



Lubb al-Lubab
(The Kernels of Kernels)
A Short Treatise on Wayfaring

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This treatise (entitled Risaleh ye lubb ul-lubab dar sayr wa suluk e uli al albab) is based on the lectures on practical 'irfan of 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, quddisa sirruh, the great contemporary exegete of the Qur'an and philosopher, delivered by him during the years 1949-1950. Its fourth impression (Tehran: Intisharat e Hikmat, 1366 H. Sh. [1987]) has been used for this translation.

This work has also been published by the State University of New York press, titled as Kernel of the Kernel Concerning the Wayfaring and Spiritual Journey of the People of Intellect (Risala-yi Lubb al-Lubab dar Sayr wa Suluk-i Ulul Albab) A Shi'i Approach to Sufism, with Mohammad H. Faghfoory as the translator. The foreword has been given by Seyyed Hossein Nasr

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Introduction: The Straight Path is one which combines the Exoteric and the Esoteric

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

May the choicest of blessings be upon the immaculate spirit of the
Apostle

of the ultimate era, Muhammad al-Mustafa, and his noble wasi (legatee)
and the possessor of the greatest wilayah, 'Ali al-Murtada, and his
glorious

descendants, the Pure Imams, especially the Pole of the contingent
realms,

the Baqiyatullah and the Hujjah, son of al-Hasan al-'Askari, arwahuna
lahu al-fida.

The religious urge and the appeal of the realms of the Hidden (ghayb)
and the quest for the mysteries of that which lies beyond the natural realm
are part of the innate instincts of the human being. This urge may be
considered as arising due to the attraction of the contingent world, especially
the human being, its noblest existent, towards the loving Lord, who draws it
towards His own infinite and absolute station. The magnet that draws the
soul is that very Soul of souls, which is referred to variously as the Beloved
(janan), the Reality of all realities, the Eternal Principle, the Mainspring of
Beauty, the Source of Being, and the Ultimate Perfection.

الْكُلُّ عِبَارَةٌ وَأَنْتَ الْمَعْنَى يَا مَنْ هُوَ لِلْقُلُوبِ مِعْنًا طَيْسُ

The universe is a writ and Thou art its meaning,

Thou! Who art the magnet of the hearts.¹

The effect of this real magnetic pull is to break the bondage of nature,
permitting one to transcend the ego and set out toward the realm of
immaterial and absolute reality, and, ultimately, toward annihilation (fana')
in the Act, Name, Attribute, and Essence of the Sacred Source of sources
and End of ends and life (baqa') in the Being of the Worshipped One. This
pull is more sublime and subtle than anything that can be conceived.

جَذْبَةٌ مِنْ جَذَبَاتِ الرَّحْمَنِ تُوَازِي عِبَادَةَ الثَّقَلَيْنِ

*An attraction of the All-Beneficent equals the worship of all men and
jinn.*

Man discovers this attraction towards this cynosure of all quest and the
end of all worship and aspiration at the core of his essence and innate
nature, and, as a result of this innate divine urge, he sets out on a journey
towards it, being drawn toward this destination with all his being. Therefore,
in the course of this journey, all his members and organs must participate in
this movement.

His body and corporeal faculties, which constitute his physical nature
(tab'); his mind and imagination, which constitute his imaginable realm
(barzakh); and his intellect and spirit, which constitute his reality-all of them
should participate in this journey and share in its effort.

The body should face the Ka'bah in the state of prayer and assume the postures of qiyam (standing), ruku' (kneeling), and sujud (prostration); the mind, shutting out its thoughts, should pin its attention on the Farthest Lote Tree (sidrat al-muntaha); the spirit should bathe in the lights of Divine sanctity and lose and abandon itself in the sanctuary of the One.

It is here that one finds how far from the real goal, and how cut off from the vision of His Beauty are those who preoccupy themselves solely with the outward, confining themselves to bodily movements in respect of worship and good conduct, and are satisfied with the crest, foregoing the kernel and the essence.

Similarly, those who are solely after spirituality and who evade the rites of worship and good conduct as prescribed by the Shari'ah, are far from the reality. They are content with the metaphorical, having abandoned the literal, and with fancies and fantasies, while missing the real.

Is it not the case that the light of God pervades all manifestations of the realm of contingency? If so, why should the body be excluded from worship, and why should this world of particularity be considered devoid of the rays of Divine effulgence, and why should we confine ourselves to such terms as communion (wusul), kernel (lubb), essence, and inner worship? Would that not be a one-sided worship?

However, 'the middle position' (al-namaf al-awsat) and 'the median community' (ummat wasat) are represented by those who combine within themselves the outward and the inward and who have summoned all the levels and planes of their being to the worship of the Beloved and submission to Him, having equipped themselves adequately for the journey of the spirit.

They have taken the exoteric as the designation for the inward and the inward as the soul and reality of the outward, mingling them with each other as sugar and milk. To them, the outward is the means for attaining to the inward, and they consider an inward devoid of the outward as "dust scattered" (haba'an manthura; 25:23).

اللَّهُمَّ تَوَرَّ ظَاهِرِي بِطَاعَتِكَ، وَبَاطِنِي بِمَحَبَّتِكَ، وَقَلْبِي بِمَعْرِفَتِكَ، وَرُوحِي بِمُشَاهَدَتِكَ، وَسِرِّي

بِاسْتِقْلَالِ اتِّصَالِ حَضْرَتِكَ، يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

*My God, illumine my outward being with obedience to Thee and my inner being with Thy Love, my heart with knowledge of Thee, my spirit with Thy vision, and my inmost being (sirr) with the independence of attachment to Thy Threshold, O Lord of Majesty and Munificence.*²

From this it becomes clear that for spiritual development and for ascent through the degrees and stairs of human perfection it is not sufficient, by any mean whatsoever, to confine oneself to the mental and contemplative divine sciences such as the study of philosophy. That is because deductive and syllogistic reasoning offers the mind convincing conclusions based on sound logic and valid premises, but it does not satisfy the heart and the spirit and it does not quench the spirit's thirst for attaining the truths and intuiting the subtleties.

It is true that hikmah and philosophy have sound foundations and they constitute the noblest of the contemplative sciences, which have established

tawhid (the Unity of Being) on the basis of reason and closed the way to any kind of doubt or uncertainty.

And it is on this basis that the Glorious Qur'an and the traditions narrated from those firmly grounded in wisdom and faith-that is, the Immaculate Imams, who are the keepers of prophesy and revelation-have prescribed thought and intellection and have advanced logical arguments and proofs based on rational premises. Yet it is quite insufficient to confine oneself to a philosophical and rational tawhid as conceived by the rational approach, but which is devoid of the submission of the heart and inner consciousness and lacks the vision of the inward.

To let the heart languish and to deprive the inner self of its spiritual nourishment derived from the realms of the Hidden and to shut off the malakuti lights of Divine Beauty and Glory, contenting oneself with cruising through books, libraries, schools of thought, teaching and learning, even at the highest level, amounts to nourishing only a part of one's being while allowing a higher part and organ to languish without nourishment. The right creed, the straight path, is one which observes both the aspects and completes the human being's hidden potentialities and capacities in each of the two aspects.

On the one hand, it encourages thought and contemplation, and, on the other, requires one to cultivate sincerity of the heart and its purification from the obfuscation of carnal appetites, to find peace, contentment and tranquillity of the heart, and, after pronouncing eleven tremendous and majestic oaths, declares:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

Whoever purifies it finds deliverance, and whoever corrupts it loses. (91:9-10)

See, how these Qur'anic verses, which address the human soul and speak to man's inner self, summon individuals,, from among thinkers, scholars and teachers of philosophy and ratiocination, to servitude, self-vigilance (muraqabah) and self-scrutiny (muhasabah), so that, by working sincerely and exclusively for God's pleasure-in the words of the Messenger of God-the springs of Divine teaching may sprout forth from the inner source of their heart and flow out to their tongues:

مَنْ أَحْلَصَ لِلَّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا ظَهَرَتْ يَتَابِعُ الْحِكْمَةِ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ إِلَى لِسَانِهِ

*Whoever dedicates himself to God for forty days, will find springs of wisdom sprout out of his heart and flow toward his tongue.*³

So that, ultimately, the deluge of inspired thoughts and Divine intuitions (waridat) may pour out from the core of their being.

The pride of the philosophers of the East, or rather of the world, Sadr al-Muta'allihin Shirazi, after spending a lifetime in transcendental philosophy (al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah), became finally so absorbed in worship and servitude and the purification of the inward and the inmost being that he declares in his vigorous style:

وإني لأستغفر الله كثيراً مما ضيَّعتُ شطراً من عمري في تتبُّع آراء المتفلسفة والمجادلين من أهل الكلام وتدقيقاتهم وتعلُّم جُرُزَتهم في القول وتفنُّنهم في البحثِ حتَّى تبيَّن لي آخر الأمرِ بنور الإيمان وتأييد الله المتَّان أن قياستهم عقيمٌ وصراطهم غيرٌ مستقيم؛ فألقينا زمامَ أمرنا إليه وإلى رسوله النَّذير، فكلُّ ما بلَّغنا منه آمناً به وصدَّقناه ولم نَحْتَلْ أن نُحَيِّلَ له وجهاً عقلياً ومسلِكاً بحثياً، بل اقتدينا بهداهُ وانتهينا بنهيه امتثالاً لقوله تعالى: (مَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمُ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا) حتَّى فتح الله على قلبنا ما فَتَحَ فَأَفْلَحَ بِبِرْكَتِهِ وَأَنْجَحَ

Indeed, I seek profuse pardons of God for having wasted a part of my life studying the opinions of the pseudo-philosophers and polemicists from among the theologians and their hair-splitting discussions, learning their clever tactics of speech and their arts of debate, until at last with the light of faith and the assistance of God, the Munificent, it became clear to me that their syllogisms were barren and their path devoid of straightness.

Thereafter I surrendered my affair to Him and His Messenger, the warner and the warned, putting faith in all that had reached us from him, confirming it without making any attempt to find some rational justification or a scientific interpretation for it. Rather, I followed his guidance, refraining from what he had forbidden from and submitting to the statement of God, the Exalted:

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمُ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا

"Take whatever the Messenger brings you and refrain from what he forbids you from" (59:7),

Until God opened my heart to what he opened it and it was delivered and saved with the blessing of following him (i.e. the Messenger). (Mulla Sadra, al-Asfar al- arba'ah, "Introduction").

One must mention in this context, the best and the sublimest of the divine legists, the divine sage and gnostic at the head of the previous century, the Sign of Truth, Akhund Mawla Husaynquli Hamadani.

This great legist, a rare thinker and an august philosopher, had incorporated all these true sciences in the light of the science of gnosis and self-refinement, and had fused all of them in the lights of the Divine Face, assigning to every science its appropriate plane and place, specifying the ultimate goal as attainment to the Divine sanctuary.

He had trained many disciples and offered them to the world of gnosis, each of whom became a shining star on the firmament of human excellence and tawhid, illuminating a whole world within the reach of his vision and insight. Among them was the divine gnostic Aqa Sayyid Ahmad Tehrani Karbala'i and his disciple, the pride of the legists and the pearl of the gnostics, Hajj Mirza 'Ali Aqa Qadi, may God elevate their noble stations.

The pride of the exegetes and the authority of the researchers, our revered teacher Hadrat 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, may God prolong his ennobling presence, had from the first days of life been on the flight with the two wings of knowledge and action and had

traversed the path, both in philosophy as well as in gnosis, under the tutelage of marhum Qadi.

Yet after spending a part of his life in syllogistic arguments, proofs and rhetoric and devoting himself to the advancement of the intellectual disciplines pertaining to the Isharat, the Shifa' and the Asfar and writing glosses on them, while at the same time devoting himself to inner solitudes and Divine mysteries and gnostic vigilance, ultimately he came to settle down at the sacred threshold of the Qur'an.

With him the study of Qur'anic verses, their contemplation and recitation, their interpretation and analysis, were a higher occupation than any other contemplative activity, and their contemplation was for him more delightful than any discursive reasoning, as if he had given up everything except total subjection and surrender to the Author of the majestic Shari'ah and his honoured successors (awsiya').

Our honoured friend and eminent master, kinder than any brother, the marhum Ayatullah Shaykh Murtada Mutahhari, may God's good pleasure be with him, with whom my terms of familiarity exceeded thirty-five years, after spending a lifetime in study and debate, teaching and lecturing, writing and sermonizing, and in the pursuit of research and investigation on the issues of philosophy with his brilliant mind and critical acumen, finally, in the last few years of his life, perceived that one cannot find mental peace and the tranquillity of the spirit without union with the inner self and connection with the Munificent Lord and without appeasing one's thirsty heart at the mainspring of Divine effusion and without it one can never enter the sacred sanctuary of God, or go about it, and reach the sought Ka'bah.

And he entered this track, like a candle that burns perpetually and dissolves, or like a moth that flings itself into the fire, or like a man of commitment and faith, passionate and ardent, who is annihilated in the shoreless ocean of the Essence, Attributes and Names of the Worshipped One and whose being grows drawing on the infinitude of the Divine Being.

Night vigils, lamentations and intimate invocations in the solitude of dawn, immersion in contemplation and remembrance, studious devotion to the Qur'an, and distancing oneself from the worldly lot and the devotees of desire, to join the people of God and the awliya' of the Lord-these were visible in his wayfaring, may God's expansive mercy be upon him:

لِيُمِثِلَ هَذَا فَلْيَعْمَلِ الْعَامِلُونَ

And for the like of this let the workers toil! (37:61)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ

Indeed God is with those who are wary of Him and those who are good-doers. (16:128)

Some days ago this nondescript was asked to write something on the occasion of the anniversary of his martyrdom. This nondescript, who in truth considered himself unequal to the task, had offered apologies for his inability to accept such an assignment on account of his preoccupations.

Lately, when the demand became persistent and the spirit of that honoured friend came to my assistance, I wrote down these passages annexing them as introduction to a treatise that I had written on wayfaring,

making it available, for the pleasure of that marhum's spirit, to the seekers of the Truth and the wayfarers of the paths of Peace and the way of Reality, in Whose hands are the reins of all affairs and it is His help that I seek.

As to its origin, this treatise is the essence and gist of the first round of lectures on ethics and gnosis delivered by our revered teacher, 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may my spirit be ransomed for him, in the years 1368-69 H. (1949-50) in the sacred hawzah 'ilmiyyah of Qum for the students of religious studies. This nondescript had written down a review of those lessons and to me its perusal was a source of spiritual illumination and consolation during times of constraint, darkness, and fatigue.

Now that it has been made ready after a revision and with some additions and clarifications, I dedicate its spiritual reward to the spirit of that felicitous friend, the late Mutahhari, may God elevate his noble station.

اللَّهُمَّ احْشُرْهُ مَعَ أَوْلِيَائِكَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ، وَاخْلُفْ عَلَيَّ عَقِبَهُ فِي الْعَابِرِينَ وَاجْعَلْهُ مِنْ رُفَقَاءِ مُحَمَّدٍ
وَأَلِيهِ الطَّاهِرِينَ، وَارْحَمْهُ وَإِيَّانَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ.

O God, gather him with Your intimate awliya' and be his successor in taking care of those who tarry back, and make him among the companions of Muhammad and his immaculate Household, and be merciful to him, and us, for the sake of Your mercy, O the Most Merciful of the merciful ones!

Notes

1. Sabzawari, Manzurnah, "Ilahiyyat," "fi af'alihi ta'ala," "ghurar fi anha' taqsimat li fi'l Allah ta'ala," Nasiri edition, p.183

2. These sentences are cited from a supplication attributed to Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) expounded by Hajj Mawla Kabutar-ahangi and has been published in a pocket-size edition, and Fayd Kashani mentions it in his Kalimat al-maknunah (lithographed edition), p. 61 with the words, "and it has been mentioned in their (i.e. of the Imams) supplications, may Peace be upon them .. ."

3. This sacred tradition has been narrated from the Messenger of God through several chains of authorities with variant wordings but with the same meaning. It is cited in Ihya' al-'ulum, iv, 322 and its gloss on p.191, and in the 'Awarif al-ma'arif published on the margins of Ihya' al-'ulum, ii, 265.

Among Shi'i books it is cited in 'Uyun akhbar al-Rida, p. 258, 'Uddat al-da'i, p.170, and Usul al-Kafi, ii, 16. The tradition is cited in the 'Uyun, with the author's chain of authorities, from Hadrat Imam al-Rida, may Peace be upon him, from his father, from his grandfather, from Hadrat Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Baqir, from his father, Hadrat Sajjad, from Jabir ibn'Abd Allah al-Ansari, from Amir al-Mu'minin, may Peace be upon him, with the following wording

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: مَا أَخْلَصَ عَبْدٌ لِلَّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا إِلَّا جَزَتْ بِنَائِبِغِ الْحِكْمَةِ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ عَلَيَّ

لِسَانِهِ

A Brief Introduction and General Plan for Godward Wayfaring

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَي مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّاهِرِينَ
وَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَي أَعْدَائِهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

*In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the Most Merciful.
May God's blessings be upon Muhammad and his immaculate
Household,*

and may God's curse be upon all their enemies.

God, Exalted and Almighty, has said:

سُرِّيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ أَلَا إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطٌ

We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, till it is clear to them that it is the truth. Suffices it not, by thy Lord, that He is witness over everything? Indeed they are in doubt about the meeting with their Lord. Indeed He encompasses everything. (41:53-54)

چه مبارک سحرې بود وچه فرخنده شي
آن شب قدر که اين تازه براتم دادند
بي خود از شعشعة پرتو ذاتم کردند
باده از جام تجلّي صفاتم دادند

A blessed dawn! An auspicious night!

The night of destiny, when I was granted this pardon.

I was made besides myself, by the beams of the lights of the Essence,

And offered the cup of the Attributes' revelation.

The materialistic human being dwells in the dark wilderness of materialism, helpless in the midst of the shoreless sea of appetites and pluralities. Every moment he is knocked around by the waves of material attachments. Before he can recover his balance and pull himself up after being struck down by a wave, he is knocked down by another, a more fearsome and terrible wave arising from attachment to wealth, money, wife and children. These waves, with their perpetual assaults, draw him into the dark depths of this fearsome ocean and his cries and laments are drowned in the uproar of its waves.

Wherever he looks around, he is threatened and intimidated by deprivation and regret, which are inalienable effects of transient matter.

In this midst, he is occasionally fondled by the draughts of an enlivening and refreshing breeze called jadhban an attraction towards the Divine , and he feels as if this kindly breeze were trying to lead him in a certain direction and towards some goal. This breeze is not continuous; it comes only once in a while.

وَإِنَّ لِرَبِّكُمْ فِي أَيَّامٍ دَهْرِكُمْ نَفْحَاتٍ أَلَا فَتَعَرَّضُوا لَهَا وَلَا تُعْرِضُوا عَنْهَا

Indeed, during the course of your life you will come across wafts of breeze from your Lord. (When they blow), expose yourself to them and do not avoid them.

In such moments, the seeker of God takes on a new life and, under the influence of that divine jadhbah, resolves to cross the world of plurality and to set out on this journey in any manner that he can and to rescue himself from this tormenting and perilous tumult. This journey is called wayfaring (sayr wa suluk) in the terminology of the gnostics ('urafa').

Suluk means travelling along a path, and sayr means watching the spectacle and features of the stages and phases encountered on the way.

The provisions (zad) required for this spiritual journey consist of the efforts and austerities undertaken to discipline the soul. As it is very difficult to detach oneself from corporeal attachments, one can depart from the world of corporeal nature ('alam al-tab) by gradually cutting off the binding chains of the world of plurality.

One has not yet recovered from the weariness of this journey when he enters the realm of barzakh, which is the world of psychic multiplicity (katharat al-anfusiyyah). Here, he clearly observes the riches stocked by matter and external pluralities within the precincts of his physical nature. These are the same imaginable psychic entities that came into being as a result of encounter with and attachment to external pluralities and they are considered part of their effects, products, and fruits.

These thoughts become an obstacle to his journey and they take away his peace of mind, and when the wayfarer (salik) wishes to take repose in the remembrance of God, all of a sudden they besiege him like a deluge that threatens to destroy him.

جان همه روز از لگد کوب خیال

وز زیان وسود واز بیم زوال

بی صفا می ماندش بی لطف و فر

بی به سوی آسمان راه سفر

*The soul, trampled all day by thoughts,
Of fears of downfall, profit and loss,
And left neither with tranquillity, nor dignity, nor charm,
Nor of a heavenward journey any contrivance.*

It is obvious that the harm and trouble caused by the psychic pluralities is stronger and more powerful than that of external pluralities. For one can save oneself from the disturbance and onslaught of external pluralities by exercising free will and through isolation and seclusion, but certainly one cannot avoid the trouble of nafsani thoughts¹ by this means, as they accompany one closely and intimately.

The wayfarer on the path of God and the way of sincerity and servitude is not deterred by these enemies. He makes his resolve and with that sacred provision pursues the way to his destination, leaving behind the realm of

thoughts arising from his psyche, which is called 'Barzakh' (the intermediate realm).

However, the wayfarer must be very vigilant and careful lest there remain any of these thoughts in the corners of the heart. That is because it is characteristic of these imaginable entities to conceal themselves at the time of their expulsion in some hidden corner of the heart, so that the wayfarer imagines that he has got rid of their evil and has been relieved of all remnants of the realm of Barzakh.

But when the traveller reaches the spring of life in order to be appeasing his thirst from the waters of the fountains of wisdom, all of a sudden they assault him and finish him off with the weapons of oppression and tyranny.

The parable of such a wayfarer is that of one who has filled a pool in his house with water. And as he does not use it for some time, all the impurities and dirt that it contains settle down at the bottom. However, when the water becomes clear and he imagines its clarity and purity to be enduring, as soon he enters it or wishes to wash something in its water all the dirt and sediment soil the clear water again and its black spots reappear on the surface.

