



THE BOOK OF ILLUMINATIONS



MUKHTAR MOHSEN MUHAMMAD



THE ROYAL ISLAMIC STRATEGIC STUDIES CENTRE

ENGLISH ISLAM SERIES • BOOK NUMBER 36

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Dr Mukhtar Mohsen Muhammad

Translated by
MOUSTAFA ELQABBANY



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INTRODUCTION

PROFESSOR DR. ALI GOMAA

*Member of the Council of Senior Scholars
and Sheikh of the Şiddīqiyyah Shādhiliyyah Order*

*In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious,
the Most Merciful*

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings be upon the noblest of Prophets and Messengers, our master Muhammad, and upon his pure family and all his companions, and upon those who follow his guidance until the Day of Judgment.

As for what follows, the journey to Allah ultimately aims to reach Allah alone, to the exclusion of all else. Therefore, the mystics and saints who have traversed this path have emphasized that Allah is the goal of all, and that one who is distracted does not arrive. Thus, it is not right for the seeker to pay attention to the illuminations, lights, manifestations, and secrets that they may acquire along the way. However, when they do occur, it is important to understand that they may be a blessing that guides one towards further travel and striving, or they may be a curse, if one becomes fixated on them and seeks them, ultimately returning to where one began.

Since awareness precedes striving, it was deemed important to explain these insights with some detail and clarity, as a form of advice and guidance for the people of the path and seekers of truth. May this help them to overcome the obstacles of the soul and escape the pitfalls of the path. It is as if the meanings of this book and similar works call out

to everyone who walks on the path to Allah, repeating in their ears the words of Allah Almighty: *'and that the ultimate end is toward your Lord'*¹ so that they may complete their journey and turn towards Allah, leaving behind laziness and neglect.

O Allah, guide us on the path to You and teach us good manners before You, and do not distract us from You. Open our hearts with the lights of Your knowledge and understanding of the secrets of our servitude to You, and establish us in Your pleasure. Grant us the breakthroughs of those who truly know You.

PROFESSOR DR. ALI GOMAA

*Member of the Council of Senior Scholars at
al-Azhar al-Sharīf*

Sheikh of the Ṣiddīqiyyah Shādhiliyyah Order

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, his pure family, his good companions, and his righteous followers until the Day of Judgment.

To proceed, Islamic Sufism is a practical program to benefit from the legacy of prophethood—that serves as a means to reach Allah; i.e., to ascertain the correct knowledge of Him, the Most Exalted—the correct knowledge, as opposed to ignorance and superstition. This is what the Holy Qur'an called us to in its verses, as in the saying of ﷺ: *'They measured not Allah with His true measure...'*²; that is, they did not know Allah with true knowledge of Him. Thus, the verse criticizes those who turned away from knowing Allah with true knowledge of Him and denied His requisite attributes of mercy and kindness to His slaves. The verse indicates the necessity for people to realize the knowledge of their Lord with true knowledge, in order to prevent them from falling into ignorance of Allah and attributing to Him what is not true of Him, Most Exalted. Whoever follows the verses of the Noble Qur'an will find that the Qur'an, from beginning to end, is based on acquainting people with their Lord, by acquainting them with His mercy and justice, His power and knowledge, His laws of creation, the greatness of His creatures and their wonderful organization, what pleases Him, what He loves, what He does not love, what He has revealed of books, what He has sent of Messengers, His Beautiful Names, His lofty attributes, what

He has prepared for the believers of bliss, and with what He has threatened the obstinate disbelievers. Thus, knowledge is the ultimate goal.

Given that this knowledge is the ultimate goal of practice and worship—as will be demonstrated in the pages of this study, in order to alert everyone treading the path that Allah is the goal of everyone, and that the one who turns away does not reach—it is incumbent upon the people of knowledge and the people of the path to explain what happens to some of those who tread and travel the path of matters during their journey, which are called ‘illuminations’. This is done through a detailed study of the reality of these illuminations and their types, and what our Sufi masters said about them, and what was narrated from them in terms of behavioural instructions and spiritual experiences, such that those who come later may benefit from those who have preceded, and that latter generations may walk in the footsteps of our predecessors. This is in agreement with what the Noble Qur’an has guided us to through His ﷺ saying: ‘... *and follow the way of him who returns to Me [in penitence]*.’³

About This Study

The idea behind this innovative study and the topics related to it are those of our master, the imam and scholar, our sheikh and our guide to Allah, Professor Dr. Ali Gomaa, member of the Council of Senior Scholars at al-Azhar al-Sharif, Sheikh of the Şiddīqiyyah Shādhliyyah order, and Imam of the Azhar Revival and Renewal School. May Allah the Exalted preserve him and benefit lands and people through him. Through the auspiciousness of obeying his commandment, I collected these illuminations from the

books of Sufi masters and then presented each chapter to His Eminence, seeking clarification of the obscure expressions found therein. By the grace of Allah, I gathered twenty types of illuminations. However, praise be to Him ﷻ, this study is also a collection of a variety of Sufi mannerisms, maxims, benefits of the path, and pearls of the words of mystics and seekers. During the course of this study, by the grace of Allah, I clarified many Sufi terms, and introduced many of its key personalities and imams such that every reader of this book may benefit from it and take from it, with the permission of Allah the Exalted and the blessing of His Messenger ﷺ. As such, this study is a simplified, contemporary Sufi encyclopedia that covers several assets of Sufi knowledge, its terminology, and biographies of its key personalities.

In Allah alone is the hope that this study be beneficial for the seekers of truth, that it be a reason for our salvation on the Day of Judgment, and that our master and sheikh, Professor Dr. Ali Gomaa, be rewarded with the best reward.

DR. MUKHTAR MOHSEN MUHAMMAD
Servant of Noble Knowledge

15 Rajab 1443 AH / 16 February 2022 CE

THE BOOK OF ILLUMINATIONS



THE PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY

This is a groundbreaking study, as it brings together a unique collection of the words of Sufi masters on the concept of illuminations (*ishrāqāt*). It delves into the depths of these experiences, which the seeker encounters on his journey towards Allah. The path to Allah, built upon remembrance (*dhikr*), reflection (*fikr*), and effort (*mujāhadah*), can lead to certain effects arising from this journey, which Sufis term ‘illuminations’. These are understood as divine blessings bestowed upon certain slaves, not indicators of spiritual station or closeness to Allah but, rather, manifestations of His mercy, guiding and strengthening seekers on the path to His presence. Therefore, they are purely gifts from Allah, deserving gratitude, not arrogance or preoccupation—lest they become trials or distractions instead of aids on the path.

Reconciling Revelation and Sufi Teachings

Imam Ghazālī acknowledged the occurrence of certain types of illuminations among Allah’s saints and cautioned against their denial without clear evidence. He said:

Know that the people of hearts are sometimes granted the secrets of the Kingdom, sometimes by way of inspiration, so that knowledge comes to them intuitively without knowing how—sometimes by way of

true vision, and sometimes in the state of wakefulness by way of the disclosure of meanings through the observation of examples, as happens in dreams. This is the highest degree, and it is one of the high degrees of prophethood, just as the true vision is a part of forty-six parts of prophethood.

Therefore, beware that your portion of this knowledge should be the denial of what surpasses your limited understanding for, in doing so, many arrogant scholars have perished, claiming to encompass all intellectual knowledge. Ignorance is indeed better than a mind that leads to the denial of such experiences for Allah's saints. He who denies Allah's saints these illuminations has essentially denied the Prophets and is completely outside the fold of religion.⁴

Imam Ghazālī's insightful words illustrate the significance of this study, which delves into an inheritance from prophethood, a branch of esoteric knowledge denied by some out of ignorance and claimed by others falsely. Clarification, therefore, becomes obligatory to prevent both ignorance and false claims.

One of the crucial goals of this study is to demonstrate the agreement between the knowledge and experiences of Sufi masters and the pronouncements of Noble Revelation. They adhere only to what conforms to the Sharia and finds support therein, both at the beginning and the end of their journey. Should their experiences reveal anything contrary to the Sharia, they would be the furthest from embracing it.

Consequently, this study combines two objectives:

1. Tracking the accounts of Sufi masters regarding the explanation of illuminations, their types, and the

experiences they encountered during their spiritual practices and journey towards Allah.

2. Presenting the supporting evidence from the principles of the Sharia or its primary texts, confirming the harmony and consistency between the knowledge and spiritual experiences of the Sufis and Noble Revelation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SHEIKH

Before embarking on this study, it is essential to highlight the critical role of the sheikh in discerning the illuminations and states experienced by the disciple. Mere knowledge and learning, especially for beginners on the path, are insufficient. The knowledge, states, and guidance provided by Sufi masters in their books and letters are not enough on their own. Instead, the cornerstone of the path lies in travelling under the guidance of a knowledgeable sheikh whom Allah has established to nurture disciples and guide the perplexed. This sheikh must embody both the knowledge of the Sharia and The Reality (*ḥaqīqah*), pointing towards Allah through his actions and words. Imam Ghazālī emphasized this concept regarding what the disciple might experience:

It is then essential to present this to his sheikh. In fact, whatever he finds in his heart of states, whether contraction or expansion, turning towards a worldly attachment or sincerity in intention, should be disclosed to his sheikh and kept hidden from others. No one else should be informed of it. Then, his sheikh will examine his state, and contemplate his intelligence and wisdom. If he knows that by leaving him and instructing him to contemplate, he will discover the truth himself, then he should direct him towards contemplation and order him to adhere to it until the light in his heart casts upon him what illuminates his

reality. However, if he knows that this is beyond the capacity of one like him, he should return him to firm belief through whatever form of preaching, remembrance, and readily comprehensible proof his heart can bear. The sheikh must be gentle and cautious, for these are the pitfalls of the path and its places of danger.⁵

We should, therefore, uphold this principle throughout this study when discussing the explanation of illuminations, their types and effects; Sunni Sufism is built upon compliance and transmission, which has ensured the preservation of religion and its knowledge generation after generation.

EXPLAINING THE REALITY OF ILLUMINATIONS (*ISHRĀQĀT*)

The Lexical Meaning of Illumination

Ibn Fāris mentions in his lexicon that the letters *shīn*, *rā'*, and *qāf* have a single origin, whose meaning is illumination (*iḍā'ah*) and opening/commencing (*fath*). He states:

Examples include *sharaqat al-shams*, meaning [the sun] rose, *ashraqat*, meaning it shed light, and *shurūq*, meaning its rising. Arabs say: 'I will not do that as long as a *shāriq* scatters,' intending by this sunrise.

The Days of Tashrīq were thus named because sacrificial meat was left out in the sun during them. Some people say that they were thus named due to their [(i.e., the Pre-Islamic Arabs')] statement: 'Ashriq (Rise), O Thabīr, that we might proceed solicitously!'⁶ The two *mashriqs* (*al-mashriqān*) are the places from whence the sun rises in the summer and winter. As for *sharq* (east), it means the place from whence the sun rises (*mashriq*). A group holds that red meat is called *sharq*. If this is true, it is because of its redness, as though it were luminescent.

Analogously, based on this, a *sharqā'* ewe is one whose ear is torn, based on the [meaning of] opening [(i.e., a tear)] that we have described.⁷

To quote *Tāj al-ʿArūs*:

Ashraqa wajhuhu wa lawnuhu (his face, or complexion, was illumined) means that it glowed, shed light, and beamed with comeliness. According to *Sīrāfī*, *mishrīq* means *mashriq*. The locus of the *sharq* [also] refers to the *mashriq*. As for *sharaqa sharqan* and *ashraqa*, they mean that one witnessed sunrise and became illumined. As for *ashraqat al-ard*, it means that [the Earth] lit up due to the sun’s illumination and its overspreading the land with its light.⁸

In conclusion, there are two lexical meanings of *ishrāq*: illumination/light and opening.

The Terminological Meaning of Illumination

Sufi masters have terminology that reflects their epistemological framework, which is based on the Qur’an, Sunnah, and experience that does not conflict with the Qur’an or Sunnah. Knowing this terminology is essential to understanding the intent of Sufi masters through their books. The reports and opinions that have been received regarding them clarify their understanding of Islamic sources, their mode of conduct, and their application pursuant to said sources.

By following the texts of Sufi masters and what has been transmitted from them, and by following some of their use of the term ‘illuminations’, we can define illuminations as: **That which happens to the seeker on the path to Allah as a result of this journey, whether outwardly (*ẓāhir*) or inwardly (*bāṭin*).**

Some of these effects happen to the seeker within the framework of outward perception, such as in the case of

marvels (*karāmāt*) that may happen to the seeker and are seen by him or by others. They may also be imperceptible, such as what happens to the disciple inwardly in the form of inspiration and light in his heart, and so on.

Sufi masters have used the term ‘illumination’ (*ishrāq*) to express what happens to the disciple as a result of his travelling and striving. One of those who has transmitted this is the imam and sage Tirmidhī رحمته الله, who says in his book, *Riyādat al-Nafs*, when speaking about the matter of the illumination of the heart with light:

The seekers have disciplined their souls and educated them by preventing them from the desires that have been released upon them. They did not allow their souls to indulge in those desires except to the extent that is necessary, like the state of one who is compelled, until the soul withered and the heat of those desires was extinguished. Then they increased their withholding until it withered and slackened. Thus, whenever they withheld a desire from it, Allah granted them a light in the heart in return for its withholding. Thus, the heart became strong and the ego became weak; and the heart came to life with Allah ﷻ, and the ego died, leaving desires behind, until the heart was filled with lights and the ego was emptied of desires. Then the breast shone with those lights, and it brought upon the soul fear, awe, and shame. It took over the soul and conquered it. The states of the souls are from the hearts by the command that has been given to the hearts, including the knowledge that is in them. So, according to the disciplining of the heart, the soul attains sainthood (*wilāyah*) and power (*sultān*). Thus, when the lights shine from the

heart in the breast, and the breast is free from the smoke of desires, the heart manifests its power, the soul submits and becomes docile, and it casts its hand in surrender. The enemy lurks and fears.⁹

This is also mentioned in the words of Imam Rāzī in his *tafsīr* (exegesis of the Qur'an), when he describes the state of one who remembers Allah:

When remembrance of the tongue is present to the extent that he hears himself, an effect of that remembrance of the tongue is produced in the imagination. Then, from that imaginary effect, an increase of lights and illuminations ascends to the essence of the spirit (*rūḥ*). Then, from those spiritual illuminations, additional effects are reflected on the tongue, and from it to the imagination, and then once again to the intellect. And these lights continue to be reflected from these mirrors, bouncing back and forth, and they strengthen and complete each other. And since there is no end to the increase of the lights of the stages (*marātib*), it is no wonder that there is no end to the journey of the mystics in these high and sacred stations (*maqāmāt*). This is a sea without a shore and a goal without end.¹⁰

Dr. Abū 'Alā 'Afīfī says in his book *Taṣawwuf: The Spiritual Revolution in Islam*: 'The illumination appears in the heart of the Sufi in different ways. It may appear suddenly, strong and intense, or it may appear weak at first and then begin to shine and gleam.'¹¹

It is important to emphasize that the meaning of illumination intended by the majority of Sufi masters has nothing to do with what is known as 'the philosophy of

illumination' (*al-ḥikmah al-ishrāqiyyah*), which is one of the branches of philosophy. It may also be called 'philosophical Sufism' (*al-taṣawwuf al-falsafī*), which has nothing to do with the principles of Sunni Sufism.

TYPES OF ILLUMINATION: A PARTIAL LIST

I. INRUSH (*WĀRID*)

Among the illuminations (*ishrāqāt*) that come to the seeker (*sālik*) are ‘inrushes’ (*wāridāt*).

In *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ‘Ajībah’s commentary on the *Aphorisms* of Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh, the author explains the definition of an inrush both linguistically and terminologically. He says:

Lexically, a *wārid* is one who arrives or visits. In our terminology, it is what the Almighty Truth bestows upon the hearts of His saints (*awliyā’*) in terms of divine inspirations, giving them a driving force. It may overwhelm them or make them lose consciousness of their senses. It only ever occurs suddenly and does not last for its recipient.¹²

He then says:

What is desired from inrushes is their fruits and results, which is what follows them in terms of certainty, tranquility, contentment, submission, and other virtues. So, if they have given you their fruits and you have reaped their benefits, you have been enriched through Allah and do not need anything else from them. Therefore, do not belittle the invocation

(*wird*) and seek the inrush (*wārid*), except if you are a slave of the inrush. As for those who are slaves of Allah, they do not pay attention to anything other than Him. Instead, they stick to what they are tasked with in terms of the duties of servitude, upholding the right of Divine Lordship. This is what endures, and through it one reaches the satisfaction of the Living, Eternal One.¹³

Among those who spoke in detail about the meaning of inrushes among Sufi masters is Sheikh Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī ؒ. He says in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*:

In the terminology of the Sufis, an inrush is what comes to the heart in terms of good thoughts without deliberate effort. In our terminology, an inrush is what comes to the heart from every Divine Name. So, the focus is on the inrush itself, not on what it brings. It may come with sobriety or intoxication, with contraction or expansion, with awe or joy, and with countless other things. All of these are inrushes, but the Sufis have agreed to call only the good thoughts that we have mentioned ‘inrushes’.¹⁴

Hence, the illuminations that come to the heart of the seeker in the form of meanings, concepts, and secrets are means of connection to Allah. Their fruit should be continuous worship and constant attachment to Allah, not attachment to these illuminations themselves, so that one is not distracted from the greater goal, which is Allah ؒ.

Effects of the Inrush Depend on the Disciple (*Murīd*)

Imam Shaʿrānī ؒ narrated from Imam Abū Mawāhib Shādhilī, saying:

Inrushes differ according to the person they happen to, not in themselves. They are like rain on land with various kinds of seeds. The rain is one, but the plants are different and are watered by ‘... *the same [source of] water; and We make some of them to excel others in flavour. ...*’¹⁵ So, understand.¹⁶

It is clear from this that the inrush that comes to the seeker may produce different effects according to the states of these seekers.

Nuance Regarding the Effects of Inrushes in Certain Seekers and the Reason for It

Regarding listening to spiritual recitations (*samāʿ*) and attaining certain states as a result of inrushes experienced by some seekers, Imam Ghazālī mentions in his *The Revival of Religious Sciences*:

If you say: ‘Who is better: one who is not moved by listening and does not show anything outwardly, or the one who exhibits something?’, know that not showing anything can occur due to the weakness of the inrush in terms of the state experienced, which is a deficiency. It can also occur with the strength of the state inwardly, but not appear due to complete control over the limbs. This is perfection. On the other hand, it could also be because the state of experiencing is constant in all situations, so the effect of listening does not become apparent, and this is the pinnacle of perfection. This is because one who experiences such a state does not maintain it all the time. Thus, one who is in a constant state is one who is tied to The Real and is constantly in the presence

of observation (*shuhūd*). Such a person is not affected by the changes of circumstances. It is not far-fetched to interpret the saying of the Truthful Friend (*al-Ṣiddīq*) ﷺ: ‘We were as we were, then our hearts hardened,’ as meaning: ‘Our hearts became strong and firm, so they became able to endure the constant state of experiencing. Therefore, we are constantly listening to the meanings of the Qur’an, so the Qur’an is not new or surprising to us, to the point that we are affected by it.’ Thus, when the strength of the state intensifies, the strength of the intellect and control over the outward appearances may subdue it, and one of the two may prevail, either due to its intensity or the weakness of what opposes it. Deficiency and perfection occur according to that. Therefore, do not think that the one who trembles on the ground has a greater spiritual experience than one who remains still with his trembling controlled. Rather, the one who has inner control and outward composure is closer to perfection.¹⁷

There is no contradiction in this meaning with what Allah says in the verse:

*God has revealed the best of discourses, a Book, con-similar in coupled phrases — whereat quiver the skins of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts soften to the remembrance of God. That is God’s guidance, by which He guides whomever He will; and whomever God leads astray, for him there is no guide.*¹⁸

The same applies to the verse:

*Those to whom God has been gracious from among the Prophets of the seed of Adam, and of those whom We carried with Noah, and of the seed of Abraham, and Israel, and from among those whom We guided and chose, when the signs of the Compassionate One were recited to them, they would fall down prostrating and weeping.*¹⁹

This is because the seeker on the path to Allah encounters various states. What may overwhelm the seeker at the beginning of the path may not affect him as he progresses. Additionally, the saying of the great leader, al-Ṣid-dīq, can be interpreted as humility and concealment, as such individuals رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ do not pay attention to any inrush, or anything else. This was explained by the scholar Ibn ʿAṭāʾillāh with words of utmost precision, saying:

Allah ﷻ praised these favoured individuals by saying that when they heard the speech of the Beloved, they humbled themselves and their hearts softened, which is the first degree of love. Above this is joy due to the Beloved's speech from a close position, and above that is joy in witnessing the Speaker. Here, weeping ceases as the one in this station enters the Garden of Knowledge, and there is no weeping in Paradise!

Furthermore, it is the nature of the heart in its early stages to be tender, easily affected by inrushes and states. When it persists in this, it becomes strong and solid, to the point where nothing from the divine inrushes affects it. In this sense, Abū Bakr ؓ said, upon seeing people weeping upon hearing the Qur'an: 'That's how we were, then our hearts hardened.' He expressed his stability and strength with

humility and concealment. These favoured individuals were praised by Allah for this attribute because it is a ladder to what is above it. And Allah knows best.²⁰

Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh ؒ also said, in his commentary on *Aphorisms*: ‘For the elite of the elite, majesty (*jalāl*) and beauty (*jamāl*) are equal in their sight. As such, incoming states do not change them, because they are with Allah and for Allah, not for anything else besides Him.’²¹

Therefore, there is no relationship between the abundance of inrushes or the extent of their effect and one’s station with Allah; rather, they are purely a favour from Allah, and they are not sought after in themselves, as has been explained by the People of Allah from among the Sufis رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ.

Should the Disciple Rejoice in Inrushes?

The seeker on the path to Allah trains his soul for servitude. Thus, he should not pay attention to blessings except as a means to reach Allah, including the inrushes that come to him from his Lord.

Imam Ghazālī mentions in his *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, while discussing the stations of gratitude:

The elite ؒ have said that the gratitude of the common people is for food, clothing, and drink, while the gratitude of the elite is for inrushes upon the heart. This is a station not attained by everyone whose pleasures are confined to the stomach, genitals, and sensory perceptions of colours and sounds, and who are devoid of the pleasure of the heart. For the heart does not enjoy anything in a state of health except the remembrance, knowledge, and the meeting of

Allah ﷻ. It only enjoys anything else when it is sick due to bad habits, just as some people enjoy eating dirt, and some sick people detest sweet things and find bitter things delicious, as it has been said:

*Whoever has a bitter, sick mouth
Finds clear water bitter.*

Therefore, this is a condition for rejoicing in the blessings of Allah. Once the heights have been reached, nothing else is needed. If not this, then the second station will have to do. But the first station is beyond any calculation. How much difference is there between one who wants the kingdom for the horse and one who wants the horse for the kingdom? And how much difference is there between one who wants Allah to favour him and one who wants the favours of Allah to reach Him through them?²²

The Inrush after Remembrance (*Dhikr*)

Some of the narrations from Sufi masters regarding dealing with and preparing for inrushes include their guidance to seekers to cultivate the expectation of an inrush following the completion of invocation. They make it one of the etiquettes (*ādāb*) of mentioning Allah (*dhikr*) that its practitioner remain silent after it, hoping for an inrush of goodness to come to him. The scholar and saint Abū Barakāt Aḥmad Dardīr ﷻ mentions post-dhikr etiquette:

As for the post-dhikr etiquette, one remains silent and sits with humility, for there are inrushes that come upon the heart of the practitioner, and the inrush cannot find its way to the heart except through that. Thus, if the inrush is an inrush of detachment (*zuhd*),

it is necessary to wait until it is complete and has settled in the heart, so that it is the same to him whether the world comes or goes. If it is an inrush of reliance upon the divine (*tawakkul*), after that he trusts all his affairs to his Lord. If it is an inrush of patience (*ṣabr*), he then becomes, after that, unshaken by the intensification of calamities, and similarly from the inrushes.²³

The Sign of a Divine Inrush

Ibn ʿAṭāʾillāh Ḥasanī says: ‘The divine inrush is followed by coolness, calmness, detachment, tranquility, and peace, while the demonic inrush is followed by heat, harshness, arrogance, haughtiness, and seeing oneself in a good light.’²⁴ He also says:

Sheikh ʿAbd al-Qādir Jīlānī ؒ was asked about the characteristics of divine inrushes and demonic intrusions. He said: ‘The divine inrush does not come with preparation, nor does it go away due to a cause, nor does it come in one pattern or at one time, while demonic intrusions are usually contrary to that.’²⁵

Supplement: Some of Ibn ʿAṭāʾillāh’s Aphorisms Regarding Inrushes

On outward actions reflecting the state of the heart:

‘Variation in deeds arises from the variation of incoming states.’²⁶

On inrushes driving the seeker towards Allah and freeing him from distractions:

‘He only sent the inrush to you so that you could be with Him through it. He sent the inrush to you to save you from

distractions and to liberate you from the shackles of remnants.’²⁷ Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh says after this: ‘He sent the inrush to you in order to remove you from the prison of your existence to the vast expanse of your observation (*shuhūd*).’²⁸

On continuous inrushes indicating a constant state of invocation:

‘If you see a slave whom Allah has raised through the presence of inrushes, and maintained them upon him with prolonged support, do not belittle what his Master has granted him just because you have not seen upon him the sign of the mystics or the radiance of the lovers. Truly, if not for the inrush, there would be no invocation.’²⁹

On inrushes being a pure gift from Allah, not earned through preparation:

‘Divine inrushes rarely occur except suddenly, so that the worshippers cannot claim they are due to preparation.’³⁰

On the importance of preserving inrushes and adhering to the Sharia:

‘Only the ignorant belittle invocation (*al-wird*). The inrush is found in the Hereafter, while invocation fades away with the fading of this world. What is worthiest of care is that which cannot be replaced. Invocation is what He seeks from you, while an inrush is what you are seeking from Him. What comparison is there between what He seeks from you and what you seek from Him?’³¹

On keeping inrushes secret (other than from one’s sheikh) to avoid hindering their effects:

‘The seeker should not express his inrushes, for that diminishes their effect on his heart and prevents him from being truthful with his Lord.’³²

On the effects of inrushes transforming the heart and removing negativity:

‘When inrushes come to you, they demolish your bad habits. “... *Indeed kings, when they enter a town, ruin it, and reduce the mightiest of its inhabitants to the most abased. ...*”³³³⁴

He then explains the reason for the inrush’s ability to overcome bad habits: they come from the presence of the Overpowering One, just as the soldiers of a king have the upper hand.

On not getting attached to the inrush itself and focusing on its true goal:

‘Do not praise an inrush whose fruit you do not know, for the purpose of the cloud is not just rain, but the yielding of fruits.’³⁵

On striving to realize the fruits of inrushes, such as achieving stations of servitude and recognizing Allah’s Lordship:

‘Do not seek the lingering of inrushes after they have spread their lights and deposited their secrets, for you are rich and Allah avails you in everything, and nothing avails you of Him.’³⁶

II. INCOMING THOUGHTS (*KHAWĀṬIR*)

Incoming thoughts are another type of illumination. We will mention their lexical and terminological meanings.

Lexically, according to *Tāj al-ʿArūs* by Murtaḍā Zabīdī, *khawāṭir* refers to:

... that which crosses the heart through deliberation or command. Ibn Sīdah defines it as a fleeting thought (*hājis*). Our sheikh said that these two terms are synonymous, while jurists, hadith scholars, and scholars of hermeneutics differentiate between them and internal monologue (*ḥadīth al-nafs*), just as they differentiate between worry (*hamm*) and resolve (ʿ*azm*), holding one accountable for the last one, but not the first four.³⁷

In Sufi terminology, the imams of Sufism have described it as follows, from which the meaning of ‘incoming thought’ in Sufi terminology becomes clear. Ibn ʿAjībah says in his *tafsīr*:

Know that thoughts are of four types: angelic, divine, those coming from the ego, and demonic. Angelic and divine thoughts only command good, while thoughts coming from the ego and demonic thoughts only command evil, and they may even command good if there is a hidden evil within it. The difference between thoughts coming from the ego and demonic thoughts is that the thought coming from the ego is

fixed and does not disappear by seeking refuge or otherwise, except by prior divine grace. As for a demonic thought, it vanishes with the remembrance of Allah and returns with forgetting Allah.³⁸

Ibn ʿArabī says, regarding thoughts:

Know that Allah sends Messengers to the heart of His slave called ‘incoming thoughts’. They have no residence in the slave’s heart except for the time it takes them to pass through it, delivering what they were sent with without delay, because Allah created them in the image of the message they carry. Each thought has the essence of its message, so when the heart focuses on it, it understands it. Then the person either acts according to what it brought them or does not.³⁹

Imam Qushayrī has an important discussion about incoming thoughts, the difference between them, and the importance of responding to them:

The sheikhs discussed whether the second incoming thought is stronger if both are from The Real, Most Glorified. Junayd said: ‘The first incoming thought is stronger because if it remains, its owner returns to contemplation, and this is based on knowledge. Thus, leaving the first one weakens the second.’ Ibn ʿAṭā’ says that the second is stronger because it gains strength from the first. Abū ʿAbdullāh ibn Khafīf, a latter-day scholar, says they are equal because both are from The Real, so there is no advantage of one over the other. Also, the first does not remain when the second one exists, because effects cannot sustain themselves.⁴⁰

In another place, he says:

It was said that the right course of action is to respond to the first thought. I heard some companions of Abū Ḥasan Būshanjī ؑ say: Abū Ḥasan Būshanjī was out in the wilderness when he called out to a student and said to him: ‘Take this shirt off me and give it to So-and-so.’ It was said to him: ‘Why not wait until you come out of the wilderness?’ He said: ‘I was not confident that I would not change my mind about giving it away after delaying it.’⁴¹

Thus, Sufi masters observed thoughts of good and guided people, and recommended acting upon them if they agree with the whole of the law, because they are an expression of divine favour and a reminder from Allah.

Criteria for Accepting Incoming Thoughts

The criterion that the Sufis rely upon when they are confused about accepting a thought is the Sharia. As Imam Junayd ؑ said: ‘A matter may occur to my heart, but I do not accept it except with the testimony of two witnesses: the Qur’an and the Sunnah.’⁴² Imam Tāj al-Dīn Subkī also states this in his *Mukhtaṣar Jam‘ al-Jawīmi‘*: ‘If something comes to your mind, weigh it against the Sharia. If it is commanded, hasten to do it, for it is from the Most Gracious. If you fear that it might occur in a forbidden manner, but you do not intend such, then do not worry.’⁴³ His commentator, Imam Zarkashī, says:

If something occurs to the seeker on the path to Allah, his way is to weigh it on the scales of the Sharia and seek the door of knowledge, for action is invalid except with knowledge. Action does not fall

outside three categories: commanded, forbidden, or doubtful. The author mentions all three. If you find it to be commanded, whether obligatory and recommended, then hasten to do it, for it is from the Most Gracious. If you fear its occurrence with a forbidden intention like conceit or ostentation, ignore the thought, and don't let it prevent you from acting, for it is demonic. Of course, were you to perform it with such intentions, it would be null and void.⁴⁴

Supplement: Eliminating Vile Incoming Thoughts— Importance and Means

Just as there are divine thoughts, there are also demonic thoughts. These are the whispers, as Imam Qushayrī points out. They are also called 'vile thoughts' (*radiyyah*). Sufi masters have emphasized the importance of getting rid of these vile thoughts, so that they do not disturb the slave's conduct towards Allah. They have also pointed out the way to do this and how to do it. Some of these are:

Avoiding unnecessary gazing

Qushayrī says: 'Those who engage in spiritual struggles—should they want to protect their hearts from negative thoughts—should not look at desirable things. This is a major principle for them in striving during states of spiritual exercise.'⁴⁵ What is meant here by 'looking' is curiosity, meaning unnecessary glances. Avoiding forbidden glances is an absolute obligation, needless to say. Therefore, they clarified that one benefit of isolation is keeping the seeker distant from the harms of looking, which lead to vile thoughts. Ibn 'Ajībah says:

Whoever is isolated from people is safe from looking at them and at what they are engrossed in, in terms

of worldly adornment and its glamour. Allah says: ‘*And do not extend your glance toward what We have given to some pairs among them to enjoy, [as] the flower of the life of this world that We may try them thereby. ...*’⁴⁶ Thus, it prevents the soul from longing for it, looking forward to it, and competing with its people.

Muhammad ibn Sīrīn says: ‘Beware of unnecessary gazing, for it leads to unnecessary desire.’ Some men of letters have said: ‘Whoever gazes much will have lengthy regrets.’ They have also said: ‘The eye is the cause of ruin’; ‘Whoever casts his glance has secured his own death’; and, ‘Looking at things with the eye distracts the heart.’⁴⁷

Struggle to reject incoming thoughts

The seeker should strive diligently to banish negative incoming thoughts from his heart, especially those that occur to him during remembrance, which is a foundation of the path to Allah. If he cannot do so and these thoughts disturb him, he should consult his sheikh, who is responsible for that by Allah’s permission. Ghazālī says:

When he occupies himself with the remembrance of Allah Almighty—which is the intended purpose—he will inevitably be free from anything else. Then it is incumbent upon him to monitor the whispers of his heart and his incoming thoughts related to the world and what he remembers therein from past states of his own and those of others. Because whatever he occupies himself with, even for a moment, will make his heart void of remembrance at that moment, and this is furthermore a deficiency. Thus, he should strive to repel it, and no matter how much he repels all the

whispers and returns his soul to his utterance, the whispers will come to him from the utterance: ‘What is this? What is the meaning of our saying: “Allah”? What does it mean for Him to be Allah? And worshipped?’ Incoming thoughts come to him that open the door of thought (*fikr*) to him, and perhaps the whispers of Satan come back to him; i.e., disbelief and heresy. However, as long as he hates that and is eager to remove it from his heart, it will not harm him.

This is divided into what one knows with certainty that Allah ﷻ is far removed from, yet Satan casts it into one’s heart and insinuates it into one’s mind. The condition in such a case is that one should take heed of it and hasten to remember Allah ﷻ and supplicate to Him to repel it, as Allah ﷻ says: ‘*And if any insinuation from Satan should provoke you, seek refuge in God, He is Hearing, Seeing.*’⁴⁸ He ﷻ also says: ‘*Truly the God-fearing, when a visitation from Satan touches them, they remember, and then see clearly.*’⁴⁹ As for what causes one to doubt, one should present it to one’s spiritual guide. Indeed, everything that one finds within one’s heart in terms of states, whether it be fluctuation, activity, inclination towards something, or sincerity in intention, one should present it to one’s spiritual guide and conceal it from others, so that no one else becomes aware of it. Then, one’s spiritual guide should consider one’s state and contemplates one’s intellect and astuteness. If he knows that by leaving it and commanding one to contemplate, one will awaken oneself to the reality of truth, then it is appropriate for him to direct one to contemplation and command one to adhere to it until

what is cast into one's heart in terms of light reveals to one the reality thereof. If, on the other hand, he knows that it is something beyond one's capacity, such as the aforementioned, then he should guide one towards firm belief in what one's heart comprehends of admonition, remembrance, and evidence that is close to one's understanding.⁵⁰

In conclusion, incoming thoughts are one of the illuminations dealt with by Sufi masters. They noted their types, explained their effects, and distinguished between those guiding towards good or evil. The Sharia is the criterion for accepting them.

III. ALLUSIONS (*ISHĀRĀT*)

Imam Sirāj Ṭūsī describes allusions (*ishārāt*) in *al-Lumāʿ* as: ‘meanings too subtle for direct expression’.⁵¹ Ibn ʿAjībāh elaborates in his commentary on *Aphorisms*, stating:

Allusions are finer and more delicate than explanations (*ʿibārāt*), and symbols (*rumūz*) are finer than allusions. Thus, there are three categories: explanations, allusions, and symbols, each finer than the preceding one. Explanations clarify; allusions allude to something; and symbols bring joy; i.e., the joy of the Beloved’s nearness.

Sufis say: ‘Our knowledge is entirely allusion.’ Once it is expressed as an explanation, its hidden essence is obscured. Sufi allusions often take the form of flirtations and allusions to the Beloved, employing imagery like Salmā and Laylā, wine, cups, companions, moons, stars, and seas. These terms have specific meanings within their terminology, distinct from their literal interpretations.⁵²

Allusions, in this sense, represent hidden and subtle meanings in the seeker’s heart. Their delicacy necessitates indirect expression through these allusions.

Allusions in the Noble Qur’an

The source of these allusions resides in divine revelation itself. Ibn ʿArabī points out that the Noble Qur’an utilizes similitudes as a form of allusion. These similitudes allude

to significant and intended meanings without being the intended meaning themselves. He says in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*:

Know, beloved friend—may Allah strengthen you with the Holy Spirit and understanding—that symbols and riddles are not sought for their own sake, but rather for what they symbolize and what riddles they contain. Their occurrence within the Qur’an are all verses meant for contemplation, as evidenced by Allah’s saying: ‘*And such similitudes, We strike them for [the sake of] mankind ...*’⁵³ Therefore, similitudes are not sought for their own sake, but rather to understand what they illustrate and symbolize. For example, Allah says:

*He sends down water from the sky, whereat the valleys flow according to their measure, and the flood carries a scum that swells, and from that which they smelt in the fire, desiring ornaments or ware; [there rises] a scum the like of it. Thus, God points out truth and falsehood. As for the scum, it passes away as dross, while that which is of use to mankind, lingers in the earth. ...*⁵⁴

He compares falsehood to the fleeting foam, as He says: ‘*... and falsehood has vanished away ...*’⁵⁵. Then He compares truth to the beneficial water that remains: ‘*... while that which is of use to mankind, lingers in the earth. ...*’⁵⁶ This serves as a similitude for truth. Thus, Allah says: ‘*... Thus, God strikes similitudes.*’⁵⁷

He then calls for contemplation: ‘*... So take heed, O you who have eyes!*’⁵⁸ This means to be amazed, ponder, and delve deeper into the intended meaning

beyond the literal level. Similarly, Allah says: ‘... *Surely in that there is a lesson for those who see.*’⁵⁹ Furthermore, examples of allusions in the Qur’an include Allah instructing the Prophet Zechariah to communicate ‘... *save by tokens ...*’⁶⁰, and ‘*Thereat she pointed to him. ...*’⁶¹ when Maryam had vowed to withhold from speech.

This knowledge has [been established by] men of great standing, whose secrets include the mysteries of eternity and pre-eternity, reality and imagination, visions and the intermediary realms, and suchlike divine relationships. Their knowledge also encompasses the properties of letters and names, and the combined and singular properties of everything in the natural world; i.e. unknown Nature.⁶²

As for scholars of *tafsīr*, they are of varying degrees: some stand at the literal meaning of the texts, some delve into their legal meanings and established contexts, while others combine these with the intended objectives and desired goals. Thus, the breadth of meaning expands with the breadth of vision; and above every possessor of knowledge is the All-Knowing!

From this arose a discipline closely connected to the disciplines of Sufi masters, while conforming to the principles of *tafsīr*: symbolic interpretation (*al-tafsīr al-ishārī*), pioneered by Sufi imams. Imam Qushayrī, author of the renowned work, *Latā’if al-Ishārāt*, stands among the prominent figures in this field.

Valid symbolic interpretation must not contradict the rules and grammar of the Arabic language, nor should it negate the core meaning of the verse. Otherwise, it would be a form of distortion.

Supplement: Another Possible Meaning of Allusion

Among the meanings used for ‘allusion’ by some Sufis is what they find in their hearts upon visiting one of Allah’s righteous slaves who has passed away. They find within themselves a direction for an action or a clarification of a truth, and they call it an allusion. In *Rashaḥāt ‘Ayn al-Hayāt*, Sheikh ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn Harawī says:

Sheikh ‘Abdullāh Khajandī, who was one of the companions of Ḥaḍrat Khawājah Bahā’ al-Dīn ؒ said that a strong attraction (*jadhbab*) occurred to him years before he had been honoured with the blessed companionship of Ḥaḍrat Khawājah ؒ. He reached the tomb of Khawājah Muhammad ibn ‘Alī Ḥakīm Tirmidhī ؒ and found from him an allusion containing good news: that he should return to his homeland, for his desired goal would be fulfilled in Bukhara after twelve years, and it was dependent on the appearance of Khawājah Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshband ؒ. Thus, from this allusion, I gained an overriding understanding.⁶³

This matter is common among the People of Allah, for the foundation of their way is love for the Prophet ؐ and love for his noble family, scholars, and saints. Therefore, as a result of this love, they have an attachment and longing for such tombs and purified stations, so their visits and their benefit from them increase.

Take, for example, Sheikh Aḥmad ibn Zarrūq ؒ. Some of his students related that the reason he chose the words of his blessed litany was that, when he came to visit the Prophet ؐ, he said to his companions, Sīdī Yaḥyā Bukhārī and Sīdī Zawāwī: ‘If my stay in the presence of the Prophet ؐ

is prolonged and he clothes me in a state, then move away from me.’ So, when the sheikh reached the noble tomb, he greeted the Prophet ﷺ with the best of greetings and salutations. He ﷺ responded: ‘And upon you be peace, O Aḥmad. Come closer to me and recite to me your litany that begins with: “Your God is One God ...”⁶⁴ He recited it to him, upon which he ﷺ omitted from it whatever Allah willed, and he confirmed in it what we and you are upon.⁶⁵

Imam Rāzī interpreted this meaning in detail and explained it in a way that illuminates hearts and minds. He says in *al-Maṭālib al-Āliyah*:

If a person goes to the grave of one who is strong in spirit, perfect in essence, and very influential, then stands there for a time, and his spirit is affected by that soil, then an attachment to that soil will occur in the spirit of this visitor. You realize that the spirit of that deceased person also has an attachment to that soil. So, at that time, a meeting occurs between the spirits of the living visitor and the deceased person, due to their gathering on the same soil. These two spirits become like two polished mirrors, placed so that the light is reflected from one to the other.

Whatever ineffable certainties, acquired knowledge, and virtuous morals this living visitor has in his spirit, such as submission to Allah ﷻ and contentment with the decree of Allah ﷻ, a light is reflected from it to the spirit of that deceased person. Furthermore, whatever that deceased has in his spirit in terms of noble knowledge and complete, powerful effects reflects onto the spirit of this living visitor.

In this way, that visit becomes a cause for the attainment of great benefit and great joy for the spirits

of the visitor and the visited one. This is the original reason for the legitimacy of the visit, and it is not far-fetched that there are other secrets in it that are more subtle and obscure than what we have mentioned, and complete knowledge of the realities of things is only with Allah ﷻ.⁶⁶

It is clear from all of the above that the meanings of ‘allusion’ revolve around hidden or subtle meanings, and they are also used to indicate meanings that are intended for something else. In addition, allusions can also refer to those spiritual meanings that occur in the spirit of a visitor when he visits one of the purified tombs that it is recommended to visit; he visits in order to remember the afterlife and to renew the meanings of love and seek blessing from the legacies of those who preceded us to Allah in time and station.

IV. DISCLOSURE (*KASHF*)

One of the most famous terms used by the Sufis is ‘disclosure’ (*kashf*). It is one of the words that appears in Revelation, as Allah ﷻ says: ‘... So [now] We have removed from you your covering, and so your sight on this day is acute.’⁶⁷ Scholars of *tafsīr* have spoken about the meanings of disclosure in this verse, and that it is used for what was hidden from us in terms of the truths of the unseen and the matters of the afterlife.

Imam Jurjānī says in *al-Taʿrīfāt*: ‘Lexically, *kashf* means “to lift the veil”. Terminologically, it is to see what is beyond the veil in terms of hidden meanings and true realities, both in terms of existence and witnessing.’⁶⁸

This definition includes two types of disclosure: the first is the uncovering of sensory matters, and the second is the uncovering of spiritual truths. This latter type of disclosure occurs either by seeing what is beyond the veil of the senses—such as seeing or hearing something happening in one place while being in another place—or by the revealing of a person’s thoughts, or the like of such matters that are rational possibilities, and happen to some people as preternatural phenomena.

Disclosure may also occur through the unveiling of hidden truths or exposure to divine knowledge, such as knowing some of the wisdoms of Creation, the reality of the world, and some of the states of the Hereafter.

Is Disclosure Necessary for the Path (*Ṭarīq*)?

Some Sufis believe this, including Sīdī ʿAlī Khawwāṣ. Shaʿ-rānī quotes him:

No one reaches the station of sincerity in actions until he comes to know what is behind walls and sees what people are doing in the depths of their homes in other lands. Then he knows for sure, by the light of this disclosure, that his action is not his own, but rather, he is a locus for its manifestation at his limbs. This is because contingent matters do not appear except in a body, and actions are contingent matters. So, understand this.⁶⁹

However, most Sufis say that what is important on the path is what leads to certainty and knowledge of Allah through the realization of the truths and knowledge that lead to Allah without anything else, as will become clear at the end of the study of ‘disclosure’.

The Great Sheikh, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, issued a statement on the meaning of disclosure, saying that it is what brings certainty in reaching knowledge of Allah. He says in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*:

The path that leads to knowledge of Allah is two paths, and there is no third. Whoever declares the Oneness of Allah without following one of these two paths is a blind follower in his monotheism. The first path is the path of disclosure, which is necessary knowledge that is obtained at the time of the disclosure itself. The person himself finds it, and he does not entertain any doubt about it, nor is he able to refute it. He does not know any proof on which to rely except what he finds in himself. However, some say

that the proof and the proven are given in his disclosure, for it is something that cannot be known except through proof. Therefore, the proof must be revealed to him. Our companion, Abū ʿAbdullāh ibn Kattāni, from the city of Fez, used to say this. I heard this from him, and he told me about his state and his truthfulness. However, he was wrong in thinking that this is the only way, for others find it in themselves as experiential, and without the proof being revealed to them.

