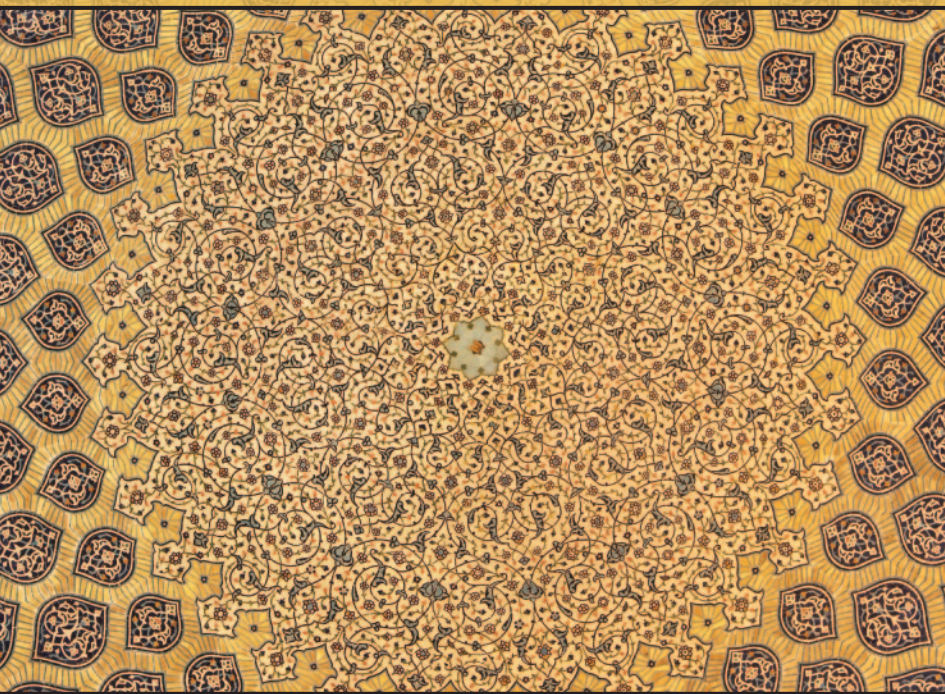


THE PATH TO ALLAH

ALI GOMAA



THE ROYAL ISLAMIC STRATEGIC STUDIES CENTRE

ENGLISH ISLAM SERIES • BOOK NUMBER 43

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

THE PATH TO ALLAH



DR ALI GOMAA

Translation by
MOUSTAFA ELQABBANY



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THE PATH TO ALLAH

by Dr Ali Gomaa

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PREFACE

*The Hadith of Gabriel is the Basis of this
Nation's Sciences of Jurisprudence,
Creed and Purification of the Heart*

We begin our discourse with the renowned hadith of our Master Gabriel ﷺ, a narration which encapsulates the core elements of our religion. It has been transmitted by the foremost authorities in hadith and has garnered significant scholarly attention. At its conclusion, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ says: ‘Indeed, that was Gabriel. He came to teach you your religion.’

Gabriel ﷺ would appear to the Companions in a form visible to them—on occasion, taking the form of a Companion named Diḥyah al-Kalbī, known for his handsome appearance. The Prophet ﷺ had appointed Diḥyah on multiple occasions as an emissary representing the Muslims to non-Muslim leaders. Gabriel would sometimes take his form, and the Companions would recognize the angelic presence when extraordinary phenomena occurred—such as Gabriel vanishing suddenly or appearing without notice, or being among them without their perceiving his entrance or departure.

In the hadith, Gabriel came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, sat before him as a student sits before a teacher, and placed his hands upon the Prophet’s knees ﷺ. He then asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, what is Islam?’ He ﷺ replied: ‘That you testify there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establish prayer,

give zakat, fast during Ramadan, and perform pilgrimage to the Kaaba if you are able to do so.'

Gabriel said: 'You have spoken truthfully.' 'Umar رضي الله عنه then said: 'We were astonished that he asked him, yet confirmed his answer!'

Gabriel continued: 'O Messenger of Allah, what is faith (*īmān*)?' He replied: 'It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in divine decree (*qadar*)—its good and its evil.'

Gabriel said: 'You have spoken truthfully.'

He then asked: 'Tell me about virtue (*iḥsān*).' He ﷺ said: 'That you worship Allah as though you see Him; and if you do not see Him, [know that] He sees you.'¹

Scholars have regarded this hadith a preamble for the study of religious sciences. They structured these sciences upon the tripartite division found within it: the science of monotheism (*‘ilm al-tawḥīd*), the science of jurisprudence (*‘ilm al-fiqh*), and the science of spiritual purification (*‘ilm al-taṣawwuf*).

1. The Science of Monotheism (*‘Ilm al-Tawḥīd*)

This science addresses matters related to faith and is also known as theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*), creed (*‘ilm al-‘aqā'id*), or religious fundamentals (*uṣūl al-dīn*). In this field, scholars have conveyed to us all that pertains to belief in Allah, His messengers, His revealed books, and the Last Day. The subject is typically divided into three major sections:

- Divine Attributes (*ilāhiyyāt*): Discussions in this area concern the attributes of Allah—what is necessary, impossible, and possible for Him—supported by both rational proofs and transmitted texts.

- Prophethood (*nubuwwāt*): This section discusses the characteristics of the noble prophets—what must be affirmed for them, such as infallibility; what is impossible for them, such as lying; and what is permissible.
- Received Matters (*samʿiyyāt*): These include beliefs based solely on scriptural transmission rather than intellectual reasoning, such as knowledge of the Last Day and the obligation of belief in it, Paradise and Hell, the Bridge (*al-Ṣirāt*), the Scale (*al-Mīzān*), the Reckoning (*al-Hisāb*), angels, jinn, and similar matters affirmed in the Qurʾan and Sunnah.

This noble science corresponds to faith (*īmān*).

2. The Science of Jurisprudence (*ʿIlm al-Fiqh*)

The science of jurisprudence was established to preserve the knowledge of the pillars of Islam concerning worship and transactions. Through rigorous methodology, jurists expanded this science until the number of derivative legal rulings exceeded one million, all of which trace their origins to the Qurʾan and Sunnah.

Differences in juristic interpretation led to the formation of various schools of law (*madhāhib*), which originally numbered over ninety. Over time, however, scholars noted a high degree of similarity among them. Many of the lesser-known schools faded away due to the absence of dedicated students to preserve and propagate them. As a result, eight schools have survived to the present day. Of these, four are widely followed by the mainstream Sunni community: the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanbalī schools.

The remaining four schools are followed by smaller communities: the Jaʿfarī school (followed by the Twelver

Shia), the Ibādī school (followed by communities in Oman and parts of Algeria), the Zaydī school (followed by some Yemenis), and the Zāhirī school (followed by a very limited number of people in North Africa).

The four major imams whose legal schools have prevailed are:

- Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150 AH / 767 CE), born in 80 AH;
- Mālik (d. 179 ah / 795 CE), born either 90 or 96 AH;
- Al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204 AH / 820 CE), born in 150 AH; and
- Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. ca. 241 AH / 855 CE), born in 164 AH.

These imams preserved the legacy of jurisprudence inherited from the Companions and scholars of independent legal methodology throughout the ages.²

3. Sufism: The Science of Spiritual Purification (‘*Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*)

This corresponds to the rank of virtue (*iḥsān*) referenced in the Hadith of Gabriel: ‘That you worship Allah as though you see Him...’³ Thus, Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) is not a foreign or extraneous science, but rather a science fundamental to Islam. It is one of the essential sciences (*‘ulūm al-maqāṣid*)—those sought for their own sake.

Every Muslim is encouraged to study this science to the best of their ability. Just as one learns the fundamentals of faith through theology and the practical rulings of worship and transactions through jurisprudence, one must also learn the ethical conduct and manners that he is obligated to embody—this is the domain of Sufism.⁴

Sufism is a Science Based on the Qur'an, Sunnah and the Practice of the Righteous

At the heart of religion lies spiritual purification (*tazkiyah*), which is synonymous with the station of virtue (*iḥsān*). Early Muslims recognized the profound significance of this station and built upon it the discipline known as Sufism (*taṣawwuf*). Just as they developed theology (*ʿilm al-kalām*) and religious fundamentals (*uṣūl al-dīn*) to preserve and defend proper creed, and engaged with jurisprudence (*fiqh*) to articulate and derive the rulings of the sacred law, so too did they cultivate the science of spiritual refinement and discipline to preserve the station of virtue.

Ascetics, devotees, thinkers, and scholars began to record their spiritual experiences, reflections, divine intimations, and the obstacles they encountered along the path to Allah ﷻ. They observed their own souls as they ascended through spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*) and fluctuated between various states (*aḥwāl*), all whilst journeying towards Allah's good pleasure and proximity. This pursuit was rooted in the Prophetic instruction: 'Worship Allah as though you see Him, and if you do not see Him, [know that] He sees you.'

In their introspection, the devout documented their experiences for the benefit of those who would come after them. Thus emerged the science of Sufism. This discipline is founded upon two primary sources: the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as facts and experience.

It is precisely this second source that has led some to object to Sufism. Skeptics doubted the spiritual states experienced by devotees, questioned the progression they described in their ascent through servitude, and were suspicious of the conditions they documented—intended as

guidance for future seekers. As a result, some expressed reservations. To them, scholars responded with the maxim: 'He who tastes knows; he who knows, draws deeply.' Once one tastes the sweetness of faith and it permeates the heart, one acknowledges it and yearns for increase. A mere sip is no longer sufficient: one desires to scoop up deeply from the fountain of mystic insight and drink one's fill of divine beauty and sweetness.

This reality was understood even by Heraclius, who, upon asking Abū Sufyān about the followers of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, asked: 'Do they increase or decrease [in number]?' Abū Sufyān replied: 'They increase.' Heraclius remarked: 'Such is the nature of true faith—when its delight settles in the heart, none can thereafter abhor it.'⁵ That is, it never departs from the heart once firmly rooted.

Thus, the Sufis emerged, documenting their spiritual states in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah. Their ultimate objective was none other than to reach Allah.

CHAPTER ONE

PRINCIPLES OF THE PATH

PRINCIPLE: ALLAH IS THE AIM OF ALL

Our path to Allah is one filled with love, mercy, tranquility, and divine facilitation. It is a path that grants a person happiness in this worldly life and joy upon returning to their Lord on the Day of Resurrection.

Every path has signposts that guide the traveller towards the intended destination. Among the signposts of the path to Allah—signs which every seeker must be aware of—is the knowledge that the path to Allah is singular, despite the plurality of approaches, for they all share the same ultimate goal.

Travellers to Allah, despite their differing backgrounds and starting points, are like individuals standing along the circumference of a circle—all heading towards its centre. The centre, in this case, is Allah. Regardless of the point of origin or the specific route taken, the destination is the same: Allah. This is the fundamental objective and the first principle of the path upon which all travelers must proceed: ‘Allah is the aim of all.’

This is the first principle that seekers of Allah must learn: ‘Allah is the aim of all.’ This phrase is a profound expression, one that establishes the bases and foundations of the spiritual path. It should be written down and memorized.

It is upon this understanding that one must question sheikhs at the outset of one's journey to Allah, to discern one's direction and purpose along the path. One must ask them: 'What is the aim I am striving to reach on this journey? Is it refinement of character and upright conduct? The delight of worship within a specific spiritual method? The expectation of divine breakthroughs and illuminations? The acquisition of reward and entry into Paradise? Or something else?'

You will find that all of our mystic sheikhs do not guide their students towards any of these intermediate aims. Instead, they all respond with one word: 'Allah.' Allah is the sole objective. They seek not to guide seekers to rewards, Paradise, mystical illuminations, visions, or any matter related to this world. Their only desire is Allah. Hence, they say: 'Allah is the aim of all,' meaning that all saints and great sheikhs have had Allah ﷻ as their ultimate aim.

They likened the pursuit of Allah—Who is the aim of all—to a road that ultimately leads to Him, as if Allah lies at the end of a journey that begins with the seeker and ends with the Sought, between the slave and the Creator. They thus named the acts of worship they engage in as 'the path,' seeing this analogy as the best description for the mystic insights, experiences, worship, obedience, and spiritual conduct they acquired with Allah. They named it: 'The path to Allah.'

What does it mean for Allah to be one's aim? It means that the goal I wish to reach is Allah Himself, such that He is present in every aspect of my life—both materially and spiritually. It means that all of my conduct is tied to Allah ﷻ. This necessitates mentioning Allah at every moment, with every breath, remaining ever mindful and never heed-

less. It requires living by His words: ‘Say: “My prayer and my rituals, and my living, and my dying, are all for God, the Lord of the Worlds.”’⁶

How does a slave reach Allah? Is it only through frequent mention of Allah and worship? Can anyone who mentions Allah and performs their acts of devotion say they have reached their aim—namely, Allah?

Mentioning Allah and acts of worship are indeed good and foundational to the path. However, any act of worship devoid of proper conduct is of limited benefit. Sheikhs of the path unanimously agree that whilst worship may earn a slave reward and Paradise, it is only through proper conduct that one may reach the divine presence. Allah says: ‘I am the companion whosoever mentions Me,’⁷ meaning: ‘... mentions Me with reverence and presence of heart, not merely with the tongue whilst the heart is preoccupied elsewhere.’ Thus, the state of the heart is what matters most in the journey to Allah. When the heart connects with Allah and attains knowledge of Him, it has reached its goal.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Iskandarī states: ‘Your reaching Allah is your attainment of knowledge of Him. Otherwise, our Lord is too majestic to be contacted by anything, or to contact anything.’⁸

Imam Ghazālī defines reaching Allah as: ‘Attainment of vision and witnessing through the inner heart in this world, and through the physical eyes in the Hereafter. Reaching does not mean the union of one essence with another—glorified be Allah far above that.’⁹

Abundant mention of Allah is indeed a foundation for spiritual arrival—provided it is accompanied by presence of heart. Sheikh Kattānī wrote: ‘Among the conditions of mentioning Allah is that it be accompanied by reverence

and glorification of Allah. Otherwise, its practitioner will not succeed in the stations of the spiritual elite.’ He also used to say: ‘By Allah, were it not that He commanded me to mention Him, I would not dare to utter His Name out of awe. How can someone like me mention the Supremely Real without first washing his mouth with a thousand acts of repentance from all else before mentioning Him?’¹⁰

Abū Hurayrah ﷺ said:

We were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on the way to Mecca, and he passed by a mountain called Jum-dān. He said: ‘Sally forth, for the solitary ones have gone ahead.’ They said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, who are the solitary ones?’ He said: ‘Those men and women who mention Allah often.’¹¹

The Prophet ﷺ thus informed us that the truly solitary one is the one who mentions Allah alone, unaccompanied by anything else. The true mentioner of Allah is one who mentions nothing alongside Allah—not even his own needs.

Abū Sa‘īd al-Kharrāz said: ‘Whilst I was on ‘Arafāt one afternoon, the proximity of Allah prevented me from asking Him my needs. Then, my soul urged me to ask Allah Almighty, and I heard a voice saying: “After finding Allah, do you ask Allah for something other than Allah?”’ Whoever is preoccupied with witnessing Allah to the extent of not asking Him for anything else, Allah grants him the truth of mystic insight, turns him away from everything else, draws him nigh, and becomes his intimate companion, for Allah has said: ‘I am the companion of whosoever mentions Me.’ The veils between him and Allah were then lifted, and it was as if he saw Him.¹²

Sheikh Dāwūd ibn Bākhilā, the sheikh of Sīdī Muḥammad Wafā', used to say:

Beware, O seeker, that your aim in mentioning Allah and worship be the reward or recompense. That is assuredly yours. Rather, your aspiration should be the pleasure of conversing with Him and the honour of His company. For one who seeks the company of a king should not concern himself with food, drink, or clothing as long as he is in His service.¹³

This does not diminish the value of mentioning Allah even when not accompanied by presence of heart. The slave must persist in mentioning Allah at all times. Even if the heart is absent, frequent mention of Allah is the means to its eventual presence. The slave continues mentioning Allah until Allah becomes his witness.

In the *Mawāqif* of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī, in the station titled Do Not Depart from My Name, he says: 'He stopped me between the beginning of His originating and the finality of His creating and said to me: "If you do not see Me, do not depart from My Name."'

One whose mention of Allah is constant finds his innermost being purified. And when his innermost being is purified, he dwells in the divine presence.

Allah only commands one to cling to His name when He is not yet beheld. For this reason, one of the mystics enigmatically said in his poetry: 'Through the mention of Allah, sins increase.' This is because the station of witnessing the divine is a station of awe and speechlessness: '... Voices will be hushed before the Compassionate One, so that you hear nothing but a faint shuffle.'¹⁴

This meaning is reflected in the words of Shiblī ؒ. When asked: ‘When will you find rest?’, he replied: ‘When none mention Him.’ This occurs in the station of beholding the divine. It is as though he wished for everyone in his location to enter that station, so that mentioning Allah might be replaced by beholding Him. This is how people of the path have understood his statement.¹⁵

PRINCIPLE: THE DISTRACTED ON THE PATH TO ALLAH DO NOT ARRIVE

Among the foundational principles of the spiritual path is the saying: ‘The distracted do not arrive.’ This means that the seeker must direct himself wholly and exclusively towards Allah, such that nothing distracts him from the divine. His attention must be entirely fixed upon Allah, turning away from all else—whether known or unknown, whether related to worldly matters such as livelihood and progeny, or even matters pertaining to religion, including incoming thoughts, spiritual illuminations, or marvels—these are all considered distractions along the path.

The seeker to Allah must have a heart attached only to Him, with a mind preoccupied solely with Him, knowing with certainty that both his current and final outcomes rest entirely with Allah. For Allah ؒ alone is reality, and all else is but illusion. It is not appropriate for the seeker to preoccupy himself with illusion or conjecture, turning away from reality.

Allah ؒ is the Light, and all else is darkness, and it is a form of misguidance to forsake the Light for darkness. The seeker, then, proceeds towards Allah with his entire being, seeing Allah in all things—to the extent that he sees nothing

but Allah, and turns to nothing but Him, for he knows that whoever is distracted will never arrive.

Aḥmad Rifāʿī ؒ says: 'The distracted does not arrive, the intruder does not succeed, and whoever does not see deficiency in himself, then all of his moments are deficient.' Similarly, Imam Qushayrī ؒ said: 'The darkness of reliance on the familiar extinguishes the light of the moment.'

Regarding the importance of seekers avoiding distraction, it is related that people used to bring food for those devoted ascetics who had freed themselves up for the worship of Allah, dedicating such offerings as endowments out of love for Allah, and so the ascetics might not be preoccupied with anything other than Him. Some scholars held that if a person were to become distracted by something other than Allah, it would no longer be lawful for him to partake in such food which was intended only for those entirely focused on Allah. It is narrated that ʿAlī al-Marṣafī said:

Whoever sits among the indigent of the *zāwiyah* and gets distracted by a worldly matter has halted in his journey and has corrupted the weak *zāwiyah* members. The burden of that corruption falls upon him, and he must then leave the *zāwiyah*, for the endowments of the *zāwiyah* or the gifts presented to it are, in essence, for those who have renounced the world and devoted themselves to the worship of Allah ؒ. The donor or endower gives out of love for Allah, intending that the indigent not be distracted from his purpose. Any indigent who partakes of such gifts whilst not being occupied with Allah has, in effect, consumed what is unlawful. This is because of the condition stipulated by the donor, who, had he seen

the indigent distracted from Allah, would not have given anything, and would rather have said to him: ‘Go out and earn your living among common traders.’ And Allah knows best.¹⁶

As such, we were taught by our predecessors that if one is travelling a path and seeks to reach its intended destination, one must continue walking without turning right or left. If, for example, a person walks along a road lined with dazzling lights and alluring displays—shop windows and the like—and stops at every one of them to gaze or enter the shop and become engrossed within, then their life will be wasted in such distractions. Lifespans vary, and time is like a sword—if you do not disrupt it, it disrupts you. Imam Shāfi‘ī said: ‘I accompanied the Sufis and learned from them that time is like a sword: if you do not disrupt it, it disrupts you.’

The principle expressed as ‘the distracted do not arrive’ is thus a foundational tenet of proper conduct (*adab*) with Allah. From this, it follows that one’s deeds must be performed solely for the sake of Allah, undistracted by lights, secrets, the Realm of Dominion (*mulk*), the Realm of Sovereignty (*malakūt*), divine manifestations, or anything else. The sole aim is Allah.

What helps the seeker to abandon distractions is frequent mention of Allah (*dhikr*). Abundant mention of Allah polishes the heart until it resembles a mirror. When the heart resembles a mirror, the lights of divine Lordship (*rubūbiyyah*) are reflected upon it. These reflected lights generate a profound delight, incomparable and inexpressible in any language. Such an experience cannot be described, likened, articulated, or fully conveyed. It can only

be known by those who have tasted it: ‘He who tastes knows; he who knows, draws deeply.’ True understanding only comes through experience and discipline of the self. Whoever attains this lofty state is undistracted by anything else in this world.

Distraction is not limited to worldly matters. The seeker might also become distracted by spiritual illuminations or dazzling phenomena that arise from increased mention of Allah. If he rejoices in them and becomes preoccupied with them, he has thereby deviated from his sole aim and will not reach his goal. One of the functions of the sheikh in the life of the seeker is to repel such distractions and redirect the seeker away from anything other than his aim.

Sufi masters derived the principle ‘The distracted do not arrive’ from the word of Allah: ‘*And they were only commanded to worship God devoting religion purely to Him as ḥanīfs and to establish prayer and pay the alms. That is the upright religion.*’¹⁷ Sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*) with Allah implies the abandonment of associating anything with Him (*shirk*), and being distracted by anything other than Allah constitutes a form of association.¹⁸

Imam Rāzī states in his *tafsīr*: ‘What is required in outward actions is the observance of the inward state of the heart—purifying intention and removing all motives except seeking the pleasure of Allah, as in His saying: “*And they were only commanded to worship God devoting religion purely to Him ...*”’¹⁹

Abū Hurayrah  narrated that the Messenger of Allah  said: ‘Allah  said: “I am so self-sufficient that I am in no need of having an associate. Thus, he who does an action for someone else’s sake as well as Mine, I will renounce him and his association.”’²⁰ Thus, Allah does not accept

that His slave be distracted by anything else in his journey to Him. By, ‘I will renounce him and his association’, what is meant is the action in which he associated others with Allah ﷻ. This means that Allah will exclude such person and his action from His presence—so long as he remains in a state of associating others with Him or ostentation. However, if he renounces associating other than Allah and ostentation, then purifies his intention solely for Allah, his action will be accepted.²¹

Sheikh ‘Alī al-Marsafī ﷺ used to say: ‘Allah does not open the doors of divine gifts to a seeker whilst his mind is occupied with anything of the cosmos. Divine breakthrough (*fath*) occurs only for one whose heart beholds the Supremely Real and is absent from all else.’

Shiblī ﷺ said: ‘Whoever remembers Allah in truth forgets everything else beside Him.’ Finally, Junayd, the leader of all Sufis, said: ‘Whoever beholds creation does not see the Supremely Real, and whoever beholds the Supremely Real does not see creation—except for those who are perfected.’²²

In conclusion, one who is distracted by other than Allah does not arrive at Allah. This is because Allah has no need for a seeker preoccupied with anything else alongside Him. Only one who is wholly absorbed in Allah can arrive at Him.

PRINCIPLE: WHAT MATTERS IS AUTHENTICITY, NOT SENIORITY

As Sufis pursued the spiritual path, they observed that sometimes a seeker might be granted in a single moment what others are not granted over a lifetime. Thus, they

concluded: ‘What matters is authenticity, not seniority.’ They also said: ‘Even a limping [animal] sometimes overtakes others,’ alluding to a well-known Arab proverb meaning that a limping ewe may outpace one that is healthy, due to circumstances or conditions favouring the former that are absent in the latter.

The people of spiritual discipline drew on this proverb to illustrate that a person who once lagged behind on the path may suddenly be stirred by powerful resolve and turn wholeheartedly to Allah. In doing so, he may surpass those who had previously been ahead of him. Perhaps Allah delayed them only to advance them—that is, He placed him at the end of the line of seekers out of divine wisdom, so that he might one day become their leader and forerunner.

They were informed by the example of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who came last among Prophets, yet was made their leader. This idea is especially important for renewing spiritual resolve and lifting the burden of guilt from those weighed down by sin—that oppressive sense of shame that can break a person and sever their connection with their Lord. When such a person learns that sincerity in pursuing the Supremely Real can shorten the spiritual journey and even allow him to surpass those who preceded him, his spirit is revived, his energy renewed, and his hope rekindled, prompting him to turn to Allah anew.

What truly matters is not the number of litanies, acts of worship, or seclusions one has performed, but the authenticity and purity of intention behind them. One may find that, when comparing one’s own prayers, acts of worship, and mentioning of Allah to those of others, one appears to fall short. This can lead to deep sorrow. However, in such moments, we remind them that what matters is not outstripping

others in the abundance of acts of worship or making mention of Allah, but the authenticity therein.

A person may give a single dinar or dirham in charity, and it may be accepted by Allah and attain divine pleasure, thereby elevating that person and drawing him closer to Him. Meanwhile, another whose heart is attached to people, not Allah, may donate a hundred thousand and still be rejected.

One of the clearest proofs of this is the story of the two sons of Adam ﷺ, each offering a sacrifice to Allah. The Qur'an recounts: *'And recite to them the story of the two sons of Adam, truthfully, how they each offered a sacrifice, and it was accepted from one of them, and not accepted from the other. He said, "I will surely slay you". The other said, "God accepts only from the God-fearing".'*²³ Ibn 'Abbās ؓ comments: 'Abel said to Cain: "Allah accepts only from one whose heart is pure. He rejected your offering because your heart is impure."²⁴

Thus, authentic resolve and sincere intention can carry the seeker across distances that years of prior effort or increased religious observance may not. An adroit person achieves far more with strong determination, high aspiration, pure purpose, and sound intention—even with little outward action—than one who lacks these qualities, no matter how much he does.

It is resolve and love that ease hardship, sweeten the journey, and propel one forward. Progress towards Allah is attained through aspiration, authenticity, and firm determination. A person of high ambition will outpace another who is more active outwardly but lacks inner drive. If the two have equal resolve, the one who does more works will surpass the other.

Ultimately, all who walk this path do so with one aim: to seek Allah ﷻ. The goal of the path is to learn proper conduct (*adab*) with Allah. This conduct manifests through repentance, reliance on Allah, loving and hating for His sake, worshipping Him alone, seeking His aid, and trusting what lies with Him, among many other qualities that we will elaborate upon, Allah willing, step by step, until we truly learn what it means to conduct ourselves before Allah.

The sheikh entrusted with nurturing others must embody certain qualities and be adorned with noble character. These traits are a Muhammadan inheritance from our Master, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The sheikh should emulate him, adopt his manners, and strive to follow his example, making the Prophet ﷺ his role model in all things.

Before all of this, however, we must commit these principles to memory. They are distilled truths—the essence of profound realities and the collective experience of those who have journeyed towards Allah. These truths represent a refined summary of the noble Sacred Law: the very pith of what Allah and His Messenger commanded, combined with the lived spiritual experience of those who applied these commands in real life. Their path was framed entirely within divine instruction, and they likened the path to Allah to a physical road travelled by a person. On either side of that road lie distractions—the temptations and preoccupations of worldly life. These distractions can also include the spiritual breakthroughs and blessings a person receives along the way. The seeker must constantly ask himself: ‘Is my goal to find pleasure in the path itself, or is my goal to worship Allah alone?’ When the seeker experiences delight, or spiritual states, he must not become attached to them. Rather, he must continue moving forward, unmoved by

delights, breakthroughs, unveilings, or anything that distracts him from Allah ﷻ.

PRINCIPLE: CONTINUOUS GOOD WORKS

Among the etiquettes and principles of the spiritual path is the implementation of continuity (*daymūmah*), as indicated by the Prophet ﷺ in his saying: ‘The most beloved of deeds to Allah are those done consistently, even if few.’²⁵

Lady ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها described the Messenger of Allah ﷺ by saying: ‘His practice was consistent.’²⁶ That is, his acts of devotion were ongoing and uninterrupted.

The people of Allah say: ‘When a litany (*wird*) is abandoned, the inrush (*wārid*) ceases.’ Their statement: ‘When a litany is abandoned’ means that someone who fails to maintain it regularly—such as one who makes mention of Allah some days and neglects to do so on others—will no longer receive divine inrushes. It is this inrush that elevates the seeker, propels him forward, and keeps his journey continuous and progressing.

This is the same meaning as their statement: ‘The distracted do not arrive.’ This is because a distracted person is one who looks right and left at every step, thereby abandoning travel, and thus, arrival. The inrush may contain lights (*anwār*), or it may contain secrets (*asrār*). It is the inrush that guides the seeker. These divine inrushes teach us how to properly conduct ourselves with Allah. Through this proper conduct (*adab*), we advance towards the Lord of All Worlds. However, whoever abandons his formula abandons his inrush.

The spiritual formula (*wird*) begins with construction: it is as though we are building a vault for lights and secrets.

How do we establish this structure? By contemplating the divine names, Sufis identified seven of these names upon which the pillars of this structure rest. Upon these pillars, the doorway is set, and the ceilings are raised. Later, Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī—may Allah sanctify his secret—said that this structure requires walls to become a secure vault. He selected six additional names to be recited after the original seven.

The people of Allah differed in how these seven names should be recited—each sheikh having his own method, just as engineers vary in their materials and techniques: some using reinforced concrete, others wood, or even high-tech composite materials. The essential idea remains the same: constructing a secure vault for the deposit of secrets and lights. Each name has a prescribed number of repetitions for the disciple. However, as spiritual readiness weakened and social climates became more clouded and impure, the number of repetitions increased in order that the practice should yield its intended effect.

Environment affects outcome. For this reason, sheikhs increased the number from seventy thousand to one hundred thousand. We mention each name one hundred thousand times. The number may be reduced if signs—known to sheikhs—appear on the seeker. These signs vary and are not generally disclosed, but the sheikh, through insight and perspicacity, may advise: ‘Move on to the next name. This suffices. We have reached the aim of this stage. Praise be to Allah. The goal of building the vault has thus been fulfilled.’

Thus, whoever wishes to begin should start with: ‘There is no god but Allah’ (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*), recited one hundred times. Then one proceeds to the name ‘Allah’, then ‘He’ (*huwa*’).

Sheikh Muḥammad Zakī al-Dīn Ibrāhīm  issued a general authorization (*ijāzah ʿāmmah*) for his contemporaries to follow him in matters of the path. Such opportunities are rare and only arise through divine facilitation and Allah's specific permission. We believe that the sheikh had a secret unveiled to him and was granted permission, so he permitted it for us. This is because the sheikh does not act from his own volition or desire, as such people have transcended their personal inclinations. Thereafter, Allah grants breakthroughs to whom He wills. However, the true aim should never be advancement in rank or superiority. The aim must remain solely the worship of Allah and the affirmation of His Oneness: 'There is no god but Allah.' The matter in its entirety must be sincerely directed to Him alone. If we proceed in such a manner, then everything is clear.

As for the number of daily repetitions, it should be based on one's capacity: five hundred, one thousand, two thousand, even ten thousand. It is a form of worship in which there is no room for haste. We do not fixate on quantity without presence, nor do we allow neglect to unravel the thread and cut off the spiritual inrush. What is required is consistency.

In perseverance, we will sometimes experience hardship and fatigue, and at other times ease and grace. This is because our purpose is not to acquire worldly happiness, psychological comfort, or even spiritual elevation. Our sole objective is the worship of Allah and His pleasure. We also do not pursue the cosmic effects that may sometimes accompany the practice.

If a seeker is granted a spiritual unveiling whilst mentioning Allah, he must not become attached to it. Such unveilings are distractions that can veer one off the path and

away from Allah. The seeker must not be distracted by them. Instead, he must once again return to mentioning Allah and making Him his aim. This is because Allah is his aim, and His pleasure is what he seeks. This is the heart of the matter.

If we proceed in this way, completing the thirteen names, we then recite the Beautiful Names of Allah (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*), focusing on one name each day. In doing so, we eventually arrive at a litany (*wird*) in which we find our heart. That name becomes the seeker's spiritual occupation until death, along with his regular formula of seeking forgiveness (*istighfār*), invoking blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ, and reciting 'There is no god but Allah' (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*), morning and evening.

In this way, one enters the sphere of those who mention Allah (*dā'irat al-dhākirīn*). Thereafter, one may do as he wills in terms of worship, mentioning Allah, devoting oneself to Him, and increasing in goodness: '*... and do good that perhaps you may be prosperous.*'²⁷

PRINCIPLE: THE PATH OF ALLAH IS ONE DESPITE ITS PLURALITY AND IT RESEMBLES A CIRCLE

The path to Allah, which may be approached through various methods, is like a circle, with Allah ﷻ, at its centre, and the seeker at its circumference. The radii of the circle differ, yet all lead to Allah ﷻ.