Therefore, the wayfarer must have obtained such mental poise through exercises and self-discipline that the offspring of imagination are reduced to fossils and are unable to disturb his mind at the time of concentrating on the Worshipped One.

When the wayfarer passes through the realms of corporeal nature and Barzakh, he enters the world of the spirit, and then passes through certain stages whose detailed description will come later, God willing.

But to put it briefly, the wayfarer, with Divine succour, having witnessed his own self and the Divine Attributes and Names, gradually reaches the stage of total annihilation (fana' kulli) and, thereafter, the station of life in God (baqa'), whereat eternal life becomes established for him.

هرگز نمیرد آنکه دلش زنده شد به عشق

ثبت است بر جریده عالم دوام ما

*Never dies one whose hearts has been quickened by love,
Inscribed is our immortality on the world's tablet.*

This principle is confirmed as a result of reflection and contemplation on the noble verses of the Qur'an. God says in one place in the Glorious Qur'an that the wayfarers martyred in God's way are immortal and that they never die:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

Don't regard those who are killed in God's way as dead; nay, they are alive and they receive their sustenance near their Lord. (3:169)

Elsewhere He states that

... كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ ...

Everything is fated to perish save the Face of the Lord (28:88)

And at another place He says:

... مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ ...

"Everything that is near the Lord is everlasting..." (16:96)

By putting these verses together side by side one comes to know that those who are alive and receive their sustenance and livelihood near their Lord are the ones referred to as the 'Face of Allah', who, as affirmed by explicit Qur'anic verses, are not subject to destruction and dissolution.

Moreover, one comes to know from the noble verses of the Qur'an that that which is meant by the indestructible Face of God, the Exalted, are the Divine Names (asma'ullah).

To explain, in another verse this 'Face of God,' which is imperishable and indestructible, has been interpreted as constituting the Divine Names, which are given the attributes of majesty and glory:

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَيَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

All that is in it shall perish, but the Face of thy Lord, possessing Glory and Majesty, shall endure. (55:26-27)

All the exegetes of the Qur'an are unanimous that the word dhu (possessing) is the adjective for wajah (face). Accordingly, the verse means: 'the Face of your Lord, which possesses Glory and Majesty, is everlasting.' As we know, the 'face' of everything is that wherewith one comes to face towards it.

Hence the 'face' of every thing is that which manifests it (mazhar), and the 'manifestations' are the very Names of God wherewith all creatures face God. The conclusion that follows is that all existents are subject to annihilation and dissolution excepts the Names of Divine Majesty and Beauty. It follows from this that the wayfarers towards God who attain the felicitous station of 'nay, they are alive, and they receive their sustenance near their Lord constitute the Names of Majesty and Beauty of the Lord, Almighty and Exalted.

From this, the meaning of the statement of the Immaculate Imams-may God's Peace be upon them-who declared 'Nahnu asma'ullah' ('We are the Names of God') becomes clear. Or else the exoteric station of outward authority over the community and their role of mediation in respect of the matters of the Shari'ah and the exoteric divine laws is not something that could be described by them in this manner.

Rather, it means the same of annihilation in the Essence of the One (dhat-a ahadiyyat), which is implied in their being the 'wajhullah,' the 'face' of God, and complete manifestation of His Attributes of Majesty and Beauty-something which is not comparable to any station or office.

Essentials of Wayfaring and Suluk

One of the most important things which is one of the essentials of wayfaring and suluk is muraqabah, contemplative self-vigilance.

From the first step that he takes on the Path until the last step, the wayfarer should not be devoid of muraqabah. This is one of the definite principles of wayfaring. It should be known that muraqabah consists of various degrees and levels. During the first stages the wayfarer has one kind of muraqabah while his muraqabah at the other stages is of another kind.

The further he advances towards perfection and traverses the stages and phases, his muraqabah becomes more precise and profound, so that if those

degrees of muraqabah were to be imposed on a wayfarer in the initial stages, he would not be able to bear them and would abandon wayfaring all together, or he would be consumed or perish.

But gradually under the effect of the preliminary -degrees of muraqabah and gathering strength in wayfaring, he is enabled to carry out the high degrees of muraqabah in the later stages. In these stages, many of the things which were permissible and lawful for him in the early stages become unlawful and forbidden.

Under the effect of intense muraqabah and careful exercise of it the signs of love appear in the consciousness of the wayfarer, because the love of perfect beauty and perfection is innate in man (fitri) and incorporated in his make-up and engraved in his being. However, attachment to multiplicity and love of material things become veils blocking this innate love which do not allow this eternal light to shine through.

Gradually, through muraqabah the veils become flimsy until ultimately they disappear altogether and that innate love manifests itself in one's consciousness, drawing it towards the Source of beauty and perfection. This muraqabah is referred to as 'may' or 'wine' in the terminology of the gnostics:

به پیر میکده گفتم که چیست راه نجات

بخواست جام ((می)) وگفت راز پوشیدن

*I asked the old man of the tavern, What's the way to salvation,
He called for a cup of wine and said, Secrets are to be kept secret!*

راه خلوتگه خاصم بنما تا پس از این

((می)) خورم با تو و دیگر غم دنیا نخورم

*Lead me into my solitary privacy, that,
Thereafter, I with Thee may drink sweet wine,
And think no more of the world's bitter woes.*

When the wayfarer carefully maintains his muraqabah, God, the Exalted, out of His love and grace, makes certain lights shine upon him as the first glimmers. At the beginning, these lights appear like flashes of lightning and they disappear as suddenly as they shine. But these lights gradually become stronger, like a small star that grows in brilliance and then begins to shine like a moon and then like a sun, and, at times, appears like a candle or lantern. These lights are called 'the gnostic sleep' (nawm-e'irfani) in the jargon of the gnostic. These lights belong to the class of entities of the realm of Barzakh.

But when these phases of the wayfarer muraqabah become more intense and he observes it with precision, these lights become stronger and the wayfarer sees the whole heaven and earth, the east and the west, as one expanse of light. This light is the light of the spirit, which appears while passing through the world of Barzakh.

But in the first stages of passing, when the revelatory lights of the soul (tajalliyat al-nafs) are about to begin to shine, the wayfarer sees his soul in a

material form. In other words, he might see himself standing before himself. This is the beginning stage of the immateriality of the soul (tajarrud al-nafs).

Our teacher, marhum Hajj Mirza Aqa Qadi-may God be pleased with him-used to say, "One day emerging from the room into the veranda, I saw myself standing silent by my side. I looked very carefully at my face, and observed a mole on it. On returning to my room when I looked into the mirror, I saw that there was a mole on my face that I had not noticed until then."

At times, the wayfarer finds that he has lost himself and however he may seek he does not find himself. It was mentioned that these experiences occur in the preliminary stages of the immateriality of the soul and are bound to space and time. But later on, with the help of God, the wayfarer can witness the entire reality of his, soul in its total immateriality.

An episode is related about marhum Hajj Mirza Jawad Aqa Maliki Tabrizi-may God be pleased with him-who for fourteen years was the pupil and disciple of the master of gnosis and tawhid, marham Akhund Mawla Husaynquli Hamadani-may God be pleased with him.

He used to say, "One day the Master said to me, 'The task of training so-and-so'-a disciple of his-is up to you: This disciple had a lot of courage and a firm determination. He carried out austerities and muraqabah for six years until he reached a station of pure receptivity for the perception of the soul's immateriality. I wanted that this wayfarer of the way of felicity to receive this grace of at the hands of the Master and to be dressed by him in this divine garb. I took him to the Master's home, and after I had mentioned my purpose, the Master said, 'It is nothing,' and all of sudden he made a gesture with his hands, saying, 'Immateriality is like this.' That pupil later told me, 'All of a sudden I saw that I had separated from my body and there was someone like myself standing at my side.'

It should be known that the observation of the beings of Barzakh is not much of an excellence, rather excellence lies in experiencing the soul in its complete and perfect immateriality. Since the soul, at this point, appears in its total immaterial reality, it is seen as a being unlimited by time and space, or, rather, as encompassing the world's east and west, and, contrary to the experience of the preliminary stages of multiplicity, this observation is of the kind of cognition of universals.

An episode is related about marhum Aqa Sayyid Ahmad Karbalai-may God be pleased with him-who was one of the well-known and outstanding pupils of the marhum Akhund. He said, "One day I was relaxing at some place when somebody woke me up and said, 'If you want to see the nur al-ifsahbod (lit. the commanding light), wake up!' When I opened my eyes I saw a boundless light covering the east and the west of the world.' "May God grant it to us to. This is the same as the stage of the soul's revelation (tajalli-ye nafs) which is observed in this manner as a boundless light.

On crossing this stage, as a result of observing the muraqabah in a manner commensurate with those higher realms and the requirements of those stages and stations, the felicitous wayfarer succeeds in observing the Attributes of God, the Exalted, or the Attributes of His Holy Essence in the mode of universality.

At this stage, it may happen that the wayfarer suddenly observes all the world's existents as constituting a single act of knowledge, or he may find that there is no power except a single power. This is at the stage of witnessing (shuhad) the Attributes. But in the stage of witnessing (shuhud) the Names, which is still a higher one, the wayfarer observes that in all the worlds there is but one knower, and one powerful being, and one living being. And this phase of the stage of perception of Attributes, which appears at the plane of the heart, is nobler and more perfect:

لِأَنَّ السَّالِكَ يُصْبِحُ وَلَا يَرَى قَادِرًا وَلَا عَالِمًا وَلَا حَيًّا سِوَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى

Because the wayfarer reaches a point where he does not see any power, knowledge, and life except those of God, the Exalted.

And this experience mostly occurs during the course of recitation of the Qur'an. It might happen that the reciter of the Qur'an finds that it is not he who is the reader but Someone Else. And it might happen that he finds that the hearer is also Someone Else.

It should be known that recitation of the Qur'an has a great role in the attainment of this station, and it behoves the wayfarer to recite the longer surahs (suwar-e-aza'im) while performing the night prayer. Falling suddenly into prostration from the standing position is not without grace, and it has been proved by experience that the recitation of the blessed Surat Sad in the one-rak'ah prayer (watirah) of the Friday's set of nightly prayers is very effective. The characteristics of this surah are known from the traditions narrated concerning its thawab.

When with Divine assistance the wayfarer covers these stages and succeeds in attaining these epiphanies, he is encircled by the Divine jadhbat, which bring him closer every moment to real annihilation, until, ultimately, he is encompassed with jadhbah, proceeding towards Absolute Perfection and Beauty, setting his own being and that of everything on fire, not seeing anything in front of the splendour of the Beloved:

كَانَ اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ مَعَهُ شَيْءٌ

God was, and there was nothing else besides Him.

And in this state the wayfarer leaves the valley of separation and is immersed in the boundless ocean of the epiphany of the Divine Essence.

It should not remain unsaid that the wayfarer's wayfaring does not preclude his life and existence in the world of matter. The realm of external plurality remains as it is, and the wayfarer finds unity while dwelling in plurality. And some of them have said, "For thirty years I have lived among the people, and they imagined that I was in their company and had constant intercourse with them, whereas throughout this period I have not seen, nor known, anybody except God."

This state is very important and significant, for in the beginning this state may appear for just a moment, but gradually it becomes more intense extending for ten minutes or more, and later on for an hour or more and still later on, with Divine grace, it might pass beyond being a state and become a station.

In the jargon of traditions and in the terminology of the sages, this state is referred to as 'living in God,' baqa' bi ma'bud (lit. survival in the

Worshipped One) and this degree of perfection cannot be attained except after attainment of total fana', annihilation, of the being of contingent existents in the Essence of the One. In this state the wayfarer sees nothing except the Sacred Divine Essence.

It has been written concerning one of the sages absorbed in Divine splendour (majdhubin), named Baba Farajullah Majdhub, who was captivated by the Divine jadhbah, that he was asked to describe the world, whereat he replied, "Since the time I have opened my eyes, I haven't seen the world that I might be able to describe it."²

At the beginning, when this shuhud (epiphany) has not yet become strong enough it is called hal (state). At this stage it is not a voluntarily condition for the wayfarer. But as a result of intense muraqabah and Divine assistance it passes from the stage of being a 'state' to become a 'station' (maqam). At this point it becomes voluntary.

It is obvious that a strong wayfarer is one who while witnessing these states also attends to the world of pluralities and who takes care of both the worlds. This rank is very sublime and elevated, and access to it very difficult. Perhaps it is exclusive to the prophets and the awliya' and whoever God wishes. While enjoying God's bounty described in the words :

أَمَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ لِي مَعَ اللَّهِ حَالَاتٌ لَا يَسْعَاهَا مَلَكٌ مُقَرَّبٌ

I have with God certain states which are beyond the capacity of any archangel,

Their outward appearance is a manifestation of:

... إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ...

I am only a mortal like you. (18:110)

Should anyone think that these stations are exclusive and attainment to this summit of Divine teaching is exclusively confined to the great prophets and infallible Imams, may God's blessings and Peace be upon all of them, and that others, by no means whatsoever, have any access to it, the answer is that the office of prophethood and Imamate is something exclusive, but attainment to the station of absolute tawhid and fana' in the Essence of the One-which is called wilayah-is not at all exclusive. In fact, it is to this plane of perfection that the prophets and the Imams, may Peace be upon them, have summoned the community of believers.

The Noble Messenger, may God bless him and his family has summoned his ummah to reach a plane where he himself stands, and this summons implies the possibility of travelling towards that purpose. Otherwise it would mean that the invitation has been pointless:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

And for you there is a good model to be emulated in the Messenger of Allah, for someone who seeks God and has faith in the Last Day and remembers God profusely. (33:21)

And it has been narrated through a chain of authorities in Sunni sources that the Prophet (S) said :

لَوْلَا تَكْتِبُ فِي كَلَامِكُمْ، وَمَرِيحٌ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ لَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا أَرِي، وَلَسَمِعْتُمْ مَا أَسْمَعُ

And were it not for this loquacity of yours and this agitation and disturbance in your hearts, you would indeed see what I see and hear what I hear.

This statement of the Noble Messenger, may God bless him and his family, indicates clearly that the cause of one's failure to attain human perfection is the same false and satanic thoughts and meaningless and futile actions. And it has also been related through a Shin chain of authorities that he said,

لَوْلَا أَنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ يَحُومُونَ حَوْلَ قُلُوبِ بَنِي آدَمَ لَرَأَوْا مَلَكَوَاتِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

And were it not for the fact that Satan besieges the hearts of the children of Adam, verily they would have witnessed the malakut of the heavens and the earth.

Among the effects of that sublime human station is universal comprehension of the divine worlds, in accordance with the contingent receptivity of the wayfarers, and the result of this comprehension is the knowledge of the past and the future and the ability to exercise power over the materials of the universe, for that which comprehends has total domination over that which is comprehended, accompanying everyone and present everywhere.

Shaykh 'Abd al-Karim Jili, one of the gnostics, in his book al-insan al-kamil, says, "I remember that once for a moment I went into a state wherein I found myself united with all existents so that they were all directly present for me, but this state did not last for more than a moment."

The Obstacle

Of course, the obstacle to the continuity and persistence of this state is preoccupation with the functions of the body, and the complete attainment of this rank can occur only after the soul's freedom from the management of the body. One of the Indian gnostics, Shaykh Waliullah Dehalawi, in his book Hama'at, says "I have been given the knowledge that relief from the effects of material life takes place five hundred years after crossing the world of matter and death." And this period corresponds to half of a divine 'day' as mentioned by Him, Almighty:

وَإِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّونَ ...

And verily a day with thy Lord is like a thousand years in accordance with what you reckon." (22:47)

Of course, it is obvious that the other degrees and graces of this world are unlimited and unbounded. The basis for verbal conventions is human need, although with the extension of these needs verbal conventions have become more multiple. Accordingly, a description of the immaterial realities and lights of the divine worlds through ordinary language is impossible, and everything that has been said about those realms does not go beyond hints, and that sublime reality cannot be brought down to the level of common understanding.

The corporeal human being lives in the world of matter, which, in accordance with the explicit text of traditions (anta fi azlami'l-'awalim) 'You abide in the darkest of the worlds' is the darkest of the divine worlds.

He coins words within the limits of his daily needs for whatever he sees with his eyes and touches with his corporal hands. However, he does not have any knowledge of the other worlds with its attachments, rays, lights, and spirits so as to be able to coin words for them too. Accordingly, in the all the vocabularies of world languages there are no words to describe those sublime meanings. So how can one describe those realities and express them with one's tongue?

مشکل عشق نه در حوصله دانش ماست

حلّ این نکته بدین فکر خطا نتوان کرد

The problem of love is beyond the reach of our knowledge.

This puzzle cannot be solved with these erroneous thoughts.

Two groups have spoken about these realities.

First is the group of the noble prophets, may peace be upon them, and it is obvious that they had links with the worlds transcending the material realm. However, in accordance with the dictum,

نَحْنُ مَعَاشِرَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ أُمْرًا أَنْ نُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ عَلَي قَدْرِ عُقُولِهِمْ

We, prophets, have been commanded to speak to the people in accordance with the level of their intellects,

they were forced to express these realities in a way understandable for the common people. Accordingly, they abstained from describing the luminous realities and their extreme brilliance, refraining from describing something which has not even entered the heart of a mortal. They have spoken of such realities as

مَا لَا عَيْنٌ رَأَتْ وَلَا أُذُنٌ سَمِعَتْ وَلَا خَطَرَ عَلَي قَلْبِ بَشَرٍ

No eye has seen, nor any ear has heard, nor ever passed through a mortal's heart,

in such terms as 'paradise,' 'houris,' 'palaces,' and so on. And so they ultimately confessed that the description of the reality of those realms is not possible.

Second, there have been a series of persons who were honoured with the perception of these realities and who attained these graces, in accordance with their different capacities, by following the path of the prophets. They too have spoken about them under the veil of metaphors and similes.

The World of Khulus and Ikhlas

It should be known that these stations and degrees cannot be attained without attainment of sincerity (ikhlas; purity, freedom from any kind of taint) in the path of God. And until the wayfarer reaches the station of the Sincere (mukhlasin), he would not be able to discover reality as it should be.

It should be known that ikhlas or khulus is of two kinds. First, the ikhlas of one's faith in God, the Exalted, and obedience to Him. Second, the ikhlas i.e. making pure of one's own self for His sake. The first is referred to in the following noble verse:

... وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

and they were not commanded but to serve God, making allegiance purely to Him. ..(98:5)

The second point is referred to in the noble verses,

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ

... except the sincere servants of God. (37:40, 74,128,160)

And the famous prophetic tradition:

مَنْ أَخْلَصَ لِلَّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا ظَهَرَتْ يَنَابِيعُ الْحِكْمَةِ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ إِلَى لِسَانِهِ،

Whoever dedicates himself purely to God for forty days, will find springs of wisdom flowing out of his heart toward his tongue,

refers to the second kind. That is, this stage is reached by someone who purifies himself for the sake of God To explain, God, the Exalted, has, in the Noble Qur'an, attributed salah (righteousness) in some places to one's actions, such as in His statement,

... مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا

whoever acts righteously... (16:97)

or

... مَنْ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا ...

... whoever does righteous deeds. (25:70)

... الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ...

... those who believe and do righteous deeds. (2:25)

And in some places it has been attributed to the being of man, such as in His Statements:

إِنَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

Verily, he is of the righteous. (21:75),

وَصَالِحِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

... And the righteous of the believers. (66:4)

Similarly, ikhlas and khulus have been at times attributed to deeds, and at times to one's essence and being. Obviously, the realization of ikhlas at the plane of being depends on ikhlas at the plane of action; that is, until someone has ikhlas in each and every one of his actions and deeds, speech, movements, and pauses, he would not attain to the stage of ikhlas of essence. God, the Exalted, has said,

إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ

... Towards Him ascends the pure speech and righteous action elevates it. (35:10)

By referring the pronoun pertaining to the active subject (fa'il) implied in yarfa'u (raises) to al-'amal as-salih (righteous action), the meaning of this verse becomes: al-'amal as-salih farfa'u kalim al-tayyib ('righteous action elevates pure speech'). It should be known that when someone reaches the stage of ikhlas of essence and attains to this mighty grace, he would come to posses properties and characteristics which others lack.

Firstly, in accordance with the text of the Noble Qur'an, Satan cannot, by any means whatsoever, have domination upon him:

فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلِصِينَ

By Thy honour, I shall seduce all of them save the mukhlasin among them of Thy servants. (38:83)

Evidently, this exception is not something consequent to a Divine instruction, but due to the essential authority of the Sincere at the station of tawhid, where Satan has no power and where he cannot find accesses to them due to his weakness and incapacity in this station. As the sincere have purged themselves for the sake of God, they see God in everything they behold. In whatever manner or form Satan may manifest himself for them they view that thing with a divine eye, arriving at a divine viewpoint.

Accordingly, from the very first, Satan confesses to his inability and impotence in relation to this group; otherwise, Satan's very being is for the seduction of mankind, and he is not someone who may have mercy on anyone and refrain from misleading him.

Secondly, this group will be excused and spared from reckoning on the day of universal summons and from presence on the scene of judgement. It is mentioned in the Noble Qur'an:

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

And the Trumpet shall be blown, and whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth shall swoon, save whom God wills. (39:68)

That which is inferred from this verse is that there is a group which will be secure from the terrors of the day of resurrection and from swooning on that day. And when it is placed by the side another noble verse,

فَأِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ

Verily they would be made present save the sincere servants (mukhlasin) of God, (37:128)

it is known that the group which shall be saved from swooning on the day of resurrection consists of the sincere servants of God, the mukhlasin, because the sincere, in a sense, have no actions so as to be called for an accounting on the plain of resurrection.

