



THE ROLE OF
TASAWWUF

IN THE MUSLIM'S TEST
WITH HIS OWN SELF

Osman Nûri Topbaş



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Preface

Endless praise be to Allah Most High, who created us weak servants from nothing, and then formed humankind in the 'best of moulds' to be at the peak of all creation, who breathed into them from His own spirit, thus bestowing on them the potential to rise to spiritual heights, who directed us to good and right by sending us the Book of guidance and the prophets.

Endless blessings and peace be upon the Pride of the Universe, the Master of all prophets, the Mercy sent to all the worlds, the unique model for all mankind, our greatest guide in this world, our source of intercession on the Day of Judgement, our Beloved Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (saw) and on his pure and elite Companions.

Just as this most elevated religion of Islam is a system of belief, it is also a set of principles for life. It brings order to our external world and our outward aspects, as well as ordering our inner world and our heart.

In order to become the 'perfect believer', which is the purpose of Islam, we must practice our religion



by perceiving its holistic nature and uniting form with spirit, matter with spirituality, and the outward with the inward.

Tasawwuf is a path of Divine training and education which aims to bring about the maturity that arises from this union.

This form of training orders our external world through the teachings and guidance of the Holy Qur'an and the *sunnah*, and moulds our hearts, saving them from rawness and boorishness so that they reach perfection.

That is, tasawwuf is a spiritual institution which builds the character of the 'perfect Muslim' and the 'God-conscious believer'.

On the condition that one perceives Almighty Allah with a 'contented *nafs*' and a 'sound heart', tasawwuf is the struggle and effort to transform mere knowledge into wisdom, imitation into (realization), and raise one's faith to the level of *ihsan*.

It is the protection offered by the shield of *taqwa* or God-consciousness, that distances all forms of mundane desires that distance one from Allah, and which attract the *nafs*, and the sensitivity of making the heart ever 'together with Allah'.



وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

‘And He is with you wheresoever ye may be...’

(Hadid, 56:4).

Tasawwuf is the struggle to make sure that Allah is pleased with every single breath we take, with our feelings, thoughts, and deeds, so that we can breathe our last breath with the soundness of faith.

Tasawwuf is a school of wisdom. The teachers at this school are the heirs of the Messenger of Allah (saw), the True Friends of Allah and the perfect guides. They are the best representatives of the prophetic character, guidance and beautiful behaviour, dispersed throughout all the ages.

The most important duty of these spiritual guides is to show us what our own selves are really like and to gain for us the ability to take our conscience to account. In this way, the human being who has been created to be tested and has the tendency to incline towards both good and evil, can reduce their carnal tendencies to a minimum and turn towards what is right and good to the utmost degree. The result of this is that they perceive their own nothingness, selflessness and powerlessness in the face of Divine power and majesty.

It has been said that ‘*He who knows his own self, knows his Lord*’ because to be able to perceive one’s



place before one's Creator implies knowing one's limits which begins with knowing oneself.

To come to such an awareness however requires a constant inner battle in which there is no truce, to eliminate the vile traits of the *nafs*, and to continue on the path of spiritual development until the last breath.

The servant must train this power called the *nafs*, with its many mysteries, under the guidance of competent masters. In this way he can make it the most powerful means of developing and advancing along the path toward his Lord. He must adorn his inner world with divine wisdom by pondering deeply on the divine embroideries of power and manifestations of greatness.

The friend of Allah, Abu al Hasan Kharaqani said:

'Make peace with the people but fight the nafs', thus demonstrating the best way to get along with the people and to draw nearer to Allah.

In this respect then, tasawwuf rejects individualism, selfishness and living for one's own sake and encourages and teaches altruism, sacrifice, struggling for the religion and becoming a believer who serves others.

That is the role of tasawwuf in the Muslim's test with his own self is to eliminate the vile traits



of the *nafs* and to overcome one's own self. It is the struggle to become a perfect believer, a truly good human being, by making one's heart a refuge of mercy and peace for all of creation, and from whose hand, tongue, spiritual state and speech others benefit.

Most importantly of all, tasawwuf is the determination to live as the prophet Muhammad (saw) did, in moderation and balance, uprightly, from the beginning of one's life to the end. As the most perfect guide and unique model, he is the most special gift given by Almighty Allah to mankind. All of the states and behaviour of the Messenger of Allah (saw) have been transmitted to us by the Noble Companions as they witnessed him. Our Lord has allowed the Holy Qur'an to exist until this day, without even one of its letters being changed, which is a great bounty for us all. So too all of the acts of the prophet Muhammad (saw) are a peerless treasure for us, which we can take as our standard in our quest to become the perfect human. Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ

'He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah' (Nisa, 4:80).

As required by the hadith which states that **'A person is with the one he loves'** (Bukhari, Adab, 96), tasawwuf is the effort to be together with the Mes-



senger of Allah (saw) at every stage of life, and to resemble him – to the best of our ability- in terms of his thoughts and feelings, in his state and acts, in his outward and inward.

For centuries every individual from our nation who has lived their lives according to this standard, has been called ‘*Mehmetcik*’ which means ‘*Little Muhammad*’ as a result of this understanding.

This is because tasawwuf, the essence of Islam, is to engrave upon one's heart that which was in the heart of the Messenger of Allah, to feel what he felt, to adopt his beautiful character, and to adorn our own character with his virtues and attributes.

In short, tasawwuf is to perceive the Holy Qur'an and the *sunnah* from the depths of one's heart and to struggle to live in accordance with them with love and ardour.

However, unfortunately in our times, there are many matters that are confusing the minds and disturbing the hearts when it comes to the subject of tasawwuf.

On the one hand we have those who reject tasawwuf completely and on the other hand we have certain wrong acts being committed in the name of tasawwuf and ignorant overzealous people who support such



acts. That is we have two extremes... acts of innovations that ignore the shariah, but are made to fit into the frame of tasawwuf and false understandings...

There are those who have certain fantasies and expectations that they will gain eternal salvation under the garment of tasawwuf, without having performed any righteous deed to their name, without struggling in the way of Allah, without effort, or protecting oneself from the forbidden...

There are those who do not adopt the state of the righteous and truthful individuals but claim to love them anyway; who are bait for the traps of their nafs which makes such claims as 'such and such person will hold my hand, he will save me'... and those who become excessive in their love for the person they have become devoted to, practically idolising them and accepting their words blindly without measuring them against any verse from the Qur'an or hadith, when even the prophets were known to 'slip'. Such people become fodder for the enemies of tasawwuf.

Those who plug their ears to the divine warning in the following verse: '**...do not let Satan deceive you about Allah (thinking that Allah will forgive you)**' (Luqman, 31:33) and misinterpret the deep tolerance and clemency of tasawwuf, thereby adopting ease for the nafs...



Those who, under the appearance of tasawwuf, search for spirituality through pictures and photographs, who act upon their dreams and inspirations even though they may go against the principles of the *shari'ah*... those who pursue unveilings and miracles as the main purpose...

On the other hand we have those who reject tasawwuf completely; the group who label others unbelievers, due to their own misunderstanding they consider *rabita* (spiritual connection to a guide), *tawassul* (taking another as a means of obtaining a desired thing) and visiting the graves to be *shirk*, that is, associating partners with Allah...

At the foundation of all the objections made against tasawwuf lie two main reasons:

The first is being distant from the reality of tasawwuf and remaining unaware of it...

The second is emphasising or giving prominence to the misapplications of tasawwuf by ignorant people who are not competent in tasawwuf and then attributing these to all true masters of tasawwuf...

In conclusion, there are many false ideas and perceptions today which are unfortunately contaminating and tainting the hearts and minds.



It is at this point then that certain concepts in tasawwuf need to be redefined, and the truth needs to be sorted out from falsehood. When we look at the general picture we have today, it becomes imperative that we present the religious principles of moderation, balance and uprightness correctly.

Dear readers!

In this humble work we have tried to draw attention to relevant criteria of the *shari'ah*, as a declaration of the vital need for tasawwuf.

We have tried to clarify the state our heart, as servants of Allah, should be in, in our interactions with our Lord.

We have tried to define the most proper way to interact with one's guide for those who set out on the journey of spiritual training under such guides. We have also tried to bring attention to the fact that overstepping the limits of love and connection can lead one to bigotry and extremes, thus warning of certain dangers that can lead one to lose their foothold.

In short, we have tried to express once again the truth of how it is only possible to be balanced in one's religion by abiding by the principles of the *shari'ah*.

May Almighty Allah allow us to understand our magnificent religion correctly and make it easy for



us to live in a way that He is pleased with. May He be pleased with our feelings, our thoughts, our intentions and our deeds. May He forgive and pardon us through His grace and allow us to gain His good pleasure and mercy.

Amen...

Osman Nûri Topbaş

November 2014

Üsküdar



TASAWWUF IS TO REACH PERFECTION THROUGH THE QUR'AN AND THE SUNNAH

Tasawwuf is another name for taking iman and carrying it forward to sublime and mighty horizons such as the state of 'ihsan'. That is, we come to the realisation and perception that we are ever under divine watch.

As Almighty Allah states in the Holy Qur'an:

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

“And He is with you wheresoever ye may be...” (Hadid, 56:4)

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

“...We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein” (Qaf, 50:16)



TASAWWUF IS TO REACH PERFECTION THROUGH THE QUR'AN AND THE SUNNAH

In order to arrive at the state of the 'perfect human being' which is the aim of Islam, it is necessary for one to practice one's religion by comprehending the union of matter and spirituality, the depths of the outer and the inner, the harmony between the intelligence and the heart, and the cohesiveness of form and spirit.

True tasawwuf consists of the struggle for understanding the inner plan in addition to the outer aspects of Islam. This requires that one perceives Islam within the unity of the *shari'ah* (Islamic law), the *tariqah* (spiritual path), *haqiqah* (reality) and *ma'rifah* (knowledge of Allah).

In reality, as the believer progresses along the True path from '*iman* to *ihsan*', their contemplation deepens, and their attitude towards life and the universe also advance in degree.



For instance, in shari'ah, which consists of the divine commands and prohibitions, and which is the minimum level presented to all of mankind, the common people and the elite, the following understanding is valid – 'your property is yours and mine is mine.'

In *tariqah*, however, the path of the seekers who aim for spiritual maturation becomes as follows: 'your property is yours, and mine is yours too – for the sake of Allah.' Thus the seeker gains the quality of self sacrifice and generosity and altruism become spiritual pleasures.

Beyond this, in the third level of *haqiqah*, which can be attained by the chosen servants of Allah, the following is understood: 'neither your property is yours nor is my property mine, rather it all belongs to Allah.'

In this way, they reach a state of the heart in which they are able to sacrifice even their own existence for Allah's sake, in order to come closer to Him, as stated in the following verse:

'By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give (freely) of that which you love...' (Al'i Imran, 3:92)

Yet still on the horizons of *ma'rifah*, which is the virtue of the Knowers of Allah, the following principle is valid – 'Friendship with Allah cannot coex-



ist with selfishness and the feeling that you possess anything...?’

As is stated in the Holy Qur'an:

‘Allah hath purchased of the believers their lives and their goods in return for Paradise...’ (Tawbah, 9:111)

The measure of friendship is sacrifice. For those who advance along the path of friendship with Allah, the existence of the servant is ‘nothing’ and is in fact non-existent. All creatures are totally dependent on Almighty Allah in order to exist and to continue their existence. There is no thing that can come into existence on its own nor can it sustain its existence, independent of the will and power of Allah. The only existent that is not dependent on another for its existence is the Necessarily Existent One, that is, Almighty Allah.

The following event illustrates this truth nicely:

Shaykh Shibli was once asked:

‘How much zakat should be paid for five camels?’

He replied:

‘The obligation is to pay one sheep but according to us, all of it is for Allah.’

When he was asked for proof of this he replied:



'Abu Bakr is our proof. He gave out his entire wealth for the sake of Allah. Whoever generously gives out all of his wealth in the way of Allah is from the school of Abu Bakr and resembles him. And whoever gives out a large portion of his wealth is from the school of Uthman (ra) and resembles him.

'Knowledge that does not lead one to abandon the world (in one's heart) is not true knowledge.'

Let us give another example that demonstrates how Islam should be perceived as the totality of '*shari'ah, tariqah, haqiqah, and ma'rifah*'.

- In *shari'ah*, to eat after one is full is considered wastefulness.
- In the *tariqah*, to eat until one is full is wastefulness.
- In *haqiqah*, to eat what suffices in heedlessness of the presence of Allah is wastefulness.
- In *ma'rifah*, in addition to all of the above, to eat without contemplating on the divine power and manifestations of His names in His bounties is wastefulness. For everything from the microorganism to the macroorganism is a proof of the eternal power and greatness of its Creator.

Most times, the great Saint, Shah Naqshiband would personally prepare and serve the food. He



would advise his disciples to not remain heedless for even an instant when preparing and eating food and to make sure that their hearts were awake. When eating with his disciples, if one of them happened to eat a mouthful in heedlessness he would immediately caution him gently. He could not bear for them to eat even one mouthful while heedless of Allah.

Eating is not an act of worship in itself. However each mouthful taken while remembering Allah can lead to prosperity and reverence in one's worship. Each mouthful eaten without awareness of Allah however, can lead to hardness of the heart, heedlessness and laziness.

The state arrived at by the Companions under the spiritual training of Allah's Messenger (saw) can be summarised nicely by the following words of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (ra):

'We had arrived at such a state that we could hear the glorification of the food that we ate' (Bukhari, Manaqib, 25).

In short, we can consider the degrees of sensitivity of Islam that we have tried to explain here with a few examples, as being a template that can be applied to any human state or behaviour that comes to mind, from worship to family life, to neighbourly relations and trade and economical transactions. In this way one can attain real depth in tasawwuf.



IN THAT CASE WHAT IS TASAWWUF?

Tasawwuf is the art of knowing Almighty Allah from the heart.

Tasawwuf is another name for taking iman and carrying it forward to sublime and mighty horizons such as the state of 'ihсан'.

Tasawwuf is the discipline of refinement. It is the path to *taqwa* that allows one to shun all things that distance one from Allah. It is a form of spiritual training that controls the greedy ambitions of one's *nafs* and allows one to uncover the potential in the spirit.

Tasawwuf is a spiritual school in which the soul is purified and the heart cleansed under the guidance of righteous teachers who are the heirs of the prophet Muhammad (saw).

Tasawwuf is a battle against the *nafs* in which there is never any truce.

Tasawwuf is the ability to remain a friend of Allah by being content with His divine decree in every circumstance. It is to keep one's heart in balance in the face of the ups and downs of life and its sweet and bitter surprises. It is to avoid becoming spoilt by wealth and feeling constricted by poverty. It is to know that the hardships that befall one are each a divine test and a means to purification. It is to abandon complaints



and whining and become a 'beautiful servant' by being in a constant state of praise and thankfulness.

Tasawwuf is when a believer has perfected themselves both physically and spiritually and then turns to creation with a selfless heart feeling the responsibility to compensate for their deficiencies and needs.

Tasawwuf is to follow the Holy Qur'an and the *sunnah*, perceive the profoundness of the divine and prophetic directives within one's heart, and attempt to apply them to every aspect of their lives.

In short, tasawwuf is to come to know the Messenger of Allah through love for him, to adopt his elevated character, personality and manners, and to struggle to live this religion in a way that is in harmony with its essence and spirit, in a state of ecstasy.

Anything else which contradicts these principles and is not measured against the Holy Qur'an and the sunnah of the prophet (saw) is false, however much it may be attributed to tasawwuf.

IN THAT CASE WHAT IS NOT CONSIDERED TASAWWUF?

When tasawwuf, which includes the depths of *ma'rifah* and *taqwa*, the spiritual and inner aspect of the religion, is ignored, what remains is a mere collection of barren rules.



Certain circles in our day in particular who claim they possess competence in tasawwuf and present themselves as such, consider only the inner aspect, making light of the *shari'ah* or the outward principles of the religion. This is a patent sign of how distant they are from the reality of tasawwuf.

Such people who open the door to self-centred compromises with statements like 'As long as your heart is pure you do not need to do a great number of good deeds' have no connection whatsoever with true tasawwuf which in fact serves the *shari'ah*.

For instance in our day, some people who are distant from the true spirit of the *Mathnawi al Sharif*, and who have overlooked the aspects of *wajd* (spiritual ecstasy) and *taqwa* (God-consciousness) which is from the Mawlawi way, have turned the *sama*, which is in reality a form of *dhikr*, into a folkdance and musical performance accompanied by an orchestra.

Whereas in actual fact, in the first 18 verses, Mawlana Jalalluddin Rumi has the following to say to those heedless people who listen to what he has to say but do not perceive his real aim and purpose:

I have cried out in every gathering and every assembly. I have consorted with people of good and bad character.



Everyone befriended me in accordance with his own understanding. However they did not perceive the secret within me.

My secret is not remote from my cry. But not every eye has the light with which to see, nor does every ear have the power with which to hear.

Inexperienced and unripe spirits cannot understand the state of the mature and ripe. In that case we shall keep the matter short!

In addition, as with all true Friends of Allah, Rumi's source is undoubtedly the Holy Qur'an and the *sunnah*. He proclaims this truth for all the world to hear, in one of his quatrains:

As long as I am alive I am the servant of the Qur'an. I am the dust upon the path of the prophet Muhammad (saw). If anyone transmits anything, however small, from me that is not in line with this, I deplore that person and I deplore his words'.

With this declaration then, Mawlana Rumi openly presents himself as the slave and servant of the Qur'an and the dust on the illuminated path of the prophet Muhammad (saw). That is the steady leg of his compass is ever connected to the *shari'ah* and his is an effort to organise his life in accordance with the directives of the Holy Qur'an and the *sunnah*.



In that case to claim membership to the way of Mawlana Jalalluddin Rumi without acting in accordance with the rulings of the *shari'ah* is an offence to his precious spirit.

On the other hand, some *tariqahs* enter into financial activities with what seems at first to be good intentions in truth. However most of them end up becoming business organisations remote from *taqwa* and yielding to financial and material benefits. This is then a patent example of using religion as a tool to acquire the benefits of this world. The *tariqah* then, which is in reality the door to selflessness and nothingness, turns into a wheel of benefit that spins with the spokes of wealth and plenty.

In some *tariqahs*, sensitivity towards the permissible (*halal*) and the prohibited (*haram*) takes a back seat and with such empty expressions as 'my heart is pure', many rulings of the *shari'ah* are compromised, such as the mixing of men and women without proper Islamic principles and unislamic dress.

As if when one's heart is pure one does not need to abide by the limits of the *halal* and the *haram* and credence is given to the *nafs* revealing a false understanding.