The second path is for him to obtain [such knowledge] from a divine manifestation, as happens with Messengers, Prophets, and some saints.⁷⁰

Can Disclosure be False? Criteria for Its Acceptance

Some scholars agree with this, including Amīr Mālikī in his gloss on the commentary on *al-Jawharah*. He says:

They have stated that disclosure can be mistaken, like a man who confused insight with eyesight, leading him to say: ‘I saw my Lord.’ The sound hadith about the uncovering of the Shank suffices as proof of this, for they say: ‘You are not our Lord’ after their first disclosure. The Sheikh addresses this at the beginning of *al-Futūḥāt*, and Shaʿrānī quotes him at the beginning of the sixth chapter as saying that everyone has a veil that is lifted when they meet Allah, so it is possible that this issue falls under the generality of these words. Therefore, we don’t reject what he said, but rather explain his words with his other words, may Allah benefit us through the dust of his feet.⁷¹

They also established the criterion for the validity of disclosure, as conveyed by Imam Shādhilī: ‘If your genuine

disclosure contradicts the Qur'an and the Sunnah, then follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah and set aside the disclosure. Remind yourself that Allah ﷻ has guaranteed the infallibility of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, but not of disclosure.⁷²

Obstacles to Disclosure

Some scholars have mentioned that there are obstacles that prevent true disclosure. Among these are what is mentioned in *al-Ithāf* (a commentary on *The Revival of Religious Sciences*):

If focusing one's attention on actions and the details of the acts of worship that bring one closer to Allah is an obstacle to the disclosure of clear truth, then what do you think about directing one's attention to the desires of this world, its pleasures, and its relationships? How can that not prevent true disclosure? The truth is that attaching the heart to anything other than Allah, even if it is to the acts of worship that lead to Him, is an obstacle to the disclosure of the truths as they are, because of the lack of attention to Him.⁷³

Thus, the disclosures that occur to some saints are illuminations that Allah manifests to them, based on His knowledge of their states and sincerity. As for being preoccupied with other than Allah and caring about other than Him, that is one of the obstacles to the disclosure of the truths.

Major Companions and Disclosure

It has been reported that disclosure, meaning gaining knowledge beyond the veil of the senses and uncovering some of

the unseen, has occurred to several of the great Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. Among the examples mentioned by Imam Ghazālī in *The Revival of Religious Sciences* are:

He made it part of the esoteric knowledge that came in the saying of Allah, Most High: ‘... and We had taught him knowledge from Us.’⁷⁴ Rather, esoteric knowledge is that which opens in one’s innermost heart without a familiar, external cause. The following are textual proofs—if all that was mentioned of it in terms of verses, hadiths, and narrations were collected, it would be uncountable. As for witnessing such through experience, were that to be gathered up as well, it too would be beyond count. It occurred with the Companions, the Successors, and those after them.

Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه said to ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا at his death: ‘They are only your two brothers and your two sisters.’ His wife was pregnant and gave birth to a daughter, so he had known before the birth that she was a girl.

‘Umar رضي الله عنه said, during his sermon: ‘O Sāriyah, the mountain, the mountain!’ when it was revealed to him that the enemy was about to attack them, so he warned them based on this knowledge. Furthermore, his voice reached them, which is one of the great marvels (*karāmāt*).

Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه said: I entered upon ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, having passed a woman on my way, having looked at her askance, and having contemplated her beauty. When I entered, ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه said: ‘One of you enters upon me and the trace of fornication is evident in his eyes. Do you not know that the fornication of

the eyes is the look? Repent, or I will punish you.’ I said: ‘Is this revelation after the Prophet ﷺ?’ He said: ‘No, but insight, proof, and true perspicacity.’⁷⁵

Thus, Imam Ghazālī believes the basis for disclosure lies within the concept of esoteric knowledge, gifted by our Lord to some of His slaves, as in His saying, Most High: ‘... and We had taught him knowledge from Us.’⁷⁶ However, this esoteric knowledge manifests in various forms, as Imam Ghazālī notes. It is proven to have happened to some of the noble Companions رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ.

In order to clarify the meaning of disclosure and that its occurrence to some righteous saints wasn’t disputed among scholars, unlike what some ignoramus claim, we will mention the details and basis of what was previously narrated from Imam Ghazālī and other scholars, as follows:

Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq’s Knowledge of his Wife’s Pregnancy

As for what happened to our master Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, Imam Mālik narrates it in *al-Muwattaʿa* on the authority of Lady ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا, and Imam Bayhaqī narrates it in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* on her authority as well. Both of them narrate her wording as: ‘There is only Asmā’, so who is the other? He said: “The one still inside the womb; Khārijah’s daughter.”⁷⁷ A narration from Hishām ibn ‘Urwah from his father from Lady ‘Ā’ishah has also been reported, as in *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, with the following wording: ‘That she is a girl has been cast into my heart.’⁷⁸

This narration explains what happened to al-Ṣiddīq as being a type of disclosure that occurs to some of the slaves of Allah. This is what Imam Ibn Rajab Ḥanbalī mentions when he explains the meaning of the unseen and the possibility of knowing some of it. He says:

As for the knowledge of what is in the wombs, Allah alone knows it before He commands the angel of wombs to form, and write it. Thereafter, Allah may reveal it to whomever He wills of His creation, just as He revealed it to the angel of wombs. If he is a Messenger, then he will know it with certainty. Otherwise, if he is a saint or a righteous person, then Allah may reveal it to him visibly. This is as Zuhri narrated from ‘Urwah, from ‘Ā’ishah, that, when Abū Bakr was about to die, he said to her, in a conversation that he had mentioned: ‘They are only your two brothers and your two sisters.’ She said: ‘So I said: “These are my two brothers, so who are my two sisters?”’ He said: ‘The one still inside the womb; Khārijah’s daughter. I think it is a girl.’ Hishām also narrated from his father, from ‘Ā’ishah, that she said to him at that time: ‘It is only Asmā?’ He said: ‘The one still inside the womb; Khārijah’s daughter. I think it is a girl.’ Hishām also narrated from his father: ‘That she is a girl has been cast into my heart, so take good care of her.’ Then Umm Kulthūm was born.⁷⁹

Thus, what happened to al-Ṣiddīq ﷺ was a type of disclosure that does not contradict, according to what Ibn Rajab Ḥanbalī mentions, what has been established about the concealment of the unseen from laypeople.

Disclosure of the State of the Army to ‘Umar

The second incident is what happened to our master ‘Umar ﷺ. Imam Ibn Kathīr narrates this story in *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* on the authority of Nāfi‘, from Ibn ‘Umar:

‘Umar had sent an army and appointed a man named Sāriyah as its leader. While ‘Umar was delivering a

sermon, he started calling out: ‘O Sāriyah, the mountain! O Sāriyah, the mountain!’ three times. When the Messenger of the army returned, ‘Umar asked him: ‘What happened?’ He said: ‘O Commander of the Faithful, we had been defeated! While we were in such a state, we heard someone cry out: “O Sāriyah, the mountain!” three times. So, we set our backs against the mountain, and Allah defeated them.’

He added: ‘Umar was told: “You were shouting that.”’⁸⁰ After mentioning this story, Imam Bayhaqī says, in *al-I‘tiqād*:

This hadith is proof of the possibility of the marvels of saints. It also falls under the meaning of the hadith when the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Among the nations that preceded you, there were inspired people, and if there are any among my nation, then it is ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.’⁸¹

Sheikh Ibn ‘Allān says in his commentary on this hadith:

There is a difference of opinion about its interpretation. The majority hold that he is the inspired one. They say that the inspired one is the truthful man of discerning opinion, and that he is the one who is inspired with something from the Highest Assembly (*al-Mala’ al-‘Alā*), so he is like someone who was spoken to by someone else. Abū Aḥmad ‘Asqalānī affirmed this. This expression has also been interpreted as one who speaks the truth unintentionally, or one who is spoken to by the word of the angels without prophethood. This was reported in a hadith of Abū Sa‘īd

with an elevated chain of narration, and its wording is: ‘It was said: “O Messenger of Allah, how does he speak?” He said: “The angels speak through his tongue.”’^{82,83}

Thus, what happened to our master ‘Umar ؓ belongs to the category of the disclosure of the unseen, and it is in agreement with what the hadiths have stated about the existence of inspired people in the Islamic nation. A particular extremist opposed the occurrence of such disclosure of the unseen to our master ‘Umar, saying: ‘None of the narrations explicitly states the disclosure to our master ‘Umar.’ He also said: ‘Thus, the reliance of some Sufis on this to prove their claim of disclosure to saints—and the possibility of their knowing what is in people’s hearts—is the greatest falsehood.’

However, this claim is not supported by all the narrations that have been reported. In *Dalā’il al-Nubuwwah*, Imam Abū Nu‘aym Iṣfahānī narrates a more detailed and clearer account regarding the occurrence of this disclosure, without the need for interpretation or anything else. The narration of Abū Nu‘aym states:

While ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was on the pulpit delivering the Friday sermon, he abandoned the sermon and said: ‘O Sāriyah, the mountain!’ two or three times. Then he returned to his sermon. The Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘He has gone mad! He is crazy! He was delivering his sermon when he had said: “O Sāriyah, the mountain!”’ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf entered upon him, as he used to feel at ease with him. He said: ‘The most I can blame them for regarding you is that you made yourself a

target of talk. While you were giving the sermon, you shouted: “O Sāriyah, the mountain!” What is this?’ He said: ‘By Allah, I could not control it. I saw them fighting near a mountain. They were being attacked from in front and from behind. Thus, I could not help but say: “O Sāriyah, the mountain!”’

They persisted in this state until the messenger [of the army] came with his letter stating:

The enemy had caught up with us on Friday. We fought them from the time we had prayed Fajr until the time of Friday prayer and the sun shone bright. Then, we heard someone calling out: ‘O Sāriyah, the mountain!’ twice. So, we scrambled for the mountain, and we did not cease to be victorious over our enemy until Allah defeated them and killed them.

Then, those who had criticized him said: ‘Leave this man alone, for he has support.’⁸⁴

Thus, our master ‘Umar’s saying: ‘By Allah, I could not control it’ is an explicit expression of disclosure, and that it was not merely a coincidence or a misunderstanding. There is no room for doubt after such evidence.

Disclosure of our Master ‘Uthmān’s ﷺ Knowledge of the State of one of the Companions

As for what happened with our master ‘Uthmān ﷺ, it also falls under the category of disclosure, in that our master ‘Uthmān ﷺ became aware of what a Companion had done without being present with him at the time. The words of our master ‘Uthmān’s ﷺ response alluded to a hadith narrated from our master, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: ‘Beware

of the perspicacity of the believer, for he sees with the light of Allah.’⁸⁵

Imam Ibn Athīr رحمته الله interprets this hadith, saying:

‘Beware of the perspicacity of the believer, for he sees with the light of Allah’ is said with two meanings: one of them being the apparent meaning, which is what Allah ﷻ instills in the hearts of His pious slaves such that they know the states of some people through a type of marvel.⁸⁶

Imam Tāj al-Dīn Subkī رحمته الله also mentions the story of our master ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, and interprets it according to scholarly principles, saying:

I hold that ‘Uthmān only revealed this to discipline this man and deter him from his evil deed. Know that when a person’s heart becomes pure, he starts seeing with the light of Allah, and his sight does not fall upon any murky qualities without recognizing them. Then, individuals differ in their states. Some of them know that there is murkiness but don’t know its origin. Others are higher than this state, knowing its origin, as happened with ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. Indeed, the man’s looking at the woman resulted in murkiness for him. ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه saw it and understood its reason. Here is a subtle point: every sin has a murkiness and leaves a black mark on the heart according to its degree, becoming a veil. Allah ﷻ says: *‘No indeed! Rather there has slayed their hearts that which they earned.’*⁸⁷ This continues until it prevails (may Allah protect us), the heart darkens, the gates of light are closed, the heart is sealed, and there remains no path to repentance. Allah ﷻ says: *‘... and a seal has*

*been set upon their hearts, so they do not understand.*⁸⁸

We have explained this in *Rafʿ al-Hawbah bi Waḍʿ al-Tawbah* in the section on the absence of repentance for those with sealed hearts.

If you understand this, then realize that a minor sin leaves a small amount of murkiness, according to its degree, and is easily erased by seeking forgiveness and other expiations. Only someone with keen insight, like ʿUthmān رضي الله عنه, can perceive it. He perceived this small amount of murkiness, for looking at a woman is one of the simplest of sins, yet ʿUthmān رضي الله عنه perceived it and knew its origin. This is a high state to which many states bow. If another small sin joins the small one, the murkiness increases, and if the sins amass to the point of reaching (may Allah protect us) what we just described in terms of darkness of the heart, it becomes such that anyone with vision can witness it. So, whoever sees someone smeared with sins and with a darkened heart and does not perceive that in him, then realize that the only reason he did not see it is because he too has some blindness that prevents vision. Otherwise, were he to see it, he would see a deep darkness. Thus he only sees to the extent of his vision. Understand this gem that we have provided you!⁸⁹

This precious citation from Imam Subkī رحمته الله reveals to us the state of our master ʿUthmān رضي الله عنه and speaks about the reality of disclosure and its levels.

Disclosure of our Master ʿAlī’s ﷺ Knowledge of Hidden Matters

Since Imam Ghazālī ﷺ only covers three of the rightly guided caliphs in the selection above, Imam Muhammad Murtaḍā Zabīdī ﷺ completed the blessed sequence, mentioning what also happened with the fourth rightly guided caliph, our master ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ﷺ, concerning the marvel of disclosure, saying:

The hadith master, Abū al-Faṭḥ Yaʿmurī, narrated, with his chain of transmission to Zayd ibn Wahb, that a delegation came from Basra, and among them was a leader of the Kharijites named Jaʿdah ibn Baʿjah. He delivered a speech and praised Allah, then said: ‘O ʿAlī, fear Allah, for you are dead!’ Then ʿAlī said: ‘Rather, killed! This [arm] will be pierced and this [head] will be dyed red; a known promise and a decreed decree. Indeed, whoever fabricates has perished!’ And it was just as he mentioned!⁹⁰

Similar reports were also narrated about our master ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ﷺ that indicate his knowledge of some matters that could only be known through disclosure. For example:

1. Ibn Athīr and others narrate the events of the battle between our master ʿAlī ﷺ and his Companions against the Kharijites. He says in *al-Kāmil*:

Then the Kharijites aimed for the bridge across the river, and they were on the west bank. ʿAlī’s ﷺ companions said to him: ‘They have crossed the river!’ He said: ‘They will not cross!’ They sent out a scouting party, and it returned and informed them that

they had crossed the river. There was a bend in the river between them and him, and due to their fear of the scouting party, they did not approach them. They returned and said: ‘They have crossed the river.’ ‘Alī ؑ said: ‘By Allah, they did not cross, and their places of death are before the bridge! By Allah, not ten of you will be killed, nor will ten of them escape!’ ‘Alī ؑ advanced towards them and saw them at the bridge, and they had not crossed. The people had doubted his words, and some of them had been troubled. When they saw that the Kharijites had not crossed, they glorified Allah and informed ‘Alī ؑ of their state. He said: ‘By Allah, I did not lie, nor have I ever lied.’⁹¹

2. *Al-Iṣābah*, by the hadith master Ibn Ḥajar ‘Asqalānī, mentions in the biography of Kumayl ibn Ziyād that, when Ḥajjāj brought him to be killed, Kumayl said to him: ‘There is only a little of my life left, so do what you are going to do, for the appointed time is approaching, and the Commander of the Believers, ‘Alī ؑ informed me that you would kill me.’⁹²

These reports about our master ‘Alī ؑ also fall under the category of disclosure, and are included in the category of knowledge of the unseen.

Purpose of Tracking these Reports

The purpose of tracking these reports about the Companions ؓ is to establish that this type of disclosure is established for the likes of such great people. The matter is not, as some who deny the occurrence of disclosure would claim, related to contacting jinn or the like.

This does not negate the occurrence of disclosure and

partial knowledge of the unseen by other, non-pious slaves of Allah, or even some disbelievers. Rather, it necessitates recalling the principle that we carry with us throughout all these illuminations. The occurrence of such things is not in itself evidence of Allah's ﷻ pleasure or of a certain station for its recipient. Rather, what is relied upon in all of this is conformity of one's state to the noble Sharia, in both appearance and inner reality. The noble Sufis drew attention to this, and distinguished, specifically in the matter of disclosure, between types of disclosure that are specific to the pious and what is not specific to them.

The following is an important statement made by Imam Sirhindī ﷺ in *al-Maktūbāt* regarding this matter; it summarizes everything that has preceded it on the matter of disclosure:

Preternatural phenomena are of two types:

1. *The first type*: Divine knowledge and insights that relate to the essence of the Obligatory One (Allah) ﷻ, His attributes, and actions, all of which are beyond the realm of rational reasoning and differ from the customary and usual. The Absolute Truth ﷻ has made His special slaves distinguished with these.
2. *The second type*: Revealing the forms of created things and informing about unseen matters that relate to the world.

The first type is specific to people of truth and those who possess spiritual guidance. The second type applies to those who are truthful and those who are false, as it happens to those who are being led astray. The first type has a place of nobility and respect among the people of truth, may Allah be glorified

and exalted, because it is specific to His saints. His enemies have no share in it.

The second type is considered important by lay-people, being esteemed and honoured in their eyes, even if it appears at the hands of one being led astray. They will almost worship him out of ignorance. They will obey and follow him in all of his commandments, and they withhold from disobeying him. Such people are veiled from the truth. They do not value the first type of preternatural phenomena. For them, marvels and extraordinary experiences are limited to the second type. To them, marvels are specific to revealing the forms of created things and informing about unseen matters. How far they are from reason! What nobility or marvel is there in knowledge related to the states of created things, present or absent? Indeed, it is more appropriate and fitting that such knowledge be replaced with ignorance in order to forget created things and their states. What is fitting for nobility and marvel is the knowledge of Allah ﷻ, and it is He who deserves esteem and respect.⁹³

This precious excerpt indicates that what matters on the path, and what is of primary importance, is the manifestation of knowledge of the divine, which is the goal of the path. Indeed, knowledge of Allah is the goal of the path, as Allah ﷻ says in His Book: *‘And I did not create the jinn and mankind except that they may worship Me.’*⁹⁴

Scholars of *tafsīr* mention that what is meant by worship here is knowledge. Ibn ‘Ajībah ؒ says:

Indeed, Allah only wants His slaves to know Him. Allah ﷻ says: *‘And I did not create the jinn and mankind except that they may worship Me.’*⁹⁵ Ibn ‘Abbās

ﷺ said: ‘Meaning: “To know Me.”’ This knowledge can only be attained through resisting the effects of creation and the transfer of states. Others mention that in His saying, ‘*But for those who feared the station of their Lord, there will be two gardens,*’⁹⁶ one of the two gardens is knowledge of Allah, which is the Garden of Knowledge. The other is the Garden of Embellishments. Whoever enters upon knowledge does not desire anything other than it. Mālik ibn Dīnār ﷺ said: ‘People left the world without tasting the most delicious thing in it.’ Someone asked: ‘What is that?’ He said: ‘Knowledge of Allah ﷻ.’⁹⁷

Knowledge of the divine is what is relied upon on the path. Thus, knowledge of the divine is the greatest fruit of the path. To emphasize this meaning, we present here a statement by Imam Qushayrī ﷺ, one of the great Sufis, from his treatise:

Certainty (*yaqīn*) is disclosure, and disclosure is of three types: disclosure of information, disclosure of the manifestation of divine power, and disclosure of hearts through the realities of faith.

Realize that the use of ‘disclosure’ in their words is an expression indicating the appearance of something to the forefront of the heart, without any room for doubt. Sometimes, by ‘disclosure’, they mean what one sees between wakefulness and sleep, and often these people describe this state as ‘stability’ (*thabāt*).

I heard Imam Abū Bakr ibn Fūrak say: ‘I asked Abū ‘Uthmān Maghribī: “What is this that you say?” He said: “I see the people like such-and-such.” I said:

“Do you see them with clear vision or disclosure?” He said: “Disclosure.”” ‘Amr ibn ‘Abd Qays said: ‘If the veil was removed, I would not increase in certainty.’ It has been said: ‘Certainty is seeing with the eye through the strength of faith.’ It has also been said: ‘Certainty is the removal of objections.’ Junayd said: ‘Certainty is the removing of doubt when viewing the unseen.’⁹⁸

Supplement: The Aims of Disclosure on the Path to Allah

It has thus become clear to us how Sufi masters have decided that the attainment of disclosure—as one of the types of illuminations that occur to some seekers on the path—is a divine gift that does not prove virtue in itself. Thus, Sufis realize that this disclosure is not intended in itself, and when it occurs to some seekers or mystics, it is a blessing that must be spent on what pleases Allah, not on His disobedience. As Sīdī Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh Iskandarī says in his *Aphorisms*:

Whenever a seeker wants to pause at what has been disclosed to him, the voices of truth call to him: ‘What you seek is before you!’ The phenomena of creation do not appear embellished before him except that their truths call out to him: ‘... *We are but a temptation; do not disbelieve. ...*’⁹⁹

Thus, the disciple should not turn away from his goal and purpose on his journey to Allah. No matter how many illuminations appear to him, including disclosure and knowledge of the unseen, he must resolve to continue his journey until he meets his Lord.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh also says: ‘Perhaps He will show you the unseen of His kingdom and prevent you from prying into

the secrets of the slaves.’ In his commentary on *Aphorisms*, Ibn ‘Ajībah says:

Perhaps Allah will lift the veil from you, and you will rise to enter unto the Beloved until He takes you out of the prison of seeing the universes to witnessing the Maker, and from the knowledge of bodies to the world of the spirits. He will show you the unseen of His kingdom. You will see the whole universe as a light overflowing from the sea of Omnipotence (*al-jabarūt*). Then, you will attach it to its origin, and you will be annihilated from witnessing the Dominion (*al-mulk*), which is the world of variegation, by witnessing the Kingdom (*al-malakūt*), which is the world of connection, concerning which Ibn Bannā’ said:

*No matter how you transcend the bodies
You will see the light of truth with a smile.*

He prevented you from prying into the secrets of the slaves out of mercy for you, lest you thereby be prevented from witnessing the Kingdom. Thus, the people of realization do not care about the disclosure of the secrets of others, as it may be a punishment for its recipient, as will be mentioned. It might also be granted to someone who has no righteousness at all, such as fortune-tellers, magicians, and others. The majority of those who witness The Kingdom are prevented from disclosing others’ secrets because they are preoccupied with what is greater and more favoured with Allah. These disclosures are only for pious slaves, ascetics, and people of religious discipline and struggle. It cannot be denied that such secrets

may be with the mystics, for they may have both types of disclosure: disclosure of the secrets of others; and the lifting of the veil from the heart. However, what is most common is the absorption of the spirit in witnessing the light of the Kingdom, without prying into the secrets of the slaves, who are from the world of the Dominion.¹⁰⁰

He then points out that the attainment of disclosures to those uncharacterized by mercy is a door to temptation and evil for its possessor, saying:

‘Whoever is aware of the secrets of slaves without being characterized by divine mercy, his knowledge is a temptation for him, and a cause for calamity to befall him.’ I add: Knowing the secrets of slaves before becoming realized in witnessing the divine and acquiring the characteristics of the worshipped King is a great temptation, affliction, and calamity. This is because before becoming realized in knowledge, the heart may be preoccupied with disclosure, thereby harming the mind and disturbing the heart. Thus, one might be distracted away from observing the divine and tempted away from firm knowledge of the Loving King. Also, as long as the soul is alive and has not been annihilated, he might also believe that he has an advantage over people, such that pride and conceit enter upon him, and they are the source of sins. Thus, his knowledge of the secrets of slaves at that time was a cause for this calamity: his belief in his own superiority over them. This in turn is a cause of being distanced from Allah.

This is unlike one who is established in the knowledge of The Real, behaves divinely, and realizes the

meanings of His attributes and names. In this case, he embodies the characteristics of the Most Gracious. When he sees the sins of slaves in such a case, he sees himself as equal to them, he pities them, conceals their faults, and is patient with them.¹⁰¹

The meaning of disclosure, the criteria for its correctness, its types, and its purposes on the path to Allah have thus been clarified.

V. INSPIRATION (*ILHĀM*)

Sufi masters have placed great importance on inspiration, investigating its nature, effects, and how to distinguish true inspiration from false promptings. The concept of inspiration also appears in the Qur'an, as in the verse: '*and inspired to discern its vices and piety.*'¹⁰² Scholars of *tafsīr* have offered different interpretations of this verse, suggesting that it could refer to Allah ﷻ guiding us towards good and evil. It could also refer to Allah granting obedience to a slave or neglecting him.

Meaning of Inspiration Lexically and Terminologically

Lexically, Ibn Fāris says that the root letters of the Arabic word for inspiration indicate the act of swallowing something. This is similar to how Arabs use the word *iltahamahu* to mean: 'he swallowed it.' Thus, inspiration can be seen as something that is thrown into the mind and then swallowed.

Terminologically, inspiration is defined as: 'Something cast into the mind by an abundant flow.' It has also been described as: 'Knowledge that arises in the heart and prompts action without the need for reasoning or argument.'¹⁰³

Imam Qushayrī views that inspiration is a type of thought that comes from an angel. He sees the angelic inspiration as the opposite of the demonic whispers that come from the devil. Angelic thoughts encourage actions that are

aligned with religious law and truth, while demonic whispers entice towards sin.

There are hadiths that support the idea of angelic and demonic influences on thoughts. In one hadith, ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd reports that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

The devil has access to the son of Adam, and the angel has access. As for the access of the devil, it is a threat of evil and a denial of the truth. As for the touch of the angel, it is a promise of good and a confirmation of the truth. Whoever finds that, let him know that it is from Allah, and let him praise Allah for it. Whoever finds the other, then let him seek refuge in Allah from the devil, then recite: ‘*Satan promises you poverty and enjoins you to indecency...*’^{104, 105}

Imam Abū Ṭālib Makkī provides a detailed explanation of inspiration in his book, *Qūt al-Qulūb*:

The origins of spiritual meanings and their centrepieces are angelic inspiration and its casting into the soul; and it is the kindling of lights in the books of faith and their other branches, and the knowledge of what has been commanded or recommended and what is permissible.

The origins of evil meanings are the opposite of those of the good. Its centrepieces are the ego and the enemy. Its causes are desire and passion. They arise from ignorance, cast a veil over the soul, and lead to punishment.

When Allah ﷻ wills to manifest good from the treasury of the soul, He stirs it, so it shines as light in the heart and influences it. The angel then looks into the heart and sees what Allah ﷻ has initiated therein,

so its place becomes apparent to him, and he gains control over it, just as the enemy acts within the treasury of evil, which is the ego. The angel is compelled towards guidance and is imprinted with the love of obedience, just as the enemy is compelled towards misguidance, imprinted with the love of sin. Thus, the angel imparts inspiration, which is his coming to the heart by piercing its thoughts, commanding restraint, embellishing it for him, and urging him towards it. This is the inspiration of piety and guidance.

Angelic thoughts are always good and pure. They are not deceptive or tricky, like the thoughts of the devil. However, if a person becomes hardened in sin, the angel's thoughts may be cut off from his heart. This leaves the person vulnerable to the devil's temptations. The devil will use the person's own desires to lead him astray.

As long as a person is inspired by the angel, he will remain in the station of faith. But when he is raised to the station of certainty, Allah ﷻ will take care of him directly. The spirit will become the place where the truth is revealed to him. This will not happen until the person's own thoughts are annihilated by the love of Allah ﷻ.¹⁰⁶

Abū Ṭālib Makkī's words here make it clear that inspiration is essential for those who want to do good and progress in the path to Allah. To benefit from inspiration, one must purify one's inner soul and be mindful of the thoughts of the soul and the whispers of the devil.

Can Inspiration be Called ‘Revelation’ (*Wahy*)?

The word ‘revelation’ can also be used to denote ‘inspiration’ when referring to non-Prophets. For example, the experience of Moses’ mother in the verse: *‘And We revealed to the mother of Moses: “Suckle him, then, when you fear for him, cast him into the waters, and do not fear or grieve, for We will restore him to you and make him one of the Messengers”*’¹⁰⁷ is considered a form of inspiration.

Ibn ‘Ajībah says:

Know that revelation is of four types: dream revelation, inspiration revelation, revelation of rulings, and revelation of information. Saints share three of these with Prophets: inspiration, dreams, and information, but not through an angel. The meaning of revelation of information is that Allah informs a Prophet of hidden matters. If it is through an angel, then it is specific to Prophets, just as revelation of rulings is specific to them. However, if it is through inspiration, dreams, or understanding from Allah, then it also applies to saints, because when the spirit is purified and cleansed from the defilement of the senses, Allah informs it of His unseen in general, but the details are known only to the Knower of the Unseen. And Allah knows best.¹⁰⁸

Inspiration helps the disciple on his spiritual journey and urges him to do what pleases Allah.

VI. BREAKTHROUGH (*FATH*)

One of the terms that our Sufi masters use frequently is ‘breakthrough’ (*fath*). There is hardly a book by a Sufi master that does not contain this term. Sufi masters derived this term from the Book of Allah ﷻ. For example, Allah ﷻ says: ‘*Verily We have given you a clear victory.*’¹⁰⁹ The word *fath* in this verse has many meanings, all of which are indicated by the language and the Qur’anic context. Among these meanings is what Imam Qushayrī ؒ mentions in his commentary on this verse: ‘We have honoured you by opening what was closed to the heart of anyone other than you, before you, by detailing the laws of Islam, as well as other breakthroughs of his heart ﷻ.’¹¹⁰

A similar meaning is what some have said when interpreting the word of Allah ﷻ: ‘*When the help of God comes together with victory.*’¹¹¹ The author of *Rūh al-Bayān* says: ‘The victory meant here is the absolute victory, beyond which there is no victory. It is the opening of the door to the divine presence of the One and the unveiling of the soul.’¹¹²

Some scholars have expanded on the types of breakthroughs that come in the verses of the Noble Qur’an. Sheikh Aḥmad Ḍiyā al-Dīn Kamshakhānwī says:

The ‘victory near at hand’ is what opens up to the slave from the station of the heart and the manifestation

of its attributes and perfections when the stations of the ego are cut off. This is what is referred to by the saying of Allah ﷻ: ‘... *help from God and a victory near at hand ...*’¹¹³. The ‘clear victory’ is what opens up to the slave from the station of sainthood and the manifestations of the lights of the divine names that are specific to the attributes of the heart and its perfections. This is what is referred to by the saying of Allah ﷻ: ‘*Verily We have given you a clear victory.*’¹¹⁴

In order to clarify the concept of breakthrough as used by Sufi masters, we refer to their definitions and taxonomy according to their cognitive framework. Shaḥrānī says:

The meaning of ‘breakthrough’ in the speech of these individuals, where they use it, is removing the veils of the soul, heart, spirit, or secret on account of what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ brought in terms of the Noble Qur’an and sound hadiths. A saint never introduces new legislation, but, rather, brings a new understanding of the Qur’an and the Sunnah that was not known to anyone before him. Therefore, those who lack faith in the People of the Path are amazed by this and say: ‘No one has said this before,’ as a form of criticism. However, it would be more appropriate for them to accept it as a matter of belief and benefit from the words of the speaker. Those whose nature is to refute will not benefit from any of the saints of their time, resulting in a clear loss. Sometimes, the objector might misunderstand the statement and interpret it contrary to the speaker’s intention. This occurred to a scholar from Baghdad

when he went to the mosque and overheard someone under the influence of alcohol reciting poetry:

*Once the twentieth of Sha‘bān has gone,
Then drink your night away with the day,
And do not drink from small cups,
For time is short for small things.*

He went out wandering in the wilderness to Mecca, and he remained in that state until he died. No one is prevented from hearing poetry and love songs except for a veiled person for whom Allah ﷻ has not opened the eye of his heart’s understanding. For if Allah ﷻ had opened the eye of his heart’s understanding, he would have looked with purity of intention, heard with keen understanding and the light of knowledge, taken a sign from the meanings of the unseen, and followed the best of what came to his mind. Allah ﷻ says: ‘... So give [such] good tidings to My servants, // who listen to the words [of God] and follow the best [sense] of it. Those, they are the ones whom God has guided; and those, they are the people of pith.’¹¹⁵

What Sha‘rānī mentions above means that a breakthrough is a type of understanding that Allah opens for whomever He wills of His slaves. This allows them to understand what has been revealed regarding what Allah ﷻ wants, as per the text of the Noble Revelation. Then, they move from that understanding to action and compliance, according to their ability.

This is also supported by what Ibn ‘Ajībah mentions in this context:

The first breakthrough that occurs to the heart of a slave is understanding the Book of Allah, eagerness to read it, and his enjoyment of the sweetness of its recitation. Then, he moves on to becoming absorbed in its remembrance with his tongue, then with his heart, then to contemplation, then to seclusion in the Divine Presence, if he finds someone to raise him and move him along these stations. Otherwise, he will remain at his first station.¹¹⁶

Thus, the first thing that the Sufis refer to as a breakthrough is the understanding that is connected to action and compliance. This shows the importance of the practical aspect of Sunni Sufism, which is followed by the majority of the Muslim nation. They are not satisfied with the aspect of illuminations only, but rather, they make action the foundation, whether or not illuminations are obtained.

Some Conditions for Receiving Breakthroughs

Firstly, it should be clarified, whether regarding breakthroughs or any other illumination, that the concept of conditionality does not imply the legal conditionality that necessitates absence or presence as recognized by juristic principles. Thus, it is unlike the relationship between ritual purity and prayer, but is based on predominant factors rather than absolute conditions. What the People of Allah have established is that the occurrence of such illuminations may happen with preparedness or without it. The foundation and essence of the path lie in the belief that: ‘There is no power nor strength except with Allah,’ so there is no breakthrough, illumination, or struggle except by the permission of Allah ﷻ.

Now that this has been established and clarified, some

Sufi masters have mentioned certain conditions for the occurrence of a breakthrough. They are as follows.

Effort (*Mujāhadah*) is the Key to Breakthrough

Imam Ghazālī says:

Striving (*mujāhadah*) leads to observation (*mushāhadah*), and the subtleties of the heart's knowledge cause springs of wisdom to burst forth from the heart. As for books and teaching, they do not fulfill this purpose. Rather, wisdom beyond containment and enumeration comes through striving, vigilance (*murāqabah*), engaging in both outward and inward deeds, sitting with Allah in seclusion while the heart is present with pure thought, and detaching oneself unto Allah to the exclusion of all else. These are the keys to inspiration and the sources of unveiling. How many scholars have prolonged their learning yet could not surpass what they had heard with a single word! How many limited their focus to the essentials in learning, yet through practice and observing their hearts, Allah unfolded for them subtle aspects of wisdom that confound the minds of the wise! That is why the Prophet ﷺ said: 'Whoever acts upon what he knows, Allah grants him knowledge of what he does not know.'¹¹⁷

Thus, Imam Ghazālī emphasizes the importance of undergoing struggles as the fundamental means to achieve unveilings and breakthroughs. The path of these people combines knowledge and action without relying solely on either. Rather, surrender, contentment, and seeking assistance are through Allah alone.

Do Not Rush Breakthroughs

A significant matter emphasized by Sufi masters is not hastening for a breakthrough, as it is part of self-desire. The purpose of the spiritual path is to rid oneself of these desires, ensuring that worship is solely for Allah, not for anything else. They have numerous texts supporting this principle, such as:

- It is narrated that the Pole, Sīdī Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī, said:

A friend and I were worshipping Allah in a cave, saying: ‘This month, Allah will give us a breakthrough,’ or ‘This week, Allah will give us a breakthrough.’ A man appeared at the cave’s entrance, adorned with the signs of virtue, and greeted us with: ‘Peace be upon you.’ We returned the greeting and asked about his well-being. He stood up and said: ‘What is the state of those who say: “This month, Allah will give me a breakthrough,” or, “This week, Allah will give me a breakthrough”?’ There is neither breakthrough nor success here! Why do you not worship Allah as commanded?’ Then, he vanished, and we understood the lesson. We blamed ourselves and turned inwards, and that’s when Allah gave us a breakthrough.¹¹⁸

The experience of Sheikh Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī confirms that the seeker should not hasten or even seek the breakthrough. Rather, his aim should be the worship of Allah alone. It is then, or along with that, that the breakthrough occurs by the permission of Allah.

- Sheikh Ibn ‘Ajībah says: ‘How many seekers hurried for the breakthrough before its time, and as a result, they were punished by being deprived? And how

many seekers gained insight into the secrets of reality before completing their service and were either expelled or killed?’¹¹⁹

This narration also highlights the importance of not hastening for a breakthrough and presents another benefit of doing so: what the seeker might attain due to the breakthrough could become a trial for them, and seeking such knowledge prematurely might harm the seeker. It might prompt them either to divulge what they have seen or make them believe they have attained a certain status, leading to arrogance, among other harms that the seeker should protect himself from.

Emptying the Heart of Others

One of the foundational principles of the path considered as an objective in the journey towards Allah Almighty is emptying the heart from distractions. It is a prerequisite for a breakthrough. Sheikh Ibn ‘Ajībah Ḥasanī says: ‘Know that divine assistance, which is the celestial breakthrough, only occurs in hearts devoid of obstacles and distractions.’¹²⁰ Therefore, as the heart is the place of divine contemplation, it is necessary for the aspiring seeker to work on purifying it from attachment to anything other than Allah, including transient desires and passing worldly concerns. Instead, they should attach their heart to the Eternal, the Most Sublime.

Love of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

Certainly, love for the Prophet ﷺ is one of the signs of faith. Just as faith has degrees and stations, love also varies in its levels and degrees, and consequently, in its effects. The superiority of the Companions over those who came after

them was only due to their love for the Prophet ﷺ and their exalted position in his noble presence. Abū Bakr ﷺ understood immediately the intentions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ without any explicit statement, and this is a form of breakthrough, as mentioned by Imam Sha‘ranī in his understanding of their breakthroughs.

Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī ﷺ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sat on the pulpit and said: ‘A slave was given a choice by Allah between what is in this world and what is with Him, and he chose what is with Allah.’¹²¹ Abū Bakr wept and said: ‘May our fathers and mothers be your ransom!’ We were perplexed by his statement and said:

Look at this old man! The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is informing us about a slave who has been given a choice between what is in this world and what is with Allah, and he says: ‘May our fathers and mothers be your ransom!’ The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the one being referred to, and Abū Bakr was the most knowledgeable among us.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also said: Among those I am most indebted to regarding his wealth and companionship is Abū Bakr. If I were to take a close friend other than my Lord, I would have taken Abū Bakr. However, friendship of Islam [suffices him]. There is to be no door in the mosque other than Abū Bakr’s door.¹²²

Thus, they emphasized that the love for the Prophet ﷺ is a reason for the breakthrough. Sīdī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Dabbāgh said: ‘All those who achieved breakthroughs did so only through their love for him ﷺ, being given to drink from his light ﷺ an amount commensurate with one of his hairs.’¹²³

Thus, the people of love and proximity to the Prophet ﷺ are the ones who achieve breakthroughs, as he ﷺ is the source of all goodness and the origin of every benefit that reaches us.

Types of Breakthroughs

Some Sufis have mentioned various types of breakthroughs. Among them, Sīdī Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī categorized breakthroughs into three types, which are closer to stations, as is evident from his words:

Know that our hands, and yours, have been strengthened by what was bestowed upon the elite of His slaves. Breakthroughs, according to the Sufis, fall into three types:

1. *Breakthroughs in outward, articulate expression.* They say that this is caused by sincere intentions, which I affirm as valid based on my experience. It is as stated by the Prophet ﷺ: ‘I have been given comprehensive speech.’¹²⁴ This includes the miraculous nature of the Qur’an. I actually asked about this issue and was told: ‘Do not disclose anything except the truth and a true, factual occurrence, without adding a letter or fabricating within yourself. If your speech is characterized by these qualities, then it is indeed miraculous.’

2. *The sweetness of inner experience.* Sufis say that this is a means to Divine attraction through His grace.

3. *Disclosure of The Real.* Sufis say that this is the cause of knowing The Real. All of this is found in considering everything that comes to you without anticipation, preconception, or request a clear breakthrough, whether manifest or concealed. It has a

distinctive mark in those who have experienced breakthroughs, which is the absence of drawing from others' breakthroughs or the results of thought.

One of the conditions of breakthroughs is that it should not accompany or result from thought. Our Sheikh, Abū Madyan, used to say about breakthroughs: 'Feed us tender meat, as Allah commands. Do not feed us tough meat.' By this, he meant: Do not transfer to us any breakthrough except that which you have experienced in your hearts. Do not transfer to us the breakthroughs of others. He thereby raised the aspiration of his companions to seek attainment from Allah.

So, my brothers, know that the station of breakthroughs requires a real scale, a station where there is hidden deception and lure. Allah mentioned breakthroughs with blessings from the heavens and the earth and also with torment, so that the wise would not rejoice in the opening of a door until they see what is on the other side. At the time of death, someone said: 'This is the door I have been knocking on for so many years, and now it opens for me, but I do not know unto where.' ʿĀd said: '... *This is a cloud that will bring us rain! ...*'¹²⁵, as common knowledge had veiled them. They were told: '... *Nay, but it is what you sought to hasten a hurricane containing a painful chastisement.*'¹²⁶ So do not be deluded by a breakthrough if you do not know what lies behind it, '... *and say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge."*'¹²⁷

From the words of the Great Sheikh, it becomes evident that breakthroughs have three stations or types, each with

its fruit for the seeker. It is incumbent upon the seeker to seek sincerely in all of this, by turning to Allah alone, without anyone else besides Him.

Supplement: A Collection of Comprehensive Quotes on Breakthrough

In *al-Ṭabaqāt*, Sha^ʿrānī mentions various statements from the People of Allah about what a seeker should focus on concerning the matter of spiritual breakthroughs—before, during, and after them—such that the seeker is aware of his state. Among these are:

1. ‘One of the greatest gateways to spiritual breakthroughs is the slave’s vigilant awareness of his heedlessness.’¹²⁸ – (Sīdī Dāwūd ibn Makhlā)

This vigilant awareness marks the initial stages of the spiritual path and represents the first and greatest gateway to spiritual breakthroughs. The effectiveness of the journey towards Allah depends on the firmness of these beginnings.

2. ‘The sign of a spiritual breakthrough is when you see people, all of them, asleep.’¹²⁹ – (Sīdī Dāwūd ibn Makhlā)

A seeker engrossed in worldly concerns will not prosper. Conversely, one who solely engages with Allah and behaves as if everyone around them is asleep will not be distracted by worldly affairs.

3. ‘The scourge of spiritual breakthroughs is being distracted.’¹³⁰ – (Sīdī ‘Alī Khawwāṣ)

This serves as a warning for the seeker not to be diverted from his path, even if spiritual breakthroughs occur. Being distracted can lead to missing

the greater purpose of the breakthroughs, which is closeness to Allah.

4. ‘A spiritual breakthrough for the seeker may be a test, temptation, or confirmation.’¹³¹ – (Sīdī Abū Mawāhib Shādhilī)

This highlights the reasons behind spiritual breakthroughs for the seeker. Therefore, their joy should only be derived from Allah, and their reliance should solely be upon Him.

5. ‘The sheikh should not reveal to the seeker the form of the spiritual breakthrough he has learned from the path of unveiling, as it could mislead the seeker after his struggles and the perfection of his conduct. When the seeker senses this form within himself and witnesses it repeatedly, he might claim a spiritual breakthrough. However, his inner self may contradict that, as the soul is susceptible to illusions, insincerity, and excessive claims. This might lead to a parting between the seeker and his sheikh, and the seeker might claim perfection based on knowledge, not understanding or wisdom, just as the hypocrite displays the appearance of a believer in outward actions while internally revealing the opposite.’¹³² – (‘Alī Nur al-Dīn Marṣafī)

This serves as a caution for spiritual guides not to reveal to the seekers the conditions they perceive, except after ensuring the seeker will not be influenced by them. This advice originates from compassion and mercy for seekers as, sometimes, in the beginning of the path, they might be preoccupied with something irrelevant to their progress; or they might imagine something that he has attained when he has not.

6. 'If the heart continuously turns to The Real in every movement and stillness without any impediment, then the gateway of spiritual breakthroughs is open. As long as the heart remains focused on The Real, then blessings will be abundant, and the person is likely to reach the heights of perfection.'¹³³ – (Sīdī ʿAlī Khawwāṣ)

This statement also describes what the heart should maintain in order to hasten spiritual breakthroughs: continuous alignment with The Real ﷻ.

Note: The Meaning of Breakthrough with Respect to the Prophet ﷺ

In *al-Ibrīz*, the following beneficial insight (in the words of Sīdī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Dabbāgh) about spiritual breakthroughs concludes the discussion on the subject. Sheikh Aḥmad ibn Mubārak says:

I asked him ﷻ about the verse in which Allah says: *'Verily We have given you a clear victory, // that God may forgive you what is past of your sin and what is to come ...'*¹³⁴. He said:

The meaning of breakthrough here is observation, i.e., observing His presence ﷻ. It was predetermined in His earlier knowledge that not all of creation would know Him, for if they did, there would have been only one abode. However, He ﷻ decreed for Himself two abodes, veiling His presence from creation, except for those whom Allah, in His mercy, permitted. He prevented them from witnessing His actions and His essence, for had He removed the veil, they would have witnessed Him. He says: *'And He is with you wherever you may be;'*¹³⁵ *'...and We are*

nearer to him than his jugular vein;"¹³⁶ *'And when My servants question you concerning Me, I am near...'*¹³⁷; and *'...nor of fewer than that or more but He is with them wherever they may be.'*¹³⁸ They witness all their deeds as created by Him, not by themselves. They are mere circumstances and entities set in place, while He, Most High, moves them as He wills, for He says: *'...God created you and whatever you make.'*¹³⁹ At this point, no one disobeys Him. Sin only arises from a veiled, heedless individual at the time of committing it.

With believers, even though they believe that Allah is the one behind their actions, this belief fluctuates due to the veil. Their belief is based on faith in the unseen, not direct observation. Those upon whom Allah, Most High, removes the veil, honouring them with the sight of Him, only see what is true from The Real and towards The Real. This is what is meant by the clear victory.

