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A Brief Introduction and General Plan for Godward Wayfaring

وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّاهِرِينَ

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:

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 مبارك سحرى بود وچه فرخنده شبى

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 *jadhbah* 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.

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.

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 (*baga'*), whereat eternal life becomes established for him.

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:

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

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

And at another place He says:

"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:

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 *wajh* (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 *f* and 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:

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!

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 Husaynguli 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-isfahbod* (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:

لِانَّ السَّالِكَ يُصنبِحُ وَلَا يَرَى قادِراً وَلَا عالِمًا وَلَا حَيًّا سِوَى اللهِ تَعالَى

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 *jadhabat, 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:

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:

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

Their outward appearance is a manifestation of:

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 benedictions 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:

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:

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,

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:

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?

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,

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 لاَ عَيْنٌ رَأَتْ وَلاَ أُذُنُّ سَمِعَتْ وَلاَ 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:

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,

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

And the famous prophetic tradition:

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,

whoever acts righteously... (16:97)

or

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

... 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:

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

... 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,

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

By referring the pronoun pertaining to the active subject (faˈil) implied in yarfaˈu (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:

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:

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.

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 anfusiyyeh*), 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

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:

. . . 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 that the generous Lord will grant a large reward in return for small deeds and in fact He will considers 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

لَهُم مَّا يَشَآؤَنَ فِيهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزيدٌ

There shall be for them whatever there 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

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 accourtements 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,

. . . 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 librated 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,

أَفَرَءَأَيْتَ 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 saught even after years of austerities and *mujahadah* 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, of 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:

. . 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:

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:

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:

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):

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 *imam*. 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 anfusiyyah*) to enter the valley of the *mukhlasin*. May it be granted to us by God, the Exalted, God willing.

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, geed, 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:

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که فرج تا که دیده بگشاده ست
چشم اوبر جهان نیفتاده است
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Since Faraj opened his eyes,

They never fell on the world.

Hafiz says something similar:

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منم که شهرة شهرم به عشق ورزیدن
منم که دیده نیالودهام به بد دیدن
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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:

وَحَيَاةٍ أَشُواقِي إِلَيْكَ وَتُرْيَةٍ الصَبْرِ الجَمِيلِ مَا اسْتَحْسَنَتْ عَيْنِي سِوَاكَ وَلاَ صَبَوْتُ إِلَي 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."

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