

# Concerning the Starting Point of the Journey and its Requisites

This chapter consists of six topics, each of which is discussed in the following sections:

Section one: on faith (*iman*)

Section two: on steadfastness (*thubat*)

Section three: on intention (*niyyah*)

Section four: on truthfulness (*sidq*)

Section five: on penitence (*inabah*)

Section six: on sincerity (*ikhlas*)

## Section One: On Faith

God, the Exalted, has said:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ

**“Those who believe and obscure not their faith with wrongdoing, theirs is safety; and they are rightly guided.” (6:82)**

*Iman* literally means 'affirmation,' that is, believing, and in the terminology of the seers means a particular kind of affirmation, an affirmation of that which is known for certain and has been declared by the Messenger, may peace be upon him.

The knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of the Prophet is inseparable from the knowledge of the Sustainer, the

Powerful, the Knowing, the Living, the Perceiving, the Hearing, and the Seeing One, Who wills and speaks and has sent the Messengers and revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad Mustafa, may God bless him and his Household, and set forth the laws, the duties, and the *sunan*, the lawful and the unlawful, as affirmed by the consensus of the entire Ummah.

Hence faith consists of these matters, neither more nor less. For if lesser, it would not be faith at all, and if more, the increase will be a higher degree of faith, contiguous to faith. And the sign of belief is to know, to say, and to do that which should be known, said, and done and to refrain from that which has been forbidden.

These pertain to righteous conduct and are subject to increase and decrease and are an essential part of the aforesaid affirmation. That is why in all the places the mention of faith is accompanied with that of righteous action, as in the following [Qur'anic] statement

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

**“Those who believe and perform righteous deeds ...” (2:25)**

And it should be known that faith has various degrees, the lowest of which is verbal confession. The verses:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ

**“O you who believe, believe in God and His Messenger and the Book that He has sent down on His Messenger.” (4: 136)**

...قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا ۖ قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ

**The Bedouins say: 'We believe: Say (unto them O Muhammad): 'Ye believe not; but say, "We submit;" for faith has not yet entered into your hearts. (Yet, if you obey God and His Messenger, He will not withhold from you aught of your deeds. God is indeed Forgiving, Merciful.)' (49: 14)**

Above that is faith by imitation, which is a convinced affirmation of that which must be affirmed, but it is subject to decline. When convinced affirmation is achieved it is necessarily accompanied by righteous action:

...إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا

***The (true) believers are those only who believe in God and His Messenger and afterward doubt not, but strive (with their wealth and their lives for the cause of God. Such are the sincere.)***  
(49: 15)

يؤمنون [the words of the Qur'an] Superior to this faith in the Unseen, in accordance with [the words of the Qur'an] "who believe in the Unseen" (2:3), which represents inward faith in transcendence, as if one were affirming something on the other side of a curtain. Superior to it is the faith of those concerning whom He says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا

***They only are the (true) believers whose hearts tremor when God is mentioned, and when the revelations of God are recited to them they increase their faith, and in their Lord put their trust, who perform the prayer, and expend of what We have provided them, those in truth are the believers; (they have degrees with their Lord, and forgiveness and generous provision.)*** (8:2-3)

This is the rank of perfect faith. Next to it is convinced faith, to be explained later on, and that is the ultimate degree of faith.

The minimum degree of faith lesser than which is not appropriate in wayfaring, is faith by imitation and faith in the Unseen, for mere verbal faith is not actually faith. To this refers the following statement of the Qur'an:

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

***“And the most part of them believe not in God, but they associate other gods with Him.”*** (12: 106)

Wayfaring with a tranquility of the soul is possible when there is convinced belief in the existence of the absolutely perfect Being, the Creator. The acquisition of such a belief is extremely simple and can be obtained with a little effort.

## **Section Two: On Steadfastness**

God, the Glorious and the Exalted, has said:

يُنَبِّئُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ

**“God confirms by a stable belief those who have faith in the life of the world and in the Hereafter . . .” (14:27)**

Unless faith is not characterized by steadfastness, the tranquility of the soul, which is essential for the quest of perfection, is not obtained, because one who is shaky in his belief cannot be a seeker of perfection. The steadfastness of faith depends on achieving the certitude that there is perfection and the Perfect Being.