When asked about when this occurred, he replied: 'From childhood. Indeed, Allah's Messenger ﷺ was never veiled from Him.'

I said: 'This breakthrough is common to every Prophet, and even to every mystic, so what of it is specific to the Prophet ﷺ?' He replied:

Breakthroughs vary in strength and weakness, so each according to his capacity. The strength present in the Prophet ﷺ intellectually, spiritually, physically, essentially, secretly, and in confidentiality, was not given to others. If all those granted breakthroughs, among Prophets and others, were gathered, then if the aforementioned strength were bestowed upon

them, they would all dissolve, and their essences would disperse. The reference to ‘sin’ in Allah’s saying, ‘...*what is past of your sin and what is to come* ...’ is due to the heedlessness and the darkness of the veil inherent to the origin of the terrestrial self. This heedlessness and veil, concerning sins, is akin to a filthy and spoiled garment attracting flies: whenever the garment is on someone, flies descend upon it, and when that garment is removed, the flies depart. The garment is a representation of the veil, and the flies are a representation of sins. If someone labels that garment as ‘flies’, it is an accurate depiction. Similarly, what is meant here by ‘sin’ is the veil. What is referred to as ‘past’ and ‘to come’ is an indirect indication of its removal. It is as if He is saying: ‘We have granted you a clear victory in order to remove the veil from you, to perfect our blessings upon you, and for you to be guided and granted victory.’ There is no blessing greater than the removal of the veil, no guidance greater than knowing spiritual meanings, and no victory is greater than this state.

I asked: ‘Is this specific to the Prophet ﷺ?’ He said: ‘Yes.’ I said: ‘Why?’ He said: ‘Because he is the source of everything.’

This is why the Prophets عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ will say on the Day of Resurrection: ‘Go to Muhammad, a slave whom Allah has forgiven his past and future sins.’

What the Sheikh said ﷺ is among the deepest of spiritual truths, the subtlest of subtleties, the most suitable to the prophetic status, the most eloquent in exaltation and reverence, the greatest in accordance with unanimously agreed-upon infallibility, the most

fulfilling of the rights of the Prophet ﷺ, and the most appropriate in the arrangement of the verse and the beauty of its context. May Allah reward him the best reward on our behalf.¹⁴⁰

Regarding the connection of a saint to the presence of the Prophet ﷺ, he said:

Furthermore, his meeting with the noble essence becomes a means to know The Real ﷲ and to witness His eternal Essence. This is because he finds the noble essence absent through The Real, perplexed through observation of Him ﷲ. Thus, the saint continues to cling to The Real through the auspiciousness of the noble essence and gradually rises in knowledge until he experiences observation, the secrets of knowledge, and the lights of love. This is the second breakthrough, which is the differentiator between the People of Truth and the People of Falsehood. As for the first breakthrough, it occurs to them just as it occurs to the people of darkness: they receive breakthroughs in witnessing transient matters and are able to deal with them. So, we see the charlatan walking on water, flying through the air, and being provided for from the unseen while he is a disbeliever in Allah Almighty. This is because Allah created light and created from it the angels, making them assistants to the people of light in guidance, directing them, and breaking through obstacles. Similarly, He created darkness and created from it the devils, making them assistants to the people of

falsehood in deception, increasing others in loss, and enabling them to perform preternatural phenomena.¹⁴¹

This explanation encapsulates the meanings, types, and levels of conquests according to the understanding of these people, and all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all worlds.

VII. VISIONS (*RU'Ā*)

Among the illuminations that scholars discuss in their writings is visions (*ru'ā*), which might be one of the most frequent and well-known occurrences for the seeker in the early stages of his spiritual journey. The handling of, and reliance upon, visions vary according to the disciplinary approaches of each path. The following is a study of this important type of illumination on the path and an explanation of what has been reported from Sufi masters regarding it.

The term *ru'yā* is used for what the sleeper perceives. It is commonly used for visions seen during sleep, and occasionally for what is perceived by the sense of sight when awake.

Ibn Athīr states: '*Ru'yā* (vision) and *ḥulm* (dream) refer to what the sleeper sees during their sleep. However, *ru'yā* is predominantly used for what are considered good and pleasant things, while *ḥulm* is used for what is considered evil or unpleasant.'¹⁴²

Regarding 'vision' in Sufi terminology, it has been defined by the mystic, Sīdī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Dabbāgh, as:

Beliefs and perceptions that Allah creates in the heart of the sleeper, just as He creates them in the eye of the wakeful. When He creates them, He makes them a sign of matters and things created in another state. Sometimes, an angel attends their creation, making the vision a bearer of good tidings, and at times, a devil attends, making it sorrowful.¹⁴³

Vision are a Source of Good Tidings

Sufi masters rely on visions as a source of good tidings, similar to the consensus of many scholars who consider them as such. Allah says in the Qur'an: '*Theirs are good tidings in the life of this world...*'¹⁴⁴. It has been mentioned in the verse's *tafsīr* that this refers to righteous visions. Also, the Prophet ﷺ said: 'There is no prophethood left except for glad tidings.' They asked: 'What are the glad tidings?' He replied: 'Righteous visions.'¹⁴⁵

Moreover, it is mentioned in a sound hadith that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'Righteous visions constitute a portion of the forty-six parts of prophethood.'¹⁴⁶

Regarding the notion that visions constitute one of forty-six parts of prophethood, the most prominent position is that the first revelations to the Prophet ﷺ were in the form of true visions. He used to see a vision, then it would occur like the break of dawn, meaning that it would be fulfilled the following day. This continued for six months. From the age of 40, his prophethood spanned twenty-three years until his ascension to the Ultimate Companion.

Before explaining the details of this type of illumination among Sufi masters, it is important to discuss the authenticity of visions from a Sharia perspective. The significance of this is evident, as some seekers might attach themselves to what they see in their visions and act upon what they have seen. This might either comply with the Sharia or contradict it. Consequently, this might lead them to deviate from the rules of the spiritual path or even the rules of Sharia. Therefore, it becomes necessary to clarify the opinions of the scholars regarding the authenticity of visions briefly.

Authoritativeness of Visions According to Scholars

Before mentioning the opinions of scholars regarding the authenticity of visions, it is necessary to clarify the scope of dispute on this issue in order to understand the scope of agreement and disagreement among scholarly opinions.

Firstly, regarding what is agreed upon: Muslims concur that righteous visions are glad tidings, intended to strengthen hearts and fortify the determination of believers. They also agree that the visions of Prophets are a form of divine revelation, and it is incumbent upon the Prophets to act according to them, as in the story of our Prophet Abraham عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ. It is also agreed upon that a general dream does not serve as a religious argument. Additionally, it is accepted that a righteous vision is worthy of contemplation if it aligns with a legitimate religious argument. This was evident in the case of Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ who confirmed the validity of *tamattuʿ*-style Hajj¹⁴⁷ based on his knowledge of established, received evidence from the Qurʾan and Sunnah. When some people had visions that aligned with Ibn ʿAbbās's statement, he felt delighted and saw no harm in it.

Secondly, the area of disagreement concerns righteous visions that imply a legal ruling without a specific foundation, and this holds whether the visualized entity is the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ or someone else, and whether the vision is shared by several people or witnessed by an individual. Whether such a dream can be used as evidence for the person who saw it or the entire community is a matter of disagreement. The majority agree that such visions do not constitute religious proof and cannot be cited as evidence for carrying out or refraining from actions, whether they involve prohibition or recommendation.

Therefore, such visions, which belong to the category of glad tidings, do not establish new rulings, let alone contradict established Sharia rulings. However, as previously agreed upon, there's no objection to taking guidance from a specific vision regarding something encouraged by Sharia. For instance, invoking Allah with specific wording, visiting a friend for the sake of Allah, seeking guidance from a saint, offering charity, or performing acts of kindness—these are all permissible. In these cases, the vision does not introduce anything beyond what was revealed through the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the rulings conveyed to him.

The situation is similar concerning the visions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that are explicitly mentioned as genuine visions, as in the narration: 'Whoever sees me in a dream has truly seen me, as Satan does not imitate me ...'¹⁴⁸ Scholars note that the one seeing the Prophet ﷺ in a dream must differentiate between being instructed in their dream to do something in accordance with Sharia and being instructed to do something contradictory to Sharia.

Based on this, when some devotees have visions of the Master of Creation ﷻ, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, in their dreams, they must distinguish between things that are not part of the true teachings of Sharia—like being commanded to do something forbidden or being prohibited from doing an obligation—and those that are. Imam Ibn Daqīq al-ʿId says:

If he ﷻ commands one to avoid doing something while a conflicting ruling has been established in wakefulness, such as non-performance of an obligatory or recommended act, then it is not permissible to act upon it. If he ﷻ commands one to do something while a conflicting ruling has not been estab-

lished in wakefulness, then it is recommended that one do it.¹⁴⁹

In the case that the seeker sees a dream in which the Master of Creation ﷻ commands him to do something that conflicts with the Sharia, he should follow two courses of action.

Firstly, he should refrain from doing anything that he knows contradicts Sharia, as visions do not annul or change Sharia rulings. Some scholars attribute this to a mistake in the individual's hearing. The knowledgeable scholar Ibn Abī Jamrah commented on such situations in his abridgement of Bukhārī, saying: 'It is a blessed vision, and his seeing the blessed essence is real, but the error may lie in his hearing, which is the undeniable truth.'¹⁵⁰ This can also be deduced from the Prophet's statement ﷺ: 'Whoever sees me in a dream has truly seen me,' as he did not say: 'Whoever hears me', but 'Whoever sees me.' Hence, one should stick to this especially when unable to interpret the vision in an acceptable manner according to Sharia.

Secondly, the devotee should consult their spiritual guide whenever they encounter something confusing. Seeking guidance from a spiritual guide helps eliminate confusion. Perhaps the vision holds a specific interpretation or serves as guidance for something unclear to the devotee. This does not only pertain to such visions, but is also advised whenever something beneficial is perceived by the devotee and requires clarification from their spiritual guide. The author of *Rūḥ al-Bayān* says:

It is incumbent upon the seeker to present his experience to his spiritual guide, whether through direct communication or indirectly, for Allah the Almighty

says: ‘*Verily, God commands you to restore trusts. ...*’¹⁵¹. This trust includes the seeker’s obligation to present it to his spiritual guide. There is immense benefit in doing so, for it strengthens the seeker’s path. Furthermore, the interpretation carries significant influence, as highlighted in the words of ‘Alī ؑ: ‘Dreams are according to how they are interpreted.’¹⁵²

The Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ used to present their dreams to our Prophet ﷺ and, at times, the Prophet ﷺ himself would inquire about their dreams. In a hadith, it is narrated that when the Prophet ﷺ finished praying, he would turn his face towards his companions and ask: ‘Did anyone among you have a dream tonight?’¹⁵³ If someone had a dream, they would narrate it, and the Prophet would respond: ‘Whatever Allah wills [occurs].’ Once, the Prophet ﷺ asked: ‘Did anyone among you have a dream?’, to which the Companions replied: ‘No.’

The seeker should consider their spiritual guide’s condition. They should not insist on knowing the interpretation of their dream. If the spiritual guide diverts them from focusing on a specific dream or dreams in general, the seeker should comply with their guide’s instructions. The Prophet ﷺ would occasionally refrain from interpreting specific dreams, as seen in the narration:

A man came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, in my dream last night I saw a cloud giving shade, from which drops of ghee and honey were falling, and I saw people collecting them in the palms of their hands, some gathering a lot and some a little. I saw a rope reaching up into heaven,

and I saw you take hold of it and rise with it. Then another man took hold of it after you rose with it, then another man took hold of it after him and rose with it. Then a man took hold of it after him and it broke; then it was reconnected, and he rose with it.’ Abū Bakr said: ‘Let me interpret it, O Messenger of Allah.’ He ﷺ said: ‘Interpret it.’ He said: ‘As for the cloud giving shade, it is Islam, and the drops of honey and ghee that fall from it (represent) the Qur’an with its sweetness and softness. As for the people collecting that in their palms, some learn a lot of the Qur’an and some learn a little. As for the rope reaching up into heaven, it is the truth that you are following; you took hold of it and rose with it, then another man will take hold of it after you and rise with you, then another, who will rise with it, then another, but it will break and then be reconnected, then he will rise with it. Tell me, O Messenger of Allah—may my father be your ransom—am I right or wrong?’ He said: ‘You got some of it right and some of it wrong.’ Abū Bakr said: ‘By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, tell me what I got right and what I got wrong.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘Do not swear.’¹⁵⁴

Based on this hadith, it is permissible to refrain from interpreting a dream or parts of it if that serves a beneficial purpose.

From all of the above, it is understood that a righteous dream doesn’t exceed being a glad tiding. It may also include encouragement towards righteous deeds, as with what happened to ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar. He said:

Whenever a man would see anything in his sleep during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he

would narrate it to the Prophet ﷺ. I longed that I should also see in a dream something which I could narrate to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. At the time, I was an unmarried, young man. I would sleep in the mosque during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. I saw in a dream as if two angels had taken hold of me and carried me to the Hellfire. It was built like a well and had two pillars like those of a well. There were people in it whom I knew, so I started crying out: ‘I seek refuge in Allah from the Hellfire! I seek refuge in Allah from the Hellfire! I seek refuge in Allah from the Hellfire!’ Then another angel joined the other two and told me: ‘You need not fear.’ I narrated this dream to Ḥafṣah, and she narrated it to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, whereupon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘‘Abdullāh is a good man, if only he would pray a portion of the night.’’¹⁵⁵

Sālim, the one narrating the hadith from ‘Abdullāh, added that thereafter, ‘Abdullāh would only sleep a small part of the night.

In this hadith, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar saw something interpreted by the Prophet ﷺ as an encouragement for him to engage more in the night prayer. This exemplifies the benefits of a righteous dream. Further details about what is meant by ‘a righteous dream’ and its impact will be discussed from the perspective of Sufi masters.

Sufi Interpretation of Visions and their Types

Given that visions are among the divine illuminations that occur to the seeker on the path to Allah, and that they are glad tidings to believers on the journey, Sufi masters provide an explanation and elaboration of their reality, some of

their causes, and how to deal with them—which will be detailed below.

*The Reality of Visions According to Muḥyī al-Dīn
Ibn ‘Arabī*

The Great Sheikh perceives that the matter of visions is entrusted to an angelic entity. This angelic entity’s jurisdiction is not limited to dreams alone, but extends to some of the depicted meanings, even in a state of wakefulness. He says:

Know that Allah has appointed an angel of visions called The Spirit (*al-Rūḥ*), who resides below the lowest heaven. In his dominion are the forms of bodies perceived by the sleeper and others, as well as the forms of the realms created by these forms. Thus, when a person sleeps or is in a state of absence, annihilation, or possesses a perception not obstructed by sensory impressions in their wakefulness, preventing them from perceiving what lies within the dominion of this angel’s forms, this individual apprehends, through the strength of their wakefulness, what the sleeper perceives during their sleep. This occurs because the human subtle faculty transfers its powers from the realm of sensory perceptions to the realm of the connected imagination, located in the forefront of the brain. Consequently, The Spirit, entrusted with forms from the imagination separate from divine permission, pours upon it whatever The Real wills to show to this sleeper, absentee, annihilated one, or one strong in perception, of meanings manifested in the forms held by this angel. Among these are those pertaining to Allah and the Names that describe Him—such that the sleeper perceives The Real as a form—as

well as the Qur'an, knowledge, and the Messenger whose religion he follows.¹⁵⁶

The Levels of Visions According to the Great Sheikh

Then the Sheikh ﷺ mentioned the levels of visions and explained how to deal with them, saying:

Here, the seer encounters three levels or one of them:

The first level involves the perceived form referring back to the thing seen from the perspective of one of its stations and the attributes that refer back to it. Thus, this is a vision of seeing things as they are through their references.

The second level occurs when the visible form refers back to the state of the seer himself.

The third level arises when the visible form refers back to legislated truth and official law, meaning the law existing in the environment where the form is observed, and where rulers of that environment are those who uphold its law. There is no level beyond what we have mentioned, except as we have stated.

In the first level, when the form refers back to the seen thing itself, it represents complete beauty and must not be characterized by anything ugly or deficient.

The remaining two levels may manifest the form with varying degrees of beauty, ugliness, deficiency, and perfection. Therefore, let the seer consider if there is an address from that form, for his state is commensurate with the address and how much of it he understands of it during his vision.

He should not depend on interpretations of this upon returning to the realm of wakefulness, unless he

is knowledgeable in interpretation or consults someone knowledgeable in it. He must also consider his interaction, meaning the interaction of the seer with the form, whether it is characterized by etiquette and respect or otherwise. For his state is according to what is expressed by him in his interaction with that form, for it is a true form from all angles. The seer may witness The Spirit, in whose dominion is this presence, or he may not.

Beyond this form, anything else is from Satan if it brings sadness, or it may stem from what one creates within themselves in their state of wakefulness. Therefore, one should not rely solely on what is seen from that.¹⁵⁷

The Great Sheikh clarified the levels of righteous visions, indicating that some are related to the station of the thing seen, some are related to the seer's state, some are related to the seer's environment, and the third is related to the environment's state. Then, he mentioned that anything contrary to these levels is either from Satan or from the self's discourse.

Imam Ghazālī's Interpretation of Visions, and their Connection to the World of the Unseen

Imam Ghazālī رحمته الله discussed the reality of righteous visions in several places within *The Revival of Religious Sciences*. He clarified that visions are connected to the world of the unseen. It is a kind of unveiling of the unseen, and as a believer's internal state becomes purer, his visions become closer to truth and the revelation of the unseen. He says:

As the veils have been lifted from the eyes of Prophets, they undoubtedly gazed upon the spiritual

realm and witnessed its wonders, even witnessing the dead in the world of the spiritual realm and conveying it, just as the Prophet ﷺ saw the squeeze of the grave in the case of Sa‘d ibn Mu‘ādh and Zaynab, his daughter. Similarly was the case with Abū Jabir’s condition when he was martyred, when he conveyed that Allah sat him before Him, without any barrier between them. Such vision is not sought by anyone other than Prophets and saints who have approached their level. What is possible for people like us is a weak form of vision, albeit it is still a prophetic vision. By this, I mean the vision during sleep, which is a manifestation of the lights of prophethood.

The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘A righteous vision is one of forty-six parts of prophethood.’ This kind of revelation occurs only when the heart’s veils are lifted. Therefore, it is only reliable when seen by a righteous, truthful person. If someone frequently lies, their visions are not believed. Likewise, someone whose heart is darkened by corruption and disobedience—their visions will be mere hallucinations.

That is why the Prophet ﷺ commanded purity before sleep, indicating purity of the inner self. It’s the foundation, and outward purity is its completion and culmination. For as pure as the inner self is, so will be the disclosure of what will happen in the future to the heart’s insight, just as the Prophet’s dream ﷺ of entering Mecca was revealed in his sleep, until the verse was revealed: ‘*Verily God has fulfilled the vision for His Messenger in all truth...*’¹⁵⁸. Rarely does a person never have dreams that allude things that he later finds to be correct.

Visions and knowledge of the unseen during sleep is among the wonders of Allah's creation and the marvelous aspects of human nature. It is one of the clearest indications of the world of the unseen, yet people are heedless of it, just as they are negligent of other wonders of the heart and the universe. Discussion on the reality of visions is one of the subtleties of the knowledge of unveiling.¹⁵⁹

Hakīm Tirmidhī's Interpretation of Righteous Visions and their Impact on the Aspiring Seeker

Imam Hakīm Tirmidhī elucidates the meaning of righteous visions and then highlights their significance for the aspiring seeker. He states:

Righteous visions have their origin in truth; they convey the truth, serving as glad tidings, warnings, and admonitions to support what one is encouraged to do. ... In the past, most matters were conveyed through dreams, but this has become less frequent in this community due to the magnitude of revelations brought by its Prophet ﷺ and the multitude of truthful, knowledgeable individuals in his nation. Hence, they rely more on divine inspirations and instructions than on an abundance of dreams, as was prevalent among earlier generations.¹⁶⁰

Hakīm Tirmidhī directs attention to the fruits and benefits of righteous visions, emphasizing their supportive nature. This guidance is crucial so that the aspiring seeker does not become deluded by what they see or overly reliant upon it. Additionally, he clarifies that the nature of this community is marked by increased divine inspirations but

decreased occurrences of dreams, contrasting it with previous nations.

Interpretation by Imam Sha‘rānī regarding the criteria for righteous visions

When speaking of righteous visions, the mind initially turns to the glad tidings or what brings joy to the spirit of the one seeing it. However, Imam Sha‘rānī conveys that there might be instances among righteous visions that could instill fear in the heart of the one seeing them. He notes that this might occur with great saints as a means for them to rid themselves of self-regard. Additionally, he mentions other benefits related to the significance of sleeping in a state of purity and remembering Allah. He says:

We took a general pledge from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to safeguard against Satan whenever we intended to sleep, ensuring the purity of our inner and outer selves and reciting the prescribed invocations. For whoever sleeps in a state of impurity and neglects to recite the invocations, Satan will remain with them. Consequently, they will continue to be troubled by frequent sleep disturbances and experience unpleasant dreams, causing distress until they wake up. Therefore, my brother, engage in the invocations recommended before sleeping and sleep in a state of purity, if you seek protection from Satan.

I heard my brother Afḍal al-Dīn ؒ say: The elite among the saints sometimes experience unpleasant dreams while being protected from Satan, to purge them of their ego. They do not dream of things that please them, just as those on the spiritual path don't dream of satiating their desires. They have fulfilled

their responsibilities and have recognized the abundant grace that Allah has bestowed upon His slaves, so they are preoccupied with fulfilling their obligations rather than their desires. This is unlike the spiritual aspirant, who, if he experiences unpleasant dreams upon entering the path, may distance himself from them, and his enthusiasm may wane.

I said to him: 'The hadith states: "A righteous dream is from Allah, and a nightmare is from Satan."¹⁶¹ If every dream that saddens the slave is not righteous, then why do you call it righteous? He replied: 'If it were not considered righteous, it wouldn't stimulate the saint and alert him to his shortcomings. Everything that leads to good is indeed good.'

Once I wished to see my state in the grave, so I slept. That night, I dreamt that I was lying in a grave on a mat filled with thorns. I tossed and turned on it and suddenly became aware of something I had been oblivious to. This scenario kept recurring in my dreams, and sometimes I would leave my pillow at night, only to dream of myself playing, carrying firewood, or walking among fig trees. Through these dreams, I recognized my inclinations towards desire, my hypocrisy, and similar issues that had escaped my observation in waking life. Engaging in frivolities indicates heedlessness towards Allah and carrying firewood signifies hypocrisy. If my hypocrisy is minimal, I dream of carrying firewood from tamarisk trees; if it's more than that, I carry firewood from *zind* trees. If it is lumber, I know I am guilty of great hypocrisy. The fig tree signifies the likelihood of committing a sin due to its association with the incident

involving Adam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ eating from it. This is all from the bounty of Allah, so that I repent and seek forgiveness. All praise be to Allah, Lord of all worlds.¹⁶²

The seeker should maintain a good opinion of their Lord, recognizing that some unpleasant dreams might serve as warnings regarding their shortcomings or their proximity to committing a sin among sins.

Being Deceived by Righteous Visions, an Explanation by Sheikh Ismā'īl Ḥaqqī

One of the recurring issues with the experiences of seekers with respect to divine illuminations is that it is not suitable for the aspirant to be deluded by any of them, as they are blessings and pure divine grace that do not establish the aspirant's status at a particular station. To this end, Sheikh Ismā'īl Ḥaqqī Khalwatī mentions in *Rūḥ al-Bayān* that some seekers who incline towards worldly desires during their quest may be ensnared by Satan. They are enticed by their renunciation, causing them to fall into the trap of vanity. They may then regard themselves with exaggerated self-esteem and view others with disdain. As a result, they are led to destruction or become deceived by what appears during their spiritual journey by way of some genuine accomplishments, righteous visions, and a sprinkling of spiritual observations and disclosures that are not divinely inspired. The deluded person assumes that their worship is the pinnacle of closeness to Allah and that they have reached the ranks of the spiritually accomplished. Consequently, they stop seeking and are plagued by afflictions until their flaws encompass them. They then revert to the lowest state of human nature.¹⁶³

Thus, it is crucial for the aspirant not to be deceived by the visions they experience, as the ultimate purpose of these visions is to provide encouragement and incentive to persist in obeying Allah Almighty.

Sheikh Dabbāgh's explanation of righteous visions, their nature and the removal of Satan's influence

Among the most comprehensive discussions concerning visions in general, their types, and the causes of each, is that of the erudite Sheikh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Dabbāgh رحمته الله. In the course of his discussion, he mentions that righteous visions are considered a form of removing Satan's influence, whereby insight is conditioned to witness righteous visions. He رحمته الله says:

Righteous visions are derived from one of the human faculties, which is the removal of Satan's influence, and from a part of the spiritual faculties, which is insight. Therefore, when insight descends upon the removal of Satan's influence from the soul, it gives birth to a collection of righteous visual perceptions.

[His student asked]: 'Does this imply that it should be said in the hadith that they are two parts of prophethood, because the removal of Satan's influence and insight are two parts, not one, so the visions are based on these two parts, not one part?'

He رحمته الله responded:

In truth, the axis of the vision is based on the removal of Satan's influence, while the part of the spirit in it is subordinate and supportive. For one from whom Allah has removed Satan's influence, all his thoughts are inclined towards

goodness. Thus, when he sleeps, he sees the goodness in which his thoughts have been engaged, and hence his vision is righteous. However, for one from whom Satan's influence has not been removed, his thoughts are contrary to this, and thus his visions are not righteous.¹⁶⁴

Therefore, according to Dabbāgh's words, visions correspond to the prevailing state of the seeker, whether inclined towards righteousness and goodness or otherwise.

Supplement: Visions of the Prophet ﷺ While Awake

Among the matters that may occur for some of those devoted to Allah and whose spirits and souls are attached to the love of the master of both worlds, the possessor of the two revelations ﷺ, is that they may see the Prophet ﷺ in a wakeful state in his noble form. This matter has been mentioned by eminent scholars and the elite among the saints, whose teachings have been followed by the nation and who have imparted knowledge about the religion. These scholars have concluded that seeing the Prophet ﷺ while awake is not a legislative issue that results in an increase or decrease in religion. Instead, it is a matter of fact, and the responsibility for claiming such visions lies with the person who asserts them. These visions are considered among glad tidings and marks of honour. These visions do not contradict the fact that the Prophet ﷺ has passed away from our worldly life, nor do they necessitate a claim to companionship. Companionship is only confirmed for those who saw the Prophet ﷺ as believers during his earthly life, not after his passing.

Despite this, a group of weak-minded individuals have denied this notion concerning Sufi masters, considering it

mere superstition and using it to defame Sufism. Their denial is a clear indication of their ignorance and their distance from the methods of godly scholars who adhere to textual evidence while upholding the rules of language, Sharia, and reason.

What is even more surprising is that these deniers always claim to follow the Sunnah and insist that they adhere to what has been narrated. However, when someone presents sound evidence from the Sunnah, they stubbornly oppose it, being devoid of any rational or transmitted proof, merely following their desires, and persisting in refuting righteous slaves of Allah.

Therefore, here are some of the proofs presented by Sufis affirming the possibility of seeing the Prophet ﷺ while awake, followed by discussions about such occurrences among the esteemed saints, and their stipulations regarding them.

Firstly, regarding evidence of the possibility of seeing the Prophet ﷺ while awake:

1. The sound hadith reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim from Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Whoever has seen me in a dream will see me while awake.’¹⁶⁵ This hadith apparently indicates the permissibility of seeing the Prophet ﷺ while awake. Anyone honoured with a vision of the Prophet ﷺ in a dream may also be granted that vision while awake. Imam Ibn Abī Jamrah mentions in his explanation of this hadith: ‘This hadith indicates two rulings: one is that whoever sees him ﷺ in a dream will see him ﷺ while awake.’ He continues:

Is this applicable universally to everyone who sees him ﷺ or is it specific? Know that all

goodness that is clearly evidenced and explicitly referred to by religious proofs and principles is only for those of divine conformance (*ahl al-tawfīq*). As for others, it remains a hopeful possibility because their final outcomes are unknown. Perhaps they are among those who have been granted happiness from eternity, so it is not right to despair of goodness for them.¹⁶⁶

2. The vision of the Prophet ﷺ when he saw the Prophets and his meeting with them during the night of his heavenly ascent. Undoubtedly, this happened through miracles. Therefore, it allows for the possibility of such occurrences through saintly marvels. Whatever can occur as a miracle for a Prophet can also occur as a marvel for a saint, on the condition that it is not in response to a challenge.

The rational possibility of such visions and the non-imposition of impossible conditions, contrary to what the deniers claim. A vision does not extend beyond seeing a likeness of the Prophet ﷺ. A likeness can vary, and there is no complication in that. Just as various people can see the Prophet ﷺ in one night in their dreams, it is also possible for such visions to occur while awake.

Imam Ghazālī says: The phrase, ‘whoever has seen me’ does not mean that he saw his physical body, but rather, he saw an image. That image becomes a means for conveying the intended meaning. Similarly, the phrase, ‘he will see me while awake’ does not imply seeing my physical body. ... Sometimes the likeness is real, and sometimes it is imaginary. The perceived likeness is not the actual spirit of the

Chosen One ﷺ or his person, but rather, to be accurate, his likeness.¹⁶⁷

The above are some of the arguments by Sufi masters affirming the possibility of seeing the Prophet ﷺ while awake. Many scholars have written extensively on this topic. For further insight, one can refer to books such as *Tanwīr al-Ḥalik fī Ru'yat al-Nabī wa al-Malak*, by Imam Suyūṭī, and *al-Kawākib al-Zāhirah*, by Sheikh ʿAbd al-Qādir ibn Ḥusayn ibn Mughayzal Shādhilī.

Secondly, regarding what has been reported from Sufi masters about this happening to some of the spiritual elites and its conditions according to them: these honours have been narrated from some of the Sufi elites. However, such experiences only increased their humility, love, and devotion to Allah Exalted.

Among those renowned for achieving this [spiritual station] was Imam Abū ʿAbbās Mursī, a student of Imam Shādhilī and heir of his spiritual state. He has been reported to have said: 'If the Messenger of Allah ﷺ were absent from me for a moment, I would not have counted myself among the Muslims.'¹⁶⁸

Also among the mentors of the Shādhiliyyah is Sīdī ʿAlī Jamal ʿUmrānī, who passed away in 1194 AH. He has been reported to have said: 'One of the things Allah blessed me with is that whenever I mention the Messenger of Allah ﷺ or his remembrance crosses my heart, I find myself in his presence.'¹⁶⁹ This has been reported from many of the People of Allah and the saints. For some of them, their situation is apparent, and their light shines. Others are concealed among the ranks of the pious. This is a grace from Allah; He bestows it upon whomever He wills. Such noble visions have been discussed by Sufi masters in terms of some

of their conditions and the prerequisites expected for such visions.

Imam Ghazālī

While praising the Sufi path in his book *al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*, and clarifying that the way of Sufis consists entirely of narrations, blessings, and adherence to the noble Sharia, he says:

In essence, what do those who speak about this path say? Its purity, which is its first condition, is the purification of the heart entirely from everything except Allah, the Almighty. Its key, which flows forth from it like the sacred start of prayer, is engrossing the heart entirely with the remembrance of Allah. Its culmination is complete annihilation in Allah.

This culmination, along with what can almost be categorized as choice and earned [merit], are from its beginnings. In reality, this is the beginning of the path. What comes before it is like an antechamber for the traveller towards it. From the beginning of the path, unveilings and visions begin until, in their wakefulness, they see angels, spirits of Prophets, hear voices, and derive benefits from them. Then the state progresses from viewing images and similitudes to degrees where speech fails them.¹⁷⁰

Sheikh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Dabbāgh

Sheikh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Dabbāgh mentions significant details in the attributes and conditions required for attaining a wakeful vision. He mentions that these stages have ranks and stations, and for each station, there are rights that must be fulfilled. Among Sufi masters, it is not acceptable

to claim sight and vision without passing through these stages or acquiring these rights and etiquettes. He said:

With each such observation, the slave must fulfill a right among the rights of lordship and an etiquette among the etiquettes of servitude. He is exposed to disconnections and faced with obstacles. He observes immense and powerful matters. If it weren't for the guidance and grace of Allah, the weak slave would return from the least of these stages to the category of fools. Furthermore, his crossing of the stations of observations and its horrors are more difficult for him than his crossing of the stations of select spirits. This is because crossing the stations of the select is internal, and he doesn't sense it until after a breakthrough, while his crossing the stations of observation is external: he eye-witnesses and sees it, because it is an affair he dives into after breakthrough. When his observation becomes clear, his sight perfects, and the mercy of Allah, the mercy after which there is no wretchedness, bestows upon him the sight of the leader of early and latter generations ﷺ, he sees him visibly, observing him wakefully, and Allah Almighty provides him with things no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived. At that moment, he achieves the station of happiness and joy. Congratulations to him for his happiness.¹⁷¹

Imam ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Shaʿrānī

Imam Shaʿrānī narrated in his books from his mentors some of what Sufi masters have mentioned regarding the meaning of seeing the Prophet ﷺ in a state of wakefulness. Among these is that this can only happen with the wakefulness of

the heart. He quoted this from Sheikh Muhammad Maghribī Shādhilī, saying:

What is meant by seeing him is the wakefulness of the heart, not the wakefulness of the physical senses. Because whoever excels in perfecting his readiness and drawing near becomes beloved to The Real, and if he is loved, his sleep, due to the abundance of spiritual wakefulness, becomes like the wakefulness of others. At that time, he sees the Messenger of Allah ﷺ only with his shaped spirit, similar to apparitions, without the transfer of his noble essence or its coming from the Barrier (*Barzakh*) to the viewer's place. He ﷺ is too honoured and distinguished to be expected to come and go. This is the explicit truth.¹⁷²

VIII. LIGHTS (ANWĀR)

One of the kinds of illuminations that Sufi masters have studied extensively is lights (*anwār*), discussing its reality, meanings, types, functions, and further topics that previous scholars have not explored. The subject of light (*nūr*) is mentioned in the Noble Qur'an in about thirty places, indicating the Qur'an's focus on the significance of light, something worthy of attention. Some of these verses are:

*'God is the Protector of the believers; He brings them forth from the shadows into the light. ...'*¹⁷³

*'... And he whom God has not granted any light has no light.'*¹⁷⁴

*'... and those who believe with him. Their light will be running before them and on their right. They will say: "Our Lord! Perfect our light for us and forgive us. Assuredly You have power over all things".'*¹⁷⁵

Rāghib Aṣṣfahānī researched the meanings of light mentioned in the Qur'an and mentioned that they are divided into two types, saying:

It is two-fold: a worldly kind and an otherworldly kind. The worldly kind is of two types:

1. An intelligible type seen by insight. This includes matters related to the divine, like the light of intellect and the light of the Qur'an.

2. A type perceptible to the vision. This includes luminous bodies like the sun, moon, stars, and bright objects.

Examples of divine light include Allah's words: '*... There has verily come to you from God a light, and a Book, lucid,*'¹⁷⁶; '*... and appointed for him a light by which to walk among people, as him whose likeness is in darkness whence he cannot emerge? ...*'¹⁷⁷; '*... you did not know what the Book was, nor faith; but We have made it a light by which We guide whomever We will of Our servants. ...*'¹⁷⁸; '*Is he whose breast God has opened to Islam, so that he follows a light from his Lord [like he who disbelieves]? ...*'¹⁷⁹; and '*... Light upon light. God guides to His Light whom He will. ...*'¹⁸⁰.

As to what is sensory and perceived by the eye, this includes: '*He it is Who made the sun a radiance, and the moon a light ...*'¹⁸¹. As for the sun being described with radiance while the moon is described with light, it is because radiance is more specific than light. He also said: '*...and a shining moon*'¹⁸²; i.e., one with light.

Among references to both are His words: '*... and He appointed darknesses and light ...*'¹⁸³; '*... and He will assign for you a light by which you will walk...*'¹⁸⁴; and '*And the earth will shine with the light of its Lord ...*'¹⁸⁵.

As for the otherworldly, it is His words: '*... their light shining forth before them and on their right...*'¹⁸⁶; '*... and those who believe with him. Their light will be running before them and on their right. They will say: "Our Lord! Perfect our light for us..."*'¹⁸⁷;

‘... Look at us that we may glean something of your light! ...’¹⁸⁸; and ‘... seek light! ...’¹⁸⁹. It is also said that Allah illuminated (*anāra* and *nawwara*) such-and-such. Allah Exalted named Himself ‘Light’ in that He is the provider of light. His naming Himself such is to emphasize His action.¹⁹⁰

The mention of lights is also found in the noble hadith, such as the Prophet ﷺ saying: ‘Beware of the perspicacity of a believer, for he sees with the light of Allah.’¹⁹¹ Further elucidation of these meanings from the Qur’an and Hadith will be presented through the discussions of Sufi masters.

Lights: Lexically and Terminologically

‘*Anwār*’ (lights) is the plural of ‘*nūr*’ (light). Lexically, ‘*nūr*’ is the spread of light that aids vision.

Terminologically, Sufis have several uses for the terms ‘light’ and ‘lights’, with each meaning understood within its context. However, these interpretations can be categorized into six types of lights as follows:

Light as Divine Manifestation and Unveiling Supernatural Truths

This signifies the manifestation and revelation of the unseen. As a person traverses the path towards Allah, certain aspects of the unseen may be unveiled to them, either as a trial and a test or as confirmation and affirmation. Sufi masters have detailed various types of these mystical lights that appear to some travellers, whether from the spiritual realm, which is understood by the intellect, or the realm of omnipotence, which is understood through insight.

Among these Sufi masters who spoke about such lights and mystical illuminations is Imam Ghazālī, who mentions in *The Revival of Religious Sciences*:

When Allah takes charge of the heart, mercy pours over it, light shines within it, the breast expands, and the secret of the divine realm unveils itself. The veils of confusion are lifted from the heart through the tenderness of mercy. The divine truths sparkle within, and for the slave, nothing is left but preparation through purification, sincere will, complete thirst, and constant vigilance, awaiting what Allah brings through His mercy.¹⁹²

Imam Ghazālī emphasized the reality of these lights, their association with the revelation of certain hidden mysteries of the spiritual realm, just as he mentioned the conditions or factors that lead to it at the end of the selection.

The Great Sheikh also mentions this type in *al-Futūḥāt*:

Know that manifestation (*tajallī*), to Sufis, is what unfolds to the hearts from the lights of the unseen, and it occurs at various levels. Among them are those related to the lights of abstract meanings detached from material things, of knowledge and secrets. Others pertain to the lights of lights, while some are related to the lights of spirits, which are the angels. Additionally, there are lights related to the winds, to nature, to names, and to causes and effects, each on its own level. When any of these lights rises from the horizon and aligns with the eye of insight, free from blindness, drowsiness, cloudiness, and the ailments of the eyes, it reveals everything that it encompasses. Therefore, the observer witnesses the essences of meanings as they are within themselves, observing their connection with the forms of expressions and words that signify them. Through this observation,

they receive from their witnessing the realities inherent in the matter, without imagination or embellishment. Among these are lights we seek, lights we aspire to, lights we seek from, lights present before us for our pursuit, lights behind us pursued by those who emulate us, lights supporting us from our right, lights guarding us through our virtues, lights descending upon us from above to benefit us, lights beneath us that we command, lights that we are—these are our people and poetry and found in our people and poetry: these are the ultimate goal.¹⁹³

The Sheikh then elaborated uniquely on each type, linking these meanings to what was revealed in the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet ﷺ. Similar ideas were conveyed by the knowledgeable Sheikh, Sīdī 'Abd al-'Azīz Dabbāgh, as mentioned in *al-Ibrīz*, where he states:

Know that when Allah grants a slave a light from the lights of The Real, it penetrates the soul from all directions, until the flesh and bones are submerged, and the hardship and chill of it entering the spirit approximate the pangs of death. The purpose of this light is to reveal to that slave the secrets of creatures that Allah intended to expose during his observation of them. Thus, the light enters the soul, coloured by the hues of mentioned creatures.¹⁹⁴

In another place, Dabbāgh directs us towards another kind of light that may precede the manifestation. He says:

When breakthrough descends upon the soul before the light of strength, a defect and weakness occur within the soul, leading to what has been previously mentioned, whether death or mental obliteration. But

if the light of strength descends upon the spirit first, and then, subsequently, the light of breakthrough descends, the spirit remains unharmed by the breakthrough. [The author asks:] ‘What is this strength?’ He replied ﷻ, while looking at a weak plant: ‘If Allah were to endow this weak plant with the strength we speak of, it could bear the burden of that mountain,’ indicating a mountain before us. Therefore, the seeker prays to Allah, Most High, for the light of strength to descend upon them before the light of manifestation, and Allah knows best.¹⁹⁵

Regarding the unseen lights that manifest for the traveller, they occur concurrently with the state of breakthrough, which we have previously expounded upon. It is as if it is a preparation for subsequent realization in the stations of servitude. The increase in knowledge necessitates an increase in fear in the slave, as Allah says: ‘... *Indeed only those of God’s servants who have knowledge fear Him. ...*’¹⁹⁶.

Light Resulting from Faith

Sufi masters mention that among the types of lights are those associated with faith. Faith has its light, just as acts of worship have their light. The light of faith is common among all believers. Regarding Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh’s saying in his *Aphorisms*, ‘Some lights have been permitted to reach and some lights have been permitted to enter’, Ibn ‘Ajībah comments:

Know that the lights permitted to reach are general for all believers. If the light of a disobedient believer were unveiled, it would cover the distance between heaven and earth. The lights permitted to enter are

specific to the devoted elite, those detached from vanities. For those whose hearts are filled with imageries of their passions, they should not hope to attain the secrets of these lights.¹⁹⁷

Sufi masters honour the status of faith and believers, on account of what they have witnessed of the lights of faith, even in the case of disobedient believers. This is reported from Sīdī Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī. In contrast, defamers and extremists, who spread corruption on earth, shed the blood of believers despite their faith and belittle their status.

Another saint reveals to us the truth about the lights of faith: it may sometimes be stronger in some common folk than in some worshippers! Sīdī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Dabbāgh says:

I sometimes see lights of faith emanating from individuals until they connect with the Barrier. These lights differ in subtlety and severity. Subtlety indicates weak faith, and severity indicates its strength. When we look at the devotees in their caves and monastic cells, we see subtlety prevalent in their lights, except for a few. When we then look at the general public, we see their lights better than those who are isolated, for the common folk rely on Allah's grace while worshippers mostly rely on their worship.¹⁹⁸

Therefore, the guidance of Sufi masters was not to rely on deeds, and that hope should be in Allah's mercy above all else.

Light as the Divider Between Truth and Falsehood

Among Sufi masters, the term 'light' is used to denote 'discrimination' (*furqān*), or the ability to differentiate between truth and falsehood, and even among various

stages of spiritual progression, in order to guard against uncertainties and spiritual afflictions.

In his work of *tafsīr*, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, Ibn ‘Ajībah says:

The Real says: “O you who believe, if you fear Allah as He should be feared, He will give you discrimination (light) in your hearts through which you distinguish truth from falsehood, and good from evil.”

Ibn Juzayy says: ‘This is proof that piety (*taqwā*) illumines the heart, expands the breast, and brings an increase in knowledge and awareness.’¹⁹⁹ ...

The discrimination cast by Allah into the hearts of the devout, directed towards those who seek Him, is the divine light that arrives at hearts from the presence of the unseen. It consists of three kinds:

1. The inrush of attentiveness: a light that distinguishes between heedlessness and vigilance, laziness and rising to obedience; it abandons heedlessness for obedience, discarding whims for devotion to the Lord.

2. The inrush of directedness: a light distinguishing between standing amidst the veils’ darkness and advancing towards witnessing those beloved.

3. The inrush of arrival: a light distinguishing between the darkness of the cosmos and the light of witnessing, or between the darkness of the trace’s cloud and the witnessing of the sun of knowing God.²⁰⁰

This concept aligns with what Ḥakīm Tirmidhī mentions in his *Nawādir al-Uṣūl* regarding the *tafsīr* of Allah’s statement, ‘... a [means of] separation ...’²⁰¹:

The people of *tafsīr* have said it means ‘removal’; i.e., from doubts and darkness. Purely from the

perspective of *tafsīr*, it is a removal that bestows upon them a light in their hearts that discerns between truth and falsehood. This is a way out from the darkness of ignorance and the ambiguities of the world. Ignorance oppresses, and the world adorns its pleasures within man, thus deluding him. So, through piety regarding these things, one attains discrimination, the light that separates truth from falsehood. This is the reward for piety in this worldly life. Its reward in the Hereafter is closeness to Allah, honour, and the elevation of status.²⁰²

Light as the Effect of Worship

The term ‘lights’ is also used by Sufi masters to indicate the effects of acts of worship and devotion within the heart, generating illuminations within, just as sins cast darkness into the heart. This aligns with the teachings of the predecessors. As mentioned in *Hilyat al-Awliyā’*, by Imam Abū Nu‘aym: ‘I heard Ḥasan ibn Šāliḥ say: “Doing good is strength in the body, light in the heart, and illumination in the eyes. Committing evil is weakness in the body, darkness in the heart, and blindness in the eyes.”’²⁰³

Sha‘rānī states:

We took a general covenant from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ not to trivialize committing minor sins, let alone major ones, nor commit any disliked acts bordering on prohibition. Instead, one should repent immediately, for engaging persistently in sins darkens the heart until one does not incline towards any good deed. People vary in the degree of darkness in their hearts according to their spiritual stations. Some may not feel the darkness in their hearts when committing

major sins but do for minor ones. Others might sense the darkness only with major sins and not with disliked acts. Some may only sense the darkness with minor sins and not disliked acts, and some may only sense it with disliked acts and not beyond. Each station has its people. The clearer the heart, the more apparent the darkness. Thus, one needs guidance from a sincere mentor, who blocks all entrances from Satan, engages one in successive devotions until lights accumulate, expunging all sins and entering the presence of virtue (*iḥsān*). There, one does not take any sin lightly, let alone disliked acts, minor sins, or major sins. In each station, everyone assists each other by observing each other's states. Hence, in completing repentance, one must abandon the companionship of evil friends, lest seeing their sins would shake one's repentance. The repentant one is directed to associate with people of obedience in order to witness their devotions and distance himself from sins. Manners are stolen from companions, whether good or bad, and even if it takes a while, everything in the companion eventually transfers over. So, the wise one is one who enters houses through their rightful doors.²⁰⁴

Thus, Sha^ḥrānī's explanation emphasizes the significance of the effects of acts of worship in enlightening the heart and the disciple's obligation to adhere to a guide, in order to assist in eradicating the darkness of sins from the heart, and paving the way towards righteousness.

