

The Body Is the Soul's Carrier | Body and Soul Relationship

What Does It Mean That the Body Is the Soul's Carrier, and Can This Relationship Be Reversed?

One of the most beautiful scenes is a rider skillfully riding on his horse, holding his bridle, and leading the horse in any direction he desires. Horse riding is so fascinating that most of us would like to experience it at least once. However, there are a few people who choose this sport as a professional one because if this very noble, elegant horse goes nuts and, so to speak, bolts, God knows how it would hurt its owner!

A horse is a carrier and must listen to the rider's commands and take orders from him. A horse, a donkey, a camel, or any other animal has the task of taking their rider to the desired destination, and they are used for this purpose. Now imagine that they become stubborn and rebellious, and instead of obeying their rider, they go wherever they like. Or for instance, instead of their owner mounting and leading them, they sat on the owner's back and took control! Such a scenario seems funny, but it is interesting that this ridiculous event happens repeatedly throughout our lives. The difference is that the rider and the carrier are now a part of our existence and both are [faculties of the soul](#).

In this lesson, we want to address a familiar statement that you may have heard. The statement says, "The body is the soul's carrier." We want to see what it means. How must the soul become the rider of the body and take control? Is it possible for this relationship to be reversed? Instead of the body being the carrier

of the soul, can the soul come under the control of the body? Under what conditions does this happen, and what are the dangers? Which one must be given priority: **nourishing the soul** or nourishing the body? And similar kinds of questions.

What Does It Mean That the Body Is the Soul's Carrier?

The ultimate perfection of an apple seed is to become an apple tree, and the potential for this exists within the nature of the seed. However, for the seed to blossom into this perfection, it must be planted in deep soil; without the soil, germination is not possible.

The same applies to humans. The potential for development and growth exists within the soul of all human beings, but the path of this development passes through the material world. In other words, the structure of the human soul is such that until there are contradictions and conflicts in the material world, we cannot pass through the stages of perfection. Our soul is immaterial in essence, and naturally, it cannot live in the material world; therefore, it needs a tool to act as an intermediary and establish a connection between it and the matter. This tool is the body. Thus, the body is the tool for the soul, or more precisely, the body is the soul's carrier to follow the path of perfection.

Naturally, a weak body cannot be a good and speedy carrier. That is why taking care of physical needs, or in other words, the needs of the inanimate, vegetative, animal, and intellectual dimensions, is of utmost importance, and great value and rewards have been set for this in philosophical sources. So far there is no problem, and no one prevents us from attending to these needs. The problem starts when animal,

physical, and intellectual needs become the center of our attention and take priority over spiritual needs.

When the Body Becomes the Rider of the Soul!

The truth of our existence is the [Supra-rational](#) faculty or the human dimension of our being, and the lower dimensions have the function of being the carrier.

The inanimate, vegetative, and animal dimensions are tools for our movement towards God and are supposed to take us to our True Beloved. However, sometimes, the amount of food and sustenance we provide for these dimensions is so excessive that it makes them fat and lazy, to the point where they defy the supra-rational faculty and resist being ridden by it. For this reason, religion becomes a worldly affair in our lives, and our relationship with the sacred falls under the control of our inanimate, vegetative, animal, and intellectual dimensions.

The lifestyle of most of us is such that most of our time and energy is spent on nourishing the animal dimension, to the extent that we become so captive to this part that we no longer have any desire for intimacy and solitude with God. That is why performing prayers (*Salah*) is harder for us than lifting a weight of two hundred kilograms! And when we are traveling and have to shorten our prayers, we become happy. We always have time for trivial and unimportant tasks, but we make countless excuses for solitude with God, and we complain about the lack of time. We leave the holy places and mosques, which are the sources of our spiritual nourishment, after a short time, but we spend twice that time waiting for food in restaurants. All these show that we have given excessive importance to our animal

dimension and dominated it over ourselves. It is as ridiculous as when a horse dictates what its owner must do!

What Are the Consequences of Giving in to the Animal Dimension?

We do not seek any specific reason or logic to fall in love with the animal dimension; just being with the opposite sex and feeling peace is enough for us. But when it comes to spiritual and heavenly loves, we seek all kinds of philosophical reasons to justify this love. We feel restless and heavy-hearted if we are away from our earthly beloved for a few days, yet throughout our lives, our hearts barely yearn for God. We only want our earthly beloved for his/her own sake, not to fulfill our needs. But when it comes to God, our love is conditional on meeting our needs. In fact, our relationship with God is a transactional not a loving one. We do not want the world for the sake of God, but rather we want God for our worldly comfort.

Giving in to the animal dimensions makes us accustomed to lower pleasures and prevents us from experiencing supra-rational pleasures. As a result, religious observance becomes a painful task for us, which we either escape from or perform with difficulty and hatred out of fear of hell. But in both cases, our inward state remains animalistic. The only difference is that in the second case, we are a sacred animal!

The first step in actualizing human potentials and the maturity of supra-rational faculty is understanding the concept of "There is no deity but Allah" ("*La ilaha illallah*"). Without understanding this concept, religion turns into a series of commandments and do's and don'ts that limit our animalistic freedoms. This is while the truth of religion is a romantic song full of love and devotion to God, and

this song is heard in all the sacred texts that have been passed down to us from the Infallibles .

In the continuation of the discussions on humanology, in this lesson, we addressed the relationship between the body and the soul. We learned that the body is the soul's carrier and a tool for moving towards growth and development. We also learned that attention to physical and animal dimensions should be balanced to support the soul in reaching its goal; it must be neither too little or too much.

Finally, if you have any questions or uncertainties about the notion that the body is the soul's carrier, please feel free to share them with us.