They thus ignore the fact that our greatest guide, the prophet Muhammad (saw), who had the purest heart of all, was a unique example for his community



in his worship, transactions with others, his character, and in abiding by the *halal* and the *haram*, which is the greatest problem of our own times in particular.

True tasawwuf, within the limits of the *ahl al sunnah wa al jama'ah*, is the effort to merge the outer and inner aspects of the life principles of the prophet Muhammad (saw).

Even though the Messenger of Allah was at the peak of spiritual perfection he carried out his duties of worship with great care and meticulousness till his last breath, and so the believer, who should take him as their example, is responsible for carrying out these duties, whatever his spiritual rank, station, way or *tariq*.

The following event which is related by Abdulqadir Gilani illustrates this matter clearly:

‘One day I saw a light appear before my eyes and encompass the entire horizon. Wondering what it was I heard a voice come from the light:

‘O Abdulqadir, I am your Lord! I am so pleased with the righteous deeds that you have done till this day that I have made lawful for you what was prohibited.’

As soon as the voice stopped I knew that Satan-may he be cursed- was behind it and I said:



'Away with you o cursed one! The light you have shown me is eternal darkness.'

Satan responded:

'Once again you have escaped me through the wisdom and insight your Lord has bestowed upon you! Whereas I have misguided hundreds of people in this way'. He then went away.

I raised my hands up to the heavens and thanked Almighty Allah in the awareness and comprehension that this was a bounty from him'

Someone from the gathering asked:

'How did you know it was Satan?' He replied:

'From his saying that I have made lawful for you what was prohibited'.

In truth, if there were ever to be a servant of Allah who would be exempted from abiding by the lawful and the prohibited due to his deeds and spiritual rank, that would be, above all else, the prophet Muhammad (saw). Since he was not even given such a concession (distinction) then certainly no one else could be.

Imam Rabbani has said:

'Giving importance to the inward aspect of Islam requires that one give importance to the outer form (That is, it is essential that the inner and outer aspects



are in harmony). A person who occupies himself with the inner but ignores the outer aspects is an unbeliever (zindiq). All of the inner states that he arrives at are istidraj¹. The best measure of the wellbeing of our inner state is how we order ourselves according to our outer worship. This is the path of uprightness (istiqama)².

In this respect then, however many expressions about tasawwuf that one may hear from a person, if they do not organise their lives according to the Qur'an and the sunnah and ignore the outer responsibilities of the religion, that person cannot be a true person of tasawwuf.

For example a believer who denies the divine commands when it comes to the matter of inheritance because it does not benefit him personally, cannot be considered to have progress along the spiritual path.

In the same way a person who does not abide by the Islamic rulings when it comes to family life cannot be said to live a life according to the principles of tasawwuf. Parents who deprive their children of learning the Qur'an because they are only concerned with their worldly future, thus endangering their eternal

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1. In contrast to *karamat* (miracles) *istidraj* are those wondrous states that appear from individuals who claim sainthood but are in fact unbelieving and sinful. These states are each a test and will slowly drag them to destruction.
 2. Imam Rabbani, *Maktubat*, III, 87-88, no: 87.



life, cannot be said to develop spiritually. For such parents to consider themselves people of tasawwuf is an open sign of heedlessness.

Also to infringe on another's rights, to act in a way proscribed by Allah in order to obtain some worldly benefit, to compromise by saying 'Let me just do this this one time, then I won't do it after that' – these are the greatest forms of oppression a person can subject themselves to and they will harm one's spirituality.

The words from the Holy Qur'an, of the brothers of the prophet Yusuf, who tried to kill him due to their jealousy of him, are an example of the traps that the *nafs* sets for itself to make one commit the unlawful:

'Slay Joseph or cast him out to some (unknown) land, so the favour of your father may be given to you alone: (there will be time enough) for you to be righteous after that!' (Yusuf, 12:9).

Thus to delve into the *haram* today thinking that one will reform themselves the next day, which may or may not arrive, is to make light of *tawbah* (repentance) and to become a slave to the whims of one's own ego. This state however, is no different than pouring poison over one's spiritual state.

We should never forget the following principles given to us by Umar (ra) in regard to this matter:



'Do not look at the prayer a person prays or their fasting. Rather ask:

When they speak, do they speak the truth?

When they are entrusted with something, do they honour the trust?

When they are busy with the world, do they abide by the haram and the halal? This is what you should consider³.

In short, it is meaningless to expect advancement in the Sufi path from a person who does not abide by the standards of the *shari'ah* in their worship, their transactions with others, their character and the order in their life.

Let us not forget that the *shari'ah*, which can be called the outer rulings of Islam, is like the skeleton that keeps the body upright. A body without a skeleton or a spine cannot stay upright. However a life that only consists of the skeleton – like certain people try to show it to be purposely- puts forth a view of Islam that is frightening, cold, repulsive and without spirit.

In this respect then, the true Sufi path consists of perceiving the spiritual nature of the Messenger of Allah (saw), his noble Companions, the righteous predecessors, and the God-conscious believers and to

3. Bayhaqi, *as-Sunan al Kubra*, VI, 288; *Shuab*, IV, 230, 326.



struggle to live like they did, with great love, ecstasy and enthusiasm.

UPRIGHTNESS – THE GREATEST MIRACLE

Tasawwuf is above all else, to struggle to order one's life in the direction of the Holy Qur'an and the sunnah.

The Holy Qur'an states:

'And obey Allah and the Messenger. that you may obtain mercy' (Al'i Imran, 3:132)

'O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the apostle, and make not vain your deeds!' (Muhammad, 47:33)

At his last sermon, the Messenger of Allah (saw) said:

'... Know this that I will go before you to wait for you at the Pool of Kawthar in Paradise. I will be pleased with your great numbers in contrast to the other nations. Beware of bringing disgrace to me by committing sins.'

... O believers! I leave behind for you two things. If you hold on to them tightly you will never lose your way. These are the Book of Allah and the sunnah of His prophet...' (See Muslim, Hajj, 147; Abu Dawud, Manasiq, 56).

Thus true tasawwuf is to be able to properly abide by these two sacred trusts. It is a method of training



that teaches us how we can realise the deeds of the heart such as sincerity (*ikhlas*), God-consciousness (*taqwa*), abstention (*zuhd*), deep reverence (*khushu*), repentance (*tawba*), and contentment (*rida*). It also teaches us how we can eliminate the diseases of the *nafs* such as ostentation (*riya*), conceit (*'ujub*), arrogance (*kibir*), back-biting (*ghiybah*) and envy (*hasad*). It is not to merely attain certain unveilings (*kashf*) or miracles (*karamat*) by training oneself in abstention and struggle.

Being subject to unveilings and performing miracles is not a measure of spiritual progress anyway. In many narrations we are informed that the best human being after the prophets was Abu Bakr (ra) but we have no information about any physical or outward miracles performed by him. His greatest miracle was his unparalleled love for the Messenger of Allah and his peerless, faithful submission and obedience to him.

This is why the true friends of Allah never gave importance to physical miracles and were meticulous in refraining from disclosing these types of miracles because they could lead to pride and fame. They put all their efforts into what was the real miracle: to live a life in accordance with the Holy Qur'an and the *sunnah*.



Junayd Baghdadi (may his spirit be sanctified) has said:

'If you see a person flying in the sky yet he does not follow the Book or the Sunnah, then know that this is not a miracle but rather istidraj'.

It is also narrated that Bayazid-i Bistami said:

'One day I wanted to cross over to the other side of the river of Tigris. The two banks of the river came together miraculously in order to let me cross over. I immediately came to my senses and said to the river:

'I swear that I will not be deceived by this. Boats take people over the river for half a coin. (You however are asking for my righteous deeds that I have prepared for the Day of Judgement for thirty years). In that case I will not waste my thirty years for half a coin (for the sake of a miracle that will lead me to believe that I have existence on my own or to feel my own ego). What I need is the Generous One (*al Karim*) not a miracle (*karamat*).

Likewise our Lord says in one verse:

'...Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him.
(Hujurat, 49:13).



TASAWWUF IS TO PROTECT ONESELF FROM HEEDLESSNESS THROUGH REMEMBRANCE OF ALLAH (*DHIKR*)

Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

**'O you who believe! Remember Allah with
unceasing remembrance'** (Ahzab, 33:41).

**'... and who remember Allah when they stand,
and when they sit, and when they lie down to sleep...'**
(Al'i Imran, 3:191).

Thus Allah wills that our hearts desire to meet with him at every instant.

In other words our duty of remembering Allah is not only limited to the ritual prayer (*salat*). We need to make our state of being conscious of Allah during the prayer continue on when it ends. Allah does not forget His servants for an instant, and wants that we too remember Him always.

At every opportunity the prophet Muhammad encouraged his Companions to remember Allah often. He advised different Companions to do different *awrad*⁴ and it is known that they would form circles of *dhikr* from time to time and perform their *dhikr* together⁵.

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4. See Ibn Majah, Adab 56; Bukhari, Fadailu Ashab an Nabi 9, Dawat 11; Muslim, Dhikr 79,80.
 5. See Ahmad, IV, 124



It is because of the danger of remaining heedless of dhikr even for a second that the prophet Muhammad prayed as follows:

'O my Lord! Do not abandon me to my nafs even for the blink of an eye⁶.

A heart will be subject to heedlessness to the degree that it forgets Allah. This is why the prophet Muhammad said:

'Sometimes there comes a veil over my heart. But I turn to Allah asking for forgiveness one hundred times a day' (Muslim, Dhikr, 41; Abu Dawud, Witr, 26).

This shows us that it is not merely committing sins that requires *istigfhar*, or asking Allah for forgiveness, but also our moments which are passed in heedlessness of Him. The measure for a heart that has reached *ma'rifutallah* is very fine and even a breath that is taken unaware of Allah is considered a sin. The prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

'If a people sit in a gathering without remembering the name of Allah, their act will be deficient and they will have sinned. Whoever walks a path and does not remember Allah, will be lacking and will have sinned. Whoever goes to sleep and does not remember Allah



will again have performed a deficient act and will have sinned' (Ahmad, II, 432).

The state mentioned in the 191st verse of the chapter Al'i Imran of remembering Allah standing, sitting and lying down is an indication of this. A person is generally in one of these three states. Thus our Lord desires for us a constant state of dhikr. The verse continues and mentions the conditions for this state of constant dhikr being accepted as follows:

'...and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth...' (Al'i Imran, 191).

That is, Allah desires that we contemplate deeply upon His Divine Power and the manifestations of His Greatness with a trembling heart that is aware of its own powerlessness and nothingness (compared to Him) and in awe and admiration.

In another verse Allah says:

'Believers are only they whose hearts tremble with awe whenever Allah's name is mentioned, and whose faith is strengthened whenever His words are conveyed unto them...' (Anfal, 8:2).

Thus *dhikr* that merely repeats words, that does not move from the lips down to the heart, and thus does not lead to an awakening of the heart and cause it to tremble, is not true *dhikr* and not acceptable.



The aim of *dhikr* is for the heart to be aware of what is being remembered and being together with Allah.

This is why progress in the path of tasawwuf is not only dependent on advancing in one's spiritual lessons and carrying out one's periodical *awrad*. It is also connected to the heart becoming more and more sensitive and attuned. It requires the development of character and an increase in the manifestations in the heart of the Names of Beauty of Allah.

A person who learns their spiritual lessons will be found to have improved in terms of grace, elegance, gentleness of the heart, mercy, compassion, serving others, struggling and sacrifice; it requires that they become more forgiving, more understanding, more tolerant and that they increase in patience and contentment. It requires that they want for their brother what they want for themselves and that they possess a spirit which is altruistic and sensitive. This is the only way that spiritual progress becomes possible.

The practice of tasawwuf is to live with the awareness that one is ever together with Allah, within the bounty and spirituality provided by *dhikr*. Sami Ramazanoglu described tasawwuf as '*purifying the heart of everything other than Allah by being in a constant state of dhikr*⁷.



When a believer attains to this state of awareness and perception it is a guarantee that he will be able to solve the mysteries in the divine tests that he encounters.

For instance Umar ibn Abdulaziz said:

‘The *haram* (forbidden things) are fire. Only those whose hearts are dead will reach out for them. If they were alive they would definitely feel the pain of the fire’.

And so a believer whose heart is alive with *dhikrullah* will be protected from heedlessness and thus:

✓ His hand will not be able to reach out for the forbidden or even those things which are doubtful.

✓ He will have protected his spirit from being harmed by evil.

✓ He will not pursue vain adventures; he will not delve in triviality, falsehood and extremes; he will not be deceived by fleeting loves.

✓ He will not waste his life trying to please his wild *nafs*; he will not taint his book of deeds with dissoluteness and disgraceful acts.

✓ On the contrary, he will adorn his life with righteous deeds and good acts.

✓ He will take the Qur'an and sunnah as his guides for life.



✓ He will perform his acts of worship in deep reverence (*khushu*). And he will increase in his efforts to serve others in the way of Allah and attend the assemblies of the righteous.

✓ As a witness of his Lord on this earth he will have left behind a good impression and many memories from a life of virtue and thus will have animated his life.

In contrast to this a heart that is distant from *dhikr* will be subject to heedlessness and will become heavy and boorish. It will be ever on the verge of falling into the pits of sin. Heedlessness is the setting that leads to sin. When that setting is established sins are committed easily without feeling their heavy weight.

In this respect then, to eliminate heedlessness through *dhikr* is a means to attaining *taqwa*, a form of spiritual protection, which is the strongest shield against sin. This is because no person will try to trig their brother while saying 'Bismillah' (In the Name of Allah). A heart that says 'Allah' will not knowingly injure another.

Thus tasawwuf is to live with a heart that is fully alive, ever aware of being under the watch of the Divine camera, in the state of *ihsan*. It is to live by the principle that Allah Most High is with us at every instant and in every place. It is to never forget for an instant that He is closer to us than our jugular vein.



It is to know with certainty that what occurs to our hearts is clear and evident to Him and that He sees and hears us all the time.

May Almighty Allah allow us all to live our faith at the degree of *ihsan*. May He illuminate our hearts with the light of *dhikrullah*, *ma'rifatullah*, and *muhabbatullah*. May He give us all success in living a life of acceptable servitude to Him.

Amen!...





TASAWWUF: THE ELIMINATION OF THE NAFS AND THE GROWTH OF THE SPIRIT

Abu al-Hasan Kharaqani said:

“Just as the ritual prayer and fasting are compulsory acts, so too it is essential that one removes from the heart arrogance, envy, and ambitious greed”.

Being arrogant and egotistical in particular, is like spreading poison over one’s spirit. In the creed of *tawheed*, that is belief in the oneness of Allah, there is no tolerance for any kind of partnership with Almighty Allah’s name of *al Mutakabbir*, the Greatest.



TASAWWUF: THE ELIMINATION OF THE NAFS AND THE GROWTH OF THE SPIRIT

Due to graveness of the matter, Almighty Allah makes an oath seven times, one after the other, and then declares the following:

‘Truly he succeeds that purifies his *nafs*. And he fails that corrupts it!’ (Shams, 91:9-10).

The invasion of today’s global culture in which the *nafs* is incited through advertising, fashion which encourages luxury and extravagance, the negative indoctrination and propaganda of television and the internet, has brought with it a terrible spiritual erosion and contamination. People are confused, and their minds and hearts are in tumult. The means are mixed up with the ends. Instead of eating to gain strength so that one can carry out one’s servitude to Allah, people now live only to eat and drink. The hearts have become enslaved by the world and the *nafs* has become a slave to carnal desires. The lack of



contentment within the souls has dragged mankind to individual and global depression. A worldview that has no anxiety about the hereafter has poured poison over the hearts and minds.

This is why training in tasawwuf, which is basically the purification of the *nafs* and the cleansing of the heart, is even more crucial in our times. Tasawwuf is training in gratitude, giving thanks, praise, contentment, abstention, self-restraint and fulfilment. It is to perceive the truth that the real life is the hereafter and to be saved from being enslaved to the carnal desires of one's *nafs*.

IN TASAWWUF EVERYTHING BEGINS ONCE ONE TRULY PERCEIVES THEIR OWN NOTHINGNESS

The endeavour of tasawwuf is to remove egoism, pride, and arrogance from one's inner world and perceive one's true state of 'nothingness' and 'selflessness'.

Shah Naqshiband was a master of spiritual knowledge. Despite this, during his first years of spiritual training with his teacher, he would clean the roads, look after the sick, the weak and even wounded animals. In this way he came to a state of great humility and selflessness. The following are his words and they reflect his state:



All else are good yet I am vile!

(That is everyone else is good, it is only I who is awry).

At a time when Khalid Baghdadi (d. 1827) was known as *Shams u Shumus*, the Sun of Suns, he went to the Sufi lodge of Abdullah Dahlawi (d.1824). However Dahlawi did not even go out to welcome him. He did not appoint such a great scholar to the pulpit, but rather in order to ensure that his ego was annihilated and for him to realise his own nothingness, he gave him the duty of cleaning the lavatories.

When Aziz Mahmud Hudayi was the chief judge of Bursa he also went through many similar stages in the lodge of the great Uftada, in order to realise his nothingness and selflessness. As a result of these steps that led to the elimination of his pride, arrogance, and egoism, he became a perfect guide who later advised the world sultans of that time. Until this time, countless numbers of judges have come and gone, but only the master Hudayi has continued to live on in the hearts for 400 years⁸.

Undoubtedly, just as with all methods and ways of tasawwuf, those that are used to train the *nafs* are

8. The Hudayi Foundation was established after his name and the author of this book is the honorary president of this Foundation (Editor's note).



founded on the prophetic way, or his way that was reflected in the lives of his Companions. The following event is a good example of this.

Zayd ibn Thabit (ra) narrates:

'I once saw a robe on the Caliph Umar (r.a) which had 17 patches on it. I went home weeping. I went out again a little while later and encountered Umar again. He had a waterskin on his shoulders and was walking amongst the people. I addressed him in amazement:

'O Commander of the Believers.' He replied:

'Shh, do not speak. I will explain later.'

I walked with him. He went to an old lady's house and emptied the water into her containers. We then went back to Umar's house. I asked him why he did this. He replied:

'After you left, the envoys to Rome and Persia came to me and said:

'May Allah bring you good o Umar. All of the people are in agreement about your knowledge, your virtue and your justice.'

When they left my side I felt a sense of pride well up in me. Then I immediately got up and did what you saw me do (in order to silence my ego)' (Muhibbu

al Tabari, al Riyadu an Nadra, II, 380).