In a closely related context, Sha^ḥrānī also cites his mentor, Khawwāṣ, regarding the necessity of expelling the desire for sin from the heart to experience the effects of obedience:

I heard my mentor, ʿAlī Khawwāṣ, say: ‘As long as the desire for sins resides in the heart, there is no benefit in acts of obedience. The darkness of sinful desire hinders the light of obedience from entering the heart, the locus where light should reside to have the capacity for divine intimacy. Allah is Forgiving and Benevolent.’²⁰⁵

Thus, the seeker must strive to reach the capability for divine presence and qualify for spiritual illuminations by eradicating sinful desires from the heart to welcome the impact.

The Lights of Progression Through the Stations of the Soul

Some Sufi masters, among them Sheikh ʿAbd al-Qādir Jīlānī, suggest the existence of various kinds of lights that might appear to some travellers in various colours. Each colour represents a degree of advancement and spiritual conduct according to the seven [names of] souls. In his treatise, *al-Asmāʾ al-Sabʿah*, Sheikh ʿAbd al-Qādir elaborates on each name, saying:

1. Regarding remembrance with ‘There is no Allah but Allah’ (*Lā ilāha illallāh*), this is the first name, which is for the evil-commanding soul. Its light is blue, and its residence is the breast.²⁰⁶
2. Regarding remembrance with ‘O Allah’ (*Yā Allāh*), this is the second name, which is for the self-reproaching soul. Its light is yellow, and its residence is the heart.²⁰⁷
3. Regarding remembrance with ‘He’ (*Hū*), this is the third name, which is for the inspired soul. Its colour is red, and its residence is the spirit.²⁰⁸

4. Regarding remembrance with ‘O Living One’ (*Yā Ḥayy*), this name is for the tranquil soul. Its colour is white, and it is connected to the Muhammadan Reality; its residence is the secret.²⁰⁹

5. Regarding remembrance with ‘O Unique One’ (*Yā Wāḥid*), this name is for the content soul. Its colour is green, and its realm is divinity. Its inrush is knowledge of Allah, and its residence is the secret of the secret.²¹⁰

6. Regarding remembrance with ‘O Mighty One’ (*Yā ‘Azīz*), this name is for the accepted soul. Its colour is black, and its realm is eye-witnessing, and its residence is eye-witnessing. It has no inrush.²¹¹

7. Regarding remembrance with ‘O Loving One’ (*Yā Wadūd*), this name is for the perfected soul. It has no light. Its realm is perplexity, and its inrush encompasses all that has been mentioned.²¹²

In the teachings of the Naqshbandī order, they refer to what are called the ‘five subtleties’, which are: the subtlety of the heart (*qalb*), spirit (*rūḥ*), secret (*sirr*), depth (*khafiyy*), and deepest depth (*akhfā*), all of which belong to the world of command, which encompasses spirits, spiritual entities, and angels. These are among the lights of the spiritual realm. They say:

Each subtlety from the world of command has its own distinct light; it may manifest during the spiritual journey for those who have divine unveiling. The light of the heart is yellow, the spirit is red, the secret is white, the depth is black, the deepest depth is green,

and the light of the soul, after purification, manifests without specification or colour.²¹³

Thus, this is another kind of light that can be gleaned from the teachings of Sufi masters, being among the illuminations that may occur to the spiritual traveller. This is important to mention to aspirants in general, lest they pay undue attention to it or become confused upon encountering it.

Perceptible Lights

Some lights that appear on certain devotees and travellers are perceptible by everyone, and others are visible only to specific individuals. The Qur'an indicates the occurrence of such lights, as in the verse: '*... Their mark is on their faces from the effect of prostration. ...*'.²¹⁴

According to one of their positions, scholars of *tafsīr* understood this verse to refer to the lights of being face-to-face on the faces of the travellers and worshippers. Ibn 'Ajībah, in his *tafsīr*, states:

His saying '*Their mark is on their faces*' means their light is on their faces due to their orientation towards The Real, for whoever approaches the light of The Real, the lights of knowledge, beauty, and splendour manifest upon him, even if he is black or Abyssinian. In this context, it is said:

*Also upon the mystics is the mark of splendour,
And upon them is light due to love.*

It is said that the mark is for mystics, while joy is for lovers. The mark represents tranquility, calmness, awe, and dignity. Those who see them feel awe for

them instinctively, and those who befriend them love them. Joy, on the other hand, represents beauty in appearance and guidance, the predominance of longing and love, expressing through verbal remembrance. Allah knows best.²¹⁵

Imam Shaʿrānī mentions in his *Ṭabaqāt*, while describing Imam Abū ʿAbbās Mursī: ‘Some said: “I prayed behind Sheikh Abū ʿAbbās and witnessed lights filling his body, emanating from him to the extent that I couldn’t look at him!”’²¹⁶

Thus, these sensory lights, which are seen by some great souls, are among the illuminations that occur to the travellers. They appear to be a manifestation of Allah’s glory to His creation, informing them of the merit of those who have turned to their Lord. Consequently, seeing them reminds one of Allah, due to the illumination that envelopes them from the divine presence and proximity, as is mentioned in the hadith: ‘The best among you are those who, when seen, Allah the Exalted is mentioned.’²¹⁷

Hakīm Tirmidhī explained this noble hadith:

They are the saints on whom are apparent characteristics from Allah, the Exalted, displaying the grandeur of nearness, the light of majesty, the awe of sovereignty, and the intimacy of dignity. When someone gazes upon them, their remembrance of Allah is due to what they see of the traces of the spiritual realm. The heart is the receptacle of these matters and the abode of light, and the face absorbs the heart’s water. Thus, if the heart bears the light of the authority of divine promise and threat, this light spreads to the face. Thus, when your sight falls upon them, it

reminds you of righteousness and piety, and it brings upon you the respect for rectitude and the knowledge of Allah's matters.²¹⁸

Blessed are those whose eyes have been adorned with the vision of one of these saints, and whose souls yearn to tread the paths of the righteous.

Important: Do Not be Distracted by Lights

It should be noted that, as is the case with all illuminations, Sufi masters have stressed the importance for the spiritual seeker not to focus on witnessing these lights, whether they are related to hidden lights, heart-based effects, or manifestations of outward phenomena.

For instance, Imam Fārūqī Sirhindī addresses this in his writings, stating:

Furthermore, the pursuit of the Sufi path is also required, not for the sake of witnessing unseen forms and shapes or beholding non-material lights and colours, as this is part of diversion and frivolity. What deficiency is there in sensory forms and lights, such that a person forsakes them and yearns for unseen forms and lights, seeking them through ascetic practices and exertions. These forms and lights, all of them, are created by The Real ﷻ, and they are signs indicative of His creatorship. They are like the light of the sun and the moon, which in the world of observation are superior to the lights observed in the world of examples. However, because their sight is constant and shared by both the elite and the common, they are disregarded and one yearns for the lights seen in the world of the unseen:

*Water that flows freely at the door of a person,
Even if it were al-Kawthar, is not valued.*

Instead, the purpose of traversing the Sufi path is to achieve an increase in certainty in religious beliefs, so that one moves from the confines of argumentation to the expanse of unveiling, and from generality to detail. For example, if the existence of the Necessary Being, His transcendence, and His unity, may He be exalted, are initially known through inference or imitation, and certainty is obtained through them to their extent, then when the Sufi path is facilitated, that inference and imitation transform into intuition and witnessing, and the most complete certainty is attained.²¹⁹

Imam Shaḥrānī conveys a precise statement from his sheikh, the knowledgeable Ḥalī Khawwāṣ:

Once, I was seated with my sheikh, Ḥalī Khawwāṣ  as he braided palm leaves. A person passed by us who was devoted, standing in prayer at night and fasting during the day, with light shimmering on his face. I said to my sheikh: 'Look at this great light on this man's face.' The sheikh lifted his head and said: 'O Allah, protect us from harm as You wish, for You are capable of whatever You will.' I asked him: 'Why?' He replied:

'O my son, if Allah intends goodness for a slave, He places light in his heart, so that he may recognize what comes and goes of beauty and ugliness. He makes his face appear like that of others. However, if Allah intends evil for a slave, He transfers the light within his heart onto his face, empties his inner self

of light, and makes it dark. As a result, he falls into every abomination and vice, yet people still attribute something commendable to him because of the light they see on his face, despite his heart being desolate and dark.'

I asked him: 'Can Allah combine both lights for someone?' He replied: 'It is possible, but Allah has ordered us to cover our actions in this world, so that perfection is not revealed to us except in a place where we can be emulated.' I said to him: 'The occurrence of light on the face of a slave does not lead to arrogance.' He said: 'True, but nothing appears on him without a tinge of conceit, and if not for that tinge, it would not manifest.' I said to him: 'So, a person needs a precise balance.' He said: 'Yes, it is as you say. Sometimes, the slave displays perfection with a hidden hint of pride, something the slave himself may not notice, so it is incumbent that he examine himself carefully.'²²⁰

Every seeker and aspirant should align his intention with the will of Allah ﷻ. He should not seek anything other than the pleasure of Allah through his actions and traversing the path. From the preceding, it is clear that the types of lights mentioned by Sufi masters fall into six categories. The ultimate aim behind all of this is the persistence of spiritual traversal and travel, along with an increase in faith and certainty.

IX. SECRETS (*ASRĀR*)

In the discussions concerning the illumination described by scholars as ‘secrets’, they expounded on their essence and detailed their various forms in complete harmony with the principles of the Sharia and its realities.

Clarifying an Objection Regarding the Reality of Secrets

Before addressing the essence of these secrets, it’s essential to clarify and respond to an objection that some individuals, misinterpreting core Sufi teachings, might raise. This objection revolves around the assumption that the assertions made by Sufi masters regarding the existence of secrets within the Sharia or religion inherently conflict with the established understanding that Islam does not encompass secrets. Its truths and decrees are open and accessible to all.

The response to this objection will become fully apparent and expounded upon after articulating the intended meanings behind Sufi masters’ references to ‘secrets’, along with an explanation of their different classifications. However, it is imperative to affirm at this juncture that Sufi masters do not adhere to what certain misguided sects, like the Bātiniyyah, claim. The latter propagate the notion that the revered texts of Sharia merely present superficial meanings not intended to be comprehended. They argue that hidden secrets lie behind these superficial meanings, known

only to an imam or a knowledgeable individual. Imam Ghazālī, a prominent figure among Sufi masters, refuted and condemned this belief in his work titled *Faḍā'ih al-Bātiniyyah*. He did so to expose the fallacies of their thoughts and to distance them from the Sharia, generally and specifically.

Regarding Sufi masters, they concur with the rest of the Muslim community that the foundational beliefs, laws, and ethics established in Sharia should be acknowledged and upheld. They contend that what the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ established in terms of Sharia is not veiled by other conflicting interpretations that they allegedly concealed from the general populace, for the Prophet ﷺ never concealed anything; he was instructed to deliver everything he was bestowed with. Allah, in praise of him, says: ‘... *that you may make clear to mankind what has been revealed to them* ...’²²¹. Therefore, how can clarity and concealment coexist?

Understanding this clarifies that the ‘secrets’ in the terminology of Sufism bear no connection to the fallacious beliefs of the Bātiniyyah. It is now fitting to elucidate and explicate the intended meanings of ‘secrets’ and how they relate to illuminations in Sufism.

Secrets: Lexically and Terminologically

Asrār (secrets) is the plural form of *sirr* (secret), which is the opposite of an announcement. It can be said to mean: ‘to keep something hidden’, as opposed to making it known. *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ* states: ‘A *sirr* is that which is concealed, and its plural is *asrār*.’²²²

Terminologically, Sufi masters apply the term ‘secret’ to multiple matters. One of the oldest Sufi texts that delineated the general uses of the term secret was penned by Imam Qushayrī in his treatise:

Among them is the ‘secret’, which is possibly a subtle nature within one’s being, like the soul. Their principles imply that it is a locus for observation (*mushāhadah*), just as souls are a locus for love (*maḥabbah*), and hearts are a locus for experiential knowledge (*maʿrifah*). They say: ‘The secret is that which you can oversee, while the secret of secrets is hidden from all but The Real.’ According to Sufis, based on their specifications and according to their principles, the secret is more subtle than the spirit, and the spirit is nobler than the heart. They say: ‘Secrets are free from the shackles of stories, such as narrations and remnants.’ The term ‘secret’ is also used for something safeguarded and concealed between the slave and the Almighty in various situations. It is in this light that this statement should be understood: ‘Our secrets are a virgin that has not been deflowered by the delusions of the deluded.’ They also state: ‘The breasts of free men are the graves of secrets.’ They also say: ‘If my button were to know my secret, I would discard it.’ This is a glimpse into their explanations and clarifications.²²³

What Imam Qushayrī mentions contains an explanation of the meanings of ‘secret’ according to the terminologies of Sufi masters. His words ﷻ indicate three general meanings of secret according to them; they are:

1. *Secret* in the sense of the subtlety deposited in the heart. This is close to the definition of Imam Jurjānī, who says: ‘A subtlety deposited in the heart that is like the spirit to the body. It is the locus of observation just as the soul is the locus of love and the heart is the locus of experiential knowledge.’²²⁴

This is the first meaning we refer to when studying the subject of ‘lights’, where the Naqshbandī masters speak about each subtlety among the five inrushes of the lights.

2. *Secret* in the sense of the secret of secrets, which is more hidden and subtle than the secret, such that only The Real ﷻ perceives it. This is also what Imam Jurjānī affirms when he says: ‘What applies to Allah to the exclusion of His slave, such as the knowledge of the details of realities within the generality of divine unity, gathering them, and their inclusion of what pertains to them.’²²⁵

Thus, the secret of secrets is what is foreordained in the secret. It is thus present in Allah’s knowledge. This is alluded to by His saying: ‘... *then indeed He knows the secret and [that which is] yet more hidden.*’²²⁶

3. *Secret* in the sense of the states between the slave and his Lord, which He conceals from creation. Sheikh Zakariyyā Anṣārī explains this in his commentary on the treatise as part of the inrushes of divine subtleties that reach the heart of the seeker. It is recommended that he conceal these from all others. The discussion about the inrushes of divine subtleties is covered in a separate section.

The Precise Meaning of ‘Secret’ and its Stations According to Ghazālī

Upon examining the words of Sufi masters, we find that they have broadened the use of the term ‘secret’ to encompass a variety of types that can be further detailed and elucidated. Among the more comprehensive discussions

concerning the levels and types of the secret, in his work *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, Ghazālī delineates five categories of secrets intended by Sufis. He presents these with a comprehensive introduction that dispels any misconceptions held by some who mistakenly believe that the Sufis' conviction in the existence of secrets within the Sharia resembles the doctrine of the Bātiniyyah. This sect holds the belief in the existence of contradictions between the apparent aspects of the Sharia and its true essence, designating the essence as the secret. This differs from the belief of Sufi masters, who consider the secret and the essence as complementing and completing the apparent aspects, without contradicting or invalidating them. Indeed, they perceive, based on the indications provided by the Sharia, that there exist differences in understanding among people. Some individuals may not find it suitable to delve into certain areas of knowledge at specific times. This is illustrated with ample examples.

The discourse of Imam Ghazālī is comprehensive, although somewhat lengthy. Therefore, I will present a portion of his discourse in laying the foundation for the meaning of 'secret' and elucidating its basis from the Sharia. I will then abridge some of the sections he mentions. Firstly, regarding the meaning of secrets among the Sufis and their basis in this regard, he says:

The issue lies in this: if I were to say that this statement implies that these disciplines have both apparent and hidden aspects—some of which are evident at first and some concealed—it becomes clear through diligent effort, exercise, persistent pursuit, pure contemplation, and focus devoid of anything from the concerns of this world except what

is essential. This notion almost contradicts religious law, as religious law does not possess the apparent and the hidden, the secret and the public; rather, all these facets are unified within it.

Understand this: the division of these disciplines into hidden and manifest is acknowledged by those with insight. It is only denied by the immature who received something in their early youth and froze upon it, never ascending to the high ranks and stations of scholars and saints. This is evident from the religious texts. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'The Qur'an has an exterior, an interior, a boundary, and a beginning.'²²⁷ 'Ali ؑ pointed to his breast and said: 'In here are comprehensive sciences, if only those who could bear them could be found.' The Prophet ﷺ also said: 'We, the assembly of Prophets, were commanded to address people according to their level of understanding.'²²⁸ He further stated: 'Whenever someone among a people narrates something their intellect cannot comprehend, it becomes a trial for them.'²²⁹ Allah says: '*And such similitudes, We strike them for [the sake of] mankind; but none understands them, except those who know.*'²³⁰

The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Some knowledge is like a concealed thing; only those who know Allah know it.'²³¹ The hadith continues as we have detailed in the *Book of Knowledge*. He also said: 'If you knew what I knew, you would laugh little and weep much.'²³² For the life of me, if this is not a secret that is prohibited to spread due to minds being unable to comprehend it, or for some other reason, then why was it not mentioned to them? Undoubtedly, had it been

mentioned, they would have believed it. In reference to the verse: *‘God it is Who created seven heavens, and of earth the like thereof. ...’*²³³, Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ said: ‘If I were to explain its interpretation, you would stone me,’ or, in other wording: ‘You would say I am a disbeliever.’

Abū Hurayrah ؓ said: ‘I have preserved from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ two vessels. As for one of them, I have poured it out; but had I poured out the other, this throat would have been severed.’

The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Abū Bakr has not surpassed you by excessive fasting or praying, but by a secret and tranquility in his heart’²³⁴ There is no doubt that this secret was related to the principles of religion, not external to them. Whatever was part of the principles of religion was not hidden from others by its apparent facets. Sahl Tustarī ؓ says: ‘For the learned, there are three kinds of knowledge: apparent knowledge that they share with the people of the apparent; hidden knowledge they cannot disclose except to those who comprehend it; and knowledge that exists between them and Allah, which they cannot reveal to anyone.’

Some mystics said: ‘Revealing the secret of divinity is disbelief.’ Others said: ‘Divinity has a secret; if revealed, it would nullify prophecy. Prophecy has a secret; if exposed, it would nullify knowledge. Scholars have a secret with Allah; if disclosed, it would nullify rulings.’ This statement, if not meant to refute the nullification of prophecy in the minds of the feeble, due to their limited understanding, is not true. Rather, there is no contradiction. The perfected one

is he whose experiential knowledge does not snuff out the light of his scrupulousness, and the foundation of scrupulousness is prophethood.²³⁵

This passage, in its entirety, specifically elucidates for us the intention of Sufi masters regarding the secrets, and that they apply to the subtle meanings of the Sharia that require preparation. Not all people are at the same level in terms of understanding the Sharia and its judgments. This does not negate the Sharia or oppose it, but it is one of the degrees of understanding attained through proximity and advancement in the stations of knowledge of Allah. As for one who is immersed in his worldly affairs, heedless of his Hereafter and the unseen, he cannot comprehend these meanings by himself unless he is guided by the care and grace of Allah. This is also expressed by Imam Qushayrī in his *tafsīr* of the verse: *And such similitudes, We strike them for [the sake of] mankind; but none understands them, except those who know.*²³⁶, saying: ‘Everyone hears these similitudes, but they are not attended to by those whose hearts are repelled, hardened by circumstances, accustomed to laziness, and dwell in the lands of failure.’²³⁷

Imam Ghazālī divides secrets into five types, which closely align with the understanding of secrets among Sufi masters:

The First Type

Intricate meanings that prove challenging for most people to grasp. Ghazālī illustrates this with examples like the essence of the spirit and certain attributes of Allah. Revealing these meanings presents difficulty for many individuals and may lead them astray, as humans struggle to comprehend what lies beyond their immediate sensory perception. This denial from some individuals could result in a religious

prohibition. Labeling this as a ‘secret’ is explicit, as Sharia prefers brevity when discussing topics such as the spirit or Allah’s attributes.

The Second Type

Concepts that are understandable in themselves but exploring them could be harmful to certain individuals. Ghazālī uses the examples of the secrets of fate and the Final Hour. While fate represents Allah’s knowledge by His will and the Final Hour’s timing is clear, informing individuals that all sins occur by Allah’s decree might lead to surrendering to sin without concern. Similarly, knowledge of the timing of Judgment Day, whether distant or near, could lead to either excessive hope or despair in Allah’s mercy. Hence, concealing such matters serves a profound purpose in compelling people towards action and fostering hope in Allah’s mercy.

The Third Type

Matters whose disclosure would not cause harm, but expressing them through metaphors and symbols would be more effective and beneficial. Ghazālī refers to a verse in the Qur’an: ‘*All that We say to a thing, when We will it, is to say to it “Be”, and it is.*’²³⁸ He explains that the literal meaning of this statement is inconceivable, as something non-existent cannot understand a command before its existence. Moreover, if it occurs after its existence, it doesn’t need to be created. However, using such metaphors profoundly underlines the reality of ultimate divine authority.²³⁹ Likewise is the metaphor of the Qur’an being like rain falling from the sky: ‘*He sends down water from the sky, whereat the valleys flow according to their measure, and the flood carries a scum that swells...*’²⁴⁰. If this were to be understood explicitly, it would be understood, but

the meaning was fortified by this imagery in order to add clarity and beauty to its meaning.

Labeling this type as a ‘secret’ is because such meanings are not immediately obvious to everyone, but require teaching and clarification.

The Fourth Type

Imam Ghazālī explains that understanding something generally and then comprehending it in detail through investigation and experience signifies different levels of knowledge. One is like the outer shell, while the other is like the core. One is akin to the apparent, the other to the hidden.²⁴¹ This suggests that one’s knowledge and awareness vary, as one’s understanding after investigation appears to be a secret compared to the previous state. Ghazālī exemplifies this with hunger: acknowledging hunger isn’t equivalent to experiencing it.²⁴² This is similar to religious sciences, where some people stick with its explicit meanings, while a few ascend to experiential knowledge and observation.

The Fifth Type

This is what is reflective of a state of affairs through expression. For instance, when someone says: ‘This craftsmanship testifies to the skill of its creator,’ it doesn’t mean it has a voice, but rather, it is a metaphor. A layperson may take it literally, but a perceptive person understands the hidden meaning and realizes that the apparent is not intended. Ghazālī explains all Qur’anic verses about attributes in this context and asserts that the Ash‘arīs, among other sects, are adept at understanding the approach and purposes of these verses according to correct belief.

These five types, chosen by Imam Ghazālī, belong to the genre of secrets that align with Sharia’s methodology and

objectives. They address people according to their comprehension levels, opening the door for those prepared to understand the meanings and objectives of Sharia, thereby enabling them to maintain a respectful relationship with Allah and honourably represent it to others.

Some Applications of Secrets and Sufi Directives

Regarding Them

After having familiarized ourselves with the meanings of secrets and their intended purpose in Sufi terminology, and after clarifying that what Sufi masters have decreed concerning secrets aligns with the Sharia and its objectives, it is now appropriate to discuss some aspects of secrets that mystics and seekers have mentioned on their path to Allah. We will also explain their advice on dealing with such secrets, and what the seeker should observe in terms of the appropriate etiquette towards them. Some of these include:

Hearing the Whispers of Creation

Imam Ghazālī رحمته الله says:

Know that for every atom in the heavens and the earth, there lies a secret communication with the people of hearts. This is something that is not limited or finite, for these words are drawn from the sea of the speech of Allah, which has no end: ‘Say: “If the sea were ink for the Words of my Lord, the sea would be spent...”’²⁴³. And they communicate with the secrets of the physical and spiritual realms.²⁴⁴

This statement by Imam Ghazālī رحمته الله is an introduction explaining some of the secrets that appear to some mystics. He then proceeds to explain some of them in more detail, saying:

We will relate a small portion of their whispers from which we can understand in general how to build trust in Him. We will reduce their words to letters and sounds, although they are not letters and sounds, but this is necessary for understanding. We say that someone who had obtained perception through the lamp of the light of Allah ﷻ asked paper, when he saw its face blackened with ink: ‘Why was your face white and shining before, but now it has become black? Why did you blacken your face, and what is the reason for that?’ The paper said: ‘You are not being fair to me with this question, for I did not blacken my face myself. Rather, ask the ink, for it was gathered in the inkwell, which is its home and resting place. Then it travelled from its home and landed on the surface of my face unjustly and aggressively.’ He said: ‘You are right.’ He then asked the ink about it, and it said: ‘You are not being fair to me. I was in the inkwell, calm and determined not to leave it. Then the pen attacked me with its corrupt greed and snatched me from my home and exiled me from my country. It dispersed my gathering and tore me apart, as you see, on a white surface. So, the question is for it, not for me.’ He said: ‘You are right.’²⁴⁵

He then proceeds to narrate explanations that are easy to comprehend regarding the occurrence of these mystical secrets, which are intended to manifest divine power and that the attribution of actions to creatures is by way of coercion or acquisition, not by way of creation and being brought into existence.

Secrets related to the spirit

The mystic, Sīdī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Dabbāgh ؒ, said:

There are three hundred and sixty-six secrets in the spirit. Among these is a secret that, if the spirit were given it, it would cry forever. Also among them is a secret that, if the spirit were given it, it would laugh forever. Also among them is a secret that, if the spirit were given it, it would scream forever. But it is not given anything except what has been decreed by divine foreordainment.²⁴⁶

This quotation also reveals to us the wisdom behind the concealment of some secrets from some of creation. It is because some of them may disrupt the purpose of establishing civilization on earth. However, the manifestation of some of these secrets is according to divine foreordainment, which is consistent with the Sunnah of Allah in His creation, where He says, Most High: *‘For were God to extend His provision to His servants, they would surely become covetous in the earth; but He sends down in the measure that He will. Surely He is Aware, Seer of His servants.’*²⁴⁷

Provisions are of two types: sensory and spiritual. Among the spiritual provisions are secrets, lights, and all other illuminations. Thus, the attainment of some of them, like secrets, for some of His slaves occurs only through wisdom and divine foreordainment. This is also what is indicated by the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ: *‘If you knew what I knew, you would laugh little and cry much; you would not take pleasure in women in bed; and you would go out into the streets beseeching Allah.’*²⁴⁸

The concealment of some mystic secrets and hidden truths is a manifestation of perfect wisdom, as was mentioned by Imam Ghazālī ؒ.

Secrets and Permission: Counsel from Ibn ʿArabī

Among the most profound spiritual leaders who extensively elaborated on many secrets and discussed their experiences and insights in this regard is Sīdī Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʿArabī, in his *Futūḥāt*. The Great Sheikh classified secrets differently than what was mentioned by Imam Ghazālī. He based it on what requires permission and what does not, also delving into secrets beyond comprehension. He said:

Understand that the secrets bestowed by The Real upon His slave from the people of this path are divided into two categories. Some secrets inherently grant you their manifestation in the realms without causing any discomfort. They do not require divine permission for their disclosure to others. Other secrets do not inherently grant this permission. These also fall into two categories: some necessitate divine consent for their disclosure. If disclosed without permission, one is met with punishment, embarrassment, and blame for disclosing it. I have experienced such a situation! But, thankfully, I received a reprimand rather than punishment—a mercy and kindness from Allah.

There are other secrets that The Real does not grant anyone directly. Even if you seek permission to convey them, if The Real does not grant you the ability to transmit them, they remain unpermitted to disclose. They are experiences that others cannot understand merely through description, as The Real specifically transmits them from Himself to His slave. It is like expressing an intense longing one has for someone they dearly miss. No amount of expression suffices to convey the depth of this feeling to another,

except when the longing itself manifests in the person, just as it did for the person experiencing it. Only then does the reality behind such a sentiment become known.²⁴⁹

The Great Sheikh's discourse sheds light on three levels of secrets: those permissible to reveal without a requirement for permission; those needing restraint in disclosure unless permitted; and those concerning an individual's internal struggles and states that cannot be articulated, hence, are rendered futile to express due to the inability to do so. These secrets become the disciple's private domain, offering specific guidance or elevation to a certain station.

The Great Sheikh's inference about the necessity of permission in certain types of secrets and the importance of concealing them from those uninitiated aligns with the beliefs of numerous Sufi masters, is encapsulated in their statement: 'The hearts of the free are the tombs of secrets.' They mean, as gleaned from their discourse, that a mystic exposed to certain secrets cannot divulge anything of them except to those capable of bearing them. Otherwise, they would ruin their condition. Imam Fārūqī Sirhindī affirms this in *al-Maktūbāt*, saying: 'The truly endowed do not disclose the intimacies, for all these relate to Allah, and they are secrets between Him and them.' This was the mistake of Ḥallāj: his disclosure and declaration of what should have been concealed, as seen in *Ḥall al-Rumūz*, where it is said: "Not every heart is fit for secrets, nor does every shell accommodate a pearl."²⁵⁰

This final statement elucidating the reason for Ḥallāj's execution highlights the significance of safeguarding secrets and truths too challenging for the uninitiated to comprehend. What Ḥallāj uttered or revealed belonged to the

domain of an overabundance of knowledge of the mystic. His statement: ‘There is nothing in the cloak except Allah’ has an outward and inward. Its outward purport is rejected, which is the negation of his human existence, as if what was in it was Allah, Most Glorified! The inward meaning, which he did not express properly during his state of absence, is that our existence is not independent, but rather, through Allah’s provisioning of us.

His expressions depict the seeker’s awareness of his weakness and perplexity before the Lord of the Worlds. However, his utterance fell short and failed to articulate this adequately during his absence. Thus, Sufi masters advise that whoever encounters such situations should refrain from speaking about anything they perceive or experience in terms of truths and secrets, as it often involves delicate matters necessitating clarification and exposition, catering to companions who share these experiences. In general, these are matters that, in reality, do not contradict the noble Sharia.

Thus, Qushayrī ؒ states: ‘Among virtuous qualities is safeguarding secrets from the uninitiated.’²⁵¹ This Sufi directive to safeguard secrets evolved into a supplication recited by saints in their gatherings and devotions, as narrated from the Imam and Pole, Sīdī Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī, in his litany named *al-Faṭḥ*, where he says: ‘We seek encompassment with the secrets and their concealment from the uninitiated.’

The path to Allah relies on maintaining decorum with Allah outwardly and inwardly, and comprehending Him with excellence. Understanding Allah is realized by discerning the intricacies of secrets, and displaying courtesy involves safeguarding them from the uninitiated.

A Matter of Tafsīr Regarding Qur'an, 5:67

Regarding the verse, 'O Messenger, make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord ...'²⁵², did the Messenger ﷺ convey to us everything that he received from his Lord, including mystical secrets?

In his *tafsīr* of this verse, Ālūsī says: Many of our Sufi masters hold that the Prophet ﷺ was commanded to convey what was revealed concerning the regulations of servitude. Allah ﷻ did not command him to acquaint people with the secrets between Him and the Prophet ﷺ. Indeed, even a particle of His secrets ﷻ cannot be borne by the heavens and the earth. These secrets are alluded to in the verse: '*whereat He revealed to His servant what he revealed.*'²⁵³ Hence, He said: '*that which has been revealed to you*' not, '*that which We singled out for you*' or, '*that through which We have introduced Ourselves to you.*'

Some hold the (correct) view that the conjunction is general and encompasses revelations, inspirations, dreams, visions, and all divine gifts. The Messenger ﷺ was commanded to communicate all of it. However, the levels of communication vary according to the readiness of the recipients, whether via speech, gesture, spiritual influence, or attraction to other forms of communication. So glorified is He who sends down water from the sky, whereat the valleys flow according to their measure.²⁵⁴

This last statement chosen by Ālūsī indicates that the Prophet ﷺ conveyed all that Allah had revealed to him concerning the various types of divine inspiration and what they encompass of legal rulings and mystic meanings

(*ma'ān 'irfāniyyah*). However, the manner of his delivery and communication could vary, whether through speech, gesture, or other modes of expression and communication.

The Imam, Pole, and martyr, Sīdī 'Abd al-Salām ibn Ma-shīsh, alluded to this in his blessed supplication, stating: 'O Allah, bestow blessings upon the one through whom secrets have been disclosed.'

Glorified is He who made His Prophet ﷺ the source and conduit for understanding His will regarding His creation, guiding us to all good in this world and the Hereafter.

X. OBSERVATIONS (*MUSHĀHADĀT*)

Among the manifestations discussed by Sufi masters, and which they have spoken about in terms of their reality and types, is what they refer to as ‘observations’ (*mushāhadāt*). Some Sufi scholars of *tafsīr* have cited evidence from verses of the Qur’an that point to the reality of observation, such as in the verse: ‘*Is he who relies on a clear proof from his Lord – [a clear proof] which is followed by a witness from Him ...*’²⁵⁵.

Regarding the *tafsīr* of this verse, *al-Baḥr al-Madīd* states:

[That is:] ‘Is he who possesses knowledge, sainthood, safety, and honour from his Lord...’ Every mystic—when he observes The Real, glorified be He, with his heart, spirit, intellect, and innermost being and perceives the outpouring of the lights of His beauty and nearness—is affected in his being to the extent that the radiant light of Allah emerges from his countenance, visible to every beholder, for Allah ﷻ says: ‘*which is followed by a witness from Him*’. The ‘clear proof’ is the insight of spiritual knowledge, and the ‘witness’ is the manifestation of the light of observation from Him.²⁵⁶

The Lexical and Terminological Meanings of Observation

‘Observations’ (*mushāhadāt*) is the plural of ‘observation’ (*mushāhadah*), which lexically means ‘inspecting something firsthand’.

In terms of terminology, there are many definitions for ‘observation’ among Sufis, and each definition has its own angle on observation. One of the broadest definitions of observation among Sufis is that of Imam Abū Naṣr Sirāj, the author of *al-Lumāʿ*, where he says:

‘Amr ibn ‘Uthmān Makkī said: ‘Observation is what hearts encounter of the unseen.’ He does not consider it to be eye-witnessing nor rapture. He also said: ‘Observation connects between the vision of hearts and the vision of eyes; because the vision of hearts, when certainty is revealed, increases in perception. Furthermore, the Prophet ﷺ said to ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar ؓ: ‘Worship Allah as though you see Him.’²⁵⁷

As for the word of Allah: ‘... *and He is Witness over all things*²⁵⁸’, they say: ‘It is the observation of things with the eye of reflection and the examination of them with the eyes of thought.’

‘Amr Makkī ؓ, said: ‘Observation means presence, meaning drawing near, as Allah says: ‘*And question them about the city that was by the sea ...*²⁵⁹, meaning ‘close to the sea’.²⁶⁰

Therefore, based on what Sirāj Ṭūsī mentions, observation can have three meanings: seeing the unseen with the eye of the heart; reflection; and proximity to the truth. He explains this further in alternate wording:

People of observation belong to three groups. The first are the beginners, who are the seekers. As Abū

Bakr Wāsiṭī ؒ mentioned: ‘They observe things with the eye of reflection and see them with the eyes of thought.’

The second are the intermediates, which Abū Sa‘īd Kharrāz ؒ alluded to by saying: ‘Creation is in the grip of The Real and in His dominion, so when observation becomes intense between Allah and a noble man, nothing remains in his secret or his delusion except Allah the Exalted.’

The third group are what ‘Amr ibn ‘Uthmān Makkī ؒ referred to in the book, *al-Mushāhadah*, saying:

The hearts of mystics observe Allah with an affirming observation. They observe Him in everything, and they observe all creatures through Him. As such, they are absent while present, and present while absent, due to the exclusivity of The Real in absence and presence. They observe Him outwardly and inwardly, inwardly and outwardly, lastly and firstly, and firstly and lastly, as He has said: ‘*He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden and He has knowledge of all things.*’²⁶¹

The Reality of Observation, Its Station, and the Difference Between it, Copresence and Unveiling

Observation, in the manner that it has been explained, especially in the sense of seeing the unseen, may be confused with some other expressions used by the Sufis in their books, among them ‘copresence’ (*muḥāḍarah*) and unveiling (*mukāshafah*). Imam Qushayrī distinguishes between these expressions in his treatise, where he says:

Regarding copresence, unveiling, and observation: copresence comes first, then unveiling, then observation. Copresence is presence of the heart, possibly through copious proofs, though it remains behind the veil. Even so, it is present through the authority of remembrance. After this comes unveiling, which is its presence characterized by clarity. In this state, the heart does not need to contemplate evidence or diligently seek out its pathway, nor does it seek protection from the false claims of doubts or remain veiled from the characteristics of the unseen. Then comes observation, which is the presence of The Real without the persistence of wavering. Thus, when the sky of the secret clears from the clouds of the veil, the sun of observation shines from the tower of honour. True observation is, as Junayd ؒ, said: ‘The presence of The Real in your absence’. The copresent is bound by His verses, the unveiled is delighted by His attributes, and the observer is absorbed in His essence. The copresent is guided by his intellect, the unveiled is drawn near by his knowledge, and the observer is erased by his understanding.

No one has clarified the reality of observation more than ‘Amr ibn ‘Uthmān Makkī ؒ, who said:

The lights of manifestation succeed one another upon his heart without any veiling or interruption, like continuous bolts of lightning. Just as the darkest night becomes illuminated by the succession and continuity of lightning bolts, until it becomes like daylight, so too the heart, if it remains under continuous manifestation, it enjoys its daylight without night. They sing:

*My night is brightened by Your face
While its darkness prevails among people.
People are in the darkness of the night,
And we are in the light of day.*

Nūrī said: ‘A slave has not truly experienced observation while anything of him remains.’ He also said: ‘When the morning dawns, one can do without the lamp.’²⁶²

Thus, Imam Qushayrī has clarified the meaning of observation on the basis of its superiority to both copresence and unveiling, and that it is not attained except by one who annihilates himself.

This is also close to what Murtaḍā Zabīdī stated: ‘Observation is one of the lofty stations of seekers and the people of uprightness. It is an observation of eye-witnessing (*mu‘āyanah*) clothed in the attributes of sanctity, silencing the tongues of indications, and an observation of connection that draws one towards the eye of certainty.’²⁶³

Some Sufi Observations

The books of the Sufis are filled with many observations narrated by some of Allah’s saints, either as a recounting of Allah’s blessings or as an exposition of truths that engender knowledge, closeness to Allah, reverence for His command, and turning towards His presence. Among these are:

Imam Ālūsī’s Tafṣīr

In his *tafṣīr*, Imam Ālūsī mentions a beautiful discussion about some observations of the aspirant seeker during his journey and travel towards Allah. He says:

Once he completes this stage and finds satisfaction in what he discovers on the path to the Beloved, his inner being becomes illuminated, and the sublime lights of the unseen become manifest to him. The door to the spiritual realm opens for him, and the tablets of divine commandments are revealed to him, one after another. Thus, he observes unseen matters in ideal forms. When he tastes something of these experiences, he desires solitude, seclusion, remembrance, and adherence to purity, worship, vigilance, and self-accountability. He turns away from sensory indulgence altogether and empties his heart of attachment to it. His inner self turns wholly towards the divine, and he experiences ecstasy, gratitude, longing, love, and certainty. He considers himself transient and oblivious to his own existence, preoccupied with the divine. He then observes the luminous realities and unseen lights, experiencing visions, observations, and unveilings. Genuine lights appear to him at times, while others fade away, until he is freed from all variegation. Spiritual tranquility and divine serenity descend upon him, and flashes and states become his disposition. He enters the realm of omnipotence, beholding the bare intellects and compelling lights of the nearest and fervent angels. Through their lights, he realizes the lights of eternal sovereignty and the radiant manifestations of His greatness and divine majesty. Thus, he becomes like scattered dust, and his ego weakens as he bows down to the Most High, dissolving into self-annihilation and disappearing into divine existence. This is the station of annihilation and obliteration, the culmination of the

initial journey for seekers. If one remains in annihilation and obliteration without reaching permanence and sobriety, he becomes immersed in union (*jam^c*), veiled by The Real from creation. His sight is not distracted from observing the beauty of the Divine Essence, His glory, and His illuminations. The multiplicity vanishes in observing Him, and particularization veils itself from His existence. This is the supreme success, beyond which there is a station where, after obliteration, one returns to sobriety and contemplates particularization within the union itself. One's heart encompasses The Real and creation, such that one sees The Real in everything and perceives everything through The Real in a manner that does not necessitate multiplicity or materialization. This is a stage beyond the comprehension of most intellects, where some have expressed that the mystic may embody the attributes of Allah through Reality (*al-haqīqah*), not in the sense of His attributes becoming contingencies of the soul, for indeed, that is inconceivable, and asserting it would be a departure from the Sharia, the path, and Reality. Rather, what is meant is a relationship more complete than its relationship with existent corporeal attributes, the reality of which is unknown. Perhaps what they mean by the station to which the soul ascends, becoming privy to the secrets of Allah, is this station, and gaining insight into it requires following the path of the righteous. It is not achieved by mere watching and thinking. Allah is the guide in travels, and it is He Who grants favour to the vagrant.²⁶⁴

Sha‘rānī’s Mention of the Mystics

Quoting some of those who know Allah, Sha‘rānī mentions a discussion on some observations of seekers. He says:

Observation is the lifting of veils between the slave and the Lord, enabling hearts to perceive with clarity the unseen realities that they have been informed of. Through this observation, one witnesses majesty and greatness. The states and stations vary, leading to a mingling of perplexity and amazement. Perplexity then gives way to bewilderment, and one perceives such a person gazing at The Real through The Real. At times, he observes majesty and, at other times, beauty. Sometimes he sees splendour, while at other times, he beholds perfection. There are moments when he senses grandeur and glory, and others when he perceives dominance and magnificence. He might also witness tenderness and joy. At times, he experiences expansion, while at others, contraction. Some moments unfold, while others fold back. Some occasions bestow, while others deprive. Some moments reveal, while others conceal. Some moments annihilate, while others preserve. Thus, the observer transcends human attributes, standing with the qualities of servitude, unaffected by vanities, witnessing none but the grandeur of the Almighty.²⁶⁵

The Revival of Religious Sciences

In *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, Imam Ghazālī also briefly mentions that some seekers observe our master, al-Khaḍīr عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام. He says: ‘Just as he hears voices when the heart is clear, he also sees the image of al-Khaḍīr عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام with the eyes, for he manifests in different forms to men of hearts.’²⁶⁶

Al-Ibrīz

Al-Ibrīz mentions many accounts of observations by Allah's saints and what happens to some seekers during their journeys. One such statement is:

Regarding the second matter, victory is that he is granted the observation of the secrets of The Real that were concealed from the people of darkness. He observes the knowing friends of Allah, speaks with them, and converses with them at a distance like one companion speaking to another. Similarly, he observes the spirits of believers above the graves, the noble scribes, and the angels, as well as the Barrier and the spirits therein. He observes the grave of the Prophet ﷺ and the column of light extending from it to the dome of the Barrier. When he experiences observation of the Prophet ﷺ in a wakeful state, he is granted security from the devil's interference, as he is united with the mercy of Allah, which is our master, our Prophet, and our master Muhammad ﷺ.²⁶⁷

These are some indications of what may happen to the seekers in terms of observations. The purpose of these indications is to alert the seeker to some of what may appear to him during his journey towards Allah, so that he does not become deluded or confused, and so that he remain firm in his purpose and not deviate from his determination.

Observations are the Fruits of Worship

Every preceding clarification concerning the observations experienced by certain seekers and aspirants during their journey must adhere to what Sufi masters have elucidated regarding the essence of observation. They assert that

observation is a fruit of servitude, and that as a slave progresses in understanding servitude, he receives blessings and divine favours manifesting as higher stations of vision and observation. Murtaḍā Zabīdī hinted at this notion, saying:

When asked about observation, Sahl ؒ responded: 'It is about servitude.' He also said: 'For forty years, I was addressing Allah while people thought I was addressing them.' The Supreme Teacher ؒ apprised [us] by saying: 'You will certainly see your Lord.' The Almighty says: '*Glory be to Him Who carried His servant ...*'²⁶⁸, specifying the moments of observation and vision by mentioning the slave and the Lord as a reminder of what we have indicated. Therefore, understand this and realize it through your servitude, for goodness lies therein and from it. So understand.²⁶⁹

Observation, in this context, is as important as all other spiritual illuminations. It is a natural outcome of genuine servitude. However, it is not a guaranteed attainment for every seeker; rather, it is solely a grace from Allah. Hence, every seeker must direct his intentions solely towards Allah and seek His pleasure through his deeds, rather than seek approval from others. As Sīdī Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, says:

Sufis have delineated three facets of observation: observing creation in The Real, which entails perceiving things through the lens of monotheism; observing The Real in creation, which involves perceiving The Real in all things; and observing The Real to the exclusion of creation, which represents the pinnacle of certainty without doubt.²⁷⁰

It has been relayed from the Pole of Knowledge, Sīdī Ibrahīm Dasūqī, that he said: ‘Whoever struggles earnestly will observe, and whoever remains negligent will remain distant.’²⁷¹

From all this, it becomes apparent that observation, being one of the spiritual illuminations, only deepens in meaning through the sincere practice of servitude and the fulfillment of the duties of divine worship.

The Station of Prophethood and The Prophetic Degree of Observation

We conclude the discussion of observations by explaining the focal point of Sufi masters when mentioning some distinctions of the noble Prophets عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ. This serves as a reminder of their status and as a means of disciplining oneself in their presence.