They have been 'killed' by the means of muraqabah, religious exercises, and inner jihad, attaining eternal life, crossing the stage of greater resurrection of the souls (qiyamat-a 'uzama-ye anfusiyeh), and their account has been scrutinized in the course of their spiritual struggle, mujahadah. And now, due to being killed in the way of God they have been dressed in the robes of eternal life in the Divine vicinity and enjoy a special sustenance from the Divine storehouse of bounty. God, the Exalted, says

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

Don't consider those who have been killed in the way of God as dead; rather they live, being nourished near their Lord. (3:169)

Furthermore, the summons implies not being present, whereas they have been present all along even before the dawn of resurrection and are aware of all circumstances and states, in accordance with the Divine statement, 'inda rabbihim yurzaqun, 'they are nourished near their Lord:

Thirdly, whatever reward and wages that everyone will receive on the day of resurrection will be in return for his deeds excepting this class of

servants, for whom Divine munificence will have a form other than that of reward or wages:

وَمَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ

... and would you be rewarded save for what you used to do, except the sincere servants of God? (37:40)

Someone might say that the meaning of this verse is that the group to be punished will receive its punishment in accordance with its deeds and that the verse excludes God's virtuous servants from recompense, for their reward will not be in return for their works. They will be awarded by the generous Lord in accordance with His favour and bounty. Our answer is that the meaning of this verse is general; those who deserve punishment are not its sole addressees.

Moreover, the rewarding of creatures in accordance with grace and generosity does not preclude their being recompensed for their works. For the meaning of favour (fadl) is that the generous Lord will grant a large reward in return for small deeds and in fact He will consider small deeds as large. Nevertheless, the reward will be in return for the deeds, whereas the meaning of the noble verse cited above is something else. It means that the sincere servants of God (mukhlasin) are basically not recompensed in return for their deeds. Also it is stated in another verse

لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ فِيهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيدٌ

There shall be for them whatever they wish, and there will be more with Us. (50:35)

That is, this group will receive whatever they desire and will, and they will receive from God over and above what they will and wish. Hence it is known that they will receive such gifts of Divine generosity as are over and above their desire and will and beyond the reaches of their thought and the flight of their will and volition, and this point deserves close and careful attention.

Fourthly, they have such a sublime station, such a high office and a position that is so great that they can praise God and thank the One as He is and as is worthy of that Sacred Being. God, the Exalted, has said

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ

God is above what they attribute to Him, excepting the sincere servants of God. (37:160)

And this is ultimate perfection for a creature and the highest possible station that it can possess.

What has been said hitherto reveals what excellences and graces pertain to the ultimate stage of wayfaring which is the station of the mukhlasin. However, one should know that attainment of these excellences and the realization of these realities becomes feasible when the wayfarer is 'killed' in the struggle (jihad) in the way of God.' He would come to partake of those Divine graces when he drinks the cup of martyrdom.

And that which is meant by 'being killed' here is severance of the spirit's bondage to the body and all that accompanies it. In the same way that the martyr in the field of battle has his spirit liberated from attachment to the

body with the outward sword, the wayfarer of the God's way cuts the chains that bind his spirit to the body and its accoutrements with the inner sword in the field of battle against the carnal self (nafs al-ammarah) with the assistance of the forces of Divine mercy.

At the beginning of the path, the God ward wayfarer, by acquiring the station of zuhd renunciation, abstinence, asceticism and contemplating the unworthiness of the world and the futility of attachment to it, should cut off the chains of attachment to the realm of pluralities. That is because the outcome of abstinence and zuhd is the absence of attachment to things, with the result that he is not delighted by events that bring material and mundane benefit and is not grieved by events that cause material harm and loss,

لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ

. . . that you may not grieve over what you lose nor be joyous over what you obtain. (57:23)

This resignation and absence of desire is not contrary to feeling grief and delight for the sake of God, because this happiness does not pertain to the love of wealth and transient things and ends, but arises on account of his finding himself immersed in the ocean of Divine munificence and bounteousness.

After passing through this stage, the wayfarer will notice that he has an extreme attachment to his own being and loves himself to the point of extreme love (ishq). He will discover that whatever he does and whatever austerities he undertakes are all inspired by his extreme self-love. This is because one of the characteristics of man is that he is of nature self-seeking and self-loving. He sacrifices all things for his own self and does not stop from destroying anything for his own survival.

Annihilation of this instinct is very difficult, and to fight this self-seeking urge is the most difficult of tasks. And as long as this urge is not annihilated and until this instinct is killed, the light of God will not shine in one's heart. In other words, as long as the wayfarer does not transcend himself he will not reach God.

The wayfarer must weaken this tie of self-love with the assistance of Divine grace and the consecutive relieves of Divine mercy and, after gradually weakening it, cut it off totally, forswearing this inner idol, which is the source of all vices, and consigning it to oblivion once and for all, so that a contemplative inner search reveals all his works to be for sake of the sacred Divine Being and his self-love transformed into the love of God.

This takes place through mujahadah. After traversing this stage the wayfarer is liberated from attachment to the body and its effects, and even from the bondage to his spirit, which is also severed. Now whatever he does is for sake of God. If he satisfies his hunger or works to obtain such means of livelihood as are necessary for his needs, that is because the Eternal Beloved desires his life; otherwise he would not take a single step for maintaining this life. However, this desire of his is one which is a continuation of the will of God, not one which is parallel to it.

For this very reason the wayfarer has no right to seek occult experiences and miraculous qualities, or to take any step for performing austerities or chanting invocations to obtain such powers as the ability to make

miraculous journeys over land and sea (lay al-ard), or to acquire the knowledge of occult matters, or of the secret thoughts of others or the power to control the materials of the universe, or to take any kind of step whatsoever for the sake enhancing his psychic powers, because one who does that does not move on the path of the Beloved's pleasure and his worship is not for the sake of God, nor will he be one of the mukhlasin.

Rather, in such a case, it is his own self that he worships and seeks to satisfy his own needs with the acts aimed to develop his powers, though he may not admit it by word of mouth and appear to perform all his worship for the sake of God. In accordance with the noble verse,

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ

Haven't you seen him who has taken his desire to be his god? (25:43)

such a person will be one who has made his desire the object of his worship, worshipping as he does his own personal ambitions. The wayfarer should pass through this stage and shed his self and its egoism. We will have more to say about it later on, God, the Exalted, willing.

When at last the wayfarer reaches this station, gradually the love he had for himself for the sake of God, the Exalted, will also be forgotten. Now he no longer sees himself, not beholding anything that may absorb his attention except the Eternal Beauty. Gradually, he is submerged in that shoreless ocean without leaving any trace.

It should be known that the wayfarer should be careful in the battle against the carnal soul to rout the troops of Satan thoroughly and to wipe out completely the effects of the carnal soul (athar al-nafsaniyyah) and remove their roots from the hidden corners of the heart. For even if a particle of the love of wealth, glory and office, or of pride, ambition and self-love should remain in him, he will never attain perfection.

Accordingly, it has often been seen that many of the Perfect (kummalin) do not attain to the perfections sought even after years of austerities and mujhadah and are defeated in the battle against the carnal soul (nafs). Its reason is that the roots of certain qualities still survive in their hearts while they imagine that they have been completely wiped out. Therefore, at the times of Divine tribulation and in temptations involving the carnal soul and manifestation of its effects, those roots suddenly send forth shoots which grow and finish off the wayfarer.

Success in overcoming the carnal soul and its drives depends on the special aid and grace of the Lord of lords, for it is not possible to traverse this stage without His special assistance and favour.

It is said that one day the pupils found marhum Sayyid Bahr al-'Ulum, may God be pleased him, smiling and in a joyous mood. When inquired about the reason for it, he replied, "After a mujhadah of twenty-five years, now when I peer into myself I see no trace therein of ostentation (riya') and I have at last succeeded in wiping it out." These words call for serious reflection.

It should not remain unsaid that from the beginning of wayfaring to its final stage the wayfarer must abide by all the precepts of the luminous Shari'ah, not departing from it even to the smallest extent.

Hence should one come across anyone who claims to be a wayfarer without being committed to piety and abstinence from sin and who does not follow all the Divine laws of the Shari'ah and deviates, even to the smallest extent, from the straight path of the true Shari'ah-excepting that which may occur due to some error, or for an excuse or on account of forgetfulness- one should consider him to be a hypocrite.

And that which is heard from some people that the wayfarer is spared of shar'i obligations after attaining to the higher stations and reaching the Divine graces-that is a big lie and slander. That is because the Noble Messenger (S) did abide by all the Divine precepts until the last moments of his life, although he was the noblest of all beings and the most noble of all creation.

Hence freedom from the obligations, in this sense, is a lie and a slander. Yes, one may interpret such a statement in another sense, which is, of course, not intended by its proponents. It is this: the performance of the rites of worship leads to the development of the human soul, and adherence to the rites of worship brings human capacities from potentiality to actuality.

Accordingly, for individuals who have not yet attained the stage of complete and all-round actuality, the rites of worship, for them, are for the purpose of development. But for individuals who have attained complete actuality, the performance of worship for the sake of development and attainment to the station of Divine proximity is meaningless.

Rather, the worship of such persons has another meaning implied in their actualized perfection. Thus the Noble Messenger (S) was asked by 'A'ishah why he took so many pains in worship when God had declared to him:

لِيُغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ

. . *that God may forgive you former and future sins. (48:2)*

The Prophet (S) replied: "Don't you want me to be God's grateful servant?"

From this it becomes clear that the performance of the rites of worship for some human souls is not for spiritual development but purely for the sake of expression of thankfulness and gratitude to God Almighty.

The states that befall the wayfarer as a result of muraqabah and mujahadah, and at times, off and on, he might have certain experiences and see certain lights-all these are a preliminary to an enduring condition (malikah).

Because the sole occurrence of experiences and changes of state are not sufficient and, rather, the wayfarer must struggle through mujahadah to completely wipe out the traces of the lower world that lie hidden and concealed within his being. And as long as he does not attain some semblance to the pure ones of the higher world, it will not be possible to attain to their degree. In fact, the smallest lapse in wayfaring and spiritual jihad would bring him down again to the lower world, and it is to this subtle point that the following noble verse refers:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ

And Muhammad is not but a Messenger and there have indeed been other Messengers before him. So if he should die or is killed, would you turn back on your heels? (3:144)

Hence the wayfarer must purge his inner and outer being once for all and remove all impurities from the nooks and corners of his heart so that he comes to partake of the company of immaculate spirits and the comradeship of the pure ones of the Higher Elite:

وَدَّرُوا ظَاهِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهُ

And get rid of sins that are outward and inward. (6:12)

On this basis he should cover completely the realms which are a preliminary to the world of khulus and its gist has been stated by God, Blessed and Exalted, in this blessed verse:

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ * يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَجَنَّاتٍ لَهُمْ فِيهَا نَعِيمٌ مُّقِيمٌ *
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

Those who have believed, and migrated, and have struggled in the way of God with their possessions and their selves are mightier in rank with God; and those are the triumphant; their Lord gives them good tidings of mercy from Him and good pleasure; for them await gardens wherein is lasting bliss, therein to dwell forever and ever; surely with God is a mighty wage. (9:20-22)

On the basis of this, there are four worlds that precede the world of khulus: first, Islam (submission); second, Iman (faith); third, hijrah (migration); four, jihad (struggle) in the way of God. And as the jihad of this traveller is the greater jihad, in accordance with the statement of the Messenger (S):

رَجَعْنَا مِنَ الْجِهَادِ الْأَصْغَرِ إِلَى الْجِهَادِ الْأَكْبَرِ

We have returned from the lesser jihad towards the greater jihad,

therefore, that which is required in this journey is that the Islam and Iman of the mujahid should be greater Islam and greater Iman. It is after this that it is proper for the seeker to muster his resolution and set out on his migratory journey with the inner apostle and with the assistance of the outward Apostle or his successor (khalifah), and then enter the battlefield of mujahadah to attain the victory of martyrdom in the path of Allah.

But the wayfarer must be aware of this point that from the beginning of the journey to this stage of jihad there will be many obstacles, created by men and devils. But when he attains to the triumph of this martyrdom and passes beyond the worlds of greater Islam and greater Iman and succeeds in the mujahadah and is killed, he stands at the beginnings of the world of greatest Islam, greatest Iman, greatest hijrah and greatest jihad, and its obstacles are the greatest kufr (infidelity) and greatest nifaq (hypocrisy). The troops of Satan have no access to this valley and no power therein; rather, Satan himself, who is the ringleader of the devils, will intercept the wayfarer in his journey.

Accordingly, the wayfarer must never imagine that as he has passed these worlds he has been rescued from the perils and reached his destination. Rather, he must be aware that after traversing the preceding worlds should he fail to traverse these greatest worlds he would become a prey of Satan who will stop him from reaching his ultimate destination.

However, the wayfarer must have a lofty courage and determination, and he should not permit Satan to afflict him with the greatest kufr or the greatest nifaq. Rather, after traversing the stages of greatest Islam and greatest Iman he must carry out the greatest hijrah and, with the greatest mujahadah, pass through the plain of greatest resurrection of the souls (qiyamat al-'uzma-ye anfusiyah) to enter the valley of the mukhlisin. May it be granted to us by God, the Exalted, God willing.

Notes

1. Translators's Note: In his book Rah al-mujarrad, the author quotes the following explanation of his teacher, Sayyid Hashim Haddad, concerning the different kinds of thoughts:

"Thoughts are of four kinds.

"First, those which are divine and these are thoughts that turn one's attention away from oneself and towards God and summon one to Him.

"Second, those which are satanic, which are thoughts that make one oblivious of God, and cause anger, enmity, greed, and envy to grow in the heart.

"Third, the malakuti thoughts, which are those that lead the human being towards the worship of God and God wariness.

"Fourth, the nafsani thoughts, which are those which allure one towards the world's adornments and appetites.

"And the human being has a sublime faculty which can turn all satanic and nafsani thoughts into virtues, and employ all of them in the way of God, so that the earning of wealth, fulfilment of appetites, and the cultivation of adornments-all are done for the sake of God, and not the self.

"He has also a faculty that is higher than that one, which can transform all those thoughts, including the spiritual thoughts, into divine thoughts, leading one to consider them and view them as ensuing from God, and encountering nothing at all save God"

2. The biographical account of Baba Faraj Majdhab is given in the Ta'rikh al-Hashri, written on accounts of the sages and gnostics of Tabriz. His sayings, including this one, have been mentioned in verse in that book:

که فرج تا که دیده بگشاده ست

چشم او بر جهان نیفتاده است

*Since Faraj opened his eyes,
They never fell on the world.
Hafiz says something similar:*

منم که شهرة شهرم به عشق ورزیدن

منم که دیده نیالوده ام به بد دیدن

*It is I who am famed in town for the philandering
I, whose eyes were never stained with dirty looks
And Ibn al-Farid has said:*

وَحَيَاةَ أَشْوَاقِي إِلَيْكَ وَتُرْبَةَ الصَّبْرِ الْجَمِيلِ

مَا اسْتَحْسَنْتُ عَيْنِي سِوَاكَ وَلَا صَبَوْتُ إِلَيَّ خَلِيلِ

*And Life, my longings of you,
And my grave, my patience fair,
Beyond you, my eyes behold no charm,*

*Nor any friend do I long for.
It is reported that he said, "I composed this couplet in a dream."*

A Detailed Description of the Realms Preceding the World of Khulus

As mentioned, the wayfarer on the way of God, the Exalted, must traverse twelve realms before entering the world of khulus, which consist of the worlds ' of lesser, greater and the greatest Islam (submission), the worlds of lesser, greater and the greatest Iman (faith), the worlds of lesser, greater and the greatest hijrah (migration), and the worlds of lesser greater and the greatest jihad (struggle). One should know the attributes of these realms and their effects and signs as well as the obstacles and hindrances relating to them. Here we shall describe them briefly, as they have been described elaborately in the fine work of the marhum Sayyid Mahdi Bahr al'Ulum, the pride of the legists and saints. Those seeking the details should refer to it. Here we shall describe them concisely for clarification of the matter.

Islam al-Akbar (Greater Islam)

Islam al-akbar consists of surrender and absolute submission; that is, it involves the renunciation of all complaint and objection of any kind whatsoever against God, Almighty and Glorious, with the confession and acknowledgment that whatever exists. and has occurred is proper and good and that which did not was not such. It implies a total abstinence from questioning and complaint in regard to the Almighty- Lord, and to this station refers the statement of the Mawla of the Muwahhidin, Amir al-Mu'minin, may Peace be upon him:

إِنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ هُوَ التَّسْلِيمُ وَالتَّسْلِيمُ هُوَ الْيَقِينُ

Verily, Islam means surrender (taslim), and surrender means conviction (yaqin).

Beside the renunciation of objection, there should not be any kind of grudge or ill feeling in one's heart in relation to God's dispensations, whether they pertain to the Shari'ah or to the world of objective existence, as stated in this statement of God, the Exalted:

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِي مَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

Nay, by thy Lord, they shall not believe until they make you the judge concerning the disputes that arise between them and thereafter when thou hast given the judgment against one of them and he finds it detrimental to his interests do not find in their hearts, in any way whatsoever, any grudge or ill feeling concerning thy judgement and surrender in complete submission. (4:65)

This is the same as the stage of imam al-akbar wherein Islam al-akbar has penetrated to the spirit and truly pervaded one's heart and soul.

Ima'm al-Akbar (The Greater Faith)

When the heart of the wayfarer is illumined with the light of Islam al-akbar, he enters a state wherein he witnesses-aside from an intellectual understanding of the matter-that whatever exists derives from God, the

Exalted, and, in other words, finds God present and watchful in all circumstances.

This is the same as the stage of shuhud and Islam al-akbar. However, as it has not reached the frontier of perfection to permeate through all the organs of the body and take charge of its members and parts, therefore the corporeal obstacles and his physical preoccupations distract him from that state and he loses that shuhud during his preoccupation with something and is overtaken by neglect (ghaflat).

Accordingly, the wayfarer must remain steadfast, with a firm determination, and raise that state to the plane of perfection, making it into an enduring habit (malikah), so that outward preoccupations do not overtake the wayfarer and divert him from the course of shuhud.

Hence he must develop this Islam from the plane of the heart to that of the spirit, so that that which was transient and passing becomes permanent and enduring. Under the command of the spirit, that state spreads to all the outer and inner faculties, changing from being a passing state to an enduring station. This station is the same which is called ihsan by the gnostics, as God, the Munificent, states in the Glorious Qur'an:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا

And those who struggle in Us, We shall guide them in Our ways. (29:69)

And not confining to stating this, He adds:

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

...And verily God is with the good-doers (muhsiniin). (29:69)

Therefore, the mujahid of God's way cannot reach the paths of Divine guidance until he attains the station of ihsan. The Apostle of Allah (S) was asked concerning the meaning of ihsan. He replied:

أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ ، وَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

(It means) that you should worship God as if He sees you, for if you don't see Him, indeed He does see you.

That is, one should worship God as if one were seeing Him, and should one be unable to worship Him in this manner, at a lower plane he should worship God as if God were seeing Him. Until the Islam al-akbar of the wayfarer does not reach the plane of imam al-akbar, the state of ihsan comes to him only off and on, wherein he performs worship eagerly and with much appeal and interest. But when he reaches imam al-akbar, the state of ihsan reaches the enduring station of the muhsinin.

At this point, all the particular of the wayfarer actions, as well as his general conduct, are driven by eagerness and fondness. All his actions are carried out with a tranquil mind, because at this stage faith has spread to the spirit, and since the spirit is the sovereign ruler of all bodily members and organs, it employs them all for its purposes and ends and they, too, perform their tasks easily and without hindrance, submitting and surrendering together to the spirit and without disobeying it even for a moment. God, the Blessed and the Exalted, has said concerning this group:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ. الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ، وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ

The believers surely have prospered! Those who are humble in their prayers, and those who turn away from what is vain. (23:1-3)

That is because preoccupation with vain things is a result of their appeal and interest for them, and the wayfarer who possess a faith of the degree of imam al-akbar and has reached the enduring station of ihsan has no inclination for them whatsoever, as he knows, moreover, that two longings and two loves cannot abide in one heart, in accordance with the statement of God, the Exalted:

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِيْ جَوْفِهِ

God has not placed two hearts in a man's breast. (33:4)

And should there be an inclination toward or interest in vain matters in a wayfarer's heart, as causes are inferred from their effects, we conclude that his heart was devoid of a longing for the Divine. Such a heart would be hypocritical due to expressing eagerness in matters relating to God, the Exalted, as well as in matters pertaining to vanities and frivolities. This is 'the greater hypocrisy' (nifaq al-akbar), which is the opposite of imam al-akbar. The submission and obedience in the heart of such a wayfarer does not spring from inner eagerness and longing, but derives from his intellect and is the product of fear and caution. It is to this nifaq that this statement of God Almighty refers:

وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كُسَالَىٰ

And when they stand for prayer they stand lethargically. (4:142)

The wayfarer attains to the station of imam al-akbar only after being freed from all degrees of this nifaq, when there remains no sign of his actions being inspired by a mere intellectual understanding and a prudence and caution deriving from fear; but when they are purely inspired and motivated by longing and love.

Hijrat al-Kubra (The Greatest Migration)

When the wayfarer arrives at the station of imam al-akbar, he must prepare to make the greatest migration. That consists of:

(1) Distancing oneself physically from the society of the disobedient and avoidance of the company of the rebellious and treacherous children of worldliness,

(2) The heart's migration after freedom from affection for and inclination towards them, and

(3) The combined migration of the body and the heart together from the prevailing customs, traditions, conventions and norms that keep the wayfarer from the Path of God-and pose obstacles in his journey, for custom and tradition make the ammunition of the citadels of infidelity.

In a materialistic society man is a captive of imaginary and fantastic customs and habits, which the people of the world are used to and which they have made the foundation of their profits and losses, their transactions, relations and communications.