Thus in tasawwuf, everything begins with letting the *nafs* know its limits and perceiving one's true state of 'nothingness'. Unique virtues arise in the hearts of those who attain this sensitivity.

The following state of Umar (ra) is another good example of this state:

Iyas ibn Salama (ra) narrates the following from his father:

"One day Umar (ra) went to the marketplace with a staff in his hand. He shook the staff at me and said:

"Do not stand there, you are blocking the path of the Muslims". The staff touched the tip of my robe.

The next year I encountered him again and he asked me:

"Salama will you go to hajj?"

I replied:

"Yes". He then took me by the hand and led me to his house. He gave me 600 dirhams and said:

"Use this for hajj. Know that this is to repay what I did to you when I shook my staff at you".

I said:

"O Commander of the believers. I do not remember any matter about a staff".



He replied:

“But I have never been able to forget it” (Tabari, Tarih, IV, 224).

Abu al Hasan Kharaqani has said:

*“Those friends of Allah who have reached elevated ranks have risen to such heights not only because they carry out their deeds with sincerity but because they also purify their nafs”*⁹.

*“Just as the ritual prayer and fasting are compulsory acts, so too it is essential that one removes from the heart arrogance, envy and ambitious greed”*¹⁰.

In reality, the mystery that has elevated all true friends of Allah is this humility and this state of selflessness. This is why the true knowers of Allah have said:

“When you take your self out of the way what remains is the Creator”.

The most difficult vice for the *nafs* to abandon is pride, arrogance and egoism. Abu Hashim as-Sufi, one of the first Sufis, said:

9. Attar, *Tathkira*, p. 622.

10. Attar, *Tathkira*, p. 629.



“It is more difficult to scrape out pride from a heart in which it has become settled than it is to dig out a mountain with a needle”.

But alas as long as this is not done it is impossible to grow spiritually and reach the state of the ‘perfected human being’ that is the aim of religion.

A hadith states:

“The one who has even an atom’s weight of pride in their heart will not enter Paradise” (Muslim, Iman, 147).

From this respect then, pride, arrogance, conceit, and egoism are like cancers on the path of spiritual growth. The aim of training in tasawwuf is that one abandons the egoism that comes from the *nafs*, in other words, one desists in saying ‘I’ and, replacing this with ‘You, o my Lord!’ puts a seal on its egoism.

Satan (may he be cursed) objected against a command of Allah, and carried out the first rebellion against Him and, instead of admitting his fault and asking for forgiveness, he persisted in his mistake, as he was a slave to his pride, arrogance and egoism. He did not regret the sin he committed. Instead of condemning his *nafs*, he became a victim of his own obstinacy and pride. Thus he was subject to the curse of Allah.

When our father Adam and our mother Hawwa (Eve) listened to Satan and tasted from the forbid-



den fruit, they committed the first sin of humankind. However, they did not try to cover up their fault by making excuses as Satan did. Rather they condemned their *nafs* and made a sincere confession.

“They said: “Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves and if You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, then we will be of the losers!” (Araf, 7:23).

They demonstrated the virtue of turning back from their misake, and regretfully and ashamed, they took refuge in the mercy and forgiveness of Allah. Their repentance and seeking forgiveness with genuine tears was accepted by Allah and they were subjected to divine grace.

In this respect then the greatest struggle in tasawwuf is to show the *nafs* its limits in regards to its Lord. The *nafs* is such a thing that even when it is in a state of worship it can admire itself and become preoccupied with the faults of others thereby seeing itself as superior.

In his book titled *Gulistan*, Shaykh Sadi-i Shirazi narrates the following anecdote:

‘When I was a child I used to worship a great deal. I would wake up in the night and occupy myself with worship of Allah. One night I was sitting next to my father. I had not slept at all and was constantly



reading from the Qur'an. Some people around me were sleeping. I said to my father:

“Not even one of these people has woken up to pray two rakats of *tahajjud*, it is as if they are all dead”.

My father frowned and said:

“My son! If only you had slept like them instead of backbiting them”.

His father was teaching him the following lesson:

“Even though those whom you hold in contempt are depriving themselves of the blessings that comes from this time of the pre-dawn, at least the angels are not writing down negative things about them. However in your book it has just been written that you belittled your brothers in religion and committed the sin of backbiting...”

There are endless traps for the *nafs*, even though they appear to be right. The one who feels an independent existence within themselves, and considers themselves superior to others, in other words they claim an ‘I’ for themselves, will have distanced themselves from the path of reality, even if they are a leading *murshid* serving in the way of spirituality.

In this regard the following event is filled with wisdom:



One time the great mujtahid scholar Ahmad ibn Hanbal, was returning from the marketplace in Baghdad, and someone who saw him with his bag in his hand, asked to carry it for him. When Ahmad ibn Hanbal did not want to give it to him, the man insisted saying:

‘Sir, serving our great men is a duty upon us’.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal responded to these words as follows:

“If we considered ourselves great men whose bags should be carried this would be arrogance and would be a sign that we were in fact little indeed. So even though for you to see us as great men will be a means of you obtaining reward, for us it will lead us to heedlessness. It is best then that I do not consider myself so great that my bag needs to be carried and so carry it myself. Because **on the Day of Judgement everyone will have to carry their own weight, and nobody else will be able to carry it for them**”.

And so the secret that made these great men great was their humility and selflessness. In contrast, and in our own day in particular, some ‘guides’ on the spiritual path display such traits as pride, arrogance and egoism as if they see in themselves some kind of power, might or strength. Alas they spread poison on the path that they are trying to represent, and stain and taint the purity of this path.



TASAWWUF IS KEEPING COMPANY WITH THE RIGHTEOUS

Shaykh Sadi gives the following example of how the state of another can be contagious and change one's life:

“Qitmir, the dog of the Companions of the Cave, gained great honour because he kept company with the righteous; his name is even mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. As for the wife of the prophet Noah and the wife of the prophet Lut, their hearts were with the sinners and so they were put in the fire (Even though their husbands were prophets this did not help them)”.

As **Imam Ghazzali** has said, keeping company with non-Muslims, sinners and heedless people will in time lead to one thinking like them, and then after a little while longer, their hearts will become one. This then leads to the step-by-step destruction of the human being.

Ubaydullah Ahrar warned those he loved of the following:

“Keeping company with those who are heedless of Allah and indifferent to religion will lead to apathy and misery arising in the heart, and the spirit becoming cluttered”.

From this respect then, it is inconceivable that a believer with *taqwa* would keep company with the



heedless out of their own will or desire. Remaining indifferent to such a matter will lead a person to eternal loss.

Likewise it is said in hadith:

'A person is with the one he loves' (Bukhari, Adab, 96). That is, a person will be raised up on the resurrection in the company of whomever he loved most and spent time with in the world.

Just as one can be negatively influenced by heedless people which can lead to constraintment of the heart, so too one can be positively influenced by the righteous leading to the heart being invigorated. In reality, due to the blessings that arise by connecting one's heart to the righteous, one can rise to endless spiritual heights.

This is why Almighty Allah encourages the believers to spend time with the truthful and righteous:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

“O you who believe! Remain conscious of Allah and be with the truthful” (Tawbah, 9:119).

Note that the verse does not say ‘be truthful’, but rather it says ‘be *with* the truthful’. This is because being truthful is a natural consequence of being with the truthful.



In regards to this verse, Ubaydullah Ahrar said:

‘The command to ‘be with the truthful’ in the verse indicates that one should be with them always (constantly). ‘with’ in the verse is mentioned in an absolute sense, and indicates that this can be done in two ways. The first is being with the truthful, that is physically attending the assemblies of the truthful and making sure one’s heart is with them. The second is that when physical togetherness is not possible one should imagine himself in their assembly’.

Having love in one’s heart for the righteous, feeling like one is with them even when they are absent, and viewing events and life through their eyes, gains for the individual great spiritual vigour. Thus in tasawwuf, the concept of ‘*rabita*’, which is a means of attaining this spiritual benefit is of great importance.

RABITA – MAKING THE HEARTS ONE

Rabita is a way of keeping one’s love constantly alive. In truth, there is no person in the entire universe who is without this connection. Every person with a heart is connected to someone.

For instance a parent is connected to their child, a child is connected to his parents, husbands and wives are connected to each other, a young person is connected to the person he or she sees as their role model – they all have a bond of the heart. Even in



worldly and transient things, there is a natural bond of love so how can this bond not exist in the spiritual realm.

The best example of this connection in the Sufi path is the bond of love felt between the prophet Muhammad (saw) and his Companions.

Because of this bond their hearts felt with the Messenger of Allah (saw), the Companions began to reflect his character and took on his spiritual hue. The result was that they adopted the state of the Messenger of Allah (saw). This is why they were able to say, in all sincerity *'May my life, my wealth and my everything be sacrificed for you o Messenger of Allah'*, and were able to receive great pleasure from saying so. They felt it an obligation on their own selves to sacrifice everything for Allah and His Messenger.

By personally adopting the hadith *'A person is with the one he loves'* (Bukhari, Adab, 96), they were able to become one with Him, in their state, via being with him physically, emotionally and mentally. It was a result of the blessings of this bond of the heart that they were favoured with such grace from their Lord.

When Hubayb (ra) was trapped and captured by the pagans of Mecca his sole desire before he was martyred was to be able to send his greeting of peace, filled with love and respect to the Messenger of Allah



(saw)... But with whom could he send it? Helplessly he looked up to the heavens and prayed:

“O Allah! There is no one here who can send my greeting to the Messenger of Allah. You pass on my greeting to him”.

At that point the Messenger of Allah was sitting with his Companions in Madina, when he suddenly said: *‘Wa alayhissalam’*, meaning *‘and upon him be peace’*. Hearing this, his Companions were surprised and asked:

‘O Messenger of Allah. Who did you respond to in this way?’

He replied:

“I responded to your brother Hubayb. Here is Gabriel who brought his greeting of peace to me” (See. Bukhari, Jihad 170, Maghazi, 10, 28; Waqidi, I, 354-363).

Another time, after the Messenger of Allah had signed the treaty of Hdaybiya with the Meccans, he sent Uthman (ra) to Mecca as an envoy. No matter how much Uthman explained to the Meccans that their only intention was to perform the lesser pilgrimage and then leave, they did not give their permission. Moreover they kept him under surveillance but told him that he could make his rounds around the Kabah if he so wished.



However, that blessed Companion showed them his loyalty and devotion to the Messenger of Allah, saying:

'I will not make tawaf of the Kabah if the prophet does not. I will only visit the Holy Ka'bah behind him. I will not be in a place where the Messenger of Allah is not welcome' (Ahmad, IV, 324).

Meanwhile the rumour spread to the believers waiting at Hudaibiyah that Uthman had been martyred. In response to this loyalty of Uthman, the Messenger of Allah took an oath from his Companions that they would fight against the pagans if need be. He then took one hand and placing it over the other he said:

'O Allah. This is for the pledge of Uthman. He is undoubtedly in Your and Your Messenger's service'. He thus showed how much confidence he had in him¹¹.

Thus was the love that the hearts of the Companions felt for the Messenger of Allah, even in his absence. They were like different bodies living with the same heart.

The best example of connecting with the Messenger of Allah, of course is the bond between the prophet and Abu Bakr (ra).



Abu Bakr as Siddiq (r.a) was devoted to the Messenger of Allah (saw) with such a deep love that he would give his entire world just to see the prophet smile. He had a desire to sacrifice everything he owned for him. One time, the prophet complimented this generous Companion of his saying:

“I have not benefited from the wealth and property of anyone like I have benefited from that of Abu Bakr..”

As for that model of loyalty, who sacrificed his entire being for the Messenger of Allah (saw), he sensed in these words a kind of separateness. With teary eyes he asked:

‘Do not I and my wealth belong only to you o Messenger of Allah’ (Ibn Majah, Muqaddimah, 11).

Thus he had given himself up entirely for the Prophet (pbuh) and submitted to him wholeheartedly. His heart had become a clear mirror reflecting the heart of the Messenger of Allah and as a result he became the confidante of the prophetic mystery. Everything pertaining to the Messenger of Allah (saw) carved out a deep niche in his heart and was filled with meaning for him. Abu Bakr (ra) was the leading Companion in terms of understanding the wisdom in the verses of the Qur’an, the hadiths of the prophets and the events that took place. He was able to perceive many prophetic nuances that nobody else could understand, with superior insight and discernment.



For instance consider the time of the Farewell pilgrimage when the following verse was revealed:

‘...This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion...’ (Maidah, 5:3).

Everyone present was pleased that the religion had been completed. However Abu Bakr (ra) perceived the reality that Allah would soon be inviting his Beloved Messenger to the eternal realm. His heart was filled with the burning pain of separation.

Another example of his fine perception is as follows:

During his last days the Messenger of Allah (saw) had become so ill that he was unable to go to the mosque. He appointed Abu Bakr to lead the prayer. At one point he felt well enough to go to the mosque. After counselling the Companions on certain issues he said the following:

“Allah Most High has left one of his servants free to choose between what is with Him and the world. That servant has chosen what is with Allah...”

Upon hearing these words Abu Bakr began to weep, his gentle and sensitive heart filled with sorrow. He sensed that the prophet was farewelling them in his own way. He was weeping like the wailing reed flute. Teary-eyed he said:



“May my mother and father be sacrificed for you o Messenger of Allah! We would sacrifice our fathers, our mothers, our lives, our property and our children for you” (Ahmad, III, 91).

No one else in that gathering had perceived that the prophet was in fact farewelling this world. In fact the other Companions could not understand why Abu Bakr (ra) was crying and asked each other in surprise:

‘How amazing it is that this old man is weeping when the Messenger of Allah mentions a righteous person who chose to meet his Lord’ (Bukhari, Salat, 80).

It did not even occur to them that the righteous slave who had been left free to choose between the world and Allah was in fact the Messenger of Allah (saw) and so they were unable to perceive the truth that Abu Bakr (ra) had perceived.

At that point the Messenger of Allah (saw) continued to speak, his words being consolation for the sorrowful heart of Abu Bakr and also proclaiming his value:

“We have paid back all of the favours of those who have helped us, in kind or even more. However not Abu Bakr! He has been so kind and good to us that he will be rewarded by Allah on the Day of Judgement.

Both in his friendship and his wealth Abu Bakr has been the kindest to me. If I were to take an intimate



friend other than my Lord, I would take Abu Bakr. But the bonds of brotherhood are greater'

A few days before the Messenger of Allah (saw) passed away, he said:

“Let no door of my mosque remain open except that of Abu Bakr’s¹². For I see a light over his door¹³”.

Thus all doors were closed and only Abu Bakr’s remained open. This indicated to the fact that the door of closeness to Allah’s Messenger can be opened through complete loyalty, submission, obedience, sacrifice, friendship and love, as demonstrated by Abu Bakr (ra).

Rabita in effect means keeping fresh and alive the love one has in one’s heart and is an attempt to strengthen this bond of the heart and benefit from this togetherness through the chain of perfected guides that goes back to the Messenger of Allah (saw).

12. Bukhari, Ashabu’ an-Nabi 3, Menakibu al-Ansar 45, Salat 80; Muslim, Fadailu as-Sahaba 2; Tirmidhi, Menakib 15.

13. Ibn Sa’d, II, 227; Ali al-Muttaqi, *Kanz*, XII, 523/35686; Ibn Asakir, *Tarihu Dimashq*, XXX, 250.



THE ONE IN YEMEN IS CLOSE TO ME...

If along with this oneness of the hearts amongst the friends of Allah, there is also a physical closeness then this is 'light upon light'. However in the training provided by tasawwuf, a mere physical proximity is not sufficient. There are those who can sit at the feet of a perfected guide but not gain anything due to their heedlessness.

On the other hand there are many sincere disciples from distant lands who, through the deep love, respect, longing and devotion for their guide, they attain great spiritual heights.

In regards to this, many of our great Sufi masters have said: '*The one in Yemen is close to me, while the one next to me is in Yemen*'. This is why the most important thing is that wherever we may be, we should not lose this connection, this oneness of the heart.

The prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

*"Those of the people who are closest to me are those God-conscious people who are mindful of Allah, whoever and wherever they may be"*¹⁴.

Rabita, a vital matter in Sufi training began to be strongly criticised from the 19th century onwards by

14. Ahmad, V, 235; Haythami, *Majmau al Zawaid*, Beirut 1988, IX, 22.



certain people. It was even made a matter of faith and unbelief. However, as we mentioned before, *rabita* is a natural psychological phenomenon. There is nothing about *rabita* that is understood and applied in this way that can bring harm to one's belief.

Ubaydullah Ahrar has the following to say about this matter:

"...If a person whose heart is devoted to money and wealth is not considered an unbeliever, then why should a person whose heart is devoted to (and who loves) a perfected believer be a cause of unbelief?"¹⁵

Moreover people whose hearts are not devoted to a spiritual guide are highly likely to follow bad examples, in line with the truth that 'nature does not accept a void'. Likewise, it has been said that '*a heart that is not occupied with the truth will be occupied with falsehood*'.

In short *rabita* consists of a follower keeping the love he or she feels for their guide and struggling to imitate them in their righteous deeds and beautiful states. Just as the company and guidance of the righteous are effective and beneficial, so too is their love...

15. Ali bin Hussain Safi, *Rashahat-i Aynu al Hayati* (thk. Ali Asgar Mu'iniyan), Tahran 2536/1977, II, 636-637.



TASAWWUF IS THE WAY OF CHARACTER NOT FORM

In discussing the matter of spiritually benefitting from the righteous it becomes necessary to briefly touch on the issue of photographs.

In today's world with the spreading of technology, we are seeing a boom in taking photographs. Nearly every place has become a studio and everyone is a photographer. Putting aside other times, we observe with great sadness people being so overly occupied with taking photos and videos even when they are performing tawaf around the Ka'aba, stopping at Arafat, and visiting the Rawda (the Prophet's tomb). These are futile acts which damage the blessings and spirituality of one's worship.

The same situation can be seen at spiritual gatherings with the master. We frequently observe photographs and videos being taken, albeit with good intentions and in order to have something to remember, whereas at such talks, one should concentrate on benefitting spiritually by attaining oneness of the heart and being in a state of contemplation. To place so much importance on this matter is wrong. Just like the medicine that can become poison if you increase the dose, such acts can bring harm to a person's spirituality.



Let us not forget that the divine cameras are recording our every instant. These will be laid before us to view in the hereafter...

The Holy Qur'an states:

“Whoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it and whoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it” (Zilzal, 99:7-8).

As we mentioned before, the important thing about keeping company with the righteous and *rabita* is the oneness of the hearts and spirit, rather than a physical, apparent and outer proximity.