Thus, the path is essentially one in its reality, even if the methods and routes differ, and the styles of reaching it vary. The essence remains singular, and the ultimate goal is one. It is only the means of access that differ due to variations

in place, time, and individual circumstances. In this regard, Ibn al-Qayyim  states:

The path to Allah is, in reality, one; there is no multiplicity in it. ... As for what is found in the words of some scholars—that the paths to Allah are many and diverse, made so by Allah due to the diversity of capacities and aptitudes as a mercy and grace from Him—this is true and does not contradict what we have mentioned regarding the unity of the path.²⁸

To elaborate and clarify: the path—whilst one in essence—encompasses all that pleases Allah, and what pleases Him is plural and diverse. Thus, all that pleases Him constitutes a single path. However, what pleases Him is numerous and varied according to time, place, individual, and circumstances. All of these are means to attain His pleasure. These varied means, which Allah has established out of His mercy and wisdom, are many and diverse due to the differences in the dispositions and receptivity of His slaves.

Had the path been singular in form despite the diversity of intellects, mentalities, and the varying degrees of readiness and capability, it would have been followed by one person at a time. However, because human capacities differ, the paths were diversified so that each person may pursue a route suited to his aptitude, strength, and receptivity. From this, we understand the diversity of religious codes [of the past] and their differences, even though all of them ultimately lead to the same religion and path to Allah. Indeed, even a single religious code may include internal variety, despite the oneness of the object of worship and the religion.

The path to Allah necessarily involves a sheikh, and the

seeker must observe proper conduct (*adab*) with the sheikh. Each sheikh has a particular method of spiritual training, and this method may be suited to the seeker, drawing him to the sheikh, under whose guidance he advances and ascends daily. A sign of such affinity is that the individual learns a new form of conduct with Allah each day—he progresses along this path and grows in refined conduct towards Allah ﷻ.

The standard and criterion by which this path is evaluated is one's conduct with Allah. If a given path cultivates ever-increasing courtesy and reverence towards Allah, day after day, and nurtures the heart, then this is the true path, and that sheikh is his rightful guide. Conversely, if the seeker remains stagnant, unmoved, unaffected, and unreflective, the deficiency lies not in the sheikh, but in the lack of harmony between the sheikh and the seeker—that is, the seeker's spiritual provision does not lie with that sheikh, nor does the sheikh's provision lie with that seeker.

Hence, there is no harm in the seeker disengaging from a particular path and seeking another—provided it is done with utmost respect and propriety towards the sheikh. He must not accuse the sheikh of deficiency or shortcoming, nor should he scrutinize him for what he perceives as flaws. Rather, the deficiency lies within himself. Therefore, if he moves on, it must be with increased veneration, respect, loyalty, and reverence for the sheikh, praising him both privately and publicly. He must not sever ties with him in his heart, for backbiting can occur not only by the tongue but also by the heart. Contempt, arrogance, and condescension are forms of inward backbiting. It is not only the tongue that slanders and gossips: the heart can do so as well.

This process may continue: the seeker may approach

one, two, or three sheikhs, yet not find his spiritual provision with any of them. However, Allah ﷻ is generous: if He sees the seeker as sincere, persistent, and steadfast in seeking the path to Him and striving along it, He will open the way, grant him success, and draw him to the sheikh with whom his spiritual cultivation is suited. The matter is entirely in Allah's hands—not in our own power or strength, nor in intelligence, investigation, or knowledge, but rather, through the grace and guidance of the Lord of All Worlds. This necessitates a measure of faith in the unseen and reliance upon Allah, without which the journey cannot proceed. The pursuit of the path is not within human power and capability—it is only through the grace of the Most Merciful ﷻ.

Moreover, some individuals take the path as a means of blessing (*tabarruk*), whilst others take it as a means of taught spiritual discipline (*sulūk*). The former may take from multiple sheikhs, drawing blessings from each. Indeed, many of our teachers would take various formulas of mentioning Allah (*adhkār*) from different sheikhs in this way. To the contrary, the path of spiritual discipline must be singular, and its sheikh must be one. Once a person has chosen this path of spiritual discipline, he must have only one sheikh. He cannot divide his allegiance between multiple sheikhs. He must not receive from one sheikh and then compare his method with that of another—appointing himself, unwittingly, as a judge over them, or selectively adopting elements from each path as he pleases. This would lead him to ruin, as though he were placing himself between two millstones that grind him whilst he cannot resist them.

In the domain of spiritual discipline, the path must be one.

CHAPTER TWO

INTEGRALS OF THE PATH

INTEGRAL: THE SHEIKH

The Necessity of the Sheikh in the Sufi Path

Sufis stipulate the necessity of a spiritual guide (sheikh) on the path to Allah, for it is he who redirects the spiritual aspirant (*murīd*) when he strays and returns him to the path. They refer to him as the ‘guiding sheikh’ (*al-Sheikh al-murshid*) and regard his function as grounded in experiential knowledge which does not contradict the Qur’an and the Sunnah, but rather stems from them and finds corroboration therein. This role is modeled after the Prophet ﷺ with his Companions, and likewise the Companions with the Followers, continuing in unbroken succession to the present day.

Sufis recognize various types and ranks of sheikhs. One is the guide (*murshid*): one who knows the path, the dangers surrounding it, how to avoid them, how to offer counsel, and how to instruct in the proper conduct (*adab*) due to Allah. For proper conduct with Allah is the cornerstone of the spiritual path. The sheikh’s role is to help the aspirant attain this conduct. The first gate of conduct he teaches is mention of Allah (*dhikr*), and the second is turning away from everything other than Allah—the ultimate objective of all seekers.

There may also be a perfect guide (*murshid kāmil*), who is designated as the Muhammadan Heir (*al-Wārith al-Muḥammadī*). Such a sheikh watches over his disciples even more than he watches over himself. Due to the intense clarity of his spiritual state and the refinement of his heart, occurrences in the hearts of others reflect themselves to him—both their faults and spiritual states—even without verbal disclosure. The Sufis have observed through experience that when such a sheikh looks upon an aspirant, Allah unveils to him the aspirant's deficiencies. Yet despite this, the sheikh's treatment of him does not change, for he understands that imperfection is inherent to humanity, and that Allah has only granted infallibility to the Prophets.

The purpose of the sheikh's awareness of these deficiencies is to rear the aspirant upon sound knowledge of his state, to guide him, to rectify him, to fill the gaps in his spiritual character, to pull him out of deviation, if any, and return him to the path and urge him onward upon it.

Thus, the path does not always require a perfect guide in every case. A qualified guide may suffice, and if Allah bestows upon one a perfect guide, that is even better.

The adoption of a sheikh, as understood by the Sufis, does not contradict the obligation to follow the Qur'an and Sunnah. Rather, it constitutes obedience to both. Evidence for this lies in the divine command: '*... and follow the way of him who returns to Me [in penitence]. ...*'²⁹, and likewise: '*They are the ones whom God has guided; so follow their guidance. ...*'³⁰.

The principle of following the Qur'an and Sunnah is in emulating those who have truly embodied them and grasped their meanings correctly. Not every Muslim is divinely granted sound understanding and proper adherence

independently, without a guide to direct him. For no matter how intelligent or knowledgeable the intellect may be, it remains prone to error.

The Prophet ﷺ himself urged us to follow his noble Companions, saying: ‘My Companions are like stars; whichever of them you follow, you will be guided.’³¹ No one ever claimed that following the Companions contradicted the obligation of following the Qur’an and Sunnah. Rather, they are the best of those who understood and implemented both, so to follow them is to follow the Qur’an and Sunnah.

Likewise is the case with the sheikh in the Sufi path: to follow him and obey him is to obey what the Qur’an and Sunnah have commanded. He is a guide to them, possessing wisdom, sound counsel, and prior experience in the journey to Allah and the distractions that obstruct it. The sheikh, through his knowledge, and by virtue of the breakthroughs granted to him by Allah, facilitates for seekers the removal of obstacles and directs them towards what is in their spiritual interest. Allah ﷻ says: ‘... *for every folk there is a guide*.’³² The exegete and knower of Allah, Ibn ‘Ajībah, says in his *tafsīr*:

‘*For every folk there is a guide*’—that is, for every age there is a mystic knower (‘*ārif*) of Allah who guides people to the Divine Presence. They are the heirs of the Greatest Guide, the Sublime Prophet ﷺ. The first among them was our master ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, for he was the first to openly teach and disseminate the knowledge of Sufism, as per the aforementioned hadith.³³ Then it was transmitted to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who refined it, then to Ḥabīb al-‘Ajāmī, then to Dāwūd al-Ṭā‘ī,

then to Ma^ʿrūf al-Karkhī, then to Sahl al-Tustarī, and ultimately to the master of the path, Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd. From there, it spread across the lands. For every generation, there are men who bear the banner of reality (*ḥaqīqah*) and guide people to the inner truths of the Sharia—they are the mystic knowers of Allah.³⁴

Allah also says: *‘And restrain yourself along with those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening, desiring His Countenance; and do not let your eyes overlook them desiring the glitter of the life of this world. ...’*³⁵. This address to the Messenger ﷺ is a lesson for his nation.

In the story of our master Moses ﷺ with al-Khiḍr, there is decisive proof for the validity of seeking out a guiding sheikh and submitting to his direction. Though Moses was a prophet and one who spoke directly with Allah, he nonetheless pursued knowledge from one whom he recognized as possessing a loftier station with Allah. He asked to accompany al-Khiḍr, saying: *‘... May I follow you for the purpose that you teach me of what you have been taught [in the way] of probity?’*³⁶, and al-Khiḍr replied: *‘... Truly you will not be able to bear with me.’*³⁷ Despite Moses’ lofty status, when he failed to observe the directive not to question, he failed to benefit from al-Khiḍr’s knowledge.

In this vein, the mystic Amīr ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī says in *al-Mawāqif*:

Know that the aspirant derives no benefit from the knowledge or spiritual states of his sheikh unless he submits to him fully and observes his commands and prohibitions, coupled with the belief in his superiority and completeness. One without the other is of no

avail. Some people may believe in the sheikh's perfection, thinking that alone suffices, whilst failing to obey his instructions. This is akin to Moses , who endured hardship in seeking al-Khiḍr. Yet when he failed to observe a single prohibition, namely: '*... do not question me concerning anything until I [myself] make mention of it to you ...*'³⁸, he failed to benefit, even though he was certain that al-Khiḍr was more knowledgeable, as Allah Himself attested when Moses said: 'I do not know of anyone more knowledgeable than I', and Allah said: 'Rather, Our slave al-Khiḍr ...'

The perfection of the sheikh does not avail the aspirant if the latter does not comply with his guidance. The sheikh merely points the way. He gives the aspirant only what his preparedness can accept. As physicians say: 'What benefit is the physician's skill if the patient refuses treatment?'

The aspirant, therefore, must strive to find the most complete and qualified among the sheikhs, lest he entrust his soul to one ignorant of the way, thereby hastening his own ruin.³⁹

Even the correct recitation of the Qur'an requires a guiding sheikh; how much more so does understanding its meanings, legal rulings, and subtle mysteries. Likewise, a prayer performed in congregation behind an imam is of higher merit than that performed alone. A person may reach Allah alone, but steadfastness and completeness in that arrival require a sheikh.

Imam Ghazālī says:

Just as one who purifies himself and becomes fit for

prayer needs an imam to follow, so too the aspirant necessarily requires a sheikh and teacher to emulate, who guides him to the straight path. For the path of religion is obscure, whilst the ways of Satan are many and manifest. Whoever has no sheikh to guide him will inevitably be misled by Satan, just as one who travels in the perilous wilderness without a guide jeopardizes his very soul. Such a person is like a tree that grows wild: though it may remain green for a while, it shall not bear fruit.⁴⁰

One may ask: how does one find a sheikh? The first step is supplication. Our teachers have taught us to implore Allah to direct us to a true sheikh. Sheikh Dardīr says:

Whoever feels a longing to walk the path of spiritual detachment until he is immersed in the oceans of divine unity should adhere to piety, take refuge in Allah, and seek the intercession of His Messenger ﷺ that he be united with a mystic sheikh who will train him, draw him out of the darkness of his ego, and purify him.⁴¹

One must then search for such a guide in his locality. If he does not find one, he must seek elsewhere. He should not heed those who claim that the true guide has disappeared in our time. Every age is endowed with mystic knowers of Allah whom He appoints for the spiritual cultivation of His slaves. Some have replied to such skeptics, saying:

*A sorry group that lost their way declare:
‘Our times are free of sheikhs, or else, they’re rare.’*

*I said: 'No, way, they stand before us, bold.
'Though blind to them some are, and deaf,
stone cold!'*

Signs of a True Sheikh

If Allah leads one to a sheikh whose outward and inward states conform to the Sharia—one who fulfills the obligations, avoids major sins, possesses knowledge of the purification of souls, and has been authorized to guide by his own sheikh—then one must examine further before preferring him over others. Among the signs of authenticity is that his method is marked by ease and not severity, and that he is most committed among his peers to adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah. The ideal sheikh is one who gently leads the aspirant towards Allah, steering him away from doubtful matters and base desires without excess or extremism. Such a sheikh may rightly be accompanied and benefitted from.

The Prophet ﷺ said: 'O Ibn 'Umar: your religion, your religion! It is your flesh and blood—so take it from those who are upright, and do not take it from those who have deviated.'⁴² Similarly, Ibn Sīrīn said: 'This knowledge is religion, so consider carefully from whom you take your religion.'⁴³

The Sheikh Diverts the Aspirant's Digressions in the Path

The seeker journeying to Allah may experience various thoughts and distractions from which he cannot be saved except through a sheikh. Whoever becomes preoccupied with them is ruined and misled.

This may take the form of seeing visions or hearing things as a result of frequent mention of Allah. He should

go and relate these matters to his sheikh, who will teach him that ‘the distracted do not arrive.’ In other words, he should not concern himself with such matters, for they are merely distractions and impediments from completing the correct path.

Among such distractions is that frequent mention of Allah might lead the aspirant to reflect upon the image of Allah, yet exalted is He beyond all depiction. When he reports this to his sheikh, the sheikh forbids him from such reflection and tells him: ‘Do not imagine Allah.’ He then guides him to recite ‘Glorified is Allah’ (*subḥān Allāh*) until such notions are removed from his heart.

Were this person to be alone without a sheikh, he might believe that what he sees or what occurs to his heart are praiseworthy signs of Allah’s blessings, and that he has reached an elevated station. His soul would find contentment in this, and he would become complacent. Conceit would seize him, and he would think himself inspired—that none of his visions fail to come true. This would increase his sense of ego (*anāniyyah*), and such traits are incompatible with being a true seeker journeying towards Allah.

This illustrates the grave danger of lacking a sheikh. It often, and regrettably, happens that a person can be overtaken by these distractions without realizing it—so much so that returning him to the sound path becomes exceedingly difficult. For this reason, we emphasize the necessity of a sheikh, especially on the path to Allah, so that a person does not go astray from the path of guidance. ‘Whoever embarks on the path without a sheikh becomes lost, wastes his life, and fails to reach his objective, for the example of a sheikh is like the guide for pilgrims to Mecca in dark nights.’⁴⁴

Regarding the exegesis of Allah's saying: '*Guide us to the straight path*'⁴⁵:

Allah immediately follows it by delimiting the path of guidance and specifying it as the path of those upon whom He had favoured. He says: '*the path of those whom You have favoured, not [the path] of those against whom there is wrath, nor of those who are astray.*'⁴⁶ This indicates that the aspirant has no way to reach the stations of guidance and unveiling unless he follows a sheikh who guides him to the straight way and protects him from pitfalls and misguidance. This is because deficiency predominates over most of Creation, and their intellects are insufficient to grasp the truth and distinguish right from wrong. Therefore, it is necessary for the imperfect to follow the perfect so that the intellect of the imperfect is strengthened by the light of the perfect's intellect, whereby he reaches the stages of felicity and ascents of perfection.⁴⁷

Imam Ibn Hajar al-Haytamī says in his *Fatāwā*:

In summary, what is best for the traveller (*sālik*) before attaining these mystic insights is to maintain constant adherence to the instructions of his teacher—one who combines knowledge of both the Sharia and Reality (*al-Ḥaqīqah*)—for he is the supreme physician. In accordance with his spiritual perceptions and divine wisdom, he prescribes for each body and soul what he sees as appropriate for its healing and nourishment.⁴⁸

Sheikh al-Islam Ibrāhīm al-Bājūrī al-Shāfi'ī, in his

commentary on the words of Sheikh Ibrāhīm al-Laqānī, the author of *Jawharat al-Tawhīd*, says:

*Be as the best of all creation were—
Of manners, mild, of truth, its followers.*

That is, be adorned with the character traits of the Best of Creation ﷺ. ... If the spiritual struggle is conducted under the supervision of a sheikh who possesses experiential knowledge (*maʿrifah*), it is more beneficial—for it is said: ‘The spiritual state of one man among a thousand is more beneficial than the admonition of a thousand men to one man.’ Thus, a person ought to remain attached to a mystic sheikh who abides by the Qurʾan and Sunnah, by first weighing him against them before taking from him. If he finds him upon the Scripture and Sunnah, he should cling to him and be courteous to him, so that he may acquire from his state what purifies his inner self, and Allah is the One Who guides him.⁴⁹

What An Aspirant Must Do if Deprived of a Sheikh

Being deprived of a sheikh (*faqd al-shaykh*) is of two kinds. The first is *relative deprivation*—that is, the sheikh exists in this life, but the aspirant has not yet reached him, or he is not present in his country, but rather, he is in another land to which the aspirant has not travelled. The second is *absolute deprivation*, in which the sheikh is hidden during a time bereft of his blessings—may Allah protect us from such a time—and we ask Allah ﷻ to take us unto Him before that era arrives.

Ibn ʿAjībah states that people’s views on affirming or denying spiritual distinction (*khuṣūsiyyah*) fall into three

categories. One group affirms it for the early generations and denies it for those who came later—these are the most ignorant of common folk. Another group affirms it for both the ancients and contemporaries but claims that people of spiritual distinction are hidden in their age and thus deprive themselves of their blessings. A third group acknowledges spiritual distinction among the people of their own age, recognizes them, attains their company, and honours them. These are the fortunate ones—those whom Allah has willed to bring near to Him and draw into His presence.

In *al-Hikam*, it is said: ‘Glory be to the One who made the sign of His friends no different from the sign that leads to Him, and Who grants access to them only to those He wills to bring to Himself.’⁵⁰

The first kind, relative deprivation, means that the aspirant does not know the sheikh at present, but, if Allah wills, he may come to know him tomorrow or the day after. This may require greater effort. If he is in another land, then he must travel to him just as a patient journeys to the place where the physician suited to their illness resides.

As for the second kind, absolute deprivation, what then is to be done? Scholars have discussed this. One of them authored a book entitled *Hidāyat Rabbī ‘Inda Faqd al-Murabbī* (*My Lord’s Guidance When Deprived of the Spiritual Mentor*). The meaning of this noble title is that when the spiritual guide is absent, we must do something in order to receive his guidance and be placed before him—rather than fall silent or despair. What is to be done?

They say that the Prophet ﷺ, by virtue of his exalted rank, is the refuge of all believers. He is the gate between us and our Lord. If we are deprived of a spiritual mentor—

one who knows the paths of the way, its depths, its thorns, and knows the paths of the soul and how to refine it, who draws us forward at times and repels us at others, through severity and gentleness, strength and softness, guiding us whilst raising us in spiritual discipline—then we must seek goodness at the hands of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He will teach us proper conduct with our Lord and guide us to the shore of safety.

How does one connect with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ? It is through invoking peace and blessings upon him. The merit of this invocation is vast, and the light of the Prophet ﷺ is higher and more complete than the light of the angels, the World of the Dominion (*al-Mulk*), the World of Sovereignty (*al-Malakūt*), the World of Awe (*al-Rahabūt*), the World of Mercy (*al-Raḥamūt*), and the World of Invincibility (*al-Jabarūt*). The light of the Prophet ﷺ is a different matter entirely. We must connect to him by a legitimate means: invoking peace and blessings, something that Allah Himself commanded. Allah says: ‘*Lo! Allah and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet. O ye who believe! Ask blessings on him and salute him with a worthy salutation.*’⁵¹ In another verse, Allah says: ‘*But nay, by thy Lord, they will not believe (in truth) until they make thee judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of that which thou decidest, and submit with full submission.*’⁵²

One of the mystics said: ‘This is the reality of sending blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ: that we recite with our tongues.’ Its true meaning in practice is that we submit to his command and judgment, and do not feel in our hearts any discomfort about what he decreed. The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘I am to you like a father is to his child.’⁵³ He is the

one granted intercession, the mercy to all worlds, and he is ever compassionate and merciful to the believers. This chosen, noble Prophet ﷺ is the one to whom we must surrender our reins.

This is the reality of sending blessings upon him: we recite it with our tongues, internalize this meaning in our minds, and prepare ourselves through our conduct and actions to be submissive to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. We translate our inward love into practical emulation, taking him as the most beautiful example to follow, for through him and through following him, we hope for Allah and the Last Day. Allah says: *‘Verily there is for you a good example in the Messenger of God for whoever hopes for [the encounter with] God and the Last Day, and remembers God often.’*⁵⁴

Ibn ‘Ajibah رحمه الله said—and this is the truth without doubt—that invoking blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ in abundance will lead its reciter to the one who will take him by the hand, and it will connect him to the sheikh of spiritual training, who is the inheritor of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, so long as his aspiration is sincere.⁵⁵

Invoking blessings upon him ﷺ is momentous: it illumines hearts, erases sins, veils faults, unveils secrets, and facilitates access to the unseen. Every act is subject to acceptance or rejection, save for blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ: they are always accepted, even from the impious and disobedient. They require neither intention nor sincerity nor any spiritual station, for they are connected to the Supreme Prophetic Presence ﷺ. Through them, Paradise expands.

The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Whoever invokes one blessing upon me, Allah will send ten blessings upon him.’⁵⁶ No conditions were stipulated: not sincerity, nor piety, nor any

spiritual rank. That is why it suits anyone who wishes to be drawn to the path of Allah in whatever state they may be. It is a form of mentioning Allah (*dhikr*), and the mention of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has been paired by Allah with His own mention.

Persist in this practice and you will find your heart illuminated. You will see the Prophet ﷺ in a dream, and he will guide you. Alternatively, Allah may disclose something to you by way of a verse you recite, or a word you hear from a sheikh, and it will be as if a sheikh has been granted to you. This is what is known as a spiritual breakthrough (*fath*), meaning that one's insight has been unveiled, and one's understanding of what surrounds one has been rectified, until Allah grants one the companionship of a sheikh.

The goal is not the sheikh. The goal is Allah. The sheikh is merely a means to help one reach Allah. That aid may come through a sheikh who guides one step-by-step, or through divine unveiling. As the Prophet ﷺ said: 'That you worship Allah as though you see Him.' This is the aim and the destination. If one is unable to attain that, then, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'then know that He sees you.'⁵⁷

The path to Allah is, as we have said: 'Allah is the aim of all.' All paths lead to Him. Disagreement arises only from the ignorance of the seekers. This path requires a sheikh who cultivates and trains. This sheikh may be a Muhammadan inheritor, one in whom the Prophet's legacy ﷺ has been imprinted. He is moulded in the character of the Chosen One, the Beloved, the Most Excellent Exemplar, the Perfect Human ﷺ. He is angered only for the sake of Allah, his heart is ever tranquil with Allah's mention, and his state is consistently one of divine alignment. Through him, Allah guides many people, opens hearts that were

sealed, and forgives him and those who seek guidance through him.

This complete guide may offer direction by his state rather than his speech. A person may sit in his presence and ascend spiritually without a single word being exchanged. Sometimes, the guide may offer training by a single glance: he gazes at the seeker, and the seeker's heart is transformed in proportion to the sincerity, compassion, counsel, and depth of knowledge of Allah reflected in that gaze. The sheikh's every action becomes guidance and training. The heart is stripped of vice and adorned with virtue. The soul becomes ready for obedience and purified of sin—by nothing more than a glance.

This was the state of the Chosen One ﷺ. When he looked at a believer, that person became a Companion. His gaze infused in them a sense of righteousness that established their justice, earning them our veneration, respect, and acceptance. All the Companions are upright (ʿudūl) by virtue of the Prophet's affirmation, but how did he affirm them? With a glance. They sat before him, and he looked at them. That gaze transformed their inner selves, refining them and bestowing them integrity.

Allah says: *'Truly God was gracious to the believers when He sent to them a messenger from among their own to recite to them His verses, and to purify them, and to teach them the Book, wisdom, though before, they were in clear error.'*⁵⁸

The Noble Qur'an makes it explicit: the Prophet ﷺ purified his Companions through both his state and his words, not only through the Qur'an or by teaching its rulings. Spiritual purification (*tazkiyah*) is one matter. Teaching the Qur'an and its laws is another. As the verse shows, the Pro-

phet ﷺ performed three functions: recitation, purification, and instruction.

This trait of the Prophet ﷺ—this divine gift granted to him—was inherited by the pious among his nation. Some trained others through speech, while others did so through companionship: through their states during travel and residence; in anger and contentment; and in constriction and expansion. Through all of this, the seeker's heart is transformed.

Note for Those Unable to Find a Sheikh

It often occurs that a seeker, sincere in his search for a spiritual guide, is well aware of the many sheikhs among the people of Allah whom others accompany and follow. Yet each time he visits a sheikh, he finds that his heart does not connect with him. He does not feel inwardly aligned with the sheikh, nor does he find himself able to follow his guidance. He thus feels deprived of a guiding sheikh whose character is compatible with his own, one whom he can emulate. This situation may lead him to frustration and despair.

In such a case, the issue is neither with the sheikh nor with the seeker. Rather, it is the will of Allah. The seeker should not belittle those sheikhs he has visited, nor harbour negative thoughts about himself, provided he was truly sincere in his intention and did not visit the sheikhs to test them or out of some worldly expectation unrelated to Allah ﷻ. In this situation, the seeker should send blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ one thousand times per day, in any of the blessed formulas of invocation. Through this, the invocation of blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ becomes a sheikh to him, a light, and a means of guidance.

The existence of the sheikh is not an end in itself. Rather, the true objective is Allah ﷻ. However, the most common means of attaining proximity to Allah is through emulating a sheikh. This is because along the spiritual path the seeker may face obstacles or difficulties that leave him confused. It is here that the general Qur’anic directive applies: ‘*Ask the People of the Remembrance if you do not know.*’⁵⁹ That is, one must turn to those who can guide him to the truth and lift the veils of confusion from him. This is the essential role of the sheikh.

In our view, it is not obligatory for every Muslim to become a Sufi or follow a spiritual path—contrary to the opinion of Imam Ghazālī, who held that joining the Sufis is an individual obligation (*fard ‘ayn*), since no one is free of flaws or spiritual illnesses except the Prophets ﷺ.⁶⁰ What is obligatory, however, is that one live the station of virtue (*iḥsān*)—striving to refine one’s character, perfect one’s worship, and uphold proper relations with Allah and with His creation.

Nevertheless, if one wishes to follow the path of Sufism, to commit to the principles of the spiritual way, and to have a sheikh, then he must seek a guide who adheres to the Qur’an and Sunnah. The sheikh’s path should be one of gentleness and ease, not one of severity, so that it does not cause the seeker to give up and withdraw. As the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘*No one contends with the religion except that it overwhelms him.*’ He also instructed his noble Companions: ‘You were sent to make things easy.’⁶¹ Thus, harshness and excessiveness have no place in religion.

INTEGRAL: THE ASPIRANT

The term *murīd* (aspirant) is the active participle of *irādah* (desire or will).⁶² The spiritual traveller (*sālik*) upon the path to Allah is designated a *murīd* because desire is the beginning of the travellers' path, and it represents the first station of those who seek Allah ﷻ. This station is called *irādah* because desire precedes all action; for unless the slave wills something, he will not act upon it.⁶³

The noble Sufi masters adopted the term *murīd* for one journeying to Allah based on its usage in certain Qur'anic verses, such as: '*And do not drive away those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening desiring His countenance. ...*'⁶⁴, and again: '*And restrain yourself along with those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening, desiring His Countenance; ...*'⁶⁵. Both verses describe those who worship their Lord as desiring His noble Countenance.

In this way, the Sufi masters have always grounded their sciences and insights in the meanings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Indeed, the science of Sufism is derived from both.

The Seeker (Murīd) and the One Drawn (Murād)

Just as we have discussed the seeker (*murid*)—he who desires the countenance of Allah and strives to attain His good pleasure—so too we must consider another term frequently used by the Sufi masters: the one whom Allah desires (*murād*). The *murād* is drawn by Allah to Himself, through His grace and generosity. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Allah marvels at people who enter Paradise in chains.'⁶⁶

This means that Allah grants him success in all good, and protects him from all evil. Should he attempt to go to a place of disobedience, he finds it barred or destroyed. If

he enters a place of sin, he is overcome by tranquility or drowsiness and falls asleep, thus missing the act entirely. From this standpoint, he is one whom Allah desires.

Imam Qushayrī has a valuable passage on the distinction between *murīd* and *murād* in his *Risālah*. He writes:

As for the distinction between the aspirant and the one drawn, in reality every aspirant is a drawn, for if he had not been desired by Allah ﷻ, he would not have desired Allah. There is only that which Allah wills. Likewise, everyone who is drawn is an aspirant, for when Allah wants someone in particular, He grants him success in desiring Him. However, the masters have nonetheless drawn a distinction: the aspirant is a beginner, whilst the one drawn is accomplished. The aspirant is tested with effort and hardship, whereas the one drawn is sufficed without exertion. The aspirant is burdened, the one drawn is carried.⁶⁷

We can understand how Allah grants such special care to one whom He desires by observing the Prophet's ﷺ life. He ﷺ was protected from the actions of pre-Islamic ignorance and never prostrated to an idol. On the rare occasions when he sought to participate in youthful gatherings, such as listening to music or entertainment, he would be overcome with sleep and prevented from attending.

Ibn Ishāq, in his *Sīrah*, and al-Ḥākim in his *Mustadrak*, relate the following words from the Prophet ﷺ:

I never intended to do anything the people of pre-Islamic ignorance did except on two occasions, but each time Allah protected me. One night, I said to a

young man from Quraysh watching over our flocks: 'Look after my sheep whilst I go into Mecca to spend the night as young men do.' When I approached a house in Mecca, I heard music and drums. I asked: 'What is this?' They said: 'So-and-so is marrying so-and-so.' I sat and listened until sleep overtook me. I woke only when the sun struck my face. I returned to my companion, who asked: 'What did you do?' I replied: 'Nothing.' By Allah, I never again desired to do what they did, until Allah honoured me with prophethood.⁶⁸

This was because he was one whom Allah desired. Allah sought to protect him, preserve him, and guard him with divine care so that he might be a mercy and exemplar for all worlds. He neither committed a sin before his mission nor after it. Indeed, whenever he desired something, even if unspoken, Allah would fulfil it. Allah says: '*We have indeed seen you turning your face about in the heaven; now We will surely turn you to a direction that shall satisfy you...*'⁶⁹.

Imam Qushayrī remarks:

He ﷺ preserved proper manners by remaining silent and not verbally asking for what he desired. Instead, he looked to the sky, the path of Gabriel ﷺ. Allah revealed: '*We have indeed seen you turning your face about in the heaven,*' meaning: 'We know what you seek even if you did not articulate it in supplication, so We changed the qibla for your sake.' This is the utmost expression of love from Beloved to Beloved: all creation strives for My pleasure, but I strive for yours: '*now We will surely turn you to a direction that shall satisfy you.*'⁷⁰

His wife, Lady ‘Ā’ishah , said: ‘I see that your Lord hastens to fulfil your desires.’⁷¹ That is, whatever you seek or love, Allah brings it about without delay.

This state was not exclusive to the Prophet . It was inherited by the righteous of his nation. We see it in many of those around us, and one may feel it in oneself at times, such as when one is prevented from committing sin, and the path to it is barred.

Whilst infallibility (*‘iṣmah*) is exclusive to Prophets and Messengers alone, what occurs with saints (*awliyā’*) is called *ḥifẓ* (protection). Protection does not mean that sin never occurs, but that it is not accompanied by insistence or persistence.⁷²

From this perspective, a preserved saint (*walī mahfūẓ*) may also be called a *murād*, whilst a *murīd* is the one who desires Allah and seeks out a sheikh to guide him and direct him to his Lord.

Guidance (*hidāyah*) is of two types. The first is guidance in the sense of showing the way. Allah says: ‘... *And verily you guide to a straight path*, ...’⁷³, meaning: ‘you show the path.’ The second type is the creation of the capacity for obedience in the slave, and this belongs to Allah alone. He says: ‘*You cannot guide whom you like, but [it is] God [Who] guides whomever He will*, ...’⁷⁴.

The sheikh, then, may guide and direct—but the creation of inward guidance and the granting of success come only from Allah.

Whoever seeks to arrive at something seeks the means by which to reach it—just as a traveller seeks a vehicle. In this analogy, the sheikh is the means through which the seeker reaches his goal. The goal is Allah, not the sheikh. The sheikh is not infallible, but he may be preserved when

the sheikh is a Muhammadan inheritor. This is alluded to in the hadith: 'Scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets.'⁷⁵

In all cases, the sheikh must be someone whose good outweighs his shortcomings, and whose obedience is more apparent than his heedlessness.