For instance, it is usual to regard someone who sits silent through learned gatherings and debates, without opening his mouth, as ignorant. Or, for instance, by habit everyone tries to get a front seat in gatherings,

considering it a sign of one's importance. The same is true of walking ahead of others while entering gatherings and leaving-things which are considered a mark of status.

Flattery and sycophantic manners are considered a mark of geniality, courtesy, and good nature and the opposite of them are regarded as signs of unimportance, triviality, ill-naturedness or as the lack of notability and personal prestige. The wayfarer must get rid of all of them with Divine succour and assistance, and migrate from this world of fantasy and fancy, sending off this old hag with triple divorces.

In the course of this dissociation the wayfarer must not have any fear or alarm, nor should he be afraid of the people's adverse opinion, nor heed the blame of persons who consider themselves as men of learning and scientific accomplishment. Hence there is the tradition narrated in Kulayni's compendium, on the authority of Sakuni, from Imam Sadiq ('a) from the Noble Apostle (S) that he said:

أركان الكفر أربعة: الرغبة، والرهبه، والسخط، والغضب

The pillars of unbelief (kufr) are four: desire, fear, displeasure, and anger.

The 'fear' here has been interpreted as the fear of people for violation of their imaginary customs and norms. In fine, the wayfarer must get rid of all the conventional social customs, manners and traditions which pose an obstacle in the path of God. The gnostics refer to this as 'madness' (junun) because the insane person is unacquainted with the people's customs and habits, nor does he attach any significance to them. He is indifferent to their praise and blame and has no fear of their hostile reaction, nor does he try to mend his ways.

اي دل آن به که خراب از مي گلگون باشي
بي زر و گنج به صد حشمت قارون باشي
در مقامي که صدارت به فقيران بخشند
چشم دارم که به جاه از همه افزون باشي
تاج شاهي طلبي گوهر ذاتي بنما
ار خود از گوهر جمشيد و فريدون باشي
کاروان رفت و تودر خواب و بيابان در پيش
کي روي ره ز که پرسي چکني چون باشي
ساغري نوش کن و جرعه بر أفلاك نشان
تا به چند از غم أيا م جگر خون باشي؟

*O heart, better that ye be ruined by rosy wine,
And have a glory, without gold and treasure,
A hundred times that of Korah.
In stations where the dervishes are seated high,*

*I hope you will find a majesty superior to all.
Ask you for the royal crown? Show your worthiness,
If you are like the jewel of Faridun and Jamshid's pearl.
The caravan has departed, and you are asleep,
While the desert lies yonder, when will you set out?
Who will show you the way? What will you do?
I have shown you the point of love, so do not falter
An outsider you will be if you look beyond the circle.
Take a cup, and spurt out a sip at the heavens,
How long will you grieve for the world's sorrows?*

Jihad al-Akbar (The Greater Struggle)

When the wayfarer, with the Lord's help, succeeds in making the migration and frees himself from society's customs and habits, he enters the field of the greater jihad, which is the field of battle against the hosts of Satan. Because, at this stage, the wayfarer is a captive in the world of nature and in the bondage of the faculties of Imagination, Anger, and Desire.

A victim of conflicting urges, surrounded as he is by the darkness of expectations and hopes, he is obsessed by worries and sorrows, anguished by things and events contrary to desire and predilection and loathsome to the mind, awaiting manifold calamities, with a fire raging in every part of his breast, his inward being crushed by myriad needs and indigence, pain, and vengeance. At times he is torn in the tussles of family and kin, and at other times under the spell of fears of the ruin of property and assets. At times he seeks prestige and fails to attain it or pursues an office that he fails to obtain.

The thorns of envy, anger, pride and desire torment him and he is a sorry and contemptible victim in the claws of corporeal life, stung by the scorpions of the world of nature and preyed upon by the carrion of materiality. The abode of his heart is darkened by the dark and innumerable shadows of Imagination, and wherever he turns up he is struck down by the fist of fate and wherever he places his feet he is tortured by its thorns. These torments and afflictions accumulate in the wayfarer's breast, and on reflection and contemplation their multiplicity is disclosed to him.

With God's succour the wayfarer must triumph against the hosts of Imagination, Anger, and Concupiscence and be victorious in this greatest jihad. On winning this great battle and freeing himself from the claws of mundane attachments, removing the hurdles from his way, he finally bids farewell to the world of nature.

Islam al-A'zam (The Greatest Submission)

At this stage he enters the world of Islam al-a'zam, and here he sees himself as a unique jewel and a matchless diamond, encompassing the world of nature and immune to death and destruction, free from the conflict of contradictories, beholding within himself a purity, a glory, and a light surpassing the perceptions of the natural world.

That is because he has died to the world of nature and found a new life, and although he is apparently in the lower world of mulk and nasut, he beholds the beings of nasut in their malakuti forms. However, the tides of

matter may turn towards him, but they do not harm him, because drawing aside the curtains he has reached the plains of the Middle Resurrection of the Souls (qiyamat al-anfusiyyah ye wusta), whereat many hidden mysteries become disclosed to him and he enjoys many a wonderful state. This rank is the same station of Islam al-a 'zam mentioned clearly in the verses of the Qur'an:

أَوْ مِنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَتَلَّهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ
بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Why, is he who was dead and Me gave him life, and appointed for him a light to walk by among the people as one who is in darkness and never emerges from it? So are their works made to appear fair to the unbelievers. (6:122)

And similarly in the statement of God, the Exalted:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ
مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

And whosoever works righteously, and is a believer; whether male or female, We shall assuredly revive him with a goodly life, and We shall recompense them with a reward better than what they did (16:97)

It should be noted that at this point the wayfarer, due to what he observes in himself, may get into a state of conceit and pride, thus confronting his biggest and bloodiest enemy, his lower soul (nafs), as mentioned in the tradition:

اعدى عدوك نفسك التي بين جنبيك

Your staunchest enemy is your (lower) soul, which dwells between your two sides.

And should the Divine aid not rescue him at this stage he would be afflicted with kufr al-azm (the greatest infidelity), and it is this kufr which is referred to in the saying:

النَّفْسُ هِيَ الصَّنَمُ الْأَكْبَرُ

The (lower) soul is the biggest idol.

It was the worship of this idol against which Hadrat Ibrahim ('a) beseeched God's refuge, seeking deliverance from it:

وَاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ

And turn me and my sons away from serving idols, (14:35)

for it is quite obvious that the worship of idols was inconceivable for someone like the Friend of the All-Beneficent (khalil al-rahman) and it was this shirk from which the Noble Apostle (S) sought God's refuge, with the prayer:

أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الشِّرْكِ الْخَفِيِّ،

O God, I seek Thy refuge from the covert shirk.

Hence, the wayfarer, with God's succour, should affirm his non-being and admit his inability and fallenness, servitude and slavery, casting away

egoism, so that he does not fall victim to kufr al-a 'azm and succeeds in reaching Islam al-a'zm.

Some sages among the gnostics, throughout their lives, would not utter the words "I" and "we" and would say instead, for instance, "This servant came" and "This servant left," while some, in describing their actions, would ascribe that which was beautiful and good and which derived from the Divine Essence to Him, and attribute to themselves that which related to themselves as such, the Sacred Divine Being being absolved of its taints.

And in cases where something could be related to themselves as well as to God they would say "we." They based this practice on the episode of Hadrat Khidr and Musa, may Peace be upon them, where Khidr says:

أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسَاكِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَعْيِبَهَا

As for the ship, it belonged to certain poor men, who toiled upon the sea; and I desired to damage it, (18:79)

because the inflicting of damage may not be attributed to the Divine Essence, and, accordingly, he ascribes it to himself by making the statement in the first person singular. However, as the killing of the lad could be ascribed to Hadrat Khidr and to God, he describes it in the first person plural.

وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ فَكَانَ أَبَوَاهُ مُؤْمِنِينَ فَخَشِينَا أَنْ يُرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ يُبَدِّلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا
خَيْرًا مِنْهُ زَكَاءً وَأَقْرَبَ رَحْمًا

As for the lad, his parents were believers; and we were afraid he would inflict on them insolence and unbelief, so we desired that their Lord should give to them in exchange one better than he in purity, and nearer in tenderness. (18:80-81)

As the concern for welfare and the will to grant benefit and excellence derives, from the Divine Essence, it is attributed to the Sustainer.

وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ

As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan lads in the city, and under it was a treasure belonging to them. Their father was a righteous man; and thy Lord desired that they should come of age and then bring forth their treasure, as a mercy from your Lord.. . (18:82)

The same manner of speech can be observed in the words of Hadrat Ibrahim ('a) when he said:

الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ

. . . Who created me and Himself guides me; who Himself gives me to eat and drink, and, whenever I am sick heals me. (26:78-80)

Here he attributes sickness to himself and its healing to God. Attainment to the station of Islam al-azam and riddance from the soul's egoism, which sets the stage for Satan to make appearances, must take place with Divine succour. Hajj Imam-Qulli Nakhjawani was the teacher in the ma'arif of marhum Aqa Sayyid Husayn Aqa Qadi, the father of marhum Aqa Hajj Mirza 'Ali Aqa Qadi, may God be pleased with theirs, and he was traversing

the stages of perfection in ethics and Divine teachings under the tutelage of marhum Aqa Sayyid Quraysh Qazwini, may God be pleased with him.

He says: "After I reached old age and decrepitude I saw Satan as the two of us stood at the top of a mountain. Putting my hand on my beard I said to him, 'I have reached old age and become decrepit. Spare me, if it is possible.' Satan said to me, 'Look over this side.' When I looked, I saw a very deep ravine. It was a dizzying sight and I was seized with an intense fright and terror. Satan said, 'I don't have any mercy or compassion in my heart. Should I get my hands on you, your place will be at the bottom of this pit that you see!'"

Imam al-A'zam (The Greatest Faith)

The stage above Islam al-azam is that of imam al-a'zam, and that consists of the heightened manifestation and clarity of Islam al-a'zam, whereat the wayfarer passes beyond knowledge and belief to enter the stage of direct vision, mushahadah. At this point the wayfarer leaves the world of malakut to participate in the Greatest Resurrection of the Souls (qiyamate kubra al-anfusiyah), entering the world of jabarut; and passing beyond the visions of malakut (mushahadat al-malakutiyyah) attains to the spectacle of the jabarut (mu'ayanat al-jabarutiyyah).

Hijrat al-'Uzma (The Greatest Migration)

After this the wayfarer must migrate from his own being, abandoning it once and for all, and this is the journey to the world of Absolute Being (wujud al-mutlaq). To this stage refers this utterance of some sages:

دَعِ نَفْسَكَ وَتَعَالَ

Leave your self and come,

and to this stage refers the statement of God, the Exalted:

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَاَدْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

... And Enter among My servants and enter My Garden. (89:29-30)

because, "and enter My Garden" comes after "and enter among My servants," the words:

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ

O contented soul! (89:29)

are addressed to a soul that has been through jihad al-akbar and has entered the abode of contentment, which is the world of victory and triumph. And since it has not yet gone through the greatest jihad (mujahadeh- ye 'uzma), traces of its own existence remain and their ultimate dissolution depends on the occurrence of jihad al-a'zam. Accordingly, it has not left the domain of the soul's domination and control (tasallut wa qahr) and is still in the field of "the king" (malik) and "the Mighty" (muqtadir) which are two Names of God Almighty mentioned in the following verse :

فِي مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِيكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ

In the abode of truth, near the Mighty King. (54:55)

After this stage, the wayfarer struggles against the feeble traces of his existence and once and for all uproots and destroys their remnants which lay

concealed, so as to put his foot into the plain of absolute tawhid, and this is the world of victory- and triumph. In this manner the twelfold stages are covered, and one who has passed through the hijrat al-'uzma and jihad al-a'zam enters the world of khulus triumphant and victorious, entering the expanse of:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Verily, we are from God, and, verily, to Him do we return. (2:156)

Thereat the Greatest Resurrection of the Souls (qiyamate 'uzma al-anfusiyyah) is established for him, and having passed beyond bodies, spirits, and all finitudes (ta'ayunat), being annihilated in respect of all of them, he lays his feet into the world of lahut, leaving behind the domain of:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ

Every soul shall taste death. (3:185)

Such a person will be dead through a voluntary death, and hence the Noble Apostle (S) said:

مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَنْظُرَ إِلَى مَيِّتٍ يَمْشِي، فَلْيَنْظُرْ إِلَى عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

Whoever wishes to see a dead man walking about should look at Ali ibn Abi Talib.

An Explanation and Clarification

The perfections that were mentioned hitherto, along with their characteristics and signs, more or less of them, are graces from the Almighty Lord that are exclusive for the ummah of the Seal of the Prophets and Apostles, Muhammad ibn Abd Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family.

The perfections of the wayfarers of the preceding ummahs and the past shari 'ahs were limited. After the attainment of annihilation and extinction of their selves they could only have a vision of the Lord's Names and Attributes, but they did not conceive of a higher stage. The secret of it is that the ultimate reach of their gnosis (ma'rifah) was the word:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

There is no god save Allah,

whose result was the vision (shuhud) of the Essence as encompassing all the Attributes of perfection and beauty. But the wayfarers of the ummah of the Noblest Messenger (S) have ascended beyond this stage, getting to know the stages that lie beyond it and finding a way to stages that cannot be expressed or described. The reason for it is that all the laws and precepts of Islam derive from the word:

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أَنْ يُوصَفَ

Allah is greater than that He be describable.

On this basis, the stages covered by the Muslim wayfarer inevitably lead to a point which is inexpressible and indescribable, and this is in consonance with the relation of his wayfaring to the blessed word:

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أَنْ يُوصَفَ

Allah is greater than that He be describable.

Accordingly, the earlier prophets, too, themselves did not conceive of a station beyond that of the shuhud of Divine Names and Attributes so as to set out towards that nest with the wings of determination. For this reason, when they became afflicted with various kinds of tribulations they would take recourse (tawassul) in the spiritual wilayah of the Noblest Messenger, Amir al-Mu'minin and al-Siddiqat al-Kubra Fatimah Zahra' and her pure offspring, whereat they would find deliverance.

This was the same station of the greatest spiritual authority (wilayat al-kubra al-ma'nawiyyah) which rescued them from their sorrows and ordeals. Although they had a simple and general apprehension of this station, which enabled them to take recourse in the high stations of the Pure Ones, but its characteristics and details remained unknown to them until the end of their lives. It is only from the verses of the Qur'an that it can be inferred that Hadrat Ibrahim ('a), once or twice, and that too as a passing state and not as an enduring station, had a vision of the higher truths and the perfect graces. But, that perception was not lasting and settlement at that station was not attained for that Hadrat.

Before resorting to a demonstration of this matter on the basis of Qur'anic verses, it should be mentioned that the station of ikhlas (sincerity) consists of degrees, as the prophets did possess the station of ikhlas in accordance with express Qur'anic texts. Nevertheless, there is a station higher and more august than that of ikhlas which they did not attain, and they would pray that they might reach it in the Hereafter. For instance, although Hadrat Yusuf, may Peace be upon our Prophet and his Family and upon him, was among the mukhlasin (the Sincere) in accordance with the express Qur'anic text,

إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ

Verily he is one of Our sincere (mukhlas) servants, (12:24)

in his prayers he would beseech God to join him with the salihun (the Righteous) in their station, and he would supplicate saying:

أَنْتَ وَلِيِّي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

Thou art my Wali in the world and the Hereafter, make me die a muslim and join me, with the salihin (12:101)

Accordingly, he had not attained to the station of suluh (or salah, lit. righteousness) in this world and so he prayed that this station may be granted to him in the Hereafter. However, whether his prayer was answered and if he will attain the station of suluh in the Hereafter, is something that cannot be inferred from the Qur'an. And although Hadrat Ibrahim (a) did possess a high station in khulus, he would supplicate saying:

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي حُكْمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

My Lord grant me wisdom and join me to the salihin. (26:83)

Accordingly, the station of suluh is higher than that of the station of khulus and Hadrat Khalil aspired to be joined with those who possess this station. God did not answer this prayer of Hadrat Ibrahim in this world, but He promised it to him in the Hereafter, saying:

وَلَقَدْ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

We surely chose him in the world, and verily in the Hereafter he is among the salihun. (2:130)

It should be known that this rank of salah which was aspired to by the former prophets is different from that which has been attributed by express Qur'anic verses to Hadrat Ibrahim ('a), himself as well as his descendants, as in the statement of God, the Exalted:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ

And We gave him Ishaq (Isaac) and Ya'qub (Jacob) in supererogation, and all (of them) We made righteous (salihin). (21:72)

For such an epithet applied to all of them including Hadrat Ibrahim himself who, nevertheless, prayed for the attainment of salah. Hence this salah is something much higher and sublimer.

As to the evidence that the Apostle of Allah (S) and some others in the time of that Hadrat had reached this same degree of salah, that is provided by the noble verse of the Qur'an which reports the words of the Apostle himself:

إِنَّ وَلِيِّ اللَّهِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ

Verily, my Wali is Allah, Who has sent down the Scripture and He takes care of the salihin. (7:196)

Firstly, in this verse, the Hadrat affirms the absolute wilayah of the One (Hadrat e Ahadiyyat) over himself, and then he says, "my Wali is He Who is the caretaker of the affairs of the salihin." Hence it is known that there lived at that time individuals from among the mukhlasin at the station of suluh, and the Sustainer was the caretaker of their affairs.

From what has been said is revealed the secret of the prayers of the former prophets and their recourse (tawassul) to the Five Ones of the Household of Purity (Khamsah-ye Al al-Taharat), or to the Pure Imams, as well as the extent of elevation of the rank of their station of suluh which was so great that Hadrat Ibrahim beseeched God to be joined with them.

And as to the evidence that the great prophets had reached the station of ikhlas, that can be inferred from several points implicit in the noble verses of the Qur'an:

First, through their praise (hamd), as mentioned in the Glorious Qur'an, because, in accordance with express Qur'anic texts no one except the mukhlas servants of God can describe or magnify the One as He is worthy. God Almighty says:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ

God is absolved of what they describe (in praising Him), excepting the mukhlas servants of Allah. (37:159 -160)

And God, the Exalted, commands His Apostle to magnify Him, where He says:

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَىٰ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ أَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

Say: All praise is God's and Peace be upon His servants whom He has chosen. Isn't God better than what they make partners with Him? (27:59)

And where it describes the praise of Hadrat Ibrahim ('a):

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي وَهَبَ لِي عَلَى الْكِبَرِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِنَّ رَبِّي لَسَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ

All Praise is Allah's, Who gave me Isma'il and Ishaq despite old age, and surely my Lord hears prayer. (14:39)

Or where He commands Hadrat Nuh (Noah), may peace be upon our Prophet and his Family and upon him, to praise God, saying:

فَقُلْ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي نَجَّانَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

Say: 'All Praise belongs to God, who delivered us from the wrongdoing people.' (23:28)

Second, there are the explicit statements of the Noble Qur'an concerning the station of ikhlas of some of the great prophets. Thus He says concerning Hadrat Yusuf ('a):

إِنَّهُ مِنَ الْعِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلِصِينَ

Verily he is among Our mukhlas servants. (12:24)

And He declares concerning Hadrat Musa ibn 'Imran ('a):

وَأذْكَرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلِصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا،

And mention in the Book Musa. Verily, he was mukhlas and a prophet and an apostle. (19:51)

And He says about Hadrat Ibrahim; Ishaq, and Ya'qub:

وَأذْكَرُ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذُكِّرَى الدَّارِ

And mention also our servants Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub, men of might and vision. Verily, We purified them with a quality most pure and with a continual remembrance of the abode of the Hereafter. (38:45-46)

Third, through their thanksgiving and gratitude towards God, the Exalted, because, on the one hand, in accordance with the noble verse containing Satan's declaration concerning humankind :

فَعِرَّزِكَ لَاغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلِصِينَ

By Your honour I will delude all of them, except such of Your servants as are mukhlas, (38:83)

Satan has no access to those few servants who are among the mukhlasin. On the other, in accordance with the noble verse:

ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ مِنْهُمْ مَن يُؤْمِنُ إِلَّا جُنُودًا مُّشْرِكِينَ
شَاكِرِينَ

Then I will approach them from their front and back and from their right and left and You will not find most of them grateful, (7:17)

the servants misled by Satan will not be among the grateful. From here it may be inferred that the grateful who are beyond the reach of Satan are the same as the mukhlas servants. Now if we find servants in the Qur'an whom God, the Exalted, describes in the Glorious Qur'an as being 'thankful' and 'grateful' we understand that they are among the mukhlasin. Among them is Hadrat Nuh ('a), about whom He says:

ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا

A seed of those whom We carried with Nuh. Verily he was a grateful servant. (17:3)

And He says about Hadrat Lut (Lot) ('a):

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حَاصِبًا إِلَّا آلَ لُوطٍ نَّجَّيْنَاهُمْ بِسَحَرٍ نِعْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي مَنْ شَكَرَ

We loosed against them a squall of pebbles, except the folk of Lot; We delivered them at dawn-a blessing from Us; even so We recompense him Who is thankful. (53:35-36)

And He says about Hadrat Ibrahim ('a):

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ شَاكِرًا لِّأَنْعُمِهِ

Indeed Ibrahim was a nation obedient unto God, hanif (of a chaste faith) and no idolater; showing thankfulness for His blessings. (16:120-121)

In general all the other prophets who have been attributed with the quality of thankfulness have been among the mukhlasin.