Sami Ramazanoglu has said:

*“There is no need to contemplate on the vision of one's guide while making rabita. Love is what is needed. The one who truly loves another will always see them before their eyes anyway”*¹⁶.

Photographs limit one's imagination and imprisons it in a material form. Whereas one's imagination reaches out for the infinite and the formless realities.

Moreover the rulings of Islam about photographs are known¹⁷. People's photographs and their form are

16. Ramazanoglu Mahmud Sami, *Musahaba*, VI, sf. 151, Erkam Publications. Ist. 1982.

17. For more details see *The chain of prophets*, I, p. 213-214, Erkam Publications. Ist. 2013.



like an envelope. What is important is what is inside the envelope, that is, the heart. The path of tasawwuf is the path of character not form. The aim of keeping company with the righteous and the truthful is to obtain oneness of character not of form. As long as spiritual flow lines are not laid down between the hearts, no other artificial means that are expected to take their place, can bring about benefit. What is of benefit are the true images – the reflections of one's inner world, and the elevated memories and impressions that are left in the heart.

Ali (ra) has said:

‘Be with the righteous and the truthful, sit with them so that their character and personality infects you. Let the people long for you while you are alive, and miss you after you have passed away’.

May Almighty Allah allow us to resemble the hearts of those He loves, and adopt their good character, thus attaining a sound heart that is constantly remembering Allah, pondering on Him, and thanking Him.

Amen...

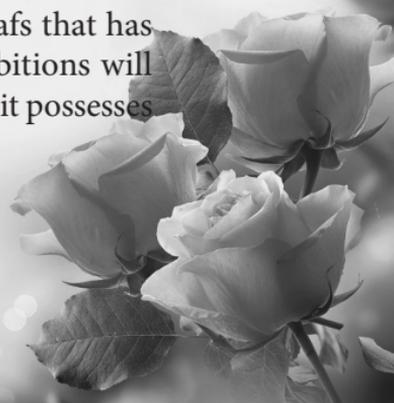




THE PATH OF THE SOUND HEART...

A person whose heart has not grown spiritually is destined to remain in a raw state, no matter how intelligent that person may be. If that person studies the worldly sciences, in this raw and crude state, and becomes a doctor for instance, instead of providing healing for people, they can end up a butcher who sells human organs, in order to satisfy the greedy ambitions of their nafs. If they become a lawyer, instead of meting out justice, they can instead become the leader of a criminal gang or an oppressive executor. If they become the leader of a nation they can end up being the representative of a dirty and ugly oppression. If they become a man of religion by studying the religious sciences, they can remain far from *taqwa* and portray an understanding of religion that is without spirit.

This is because a crude nafs that has become a slave to its own ambitions will end up using all the knowledge it possesses for its own lowly benefit...



THE PATH OF THE SOUND HEART...

Almighty Allah has created us, His slaves, in the best mould, the *ahsan al taqwim* and upon the *fitrah* (primal nature) of Islam, without us having paid any price. And in order to test us, he has endowed us with a *nafs* that is capable of inclining to either *taqwa* or immorality, to good or evil, to good works or sin.

The most difficult obstacle that lays in our path of passing this worldly examination is our own *nafs*. In order to be able to get passed this obstacle of the *nafs*, we need to purify it, that is, we need to enter upon a path of spiritual education and perfection.

Imam Ghazzali has said:

‘The human being is like wax. It can be given form – either negative or positive- through training, moulding.

For instance, out of two three year old children who see a puppy, one of them, will give it milk and



the other will throw rocks at it. This is a direct result of the difference in how they were raised and trained.

Spiritual training is a must in order to eliminate the negative tendencies that are part of human nature, and develop the positive potential that is within man.

Imam Ghazzali has identified three natural powers that give shape to the human being's state and behaviour. These are:

- 1) *Quwwayi aqliyya* (the rational power)
- 2) *Quwwayi ghadabiyya* (the power of wrath)
- 3) *Quwwayi shahawiyya* (the power of the appetites).

These natural powers can be manifest in one's life in one of three ways: *ifrat*, *tafrit*, or *itidal*.

Ifrat is the excessive extreme, *tafrit* is the opposite of excessiveness, that is, it is a deficiency and laxity, and remaining well below the average. *Itidal*, on the other hand, is the balance between these two extremes.

The excess of the rational power is deception and lack of restraint. When the rational power is deficient it leads to docility. Its acceptable balance is to use one's mind in the light of guidance and revelation, thus leading to wisdom and discernment.



The excess in the power of wrath is rage, that is, unbridled anger. Its deficiency is cowardice. Its moderate, desirable form is courage; to use one's power and courage as needed and in the right place.

During a battle just when Ali (ra) was about to slay an unbeliever he was fighting, the man spat in his face. At that point he refrained from killing him thus showing us a unique example of this use of courage. This is because that blessed Companion was fighting only to bring about the command of Allah and not to satisfy his own anger or pride. In order not to overshadow this deed of his that he was doing for the sake of Allah, with any desire of his nafs, he overcame his anger. That is, he submitted his power of wrath to the guidance given by revelation and demonstrated the willpower to use it in the best and most acceptable way.

The excess in the power of the appetites is debauchery, indecency and immorality. Its deficiency is frigidity. What is accepted is its moderate form which is decency, chastity and modesty.

Islam has made ideal all forms of human behaviour carried out by these powers of rationality, wrath and appetites and has defined acceptable and lawful limits for them. For instance, a 'murderer' and a 'war veteran' perform, in essence, the same deed. However the murderer commits the greatest crime for carrying



it out for the sake of his nafs whilst the war veteran performs a virtuous deed in his battle for the sake of Allah.

Likewise there is an apparent similarity between earning interest and carrying out trade in terms of both of them being means of earning money. However, interest is unlawful as it takes advantage of the rights of individuals and communities. Trade on the other hand, is a means of earning lawful income.

Also similar are fornication and sexual intercourse between husband and wife. Fornication destroys lineage and is an unlawful and cursed act. A virtuous married life which is the means to righteous progeny and consequently a peaceful society is lawful and desired. The Holy Qur'an states:

'Our Lord, grant us from our mates and our progeny what will be the comfort of our eyes, and make us role models for the righteous' (Furqan, 25:74).

Thus human acts which resemble each other on the outside can lead to either felicity or destruction depending on whether the *nafs* that performs them has undergone spiritual training or not.

And so the aim of spiritual training then is to protect oneself from the excesses of these human powers and tendencies and to bring them to a level of moderation and balance as described by the Qur'an



and the *sunnah*. If these natural tendencies are left alone and not trained, then they can become means for evil and oppression rather than being means for good. Instead of leading to benefit they can bring about great harm.

From this respect then the human being is in absolute need of training and discipline.

Almighty Allah has presented humankind with the greatest teachers, that is the prophets. He has sent prophets to periods of ignorance, in particular - times devoid of justice, human rights and humanity. The prophets trained and educated those who followed them, under the guidance of revelation, allowing them to mature, and saving them from the darkness of ignorance, to bring about star personalities who would go on to establish civilisations of virtue.

THREE DUTIES OF THE PROPHETS

The Holy Qur'an states:

'As We have sent a messenger to you from among yourselves to recite Our revelations to you, and purify you, and teach you the Book and the wisdom, and teach you what you did not know' (Baqara, 2:151).



Almighty Allah draws our attention to three important duties of the prophet Muhammad (saw) in this verse:

- 1) يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا – the recitation of Allah's signs and teaching the religion.
- 2) وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ – purifying the inner world and refining one's emotions.
- 3) وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ – teaching the divine mysteries and wisdom in the universe, events and phenomena and a deep understanding of the Qur'an which comes after this spiritual training.

As we know the prophet Muhammad invited his community to Islam and to believe in the oneness of Allah and this began when he read the revelation and preached it. However this duty was only the first stage in ensuring people reach the ultimate aim.

The only way to reach the true aim of *tawheed* is to completely purify the *nafs* of all spiritual contamination such as unbelief (*kufur*), associating partners with Allah (*shirk*), hypocrisy (*nifaq*), ostentation (*riya*), arrogance (*kibir*) and envy (*hasad*), and thus to allow it to reach a state of sincerity (*ikhlas*), God-consciousness (*taqwa*), deep reverence (*khushu*), and peace (*huzur*).

Abu al-Hasan Kharaqani has the following to say about this matter:



“If a tiny spark catches onto your dress from the fire, you immediately rush to put it out. What then of a fire that will burn your religion - evil traits such as arrogance, envy and ostentation- how can you allow them to remain in your heart?”¹⁸.

Purification is then the refinement of all of one’s feelings by passing them through the filter of *iman*, thus bringing them to a pure and sincere state.

Ibn Abbas (ra) makes the following commentary on the expression ‘*tathkiya*’ (purification/cleansing), mentioned in the verse. He says that it means to say ‘*La ilaha illa Allah*’ (There is no god but Allah)¹⁹. This is because the first step in purification is to clean the heart of unbelief and association of partners with Allah.

The kalima-yi tawheed begins with a negation (*nafy*). That is, it says ‘*La ilaha*’ (There is no god), and by saying so it removes from the heart all desires and ugly traits of the *nafs* that have become like idols. Then it goes on to affirmation (*isbat*). That is, by saying ‘except Allah’, the heart, the site Allah is ever in watch of, is filled with the light of *tawheed* of Allah Most High.

The poet has expressed this truth well:

18. Kharaqani, *Nur al Ulum*, p. 239.

19. Qurtubi, *al-Jami*, XX, 22.



“Drive out from the palace of your heart everything other than Allah, for a sultan will not honour with his presence a palace that is not beautiful, clean and taken care of.”

After the stage of cleansing the heart, the next stage is that of ‘teaching the Holy Qur’an’, obeying the divine commands and prohibitions.

To delve into contemplation of the Holy Qur’an is possible through this cleansing of the heart. The Qur’an can only be read and understood with a pure heart.

Uthman (ra) said:

“Had your hearts been pure you would not have been able to stop reading Allah’s word” (Ali al-Muttaqi, II, 287/4022).

From this respect then, it is first necessary to free one’s inner world from the effects of false ideas and base feelings and adorn it with correct belief, that is sound faith and good character. After all of these stages then, the servant begins to understand the manifestations of wisdom, that is, the inner secrets and reality of events, occurrences and things.

USELESS KNOWLEDGE

It is interesting that the verse mentions purification and teaching the Book and wisdom together.



This also means the following: one cannot attain knowledge in the true sense, with a heart that has not been purified. The knowledge that one thinks one has gained will not be of any benefit to him in his journey on the way to eternal salvation.

This is why the prophet Muhammad (saw) prayed as follows:

“O Allah! I seek refuge in You from knowledge that does not benefit, from a heart that does not tremble from the fear (of Allah), from a soul that is not satisfied and the supplication that is not answered” (Muslim, Dhikr, 73).

A person whose heart has not grown spiritually) is destined to remain in a raw state, no matter how intelligent that person may be. If that person studies the worldly sciences, in this raw and crude state, and becomes a doctor for instance, instead of providing healing for people, they can end up a butcher who sells human organs, in order to satisfy the greedy ambitions of their nafs. If they become a lawyer, instead of meting out justice, they can instead become the leader of a criminal gang or an oppressive executor. If they become the leader of a nation they can end up being the representative of a dirty and ugly oppression. If they become a man of religion by studying the religious sciences, they can remain far



from taqwa and portray an understanding of religion that is without spirit.

An immature *nafs* that has become a slave to its greedy desires will use all knowledge it has gained for its own lowly benefit. It can carry out with ease, much more worse forms of oppression that even an ignorant person is incapable of with his ignorance. Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi has said:

“Teaching an immoral person knowledge is like giving a sword to a bandit”.

That is for those with an unripe and immature *nafs*, devoid of spiritual training, knowledge can become a veil of heedlessness that will drive one even further away from Allah, instead of bringing them closer.

Thus true knowledge is not that which is obtained by the mere accumulation of information in the brain. In order for knowledge to benefit a person both in this world and the next, that person needs to become purified as a result of spiritual training, their heart must grow, and their conscience and character must develop and mature.

Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi said:

“There are many scholars who are devoid of wisdom. They have memorised and swallowed up knowledge, but have failed to become beloved to Allah”.



Now it is important not to forget that all knowledge and sciences consist of struggling to identify the rules and laws that Allah has placed in the universe. True knowledge is that which does not become stuck at this stage but goes one step further and recognises the elevated and magnificent power behind those laws and then perceives the underlying divine mystery and wisdom.

Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi describes his state in which he had acquired the peak of outer knowledge but had yet to taste the spiritual pleasure of closeness to Allah as being ‘raw’. When he began to understand the divine mystery and wisdom within his heart and began to turn the pages of the Book of the Universe he described himself as being ‘cooked’. At the final stage in which he had reached *marifatullah*, and was now roasting from the fire of divine mystery and true love, he described himself as ‘burned’.

In contrast a person who has not become upright through the standards of the Holy Qur’an and the sunnah, will not benefit from his knowledge nor from any of his deeds. Ali (ra) has said:

“The shadow of something crooked will also be crooked”.

All of man’s states and behaviour are a reflection of their inner world. Just like you cannot draw a straight line with a crooked ruler, so too it is vain



to expect virtuous behaviour to come from a person whose heart is not pure. The path of those with dark intentions can never be illuminated. Every container will leak out what is inside of it. A cloudy heart can not produce a clear state or behaviour in the true sense of the word.

In contrast, the purity, sincerity, and beauty of the inner world of the human being will lead to the divine decree manifesting itself as grace, mercy and bounty. The following story is a nice example of this truth:

THE POMEGRANATE GARDEN

One day Nushirawan, known throughout history for his justice, was out hunting when he parted from his friends and his path took him to a garden. He asked a young man standing there:

‘Can you give me a pomegranate?’ The youth did so.

Nushirawan was able to quench his thirst from the pomegranate and this gave him great pleasure. He said to himself:

“A garden filled with such delicious fruit has to be mine. I must obtain this garden, no matter what”.

He then asked for another pomegranate. However this time the pomegranate was dry and sour. When he asked the reason for this, the wise young man said:



‘My sultan, I think your heart inclined towards injustice. You must have thought of obtaining this garden from me through your power and might’.

Upon this Nushirawan gave up the idea of obtaining that garden by force, and regretted his evil intentions, and repented. Then when he asked for another pomegranate, it was even more juicy and sweeter than the first one.

The sultan was amazed and asked about the wisdom behind the taste in the pomegranate. This time the young man said:

‘I believe you repented for those negative thoughts that you were having’.

According to narrations, Nushirawan woke up as a result of this and other similar events. He removed the evil intentions he had within himself, and thereafter stayed away from oppression and injustice. He abided by rights and justice with great care and meticulousness. In this way his name became synonymous with justice.

Nushirawan gave up all of his rights and asked his people to forgive him for any injustice. When he passed away his grave was taken around the entire country. At that point a crier could be heard:

‘Whoever has a right with me let him come and take it!..’



However not one person with even a *dirham* owed to them could be found²⁰.

Thus those whose hearts are beautiful and pure will leave behind beauty and pleasant memories. All of the acts and states of a person are like a mirror to their inner world. The prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

“Undoubtedly Allah Most High does not look at your body or your form but he looks at your hearts”
(Muslim, Birr, 33; Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 9).

That is, the way Almighty Allah views and treats His servants depends on the nature of their own desires and intentions. A heart which is pure and has pure intentions will lead to an end-affair which is good. The divine decree then manifests itself in accordance with one's intentions and thoughts.

The following event is a typical example of this:

SULTAN ALPARSLAN TAKES HIS CONSCIENCE TO ACCOUNT...

Before Alparslan entered the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, he put on his white clothes and said: ‘This is my funeral shroud’. He was preparing himself not for worldly fame but for martyrdom, with sincere faith.



Before going into battle he addressed his soldiers as following:

“Either I will be successful and reach my aim or I will become a martyr and enter Paradise. Whoever prefers to follow me, let him do so. Whoever wants to part from here, let him go. There is no commanding sultan nor any obeying soldiers here, for today I am one of you. I am a soldier entering into battle just like you. For those who follow me and become martyrs – Paradise awaits you. Those who survive will become honourable war veterans. As for those who abandon this battle, for them awaits the fire of the hereafter and disgrace in this world”.

In response to this sincerity of Sultan Alparslan, Allah gave him success over Romanos Diogenes who had an army that was five times larger than Sultan Alparslan’s.

Only those human beings who are true in their sincerity will meet with true salvation. And only those who are sincere are subjected to a great and dangerous test. The assassination attempt of the great Islamic commander Alparslan took place after such a test which eventually led to him losing his life.

After the success at Manzikert, Sultan Alparslan set out for Maveraunnehir with a great number of horsemen in 1072. He took siege of the Fortress of Hana which lay on the Oxus river. The commander



of the fortress was Yusuf al-Khwarazm, who belonged to the false Batiniyya sect. When he realised that the fortress would not last long, he proclaimed that he had surrendered. However when brought into the presence of Sultan Alparslan, this traitor attacked him and stabbed him. They immediately killed Yusuf al-Khwarazm. But Sultan Alparslan was not able to recover from his wounds. He was martyred on the 25th October in 1072. His last words were as follows:

“Whenever marching out against the enemy I would always seek refuge in Allah and ask for His help. Yesterday, however, as I mounted a hill and looked over my army, it was as if the mountain was trembling under me from the greatness of my army and the large number of my soldiers. A thought crossed my mind: ‘I am the ruler of the world, who can defeat me?’

And so as a result of this, Almighty Allah punished me with a powerless man. I am now paying the price for that one moment of heedlessness. I ask Allah for forgiveness for this thought of mine, and for all of my other mistakes and faults and I turn back to Him. La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadun Rasulullah (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger)”.

It is for this reason that it is of vital importance that the heart be trained to be with Allah always, and one's emotions be cleansed and made pure in order to gain the pleasure of Allah. If the thoughts of the *nafs*



are allowed to enter the heart, then Almighty Allah does not look upon that heart with the gaze of mercy.

In tasawwuf it is the heart that Allah observes, and so the aim of tasawwuf is to mould the heart to such a state that Allah will look upon it with mercy and kindness, and which will be pleasing to Him.

In one of the codes of civil law (the *Majalla*), it is said:

“It is necessary first to remove that which harms than to attract that which benefits”.

That is, to eliminate evil takes priority over attaining beneficial things. A wound is first cleansed of pus and microbes before ointment is applied. Otherwise, it will not heal, no matter how well it is dressed.