How an Aspirant Conducts Himself (*Ādāb al-Murīd*)

The noble Sufi masters placed immense emphasis on spiritual conduct and comportment, and considered it among the most essential obligations upon the seeker. The seeker must observe proper conduct with Allah in his mention of Him and contemplation; with his sheikh in receiving instruction and never objecting to him, neither outwardly nor inwardly; with his brethren upon the path, and with all people. It has been said: 'Whoever lacks proper conduct shall never attain arrival.' It has also been said:

Refined speech is part of perfected conduct, and the perfection of conduct is the cause that leads to soundness and rectitude. One who lacks proper conduct cannot be refined; one who lacks refinement cannot tread the path; and one who does not tread cannot arrive. He who was not spiritually raised at the hands of men will never raise others.'

The Sufis also say: 'He who behaves without courtesy among the beloved will be cast out the door, and whoever misbehaves at the door will be driven off like livestock.' Another saying holds: 'Let your deeds be salt, and your conduct be flour.' A sage said: 'A person may attain the loftiest ranks through character and conduct even if his deeds are few. Whoever is deprived of proper conduct is deprived of all good. But he who has been granted proper conduct has been granted the keys to hearts.' Abū 'Uthmān  said: 'Proper conduct in the presence of the great ones and in the

gatherings of the elect, from among Allah's saints, leads its possessor to the highest degrees and to goodness in both this world and the next.' Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ḥaddād ؒ said:

Sufism is entirely conduct: every moment has its appropriate conduct, every state has its conduct, and every station has its conduct. Whoever adheres to proper conduct will reach the rank of the actualized men, and whoever is deprived of it is distant even when he believes himself near, rejected when he hopes for arrival.

Finally, Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī ؒ said: 'When the seeker abandons proper conduct, he is no longer truly a seeker.'⁷⁶

Among the specific forms of conduct that the seeker must uphold are:

1. **To observe courtesy with Allah** by remaining conscious of His majesty and His favours. This attentiveness motivates proper conduct in both obedience and in moments of sin, prompting the seeker to repent swiftly and feel remorse.
2. **To observe courtesy with one's sheikh**, never opposing him in matters of training and spiritual guidance. This is derived from the story of al-Khiḍr and our master Moses ؑ, when the latter said: '*... May I follow you for the purpose that you teach me of what you have been taught [in the way] of probity?*'⁷⁷ In his use of 'May' (*hal*) is an indication that he relinquished his own will in deference to his guide's. And his saying '*follow you*' (*attabi'uka*) implies submission to whatever al-Khiḍr would teach him—he did not say 'accompany you' (*uṣāhibuka*), which would imply parity. Moreover, he

added: ‘... *You will find me, God willing, patient, and I will not disobey you in any matter.*’⁷⁸ From this we learn that the seeker must commit to what his sheikh advises, not questioning his methods or objecting. The sheikh is like an expert physician: he knows what medicine the patient needs and the seat of his ailment. Opening the door to objections deprives the seeker of immense good.

Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī said: ‘Whoever opens the door of objection against the sheikhs—scrutinizing their states, judging their actions, and investigating their behaviour—this is a sign of his deprivation and an ill end, and he shall never bear fruit.’⁷⁹

1. **To avoid attributing infallibility (*‘iṣmah*) to the sheikh.** The sheikh may be preserved (*maḥfūẓ*), but he is not infallible. Should the seeker mistakenly assume his sheikh to be infallible, then upon witnessing a lapse or misstep, this may cause him to sever ties and abandon his progress.
2. **To love the sheikh with deep affection**, for he is the guide to what is most beloved: Allah. Love of the sheikh is love for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and love for the Messenger ﷺ is love for Allah ﷻ.

Should the Seeker Ask His Sheikh About Every Matter of Life?

It is not incumbent upon the seeker to ask his sheikh about every worldly matter. It suffices that he consult him regarding matters of the path—his spiritual discipline (*sulūk*), invocations (*adhkār*), spiritual influxes (*wāridāt*), visions, inner states, lapses, and sins. If he asks about life matters—

such as marriage, divorce, purchasing a home, and so on—he should follow the sheikh’s advice not out of obligation, but as a matter of proper conduct.

From the masters under whom we studied and traversed the path, we never received commands to consult them on mundane affairs. Such matters were usually initiated by the seeker, not the sheikh, and are not obligatory to ask. Moreover, the sheikh is not free to attend to every such concern.

Sheikh ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Qalyūbī, a student of Sheikh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ḥaṣāfī—the master of the Ḥaṣāfī Shādhilī order—was born in 1906 and passed away at the age of 108. I received a Sufi chain of authority (*isnād*) from him. He related the following story:

He married a beautiful and noble woman without first informing his sheikh. Some time after the marriage, the sheikh visited the village and, in the course of conversation, learned that Qalyūbī had married. The sheikh said to him: ‘You married her?’ He replied: ‘Yes.’ The sheikh said: ‘Then divorce her.’ Out of immense reverence, Qalyūbī immediately divorced her, giving her all her rights. He later married another woman, again without informing the sheikh. After some time, in a gathering, Qalyūbī brought up the matter and asked: ‘You told me to divorce my wife, and I did, but why did you command me thus? Was there anything wrong with her?’ The sheikh replied: ‘No.’ Qalyūbī asked again: ‘Then why did you tell me to divorce her?’ The sheikh said: ‘Because you would like to have many children, and she is infertile.’

Qalyūbī later learned that the woman did indeed remarry and lived happily with her new husband but died childless.

This story demonstrates that it is not a foundational rule of the Sufi path that the sheikh command the seeker in worldly matters. It was Qalyūbī's trust in his sheikh that led him to comply. Had he not followed the advice, would he have sinned or been cast into Hell? Certainly not. But he may have been deprived of something he loved, which his sheikh knew by inner discernment. Thus, the advice was an act of mercy.

When we seek counsel from our sheikhs, following their advice brings blessing and light, whilst disregarding it forfeits this blessing.

As for the statement: 'Be before your sheikh like a corpse before its washer,' this is not to be taken as absolute in all matters—as though the sheikh may do with the seeker whatever he wills. Such an idea has no basis in our foundational teachings.

INTEGRAL: MENTIONING ALLAH

Allah ﷻ commanded us in His noble book to be among those who mention Him. He said: '*O you who believe! Mention God with much mention.*'⁸⁰ To mention Allah is an act of worship of the heart through which the heart is purified and finds tranquility. Allah declares: '*those who believe and whose hearts are reassured by God's mention. Verily by God's mention are hearts reassured;*'⁸¹ When the heart is at peace, it is sound—and when it is sound, the entire body is sound. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Truly, in the body is a morsel of flesh: if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Truly, it is the heart.'⁸²

Mentioning Allah is the pillar of the heart, and the heart is the pillar of the body. The believer's heart lives through

the frequent mention of Allah, and by virtue of the heart's life, the rest of the body is enlivened. Abū Mūsā رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'The example of the one who mentions his Lord and the one who does not is like that of the living and the dead.'⁸³

This becomes especially clear when we recognize that prayer (*ṣalāh*), the pillar of faith, was legislated primarily for the believer to mention Allah. Allah says: '*... establish prayer for to make mention of Me.*'⁸⁴ Indeed, when a Muslim begins his prayer by declaring '*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*', Allah announces to His angels: 'My slave has mentioned Me.'⁸⁵

Mentioning Allah is thus the comprehensive environment in which all forms of worship flourish. Prayer begins with saying: 'Allah is Greatest' (*Allāhu akbar*) and concludes with saying: 'peace be upon you' (*al-salāmu 'alay-kum*)—both forms of mentioning Allah's names. Allah says: '*and mentions the Name of his Lord and prays.*'⁸⁶ Fasting begins with a state of hiddenness between slave and Lord and culminates in declaring Allah's greatness during Eid—also an act of mentioning Him. Allah says: '*and that you fulfil the number and magnify God for having guided you and that you might be thankful.*'⁸⁷

Hajj, too, is permeated with mentioning Allah at every step and station. Allah commands: '*... but when you press on from 'Arafāt, then mention God at the Sacred Way-mark; and mention Him as He has guided you, ...*'⁸⁸; '*Then press on from where the people press on, and seek God's forgiveness; God is Forgiving, Merciful.*'⁸⁹; and, '*And when you have performed your holy rites, mention God as you mention your fathers, or yet more intensely. ...*'⁹⁰.

The relationship between mentioning Allah and other

acts of worship is like that between soil and a tree: one cannot flourish without the other.

The commandment to mention Allah is from the Beloved to those who love Him. Whoever truly loves Allah will obey. Allah says: *'So mention Me, I will mention you; and be thankful to Me, and be not ungrateful towards Me.'*⁹¹ In a sacred hadith, the Prophet ﷺ reported from Allah: 'I am with the one who mentions Me. If he mentions Me privately, I mention him privately; and if he mentions Me in a gathering, I mention him in a gathering better than it.'⁹²

When one of us loves a beloved, he loves that he mention him (glorified be Allah from having a similitude). Thus, mention of Allah is a sign of lover, as there is no lover who is heedless of his beloved. For this reason, scholars say: 'Mentioning Allah (*dhikr*) is the proclamation of sainthood (*wilāyah*).'

The mystic knower of Allah, Sayyidī 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'ṛānī, says:

Our people are in agreement that mentioning Allah is the key to the unseen, the attractor of good, the companion of the lonely, and the proclamation of sainthood. It should not be abandoned, even in a state of heedlessness. Were there no merit to mentioning Allah except that it is not restricted to a specific time, that alone would suffice to establish its rank. Allah ﷻ says: *'Those who mention God, standing and sitting and on their sides, ...'*⁹³. They say: 'There is nothing that brings about spiritual breakthrough (*fath*) more swiftly than mentioning Allah. It gathers the dispersed self of its practitioner. When mentioning Allah dominates the one mentioning, the love of

the Named fuses with the soul of the one who remembers.⁹⁴

The path to Allah is founded upon mentioning Him: its beginning is His mention, its middle is His mention, and its end is His mention—until the one mentioning is annihilated in the One mentioned, such that he becomes a mentioner in his presence and in his absence, in his wakefulness and in his sleep—until he is annihilated by the One he mentions from even his act of mentioning.

Response to those who object to the practice of mentioning in specific formulas or numbers

Some people object to the Sufi masters on the basis that the formulas and varied numbers found in their litanies (*awrād*) are not transmitted from the Prophet ﷺ. This is a matter requiring clarification and explanation:

The noble revealed law has commanded mentioning Allah in every circumstance.

1. It has commanded us to engage in it unconditionally—without restriction to any formula, number, time, place, or specific state. Thus, the Muslim is to mention Allah in whatever way his heart inclines, and in whatever number he finds suitable—whether the mention is in the heart or on the tongue. Allah ﷻ says: *‘Those who mention God, standing and sitting and on their sides, and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: ‘Our Lord, You have not created this in vain. Glory be to You! So guard us against the chastisement of the Fire.’*⁹⁵ It is also related from ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها that she said: ‘The Prophet ﷺ used to remember Allah in all his states.’⁹⁶

2. Mentioning Allah has also come in specific forms and with specific numbers, in particular circumstances and times—such as the invocations (*adhkār*) of morning and evening, those after each prayer (such as glorification (*tasbīḥ*), praise (*tahmīd*), and magnification (*takbīr*), those for travel, eating and drinking, marriage, as well as what is to be said when meeting the enemy, or in fear and hardship, illness, and other situations. Indeed, for nearly every circumstance in a Muslim's life, there is a corresponding invocation.

This is why many scholars devoted entire works to collecting all the transmitted invocations, clarifying their occasions, manners, and etiquettes. Among these are:

- i) *al-Adhkār*, by Imam Nawawī—of which it was said, due to its great merit: ‘Sell your house and buy *al-Adhkār*.’
- ii) *Tuḥfat al-Dhākirīn*, by Shawkānī, which is a commentary on *al-Ḥiṣn al-Ḥaṣīn* by Ibn al-Jazarī.
- iii) ‘*Amal al-Yawm wa al-Laylah*, by Ibn al-Sunnī and also by al-Nasā’ī.
- iv) *al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib*, by Ibn Taymiyyah.

And others—indicating the immense concern that Muslim scholars of all schools and ranks have shown for mentioning Allah, its virtues, and its various kinds.

Just as mentioning Allah is the path of love and its means, so too is it the path of success and salvation. Allah ﷻ has made clear that whoever seeks success in this life must persevere in mentioning Him, keeping his tongue ever

moistened with it. He says: ‘*And remember Allah much, that you may succeed.*’ [al-Anfāl, 8:45]

It is from His grace upon His slaves that He made mentioning Him—which is the most virtuous of acts of worship, the most beloved to Him, the most rewarded, and the greatest in merit—unrestricted by time or place, and independent of conditions or prerequisites, unlike other forms of worship. It is not bound to a specific time like the five prayers, does not require ritual purity, nor a specific month like fasting, nor the possession of wealth like zakat, nor physical ability like Hajj.

It is the work of the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the healthy and the ill, the pure and the impure. Despite all this, it is the best thing with which a slave can occupy himself.

The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Shall I not inform you of the best of your actions, the purest of them in the sight of your Sovereign, the highest of them in rank, better for you than giving gold and silver, better than meeting your enemy, striking their necks and them striking yours?’ They said: ‘Yes, O Messenger of Allah!’ He said: ‘Mentioning Allah.’⁹⁷

It is also related from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘The solitary ones have gone ahead.’ They said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, who are the solitary ones?’ He said: ‘Those men and women who mention Allah often.’⁹⁸

Mentioning Allah is the greatest door to Allah—perpetually open, unless closed by the slave through heedlessness. By it the clouds covering the heart are dispelled, the eyes are illuminated, and the believer ascends from one light to the next.

Every time the Prophet ﷺ would advance from one spiritual station to another, he would increase in mention of

Allah, and thereby increase in ascension and elevation. He ﷺ said: ‘There is a veil (*ghayn*) upon my heart, and I seek the forgiveness of Allah one hundred times a day.’⁹⁹ Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ, commenting on this statement, says: ‘This veil is a state of awe and reverence that envelops the heart. His seeking forgiveness is an expression of gratitude.’¹⁰⁰ It has also been said that the Prophet ﷺ was constantly rising from one station to another. When he ascended to a higher station, he sought forgiveness for the previous one.

It is related from Imam Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, the founder of the Sufi tariqa [bearing his name], that when he heard this hadith, he was astonished, wondering how the Prophet ﷺ, with his beauty and majesty, could have a veiling upon his heart. He saw the Prophet ﷺ in a dream, who said to him: ‘O ‘Alī, it is the veiling of lights (*ghayn anwār*), not the veiling of otherness (*ghayn aghyār*).’

Among the divine honours granted to one who mentions Allah is that Allah makes His mention of the slave the recompense for the slave’s mention of Him. Allah ﷻ says: ‘*So remember Me, I will remember you; and be thankful to Me, and be not ungrateful towards Me.*’¹⁰¹ If a person is overjoyed to learn that a worldly king has mentioned him and praised him in a gathering, then what of the state of the one who is mentioned by the King of Kings in a gathering nobler than that in which the slave mentions Him? Finally, it is related from Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ that he said: ‘His remembrance of you is greater than your remembrance of Him.’¹⁰²

Allah has made His love the reward for those who love Him: ‘... *whom He loves and who love Him ...*’.¹⁰³ He has also made His pleasure the reward for those who are pleased with Him: ‘... *God is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him ...*’.¹⁰⁴

All of these citations and evidences affirm the importance of mentioning Allah in every circumstance—whether in private or aloud, in congregation or alone. It is not valid to censure the Sufis for their adherence to litanies (*awrād*) that include the mention of Allah ﷻ, His praise, and supplication to Him. All of these are matters encouraged by the noble Sharia and among the means of spiritual breakthrough and arrival, by Allah’s permission.

INTEGRAL: THE SHARIA AND ESOTERIC REALITY NEVER CONFLICT

Sufis divide knowledge into two types: knowledge of the Sharia and knowledge of Reality (*ḥaqīqah*), or outward and inward knowledge. The sciences of the Sharia pertain to the station of Islam. They examine rules concerning acts of worship and transactions and are the domain of jurists. The sciences of the Reality pertain to the station of virtue (*iḥsān*)—‘to worship Allah as though you see Him’—and are concerned with the inward dimension: what is cast into the hearts of saints and mystic knowers of divine bestowals and unveiled truths.

Al-Ḥasan said: ‘Knowledge is of two kinds. One is in the heart, and that is beneficial knowledge. The other is upon the tongue, and that is Allah’s argument against the children of Adam.’

Between the Sharia (the outward) and Reality (the inward), there exists an intimate interrelation, like that of the soul to the body. Reality can never conflict with the Sharia. Rather, each completes and perfects the other without contradiction or opposition. Both the Sharia and Reality proceed from a single source and lead to a single aim: the cultivation and disciplining of the soul. Since they stem

from the same source and aim at the same end, their truths cannot be at odds.

Thus, Sufis codified as one of their principles that every so-called ‘reality’ which contradicts the Sharia is utter heresy. Ibn ‘Ābidīn writes:

The [Sufi] path is the path of journeying through the Sharia. The Sharia consists of delimited legal acts. The path, the Sharia, and Reality are three inseparable things, for the way to Allah contains an outward and an inward. Its outward form is the Sharia and the path; its inward form is Reality. The inwardness of Reality within the Sharia and the path is like butter within milk: one does not attain butter without churning. The aim of all three is to establish servitude (*‘ubūdiyyah*) as Allah intended from His slave.¹⁰⁵

If not coupled with adherence to the Sharia and its rulings, Sufism is ignorance and heresy. The knowledge of legal rulings, if not accompanied by spiritual discipline and righteous action, leads to sin. Imam Mālik (d. 179/795) said: ‘Whoever practices Sufism without learning sacred law (*fiqh*) has become a heretic; whoever learns sacred law without practicing Sufism has become a transgressor; and whoever combines the two has realized the truth.’¹⁰⁶

Thus, knowledge of the Sharia without knowledge of Reality is incomplete, and knowledge of Reality without knowledge of the Sharia is invalid. Imam Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493) said: ‘There is no Sufism without sacred law, for how else would the outward rulings of Allah be known? Also, there is no sacred law without Sufism, for no action is valid without sincerity and turning to Allah. Neither can stand without faith, for neither can be valid without it.

Thus, the three are necessarily joined, like the soul with the body: the soul cannot be manifest without the body, nor can the body be alive without the soul. Realize this.’¹⁰⁷

An illustration of the need to unite outward and inward knowledge, and the falsehood of abandoning the outward under pretext of inward truth, is the distinction between the outward and inward nature of water. Inwardly, water is composed of hydrogen and oxygen: one combustible, the other supporting combustion. Outwardly, it is a fluid that cools and refreshes. Outwardly, it is water; inwardly, it is fire. Some short-sighted persons imagined a contradiction in this. The Sufis, however, understood that the revealed law was sent to regulate both the outward and the inward, that the outward matters, and that one who abandons it is a disbeliever. That does not, however, negate the possibility that there are inward truths differing in appearance from the outward, and which may be unveiled over time, without invalidating the outward itself.

If someone were to say: ‘I will not perform ablution,’ and we were to ask why, and he were to reply, pointing to the water: ‘Because this is fire, and I fear it will burn me,’ we would deem him insane. Though inwardly it may be composed of fiery elements, outwardly, it is water. Likewise, if someone were to say, pointing to a free man: ‘I wish to sell this man,’ and we were to ask: ‘Why?’ and he were to reply: ‘Because a buyer needs a quantity of soil, and this man is, in his essence, made of soil,’ we would say: ‘You are mad.’ Whilst man was created from soil, and will return to soil, he is not soil in the legal sense. It is unlawful to sell a free man, regardless of his origin. These are truths, but they are not apparent reality. Many have failed to grasp this, and have attacked Sufism, accusing its adherents of

heresy. In truth, the Sufis call to a reality that perfects the Sharia, not one that nullifies it.

Sufis understand this as part of the path to Allah. They understand that the Sharia bases its rulings on the outward, which is perceptible and assessable by all. Were rulings to be based on the inward, it would impose hardship and burden upon people beyond their capacity. For this reason, judges rule based on what is outwardly evident, not on what they feel or intuit inwardly, lest truth be lost in the absence of clear standards. As narrated by Umm Salamah, the Prophet ﷺ said: 'You bring your disputes before me. Perhaps one of you is more eloquent in argument than the other. I judge according to what I hear. So, whoever's favour I judge in, awarding him the right of his brother, I am handing him a piece of the Fire, so let him not take it.'¹⁰⁸

Sufis affirm the existence of unseen realities which may be unveiled to saints and mystics, but they do not derive legal rulings from such unveilings. Legal rulings are based on outward evidence and on texts transmitted and interpreted by jurists.

Imam Shaʿrānī explains that the knowledge of Reality which Allah discloses to the hearts of His saints is the fruit of acting upon the knowledge of the Sharia derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. He writes: 'Realize, my brother, that the science of Sufism is knowledge that is cast into the hearts of the saints when their hearts are illumined by acting upon the Qur'an and Sunnah. Every person who acts upon them receives from that action knowledge, etiquettes, secrets, and disclosures that words cannot express, just as jurists arrived at rulings through acting on what they already knew.'¹⁰⁹

The claim that Sufis ignore the Sharia and are concerned

only with Reality is a baseless fabrication. The texts of the great Sufi masters are replete with affirmations that their foundation lies in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Sheikh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī said: 'Any reality that is not witnessed by the Sharia is heresy. Fly to the Supremely Real on the wings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Enter upon Him with your hand in the hand of the Messenger of Allah

ﷺ.'¹¹⁰

Imam Sahl al-Tustarī said: 'Our principles are seven: holding fast to the Book of Allah, following the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ, eating only what is lawful, restraining harm, avoiding sin, repenting, and fulfilling rights.'¹¹¹

Sheikh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī said: 'If your disclosure contradicts the Qur'an and Sunnah, then act according to the Qur'an and Sunnah and abandon the disclosure. Say to yourself: "Allah guaranteed me protection in the Qur'an and Sunnah, but did not guarantee me protection in the side of unveiling and inspiration."¹¹²

The master of the Sufis, Imam Junayd, said: 'Our way is bound by the foundations of the Qur'an and Sunnah.'¹¹³

Finally, Imam Shaʿrānī wrote: 'No slave reaches Allah except through Allah, and through conformity to His Beloved ﷺ through his sacred law. Whoever seeks the path without following him is astray, even as he believes himself to be guided.'¹¹⁴

CHAPTER THREE

THE MEANING OF DIVESTMENT, ADORNMENT AND MANIFESTATION

Every path a person treads comprises numerous steps, passing through various phases and stations until one reaches the intended goal. Similarly, those journeying to Allah traverse spiritual steps and stations that must be surpassed before attaining their final aim.

The first of these steps is repentance. This marks a key stage in the spiritual journey, known as divestment (*takhliyah*). Repentance is defined as remorse over past misdeeds and resolve not to return to them, an essential aspect of divestment.

What, then, is divestment, and what benefit does it bring? Divestment is the purification of the heart and the removal of distractions. It entails disciplining the soul to rid itself of blameworthy traits. It is a cleansing of both outward and inward being—of the outer self from sins and misdeeds, and of the inner self from heedlessness and attachment to base desires. Only then is the seeker ready for adornment (*tahliyah*), the second stage, which involves refinement of both inner and outer being. Just as a vessel that is already full cannot be filled until it is emptied, the heart must be cleared of ailments and defects before it can be filled with what refines it and makes it a receptacle for divine breakthroughs and lights.

The sheikh guides the seeker by removing the attachments that hinder his path—purging all that is blameworthy so as to prepare the seeker for that which is praiseworthy. In this way, divestment precedes adornment.

The Qur'an refers to both stages in the verse: '*Take of their wealth some alms, to purify them and to cleanse them thereby ...*'¹¹⁵. Ibn 'Āshūr comments: 'The phrase "*purify them*" alludes to the stage of divestment from sin, whilst "*cleanse them*" refers to the stage of adornment with virtues and righteous acts. Thus, divestment necessarily precedes adornment. This prescribed almsgiving is both expiation for their sins and a means to great reward.'¹¹⁶

The heart cannot receive spiritual refinement until it has been emptied of distractions and preoccupations. Allah ﷻ states: '*Successful indeed will be the one who purifies it*'¹¹⁷—that is, the one who cleanses the soul of sins, purges it of flaws, elevates it through obedience, and refines it by beneficial knowledge and righteous action.

Divestment is not limited to what is unlawful: it may also involve that which is lawful if it distracts the heart from Allah, such as children, wealth, love of worldly forms, power, or desires. The soul is like a mount: discipline strengthens it, whilst indulgence, even in what is lawful, weakens it. Restricting the soul is thus praiseworthy, even in permissible matters, except in two: women—according to the word of Allah, for they are of the same essence as man: '*He, it is Who created you from a single soul, and made from him his spouse that he might take rest in her. ...*'¹¹⁸—and fragrance, which nourishes the soul, sharpens the senses, and is like a breeze from the unseen realm into the manifest world. All other indul-

gence, when it follows the soul's desires, indicates rejection of the promise of the All Merciful and belief in the promise of Satan: '*... Satan has adorned for them their deeds and he has barred them from the Way, so that they are not guided*'¹¹⁹.

The believer must seek Allah's help in both divestment and adornment, through supplication and by following the example of the sheikh. Among the supplications of the Prophet ﷺ is: 'O Allah, grant my soul its devoutness, and purify it: You are the best to purify it. You are its Guardian and Master.'¹²⁰

When Imam Ghazālī authored *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, he clearly structured the work around these two stages. He divided it into four quarters: worship, social customs, destructive traits, and salvific virtues. The first half addresses the limbs and Allah's outward rulings, beginning with acts of worship (man's dealings with Allah), then interpersonal dealings in commerce, marriage, divorce, legal judgement, and testimony. This is because knowledge of Sharia rulings and adherence to them is the very path to Allah. When some once asked a scholar to write a book on renunciation, he replied: 'I have written a book on commercial transactions!'¹²¹ It was as if he had said: 'Sufism and renunciation consist in obeying Allah in lawful matters and avoiding the unlawful.'

The second half of Ghazālī's work is devoted to the heart and inner states. He begins with destructive traits, then discusses the salvific ones, indicating that the path to salvation begins by abandoning what is destructive. These include miserliness, lying, arrogance, ostentation, love of the world, and attachment to it.

Divestment, then, is the rejection of all that is base, and adornment is the acquisition of all that is noble. Arrogance, for example, is replaced by humility. When the heart is purged of arrogance, it is necessarily adorned with humility before Allah, and ‘Whoever humbles himself for Allah, He will raise him.’

This is a tangible reality: when one purifies the heart of vices, it is adorned with virtues. These are opposites: when arrogance departs, humility arrives. When rancour, hatred, envy, or resentment leave the heart, they are replaced by love, mercy, compassion, gentleness, forgiveness, and forbearance.

Rules of Divestment

The process of divestment is accomplished through several means:

1. **Mystic insight** (*maʿrifah*): This involves realizing the reality of one’s own self—that death is inevitable, and that all the wealth and status one accumulates will be left behind without fail. Beyond death lies reckoning, recompense, Paradise, and Hell.
2. **Self-vigilance** (*murāqabah*): When one attains this knowledge as explained, it drives one to act, to try to make amends before life runs out. However, the fruits of action are not gained unless one watches oneself before, during, and after the deed. One must not allow thoughts of ostentation, pride, or heedlessness towards Allah to arise, but must immediately repel them by magnifying the status of those for whom the deed was truly done, excluding all others.
3. **Resolve** (*himmah*): Resolve is the determination made

by the seeker to arise and abandon laziness and slackness on the path to Allah.

We used to visit Sheikh ‘Abdullah ibn al-Şiddīq al-Ghumārī and ask him for litanies (*adhkār*) that inspire resolve, but he would laugh and say: ‘There are none!’ Resolve itself is the very secret of the obligation. Allah has commanded you to act, and it is not the litanies that affect or assist you. Resolve is when a person decides: ‘I will complete my work by such and such a time, and I will avoid such and such.’ This requires inner strength and determination to carry it out. This reminds us of the words of the Prophet ﷺ: ‘The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, though there is good in both.’¹²²

A person’s strength and weakness may vary in different areas of life—one may be strong in something and weak in another. For example, our master, Ḥassān ibn Thābit ؓ was eloquent and powerful in poetry, but he was not skilled in fighting nor strong at it. It is narrated from Umm ‘Urwah, from her father, from her grandfather al-Zubayr, that he said: ‘When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ left his wives in Medina, he left them behind in Fārī Fort. Among them was Şafiyyah bint ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Ḥassān ibn Thābit was left to guard them. A man from the polytheists approached to enter upon them. Şafiyyah said to Ḥassān: ‘There is the man.’ Ḥassān was fearful and refused. Şafiyyah then took a sword and struck the polytheist, thereby killing him. When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was informed of this, he gave Şafiyyah the same mark of honour with an arrow as he did for the men.’¹²³

Mentioning Allah (*dhikr*) is the fuel of the intellect. It begets mystic insight and self-vigilance, and also helps to increase resolve once it exists.

Thus, these things—mystic insight, self-vigilance, and the presence of resolve—help and assist in achieving divestment before the attainment of adornment, leading ultimately to manifestation.

The Meaning of ‘Manifestation’

Manifestation (*tajallī*) is when tranquility, serenity, and mercy become evident to your heart, and when the cosmic realities that assist you in adhering to faith and in worshipping Allah as if you see Him become unveiled to you. As the noble mystics note, manifestation is the embodiment of those attributes of Allah that we are able to embody. Allah ﷻ is Merciful, so we must be merciful. Allah ﷻ is Compassionate, so we must be compassionate. Allah ﷻ is Forgiving, so we must be forgiving and tolerant towards others. In this way, one attains complete submission to Allah’s decree and contentment with Allah. Certainty regarding what is with Allah becomes manifest, and the reality of this world appears clearly.

In order to clarify the ranks of divestment (*takhliyah*), adornment (*tazkiyah*), and manifestation (*tajallī*), we recall a hadith on the Chosen One ﷺ narrated by Ṭabarānī and others. The Prophet ﷺ met one of his companions named Ḥārith and asked him: ‘How are you this morning, Ḥārith?’ He replied: ‘I am truly a believer this morning.’ The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Consider what you say, for everything has a reality. What is the reality of your faith?’ He said: ‘My soul has turned away from the world: I have kept vigil at night and fasted by day. It is as if I see the Throne of my Lord clearly, see the people of Paradise greeting one another therein, and see the people of Hell disputing therein.’ The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘O Ḥārith, you have known, so hold fast.’¹²⁴

Here, turning away from attachment to the world is part of divestment, and turning towards Allah through acts of obedience is part of adornment. One then attains manifestation through certainty and knowledge that are free from doubt and suspicion. At this point, one attains contentment with Allah and full submission to Allah's decree. This contentment and submission enter the heart in three stages:

1. The first stage is when one submits to Allah's command and restrains the soul from objection and sorrow. One feels grief but prevents oneself from objecting to Allah's decree. One may weep day and night for the loss of a child, for example, but the heart remains resigned to Allah's judgment and wisdom.
2. The second stage is one of no sorrow. If a child dies or a calamity strikes, one smiles. The reason is certainty in Allah's kindness and wisdom.
3. The third stage is when one weeps, because one recalls that Allah caused this loss so that one may weep. This is not weeping out of sadness but weeping for Allah. This is the station of Prophethood and the greatest of saints. For example, when the Prophet ﷺ lost his son Ibrāhīm, he wept.¹²⁵

In another narration, the Prophet's daughter ʿĀʾishah sent word to him: 'My son has died, so come to us.' He ﷺ sent greetings and said: 'Allah takes and gives, and everything has an appointed time with Him. So be patient and seek a reward.' She sent another message, swearing he must come. He ﷺ rose with Saʿd ibn ʿUbādah, Muʿādh ibn Jabal, Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, Zayd ibn Thābit, and others. When the boy was

lifted to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in his last moments, his eyes shed tears. Sa'd said: 'O Messenger of Allah, what is this?' He said: 'This is mercy that Allah places in the hearts of His slaves, and Allah only has mercy on His slaves who are merciful.'¹²⁶

The Prophet ﷺ wept for Ibrāhīm, but he wept because Allah ordained that those afflicted with calamity should weep. The first stage is weeping out of grief, the second is smiling out of contentment, and the third is weeping under the power of Allah's decree, in accordance with what the Supremely Real ordained for that particular moment. It is as if Allah wills that now I should grieve, so I grieve.

Therefore, repentance is the first stage of the path. It consists of stages: first, repentance from sin, then repentance from attachment to the worlds through divestment and adornment, then repentance from everything except Allah. Whoever repents from everything besides Allah, Allah manifests Himself to him with His attributes, so he becomes a divine slave who calls upon Allah and says: 'O Lord', and Allah responds to him. He is a divine slave in his contentment with Allah and submission to Allah's decree.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRAVELLING THE PATH TO ALLAH INVOLVES DEALING WITH THE REALMS OF DOMINION AND SOVEREIGNTY, LIGHTS AND SECRETS

Every day in prayer, Muslims recite *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, which begins with the words of the Exalted: ‘*Praise be to God; Lord of all Worlds (Rabbi al-‘Ālamīn)*.’ Upon reflection, one finds that the phrase ‘*all Worlds*’ indicates that there are many worlds. It has been said that they exceed fourteen worlds.¹²⁷ Among these many worlds, some belong to the World of Dominion (‘*Ālam al-Mulk*’), and others have not been revealed to His creation, being part of the World of Sovereignty (‘*Ālam al-Malakūt*’).