1. *The Observation of Moses* عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

Among them is what the mystic, Sīdī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Dab-bāgh, affirmed regarding some of the established characteristics of the Prophet of Allah, Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, in relation to the station of observation. He said in *al-Ibrīz*:

I asked him ﷺ, about the statement of Allah: ‘... *he said, “My Lord! Show me that I may behold You!” Said He, “You shall not see Me, but behold the mountain, and if it remains, in its place, then you shall see Me”*. ...’²⁷² I said: ‘Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, is one of the greatest mystics, and a mystic does not become a mystic until he delves into the depths of observation. So why did he ask for a vision when he is from the people of constant observation? Does vision add to observation?’ He ﷺ said:

The people of observation do not observe the Supreme Essence independently of observing its actions, nor can observation be free of them until the actions of the Supreme Essence cease. If the actions of the Supreme Essence were to cease, even for a moment, existence would collapse, and the order of the world would be disrupted. There is no existent being except that it contains the action of Allah, for that is its substance and the reason for its existence, and that is the veil between it and the Supreme Essence. If He did not veil His actions in His essence, essences would burn, and everything in the world would dissolve. Given that observation is not limpid for those it applies to, and given that the aforementioned actions are like debris to eyesight, Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ asked his Lord ﷻ to sever him from actions so that they would not obstruct him from observing the Supreme Essence clearly. His Lord ﷻ said to him: ‘When I cut [My] actions from a contingent thing, its essence becomes disturbed. This mountain is stronger and more solid than you in essence and substance. Look at it, and you will see Me.’ Then, when his Lord manifested Himself to the mountain, and severed it from His actions that obstructed it from the domination of the Supreme Essence, the mountain crumbled, and its parts scattered until Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ fell unconscious.²⁷³

This is an explanation of the state, station, and distinction of our master Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, and how he was in the station of observing divine actions. He sought in his station to achieve the observation of the Supreme Essence, and the divine response and action towards him were extremely gentle, merciful, and compassionate.

2. *The Observation of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in Al-Ibrīz*

This is a glimpse of the station of our Prophet ﷺ and his noble characteristics with respect to the station of observation applicable to him. Sheikh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Dabbāgh says:

Regarding his saying ﷺ, ‘Were you not to do it, it would be better,’²⁷⁴ is a correct statement and a truthful utterance. This statement emerged from him with absolute certainty and conviction that He ﷻ is the absolute doer. This certainty is based on observing His action directly in all possible things, such that not a particle moves, nor does a hair stir, nor does a heart beat, nor does a drop of sweat fall, nor does an eyelid twitch, nor does an eyebrow flinch except that He ﷻ is the doer of it directly, without any intermediary. This is something that the Prophet ﷺ observes like others perceive sensory experiences. This does not escape his sight, whether in wakefulness or in sleep, because his heart, which possesses this observation, does not sleep. There is no doubt that one who possesses this observation loses sight of causes, and rises above mere belief in the unseen to witnessing and seeing [it]. Concerning the Word of Allah ﷻ, ‘... *God created you and whatever you make ...*’²⁷⁵, he has continuous observation that does not fade away and certainty that suits this observation, which is that he is certain about the meaning of the verse without ever considering attributing the action to anyone other than Him ﷻ. Even if such a consideration crossed his mind as much as the size of an ant’s head, there is no doubt that the certainty established

on this attribute overwhelms the outcomes and activates things. It is the secret of Allah ﷻ with which no cause or intermediary remains. Thus, when someone who possesses such a station points to the disappearance of causes and attributes actions to the Lord of Lords, his utterance is true, and his speech is truthful. As for one with mere faith and belief in the unseen, he does not possess observation in His saying ﷻ, ‘*God created you and whatever you make.*’ Rather, he only observes the attribution of actions to whoever they appear to be from. He is not drawn to the meaning of the verse and the attribution of actions to Him ﷻ except by the faith that Allah ﷻ has endowed upon him. So, with him, there are two attractions: one from his Lord, which is faith that draws him towards truth; and the other from his nature, which is observing actions from others, which draws him towards falsehood.²⁷⁶

3. *The Observation of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ per Ghazālī*

Imam Ghazālī also discusses the observation of our Prophet ﷺ, saying:

A subtle point worth noting is that when the Messenger ﷺ said: ‘I saw ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf entering Paradise crawling,’²⁷⁷ do not assume that he did not also see him with his eyesight. Rather, he observed him while awake, akin to how one perceives in a dream during sleep. Even if ‘Abd al-Raḥmān was physically asleep in his home, for example, sleep only influences such observations by subduing the domination of the senses over the divine inner light. Senses

preoccupied and attracted him towards the sensory world, diverting his attention from the unseen and the spiritual realm. Some prophetic lights may rise and take control to such an extent that the senses do not draw one towards their world or occupy him, enabling him to observe in wakefulness what others observe in dreams. However, if one reaches the pinnacle of perfection, his perception is not limited to mere visual imagery; rather, he transcends beyond them to uncover that faith draws one towards the world called 'Paradise', while wealth and riches draw one towards the present life, which is the lower world. If the attraction towards worldly affairs is stronger or resists the other attraction, it impedes progress towards Paradise. If the attraction of faith is stronger, it causes hardship and delay in one's journey, making his likeness akin to that of crawling in the perceived world. Thus, the lights of secrets become manifest to him beyond the windows of imagination. Therefore, his statement is not confined to 'Abd al-Rahmān alone, even if his vision was restricted to him. Rather, it applies to everyone whose insight is strong, whose faith is firm, and whose wealth is so abundant that it competes with faith but does not resist it due to the predominance of the strength of faith.

This elucidates how the Prophets perceive images, and how they observe meanings beyond the images. Typically, the meaning precedes internal observation, then shines onto the imaginative spirit, imprinting the imagination with a balanced form of the meaning, thereby mirroring it.²⁷⁸

XI. MARVELS (*KARĀMĀT*)

A ‘marvel’ (*karāmah*) is one of the illuminations that occur to some seekers on the path to Allah. Additionally, it is one of the most renowned topics discussed by Sufi masters and frequently referenced in their gatherings and writings.

Regarding the issue of marvels, people hold varied opinions. Some vehemently deny the existence of marvels, attributing them to superstition and a breach of reason. Others, however, exaggerate the attribution of marvels to numerous saints and righteous individuals, with Sufi masters often mediating between these extremes. They affirm the occurrence of marvels in general based on evidence from religious sources, then transmit what is authentically attributed to a saint. They also establish clear guidelines for dealing with the topic of marvels, following their tradition of adhering to the noble principles of the Sharia.

Numerous works have been compiled specifically on the marvels of saints, documenting instances of marvels experienced by some of Allah’s righteous slaves. One such work is *The Collection of Marvels of the Saints*, by Sheikh Yūsuf Nabahānī, spanning two large volumes. In the introduction, he mentions compiling material from about forty different sources found in central works, ensuring to attribute each marvel to its respective source as a means of authentication accepted in this topic. This approach mirrors the practice of all Sufi sciences and knowledge, which are attributed to their respective authorities from among eminent scholars.

Generally, these sciences are derived either from revelation or existence, as indicated in the Quranic verse: ‘... *Verily, His is creation and the command. Blessed be God, the Lord of the Worlds!*’²⁷⁹, where ‘the command’ refers to sciences derived from revelation, and ‘creation’ refers to sciences derived from existence.

Marvels: Lexically and Terminologically

The Arabic word ‘*karāmah*’ is a term derived from the root *k-r-m*. Imam Ibn Fāris says in *Maqāyīs al-Lughah*: ‘The letters *kāf*, *rā*’, and *mīm* have an authentic origin with two meanings: one is nobility in the thing itself or in one of its characteristics. One says: “a noble man” (*rajul karīm*) and, “a noble horse” (*faras karīm*).’²⁸⁰ Thus, according to the rules of language, ‘marvel’ (*karāmah*) is a verbal noun of the verb, ‘to grant nobility [to something]’ (*akrama*), which refers to the meaning of nobility, as mentioned in the quotation from Ibn Fāris.

Terminologically, a marvel is a preternatural event not associated with a claim of prophethood, or a precursor to it, that appears at the hands of an outwardly righteous person committed to following his Prophet.

According to this definition, a marvel occurs to some righteous slaves of Allah as a means of keeping them firm or as an indication of the correctness of their uprightness and righteous deeds. Thus, scholars have stipulated that those who attain marvels must be upright on the path of the noble Sharia. If such an event occurs to someone who is not sufficiently pious—such as if he is corrupt, Allah forbid—then such a preternatural event is not called a marvel in his case, but deception (*istidrāj*), Allah forbid. Accordingly, it is impossible in the Sufi tradition to attribute

a marvel to anyone unless it is known that it occurred to them due to the clarity of their outward actions and the enlightenment of their inner selves. As the Great Sheikh, Sīdī Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, said in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*: ‘If we presume it to be a marvel, then it must be a result of uprightness or produce uprightness. This must be. Otherwise it is not a marvel.’²⁸¹

More details follow regarding the requirement of uprightness to achieve the essence of achieving a marvel. All of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah agree on the occurrence of marvels, as stated by the author of *Jawharat al-Tawḥīd*, Imam Laqānī:

*We affirmed marvels for the saints,
And whoever denies, his words we reject.*

The Qur’an mentions marvels of the righteous, such as what is mentioned regarding Lady Mary , where Allah says: ‘... Whenever Zachariah went into the sanctuary, where she was, he found her with provisions. “O Mary,” he said, “Whence comes this to you?” She said, “From God. Truly God provides for whomever He will without reckoning”.’²⁸² Regarding this, scholars of *tafsīr* say that he would find with her the fruits of winter in summer and the fruits of summer in winter! This was a preternatural event in their time.

Allah also mentions the story of Solomon with the Queen of Sheba: ‘The one who had knowledge of the Scripture said: “I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you.” Then, when he saw it standing before him, he said, “This is of my Lord’s bounty, that He may try me, whether I give thanks or am ungrateful. ...”’²⁸³. So, what he had, which was knowledge of the Scripture, allowed him to

know the greatest name of Allah, and when he invoked it, the throne was brought from Yemen to the place of Solomon in Jerusalem.

Likewise, what has been received of the sound Sunnah provides evidence for the occurrence of marvels for the righteous among His slaves. For example, in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, it is narrated from Ṣuhayb that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

There lived a king before you, and he had a court magician. As he (the magician) grew old, he said to the king: ‘I have grown old, so send me a young boy in order to teach him magic.’ The king sent him a young boy to serve that purpose. On his way (to the magician), the young boy met a monk to whom he listened and was impressed. It became his habit that, on his way to the magician, he would meet the monk, sit there, and then go to the magician (late). The magician used to beat him because of this delay. He complained about this to the monk, who told him: ‘When you fear the magician, say: “Members of my family detained me,” and when you fear your family, say: “The magician detained me.”’

It so happened that a huge beast appeared, and it blocked the route used by people. The young boy said: ‘I will know today whether the magician or the monk is better.’ He picked up a stone and said: ‘O Allah, if the way of the monk is dearer to You than the way of the magician, bring about death to the animal so that the people are able to move about freely.’ He threw that stone at it, killed it, and people began to move about freely. He then went to the monk and told him the story. The monk said: ‘Son, today you

are superior to me. You have come to a stage where I feel that you would be soon put to trial, and in case you are put to trial, do not expose me.'

The young boy began to heal those born blind and the lepers, and he, in fact, began to cure people from all kinds of illnesses. When a courtier of the king who had gone blind heard about him, he came to him with numerous gifts and said: 'If you cure me, all these things will be yours.' He said; 'I myself do not cure anyone. It is Allah, the Exalted, Alone Who cures; and if you affirm faith in Allah, I shall also supplicate to Allah to cure you.' This courtier affirmed his faith in Allah, and Allah cured him. He came to the King and sat by his side as he used to sit before. The King asked him: 'Who restored your eyesight?' He said: 'My Lord.' Thereupon he said: 'Do you have another lord besides me?' He said: 'My Lord and your Lord is Allah.' So, the king kept torturing him until he exposed the young boy.

The young boy was thus summoned and the King said to him: 'O boy, it has been conveyed to me that you have become so much proficient in your magic that you cure the blind and the lepers, and you do such-and-such.' Thereupon, he said: 'I do not cure anyone; it is Allah Alone Who cures.' The King took hold of him and began to torture him until he exposed the monk.

The monk was summoned and was told: 'You should turn back on your religion,' but he refused. The King sent for a saw, placed it in the middle of his head and cut him into two parts that fell over. Then, the King's courtier was brought forward and was

told: 'Turn back on your religion.' He, too, refused, and the saw was placed in the midst of his head, and he was torn into two parts.

Then the boy was sent for and was told: 'Turn back on your religion.' He refused. The King then handed him over to a group of his courtiers and told them: 'Take him to such-and-such mountain, make him climb up that mountain, and when you reach its peak, ask him to renounce his faith. If he refuses to do so, push him to his death.' So, they took him and made him climb up the mountain, then he said: 'O Allah, save me from them in any way You will.' The mountain began to quake, and they all fell (to their deaths). The young boy went to the King walking. The King asked him: 'What happened to your companions?' He said: 'Allah has saved me from them.'

He again handed him to some of his courtiers and said: 'Take him out in a boat, and when you reach the middle of the sea, ask him to renounce his religion. If he does not renounce his religion, throw him in.' So, they took him, and he said: 'O Allah, save me from them.' The boat capsized, and they all drowned except the young boy, who went to the King walking. The King asked him: 'What happened to your companions?' He said: 'Allah has saved me from them.'

He told the king: 'You cannot kill me until you do what I command you to do.' The King asked: 'What is that?' He said: 'Gather all people in one place and tie me up to the trunk of a tree. Then, take an arrow from my quiver and say: "In the Name of Allah, the Lord of the Boy", then shoot me. If you do that, you will be able to kill me.'

The King gathered the people in an open field and tied the young boy to the trunk of a tree. He took out an arrow from his quiver, fixed it in the bow, and said: 'In the Name of Allah, the Lord of the boy.' He then shot the arrow, and it hit the boy's temple. The young boy placed his hand upon the temple where the arrow had hit him and died. The people then said: 'We believe in the Lord of this boy.' The King was told: 'Do you see that what you were afraid of, by Allah, has taken place. All the people have believed.'

The King then commanded that trenches be dug and fires lit in them. He said: 'Whoever does not turn back on his (the young boy's) religion, throw him into the fire,' or 'will be ordered to jump into it.' They did so until a woman came with her child. She felt hesitant in jumping into the fire. The child told her: 'O mother! Endure (this ordeal), for you are on the right path.'²⁸⁴

In his commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Imam Nawawī says: 'This hadith contains evidence for the marvels of saints.'²⁸⁵ What happened to the boy and because of him was because he was one of Allah's saints, inviting people to Him despite all the threats he faced from the disbelieving King until he sacrificed his life to guide people to the great power of Allah ﷻ. Thus, marvels are affirmed by the words of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and they are established as part of the beliefs of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah. No one whose opinion can be relied upon has denied them.

Since a proper understanding of this is not evident without explaining the meaning of sainthood (*wilāyah*), we will elaborate on it briefly in what follows.

The Reality of Sainthood (*Wilāyah*)

Many verses in the Qur'an point to the status of sainthood (*wilāyah*), signifying that these individuals possess special characteristics bestowed upon them by Allah. Among these verses is His Word: 'Assuredly God's friends, no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.'²⁸⁶ Likewise, narrations from the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ affirm this concept, emphasizing Allah's special care for His saints, such as in the hadith attributed to Allah:

Whosoever shows enmity to a friend (*walī*) of Mine, then I have declared war against him. And My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved to Me than the religious duties I have obligated upon him. And My servant continues to draw near to me with supererogatory deeds until I Love him. When I Love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to seek refuge with Me, I would surely grant him refuge.²⁸⁷

Scholars have been keen on elucidating the reality of sainthood and clarifying the virtues associated with this station, in order to prevent any negligence or audacity in its pursuit. In his work *Tashnīf al-Masāmi'*, Imam Zarkashī delineates the essence of sainthood, stating:

The reality of sainthood entails detachment from forms and directions and standing with Allah with one's essence. It is said that a saint (*walī*) is named such because he enters under Allah's guardianship (*wilāyah*) due to his obedience. It is also said that

Allah takes care of him out of His kindness. The word is of the form *faʿīl*, being either an active or passive participle.

At this level, he becomes one whose prayers are answered, uncovering the unseen of the earth and the heavens, addressing all ears, attracting everyone to Him, and not seeking guidance from anyone else. Abū Saʿīd Kharrāz said:

When Allah intends to take His slave as an ally, He opens for him the door of His remembrance. Then, when he delights in the remembrance, He opens to him the door of closeness, then raises him to the gatherings of intimacy, then seats him on the throne of monotheism, then removes the veils from him, admits him to the abode of nearness, and reveals to him His majesty and greatness. When his sight falls upon the majesty and greatness, he loses his senses and his self-conceit. At that moment, he reaches the station of knowledge of Allah, not learning from creation, but being taught by Allah, with his heart then becoming illuminated, hearing what he had never heard before and understanding what he had never comprehended.²⁸⁸

Therefore, the essence of sainthood is a state of detachment and servitude to Allah. In it, Allah bestows upon His servant various types of manifest and hidden gifts, including marvels, which are among the illuminations experienced by saints.

Distinguishing Marvels from Other Illuminations

Before delving into the meanings and conditions of marvels among Sufi masters, it is necessary to clarify the following:

The Resemblance Between Marvels and Other Illuminations

Marvels, as one type of illumination, may overlap with some other illuminations that have occurred or will occur, in that both are preternatural occurrences. An example is the disclosure that was granted to some saints, such as what was narrated about our master ʿUmar.²⁸⁹ What happened to him in that incident was preternatural, and it enters into the definition of marvels, as has been discussed. This might also happen with other illuminations, such as addresses (*mukhāṭabāt*), observations, or others, as will be mentioned, Allah willing.

The Scope of Marvels is Broader than Other Illuminations

If we contemplate the concept of marvels and other illuminations, we find that marvels are a superset of the others, meaning that every disclosure (for example) is a marvel, but not every marvel is a disclosure. The same can be said regarding observations, addresses, etc. Therefore, marvels are broader than other illuminations that involve a preternatural occurrence. Marvels are not limited to knowing, seeing, or hearing something unusual. Rather, they occur by changing entities, such as fruits appearing out of season, altering time and place, healing the sick, rainfall, and more. Several scholars have suggested that marvels include all types of preternatural occurrences. As Imam Nawawī says:

Marvels can occur through all types of preternatural occurrences, though some scholars have restricted

them, claiming they are exclusive to things like answered prayers, etc. This is incorrect according to the people of knowledge, as it stands in the face of sensory evidence. Rather, the correct understanding is that they occur through divine intervention, such as producing something from non-existence, etc.²⁹⁰

This viewpoint is not problematic from the perspective of confusing marvels with miracles, considering the association of miracles with prophethood, which is not the case with marvels, as their definition stipulates that they are not associated with prophethood. Additionally, the same marvels that happened to some saints are considered miracles of the Prophet ﷺ, as affirmed by scholars. Following the Prophet ﷺ and adhering to his path outwardly and inwardly are among the evident means for the occurrence of marvels. Ibn ‘Ajibah says in his commentary: ‘Every marvel that occurs is a miracle of the Prophet ﷺ, and every disclosure and observation is from his light.’²⁹¹ Qushayrī says: ‘These marvels are derivative of the miracles of our Prophet ﷺ because no one untruthful to Islam experiences marvels, and every marvel that appears to someone from a Prophet’s nation is counted among his miracles.’²⁹²

Based on the above, it is established that marvels, no matter how they occur, or in what form they take, are extensions of the miracles of the Prophet ﷺ. The most that can be said is that they appear at the hands of some of his followers who are sincere in following him ﷺ.

Marvels Occurring After Death

Another distinctive feature that appears in marvels, unlike other illuminations, is that marvels occur for the saint during his life and after his passing. Marvels, as they manifest

to the living saint in this world, also serve as support for him after his transition from this realm. Sheikh Imam Muhammad Zakī al-Dīn Ibrāhīm says:

Marvels are a divine gift from Allah to His righteous slave, whether alive or dead, whether bestowed or acquired through sincere belief and worship. They are a spiritual consideration associated with the characteristics of the spirit, its preparations, and its striving in life. The spirit persists after the body's demise, and Allah says: '*... and behind them there is a barrier until the day when they are raised.*'²⁹³ Thus, marvels persist after death through the spirit and its distinctive characteristics. The Qur'an hints at this in the story of the people of the cave, with the building of a mosque over their graves. The Sunnah confirms this, especially the story of the Companion 'Āṣim ibn Thābit, who was martyred, and Allah protected his body through the presence of aggressive, predatory hornets until the angels concealed him.²⁹⁴

Therefore, just as marvels occur to a saint in his life, they can also appear after the saint's transition to his Lord, as Allah guides His slaves through His saints, and what Allah manifests to them in their lives or after their transition is part of the means that Allah has arranged to guide people to Him. Thus, it is not beyond the power, grace, and kindness of Allah towards His righteous and devout slaves. Sheikh al-Islam Ḥasan 'Aṭṭār says: 'Let it be known that, since marvels are from Allah, there is no difference in their occurrence whether the saint is alive or dead, contrary to those who deny their occurrence after death; they have no argument. Allah is the Possessor of Great Bounty.'²⁹⁵

The hadith about the Companion ʿĀṣim ibn Thābit mentioned by Muhammad Zakī al-Dīn Ibrāhīm was narrated by Abū Nuʿaym in *Hilyat al-Awliyāʾ* with his chain of transmission from Buraydah ibn Sufyān al-Aslamī:

The Messenger of Allah sent ʿĀṣim ibn Thābit, Zayd ibn Dithnah, Ḥabīb ibn ʿAdiyy, and Marthad ibn Abī Marthad to the Banū Laḥayyān in Rajīʿ. They fought them until they were promised safely, except for ʿĀṣim, who refused, saying: ‘I will not accept protection from a polytheist, today,’ and prayed: ‘O Allah, today I protect Your religion, so protect my flesh.’ He then started fighting while saying:

*High up am I, with lash in hand,
And my bowstring, like a cord, does stand.
If I fail to fight, my mother’s land
Will mourn, for death’s decree is grand.
All that God ordains, we understand,
For man to God and back does span.*

When they killed him, they said to one another: ‘This is the one that the Meccan lady swore an oath about; she is Sulāfah.’ ʿĀṣim had killed three men from Banū ʿAbd al-Dār on the day of Uḥud, all of them carrying the Quraysh’s standard. He would shoot his arrows, saying: ‘Take this! I am the son of Aqlaḥ!’ She swore that if she could get hold of his head, she would drink wine from his skull. They intended to take his head to her, but Allah sent protection in the form of horns, and they could not decapitate him.²⁹⁶

What Abū Nuʿaym narrates is a marvel of our master ʿĀṣim ibn Thābit after his martyrdom at the hands of the

polytheists. He prayed to his Lord before his martyrdom not to allow the polytheists to take anything from him, so Allah protected his body with large hornets. The same can happen to visitors of the shrines of the saints and the members of the Prophetic Household عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ. This is because, when people visit them, they know that it is Allah who has bestowed goodness and marvels upon these individuals during their lives, and He is capable of bestowing the same marvels upon them even after their passing. This is indicated by the verse: *‘They shall have whatever they wish with their Lord. ...’*²⁹⁷ They call upon their Lord, and Allah, in His exalted status, does what He wills and desires. Thus, marvels are one of the illuminations that continue after transition from this world. It is as if they are one of the manifestations of the spirit’s persistence and are one of the marks of a life that ended well. We ask Allah for a good state and a good culmination to our lives.

Some Established Sufi Maxims Regarding Marvels

Sufi masters have derived some important principles regarding the topic of marvels from the clear evidences and rulings of the Sharia. Their experience of righteous conduct has aided them in this, preserving the legacy of prophethood and highlighting the principles and objectives of the Sharia. Among these principles are the following:

Marvels are not a Condition for Sainthood

Sufi masters have affirmed that marvels are not a prerequisite for the attainment of sainthood, emphasizing that sainthood is realized primarily through uprightness (*istiqāmah*), which is a divine grant before it becomes an effort or acquisition on the part of the slave. Divine care precedes the slave’s effort and diligence. As Sheikh Ibn

‘Ajībah stated: ‘The manifestation of marvels is not a condition for saintliness. Rather, perfection in uprighteousness is what is required.’²⁹⁸

Furthermore, it is as though they have considered the appearance of marvels to be inversely proportional to the degree of sainthood. In other words, as the saint progresses in the stations of perfection on the path to Allah, the manifestation of marvels through them decreases. This is contrary to the belief of the common folk. Ibn ‘Ajībah further elaborates on this point, stating:

Many among the common folk do not acknowledge a saint until they witness a sign or marvel from him, although the more firmly rooted a saint becomes in knowledge, the less marvels will manifest at his hands. This is because marvels are only support, reinforcement, and an increase in certainty. A firmly rooted mountain does not require a prop.²⁹⁹

A Lack of Marvels May be Divine Mercy

The absence of marvels for the saint and traveller may be from the door of divine mercy:

Allah nurtures His creation in a way that is conducive to their rectification, for He is the Lord of the Worlds. Therefore, Allah, in His majesty, may withhold marvels from a saint temporarily, or even permanently, for the sake of elevation and closeness, not deprivation and distance.

Ibn ‘Ajībah, says:

The withholding of marvels from the progressing disciple or saint is an act of mercy and care towards them. When such marvels do manifest, the individual might become attached to them and consider his state

in a positive light, or he might vouch for his own integrity, lifting the staff of discipline away from himself. Consequently, he may cease his journey and thus forfeit reaching the pinnacle of perfection. As per *Aphorisms*: ‘Whenever the aspiration of the seeker wants to pause at what has been disclosed to it, the calls of reality proclaim: “What you seek lies ahead of you.”’ As Tustarī states:

*No matter how all stations may unveil
themselves
To you, pass beyond them, for we have
passed beyond the likes of them.
Say: ‘I seek nothing but You,
‘Neither a form that appears nor a glance that
is gleaned.’³⁰⁰*

The priority on the path is always, and forever, turning towards Allah alone, without equal. Therefore, one should not turn away from this sublime objective for anything else, even if it be a marvel.

It is Better for Saints to Conceal their Marvels from Laypeople

Sufi masters also perceive the matter of marvels as incumbent upon the saint to conceal rather than to display. This is because marvels are not intended as a challenge, as is the case with miracles that occur to the honoured Prophets ﷺ. This understanding was transmitted by Sha‘rānī in his *Ṭabaqāt* from one of the Sufi scholars in the fourth century Hijri. He was Abū ‘Amr Dimashqī, who passed away in 320 AH. Sha‘rānī says: ‘Among his sayings ﷺ, is: “Indeed, Allah the Exalted has mandated upon the saints

the concealment of marvels so that people are not tested by them, whereas it is more incumbent upon the Prophets عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ to manifest them occasionally as evidence of the truth.”³⁰¹

Many saints and righteous individuals have adhered to this conduct, which is the eagerness to conceal their marvels and not to display them to people. Perhaps they were compelled to display them in the narrowest of circumstances for some legitimate purposes, such as fulfilling needs, comforting hearts, and similar situations.

Something that has been narrated regarding that is what has been reported about the Master of the Followers, Uways ibn ʿĀmir Qarnī, who lived during the time of the Prophet ﷺ but did not have the honour of his companionship because he remained with his mother and could not leave her. Therefore, Allah honoured him with the marvel of answered supplications! The Prophet ﷺ informed us about his condition in order to apprise of his status.

Imam Muslim narrates in his Ṣaḥīḥ:

When ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb received the provisions of the people of Yemen, he asked them: ‘Is Uways ibn ʿĀmir among you?’ until he reached Uways and asked: ‘Are you Uways ibn ʿĀmir?’ He said: ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘From Murād, then from Qarn?’ He said: ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘Did you have leprosy that has been cured except for a dirham-sized spot?’ He said: ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘Do you have a mother?’ He said: ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, say:

Uways ibn ʿĀmir will come to you with the provisions of the people of Yemen, from Murād, then from Qarn. He had leprosy, which has

been cured except for a dirham-sized spot. He has a mother, and he is dutiful to her. If he swears by Allah, He will fulfill it. If you can ask him to pray for your forgiveness, do so.'

So, pray for my forgiveness,' and he prayed for his forgiveness. 'Umar said to him: 'Where do you intend to go?' He said: 'To Kufa.' He said: 'Shall I write to its governor about you?' He said: 'I prefer to be among the unseen people.'

The next year, one of their noble men came to perform Hajj. 'Umar met him and asked him about Uways. He said: 'I left him in a dilapidated house, with little belongings.' He said: 'I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, say:

Uways ibn 'Āmir will come to you with the provisions of the people of Yemen, from Murād, then from Qarn. He had leprosy, which has been cured except for a dirham-sized spot. He has a mother, and he is dutiful to her. If he swears by Allah, He will fulfill it. If you can ask him to pray for your forgiveness, do so.'

So he went to Uways and said: 'Pray for my forgiveness.' He said: 'You were just on a pious journey, so pray for my forgiveness.' He said: 'Pray for my forgiveness.' He said: 'You were just on a pious journey, so pray for my forgiveness.' He then asked: 'Did you meet 'Umar?' He said: 'Yes.' So he prayed for his forgiveness. People became aware of him, so he left hastily.³⁰²

Our master Uways al-Qarnī did not know that people had come to know of his marvels after the visit of our master ʿUmar . He left his place out of fear that people would crowd around him, thus distracting him from the worship of Allah. However, when our master ʿUmar requested him to pray for his forgiveness, he obliged and prayed for his forgiveness in compliance with the command of the Prophet .

Another story in this regard is what is narrated about the sheikh of our sheikhs, our master, Sheikh Muhammad Amīn Baghdādī Naqshbandī. He was a great saint. Because his biography is not well known, we mention it here to apprise of his status and some of his noble virtues. We follow this by mentioning his upright conduct in his keenness to conceal his marvel .

He is our venerable master, Sayyid Muhammad Amīn Baghdādī , the sheikh of the Naqshbandī order. His luminous shrine is located in the Jāshankīr Mosque in El Gamaliya. He is the saintly mystic and sheikh of mystics, endowed with divine gifts, blessings, and lofty spiritual outpourings. He blessed the land of Egypt with his presence and won the company of both the elite and the common people, who had witnessed a light emanating from his essence. He spread light and security in the vastness of place and time. Those who kept his company received the mercy of his compassionate heart, which encompassed all beings and all humans.

He  was born in the town of Sulaymaniyah in Iraq on 8 Rabīʿ al-Thānī 1286 AH. He was orphaned and raised under the care of his pure, noble, and virtuous mother, Amīnah, and his maternal uncle, a man of praiseworthy religion and repute, after the death of his father.

He was enrolled in a school where he memorized the Qur'an and delved into noble knowledge, both received and rational. He was an authority in Shāfi'ī jurisprudence and mastered Arabic, Turkish, and Persian.

He pledged allegiance to the spiritual guide of the travellers, our master Sheikh 'Umar, nicknamed Ḍiyā' al-Dīn. He entered spiritual retreats and emulated the righteous. His sheikh called him 'al-Amīn' (the trustworthy) due to his obedience and sincerity.

In his youth, he saw Imam Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته الله sitting full of awe and radiance as he stood before his noble grave in Baghdad. He lived his youth ascetically, far from the pleasures of life and its adornments. He was generous and noble, loving solitude and seclusion.

His heart was attached to the love of Allah and longing for our master, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. However, he did not obtain permission [in the path] from his sheikh, our master Sayyid 'Umar Ḍiyā' al-Dīn, who asked him to wait. Events continued until his sheikh passed away, and his son Sheikh Muhammad Najm al-Dīn succeeded him. Two years after his sheikh's death, he left the spiritual retreat and secluded himself in his house for two years of worship. Then he gathered his family, distributed his wealth among them, left them, and set out trusting in Allah, walking along the beach until he reached a ship and sailed to the land of Hijaz. In the city of Medina, he saw the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in a dream. With continued obedience, striving, and seclusion, the veils were lifted from him, and he saw the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while awake. He flew with joy at this meeting, and he remained in the city of Medina for thirteen years, enjoying the company of the beloved Chosen One صلى الله عليه وسلم. He stayed in Mecca for three years, then directed himself to visit Egypt in order to visit

the resting place of the fragrant flower of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, our master Imam Ḥusayn ؑ, and Imam Shāfiʿī ؑ. He entered Egypt in the year 1914 CE, and he frequented the mosque of our master, Imam Ḥusayn ؑ. He regularly visited our master, Imam Shāfiʿī, and our Lady Sukaynah, daughter of our master Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ.

He settled in Egypt in Jāshankīr Mosque in the El Gamaliya neighbourhood. After five years of seclusion, non-appearance, and not mingling with people, his name spread by the decree of Allah. Soon after, crowds of scholars and students from Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Hijaz, Sudan, Ethiopia, as well as from Upper Egypt, Iraq, Bukhara, Japan, India, and China gathered around him. He welcomed them and honoured them. Among these scholars were: Sheikh Ḥassūnah Nawāwī, the Sheikh of al-Azhar, Sheikh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Qurāʿah, the Mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Basyūnī, Sheikh ʿAbd al-Majīd Salīm, Sheikh Muhammad Bakhīt Mutīʿī, and others.

The path of the sheikh spread to all groups in various countries. Egypt received many blessings from the sheikh ؑ. He prayed abundantly for Egypt and its people, whom he loved and who loved him, especially during times of hardship and trials that the country went through. By the blessings of his prayers, Allah lifted those hardships. Many marvels appeared to him, countless and undesired by him, but their appearance was a mercy to the land.

He married into a noble family, to a righteous, virtuous, honourable, and pious wife, and was blessed with three sons: Sayyids ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, and Muhammad Bahāʾ al-Dīn, as well as one daughter, Sayyidah Fāṭimah.

He passed away on 17 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1358 AH and was buried in the Bāb al-Wazīr cemetery near al-Azhar Mosque

in Cairo. After 25 years, Allah honoured him by fulfilling his wish, as he had often said while in the Baybars Mosque: 'I wish to be here.' So his honourable body was transferred to the shrine established in the Jāshankīr Mosque in El Gamaliya on Sunday, 15 of Jumādā al-Ākhirah 1383 AH, corresponding to 10 October 1965 CE. May Allah benefit us through his auspiciousness, and with the abundance of his light and blessings. *Āmīn*, O Lord of the Worlds!

Returning to the matter of marvels experienced by the righteous, we recount an incident narrated by his disciple, our master, Sheikh Aḥmad Mursī رحمته الله. Once, he brought his little sister to him. He had already taken her to a doctor specializing in eye ailments, who told him: 'She has become blind and cannot see. Allah has taken away her eyesight.' The Sheikh took the girl, who was then nine years old, and carried her to his sheikh. He told him that the doctor had said she had gone blind, so what should he do with her? The Sheikh replied: 'This is Allah's decree, O Aḥmad.' He replied: 'Yes, this is Allah's decree. As Allah has made her blind, ask Him to restore her eyesight.' The Sheikh said: 'What should I do? It is Allah's decree that took away the girl's eyesight.' He told him: 'I will not leave until you find a solution.' This incident reflects Sheikh Aḥmad's child-like pleading with Allah and his confidence in Allah's generosity and mercy.

The Sheikh then said: 'In that case, lock the door and remove the covering from her eye', so he did. After invoking blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, he blew gently into the girl's eyes, praying for her vision to be restored. The girl's sight was restored, and she clung to the Sheikh's neck in astonishment. Notably, at that time, Sheikh Aḥmad Mursī was clean-shaven, while his Sheikh had a beard. The

girl, puzzled by the sudden change, asked: 'What is this?' as she touched his beard. Realizing that the girl could now see, the Sheikh explained: 'This is a beard!' The girl then asked: 'Why do you have a beard?' The Sheikh replied: 'Because I am a man.' She then asked: 'Isn't my brother Aḥmad a man too?' The Sheikh responded: 'He is a man, Allah willing.' She asked again: 'Then why doesn't he have a beard?' The Sheikh said: 'He will have one, Allah willing.' From that moment on, Sheikh Aḥmad Mursī decided to grow his beard. The Sheikh asked Sheikh Aḥmad not to reveal what had happened to anyone, saying: 'For the sake of Allah, do not tell anyone what has occurred for as long as I am alive,' and he agreed to keep it confidential.

Sheikh Aḥmad then asked: 'What should I do now? If I go home, they will know that she can see, and that is indeed strange.' The Sheikh told him: 'Return to the doctor and have the girl examined again, upon which time he will find her to have been cured.' He complied, then took her to the doctor again, having covered the girl's eyes once more. Upon uncovering them, the doctor was astonished to find her vision restored. He exclaimed: 'What is this? Where were you? Who treated her?' The Sheikh replied: 'We were not with anyone.' The doctor, sensing that the truth was being concealed, insisted: 'You are not telling the truth.' He then examined the girl and discovered that her detached retina had miraculously reattached. Perplexed, he asked: 'How was it reattached? You must tell me who did this!' The Sheikh calmly responded: 'No one did it; it was Allah who performed this miracle.'

The doctor, acknowledging the divine intervention, exclaimed: 'I know that Allah is the one who did it, but who was the instrument through which Allah acted visibly?' He

then left and shared the miraculous occurrence with his patients, proclaiming: ‘Our brethren, relief has come to you! Relief has come to you!’

Sheikh Baghdādī demonstrated his marvel as a means of reassuring his disciple and assisting his little sister in regaining her sight by Allah’s permission. Simultaneously, he was careful not to seek fame for this, instructing Sheikh Aḥmad Mursī not to disclose the secret of his marvel to anyone.

Such saints preferred to conceal their virtues, because they sought the pleasure of Allah and did not wish for people to know what Allah had bestowed upon them. As Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh said in his *Aphorisms*: ‘Your desire for others to know your uniqueness is evidence of insincerity in your servitude.’

At the same time, their hearts overflowed with mercy towards Allah’s creation, so they turned to Allah to alleviate some of what His slaves had been afflicted with, knowing that Allah had permitted them to do so. In this way, they became a means of benefiting Allah’s slaves.

Thus, the marvels experienced by Allah’s saints become a means of benefiting Allah’s creation and an indication of Allah’s power and generosity. May Allah benefit us through them.

Marvels are not Granted to Those Who Seek Them

One of the principles that Sufi masters also emphasize regarding marvels is that they are not attained by those who seek them or strive for them. This is because they are a divine gift and not dependent on any specific action by the slave. Our master, the Imam and Mystic, Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī رحمته الله, said: ‘Marvels are not given to those who seek them, nor to those preoccupied by them. Rather, they are

given to those who do not see themselves or their actions, but are preoccupied with the love of Allah, hopeful of His favour, and engrossed in His worship.³⁰³ Thus, the seeker should not seek marvels for himself, for etiquette dictates that he should be preoccupied with the worship that Allah has enjoined upon him.

Imam Qushayrī also reported from some Sufi masters: ‘Be a man of uprighteousness, not a seeker of marvels, for your ego is moved by seeking marvels, and your Lord, glorified and exalted, demands uprighteousness from you.’³⁰⁴ A disciple at the start of his journey to Allah may be preoccupied by the lights, illuminations, and marvels that he sees from his sheikh or some of his peers, and he becomes preoccupied with attaining these illuminations and marvels for himself. This is one of the matters that Sufi masters warned against: where the traveller becomes preoccupied with what is not intended or required, neglecting his true purpose and goal.

Marvels are of Two Types: Material and Spiritual

Sufi masters also affirm that marvels are not limited to sensory phenomena, as defined at the beginning of this section. Rather, they broaden the concept of marvels to include spiritual matters that occur to some travellers on the path, such as the disappearance of hatred and envy from their hearts and becoming grounded in the station of contentment (*riḍā*).

Perhaps the reason for applying the term ‘marvel’ to such matters is based on the fact that such occurrences are not common among most people who are dominated by their egos and led by their desires. For one who escapes this, it is as the laws of nature have been violated!

Among those who mentioned these two types of marvels was Sheikh Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī , who said:

The masses only know marvels in a sensory sense, such as speaking through thoughts; reports of past, present, and future events; walking on water; flying through the air, travelling great distances instantaneously; being concealed from sight; and the immediate response to prayers. Spiritual marvels are only known to the elite among the slaves of Allah, and the masses do not know them. They include observing the etiquettes of the Sharia, striving to embody noble character traits, avoiding their vices, fulfilling obligations at all times, hastening to do good deeds, removing grudges and envy from their hearts towards people, having good thoughts about others, purifying the heart from every blameworthy quality, adorning it with constant mindfulness, considering the rights of Allah concerning oneself and things, examining the effects of their Lord in their hearts, considering their breaths as they leave, and receiving them with proper etiquette when they return. All of these are, in our view, the spiritual marvels of saints, which are not achieved through deceit or manipulation, but are evidence of fulfilling the covenant, having the right intention, and being content with what is decreed, even if it is not desired, and enduring what is disliked.

No one has any share in these marvels except for the archangels and the chosen, righteous slaves of Allah. As for the marvels that we have mentioned, which the masses recognize, they may be influenced by hidden deceit.³⁰⁵

From all of this, it becomes clear how Sufi masters have safeguarded the noble Sharia by establishing regulated principles for everything found on the path, such that the seekers do not become preoccupied with attaining illuminations and marvels for themselves, and such that people do not become attached to those through whom marvels appear merely because marvels appear through them. Rather, their collective goal is Allah and nothing else.

XII. CLAIRAUDIENT MESSAGES (*MASMŪ^cĀT*)

Among the illuminations attributed to the righteous slaves of Allah are what are called ‘clairaudient messages’, and many reports have been mentioned about the occurrence of these clairaudient messages to a number of people. They are broader than being a type of illumination, but in our discussion, we will only discuss those that are considered illuminations, and consequently, what distinguishes them from other clairaudient messages.

The Lexical and Terminological Meanings of Clairaudient Messages

Lexically, ‘clairaudient messages’ (*masmū^c*, pl. *masmū^cāt*) is the passive participle derived from the verb ‘to hear’ (*sami^ca*). The intended meaning is any of various sounds that are heard. They are one of the perceptions by the five senses. Imam Rāzī says: ‘The entities that we perceive through one of the five senses are: the visual, the auditory, the olfactory, the gustatory, and the tactile.’³⁰⁶

Sufi literature does not address clairaudient messages as a technical term. Rather, Sufi (and other) works discuss the experiences of Allah’s people in obtaining these clairaudient messages while journeying on the path to Allah. In general, these are phrases and words heard without seeing their source. These phrases and words include warnings or

reminders of particular truths or warnings about the consequences of specific actions. They are considered among the manifestations of divine care for the traveller, deserving gratitude and praise to Allah like all other illuminations on the path to Allah.

Types of Clairaudient Messages

What occurs to seekers and travellers on their path in terms of clairaudient messages, as we have mentioned before, can be categorized into types. Among them are those intended as a warning about the consequences of sins or specific actions, those intended as glad tidings that open the door of hope, and those intended as guidance to particular truths. We will mention examples of each type:

The First Type: Warnings About the Consequences of Disobedience or Specific Actions

Sufi literature mentions several examples of this type. In Ibn Abī Dunyā's book, *al-Hawātif*, it is narrated:

Muhammad ibn Faḍl told me, from Abū Asmā', that a man entered a deserted place and said: 'If I were alone here committing a sin, who would see me?' Then he heard a voice that filled the void between the hills: '*Will He Who has created not know? And He is the Subtle, the Aware.*'³⁰⁷

Another narration from the same book:

Muhammad ibn Makhlad said: 'I accompanied a group from Mecca, and my soul tempted me to commit an evil deed. I heard a voice from the direction of the Kaaba saying: "Woe to you! Did you not perform Hajj? Woe to you! Did you not perform Hajj?" And thus, Allah ﷻ protected me until the moment.'³⁰⁸

Another instance concerns the story of the repentance of Ibrahīm ibn Adham ؓ, as narrated by Imam Qushayrī in *al-Risālah*:

Abū Ishāq Ibrahīm ibn Adham ibn Manṣūr ؓ, from Kura, Balkh, was born into royalty. One day he went out hunting and stirred up a fox or rabbit while in pursuit. A voice then called out to him: ‘O Ibrahīm, were you created for this, or were you commanded to do this?’ Then another voice called out from the saddlebag of his horse: ‘By Allah, you were not created for this nor were you commanded to do it!’ He dismounted his mount and came across a shepherd of his father. He took the shepherd’s cloak made of wool and put it on, giving him his horse and what was with it. Then he moved to the wilderness, then Mecca, where he kept the company of Sufyān Thawrī and Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyāḍ. He moved to the Levant and died there. He would eat from the fruits of his own labour, which included harvesting, tending gardens, etc.³⁰⁹

What Ibrahīm ibn Adham and these righteous individuals heard are among the clairaudient messages that some of Allah’s slaves encounter as a warning against the consequences of sin and heedlessness of Allah, in order to distance them from the wrath of Allah ؓ.

The Second Type: Glad Tidings, Opening the Door of Hope

Among the types of clairaudient messages are those that bring glad tidings to a slave of Allah or open the door of hope for him. They include:

Imam Abū Nu‘aym mentions the following narration in *Hilyat al-Awliyā’* in the following narrative: ‘A man bade farewell to his household, saying: “O Allah, for You are praise commensurate to the number of times You have forgiven Your creation.” Upon his return, he repeated the same supplication. Subsequently, he heard a voice proclaiming: “We have not ceased counting since you said it last year.”’³¹⁰ This account heralds glad tidings for the individual who extolled Allah using this auspicious invocation, signifying its acceptance by Allah ﷻ and the anticipation of a substantial reward.

In *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, the author mentions that Shaykh Abū ‘Alī Daqqāq ﷻ conveyed the following:

Certain disciples repented, after which a span of time had elapsed. Contemplating their situation, they wondered about the outcome should they renege on their repentance. At that moment, a voice called out to them, saying: ‘O So-and-so, you obeyed Us, and We expressed gratitude. Subsequently, you departed from Us, and we neglected you. Should you return to Us, We shall accept you.’³¹¹

Such narratives and the likes of them serve to reaffirm and bolster the resolve of some disciples in their journey back to the path of repentance and penitence. They epitomize divine benevolence and compassion extended to select disciples.

