Want to know what just happened?

Picture a horse.

Not an old, tired horse.

A magnificent one.

Powerful. Muscular. Full of energy. Capable of carrying you for miles, climbing difficult ground, breaking into a gallop and taking you places you could never reach on foot.

Now picture a young rider sitting on it.

The rider looks tiny compared with the animal beneath him.

But watch.

A slight movement of the reins...

the horse turns.

Another signal...

it slows.

Then trots.

Canters.

Gallops.

Stops.

Even leaps when asked.

The horse has far more physical strength than the rider.

Yet the rider determines **where all that strength goes**.

That picture tells you quite a lot about yourself.

The **horse is your nafs**.

It contains enormous drive: desire, appetite, anger, pleasure, ambition, attraction, energy.

You don't want to kill the horse.

Without it, you're going nowhere.

You need to **ride it**.

The **reins are your ‘aql , your intellect**.

They are what allow direction to become action.

Your ability to think.

To remember.

To weigh consequences.

To tell yourself, *not now*.

To choose one road rather than another.

But reins lying on a horse's neck achieve nothing.

Someone has to hold them.

And deeper still is your **ruh** , the part of you that is drawn upwards, towards Allah Ta'alaa, towards what is true, clean and lasting.

It is why a person can have the substance sitting right in front of him...

every appetite telling him to take it...

and yet something inside whispers:

"No. There has to be more to me than this."

But there is one part of the picture that matters enormously.

The **qalb the heart**.

Think of it as the rider's inner direction.

His intention.

Where does he actually want this horse to go?

Because a skilled rider with excellent reins and a powerful horse can still ride confidently...

in completely the wrong direction.

That is why the heart matters.

When the heart turns towards the ruh, the intellect begins serving that direction and the nafs can be harnessed to carry you there.

When the heart turns completely towards appetite, something strange happens:

the horse begins deciding the journey...

and the intellect, instead of controlling it, starts finding clever reasons to give it what it wants.

"Just tonight."

"I need it."

"I've had a bad day."

“I'll stop after this.”

Same intellect.

Different master.

And that is one of the most useful insights in Islamic psychology.

Scholars such as Malik Badri, Rasjid Skinner, Abdallah Rothman, Hooman Keshavarzi and others have returned to this classical Islamic picture of the human being: you are not simply a brain reacting to chemicals. There is a *nafs*, an *‘aql*, a *qalb* and a *ruh*, constantly interacting with one another. Modern Islamic psychotherapy describes good psychological health not as destroying one of these parts, but bringing them back into a healthy order and balance.

Skinner uses almost this very image: the healthy person resembles a rider whose powerful horse takes him where he intends to go. The instinctive drives are not meant to be extinguished; they are meant to be **channelled and transformed**.

Keshavarzi's work develops the same idea clinically: our thoughts, behavioural drives, spiritual life and emotional world interact, and healing means restoring equilibrium between them rather than treating the human being as one isolated symptom.

And Rothman's model adds something beautiful:

the heart can **turn**.

It can turn down towards the immediate pull of the nafs.

Or it can turn upwards towards the ruh, remembrance of Allah Ta'alaa and the person you were created to become.

Which means this is not really a story about having a bad horse.

It is about **who is directing the ride**.

And earlier, when you stopped...

breathed...

and said:

Allah.

Something shifted.

For that moment, the horse didn't disappear.

The reins didn't disappear.

Nothing inside you had to be destroyed.

They simply began moving in the same direction.

And that is where things can start to change.