What, then, is the reality of the World of Dominion? And what is the reality of the World of Sovereignty? And what is the relationship between them and Sufism?

The World of Dominion is the world of the apparent (‘*Ālam al-Zāhir*’), comprising everything perceived by humans through their usual senses of hearing, sight, and touch—such as the sun, trees, rivers, seas, and animals—as well as perceiving that which is unseen but whose effects are apparent, like electricity. This world is equally perceptible to all people.

The Noble Qur'an has indicated this type of world in the words of the Exalted: *'And say: 'Praise be to God, Who has neither taken a son, nor has He any partner in dominion ...'*¹²⁸ and *'Blessed is He in Whose hand is [all] dominion, and He has power over all things.'*¹²⁹

As for the World of Sovereignty, it is what lies beyond this world: realities that are not perceived by the outward senses and are not equally accessible to all people. Rather, Allah ﷻ grants some of His slaves this perception as a favour and an elevation of spiritual stations. The more a person advances on the path to Allah, the more he perceives of the sovereign realities that reveal Allah's power, greatness, and perfect creation. The Noble Qur'an has also alluded to this world, saying: *'So glory be to Him in Whose hand is the sovereignty of all things and to Whom you will be returned.'*¹³⁰ Among those singled out by the Qur'an as possessing perception of this hidden world is our master Abraham ؑ. Allah says: *'And so We show Abraham the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth, and that he might be of those knowing with certainty.'*¹³¹

The relationship between the World of Dominion and the World of Sovereignty is like the difference between secrets and lights, both of which the spiritual traveller may encounter along his journey. Some receive the unveiling of secrets; others receive the descent of lights. What then is meant by secrets and lights, and what must the traveller do if these befall him?

Secrets are all that is new and undiscovered by one, whether or not they have been discovered by others.

Lights are that which illuminate darkness, lift the veil, and remove obscurity, whether sensory or spiritual. *'God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. ...'*¹³², and He sent

the Prophet ﷺ as a mercy, describing him as ‘... *a summoner to God by His leave, and as an illuminating lamp*.’¹³³

As one progresses on the path to Allah, some secrets of the World of Dominion become unveiled to him. Among these secrets are the properties of herbs and plants, the principles of construction, and the rules of governance and human society. These secrets are perceived by both Muslims and non-Muslims and are gradually revealed to human-kind. Indeed, people, though disbelievers, learned how to build the pyramids, how to preserve the dead over extended periods, and came to understand the properties of medicines, whether natural or synthetic. They discovered many things through the microscope and telescope, yet the unknown remains far greater than what is known.

Every day, millions of new pieces of information are discovered, and the process never ends. Each discovery brings with it about forty or fifty new questions. Thus, if a million facts are discovered in a day, some forty million questions arise that require answers, all related to the secrets of the World of Dominion.

However, one also experiences unveilings on the path to Allah, known as *kashf* (spiritual disclosure). For example, whilst in seclusion, or prayer, or walking, a cosmic matter may become disclosed to one. One may come to know what a physician or chemist knows, either fully or partially, understanding laws of the cosmos or some portion thereof. Some retain this unveiling permanently, whilst others have it closed off and forgotten. For example, the unveiling may last five minutes and then be closed, only for the physician to later recall hearing the same knowledge he initially received, saying: ‘Yes, I knew it, but I forgot.’

The seeker may have secrets and lights disclosed to him,

whether from the World of Dominion or the World of Sovereignty, to raise him to a higher station than he was at, namely, the station of certainty. Allah says: '*And so We show Abraham the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth ...*'¹³⁴. The traveller should not become distracted by these illuminations from his true objective, which is Allah alone. These illuminations are merely similitudes.

The Seeker is Preoccupied with His Aim

We have mentioned that the meaning of 'distraction' (*ilti-fāt*) is being preoccupied with something other than Allah ﷻ. This means that if we are granted an unveiling of secrets or outpourings of lights, we praise Allah and continue on. Hence, the friends of Allah say: 'Whenever something is disclosed to us, we pray to Allah to divert it away from us.' That is to say: 'We do not desire it.'

Sufis also say that unveiling occurs for those at the beginning of the path, but for those in its middle or end it does not occur. In other words, the more a person advances in his servitude to Allah, the more Allah closes this unveiling from him, and he returns to being an ordinary person without this special faculty, nor does he desire it. For the intention is to devote worship purely to Allah. As in the hadith: 'Actions are but by intentions, and every man shall have only what he intended.'¹³⁵

When someone asked Abū Yazīd al-Buṣṭāmī: 'Why do I worship Allah and exert effort in worship but find no sweetness in my heart?' he replied: 'Because you worship worship itself; worship Allah and you will find the sweetness of worship.'

This is a very precise insight. For example, when I stand praying at night, I stand so that in the morning I can say to

myself: 'I stood at night in prayer.' On the contrary, a friend of Allah stands out of longing for Allah, and there is a great difference between these two states.

The first says to himself: 'I stood in secret. No one saw me—not my family, my children, or anyone else. I concealed my worship from them.' However, he hides it whilst in his heart saying: 'Well done for standing the night prayer.' The second stands out of love for Allah, without any thought of whether anyone sees him or not, or whether anyone speaks about him or not. Such thoughts do not enter his mind at all because there is nothing in his heart but Allah. The difference between the two is vast. Abū Yazīd said: 'You worship worship and do not find its sweetness. Worship Allah and you will find the sweetness of worship.'

It was reported that 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was sitting in his dark seclusion when one of the lights of the World of Dominion shone. He said: 'I heard a voice whose sweetness I cannot describe, saying: "O 'Abd al-Qādir."' He sensed that Allah was addressing him. He said: 'Here I am.' The voice said: 'We love you.' He said: 'I dissolved as salt dissolves in food or water.' The voice said: 'We have brought you near to Us.' He said: 'Tears flowed from my eyes.' The voice said: 'We have made lawful for you the forbidden.' Sheikh 'Abd al-Qādir responded immediately, saying: 'Get lost, O accursed one!' He was ready with a reply, without hesitation. He knew the realities from the moment he entered the path, for he entered it with knowledge. Then the light was extinguished, and he heard a most terrible, harsh, and ugly voice, say to him: 'I have eliminated seventy worshippers from the register of servitude with this, O 'Abd al-Qādir, but your knowledge saved you.'

This means that seventy worshippers had the same experience and said: 'Here I am, O my Lord. The matter is final: we shall not pray again.' Then the same thing would happen to them again, and each would say: 'I obey Your command,' only to depart from the path of Allah to the path of Satan.

Those who know Allah and turn solely towards Him are the people of Allah, and this is their experience. Its importance and the importance of following it have become clear, for if I were to abandon their legacy and teachings and begin experimenting anew without concern for these rulings or this experience, I would say to myself, as these seventy worshippers did: 'This is possible, for I have seen a light and sweetness beyond all sweetness, and a state beyond all states.' Rather, we say: 'We are commanded to forbid evil and enjoin good. You will, by Allah's help, be stronger than all these superstitions, and they will be under your control, if you are sincere, and not the other way around.' This experience is what made us listen to the Allah's saints, heed their words, seek their guidance, and learn from them.

What meant by the path? What is meant by distraction? What is meant by disclosure? What is meant by purification? What is the meaning of abandonment? What is meant by manifestation? What is meant by arrival? What is meant by repentance? What is meant by contentment? What is meant by submission? What is meant by reliance? What is meant by mentioning Allah? What is meant by worship? What is meant by seeking help? What are the conditions of each station? What happens when we do this or that? How do I realize these insights, and how do I apply the commands of Allah ﷻ in a practical and correct manner?

All this because they adhered to the Qur'an and followed

the Sunnah of the Master of All Creation ﷺ, because they practiced this over long periods and lived among the truthful people of insight and knowledge who guided them, taught them the pitfalls of the path, and showed them how to travel to Allah with insight.

This is the path of Allah. We began it with repentance. Imam Harawī, author of *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, divided the stations of the path and its signs into ten stages and explained that they are within the scope of: 'You [alone] we worship, and You [alone] we ask for help.'¹³⁶ He wrote a book titled *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn Bayna Iyyāka Na'budu wa Iyyāka Nasta'in*. Ibn al-Qayyim explained it in his book *Madārij al-Sālikīn Bayna Manāzil Iyyāka Na'budu wa Iyyāka Nasta'in*. I have written a commentary on the first twenty stations in my book *Sabīl al-Mubtadi'in wa al-Sālikīn fī Sharḥ Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*.

The Meaning of 'Disclosure' and 'Breakthrough' and that They Do Not Matter Unless They Improve a Slave's Conduct with Allah

Disclosure (*kashf*) and breakthrough (*fath*) both mean perception and knowledge of secrets. The secrets of the World of Dominion are trivial matters, unworthy of the ambitions of great men. Suppose a saint has been granted disclosure of all the secrets and sciences of everyone on Earth, such that he knows and encompasses all of it. What benefit does he gain from this if it does not teach him proper conduct (*adab*) with Allah? Then it is nothing. If this knowledge does not teach him how to behave correctly with Allah, then it is knowledge that is of no benefit, and ignorance of it does no harm.

For example, we belong to a certain group with specific

specializations. We do not know medicine or engineering. What harm has come to us? None, because others have studied and mastered these fields, and each person has their own specialization. However, if this disclosure or breakthrough improves the slave's conduct with Allah, then this is the intended purpose.

Some people—Allah protect us—were not completely sincere. When some secrets were disclosed to them, they began to play and abandon the path, becoming arrogant with creation, seeking worldly benefit and profiting from what was disclosed to them or granted as a breakthrough, such as through wealth, status, reputation, power, or desire.

There is another kind of distraction, subtler and more hidden than this, which is preoccupation with secrets or lights. The worshipper worships his Lord, and his heart fills with light whilst he is sitting in seclusion, which is dark. Suddenly it becomes illuminated, and he finds sweetness and light in his heart. All of this is from the lights of the World of Dominion, and this happens both to Muslims and non-Muslims. Monks in churches experience this, as do Buddhists and Hindus. They experience the lights of the World of Dominion. However, if the seeker on the path to Allah becomes preoccupied with these lights instead of Allah—for example, by becoming proud or rejoicing in them, exploiting them, or worshipping Allah to obtain them—such as mentioning Allah whilst his heart is preoccupied with ‘May today be as illuminated as yesterday was’—this is mere play. This is because his attention has turned to distractions instead of Allah. He has become preoccupied and distracted, and the distracted do not arrive.

More profound than this are the lights of the World of

Sovereignty, for the highest assembly is disclosed to him. If he becomes preoccupied with them instead of Allah, then he lacks in proper conduct and does not arrive.

The worshipper must be mindful of himself on the path to Allah and not become distracted away from Him by the disclosure of secrets of the World of Dominion, the secrets of the World of Sovereignty, the lights of the World of Dominion, or the lights of the World of Sovereignty. Indeed, all of this is from the deception of Iblīs, who tries to turn him away from Allah, confuse him about his matter, and cause him to worship in order to attain the sweetness of worship, not the pleasure of Allah. We worship Allah alone, sincerely for His own sake, in worship and love—whether we attain sweetness or not, whether secrets are disclosed to us or not, and whether we are immersed in lights or not—because the objective is Allah alone.

The Five Subtleties

The five subtleties (*al-laṭā'if al-khamsah*) are: the heart (*al-qalb*), the spirit (*al-rūḥ*), the secret (*al-sirr*), the hidden (*al-khafī*), and the most hidden (*al-akhfā*). A person ascends through them and feels them in certain places in the chest. He feels, for example, a kind of coolness in the chest when mentioning Allah, and experiences an extraordinary, indescribable sweetness when mentioning Him. He also perceives their specific locations, which are known places in the body. As he progresses in mentioning Allah and sincerity therein, he advances gradually from one stage to the next.

Part of proper conduct with Allah is that the seeker does not move himself from one stage to another, but rather allows Allah to move him. Another aspect of proper conduct

is that the seeker does not yearn for a higher rank, but is content and resigned.

This matter is exceedingly difficult, because human nature is inclined towards ambition, greed, and seeing oneself as superior to others. Thus, one tries to move oneself, which is not proper conduct. One tries to long and aspire, but ambition and greed in this matter are contrary to proper conduct. Rather, proper conduct lies in contentment and resignation.

For this reason, we always find a saint  on the path constantly reproaching himself, always looking at those below him, and always praising Allah for the blessings He has bestowed upon him. Reaching this high rank requires spiritual struggle, and few people strive against their selves, whilst many leave themselves to roam freely as they wish.

Būsīrī says:

*The soul's a babe: neglected, it grows up
Upon the teat, but weaned, it learns to sup.
Oppose and disobey both self and fiend—
Their heartfelt help's suspicious, must be screened.
Defy their plaintiffs and their judges, too;
You know the machinations of these two.
Observe it as it grazes in good work,
But if it craves this pasture, then avert.*

This means that a true slave performs acts of worship for Allah without delighting in them or boasting about them to others. As part of proper conduct with Allah, one must watch over one's soul, not letting it roam freely without self-vigilance, prevention, restraint, or patient discipline for the sake of Allah. If one does not do this, the soul closes upon him and veils him with the veil of the ego.

Many of the people of Allah have expounded in detail about these subtleties and their realities, and have also mentioned their loci. Among them is the author of *Tadhyyīl al-Bāqiyāt al-Ṣāliḥāt*, Sheikh Murād ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Qazānī al-Naqshbandī, who wrote this as an appendix to the book *Rashḥāt ʿAyn al-Ḥayāh*, a biography of the notable figures of the Naqshbandī path. He stated that these subtleties belong to the World of Command (ʿĀlam al-Amr), that each has a place, and that each has a light perceived by the one who remembers Allah. He detailed all this extensively, all based on the experience of the those who mention Allah much among the people of Allah.¹³⁷

The benefit of mentioning these subtleties is to convey the correct experience to seekers, alerting them to what may occur to them whilst mentioning Allah, so that the devotee remains clear-sighted regarding his state, neither distracted from the mention of Allah nor cut off from the path because of these afflictions or occurrences.

Likewise, among those who spoke about these subtleties was Imam Qushayrī, in his *Risālah*. Regarding the subtlety of the secret (*laṭīfat al-sirr*), he says:

It is a subtlety deposited inside, like the spirit. Their (e.g., the Sufis) maxims entail that it be a place of witnessing, just as spirits are a place of love, and hearts a place of knowledge. They say: ‘The secret (*al-sirr*) is that over which you have supervision, and the secret of the secret is that which none but the Supremely Real has knowledge of.’¹³⁸

It has also been said that: ‘The soul (*nafs*), intellect (ʿ*aql*), heart (*qalb*), spirit (*rūḥ*), and secret (*sirr*) are all names for one reality, which is the divine luminous subtlety deposited

in this dark, bodily form. The difference in names is due to the difference in their conditions.²¹³⁹

These five subtleties have connections with both the World of Dominion (*al-mulk*) and the World of Sovereignty (*al-malakūt*). To understand this, with all its subtlety and complexity, the seeker requires a perfect guiding sheikh who accompanies him on the path to direct him, nurture him, teach him, show him his Lord, save him time and hardship, and protect him from trials that he might not withstand at times.

The Relationship of the Five Subtleties to the Soul and Its Ranks

Each of the five subtleties (*al-laṭāʾif al-khamsah*) has a degree, a light, and a specific invocation. Each subtlety also corresponds to a world. The people of Allah have exerted great effort to reach these subtleties and to verify their reality. They confirmed their truths by the consistency of what was attained, despite differences in time and place, as demonstrated by two people who had never met sharing the same experience and reaching the same results, thereby indicating their veracity.

They realized that in the World of Dominion (*ʿĀlam al-Mulk*), a person has five subtleties by which he can connect with the World of Sovereignty (*al-Malakūt*), which also has five subtleties. Thus, there are ten subtleties in total, each two of them forming one stage. Each degree has its own invocation. These stages are divided into parts, and a person progresses from part to part through training, mentioning Allah, contemplation, reflection, worship, and obedience, gradually ascending—all, as mentioned before, under the guidance and instruction of a nurturing sheikh.

When the people of Allah investigated these subtleties, it led them to study the human soul. They contemplated the Qur'an and Sunnah and scrutinized the human condition closely, discovering that a person is composed of a body, which contains a spirit, and that within this body and spirit resides a human soul (*nafs*). They likened this to a vessel inside a vessel, with the soul being inside the two vessels. The soul is the rational, accountable, speaking self.

There is the spirit which Allah sends down into the embryo after 120 days, and it begins to form after about 40 or 42 days until the rational, accountable soul descends, which will be held accountable upon fulfilling conditions of puberty, knowledge, and sound perception. Thus, a person is composed of three things: a body containing the spirit, and within the spirit is the soul.

Allah says: *'God takes the souls at the time of their death, and, those that have not died in their sleep. Then He retains those for whom He has ordained death and releases the others until an appointed term. ...'*¹⁴⁰. When we sleep, it is as if the soul rises whilst the body remains alive with its spirit. The soul then experiences other perceptions by which it sees visions. There is a vision from the angels and a dream from Satan, or the soul may talk to its owner, which is similar to its internal monologue.

There are visions of a merciful or angelic nature that bring glad tidings or guidance, and there are psychological or satanic perceptions. Likewise, the thoughts that occur to a person's mind are among these illuminations, as are the inspirations that come during times of abundant mentioning of Allah. These may be angelic, satanic, merciful, or psychological. The sheikhs discern all these by signs, using them to guide creation to Allah.

The soul, which is the locus of accountability and perception, has seven ranks: the commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), the reproachful soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*), the inspired soul (*al-nafs al-mulhamah*), the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma'innah*), the contented soul (*al-nafs al-rāḍiyah*), the pleasing soul (*al-nafs al-mardhiyyah*), and the perfect soul (*al-nafs al-kāmilah*).¹⁴¹ Each corresponds to one of the five subtleties and has an invocation appropriate to its state. Each has a treatment and a motivator to cause it to ascend to the rank above.

The commanding soul, which inclines towards evil, is seated in the heart, which is the first subtlety. Its invocation is ‘*There is no god but Allah*’ (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*), the first primary ‘name’. ‘*There is no god but Allah*’ negates and affirms. It is as if it leads people from a place of darkness to a place of light. It negates the existence of any deity, then affirms Allah alone, without partner.

Our sheikhs learned through experience—not by a citation from the Qur’an or a hadith, but from existence itself, which is a source of knowledge—that frequent mention of ‘*There is no god but Allah*’, seventy thousand times, cures this commanding soul and restrains it from commanding evil, elevating it to the rank of the reproachful soul. This is considered an advancement on the path and a good step.

In the early twentieth century, however, our sheikhs found that seventy thousand repetitions no longer achieved this change due to the soul’s increased attachments to worldly affairs, due to the transformations and developments of life, including technology. People’s daily routines and times changed, and the soul became busier with attachments that previously did not concern it. Accordingly, they decided to increase the number to one hundred

thousand repetitions to have an appropriate effect in present-day reality. Thus, seventy thousand invocations were observed through experience in a past era, and one hundred thousand repetitions through experience in the present era.

After the commanding soul comes the rank of the reproachful soul, which is related to the first subtlety, the heart, and borders on the second subtlety, the spirit. Its invocation is the pronoun ‘He’ (*Huwa*), which is the most comprehensive of mystic insights.

Between the commanding and reproachful souls lies the heart. Between the reproachful and inspired souls lies the spirit. Between the inspired and tranquil souls lies the secret. Between the tranquil, contented, and pleasing souls lies the hidden (*al-khafī*). Between them and the perfect soul lies the most hidden (*al-akhfā*).

Thus, these five subtleties permeate the seven souls in their intermediate spaces. The contented and pleasing souls, considered as one stage with two parts, count as one. Hence, these five subtleties are interspersed within these seven souls.

We know that the treatment of these souls involves invocations of the primary names: ‘There is no god but Allah’ (*lā ilāha illā llāh*), ‘Allah’, ‘He’ (*Huwa*), ‘Living, Eternal Sustainer’ (*Ḥayy Qayyūm*), ‘Supremely Real, Almighty’ (*Ḥaqq Qahhār*). The methods differ according to this order and the order of their offshoots, according to specific visions and numerous approaches. Hence, the plurality of methods is a difference of variety, not of contradiction or conflict, for the path of Allah is one, as we have mentioned.

There are seven ranks of the soul, five subtleties, and seven primary names. We always seek to move from one soul to the next until the seeker reaches the tranquil soul,

upon whom serenity and mercy descend. Then the human heart becomes attached to the matter of tranquility and contentment with Allah ﷻ. After this, the system unfolds in action, whose essence is mentioning Allah, reflection, divestment, and adornment.

On the path to Allah, one discovers that four matters obstruct one's progress towards one's Lord ﷻ: the soul itself, Satan, obsession (*hawā*), and the world. These are the enemies of the children of Adam, because they try to withhold him from the path of Allah, to attract him to themselves, and to make him deviate from the straight path, the upright way, which is the shortest path by which the worshipper reaches his Lord. These four things disrupt the clarity of a person's orientation to Allah.

In reality, the most severe of these enemies is the soul, for the world may or may not be relevant, Satan comes and goes, obsession appears and disappears, but the soul accompanies a person from the moment of perception until death. We can distinguish its striving, veil, and desire from the rest of these enemies by its repetition and return. This is the meaning of the saying, which is also a principle: 'Your soul is your worst enemy.'

How do we differentiate between the whispering of Satan and the call of the soul? They say: 'The whispering of Satan does not endure, nor return, nor repeat.' He tries to whisper into people's hearts, and if one resists and turns away, Satan does not return to the same whisper but goes to whisper something else. If a person experiences an inner call to neglect prayer or mentioning Allah, or to something disliked or forbidden, then afterwards finds no such call within himself, this is from Satan's whispering. Allah says: *'Who whispers in the breasts of mankind'*¹⁴²

This is the harm of Satan, who is weak and has no authority over us. Allah tasked him but weakened him and left him as a trial. Despite this, he failed. We can guard ourselves from his evil by the nearest and simplest means: the call to prayer (*adhān*) drives Satan away; mentioning Allah drives Satan away; reciting the closing verses of *al-Baqarah* removes Satan's whispering and protects the place; reciting *Āyat al-Kursī* protects us from Satan; and morning and evening invocations safeguard the soul. Thus, Satan is repelled by the nearest and simplest methods. A person's life that is filled with mentioning Allah, Qur'an, worship, purity, prayer, and fasting makes Satan flee.

Thus, the problem is the soul itself, because it requires training. The soul repeatedly calls a person to neglect, sin, and commit disliked acts. If one resists the first time, the soul insists again a second time. This is the commanding soul. For this reason, it is given an intensive form of the word: *ammārah*, which follows the pattern *fa^{cc}ālāh*, indicating repetition, return, and abundance of action. The soul does not command once and then fall silent; it insists repeatedly.

If you find insistence on a reprehensible act you know to be blameworthy or sinful, you should recognize it as coming from your soul and know that you must train it. The commanding soul is the default state of the soul. Most people's souls command them to evil. When we ascend from it to the next stage, the reproachful soul, we find conflict between one and one's soul: sometimes it commands one to evil and one tries not to respond; other times, one responds but repents and atones. There is a contest and struggle until the soul settles on the inspired soul, the third rank.

Some say this is the beginning of annihilation (*fanā'*), and that there are only three souls: commanding, reproachful, and inspired. Others say that we should not be content with the beginning of perfection, but rather, must ascend beyond it until we reach the contented, pleasing, tranquil, and perfect souls.

In any case, these stages begin in all people—Muslims and disbelievers alike—with the commanding soul. However, this commanding soul has the potential to transform into the reproachful soul, and the reproachful soul has the potential to transform into the inspired soul. The potential is present, but the common soul is the commanding soul.

The Veils Between the Soul and Allah are Removed through Mentioning Him and Contemplation

The commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah bi al-sū'*) is veiled from the lights of Allah ﷻ by seventy thousand veils. Whenever we manage to relinquish, remove, or dispel a veil—representing the characteristics of the soul—we attain some lights, and some of the secrets of the World of Dominion and the World of Sovereignty are disclosed to us.

We are now on the path to Allah, and at this stage, the path of Allah consists of seventy thousand steps, seventy thousand stages, or seventy thousand parts. Each part represents a veil. Every time a veil is removed, another veil remains to be removed. Remarkably, some travellers may remove the seventy thousand veils in a single day, whilst others may remove ten thousand in 40 years, and so on, according to the divine breakthrough granted to them.

Hence, we observe the sheikhs preferring some of the newcomers among their disciples to their elders, because the elder may not have advanced on the path to Allah as

much as the newer traveller. The matter is that the grace of Allah is given to whom He wills, not by [human] power or strength.

The traveller should not concern himself with how much he has traversed or how much remains. Such concern is contrary to perfect sincerity and, by itself, detracts him from advancing further. The more he fixates on his position, the more he is preoccupied with it instead of his Lord—like someone looking around distractedly on the path of Allah and never arriving. Even those who look back to see how far they have come or how far they have to go, though they may know the distances, will be afflicted by despair if they have done much but advanced little, or by pride if they have done little but advanced far. Both despair and pride obstruct the traveller on the path to Allah ﷻ.

What are these veils before me that I must rid myself of in order to transform from the state of the commanding soul to that of the reproachful soul? None of the people of Allah has written a detailed account or list of the seventy thousand veils as such. Rather, they write in general terms, guide us, and bring closer to us the spiritual meanings which may have no precise equivalent in the languages of people, neither in Arabic nor in non-Arabic tongues. They liken things to one another, comparing the path, its stages, and the veils to known concepts, in order to bring the spiritual reality closer to the mind, even though the spiritual state has no sensory parallel.

The impulses of the heart represent those veils. For example, a heart preoccupied with the world, clinging to it, grieving the lost, rejoicing in the present, forgetting death, imagining itself immortal on Earth, pursuing self-interest, selfish, unwilling to benefit others or to give what is in its

hand, characterized by all that is vile and bereft of all that is right, filled with the world and darkness—such a person is the one facing the seventy thousand veils.

How can we rid ourselves of those veils that are impulses troubling the heart? An impulse that causes doubt about the efficacy of one's actions, or distrust in what is from Allah, or affirms strength and power to other than Allah.

A person constantly lives amid such things. When he tries to balance himself, whispers come either from his own soul or from Satan to unsettle his psychological balance and the tranquility upon which believers rely. All these are among the veils that conceal a person from his Lord and cloud his path. So, how do those veils vanish?

There are established means for this, including: contemplation of the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. The more a person contemplates the creation of the Heavens and Earth, the more certain he becomes of Allah's Oneness and existence, His greatness and His majesty.

Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for people of pith.

*Those who mention God, standing and sitting and on their sides, and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: 'Our Lord, You have not created this in vain. Glory be to You! So guard us against the chastisement of the Fire.'*¹⁴³

Here arises the issue of mentioning Allah (*dhikr*). There are two separate issues: the first is contemplation (*fikr*), the second is mentioning Allah (*dhikr*).

The people of Allah devised contemplative reflections

that one may bring to mind to rid oneself of many veils. They assigned a number of the Most Beautiful Names of Allah to each stage, such that when a seeker is engaged with a particular name, Allah eases the stages of the path and lifts the veils corresponding to that stage. Among these names are the Divine Name ‘Allah’, the declaration of monotheism, ‘There is no god but Allah’ (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*), and the pronoun referring to Allah: ‘He’ (*Huwa*).

They devised a plan to follow, prescribing a particular phrase and number against each veil. For example, they advise mentioning the Divine Name ‘Allah’ one hundred thousand times. One of the effects of repeatedly associating specific names with certain numbers on the soul of the seeker to Allah is to refine the soul and gain mastery over it, to recall the meaning of that Divine Name, and to habituate the soul to the merit of its meaning. This method also leads to cleansing the heart of those veils, as well as helping the traveller to engage in contemplation connected to the act of mentioning Allah.

The phrase ‘There is no god but Allah’ is the expression of monotheism that negates partners and affirms His Oneness. It purifies and adorns the heart. The seeker repeats it one hundred thousand times. These repetitions soften the heart, inclining it to mention Allah. The seeker begins with this litany, attempting to rid himself of the veils. How does he rid himself? By uttering it with certainty, presence of mind, and sincere intention, reciting as much as he is capable of each day. Some can manage five thousand repetitions daily, some one thousand, some five hundred. One capable of five thousand will finish in twenty days; one capable of one thousand will finish in a hundred days.

One must perform this as an act of devotion to Allah—

that is, with full humility and reflection. Thus, he does not rush to complete thousands in half an hour or a set time, because worship is not merely fulfilling an obligation, but a delight. We should mention Allah with contemplation, reflection, calmness, presence, humility, and certainty. Even if we mention Allah only one hundred times a day, the purpose is presence of the heart, treating the heart, serving the heart, and ultimately serving Allah.

Therefore, one must proceed slowly, deliberately mentioning Allah, undistracted by counting. Hence, when the sheikhs instructed people not to busy themselves with numbers when mentioning Allah, they also devised a means to set limits for these counts—resulting in the development of the well-known prayer beads (*misbāḥah* or *subḥah*).

The beads began as ninety-nine, then one was added to complete one hundred. Marks were added to show numbers clearly, and counters were devised enabling the one mentioning Allah to repeat a million times without error or distraction on account of counting.

These enhancements were made to free the believer's heart when mentioning Allah ﷻ. There are prayer beads up to a million, with ten beads above its knob and ten on the side. When completing one hundred, one increments the upper counter, and when it finishes, one increments the lower counter—a thousand, ten times. After completing these, one will have mentioned Allah ten thousand times. The process repeats, incrementing counters bead by bead, with a hundred multiplied by ten thousand equalling one million. All this happens without confusion or distraction due to counting.

We have thus spoken about the path to Allah, and that the objective of this path is Allah alone ﷻ. The traveller

should not be distracted by anything other than this noble goal. As we have mentioned, distraction may be towards the World of Dominion or the World of Sovereignty; it may be towards secrets or towards engagement with lights. All that is other than Allah, whether seen or unseen, should not divert us from Allah ﷻ.

CHAPTER FIVE

SECLUSION, REFINING THE SOUL AND RENEWING ITS FAITH

One of the methods relied upon by the Sufis for spiritual training is seclusion (*khalwah*). What is meant by seclusion, what is the proof of its legitimacy, what are the etiquettes the recluse must observe, what is the prescribed duration for it, and is the seclusion of Sufis like the monasticism forbidden by the Qur'an in Christianity, as stated in the verse: '*... But [as for] monasticism, they invented it—We had not prescribed it for them ...*'¹⁴⁴? Also, how does one respond to those who claim that seclusion is an innovation (*bid'ah*), and that it benefits neither one nor society, and often harms those who engage in it, causing them to become lonely and depressed?

Seclusion: Definition and Legitimacy

As for what is meant by seclusion to Sufis, it is a type of spiritual exercise and training that consists of withdrawing from people, and renouncing the adornments and allures of this world, in order to examine the soul, assess its faults, contemplate the creation of Allah ﷻ, glorify Him, mention Him, and take delight in additional acts of worship and intimate supplication, all for a specified period.

During this time, the heart is freed from all but Allah, so that the spirit ascends and becomes pure, the inner self

is enlightened, and the soul is freed from afflictions and sins.

Legal Evidence for Its Legislation

As for the proof of its legitimacy, seclusion is a form of worship which Allah ﷻ specifically granted to those chosen for worship: Prophets, saints (*awliyā'*), and the righteous. It is among the practices of previous religions. Our master Abraham ؑ withdrew from his people, turning to supplicate his Lord and to intimate conversation with Him. Allah says: *'And I shall shun you and that which you call upon besides God. I will supplicate my Lord—hopefully in calling upon my Lord I shall not be wretched.'*¹⁴⁵

Our master Moses ؑ was appointed thirty nights of intimate conversation with his Lord on Mount Ṭūr. During this time, Allah disclosed many revelations and manifestations to him and revealed the Tablets to him. Allah says: *'And We appointed for Moses thirty nights, and completed them with ten. Thus was the time appointed by his Lord concluded as forty nights; ...'*¹⁴⁶.

Allah elevated the mention of Lady Mary ؑ by mentioning her in the Qur'an as one of the devout worshippers dedicated in the sanctuary, so much so that Allah bestowed upon her sustenance and manifestations which amazed those who witnessed them. 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".'*¹⁴⁷ He also says:

And mention in the Book Mary when she withdrew from her family to an easterly place.

*Thus she veiled herself from them, whereupon We sent to her Our Spirit, and he assumed before her the likeness of a well-proportioned human.*¹⁴⁸

Our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was among those who loved seclusion before the start of revelation. He would retire to the Cave of Ḥirā' during some nights to worship and contemplate the creation of the Heavens and Earth.

‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها said: ‘The first thing revealed to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was true vision in sleep, which never failed. Thereafter, he loved seclusion and would retreat to the Cave of Ḥirā’, performing worship and contemplation for several nights before returning to his family and preparing himself for that.’¹⁴⁹

Imam Nawawī said: ‘As for *khalā*’, it is with an extended vowel and is the same as *khalwah* (seclusion). It is the practice of the righteous and the worshippers who truly know Allah.’ Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī رضي الله عنه said: ‘The Prophet ﷺ loved solitude because it frees the heart, aids reflection, and through it, one disconnects from familiar people and humbles one’s heart.’¹⁵⁰

The noble Sharia also legislated the sunnah of retreat (*i’tikāf*)—staying in the mosque and severing ties with Creation in order to continuously serve the Creator for a specified period. Jurists differ on its minimum and maximum durations. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ used to perform *i’tikāf* during the last ten nights of Ramadan.¹⁵¹

Seclusion is thus a secret act of worship, legislated in previous revealed laws and in ours, recommended and beloved to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘There are seven whom Allah will

shade in His shade on the Day when there is no shade but His', and among them is 'a man who remembers Allah in seclusion until his eyes overflow.'¹⁵²

Hence, Sufis consider seclusion as one of the struggles and spiritual exercises by which they ascend in ranks. It often brings about many breakthroughs and unveilings, provided the seeker enters seclusion only with the permission and guidance of his sheikh. This is so that the sheikh may teach him if he is ignorant, remind him if he is heedless, energize him if he becomes weak, and help him repel the whisperings of Satan and the insinuations of the soul.

One enters seclusion to sever his attachments to the world, to people, to events, to time, and to place. The kingdom of evil deeds is suspended for forty days, and his heart is inspired with wisdom—a wisdom difficult to express in words but which is an unveiling of the secrets of proper etiquette with Allah. The secrets include how to tread the path, the secrets of the cosmos and the realm of the unseen. There are many intertwined lights, some returning to the World of Dominion and others to the World of Sovereignty. One discovers the levels of existence and becomes certain that this is the path that is pleasing to Allah ﷻ, according to the religion of the chosen Prophet and beloved Messenger ﷺ.

When Does the Sheikh Permit Seclusion?

The sheikh permits seclusion when he senses in his disciple the capacity and strength to undertake it, because there are various afflictions that confront the seeker during seclusion. These may include severe sweating, dizziness, fainting, or fever. Each of these conditions requires specific measures and management so that the disciple can overcome them.

Therefore, permission from the sheikh is essential so that he may inform the disciple about all these afflictions, and so that there is a connection between the sheikh and the disciple, ensuring that the seclusion yields its intended spiritual secrets and illuminations.

Duration of the Seclusion

The Prophetic Sunnah states that the Prophet ﷺ used to worship for several nights.¹⁵³ Thus, he would go out for a week or ten days until his provision was exhausted, then return to replenish it and perform spiritual retreat, seclusion, worship, or spiritual exercise for another similar period of seven or ten days, and so forth.

Accordingly, seclusion may begin even with an hour and can extend to a day, two, or three. The experienced, drawing from those who preceded us among the noble Prophets, established a form of seclusion called the ‘Forty-Day Seclusion,’ modeled upon the seclusion of our master Moses ﷺ with his Lord. At the end of that seclusion, he received the Tablets and the Torah, and during it, Allah spoke to him, as He says: *‘And when Moses came at Our appointed time, and his Lord spoke with him, ...’*¹⁵⁴.

This indicates that many manifestations and revelations descended upon the Prophet Moses ﷺ during his forty-day seclusion, as the Qur’an explicitly states. Hence, those with experience say that the Sunnah of seclusion is forty days. Thus, seclusion may start from an hour and continue up to forty days: *‘And when We appointed for Moses forty nights, ...’*¹⁵⁵.

Imam Muḥāsibī said: ‘When a person suspends the dominion of evil deeds for forty days, the springs of wisdom burst forth from his heart, and he realizes that our path is

the path of truth. Whoever tries this and finds otherwise may strike me with sandals.’

The timing and length of seclusion are ultimately determined by the sheikh, who knows the disciple’s capacity and endurance, as well as the period within which the disciple may spiritually progress through seclusion. The sheikh also knows the disciple’s psychological, physical, and social needs.

Etiquettes of Seclusion

Seclusion has etiquettes that the recluse must observe. These etiquettes are partly derived from the Sharia and partly from experience and practice. As for the etiquettes derived from the Sharia, they include:

1. Sincerity of intention: that one enter into seclusion solely as an act of worship for Allah ﷻ and for reforming the soul from its afflictions.
2. Sufficing oneself with little food, drink, and sleep, for the less one clings to the sensual needs of the soul, the more the spirit ascends and the heart becomes illuminated.
3. Increasing acts of worship, for seclusion means severing connections so that the heart may devote itself entirely to Allah ﷻ.
4. Maintaining ritual purity (*wuḍū’*); i.e., always being in a state of ritual purity, performing it upon waking and after every nullification.
5. Completely turning away from the distractions of the world.

6. Wearing white garments. In whiteness, there are secrets that aid concentration, contemplation, and immersion in the universe. This has been inferred empirically.
7. Facing the qibla.
8. Mentioning Allah frequently, sending blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ, reciting the Qur'an, and engaging in the virtuous litanies and invocations authorized by the guiding sheikh.
9. The recluse should fast from anything containing, or derived from, a spirit (such as eggs, milk, ghee, butter, and cheese).
10. Whenever one's father or mother specifically call for one, one must immediately abandon seclusion and respond to their plea.

The recluse must not consume what is produced by anything that has a spirit or that had a spirit. It seems as though consuming what contains a spirit impedes some spiritual progress. Rather, he is to subsist on earthly plants. The ancient saints used to eat dried fruits, raisins, almonds, and walnuts, carrying them in a container and taking small portions daily. This type of food is highly nutritious and sufficient for the worshipper's daily needs, along with water and dates.

Moreover, the recluse must avoid anything touched by fire. So, he does not eat bread (as it is baked), nor cooked food, even if plant-based, since cooking involves fire. Thus, what remains are these dried foods, on which he lives for forty days. This practice purifies the body's toxins. The

recluse only needs to use the toilet once a week, some once a month, others once every forty days, and remains careful to maintain ritual purity.

Fasting from what contains, or derives from, a spirit was practiced by the righteous in previous religions. Our religion does not currently legislate this type of worship, but Allah accepted it at certain times and granted breakthroughs and unveilings through it. Following it does not contradict the Sharia, for the essence of seclusion is minimal food and asceticism. Avoiding all that contains or derives from spirit is part of this minimalism and asceticism.

This topic raises a fundamental legal question discussed by scholars of legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*): does the law given to previous peoples apply to us? In summary, this issue is disputed among jurists, but the people of Allah proceed on the principle that what is legislated before us applies to us if it is mentioned in the Qur'an and nothing abrogates it. That is an indication of Allah's acceptance of it, and since Allah accepted it, we worship Him through all means that draw us near to Him.

As for the etiquettes known from experience, these include that the recluse must not lean his back against a wall. The wisdom behind this is that it induces a certain tension and engagement of body and soul. He may only lean back with permission from his sheikh, emphasizing the connection and bond between him and the sheikh.

In former times, mosques were filled with places of seclusion, and in the case of the forty-day seclusion, the recluse would perform the Friday and congregational prayers without meeting anyone because his seclusion was closed off to him. Some perform this at home, for seclusion may take place in an isolated place. The proof is the Prophet's

worship ﷻ and retreat in Cave Hīrā'. What is essential is that the recluse sever all contact with Creation, even those who serve him by bringing food, drink, and necessary human needs, which are left at the door of the quarters without communication or request.

In response to those who claim seclusion causes depression and loneliness in Muslims, it is said that seclusion is one of the means of preserving psychological and physical health. Physicians of bodily and psychological health affirm the necessity of setting times in which a person isolates himself from everything for rest and relief from the burdens and distractions of life.

In summary, the Sharia permits us a space for experimentation in our worship to attain psychological, physical, and bodily benefits that aid us in the matter of worship.

Conditions on the Place of Seclusion

Seclusion cells (*khuluwāt*) were found in mosques and attached to them. In the Mosque of al-Zāhir Jāshankīr behind out master, al-Ḥusayn, the seclusion cells surround the mosque courtyard. Similarly, in the Mosque of al-Zāhir al-Muḥammadi al-Damirdāshī, the cells encircle the mosque. In the Mosque of the Muḥammadiyah Clan, Sheikh Muḥammad Zakī al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ﷻ built a place inscribed with the word 'Seclusion' (*al-Khulwah*). The purpose of entering seclusion is that one sever one's attachments to the world.

Fruits of Seclusion

Abundant mentioning of Allah during seclusion, coupled with observing the etiquettes mentioned above, causes a gradual elevation in the human soul along the path of

Allah. Through frequent mentioning of Allah, the subtle faculties (*laṭā'if*) of the soul are activated. These five subtleties are conditions or states of the spirit (*rūḥ*), or the speaking soul. The People of Allah name them: the heart (*qalb*), the spirit (*rūḥ*), the secret (*sirr*), the hidden (*khafī*), and the most hidden (*akhfā*). These are ranks into which a person does not enter except after having completed the previous rank. There is the stage called the heart, then above it the spirit, then above it the secret—so much so common folk say: ‘The divine secret has emerged’—then above it is the hidden, and above that is the most hidden.

All these exist in the World of Dominion. Corresponding realms exist in the World of Sovereignty, thus making ten ranks in total. Beyond that, there are further degrees until one reaches the Throne of the Merciful (‘*Arsh al-Raḥmān*). Above the Throne are other realms beyond the World of Dominion and the World of Sovereignty, which are the Worlds of Creation (*Nāsūt*)—that is, the cosmos besides Allah, Lord of the Worlds. These are the Worlds of Mercy (*Raḥamūt*), Divinity (*Lāhūt*), Invincibility (*Jabarūt*), and Magnificence (‘*Aẓamūt*): these are manifestations of Allah ﷻ.

This is the utmost extent of what humanity has perceived. Allah has no end and cannot be encompassed, not by the nearest angels nor by Prophets sent. He ﷻ is the Subduer above His slaves and the Wise, the All-Aware. No throne encompasses Him, nor does any human being reach His reality, neither our Master Muhammad ﷺ nor anyone else. The Lord is Lord, and the slave is slave. There is an absolute distinction between the created and the Creator.

In his seclusion, the recluse continues mentioning Allah until Allah grants him a breakthrough. It is customary that

the breakthrough occur on the twentieth, twenty-first, or twenty-third day. He completes his appointed time, giving thanks and praise to Allah ﷻ for the breakthrough thus granted.

This breakthrough brings one to absolute certainty, without any hesitation, neither in his worship, nor in the reality of the Prophet ﷺ, nor in his luminosity, nor in the path he treads, nor in the etiquette he follows. The matters transform from knowledge into witnessing, becoming acceptance, tranquility, and submission. The self no longer disputes nor demands anything worldly.

Seclusion and Contemplation

The first station of seclusion is mentioning Allah (*dhikr*). The second is contemplation (*fikr*).

To reflect upon the essence (*dhāt*) of Allah is a form of associating partners with Him (*shirk*), whilst claiming to comprehend His reality is an act of ignorance. This is the realization that dawns upon one who enters into seclusion: it ceases to be merely a notion written in books. Either, it becomes something one now sees, hears, witnesses, and lives. In that state, he hears with his eyes more than with his ears, and he sees with his ears more than with his eyes, for the instruments of perception are no longer engaged with sensory input, but with something that transcends perception.

From there, the contemplative ascetic begins to reflect on the degrees of existence. These degrees of existence, as has been said, are forty in number. Sheikh ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī wrote about them in detail, explaining each level, its meaning, and its particular reality. The highest of these ranks is the realm of the Unseen of the Unseen (*Ghayb*

al-Ghayb)—that is, Allah Himself: the Sanctified Unseen, concealed from all save Himself. None comprehends Him save He Himself. There is no deity but He.

At this point, the contemplator becomes overwhelmed by his own lowliness, his poverty, his annihilation, and his utter need for Allah, in his very existence and its persistence. Indeed, we are created at every moment, every instant, every fraction of time, by the creative act of Allah. Were He to withhold His sustaining grace (*imdād*), we would perish. At this point, the contemplative, ascetic, worshipful soul realizes—experientially and not merely verbally—the full meaning of the phrase ‘There is no power nor strength but through Allah’ (*lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā billāh*). He grasps its reality and perceives that he himself is no more than scattered dust, devoid of any true existence except insofar as Allah brings him into being.

His relationship with Allah is purely one of ‘Be, and it is’ (*kun fa-yakūn*). Were Allah ﷻ to issue a command, the world would vanish in the space between the letters of ‘Be’, and even this is not a temporal sequence, for in His Reality, there is no succession. The contemplator sees this, perceives it, witnesses it, and tastes it. When such taste (*dhawq*) enters the heart, it never departs. He who tastes knows; he who knows, draws deeply.

All of this arises through mentioning Allah and contemplation. This is a vast matter, an ocean without shore. What we offer here is merely a glimpse into what may occur in the state of seclusion. Imam Shaʿrānī said: ‘I entered into seclusion, and Allah disclosed to me one hundred and twenty-four thousand sciences in a single day.’ Yet, such an breakthrough is not considered valid unless it leads one to increased reverence and proper conduct with Allah ﷻ.

Among the fruits of seclusion is the unveiling of the glorification (*tasbīḥ*) of Allah by all created things. Another fruit is what has been termed ‘the prostration of the heart’. The outward act of prostration is known. As for the heart’s prostration, once the heart prostrates, it never rises again. It remains in prostration until the slave meets Allah. This is what the spiritual elect call the ‘lofty station’ (*al-maqām al-‘ālī*), and it is none other than the heart’s prostration before Allah.

Through the certainty (*yaqīn*) engendered in seclusion, the heart prostrates to Allah. Yet the nature of the heart’s prostration cannot be captured in any human language. No words can express it. Its reality can only be known through direct experience. One who has not experienced it cannot comprehend it. Why not? Because language lacks the capacity to describe such a state. The prostration of the heart to Allah arises from this seclusion.

The Meaning of ‘Our Seclusion is In Our Intermingling’

Among the foundational principles is the statement: ‘Our seclusion is in our intermingling’—that is, the act of glorifying Allah (*tasbīḥ*) performed in solitude, wherein a person is alone with himself, is more virtuous by night than by day, better whilst in a state of ritual purity than without, and more effective when wearing white than other colours. All of these are auxiliaries, not essentials, and they vary according to each person’s capacity, strength, and state. What matters most is not to abandon the mentioning of Allah, but to remain constant in it and persist.

A man once came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, the obligations of Islam have become too many for me. Tell me something I can cling to.’

He replied: 'Let your tongue remain moist with the mention of Allah.'¹⁵⁶

Now, when the tongue is preoccupied with mentioning Allah, it actually dries out, and one may feel the need to drink. However, the Messenger ﷺ refers to this dryness as 'moistness'. He does not mean that mentioning Allah causes physical moisture on the tongue. Rather, it causes a kind of dryness, but what a delightful dryness it is! That very dryness is, in fact, moistness: it is sweetness and beauty. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Let your tongue remain moist with the mention of Allah,' meaning: 'Continue to mention Allah until your tongue becomes dry, and when it does, that dryness itself is the very essence of moistness.'

Similarly, he ﷺ said: 'By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, the smell of the fasting person's mouth is more fragrant to Allah than the scent of musk.'¹⁵⁷ The foul odour that arises from a fasting mouth, due to abstaining from food, is not foul in the sight of Allah. Rather, it is more beloved to the angels than the scent of musk. This is one of those paradoxes by which realities are discerned. As a poet said:

*Two opposites, when joined, will captivate,
For opposites bring out their charm, innate.*

One must persevere in mentioning Allah, up to a hundred thousand times, for this specifically is the cure for the commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*). We have previously stated that there are seventy thousand veils of light from the Divine. Not all these veils pertain to the commanding soul, only ten do. The next level of the soul has ten more, and so on. The seventy thousand veils correspond to the seven levels of the soul.

The remedy for the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) is the repetition of the Divine Name ‘Allah’, the solitary name of the Essence. All the people of Allah employ it, and they cite various evidences for its legitimacy. Among them is the verse: ‘... Say: “Allah”, then leave them to play in their discourse.’¹⁵⁸ Here, the name ‘Allah’ is mentioned alone, and the Prophet ﷺ is instructed to say it and move on.

They also cite the hadith: ‘The Final Hour will not be established until “Allah, Allah” is no longer said on Earth.’¹⁵⁹ In another narration: ‘The Final Hour will not come except upon the most wretched of people.’¹⁶⁰ This refers to the disappearance of mentioning Allah in its purest form—the solitary utterance of ‘Allah’—from Earth, a condition that will prevail only after the souls of all true believers have been taken, as prophesied by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who said that a gentle breeze shall take the souls of the believers from beneath their armpits before the Day of Resurrection. Thus, the Final Hour will only befall the most deprived of humanity.

The Name ‘Allah’ is to be repeated one hundred thousand times. The spiritual masters caution against repeating this Name whilst afflicted with fever, for it has the effect of raising body temperature. Repeating ‘Allah’ may be unsuitable for one with fever, and if the repetition is done with sincerity, it could even lead to death. Some of those not initiated in the path have experimented with the divine names and their cosmological effects—such as using ‘Allah’ to warm themselves when cold—but this contradicts sincerity. True mention of Allah is not performed to obtain worldly benefit, but out of love for Allah alone. He is worthy of all love and mention. One who mentions His name for the

sake of its effects may receive some benefit, but his reward is hastened in this world. We ask Allah for protection. Allah says:

Whoever desires the hasty world, We hasten for him therein whatever We will, for whom We please. Then We appoint for him Hell, to which he will be exposed, condemned, and rejected.

*And whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it with the necessary effort, being a believer — for such their effort will find favour.*¹⁶¹

The basic principle, then, is that one who seeks worldly gain through worship has no reward with Allah in the Hereafter, unless Allah grants it out of His bounty. None can presume upon Allah, for He is the possessor of every grace. ‘*God desires to make clear to you and to guide you in the ways of those before you, and to turn [in forgiveness] towards you; God is Knowing, Wise.*’¹⁶²

After extensive repetition of the Name ‘Allah’, the seeker transitions to mentioning Him by way of the pronoun ‘He’ (*Huwa*), which denotes His existence and presence. The Name ‘Allah’ is a wondrous name, and many spiritual masters have considered it the Supreme Name (*al-Isim al-A‘zam*). If supplications made with it fail to be answered, it is because the conditions of supplication are lacking, such as sincerity, freedom from aggression in the request, or knowledge of how to recite it properly.

‘Allah’ is the proper name for the necessarily existent essence, deserving of all praise and transcendent perfection. It is a unique word, unmatched in any language of the world. If one removes the initial alif, the remaining letters—

lām-lām-hā—still point to Him. Additionally removing the first *lām* leaves *lahu* (‘to Him’). Removing the second *lām* yields *hu* (‘He’).

Thus, it becomes clear that the heart of the believer is a landing strip for lights (*anwār*) and a source of secrets (*asrār*). Some of these lights and secrets belong to the World of Dominion, and some to the World of Sovereignty. Yet the seeker on the path to Allah should not turn his attention to lights, nor to secrets, nor to the Dominion, nor to the Sovereignty. Allah is our sole aim, the ultimate object of every seeker. The heart must be liberated from every other end and every other desire, even those that are pleasurable, such that the true aim is to cultivate proper conduct with Allah.

We previously discussed how the people of Allah resort to seclusion, and we said that seclusion aids in the mentioning of Allah and contemplation. We also discussed the mentioning of Allah and the doctrine of the seven primary divine names and their six branches. These are believed by the people of the path to raise the slave along his journey to Allah, allowing him to overcome the veils of the lower self that block the divine lights, or that may, in the early stages, even block access to the path itself, or prevent the unveiling of the mysteries of the cosmos.

Finally, we discussed the phrase ‘There is no god but Allah’ as the beginning of the path to Allah, and that the sheikh ﷺ would authorize qualified seekers to engage in its repetition as a foundational practice.

CHAPTER SIX

TRAVELLING TO ALLAH REMOVES STRAIN, BUT NEVER ACCOUNTABILITY

As they journey to Allah, Sufis arrive at a stage where effort no longer feels burdensome. In the early stages of their path, one might rise for night prayers and to mention Allah, struggling with weariness. His lower self urges him to sleep. He may need to perform ablution on a cold winter night, and the sting of the chill causes him to hesitate, but he resists his self, perseveres, and completes the ablution. Later, however, he finds joy in standing for prayer. That same sting which once troubled him becomes sweet to him. He begins to seek it out, as if drawn to something beloved. Thus, strain—meaning heaviness and resistance in worship—fades from his experience.

It is at this point that one may say: ‘I no longer strain for Allah.’ What is meant here is not the lifting of accountability (*taklīf*), but the absence of strain (*takalluf*). He acts out of love and longing for Allah. Yet the spiritually immature misunderstood the words of the realized ones, falsely claiming that they had abandoned prayer or ablution.

Consider the vast difference between the two: one who worships Allah until his acts of devotion become his very nature, motivated solely by seeking Allah’s essence, his love for Allah dispelling all burden from his limbs. How far this

is from the slanderous charge levelled against the Sufis: that they deny religious accountability!

The worshipper says: 'Hardship has been lifted from me'—not: 'Prayer has been lifted.' He means: 'I pray and feel no fatigue, no weariness, and no boredom.' The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Indeed, Allah does not grow weary until you grow weary.'¹⁶³

Thus, the sincere seeker reaches a state where he never tires of worship. Rather, with every act of prayer his heart ascends in intimacy with Allah, filled with longing and hope, and overcome with noble meanings far removed from the strain and fatigue that common people often experience.

In the End Times, Hajj, Knowledge and Sainthood Become Easy

Our master, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī said: 'At the end of time'—and we assume our own era to be that time, for all the signs have come to pass, just as the Master of Creation ﷻ foretold—'three things will be made easy for people: pilgrimage (Hajj), knowledge (*ilm*), and sainthood (*wilāyah*)."

As for Hajj, praise be to Allah, its ease has become evident. If we compare our present circumstances with those of the past, we recognize Allah's bounty upon us through ease of travel and safety of the roads. In earlier times, the royal pilgrimage caravan (*maḥmal*) would depart from Egypt escorted by a military detachment to defend it on the road, for the caravan bore all manner of goods—charitable alms, donations, and provisions—for the people of Medina and Mecca. Highwaymen would lie in wait along the desert routes to rob it. A military escort was thus essential, making the journey resemble a wartime expedition. Whoever un-

dertook the pilgrimage did so as if he were embarking upon battle, due to the length of the journey and the harsh motion of swift-moving camels that shook their riders. Poets composed verses for them, as they would grow exhausted and burdened. By the time a person reached Mecca, he would be utterly worn and broken.

On the land route, we used to enter into a state of pilgrim sanctity (*iḥrām*) at al-Juhfah, and the distance between al-Juhfah and Mecca required ten days—ten days of hardship. As is famously said: ‘Travel is a slice of torment.’ ‘Ā’ishah  said: ‘Had I wished, I would say: “Torment is a slice of travel.”’¹⁶⁴

Today, by contrast, we speak of constant connectivity. We board a plane and travel in air-conditioned comfort, arrive to find air-conditioned vehicles and lodgings, and even the Grand Mosque itself is cooled. The marble absorbs heat. Hajj has become like a tourist excursion. The Prophet  described Hajj as the jihad of women. That is, when a woman undertakes the pilgrimage, it is as if she has fought in battle.

The second is knowledge. Electricity was invented in the past century. The ink pen then appeared, and soon after became obsolete. Markers came and passed. Then came the computer, and with it, many lost even the skill of handwriting.

A tremendous transformation occurred in the realm of books and their dissemination. In the year 1490 CE, the printing press was invented—roughly five hundred years ago. Today, all knowledge available in the world can be stored on a single CD. News agencies transmit over 120 million pieces of information each day, all categorized and indexed, easily retrievable by anyone at any time.

The pursuit of knowledge has changed. In the past, in order to find a single piece of information, one had to pore through books page by page, carefully scouring so as not to miss a single letter. Now, one simply searches by computer or on the internet. This is the facilitation of knowledge. But where are the scholars?

Sheikh Aḥmad ibn al-Ṣiddīq al-Ghumārī  once visited the Idrīsiyyīn in Upper Egypt. Between the noon and afternoon prayers, he read through a manuscript in their possession. His host, seeing his dedication, said: ‘Take it, Sheikh Aḥmad. This is from my father’s inheritance, and you are more deserving of it than I.’ The Sheikh replied: ‘I have memorized it.’ The host said: ‘Recite it to me.’ So, he did, from memory, having committed it to memory fully between the noon and afternoon prayers.

Memorization is a faculty. When cultivated, it becomes firmly established. When neglected, it vanishes. Memorization is a skill that must be trained. Some, like Imam Shāfi‘ī , possessed it as an innate gift. He would cover the left-hand page of a book whilst reading the right, so that its contents would not interfere with what he was memorizing. Sheikh Muḥammad Anwar al-Kashmīrī used to retain whatever he read for two full days. Glory be to Allah, these are remarkable matters!

The third is sainthood. Our master, Muḥyī al-Dīn, has a very unusual aphorism in which he says: ‘To believe in us is sainthood.’ That is, if you believe in what he transmits—even though you may not have experienced it, nor entered into it—this belief itself constitutes sainthood.

Through mentioning Allah and contemplation, the breakthroughs of the mystics unfold. Intimate knowledge descends upon the heart of the one who truly knows Allah.

The spiritual guide who helps you traverse the path to Allah supervises this carefully. For if knowledge descends upon you too rapidly, you might lose your sanity. The true path to Allah contains no madness, but such may occur when the path is pursued without discipline.

If a seeker proceeds without a guide, he is in grave danger, except in the rare case of divine guidance in the absence of a spiritual guide, the Prophet ﷺ himself being his guide, which is said to occur with no fewer than a thousand prayers for him per day.

The path may still be walked, for Allah is ever-gentle with His slaves and all-knowing of their states. Whenever He sees sincerity, true resolve, and a heart free of worldly attachments, He fills that heart with His light.

CHAPTER SEVEN

REFLECTION: ITS MEANING AND IMPACT ON TRAVELLING TO ALLAH

We now turn to the matter of reflection (*tafakkur*). We have said that spiritual seclusion (*khalwah*) involves both mentioning Allah (*dhikr*) and contemplation (*fikr*). Regarding mentioning Allah, we have already alluded to it. As for contemplation, it pertains to Allah and is for the sake of Allah ﷻ. This reflection should be directed towards the Worlds of Sovereignty and Dominion, towards the heavens and the earth, the self, animals, plants, and everything a person is capable of perceiving, understanding, knowing, discerning, and grasping its meaning. That is to say, a person must reflect upon everything.

Such reflection must lead to knowledge, and knowledge leads to certainty (*yaqīn*). Certainty, in turn, leads to witnessing (*mushāhadah*), which leads to presence (*ḥuḍūr*). In presence there is intimacy (*uns*) in the Divine Presence (*Ḥaḍrat al-Quds*), and such intimacy is the ultimate end of reflection. That is, reflection brings us to the Divine Presence.

This is the goal of reflection. The goal of reflection is not to vaunt oneself over others, nor to take pride in oneself, nor to go astray, nor to cause harm, nor to be arrogant. The goal of reflection is always Allah. We must therefore

direct our reflection so that it leads us to Allah. Everything around us points to Him.

The Prophet ﷺ once saw a man surrounded by people and said: 'What is this?'—as though surprised by the attention being paid to that man. He did not say 'Who is this?', but rather, 'What is this?', referring to the spectacle of a man standing in the centre of a gathering, speaking whilst others listened. They replied: 'He is a scholar (*'allāmah*).'

He asked: 'And what is a scholar?' They said: 'One who knows the lineages of the Arabs, their days of battle, their wars and events, their languages and their poetry.'

The Prophet said: 'Knowledge is of three kinds, and everything else is a superfluity: a clear and decisive verse (*āyah muḥkamah*), an established Sunnah, or a just and fair obligation.'¹⁶⁵

This is the kind of knowledge that leads to Allah ﷻ, not that which gives rise to boastfulness, pride, arrogance, harm, or corruption on Earth. Every form of knowledge that leads its possessor to Allah causes one to glorify his Lord, saying: 'Glory be to Allah, the Magnificent Creator!' He sees that behind everything in the cosmos is the power of Allah ﷻ just as one of the sages said:

*In every thing His sign is clearly shown,
Proclaiming He is One, and Him alone.*

Thus, the traveller on the path to Allah contemplates, reflects, and draws insight from the wondrous order of both the upper and lower worlds. Through this he arrives at an unshakeable certainty in Allah, one that admits no doubt thereafter. He reflects upon the creation of Allah, and he reflects upon his own self. It has long been said: 'Whosoever knows himself has known his Lord.'

When a person reflects upon himself, he finds that he has a beginning, and this beginning is unknown to him. He does not recall it. No one remembers the moment of their own birth. This beginning is one of weakness, for he was helpless before he could manage his own needs. He was utterly dependent on others. He could not feed himself, drink, seek treatment, or remove harm from himself. He was nothing but a piece of flesh in his mother's arms, in need of her entirely. Allah cast into the hearts of mothers a tenderness that responds to this absolute need. This points to the truth that when a person needs his Lord, Allah is compassionate and merciful towards him. A human being is dependent on others from the outset. Allah is indicating that at the beginning of one's path in this life, one had absolute need, and one continues to be in need of Allah for one's very existence.

When we observe mothers among human beings, animals, birds, and even plants, we find that they care for their offspring with deep affection, sometimes even to the point of forsaking rational behaviour. This compassion is immense, proverbial even. Yet Allah is more tender towards us than a mother is to her child, for we have no recourse in this world except to Him. We depend on Him for our existence, our continuance, and our endurance. He is Mighty, Merciful, and Compassionate. He is never unaware of our condition.

Even the disbeliever who turns his back on Allah—like an impious son who disobeys his parents—is not abandoned. A mother may discipline or strike her son, yet she cannot erase him from her heart. She will accept any excuse he offers, rush to forgive him, and embrace him once more. This points to the reality that whoever is in need, helpless,

and distressed, when he turns to Allah, Allah accepts him and fulfils his need.

When a person reflects upon himself and recognizes his weakness and transience, he realizes that his Lord is self-sustaining, needing none. He is strong, without beginning or end. Whoever returns to Him will find Him present, looking upon him with mercy and tenderness. No matter how far one strays or wanders in the darkness of worldly life, when one returns to Allah, one finds Him there: Compassionate, Merciful, Pardoning, Forgiving, taking him back with a mercy more tender than that of a mother for her wayward or lost child.

Reflection leads one to recognize his continual dependence on others. One cannot completely abstain from food, or drink, or sleep, or relieving oneself, or from other people, or from numerous other things. Thus, man is in a state of persistent weakness and need, a need for others, and a need for what subsists within himself.

Allah, on the other hand, is the complete opposite: He is self-subsistent, without beginning or end. Through reflection, one sees that human beings are subject to death and transformation. They are bound by time and place. On the other hand, Allah is beyond the confines of time and space. Nothing encompasses Him, restricts Him, dominates Him, or subjugates Him. He relies on nothing. When He wills a thing, He says to it: 'Be,' and it is. He said to the Heavens and the Earth: 'Be,' and they came to be without effort or weariness: *'And verily We created the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, in six days, and no weariness touched Us.'*¹⁶⁶

Man reflects upon his birth, his life, his death, upon all things, and behold! He finds Allah ﷻ whilst facing all of it.

When one thus engages in reflection, doubt does not assail him, nor do misgivings storm his heart. Instead, one sees him tranquil in the mention of Allah. Indeed, mentioning Allah and reflection (*tafakkur*) are the two foundational pillars of the spiritual path to Allah. The seeker does not waver when struck by a violent calamity, nor is he disturbed or cast down into the pit of despair.

When a person gains certainty through such reflection, he realizes that Allah is characterized by the most exalted attributes. These exalted attributes have been summarized by Allah ﷻ in His Most Beautiful Names (*al-Asmā' al-Husnā*). These names are numerous. The Prophet ﷺ specified one hundred of them, saying: 'Allah has ninety-nine names, one hundred less one. Whoever enumerates them shall enter Paradise.' This was narrated by Abū Hurayrah from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Yet, when Allah says in the Qur'an: *'And to God belong the Most Beautiful Names - so invoke Him by them, and leave those who blaspheme His Names. They will be requited for what they did'*¹⁶⁷, He neither confines them nor enumerates them. Indeed, in the Qur'an alone, there are one hundred and fifty-eight names of Allah ﷻ. If we combine these with the varying narrations found in the Sunnah, the total reaches one hundred and sixty-four. If we then remove repetitions from the total found in both the Qur'an and the Sunnah, we find approximately two hundred and twenty names of Allah ﷻ. Among them are the Powerful (*al-Qādir*), the Supremely Powerful (*al-Qadīr*), the Possessor of Power (*al-Muqtadīr*)—some are included among the commonly known Most Beautiful Names, and some are not, though they are mentioned in the Qur'an.

Behold the majesty of the Qur'an and the loftiness of its

station! The speech of the Master of Creation ﷻ offers us precise guidance, whilst Allah ﷻ is boundless. He speaks with expansiveness, saying: ‘*And to God belong the Most Beautiful Names—so invoke Him by them...*’. He does not speak of number or limitation. The Prophet ﷺ, however, teaches us and points us to this expansiveness, which is unique to the speech of Allah as compared to the speech of others. He ﷺ says:

I ask You by every Name that is Yours, which You have named Yourself with, or taught to any of Your creation, or revealed in Your Book, or kept unto Yourself in the knowledge of the Unseen with You, that You make the Qur’an the springtime of my heart, the light of my chest, the banisher of my sorrow, and the reliever of my distress.

Such is the affair of Allah.

When we reflect upon His Most Beautiful Names, we find them divided into three categories: attributes of majesty (*jalāl*), beauty (*jamāl*), and perfection (*kamāl*).