The Third Type: Apprising the Seeker of Beneficial Truths

Among the clairaudient messages documented in Sufi literature, the broadest type includes those intended to guide seekers. These messages may contain truths that benefit the seeker in their religion or behaviour with Allah, or direct them towards a specific action. They include:

In *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, Imam Ghazālī says:

If one understands the jurisprudence (*fiqh*) related to litanies and their secrets, he should follow the spiritual meaning. If, for example, he hears a glorification (*tas-bīḥah*) and feels its impact in his heart, he should persist in repeating it as long as he feels an impact. It was narrated from Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, from a righteous man, that he once prayed on the seashore and heard a loud voice glorifying Allah, yet he saw no one. He asked: ‘Who are you? I hear your voice, yet I do not see anyone.’ The voice replied: ‘I am an angel responsible for this sea. I have been glorifying Allah with this glorification since I have been created.’ He asked: ‘What is your name?’ He replied: ‘My name is Muḥalhayā’īl.’ He asked: ‘What is the reward for one who says it?’ He replied: ‘Whoever says it a hundred times will not die until they see their place in Paradise or it is seen on his behalf.’ The glorification is:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الدِّيَّانِ، سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ الشَّدِيدِ
 الْأَرْكَانِ، سُبْحَانَ مَنْ يُذْهَبُ بِاللَّيْلِ وَيَأْتِي بِالنَّهَارِ،
 سُبْحَانَ مَنْ لَمْ يُشْغَلْهُ شَأْنٌ عَنْ شَأْنٍ، سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ
 الْحُتَّانِ الْمَنَّانِ، سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ الْمُسَبِّحِ فِي كُلِّ مَكَانٍ.

*Subḥān-Allāhi-l-‘Aliyyi-d-Dayyān. Subḥān-
 Allāhi-sh-Shadīdi-l-arkān. Subḥāna man yudh-
 hibu bi-l-layli wa ya’tī bi-nnahār. Subḥānā man
 lam yushghilhu shānun ‘an shān. Subḥān Allāhi-
 l-Ḥannāni-l-Mannān. Subḥān-Allāhi-l-Musab-
 baḥi fī kulli makān.*

Glorified is Allah, the Exalted, the Judge. Glorified is Allah, the Powerful Support. Glorified is the One Who removes night and brings day. Glorified is the One Who is not preoccupied by any affair. Glorified is Allah, the Tender, the Bestower. Glorified is Allah, Who is glorified everywhere.

If a seeker hears this and feels an impact in their heart, they should persist in it, and when the heart finds acceptance, they should adhere to it.³¹²

What the seeker heard was a teaching from an angel guiding him to the virtue of this formulation of glorification.

Imam Ālūsī mentions in his *tafsīr*:

It was narrated that Ibrāhīm ibn Adham ؒ spent most of the night in circumambulation, saying: ‘O Allah, protect me from sins.’ He then heard a voice from his heart saying: ‘O Ibrāhīm, you are asking for protection, and all His slaves ask for protection. When He protects you, it is by His favour and generosity.’”³¹³

This also falls within the meaning of teaching and guidance; absolute protection is only fitting for the Prophets عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ, while the rest of creation should seek concealment from sin and forgiveness upon committing it.

In *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī relates a story about the Imam and mystic, Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Ḥanafī:

The Sheikh did not leave that seclusion until he heard a voice tell him three times: ‘O Muhammad, go out and benefit people.’ The third time, it told him: ‘Go out, or get out!’ The Sheikh said: ‘There is nothing after “get out” than severance.’ The Sheikh said:

I stood up and went to the corner, where I saw a group on the drinking trough performing ab-lution. Among them were those with yellow turbans on their heads, others with blue, and some with faces resembling monkeys or pigs, while others had faces like the moon. I realized that Allah had shown me the consequences of these people's affairs. So, I turned away from them and turned towards Allah, seeking His concealment of what had been revealed to me about people's conditions. And I became like any other person.

In the seclusion of the Sheikh, there was a planted mulberry tree. The Sheikh ﷺ said: 'It occurred to me to speak candidly with it.' So, I said: 'Oh, mulberry tree, tell me your story.' It replied loudly: 'Yes, indeed. When they planted me, they watered me. When they watered me, I took root. When I took root, I branched out. When I branched out, I put out leaves. When I put out leaves, I bore fruit. When I bore fruit, I provided food.' The Sheikh ﷺ said: 'Its words became my conducts and, by the grace of Allah, what the mulberry tree said has come to pass for me.'³¹⁴

What Shams al-Dīn Ḥanafī heard guided him to come out of seclusion for the benefit of people. The path of Sufi masters is not based on monasticism and isolation from people. Rather, the perfect state is to emulate the Master of Creation ﷺ, who combined diligence in worship with attending to the affairs of calling people to Allah and teaching Muslims.

In *al-ʿUhūd al-Muḥammadiyyah*, Shaḥrānī also mentions:

My brother, Afḍal al-Dīn ؒ, informed me that he used to stand at night for such-and-such years without anyone noticing, saying to himself that he was sincere in doing so. Then he heard a voice saying: ‘You only stand at night for the pleasure you find in your communion, and if it were not for that, you would not have stood up to fulfill your duty of servitude.’ He said: ‘So I sought forgiveness from Allah, and I rid myself of that pleasure, and I knew that pleasure harms my sincerity. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.’³¹⁵

In *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, the author narrates that Aḥmad ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh Rodhabārī said:

I had neurotic misgivings about matters of purification until my breast felt constrained one night due to the abundance of water I had poured out, and my heart found no peace. So, I said: ‘O Lord, Your pardon!’ Then I heard a voice say: ‘Pardon lies in knowledge’, and I was cured.³¹⁶

This too is a form of guidance and direction. When a slave travelling the path is not firmly grounded in knowledge, he becomes susceptible to doubts and illusions, especially in matters of purification. When Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh Rodhabārī faced this, and Allah knew his sincerity, He guided him through this voice to the solution to his perplexity when seeking pardon, which is knowledge. Knowledge is the guide for the perplexed, the foundation of those travelling the path, and the beacon for those journeying.

Clairaudient Messages Must Conform to the Sharia

Before considering such clairaudient messages, it is essential to discern that they are from the realm of divine illumina-

tions, not from the realm of satanic whispers. It is imperative to ensure that one does not deviate from the framework of the noble Sharia. Whatever the seeker hears of such matters, it is incumbent upon them to weigh it against the noble Sharia, if he is knowledgeable. If not, he must return to his sheikh to avoid being manipulated by Satan.

Among the most famous accounts from the saints and mystics in this regard is what has been reported about the Pole, Sīdī ʿAbd al-Qādir Jīlānī (may his secret be sanctified). Imam Shaʿrānī mentions in *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* that he said:

A great light appeared to me, filling the horizon, then a form appeared in it calling me: ‘O ʿAbd al-Qādir, I am your Lord, and I have permitted the forbidden for you.’ So, I said: ‘Woe to you!’ Then the light became darkness, and that form became smoke. Then it addressed me: ‘O ʿAbd al-Qādir, you were saved from me by your knowledge of your Lord’s command and your understanding of your states of encounters. I have misled seventy of the people of the path by a similar ruse.’ He said, ‘The favour is Allah’s.’ He was asked: ‘How did you know it was Satan?’ He said: ‘When he said: “I have permitted the forbidden for you.”’³¹⁷

What happened with Sīdī ʿAbd al-Qādir indicates to us that one of the actions of Satan is to disguise himself among worshippers, sometimes even audibly, in order to tempt them away from obedience to Allah and distract them from His worship. Here, it is imperative for the seeker to seek refuge in Allah from such satanic actions that may lead him from the realm of divine presence to the realm of satanic delusions. We ask Allah for safety.

Coincidental Clairaudient Messages

There might be another type of clairaudient messages, even if they do not belong to the class of divine illuminations. They also stem from the general conduct of divine power and Allah's pre-eternal care for His righteous slaves.

Among these are instances where Allah affirms certain clairaudient messages in specific circumstances, either to alert the seeker or draw him closer to His divine presence. Upon reflection, it becomes clear that every occurrence in a person's journey towards Allah is under His command. Ultimately, it is crucial for the seeker to listen with his heart's ear to the messages from his Lord and His signs in everything around him, as the saying goes:

*There's a sign in everything
Pointing to the fact that He is One.*

This is what Allah hinted at in the Qur'an: '*Assuredly there is in that a reminder for him who has a heart, or gives ear in [full] witness.*'³¹⁸ Imam Qushayrī, in his *tafsīr* of this verse, says: 'Listen to what creation openly proclaims and to what returns of it to the secret of The Real.'³¹⁹

Thus, the seeker should be attentive, not heedless, of what transpires around him regarding the divine power's workings and the effects of divine wisdom. This is a significant topic that the Sufi masters have addressed in their books and teachings. Imam Ibn 'Ajībah says:

If people praise you for something that is not present in you, know that these are the voices of The Real calling for you and inviting you towards an increase. They speak of good things ahead of you, so do not be content with what they say or rely on it. Rather, turn to yourself in blame. Do not be deceived by

people's praise, for they only know the superficial aspects of you, while you know your hidden essence within yourself. Someone once said: 'Whoever delights in people's praise has given the Devil an entry into his belly!' Someone also said: 'O Allah, make me better than what they think of me, do not hold me accountable for what they say, and forgive me for what they do not know.'

We hold that the praises of people are but the voices of The Real, for there is nothing in existence other than The Real: '... *Our Lord, You have not created this in vain. Glory be to You! ...*'³²⁰. People of understanding regarding Allah listen to the address. When they hear people praising them for something, they reflect: if they find it within themselves knowledge, they know it is an admonition for them to be thankful, and if they do not find it within themselves, they know it is a reminder for them to attain that status.³²¹

Thus, the occurrence of these coincidences or confirmations is by the command of Allah. However, they do not benefit anyone except for a slave who listens with his heart and mind to these divine messages.

There are reports from some mystics confirming such occurrences. Among them are the following:

Imam Ghazālī mentions in *The Revival of Religious Sciences* that a companion of Abū Ḥanīfah said:

I kept Abū Ḥanīfah's company ﷺ for six months, during which there was not a single night where he lay down his side on the ground. Abū Ḥanīfah used to observe half of the night in prayer. Once, he passed

by a group of people who said: 'This person spends the whole night in prayer.' Abū Ḥanīfah responded: 'I feel ashamed to be described with what I do not do.' After that, he started praying the entire night.³²²

Thus, Imam Abū Ḥanīfah ﷺ considered the comments made about him by those people a message guiding him towards exerting more effort in standing for prayer at night. He feared being praised for what he did not do. This is one of the signs of a vigilant heart and its presence with Allah.

In *al-Risālah*, Imam Qushayrī mentions the story of the repentance of Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ:

Fuḍayl used to intercept the road between Abiward and Sarakhs. The reason for his repentance was his love for a girl. As he climbed the walls towards her, he heard someone reciting: '*Is it not time for those who believe that their hearts should be humbled to the remembrance of God ...*'³²³. He said: 'O Lord, indeed, the time has come!' So, he returned. The night led him to a ruin where there was a group of people. Some said: 'Let us depart,' and others said: 'Let us stay until morning, for Fuḍayl is on the road, and he will intercept us.' So Fuḍayl repented and assured them safety. He lived by the Sacred Precinct until he died.³²⁴

What happened to Fuḍayl is certainly the transformation from a state of sin to repentance and penitence. It occurred by the administration of divine power and the precedence of divine care. The recitation of this verse at that moment was heard by Fuḍayl with his heart, not with his mind, and with his spirit, not with his ears. Therefore, such coincidences are ultimately from the decrees of Allah, which He

administers in His creation. He is Exalted in His greatness and subtle in His will. There is no objection to a worshipper experiencing such clairaudient messages on their way to Allah, whether they are extraordinary illuminations or coincidences. The key is for the seeker to open his heart and listen with his spirit to such divine messages until he attains the blessing of hastening towards obedience to Allah, unless it becomes clear to him that these are not from the realm of divine messages.

XIII. TELEPATHY (TAKHĀṬUR)

Lexically, *takhāṭur* follows the form of nouns that indicate a type of mutual interaction. This means that it occurs between two or more parties, as we will detail later. It derives its name from the word for ‘thought’ (*khāṭir*). According to *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, a thought is: ‘What occurs in the heart in terms of planning or instruction’.³²⁵ Therefore, telepathy is a type of insight into someone’s thoughts; that is, what occurs within himself.

Psychological studies have addressed telepathy and consider it a phenomenon that can be studied and understood. One scientific reference defined telepathy as: ‘Contact between thoughts and their conformity at the same moment and transmitting influence without resorting to familiar sensory pathways.’³²⁶

The truth is that telepathy is a phenomenon that has been observed in many studies, both ancient and modern. Often, a person thinks of an idea, then another person in front of him speaks it at the same moment, or a person feels in one place that another distant person feels distress or is in need, prompting him to inquire. There are other cases that sometimes occur without the person finding a sensory explanation for them.

Interpretations of this phenomenon vary depending on the cognitive model or scientific framework used in the

study. Sufi literature discusses and observes this phenomenon, considering it a type of illumination that occurs to some seekers on the path to Allah. One of the most prominent occurrences of confirmed telepathy by prominent Companions is what happened to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb

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Sufi Definition of Telepathy and Its Relationship to Perspicacity

I mentioned earlier that Sufi masters have observed the phenomenon of telepathy in their surroundings, as well as what they have transmitted from their sheikhs, from among the righteous slaves of Allah. However, while what has been conveyed from them confirms the occurrence of this phenomenon and that it is a type of illumination created by Allah for some seekers and righteous slaves of Allah, none of their books, as far as we have reviewed, address this phenomenon specifically with the term ‘*takhāṭur*’. This might be due to the novelty of the term and its closer association with psychological studies, as mentioned. Nevertheless, they sometimes use expressions that closely resemble the term ‘*takhāṭur*’, suggesting the possibility of using this term in a way that does not contradict the practices of Sufi masters.

However, after examining many texts of Sufi masters, we find that some of them, like Imam Qushayrī, use the term perspicacity (*firāsah*) to express the phenomenon of telepathy. It is clear that the intended perspicacity here is the bestowed perspicacity that occurs as a divine gift to some of Allah’s righteous slaves, not the science of perspicacity that can be learned and has known rules. Ibn Athīr commented on the hadith, ‘Beware of the perspicacity of the believer,’³²⁸ saying:

The apparent meaning of this hadith refers to what Allah inspires into the hearts of His saints, such they know the conditions of some people through a kind of marvel, correct guessing, and intuition. Another meaning is a type of knowledge learned through evidence, experiments, behaviour, and ethics by which one knows the conditions of people. People have different classifications for it, old and new.³²⁹

However, even in its bestowed sense, perspicacity is broader than the concept of telepathy, as it includes perspicacity into what crosses another person's mind, as well as other aspects, such as someone looking at another person's face and knowing their sincerity or their state with Allah.

There are various definitions of perspicacity, including the following:

- In *al-Ta^crīfāt*, Jurjānī says: 'Disclosure of certainty and observation of the unseen'.³³⁰
- In *al-Risālah*, Qushayrī says: 'Perspicacity is a notion that attacks the heart, repelling what contradicts it, and it has dominion over the heart'.³³¹
- In *al-Ta^crruf*, Kallābādihī says: 'Junayd was asked about perspicacity, and he said: "It is the coincidence of accuracy."' ³³²

It is worth noting that all of the above are broad and general definitions of perspicacity, encompassing what we are currently discussing as telepathy, and more. Therefore, telepathy, as a specific concept, was affirmed by Sufi masters, some of whom expressed it as 'perspicacity'. In order to distinguish it from other phenomena, it can be defined according to what is found in the books of Sufi masters as:

‘Cognizance of what crosses someone’s mind through a marvel and preternatural occurrence’.

The Wisdom Behind Telepathy

Before recounting what the books of Sufi masters narrate regarding the occurrence of telepathy among some of the righteous slaves of Allah, it is necessary to touch upon part of the wisdom behind its occurrence, based on how Sufi masters have dealt with it. Upon contemplation of their narratives, one finds that most of what is narrated about it is in the form of admonishment for mistakes and the abandonment of evil thoughts, seeking the refinement of the soul and proper conduct with Allah and His saints. This is because Allah ﷻ may reveal to some of His creation the flaws and shortcomings of some seekers in order to alert and guide them towards doing good deeds and abandoning reprehensible actions.

This is evidenced by what Kallābādhī mentions in *al-Taʿrūf* regarding various divine manifestations among Allah’s righteous slaves, including the ‘call’ (*hātif*), ‘thought’ (*khāṭir*), and perspicacity. He says: ‘Alerting them through occurrences of perspicacity’,³³³ meaning what occurs to sheikhs and seekers among Allah’s elect as an alert to what occurs in their thoughts and souls regarding matters contrary to righteousness.

It may also serve other purposes, such as answering a question or dispelling confusion. Thus, overall, it is a type of divine mercy and kindness towards Allah’s slaves as He guides them through those who become a means of rectifying their inward and outward selves.

As for reports of this type of illumination, which we have termed telepathy, they are too numerous to count!

Imam Ghazālī says: ‘The accounts of perspicacity in sheikhs—and their being apprised of the beliefs and consciences of people—are beyond enumeration.’³³⁴ We confine ourselves to what achieves the objective by the assistance of the worshipped King.

Types of Telepathy

Based on what has become apparent to us from examining this pattern of illuminations, it can be divided into three categories.

Telepathy as a Warning and Corrective Guidance

Examples include:

Abū Sa‘īd Kharrāz narrated:

I entered the Sacred Mosque and saw a poor man with torn clothes. I thought to myself: ‘This and similar situations are common among people.’ Then he called out to me and said: ‘... *and know that God knows what is in your souls; so be fearful of Him ...*’³³⁵ I sought forgiveness from Allah secretly. He called out to me again, saying: ‘*And He it is Who accepts repentance from His servants ...*’³³⁶ Then he disappeared, and I did not see him again.³³⁷

In this story, Allah revealed to the poor man what Abū Sa‘īd was thinking, warning him against having bad thoughts. Abū Sa‘īd immediately corrected himself.

Zaytūnah, the slave of Abū Ḥusayn Nūrī, said:

It was a cold day, so I asked Nūrī if I could bring him anything. He requested bread and milk. I brought them as he was adjusting lit coal before him with his hands. He began eating the bread and, as milk

streamed down his coal-smearred hand, I thought to myself: 'How filthy Your saints are, O Lord, without exception!' Then a woman accused me of stealing a bundle of clothes and took me to the police. Nūrī intervened and told the police not to harm me, as I was one of Allah's saints. The policeman asked what to do, given the woman's accusation. Then a girl arrived with the bundle, and the servant woman was returned to Nūrī. He told her: 'You will no longer say: "How filthy Your saints are."' I said: 'I repent to Allah the Exalted.'³³⁸

This incident shows how the woman misunderstood and judged the behaviour of one of Allah's saints, despite serving him outwardly. However, Allah revealed her thoughts to Nūrī, prompting him to advise her to improve her manners internally as well.

Abū Mūsā Daylamī said:

I asked 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yaḥyā about trust in Allah (*tawakkul*). He replied: 'If you were to thrust your hand into the mouth of a dragon until it reached your wrist, fear nothing but Allah the Exalted alone.' I then went to Abū Yazīd to ask him the same question. I knocked at his door, and he said: 'Do you not find 'Abd al-Raḥmān's answer sufficient?' I said: 'Open the door.' He said: 'You did not come to visit me, and you got your answer outside of this door,' and he did not open the door for me.

So, I left and returned after a year. He welcomed me, and I stayed with him a month, during which nothing occurred to my heart except that he would speak to me about it. When it

came time to depart, I said: ‘Tell me something of note.’ He told me that his brother informed him that when his mother was pregnant with him, whenever halal food was brought to her, she would extend her hand to eat, but if there was any doubt, she would retract it.³³⁹

Allah revealed to Abū Yazīd the need of Daylamī to ask again about trust in Allah, and he advised him that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s answer was sufficient. This teaches the lesson of refraining from excessive questioning, as these are barriers and distractions on the path. It also emphasizes the importance of companionship with scholars based on good faith and hastening to action.

Imam al-Qutb Sīdī Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī  said:

I entered the city of Tunis as a young man and found severe famine. People were in the markets. I thought to myself: ‘If I had something to buy bread for these hungry people, I would.’ Then a voice said to me: ‘Take what is in your pocket.’ I checked and found coins. I went to a baker and said: ‘Bake some bread.’ He did, and I handed it out to the people, who snatched it. Then I gave the coins to the baker, who said: ‘These are counterfeit. You Moroccans employ alchemy!’ I gave him my cloak and turban as collateral for the price of the bread. As I left, a man at the door said: ‘O ‘Alī, where are the coins?’ I gave them to him, and he shook them in his hand and returned them to me, saying: ‘Give them to the baker.’ I did, and he said: ‘Yes, these are good,’ and returned my cloak and turban.

Later, I looked for the man but could not find him. I remained perplexed until I entered the mosque on

Friday, settling near the enclosure in the eastern corner. After greeting the mosque followed by salutations, I saw the man on my right. Extending my greetings to him, he returned them with a smile and addressed me: ‘O ‘Alī, you often say: “If only I had something to feed these hungry souls, I would.” Do you show kindness to the Generous Creator through His creation? If He willed, He could surely satiate them, for He knows their needs best.’ Curious, I inquired: ‘And who might you be, my master?’ He said: ‘I am Aḥmad al-Khaḍīr. I was in China when I was told: ‘Meet my saint, ‘Alī, in Tunis, so I hastened to you. After completing the Friday prayer, I searched for him in vain.’³⁴⁰

This incident reveals how Allah chose a higher station for Sīdī Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī, showing him Allah’s kindness in His decrees. The saint should not be preoccupied with his actions but should see Allah’s actions before his own. Despite outwardly intending good for the people, Allah desires further perfection and advancement in understanding Him from His saints.

Ibn ‘Imād narrated from ‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Ḥasan Jabbā’ī, who said:

I used to listen to the book *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’* from our sheikh, Ibn Nāṣir. My heart was moved, and I thought: ‘I desire to detach from people and devote myself to worship.’ I prayed behind Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir. After prayers, we sat before him. He looked at me and said: ‘If you intend detachment, do not detach until you have studied jurisprudence and have sat with the sheikhs and learnt from them. Only then will detachment be appropriate for you. Otherwise,

you will detach prematurely. You are like a chick that has not yet grown feathers. If something about your religion confuses you, come out of your corner and ask people about it. It is not befitting for someone in seclusion to ask people about his religion. He should be like a candle, providing light to others.³⁴¹

Sheikh Abū Muhammad Jabbā'ī had thought about devoting himself to worship and abandoning society. However, Allah appointed Sheikh 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī to guide him, teaching him that his idea was incorrect, and detachment should only come after studying jurisprudence lest he fall into problematic situations. One detached for worship should benefit people, not be a burden to them. Therefore, engaging in worship should come after gaining sufficiency in religious knowledge and worldly affairs.

Regarding Sheikh Muhammad Amīn Baghdādī Naqshbandī—whose biography was mentioned in the section on disclosures—one of his students was in al-Azhar Mosque when the call to the afternoon prayer was made. He hurried from al-Azhar to join the prayer with Sheikh Baghdādī in the mosque of Zāhir Jāshankīr. He met a worker from al-Azhar on the way, who asked him why he was in such a hurry. He replied that he wanted to catch the prayer with his sheikh in his mosque. The worker seemed surprised and asked: 'Why did you leave the prayer in al-Azhar to pray behind your sheikh? Is your sheikh like our master 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb?' Sensing mockery, the student replied: 'No, he is better than him!' When the student reached the mosque, Sheikh Baghdādī had already completed a unit or two of prayer. After the prayer, he raised his voice, saying: 'How can someone boast and claim that his sheikh is better than our master 'Umar!' The student immediately realized

that the Sheikh was referring to him. He felt remorse but remembered that the worker's words had provoked him. The Sheikh immediately replied: 'Even if his words provoked you, you should not have said that!'

Allah informed Sheikh Baghdādī what the student had said about our master ʿUmar al-Fārūq, may Allah be pleased with him, in a conversation, alerting him to it without anyone knowing the intended recipient. Then, when the student thought about a response to his action, the Sheikh advised him that it is preferable for the seeker not to rush into defending his Sheikh without adhering to the etiquette of the Sharia, which includes showing respect for the esteemed status of the noble Companions. All of this was conveyed without any of those present realizing who the Sheikh was referring to, because the saints of Allah are people of counsel, not scandal.

These remarks reveal the extent of Allah's care for seekers at the beginning of their path, guiding them to the errors they have fallen into internally. Thus, the phenomenon of telepathy is an act of kindness from Allah to them, as some of His saints, who embody divine mercy, become aware of the negative thoughts or misunderstanding of Allah's intent that occupy their minds. This results in alertness, and the inward truths are realized by Allah's command, and praise be to Allah, the Lord of all worlds.

Telepathy as a Response to Objections and Confusion

Among them are the following:

Imam Qushayrī narrated a story about himself, saying:

I had recently gotten to know the mentor Abū ʿAlī . I was appointed a time to teach [regularly] in the Muṭarriz Mosque. Later, I sought his permission to

leave for a while and go to Nasa. He granted me permission. One day, as I was walking with him on the way to his gathering, it crossed my mind that it would be good if he took my place in my gatherings during my absence. He turned to me and said: ‘I will take your place in your gatherings during your absence!’ So, I walked a little, and it occurred to me that it would be burdensome for him to take my place for two days a week during my absence. I wished he would limit it to one day a week. He turned to me and said: ‘If I cannot take your place for two days a week, I will take it once a week.’ So, I walked with him a little, and something else crossed my mind. He turned to me and mentioned it unequivocally.³⁴²

From this narration, it is evident how Sheikh Abū ‘Alī Daqqāq was one of the people of this marvel. He dispelled his student’s confusion and embarrassment with his response and his commitment to substituting for him in his gatherings.

Sheikh Aḥmad ibn Mubārak recounts that he was sitting in the mosque with the book *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān bi al-Ma’thūr* in his hand. He stumbled upon a hadith that puzzled him, and he said to himself: ‘I wish the Sheikh were present so I could ask him about its meaning.’ He said:

No sooner had this thought occurred to me than he came and sat beside me. I opened the book and said: ‘O my master, I wish to ask you about a hadith herein.’ He said: ‘I came here precisely to provide the answer, so ask.’ So, I mentioned the hadith to him, and he provided the answer ﷺ, and benefited us with his knowledge.³⁴³

Sheikh Dabbāgh ؒ was made aware by Allah of his student's confusion in understanding a hadith, so he hastened to him to answer it.

Our Imam, the Pole, Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī ؒ narrated:

I was once in the presence of the mentor [Ibn Mashīsh], and I said to myself: 'I wonder if the Sheikh knows the Supreme Name of Allah?' The Sheikh's son, who was in the farthest part of where I was, said: 'O Abū Ḥasan, it is not a matter of knowing the Supreme Name of Allah; rather, it is a matter of being the Supreme Name itself.' So, the Sheikh said: 'He has struck the mark, and my son has scrutinized you.'³⁴⁴

When Sheikh Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī felt this confusion and questioned his sheikh's knowledge of the Supreme Name, which brings breakthroughs and answers to prayers, Allah intervened by guiding his sheikh to address his student by way of a marvel—as if the Sheikh intended to divert him from focusing on the Supreme Name to focus on the worship of the possessor of the Supreme Name!

Perhaps Sheikh Ibn Mashīsh's choice of answering in this manner was more effective psychologically, as it indicated to him that the solution to this and its knowledge is accessible even to the young, thus making it more compelling to abandon fixation upon it and not be preoccupied with it.

Conversing through Telepathy

This type does not fall into either of the first two types, perhaps because telepathy here is not merely the perception of thoughts by the saint or the mystic, but it may also involve conveying a specific thought to the disciple, and it may even be from someone who is not a mystic! We mention this here

as it follows from a thorough checking and examination of such cases.

The first such instance we found is what Khayr Nassāj said:

I was sitting in my house when it occurred to me that Junayd was at the door, but I dismissed the thought. It occurred a second and a third time, so I went out, and indeed, Junayd was there. He said: ‘Why did you not come out with the first thought?’³⁴⁵

The apparent meaning of this narration is that Junayd  seems to have addressed his secret with that thought while Khayr Nassāj diverted himself from it until he was convinced that what he had perceived was indeed happening. Then he went out and found Junayd there indeed.

In *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, it mentions that Abū ‘Abbās ibn Masrūq said:

A Sheikh came to us and spoke well on this matter. He was eloquent and of good understanding. During his speech, he mentioned to us: ‘Whatever occurs to you in your thoughts, say it to me.’ It occurred to me in my heart that he was a Jew! The thought was persistent and did not fade. So, I mentioned it to Jurayrī, and he disapproved of it greatly. I said: ‘I must inform the man about this.’ So, I told him: ‘You told us to tell you what occurs in our thoughts. It occurs to me that you are a Jew!’

He remained silent for a while, then raised his head and said: ‘You are right. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ He then said: ‘I have followed all religions, and I used to say if there

was anything to any of them, it is with these people. So, I came to you to test you, and you are on the truth.' He was true to his conversion to Islam.³⁴⁶

This news indicates two things: that telepathy can occur by conveying a specific thought to another in order to test him, and also that it may occur to those who are not among the people of truth, as it happened to the Jew before his conversion to Islam. So, not every preternatural occurrence is evidence of the truthfulness of the one through whom it occurs, as we have discussed in the section on marvels.

We now conclude this chapter with some of the conditions mentioned for the authenticity of telepathy.

Supplement: Some Conditions for the Veracity of Telepathy and Perspicacity

As is the case with all illuminations that occur to seekers, there are some conditions regarding telepathy as a divine illumination that Allah has bestowed upon His slave. While we have repeatedly emphasized the importance of not paying attention to, and dwelling on, such illuminations if they occur, Sufi masters have mentioned some conditions that are confirmed in those whose perspicacity is true. Imam Qushayrī mentions some of these conditions in *al-Risālah*, including the following:

Adhering to Sharia Outwardly and Inwardly

Shāh Kirmānī said: 'Whoever lowers his gaze from what is forbidden, restrains himself from desires, keeps his inner self constantly vigilant while his outward self follows the Sunnah, and is accustomed to consuming lawful sustenance, his perspicacity will not err.'³⁴⁷

*Perspicacity is a Light that Only Reaches Those
Who are Attentive*

Abū Ḥasan Nūrī was asked about the source of perspicacity in those who have it. He said:

From the Word of Allah: ‘... *and breathed of My Spirit in him ...*’³⁴⁸. Whoever’s share of this light is more consummate, their visions will be more accurate, and their judgments by perspicacity will be truer. Do you not see how the prostration was mandated when the Spirit was breathed into him by Allah: ‘*So, when I have proportioned him and breathed of My Spirit in him, fall down in prostration before him!*’³⁴⁹?

Imam Qushayrī adds:

Indeed, Allah ﷻ has endowed the believers with instances of perspicacity and lights through which they see clearly, and these are, in reality, mystic insights. This is why the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Indeed, he sees with the light of Allah,’ meaning with knowledge and perspicacity that Allah has specially granted him.³⁵⁰

Perspicacity and Telepathy Should not be Claimed

Abū Ḥafṣ Naysābūrī said:

No one should claim perspicacity, but one should guard oneself against the perspicacity of others, for the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Beware the perspicacity of the believer,’ and he did not say: ‘Exercise perspicacity.’ How can the claim of perspicacity be valid for someone who is in the position of guarding against perspicacity?³⁵¹

Thus, it is fitting for the seeker and the disciple to refrain from paying attention to the secrets of creation that elude them; rather, they should occupy themselves with themselves and seek concealment and well-being from Allah.

XIV. INSIGHT (*BAŞĪRAH*)

Sufi masters strive through their struggles to attain closeness to Allah, meaning to know Him, and knowing Allah is the reality of realities, which is the goal of every seeker of Allah ﷻ.

Allah may manifest Himself to some of His saints with certain truths along the path and permit them to access the knowledge accumulated in different worlds. The recurring theme in all these illuminations is that such occurrences are not sought after by the seeker himself. No matter what truths he comes to know or what causes lead to his insight and knowledge of what was hidden from him, all of this is purely a grace from Allah. It is incumbent upon the disciple to respond to this grace with gratitude and acknowledgment of Allah's blessings, as the Prophet ﷺ said: 'Should I not then be a grateful slave?'³⁵²

Among the illuminations through which Allah manifests Himself to some of His slaves, and which serve as a means to knowing certain truths or are like a prelude to it, is the illumination of the 'breakthrough of insight'.

Definition of Insight

Jurjānī defined insight in his *al-Taʿrīfāt* by saying: 'It is a power in the illuminated heart with the light of the Divine, through which one sees the realities of things and their innermost meanings, akin to sight for the spirit through which it sees the forms and phenomena of things.'³⁵³

Attainment of Illumination and Its Effects

One Effect of Insight: Seeing the Supremely Real in all Things

Sheikh Ibn ‘Ajībah said in *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*: ‘Whoever has his insight opened sees The Real, whether before, during, or after it. And whoever is blind to insight sees nothing but the darkness of existence. Allah knows best.’³⁵⁴ He also said: ‘The blind, who only perceive the sensory world, and the insightful, whose insight has been opened, differ. The blind perceive the universe, while the insightful witness creation and do not stop at mere perception.’³⁵⁵

Contemplating and Acting Upon the Noble Qur’an Lead to Insight

Sheikh Ibn ‘Ajībah said in *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*:

*‘This is [a set of] insights for mankind...’*³⁵⁶, meaning that the Qur’an and following the Sharia are insights for the hearts of people, as it is made a spirit and life for them. Whoever adheres to the Qur’an and Sunnah, deeply ponders them, and acts in accordance with them, carves out his insight, revives his heart, receives ‘guidance’³⁵⁷ from misguidance, and ‘mercy’³⁵⁸ in place of punishment, ‘... for a people who have certainty’³⁵⁹ in unseen matters.³⁶⁰

In explaining the mercy contained in the Qur’an, and that those whose insight is opened are those who perceive its effects, he said:

The mercy encompassed by the Compassionate is of two types: Self-mercy that does not part from the Self, and attribute-based mercy through which creation

receives sustenance, as it bestows mercy upon whomever He wills from among His slaves. Self-mercy is called Compassionateness (*Raḥmāniyyah*). Given that it is inseparable from the Self, it appears in the expression of presiding upon the Throne, as Allah says: ‘*The Compassionate One presided upon the Throne*’³⁶¹, and ‘... *then presided upon the Throne. The Compassionate One. ...*’³⁶². The author of *Aphorisms* hinted at this, saying: ‘O You Who presided with Your Compassionateness upon Your Throne, until the Throne vanished in Your Compassionateness...’.

Attribute-based mercy is that which provides sustenance and varies according to the diverse Beautiful Names, which are ninety-nine. As for the Graceful Names, mercy is apparent in them, while in the Majestic Names, mercy is the absence of Allah’s gentleness from its measure. Self-mercy fulfills one hundred; hence, the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Indeed, Allah created one hundred mercies, withholding ninety-nine and sent down one to the earth. With it, creatures show mutual mercy.’³⁶³ So, the one hundredth is sent to the earth to facilitate mercy among creatures.³⁶⁴

Insight Leads to Observing Resurrection Day

Ibn ‘Ajībah says in *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*: ‘If one’s insight were opened, he would witness the Resurrection at every moment, with alternating manifestations of perishing and permanence.’³⁶⁵

Insight Leads to Understanding Subtleties of Divine Decree

Imam Ghazālī says in *The Revival of Religious Sciences*:

If you say: ‘What is the benefit of supplication when destiny has no recourse?’, know that destiny includes the repelling of affliction through supplication. Thus, supplication is a means to repel affliction and attract mercy, just as armour is a means to repel arrows, and water is a means for plants to emerge from the earth. Just as armour repels arrows, so do supplication and affliction heal. Recognizing the destiny of Allah does not necessitate not carrying a weapon, as Allah says: ‘... *take your precautions ...*’³⁶⁶. Nor is it a condition that the earth not be watered after sowing seeds, lest it be said: ‘If the seedling was predestined to sprout, it will sprout, and if not, it will not.’ Rather, linking causes to their effects is the initial destiny (*qadā’*), which is like the twinkling of an eye or even closer. The arrangement of causes based on the consequences of means on a gradual and proportional basis is divine decree (*qadar*). He Who decreed good did so through a means, and He Who decreed evil also decreed a means of repelling it. Thus, there is no contradiction between these matters for those whose insight has been opened.³⁶⁷

Limiting Food Leads to Insight

Imam Ghazālī says: ‘We note that hunger has ten benefits. The first benefit is the purification of the heart, the kindling of zeal, and the deepening of insight. For satiation begets laziness and blinds the heart.’³⁶⁸

Heedlessness and Lusts Block Insight

Ibn ʿAjībah mentions in *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, quoting Qushayrī:

Nothing perceptible is veiled from The Real ﷻ, nor are any of His creatures hidden from Him. Rather, the veils are upon the eyes and insights of the seekers. Normal phenomena entails that He does not create in us the perception of what lies beyond the veils. Hence, hearts are enveloped in heedlessness, overwhelmed by bewilderment. Their insights are blocked, and their understandings are obscured. Above them are veils, both apparent and concealed. In the apparent aspect, the heavens serve as a barrier between us and the lofty abodes. Over hearts are veils and coverings, such as desires, aspirations, preoccupied intentions, and accumulated heedlessness.³⁶⁹

The Sphere of Developed Insight is Greater than the World

Shaʿrānī says in *al-Ṭabaqāt*: ‘When the mystic perceives with the eye of his insight, the world disappears from his sight because the gaze of his insight is vaster than it.’ He also used to say:

The worldly realm is where human meanings appear, and from the moment after death until the end of the Resurrection is where the illumination of faith appears, and from the beginning of entry into Paradise is where the secret of mystic insight appears.³⁷⁰

Categories of Insight and their Respective Eyes

Shaʿrānī says in *al-Ṭabaqāt*:

The reality of directing one's intentions towards Allah through one's secret lies in the unveiling of reality within the veil of knowledge. Then, Allah opens for him the door of divine care as he clings to Him. An indication of this is when Allah opens three eyes for him through his insight: one eye through which he grasps knowledge, another through which he perceives the lights of realities, and a third through which he perceives the lights of knowledge of the divine.

Similarly, there are three eyes: the eye of physical vision, the eye of insight, and the eye of the spirit. The eye of physical vision perceives the tangible (*maḥsūsāt*), the eye of insight perceives the mystical (*ma'naviyyāt*), and the eye of the spirit perceives the spiritual realm (*malakūtiyyāt*).³⁷¹

XV. MYSTIC INSIGHT INTO SPIRITUAL REALITIES (*MAʿRIFAT AL-ḤAQĀʾIQ*)

Given that we have explained the onset of insight as one of the types of illuminations that occur to some seekers on the path to Allah, it is now time to explain the impact and result of insight, which is none other than the illumination of ‘mystic insight into spiritual realities’ (*maʿrifat al-ḥaqāʾiq*). According to Sufi masters, mystic insight is the goal of the path. Allah ﷻ says in His Book: ‘*And I did not create the jinn and mankind except that they may worship Me.*’³⁷² Scholars of *tafsīr* say that the intended meaning of worship here is knowledge [of mystic insight].

The Meaning of Mystic Insight and Its Levels

Sufi masters have explained the meaning of mystic insight (*maʿrifah*) and its levels, such as what is mentioned by the author of *al-Taʿarruf*:

Junayd says: ‘Mystic insight is of two types: the mystic insight acquaintance (*taʿarruf*) and the mystic insight of apprising (*taʿrīf*).’ Acquaintance means that Allah ﷻ acquaints them with Himself and acquaints them with things through Himself, as Abraham عليه السلام, said: ‘... *I love not those that set ...*’³⁷³ Apprising is when He shows them the effects of His power in the horizons and their souls, then He grants them

a subtlety indicating to them that He is the Creator. This is the mystic insight of common believers, while the former is the mystic insight of the elite, and everyone who has not known Him in reality except through Him. This is as Muhammad ibn Wāsi^c has said: ‘I have not seen anything but I have seen Allah through it.’ Others said: ‘I have not seen anything but I have seen Allah before it.’³⁷⁴

The Great Sheikh  says in *al-Futūḥāt*:

According to Sufis, mystic insight is a proof. Thus, every mystic insight that is only attained through action, piety, and travelling the path is a mystic insight. This is because it is the result of a verified disclosure that does not admit doubt, unlike knowledge obtained by intellectual scrutiny, which is never safe from doubt and confusion and disputed conclusions.³⁷⁵

The Definition of Realities According to Sufi Masters

The mystic master, Ibn ‘Ajībah, says: “‘Realities’ is the plural of ‘reality’, and it is the perception of knowing things as they truly are in their original state.”³⁷⁶ The mystic, Sha^c-rānī says, quoting our master Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī:

Realities are the established meanings found in hearts, what has been disclosed to them, and what has emerged from the unseen. They are gifts from Allah the Exalted, and marvels, through which they attain righteousness and obedience. Their evidence lies in the words of the Prophet  to Ḥarītha: ‘In what state did you wake up?’ He said: ‘I woke up as a true believer.’³⁷⁷

Spiritual Realities: Details and How They Appear

Ibn ʿAjībah says:

Realities are what are transmitted to the heart of the mystic in terms of the manifestations of sciences, judgements, and mystic insights. Sometimes they are sciences, sometimes judgements, or mystic insights, and sometimes they are a disclosure of the unseen, whether past or present. The wisdom of such a soul, when it is purified and clarified from the dimness of senses, will mostly have truth manifest in it. Such truths might be transmitted during manifestation in a general sense, and the person then restricts them as they manifested. Then he contemplates them, and their meanings become clear to him. After awareness, which is preservation, the explanation comes.³⁷⁸

The Condition for Knowledge of Spiritual Realities

The mystic, Shaʿrānī, says in *al-Ṭabaqāt*:

When heedless hearts hear of realities, they recoil. Nothing remains firm to hear of realities except a heart that The Real has intended to raise. He used to say: ‘A saint never manifests in this world through his reality. Rather, he only manifests through his knowledge, not his person. On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will manifest them through their realities.’³⁷⁹

A Heart Prepared to Know Spiritual Realities

The Proof of Islam, Ghazālī, mentions in *The Revival of Religious Sciences* that a heart capable of realizing the truths is like a mirror, and, just as there are reasons that prevent the appearance of images in a mirror, so too are there several reasons that prevent knowing realities. Later,

he says that, if it were not for these reasons, every heart would be able to perceive these realities. He said: ‘Otherwise, every heart bears the natural disposition to acquire knowledge of realities, for it is a noble divine matter that distinguishes itself from all other jewels of the world with this quality and honour.’³⁸⁰

Knowing The Reality of Oneself is Knowing Allah

The mystic, Ibn ‘Ajībah, says:

Whoever knows the reality of himself, knows that it is one of the manifestations of The Real, and for whom illusions have disappeared from the perception of his existence, has known his Lord and witnessed Him. So, seek knowledge in yourself, for the matter is not external to you.³⁸¹

The Muhammadan Reality is The Reality of All Realities

Sheikh Sirhindī Fārūqī says in *al-Maktūbāt*:

The arrival of the flow [of insight] to the seeker, through the mediation of the Best of Mankind ﷺ and his intervention, is only before the reality of the Muhammadan seeker conforms to the Muhammadan reality, and before it is united with it. When the union between these two realities occurs in the stations of ascent through following him ﷺ perfectly, or rather, through pure grace, the mediation is removed from in between, for mediation is only necessary between different things. In union, there is neither mediator nor one on whose behalf there is mediation, nor a veil, nor the veiled. Rather, interaction during the station of union is through partnership but, since the seeker is subordinate, supplementary and parasitic, it

is necessary that this partnership be one of a servant and his master.

To explain what I mean by the seeker's reality conforming to his reality ﷺ, and that they are united: The Muhammadan reality encompasses all realities, and it is called The Reality of All Realities. The realities of others are like its parts or components, because if the seeker is Muhammadan, then his reality is like a part of that whole, and part-and-parcel of it.³⁸²

These aforementioned are some of what Sufi masters mention regarding mystic insights. May Allah benefit us through their knowledge in both worlds.

XVI. COSMIC AGENCY (*TAŞRĪF*) OR THE FULFILLMENT OF PRAYERS

One of the types of illuminations conveyed by Sufi masters regarding saints and the righteous people of Allah is what is called ‘cosmic agency’. For example, it is said: ‘This saint is one of the people of cosmic agency.’ Thus, it is a well-known term among Sufi masters. Despite its popularity and the clarity of its meaning among them, many enemies of Sufism have maligned Sufis because of it, accusing them of violating the Sharia or deviating from the requirements of correct belief. They attribute to them the claim that the saints of Allah are partners with Allah in cosmic agency or His deputies in this regard. ‘... *Dreadful is the word that comes out of their mouths. ...*’³⁸³ Sufi masters do not attribute lies to Allah nor do they say anything contrary to the Sharia or creed. Rather, these haters of Sufism and its people have indulged in lying and slander without providing a single shred of evidence for their false assertion.

The Evidence of Cosmic Agency from the Book of Allah

This station is referenced in the Book of Allah: ‘*The one who had knowledge of the Scripture said: “I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you.” ...*’³⁸⁴. He was

one of the slaves of Allah to whom Allah granted knowledge and sainthood, so he attained the status of cosmic agency by the permission of Allah in the presence of Solomon عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, as he was a student and follower of the Prophet Solomon عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ.

One of those who indicated that what happened to this slave, named Āṣif ibn Barkhiya, is a type of cosmic agency is the Great Sheikh in *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, where he says:

The superiority of the human world over that of the jinn in terms of the secrets of the cosmic agency and properties of things is known through temporal necessity: the movement of the eye towards the object of perception is faster than the rising of someone from his seat, because the movement of sight in perception is faster than the movement of the body in physical motion. Indeed, the time in which sight moves is the same time that relates to the viewer, despite the distance between the viewer and the object viewed. The moment of opening one's eyes is the moment of connection with the sphere of the fixed stars, while the moment of turning one's gaze back to oneself is a moment of not perceiving. However, rising from the station of humanity is not like this; it does not possess this speed.