Fourth, is the epithet 'the chosen ones,' which has been ascribed by God, Almighty and Glorious, in the Glorious Qur'an to some prophets, where He says:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِن قَبْلُ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ

وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى وَهَارُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَى وَعِيسَى وَإِلْيَاسَ كُلٌّ مِّنَ

الصَّالِحِينَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ وَلُوطًا وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ وَمِن آبَائِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ

وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَاجْتَبَيْنَاهُمْ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

And We gave to him Ishaq and Yaq'ub -each one We Guided, and Nuh We guided before; and of his seed Dawud (David) and Sulayman (Solomon), Ayyab (Job) and Yusuf (Joseph), Musa and Harun (Aaron)-even so We recompense the muhsinin-Zakariyya (Zachariah) and Yahya (John), Isa (Jesus) and Ilyas (Elias); each was of the righous, Ismai'l and Yasi ' (Elisha), Yunus (Jonah) and Lut -each one We chose above all beings; and of their fathers, and of their seed, and of their brethren; and We elected them, and We guided them to a straight path.) (6:84-87)

The station of ikhlas of all the prophets, may Peace be upon them, may be inferred from this blessed verse, contrary to the previous case where we could draw conclusions concerning only some of the prophets mentioned by name. Our inference from this verse is based on two premises:

First is the epithet of ijtiba', which lexically means 'selecting' or 'choosing' something from among things that resemble one another. For instance, if someone selects for himself an apple from a crate full of apples, his action is called ijtiba'.

As God says wa ijtabaynahum (and We elected them) in this noble verse, it means that 'We chose them from all Our creation and from among all human beings and We have chosen them for Ourselves, setting them apart in an exclusive station.-Accordingly, their case is different from that of all other mortals.

They are persons who have been made exclusive, in the full sense of the word, and exist solely for God and enjoy His special grace. It is obvious that this selection by God corresponds to the epithet of ikhlas,, for the mukhlasin

are also those who exist solely for God and who have severed all their ties totally from all other existents to become attached to His Threshold.

Second, the *ijtib'a* in the noble verse is not exclusive to a fixed group of persons, although God, after mentioning Nub and Ibrahim and sixteen other prophets, and their fathers, decedents and brothers, says 'We have chosen them.' But it is obvious that by 'brethren' here is meant those who belong to their fraternity in matters of spirituality and ethics and are their comrades and fellow travellers in the pursuit of Divine teachings. Accordingly, the verse is general, or rather universal, and one can infer from it the station of *ikhlas* of all prophets.

A General Description of the Method And Way of Godward Wayfaring

(Now that the details of the twelvefold realms of the Way are known, we may proceed to discuss the method and way of wayfaring and making the journey. Here, there are two descriptions: the first is a brief and general description and another will be a detailed one.)

The First Description

The first thing that is essential for the wayfarer to do is to undertake an inquiry and investigation into different religions and creeds, putting in an effort and endeavour to the extent of his capacity, in order to discover the Unity and Oneness of God, the Exalted, and the reality of His guidance, even if it is only to the extent of a conjecture and probability. After an affirmation, based on knowledge or conjecture, he would emerge from the state of disbelief (kufr) and enter the realm of the 'minor submission' islam al-asghar; that is, submission of a rudimentary kind and that of the minor faith (iman al-asghar).

This is the stage which is unanimously regarded as the duty of every religiously responsible individual mukallaf, i.e. someone who being sane and of mature age is considered responsible for his beliefs and acts by the Shari'ah), that he should have sufficient rational grounds for whatever beliefs he holds .

Should the mukallaf fail to reach any probability after effort and endeavour, he must make a firm resolve and, with humility and lamentation accompanied with a deluge of tears, he must make insistent invocations and pleas, not sparing any persistent and pressing supplications and appeals, until ultimately the way is opened- to him, as mentioned in the accounts reported of Hadrat Idris and his disciples-may Peace be upon our Prophet and his Progeny and upon him.

These supplications and appeals are a sign that the wayfarer has known his inability and weakness and that he desires guidance from the depths of his heart. It is obvious that God, the Exalted, does not abandon His destitute servants who seek the Truth and the path of Reality.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And those who struggle in Us, We shall assuredly guide them to Our ways. (29:69)

I remember that during the days that I was in Najaf Ashraf under the moral and spiritual tutelage of marhum Hajj Mirza Ali Qadi, may God be pleased with him, once at the time of daybreak I fell into a brief trance as I sat on the prayer mat on the roof. I saw two men sitting in front of me. One of them was Hadrat Idris-may Peace be upon our Prophet and his Progeny and upon him-and the other was my dear and honoured brother Hajj Sayyid Muhammad Hasan Tabatabai, who resides presently at Tabriz.

Hadrat Idris commenced a conversation with me but in such a manner that he would converse and communicate his speech, but his utterances would be heard from the mouth of my brother. He said, "Terrible events and accidents have occurred in my life whose solution and understanding

seemed to be impossible to me on the basis of ordinary and natural course of events, or, rather, that appeared to me to be a logically impossible task. But all of a sudden they were resolved and it became clear to me that a hand from the world of the Hidden and from above the plane of normal causes and effects was solving these riddles and removing these difficulties.

This was the first trip that connected for me the world of nature to the supernatural realm, and our ties of connection began from that point."

At that time it appeared to me that what he meant by his tribulations were the hardships and afflictions of the days of infancy and childhood. What I mean to say is that if one were really to take resort in his Sustainer in the matter of guidance, He would assuredly help and assist him. In such a circumstance seeking the help of Qur'anic verses that suit his condition would be very effective and beneficial. God, the Blessed and the Exalted, has said:

أَلَا يَذْكُرُ اللَّهُ تَطْمِئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

Lo! The hearts find tranquillity in the remembrance of God. (13:28)

Also chanting such expressions as:

يَا فَتَّاحُ , يَا دَلِيلَ الْمُتَحَيِّرِينَ

O Opener! O Guide of the perplexed!

and the like, will prove to be effective. Of course, one must take care to carry them out with sufficient attention and presence of mind and from the depth of one's heart.

One of our friends related this story. He said, "Once I was setting out by the bus for the honour of pilgrimage to Karbala' Mu'alla. My journey was from Iran. Near my seat there sat a youth who was beardless and had a Westernized appearance, and therefore there did not occur any exchange between us. All of a sudden the youth began to cry. I was very amazed. I asked him the reason for his crying.

"He said, 'If I don't tell you, then whom shall I tell! I am a civil engineer. From my childhood. years my training had been such that I grew up to be irreligious. I was a materialist and did not believe in creation and resurrection. All that I felt was a liking for pious people, whether they were Muslims, Christians or Jews.'

"One night I was attending a party arranged by my friends, most of whom were Bahais. For several hours we were busy dancing and having fun and so on. After some time I felt ashamed of myself and felt disgusted with what I was doing. I left the room and went upstairs.

There, alone, I cried for some time, a prayer arose from within me, "O God, Who are the only god that there is! Help me!" Then after a while I came downstairs. That night party came to an end, and we dispersed. Next day as I was going for a technical assignment with the railway chief and some senior officials, all of a sudden I saw a sayyid at a distance. He had a bright face and he was coming towards us. He approached and greeted me. Then he said, "I have some errand with you." I promised to see him in the afternoon the next day.

"Incidentally, after he was gone one of my companions said to me, "That was a saintly man. Why did you answer his greeting so indifferently?"

That was because when the sayyid greeted me I thought that he needed something, that he had come there to see me for that purpose. By chance, the railway chief ordered me to go next day afternoon to some place and to carry out his instructions. The time he had mentioned coincided precisely with the one that I had promised to meet the sayyid. I told myself that I would not be able to see him.

The next day when the hour of my assignment was drawing near I began to feel unwell. Gradually I had such a fever that I had to take to the bed. Then they brought a physician to examine me. Naturally I had to excuse myself from the assignment given me by the railway chief. Soon afterwards when the messenger sent by the railway chief had left, I realized that my fever had subsided and my condition had turned to normal. I felt totally well. I guessed that there must be a secret in it.

Accordingly I got up and set out for the place of that sayyid. As soon as I sat down with him, he gave me such a lucid lecture on the principal doctrines along with all their related proofs and reasons, which were so convincing that I became a believer. Then he gave me some instructions and said to me, "Come again tomorrow" I went to see him again, and then I visited him several times. He described the incident that had happened to me precisely as it had occurred. He would also describe for me all my acts and intentions, which nobody knew except me.

Some time passed in this manner until one day I was compelled to attend a party with some friends. There, I was forced to join them in gambling.

The next day when I visited him, he said to me all of a sudden, "Are you not ashamed to have committed that mortal sin?" Tears of repentance appeared in my eyes and I said to him, "It was a wrong thing for me to do. I promise not to do it again." He said, "Take a bath of repentance, and never do such a thing." Then he gave me some instructions.

Ultimately he changed the very course of my life and my life-style. This incident occurred in Zanzan. Later, when I wanted to go to Tehran he told me to go and visit certain 'ulama' in Tehran. Finally I was told to make a pilgrimage to the holy shrines. This is the journey that I am making at the behest of that sayyid. "

Our friend said: "In the vicinity of Iraq, twice, I heard him suddenly break into tears. I asked him why he had cried. He said: 'Just now we have entered the territory of Iraq, as Hadrat Abu Abd Allah (a) has greeted me.'"

The purpose of narrating this episode is that if someone really sets out with a genuine and pure intention and seeks guidance from God from the depth of his heart, he would succeed in obtaining guidance even if he had doubts concerning the very existence of God.

When the wayfarer has succeeded at this stage, he should extend his quest to islam al-akbar and iman al-akbar. The first thing that is essential at this point is the knowledge of the rules of the Shari ah, which he must learn from a jurist (faqih). After he has received that knowledge he should put it into practice. In practice, too, he must persevere until his conviction and gnosis increase degree by degree.

For knowledge gives birth to action and action in turn brings knowledge. Should anyone have a sincere knowledge of and belief in something, he

would of necessity try to make his actions conform to his perceptions. The absence of action-in accordance with the rule that every effect is traceable to its cause-discloses that one's knowledge was not certain and that he did not have any belief or faith in the matter.

Rather, it was a mere fancy painted by his ingenious faculty of imagination. Should one have a real and true knowledge that the One God is the Absolute Sustainer and Provider; one would never kill oneself obtaining the means of livelihood for oneself.

Rather, he would be content with making as much effort as has been enjoined by the Shari 'ah and he would endeavor to the extent of his ability and with a peaceful mind to procure sufficient means for himself and his family. But should he get himself embroiled in anguish and agitation for the sake of livelihood and make extraordinary efforts, that would mean that he does not know God to be the Absolute Provider or, rather, that he considers God to be a provider subject to certain conditions.

He thinks, for instance, that God is the Provider if he works as hard as he does, putting him to pains, as if God were his provider on condition that he had money and continued to receive his monthly income, and so on.

On this basis, inner and outer agitation reveals the absence of conviction concerning God being the Provider, or it signifies that one knows God to be a provider subject to certain conditions. This is what is meant by the saying that action is the result and product of knowledge. To give an example of knowledge following as the result of action, should one make the following declaration,

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَىٰ وَبِحَمْدِهِ

Glory belongs to my Lord, the Exalted, and Him do I praise,

believing it to be a fact, he would perceive his own lowliness, and it is obvious that lowliness cannot exist without exaltation: the lowly one would always stand in contrast to one who is exalted and majestic.

Accordingly, he would inevitably come to perceive the station of Absolute Majesty. Then he would understand that this Majesty is accompanied with Knowledge and Power. Hence, from a very minor action, such as this dhikr said in prostration, one would discover the absolute majesty and the absolute power and knowledge of God, the Blessed and the Exalted. This is the meaning of knowledge being the product of action and to this refers the statement of God Almighty:

وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ

..And righteous action elevates it... (35:10)

One must make a far-reaching effort in carrying out the obligatory duties and put in considerable effort in abstaining from unlawful things (muharramat). Because the neglect of obligatory duties and the commission of unlawful acts is contrary to Godward wayfaring. All the efforts of the wayfarer are beneficial when these two matters are observed.

Otherwise, in the same way that gold, adornment and ornaments are useless on a body bearing filth, so also the performance of supererogatory acts and austerities prescribed by the Shari 'ah is of no benefit for an impure heart and soul. Also, one must be careful to avoid the reprehensible acts

(makruhat) and to carry out the supererogatory ones, for attainment to the ranks of Islam al-akbar and iman al-akbar depends on these acts. Because every act has a special property which is exclusive to it and results in perfecting one's faith. The same matter is referred to in the tradition narrated by Muhammad ibn Muslim:

الإيمانُ لا يَكُونُ إِلَّا بِالْعَمَلِ وَالْعَمَلُ مِنْهُ وَ لَا يَتَّبِثُ الإِيمَانُ إِلَّا بِعَمَلٍ.

Faith cannot be without action, and action is a part of it. Faith is not established except with action.

Accordingly, the wayfarer must carry out every supererogatory act even if it is only for once, so that he may partake of its benefit. Hence it has been mentioned in the statements of Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) that "Perfect faith is the offspring of perfect action." Hence the wayfarer of the way of God must not refrain from supererogatory acts in his journey towards the station of iman al-akbar.

Obviously, his faith will remain deficient to the very degree to which he is negligent in performing the acts. Hence, if a wayfarer purifies his tongue and all other members and organs and makes them observant of the divine etiquette, in the full sense of the term, while he does not make any effort to spend his wealth in the way of God, he would not advance beyond that stage and his faith would not become perfect but would remain deficient.

The same deficiency would keep him from rising to the higher stations. Accordingly, he must make every member partake of its share of faith until the faith pertaining to it is attained. For instance, the heart, which is the sovereign of the body, must be kept engaged in contemplation (fikr) and dhikr. Dhikr means the heart's remembrance of the Names and Attributes of the Supreme Creator.

Contemplation consists of the attention of the heart and its journey through "the signs in the horizons and in the souls" and careful reflection over and examination of the realm of creation and journey through it. The human heart is watered from the mainspring of faith by the means of these two actions:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

Lo! The hearts find tranquillity in the remembrance of God. (13:28)

After that each of the parts of one's being is made to partake of its share of faith, one must commence the inner struggle (mujahadah) and by its means remove the deficiencies pertaining to Islam al-akbar and iman al-akbar, and reach the frontiers of certainty after obtaining deliverance from doubt and conjecture.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ

Those Who believe and do not vitiate their faith with wrongdoing -they, for them is security and they are the guided. (6:82)

The result of mujahadah, apart from one's establishment on the straight path, is security and safety from the trouble of satans.

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Lo! Verily, there is no fear on the friends of God, nor do they sorrow. (10:62)

Fear consists of being alarmed by something that has not yet happened and whose occurrence is expected and which causes one to be agitated and anxious. Grief consists of a sorrow arising from something unpleasant that has already occurred. These two things have no access to the wayfarer of God's way, for the wayfarer has settled his matter with God once and for all and he has no goal and purpose except God. He will neither grieve on account of any unexpected loss nor fear some unexpected event. His is the abode of certainty and those who possess it have been called by God as His 'friends' (awliya'), and to such a one refers the saying of Amir al-Mu'minin

أَبْصَرَ طَرِيقَهُ، وَ سَلَكَ سَبِيلَهُ، وَ عَرَفَ مَنَارَهُ، وَ قَطَعَ غِمَارَهُ، فَهُوَ مِنَ الْيَقِينِ عَلَى مِثْلِ ضَوْءِ الشَّمْسِ

He has seen his path and found his road, recognizing his minaret and removing s veils. So he is has a certainty; like the light of the sun.

And it is he who has said of such wayfarers:

هَجَمَ بِهِمُ الْعِلْمُ عَلَى حَقِيقَةِ الْبَصِيرَةِ ، وَبَاشَرُوا رُوحَ الْيَقِينِ ، وَاسْتَلَانُوا مَا اسْتَعْوَرَهُ الْمُتَرَقُونَ ، وَأَنْسَوْا بِمَا اسْتَوْحَشَ مِنْهُ الْجَاهِلُونَ ، وَصَجِبُوا الدُّنْيَا بِأَبْدَانٍ أَرْوَاحُهَا مُعَلَّقَةٌ بِالْمَحَلِّ الْأَعْلَى .

The waves of knowledge founded on real perception and insight rush upon them from all sides, and they feel the essence of faith and certainty tangibly in their hearts and souls. That which appears tough and harsh to the seekers of comforts is soft, smooth and easy to them, and they are used to what the ignorant regard with fear and aversion. They are in the world with their earthly bodies, but their spirits dwell on the highest summits of the sacred heights of the realms of malakut

It is at this stage that the gates of gnostic revelation and vision (kashf wa shuhud) are opened to him.

It is obvious that the traversing of these stations is not contrary to the wayfarer's presence in the world and his engagement in his previous occupations. His inner gnostic experience has no relation to his outward conditions such as married life, profession, trade, farming and the like.

The spirit of the wayfarer journeys through the realm of malakut in the company of the beings of malakut, while he is in the midst of the people and engaged in carrying out the affairs of the world. His parable is that of someone who is struck with a tragedy and suffers bereavement for the death of a relation.

This bereaved person, while he is in the midst of the people, speaks, walks around, sits, eat and sleeps. But within him there is a turmoil arising from the thought of his dear one so that whoever looks at him finds him to be sorrowful.

The wayfarer of God's way, while he is engaged in affairs relating to physical nature has links and connections with His God. An ocean of longing surges in his heart and a fire of love consumes his inner being. The sorrow of separation melts his heart and none knows of his inner turmoil except God. But whoever looks at his countenance gets some idea that it is the love of God and the longing and quest for His Sacred Being that has made him such.

This description reveals that the lamentations, pleadings and invocations of the Pure Imams, as indicated by the supplications narrated from them, were neither a pretense nor for the purpose of others' training and guidance. Such a misconception arises from ignorance and the lack of perception of realities.

Their station is nobler and more majestic than that they should say things that are affected and devoid of reality and substance, intending thereby to summon people to God through a series of make-believe and feigned supplications.

Is it right for us to think that those heartrending wails, lamentations and plaintive invocations of the Master of all masters, Hadrat Amir al-Mu'minin, and those of Hadrat Sajjad, may Peace be upon them, weren't genuine but artificial and merely contrived for others' instruction? Never! Not by no means!

Those religious leaders, may God's Peace be upon all of them, had passed beyond the stages of Godward wayfaring and entered the sanctuary of God, to reach the station of subsistence after annihilation (baqa' bad al jana), which is life in the Worshipped One (baqa ' bil-ma'bud).

Their state is one which combines the two realms of Unity and plurality (wahdat wa kathrat), and they perpetually observe Divine Unity (ahadiyyat) in the manifestations of the worlds of contingency and plurality relating to mink and malakut.

Accordingly, at the high summits of their excellences they are always observant of the essentials and implications of the worlds of mink and malakut. Or, rather, they do not avoid or withhold themselves from observance of the most minor of the laws, etiquette, and states associated with these worlds, while, at the same tune, they preserve their links with the higher worlds. That is why they are called 'beings of light' (mawjudat al-nuriyyah).

In any case, when the wayfarer succeeds and traverses these worlds and overcomes Satan, entering the world of victory and triumph, it is time for journey through the adjacent worlds. At this point, the wayfarer would have passed through the world of matter and entered the path of the world of spirits to confront the greatest journey, which is departure from the world of the soul and spirit and transition from the domain of malakfut to the realms of jabarut and lahut.

A Detailed Description of the Method and Way of Godward Wayfaring

After one has performed bay 'ah (oath of allegiance) with an aware shayhh and a wali of God, who has passed beyond the station of fana' and reached the station of baqa' billah and is informed about the things which are beneficial and harmful, those which lead to deliverance and those which lead to perdition, and who can take charge of the wayfarer's training and guide him to his sought goal, the method of journey on this path is the same as that of contemplation and dhikr, lamentation, invocation and pleading at the threshold of God, the Fulfiller of needs. However, one's journey through these stages depends on several matters, all of which must be observed in the best and most perfect manner.

First: Abandoning Habits, Customs and Conventions

The first thing that is to be done is to cast away social habits, customs, and conventions and to do away with fictitious values that hinder the wayfarer from traversing the path. What is meant is that the wayfarer should live in a moderate style among the people, for a group of people are perpetually immersed in social customs and all their thought and efforts are devoted to cultivating friends. They do not avoid any kind of formal and futile or harmful relations for the sake of keeping up their personal status.

They subject themselves to these formalities solely on account of habit and in order to maintain their apparent and imaginary prestige, often putting themselves to severe hardship. In order to preserve that which is peripheral they forgo the very substance of life. Taking the common people's appreciation and blame as a criterion and standard, they waste their lives and lifetime trying to conform to these standards. The ship of their existence is besieged with the tides of social habit and custom, swept hither and thither wherever it is carried away by the waves of common morality and etiquette.

Unconsciously, this group of people is totally submissive to the will of society. In opposition to them is the group of people who have withdrawn from the community, forsaking all kinds of social habits and norms, and depriving themselves of all social advantages. They have no intercourse or terms of friendly relations with the people and dwell in isolation, so much so that they become conspicuous by their very seclusion and known for their reclusion.

In order to attain his goal the wayfarer must adopt a policy of moderation and assume a middle position between those of these two groups, refraining from either extreme and moving on the straight path. This purpose is not attained without intercourse and dealings with the people to the extent of one's social needs. However, if there should arise an inevitable difference in sociability, in respect of quality and quantity, between a wayfarer and a non-wayfarer, it would not be harmful. Such a difference, of course, will not arise, because while social intercourse is necessary and essential to a certain extent, but the wayfarer must not, by any means whatsoever, submit to the moral characteristics and ways of the people:

وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ

And they are not afraid of the blame of any blamer in matters relating to God. (5:54)

This verse is indicative of their steadfastness in the pursuit of this straight policy and their fortitude in pursuing their own way. On the whole, it may be said that the wayfarer must evaluate every social matter in respect of its benefit and harm and he should not submit pointlessly to the caprices and opinions of the mass of people.

1. Steadfastness ('Azm)

As soon as the wayfarer puts his foot into the field of spiritual struggle (mujahadah) he is faced with difficult and unpleasant developments arising from the conduct of the people and the behaviour of acquaintances that have no purpose in life except their base desires and social aspirations. By word and action they reproach him, desiring to dissuade him from his path and purpose.