TAKHALLI, TAHALLI, TAJALLI

In tasawwuf the journey to spiritual perfection can be summarised by the following statement:

« أَلْتَحَلِّي ثُمَّ التَّحَلِّي ثُمَّ التَّجَلِّي »

The stages of the spiritual journey are as follows:

- First comes *takhliyya*, which means to empty one's inner world of everything that distances it from Allah. It is to remove from the heart spiritual pus such as *shirk* (associating partners with Allah), *kufur*



(unbelief), *nifaq* (hypocrisy), *riya* (ostentation), *gurur* (pride), *kibr* (arrogance), *'ujub* (conceit), and *hasad* (envy) from it.

- Then comes *tahalli* which means to endow oneself with beautiful character and good deeds which will make one beloved to one's Lord. At the head of this comes the obligatory acts, followed by supererogatory worship and virtues such as generosity, compassion, kindness, serving others, sensitivity of the spirit, grace, courtesy and self-sacrifice.

- The result of all of this is spiritual manifestation (*tajalli*). That is, after the heart has become gentle and gains spirituality in depth, it can climb the peaks of *marifatullah* and *muhabatullah*.

Allah Most High only bestows the secrets and wisdom behind the divine manifestations of power and greatness that are on display in the universe, upon sound hearts that are pure, and that have been spiritually refined and perfected.

And so for those hearts that have passed through these stages and reached a state of purity, they will be subject to unique manifestations, through the blessings of this reliance upon Allah and submission to Him.



ALLAH WILL SUFFICE...!

In a narration by Abu Huraira (ra) the Messenger of Allah (saw) once related the following story about the sons of Israel:

“One time a man from the sons of Israel asked for a loan of one thousand dinars from his friend. His friend responded:

‘Bring me your witnesses, and I will give it to you in their presence’

The one who asked for the loan said:

‘Allah is enough as a witness’.

The other man said:

‘In that case bring me a guarantor’

The one who asked for the loan said:

‘Allah is enough as a guarantor’.

Trusting his sincerity, the other man said:

‘You are right’. He then gave him a certain amount of money for a particular term.

The first man set out on his sea voyage and completed his task. He then looked for a boat so that he could go back to repay the man within the required time. However he could not find a boat. He found a piece of wood and carved out a hollow in it. He then wrote a



letter to the man and placed it, along with the thousand dinars, in the hollow. He then sealed off the hollow and took it out to sea, saying:

'O Allah! You know that I took a loan from such and such. When he asked me for a guarantor, I said 'Allah is enough of a guarantor'. And he was happy with You as a guarantor. And when he asked me for a witness I said: 'Allah is enough as a witness'. And he was satisfied with You as a witness. And now here I am, having looked for a boat to board so I could take his money back to him, but alas, I could not find one. Now I entrust this money to You'. He then placed the log in the sea. A little while later it vanished from sight.

He then left and continued searching for a boat to take him home.

Meanwhile the other man began to look on the horizon for a boat in the hopes that it would be carrying the man who would bring his money back to him. At that point he found the log containing the money. He took it in order to use as firewood for his family. When he sawed open the log he found the money and the letter inside.

The other man arrived back home a short time later. He brought one thousand dinars with him and said:



'I searched without pause for a boat to bring your money back, but I was unable to find one before now'.

The man said:

'Did you not send me anything?'

He replied:

'I told you that I could not find a boat until now'.

The man who was asked for the money said:

'The money you sent in the log was brought to us by Allah Most High and He has paid your loan back. Now take this thousand dinars and go in peace' (Bukhari, Kafalah 1, Buyu, 10).

This is the way the Divine manifests for the one who has firm and pure belief and the heart that has reached a state of purity...

People who have reached a state of perfection through the spiritual training of tasawwuf are like the man in this hadith. Their hearts are with Allah at every instant and they are so preoccupied with deeds that will draw Allah's pleasure upon them that He becomes a guarantor for their deeds. He bestows extra bounty and blessings upon their sincere intentions and efforts.

The same applies to the man who put his reliance upon Allah in the hadith and put his repayment in the log and placed it out to sea. He was acting in accor-



dance with the level that his heart had reached but he also did not fail to abide by the rules of the shariah.

This is because the shariah must be made the foundation of all of one's acts, as it is like the steady leg of the compass.

All acts and states that pertain to the different stages of *tariqah*, *haqiqah*, and *marifah*, only mean anything if they are founded on the *shariah*. The greatest sign of the true people of tasawwuf is that they always abide with meticulousness, by the principles of the shariah, no matter which spiritual level they may have reached. Thus, as soon as he was able to find a boat, that wise man immediately took another one thousand dinars to the man he owed money to, in order to obey the shariah.

PERFECTED GUIDES...

Almighty Allah has shown us the model of the perfect human being, in the personality of the prophet Muhammad (saw). Thus he is undoubtedly our greatest guide, example and mentor.

As we mentioned earlier one of the three duties of the prophet Muhammad (saw) was to recite the verses of the Book and teach the lawful and forbidden things and this duty has been carried out by the scholars until our own times. As for the duty of guidance, which is



refining the *nafs* and purifying the hearts, this task has been adopted and carried out by the perfected guides.

The commentator Bursawi has the following to say about the verse: ...**“seek a way to come closer to Him”**... (al-Maida, 5:35).

“This verse openly commands us to seek a means. This is absolutely necessary. Reaching Allah can only be realised in this way. What is meant by a means is the scholars of reality and the perfected guide” (Bursawi, *Ruh al Bayan*, IV, p. 543).

A scholar who is teaching his student is a means for him to learn. The perfected guides too, carry out a similar duty to the scholars of the outer sciences, which is in the spiritual path.

Those who are deficient in the matters of *fiqh* (the legal rulings) are required to reform their outer acts by studying at the feet of the righteous scholars of the religion. And if they are lacking in the truths of tasawwuf, which we can call *fiqh-i batin* (the inner sciences), they need to benefit from the company and advice of the wise and God-conscious knowers of Allah, that is, the guides. Thus they can bring order to their inner world. They are required to make up for the deficiencies in their hearts, in terms of sincerity, God-consciousness, reverence, and excellence, and develop spiritually.



Man's greatest need is to pass the examinations of this world safely and reach Allah. In this respect then, the true friends of Allah who guide people and help them advance along the path, are precious means that Allah has bestowed upon us. They are in interaction with the people and with Allah at the same time. This is why they are like a bridge that allows the people to reach Allah.

Yaman Dede, the late Persian teacher, was formerly a Christian but became Muslim after reading the Mathnawi by Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi. He would be frequently asked:

“Why do you talk about Mawlana and the Mathnawi so much?”

He would reply:

“My dear child. Mawlana took me by the hand and guided me to the door of the Holy Prophet (saw). For someone who has saved me from the fire, the mention I make of him is little indeed”.

And so the true perfected guides are models and inheritors of the prophetic way. They have allowed the prophetic guidance and perfection of character to spread throughout all times. That is, they are the models of the perfect human being for those who were deprived of seeing the Prophet or his Companions themselves. Their advice and guidance and



their compassionate words revive the hearts, and have come to us from the prophetic source.

The service of the perfected guides consists of carrying on the duty of purification of the prophet. In this respect then, tasawwuf is like a spiritual school, in which one learns to refine one's *nafs* and purify one's heart through true spiritual teachers who inherited their knowledge from the prophet. The journey – *sayr-u suluq*– consists of entering this school and struggling along the path to become a perfect human being.

METICULOUSNESS IN ABIDING BY THE SUNNAH

The most important characteristic of true guides and their distinguishing feature is their unique devotion and obedience to the Messenger of Allah (saw). They are best known for their careful and meticulous obedience to the Holy Qur'an and the sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (saw) which is the personal embodiment of the Qur'an, and their training those who love them to do the same.

Consequently it is impossible for a person to be a perfected guide if he does not abide by the practices of the prophet Muhammad (saw), or is lax, heedless or compromises them.

The following event illustrates this matter nicely:



One day Bayazid Bistami, one of the great perfected guides, set out with his disciples to visit a person who was known amongst the people to be a *wali* of Allah. When that man whom they went to visit left his house to go to the masjid, they saw him spit in the direction of the Qibla. Bayazid Bistami was greatly saddened by this crude and negligent act and without even so much as greeting him, he returned back home. He said to his disciples:

“This man is not even trustworthy in abiding by a manner of courtesy that the Messenger of Allah taught us. So how can we trust him in the matter of the mysteries of Almighty Allah?”²¹

The noble Companions were also models of meticulousness in matters of religion for successive generations to come. Some of the Companions would travel a month's distance in order to confirm the narration of a hadith that was known to them. Even though the journey was difficult, when they saw the narrator deceiving his horse when trying to call him by showing him a bag of food that was empty, they regarded him as impaired and having weakness of character and considered him incapable of transmitting hadith.



One of the great men of the Tabi'een (the generation after the Companions), Abu al-Aliya narrates the following example of this sensitivity:

“Whenever we would go to someone to receive a hadith from them, we would first of all look at the way they performed the prayer; If they performed it well we would sit by them, thinking that if they did that well, then they would do other things well also. If they were neglectful during the prayer, then we would leave them, thinking that they would also be neglectful in other matters” (Darimi, Mukaddimah, 38/429).

And so in people who should be trusted in religious and spiritual matters, meticulousness following of the Qur'an and the *sunnah* is a must. The greatest source of prosperity for the heart is meticulous devotion to the Qur'an and the *sunnah* at every stage of one's life.

Imam Rabbani said:

“One time I heedlessly entered the bathroom with my right foot. As a result of failing to abide by the *sunnah*, I was deprived of many spiritual states for that entire day”²².

Another day Imam Rabbani said to his students:

“Bring us some carnations from the garden”.

22. Qishmi, Barakat, p. 197.



His student went out and brought six carnations. When Imam Rabbani saw them he said sadly:

“Our students are yet heedless of the hadith of the Messenger of Allah that ‘Allah is One (which is an odd number) and loves the odd number’ (Bukhari, Dawat, 68). Whereas to be careful about these matters is *mustahab* (a recommended act). What do people think the *mustahab* are? They are the acts that are pleasing to Allah. If you were given the whole world and the hereafter in place of an act pleasing to Allah, you will have received nothing”²³.

Said ibn Musayyab (may Allah have mercy on him), a great scholar from the generation of the Tabi'een once saw a person who had prayed two extra rakats of prayer. (He was not pleased with this act of supererogatory prayer that was carried out at one of the discouraged times).

In an attempt to defend himself, the man who had prayed said to him:

“O Abu Muhammad! Will Allah punish me for performing the prayer?”

Said ibn Musayyab replied:

23. Qishmi, Barakat, p. 198; Abu al Hasan an-Nadwi, Imam Rabbani, p. 180-181.



“No! Almighty Allah will not punish you for praying but for acting in opposition to the *sunnah*” (Darimi Mukaddimah, 39/442).

Bayazid Bistami would measure every state of his against the *sunnah* of the Messenger of Allah (saw). The prophet was a complete criterion of action for him. One of his pieces of advice was as follows:

“Whoever does not recite the Holy Qur’an, abandons a life of abstention, does not continue to pray in congregation, does not attend the funeral prayer, does not visit the sick, and then claims to be a Sufi is in fact an innovator”²⁴.

If a disciple, let alone a guide, does not abide by the *sunnah*, and distances himself from these individual and social duties of servanthood, then that disciple, and certainly that guide, has no connection with *tasawwuf* whatsoever.

The *tahajjud* (late night) prayer and reviving the predawn time, are both important *sunnah* practices. The Messenger of Allah (saw) did not abandon the *tahajjud* prayer even during long and difficult battles. Thus it is unthinkable that the people of *tasawwuf* remain indifferent to these spiritual practices.

In a similar vein, Bayazid Bistami said:

24. Bayhaqi, *Shuab*, III, 305; Ibn Jawzii, *Talbisu Iblis*, p. 151.



“No mystery was opened up for me until the night became the day (that is I spent the whole night awake)”.

The following words of Bayazid Bistami also give us a nice measure of how sensitive he was to the *sunnah*:

“I once thought about asking Allah to free me from the need to eat and drink, and have relations with my wife but then I thought to myself:

How can it be permissible for me to ask for such a thing from Allah Most High? The Messenger of Allah (saw) never asked for such a thing? I then gave up the idea”²⁵.

Thus one should not follow those who adopt states and behaviour under the guise of *zuhd* and *taqwa* but which are not from the *sunnah* practices of Allah's Messenger (saw). In going to such extremes in abstention and struggle, such individuals try to put themselves in a position in which they appear more religious and pious than the Messenger of Allah (saw) himself. This is great impertinence, heedlessness and deviation.

The Holy Qur'an cautions against such lack of restraint and courtesy as follows:



“O you who believe! Do not put yourselves forward before Allah and His Messenger. But fear Allah...!” (al-Hujurat, 49:1).

The prophet himself, also cautioned a Sahabi who rushed to sacrifice his animal before due time and ordered that he repeat the sacrifice after the eid prayer²⁶.

Let us not forget that the prophet Muhammad (saw) was the closest human being to Allah Most High, and yet he advised moderation in every matter, and he himself was a living example of this moderation.

The following event illustrates this nicely:

One day the Messenger of Allah (saw) was talking about the Day of Judgement with his Companions. They were very affected and began to weep. Later ten of them met in Uthman ibn Maz'un's house. After their consultation with each other, they came to the decision that they would thereafter abstain from the world, castrate themselves, spend their days fasting and their nights in worship, refrain from eating meat, reduce their relations with their wives, refrain from using perfume, and stop traveling about.

26. See Ibn Majah, Edahi, 12/3151-3154; Abu Dawud, Dahaya, 5.



When the Messenger of Allah (saw) was informed of this he first cautioned them, then he gathered together all of his Companions and addressed them as follows:

“What is wrong with some people that they have prohibited themselves from relations with their wives, from eating and drinking, from using perfume, from sleeping and lawful worldly pleasures? I do not command that you be hermits or monks. There is no place in my religion for giving up meat, staying away from women, locking oneself up in a monastery and abandoning the world²⁷. Travelling is like fasting for my community and jihad is their monastic life (taqwa).

Worship Allah, do not associate any partners with Him, perform the Hajj and Umrah, perform your ritual prayer, give alms and fast in Ramadan. Be upright so that others can be too. People before you were destroyed because they went to extremes. They tried to make the religion too difficult and so Allah made it difficult for them. The people in the churches and monasteries today are what are left over from them”.

Upon this the following verse was then revealed:

27. This is also the teaching of tasawwuf. Experiencing unity within multiplicity, that is, feeling Allah in one's heart while being amongst the people.



“O you who believe! Do not make unlawful the good things which Allah has made lawful for you, and commit no excess: for Allah does not love those given to excess” (al-Maida, 5:87) (See. Wahidi, p. 207-208; Ali al-Qari, al-Mirkat, I, 182-183).

Thus no good can come from a lifestyle which lies outside of the principles laid down by the Messenger of Allah (saw). On the contrary, such a way will lead to certain weaknesses of the spirit. Unease, stress, imbalance, irritability and seeking out unlawful acts are a few of these.

The most correct path then is to fulfil one’s human needs within lawful limits and in accordance with the *sunnah*. Forbidding certain things which are lawful under the pretense of serving the religion or coming closer to Allah, can never be seen as a requirement of being religious.

Consequently a believer should never forget that their greatest guide is the Messenger of Allah (saw), above all else. They should strive to know him better. They should measure their every state against his. After doing this, it then becomes much easier to know who is really on the path of the prophet, and who is not, and thus who one needs to follow or avoid.

The commentator Bursawi has the following to say about this matter:



“If you are going to follow someone, then follow our Master, the prophet Muhammad (saw). The prophet Adam and all later prophets and saints are under his banner.

And if you are going to follow someone from his community, then do not follow one just because he is famous, or is accepted by the rulers or sultans. What you need is first of all to recognise the truth, and then measure people against it. Ali (ra), the door to divine knowledge, said about this matter:

“The one who knows the truth via heedless people will flounder and waver in the eddies of misguidance. Thus know the truth (via the Qur’an and the sunnah) and then you will come to know the real people of truth”²⁸.

Thus one should give no regard to those who do not strictly apply the Qur’an and the *sunnah* to their lives, even if they are known to be a guide by the people. Even if they display miracles, unveilings and other states that appear virtuous, one should approach them with caution. In most cases, these are not miracles or virtues but rather *istidraj* which are the traps of Satan.

Aldulkhaliq Ghujduwani said that only those people who carry the Holy Qur’an in one hand and the hadith in their other and travel under the light



provided by these, can reach the stage of *'fana-yi nafs'* (annihilation of one's ego)²⁹.

He also gave one of his disciples the following advice:

*“Never remain distant from learning knowledge. Learn the sciences of fiqh and hadith! **Stay away from ignorant Sufis** for they destroy the path of religion... Hold tightly to the sunnah of the prophet and follow the way of the imams from the righteous predecessors...”*

BE CAREFUL WHO YOU LEARN YOUR RELIGION FROM!

The Messenger of Allah (saw) once said to Abdullah ibn Umar (ra):

“O Ibn Umar! Hold tight to your religion! Hold tight to your religion for it is your flesh and your blood. Be careful about who you learn your religion from! Learn the sciences of the religion and the rulings from upright scholars and not from those who stray to and fro”³⁰.

Thus the believer must first of all learn the truth and the nature of truth from the Qur'an and the *sun-*

29. Abdurrahman Jami, *Nafahatu al Uns min Hadarati al Quds* (thk. Mahmud Abidi), Tahran 1375 hş./1996, p. 384.

30. Hatib al-Baghdadi, *al-Kifaya fi Ilmi al Riwaya*, al-Madina al Munawwara, al-Maktabatu al Ilmiyya, p. 121.



nah. Then he must identify a guide for himself in accordance with the measures of the Qur'an and the *sunnah* and strive to progress under the direction of these two. Even a true perfected guide cannot benefit one who does not follow the Qur'an and the *sunnah*.

Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi said it well:

“The Holy Qur’an contains the states and characteristics of the prophets. If you read and apply its teachings you can consider yourself conversing with the prophets and the saints! However if you read the Qur’an but do not obey its commands and do not adopt its character, then what benefit can the prophets and saints have for you...?”

May Almighty Allah bestow upon us a life lived under the direction of the Qur'an and the *sunnah*, and allow us to walk in the path of those beloved to Him, and be raised up with His righteous servants!

Amen!...





THE LIMITS OF LAWFUL LOVE

One time someone asked the prophet Yaqub:

“O wise prophet with enlightened heart! Why is it that you could smell the scent of Yusuf’s shirt when he was coming from Egypt, but you could not see when he was thrown into the well?”

Yaqub replied:

“What Allah bestows upon us are like bolts of lightning. Truth is sometimes made clear to us and is sometimes hidden”.