As for the attributes of beauty, they include mercy (*rahmah*), gentleness (*ra’fah*), compassion (‘*atf*), forgiveness (*maghfirah*), and the like—attributes that, when one adorns oneself with them, cultivate tenderness in the heart.

As for the attributes of majesty, they include power (*quwwah*), severity (*shiddah*), might (‘*izzah*), subjugation (*qahr*), invincibility (*jabarūt*), and sovereignty (*malakūt*).

As for the attributes of perfection, they indicate that Allah ﷻ is singular in both majesty and beauty together, that He transcends creation, that He is their Creator, and to Him is the return and final destination. ‘*The Originator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you, from*

*your own selves, pairs, and [also] pairs of the cattle: He multiplies you by such [means]. There is nothing like Him. He is the Hearer, the Seer.*¹⁶⁸

The believer adorns himself with the attributes of beauty, for indeed, Allah manifested them upon us at the very opening of His Book: *'In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful'*. He did not say *'the Avenger'* or *'the Compeller'*, combining beauty with majesty. Rather, He manifested only through beauty: *'the Compassionate, the Merciful'*, beauty upon beauty.

There is a distinction between adornment (*takhalluq*) and attachment (*ta'alluq*). Adornment pertains to beauty, whilst attachment pertains to majesty. Man does not adorn himself with pride, for Allah alone is the Supremely Proud (*al-Mutakabbir*). Nor does man adorn himself with transcendence or vengeance, or with any of these severe and elevated attributes.

Thus, man both adorns himself and attaches himself. When he does so, his heart becomes connected. As we said before, at the beginning of the path, the believer must strive against himself, to divest his heart of all that is vile (*takhallī*) and to adorn it with all that is sound (*tahallī*). These two—divesting and adorning—are the means by which man lives in divine light, aiding him in mentioning Allah and sound reflection.

After divesting and adorning, there is the station of divine manifestation (*tajallī*). This station is linked to the final category of divine names, the attributes of perfection. These are not to be adorned nor attached to, but rather, they are manifested in the heart. When we empty the heart of the vile and adorn it with the sound—by means of adornment and attachment—then, if this is accomplished, divine man-

ifestation (*tajallī*) occurs through the names of perfection. Man then becomes a locus of manifestation (*majlā*) for the attributes of Allah ﷻ. This is a grace and effusion from the Divine, by which our Lord ﷻ manifests Himself to those pure, sanctified, and transparent hearts who have divested and adorned themselves, and adorned and attached themselves—upon them He manifests with His attributes of perfection.

Among these is the attribute the Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*). Wisdom is granted by Allah to the perfected among His slaves—the elect of the elect—those who have traversed the path with all its stages of divesting and adorning, and of adornment and attachment. Our Lord ﷻ makes it the highest rank that man may attain, saying: *‘He gives wisdom to whomever He will, and he who is given wisdom, has been given much good; yet none remembers, but the people of pith.’*¹⁶⁹

The attribute *al-Ḥakīm* manifests to the mystics (*‘ārifūn*), and He grants them, along with their intellects, a balance by which they weigh matters. This balance itself is the very essence of wisdom. Allah ﷻ says: *‘God it is Who has revealed the Book with the truth as well as the Balance. And what do you know—perhaps the Hour is near!’*¹⁷⁰ That is, He has sent down the Balance just as He has sent down the Book. The conjunction here implies that the Balance is also a revelation. Allah has sent down both the Book and the Balance: the Book guides the seeker on the path to Allah, and the Balance is a bestowal, not an acquisition. It is granted to man and thereby he is given wisdom.

To summarize what we have mentioned: we have spoken about the path to Allah ﷻ: that it is Allah who is the aim of all, that the path to Him is singular, and that the

differences are but differences in approach among the various spiritual paths. All of them are as if standing upon the circumference of one circle, each striving to reach its centre, where Allah ﷻ is the singular goal. All are equally valid paths to reach Allah, though they differ in direction, mode, and structure, differing in sheikh, invocations, retreat, the sweetness they taste, and their reflections. Yet, the intended goal remains one: Allah ﷻ.

We have said that the believer who treads this path must examine himself in his conduct with Allah. The more his conduct improves, the better his state and the greater his good. Any preoccupation that does not improve his conduct with Allah is extraneous speech—a surplus of no concern—distracting the one traversing the path to Allah.

We have also said that man advances along the path to Allah by passing through stages. These stages are stations wherein the stirrings of the soul shift. The soul itself has seven types: the soul that commands evil, the reproachful soul, which reproaches its owner until he returns and repents, the inspired soul—some among the people of the path halt here, others adding—the content soul, the well-pleasing soul, the tranquil soul, and the perfected soul, thus completing all seven. We also noted that between each type of soul are veils, and the masters of the path say there are seventy thousand veils. In order for a person to reach the station of perfection in worship and conduct with Allah ﷻ he must pass through and remove those seventy thousand veils.

We also said that a person may arrive after thirty years, or after three minutes, for the matter is entirely in Allah's Hands. It returns to Him. He bestows His grace upon whomever He wills, without recourse to their knowledge, piety,

deeds, or anything else. Rather, He selects whomever He wills among His slaves. This is a bestowal (*wahb*), not an acquisition (*kasb*). It may be granted to someone after thirty years, or after thirty minutes. One may suddenly find himself drawn to Allah ﷻ—his path grounded in that attraction—or he may journey until he is drawn, such that his attraction emerges from his travel. There is thus a difference between one who is drawn, then traverses (*majdhūb sālik*) and one who is traversing, then drawn (*sālik majdhūb*).

We also said that people are of three types: the general public, the elect, and the elect of the elect. The elect of the elect outwardly resemble the general public, yet their hearts are suspended from the Throne, whereas the hearts of the general public are attached to the world. The elect of the elect take up causes, act upon them, and perform the actions of worldly people, but their hearts are with Allah. The common person likewise performs worldly acts, but may be distracted. This is what was said regarding the Master of All Creation ﷻ, when he was momentarily heedless in prayer:

*O you who ask how God's beloved erred—
Forgetfulness strikes hearts that aren't prepared.
His secret was from all creation veiled,
He slipped from all but God—His praise prevailed.*

Are there Limits that the Mind Must Not Trespass?

A question may arise: are there limits to the intellect in its reflection? Is there a framework it must not exceed?

At the outset, there is no impediment that prevents the intellect from reflection, nor any framework that confines it—neither in the written Book of Allah (the Qur'an) nor in the visible Book of Allah (Creation), nor in the synthesis

of the two. Nonetheless, there are logical stages, each leading to the next, each complementing the other. This is what we refer to as the degrees of knowledge, where each degree leads one to the next, which is simultaneously above it. We cannot leap to the summit of the pyramid at once, nor can we halt at a particular level and claim completeness or total knowledge. The ascent of the intellect through knowledge and understanding is limitless and without end.

Just as daylight continues to increase the closer the sun draws to the zenith—until full illumination is achieved—so too does the light of knowledge and monotheism (*tawḥīd*) grow clearer the more a slave reflects upon the tiers of Allah’s creation. The difference, however, between the sun of worldly light and the sun of knowledge is that the corporeal sun has a fixed limit to its ascent, beyond which it cannot rise, whereas the sun of knowledge, intellect, and monotheism has no boundary to its ascent and no limit to its increase.¹⁷¹

This endless ascent of the intellect in knowledge and understanding is clearly indicated by the divine command found in the Noble Qur’an to reflect and contemplate upon it, and not merely generally, but upon each verse and its connection with others. Allah says: *‘What, do they not ponder the Qur’ān? If it had been from other than God surely they would have found therein much inconsistency.’*¹⁷² This command to reflect upon the Qur’an implies a careful contemplation of its verses, their interrelations, and the harmony between them, such that each verse supports and confirms the other. For to reflect upon something is to consider its outcomes and what it ultimately leads to. In his *tafsīr*, Imam Ṭabarī says:

Do not those who spend their nights plotting contrary to what you say, O Muhammad, reflect upon the Book of Allah and recognize Allah's proof upon them in obeying you and following your command? For what you have brought them in revelation is from their Lord, evidenced by the coherence of its meanings, the harmony of its rulings, and its internal confirmation, each part affirming the truth of the other. For had it been from other than Allah, its rulings would contradict and its meanings clash, and some parts would expose the falsehood of others.¹⁷³

Let us reflect further. Firstly, the Qur'an comprises 6,236 verses. Secondly, to confirm that it contains no contradiction, one would have to contemplate every verse in light of every other verse. This would require a number of comparisons that is, effectively, incalculable.

If we suppose that a man lived a full hundred years, that would give him 36,500 days. If he sleeps four hours per day and reflects for the remaining 20 hours, then multiplying that by the number of days would yield 730,000 hours. Even if he were to reflect for 20 hours each day without pause, how would he have time to contemplate each verse in relation to all others?

Thus, reflection is without limit or end, because man is limited in capacity and time is short. Another indication that the intellect's reflection and inquiry are boundless is found in our contemporary reality: the six major global news agencies collectively broadcast approximately 120 million pieces of information daily. For someone to read what is published in a single day would require two hundred years.

Having thus established that the intellect and reflection have no limit, we must ask: upon what should this intellect reflect? Towards what end should it strive?

Allah ﷻ has not left His slaves without guidance on where the intellect should be directed, nor on what is beyond its jurisdiction. This is so that it may lead them towards felicity in this world and the next. Among these directives are:

1. Allah commanded reflection upon the Qur'an and its verses, saying: *'A Book that We have revealed to you, full of blessing, that they may contemplate its signs and that they may remember those people of pith.'*¹⁷⁴
2. He encouraged reflection upon the cosmos and its created beings, saying: *'Those who remember God, standing and sitting and on their sides, and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: "Our Lord, You have not created this in vain. Glory be to You! So guard us against the chastisement of the Fire."'*¹⁷⁵
3. He also urged the pursuit of beneficial knowledge, saying: *'... Indeed only those of God's servants who have knowledge fear Him. Truly God is Mighty, Forgiving.'*¹⁷⁶
4. He commanded that people strive in this world for righteousness and goodness, saying: *'Let there be one community of you calling to good, and enjoining decency, and forbidding indecency; those are the successful.'*¹⁷⁷

From this, it is evident that the Muslim must direct the intellect towards discerning both religious and worldly truths, and must strive for reform and benefit, not for corruption or harm. The blessings of Allah are not to be

misused, but are to be employed in accordance with His will. The purpose of human creation, as has been made clear, is worship, cultivation, and purification.

The effects of these divine instructions upon the intellects of Muslims were manifest. For example, Muslims found that the Qur'an presents rational arguments for the oneness of Allah in a manner that silences doubt. Consider His statement: *'Had there been in [either of] them gods other than God, the two would have surely deteriorated. So glory be to God the Lord of the Throne, above what they ascribe.'*¹⁷⁸

Scholars of Islam reflected deeply upon this verse, extracting from it a rational proof for the oneness of the Creator. Even the common person understands from it that it is impossible for two gods to exist, for a god must possess absolute power. If two deities existed, then one of these scenarios must follow:

1. They agree, or
2. They disagree.

If they agree to create the world together, this entails two agents producing a single effect: an absurdity. If one created it before the other, this would amount to a redundancy: also invalid. If one created part and the other created another, this would imply the incapacity of each to do what the other did, thus negating omnipotence.

If, however, they disagree—one willing creation, the other willing non-existence—then if both wills are fulfilled, that entails the coexistence of opposites, which is impossible. If the will of one is fulfilled and not the other, the one whose will is thwarted is shown to be incapable.

This rational demonstration is known in scholastic

theology (*kalām*) as *the Argument from Mutual Exclusion and Interference* (*Burhān al-Tamānu^c wa al-Tawārud*). From this, scholars derived axioms of great importance:

1. Opposites cannot coexist.
2. It is impossible for two agents to jointly produce a single effect.

Hence, the Qur'an not only commands man to employ the intellect and to reflect upon the cosmos, but makes such reflection a religious obligation for which one is rewarded. At the same time, it places no constraints on thought, except that it be directed towards benefit, righteousness, and the cultivation of the Earth, not corruption.

This directional limitation is not a restriction on thought per se, but rather, a clarification of the path in which the intellect should be given free rein, so that its activity remains praiseworthy. Consider, by analogy that one of the conditions for the validity of prayer is facing the qibla, the noble Kaaba. Allah says: '*... wherever you may be, turn your faces towards it...*'¹⁷⁹. If one performs every other pillar of prayer but does not face the qibla, the prayer is invalid, despite its outward form. Similarly, the intellect, though capable of reflection on all matters, may be rejected and even blameworthy if not directed towards truth and righteousness.

Imam Qushayrī says:

Just as you turn your bodies towards the qibla, whether near or far, so too turn your hearts towards Us, whether favoured or afflicted... If you wish that no one have power over you, that no creature casts a shadow over you, that no hand reach you in harm, then wherever you are, however you are, be for Us

and of Us. For the one who severs himself unto Us shall not be touched by the contingencies of the world.¹⁸⁰

On this basis, if a person were to announce: ‘I will invent something,’ and specialists determine that this invention would cause the death of millions, and he replies: ‘I am free to do as I wish,’ the response would be that if your freedom in thought leads to the destruction of others, it becomes a crime.

Another question arises: can we subject all matters to the intellect, even those related to divine laws and legal commands? To answer, we must distinguish between doubt (*shakk*) and skepticism (*tashkīk*).

Doubt is a valid methodology permitted with the goal of reaching certainty. It allows a person to question everything, seeking reassurance through reflection and reasoning. In the story of the Prophet Abraham, Allah says: ‘*And when Abraham said, “My Lord show me how You give life to the dead”. He said, “Why, do you not believe?” “Yes”, he said, “but so that my heart may be re-assured”. ...*’¹⁸¹.

Abraham, in his intense desire to witness the certainty of resurrection, sought to progress from theoretical, demonstrative knowledge to necessary knowledge. He asked Allah to show him the resurrection in a perceptible way, so his knowledge would be confirmed and move from rational deduction to the certainty of direct witnessing—an unveiling of what is known without need for further argument or removal of doubts from the intellect.

Similarly, in the story of Moses, Allah says: ‘... *My Lord! Show me that I may behold You! ...*’¹⁸²

Hence, doubt is unrelated to faith itself. One can be a believer and yet seek to increase and stabilize faith through

questioning and learning. There are preparatory questions—hypothetical inquiries made to counter atheist doubts—leading to the strengthening of faith and the settling of truth.

Skepticism, on the other hand, aims to induce hesitation, doubt, and confusion. This is not acceptable. Its purpose is to undermine and destabilize truths rather than to verify or confirm them. This skeptical approach is seen in deviant thinkers who seek to cast doubt upon the established knowledge of the common people, imposing their misguided beliefs upon them: an intellectual terrorism that leads neither to knowledge nor sound reasoning. The English philosopher and mathematician, Bertrand Russell, said: ‘A mind perpetually open, will be a mind perpetually vacant.’

We must also know that human knowledge does not reach a consummate state, nor does any human reach its end. Allah says: ‘... *and above every man of knowledge is one who knows better.*’¹⁸³

Anyone who wishes to learn is permitted to question all matters. Questioning is the key to knowledge. Allah taught us to ask for increased knowledge, saying: ‘... *and say, “My Lord, increase me in knowledge”.* ...’¹⁸⁴ This is a continuous exhortation to persist in seeking knowledge with humility, and to recognize that however much knowledge one acquires, there is always someone more knowledgeable, leading the soul to greater refinement, love of knowledge, and mastery of its craft.

For this reason, the story of the Prophet Moses and al-Khidr ؑ is significant. Despite Moses’ high rank as the one to whom Allah spoke directly, Allah sent him to a slave of His to demonstrate that many sciences remain hidden.

Allah says:

So [there] they found one of Our servants to whom We had given mercy from Us and We had taught him knowledge from Us.

Moses said to him, 'May I follow you for the purpose that you teach me of what you have been taught [in the way] of probity?'¹⁸⁵

Therefore, a Muslim must direct his intellect to apprehend religious and worldly truths, to recognize the blessings of Allah scattered throughout Creation, and to benefit from what Allah has subjected to him in a manner pleasing to Allah and beneficial to Creation. The limits of the intellect and its activity are constrained by what is good and beneficial, the cultivation of the Earth, worship of the One God, and purification of the self.

The issue of the heart and its role in knowledge preoccupied Imam Ghazālī during his famous seclusion. Eventually, through insight and reflection, he realized that the human being comprises heart, intellect, and behaviour, that the heart is above the intellect, and the intellect above behaviour. The intellect (*‘aql*) is named as such because it ‘binds’ and ‘restrains’: it is the regulator that prevents a person from misguided, harmful, or destructive behaviour, whether in this world or the next.

He wrote a fine book called *Unveiling of the Hearts*, in which he states that the soundness of the senses is necessary for the intellect to operate properly, and that the heart requires insight (*baṣīrah*) by which it perceives things, as the eye perceives through the light of vision. There is a close connection between the human spirit and the perceiving

self: the purer the spirit and the more the self ascends in the ranks of perfection, the clearer and greater the insight and vision of the heart.

Ghazālī further explained that the heart is the locus of guidance, as Allah says: ‘*You cannot guide whom you like, but [it is] God [Who] guides whomever He will, and He knows best those who will be guided*’¹⁸⁶, and that the reason for the intellect’s guidance or misguidance is the soundness of the heart. Allah says: ‘*except him who comes to God with a heart that is sound.*’¹⁸⁷ When the heart is sound, the intellect is sound. Ghazālī also discussed how to attain soundness of heart.

The people of Allah summarize the answer in three words, two of which are of utmost importance and are the goal: ‘divestment’ (*takhliyah*) and ‘adornment’ (*tahliyah*). To bring the heart to soundness requires passing through two stages:

1. The first stage is divestment: removing all that is evil.
2. The second stage is adornment: adorning it with all that is beautiful and correct.

Opposites distinguish things. By removing evil, the heart becomes adorned with what is good. When divestment and adornment take place, manifestation (*tajallī*) occurs. This is the third stage.

Thus, these are three stages: divestment, adornment, and then manifestation.

To understand this better, Ghazālī authored a great book entitled *Revival of the Religious Sciences*, divided into four quarters:

1. The first quarter: Acts of worship.
2. The second quarter: Transactions.
3. The third quarter: Reprehensible traits, which we seek to remove.
4. The fourth quarter: Beautiful traits, which we seek to adorn ourselves with.

Thus, he spoke about purification and adornment in half the book, and about worship and transactions in the other half.

We return to the texts of the two noble revelations (the Qur'an and Sunnah) to see where this teaching appears on the clear path the Prophet ﷺ left us upon, as he said: 'I have left you on a clear path—its night like its day—no one deviates from it after me except that he perishes.'¹⁸⁸ We find the noble Sunnah comprises some 60,000 hadiths, of which only about 2,000 contain the rulings of the Sharia, covering everything from prayer, pilgrimage, zakat, transactions, sales, gifts, marriage, divorce, the judiciary, and so forth. The remainder deal with adorning oneself with noble ethics: forbidding hatred, envy, rancour, arrogance, commanding mercy, love, forgiveness, and so on. Similarly, the Qur'an contains approximately 300 verses on rulings; the rest deal with faith, divestment, adornment, and manifestation. Therefore, the intellect must not limit itself to the outward rulings alone, but must also reflect on ethics, divestment, and the adornment of the heart.

The intellect must be used to traverse these stages in full measure, being mindful of the limits established by divine revelation and by the Prophet's guidance ﷺ, and seeking benefit for this life and the next.

Inculcating Seeking Allah Through Mystic Insight and Good Works

The comprehension and experience of the path (to Allah) may be attained either through knowledge (*‘ilm*) or action (*‘amal*). One may study books and understand from them the types of souls and the kinds of lights (*anwār*) that proceed from mentioning Allah, and further grasp the meaning of Allah disclosing truths to one’s heart, the meaning of being turned away from reaching Him, and the meaning of Allah ﷻ being the ultimate aim of all. Thus, one might become the most learned of the world in Sufism, yet still not have traversed the path.

In addition, mystic insight (*ma‘rifah*) in any case is not without benefit, for it helps the seeker understand matters and makes him more respectful in his manners towards his sheikh, towards himself, towards others, and towards the cosmos which Allah created. It also teaches him much refined etiquette with Allah. Knowledge is knowledge, and mystic insight is mystic insight, but it is action that enables the seeker to taste the realities. He who tastes knows; he who knows, draws deeply.

When the Prophet ﷺ passed by al-Ḥārith ibn Mālik al-Anṣārī ؓ, he asked him: ‘How are you this morning, Ḥārith?’ He replied: ‘I am truly a believer this morning.’ The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Consider what you say, for everything has a reality. What is the reality of your faith?’ He said: ‘My soul has turned away from the world; I have kept vigil for it at night and fasted by day. It is as if I see the Throne of my Lord clearly, and as if I see the people of Paradise greeting one another therein, and as if I see the people of Hell disputing therein.’ The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘O Ḥārith, you have known, so hold fast.’ He said it thrice.¹⁸⁹

Whoever attains and tastes the sweetness of mentioning Allah and contemplation is not like one who learned about it only from books and manuscripts.

Whoever witnesses lights, for whom secrets are unveiled, and who lives with Allah ﷻ in the stations of repentance (*tawbah*), reliance (*tawakkul*), contentment (*riḍā*), and surrender (*taslīm*), is not like one who hears of these matters and believes them, but has neither practiced them nor received them in his heart.

Thus, the comprehension of the path may be through knowledge, and it may be through practice and experiential engagement.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LOVE IS THE BEGINNING AND END OF THE PATH

The masters of the path unanimously agree that love is a necessary condition for spiritual arrival (*wuṣūl*), and indeed, a prerequisite for spiritual travel (*sulūk*). This love is exclusively for Allah Almighty and His Messenger ﷺ. The journey is not motivated by desire for Paradise nor fear of Hellfire, neither by longing for reward nor dread of punishment. Rather, it is purely for the love of Allah. We worship Allah so that He may be pleased with us, so that He may love us because we love Him and love the Messenger ﷺ who is our guide to Him. We also love the Sheikh, for he is our means to Allah and His Messenger.

Thus, the Sufi does not worship Allah out of hope for anything other than Allah Himself. He worships Allah desiring to be among those about whom Allah said: ‘... *He loves them and they love Him ...*’¹⁹⁰, and whose love is the greatest: ‘... *but those who believe love God more ardently...*’¹⁹¹. He desires to join the company of the lovers, to be with those whom he loves.

Anas ibn Mālīk ؓ reported: ‘We used to be pleased when a man from the Bedouins would come to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and ask him questions.’ A Bedouin came and asked the Prophet ﷺ: ‘O Messenger of Allah, when will the Final Hour be established?’ Prayer was then commenced.

When the prayer ended, the Prophet ﷺ asked: 'Where is the questioner?' He said: 'Here I am, O Messenger of Allah.' The Prophet ﷺ asked: 'What preparation have you made for it?' The man replied: 'I have not prepared for it any great prayer or fasting, but I love Allah and His Messenger.' The Prophet ﷺ said: 'A person will be with whom he loves.' The Muslims never rejoiced after Islam as they did over this statement.¹⁹²

When Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī was asked about the Sufis, he replied: 'They are people who have preferred Allah Almighty to everything, so Allah has preferred them to everything.'

Love, therefore, is both the first and the most perfect of spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*). The spiritual journey cannot begin without love, cannot continue without love as its centre, and cannot be completed without love as its seal. The traveller is a lover at the start, a lover at the end, and a lover throughout the entire course.

Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī said: 'Love is the most perfect of the stations of the mystics (*ʿārifīn*) and the sincere slaves of Allah.' He further stated: 'Love is a gift from Allah Almighty to His chosen saints (*awliyā*).' It is the most perfect of the stations that the believer can attain.' Every believer loves Allah, but the intensity of love corresponds to the degree of faith, disclosure, and the manifestation of the Beloved's qualities to the lover.¹⁹³

Al-Ṭūsī divides the people of love into three categories:

1. The first category is the love of the common believers, which arises from Allah's grace and kindness towards them.
2. The second is a love generated by the heart's contem-

plation of Allah's independence, majesty, grandeur, knowledge, and power. This love is attained by the truthful and those who have realized the truth.

3. The third is the love of the veracious (*ṣiddīqīn*) and mystics (*ʿārifīn*), which arises from their direct knowledge of Allah's eternal love that existed without cause. Accordingly, they love Him without cause.¹⁹⁴

Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawiyyah exemplified this state of love which seeks nothing but Allah Himself. She expressed her love for Allah because He alone deserves it, not out of hope for Paradise nor fear of Hellfire, saying:

*I love You with two loves: love of desire,
And love as You alone are worthy, higher.
The first's my longing's constant inward plea.
Your name distracts me from all else but Thee.
The second love is Yours by rightful claim.
You lift the veils, and I behold Your Name.
For neither love is praise or thanks my due.
All praise is Yours for both, and ever true.*

It is related in a famous hadith that when the Angel of Death came to take the soul of Abraham ﷺ he asked: 'Have you ever seen a friend who causes the death of his friend?' Allah then revealed to him: 'Have you ever seen a lover who hates meeting his Beloved?' He then said: 'O Angel of Death, now reap [his soul].'¹⁹⁵

Among the characteristics of the lovers is that they speak the language of love, not the language of reason and knowledge. This was illustrated by Khattāf in a story involving Solomon ﷺ. Khattāf attempted to seduce a woman

in Solomon's dome and said to her: 'My love for you has reached such an extent that if you commanded me to destroy Solomon's dome, I would do it.' The wind carried these words to Solomon, who asked Khattāf: 'What compelled you to say this when you are powerless?' He replied: 'O Prophet of Allah, I am a lover, and lovers speak the language of their passion and intoxication, not of knowledge and reason.' Solomon smiled and did not punish him.¹⁹⁶

From this story, it is understood that the people of love are excused for the poetic expressions they are blamed on account of. Some even accusing them of disbelief and associating partners with Allah because of these statements. Their excuse is that they speak not the language of intellect but the language of the heart and love. Their speech during intoxication differs from that in moments of sobriety and wakefulness, and our masters have rightly stated that the language of love is only known and understood by those who have tasted it deeply.

Some poets, in expressing their love, report the rejection of reason and the amazement it causes, whilst lovers melt away in it. One poet says:

*The flood of Noah, next to my laments,
Is like my tears, no greater in extent.
And Abraham's great fire, fiercely bright,
Is but a flicker of my burning plight.
Had not my sighs expelled my tears in pain,
My tears would drown me like relentless rain.
And had my tears not flowed from grief unspoken,
My sighs alone would leave my heart heat-broken.
My sorrow—Jacob told of far too few,
And Job's afflictions mirror but a view.*

Lovers are the possessors of the highest spiritual stations, surpassing the worshippers who fear Hellfire and desire Paradise. They enjoy their love in this world and the next, finding in the pain endured for love a source of happiness.

It is related that Jesus ﷺ passed by three individuals whose bodies were emaciated and their complexions altered. He asked them: 'What has brought you to this state?' They replied: 'Fear of Hellfire.' He said: 'It is incumbent upon Allah to grant security to the fearful.' Then he passed by another three, who were even more emaciated and altered. He asked the same question; they said: 'Longing for Paradise.' He said: 'It is incumbent upon Allah to grant you what you hope for.' Then he passed by three others, who were yet more emaciated and their faces shone with radiance. He asked: 'What has brought you here?' They said: 'We love Allah Almighty.' He said: 'You are those drawn near, you are those drawn near.'¹⁹⁷

One sign of true love for Allah is to perceive grace, even in deprivation, and bounty, even in withholding. The lover does not rejoice in what he has nor grieve over what he lacks, and he desires from Allah nothing other than Allah. Whatever comes from Allah is beloved because it comes from the Beloved.

Regarding the signs of love, it has been said:

*Be not deceived, for lovers bear a sign,
And tokens from the Loved One surely shine.
Among them: sweetness in a bitter trial,
And joy in all He does, in every style.
When He withholds, it is a gift, most high,
And poverty's His grace brought swift and nigh.*

CHAPTER NINE

PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

Restraint in Speech

We have discussed inward worship—consisting of mentioning Allah (*dhikr*), reflection (*tafakkur*), intimate conversation (*munājāh*), and supplication (*duʿāʾ*). We have learned that for the seeker to reach his objective, he must refine his soul by strict control over its desires until it passes from self-love to the love of Allah. This is not realized except through also engaging the outward limbs in worship, for just as the inward has its discipline, so do the limbs.

The essence of inward discipline is abundance: abundant mentioning of Allah, abundant reflection, abundant supplication, divestment, and adornment. As for the outward limbs, their discipline is restraint: restraint in speech, sleep, food, and human company—that is, minimizing these four distractions.

This discipline is achieved through training (*riyāḍah*) and striving (*mujāhadah*), and it is among the fundamental principles of the path, as some say. We begin by clarifying the status of restraint in speech from the Prophetic Sunnah and sayings of the Pious Predecessors.

Many texts in the Prophetic tradition forbid excessive speech and commend silence except when speaking good, such as mentioning Allah, enjoining good, or forbidding evil. Anas  reports:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘O Abū Dharr, shall I not guide you to two traits lighter on the back and heavier on the scale than others?’ He said: ‘Yes, O Messenger of Allah.’ He said: ‘Good character and lengthy silence. By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, Creation has done nothing equal to them.’¹⁹⁸

Abū Hurayrah ؓ reported that he Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him say good or keep silent.’¹⁹⁹

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ؓ said that the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Whoever keeps silent is saved.’²⁰⁰ That is, saved from all that his tongue might bring upon him of destruction.

The Prophet ﷺ himself was of few words, to the extent that listeners could count his speech. ‘Ā’ishah ؓ said: ‘The Prophet used to speak so sparingly that if someone counted his words, he could tally them.’²⁰¹

The mystic is always engaged with his Lord, aware of His presence in all states. Silence is among the etiquettes of divine presence. Allah says: ‘... *Voices will be hushed before the Compassionate One, so that you hear nothing but a faint shuffle.*’²⁰² The Prophets’ practice was silence and few words. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā wrote a large book compiling all hadiths about the virtue of silence. The Companions were among the keenest on observing this practice. Excessive speech leads to sin, whilst restraint aids mentioning Allah and reflection, foundations of the path to Allah.

Ibrāhīm ibn Bashshār said: ‘I asked Ibrāhīm ibn Adham about worship. He said: “The head of worship is reflection and silence, except for mentioning Allah.”’²⁰³

Excessive speech is indeed a calamity and one of the earliest causes that drags a person into Hell.

Mu‘ādh ﷺ said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, will we be held accountable for what we say with our tongues?’ He said: ‘May your mother bereave you, O son of Jabal! Does anything cast people face down into Hellfire other than the harvests of their tongues?’²⁰⁴

Imam Shāfi‘ī likened silence to a profitable trade, saying:

*My silence is a trade where I’m the boss—
If gains don’t come, at least there isn’t loss.
Silence in men is nothing but a trade.
There simply is no trade of higher grade.*

Thus, maintaining silence is among the etiquettes the seeker must observe, to shield himself from the many dangers of the tongue caused by excessive speech.

Restraint in Sleep

Among the principles of Sufi training is restraining sleep and eagerness to stand (*qiyām*) at night, following the divine command: ‘*Their sides withdraw from their lying places to supplicate to their Lord in fear and in hope, and they expend of what We have provided them.*’²⁰⁵

Night prayer (*qiyām al-layl*) is facilitated for whoever Allah makes it easy for, but the slave needs zeal, effort, and persistence to attain this rank. The seeker may perform even a small amount, such as two units each night.

When Sayyid Muḥammad Amīn al-Baghdādī met Shaykh Muḥammad Rāshid, he asked him: ‘O Sayyid Muḥammad Rāshid, what worship do you hope to be accepted by Allah?’ He said: ‘I have prayed two units at night, which none of my family know about, for forty years.’

Two units only! These may take no more than five mi-

nutes, but they hold great virtue and deep meaning in worship.

Regarding the night prayer, some of the people of Allah say: ‘Words are lost, phrases vanish, but the units we prayed at night to the Lord of slaves remain.’²⁰⁶

Restraint in sleep enables a person to stand in prayer during the last third of the night, which is a time particularly sanctified by Muslims. It is a time when supplications are answered and repentance is accepted. As far as acts of worship, night prayer is among the dearest acts to Allah. Abū Hurayrah reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Our Lord descends every night to the lowest heaven during the last third of the night and says: “Who calls upon Me that I may answer him? Who asks of Me that I may give him? Who seeks My forgiveness that I may forgive him?”’²⁰⁷

Performing the night prayer and forsaking sleep for worship is a sign of sincerity. The slave forsakes worldly pleasure and finds delight in standing before his Lord and intimate conversation, where none but Allah sees him. The night prayer is one of the acts most conducive to spiritual realization. Though it is an outward act of the limbs, its hidden nature makes it one of the acts that purify the inward.

The Prophet ﷺ strongly encouraged the night prayer. Abū Hurayrah reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘The best fasting after Ramadan is the month of Muḥarram, and the best prayer after the obligatory prayer is the night prayer.’²⁰⁸

The Prophet ﷺ never abandoned night prayer after Allah commanded it. The path to Allah requires that the sheikh train the seeker to create an environment conducive to spiritual purity, mentioning Allah, and seclusion with

Allah. Among what aids this is restraint in speech and sleep, under the sheikh's supervision to avoid excess or neglect, lest the result be abandonment, for when this is excessive, it turns to its opposite, as Allah says: '*Thus, We appointed you a midmost community ...*'²⁰⁹.