Without this certitude the quest of perfection does not materialize, and until the resolve to seek perfection and the steadiness of this resolve is not achieved, wayfaring is not possible. One who makes the resolve without being steadfast in it is

**“like one bewildered whom the devils have kidnapped in the earth” (6:71, كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ الشَّيَاطِينُ فِي الْأَرْضِ حَيْرَانًا)**

The bewildered man has no resolve, and until he is resolute enough to *advance* in a direction, no movement, journey, or wayfaring will take place, and if there is any movement at all, it is accompanied with anxiety and hesitation and is fruitless and futile.

The cause of steadfastness is an insight into the truth believed in, the delight of having found it, and a perseverance in this state as a habitual condition of the inner self. That is why the performance of righteous works by those who have this steadfastness is perpetual as well as necessary.

### **Section Three: On Intention**

God, the Exalted, has said:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

**“Say (O Muhammad), 'Indeed, my prayer and my worship, my living and my dying, are for God, the Lord of the Worlds.’” (6: 162)**

*Niyah* means intention, and intention is a link between knowledge and action. For unless one knows at first that he has to do something, one cannot intend to do it and unless there is intention one cannot carry out an act.

The starting point in wayfaring is intention, the intention to reach a certain destination, and since the goal is to acquire perfection from the Absolutely Perfect, the intention should be one of acquiring nearness to the Almighty, Who is Absolute Perfection.

Such being the case, intention by itself is better than action when taken alone, for

نية المؤمن خير من عمله

The believer's intention is better than his works. [1](#)

For intention is like the soul and action like the body, and

إنما الأعمال بالنيات

(The intrinsic worth of) works only depends on the intentions (that lie behind them) [2](#)

that is, the life of the body is through the soul. And [as the Messenger of God has declared

لكل أمرئ ما نوى فمن كانت هجرته الى الله ورسوله فهجرته الى الله ورسوله ومن كانت هجرته لدنيا يصيبها او امرأة ينكحها فهجرته الى ما هاجر إليه

Every man receives what he has intended: one who has migrated towards God and His Messenger migrates towards God and His Messenger, and one whose migration is to achieve a mundane purpose or to marry a woman, his migration will take him to the intended goal of his migration. [3](#)

A good work accomplished with the intention to seek nearness to God will certainly achieve its due perfection, in accordance with the statement of God, the Exalted,

لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ نَّجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۗ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

***“There is no good in much of their secret conferences save him who enjoins charity and propriety and peace-making among the people. Whoso does that, seeking the good pleasure of God, We shall bestow on him a mighty reward.” (4: 114)***

## **Section Four: On Truthfulness**

God, above all descriptions is He, has said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

***“O you who believe, observe your duty to God and be with the truthful (al sadiqin).” (9: 119)***

*Sidq* literally means speaking the truth and being true in one's promises. Here by truthfulness is meant

the truthfulness of speech as well as that of intention and resolution (*`azm*) and fulfillment under all circumstances of the promises made by one.

*Siddiq* is one who is truthful in all these matters as a matter of habit, and that which is contrary to fact in whatsoever manner, neither itself nor its trace is found in him.

The `ulama' have said that if one is such his dreams too would be true and come true. The verse:

...مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ

**“(Among the believers are) men who truly fulfill the promise they have made with God” (33:23)**

has been revealed concerning them. The truthful have been described as standing in the same rank as the Apostles and the martyrs:

...فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ

**“(Whoso obeys God and the Messenger), they are with those unto whom God has shown favour, of the prophets, the truthful, and the martyrs and the righteous, (the best company are they).” (4:69)**

And such great prophets as Ibrahim and I'dris have been described as `truthful ones,' with the words:

إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا

**“Indeed, he was a truthful one, a prophet.” (19:41, 19:56)**

And concerning others it has been said:

وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا...

**“(And We bestowed upon them of Our mercy), and assigned to them true and sublime speech.” (19:50)**

And since the straight path is the shortest path to the goal, one who walks straight is the most likely to reach his intended destination, God willing.