That is, if Almighty Allah lifts the veil for His servant, then he can see beyond all things; but if the veil is drawn, a person cannot even see the pit that is in front of them.

Thus, whatever the spiritual state of the servant, he is always powerless and ever in need of the grace of Allah.



THE LIMITS OF LAWFUL LOVE

The spiritual food of advancing in the Sufi path is love and the sign of this love is to abide by etiquette (*adab*). Love is also the means of forming a bond of the heart (that is, *rabita*) with a spiritual guide. However, just as in all other matters, one can go to extremes in one's love and this can lead them to go astray.

This is why the mistake in *rabita* is to show love for a human being to the degree that it should only be shown for Allah. It can lead one to elevate the guide they have taken for themselves, their object of their love, to show them more respect and blind devotion than they deserve, and even so far as to attribute divinity to them. These acts are not condoned by the Qur'an or the *sunnah*. Allah forbid, this type of behaviour can bring harm, rather than benefit, and can even make one lose their way altogether.

Let us never forget that a *murshid* is only a guide for his disciple. That is, he is a 'means'. To show too much love for the 'means', that is to make them the 'ends' is to open the door to *shirk*, associating partners



with Allah. Whereas in the creed of *tawheed*, there is absolutely no place for *shirk*.

For instance, when we board a plane, the plane is a vehicle for us. We can arrive at our destination by means of that vehicle. There is no harm in using the vehicle in order to reach one's aim, as long as one is aware that it is only a vehicle. In fact, our Lord commands us to take certain means in order to gain His pleasure, which is our aim. He says in the Holy Qur'an:

“O you who believe! Fear Allah and seek a way to come closer to Him...!” (al-Maidah, 5:35).

The objectionable thing here is to exceed the limits in one's love for means and vehicles and to make them the aim of one's love.

Those people who deviate to such extremes become fodder for the opponents of tasawwuf and bring harm to the uprightness of the spiritual path that they claim to be a member of. This is a great responsibility and sin.

Out of all the Companions, Abu Bakr (ra) was the one who loved the prophet Muhammad (saw) the most, however, he made this love a means of moderation, deliberation, and integrity. Consider the following state of his which is an example for the people of tasawwuf:



The death of the Messenger of Allah (saw) bore down hard on the Companions. They were all in great shock and even displayed outburst and excess. They would no longer be able to see the beautiful face of Allah's Messenger whom they loved more than they loved their own lives, and they would no longer be able to find consolation in his very presence. There were those amongst the Companions who did not want eyes which could no longer see him, ears who could no longer listen to him, nor a life in which he was absent.

They began to weep in the masjid. Whilst their hearts were being shaken by this indescribable pain, even Umar (ra), the astute man that he was, cried out:

“Do not let me hear any of you say that Muhammad is dead! Otherwise I will cut off his head with my sword! The Messenger of Allah (saw) has only fainted, just as Musa fainted...”

As he spoke he began to foam at the mouth.

When Abu Bakr (ra) heard the painful news, he immediately mounted his horse and came to Madina. He uncovered the face of the prophet and bowed over him. Then he kissed his cheeks, weeping and said:

“I swear by Allah, the Messenger of Allah has passed away!



إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

'...To Allah we belong (We are His servants), and to Him will we return' (Baqarah, 2:156).

"May my mother and father be sacrificed for you! I swear by Allah that you will never taste the pain of death twice. You have passed away and met the death which was written for you. After this, there will be no more death for you..."

You were beautiful in life and you are now beautiful in death..."

He then covered the face of Allah's Messenger and went out.

Umar (ra) was continuing his talk about how the prophet had not really passed away. Abu Bakr (ra) motioned to him:

"Sit down, o Umar".

Umar (ra) did not want to sit down. Abu Bakr (ra) repeated his words three times and at such a sensitive time and with great fortitude, he calmed the people down by addressing them as follows:

"Allah Most High informed us of the prophet's death while he was still amongst us. And He has told you that you too will die when your time comes. The Messenger of Allah (saw) has passed away! And none of you will live forever. Whoever worships Muhammad,



know that he has passed away! And whoever worships Allah, know that Allah is Ever-living and never dies!”

Allah Most High has said: Muhammad is no more than a messenger: many were the messengers that passed away before him. If he died or were slain, will you then turn back on your heels? If any did turn back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah. But Allah (on the other hand) will swiftly reward those who (serve Him) with gratitude (al-i Imran, 144)”.

When the people heard this verse, they finally realised that the prophet had indeed passed away. They had been in such a state of shock that it was as if they did not even know that this verse had been revealed until Abu Bakr (ra) recited it.

Umar (ra) later said :

“By Allah it was as if I had never heard that verse until that day. When I heard it from Abu Bakr I was filled with dread. My legs were no longer able to hold me up and I fell to the ground”³¹.

As we can see, Abu Bakr (ra), the one who loved the prophet the most and who showed him the greatest respect and honour, never went to excess in his unparalleled love for him. His love never made him

31. Ibn Sa'd, II, 266-272; Bukhari, Maghazi, 83; Haythami, IX, 32; Abdurrazzak, V, 436.



go against the truths of the shariah. On the contrary, it became a measure of uprightness for him from which he could caution and guide others who did go to such excess.

EXCESS AND FANATACISM...

There is a saying said by certain, overexcited murids:

“If my shaykh asks for something, Allah will most certainly grant it...”

Such words are a patent example of love, respect and devotion overstepping its limits and reaching the degree of excess and fanaticism.

The prophet Muhammad (saw) was the Beloved of Allah and yet not all of his prayers were granted. He says in a hadith:

“I asked for three things from my Lord. He granted two but refused me one of them. I asked Him not to destroy my community with a general famine and this He accepted. I asked him not to destroy my community through drowning and this He accepted also. I also requested that my community do not fight amongst themselves, but this was refused” (Muslim, Fitn, 20/2890).

Thus our Lord accepts or refuses the prayers of even the prophets. Thus the servant of Allah, is ever in need of the acceptance of Allah's prayer and his



deeds, whatever his spiritual station or rank may be. If this is true for the prophets, then we should realise how much it applies to those who are not prophets, however great a Saint they may be.

From this respect then, we cannot say that when a beloved servant of Allah prays to Him, that his prayer will be accepted without question or that when he asks for a cure for a patient that the patient will be cured. The acceptance of such matters depends not only on the sincerity of the people involved, but also on the decree and will of Allah. Moreover we should not forget that the acceptance of some prayers may occur not immediately in this world, but may become manifest in the hereafter and these are also dependent on the will of Allah.

On another note, there are different ways and means of disposal (*tasarruf*) bestowed on the prophets and the *awliyaullah*. Consequently a trait that has become prominent in one person may not be at the same level in another. In that case we cannot expect them to all have the same power of disposal. In any case, their true duty is to guide and caution the hearts.

The following event shows that all powers of disposal are dependent on the will of Allah:

The protector of Allah's Messenger (saw) and the Muslims was his uncle Abu Talib, who had selflessly defended them for years. The Messenger of Allah



(saw) ardently desired that his uncle become muslim and he was very persistent in this matter. In the face of this insistence, Abu Talib said to his nephew:

“I believe in the truth of what you say. However, if I believe in you, the women of the Quraysh would censure me!”

He was unable to admit to a truth that his conscience accepted due to being overcome by tribal partiality. The final words of Abu Talib to the Messenger of Allah (saw) were as follows:

“I am dying upon the old religion (that of Abdul-muttalib). If I did not fear that the Quraysh would say he changed his religion because he feared death, then I would accept your words...”³².

The prophet responded as follows:

“And now, I will continue to ask for forgiveness for you, as long as I am not prohibited from doing so”³³. He then left his uncle's house in great sorrow.

32. Bukhari, *Janaiz* 81, *Manaqibu al Ansar* 40; Ibn Sa'd, I, 122-123.

33. When the Prophet sought forgiveness for his uncle, the Muslims also asked if they could ask for forgiveness for their pagan fathers and forefathers, whereupon the 113th-114th verse from chapter Tawba was revealed forbidding this act (See Tabari, *Tafsir*, XI, 31).



The following verse was revealed after the prophet was so saddened by this event and said that he would ask for his uncle to be forgiven:

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي
مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

“(My Messenger!) You cannot guide whom you love. But it is God who guides whom He wills; and He is fully aware of those who receive the guidance” (al Qasas, 28:56)³⁴.

Thus, even the efforts of the prophets is not enough to bring about guidance. If Almighty Allah so wills, he can bestow the blessing of influence upon these efforts and bring them to fruition, or He can leave them without result.

TAWASSUL

When a person prays to Allah and takes as a means either the prophets or the righteous slaves who are beloved to Allah, then this will attract the mercy of Allah to a greater degree. That is, he is asking out of respect for them, which is called *tawassul*. This is like hoping that blessings will rain down by mentioning the names of righteous people.

34. Bukhari, Tafsir al Qur'an, 28/1; Muslim, Iman, 39, 41-42; Ahmad, *Musnad*, V, 433.



However when using the beloved people of Allah as a means it is important that one ask from Allah Most High, and not from those people themselves. This is because the Absolute Doer of all things is Almighty Allah. All things can only occur through the will of Allah.

This is why it is said that success is from Allah. That is, Allah Most High is the One who bestows all success. The benefit of the righteous is in their prayer. They too supplicate Allah Most High for the solving of the material and spiritual problems.

The Holy Qur'an indicates that all affairs are dependent on the will and decree of Allah:

الَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ
عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ

“Do they not know that it is God alone who can accept the repentance of His servants and is the recipient of whatever is offered for His sake...”

(Tawbah, 9:104).

Tawassul merely consists of attracting the pleasure and grace of Allah in honour of His beloved servants.

When Almighty Allah wills a thing He says only “كُنْ” (‘Be’) and that thing occurs. Nevertheless Allah Most High has entrusted certain events to the disposal



of some of His servants, in accordance with the Divine will.

For instance, healing is from Allah only, (that is only Allah can truly heal). However He has made doctors and medicine a means to healing. Thus we need to seek to be healed by using these means. It is not considered *shirk* that a person goes to the doctor to be healed, for every believer knows that only Allah can heal and the doctor is only an instrument of that healing. And the One who gave medicine its chemical properties of healing and allowed mankind to discover it is also Almighty Allah.

The Blessed Companions would ask the Messenger of Allah (saw) for help. They would ask him to intercede for them, and put forth their poverty, illness, cases of debt to him and run to him in their time of need. According to a great number of narrations, whenever there was a drought, the Companions would go to the Messenger of Allah (saw) and ask him to pray to Allah for rain.

In doing so, the blessed Companions knew full well that the Messenger of Allah (saw) was only a means or vehicle that would allow them to reach their goal. The true Doer, the Absolute One of Power is only Almighty Allah. But because they knew of the love our Lord has for His Beloved, they used him in the hope that his prayers would be more read-



ily accepted. And obviously those Companions were people who knew much better than we do, the difference between *shirk* and *tawheed*.

One day Marwan saw a person place his face on the stone of the blessed grave of the Messenger of Allah (saw) and grabbed him by the collar saying:

“What do you think you are doing?”

When that man turned around he saw that it was none other than Abu Ayyub al Ansari, the lover of the prophet (saw) who said:

“Yes, I know what I am doing. I came to visit the Messenger of Allah (saw), not this stone. I heard him (saw) say:

“Do not become anxious when the competent people of religion take the religion upon themselves; however, when those who are not competent take over, then that is when you should worry and weep” (Ahmad bin Hanbal, V, 422; Hakim, IV, 560/8571; Haythami, V, 245).

In this way, Abu Ayyub explained to Marwan that what he did at the grave of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) was not a sin since Abu Ayyub knew the religion better than Marwan.

Thus, it is groundless to claim that *tawassul* carried out in accordance with the correct etiquette is



shirk. What is *shirk* is to consider that the one being used as a means is in a position to personally bring about benefit or harm, as only Allah can do. Thus the one who is turning to *tawassul* as a means, must know that the one whom they are turning to is only a means of good and can repel evil only by the will of Allah.

VISITING THE GRAVES

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said:

“Remember death often! Remembering death will purify man of his sins and make him abstain from the world. If you reflect on death when you are wealthy, you will be protected from the dangers of wealth. If you ponder on death when you are poor, you will be content with your life”(Suyuti, Jamiu as-Saghir, I, 47).

“Remember death and how your body and bones will rot after death! The one who desires the afterlife will abandon the embellishments of this world” (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 24).

“...Allah loves the one who remembers death often” (Haythami, X, 325).

“Make much remembrance of death, the destroyer of pleasures” (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 26).

For these reasons the masters of *tasawwuf* would attain spiritual acumen by pondering on death for a certain period each morning. Reflecting on death is



an unparalleled means of eliminating the desires of the nafs and allowing the spirit to grow and develop. Through this acumen they obtained from such reflection that they were able to shun wrong and vain affairs, and always did that which was beneficial, in their struggle to perform countless righteous deeds.

According to narrations, Ali (ra) would frequently visit the graves often. One day he was asked:

“What is this state o Ali? You have become a neighbour of the graves”. He gave them the following reply:

“I have found them to be truthful neighbours. They do not cause any harm and they continuously remind us of the hereafter (by making us take heed of their state)” (Ibn Abi Shayba, Musannaf, VII, 102/34514).

A friend of Allah gives the following advice about how we should make the most of this bounty of life given to us by freeing ourselves from heedlessness and performing righteous deeds and how to live a life of servitude to Allah in gratitude, thanks and contentment:

“Go and visit the ill in the hospitals from time to time. Ponder over how you have not been afflicted with that illness and be grateful for the bounty of health that you have been given!



Go and visit the prisons from time to time and reflect on the lives of the prisoners filled with pain.

Think about how crimes are committed just because of an instant of madness or rage. Or how there are some innocent people who have been imprisoned but yet endure that hardship. Think about how the same thing could have happened to you. Thank Allah that He saved you from such a situation. And pray for the salvation of those who are there.

And then visit the graves and listen to the silent cries rising up from those tombstones. Think about how regret will be of no benefit once you have lost the bounty of life. Know the value of your time. Pray and ask for forgiveness for those who are lying in their graves. And then spend your remaining days in a state of praise, gratitude and remembrance of Allah!”

In truth, visiting the graves is the best way to remember death and the hereafter. The prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

“I had forbidden you from visiting the graves...But now you may visit them for this makes you remember the hereafter...” (Tirmidhi, Janaiz, 60; See Muslim, Janaiz, 106).

At the beginning of his prophethood, the Messenger of Allah (saw), had forbidden visiting the graves due to the danger of this becoming *shirk*. During the period of ignorance, people believed that



there the spirits of their forefathers became sacred in some way and they would visit the graves in order to boast about the greatness of their tribes and the great number of their dead. In order to remove all trace of this practice from the days of ignorance, the prophet forbade visits to the grave.

However once Islam gained strength, and faith and *tawheed* became firmly established in the hearts, there was no longer any occasion for worshipping the graves, expecting any help from the dead, or attributing any sort of sacredness to them. Thus the prophet allowed, and even encouraged people to visit the graves.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) would frequently visit the Baqi Cemetary in Madina, and the martyrs of Uhud. According to Aisha (ra), whenever the prophet would spend the night with her, he would visit the Baqi Cemetary and greet the dead there and pray for them³⁵.

In fact one night the angel Gabriel came to the prophet and said:

“Your Lord commands you to go to the dwellers of the Baqi Cemetary and ask for their forgiveness” (Muslim, Janaiz, 103). The prophet obeyed this command and went to visit the Baqi cemetery.



Abdullah ibn Abi Farwa (ra) narrates:

“The prophet visited the graves of the martyrs of Uhud and prayed as follows:

“O Allah! Your slave and prophet bears witness that these are true martyrs. And whoever visits these martyrs and greets them, they too will respond to their greeting” (Hakim, III, 31/4320).

The prophet would teach his Companions to say the following when visiting the graves:

“Peace be upon you, o believers and Muslims of this land (the graveyard)! Allah willing we too will join you soon. I ask that Allah forgive us and you”(Muslim, Janaiz, 104).

Imam Sha’bii, one of the great Tabiieen, said:

*“Whenever a relative of the Ansar would pass away, they would visit his grave frequently and recite the Qur’an by their side”*³⁶.

Thus whenever a believer visits a grave, he should first greet the people of the grave with the greetings of peace, pray for them, and recite Qur’an if possible. He should also reflect upon the fact that he too will one day be in their state. The great friend of Allah, Hatem-i Esam said:

36. Abu Bakr ibn Hallah, al Qirae ‘inda al Kubur, Beirut, 1424, p. 89, no: 7.



“One who passes by the grave and does not pray for those there or ponder on his own end affair is considered to have betrayed those there and his own self” (Ihya, IV, 868).

According to a narration by Sufyan ibn Uyayna it is said that:

“The need that a dead person has for prayer is greater than the need that the living have for food and water” (Suyuti, Sharh-u Sudur, Lebanon 1417, p. 297).

All of the scholars are in clear agreement that it is permissible to recite the Holy Qur'an over the graves.

In his work *Sharhu al-Muhazzab*, Imam Nawawi said:

“It is recommended for a person to recite as much Qur'an as he can and pray for the dead, when visiting the graves” (Suyuti, Sharh-u Sudur, p. 303).

According to Qurtubi, when the Qur'an is recited by the graves, those in the grave can hear it and are thus rewarded by the grace of Allah with the reward of reciting and listening to the Quran. They thus attain divine mercy. For those who do not hear it, it will reach them like the gifts of the reward for charity given on behalf of the dead and dua made for the sake of the dead.



In *Fatawa Qadihan*, one of the books of the Hanafi school, it is said:

“If the one who recites Qur’an by the graves thinks that the dead will become familiar with the sound of the Qur’an, he will read it there, and if he does not have such an intention, then Allah Most High will hear it wherever he may be” (Suyuti, *Sharhu as Sudur*, p. 304).

That is, a person can recite from the Qur’an wherever he is and can send the reward for this to the dead. However if he recites it at the site of the grave, then those in the grave will also receive the reward of listening to it and he will thus become a means of mercy and calm raining down upon them.

Reciting the Qur’an while visiting the graves is an *ijma*³⁷ that has been applied for over 1400 years. Reciting the chapter Yasin in particular, in order that the dead benefit from divine mercy, is a fact known by all.

It is said in a hadith:

37. **Ijma:** There are four essential proofs in Islamic law: The Qur’an, the *sunnah*, *qiyas al fuqaha* (deductive analogy) and *ijma-i ummah*. *Ijma-i ummah* is when all of the Muslims, especially the scholars who are competent in the matter, agree on a particular topic.