On the whole, they are alarmed by the divergence that has emerged between him and themselves in respect of the program of life, and therefore with whatever means that they have at their disposal they try to dissuade the wayfaring novice from his path with the whip of blame and reproach and they try to crush his feet.

Of course, the wayfarer will confront new problems at each and every one of the stages in his journey, which cannot be overcome without fortitude and steadfastness. The wayfarer must have such steadfastness by relying on God's power and might that he can withstand all these difficulties and annihilate these obstacles with the weapon of fortitude and trust in God (tawakkul). In view of the greatness of the goal he should not be frightened by the terrible winds that obstruct the path of God and he should not allow any fear to enter his heart by any means.

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

And let the faithful put their trust in God. (3:160)

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

And let those who trust (anything) put their trust in God. (14:12)

2. Gentleness and Leniency (Rifq wa Mudara)

This is the most important of matters which the wayfarer must observe, because even a small negligence in this regard, aside from the fact that it may halt the wayfarer's progress and advancement, may totally put an end to his journey forever. At the beginning of his journey the wayfarer finds in himself more than an expected amount of eagerness and zeal, or during the course of the journey he feels a lot of enthusiasm and yearning during the manifestation of formal revelations of Divine Beauty (tajalliyat al-suriyyeh-ye jamaliyyeh), and, as a result, he decides to be diligent in performing the acts of worship.

Thus he may spend most of his time in prayer and lamentation, performing every rite and trying to learn something from everyone, taking mouthfuls out of every kind of spiritual nourishment. This kind of practice

is not only not beneficial, it is harmful. Because, as it imposes a heavy schedule of worship on the lower soul (nafs), it suddenly reacts as a result of the pressure placed upon it and breaks down. As a result without having drawn any results the wayfarer is deprived of all activity, and he does not find any inclination in himself to perform even the smallest of supererogatory acts.

The secret behind this excess and the following breakdown is that the criterion and standard in performing supererogatory rites was taken to be one's temporary interest and zeal, leading the soul to be overloaded. When that interest and zeal subside and that intense flame becomes dimmer, then the soul, being tired from the heavy burden, suddenly plays truant throwing the journey's burden to the ground either at the outset of the journey or in the middle of it. It develops an aversion for the journey and becomes impatient with bearing the supplies needed to carry out the journey or to continue it.

Hence the wayfarer must not be misled by his passing zeal, but he should, with care and foresight, correctly estimate his own spiritual resources and the requirements of his trade and profession, as well the extent of his capacities. He should select an act that he can continue and is somewhat lighter than his capacity, and confine himself to it, and engage in it until he derives the complete benefit that accrues to his faith from that action.

On this basis, when engaging in worship the wayfarer must stop at a point when there is still interest left in him and the inclination to continue, so that this desire remains in him and he always find himself eager to perform worship. The case of the wayfarer's engagement in worship is like that of the man desirous of having a constant appetite for food: first he must select a food that suits his taste and then stop eating before he has eaten to his fill so that he continually feels an appetite. It is to this gentleness and mildness that the advice of Hadrat Sadiq ('a) to Abd al-Aziz Qaratisi relates:

يَا عَبْدَ الْعَزِيزِ ! إِنَّ لِلْإِيمَانِ عَشْرَ دَرَجَاتٍ بِمَنْزِلَةِ السُّلَّمِ يُصْعَدُ مِنْهُ مَرْقَاةٌ بَعْدَ مَرْقَاةٍ . إِلَى أَنْ قَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ . وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ مَنْ هُوَ اسْتَقْلَمَ مِنْكَ بِدَرَجَةٍ فَارْفَعَهُ إِلَيْكَ بِرِفْقٍ، وَلَا تَحْمِلَنَّ عَلَيْهِ مَا لَا يُطِيقُ فَتَكْسِرَهُ.

O Abd al-Aziz, verily faith has ten degrees, like the steps of a ladder, which one climbs step by step.... When you see someone who is at a lower step than yours, lift him up gently to yourself and don't put a burden upon him which would strain him to the breaking point.

On the whole that which can be concluded from what has been said is that a worship is effective in wayfaring which arises solely and exclusively from inclination and interest, and to this refers the statement of the Imam

وَلَا تُكْرِهُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ عَلَى الْعِبَادَةِ.

Do not force worship on yourself (making it unpleasant).

3. Loyalty (Wafa)

That consists of not committing again a wrong action after one has repented, and fulfilling the duty that one has committed oneself to carry out

and not to neglect it. It also includes remaining faithful until the end to the promises and pledges one has given to one's aware shaykh and trainer of the way of God.

4. Stability and Perseverance (Thubat wa Dawam)

Explanation of this notion requires an introduction. That which can be inferred from Qur'anic verses and sacred traditions is that whatever external entities we perceive by the means of our senses and whatever external acts we perform and which assume reality in the world of matter are accompanied with certain realities lying beyond the realm of material and physical bodies. Beyond these sensible appearances are realities of a higher order, divested of the dress of matter, time, space and all its accidents. And when those realities descend from their own reality they take material and sensible forms in the external world. It is to this fact that the blessed verse of the Glorious Qur'an expressly refers:

وَأَنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنزِّلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ

And there is nothing but that its stores are with Us, and We do not send it down except in a known measure. (15:21)

To give a brief explanation, in general that which exists in this world of matter has a reality before its external occurrence, a reality that is without extensions and dimensions. However, on its descent it becomes defined and delimited to certain particular magnitudes with Divine determination and in accordance with the Knowledge of the Supreme Creator:

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ

No affliction befalls in the earth or in yourselves, but it is in a Book, before We create it; that is easy for God. (57:22)

The forms of the external world are subject to corruption and destruction as they are finite and limited and are subject to material accidents pertaining to their coming into being and perishing:

مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ

That which is with you is perishing (16:96)

But nothing except permanence, exchangeability and universality applies to those higher immaterial realities which make up the Divine stores, and whose mode is that of immateriality and malakut:

وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ

And that which is with God is enduring, (16:96)

And to this fact and truth refers the following tradition which is accepted unanimously both by the Shi'ah and the Ahl al-Sunnah:

نَحْنُ مَعَاشِرَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ أُمِرْنَا أَنْ نُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ عَلَى عَقُولِهِمْ. قَدْرٍ

We prophets have been commanded to speak to the people in accordance with the level of their intellects.

This tradition refers to the qualitative aspect of the description of these truths, not to their quantitative aspect, and it signifies that the Divine prophets had always brought these higher truths down to a lower plane

appropriate to the understanding and grasp of their audience. The reason for this is that during the life of the world human intellects gather darkness and obscurity due to their attention towards and interest in worldly attractions and glamour and their hollow and protracted desires.

They cannot perceive that truth in their original clarity and reality. Therefore, the great prophets were forced to simplify those truths and to bring them down to a lower plane, like someone trying to explain some matter to children with their ingenuous minds, who describes it to them in sensible terms which are comprehensible to children.

Often by the means of the Shari 'ah, of which they were defenders, the great prophets described those truth in terms that makes them appear as things that are devoid of sense and consciousness, although each of the exoteric elements of the Shari 'ah, such as prayer, fasting, hajj, jihad, fulfillment of obligations towards blood relations, charities, amr bil-ma'ruf and nahy 'anil-munkar, and the rest of them possess a reality possessing life, perception, and consciousness.

The 'wayfarer' is someone who, with God's help and His succour, and with the means of wayfaring and inner struggle (mujahadah), and in the shelter of the lowliness of servanthood, humbleness, pleading and supplication, removes the obfuscations and crests from the soul (nafs) and the intellect and, with a purified intellect and a clear and luminous soul purged of taints and impurities, witnesses those higher realities in this very material life and dark realm with the purity and burnish of his spirit.

Often it happens that the wayfarer observes this very prayer and wudu' in their real form and sees clearly their excellence which is a thousand times superior to its physical form in respect of consciousness and perception. Hence there are traditions of the Immaculate Imams, may God's Peace and benedictions be upon them, containing very sublime and precious descriptions concerning the Imaginal forms (suwar al-mithali) of the rites of worships in the worlds of Barzakh and Resurrection and their conversing with persons.

Also there is a verse in the Glorious Qur'an concerning the possession of the faculties of speech, hearing and sight by bodily members. Hence it must not be imagined that a mosque is something made up of mere bricks and mud; rather it has a reality that is living, conscious, and perceptive. Hence it is mentioned in the traditions that the Qur'an and the mosque will complain before their Lord on the dawn of Resurrection.

One of the wayfarers of the way of God was resting in his bed. As he wanted to turn from one side. to another suddenly he heard a wail from the ground. When he sought the cause for it, he perceived or was told, "It is the earth that is wailing due to separation from you!"

Now after this preliminary introduction, we may say that with perseverance in performing the pertinent acts the wayfarer must reinforce the related immaterial malakuti forms in his soul, so that his passing state (hall) rises to the plane of habit (malikah). By repeating every act the wayfarer must derive his share of spirituality and faith from that act, and until this is achieved he must not stop it. That stable malakuti aspect is attained when the wayfarer performs that act steadily and contiguously until

the enduring effects of transient external acts are well established in the realm of the soul and become engraved on it, where, after their establishment, they become irremovable.

Hence the wayfarer must try to select an act that suits his capacity, and should he have no plans of continuing it and stabilizing it he should not opt for it. Because on abandonment the reality of that act becomes hostile and it departs from him resentfully carrying away with it its fruits and effects once and for all. As a result there emerge in his soul effects that are opposite to those of that act. May God be our refuge!

The meaning of its becoming inimical is that when the wayfarer abandons that act, as a reaction the reality of that action distances itself from the wayfarer, carrying away with it its characteristics and effects. And since that act possessed goodness and luminosity, as the soul loses those luminous effects, inevitably opposite effects such as darkness, gloom and evil take its place. The fact is that:

عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَيْرُ.

Nothing except good is to be found with Allah.

And:

وَأَمَّا الشُّرُورُ وَالْقَبَائِحُ وَالظُّلُمَاتُ فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِنَا.

As to evil, ugliness and darkness, they derive solely from ourselves.

Accordingly, every evil and defect and deficiency that arises derives from human beings can not be referred to God:

لَيْسَ إِلَيْكَ وَالشَّرُّ.

Hence on this basis too it becomes clear that Divine graces are not exclusive or limited; rather, they are proffered from the realm of Divinity and from the station of infinite mercy to all human individuals, including Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and the worshippers of fire and idols. However, the qualities present in the recipients, or their ill-advised choices, cause this expansive mercy to produce delight, happiness and bliss in some people and sorrow and grief in some others.

5. Self-vigilance (Muraqabah)

Self-vigilance means that the wayfarer must be watchful and on his guard in all conditions so that he is not guilty of misfeasance in respect of his duties and does neglect what he has resolved upon.

Muraqabah has a common meaning and it differs according to the difference of stations, ranks and degrees of the wayfarers.

At the beginning of wayfaring muraqabah consists of abstaining from anything that is of no benefit either for one's religion or one's world, and avoiding that which is of no concern to one, while trying not to say or do anything that is contrary to God's pleasure. But gradually this muraqabah becomes more intense and heightens degree by degree. At times muraqabah may consist of concentrating on one's silence and at other times on one's soul, and at other times, at a higher plane, on the reality of the Universal Divine Names and Attributes. Its ranks and degrees will be explained shortly, God, the Exalted, willing.

It should be known that muraqabah is one of the most important requirements of wayfaring and the great masters have laid great stress on it. Most of them have considered it to be a definite necessity of wayfaring, for it is like the foundation whereupon is built the superstructure of contemplation, dhikr and other requirements.

Therefore, without muraqabah, contemplation and dhikr will remain fruitless. Muraqabah in relation to wayfaring is like the sick man's refraining from improper foods, while contemplation and dhikr are like medicines, and until the sick person does not purge his physiological condition and refrain from that which does not suit his condition the medicines will be ineffective, or they may even produce an opposite result. Hence the sages and the grand masters of this way forbid the wayfarer from contemplation and dhikr without muraqabah, and they prescribe contemplation and dhikr in accordance with the rank and degree of the wayfarer.

6. Self-Accounting (Muhasabah)

This consists of fixing a certain time during day and night for oneself wherein one may scrutinize all one's actions during past twenty-four hours. It is to this that the statement of Hadrat Musa ibn Ja'far, may Peace be upon him, refers:

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يُحَاسِبْ نَفْسَهُ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ مَرَّةً.

He who does not take account of his own soul once every day is not one of us.

And should it appear to the wayfarer during muhasabah that he has violated his duties, he must seek forgiveness (istighfar) and, in case he hasn't done any, he should thank God, die Exalted.

7. Self-Censure (Mu'akhadhah)

It consists of the wayfarer's taking disciplinary measures against his lower soul in case of observance of any betrayal on its part and taking steps to discipline it and warn it in a manner that he himself deems fit:

8. Speedy Action (Musara'h)

It means taking speedy action in carrying out one's resolve, for this path has havocs that may pose obstacles to the wayfarer at every station pertinent to his state. The wayfarer must be very clever and judicious and carry out his duty before any hindrance arises and spoils his poise, and he must leave no stone unturned in the way of achieving his goal.

9. Affection (Iradat)

That is affection for the master of the Shari 'ah and his true successors. This affection must be so pure and sincere as to be free of any kind of taint or impurity, and this stage must be raised to the frontier of perfection. Because iradat has a great role in the effect of actions, and the greater the intensity and excellence of one's iradat, the better and more enduring will be the effect of actions in the soul of the wayfarer.

And since all existents are the creatures of God, the wayfarer must have affection for all of them and have respect for them in accordance with their rank and degree. Affection and kindness towards all creatures of the Lord,

whether human beings or animals, all of them and each in accordance with its station and rank, are manifestations of the love for God. Hence it has been stated in traditions that the main product of faith is affection for God's creation:

إلهي أسألك حُبَّكَ وَحُبَّ مَنْ يُحِبُّكَ...

O my God, I beseech You to grant me Your love and the love of those who love You.

أَحِبُّ بِحُبِّهَا تَلَعَاتِ نَجْدٍ وَمَا شَعَفِي بِهَا لَوْلَا هَوَاهَا
أَذُلُّ لَالٍ لَيْلِي فِي هَوَاهَا وَأَخْتَمِلُ الْأَصَاغِرَ وَالْكَبَارَا

*Her love makes me love the sand dunes of Najd,
And why would they delight me were it not for her love?
In her longing, I humble myself for Layla's family,
And bear with its humble and stately.*

10. Reverence and Etiquette (Adab)

This consists of veneration for the Sacred Lord of Honour and His vicegerents, and this is different from the affection and love mentioned above. For reverence consists of being careful of oneself lest one should trespass one's limits and commit some action contrary to the demands of servanthood. That is because there are limits and bounds for the contingent in respect of the Necessary Being, and that which is implied by the observance of this reverence is the observance of the requirements of the world of plurality. But love and affection consist of attraction towards the threshold of the One and that which is implied in it is attention to Unity.

The relation of affection and reverence is like the relation of that which is obligatory (wajib) to that which is forbidden (haram) in the Law, for in carrying out the wajib the wayfarer's attention is towards the Beloved while in refraining from the haram his attention is toward his own limits and bounds, lest he should trespass the bounds of contingency and violate the demands of servanthood. In fact reverence refers to the taking of a middle path between fear and hope (khawf wa raja'), and the consequence of absence of reverence is immensity of expansion (inbisat) which would not be desirable if it exceeds the desirable limit.

In the marhum Hajj Mirza Ali Aqa Qadi, may God be pleased with him, expansion and affection were predominant over his fear. Similar was the case with marhum Hajj Shaykh Muhammad Bihari, may God's mercy be upon him. On the contrary, the station of fear in Hajj Mirza Jawad Aqa Maliki Tabrizi, may God be pleased with him, predominated hope and expansion, and this is visible in his statements. Someone whose expansion is predominant is called "kharabati" (lit. 'tavern haunter'), and one whose fear is greater is named "munjati" (supplicator). But perfection lies in observance of moderation, and that consists of possessing perfect expansion while possessing perfect fear, and this is something that is exclusive to the Immaculate Imams, may God's blessings and His Peace be upon them.

To return to the main point of our discussion, that which may be concluded is that etiquette lies in this that the contingent being should not

forget its bounds of contingency. Accordingly, whenever anything was said in the presence of Hadrat Sadiq ('a) that had a trace of ghuluww i.e. ascription of divinity to the Imams in it, the Hadrat would immediately fall down and rub his forehead in the dust.

The perfect degree of etiquette is that in all conditions the wayfarer must consider himself as being in the presence of God, the Glorious and the Exalted, and observe the rules of etiquette in his speech and silence, while eating and sleeping, while moving about and while resting, and in all his states, movements and pauses. Should the wayfarer's attention be always towards the Names and Attributes of God, he will inevitably be well-mannered and humble.

11. Intention (Niyyat)

It consists of the wayfarer not possessing any purpose in his wayfaring except the making of the spiritual journey itself and seeking annihilation in the Essence of the One (dhat al-ahadiyyat). Hence the wayfarer's quest must be sincere and pure:

فَادْعُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

So call on God with pure allegiance to Him. (40:14)

It is mentioned in many traditions that intention has three ranks. Among them is the one in which Imam Sadiq ('a) says:

الْعِبَادُ ثَلَاثَةٌ: قَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ خَوْفًا فَتَلَّكَ عِبَادَةُ الْعَبِيدِ. وَقَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ طَمَعًا فَتَلَّكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَجْرَاءِ. وَقَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ حُبًّا فَتَلَّكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَحْرَارِ.

The servants are of three kinds: a group worship God for fear, and that is the worship of slaves; another group worship God for the sake of greed, and that is the worship of merchants; yet there is another group that worships God for the sake of His love, and that is the worship of freemen.

Careful reflection over these words will show that the worship of the first two groups is not real worship, because their worship is not of God and for the sake of God but derives from their egoism and self-worship. In reality they have worshipped themselves, not God, the Exalted, for the motives behind their worship are their self-seeking appetites and attachments. And since self-worship is not consistent with the worship of God, therefore, at first sight, this group are unbelievers in God and His Divinity. However, as the Noble Qur'an explicitly describes God-worship as being innate to the human being, it has negated any kind of change and alteration in creation:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

So set your face toward religion as a man of pure faith (hand; that is the original creation of God wherewith He originated mankind. There is no changing the creation of God. That is the right religion, but most people do not know it. (30:30)

Accordingly, this is not a deviation of man from the path of God-worship but from the path of tawhid, as they do not consider God to be One in His Act and Attribute and so make others His partners. Accordingly, the Qur'an,

throughout, has stood up to affirm the Unity of God and to negate any partner in relation to Him. On this basis, the first two groups consider God as a sharer in their purpose, and while they worship God they do not leave off worshipping themselves, and carry out their acts of worship with a dual purpose and this is shirk (polytheism). In reality these two groups are mushrik (polytheist) in respect of God, the Exalted, which is unforgivable in accordance With express Qur'anic texts:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا

Verily, God does not forgive that anyone should assign partners to Him, yet He forgives anything besides that for anyone He wills. (4:48)

Accordingly, their worship will never be fruitful or bring them close to God, the Exalted.

As to the third group of persons, who worship God for their love of Him, that is the worship of freemen, and it is mentioned in some traditions that:

تِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْكِرَامِ

That is the worship of the noble ones.

This is the real and correct kind of worship which is not attained by anyone except the pure ones of the Divine Threshold:

فَهَذَا مَقَامٌ مَكْنُونٌ لَا يَمْسُهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ.

This is the hidden station, untouched by anyone except the pure ones.

Love consists of attraction that is one's being gravitated towards some thing or towards some reality. The third group consists of those who have based their worship on the foundation of love and attraction towards God, and they have no purpose in view except being drawn towards Him and coming closer to Him. It is the sole attraction towards the Beloved that they feel in themselves which is the motive that drives them towards the Beloved and impels their journey towards His sanctity.

It is mentioned in some traditions that we should worship God, the Exalted, because He is worthy of worship. Obviously, this worthiness does not derive from the Divine Attributes but from the station of His Sacred Being, glorious is His Majesty and great is His station. Accordingly, it means that we must worship God because He is God.

إِلَهِي مَا عَبَدْتُكَ خَوْفًا مِنْ نَارِكَ وَلَا طَمَعًا فِي جَنَّتِكَ، بَلْ وَجَدْتُكَ أَهْلًا لِلْعِبَادَةِ فَعَبَدْتُكَ.

My God, I did not worship You for the fear of Your hell, nor in the hope of Your paradise. Rather, I found You worthy of worship and so I worshipped You.

أَنْتَ دَلَلْتَنِي عَلَيْكَ، وَدَعَوْتَنِي إِلَيْكَ، وَلَوْلَا أَنْتَ لَمْ أَدْرِ مَا أَنْتَ.

You have guided me to Yourself and have summoned me to Yourself and were it not for You I would never have known what You are!

The wayfarer of God's way begins his wayfaring with the feet of love, but after covering some stages and attaining to a certain degree of perfection he will notice that love is something other than the beloved. Therefore, he

tries to leave behind the love that had been a means for his wayfaring and his Godward ascent. He finds it as having been an effective means up to this point and but thereafter he considers it harmful. Accordingly, from this point the wayfarer keeps solely the beloved in his view and worships Him as the Beloved.

But when he goes further and covers further stages he finds that this kind of worship too is not free of the taints of shirk, because in this worship he has considered himself as the lover, and God as the beloved, and that his ego hood is other than the love of the Beloved. Accordingly, viewing the Beloved as a lover involves otherness and is contrary to the worship of God's Sacred Being. Therefore, at this point he tries to forget love and the beloved so as to totally overcome otherness and pass beyond plurality to lay his feet in the world of Unity. At this time the wayfarer becomes devoid of all intention (niyyat) because there is no more an ego or personality from which intention may arise.