## Section Five: On Penitence (Inabah)

God, the Exalted and the Glorious, has said:

...وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلُمُوا لَهُ

**“Turn unto Him penitent, and surrender unto Him, (before there come to you the chastisement, where after you wilt not be helped).” (39:54)**

*Inabah* means turning to God and attending to Him. It consists of three things. First, turning with one's inner self, so that it is always turned towards God, the Exalted, and to seek nearness to Him in all one's thoughts and intentions, and to this refer the words:

وَجَاءَ بِقَلْبٍ مُّنِيبٍ...

**“. . . And comes with a penitent heart.” (50:33)**

Second, to attend with one's speech, which means remembering Him and His favours and to remember those who are nearer to Him, as referred to in this verse:

وَمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ إِلَّا مَنْ يُنِيبُ...

**“None pays heed save him who turns penitent (unto Him).” (40: 13)**

Third, (to turn to Him) in one's outward actions, which means being always watchful of one's acts of obedience and worship.

These must be performed with the intention of seeking nearness, such as the obligatory and the supererogatory prayers, abstaining from things avoided by the leading figures of the faith, giving of charities, showing kindness to God's creatures, procuring the means of their benefit and preventing the causes of their harm, observing of rectitude in dealings, being just in regard to oneself and one's kin, and, in summary, observing the laws of the Shari'ah with the intent of acquiring nearness to God and seeking His good pleasure. Indeed, He, the Exalted, has said:

وَأَزَلَّتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ هَذَا مَا تُوعَدُونَ لِكُلِّ أَوَّابٍ حَفِيفٍ مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ الرَّحْمَنِ الْغَيْبِ وَجَاءَ بِقَلْبٍ مُّنِيبٍ  
ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ ﴿٩﴾ ذَلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُلُودِ لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ فِيهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيدٌ

**“(On the day when . . . ) the paradise is brought nigh for the God fearing, no longer distant. (And**

***it is said): This is that which you were promised. (It is) for every penitent and watchful one, who feareth the Beneficent in secret and comes with a penitent heart. Enter it in peace. This is the day of eternity. There they have all that they desire, and there is more with Us.” (50: 30–35)***

## **Section Six: On Sincerity (Ikhlas)**

God, the Glorious and the Exalted, has said:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ...

***“And they were not commanded except to worship God, keeping religion pure for Him . . . .” (98:5)***

*Ikhlas* in Persian means `vizheh kardan' ('to make exclusive'), that is, to purge a thing of everything else that has mingled with it. That which is meant here is that all of one's speech and action should be for the sake of seeking nearness to God, the Exalted, and exclusively for His sake, without being adulterated with any worldly or otherworldly purpose.

...إِلَّا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ

***“Indeed, to God belongs sincere religion.” (39:3)***

The opposite of sincerity is that there be some other purpose mingled with it, such as the love of honour and property, good name, or the hope of otherworldly reward, or salvation and deliverance from the chastisement of hell, all of which are signs of *shirk*.

*Shirk* is of two kinds: open and concealed. Open *shirk* is idolatry, and all its other forms consist of concealed *shirk*. The Messenger of God, may God bless him and his Household, has said:

نية الشرك في أمتي أخفى من دبيب النملة السوداء على الصخرة الصماء في الليلة الظلماء

Amongst the people of my Ummah intentions contaminated with *shirk* are more invisible than the creeping of a black ant on a black rock in a dark night. [4](#)

*Shirk* is the most destructive obstacle for the seeker of perfection in wayfaring

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

***“So let him who hopes for the encounter with his Lord, work righteousness, and not include in***

***his Lord's service anyone.” (18: 110)***

And when the obstacle of concealed *shirk* is removed, wayfaring (*suluk*) and attainment (*wusul*) become easy:

من اخلص لله أربعين صباحا ظهرت ينابيع الحكمة من قلبه على لسانه

If one is sincere to God for forty days, springs of wisdom, emanating from his heart, become manifest in his speech. [5](#)

And safety from sin comes from God.

- [1.](#) Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, ii, 84, Beirut.
- [2.](#) Ibid, ii, 211.
- [3.](#) Sunan Ibn Majah, ii, 1413, bab 26, hadith 4227.
- [4.](#) Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, Ixix, 93, Beirut.
- [5.](#) Ibid., Ixvii, 242.

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