Thus, Āṣif ibn Barkhiya was more perfected in action than the jinn. The words of Āṣif ibn Barkhiya were the same as the act in a single moment. In that moment, Solomon عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ saw the throne of Bilqīs stationed with him, so as not to imagine that he perceived it while it was in its place without moving.³⁸⁵

The Lexical and Terminological Meanings of Cosmic Agency

Lexically, cosmic agency is the diversion of something from one direction to another, like the diversion of winds and the diversion of affairs.

Terminologically, based on the discourse of Sufi masters, we can say that the meaning of cosmic agency for them is that Allah make the will of the saint a means for the occurrence of something in the cosmos. In other words, Allah causes His decree to unfold in a matter while the will of a saint is connected to its occurrence. Thus, this falls under the category of marvels, and also under the category of prayers that are answered immediately.

Sheikh Muhammad Zakī Ibrāhīm's Exposition of the Meaning of Cosmic Agency

Perhaps the best one to elaborate on the concept of cosmic agency among Sufi masters is Imam Muhammad Zakī al-Dīn Ibrāhīm رحمته الله, when he said:

Those who say that someone is from the people of cosmic agency, for example, mean that he is among those favoured by Allah and accepted by Him, and that he is among those whose prayers are answered, whether spoken with the tongue, directed through the heart, or moved by the will, driving his aspiration to its pinnacle, as mentioned in the sound hadith: 'And if he asks of Me, I shall surely give it to him; and if he seeks refuge in Me, I shall surely grant him refuge,'³⁸⁶ as well as the hadith: 'Whoever is too preoccupied with my remembrance to ask Me, I shall grant him better than what I give those who ask.'³⁸⁷ Similarly, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Perhaps a disheveled, dusty person in two worn-out garments, who is

turned away from every door—were he to swear an oath by Allah, He would surely fulfill his oath.’³⁸⁸

This is what Sufi masters mean when they say: ‘Allah has slaves that, when they will, He wills.’ This is the interpretation of His saying: ‘... *Call on Me and I will respond to you.* ...’³⁸⁹, so understand it. Thus, the meaning of cosmic agency here is: Allah’s favour upon His slave by making His decree occur as a result of the will of the saints in terms of their verbal supplication, their heart’s direction, or the movement of their spiritual will. This is an implementation of the arrangement of causes and effects according to what is in the Preserved Tablet and the Mother of the Book.

Cosmic Agency is outwardly and inwardly from Allah. The slave does not direct anything with Allah, but Allah, in His grace, directs things as they are in His knowledge, according to the will of His saints and beloved ones, outwardly only, as an execution of His preceding will. Those who are recipients of this cosmic agency are referred to as ‘people of divine grace’, whom Allah honors by fulfilling their outward will, which is, in reality, the inward will of Allah concerning what they seek from the cosmos, whether it be through speech, action, or aspiration.

By aspiration, many Sufis mean the movement of the spiritual will that Allah makes a common means for the actions of beings through His power in order to achieve what is desired for His righteous slaves, outwardly, in accordance with pre-eternal knowledge. The desired outcome is His will, and the command is His command. He executes it as He pleases, through whomever He wills.

In other words, Allah makes His righteous slave himself an instrument for executing the eternal divine will, which may appear in the form of the human slave's will as perceived by people. For example, Jesus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام used to heal the blind and the leper, and revive the dead—by the permission of Allah—and inform them of what they eat and store in their homes, yet he was only a slave favoured by Allah, with no authority of his own. Rather, Allah made the will of this slave a common means in His prior knowledge and made him a means to execute His prior divine will, which was ignited by the human slave's will in accordance with pre-eternal knowledge, thus flowing from the realm of the unseen to the realm of the witnessed.

Among the shameful lies and mythical fabrications—as well as being a pretext for disbelief, polytheism, and heresy—is the assertion that a saint, no matter how elevated his status, can manipulate the cosmos as he pleases, that Allah delegated authority to the saint to do as he pleases, or that Allah, after creating the universe, handed it over to the saints to manage as they see fit.³⁹⁰

Thus, as we have seen, Sheikh Muhammad Zakī Ibrāhīm clarified the meaning of cosmic agency according to Sufi masters in a manner consistent with the provisions of Islamic law and its evidence. He also refuted those who falsely claim that Sufi masters believe in the delegation of the agency of the universe to anyone, regardless of his status or importance.

On this basis, it is possible to read and understand the texts found in the biographies of some saints as indicating

that they were granted the marvel of cosmic agency, where their wills coincided with divine decrees and—as a result of their supplications or their orientation towards Allah—the outcomes of affairs were realized.

Sufi Citations on the Cosmic Agency of Some Saints

Cosmic Agency Against Oppressors

In *al-‘Uhūd al-Muḥammadiyyah*, Sha‘rānī quotes ‘Alī Khawwāṣ̣ as having said:

Whoever Allah has not granted cosmic agency against oppressors in terms of seclusion, guardianship, the transformation of blessings, and their impact on people’s bodies, then he has no right to frequent their presence, whether seeking intercession or otherwise. This is especially true in this time when dervishes are regarded by oppressors as the most despicable of people, and they do not accept intercession from them, whether because the dervishes do not adhere to the principles of the righteous, or because people do not deserve intercession on their behalf.

I kept the company of a group of rulers while being uninterested in their wealth, and they did not accept my intercession until they had withdrawn or passed away. So, my brother, adopt the stance of non-interest regarding their wealth and gifts, then intercede before them day and night, as that will not harm you, Allah willing.

Sīdī Sheikh Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī   interceded a hundred times before the Sultan, but the Sultan rejected his requests. When he returned after the hundredth time, the Sultan offered him silver coins, but he refused and pointed to the round stones in front

of the Sultan, which turned into gold. The Sultan sought forgiveness for opposing the Sheikh and granted him all of his requests.³⁹¹

Cosmic Agency to Mend the Hearts of the Downtrodden

In *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, in the section on the biography of Sheikh Farghal, buried in Abu Tij in Upper Egypt, Sha‘rānī mentions:

He was one of the spiritually accomplished men and companions of cosmic agency. Among his miracles ﷺ is that a woman wanted coconuts, and they could not be found in Egypt. He told Mukhaymir: ‘O Mukhaymir, enter space for spiritual seclusion and pick five coconuts from the tree you find inside.’ So, he entered and found a coconut tree, then picked five coconuts from it. Later, he entered it again but did not find a tree.³⁹²

Cosmic Agency Can Occur at the Hands of One Who is not a Spiritual Pole (Qutb)

Also, in *al-Ṭabaqāt*, the biography of Sheikh ‘Alī Khawwās mentions:

He ﷺ was asked about a group of spiritual guides, such as Aḥmad Zāhid, Madyan, and their likes رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ: were they Poles? He said: ‘No, indeed. Rather, they are like the doormen of a king: no one enters upon him except with their permission and knowledge. They teach people the proper etiquette of the Sharia and realities. Whatever miraculous occurrences and spiritual states appear in them are due to the purity of their spirits, their sincerity, their abundant vigilance, and their striving. As for polehood,

no one dares enter that hallowed station other than those who are endowed with it.

Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī ؒ elucidated these matters, saying: ‘There are sixteen worlds; this world and the Hereafter are one of these worlds.’ He was asked: ‘Is the manifestation that appears through the hands of these spiritual guides grounded, like that of a Pole, or not?’ He ؒ said: ‘They are not grounded in it. Rather, it comes through the process of down-pour upon them from the spheres that are above them, up to the Pole.’

To clarify, when Allah the Exalted intends to send down a severe affliction, for example, the first to receive it is the Pole, who accepts it with humility and fear. He then waits for what Allah the Exalted manifests in the tablets of obliteration and affirmation that are specific to dispatch and dismissal. If obliteration appears to him, he executes the decree of Allah and implements it in the world through the intermediaries of the spiritual guides who are its custodians. They execute it without knowing that the matter has flown down upon them. If affirmation appears to him, he pushes it towards the group most closely associated with him, these being the two Imams. They bear it along with him, then they transfer it—if it is not lifted—to those most closely associated with them. This continues until it descends upon all the companions of his circle collectively. If it is not lifted, the Peerless (*Afrād*; s: *Fard*) and other mystics divide it up among the believers until Allah ؒ elevates it through their bearing it.

If these individuals did not bear this from the

world, it would vanish in the blink of an eye. Allah says: ‘... *Had God not repelled people some by means of others, the earth would have surely been corrupted ...*’³⁹³, and: ‘*He created the heavens without any pillars that you can see ...*’³⁹⁴, indicating the Pole, who is the metaphysical pillar holding the heavens. There is also an indication of his being concealed in this world.³⁹⁵

Why Saints do not Destroy the Disbelievers

In *al-Ibrīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak states: ‘One day, I asked him ﷺ: “The people of cosmic agency رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ have the ability to destroy the disbelievers wherever they are. So, why do they leave them to their disbelief and their worship of other than Allah Almighty? Shouldn’t their destruction be obligatory?!”’ He ﷺ looked backwards momentarily and replied:

A saint is capable at this moment of destroying this land entirely, and yet, when he finds himself in a battle between Muslims and disbelievers, it is forbidden for him to use that secret against the disbelievers. Rather, he fights them using the common methods of warfare, such as striking with a sword, thrusting with a lance, and similar actions, following the example of the Prophet ﷺ. ... A ship of Muslims, upon which there were two saints, encountered a ship of disbelievers. When a battle broke out between them, one of the saints, who was young, exercised the secret of cosmic agency against the other ship. A fire broke out in the ship of disbelievers while they watched, and there was no common cause for it through which he could conceal his agency. Instead, the ship

burned without a visible cause. When the other saint, who was older, saw what the first one did, he punished him.

Cosmic agency against the disbelievers—may Allah destroy them—is not permissible for its possessor, because in that state, he is outside the realm of humanity, on account of his reality, and has joined another realm. Just as it is not permissible for the high-ranking angels, for example, to exercise cosmic agency against them with their power, it is likewise not permissible for the possessor of this secret to do so with his power. Rather, the affairs that maintain them and preserve their livelihood appear at his hands, just as there are guardians from among the angels who oversee their affairs from the time they were born until they perish. In summary, the disbelievers—may Allah destroy them—are from the realm of humanity, so only what is customary in the human realm is used against them in battle and their destruction; and Allah knows best.³⁹⁶

Why One Engrossed in Allah (Majdhūb) does not Have Cosmic Agency

Al-Ibrīz also states:

I asked him ﷺ about those engrossed in Allah: ‘Do they have any involvement in the divine court? Do they exercise cosmic agency like those who are not engrossed?’ He ﷺ said: ‘They have no involvement in the divine court, nor do they exercise cosmic agency. Were cosmic agency to reach them, people would perish.’ I asked: ‘When will it reach them?’ He said: ‘At the time of the emergence of the Antichrist,

may Allah curse him, cosmic agency falls into their hands. The chief of the divine court among them will not possess rational discernment; so, a flaw will occur in the exercise of cosmic agency, and that will become a cause for the emergence of the Antichrist.³⁹⁷

Cosmic Agency is an Act of Allah, not the Saint

Al-Ibrīz also states:

I asked him ﷺ about our master al-Khaḍīr, whether he is a Prophet, as some scholars have opined, to the extent that the eminent scholar Ibn Ḥajar said in his commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: ‘His prophethood should be believed lest a non-Prophet be more knowledgeable than a Prophet.’ He ﷺ said:

He is not a Prophet. Rather, he is a slave whom Allah has honoured with knowledge and entrusted with cosmic agency in those he is responsible for. He has been granted the perfection of cosmic agency and consummate mystic insight that is granted to the Helper (*Ghawth*) of this nation. Al-Khaḍīr attained this without a mentor or spiritual path, for Allah Almighty bestowed it upon him to begin with. This is his station, which does not reach the level of prophethood or messengership. Al-Khaḍīr’s knowledge in these matters to the exclusion of Moses does not necessitate a non-Prophet being more knowledgeable than a Prophet, for, as was mentioned, Moses was preoccupied with observation of The Real, which has no equivalent or substitute. Thus, there is no need to believe in his prophethood.

I said: ‘Those who claim his prophethood have relied on the statement of Allah Almighty: “... *And I did not do it of my own accord. This is the interpretation of that over which you could not maintain patience.*”³⁹⁸ He ﷺ said: ‘No Helper, Pole, or anyone else among the possessors of cosmic agency does anything, nor exercises cosmic agency in an event, except by the command of Allah. That is not prophethood or messengership, but most people know not.’³⁹⁹

Cosmic Disposal to Fulfill the Needs of Saints’ Visitors
Al-Ibrīz also states:

Sīdī Yaḥyā, who was also one of the Poles, was extremely committed to the outward and inward aspects of the Sharia of the Prophet ﷺ. He was in charge of cosmic agency for everyone who visited the pious deceased. He would look into their needs and fulfill whatever Allah had decreed for him of them.

He (i.e., Dabbāgh) ﷺ told me this when I spoke to him about some deceased saints who are visited by many people, and at whose graves benefit appeared and the sick were healed. He added:

The hearts of the nation of Muhammad ﷺ have a great status with Allah. Were they to gather at a place where no one is buried while thinking there is a saint there, and were they to supplicate to Allah Most High at that place, then Allah Almighty would hasten to answer them. Today (i.e., the day of the conversation), Sīdī Yaḥyā is the one in charge of cosmic agency for such matters. This may also happen

with the living saints. A man may be notorious for his sainthood among people, and needs may be fulfilled by interceding to Allah through him, while, in fact, he has no share of sainthood. Rather, the needs of the supplicant are fulfilled by the possessors of cosmic agency رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ who have established that man in the image of a saint to gather the people of darkness like him around him, while it is they who exercise cosmic agency according to fate. In the eyes of commoners, he is like a scarecrow that a landowner places in his field to scare away birds: they think the scarecrow is a man, so they flee from it. This is actually the act of the landowner, not the scarecrow. Similarly, the possessors of cosmic agency رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ prop up that man and gather the people of darkness like him around him, while the one who with cosmic agency towards them is hidden from them. He does not appear to them because the truth is beyond their comprehension.⁴⁰⁰

Cosmic Disposal: Allah's Gift to the Prophet ﷺ through His Nation

Sheikh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Dabbāgh says:

Everything that Solomon عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ was given in his kingdom, whatever was subjugated for David عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, and all honours granted to Jesus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, Allah Almighty granted all of this and more to the people of cosmic agency from the nation of the Prophet ﷺ. Allah has subjugated for them the jinn, humans, devils, winds, angels, and, indeed, all that is in the

worlds altogether. He has granted them the ability to cure the blind, lepers, and to revive the dead. However, it is an unseen and veiled affair that is not apparent to people lest they rely on them and forget their Lord ﷻ. All of this was granted to the people of cosmic agency due to the auspiciousness of the Prophet ﷺ. All of these are among his miracles ﷻ.⁴⁰¹

Why Some Disciples Have Cosmic Disposal while their Sheikhs Do Not

In *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, it says:

Question 131: How did Solomon's عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام companion gain what he did while it was kept from Solomon عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام?

Answer: Through his associative assembly and discipleship, and that the sheikh be known on account of what happened where he was, because of him, and was kept from Solomon, in his presence,⁴⁰² in place of wasting time. There is a time for everything. This was a time for him to be a Messenger, for he was host to an attendance, focused on the delegation sent to him. Meanwhile, his companion, by virtue of being in his associative assembly, is fully realized through it upon a single command. He then manifested what Solomon was kept from acting upon out of reverence for his standing عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام in the eyes of the people of Bilqīs and all his companions. What was kept from Solomon was not the knowledge of it, but rather, permission to act upon it, as it was unbecoming for his status.

Question 134: What is the reason for that?

Answer: To inform others that when the following

disciple becomes so esteemed, what can you surmise about the master? Thus, the master's status remains unknown, greatly revered. Had it been manifested by Solomon, it would have suggested that this was his ultimate achievement. Undoubtedly, Solomon's demeanor at that time, and Allah knows best, was decorum in which he did not wish cosmic agency to have any share. As Abū Sa'ūd said in a lengthy story: 'I was given cosmic agency and left it out of classiness.' The role of a Prophet is demonstrating, and its manifestation at the hands of his companion is more perfect in his right when this follower is a believer in him, stands before him at his service, and is under his command and prohibition. Thus, the desire for such a Messenger is even greater when they see his blessings benefitting his followers. They enter into his fold expecting to have what this follower has by participating in his affairs, as the ego is driven by greed, love for leadership, and advancement.⁴⁰³

Degrees of Sainthood and Cosmic Agency in Some to the Exclusion of Others

Sheikh Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī says in *al-Futūḥāt*:

For the possessors of this station, there is cosmic agency and administration in the world. The first group among them left administration of His creation to Him, though The Real had empowered and assigned it to them, not as a command but as empowerment. Instead, they donned their cloaks and entered the pavilions of the unseen, concealing themselves through the veils of distributed returns, and adhered to worship and neediness. They are the accomplished,

the down-to-earth, easy-going, blameless Malāmatīs. Abū Saʿūd was one of them. He was among those who obeyed Allah's command in His saying: '... so take Him for a Guardian'⁴⁰⁴. The trustee has the authority to act, so if a command was given, he complied with it.

As for ʿAbd al-Qādir, it was evident from his state that he was ordered to act. Thus, this characteristic was manifest in him. This is the presumption regarding such individuals. Muhammad Awānī, on the other hand, was said to have been granted cosmic agency by Allah, which he accepted, and which he exercised without being commanded to do so. Consequently, he was tested, and his mystic insight was diminished commensurate to the level attained by Abū Saʿūd. Therefore, Abū Saʿūd spoke with the language of the first station of the elite, and they were called Poles due to their permanence. Given that this station of worship revolves around them, their Polehood indicates that they have a group under their command, being their leaders and Poles for them. They are nobler and superior than this. They do not inherently possess leadership due to their understanding of their servitude.⁴⁰⁵

Thus, it is clear from these statements that the station of cosmic agency is one of the illuminations bestowed by Allah upon some of His saints, and it is an act of divine power that occurs according to divine will. There is no superiority for some saints over others in this regard, for the matter belongs to Allah before and after.

XVII. SPEAKING IN TONGUES (*LUGHĀT*)

Among the divine illuminations that Allah manifests to some of His saints is inspiring them with the knowledge of certain celestial tongues that have specific connotations for particular meanings. Some of the slaves of Allah come to know these tongues without being taught them in reality.

Through these tongues, they grasp some of Allah's secrets in creation. These languages are not part of the common languages known to people. Rather, they are special languages that resonate with them and are manifested within them through divine grace.

Sufi masters have mentioned that among the knowledge and insights Allah bestows upon His saints is the knowledge of various languages, whether human languages or languages of the Highest Realm, among other special languages. Some mentions follow:

Abū ʿAbbās Mursī states: 'When a man perfects his speech in all languages, and knows all tongues, it is by inspiration from Allah Almighty.'⁴⁰⁶

Ibn ʿAjībah mentions in his *tafsīr*:

Allah did not send a saint inviting others except in the language of his people. Sometimes, custom is overridden for him, and he is acquainted with all languages,

as Mursī ؒ said: ‘Whoever reaches this station, nothing is hidden from him.’ This is a type of honour, as the Prophet ﷺ used to address every people in their own language, which was a miracle for him ﷺ. His knowledge expanded ؒ, encompassing the realities of things, their names and meanings, and the principles and branches of language. He knew what our master, Adam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ knew, or even more. Ibn Mashīsh alluded to this in his famous supplication, saying: ‘And all knowledge given to Adam descended, so he surpassed all creatures.’ Būṣīrī says in his poem:

*You have the essence of knowledge from
the Knower of the Unseen
And from it, Adam had the names.⁴⁰⁷*

As for the language through which knowledge is attained, it is not like other languages known to humans; it is a special language known by saints and Poles. Some scholars refer to it as ‘Syriac’, by which they do not intend the language known to linguists, and which belongs to the Semitic language group, including Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic. There are differences between the known rules and meanings of Syriac and this language that has been transmitted from these saints and Poles.

Among those who alluded to this language is Imam ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Sha’rānī ؒ. He said, in elucidating the sciences which Allah discloses to some saints:

Among them is the knowledge of the names, which is obscure to creation but not to the select few among the saints, such as what the companion of Solomon عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ attained. What caused the veiling of that knowledge from Solomon عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ? What did his

companion discern from the names, whether in terms of their letters or their meanings? Where is the door to these names that were hidden from creation but not from the select few? What are their vestments, what are their letters, and where are the letters?⁴⁰⁸

He also said: ‘Among the blessed knowledge derived from blessed seclusion is the knowledge of the names of creation, and, from them, the knowledge of the letters of creation.’⁴⁰⁹

Passages from Al-Ibrīz

Among those who spoke most extensively on this language used by Sufi masters is Sīdī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Dabbāgh in *al-Ibrīz*, including:

The Syriac language is the language of spirits, and through it, the saints who are among the people of the court converse among themselves, for it is abbreviated and carries numerous meanings that cannot be conveyed by its words in any other language. So, I asked: ‘Does Arabic convey the same as Syriac in this regard?’ He ﷺ said: ‘Arabic conveys it only to the extent found in the Noble Qur’an. For when the meanings conveyed in Syriac are gathered in Arabic words, they become more eloquent and beautiful than in Syriac. Allah knows best.’

I heard him ﷺ say: ‘All languages are inferior to Syriac, because speech in every language except Syriac is composed of words, not alphabetical letters. In Syriac, speech is composed of alphabetical letters, and each alphabetical letter in Syriac signifies a useful meaning. So, when one letter is combined with another, the benefit of speech is obtained from them. Whoever understands the meaning associated with

each letter can easily grasp the essence of Syriac and can speak it as he wishes, thus attaining knowledge of the secrets of letters. This is a great knowledge that Allah has veiled from minds as a mercy to people, lest they come to know wisdom while in their darkness and perish. We ask Allah for safety, and Allah knows best.’

I also heard him ﷺ say: ‘Syriac is prevalent in all languages like water flowing through a branch, because the alphabetical letters of each word in every language are interpreted in Syriac and incorporated into it with their specific meanings indicated beforehand. For example, in Arabic, ‘Aḥmad’ denotes the named entity. In Syriac, the a-vowelled *hamzah* at the beginning denotes a meaning, the unvowelled *ḥā*’ denotes a meaning, the a-vowelled *mīm* denotes a meaning, and the u-vowelled *dāl* denotes a different meaning than if it is a-vowelled. Likewise, ‘Muhammad’ denotes the named entity in Arabic, while in Syriac, the *mīm* denotes a meaning, the a-vowelled *ḥā*’ denotes a meaning, the doubled *mīm* denotes a meaning, and the *dāl* at the end denotes a meaning. This applies to ‘Zayd’, ‘Amr’, ‘man’, ‘woman’, and other concepts not limited to the Arabic language. Each of its alphabetical letters has specific meanings in Syriac, as do the rules of each language. ...

So, Syriac is the root of all languages, and other languages are superimposed upon it. The reason for their superimposition is the ignorance that engulfed the children of Adam. The structure of Syriac and the basis of communication in it is pure knowledge, without ignorance, so that the meanings are known

to the speakers before speaking. Therefore, they agreed that they would indicate meanings with alphabetical letters as a means of abbreviation, because their aim was to delve into meanings, not to indicate what is already known. Indeed, if it were possible for them to convey meanings without those letters, they would not have used them at all. Therefore, only the people of great disclosure and those among the spirits created with innate knowledge and understanding, as well as the angels who were granted knowledge, can speak it. When you see them speaking it, you will see them indicating with one or two letters, or with one or two words, what others indicate with a book or two.⁴¹⁰

Also in *al-Ibrīz*:

I asked him ﷺ about the questioning in the grave, whether it is in Syriac or in another language, as Suyūṭī mentioned in his poem:

*Among the strange things your own eyes will see
Is that the questioning in the grave is in Syriac.*

The commentator explained this by saying that the poet said his book, *Sharḥ al-Ṣudūr bi Aḥwāl al-Mawtā wa al-Qubūr*: ‘It is mentioned in the fatwas of Shaykh al-Islam Bulqīnī that the deceased answers the questions in Syriac.’ The poet adds: ‘I have not come across any supporting chain of narrators for this.’ When Ibn Ḥajar was asked about this, he said: ‘The apparent meaning of the hadith is that it is in the Arabic language. However, it is possible that each person is addressed in their own language, and this interpretation is plausible.’

He ﷺ said: ‘Yes, the questioning in the grave is in Syriac because it is the language of angels and spirits. Among the angels are the angels of questioning, and the deceased answers their questions with his spirit, which speaks in Syriac like all other spirits. When the spirit is relieved of the veil of the body, it returns to the deceased in its original state.’

He continued: ‘As for an enlightened saint, he is granted a great breakthrough, and he speaks it without having learned it beforehand, because he acts in accordance with his spirit. Thus, what do you think of the deceased? There is no difficulty for him in speaking it.’⁴¹¹

He also said: Whoever knows Syriac and the secrets of letters, this helps him understand the inner meanings of the Qur’an greatly, the knowledge of what is in the world of spirits, what is in this abode, what is in the hereafter, what is in the heavens, and what is on earth, what is in the Throne, and beyond. They know that the meanings of the Noble Qur’an to which it refers are endless. Thus, they understand the meaning of His saying ﷻ: ‘... *We have neglected nothing in the Book ...*’⁴¹². And Allah ﷻ knows best.⁴¹³

Thus, the sheikh continued to mention the characteristics of this language, which is the language of the spirits, as he stated. He even went on to interpret some expressions attributed to some saints that are not understood based on the rules of Arabic and which belong to this language. He did so in his explanation of the words of Imam Dasūqī ﷺ. His student Aḥmad ibn Mubārak reported:

Some of our companions from the elect of Tlemcen

came to us and told me that they heard some pilgrims to the Sacred House of Allah saying that they visited the grave of Sīdī Ibrāhīm Dasūqī, may Allah benefit us through him. Sheikh Ibrāhīm Dasūqī, may Allah benefit us through him, stood at his grave, and taught us a supplication, which is this: ‘In the name of the Deity, the Great Creator. He is a protective barrier from what I fear and caution against. There is no power for a creature alongside the power of the Creator, as He restrains it with the bridle of His power. *Aḥmā Ḥamīthā. Aṭmā Ṭamīthā*. Truly, Allah is Strong, Mighty. *Hā Mīm ‘Ayn Sīn Qāf* is our protection. *Kāf Hā Yā ‘Ayn Sīn Qāf* is our sufficiency. Allah will suffice you against them; He is the Hearer, the Knower. And there is no might nor power except with Allah, the Exalted, the Supreme.’

My companion, the Tlemcenian, the Hajji, the pure merchant, my master, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ibrāhīm, from the sons of Ibn Ibrāhīm residing in Tlemcen, said: ‘My brother Hajji Muhammad ibn Ibrāhīm—given that he did not know the meaning of these two expressions: “*Aḥmā Ḥamīthā. Aṭmā Ṭamīthā*”—he refrained from this supplication and said: “I do not know their meaning, and perhaps they contain something I dislike.”’ Thus, he asked me about the meaning of the two expressions. I asked our sheikh ﷺ about their meaning, and he immediately replied: ‘No one today speaks with these two words on the face of the earth. So where would you know them from?’

I told him the story, and he said: ‘Yes, our master Ibrāhīm Dasūqī is one of the greatest of the righteous,

and among the people of great breakthrough. He and others like him speak with these expressions.’ Then he said:

They are two expressions from Syriac. As for ‘*Aḥmā*’, it means: ‘O Possessor’, and contained in its secret is: ‘O Possessor of the Great Dominion, the Greatest, the Living, the Sustainer.’ ‘*Ḥamūthā*’ indicates His sovereignty. It is like saying: ‘O Possessor of Secrets, O Possessor of Lights, O Possessor of Night and Day, O Possessor of Flowing Clouds, O Possessor of Suns and Moons, O Possessor of Giving and Withholding, O Possessor of Lowering and Raising, O Possessor of Everything Living, O Possessor of Everything.’ In this name, there is a wondrous secret that cannot be expressed by the pen or speech.

As for His saying ‘*Aṭmā*’, it is like someone describing Him 𐌌 with greatness, pride, domination, victory, glory, and uniqueness in all of this. It is as if he is saying: ‘O Knower of Everything, O You Capable of Everything, O You Who Wills of Everything, O Arranger of Everything, O Subduer of Everything, and O You Whom weakness does not approach, and no deficiency is imagined in His approaching.’ ‘*Ṭamīthā*’ refers to the things that He controls and the possibilities in which He does whatever He wills and judges as He pleases. Glory be to Him. There is no deity except Him.

And Allah knows best.⁴¹⁴

Also found in the words of saints is what appears in some litanies by the Pole, Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī ؒ, such as his words in the Litany of Clemency: ‘*Aḥunun Adumma Ḥamma Hā’un Āmīn*’, and his words in the Litany of the Circle: ‘*Ṭahawurun*’, ‘*Bad‘aqun*’, ‘*Maḥbabahun*’, ‘*Saqafā-ṭīsun*’, ‘*Saqāṭīmun*’, and similar words in his litanies ؒ.

Some scholars have disclosed the origin of these words chosen by Imam Shādhilī for supplication and invocation, such as Sheikh Ibn ‘Abbād Maḥallī Shāfi‘ī, one of the scholars of the twelfth century AH. In *al-Mafākhir al-‘Aliyah fī al-Ma’āthir al-Shādhiliyyah*, he writes: ‘Know that these are from the names of Allah Almighty, not in the language of the worldly or spiritual realms, nor in any language of the worlds, but they are names of omnipotence. So, whoever claims Singular Polehood, let him explain this language and its people to us ...’⁴¹⁵

He ؒ interpreted some of these names, saying:

‘*Ṭahawurun*’: The Perfect in His Essence, Illuminating His Attributes. ‘*Bad‘aqun*’: The Eternal, in whom everything remains. ‘*Maḥbabahun*’: The Clarifier of Wisdoms and the Giver of Graces. ‘*Ṣūrahun*’: The One Whose majesty overwhelms every tyrant. ‘*Maḥbabahun*’: This is the name of magnificence. ‘*Saqafā-ṭīsun*’: Known as Key of the Unseen. ‘*Saqāṭīmun*’: The name of majesty that leads to the key of treasures and the station of consummate perfection. As for the name ‘*Aḥunun Adumma Ḥamma Hā’un Āmīn*’, the narration from the sheikh differs about it. Some say it is a portion of the Supreme Name, which when invoked, prayers are answered, and when asked on account of, gifts are given. Others say that it is the Supreme Name, as mentioned by Imam Shādhilī.⁴¹⁶

Through the foregoing explanation, it is clear that this is a type of illumination where some saints and righteous people have access to specific languages from the spiritual world that carry some secrets of creation or how the Creator deals with His creation in His exaltedness.

XVIII. ASTRAL PROJECTION (AL-ṬARḤ AL-RŪḤĪ)

The issue of the spirit in Islamic creed is one of the subjects that the science of theology concerns itself with, and scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah have followed two approaches in explaining its reality, as indicated by Imam Laqānī in his commentary on *Jawharat al-Tawḥīd*:

*We do not delve into the spirit when nothing has
been mentioned
Explicitly from the Lawgiver, though we find
With Mālik: It's a form, like the body.
So suffice yourself with this wording with this chain
of narrators.*

Sheikh ʿAbd al-Salām Laqānī says in his explanation of *Jawharat al-Tawḥīd*:

We, the majority of exacting scholars, do not delve into clarifying the reality of the spirit, its essence, and its distinctive attributes, because it is difficult to ascertain them due to the absence of direct perception or transmission, and they are only known by divine revelation. He pointed out the reason for the prohibition of delving into it in this way, stating that it contradicts proper conduct with the Lawgiver, as the Prophet ﷺ did not clarify it to us. That is, we refrain

from elaborating on it as a commendable act. Thus, delving into clarifying its reality is disapproved due to the lack of definitive evidence from the Lawgiver. Our Prophet ﷺ did not inform us about it, and whatever is such, it is better to abstain from delving into it. Hence, Junayd said: ‘The spirit is something that Allah has kept to Himself in terms of knowledge, and no one among His creation has knowledge of it, so it is not permissible for His slaves to search for it beyond its existence.’ Allah says: *‘And they will question you concerning the Spirit. Say: “The Spirit is of the command of my Lord. ...” ...’*⁴¹⁷.

Meaning, it is among the matters that Allah has kept to Himself, indicating human inability to comprehend its reality, even though it is between their sides. Thus, knowledge is referred back to Him, glorified be He, acknowledging the incapacity to grasp what He has not revealed. Ibn ‘Abbās and most early scholars followed this approach, refraining from definitively placing it within a specific bodily location. The Prophet ﷺ did not depart from this world until Allah had informed him about everything unclear to him, but he was commanded to conceal certain matters and disclose others.

The second group spoke and researched its reality. Nawawī said: ‘The soundest opinion regarding it, from this perspective, is what Imam al-Ḥaramayn said: that it (i.e., the lower spirit)⁴¹⁸ is a subtle, transparent body (*jism laṭīf*), independently alive, that intermingles with dense bodies like water in green wood.’ They supported this by its being described with descent, ascent, and fluctuation in the Barrier.

This unfavourable approach is indicated in his saying: ‘With Mālik’, meaning, according to the followers of his school who delved into clarifying its reality. They hold that the spirit is in the form of a body similar to the physical body in shape and appearance, but not in darkness, density, softness, or subtlety. They specifically mentioned the Mālikīs because they are the most cautious in avoiding doubts and the most protective of textual evidence.⁴¹⁹

Hence, some scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah view the spirit as one of the divine matters that should not be delved into, while others consider it permissible, asserting that researching its nature and conditions is not prohibited by Islamic law.

According to the latter opinion, several Sufi masters and others elaborated on the states of the spirit and what happens to some people in this respect during life, sleep, after death, and during the transition from this world. They mentioned that these spirits have states and illuminations. Here are some passages from these scholars that illustrate the states of the spirit and some of their illuminations:

Sheikh Ibn al-Qayyim says *al-Rūh*:

It should be known that the attributes of the spirit vary depending on the strength, weakness, greatness, and insignificance of the spirits. The great and mighty spirit possesses qualities that those below it lack. You can see in the world how the judgments of spirits vary according to their differences in qualities, strength, slowness, speed, and assistance. The spirit freed from the body, its connections, and its barriers possesses agency, power, penetration, aspiration, quick ascent

to Allah, and attachment to Allah that the humiliated spirit, confined to the body, lacks. If this is the case while confined in the body, how will it be when it is freed from it, when its powers are gathered, and it becomes a high, pure spirit with lofty aspirations? After leaving the body, it has a different state and course of action.

The phenomenon of visions concerning the actions of spirits after death has been reported across various categories of humanity, surpassing what can be comprehended under normal circumstances of their connection with the body. These visions include instances of numerous armies being defeated by one or two individuals, or even a small number, and similar occurrences. How often has the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and with him Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, been seen in dreams, their spirits overpowering the armies of disbelief and oppression. Their armies were seen defeated and broken despite their numerical and technical superiority, while the believers were outnumbered and seemingly weak.

Of particular interest is the convergence of spirits of loving and acquainted believers, despite being separated by great distances. They recognize each other intimately, as if they were close companions and kin. When one sees another in such encounters, they recognize them beyond what their spirits had known before the vision. ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr remarked that the spirits of believers converge at a distance covered in a single day, while neither of them has ever seen his companion. Some have attributed this to the Prophet ﷺ.⁴²⁰

Thus, Ibn al-Qayyim's words above discuss the states of the spirit and its affairs in this life and after death.

Imam Ālūsī says in his *tafsīr*:

Spirits—though their abode may differ in terms of the place designated to them by the grace of Allah Almighty as a reward for their deeds—are allowed to roam in the dominion of Allah where He wills, and this can only happen with His permission. Spirits vary in this according to their proximity and closeness to Allah Almighty. Indeed, some pure spirits may even manifest themselves to some living people (by Allah's will) while awake. The spirits of the dead meet, socialize, and converse. Sometimes the spirits of the dead and the living meet in dreams. Only those who consider visions to be mere fantasies deny this, and they are not worthy of attention. However, legal rulings should not be based on them due to the possibility of their inaccuracy even if there is circumstantial corroboration.⁴²¹

The Nature of Astral Projection

One of the illuminations that occurs to some spirits is what is referred to as 'astral projection', where 'projection' means leaving, departing, or distancing oneself. An example is Allah's Words: '*Kill Joseph or cast him away into some land ...*'⁴²²; meaning, distance him. Therefore, the spirit may completely leave the body, as in the case of death, or partially leave it, as in the case of sleep or when the spirit experiences specific illuminations, as in the case of astral projection. A verse attributed to Imam Rifā'ī indicates the illumination of astral projection. It is reported that this type of illumination occurs to some saints and mystics. This can

be understood in a verse attributed to Imam Aḥmad Rifāʿī. When he performed Hajj and stood facing the Noble Chamber, he recited:

*When far away, I would send my spirit
To kiss the earth on my behalf, as my deputy.
And here the turn for apparitions is in order,
So extend your hand that my lips may obtain
its blessing.*⁴²³

This verse indicates the occurrence of this illumination to some saints, in that the spirit travels differently than it does during the states of death and sleep, seeing places or meeting people.

Imam Shaʿrānī's Astral Projection

Among those who have experienced this type of illumination is Sheikh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Shaʿrānī. He was reported to have experienced it repeatedly, such that he said:

Work, my brother, on clearing the mirror of your heart from rust or dust if you intend to work with this creation, for you will traverse the regions of the earth in the span of an hour. One of the things that happened to me was that a person from the land of Abyssinia converted to Islam with us in Egypt, so I asked him about his country, and about the great church at the end of the alley of his house, and about the lote tree in his neighbour's house, and he confirmed it to me, then he said to those present: 'This is a pious man,' on account of my insight into his country and his neighbour's house, though I never went to them physically. However, I looked at them with my heart.⁴²⁴

Shaḥrānī further elaborates on this, saying:

Among the blessings that Allah ﷻ bestowed upon me is in aiding the people of ecstasy in all corners of the earth in preserving their perception amidst deserts, wildernesses, cities, seas, villages, and mountains. So, with my heart, I traverse all corners of the earth in about three degrees... The likeness of my circumambulation every night over Egypt and all regions of the earth is that I point my finger at the alleys of all cities, villages, deserts, seas, and I say: ‘Allah, Allah, Allah.’ I start with Old Egypt, then Cairo, then its villages, until I reach the city of Gaza, then to Jerusalem, then to Damascus, then to Aleppo, then to the lands of the Persians, then to the lands of the Turks, then to the lands of the Romans, then across the ocean to the lands of the Maghreb. I circle them, country by country, until I come to Alexandria, then I turn from it to Damietta, then from it to the farthest reaches of Upper Egypt, then to the farthest lands of the slaves, then to the lands of the Rajrāj, which is the region of the fifth grandfather. Then I turn to the lands of Tekrur and the lands of Sokoto, and from there to the lands of Nubia, then to the farthest lands of Abyssinia, which is a journey of ten years. Then, from there to the lands of India, then to the lands of Sindh, then to the lands of China. Then I return to the lands of Yemen, ascend to Mecca, then exit from Bāb al-Muḥallā to the Hijazi road to Badr, then to Safra, then to the city of the Prophet ﷺ so I seek permission from him at the gate of the wall, then I enter until I stand before him ﷺ, and I pray and greet him and his companions, and visit those in al-Baqī^c.⁴²⁵

Sheikh Sha^ʿrānī  used to describe this state in which his spirit experiences illumination, covering long distances in a short period. Through it, he attains mystical insight that makes him more grateful and thankful to his Lord, and more inclined to acknowledge His grace.

Our Master Uways Qarnī's Astral Projection

This type of illumination is also alluded to by Imam Abū Nu^ʿaym in *al-Hilyah*, where he narrates from Haram ibn Ḥayyān ^ʿAbdī, who said:

I came, and I had no concern except for Uways. I asked about him, and they directed me to find him by the bank of the Euphrates, where I found him performing ablution and washing his garment. I recognized him by his description: a dark man with a shaven head, thick beard, and awe-inspiring appearance. I greeted him and extended my hand to shake, but he refused. I held back tears when I saw his state. I said: 'Peace be upon you, O Uways. How are you, my brother?' He said: 'And peace be upon you, O Haram ibn Ḥayyān. Who guided you to me?' I said: 'Allah, for He says: "... *Glory be to our Lord. Indeed Our Lord's promise is bound to be fulfilled*"'⁴²⁶. I said: 'May Allah have mercy on you. How did you know my name and my father's name?' He replied: 'I knew your spirit through my spirit when I conversed with myself. Spirits have souls, like bodies, and indeed, believers recognize each other by the Spirit of Allah, even if they are distant from each other.'⁴²⁷

Ḥakīm Tirmidhī explains this hadith concerning the meeting of spirits in *Nawādir al-Uṣūl*, saying:

Spirits are indeed remarkable, ethereal beings, but they become heavy when the ego engulfs them with the darkness of its desires. When the ego is disciplined, and the spirit is purified from it, it returns to its lightness and purity, and has a station that none believes in except for a believer whose heart is tranquil in Allah ... Regarding the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: ‘Indeed, the spirits of believers meet,’ it means the complete believer in all of its truths, whose breast Allah has opened to Islam, so that he follows a light from his Lord. It does not apply to a monotheist who indulges in his desires and is distracted through preoccupation from his worship until he confuses matters for himself: his heart, imprisoned; his spirit, preoccupied; his ego, tempted. How can he now perceive or comprehend?⁴²⁸

This is a luminous state in which the spirit illuminates by the command of its Lord, beholding those who resemble it in condition and destiny. This is also alluded to by the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ: ‘Spirits are amassed troops: those who acquainted with each other associate with each other, and those amongst them who differ, dissent.’⁴²⁹

Imam Suyūṭī’s Anecdotes on Some Who Have Experienced Astral Projection

Imam Suyūṭī has an extensive treatise titled *al-Munjalī fī Taṭawwur al-Walī*, in which he speaks about what the progression of a saint entails. It is an explanation of some of the honours bestowed by Allah upon some of His saints, including what happens to their spirits in different states. He ﷺ responded to what some might raise in terms of objections regarding such occurrences, saying:

When the saint attains realization in his sainthood, he becomes capable of taking on numerous forms. His spirituality becomes manifest in multiple directions simultaneously, as he progresses through stages and assumes forms according to his will. Thus, the form that appeared to one who saw him in Arafat is true, and the form seen by another that did not leave Damamin is true, and each is truthful in his testimony. The sheikh said: 'This is correct.'

This was also mentioned by Yāfi'ī in *Kifāyat al-Mu'taqid*:

If it is said: 'this is puzzling; there seems to be no way for the jurist to accept it; it does not seem logical at all; and the judgment of neither of them is valid, as having one person in two places at the same time is inconceivable.'⁴³⁰

The answer to this is what Sheikh Ṣafī al-Dīn mentioned: that this is not impossible, because it proves the multiplicity of spiritual forms, not in a single form, which would necessitate the impossible. He adds that if the objection remains regarding the multiplicity of forms from one person, the answer is that it has occurred, has been witnessed, and cannot be denied, even if it puzzles the mind. What is famously known among many scholars and others is that, at times, the revered Kaaba has been seen circumambulating around a group of saints while not in its place, while it is known that it never leaves its place at those times.

This is related to the story of Qaḍīb al-Bān. We have heard from a venerable man that he

said: ‘Flying is not such a great matter. Rather, it is that two people, one in the east, and the other in the west, yearn to visit each other, so they meet and converse, then each returns to his location, while people see each of them in his place without leaving it...’

Sheikh Khalīl Mālikī, author of the famous *Mukhtaṣar*, said in his book about the virtues of his sheikh, Sheikh ‘Abdullāh Manūfī:

The Sixth Chapter: The earth would fold up for him, without his movement. One case involves a man who came from Hijaz and asked about the Sheikh, mentioning that he had seen him standing at Arafat. People told him that the Sheikh has not moved from his place. He swore he was truthful. The Sheikh appeared, and he intended to speak, but the Sheikh gestured for silence.

He mentions other incidents that occurred to him of this nature, then says:

If it is asked how is it possible for one person to be in two places, I say that when a saint attains realization in his sainthood, he becomes capable of taking form through his spirituality, and is granted the ability to assume multiple forms. This is not impossible, for it is the multiplicity of spiritual forms, and this is known among those who have true knowledge of Allah, as was the case with Qaḍīb al-Bān. A jurist objected to him not praying in congregation, then met him. He prayed before him eight

units of prayer in four forms, then asked him: 'Which form did not pray with you?' So, he kissed the Sheikh's hand and repented.

Regarding Sheikh Abū 'Abbās Mursī, it was narrated that a person requested his presence for a matter he had on Friday after the prayer, so he granted it to him. Then four others came to him, each requesting the same, so he accommodated them all. The Sheikh prayed with the congregation, then he sat among the scholars and did not go to any of them. Suddenly, each of the five came to thank the Sheikh for his presence.

Some have narrated that the Kaaba was seen circumambulating around saints. These are the words of Sheikh Khalīl, and his imamate and majesty are beyond doubt. I have also read among the virtues of Sheikh Tāj al-Dīn ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, by one of his disciples, that a man from the Sheikh's group performed Hajj. He said:

I saw the Sheikh in circumambulation, behind the Station of Abraham, in *sa'ya*, and in Arafat. When I returned, I asked about the Sheikh, and it was said: 'He is well.' I went to him and greeted him, and he asked me: 'Which men did you see on your journey?' I said: 'O master, I saw you.' He smiled and said: 'The great man fills the universe.'⁴³¹

Hence, this type of illumination is affirmed by a number of saints and righteous individuals. They have affirmed it in order to demonstrate what Allah honours His saints with, and that is not beyond the capability of Allah

Almighty. Whatever happens to a person is not a criterion for saintship and advancement over creation. Rather, it is a matter from Allah that the spirit should not pay attention to because its beginning and end are with Allah Almighty.

