince the reader of the validity of the recommendation. It may be argued that this understanding contradicts the concept of *tawakkul* emphasised earlier in the book. Having *tawakkul* necessitates that one is dependent on Allah alone and not a person. The controversial view of giving *bay'ah* to spiritual leader could have better been addressed in a balanced manner had Hussain contrasted the view of the Sufi scholars with the view of scholars who follow mainstream Islamic teachings.

Step three calls for the proper learning of Islam. Step four praises and encourages the seeker to live the life of a *zāhid* (ascetic). The author explains what *zuhd* is using the quotes of scholars, and provides a methodology for one who is motivated to develop *zuhd*. Step five lists details as to how the reader can undergo a process of *mujāhadah* (striving earnestly to worship Allah). Step sixth is to consistently engage in *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and make *du'ā'* to God (supplication). The reader is provided with practical steps as to how to perform these actions properly. The final step is to have *murāqabah* (consciousness of one's sins and actions).

Chapter 5 builds on the previous chapter by offering ranks that chart the progress of the seeker of spiritual development. These ranks may be familiar to practitioners of Sufi thought. They are *al-nafs al-ammārah* (the inciting self), *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* (the reproachful self), *al-nafs al-mulhamah* (the inspired self), *al-nafs al-muṭma'innah* (the serene self), *al-nafs al-rāḍiyah* (the contented self), *al-nafs al-marḍīyyah*

(the self-found pleasing), and *al-nafs al-kāmilah* (the perfected self). Hussain indicates that these ranks were categorised in a book titled *The Degrees of the Soul* by al-Shabrawi. The reader, however, may have also benefitted from references in the Qur'ān or Sunnah, where these ranks have been explained. In this chapter, the author returns to the concept of having a spiritual leader to direct the seeker through these ranks. Hussain advises that the alternative, if it is not possible to follow the guidance of a spiritual guide, is to follow the Sunnah strictly.

Chapter 6 provides the reader with the motivation to pursue this path and rise in the suggested ranks. The references that are deeply interwoven into this chapter are meant to convince the reader that loving God and possessing a strong moral character, which is the desire to act in a righteous manner, are some of the main benefits of having spiritual intelligence.

Chapter 7 concludes the book by offering practical examples of Sufi scholars who were the embodiment of spiritual intelligence. The reader is provided with examples of the actions of these great scholars which anyone can follow such as their practices related to drinking, eating, sleeping, speaking less, loving knowledge, and remembering God. Their actions were sustained by constantly learning and understanding spiritual intelligence, living a simple, contented life, constantly striving to practice, remembering, and praying to God, and controlling and inspecting themselves, their thoughts, and behaviour. These brief biographical accounts are somewhat inspirational and introduce the lives of great Sufi scholars of which many may not be familiar.

Overall, this book is of benefit to non-Muslims and to novice seekers of Islamic spiritual knowledge. It is an unconventional self-help book because it does not provide proper referencing for quote or supporting evidence using empirical sources. It is an easy read with mass audience appeal. The book has frequent usage of metaphors to help drive a point home. The chapter summaries are beneficial. Diagrams help the reader to understand concepts visually. References from psychological, business, and popular culture are also helpful. The book would have been stronger had it incorporated references to the materials used along with the mention of their authors, and citations with specific page numbers. Because of that, I find it to be of limited use to academics or those in academic settings.
