



Into the Heart of Reality: The Inner Voice

Safiullah

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Safiullah eloquently elaborates on quotes from Muhammad to discuss the connection between the teachings of Islam and contemporary life.

Mohamed Safiullah Munsoor wrote *Into the Heart of Reality* to share the insights and wisdom he's accumulated about life and spirituality from an Islamic perspective. The book is an attractively packaged, slim volume with abstract drawings on many of the pages. Though there are many typographical and grammatical errors and awkward sentences and concepts, as well as a confusing use of pronouns and tenses, *Into the Heart of Reality* is a lovely, heart-centered book that will appeal mainly to a Muslim audience, but could also be enjoyed by a general audience with an interest in Islamic spirituality,

The book is organized into sixty short entries that cover a variety of themes from the profound to the mundane, with such titles as "On Gratitude," "For Life is a Prayer," and "On Mosques and Malls." Most of the entries are footnoted with referenced quotes from the Koran and extrapolations by the author. The footnotes are sometimes too long, and much of their content would have worked better in the entries themselves to maintain the flow of the narrative. The reader is compelled to jump back and forth from entry to footnote, when the separation often feels unnecessary. For example, the entry "On Anger" opens with, "Such an uncontrollable rage, 'bouts of insanity,' said the Master, and when you wake up from it, the damage has been done." Only by reading the footnote does one get a sense of what this means: "An incident related by the Master and as narrated by one of the companion's Abu Huraira 'A man said to me, advise me and I said don't become angry (furious).'"

The addition of many sayings from the prophet Muhammad, who is referred to as Master throughout the book, and his disciples adds a nice touch, and Safiullah does an excellent job of using these quotes to elaborate on the connection between the teachings of Islam and contemporary life. He writes about mindfulness, busyness, ego, interpersonal relationships, and death with the skill and empathy of someone who successfully juggles the challenges of staying spiritually centered in today's hectic and complex world.

The author enjoys a distinguished career in international development, has studied the world religions and philosophies, and is currently working toward his second PhD at the Academy of Islamic Studies through the University of Malaya.

Reading *Into the Heart of Reality* as a tool for prayer and reflection would work beautifully for those who enjoy using books for daily inspiration. All of the entries can stand alone; a reader can open the book to a random page and be assured of finding something meaningful to ponder. Safiullah writes like a poet dabbling in prose; when it fails, the deeper truth still shines, and when it works, it transcends.

PATTY SUTHERLAND (January 22, 2014)

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