"...Yasin is the heart of the Qur'an. Whoever recites it seeking Allah's pleasure and the hereafter, his sins will be forgiven. Recite Yasin over your dead" (Ahmad, V, 26).

Other chapters and verses can be recited for the spiritual benefit of the dead and one of many narrations concerning this is as follows:

"Whenever one of you passes away, bury them immediately. And when you bury him, let one of you recite al Fatiha at his head, and another recite the last part of chapter Baqara at his feet" (Tabarani, Kabir, XII, 340; Daylami, I, 284; Haythami, III, 44).

Imam Shafii (may Allah's mercy be upon him) has said:

*"It is recommended to recite chapters and verses from the Qur'an at the head of the grave. It is even better if one were to recite the entire Qur'an"*³⁸.

Thus visiting the graves, greeting and praying for those in them, performing good deeds such as reciting from the Qur'an in their name, are all means of mercy raining down upon them.

Visiting the graves is a means for great good if done in accordance with the principles of Islam. A result of reflecting on death is that the greedy ambitions of the *nafs* are shattered, the human being



becomes more inclined towards *taqwa* as their heart softens and they become cautious of walking the earth as if they were permanently settled here. The graves are like mirrors that show one's future. If a person looks into this mirror frequently and takes heed from it, they will avoid wasting their lives on futile desires. Thus visiting the graves is the best vehicle for preparing for death and the hereafter.

This is why our forefathers built cemetaries in the town centre, and near mosques in particular. In this way they assured that people passing by would recite the Fatiha for the dead and they themselves could see their own end-affair and contemplate death more.

On the other hand, when visiting the graves it is necessary to avoid certain incorrect actions with extreme care. Some of these include lighting candles by the graves, tying ribbons, or directly expecting something from those in the grave...

We should never forget that however great the man that is lying in that grave may have been, we should never expect anything from him. We should ask from Allah, using him as a means, on account of his worth and honour with Allah.

This is because the sole recourse to which we should turn when asking for something is the Absolute Doer of all, that is Almighty Allah. If He does not so will, not one of His servants could ever bring about



any good nor could they repel any evil or harm. This is why it is a great wrong to pray by the graves of the righteous or in their absence as follows: ***“O so and so! Heal me! Fulfil this need of mine!”*** These are ignorant words, in which, in asking directly from those people, one opens up the door to *shirk*. One should meticulously shun such words that can harm the belief of *tawheed* which is extremely sensitive.

One should intensely avoid all manner of expressions or words that give the impression that any other than Allah has absolute disposal and rule over the universe and can solve our physical or spiritual problems.

It is the responsibility of every believer that they caution others who act in such a way that their actions border on *shirk* due to their heedlessness or ignorance. However those who go to extremes, saying that visiting the graves in accordance with the *adab* of Islam is still a form of *shirk* in order to object against such extreme actions, is doing the same mistake in reverse.

As in every other matter, Islam takes moderation as its basis in the matter of visiting the graves. The words and actions of the prophet Muhammad (saw) and his Companions show us how to behave in such cases without going to one extreme or the other.



IF ALLAH MOST HIGH DOES NOT INFORM ...

Some disciples, in their extreme love they feel for their guide, can get caught up in thoughts such as: “*My guide knows everything*”. This is undoubtedly a false belief.

The prophet Muhammad (saw) was sometimes asked a question and he would answer: “*The one asked does not know much more than the one asking*”³⁹.

In his book *Gulistan*, Shaykh Shadi has the following to say:

One man once asked the prophet Yaqub:

“O wise prophet with enlightened heart! Why is it that you could smell the scent of Yusuf’s shirt when he was coming from Egypt, but you could not see when he was thrown into the well near you?”

Yaqub replied:

“*What Allah bestows upon us are like bolts of lightning. Truth is sometimes made clear to us and is sometimes hidden*”.

That is, if Almighty Allah lifts the veil, His servant can see beyond the horizons however, if he closes it a person cannot even see the hole that is before

39. See Muslim, Iman, 1.



them. That is, the servant is powerless, no matter his spiritual rank. He is ever in need of the grace of Allah.

NO PERSON IS WITHOUT FAULT

Some disciples, due to their extreme love for their guide, go to another extreme, this time saying: "My guide does not make mistakes" (My guide is without fault). This is also an incorrect understanding.

Consider Abu Bakr (ra), who we are told in many narrations⁴⁰ was the best of human beings after the prophets, and who, in his first sermon after becoming caliph, gave us an amazing standard which would be a model for all believing leaders and people of the straight path to come. He said:

"O people! I have been chosen to be caliph over you even though I am not the best among you. If I do not carry out my duty properly then help me. If I make a mistake, show me the correct way..."

... As long as I obey Allah and His Messenger, then you obey me. If I fail to do so, then you do not need to obey me...!"⁴¹

40. See Ali al-Muttaqi, *Kanzu al Ummal*, XI, 549/32578; Ibn Majah, *Muqaddima*, 11/106; Ahmad, I, 127, II, 26.

41. Ibn Sa'd, III, 182-183; Suyuti, *Tarihu al-Khulafa*, p. 69, 71-72; Hamidullah, *The prophet of Islami*, II, 1181.



If the most virtuous man of the Muslim community said as such, then we need to think about how those who take him as their example should be.

Another great perfected guide, Mazhar Jan-e Janaan, was very careful that his every act was in accordance with the *sunnah*. Despite this he showed great humility, saying:

“Whoever sees an act from us that is not in accordance with the rulings of Islam, let him warn us immediately!”⁴².

O MANKIND... DO NOT BECOME ARROGANT!

Sometimes it is possible to come across people who go to extremes in their love for the spiritual path that they are on saying: ‘the greatest of sinners on his own path will go straight to Paradise having fallen at the feet of his guide in the hereafter, who will intercede for 40 people’. This is in no way in agreement with the principles of the shariah, and is nothing more than a baseless delusion which has no support whatsoever.

Let us first of all state this clearly – intercession is a reality. If our Lord so wills, he can bestow this authority on whoever he wishes. However only Allah

42. Abdullah Dahlawi, *Makamat-i Mazhariyya*, p. 43.



knows who will intercede for whom. As we are told in the Holy Qur'an:

"...Who will intercede with Him except with His permission?..." (Baqara, 2:255).

In addition, the warning that the prophet Muhammad (saw) gave to his beloved daughter, Fatima (ra) is enough of a lesson for us:

"O Fatima, daughter of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah! Perform righteous deeds that are acceptable in the sight of Allah! (otherwise do not rely on your father being a prophet). I cannot save you from the punishment of the fire (if you do not carry out your duty of servitude to Allah)!" (Ibn Sa'd, II, 256; Bukhari, Manaqib, 13-14; Muslim, Iman, 348-353).

Thus, assuming that the love, respect, sense of belonging and membership, and good opinion one has for the righteous servants will be a definite means of one's own eternal salvation is extremely dangerous.

One of the most important matters that makes the gentle hearts of the friends of Allah shiver, is the anxiety that they will be taken to account when they enter the presence of Allah for the extreme love others show for them. This is why one time when Abu Bakr (ra) was praised by someone, he immediately sought refuge in Allah saying:



“O Allah! You know me better than I know myself. And I know myself better than they know me. O Allah, make me better than they think of me. Forgive me for my sins that they do not know of. And do not take me to account for what they say about me!”⁴³

It was due to the same anxiety that Khalid-i Baghdadi stated in his last testament that no words of praise or compliment were to be written on his tombstone.

Thus true people of tasawwuf are believers whose hearts tremble with such sensitivity.

Let us never forget that the Christians went to extremes in their elevation of their prophet and thus damaged the creed of *tawheed* and committed *shirk*, by associating a partner with Allah.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) warned his community of such extremes as follows:

“Do not overpraise me as the Christians overpraised ‘Isa, the son of Maryam. I am a mere servant of Allah. Say about me only that “He is Allah’s servant and Messenger” (Bukhari, Anbiya, 48).

“Do not elevate me above a station that is my due! Allah Most High made me His servant before He made me a messenger” (Hakim, III, 197/4825; Haythami, IX, 21).

43. Suyuti, *Tarihu al-Khulafa*, p. 104.



The Messenger of Allah (saw) considered the honour of being a servant of Allah to be above all else. The following narration is a patent example of this:

One day Allah's Messenger (saw) was conversing with the angel Gabriel. At that point an angel descended down from the heavens. Gabriel said that this was the first time this angel had come down to earth. The angel said:

“O Muhammad! Your Lord has sent me to you. He wants me to ask you whether you want to be a king prophet or a servant prophet”.

The prophet looked at Gabriel who said:

“O Allah's Messenger! Be humble towards your Lord!”

The Messenger of Allah responded:

“I wish to be a servant prophet” (Ahmad, II, 231; Haythami, IX, 18, 20).

It was after this choice that ‘servanthood’ became the highest and most honourable rank that mankind could attain.

Likewise in the declaration of faith, when the prophet is mentioned, he is mentioned first as a ‘servant’ (*abd*). Thus the way to attaining the pleasure of Allah, is to struggle to live one's entire life in a state of servanthood to Allah.



Let us also not forget that aside from the prophets, every human being is weak and flawed. Even the prophets can slip due to their being human beings. However because they are subject to divine vindication, they are corrected. One of the wisdoms in this is to remind them that even they the prophets are powerless, and to teach their people not to elevate them to such a degree that they consider them gods.

In short, love and respect for our great men of spirituality is necessary, however it is also of utter importance that we abide by the limits of the shariah when elevating them.

Otherwise those who overstep the limits in this matter will harm themselves and will bring a stain to the purity of the spiritual path they claim to be a member of.

As in all other matters, there have been exploiters who have arisen from time to time in the Sufi path. Today even, there are people who rise up and make claims such as: 'I am the Spiritual Pole of these times' or 'I am a saint', due to egoism, due to a spiritual illness, or having been deluded by the extreme compliments of their followers. They find themselves in a claim for greatness or search for fame that is completely against the spirit of true tasawwuf.

The caliph Uthman, said:



“A sign of a pious servant is that he sees others as being saved, while he considers himself ruined”.

Let us not forget that in this world of testing we did not come here to boast about ourselves to each other. We were sent to this world to perceive our own nothingness, mortality and weakness and to serve our Lord. The greatest honour in this fleeting world is to be a servant of Allah. Everyone of us, with our mistakes and our good deeds, is a helpless slave. After putting in our effort to the best of our ability, we seek refuge in Allah's mercy, forgiveness and grace when it comes to our end affair.

TASAWWUF: TO KEEP THE HEART IN A STATE OF BALANCE BETWEEN FEAR AND HOPE

The following event took place in the Age of Bliss and we should each of us take it as an important principle to live by.

One of the Companions, known for his ascetism and worship, was Uthman ibn Maz'un (ra). He passed away in the house of a woman in Madina named Ummu al-Ala'. After he died this lady said:

“O Uthman I bear witness that Allah Most High is favouring you with His grace (that is, you will go to Paradise)”.



The Messenger of Allah (saw) interferred saying:

“*How do you know that?*” She replied:

“I do not know, by Allah”. The Messenger of Allah (saw) then cautioned her:

“*Look, Uthman has passed away. I myself hope that Allah will be good to him. But even though I am a prophet, I do not know what will happen to you or me*”.

Ummu al-Ala later said:

“I swear by Allah, that after this event I never said anything about anyone’s end affair” (Bukhari, Tabir, 27).

We know that there is no guarantee that anyone, other than the prophets and those whom they gave glad tidings about, will pass away in a state of faith. The Holy Qur’an and certain hadith mention those who, on their way to Paradise, were subject to divine punishment, and those who were on their way to Hell, but were subject to divine mercy at the last minute.

We should never forget the state of Bal’am bin Baura⁴⁴ who had reached the state of being able to view the *Lawh-i Mahfuz*, but then succumbed to his *nafs* and ended up suffering endless loss.

Qar’un also was once a person of abstinence and *taqwa*, whom Allah Most High had favoured with

44. See Araf, 7:176



great bounty. He was also the most capable reader and commentator of the Torah. But alas! When Allah gave him great treasure and wealth as a test, this only served to distance him from Allah instead of bringing him closer. When the prophet Moses informed Qar'un of the amount he had to pay in alms, he protested saying:

“I earned all of this on my own!” His worldly wealth made him so foolish as to even slander Moses. In the end he was destroyed after being swallowed up by the earth together with all his wealth and riches that he had so relied upon.

Khalid-i Baghdad said:

“...Nobody knows who will be saved at the last breath. There are many sinners and transgressors (who repent and become upright) who become saints. And there are many principled and upright people (who later give in to their nafs and lose their direction) who fall to the lowest of the low...”⁴⁵

In many of his letters, he would request that people pray that he pass away in a state of faith.

This is why it is forbidden to belittle and despise people. Likewise it is also wrong to compliment others who one assumes to have secured Paradise.



Thus on this spiritual path, there is no room for becoming proud and slack, in the delusion that 'I am now perfect' or assuming an air of spiritual superiority. On the contrary one should take as one's basis the fact that one is faulty and deficient and increase one's efforts to improve.

The poet expressed it well when he said:

There can be no perfect scale better than the eye of justice,

And there can be no wisdom better than to know one's own faults...

Abu al Hasan al-Kharaqani said:

"People continue to boast about how much they know until they realize they do not know anything. And when they realize that they do not know anything, they become ashamed of their knowledge and it is then that they reach a state of true knowledge. For true knowledge is to know that one does not know".

Even the prophets who were guaranteed their hereafter, would seek refuge in Divine Mercy, ever in a state between fear and hope.

For instance, the prophet Abraham was anxious about his end-affair, even after having being tested with his wealth, his life and his son, and prayed as follows:



وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ

“...and do not put me to shame on the Day when all shall be raised from the dead!” (al-Shu'ara, 26:87).

The Beloved of Allah, the prophet Muhammad (saw) had been forgiven his past and future sins, but still continued to pray at night and ask for forgiveness, in tears, until his feet were swollen. When he was asked why he did this, he replied:

“Should I not be a grateful servant of Allah?” (Ibn Hibban, II, 386).

The ‘*ashara-i mubashshara*’, that is those ten Companions who were promised Paradise while still in the world, never once relied upon this promise, nor did they slacken in their duties or become proud and lax. On the contrary, they increased in their efforts, with softened and gentle hearts, and displayed model lives of servitude to Allah.

The following event is a beautiful example of the gentleness of the hearts of the Companions:

Salman Farisi (ra) had become such a distinguished and unique personality through his self-sacrificing struggle in the way of Allah that both the Ansar and the Muhajirun would say:



“Salman is of us”. They did not want to share him and even began to argue about this. In order to reconcile them and to compliment Salman, the Messenger of Allah (saw) said:

“Salman is of us. He is of the ahl-al-bayt!”(Hakim, III, 691/6541; Haythami, VI, 130; Ibn Hisham, III, 241; Ibn Sa’d, IV, 83).

Despite having received such a prophetic compliment, this blessed Companion continued to live his life in a state of great humility and selflessness, with his heart ever bearing anxiety for the hereafter.

One time two men greeted Salman (ra) and asked him:

“Are you a Companion of the Messenger of Allah (saw)? ” He replied:

“I do not know”.

The men hesitated, thinking that they had come to the wrong person when Salman explained:

“I saw the Messenger of Allah (saw). I was present in his company. However his true Companions are those who will enter Paradise with him” (Haythami, VIII, 40-41; Dhahabi, Siyer, I, 549).

What a magnificent model of selflessness and humility! He did not consider himself saved, even though the prophet had complimented him in such



a way, and his heart was ever trembling with concern about the hereafter...

Another Companion who was praised by the Messenger of Allah (saw) was Khalid ibn Walid (ra).

He was the author of countless victories in the history of Islam, his sword broke into nine pieces during the Battle of Muthah⁴⁶, he wrought terror into the eyes of an enemy force of one hundred thousand men, with his tiny army of three thousand, his conquests at Yarmuk became an epic, he was the conqueror of Syria, and he was given the title 'Allah's sword' by the prophet himself. Khalid ibn Walid became ill in the 21st year after the hijrah at Homs. His friends from the army were by his side. When he was about to pass away he asked for his sword. He held the handle and gently stroked it. He then began to take his conscience to account, saying:

“How many swords have been broken in my hand. And now here is my last sword about to witness my death. What saddens me the most is that I have spent my life on the battlefield, never having laid on my bed to sleep at night and now here I, Khalid, lay, weak and dying in my bed. Not one of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah died in the comfort of his own bed. They were either martyred on the



battlefield or in distant lands, spreading the religion of Islam.

O Khalid! Khalid, who failed to become a martyr... There has been no position I have not been able to acquire, other than martyrdom. There is no spot on my body left without a scar or a wound made by a spear or sword. Is this the end – dying in my bed- for one who galloped around the battlefield spreading the religion of Islam? I would have expected my death to come on the battlefield, on my horse, striking my sword at the enemy for the sake of Allah...”

He then said:

“I am letting you know of my last testament, lift me up”. When he had stood up, he said:

“Leave me now and let the sword that I have carried until now, carry me instead. He then leaned on his sword and said:

“I will meet my death as if I am fighting on the battlefield. Give my horse to a brave man who will rush to encounter any manner of danger without fear. I am dying possessing nothing more than my horse and my sword. Dig my grave with this sword. Heroes are fond of the clanging sound of the sword”.

He then lay down on his bed, and pronouncing the declaration of faith one more time, he passed



away, with the longing for martyrdom still in his heart⁴⁷.

The Companions were thus people of action and strong faith, and not mere words and names. They had submitted to the Messenger of Allah (saw), in every way. Despite having lived lives filled with righteous deeds, they did not consider themselves saved and continued to struggle to serve Allah. Their state should be an example for all the believers.

In reality the spiritual worth of a person will become clear in the hereafter. This is why it befalls the servant of Allah to continue in his struggle, knowing that he is nothing (without Allah) and powerless.

We too should take every breath of our life, concerned about our last breath, and struggling to live according to the Qur'an and the sunnah and like the prophet Yusuf we should continue to pray:

تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

“...(o my Lord!) Let me die as a Muslim and make me one with the righteous!” (Yusuf, 12:101).

Let us not forget that whatever our rank or position, we are always powerless to know our end affair

47. See Sadik Dana, *Heroes of Islam*, I, p. 68-69, Erkam Publications, Istanbul, 1990.



or the end affair of others. We are ever in need of our Lord's mercy, forgiveness and grace.

Allah Most High says in the Qur'an:

“And serve your Lord until there come unto you the Hour that is Certain (death)” (al Hijr, 15:99). In saying so, He has commanded us to live our lives in servitude to Him and in uprightness until our last breath.