Restraint in Food

Among the principles of the Sufi path is restraint in food, for they know that excess food is one of the greatest destroyers. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'No human ever fills a container worse than his stomach. It suffices the son of Adam to eat a few morsels to keep his back upright. If he must, then a third for food, a third for drink, and a third for breathing.'²¹⁰

Excess food burdens the body and spirit and deadens the heart. As such, Allah prescribed fasting in Ramadan and made abundant worship beloved during it. This is because, when the body's attachment to matter and desires diminishes, the spirit rises, clarifies, and becomes more able to worship and draw near to Allah.

Excess food causes excessive sleep, dullness of the mind, and heaviness of the spirit, making one unable to reflect and contemplate. Moreover, overeating is a primary cause of disease. As per the adage: 'The stomach is the home of disease, and diet is the head of medicine.'

Diet means emptiness of the stomach, whilst hedonic hunger (*baradah*) means eating food on full stomach.

The mystic trains himself to break the desire of the stomach and accustom himself to feeling hunger gradually without excess so as not to perish. A good limit in eating is moderation: to avoid eating until one desires food, and to stop whilst still desiring it.

Imam Junayd said: ‘Whoever sleeps hungry, obedient to Allah, sleeps standing [in prayer] even if lying down, for hunger causes fear of Allah... O people of aspiration, observe hunger, meeting, and mentioning Allah to reach your goal. Whoever hungers reaches, and whoever is satiated is cut off.’²¹¹ Hunger breaks the soul from desires, facilitates reflection and mentioning Allah, and separates one from blameworthy traits, moving one towards praiseworthy ones.

A poet said:

*The House of Sainthood, firmly built and wide,
Its pillars set by noble saints who guide.
In silence and seclusion they live on,
And hunger, wakeful nights, and God alone.*²¹²

Choosing hunger and not being full is one of the means leading to Allah that the seeker must observe.

Restraint in Human Company

On the way to Allah, we have stopped at training for restraint in speech, sleep, and food. Now, we discuss restraint in company (*qillat al-anām*).

The evidence for restraining one’s company is indicated by the fact that Allah prescribed retreat (*i’tikāf*) for us. Lady ‘Ā’ishah reported, regarding the Prophet ﷺ: ‘Then seclusion became beloved to him.’²¹³ He would provision himself for several nights in the Cave of Ḥirā’ until his food and drink ran out, then he would return to Mecca to replenish provisions for similar retreats.

Thus, retreat and seclusion are forms of restraint in company. They provide opportunity for the intellect to contemplate and deliberate, to reflect, to live with oneself, to review

mistakes and actions, and to rectify one's conduct to progress forward. Ultimately, this training leads one to mention Allah and reflect, divest and adorn, and to deal with divine manifestation, so that through this conduct, one reaches true worship, sincerity in religion, and the raising of aspiration.

Abū Hurayrah reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'There are seven whom Allah will shade on a day when there is no shade except His shade: ... a man who mentions Allah in seclusion and his eyes overflow [with tears].'²¹⁴ Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ comments: 'A man who mentions Allah in seclusion and whose eyes overflow has the virtue of weeping and all secret acts of worship, for they are farthest from ostentation and affectation.'²¹⁵ The best acts in the sight of Allah are those done away from the eyes of people, such as secret charity, night prayer, and Qur'anic recitation.

The people of Allah hold that restraint in company is linked to their service of others. The path of Allah is connected to serving people, as Allah says: '*... and do good that perhaps you may be prosperous.*'²¹⁶ Serving people means whatever one can do for them, whether public or private, restricted or unrestricted, material or spiritual.

Restraint in company does not mean fleeing from people out of hatred, but trying to serve them by all means. This is why they related the report about Ibn 'Abbās ؓ who was in retreat when a man came to him seeking help in a matter. Ibn 'Abbās ؓ left his retreat to serve the man. The man said: 'I am not in a hurry; complete your retreat.' Ibn 'Abbās said: 'I heard the Messenger of Allah say: "Walking with your brother to fulfill his need is better than retreating in this mosque of mine for two months."²¹⁷

Thus, restraint in company has two aspects: one is se-

clusion, in order to fill the heart with aspiration, and the second is fulfilling the needs of others and serving them.

They say that among the etiquettes of seclusion is to be present yet apart (*kā'in bā'in*): that is, to be present with Creation but separate from them in spirit.

In his *Risālah*, Qushayrī reports hearing his teacher, Abū ʿAlī al-Daqqāq say: ‘Wear what people wear, eat what they eat, but be alone with your secret.’²¹⁸

Restraint in speech, sleep, food, and company—whilst serving others—are the fundamentals of the path through which one reaches Allah. All of these are derived from the Qur’an and Sunnah.

CHAPTER TEN

THE STATES AND STATIONS OF HEARTS

We have previously spoken about the methodology of Sufism, the principles of the path, and its pillars, such as keeping the company of the sheikh, mentioning Allah, reflection, and seclusion, along with what accompanies these in terms of reducing speech, food, sleep, and human contact, all of which pertain to the actions of the body. What remains is to speak about the states of the heart and its progression in the journey towards Allah ﷻ. This is because the heart has levels and degrees by which it advances on its path to Allah ﷻ. These have been discussed by many scholars of Sufism, such as Imam Ghazālī in the *Iḥyāʾ* and Imam Harawī in *Manāzil al-Sāʾirīn*. Among these stations are: wakefulness (*yaqāzah*), repentance (*tawbah*), self-reckoning (*muḥāsabah*), fear (*khawf*), hope (*rajāʾ*), truthfulness (*ṣidq*), sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), patience (*ṣabr*), scrupulousness (*waraʿ*), renunciation (*zuhd*), contentment (*riqā*), reliance upon Allah (*tawakkul*), and gratitude (*shukr*).

Sufi masters have given great care to elucidating these stations and expounding them in a detailed and extensive manner.

Abū Bakr al-Kattānī and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ramlī ؒ said: ‘We asked Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz: “Inform us about the beginnings of the path to Allah ﷻ.”’ He said:

Repentance (and he mentioned its conditions). Then, one is moved from the station of repentance (*tawbah*) to the station of fear (*khawf*), and from the station of fear to the station of hope (*rajā'*), and from the station of hope to the station of the righteous (*al-ṣāliḥīn*), and from the station of the righteous to the station of seekers (*murīdīn*), and from the station of the seekers to the station of the obedient (*muṭī'in*), and from the station of the obedient to the station of lovers (*muḥibbīn*), and from the station of lovers to the station of the longing (*mushtāqīn*), and from the station of the longing to the station of saints (*awliyā'*), and from the station of saints to the station of the ones brought near (*muqarrabīn*).

They mentioned for each station ten conditions. If one pursues them and masters them, and the hearts settle in that position, they become habituated to contemplating divine blessings, and reflecting upon favours and beneficence. Then, the souls become solitary in mentioning Allah, and the spirits roam in the sovereignty of His majesty, through pure knowledge of Him, arriving at the pools of mystical insight, returning therefrom, knocking at His door, and gazing towards Him in love.

Have you not heard the words of the sage who said:

*I watch the night in joy, His Name my light,
With longing deep, not patience marred by plight,
But constant joy, and standing at His door,
I knock upon the Lord of Might and More*²¹⁹.

These stations are only attained by ascending, degree by degree, and station by station, through patience, spiritual

striving (*mujaḥadah*), truthfulness in pursuit, and sincerity—by divesting oneself of seeing people and of seeing the self. This is because Allah ﷻ is most free of needing partners, and none reaches Him but one who seeks none but Him.

In order for progress along the path to occur, sound belief, firm faith, and commitment to the noble Sharia are necessary, along with adopting praiseworthy character traits, emulating the Prophet of guidance ﷺ, and accompanying the sheikh from the beginning of the path to its end. One's intention in this must not be advancement merely for the sake of advancement, but rather, that one's intention in every station is Allah ﷻ.

Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī ؒ said: 'The aspiration of a traveller never wills to halt at what has been disclosed to it except that the voices of Reality call to him: "What you seek lies ahead of you."'²²⁰

Just as every path that a person travels for a particular goal contains its own risks and obstacles, so too does the traveller's path to Allah ﷻ contain what Allah knows of perils and hindrances. The greater and loftier the goal, the more difficult and burdensome its attainment. Among the dangers and impediments of the path are: halting and being cut off, and turning one's attention to the disclosures or breakthroughs that occur to the traveller, whether inner promptings (*khawāṭir*) or illuminations (*ishrāqāt*). Here, the importance of the sheikh—one who is knowledgeable of the perils of the path—becomes manifest. He alerts the traveller to avoid turning aside, reminds him of his objective, and diverts him from distractions.

The Meaning of 'State' and 'Station' and the Difference Between Them

In Sufi usage, a spiritual station (*maqām*) refers to the position of the slave before Allah in relation to specific acts of worship, spiritual struggle (*mujāhadah*), and ascetic discipline (*riyāḍah*). Among the recognized stations are: repentance (*tawbah*), renunciation (*zuhd*), scrupulousness (*waraʿ*), destitution (*faqr*), patience (*ṣabr*), contentment (*riḍā*), reliance upon Allah (*tawakkul*), and others of this kind.

As for spiritual states (*aḥwāl*), these are conditions that descend upon the heart or through which the heart passes. They are characterized by the refinement of one's mentioning of Allah. Examples of spiritual states include: vigilant awareness (*murāqabah*), nearness (*qurb*), love (*maḥabbah*), fear (*khawf*), hope (*rajāʾ*), longing (*shawq*), intimacy (*uns*), serenity (*ṭuma'nīnah*), witnessing (*mushāhadah*), certainty (*yaqīn*), and so forth.

Sufis draw a careful distinction between a station and a state. A station is marked by stability and continuity, whereas a state is transitory: it comes and goes. The seeker acquires a station through effort and volition, whilst a state descends upon him without intention or premeditation. This distinction is indicated by Qushayrī in his *Risālah*, where he writes: 'A state is an insight that enters the heart without any intention or contrivance on the part of the Sufis, and without their seeking or acquiring it, whether it be joy (*ṭarab*), sorrow (*ḥuzn*), expansion (*bast*), contraction (*qabḍ*), longing (*shawq*), agitation (*inziʿāj*), awe (*haybah*), or need (*iḥtiyāj*). Thus, states are gifts, whilst stations are acquisitions. States proceed from the eye of divine generosity, whereas stations are attained through exertion. The one who possesses a station is established therein,

whilst the one experiencing a state is continually being elevated beyond it.²²¹

Among the Stations of the Path is Wakefulness

The first of these stations is the station of wakefulness. Wakefulness (*yaqazah*) is attentiveness and absence of heedlessness. Wakefulness means that one reflects upon his past, his present, and his future, that he contemplates whence he came and whither he returns, and what his duty is in this life whose end is annihilation.

He finds the answer to these questions plainly in the Book of Allah ﷻ: that Allah is his Creator, as Allah says: *'God is the Creator of all things and He is Guardian over all things'*²²²; that death is his end, as Allah says: *'Every soul shall taste death. Then to Us you shall be returned.'*²²³; and that his role in this life is to worship Allah and cultivate the earth upon which he lives, as Allah says: *'... He it is Who produced you from the earth, and has given you to live therein; so ask forgiveness of Him, then turn to Him repentant. Truly my Lord is Near, Responsive.'*²²⁴

Wakefulness means that these insights remain clear and manifest before one's eyes, so that one is illumined by them and fulfills their rights, namely: the worship of Allah, preparation to meet Him, and doing good to all of His creatures, whether inanimate, animal, or plant.

It is related from Ibn 'Umar ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ said: *'A woman entered the Fire on account of a cat she had tied up: she neither fed it nor let it eat from the vermin of the Earth.'*²²⁵

It has also been related from Abū Hurayrah ؓ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

Whilst a man was walking on a path, thirst overcame him. He found a well, so he descended into it and drank. Then he emerged and saw a dog panting, licking the soil due to thirst. The man said: 'This dog is as thirsty as I had been.' Thus, he descended into the well, filled his leather sock with water, held it in his mouth, and gave the dog to drink. Allah thanked him and forgave him.

They said: 'O Messenger of Allah, do we receive reward for animals?' He said: 'Yes, in every creature with a moist liver, there is a reward.'²²⁶

The believer should remain in wakefulness and anticipation of Allah's watchfulness over him, even in the final moments of his life in this world. Even if the signs of the Final Hour appear before his eyes, he should still fulfil the rights of that which is around him. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'If the Final Hour rises upon one of you whilst he has a sapling in his hand, let him plant it.'²²⁷ The erudite scholar, al-Munāwī says: 'In this is a reminder that the believer should never forget—and should constantly bear in mind—that Allah watches over him and that death is near. Thereby, in his moments of solitude, he is more reverent, more modest, and more guarded than when he is among people.'²²⁸

This wakefulness is not only about fulfilling rights outwardly, but also being alert to the state of one's soul and purifying it so that it might be saved. '*Successful indeed will be the one who purifies it, // and he will indeed have failed he who eclipses it.*'²²⁹ This is achieved through mentioning Allah, reflection, relinquishing blameworthy traits, adorning oneself with praiseworthy ones, and attaching the heart to the attributes of majesty, beauty, and perfection, as has already been explained.

Wakefulness is the first level of the path. Allah says: ‘Say: *“I will give you just one [piece of] admonition: that you rise up for God ...”*’²³⁰. Rising for God is wakefulness from the slumber of heedlessness, a rising from the pit of spiritual lethargy, and the beginning of the heart’s illumination with the light of awareness.²³¹

Whilst wakefulness is a goal the believer must strive for, it is ultimately guidance and a grace from Allah ﷻ. It is nothing other than a light which Allah casts into the heart of the slave, by which his life becomes illuminated. Allah says: ‘*Why, is he who was dead, and We gave him life, and appointed for him a light by which to walk among people, as him whose likeness is in darkness whence he cannot emerge? ...*’²³²

Allah’s guidance to His slaves is a grace through which they come to know Him. It extends to all Creation, through what He has placed in the cosmos and within themselves of manifest signs. Yet, not every heart is unveiled to the realities they signify. Thus, the foundation of the path is mentioning Allah and reflection until the heart is freed of its attachments and becomes a receptacle for the lights of divine guidance and the traces of heedlessness are erased, such that the heart becomes awake and illumined.

Among the effects of wakefulness is awareness of blessings and scrutiny of one’s transgressions.

In *Manāzil al-Sā’irīn*, we find:

Wakefulness consists of three matters.

The first is the heart’s attentive regard towards blessings. This includes despairing from enumerating them, affirming their limits, and branching out into the recognition of the gracious favour bestowed

through them, coupled with an awareness of one's falling short in giving them their due.

The second is contemplation of one's transgression, recognizing the peril it entails, rousing oneself to redress it, striving to free oneself from its bonds, and seeking salvation through purification.

The third is awakening to the knowledge of increase and decrease in the days of one's life, seeking to absolve oneself from squandering them, regarding them with jealous care so as to make up for what has passed, and cultivating what remains.²³³

Allah ﷻ has commanded us to be wakeful and forbidden us from heedlessness. He has also forbidden us from keeping the company of the heedless, for a person's state is influenced by those he accompanies. Whoever keeps the company of the righteous becomes upright, like them. Whoever keeps the company of the heedless is touched by their heedlessness. Allah says: '*... And do not be among the heedless.*'²³⁴ He has shown us that one of the causes of heedlessness is abandoning mention of Him. He says: '*... And do not obey him whose heart We have made oblivious to Our mention, and who follows his own whim, and whose conduct is [mere] prodigality.*'²³⁵

Just as the company of the heedless leads to heedlessness, the company of the righteous is among the most powerful aids to wakefulness. Allah says: '*And restrain yourself along with those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening, desiring His Countenance ...*'²³⁶.

The Station of Repentance

We are still journeying along the path to Allah, ascending through it from stage to stage and from station to station.

The first of these stages and stations through which the spiritual aspirant advances is the station of wakefulness (*yaqazah*) and attentiveness (*intibāh*). It is the station wherein the heart becomes illuminated and perceives its state before Allah. When it is illumined and alert, the heart inevitably realizes the necessity of repentance (*tawbah*). This constitutes the second stage along the path, and the second station to which the aspirant rises after attaining wakefulness. Whoever lacks repentance has no journey.

Repentance is the return from that which is blameworthy in the sight of the Sharia to that which is praiseworthy therein. It is a condition between the slave and Allah, incumbent upon all His slaves, for there is none who has not fallen short or erred in his relationship with Allah ﷻ.

The best of those who err are those who repent. Allah says: ‘... *And rally to God in repentance, O believers, so that you might be prosperous.*’²³⁷

Anas ibn Mālik ؓ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘Every son of Adam sins, and the best of sinners are those who repent.’²³⁸

Imam Ghazālī ؒ says: ‘Realize that repentance consists of a meaning composed of three sequential elements: knowledge, state, and action.’²³⁹

When the believer recognizes his state with Allah—knowing without doubt that he is either falling short, heedless, or exceeding the bounds of Allah’s right—he is struck by remorse. This is a state (*ḥāl*). Then, if he finds within himself a resolute determination to redress his shortcomings and abandon his transgressions, this is repentance.

The believer’s state in repentance differs in accordance with his state before Allah. Scholars have categorized the spiritual states of the believers in their knowledge of Allah

into three ranks: the commonality (*‘awāmm*), the elect (*khawāṣṣ*), and the elect of the elect (*khāṣṣat al-khawāṣṣ*). They likened this to people’s various relationships with the ocean. Some merely stand at its shore: they might taste its water and know it is salty, yet they never step beyond the dry land. They have not seen its limits, nor do they know what lies in its depths. This is the state of common people.

Others have both seen the ocean and tasted its water, and beyond that, they have boarded vessels and sailed upon it. They know where the shore begins and ends and perceive the vastness of its waters, yet they have not plunged into its depths nor beheld the mysteries therein. This is the state of the elect, among whom are the scholars.

Then, there are those who have gone further: they have dived into its depths and discovered the treasures and secrets it holds. This is the station of the elect of the elect, those brought near (*muqarrabūn*), the veracious (*ṣiddīqūn*), and the inheritors of the noble prophetic estate.

Their ranks differ according to the degree of certainty (*yaqīn*) each has attained. The station of the commonality corresponds to the knowledge of certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*), the elect to the eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*), and the elect of the elect to the reality of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*).

Accordingly, the repentance of the commonality differs from that of those above them in rank, both in its nature and in its obligations. A commoner repents from outward sins: acts of disobedience committed by the limbs, transgressions against the rights of others, and failures in fulfilling the obligatory and required acts.

The elect, however, may repent from deficiency in acts of devotion, from slackness in observing a sunnah or a virtuous deed. They might even repent from lawful or permis-

sible acts (*mubāḥāt*) that cloud the heart's clarity in its relationship with Allah. It is in this sense that the saying is understood: 'The good deeds of the righteous are the sins of those brought near.'

Whereas the commoner repents from sins and acts of disobedience, the elect repent from lawful, but spiritually veiling, actions in order to draw closer to Allah. They replace the permissible with the recommended and exchange the permissible for acts of obedience and greater devotion.

They do not evaluate their repentance by the paltriness of the sin, but rather, by the greatness of the Lord, thereby emulating the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه said: 'You do acts which you regard as finer than a strand of hair, yet, during the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, we used to consider them among the destructive sins.' Abū 'Abdullāh said: 'He meant among the ruinous deeds.'²⁴⁰

As for the repentance of the elect of the elect, it is repentance from one spiritual station to a higher one. Such people repent from that which is other than Allah—not from sins, but from anything that is not Allah. For example, asking assistance from someone may not be sinful, nor outside the bounds of piety. Indeed, abandoning means altogether is not required of those in spiritual distinction. Rather, the elect of the elect employ causes only in obedience to the command of Allah ﷻ.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'There is a veil (*ghayn*) upon my heart, and I seek the forgiveness of Allah one hundred times a day.'²⁴¹ Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, commenting on this statement, says: 'This veil is a state of awe and reverence that envelops the heart. His seeking forgiveness is an expression of gratitude.'²⁴² It has also been said that the Prophet ﷺ

was constantly rising from one station to another. When he ascended to a higher station, he sought forgiveness for the previous one.

It is related from Imam Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, that when he heard this hadith, he was astonished, wondering how the Prophet ﷺ, with his beauty and majesty, could have a veiling upon his heart. He saw the Prophet ﷺ in a dream, who said to him: ‘O ‘Alī, it is the veiling of lights (*ghayn anwār*), not the veiling of otherness (*ghayn aghyār*).’

Let us give some examples. A man from among the common people loses his son. He weeps because he is overwhelmed by grief. The separation from his child has stirred sorrow in his heart. He strives to be composed and patient, for true patience is at the moment of the first shock.

As for the elect, consider al-Shiblī رحمه الله, when he was informed of the death of his son, he laughed. This is not a typical or expected response—it defies ordinary human instinct. Yet in that moment, he perceived the death as a divine reward, a mark of divine favour in the midst of trial. He remembered that this child would intercede for him on the Day of Resurrection, and this thought took hold of his heart. His heart was wholly attached to Allah.

Then there is the state of the elect of the elect, like the Master of the Messengers ﷺ, who was loftier and purer still. The state of the elect of the elect resembles his condition when his son Ibrāhīm died. He wept, because it was as if Allah, by taking Ibrāhīm, was saying: ‘Weep, for this is given in exchange for that.’ His heart remained patient, stable, and connected to Allah ﷻ. His eye wept and his heart grieved, yet he said only what pleased our Lord.

These are the three levels.

When the Most Generous Grants, He Does Not Take Back What He Has Granted

Truly, the Most Generous ﷻ does not take back what He has granted.

A station (*maqām*) is a settled state in which the worshipper finds himself. Once he ascends to it, he does not descend from it. One of the fundamental axioms of the path is: 'The Most Generous—namely, Allah—does not take back what He has granted.' When He bestows a specific gift upon a person—such as granting him a divine mystery, honouring him with a light, allowing him a spiritual disclosure, teaching him a matter of subtle knowledge, or elevating him to a station of servitude—He ﷻ does not revoke it. However, He may withhold its reward, Allah forbid. This withholding is termed divine abandonment (*khidhlān*). We seek refuge in Allah from it.

Allah's saints (*awliyā'*) are fallible. They remain subject to Allah's decree, vulnerable to sin, and liable to deprivation. The deprivation here refers not to the removal of the station, but rather of the reward associated with it.

That is to say, one may still experience the spiritual awareness or qualities of a given station, but if he sins and persists in that sin, Allah ﷻ may suspend the reward that was once linked to that station. The station itself remains, for the Most Generous does not revoke what He bestows.

A station is thus stable, whereas a state is transient. A state descends upon one and then departs. It comes and goes. These states fill the heart suddenly and, just as suddenly, vanish. The (Arabic) term *ḥāl* implies flux, swift disappearance, lack of stability, sudden arrival, and sudden withdrawal from the heart.

These states arise through spiritual influxes (*wāridāt*)

and are of the same category. A person, whilst sitting, may suddenly feel a pressing need to repent: that is an influx. He may suddenly feel he must be mindful of Allah in his actions: that too is an influx. He may be moved to purify his heart of blameworthy traits: also an influx. He may be drawn to invoke a specific invocation: that is an influx. He may feel compelled to abstain from something specific: an influx. However, then this sensation departs, the desire fades, and the moment passes and transforms. This is why it is called a state, for the permanence of a state is impossible. Allah ﷻ says: ‘... *Such days We deal out in turn among mankind ...*’.²⁴³

Illuminations and Inrushes

The terms illuminations (*ishrāqāt*), influxes (*wāridāt*), and marvels (*karāmāt*), particularly as they relate to the disclosure (*kashf*) of unseen matters, frequently recur in the discourse of the mystics. What is the true nature of these phenomena? How is their validity determined? When do they arise for the traveller? And what is his duty upon witnessing such illuminations?

Disclosure of certain unseen realities for specific individuals is both possible as per the Sharia and widely attested. It can occur through various means that the mystics classify under the term *illuminations*, which include influxes, true visions (*ru’yā ṣāliḥah*), inspiration (*ilhām*), and others.

The Unseen (*ghayb*) is of two types: one known only to Allah—‘*And with Him are the keys of the Unseen; none but He knows them...*’²⁴⁴—and another which Allah may disclose to some of His slaves, as a form of glad tidings, warning, or affirmation. This is explicitly confirmed by the noble Prophetic Sunnah. Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه relates that the

Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘Nothing remains of prophecy except glad tidings.’ They asked: ‘What are glad tidings?’ He replied: ‘A true vision.’²⁴⁵ A true vision is thus a kind of illumination and among the ways through which a believer may be shown elements of the Unseen.

A sage said: ‘The origin of visions is truth sent from the Manifest Truth (*al-Ḥaqq al-Mubīn*). It informs us of hidden news. It is one of: a glad tidings, a warning, or a testimony. It was the common basis of insight for the ancients, though its strength weakened in this nation due to the completeness of the Prophet’s revelation.’²⁴⁶ A true vision, then, is a type of illumination.

Illuminations are the initial glimmerings of divine lights within the heart of the aspirant. They are among Allah’s gifts to him, manifesting in visions, influxes, inward thoughts, inspirations, and other such matters. Through them, the seeker begins to perceive hidden realities once veiled from others’ eyes, following his striving and acts of worship.

The traveller to Allah passes through successive stages: beginning with divestment, followed by adornment, then discipline and spiritual training through opposing his ego and combating his passions. Once he overcomes these, his soul is refined, and the way opens to witnessing and disclosure, with the divine lights rising in his heart. As a poet said:

*The Light’s own Light have lights that light up men
And secrets of the Secret hide in them.*

These illuminations are divine blessings. Yet the seeker must not pause at them, nor turn his gaze towards them, for the distracted do not arrive. Our aim is not to attain illuminations, but to reach Allah, His good pleasure, and His

love. If illuminations and unveilings accompany this journey, we praise Allah, but we do not halt for them or become attached to them.

Among the illuminations are influxes (*wāridāt*), which enter the heart upon invocation of any of the Divine Names. The heart is immersed in a divine state that arises and overwhelms it. The influx may gladden the heart, or cause sorrow and contraction. Qushayrī says:

The influx is that which enters the heart, either as praiseworthy thoughts that arise without the slave's intention, or as spiritual states not belonging to the category of thoughts. Influxes are broader than thoughts: thoughts are specific types of discourse or contain such meaning, whereas influxes may be of joy or sorrow, expansion or constriction, and so on.²⁴⁷

Regarding audition (*samāʿ*), Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī  said: 'It is an influx of truth that agitates hearts towards the Supremely Real. Whoever listens with sincerity realizes the truth. Whoever listens with his ego becomes a heretic.'²⁴⁸

When the heart is illumined with mystic knowledge of Allah, it becomes a locus for influxes and divine manifestations, which only increase one's steadiness and focus on Allah. In his commentary on the *Aphorisms*, Ibn ʿAḡibah, says: 'An influx is only sent upon you so that you may arrive thereby at Him. ... The influx is a divine light which Allah casts into the heart of whomever He loves among His slaves.'

Influxes vary in accordance with the traveller's level, whether he is a beginner, intermediate, or accomplished, whether he is a seeker (*ṭālib*), traveller (*sālik*), or one who has arrived (*wāṣil*). Accordingly, they fall into three categories:

1. **The Influx of Awakening (*Wārid al-Intibāh*)**

A light that delivers one from the darkness of heedlessness to the illumination of wakefulness. It belongs to beginning seekers. Once one awakens, one stands upright in pursuit of one's Lord, turning to Him with his heart and body, and gathering one's entirety for Him.

2. **The Influx of Turning (*Wārid al-Iqbāl*)**

A light that Allah casts into the slave's heart, drawing him towards mentioning Him, veiling him from all else. He remains engrossed in His mention of Allah, absent from all other objects of concern, until the heart is filled with light and sees nothing but the One mentioned. He exits the prison of worldly distractions and is liberated from the bondage of created effects.

3. **The Influx of Union (*Wārid al-Wiṣāl*)**

A light that takes over the slave's heart, then encompasses his outer and inner being. It removes him from the prison of his lower self and obliterates his sensory witnessing.²⁴⁹

Despite this, the seeker must not occupy himself with influxes, nor desire them, for they are not his aim. His aim is Allah. He must not be distracted from the goal by incidents encountered on the path. Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī says in his *Ḥikam*: 'Do not seek the perpetuation of influxes after their lights have spread and their secrets have been deposited, for you have sufficiency in Allah beyond all things, and nothing suffices you in His stead.'

If what is experienced—whether in visions, inspiration,

inward thoughts, or other illuminations—accords with the Sharia, it is permitted to act upon in matters that are permissible (*mubāḥ*). Among these are acts of mentioning Allah, supplications, and litanies received in visions. It is reported that our master Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī received the Litany of the Sea (*Ḥizb al-Baḥr*) from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in a vision and said: ‘I received it from the Messenger of Allah, letter by letter.’

These influxes are not authoritative proofs in themselves. Rather, they are glad tidings. As stated in the hadith: ‘A true vision that is seen by a righteous slave or seen of him.’ Prophethood has ended, but glad tidings remain.

As long as these glad tidings neither prohibit what is permitted nor permit what is forbidden, they fall within the realm of what is permissible, and acting upon them is allowed, even without vision or inspiration. Thus, if a dream teaches something that does not contravene the Sharia, it is valid to act upon it.

If, however, it contravenes the Qur’an and Sunnah, it is a Satanic influx, for Satan seeks to block the believer’s path and divert him from his journey by preoccupying him with influxes, visions, and the like. Thus, every influx that contradicts the Qur’an and Sunnah is from Satan, and we must seek refuge in Allah from it.

As for what the aspirant relates to his spiritual guide in terms of illuminations, influxes, and visions, this depends on what he finds in his heart. If he feels an inclination to share it with his guide, he may do so. If it is accompanied by intense joy, worry, fear, or confusion, he must ask his guide.

Fundamentally, our path considers illuminations to be a divine blessing, like health, status, lineage, or bodily

strength. Each of these blessings entails responsibilities: the wealthy should be generous, the strong should protect the weak, and the learned should teach others. Likewise, illuminations must lead to continued progress on the path, sincerity, and avoidance of self-conceit.

A Slave's Heart Has Two Doors: One that Opens to Creation and One that Opens to the Supremely Real

We have previously explained that the heart of the slave possesses two doors: one is open to the Supremely Real (*al-Haqq*), and the other is open to Creation (*al-Khalq*).

The door that opens onto the Supremely Real is that through which the believer beholds the World of Sovereignty with his insight (*baṣīrah*), perceiving what Allah discloses to him in terms of divine disclosure. The door that opens onto Creation is that through which he perceives the World of Dominion, the world of sensory phenomena. The door of Sovereignty is not opened except through mentioning Allah and constant spiritual presence with Him.

Imam Ghazālī states:

The heart has two doors: one opens onto the World of Sovereignty, which is the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*) and the world of angels. The other opens onto the five senses, which are bound to the World of Dominion and observed reality. The world of observed reality imitates, in a manner of speaking, the World of Sovereignty.

As for opening the heart's door to the sensory faculties, that is evident and needs no explanation. However, the opening of the inner door to the World of Sovereignty, and the vision of the Preserved Tablet, is known with certainty through reflection on the

marvels of dreams, and the heart's access—during sleep—to things that will occur in the future or that occurred in the past, without any input from the five senses.

That door only opens to those who isolate themselves when mentioning Allah. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'The solitary ones have outstripped the others.' It was asked: 'Who are the solitary ones (*al-mufar-ridūn*), O Messenger of Allah?' He replied: 'Those who have cleared themselves through mentioning Allah ﷻ. Their burdens were lifted from them such that they will arrive during the Resurrection light and unburdened.'

Then, Allah will say, concerning them: 'Then I shall turn My Countenance towards them. Do you think that one whom I face with My Countenance knows what I intend to give him?' Then He will say: 'The first thing I grant them is to cast light into their hearts, so they speak of Me as I speak of them.'²⁵⁰

Thus, a human being exists in one of four states:

1. **Both doors are closed**, the door to the Supremely Real and the door to Creation. This is the state of one whose reason is absent, such as a madman (*majnūn*). He is not held legally accountable.
2. **The door to Creation is closed, but the door to the Supremely Real is open**. In this state, the heart becomes filled with divine lights and one becomes spiritually enraptured (*majdhūb*), overcome by spiritual attraction. However, this is not a state of perfection. Rather, it is a type of deficiency, for Allah did not make this condition a station of spiritual maturity.

3. **The door to the Supremely Real is closed, but the door to Creation is open.** Such a person is immersed in worldly matters, heedless of his Lord. If he mentions Allah, it is with his tongue alone, not with reflection or presence.
4. **Both doors are open.** This is the condition of the mystic knowers (‘*ārifūn*) of Allah ﷻ. In this state, the distractions and preoccupations of worldly life continually try to close the door to the Supremely Real. This obstruction is referred to as the veil of otherness (*ghayn al-aghyār*). Worldly distractions attempt to veil the slave from the Supremely Real. Yet, in some cases, intense divine lights themselves may flood the heart so as to obscure even the door to Creation. This too can lower one from the balanced station he previously held.