Until before this stage the wayfarer had sought gnostic visions and disclosures (shuhud, kashf wa mukashafah), but at this station he consigns them all totally to oblivion, for he has no more any will or intention to have any sought object in view. At this stage, the wayfarer's eyes and heart have renounced vision as well as the absence of vision, attainment and the absence of it, knowledge and the absence of it. Hafiz Shirazi says:

با خرابات نشینان ز کرامات ملاف

هر سخن جائی و هر نکته مقامی دارد

*Don't brag of miraculous deeds before the tavern haunters,
Every continent has an occasion and every point a place.*

It is related off by Yazid Bistami that he said, "I renounced the world on the first day, and the Hereafter on the second; the third day I renounced everything other than God, and on the fourth I was asked,

ما تُریدُ ؟

'What do you want?'

I said,

أُریدُ أَنْ لَا أُریدَ.

'I want not to want anything!' "

And in this there is a hint about what some sages have said in defining the fourfold stages: "First, renouncing the world; second, renouncing the Hereafter third, renouncing the Master (mawla); fourth, renouncing renunciation." Reflect over these words. And it is this stage which is meant by the expression 'renunciation of yearning' (qat al-tam') used by the wayfarers, and this is a stage which is very great, as it is a valley most difficult to traverse and passing through which is a most formidable task.

For, the wayfarer, after much introspection and study finds that in all the phases of journey at this stage he has not been free from intention and purpose; rather there was a purpose and end that he cherished in some corner of his heart, even though that purpose should have been to transcend

the stages of deficiency and weakness and to attain perfection and excellence.

And should the wayfarer, by the means of denuding his mind and stripping away his thoughts, make repeated attempts and exert himself to the utmost so as to get across this valley and to liberate and denude him of these purposes and notions, he will not make any success. That is because the very effort to obtain this denudation (tajrid) implies the absence of denudation, for the wayfarer's effort at denuding himself of purpose has behind it a motive to attain an end, and this very motive and having an end in view is an indication of absence of denudation.

One day I mentioned this mystery to my teacher marhum Aqa Hajj Mirza Ali Aqa Qadi, may God be pleased with him, and I requested him to suggest a remedy. He said, "This problem can be solved through the means of the method of incineration. That method is that the wayfarer must perceive the truth that God, the Exalted, has made him a covetous being.

However much he may want to overcome his desire, as his covetousness lies in his innate nature it would not produce any result, for the very desire to eradicate desire implies the presence of desire and all that he has done is to overcome a lower desire by the means of a higher one.

Accordingly when he fords himself impotent to eradicate desire and fords himself defeated, naturally he would entrust his affair to God abandoning the intention to eradicate desire. This admission of impotence and helplessness burns down the very roots of desire, purging and purifying him."

However, it should be known that the attainment of this matter is not something possible through discursive thought, and discursive thought does not yield any result in this regard. Rather its true perception requires gnosis and spirituality. Should one be able to perceive this matter once through gnosis, he will ford that the attainment of all the world's-pleasures does not equal the delight of perceiving this truth.

The reason for calling this method 'incineration' is that it burns down the entire harvest of existents, intentions, frustrations and difficulties, destroying their very roots, not leaving any of their traces to remain in the wayfarer's being.

The method of incineration (ihraq) has been referred to in certain cases in the Noble Qur'an. Should anyone use this method for the attainment of the goal and move on this path, in a short time he would cover distances which would otherwise take several years. One of the cases in which it has been employed in the Glorious Qur'an is the utterance of *istirja'*:

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Verily we belong to God and to Him do we return .(2:156)

Because at times of adversity and affliction man can console himself in several ways, for instance by recalling that everyone is bound to die and everybody has to face misfortunes and in this way he can gradually pacify himself. But God has shortened the way, solving the problem once and for all through the means of the method of incineration by suggesting the formula of *istirj* '.

Because when one remembers that he himself and all that belongs to him and pertains to him belongs to God, which had been given to him one day and is taken away from him another day and that no one has a right to interfere in the matter, when one perceives clearly that he was not their owner from the very first day and that his ownership was something metaphorical and that he had baselessly imagined himself to be its owner, he would of course not be affected by its loss. Attention to this point suddenly makes things easy for him to bear.

The knowledge that from the very first God has made man covetous is like the knowledge that the Absolutely All-Sufficient Lord had created His servant poor from the very beginning, putting poverty into his very being. Hence the affirmation of poverty and the affirmation of need, which is implied in poverty, do not stand in need of a proof.

One cannot find fault with someone who is poor as to why he is a beggar, because poverty presumes begging. Accordingly; if the wayfarer of God's way is covetous during the course of his journey, he must be perceptive that God has fashioned his being from its very origin with covetousness and that he cannot get rid of desire by any means whatsoever and free himself from it.

On the other hand, as annihilation 11 the Essence of the One has been based on the foundations of the worship of freemen, it is not consistent with covetousness and intention. Accordingly; he feels helpless and finds himself in a strange state of anguish and helplessness, and this very state emancipates him from his egohood with its associated covetousness, and after crossing this stage there remain no ego or egoism with its associated desire. So understand this point and reflect upon it well!

12. Silence (Samt)

Silence is of two kinds:

- (1) general and mixed (mudaj), and
- (2) special and pure (mutlaq).

The general and mixed silence consists of withholding the tongue from superfluous speech with people. Rather, the wayfarer must confine himself to the minimum that is possible, and this silence is essential at all times and throughout the course of wayfaring. Rather, it may be said that it is unconditionally commendable. And to this refers the statement of the Imam ('a):

إِنَّ شِيَعَنَا الْخُرْسُ

Surely, our shi'ah are the mute ones.

And so also is that which has been narrated from Hadrat Sadiq ('a) in the Misbah al-Shari'ah:

الصَّمْتُ شِعَارُ الْمُجِيبِينَ، وَفِيهِ رِضَا الرَّبِّ، وَهُوَ مِنْ أَخْلَاقِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَشِعَارِ الْأَصْفِيَاءِ

Silence is the motto of the lovers and in it lies the Lord's pleasure, and it is of the etiquette of the prophets and the maxim of the elect.

And it is mentioned in the tradition narrated by Bazanti, from Hadrat Rida ('a):

الصَّمْتُ بَابٌ مِنْ أَبْوَابِ الْحِكْمَةِ، وَإِنَّهُ دَلِيلٌ عَلَيَّ كُلِّ خَيْرٍ

Silence is a door from among the doors of wisdom, and it is indeed the guide to all goodness.

The second kind is special and absolute silence, which consists of withholding the tongue from speech with people while being engaged in exclusive verbal ahikar, and it is not commendable in cases other than that.

13. Hunger (Ju') and Eating Little

'Hunger' is to be to the extent that it does not lead to weakness and does not make one's state turbulent. Imam Sadiq ('a) said:

إِدَامُ الْمُؤْمِنِ، وَغِدَاءُ الرُّوحِ، وَطَعَامُ الْقَلْبِ. الْجُوعُ

Hunger is the condiment of the believer, and the spirit's nourishment, and the heart's food.

That is because hunger brings lightness and luminosity to the soul, and thought can soar high in the state of hunger. Overeating or eating to one's fill makes the soul heavy, tired, and weary and holds it back from soaring into the skies of gnosis.

Fasting is one of the most commendable rites of worship, and in the tradition of the Prophet's celestial ascent (miraj), which is mentioned in detail in Daylami's Irshad al-qulub and volume fifteen of the Bihar al-anwar, wherein God's addresses to His beloved, the Messenger of Allah (s), begin with the words "O Ahmad!," there are amazing statements concerning hunger and its advantages in wayfaring which are described in a wonderful manner. Our teacher marhum Qadi, may God be pleased with him, would relate a strange story on the topic of hunger. Its summary is as follows:

During the days of the former prophets there were three friends who happened to enter a town where they were strangers. At nightfall they dispersed in different directions for the sake of food and they made an appointment with each other to meet together at a certain place and time the next day. One of them had received an invitation and the other became someone's guest and the third one who had no place to go, said to himself, 'I will go to the mosque and be God's guest.'

There he went, staying until the morning and remained hungry. In the morning all the three of them met together in the appointed place and each of them described what had befallen him. God, the Exalted, revealed to the prophet of that time, 'Tell that guest of Ours, "We accepted the hospitality of this dear guest. We were his host and we desired to offer him the best of foods. But on searching Our stores We did not find any better food for him than hunger." "'

14. Seclusion (Khalwat)

That is of two kinds: general and particular.

General seclusion consists of seclusion and withdrawal, except when demanded by necessity, from those who are not the people of God (ahl Allah), especially from the weak-minded among the common people,

وَدَّرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهُمْ وَعَرَّتُهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَذَكَرَ بِهِ أَنْ تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ
لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَكِيلٌ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ وَإِنْ تَعْدِلْ كُلُّ عَدْلٍ لَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا
كَسَبُوا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ

And leave alone those who have taken their religion as a sport and play and the life of the world has deceived them. (6:70)

As to the special seclusion, it consists of distancing oneself from all people. Although that is not devoid of excellence during all worship and dhikr, but in a group of verbal adhkar, or rather in all of them, it is considered essential by the masters (mashayikh) of the Way.

There are several things that are to be observed this regard: seclusion and withdrawal from crowded places and clamor, and refraining from hearing any kind of disturbing sound. The other is the lawfulness of the place and its ritual purity (taharah), even that of its roof and walls. It should have room for not more than one person and one must take care that there is nothing of worldly embellishments in it, because the smallness of the prayer cell and absence of furnishings in it result in concentrating one's senses.

A man asked Salman, may God be pleased with him, to permit him to build a house for him, as he had not built a house for himself until that time. Salman would not permit him to do that. He said, "I know why you do not permit me." Salman said, "Tell me, what could be the reason?" The man replied, "The reason is that you would like me to build a house whose length and breadth is to the extent of your body, and such a house is not practicable." Salman said, "Yes, you are right." Then that man received the permission to build such a house for him, whereupon he built it.

15. Morning Wakefulness (Sahar)

This means being awake at dawns to the extent permitted by the wayfarer's constitution. This statement of God, the Exalted, refers to the reprehensibility of sleeping at daybreak and the praiseworthiness of being awake during that time:

وَدَّرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهُمْ وَعَرَّتُهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَذَكَرَ بِهِ أَنْ تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ
لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَكِيلٌ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ وَإِنْ تَعْدِلْ كُلُّ عَدْلٍ لَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا
كَسَبُوا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ

Little of the night they would slumber, and in the mornings they would ask for forgiveness. (6:70)

16. Perpetual Observance of Taharah

That consists of always being with wudu', performing the wajib baths, the Friday bath, and all other mustahabb baths to the extent possible.

17. Outpouring Humility (Tadarru')

This consists of expressing lowliness and humility; making entreaty and lamentation.

18. Refraining from Pleasures

This consists of refraining from pleasures and appetites to the extent of one's capacity; confining oneself to that which is necessary for the body and for survival.

19. Secrecy

This is one of the most important of the requirements of wayfaring, and the sages attached much importance to it and gave significant advices to their disciples, exhorting them in the extreme, whether the matter was one that pertained to the acts of worship, awrad or adhkar, or to spiritual experiences, disclosures, and states.

Even in instances where secrecy (taqiyyah) is impossible and the disclosure of secrets becomes immanent they have considered concealment as being part of the essentials and binding instructions, and if the concealing of secret entails even the abandonment of an act or wurd, it should be left off.

وَاسْتَعِينُوا عَلَيَّ حَوَائِجِكُمْ بِالْكِتْمَانِ

Seek help concerning your needs through concealment and secrecy.

The result of taqiyyah and secrecy is to bring about a considerable reduction in one's difficulties and hardships, and the neglect of taqiyyah leads the wayfarer to face many ordeals and afflictions. Moreover, when difficulties do arise one must advance on the path with forbearance and fortitude and achieve success.

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

Seek help through patience and prayer (salat), and surely it is hard except for the humble. (2:45)

The meaning of salat in this blessed verse is its literal sense of attending to the Great Lord. Accordingly, fortitude and forbearance along with the remembrance of God and patiently bearing one's afflictions diminishes the severity of adversities and afflictions and is an important factor of victor: Hence it is seen that the same people who moan from palls if a hand is injured at home have no fear if their hands suffer wounds and other members receive injuries in the battlefield and while confronting the infidels, and they do not find any weakness and fear in themselves.

In accordance with this rule, all the Immaculate Imams, may God benedictions and Peace be upon all of them, have made profuse recommendations and amazing exhortations concerning the guarding of secrets, even considering the abandonment of taqiyyah as a major sin.

سأل أبو بصير الإمام الصادق عليه السلام؛ قال : فقلتُ له : أجزبني عن الله عزَّ وجلَّ. هل

يراه المؤمنون يوم القيامة ؟

قال : نعم؛ وقد رآوه قبل يوم القيامة. فقلتُ : متى ؟ قال : حين قال لهم : ألسنتُ برَبِّكم ؟ قالوا : بلي؛ ثمَّ سكَّت ساعةً، ثمَّ قال : وإنَّ المؤمنينَ ليرونه في الدنيا قبلَ يومِ القيامةِ، ألسنتُ تراه في وقتك هذا ؟ قال أبو بصيرٍ : فقلتُ له : جعلتُ فداك فأحدتُ بهذا

عَنْكَ ؟ فَقَالَ : لَا؛ فَإِنَّكَ إِذَا حَدَّثْتَ بِهِ فَأَنْكَرَهُ مِنْكَرٍ جَاهِلٍ بِمَعْنَى مَا تَقُولُهُ ثُمَّ قَدَّرَ أَنَّ ذَلِكَ تَشْبِيهٌ كَفَرٌ، وَلَيْسَتْ الرُّؤْيَةُ بِالْقَلْبِ كَالرُّؤْيَةِ بِالْعَيْنِ. تَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُصِفُهُ الْمُشَبِّهُونَ وَالْمَلْحَدُونَ»

One day Abu Basir asked Hadrat Sadiq ('a), "Can one see God on the day of Resurrection?" (That is because the Ash'arites believe that on the Day of Resurrection and in the next life all people will see God physically-exalted is God greatly over what the wrongdoers say!) The Hadrat said, "One can see Him in this world too, in the same way that you yourself are seeing God in this sitting." Abu Basic said, "O son of the Apostle of Allah, do you permit me to narrate this for other people?" The Hadrat said, "Don't do that, because the people cannot understand its meaning and therefore they will be misled."

20. The Teacher and the Shaykh

The teacher is of two kinds: the general teacher (ustad al-'amm) and the special teacher (ustad al-khass). The general teacher is someone who is not specially appointed to guide others and consulting him belongs to the category of consulting 'those who are knowledgeable,' in accordance with the general sense of the verse:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوْحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Ask the people of the Remembrance if you do not know. (16:43)

The necessity of referring to the general teacher is only at the beginning of wayfaring, and when the wayfarer is honoured by visions and revelations (mushahadat wa tajalliyat) of the Attributes and the Essence, his company is not necessary. But as to the special teacher, it is he who has been specially designated to guide, and they are the Apostle of Allah and his true successors. The wayfarer cannot dispense with the company of the special teacher in any circumstance whatsoever, even if he has reached his sought homeland.

Of course, that which is meant is the inner company of the Imam with the wayfarer, nor merely their outward company and comradeship. And the reality of the Imam is the same as the station of his luminosity which prevails over the world and its people. As to his physical body, even though it has an excellence over all other bodies, it is the not the source of influence and dispensations in the affairs of the universe.

The explanation of this point is that the source of all that which has concrete existence in the world of creation are the Divine Attributes and Names, and the reality of the Imam is the same as the Names and Attributes of God. Hence it is on this basis that the Imams have said, "The wheel of the world of being, the heavens, and the entire universe turns by our means and that which happens takes place with our permission:"

بِنَا عُرِفَ اللَّهُ، بِنَا عُيِدَ اللَّهُ

It is through us that God is known and it is through us that God is worshipped.

Accordingly, the wayfarer, in the state of wayfaring, travels through the planes of the Imam's luminosity and whatever degree he may ascend to and whatever rank he may attain, the Imam ('a) too possess that rank and accompanies the wayfarer at that degree and rank.

Similarly, the Imam's company is necessary after the attainment of the goal (wusul) too, for it is he who must also teach the wayfarer the etiquette of the realm of lahut. Therefore, this company of the Imam in all conditions is one of the most important conditions of wayfaring or, rather, it is the most important of them. Here there are points very subtle that are inexpressible and the wayfarer himself must find them out by the means of gnosis (dhawq).

Muhy al-Din Arabi once went to a master and complained about the prevalence of injustice and sinfulness. The teacher said to him, "Pay attention to your God." After some time he went to another teacher and complained about the prevalence of injustice and sinfulness. The teacher said, "Pay attention to your own soul."

Thereat Ibn Arabi began to cry. Then he asked the teacher concerning the divergent replies he had received. The teacher said to him, "O apple of my eye! The replies are the same. He invited you to the companion (rajiq), and I invited you to the Way (tariq)."

This story was related for the purpose that it may be known that Godward wayfaring is not inconsistent with journey through the ranks of the Divine Names and Attributes, which are the same as the station of the Imam. In fact they are very close or actually identical, and there is no duality to be found at that plane. Rather, whatever there is, is a single light, the Light of God. At the most that light is referred to by different terms, at times as 'Divine Names and Attributes' and at times as 'the reality of the Imam's luminosity.'

شَيْءٌ وَحُسْنُكَ وَاحِدٌ وَكُلُّهُ إِلَى ذَاكَ الْجَمَالِ يُشِيرُ عِبَارَاتُنَا

*Our descriptions are various, but Thy beauty is one,
And it is to Thy beauty that each of them does refer.*

But the general teacher is not recognized except through company and being with him in public and private, until his reality and conviction (yaqin) are known for certain to the wayfarer. One cannot ascertain that someone has obtained ultimate attainment (wusul) on the basis of such things as performance of extraordinary feats, knowledge of hidden things, of private thoughts of persons, passing over fire and water, miraculous journeys over land and in air (tayy al-ard wa al-hawa'), knowledge of the future and the past and the like. Because all of them are obtained at the stage of spiritual disclosure (mukashafah-ye ruhiyyeh) and there is a very great distance between this point and the frontiers of wusul and perfection.

He is not a teacher so long as the revelations of Divine Essence (tajalliyyat al-dhatiyyeh ye rabbaniyyeh) are not manifested in him, and one cannot also suffice with the mere revelations of Attributes and Names (tajalliyyat al-sifa'tiyyeh wa asma'iyyeh) and consider them as a sign of wusul and perfection.

The meaning of revelation of Attributes (tajalli ye sifati) is that the wayfarer observes an Attribute of God in himself and beholds his own knowledge, or power and life as the knowledge, power and life of God. For instance, when he hears something he perceives that God has heard and that He is the Hearing One; when he sees something, he perceives that God has seen and it is He who is the Seer; or he has gnosis of all knowledge in the world as being exclusive to God and witnesses the knowledge of every existent as deriving from His knowledge or as being identical with His knowledge.

The meaning of the revelation of Names (tajalli-ye asma'i) is that he witnesses within himself the Attributes of God that derive from His Essence such as the Sustainer, Knower, Hearer, Seer, Living, Omnipotent, and the like. For instance, he see that the all-knowing is one in the world and that is God, the Exalted, and he no longer sees himself as all-knowing in opposition to God; rather, that his being all-knowing is identical with God's being all-knowing. Or he perceives that the living one is one and that is God and that he himself is basically not living, but that it is God who is the Living One, and that's all. And ultimately he perceives that:

ليس القدير والعليم والحيّ إلاّ هو تعالٰى و تقدّس.

The Almighty, the All-knowing and the Living' One is none but He, Exalted and the Sacred.

Of course, it is possible that the revelation of Names may take place in respect of only some Divine Names and if one or two Names are revealed in a wayfarer it is not necessary that the remaining Names must also be revealed.

As to the revelation of the Essence, that consists of the Sacred Divine Essence manifesting Itself in the wayfarer. And that is attained when the wayfarer passes beyond all names and descriptions, and, in other words, loses himself totally, seeing no trace of himself in the world of being and consigning his ego and egohood to oblivion once and for all:

وَأَيْسَ هُنَاكَ إِلَّا اللّٰهَ

There is none here save Allah.

At this point misguidance and error cannot be conceivable for such a person, because as long as a particle of being remains in the wayfarer Satan is not disappointed about him and has hopes of leading him astray. But when with the power of God, the Exalted and the Blessed, the wayfarer obliterates his ego and personality and puts his foot into the world of lahut and enters the sanctuary of God, wearing the dress of ihram, having been blessed with the revelations of Divine Essence, Satan despairs of misleading him. The general teacher must have attained to this rank of perfection; for otherwise one may not surrender oneself to everyone and anyone and submit and obey him.

هزار دام به هر گام این بیابان است

که از هزاران یکی از آن نجهند

A thousand trap lies concealed in this wilderness,

Not one out of a million finds deliverance there from.

Therefore, one must not surrender oneself to everyone that exhibits his merchandise and puts out his wares on display making claims to kashf and shuhud. Yes, in cases where it is excusable or hard to make an inquiry and investigation about the condition of a teacher and shaykh, one must, putting trust in God, evaluate whatever he says or prescribes in the light of the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah and the practice of the Immaculate Imams, may God's benedictions and Peace be upon them, and then put it into practice. Otherwise he should not act upon them. Evidently, when such a wayfarer takes his steps with trust in God, Satan will not have domination over him.

إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ إِنَّمَا سُلْطَانُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهُ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِهِ مُشْرِكُونَ

Verily, he has no power over those who have believed and who trust their Lord; his power is only over those who take him for their friend and who make him a partner (in their worship). (16:99-100)

21. Wird

Wird consists of verbal adhkar and awrad, and their quality and quantity depends on the prescription of the teacher. For they are like medicines, which are beneficial for some people and harmful for some others. It is often seen that the wayfarer engages in two dhikrs, one which turns his attention toward plurality and the other toward Unity, and as they are said together they neutralize one another without yielding any result. However, the teacher's permission is required for awrad concerning which there is no general permission. But as for those for which a general permission exists, there is no problem.

