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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 In opposition to them is the group of people who have withdrawn from the community, forsaking all kinds of social habits and norms, and depriving themselves of all social advantages.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:

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.

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

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 alsuriyyeh*–*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:

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

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:

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:

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:

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:*

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:

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 realties 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:

Nothing except good is to be found with Allah.

And:

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:

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 ii 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:

He who does not take account of him 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:

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

أَذلُّ لآل لَيْلَى في هَوَاهَا وَأَحْتَمِلُ الاصاعر وَالكِبَارا

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 benedictions 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 lmams 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:

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:

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:

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 worshiping 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:

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:

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:

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.

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.

You have guided me to Yourself and have summoned me to Yourself andwere 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:

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 تُريدُ ؟

'What do you want?'

I said,

أُريدُ أَنْ لا أُريدَ

'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 fords 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*:

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 perceive 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 hi 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):

Surely, our shi'ah are the mute ones.

And so also is that which has been narrated from Hadrat Sadig ('a) in the *Misbah al_Shari'ah*:

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):

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:

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,

وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُواْ دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهُوًا وَغَرَّتُهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَذَكِّرْ بِهِ أَن تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِن دُونِ اللّهِ وَلَيْ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ وَإِن تَعْدِلْ كُلَّ عَدْلٍ لاَّ يُؤْخَذْ مِنْهَا أُوْلَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَبْسِلُواْ بِمَا كَسَبُواْ لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَكُفُرُونَ كَانُواْ يَكُفُرُونَ كَانُواْ يَكُفُرُونَ كَانُواْ يَكُفُرُونَ كَانُواْ يَكُفُرُونَ وَنَ

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:

وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُواْ دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهُوًا وَغَرَّتُهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَذَكِّرْ بِهِ أَن تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِن دُونِ اللّهِ وَلَيْ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ وَإِن تَعْدِلْ كُلَّ عَدْلٍ لاَّ يُؤْخَذْ مِنْهَا أُوْلَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُواْ بِمَا كَسَبُواْ لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَالُولْ بِمَا كَسَبُواْ لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَالُولْ يَكُولُونَ كُلُولُ وَنَ

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 tile 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 wird, it should be left off.

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 *tagiyyah* 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.

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 *tagiyyah* as a major sin.

قَالَ : نَعَمْ؛ وَقَدْ رَأَوْهُ قَبْلَ يَوْمِ القِيَامَةِ. فَقُلْتُ : مَتَي ؟ قَالَ : حِيْنَ قَالَ لَهُمْ : أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ؟ قَالُوا : بَلَي؛ ثُمَّ سَكَتَ سَاعَةً، ثُمَّ قَالَ : وَإِنَّ المُؤْمِنِينَ لَيَرَونَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ القِيَامَةِ، أَلَسْتَ تَرَاهُ فِي وَقْتِكَ هَذَا ؟ قَالَ أَبُوبَصِيرٍ : فَقُلْتُ لَهُ : جُعِلْتُ ثُمَّ قَالَ : لَا؛ فَإِنَّكَ إِذَا حَدَّثْتَ بِهِ فَأَنْكَرَهُ مُنْكِرٌ جَاهِلٌ بِمَعْنَي مَا تَقُولُهُ ثُمَّ قَدَّرَ أَنَّ ذَلِكَ تَشْبِيهٌ كَفَرَ، فِذَاكَ فَأَحَدِّثُ بِهِذَا عَنْكَ ؟ فَقَالَ : لاَ؛ فَإِنَّكَ إِذَا حَدَّثْتَ بِهِ فَأَنْكَرَهُ مُنْكِرٌ جَاهِلٌ بِمَعْنَي مَا تَقُولُهُ ثُمَّ قَدَّرَ أَنَّ ذَلِكَ تَشْبِيهٌ كَفَرَ، وَذَكَ تَشْبِيهٌ كَفَرَ، وَلَيْسَتِ الرُّؤَيَّةُ بِالقَلْبِ كَالرُّؤَيَّةِ بِالعَيْنِ. تَعَالَى اللَهُ عَمَّا يَصِفُهُ المُشَبِّهُونَ وَالمُلْحِدُونَ

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:

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:"

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.'

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 end the like. Because all of them are obtained at the stage of spiritual disclosure (*mukashafeh_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:

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:

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.

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 آمَنُواْ وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ إِنَّمَا سُلْطَانُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهُ وَالَّذِينَ هُم 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 guest 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:

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 wird) 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:

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 wirds of isti'adhah, istighfar, and the dhikr "Ya Fa "al" engaging in these adhkar 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 (*fikr*) 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:

'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 آمَنُواْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ لاَ يَضُرُّكُم مَّن ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ إِلَى اللّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ 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 (*taqrirat*) 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 (*mahiyyah*).

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 entirely 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 fords 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 fords 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;

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:

دوتنها ودوسرگردان، دو بي كس دد ودامت كمين از پيش واز پس بيا تا حال يكديگر بدانيم مراد هم بجوييم ار توانيم

چنینم هست یاد از پیر دانا فراموشم نشد هرگز همانا که روز*ي* رهرو*ي* در سرزمیني به لطفش گفت رندي ره نشینی

که اي سالك چه در انبانه داري بيا دامی بنه گر دانه داري

جوابش داد كآري دام دارم ولي سيمرغ مي بايد شكارم

بگفتا چون به دست آري نشانش که او خود بی نشانست آشیانش

بگفتا گرچه این امري محال است ولیکن ناامیدي هم وبال است

نكرد آن همدم ديرين مدارا مسلمانان مسلمانان خدا را

مگر خضر مبارك پى تواند كه اين 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).

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.

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