The Prophet ﷺ, however, with each elevation from one station to another, increased in mentioning Allah, and thus in ascent and nearness. He said: ‘Truly, a veil appears upon my heart, and I seek the forgiveness of Allah one hundred times a day.’²⁵¹

Those Who Hold an Ill Opinion of Saints and Mystics

Some people harbour ill thoughts about the Allah’s saints, supposing that they speak of matters contrary to the Sharia. In reality, these insights stem from their profound propriety with Allah. They appear in forms that the tongue and the languages of men fail to express adequately. This is their true nature. Thus, we are enjoined to maintain propriety with Allah’s saints and not to rush to accuse them regarding matters we do not comprehend. It behooves us to be humble and courteous in our stance towards them.

For this reason, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī gave a powerful example and expressed a remarkable principle, saying: ‘Belief in us is sainthood.’ That is, affirming the sanctity of one upon whom the signs of the Sharia are manifest—his steadfastness, his constant mention of Allah and reflection, his spiritual journey and propriety with Allah, and his guiding Creation to the religion of truth—this is faith in the Unseen. To believe in such a person is, in itself, an act of sainthood.

Some interpret this phrase—‘*belief in us is sainthood*’—as if it implies intellectual coercion or domination. This is a misreading. Allah’s saints flee from the veil of all that is other than Allah. They seek to close their hearts to Creation, desiring to see none but Allah. They cannot bear social entanglement or the company of others. Whilst we may run after them, they run from us. They do not seek wealth to accumulate, nor followers to flatter or decode their states. Whoever does seek that is merely a pretender, not truly a saint.

The true saint of Allah flees from people. Their company constricts him, yet he bears this difficulty with patience, asking forgiveness of his Lord and forcing his heart open, because he is tasked with conveying the divine message and guiding others to the religion of truth. However, due to his yearning for his Lord, he becomes wearied by people and wishes not to look at their faces, so absorbed is he in his longing. This longing stirs the heart, shutting the gate to Creation whilst the gate to the Supremely Real remains ever open.

Our master, Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mursī, used to say:

O seekers, beware of speaking against any of your Sheikh’s peers, for the flesh of the saints of Allah is

poison. Even if they themselves do not rebuke you, beware. And beware—truly beware—of belittling the backbiting of another even if it does not reach the one spoken of, for in that case his Protector is Allah Himself.

Among the sayings of our master, ‘Alī al-Khawwāṣ , is that nothing halts the seeker’s spiritual path like backbiting any Muslim, let alone backbiting one of the saints of Allah .

If someone hears or sees something from one of the spiritual masters that his intellect cannot grasp, he has no right to reject it. A beginner in the path can never, by his own reason, reach the station attained by the masters in their knowledge and mystical insight. Rather, he must accuse himself of deficiency in understanding and maintain proper conduct with the masters.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SUFISM IS KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

Sufism comprises both a theoretical and a practical dimension, each completing and perfecting the other. The theoretical aspect refines the disciple's conduct and deepens his understanding of the spiritual stages he traverses. It acquaints him with the states of the path, its degrees, the categories of its people, their stations and lives. All of this is not without benefit.

Yet the practical dimension is the ultimate purpose for which the theoretical was established. Without it, what is the value of grammar to an Arab if he does not apply its rules to regulate his tongue? What benefit is there in a jurist's knowledge of the laws of prayer, zakat, and fasting, if such knowledge bears no fruit in his acts of worship or his dealings with others?

The true aim of all knowledge lies in its fruits, not in merely acquiring it devoid of practice. It has been transmitted in a noble hadith: 'Whoever acts upon what he knows, Allah will grant him knowledge of that which he did not know.'²⁵²

Sahl ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Tustarī said:

The entire world is ignorance, except that which is knowledge; and all knowledge is a proof against one, except that which is acted upon; and all action is sus-

pended, except that which is done with sincerity; and all sincerity is rejected, except that which conforms to the Qur'an and Sunnah; and the Sunnah is founded upon piety.

If we learn but fail to act, this is a grave deficiency. Knowledge must be accompanied by action. True Sufism, in essence, is knowledge and practice. Junayd  alluded to the necessity of combining knowledge with spiritual discipline when he said: 'We did not take Sufism from hearsay, argument, or disputation. We took it from hunger, wakefulness, and constant practice', or words to that effect.

Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī  said: 'When souls are habituated to abstain from sin, they roam in the World of Sovereignty and return to their possessor bearing subtle knowledge, without a scholar having conveyed that knowledge to them.'

Thus, whoever aspires to attain these higher realities and embarks sincerely upon the means of their acquisition, this is a sign of the soundness of his quest, and his hope is genuine. Whoever desires them without earnestly engaging in the means to attain them, his is a mere wish, delusion, and folly.²⁵³

Both Jurists and Sufis Serve the Sharia

Jurists (*fuqahā'*) serve the Sharia from one aspect, whilst Sufis serve it from another. A person cannot proceed except by both methods together. They are like the two wings of a bird. Sufism plays a significant role in serving the noble Sharia and in unveiling its wisdom and objectives.

The knowledge of the essentials of the Sharia and its general rulings is agreed upon by all Muslims from the simplest inspection of the Qur'an and Sunnah. We all share the

knowledge that prayer is obligatory, theft is forbidden, wine and gambling are prohibited, as is fornication and unjust killing, and other obligations and prohibitions. This is called the apparent (*ẓāhir*) aspect of the Sharia.

When we hear Allah ﷻ say: ‘Establish prayer’, a jurist knows what prayer is and discusses its pillars and conditions. He explains the Prophet’s ﷺ statement: ‘Pray as you have seen me pray.’²⁵⁴ He says that we begin the prayer by saying *Allāhu Akbar*, not *al-Raḥmān Akbar*, nor *Allāhu A‘ẓam*, or any other name besides Allah. Hence, it is obligatory to use the name Allah and not *al-Raḥmān*, *al-Qawī*, or *al-Matīn*, even though these are among the Beautiful Names of Allah. We say *Allāhu Akbar* without qualifying it with any other attribute such as *the Most Noble* or *the Greatest*, because the Prophet ﷺ said so. He ﷺ said: ‘Pray as you have seen me pray.’

We must bow after reciting, not prostrate. No Muslim is allowed to prostrate and then bow. Prostration before bowing is not permissible, because the Prophet ﷺ did otherwise and commanded us to follow him in his acts. The placing of the hands one over the other and the recitation of a *surah* after *al-Fātiḥah* is a *sunnah*, whilst the glorification (*tasbīḥ*) during bowing is an exterior aspect (*ḥay’ah*). If a person omits these intentionally, there is no blame upon him: he simply forgoes some reward and merit.

Such a person may inquire about his prayer word by word and act by act, learn it well, and perfect it. He may ask: ‘How do I pray?’ However, he seldomly asks about humble focus (*khushū‘*) or how to make Allah present in his heart whilst standing in prayer. He rarely asks about the secret and goal of prayer. Little is asked about the meaning of the word *ṣalāh* (prayer).

A jurist who investigates the external form of prayer says: *ṣalāh* means ‘conjunction’ (‘*aṭf*’) and ends his investigation there. However, the Sufi does not stop at the outward form of prayer. Rather, he seeks its secret, its wisdom, its necessary consequences, the effects it leaves on the heart, how to attain humility in it, how to mention Allah through the presence of heart in it, and how this prayer then prevents one from indecency and wrongdoing. He seeks to surround this prayer with mentioning Allah before, during, and after it, until the statement of Allah ﷻ is realized: ‘... and maintain prayer; truly prayer prohibits lewd acts and indecency. And the remembrance of God is surely greater...’²⁵⁵

A Sufi does not remain at the level of outward form as others do. When asked about focus in prayer, a jurist may say: ‘It is that a person place his gaze where he prostrates,’ inferring the state of the heart from this outward action. However, this is not so, for it is merely a sign that may exist or not, whilst true focus is a matter of the heart.

Thus, a Sufi does not stop at the apparent texts. Rather, he seeks what is above that. He seeks the import of the texts, their consequences, and proper conduct with the texts. Hence, a Sufi differs from others in that he seeks proper etiquette with things, whereas others seek the things themselves. There is a difference between one who seeks something along with its proper etiquette and one who seeks it but neglects proper etiquette.

There was a misguided faction that claimed that it was possible to attain onto proper etiquette without what it related to; i.e., to get the fruit without the tree, or to have the tree without seeds. This is folly. They called themselves Esotericists (*Bāṭiniyyah*). They held on to the shadows—or

sometimes the propriety due to things and their conditions—but left the thing itself, saying, for example, that prayer meant turning to the sheikh or the infallible imam, among other falsehoods. They said that ablution meant purifying the heart from certain tendencies and fears, and that this sufficed. This is false.

Jurists concern themselves with outward forms, whilst Sufis add to these etiquette, insights, and wisdom. The esotericists were misguided: they claimed to attain etiquette and goals by abandoning the means, rulings, and outward forms.

We see the Sufis as more complete in understanding: they attend to the outward and add to it proper conduct and wisdom. Sufism has become an independent discipline. When the sciences were categorized, auxiliary sciences were assigned, such as the science of *tafsīr* (Qur’anic exegesis) that aids in understanding Allah’s speech. No one claims to have interpreted the entire Qur’an exhaustively, and the Prophet ﷺ taught us that its wonders never end. No hadith scholar claims to have encompassed the entire Sunnah by narration or understanding. No linguist claims mastery over the Arabic language with all its nuances, for Imam Shāfi‘ī said: ‘None masters language but a prophet.’

Similarly, no one claims to have inherited all the states of the Prophet ﷺ, not the Companions, nor those after them, not even his inheritors. None claims to have inherited the perfection that was with the Prophet ﷺ. Muhammadans (*al-Muḥammadiyyūn*) do not claim this. Each takes from the Messenger ﷺ a ray of light, a tree branch, or a scoop from the sea.

The Sufis are the elite—the select—who specialize in preserving the rank of virtue (*iḥsān*). When Gabriel ﷺ came

to teach the nation its religion, he asked the Prophet ﷺ about Islam, faith (*īmān*), and virtue (*iḥsān*). Thus, one group, the scholars of monotheism, emerged to protect faith; another, the jurists, to protect Islam; and a third, the Sufis, to protect virtue.

When asked why they are not called jurists, whether the people of monotheism are not jurists, or whether the Sufis are not jurists, the answer is: jurisprudence (*fiqh*) literally means ‘understanding’. Why then do you restrict it to knowledge of legal rulings? It is applicable to acquiring knowledge (in general), for this nation is a nation of knowledge. It seeks and pursues knowledge. It is a nation of knowledge for good and guidance. Jews are also a people of knowledge, but in error and wrath. They know the truth and deviate from it. The Islamic nation knows the truth and strives to act by it.

Sufis are those who seek the realities and uphold this dimension. If you read any book on monotheism, you find it discusses existence and nonexistence, divine attributes, the state of prophecy, the Day of Resurrection, Paradise, Hell-fire, the Bridge, and so forth. If you read a book of jurisprudence, you find how to perform ablution, prayer, fasting, what invalidates Hajj, who is entitled to zakat. These books end with jihad, divorce, and marriage.

If you read books of the Sufis, you find discussions about stations on the path: repentance, vigilance, love for Allah and hatred for His enemies, purifying the heart from hatred, envy, jealousy, reliance, contentment, submission, mentioning Allah, contemplation, and so forth—meanings absent from the other two sciences.

Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah, by Qushayrī; *Qūt al-Qulūb*, by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī; and *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm ad-Dīn*, by Gha-

zālī (as well as *al-Akyās wa al-Mughtarīn* by Ḥakīm Tirmidhī) are works of those whose hearts have been purified through mentioning Allah. They are called Sufis because of this purity, as the Prophet ﷺ indicated in a hadith: ‘... to worship Allah as though see Him, and if you do not see Him, surely He sees you.’

Those devoted to Allah—who engage in this discipline and act according to this knowledge—say that the first level is higher than the second: that is, to worship Allah until you reach the state of closeness as if you see Him, and if you do not reach this, then descend to a lower stage, which is to believe that He sees you.

This is a noble hadith in which we believe, which we understand, and which we experience inwardly after comprehending it, for spiritual taste is the purity of the mystic. Worshipping Allah as is due and persevering in this worship such that it leads us to the station of tasting—this is a matter we must heed. When I shut the door upon myself, I deprive myself of much good, and remain confined to outward forms, unaware of their inner realities.

In conclusion, we have clarified certain dimensions of Sufism: namely, its sources and modes of derivation, the place of knowledge and practice within it, and how the traveller proceeds upon the path towards the Divine Essence. These are aspects which, I believe, no serious inquirer can afford to ignore or dispense with in independent study.

Allah—exalted is He—is the ultimate object of all aspiration. He suffices us, and how excellent a guardian He.

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- ¹ Muslim, *The Book of Faith*, 8.
- ² Cf. *Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyah*, Sheikh Muhammad Abū Zahrah, Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī.
- ³ Muslim, *The Book of Faith*, 8.
- ⁴ Due to the importance of this discussion, we saw it fit to preface our work on Islamic Sufism with it.
- ⁵ Bukhārī, *Faith*, 51.
- ⁶ *al-An‘ām*, 6:162.
- ⁷ *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, *Traditions Related to Mentioning Allah*, 670, Bayhaqī.
- ⁸ *Īqāz al-Himam*, 2/295.
- ⁹ *Rawḍ al-Ṭalībīn*, p. 150, Ghazālī.
- ¹⁰ Cf. *al-Anwār al-Qudsiyyah*, p. 35, Dār al-Fikr, Sha‘rānī.
- ¹¹ Muslim, *Encouraging the Mention of Allah*, 2676.
- ¹² *Baḥr al-Fawā’id (Ma‘ānī al-Akbbār)*, 1/251, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Kallābādhi.
- ¹³ *al-Anwār al-Qudsiyyah*, p. 129, Sha‘rānī.
- ¹⁴ *Ṭā Hā*, 20:108.
- ¹⁵ Cf. *al-Anwār al-Qudsiyyah*, p. 86, Sha‘rānī; *Laṭā’if al-Minan*, 2/98, Sha‘rānī.
- ¹⁶ *al-Anwār al-Qudsiyyah*, p. 82, Sha‘rānī.
- ¹⁷ *al-Bayyinah*, 98:5.
- ¹⁸ *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb (al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr)*, 27/497; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī; Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 3ed.
- ¹⁹ *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb (al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr)*, 11/218; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.
- ²⁰ Muslim, *The Book of Asceticism and Softening Hearts*, 2985.
- ²¹ *al-Mafātīḥ fī Sharḥ al-Maṣābīḥ*, 1/109; al-Ḥusayn ibn Maḥmūd al-Shīrāzī al-Ḥanafī al-Muḥiri; Kuwait Ministry of Awqaf, 1ed.
- ²² *al-Anwār al-Qudsiyyah*, p. 129, Sha‘rānī.
- ²³ *Al-Mā’idah*, 5:27.
- ²⁴ *Al-Tafsīr al-Basīt*, 7/336, Imam Muhammad bin Saud University, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī.
- ²⁵ Bukhārī, *Matters that Touch the Heart*, 6464; Muslim, *Prayer*, 783.
- ²⁶ Bukhārī, *Matters that Touch the Heart*, 6466; Muslim, *Prayer*, 783.
- ²⁷ *Al-Ḥajj*, 22:77.
- ²⁸ *Tariq al-Hijratayn*, Ibn al-Qayyim, pp. 223, 225.
- ²⁹ *Luqmān*, 31:15.
- ³⁰ *Al-An‘ām*, 6:90.
- ³¹ ‘Abd ibn Ḥumayd, *al-Musnad*, (Ch. 1, p. 250, h. 783); Ibn al-Khallāl, *Al-Sunnah*; Al-Ājurri, *Al-Sharī‘ah*. NB: These words cannot be soundly attributed to the Prophet ﷺ.

- ³² *Al-Raʿd*, 13:7.
- ³³ This might be in reference to the hadith: 'I am the city of knowledge, and 'Alī is its door', even though it is not mentioned in the *tafsīr*. The hadith scholar, Al-Sayyid Aḥmad ibn al-Ṣiddīq al-Ghumārī, rated this hadith as sound in his book, *Faṭḥ al-Malik al-ʿAliyy*.
- ³⁴ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, Ibn ʿAjībah, 3/12.
- ³⁵ *Al-Kahf*, 18:28.
- ³⁶ *Al-Kahf*, 18:66.
- ³⁷ *Al-Kahf*, 18:67.
- ³⁸ *Al-Kahf*, 18:70.
- ³⁹ *al-Mawāqif*, 1/305. Emir ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jazāʾirī—the great mujahid who fought against the tyrannical French and stood as an unyielding barrier before French colonialism for seventeen years, striving and struggling—is too renowned to require introduction. He authored a moderately sized collection of poetry, the longest poem of which is the *Rāʾiyyah*, titled *Ustādhī al-Ṣūfī* ('My Sufi Master'). He was born in 1222 AH and was buried beside the Great Sheikh, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, below the dome—may Allah have mercy upon them both—before being later relocated to his homeland, Algeria, in the year 1386 AH.
- ⁴⁰ *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, 3/75. Dār al-Maʿrifah.
- ⁴¹ *Sharḥ al-Kharīdah al-Bahiyyah*, Sheikh Dardīr.
- ⁴² Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāyah fī ʿIlm al-Riwāyah*; al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-Ummāl* (5918).
- ⁴³ *Sunan al-Dārimī*, Ch. 1, p. 124, h. 424. Imam Muslim also related it in his introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.
- ⁴⁴ *Laṭāʾif al-Minan wa al-Akhlāq*, Shaʿrānī, 1/49.
- ⁴⁵ *al-Fātiḥah*, 1:6.
- ⁴⁶ *al-Fātiḥah*, 1:7.
- ⁴⁷ *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 1/164.
- ⁴⁸ *Al-Fatāwā al-Ḥadīthiyyah*, Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, p. 53.
- ⁴⁹ *Sharḥ al-Jawharah*, Bājūrī, p. 133. Bājūrī (d. 1277 AH) was the Sheikh of al-Azhar and the imam of Shafīʿis of his day.
- ⁵⁰ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 1/133, Ibn ʿAjībah.
- ⁵¹ *Al-Aḥzāb*, 33:56.
- ⁵² *Al-Nisāʾ*, 4:65.
- ⁵³ Ibn Ḥibbān, 4/279; Abū Dāwūd, *Purification*, 8. Imam Nawawī declared it sound in *al-Majmūʿ* (2/128).
- ⁵⁴ *Al-Aḥzāb*, 33:21.
- ⁵⁵ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 4/460, Ibn ʿAjībah.
- ⁵⁶ Muslim, *The Book of Prayer*, 408.
- ⁵⁷ Muslim, *Book of Faith*, 8.
- ⁵⁸ *Āl ʿImrān*, 3:164.
- ⁵⁹ *Al-Anbiyāʾ*, 21:7.
- ⁶⁰ *Sharḥ al-Ḥikam al-ʿAṭāʾiyyah*, Ibn ʿAjībah, 1/7.
- ⁶¹ Bukhārī (6196).

- ⁶² *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn wa al-‘Ulūm*, Tahāwunī, 2/1514.
- ⁶³ *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, 2/351.
- ⁶⁴ *Al-An‘ām*, 6:52.
- ⁶⁵ *Al-Kahf*, 18:28.
- ⁶⁶ Bukhārī, *Jihad and Expeditions*, 3010.
- ⁶⁷ *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, 2/354.
- ⁶⁸ *Al-Sīrah*, Ibn Ishāq, p. 180, Dār al-Fikr.
- ⁶⁹ *Al-Baqarah* 2:144.
- ⁷⁰ *Tafsīr al-Qushayrī*, 1/134.
- ⁷¹ Bukhārī, *Prophetic Tafseer*, 4788.
- ⁷² *Tafsīr al-Qushayrī, Laṭā‘if al-Ishārāt*, 2:105. Imam Qushayrī ﷺ states, in distinguishing between ‘*ishmah* (infallibility) and *hifz* (preservation): The difference between the preserved (*maḥfūẓ*) and the infallible (*ma‘ṣūm*) is that the infallible one does not approach sin at all, whereas the preserved one may commit minor slips, and may—on rare occasions—have lapses. However, he does not persist [in wrongdoing], as in the verse: ‘... *then repent shortly thereafter* ...’ (*Al-Nisā*’, 4:17).
- ⁷³ *Al-Shūrā* 42:52.
- ⁷⁴ *Al-Qaṣaṣ*, 28:56.
- ⁷⁵ Tirmidhī, *Prophetic Knowledge*, 2682.
- ⁷⁶ *Al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, 1/147, Ibn ‘Ajibah.
- ⁷⁷ *Al-Kahf*, 18:66.
- ⁷⁸ *Al-Kahf*, 18:69.
- ⁷⁹ *Al-Fatawā al-Ḥadīthiyyah*, Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, p. 55.
- ⁸⁰ *Al-Aḥzāb*, 33:41.
- ⁸¹ *Al-Ra‘d*, 13:28.
- ⁸² Bukhārī, *Belief*, 52.
- ⁸³ Bukhārī, *Supplications*, 6407.
- ⁸⁴ *Ṭā Hā*, 20:14.
- ⁸⁵ *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, Bayhaqī, 2368.
- ⁸⁶ *Al-A‘lā*, 87:15.
- ⁸⁷ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:185.
- ⁸⁸ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:198.
- ⁸⁹ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:199.
- ⁹⁰ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:200.
- ⁹¹ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:152.
- ⁹² Bukhārī, *Monotheism*, 7494.
- ⁹³ *Āl ‘Imrān*, 3:191.
- ⁹⁴ *Al-Anwār al-Qudsiyyah*, Sha‘rānī, p. 43.
- ⁹⁵ *Āl ‘Imrān*, 3:191.
- ⁹⁶ Muslim, *Menstruation*, 373.
- ⁹⁷ Tirmidhī, *Supplication*, 3377.
- ⁹⁸ Muslim, *Invocation, Supplication, Repentance & Seeking Forgiveness*, 2676.
- ⁹⁹ Muslim, *Invocation, Supplication, Repentance & Seeking Forgiveness*, 2702.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ikmāl al-Mu‘allim bi Fawā‘id Muslim*, Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ, 8/197, Dār al-Wafā’.

- ¹⁰¹ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:152.
- ¹⁰² *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 18/414. Dār al-Hajr.
- ¹⁰³ *Al-Mā'idah*, 5:54.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Al-Mā'idah*, 5:119.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Radd al-Muḥtār*, Ibn ʿĀbidīn, 1/60.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Sharḥ ʿAyn al-ʿIlm wa Zayn al-Ḥilm*, Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī, 1/33.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Qawā'id al-Taṣawwuf*, Ibn Zarrūq, p. 18.
- ¹⁰⁸ Bukhārī, *Witnesses*, 2680.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī wa al-Imām al-Shaʿrānī*, Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Bāqī Surūr, p. 70.
- ¹¹⁰ *Al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī*, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, p. 29.
- ¹¹¹ *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, Sulamī, p. 170.
- ¹¹² *Īqāz al-Himam*, Ibn ʿAjibah, 2/302-303.
- ¹¹³ *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, Sulamī, p. 159.
- ¹¹⁴ *Laṭā'if al-Minan*, 1/25, Shaʿrānī.
- ¹¹⁵ *Al-Tawbah*, 9:103.
- ¹¹⁶ *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Ibn ʿĀshūr, 11/23.
- ¹¹⁷ *Al-Shams*, 91:9.
- ¹¹⁸ *Al-Aʿrāf*, 7:189.
- ¹¹⁹ *Al-Naml*, 27:24.
- ¹²⁰ Muslim, *Invocation, Supplication, Repentance & Seeking Forgiveness*, 2722.
- ¹²¹ *Al-Mabsūt*, Sarkhaṣī, 12/110. The scholar in question is Muhammad ibn Ḥasan al-Shaybānī.
- ¹²² Muslim, *Divine Decree*, 2664.
- ¹²³ Abū Yaʿlā (683).
- ¹²⁴ *Al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr*, Ṭabarānī, 3367; *Shuʿab al-Īmān*, Bayhaqī, 10107.
- ¹²⁵ Bukhārī, *Funerals*, 1303.
- ¹²⁶ Bukhārī, *Oaths and Vows*, 6655; Muslim, *Funerals*, 923.
- ¹²⁷ *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 11/147.
- ¹²⁸ *Al-Isrāʾ*, 17:111.
- ¹²⁹ *Al-Mulk*, 67:1.
- ¹³⁰ *Yā Sīn*, 36:83.
- ¹³¹ *Al-Anʿām*, 6:75.
- ¹³² *Al-Nūr*, 24:35.
- ¹³³ *Al-Aḥzāb*, 33:46.
- ¹³⁴ *Al-Anʿām*, 6:75.
- ¹³⁵ Bukhārī, *The Start of Revelation*, 1.
- ¹³⁶ *Al-Fātiḥah*, 1:5.
- ¹³⁷ Cf. *Dhayl al-Rashaḥāt*, p. 206.
- ¹³⁸ *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, 1/205.
- ¹³⁹ *Īqāz al-Himam*, p. 42.
- ¹⁴⁰ Al-Zumar, 39:42.
- ¹⁴¹ Cf. *Marātib al-Nafs*, ʿAbd al-Khāliq al-Shabrāwī al-Khalwatī.
- ¹⁴² *Al-Nās*, 114:5.
- ¹⁴³ *Āl ʿImrān*, 3:190-191.

- ¹⁴⁴ *Al-Hadīd*, 57:27.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Maryam*, 19:48.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Al-A‘rāf*, 7:142.
- ¹⁴⁷ *Āl ‘Imrān*, 3:37.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Maryam*, 19:16-17.
- ¹⁴⁹ Agreed upon.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Imām al-Nawawī*, 2/198.
- ¹⁵¹ Agreed upon.
- ¹⁵² Agreed upon.
- ¹⁵³ Bukhārī, *The Start of Revelation*, 3.
- ¹⁵⁴ *Al-A‘rāf*, 7:143.
- ¹⁵⁵ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:51.
- ¹⁵⁶ Ibn Ḥibbān (3/96); Tirmidhī, *Supplications*, 3375.
- ¹⁵⁷ Bukhārī, *Monotheism*, 7538; Muslim, *Fasting*, 1151.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Al-An‘ām*, 6:91.
- ¹⁵⁹ Muslim, *Tribulations and Portents of the Final Hour*, 2912.
- ¹⁶⁰ Muslim, *Tribulations and Portents of the Final Hour*, 2949; Ibn Ḥibbān (15/116); Ṭabarani, *Awsaṭ* (3/257).
- ¹⁶¹ *Al-Isrā’*, 17:18-19.
- ¹⁶² *Al-Nisā’*, 4:26.
- ¹⁶³ Bukhārī *Belief*, 43; Muslim, *Book of Prayers*, 785.
- ¹⁶⁴ Cf. *Ḥaṣhiyat al-‘Adawī ‘alā Sharḥ Kifāyat al-Ṭālib*, 2/488.
- ¹⁶⁵ Abū Dāwūd, *Inheritance*, 2885; *Al-Mustadrak* (4/369)
- ¹⁶⁶ *Qāf*, 50:38.
- ¹⁶⁷ *Al-A‘rāf*, 7:180.
- ¹⁶⁸ *Al-Shūrā*, 42:11.
- ¹⁶⁹ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:269.
- ¹⁷⁰ *Al-Shūrā*, 42:17.
- ¹⁷¹ *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, 13/38.
- ¹⁷² *Al-Nisā’*, 4:82.
- ¹⁷³ *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 7/251.
- ¹⁷⁴ *Ṣād*, 38:29.
- ¹⁷⁵ *Āl ‘Imrān*, 3:191.
- ¹⁷⁶ *Fāṭir*, 35:28.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Āl ‘Imrān*, 3:104.
- ¹⁷⁸ *Al-Anbiyā’*, 21:22.
- ¹⁷⁹ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:150.
- ¹⁸⁰ *Laṭā’if al-Ishārāt*, Imam Qushayrī, 1/136.
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- ¹⁸² *Al-A‘rāf*, 7:143.
- ¹⁸³ *Yūsuf*, 12:76.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Ṭā Hā*, 20:114.
- ¹⁸⁵ *Al-Kahf*, 18:65-66.
- ¹⁸⁶ *Al-Qaṣaṣ*, 28:56.
- ¹⁸⁷ *Al-Shu‘arā’*, 26:89.

- ¹⁸⁸ Aḥmad (28/367/17142); Ibn Mājah (1/16/43).
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- ¹⁹⁰ *Al-Mā‘idah*, 5:54.
- ¹⁹¹ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:165.
- ¹⁹² Tirmidhī, *Asceticism*, 2385.
- ¹⁹³ *Qūt al-Qulūb*, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, 1/50.
- ¹⁹⁴ *Al-Luma‘*, Ṭūsī, p. 54, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.
- ¹⁹⁵ *Iḥyā‘ Ulūm al-Dīn*, 4/295.
- ¹⁹⁶ *Al-Anwār al-Qudsiyyah fī Ma‘rifat Qawā‘id al-Ṭaṣawwuf*, Sha‘rānī, p. 170.
- ¹⁹⁷ *Iḥyā‘ Ulūm al-Dīn*, 4/295.
- ¹⁹⁸ Haythamī says in *Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id* (8/22): ‘Abū Ya‘lā and Ṭabarānī (in *al-Awsaṭ*) have narrated, and Abū Ya‘lā’s narrators are reliable.
- ¹⁹⁹ Bukhārī, *Matters that Soften the Heart*, 6475.
- ²⁰⁰ Narrated by Tirmidhī, who labelled it ‘singular’ (*gharīb*).
- ²⁰¹ Bukhārī, *Merits*, 3567.
- ²⁰² *Ṭā Hā*, 20:108.
- ²⁰³ *Hilyat al-Awliyā‘*, Abū Nu‘aym, 8/17.
- ²⁰⁴ Tirmidhī, *Faith*, 2616.
- ²⁰⁵ *Al-Sajdah*, 32:16.
- ²⁰⁶ *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwah*, Ibn al-Jawzī, 1/522.
- ²⁰⁷ Bukhārī, *The Night Prayer*, 1145.
- ²⁰⁸ Muslim, *Fasting*, 1163.
- ²⁰⁹ *Al-Baqarah*, 2:143.
- ²¹⁰ Tirmidhī, *Asceticism*, 2380.
- ²¹¹ *Shaykh al-Shuyūkh fī al-Amṣār Abū Madyan al-Ghawth*, Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī, p. 277, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.
- ²¹² *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ‘Arabī, 3/273.
- ²¹³ Bukhārī, *The Start of Revelation*, 3.
- ²¹⁴ Bukhārī, *The Call to Prayer*, 660.
- ²¹⁵ *Ikmāl al-Mu‘allim bi Fawā‘id Muslim*, Qaḍī ‘Iyād, 3/564.
- ²¹⁶ *Al-Ḥajj*, 22:77.
- ²¹⁷ In his commentary on the *Iḥyā‘*, the hadith master, al-‘Irāqī, indicates the acceptability of this narration.
- ²¹⁸ *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, 1/223.
- ²¹⁹ *Hilyat al-Awliyā‘*, Abū Nu‘aym, 10/247-248.
- ²²⁰ *Īqāz al-Himam*, 1/51.
- ²²¹ Cf. *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, 1/154.
- ²²² *Al-Zumar*, 39:62.
- ²²³ *Al-‘Ankabūt*, 29:57.
- ²²⁴ *Hūd*, 11:61.
- ²²⁵ Bukhārī, *The Beginning of Creation*, 3318.
- ²²⁶ Bukhārī, *Manners*, 6009.
- ²²⁷ Aḥmad (3/183/12925).
- ²²⁸ *Fayḍ al-Qaḍīr*, 2/12.
- ²²⁹ *Al-Shams*, 91:9-10.

- ²³⁰ *Saba'*, 34:46.
- ²³¹ *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, p.11.
- ²³² *Al-An'ām*, 6:122.
- ²³³ *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, p.12.
- ²³⁴ *Al-A'rāf*, 7:205.
- ²³⁵ *al-Kahf*, 18:28.
- ²³⁶ Ibid.
- ²³⁷ *Al-Nūr*, 24:31.
- ²³⁸ Tirmidhī, *Description of Judgment Day and Matters that Soften the Heart*, 2499.
- ²³⁹ *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 4/3.
- ²⁴⁰ Bukhārī, *Matters that Soften the Heart*, 6492.
- ²⁴¹ Muslim, *Invocation, Supplication, Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness*, 2702.
- ²⁴² *Ikmāl al-Mu'allim bi Fawā'id Muslim*, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, 8/197, Dār al-Wafā'.
- ²⁴³ *Āl 'Imrān*, 3:140.
- ²⁴⁴ *al-An'ām*, 6:59.
- ²⁴⁵ Bukhārī, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 6990.
- ²⁴⁶ *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*, 4/47.
- ²⁴⁷ *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, 1/200.
- ²⁴⁸ *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 2/292.
- ²⁴⁹ *Īqāz al-Himam*, p. 65.
- ²⁵⁰ *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 3/21.
- ²⁵¹ Muslim, *Invocation, Supplication, Repentance & Seeking Forgiveness*, 2702.
- ²⁵² *Baḥr al-Fawā'id*, Kallābādī, p.99.
- ²⁵³ *Īqāz al-Himam*, p. 95.
- ²⁵⁴ Bukhārī, *Good Manners*, 6008.
- ²⁵⁵ *Al-'Ankabūt*, 29:45.1

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