Wird is of four kinds: outward and inward (khafi), and each of them is either general or exclusive. The outward dhikr is not given much significance by the people of the Way, for outward dhikr consists of verbal chanting without attention to the meaning and is in reality no more than oscillation of the tongue. And since the wayfarer's quest is for meaning, and nothing else, outer dhikr will have no benefit for him.

22 & 23. Thought Control, Contemplation and Dhikr

These three constitute important stages in attaining to the goal, and most of those who halt midway and are unable to reach the destination halt in one of these three stages, where they either remain standstill or perish and are destroyed, as the dangers of these stages consist of the worship of idols, stars, fire, and, at times, atheism, Pharaohism and claims to hulul and union (ittihad) and rejection of obligatory duties, considering what is haram as lawful, and the like. Of course, we shall refer to all of them but presently we will discuss hulul and ittihad which are among important dangers and that emerge for the wayfarer while purging his mind through thought control (nafy al-khawatir).

As the wayfarer has not yet emerged from the valley of names and descriptions, therefore, as a result of the revelation of the Attributes and Names, he may imagine-may God be our refuge-that God has united with

his ego and personality. This is what hulul and ittihad mean, which are kufr and shirk, whereas the meaning of the Unity of Being totally negates plurality and otherness and considers all conceivable existents, in front of the sacred Being of the One, as imaginary and reckons all of them as shadows. The wayfarer is denuded of all his berg through ascent to this station and loses himself, becoming annihilated, not perceiving any being as possessing existence in the realm of being except His Sacred Essence:

وَلَيْسَ فِي الدَّارِ غَيْرُهُ دَيَّارٌ،

There is no master in the house except Him.

And how far is this from the notions of hulul and ittihad.

As to thought control, it consists of conquering the heart and mastering it, so that it may not say anything or carry out any action nor any notion and thought should enter it except with the permission of its master. The attainment of this state is very difficult, and that is why it has been said that thought control is the greatest of the purging agents of the inner spirit (sirr).

When the wayfarer stumbles at the station of thought control he sees that all of a sudden a devastating deluge of thoughts and fancies has besieged him and even thoughts which he never imagine would come to his mind, of distant past or of impossible things, come to him and constantly keep him preoccupied.

At this stage the wayfarer must remain steadfast like a mountain and with the sword of dhikr slay every thought that arises and causes trouble. The meaning of dhikr here is the same as the Divine Names toward one of which the wayfarer must turn his attention at the time of emergence of any of the thoughts and make his attention towards it perpetual, witnessing it with the eye of the heart until that thought is cast out of the heart's abode.

And this is a very sound method of keeping our thoughts solely with dhikr which is the same as paying attention to and remembering one of the Divine Names. God, the Exalted, has said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ

Verily, those who are God-wary, remember when a visitation from Satan troubles them, and then they see clearly. (7:201)

However, this method has not been allowed in the treatise attributed to the marhum Bahr al-'Ulum and there it is strongly insisted that thought control must be exercised without dhikr and that one must take up dhikr after that, because control of thoughts with the sword of dhikr is very dangerous. First we shall briefly cite that which has been said there and then take up its refutation. There it is said:

Many of the pseudo-masters (mutashayyikhin) teach that the stage of thought control should be covered through dhikr (evidently, what is meant by dhikr is payment of attention with the heart, not a dhikr said verbally, for which the term is wurd) and this is very dangerous. For the reality of dhikr consists of paying attention, to the Beloved and concentrating on His beauty from distance.

The vision of the Beloved is permissible when the eye is blind to anything other than Him, for the Beloved is ghayur (jealous), and His ghayrah implies that it is not proper for the eye that sees Him to see any

other, and He inflicts with blindness any eye that turns away from Him to view someone else, and beholding Him while viewing other than Him is contrary to His ghayrah, and should this beholding and fuming away be repeated it amounts to contempt and the Beloved responds by delivering such a rap on his neck that that would be the end of him:

وَمَنْ يَعْتَشْ عَنِ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقِصْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ

Whoever blinds himself to the remembrance of the All-merciful, to him We assign a Satan for comrade. (43:36)

Nevertheless one kind of dhikr is permissible in thought control, and that is the case where the purpose of dhikr is not the sight of the beauty of the Beloved but to drive away Satan, like someone who calls the beloved to expel an intruder from the place of meeting. Here, the purpose is to threaten the other, and its method is that, while engaging in thought control, if a thought should intrude in such a manner that it be very difficult to dispel it, one engages in dhikr in order to banish it.

However, the method of the adept of the Way and the aware ones who have attained to the ultimate goal (wasilin) is that in the instruction and guidance of the initiates they first order them to exercise thought control and then to proceed to do dhikr. For thought control, they order the wayfarer to concentrate on some sensible object such as a stone or piece of wood and to fix his gaze upon it while refraining as much as possible from blinking the eyes and concentrating upon it with all one's inward and outward faculties.

Preferably one should practice it continuously for forty days and, during this period, employ the threefold wirts of isti'adhah, istighfar, and the dhikr "Ya Fa "al" engaging in these adhkars after the obligatory prayers of dawn and night. After this he must concentrate on his heart and continue this practice for some time, concentrating on it fully and not allowing into his mind any thought other than the thought of it. Should any thought intrude upon him during the course of this exercise and give rise to an disturbance, he should take recourse to the words "La mawjuda illallah" (There is no existent except God) and the word "Allah."

He should persevere in this exercise until there emerges a state of self-abandonment. The dhikr during this exercise is istighfar and "Ya fa "al", and the Name "Ya basil" should be chanted a lot. When the wayfarer reaches this stage, he is permitted to complete the remaining stages of thought control through the means of inward dhikr until thoughts are purged once and for all, for the remaining thoughts will automatically be purged, God willing, on entry into the stages of contemplation (fikir) and dhikr." (Here ends its summary).

It should be known that the method of thought control which has been mentioned here is derived from the Naqshbandi orders, who are a group of Sufis whose refuge is in Turkey and other places. Their murshid was Khwajah Muhammad Naqshband and so they are known as the Naqshbandiyah.

However, the tariqah of the marhum Akhund Mulla Husayn-Quli Hamadani, may God be pleased with him, was not such. He and his disciples do not consider thought control to be practical without dhikr. Rather, their method was observance of muraqabah, that is, exercising care

in its stages. We have mentioned it briefly earlier and now we shall describe it in detail.

The first degree of muraqabah lies in the wayfarer's abstaining from unlawful things (muharramat) and performing all obligatory duties (wazjibat), without being negligent in these two matters in any way whatsoever.

The second degree consists of an intensification of muraqabah, making an effort to do whatever one does for the pleasure of God and to refrain from matters which are considered vain and frivolous. And when he covers this stage carefully he fords stability (tamakkun) therein, whereafter he does not succumb or lose himself and his self-possession approaches the degree of a habit (malikah).

The third degree of muraqabah is to consider, perpetually, the Sustainer of the world as being watchful over oneself, gradually coming to admit that God, the Exalted, is present and watchful everywhere and observant of all creatures. This muraqabah must be observed in all states and at all times.

The fourth degree belongs to a higher stage and is more perfect and that consists of seeing God as present and watchful accompanied with a brief vision of Divine Beauty. These two latter stages of muraqabah are referred to in the advice of the Nobles Apostle (s) to Abu Dharr Ghifari, may God be pleased wide him:

اعْبُدِ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

'Worship God as if you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, then worship Him as if knowing that He sees you.'

On this basis, the stage of worship -where God sees the devotee is lower than the stage wherein he sees God.

When the wayfarer reaches this stage, in order to be able to expel everything other than God totally from his mind, thought control must be practised in the course of one of the acts of worship; for it is not permissible in the sacred Shari 'ah to concentrate on a stone or piece of wood, because if death were to come to one in those moments what answer would he have be-fore God? However, thought control in the course of dhikr and with the weapon of dhikr is worship and is commended by the Shari 'ah and its best method is to concentrate on the soul, which is quickest of methods for reaching the goal. Because concentrating on the soul is accepted and commended by the luminous Shari 'ah, and the noble verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ
جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

O those who believe, take care of your souls. if you are guided, he who is misguided will not harm you, (5:105)

bears evidence to this matter. The method of concentrating on the soul was the method of marhum Akhund Mulla Husayn-Quli, and all his disciples followed the method of gnosis (ma'rifah) of the soul, which is essential to the gnosis of the Lord.

The reality of 'irfa'n derives from Amir al-Mu'minm All ibn abi Talib ('a). The orders that have propagated this reality, handing it down from

master to pupil are more than a hundred. But the principal branches of tasawwuf do not exceed more than twenty-five and all of these orders culminate in Hadrat Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a). Among these twenty-five sects, two or three pertain to the Shi'ah and all the rest belong to non-Shi'is (Ammah) and some of these orders culminate in Imam Rida ('a) through Ma'ruf al-Karkhi. However, our tariqah is that of the marhum Akhund which does not end in any of these silsilahs.

To put it briefly, about more than a hundred years ago there was an eminent scholar in Shushtar, named Aqa Sayyid Ali Shushtari, who carried out the functions of a judge and religious authority for the people. Like other eminent scholars he attended to such general matters as teaching, settlement of disputes and acting as a religious authority (marja' iyyat).

One day someone knocked at his door. When asked as to who it was, the visitor said, "Open the door, someone has a business with you." When the marhum Aqa Sayyid 'Ali opened the door he saw that it was a man, a weaver. He asked him as to what he wanted. The weaver told him that a certain ruling that he had given concerning some case of property in favour of someone on the basis of the testimony of witnesses was not correct, and that property belonged to a minor, an orphan, and that the relevant documents were buried in a certain place.

He said to him, "The way that you have adopted is not a right one; this is not your path." Ayatollah Shushtari said to him, "Have I been going the wrong way?" The weaver said, "I have already given my answer." Having said this he went away. The Ayatollah was sunk in thought as to who that man was and what he had said. Then on making an investigation he found out that the documents of the orphan's ownership were buried in the same place and that the witnesses who had testified in the other party's favour had lied.

He becomes dismayed and said to himself, "I am afraid that many of the judgments that I have given have been of this sort." He was possessed by a terror and a deep anguish. The following night the weaver knocks on his door again at the same hour and said to him, "Aqa Sayyid Ali Shushtari! The way is not what you are pursuing." The third night the same episode was repeated in precisely the same manner and the weaver told him, "Don't delay. Gather all your belongings, sell away your house and leave for Najaf Ashraf, and carry out the tasks that I have assigned to you. Then, after six months, wait for me in the Wadi al-Salam (cemetery) in Najaf Ashraf."

Marhum Shushtari immediately began to carry out the instructions. He sold the house and gathered his belonging and made arrangements for his departure to Najaf Ashraf. As soon as he arrived in Najaf, at sunrise he saw the weaver in Wadi al-Salam as if he had come out of the ground and was standing in front of him. Then he gave him certain instructions and disappeared. Marhum Shushtari took up residence in Najaf Ashraf and carried out the weaver's instructions until he reached a station that is not describable. May God be pleased with him and may His Peace be upon him.

For the sake of reverence that he had for the marhum Shaykh Murtada Ansari, marhum Shushtari would attend his lectures on fiqh and usul, and once a week the marhum Shaykh too would attend Aqa Sayyid Ali's lessons

on ethics (akhlaq). After the demise of the marhum Shaykh (rh), marhum Shushtari (rh) took charge of the Shaykh's chair and continued the lectures right from where they the Shaykh had left them. However, he did not live for much long and after six months departed towards God's eternal mercy.

During these six months marhum Shushtari sent a message to one of the outstanding pupils of marhum Ansari, named Akhund Mulla Husayn-Quli Dargazini Hamadani. During the lifetime of the marhum Shaykh he had long-standing relations with marhum Shushtari and had benefited from his lessons in ethics and gnosis, and after the marhum Shaykh he was planning to rake up teaching and he even wanted to pursue the discussions of the Shaykh and to complete them, himself having compiled a written record (taqirrat) of Shaykh Ansari's lectures. In that message marhum Shushtari reminded him that his approach was not one that was complete and that he should try to attain other higher stations. That is how he converted this pupil and guided him to the valley of truth and reality.

Yes, the marhum Akhund, who for several years had studied the higher Divine teachings under marhum Aqa Sayyid Ali before the demise of the marhum Shaykh, rose to become the most outstanding figure in the fields of ethics, spiritual struggle, and the Divine teachings and turned out to be a wonder of his era. The marhum Akhund, too, trained very outstanding disciples each of whom was considered a citadel of gnosis and tawhid and a mighty sign of the Divine. Among the most outstanding pupils of the circle of the Akhund one must name marhum Hajj Mirza Aqa Maliki Tabrizi, marhum Aqa Sayyid Ahmad Karbala'i Tehrani, marhum Aqa Sayyid Muhammad Said Hubbubi, and marhum Hajj Shaykh Muhammad Bahari.

Our revered teacher, the unparalleled gnostic, marhum Hajj Mirza Ali Aqa Qadi Tabrizi, may God be pleased with him, belonged to the circle of pupils of marhum Aqa Sayyid Ahmad Karbalai. This is the genealogy of our teacher which culminates in marhum Shushtari and ultimately in that weaver. As to whom that weaver was, and what were his connections and from where he had brought these teachings, nothing is known.

The approach of our marhum teacher, Aqa'i Qadi Tabrizi, like the approach of the great teacher Akhund Mulla Husayn-Quli, was also that of self-knowledge, and he would prescribe concentration on the soul for thought control at the first stage. The method was that the wayfarer had to fix a half an hour or more in every twenty four hours for thought control in which he concentrated on his soul. As a result of this concentration he gradually gains in strength and succeeds in controlling thoughts, gradually attaining to the gnosis of the soul and ultimately to his ultimate goal, God willing.

Most of the persons who have succeeded in thought control and in purging their minds of thoughts and who ultimately discover the kingdom of gnosis, that has occurred to them in one of the two states. First, during recitation of the Glorious Qur'an and while concentrating on its reciter, as to who the real reciter of the Qur'an is. At that time it was revealed to them that the reciter of the Qur'an was God, majestic is His glory.

Second, through recourse (tawassul) to Hadrat Abu Abd Allah al-Husayn ('a), because that Hadrat is greatly gracious towards the wayfarers of the

way of God in respect of lifting the veils and removing the obstacles of the way.

On the basis of what has been said, two matters have a great role in the revelation of the kingdom of gnosis. First is muraqabah in its various degrees; and second, concentration on the soul. When the wayfarer takes care to be observant of these two matters, he gradually notices that the pluralities of this world derive from one mainspring and everything that assumes reality in it derives from one source, and whatever light, beauty and glory, and perfection is possessed by any existent derives from that Mainspring, and it is from that great Source that the light of existence, beauty and greatness to every existent emanate in accordance with the extent of its essential capacity (qabiliyyat al-mahuwi). In other words, absolute and boundless grace, unlimited by any condition and limit, emanates from the Absolute Source of superabundance and every existent receives it to the extent of its essence (mahiyah).

In any case, gradually four worlds will be revealed to the wayfarer as a result of his consummate muraqabah and intense care:

The First World: It is the world of the Unity of Act (tawhid al-af'ali). That is, at the first stage he perceives that whatever is seen by the eye and pronounced by the tongue and heard by the ear and performed with the hands, feet and other organs and members derives in its entirety from his own soul (nafs), and the soul does what it wills. Then he perceives that the acts that occur in the external world derive from himself, and his soul is the source of all the external acts. Then he finds that his soul subsists through the Divine Being and is a door for the grace and mercy of God. Hence all acts in the external world derive from His Sacred Being.

The Second World: It is the world of the Unity of Attributes, and it is manifested after the first world. It consists of this that when the wayfarer hears anything he does not see the reality of hearing as belonging to himself but to God. Similarly, whatever he may see with his eyes, he perceives the reality of vision as belonging to God. Thereafter, every kind of knowledge, power, life, hearing, sight, and the rest of things that he observes in the external existents are found by him to derive from God, the Exalted.

The Third World: It is the world of Unity of Names and it rises after the second world. It consists of this: he perceives the attributes as subsisting through essence. For instance, he finds that the one who knows and is powerful and living is God, the Exalted. That is, he perceives his own faculty of cognition as being the cognition of God, his own power, hearing, and sight as being in God. On the whole, he finds that there is one and only one who is powerful, knowing, seeing and living in all the worlds and that is God, the Glorious, and that every existent is a sign and symbol, to the extent of its existential scope, of that Knower, Hearer, Seer, and Living One.

The Fourth World: It is the world of the Unity of Essence which is higher than the third world, and this is disclosed to the wayfarer through the revelations of Essence. That is, the wayfarer perceives that the Essence, from which all acts, attributes, and names derive, is one essence and one reality by which they all subsist.

Here the wayfarer pays no attention to Attributes and Names and what he witnesses is solely the Essence. And this is at the point when he bids farewell to his borrowed existence and loses his being once and for all to become annihilated in the Sacred Essence of God, the Exalted. At that point there will be revelation of Essence. Of course, to name this stage as 'the station of the Essence' or 'the reality of the Essence' or 'Oneness' (ahadiyyah) and so for compulsion's sake, for whatever is expressed by the tongue or written by the hand is not beyond names, and the Sacred Divine Essence transcends these and one cannot consider any name or description for It, nor can it be conceived in terms of stages and stations.

In fact it is even beyond this inability, for inability, while implying negation, affirms a limit for Him, and God Exalted is 'above limits. When the wayfarer enters this stage and loses his own name and description he will be unrecognizable to himself, nor he will recognize any other and he will not recognize anyone except God. Rather, it is God who know Himself, and that is all there is to it.

The wayfarer loses a part of the effects of his existence in each of the fourfold worlds until, ultimately, he loses the very principle of his being and existence.

In the first world he reaches the station of annihilation in the Act and understands that it is not he who acts but God. Here he loses all his effects pertaining to action.

In the second world, as he understands by virtue of the revelation of the Attributes that knowledge, power and all other attributes are exclusive to the Divine Essence, Glorious and Exalted, at this point he loses his attributes and does not ford them anymore in himself.

In the third world, as he perceives through the revelation of the Names that it is He, the Glorious, who is the knower and the powerful one, here he loses his names and does not ford them in himself any more.

And in the fourth world, which is that of the revelation of Essence, he loses his own existence and does not ford himself anymore. The only essence that there is the Sacred Essence of God.

This stage of shuhud, that is of the revelation of Essence, is referred to by the gnostics as the Anqa or Simurgh, a bird which no hunter can trap. The Simurgh is that essence which is sheer and absolute being, which is called variously as 'alam al-'ama, kanz al-makhfi, ghayb al-ghuyub, dhat ma la isma lah wa la rasma lah;

برواین دام بر مرغ دگر نه که عنقا را بلند است آشیانه

Go set this snare for another bird,

The Phoenix has a nest on inaccessible heights.

How well has Hafiz, may God's mercy be upon him, sung these lines in his mathnawis, describing this stage in fine metaphors:

الا ای آهوی وحشی کجایی مرا با توست چندین آشنایی

دوتنها ودوسرگردان، دو بی کس دد ودامت کمین از پیش واز پس بیا تا حال یکدیگر

بدانیم مراد هم بجویم ار توانیم

چنینم هست یاد از پیر دانا فراموشم نشد هرگز همانا که روزی رهروی در سرزمینی به
لطفش گفت رندی ره نشینی
که ای سالک چه در انبانه داری بیا دامی بنه گر دانه داری
جوابش داد کآری دام دارم ولی سیمرخ می باید شکارم
بگفتا چون به دست آری نشانش که او خود بی نشانست آشیانش
بگفتا گرچه این امری محال است ولیکن ناامیدی هم وبال است
نکرد آن همدم دیرین مدارا مسلمانان مسلمانان خدا را
مگر خضر مبارک پی تواند که این تنها بدان تنها رساند

*Lo! Wild gazelle, where shall I find you?
I have had with you much familiarity.
Two lonely and friendless wanderers, in wilderness
Wild beasts and snares lying in ambush up and down the way.
Come, let's get to know each other's plight,
And if we can find out each other's desire.
So do I remember the old sage's words,
Which I have never forgotten:
That once a traveller in a certain land,
Was told jocundly by a libertine sitting on wayside,
'O traveller what is it that thou carriest in thy bag,
Let us set a snare if thou hast any grain.'
He replied, 'Yes I do have a net, But I must the Phoenix catch.'
He said, 'How shall you find its trace,
For it is traceless and traceless is its nest.'
He said, 'Though it should be an impossible thing,
But despair too is an affliction.'
That old companion did not proffer his kindness,
By God, O Muslims! O Muslims!
Perhaps the Khidr, of auspicious outcome, can do it,
For that lonely one can help this lonely one reach his goal.*

Obviously when the Simurgh's nest itself is traceless one cannot hope to find it, except when one is guided by His grace, leading the wanderers of the valley of love and the lovers of His eternal beauty into the valley of tawhid and annihilation, for the sake of the forerunners of the valley of love, the standard bearers of hamd and ma'rifah, Muhammad al-Mush and Ali al-Murtada and his eleven glorious sons in the descent of the Batul and the Adhra', Fatimah al-Zahra', may Peace of Allah, the Sovereign and the Exalted, be upon them. O God, grant success to all the lovers, and us, to attain to that which pleases You and join us with the Righteous Ones (salihin).

Thank God for His favour. This noble treatise, which has been named Risaleh ye lubb al-lubab dar sayr wa suluk al-uli al-albab, was completed by

the pen of this destitute and nondescript on the 8th night of the month of fasting in the year 1369 of Hijrah (June 24, 1950).

وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْأُولَىٰ وَالْآخِرَةِ، وَآخِرُ دَعْوَانَا أَنْ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ.

And to Him belongs all Praise, in the World and the Hereafter, and our ultimate cry is 'All Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the Worlds.'

This destitute nondescript Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Tehrani, at the holy city of Qum.