IXX-XX. CONFORMANCE (*TAWFĪQ*) AND AGREEMENT (*TAWĀFUQ*)

Among the experiences that many seekers and travellers on the path of Allah encounter are what are called ‘conformance’ (*tawfīq*) and ‘agreement’ (*tawāfuq*). They are like other illuminations of blessings that Allah bestows upon some of His slaves, where these illuminations occur as a confirmation for travellers, and as an expression of Allah’s care for seekers.

One of them, conformance, is a cause for the other, which is agreement. Thus, it is appropriate to discuss them together.

Definitions

Scholars have defined conformance as: ‘Creating the ability for obedience and the inclination towards it in the slave’. Its opposite, ‘failure’ (*khidhlān*) is: ‘Creating disobedience in the slave and inclination towards it’.⁴³²

As for agreement, it is a mutual interaction between two, related to congruence and agreement. One says: ‘I agreed with So-and-so on a matter, meaning: “We mutually agreed.”’

How Are They Illuminations?

As for their being illuminations, they, like other illuminations, occur due to travelling on the path, or as a result of

its effects. To explain, when Allah Almighty knows the sincerity of His slave in seeking closeness to Him, He creates in his heart the desire to seek the guidance of the Sheikh and the guide on the path. Thus, he travels in search of someone to take him by the hand to Allah and show him the path of His satisfaction. The illumination of conformance becomes apparent when Allah grants him success after the manifestation of his sincerity to meet the Sheikh who takes him by the hand, saying to him: 'Here you are with your Lord!'

When his Sheikh meets him, Allah honours him thereafter with the occurrence of agreement, where the seeker finds the answers to his questions with his Sheikh before he even speaks, often dispelling his confusion, removing his worries, and easing his heart!

In order to count as instances of agreement, this must not happen just once or twice, as that may happen by coincidence. What is commonly accepted as such is that which occurs repeatedly between the seeker and his Sheikh.

Examples

Specific examples of these two illuminations that happened to major Sufi masters follow.

Sheikh Shādhilī and the Pole, Ibn Mashīsh

It is narrated that our master, Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī, was seeking the Pole to receive guidance from him. Something narrated about him in this regard is that he said:

When I entered Iraq and met the righteous sheikh, Abū al-Faṭḥ Wāsiṭī, I did not see in Iraq anyone like him. He was among the foremost companions of our master Aḥmad Rifāʿī رحمته الله. There were many sheikhs in Iraq, and I was seeking the Pole there. Sheikh Abū

al-Faṭḥ told me: ‘Are you seeking the Pole in Iraq while he is in your country? Return to your country; you will find him there.’ So, I returned to the Maḡhreb until I met my master, the Sheikh, the saint, the guide, the Pole, al-Ghawth Abū Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Bashīsh al-Sharīf al-Ḥasanī.

I went to him while he was residing in his seclusion in a cave at the top of the mountain. I bathed in a spring at the bottom of the valley, and I went beyond my knowledge and my deeds, and I presented myself before him as needy. When he saw me, he said: ‘Welcome, ‘Alī ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār ...’, and he mentioned my lineage to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Then he said: ‘O ‘Alī, you have come to us needy in your knowledge and deeds, but you have taken from us the wealth of this world and the hereafter.’ His words amazed me, so I stayed with him for days until Allah opened my insight. At that time, he was the Pole of the era.⁴³³

This story alludes to instances of conformance and agreement, where Allah Almighty knew the sincerity of the direction of our master Abū Ḥasan Shādhilī, so He guided him to meet the Pole and learn from him. At the same time, he found with the Pole Ibn Mashīsh secrets that astonished him and mystic insight that aligned with his needs and state on the path.

This matter, as we have mentioned, did not occur just once or twice between our master Abū Ḥasan and his Sheikh, the Pole, Ibn Mashīsh. Rather, it happened repeatedly, such as what we have noted earlier:

I was once in the presence of the mentor [Ibn Mashīsh], and I said to myself: ‘I wonder if the Sheikh

knows the Supreme Name of Allah?’ The Sheikh’s son, who was in the farthest part of where I was, said: ‘O Abū Ḥasan, it is not a matter of knowing the Supreme Name of Allah; rather, it is a matter of being the Supreme Name itself.’ So, the Sheikh said: ‘He has struck the mark, and my son has scrutinized you.’

Sheikh Qushayrī and His Sheikh, Abū ‘Alī Daqqāq

Qushayrī says:

At first, I did not enter upon my master, Abū ‘Alī, except while fasting, and I used to perform a ritual bath before. I would go to the door of his school more than once. Then I would turn back from the door feeling ashamed to enter upon him. Once I took courage and entered the school, and when I reached the middle of the school, I felt a tingling sensation accompanying me such that if a needle were to prick me, for example, I would not feel it. Then, when I would sit down to discuss a matter that had occurred to me, I did not have to ask him verbally about the issue. Every time I would sit with him, he would begin to explain my situation. I would often witness this from him firsthand.⁴³⁴

Here, Qushayrī also mentions the repeated agreement between him and his Sheikh, Daqqāq, to the extent that his sheikh would inform him of what was on his mind and what he was experiencing before he even told him about it! All of this undoubtedly serves to strengthen the seeker on the path, reassure his heart, and strengthen his inclination.

Sheikh Ibn ‘Atā’illāh and His Sheikh, Abū ‘Abbās Mursī

Sheikh Ibn ‘Atā’illāh said, narrating about his first encounter with Sheikh Mursī:

I had been objecting to him and his friends for no reason other than that I had not heard from him nor heard any authentic narration about him. This continued until there was a confrontation between me and some of his companions, and this was before my companionship with him. I said to that man: ‘The only ones who matter are the people of outward knowledge, and these people claim great matters that the Sharia outwardly rejects.’ After I had kept the Sheikh’s company, the man asked me: ‘Do you know what the Sheikh told me that day we had an argument?’ I said: ‘No.’ He said: ‘I entered upon him, and the first thing he said to me was: “These people are like stones. What you miss from them is better than what you gain.” I knew that the Sheikh had insight into us.’ By my life, I accompanied the Sheikh for twelve years, and I did not hear from him anything that contradicted the apparent knowledge that was narrated about him by those who intended harm.

The reason I met him was that I said to myself after the argument between me and that man: ‘Let me go and see this man. The possessor of truth has a sign that cannot be hidden.’ So, I went to his gathering and found him speaking about the lives that the Sharia commanded. He said: ‘The first is Islam; the second is faith (*īmān*); and the third is virtue (*iḥsān*). If you wish, you can say the first is worship and the second is servitude. Or, if you wish, you can say the first is the Sharia, the second is reality, and the third

is realization,' or something like that. He kept saying: 'If you wish, you can say ...' until he blew my mind, and I knew that the man was only drawing from the overflowing sea of the divine and the extended divine bounty. So, Allah removed the issue I had. I went home that night, and I found nothing that would make me prefer staying with my family as was my habit. I had a strange sense. I did not know what it was. So, I secluded myself in a place, looking at the sky and its stars and all the wonders created in it by His power. That led me to return to him once again, so I went to him, seeking permission to enter. When I entered upon him, he stood up, welcoming me with a smile and warmth until I was astonished with embarrassment, and I belittled myself due to unworthiness of such.⁴³⁵

What happened with Sheikh Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh with his Sheikh is also a case of conformance, where Allah Almighty knew his sincerity and turned his situation from denial to acceptance. Then, Allah inspired the Sheikh with what he desired on his path and guided him on his way.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh also says:

I entered upon him, and in my heart, I left all means and renounced them. I left my preoccupation with outward knowledge, saying that reaching Allah does not happen in this state. Without me expressing anything to him, he said:

A person from Qus named Ibn Nāshī kept my company. He was a teacher and deputy judge there. He had tasted something of this path at our hands, so he said: 'O my master, should I

leave what I am involved in and devote myself to your company?’ I said to him: ‘This is not the course, but stay where Allah has established you, and what has been assigned to you at our hands will reach you.’

Then he said: ‘Such is the case of the truthful ones. They do not leave anything until The Real takes them out.’ So, I left, and Allah washed those thoughts from my heart as if they had been a garment I had taken off. I was satisfied with where Allah had established me.⁴³⁶

Among the signs of conformance and agreement is that the seeker find a Sheikh who guides him to what keeps him upright according to the principles of the path. Whenever the seeker faces any obstacles on the path, his Sheikh guides him to what aligns with his situation and regulates his behaviour.

*Our final prayer is that praise be to Allah,
Lord of the Worlds.*



ENDNOTES

- ¹ *Al-Najm*, 53:42.
- ² *Al-An‘ām*, 6:91.
- ³ *Luqmān*, 31:15.
- ⁴ *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 1/82, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, Beirut.
- ⁵ *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 7/373, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, Beirut.
- ⁶ Tr: The Pre-Islamic Arabs would wait for the sun to rise over Mount Thabīr before proceeding to slaughter their sacrificial animals during Hajj.
- ⁷ *Mu‘jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, Ibn Fāris, 3/264, Dar al-Fikr, 1979
- ⁸ *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, Zabīdī, 25/504, Dār al-Hidayah.
- ⁹ *Riyādat al-Nafs*, Ḥakīm Tirmidhī, p.43, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.
- ¹⁰ *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Rāzī, 15/445, Dār Ihyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī.
- ¹¹ *Al-Taṣawwuf: al-Thawrah al-Rūḥiyyah fī al-Islām*, Dr. Abū ‘Alā ‘Afīfī, p.292, Al-Hay‘ah al-‘Āmmah li al-Kitāb.
- ¹² *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ‘Ajībah, p.266, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ¹³ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ‘Ajībah, p.214, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ¹⁴ *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ‘Arabī, 2/629, Būlāq.
- ¹⁵ *Al-Ra‘d*, 13:4.
- ¹⁶ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 2/70.
- ¹⁷ *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 2/103, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, Beirut.
- ¹⁸ *Al-Zumar*, 39:23.
- ¹⁹ *Maryam*, 19:58.
- ²⁰ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 3/346.
- ²¹ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ‘Ajībah, p.206, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ²² *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 4/84, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, Beirut.
- ²³ *Sharḥ al-Kharīdah al-Bahīyyah*, p.185, Dardīr, Dār Kashīdah.
- ²⁴ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ‘Ajībah, p.469, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ²⁵ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ‘Ajībah, p.184, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ²⁶ *Al-Minah al-Qudsiyyah*, Sharqāwī, Aphorism 9, p.36, Dār Kashīdah, 1st ed.
- ²⁷ *Ibid*, p.75, Aphorism 53.
- ²⁸ *Ibid*, Aphorism 54.
- ²⁹ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ‘Ajībah, Aphorism 67, p.180, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ³⁰ *Ibid*, Aphorism 69, p.184.
- ³¹ *Ibid*, Aphorism 112, p.266.

- ³² Ibid, Aphorism 189, p.411.
- ³³ *Al-Naml*, 27:34.
- ³⁴ *Al-Minah al-Qudsiyyah*, Sharqāwī, Aphorism 216, p.190, Dār Kashīdah, 1st ed.
- ³⁵ Ibid, Aphorism 220, p.192.
- ³⁶ Ibid, Aphorism 221, p.192.
- ³⁷ *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, Zabīdī, 11/194, Dār al-Hidāyah.
- ³⁸ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 1/317.
- ³⁹ *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ‘Arabī, 2/226, Būlāq.
- ⁴⁰ *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 1/198.
- ⁴¹ Ibid, 2/405.
- ⁴² *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 1/316.
- ⁴³ *Tashnūf al-Masāmī‘ Sharḥ al-Jawāmi‘*, Zarkashī, 4/936, Dār Qurṭubah, 1st ed, 1998.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ *Latā‘if al-Ishārāt*, 2/206, al-Hay’ah al-Miṣriyyah al-‘Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 3rd ed.
- ⁴⁶ *Tā-Hā*, 20:131.
- ⁴⁷ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ‘Ajībah, p.59, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ⁴⁸ *Al-A‘rāf*, 7:200.
- ⁴⁹ *Al-A‘rāf*, 7:201.
- ⁵⁰ *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 3/77, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, Beirut.
- ⁵¹ *Al-Luma’*, Sirāj Ṭūsī, p. 414, Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, Egypt.
- ⁵² *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ‘Ajībah, p. 198, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ⁵³ *Al-‘Ankabūt*, 29:43.
- ⁵⁴ *Al-Ra‘d*, 13:17.
- ⁵⁵ *Al-Isrā’*, 17:81.
- ⁵⁶ *Al-Ra‘d*, 13:17.
- ⁵⁷ *Al-Ra‘d*, 13:17.
- ⁵⁸ *Al-Ḥaṣhr*, 59:2.
- ⁵⁹ *Al-Nūr*, 24:44.
- ⁶⁰ *Āl ‘Imrān*, 3:41.
- ⁶¹ *Maryam*, 19:29.
- ⁶² *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ‘Arabī, 1/189, Būlāq.
- ⁶³ *Al-Bāqiyāt al-Ṣāliḥāt fī Ta‘rīb al-Raṣaḥāt*, p.22, Dār Ṣādir.
- ⁶⁴ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:163.
- ⁶⁵ *Al-Lawāqih al-Qudsiyyah*, Ibn ‘Ajībah, part of *al-Jawāhir al-‘Ajībah*, p.16, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.

- ⁶⁶ *Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliyah*, Rāzī, 7/274, 1st ed, 1987.
- ⁶⁷ *Qāf*, 50:22.
- ⁶⁸ *Al-Ta‘rifāt*, Jurjānī, p. 184, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.
- ⁶⁹ *Al-Anwār al-Qudsiyyah*, Sha‘rānī, p. 97.
- ⁷⁰ *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ‘Arabī, 1/319, Būlāq.
- ⁷¹ *Hāshiyat Ithāf al-Murīd*, Amīr Mālikī, p. 146.
- ⁷² *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ‘Ajībāh.
- ⁷³ *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīn*, Zabīdī, 7/230, Mu’assasat al-Tārikh al-‘Arabī, Beirut, 1414 AH.
- ⁷⁴ *Al-Kabf*, 18:65.
- ⁷⁵ *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 3/25, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, Beirut.
- ⁷⁶ *Al-Kabf*, 18:65.
- ⁷⁷ *Al-Muwatta’*, Mālik, *Judgments*, 40.
- ⁷⁸ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Ibn Sa‘d, 3/95, Dār Ṣādir.
- ⁷⁹ *Fath al-Bārī*, Ibn Rajab, 9/271, Dār al-Ḥāramayn.
- ⁸⁰ *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/131, Dār al-Fikr.
- ⁸¹ Bukhārī, *Companions of the Prophet* ﷺ, 3689.
- ⁸² *Al-‘Iṭiqād, Saints’ Marvels*; Bayhaqī.
- ⁸³ *Dalīl al-Fāliḥīn*, Ibn ‘Allān, 7/316, Dār al-Ma‘rifah.
- ⁸⁴ *Dalā’il al-Nubuwwah*, Abū Nu‘aym, 1/580, Dār al-Nafā’is.
- ⁸⁵ Tirmidhī, *Tafsīr*, 3127.
- ⁸⁶ *Al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa al-Athar*, Ibn Athīr, 3/428, Dār al-Maktabah al-‘Aliyyah, Beirut.
- ⁸⁷ *Al-Muṭaffifīn*, 83:14.
- ⁸⁸ *Al-Tawbah*, 9:87.
- ⁸⁹ *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyyah al-Kubrā*, Ibn Subkī, 2/328, Dār Hajr.
- ⁹⁰ *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīn*, Zabīdī, 7/230, Mu’assasat al-Tārikh al-‘Arabī, Beirut, 1414 AH.
- ⁹¹ *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārikh*, Ibn Athīr, Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, Beirut, 1st ed, 1997.
- ⁹² *Al-Iṣbah fī Tamayūz al-Ṣaḥābah*, 5/486, Ibn Ḥajar ‘Asqalānī, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1st ed, 1415 AH.
- ⁹³ *Al-Maktūbāt al-Rabbāniyyah*, Aḥmad Sirhindī, 1/445. Arabic trans. by Muhammad Murād Qazānī, Maktabat al-Nīl.
- ⁹⁴ *Al-Dhāriyāt*, 51:56.
- ⁹⁵ *Al-Dhāriyāt*, 51:56.
- ⁹⁶ *Al-Raḥmān*, 55:46.
- ⁹⁷ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ‘Ajībāh, p. 488, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.

- ⁹⁸ *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 1/3 19.
- ⁹⁹ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:102. *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ʿAjībah, p. 69, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ʿAjībah, p. 290, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ¹⁰¹ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ʿAjībah, p. 291, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ¹⁰² *Al-Shams*, 91:8.
- ¹⁰³ *Al-Taʿrīfāt*, Jurjānī, p. 34, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:268.
- ¹⁰⁵ Tirmidhī, *Tafsīr*, 2988.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Qūt al-Qulūb*, Abū Ṭālib Makkī, 1/2 15, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2nd ed, 2005.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Al-Qaṣaṣ*, 28:7.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 1/3 53.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Al-Fathḥ*, 48:1.
- ¹¹⁰ *Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt*, 3/3 17, al-Hayʾah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah li al-Kitāb, 3rd ed.
- ¹¹¹ *Al-Naṣr*, 110:1.
- ¹¹² *Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 10/5 29, Ismāʿīl Ḥaqqī, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut.
- ¹¹³ *Al-Ṣaff*, 61:13.
- ¹¹⁴ *Al-Fathḥ*, 48:1. *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl fī al-Awliyāʾ*, p. 65, Kamshakhānwī, Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyyah.
- ¹¹⁵ *Al-Zumar*, 39:17–18. *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Shaʿrānī, 1/6.
- ¹¹⁶ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 5/7 1.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, 10/1 5, Abū Nuʿaym, Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī. Imam ʿIrāqī classifies the hadith as weak. See also *Tashnīf al-Masāmiʿ Sharḥ al-Jawāmiʿ*, Zarkashī, 2/760, Dār Qurṭubah, 1st ed, 1998.
- ¹¹⁸ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ʿAjībah, p. 104, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ¹¹⁹ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 1/465.
- ¹²⁰ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ʿAjībah, p. 391, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ¹²¹ Bukhārī, *Prayers*, 466.
- ¹²² Bukhārī, *Merits of the Helpers*, 3904.
- ¹²³ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p. 137, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ¹²⁴ Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 6998. Muslim, *Mosques and Places of Prayer*, 523a.
- ¹²⁵ *Al-Aḥqāf*, 46:24.
- ¹²⁶ *Al-Aḥqāf*, 46:24.
- ¹²⁷ *Ṭā-Hā*, 20:114. *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ʿArabī, 2/5 59, Būlāq.

- ¹²⁸ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 1/161.
- ¹²⁹ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 1/170.
- ¹³⁰ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 2/135.
- ¹³¹ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 2/63.
- ¹³² *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 2/112.
- ¹³³ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 2/138.
- ¹³⁴ *Al-Fath*, 48:1-2.
- ¹³⁵ *Al-Ḥadīd*, 57:4.
- ¹³⁶ *Qāf*, 50:16.
- ¹³⁷ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:186.
- ¹³⁸ *Al-Mujādilah*, 58:7.
- ¹³⁹ *Al-Ṣāffāt*, 37:96.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p. 139, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ¹⁴¹ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p. 257, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ¹⁴² *Al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb Al-Ḥadīth wa al-Athar*, Ibn Athīr, 1/434, Dār al-Maktabah al-‘Aliyyah, Beirut.
- ¹⁴³ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p.78, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Yūnus*, 10:64.
- ¹⁴⁵ Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 6990.
- ¹⁴⁶ Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 6983.
- ¹⁴⁷ Translator: *Hajj al-Tamattju‘* is when a pilgrim performs umrah during the Hajj season, then relieves himself of the pilgrimage sanctity (*iḥrām*), then once again enters into a state of pilgrimage sanctity while in Mecca for the purpose of performing Hajj. The validity of this type of Hajj was a matter of disagreement among the Companions, but was later agreed upon by Sunni scholars.
- ¹⁴⁸ Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 6994.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 1/89.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Bahjat al-Nufūs*, Ibn Abī Jamrah, 4/242, al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1st ed, 1425 AH.
- ¹⁵¹ *Al-Nisā’*, 4:58.
- ¹⁵² *Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 9/405, Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut.
- ¹⁵³ Abū Dāwūd, *Etiquette*, 5017.
- ¹⁵⁴ Ibn Mājah, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 3918.
- ¹⁵⁵ Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 7030.

- ¹⁵⁶ *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ʿArabī, 2/418, Būlāq.
- ¹⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Al-Faṭḥ*, 48:27.
- ¹⁵⁹ *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 4/504, Dār al-Maʿrifah, Beirut.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Faṭḥ al-Bārī*, Ibn Ḥajar ʿAsqalānī, 12/372.
- ¹⁶¹ Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 6986.
- ¹⁶² *Lawāqih al-Anwār al-Qudsiyyah*, Shaʿrānī, p.190, Dār Iqraʾ, 1st ed, 2004.
- ¹⁶³ *Rūḥ al-Bayān*, 1/171, Ismāʿīl Ḥaqqī, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p. 68, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ¹⁶⁵ Ibn Mājah, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 3904.
- ¹⁶⁶ *Babjal al-Nufūs*, Ibn Abī Jamrah, 4/237, al-Maktabah al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1st ed, 1425 AH.
- ¹⁶⁷ *Faṭḥ al-Bārī*, Ibn Ḥajar ʿAsqalānī, 12/388, Dār al-Maʿrifah.
- ¹⁶⁸ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 3/54.
- ¹⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁰ *Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, Ghazālī, p.178, Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah.
- ¹⁷¹ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p.78, Al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ¹⁷² *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Shaʿrānī, 2/103.
- ¹⁷³ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:257.
- ¹⁷⁴ *Al-Nūr*, 24:40.
- ¹⁷⁵ *Al-Taḥrīm*, 66:8.
- ¹⁷⁶ *Al-Māʾidah*, 5:15.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Al-Anʿām*, 6:122.
- ¹⁷⁸ *Al-Shuʿarāʾ*, 42:52.
- ¹⁷⁹ *Al-Zumar*, 39:22.
- ¹⁸⁰ *Al-Nūr*, 24:35.
- ¹⁸¹ *Yūnus*, 10:5.
- ¹⁸² *Al-Furqān*, 25:61.
- ¹⁸³ *Al-Anʿām*, 6:1.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Al-Ḥadīd*, 57:28.
- ¹⁸⁵ *Al-Zumar*, 39:69.
- ¹⁸⁶ *Al-Ḥadīd*, 57:12.
- ¹⁸⁷ *Al-Taḥrīm*, 66:8.
- ¹⁸⁸ *Al-Ḥadīd*, 57:13.
- ¹⁸⁹ *Al-Ḥadīd*, 57:13.

- ¹⁹⁰ *Al-Mufradāt*, Aṣḥāhānī, pp. 727–728.
- ¹⁹¹ Tirmidhī, *Tafsīr*, 3 127.
- ¹⁹² *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 3/19, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, Beirut.
- ¹⁹³ *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ‘Arabī, 2/537, Būlāq.
- ¹⁹⁴ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p.177, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ¹⁹⁵ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p.267, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ¹⁹⁶ *Fāṭir*, 35:28.
- ¹⁹⁷ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ‘Ajībah, p. 440, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ¹⁹⁸ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p.162, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ¹⁹⁹ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 2/324.
- ²⁰⁰ Ibid.
- ²⁰¹ *Al-Anfāl*, 8:29.
- ²⁰² *Nawādir al-Uṣūl*, 1/238, Dār al-Jīl, Beirut.
- ²⁰³ *Hīlyat al-Awliyā’*, 7/330, Abū Nu‘aym, Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī.
- ²⁰⁴ *Lawāqih al-Anwār al-Qudsiyyah*, Sha‘rānī, p. 571, Dār Iqra’, 1st ed, 2004.
- ²⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 366.
- ²⁰⁶ *Risālah fī al-Asmā’ al-‘Azīmah*, ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī, p. 30, Dār al-Sanābil, 2nd ed.
- ²⁰⁷ Ibid, p.31.
- ²⁰⁸ Ibid, p.32.
- ²⁰⁹ Ibid, p.33.
- ²¹⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹¹ Ibid, p.34.
- ²¹² Ibid, p.35.
- ²¹³ *Dhayl al-Rashahāt*, Muhammad Murād Qazānī, printed on the margin of *Rashahāt ‘Ayn al-Hayāt*, p.209.
- ²¹⁴ *Al-Faṭḥ*, 48:29.
- ²¹⁵ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 5/410.
- ²¹⁶ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 2/13.
- ²¹⁷ Ibn Mājah, *Worldly Detachment*, 4119.
- ²¹⁸ *Nawādir al-Uṣūl*, 2/39, Dār al-Jīl, Beirut.
- ²¹⁹ *Al-Maktūbāt al-Rabbāniyyah*, Aḥmad Sirhindī, 1/245.
- ²²⁰ *Al-‘Uhūd al-Muḥammadiyyah*, Sha‘rānī, p.474.
- ²²¹ *Al-Naḥl*, 16:44

- ²²² *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr Rāzī, p. 146, al-ʿAṣriyyah, Beirut, 5th ed.
- ²²³ *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 1/206.
- ²²⁴ *Al-Taʿrīfāt*, Jurjānī, p. 118, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah.
- ²²⁵ Ibid.
- ²²⁶ *Ṭā-Hā*, 20:7.
- ²²⁷ Ibn Hibbān, *Knowledge*, 75. The wording here is: ‘The Qur’an has been revealed in seven modes, each verse having an interior and an exterior.’
- ²²⁸ *Musnad al-Firdaws*, 1/398. This narration is weak as per hadith experts. However, the statement of our master ‘Alī in Bukhārī confirms its meaning: ‘Address people according to what they know. Do you want them to deny Allah and His Messenger?’
- ²²⁹ Muslim, *Introduction*, 13. These are the words of Ibn Mas‘ūd.
- ²³⁰ *Al-ʿAnkabūt*, 29:43.
- ²³¹ *Al-Arbaʿūn fī al-Taṣawwuf*, Sulamī.
- ²³² Bukhārī, *Touching Matters of the Heart*, 6486.
- ²³³ *Al-Ṭalāq*, 65:12.
- ²³⁴ *Al-Mawḍūʿāt al-Kubrā*, *Fabrications About Abū Bakr*, 1307; Mullā ‘Alī Qārī. The author attributes these words to Abū Bakr ibn ‘Ayyāsh.
- ²³⁵ *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 1/99, Dār al-Maʿrifah, Beirut.
- ²³⁶ *Al-ʿAnkabūt*, 29:43.
- ²³⁷ *Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt*, 3/98, al-Hay’ah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah li al-Kitāb, 3rd ed.
- ²³⁸ *Al-Naḥl*, 16:40.
- ²³⁹ *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 1/102, Dār al-Maʿrifah, Beirut.
- ²⁴⁰ *Al-Raʿd*, 13:17.
- ²⁴¹ Ibid, 1/101.
- ²⁴² Ibid, 1/103.
- ²⁴³ *Al-Kahf*, 18:109.
- ²⁴⁴ Ibid, 4/248.
- ²⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁴⁶ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ‘Abd al-ʿAzīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p. 152, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ²⁴⁷ *Al-Shūrā*, 42:27.
- ²⁴⁸ Tirmidhī, *Worldly Detachment*, 2312.
- ²⁴⁹ *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ‘Arabī, 2/705, Būlāq.
- ²⁵⁰ *Al-Maktūbāt al-Rabbāniyyah*, Aḥmad Sirhindī, 1/508.

- ²⁵¹ *Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt*, 2/388, al-Hayʾah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah li al-Kitāb, 3rd ed.
- ²⁵² *Al-Māʾidab*, 5:67.
- ²⁵³ *Al-Najm*, 53:10.
- ²⁵⁴ *Tafsīr al-Ālūsī*, 4/8.
- ²⁵⁵ *Hūd*, 11:17.
- ²⁵⁶ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 2/519.
- ²⁵⁷ Ibn Mājah, *Introduction*, 64.
- ²⁵⁸ *Sabaʾ*, 34:47.
- ²⁵⁹ *Al-Aʿraf*, 7:163.
- ²⁶⁰ *al-Lumaʾ*, Sirāj Ṭūsī, p.100, Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, Egypt.
- ²⁶¹ *Al-Ḥadīd*, 57:3. Ibid, p.101.
- ²⁶² *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 1/185.
- ²⁶³ *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, Zabīdī, 8/256, Dār al-Hidāyah.
- ²⁶⁴ *Tafsīr al-Ālūsī*, 8/151.
- ²⁶⁵ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Shaʿrānī, 1/127.
- ²⁶⁶ *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī; 2/294, Dār al-Maʿrifah, Beirut.
- ²⁶⁷ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sidī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p. 257, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ²⁶⁸ *Al-Isrāʾ*, 17:1.
- ²⁶⁹ *Iḥḍāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīm*, Zabīdī, 2/190, Muʾassasat al-Tārikh al-ʿArabī, Beirut, 1414 AH.
- ²⁷⁰ *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ʿArabī, 2/548, Būlāq.
- ²⁷¹ *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Shaʿrānī, 1/152.
- ²⁷² *Al-Aʿraf*, 7:143.
- ²⁷³ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sidī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p. 126, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ²⁷⁴ Translator: The hadith is about pollinating date palms.
- ²⁷⁵ *Al-Ṣāffāt*, 37:96.
- ²⁷⁶ Ibid, p.96.
- ²⁷⁷ Aḥmad, *Musnad ʿĀʾishah*, 24842. Haythamī and Arnāʾūṭ deem this hadith weak.
- ²⁷⁸ *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p.75.
- ²⁷⁹ *Al-Aʿraf*, 7:54.
- ²⁸⁰ *Muʿjam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, Ibn Fāris, 5/172, Dār al-Fikr, 1979.
- ²⁸¹ *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ʿArabī, 2/412, Būlāq.
- ²⁸² *Āl ʿImrān*, 3:37.

- ²⁸³ *Al-Naml*, 27:40.
- ²⁸⁴ Muslim, *Worldly Detachment and Touching Matters of the Heart*, 3005.
- ²⁸⁵ *Sharḥ al-Nawawī ‘alā Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 18/130.
- ²⁸⁶ *Yūnus*, 10:62.
- ²⁸⁷ Ibn Mājah, *Tribulations*, 3989.
- ²⁸⁸ *Tashnīf al-Masāmi‘ Sharḥ al-Jawāmi‘*, Zarkashī, 4/933, Dār Qurṭubah, 1st ed, 1998.
- ²⁸⁹ See Illumination IV: Disclosure, *Major Companions and Disclosure*.
- ²⁹⁰ *Sharḥ al-Nawawī ‘alā Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 16/108.
- ²⁹¹ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 4/409.
- ²⁹² *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 2/522.
- ²⁹³ *Al-Mu‘minūn*, 23:100.
- ²⁹⁴ *Risālat Tarjamah Mūjizah wa Ta‘rīf bi al-Imām al-Rā‘id*, Muḥyī al-Dīn Isnawī, al-‘Ashirah al-Muḥammadiyyah.
- ²⁹⁵ *Ḥāshiyat al-‘Aṭṭār ‘alā Sharḥ Jam‘ al-Jawāmi‘*, 2/481, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.
- ²⁹⁶ *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā‘*, 1/111, Abū Nu‘aym, Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī.
- ²⁹⁷ *Al-Zumar*, 39:34.
- ²⁹⁸ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 1/150.
- ²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 3/211.
- ³⁰¹ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 1/86.
- ³⁰² Muslim, *Merits of the Companions*, 2542a.
- ³⁰³ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 2/6.
- ³⁰⁴ *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 2/357.
- ³⁰⁵ *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ‘Arabī, 2/411, Būlāq.
- ³⁰⁶ *Al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliyah*, Rāzī, 1/49, 1st ed, 1987.
- ³⁰⁷ *Al-Mulk*, 67:14. *Hawātif al-Jinān*, Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, p. 39, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1st ed.
- ³⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 136.
- ³⁰⁹ *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 1/35.
- ³¹⁰ *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā‘*, 8/366, Abū Nu‘aym, Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī.
- ³¹¹ *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 1/210.
- ³¹² *Iḥyā‘ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 1/348, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, Beirut.
- ³¹³ *Tafsīr al-Ālūsī*, 2/316.
- ³¹⁴ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 2/80.
- ³¹⁵ *Al-‘Uhūd al-Muḥammadiyyah*, Sha‘rānī, p. 109.

- ³¹⁶ *Al-Risālah Al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 2/531.
- ³¹⁷ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Shaʿrānī, 1/109.
- ³¹⁸ *Yā-Sīn*, 50:37.
- ³¹⁹ *Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt*, 3/456, al-Hayʾah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah li al-Kitāb, 3rd ed.
- ³²⁰ *Āl ʿImrān*, 3:191.
- ³²¹ *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ʿAjībah, p. 270, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ³²² *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 1/355, Dār al-Maʿrifah, Beirut.
- ³²³ *Al-Ḥadīd*, 57:16.
- ³²⁴ *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 1/40.
- ³²⁵ *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, Zabīdī, 3/194, Dār al-Hidāyah.
- ³²⁶ *Muʿjam ʿIlm al-Nafs wa al-Taḥlīl al-Nafsī*, p. 105, Dār al-Nah ʿah al-ʿArabiyyah, 1st ed.
- ³²⁷ See Illumination IV: Disclosure, *Major Companions and Disclosure*.
- ³²⁸ Tirmidhī, *Tafsīr*, 3127.
- ³²⁹ *al-Nihāyah fī Ḡharīb al-Ḥadīth wa al-Athar*, Ibn Athīr, 3/428, Dār al-Maktabah al-ʿAliyyah, Beirut.
- ³³⁰ *al-Taʿrīfāt*, Jurjānī, p. 166, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah.
- ³³¹ *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 2/368.
- ³³² *al-Taʿarruf*, Kallābādī, p. 132, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah.
- ³³³ *Ibid*, p. 151.
- ³³⁴ *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 3/25, Dār al-Maʿrifah, Beirut.
- ³³⁵ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:235.
- ³³⁶ *Al-Shūrā*, 42:25.
- ³³⁷ *Ibid*.
- ³³⁸ *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 2/550.
- ³³⁹ *Ibid*, 2/394.
- ³⁴⁰ *Al-Mafākhir al-ʿAliyyah fī al-Maʾāthir al-Shādhiliyyah*, Ibn ʿAbbād Maḥallī, p. 14, al-Maktabah al-Azhariyyah li al-Turāth.
- ³⁴¹ *Shadharāt al-Dhabab*, Ibn ʿImād, 7/31.
- ³⁴² *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 2/388.
- ³⁴³ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p.93, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ³⁴⁴ *Laṭāʾif al-Minan*, Ibn ʿAṭāʾillāh Iskandarī, p.63, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ³⁴⁵ *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 2/395.
- ³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 2/396.
- ³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 1/94.

- 348 *Al-Ḥijr*, 15:29.
- 349 *Al-Ḥijr*, 15:29.
- 350 *Ibid*, 2/389.
- 351 *Ibid*, 2/390.
- 352 Bukhārī, *The Night Prayer*, 1130.
- 353 *al-Taʿrīfāt*, Jurjānī, p. 46, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah.
- 354 *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 4/69.
- 355 *Ibid*, 4/534.
- 356 *Al-Jāthiyah*, 45:20.
- 357 *Ibid*.
- 358 *Ibid*.
- 359 *Ibid*.
- 360 *Ibid*, 5/309.
- 361 *Ṭā-Hā*, 20:5.
- 362 *Al-Furqān*, 25:59.
- 363 Ibn Mājah, *Worldly Detachment*, 4294.
- 364 *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 7/269.
- 365 *Ibid*, 7/188.
- 366 *Al-Nisāʾ*, 4:71.
- 367 *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 1/329, Dār al-Maʿrifah, Beirut.
- 368 *Ibid*, 3/84.
- 369 *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 3/569.
- 370 *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Shaʿrānī, 1/168.
- 371 *Ibid*, 1/129.
- 372 *Al-Dhāriyāt*, 51:56.
- 373 *Al-Anʿām*, 6:76.
- 374 *Al-Taʿarruf*, Kallābādī, p. 64, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah.
- 375 *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ʿArabī, 2/331, Būlāq.
- 376 *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 1/301.
- 377 *Shuʿab al-Īmān*, *Worldly Detachment & Being Heartbroken*, 10106, Bayhaqī. See also, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Shaʿrānī, 2/8.
- 378 *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ʿAjībāh, p. 459, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- 379 *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Shaʿrānī, 1/168.
- 380 *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, Ghazālī, 3/14, Dār al-Maʿrifah, Beirut.
- 381 *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 5/492.
- 382 *al-Maktūbāt al-Rabbāniyyah*, Aḥmad Sirhindī, 2/423.

- ³⁸³ *Al-Kahf*, 18:5.
- ³⁸⁴ *Al-Naml*, 27:40.
- ³⁸⁵ *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam*, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, p. 155, Maktabat al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ³⁸⁶ Bukhārī, *Hiring*, 2266.
- ³⁸⁷ Tirmidhī, *Virtues of the Qur’an*, 2926.
- ³⁸⁸ Muslim, *Virtues, Ties of Kinship and Etiquette*, 2622.
- ³⁸⁹ *Ghāfir*, 40:60.
- ³⁹⁰ *Uṣūl al-Wuṣūl*, Muhammad Zakī Ibrāhīm, p. 245, al-‘Ashīrah al-Muḥammadiyyah, 1995.
- ³⁹¹ *al-‘Uhūd al-Muḥammadiyyah*, Sha‘rānī, p. 277.
- ³⁹² *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 2/92.
- ³⁹³ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:251.
- ³⁹⁴ *Luqmān*, 31:10.
- ³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 2/139.
- ³⁹⁶ *Al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, p. 172, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ³⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 169.
- ³⁹⁸ *Al-Kahf*, 18:5.
- ³⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 260.
- ⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 215.
- ⁴⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 171.
- ⁴⁰² Translator: Alternatively: ‘through his presence’.
- ⁴⁰³ *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ‘Arabī, 2/134, Būlāq.
- ⁴⁰⁴ *Al-Muzzammil*, 73:9.
- ⁴⁰⁵ *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ‘Arabī, 2/225, Būlāq.
- ⁴⁰⁶ *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Sha‘rānī, 2/13.
- ⁴⁰⁷ *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 3/43.
- ⁴⁰⁸ *Irshād al-Ṭalībīn*, Sha‘rānī, p. 50, Dār al-Karaz li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘.
- ⁴⁰⁹ *al-Jawhar al-Maṣūn*, Sha‘rānī, p. 113, Jawāmi‘ al-Kalim.
- ⁴¹⁰ *al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Kalām Sīdī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz*, Aḥmad ibn Mubārak, pp. 106–107, al-Maymaniyyah, 1300 AH.
- ⁴¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 108–109.
- ⁴¹² *Al-An‘ām*, 6:38.
- ⁴¹³ *Ibid*, p. 111.
- ⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 106.
- ⁴¹⁵ *Al-Mafākhir al-‘Aliyyah fī al-Ma’āthir al-Shādhiliyyah*, Ibn ‘Abbād Maḥallī, p. 212, Dār al-Ḥusayn al-Islāmiyyah.

- ⁴¹⁶ Ibid, p.211.
- ⁴¹⁷ *Al-Isrā'*, 17:85.
- ⁴¹⁸ i.e., the animus.
- ⁴¹⁹ *Ithāf al-Murīd*, Laqānī, p. 266, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.
- ⁴²⁰ *al-Rūḥ*, Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 311, ‘Ālam al-Fu’ad.
- ⁴²¹ *Tafsīr al-Ālūsī*, 8/155.
- ⁴²² *Yūsuf*, 12:9.
- ⁴²³ *Tamwīr al-Ḥalik fī Ru’yat al-Nabī wa al-Malak*, Suyūṭī, part of *al-Ḥāwī*, 2/314, Dār al-Fikr.
- ⁴²⁴ *Laṭā’if al-Minan wa al-Akhlāq*, Sha‘rānī, p. 176, Dār al-Fikr.
- ⁴²⁵ *Jāmi‘ Karāmāt al-Awliyā’*, Nabhānī, 2/227, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.
- ⁴²⁶ *Al-Isrā'*, 17:108.
- ⁴²⁷ *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’*, 2/84, Abū Nu‘aym, Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī.
- ⁴²⁸ *Nawādir al-Uṣūl*, 2/116, Dār al-Jīl, Beirut.
- ⁴²⁹ Muslim, *Virtues, Ties of Kinship and Etiquette*, 2638a.
- ⁴³⁰ i.e., Bilocation.
- ⁴³¹ *al-Munjalī fī Taṭawwur al-Walī*, Suyūṭī, part of *al-Ḥāwī*, 1/257.
- ⁴³² *Ḥāshiyat Ithāf al-Murīd*, Amīr Mālikī, p.190.
- ⁴³³ *Rawḍat al-Nāzīrīn*, Aḥmad Baghdādī, p.44, al-Khayriyyah.
- ⁴³⁴ *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Qushayrī, 2/460.
- ⁴³⁵ *Laṭā’if al-Minan*, Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh Iskandarī, p.83, al-Fajr al-Jadīd.
- ⁴³⁶ Ibid, p.78.

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A righteous dream is from Allah, and a nightmare is from Satan (Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 6986), 92

A slave was given a choice by Allah between what is in this world and what is with Him, and he chose what is with Allah (Bukhārī, *Prayers*, 466), 68

Abdullāh is a good man, if only he would pray a portion of the night (Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 7030), 85

Abū Bakr has not surpassed you by excessive fasting or praying, but by a secret and tranquility in his heart (*al-Mawḍūʿāt al-Kubrā*, *Fabrications about Abū Bakr*, 1307; Mullā ʿAlī Qārī), 125

Among the nations that preceded you, there were inspired people, and if there are any among my nation, then it is ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (Bukhārī, *Companions of the Prophet* ﷺ, 3689), 43

Among those I am indebted to regarding his wealth and companionship is Abū Bakr (Bukhārī, *Merits of the Helpers*, 3904), 68

And if he asks of Me, I shall surely give it to him; and if he seeks refuge in Me, I shall surely grant him refuge (Bukhārī, *Hiring*, 2266), 221

Beware of the perspicacity of the believer, for he sees with the light of Allah (Tirmidhī, *Tafsīr*, 3127), 46

Did anyone among you have a dream (Abū Dāwūd, *Etiquette*, 5017), 83

I have been given comprehensive speech (Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 6998; Muslim, *Mosques and Places of Prayer*, 523a), 69

I saw ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf entering Paradise crawling (Aḥmad, *Musnad ʿĀʾishah*, 24842), 150

If you knew what I knew, you would laugh little and weep much; you would not take pleasure in women in bed; and you would go out into the streets beseeching Allah (Tirmidhī, *Worldly Detachment*, 2312), 131

If you knew what I knew, you would laugh little and weep much (Bukhārī, *Touching Matters of the Heart*, 6486), 124

‘In what state did you wake up?’ He said: ‘I woke up as a true believer’ (Shu‘ab al-Īmān, *Worldly Detachment and Being Heartbroken*, 10106; Bayhaqī), 215

Indeed, Allah created one hundred mercies, withholding ninety-nine and sent down one to the earth (Ibn Mājah, *Worldly Detachment*, 4294), 210

‘O Messenger of Allah, how does he speak?’ He said: ‘The angels speak through his tongue’ (*Al-Itiqād, Saints’ Marvels*; Bayhaqī), 44

O Messenger of Allah, in my dream last night I saw a cloud giving shade, from which drops of ghee and honey were falling (Ibn Mājah, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 3918), 83

Perhaps a disheveled, dusty person in two worn-out garments, who is turned away from every door—were he to swear an oath by Allah, He would surely fulfill his oath (Muslim, *Virtues, Ties of Kinship and Etiquette*, 2622), 221

Righteous visions constitute a portion of the forty-six parts of prophethood (Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 6983), 79

Should I not then be a grateful slave (Bukhārī, *The Night Prayer*, 1130), 208

Some knowledge is like a concealed thing; only those who know Allah know it (*Al-Arbā‘in fī al-Taṣawwuf*; Sulamī), 124

Spirits are amassed troops: those who acquainted with each other associate with each other, and those amongst them who differ, dissent (Muslim, *Virtues, Ties of Kinship and Etiquette*, 2638a), 253

The best among you are those who, when seen, Allah the Exalted is mentioned (Ibn Mājah, *Worldly Detachment*, 4119), 115

The devil has access to the son of Adam, and the angel has access (Tirmidhī, *Taf-sīr*, 2988), 58

The Qur’an has an exterior, an interior, a boundary, and a beginning (Ibn Hibbān, *Knowledge*, 75), 124

There is no prophethood left except for glad tidings (Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 6990), 79

There lived a king before you, and he had a court magician. As he (the magician) grew old, he said to the king (Muslim, *Worldly Detachment and Touching Matters of the Heart*, 3005), 115

Uways ibn ʿĀmir will come to you with the provisions of the people of Yemen, from Murād, then from Qarn (Muslim, *Merits of the Companions*, 2542a), 169

We, the assembly of Prophets, were commanded to address people according to their level of understanding (*Musnad al-Firdaws*, 1/398), 124

Whenever someone among a people narrates something their intellect cannot comprehend, it becomes a trial for them (Muslim, *Introduction*, 13), 124

Whoever has seen me in a dream will see me while awake (Ibn Mājah, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 3904), 96

Whoever is too preoccupied with my remembrance to ask Me, I shall grant him better than what I give those who ask (Tirmidhī, *Virtues of the Qurʾan*, 2926), 221

Whoever sees me in a dream has truly seen me, as Satan does not imitate me (Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 6994), 81, 82

Whosoever shows enmity to a friend (*walī*) of Mine, then I have declared war against him (Ibn Mājah, *Tribulations*, 3989), 159

Worship Allah as though you see Him (Ibn Mājah, *Introduction*, 64), 138

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Historically, there has been a longstanding tension among conscientious Muslims, with those of scholarly persuasion on one side, and those who focused on devotion and religious experience on the other. This has been intensified by scientific materialism and modern education. In this book, Dr. Mukhtar Mohsen Muhammad closes the gap of understanding by explaining the more mystical, and mystifying, aspects of Sufism, spiritual illuminations, from the perspective of Sunni orthodoxy and Sufi sheikhs.



DR. MUKHTAR MOHSEN MUHAMMAD is an Azhari scholar and Secretary General of Egypt's Dar al-Ifta.



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