May Almighty Allah give us all a good end affair, through His grave and favour...

Amen...





ROSEBUDS FROM THE GARDEN OF WISDOM

Ali عليه السلام said:

“Let your souls take comfort in subtle and wise words and acts. For just as the body gets tired and is weakened, so too the spirits get tired”.



The wisdom that is lost by heedless hearts can only be found at the feet of the people of the heart...



ROSEBUDS FROM THE GARDEN OF WISDOM

Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

“There are such among people that they are keys to good and locks to evil. And then there are some who are keys to evil and locks to good.

Happy are those people whom Allah has given the keys to good! And woe to those whom Allah has given the keys to evil!” (Ibn Majah, Muqaddimah, 19; Bayhaqi, Shuab, I, 455)



“There are only two people who should be admired and whose example should be taken:

One is he whom Allah has given the Qur'an. Such a person recites the Qur'an from day until night, and acts according to it. And the other is to whom Allah has given wealth. He gives it in charity from morning to night”(Muslim, Musafirin, 266, 267).



“O Allah! I seek refuge in You from knowledge that has no benefit, a heart that does not tremble (out of awe for You), a nafs that is never satiated, and a prayer that is not answered” (Muslim, Dhikr, 73).



The prophet Muhammad (saw) would pray after the night prayer and a part of his prayer is as follows:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِكَ

“O Allah! I ask You for a mercy from Your own mercy, such that through this mercy:

تَهْدِي بِهَا قَلْبِي

You will guide my heart

وَتَجْمَعُ بِهَا أَمْرِي

Bring order to my affairs

وَتَلْمُ بِهَا شَعْبِي

Bring order to my disorder

وَتُصْلِحُ بِهَا عَائِبِي

Put perfect faith in my spirit

وَتَرْفَعُ بِهَا شَاهِدِي



Favour my outer with righteous deeds

وَتُرَكِّبْ بِهَا عَمَلِي

Bestow purity and sincerity on my deeds

وَتُلْهِمْنِي بِهَا رُشْدِي

*Inspire me with a direction that will gain Your
favour*

وَتَرُدُّ بِهَا أَلْفَتِي

Bestow on me an intimate friend

وَتَعْصِمْنِي بِهَا مِنْ كُلِّ سُوءٍ

And protect me from all manner of evil!"

(Tirmidhi, Dawat, 30/3419).

Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه **said:**

“Four people are from amongst Allah’s righteous slaves:

1. The one who is pleased when they see someone who has repented (they take pleasure from them having set out upon the path of salvation)
2. The one who entreats his Lord for the forgiveness of the sinners.



3. The one who prays for his brother in his absence

4. The one who helps and serves one who is more needy than him.”



“Flee from fame so that honour will follow you”.



“Be prepared for death so that eternal life can be given to you.”



“Know this – There is a deed that Almighty Allah wishes to be done during the day that He will not accept if done at night; and there is a deed which Almighty Allah wishes to be done during the night that He will not accept if it is done during the day!”



“O Allah! Let the best part of my life be its end, let my best deed be my last deed, and let my best day be the day I return to You”.

Umar  said:

“The person most beloved to me is the one who informs me of my faults and defects”.



One time a person was praising another in the presence of Umar. Umar (ra) asked him three questions:

1. Have you ever travelled with him?
2. Have you ever had any financial transactions or social interactions with him?
3. Have you been his neighbor day and night?

When that man replied “no” to all three of these questions, Umar said:

“I swear by Allah, besides whom there is no other god, that you do not know this man!”



“In order to reform others you need to first reform yourself. The most ignorant of people is the one who sells his own hereafter for another’s worldly life”.

‘Uthman  said:

“The true believer fears six things:

1. Fear that his faith will be taken away by Allah.
2. Fear that the angels will write down the things that will disgrace him on the Day of Judgment.
3. Fear that his deeds will be brought to nought by Satan



4. Fear that the angel Azrail will take him suddenly while he is in a state of heedlessness.

5. Fear that he will become arrogant due to the world, and heedless of the hereafter.

6. Fear that he will become pre-occupied with his wife and children and neglect to occupy himself with remembrance of Allah Most High”.



“There are four things whose outer aspect is virtue and whose inner aspect is compulsory:

1. Keeping company with the righteous is a virtue and following them is compulsory.

2. Reciting the Qur’an is a virtue whilst acting upon it is compulsory.

3. Visiting the graves is a virtue whilst preparing for death is compulsory.

4. Visiting the sick is a virtue whilst taking heed from them is compulsory” (Ibn Hajar, Munabbihat, p. 14).

Ali (ra) said:

“The most difficult deeds consist of four virtues:

1. Forgiving in times of anger.

2. Being generous when one is in need.



3. Protecting oneself from the evil of one's *nafs* in closed and secluded places.

4. Speaking the truth to one whom one either fears or hopes for some benefit”



“There are two bounties of which I do not know which one is more pleasing to me:

The first is when a person in need comes to me in all sincerity hoping that I can help him.

The second is when Allah Most High makes me a means for that person's need being fulfilled or makes it easy for me to fulfil it. I prefer to remove the distress of a Muslim over possessing (tons of) gold and silver”
(Ali al Muttaqi, VI, 598/17049).



“Do not consult with the following people: the miser who makes you afraid of poverty, thereby stopping you from doing good, the coward who tries to break your determination in the face of great tasks, and the one who has become blinded by greedy ambition”.



“Let good advice bring life to your heart and wisdom illuminate it”.



Bayazid-i Bistami رحمته الله said:

“The Sufi is the one who bears the Holy Qur’an in one hand and the *sunnah* of the Prophet in his other, who has one eye on Paradise and one eye on Hell, who wraps the world around his lower body and the hereafter around his upper, entering into the state of ihram and, running to his Lord between the two, he says: *Labbayk Allahumma Labbayk* (Here I am at Your service Allah, ready and in submission to Your command”.



“Do not be deceived by one who performs miracles and who may even sit cross-legged floating in the air! Look and see – does he abide by the Divine commands and prohibitions, does he preserve the Divine limits, does he carry out the rulings of the Shariah? (Otherwise, his state is not one of miracle-working but rather *istidraj*)”.

Abu al-Hasan Kharraqani رحمته الله said:

“Allah brought you into this world pure, so do not go back to Him having tainted yourselves”.



“The thorn that pricks the finger of the one from Turkestan to Damascus, is as if it has pricked my own finger, the rock that has struck their foot has hurt my



foot, and if there is sorrow in any heart, then that heart is mine”.



“After faith, Allah Most High has not bestowed upon His servant anything greater than a pure heart, and an upright tongue”.



“The mischief that the following two people cause cannot be caused even by Satan himself:

1. The scholar who has become engulfed in greed for the world (that is, the greedy scholar who does not practice what he knows, and who lacks piety).

2. The immature Sufi who is deprived of (religious) knowledge”.

Yusuf Hamadani  said:

“The one who does not walk the path of religion and the shariah’ has followed Satan, even if he displays a thousand miracles a day. The efforts of the one who memorises the entirety of worldly knowledge, will amount to nought if they believe a matter which is contrary to the *sunnah*, and their striving will be nothing more than fatigue”.

As is said in the Holy Qur’an:



عَامِلَةٌ نَاصِبَةٌ

“Labouring hard, weary...” (al Ghaashiya, 88:3).

Muhammad Arif Riwgari رحمته الله said:

“The beginning of the *tariq*, its joy, its key and the commands of the religion are to seek refuge in Allah through repentance and deep reverence. *Tawbah* (repentance) is the most important *wird* (daily practice) of the believer”.



“Wise is the person who with every breath Allah gives him, he devotes his heart to Him completely, and this state continues until his last breath! Moreover this state of his is hidden from the people!”

Sayyid Amir Kulal رحمته الله said:

“Even if you spend your nights in worship and your stomach has become as thin as the string of a violin from hunger, you will never reach your true aim unless what you eat and what you wear are lawful.

Bahauddin Shah Naqshiband رحمته الله said:

“The way of the people of the heart is to belittle their righteous deeds, and to be in a state of humility, nothingness, selflessness, and powerlessness, and to see their deeds as being faulty and their state defective.

There is nothing more beneficial and effective in break-



ing the ego than to see oneself as defective and lacking. This is one of the wisdoms in the slips of the prophets, that is, in their making mistakes outside of their will”.



“O my Lord! The people fear You whereas I fear myself! How can it be otherwise, when my Lord, from You I have only seen good and from myself only evil”.

Ubaydullah Ahrar  said:

“I advanced upon this path, not by reading the books of the Sufis, but by personally serving the people and Allah’s creation...They took everyone by a different path and my path was through service. And so serving others is a method that I am content with, and that I prefer and love. I advise those who I see as having potential for spirituality to serve others”.

Muhammed Zahid  said:

“The manners of tasawwuf are like torches that light the way for the one who wishes to advance upon this path. Whoever wishes to progress in the spiritual realm and become a person of *hal*, must comply with the manners taught and applied by the Friends of Allah”.

Imam Rabbani  said:

“Do not be content with anything other than that which Allah is pleased with, and do not desire them! Since all of these (the desires of our *nafs*) will end with



our last breath, let us abandon them now! The true Friends of Allah abandon these of their own accord (by struggling against their *nafs*)”.

(It has been said: *مُوتُوا قَبْلَ أَنْ تَمُوتُوا*)

“Die before you die”, that is, abandon the greedy ambitions of your *nafs* before death comes to you).

Muhammed Masum Sirhindi رحمته الله عليه said:

“Be upon the path of worship and obedience and seek forgiveness for the defects that you have in this worship. Never see your acts as being worthy of Allah (that is, always see them as lacking)!

One of our great scholars has said: *اعْمَلْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ*
“Perform righteous deeds and ask for forgiveness. This is the path of servanthood!”



“No person who is devoid of manners (*adab*) has ever been able to reach Allah”.

Abdullah Dahlawi رحمته الله عليه said:

“We came to this world to pick roses, but we have become bearers of thorns”.

(While there is a treasure of happiness in this world which is to be a friend of Allah through *taqwa*, how tragic is it that we follow our lowly desires...



“One of the most important means of being accepted in the sight of Allah is to turn to Him, and be in a constant state of servanthood, in continuous remembrance of Him with a broken heart.



“How can the one who follows the desires of his *nafs* be a servant of Allah?!”

Mawlana Khalid Baghdadi  said:

“It is very difficult to walk uprightly upon the path of Islamic morality without entering upon the *sayr-u suluq*, that is, without being a Sufi. For there are all manner of trials, traps and deceptions of the *nafs* that will ruin a person”.



“Even if a person memorises all of the sciences of the religion in all of the books, it will still not be sufficient for him to be freed from the wiles of his *nafs*. These can only be eliminated under the training of and through the disposal of a perfected guide. Otherwise a person will not be subject to spiritual manifestations that will revive the heart and will not be able to advance along the path of the clear religion in sincerity and faithfulness”.



“How can a person who has been honoured with Islam spend the entire night sleeping and not protect the trust given to them by Allah Most High? One of the most important trusts given to us by Almighty Allah is to wake in the predawn and stand in prayer”.

Seyyid Tâhâ el-Hakkârî رحمته الله says:

“Do not bury your deeds in the earth! A person who fancies themselves (on account of the deeds that they have done) and becomes proud and arrogant is like one who buries his deeds in the grave, thus annihilating them”.

Muhammed Es'ad Efendi رحمته الله buyurur:

“Since all of our subtle faculties (*lataif*) are in need of being purified, it is a must that a journeyer on the path to Allah, accustom all of his faculties and turn to *dhikr*. Just as when the major ritual ablution (*ghusul*) becomes necessary under particular circumstances, one washes every part, in fact, every point, of his body, so too one who wishes to purify their heart must perform *dhikr* with each of their subtle faculties, in fact with each atom in their body”.



“May Almighty Allah illuminate the eye of your heart! Just as rosewater is present at every point in the rose leaf, so too, let every atom in your precious body,



be beautified with the exquisite fragrance of love and constant *dhikr*.”



“One does not fear the thorns in the rosegarden of love! I pick hundreds of rosebuds for each thorn”.



“I take pleasure out of the pain that comes from being in the garden of the darwishes. If I make my pillow out of thorns, then I see the Rose (saw) in my dream”.



“One, in fact the primary, of the sins that leads to the servant being deprived in the sight of Allah, is to consider oneself as existing in and of themselves, that it, it is egoism”.

Mahmud Sami Ramazanoglu  said:

“The first condition for the servant’s prayer being accepted is that he eats from what is lawful and thus reforms his heart and the last condition is sincerity and presence of heart. That is, it is to turn to Almighty Allah, as is His due. If the food that one eats is not lawful, it is very difficult for one to be sincere or fully present, and to abandon everything other than Allah and turn to Him”.



“The person of uprightness should be upright like a mountain. There are four features of a mountain:

- 1) It does not melt from the heat,
- 2) It does not freeze from the cold,
- 3) It does not fall down due to the wind,
- 4) It cannot be overtaken by a flood.

Khwaja Musa Topbas  said:

“Our great scholars have stated that purification of the *nafs* is an individual obligation (*fard-i 'ayn*).



“Many people believe advancing spiritually is ensured through frequent worship. No, indeed, real progress is knowing that one is in the Divine presence of Almighty Allah, following the *sunnah*, and ordering one's life accordingly. There are many people who have much supererogatory worship to their name, however they do not care about the lawful or the forbidden, and they do not attempt to adopt the character of Islam. They spend their free time gossiping and backbiting others. They spend everything they get on satisfying the carnal desires of their *nafs*. If only they had reduced the amount of supererogatory worship they



do and struggled more in the matter of good character, and remained vigilant in the matter of others' rights”.



“The kernel, or the seed, that allows the servant to reach *marifatullah*, are ready and waiting in the earth of the body. In order for them to sprout and blossom one needs to continue in one's gratitude, praise, *dhikr*, and contemplation... The beginning of the knowledge of *marifah* is to contemplate the mysteries in the Divine works of art”.



“As a result of the introspection and contemplation carried out by a heart that is sound and purified from all other than Allah, the human being gains much spiritual knowledge that cannot be learned from books”.



“Our salvation, our peace and our happiness is only possible by completely following the Messenger of Allah (saw), in every circumstance, at our every breath, every step, and every state and act. It is to colour ourselves with his hue, to adopt his character, and to struggle to follow his blessed *sunnah*, without parting from it at all”.



Mawlana Jalalluddin Rumi  said:

“Shams (may his mystery be sanctified) taught me the following:

“If there is even one believer on the face of this earth who is cold, then you do not have the right to be warm”.

I know that there are many believers on the face of the earth who are cold and I can no longer keep myself warm...”



“The toleration of the rose for the thorn is what gave it its beautiful scent”.



“However wealthy you may be, you can only eat so much. If you dip your urn into the ocean, it will only hold so much water, the rest will be left behind”.



“Have you ever planted wheat and harvested barley?”



“I have lost my inspiration this predawn. I realized that something doubtful must have entered my body. Knowledge and wisdom arise from lawful pro-



vision. Love and compassion too are harvested from lawful provision. If heedlessness arises after a particular mouthful, then know that that mouthful was doubtful or even unlawful”.



“The human being is like a forest. Just as there are thousands of hogs, wolves, and all manner of animals, both pure and impure, so too all manner of beauty and ugliness can be found in the human being”.



“If you want to radiate light like the day, you must burn your *nafs* which is like the night”.



“To submit to a person who is a true friend of Allah is better than being exalted by the sultan”.



“There are many instances of grace and glory in water in that it accepts dirt and cleans it (Be precious like water)”.



“Do not act until your guide acts. The one who acts without his head will become a tail.



“The one whose heart and state is not one will be without a tongue even though he may have a hundred tongues.



“The one who has a good friend is in no need of a mirror”.



“Who ever said that the rose lives under the protection of the thorn? The thorn's reputation is only on account of the rose”.



“Just as the animal gains in value due to its skill, so too the human being gains in value when he uses his intelligence and his heart”.



“O you unfortunate one who throws away the jewel of faith for the sake of a piece of bread, and who throws away a treasure for a piece of barley! Nimrod did not give his heart to Ibrahim and ended up losing his life to a mosquito”.



“One should feel sorry for the pain of a problem that comes from lack of faith for there is no cure for such a problem”.



“There are many fish in the sea who are safe whilst in the water, but due to their greed they get caught by the hook”.



“It is not water that will clean the dirt inside, but tears”.



“No mirror ever turned back into metal. No bread ever turned back into wheat. No grape ever turned back into its unripe state. Cook, mature and be saved from rotting away (Do not fall into the trap of your *nafs!*)”.

Shaykh Sadi Shirazi  said:

“If a poor man should come to your door, do not turn him away empty-handed. God forbid, maybe one day you will become poor like him and will have to walk from door to door.

Ask about those whose hearts are broken, look at them. Maybe one day you will be in their shoes.

Since you do not have to go to anyone’s door when you want something then do not shoo away the poor one who comes to your door, do not frown at him, but greet him with a smile...



“The true friends of Allah shop at the stores where no one else ever goes”.

The people of wisdom have said:

Three things are the secret to happiness:

1. Being a person of humility,
2. Finding peace and becoming wealthy through contentment,
3. Reflecting on death often, and comprehending that the hereafter is the true life.



This world can become a paradise via three things:

1. With an elegant tongue that conquers the hearts,
2. With a generous hand,
3. With a heart that has become an abode of mercy.



Three kinds of people are in spiritual darkness:

1. The heedless one who does not practice what he preaches,



2. The fool who claims virtue even though he has become a slave to arrogance,

3. The boor who is deprived of prosperity of the heart.



The believer is in a state of seclusion with Allah in three places:

1. In solitude that is not harmed by the crowd (from multiplicity to unity),

2. When he brings a smile and hope to the lonely, the forlorn and the hopeless,

3. When he meets misfortune with praise, patience and thanks, thinking of the reward.



Amongst the people, there are three who truly know themselves:

1. Those who are content with the divine decree,

2. Those who are shy to say their name (the people of humility and selflessness),

3. Those who look on creation through the eyes of their Creator.



Three people are distant from Allah:



1. Those who only think of their comfort, and stay away from serving others.
2. Those who claim to be sensitive and thus do not approach the suffering and impoverished.
3. Those who keep company with the heedless.



Three kinds of people are given the glad tidings of being able to see Allah:

1. Those who have pure and sincere hearts that are friends to Almighty Allah (possessors of a sound heart),
2. Those who find the sun in the pitch black of the night (those who bring life to predawn in a state of ecstasy),
3. Those who make good use of the capital of their life in the way of Allah, in a constant state of anxiety about their hereafter.



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