

Introduction

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Immeasurable thanks are due to God, Whose reality no intellect can fathom and the knowledge of whose Being no thought or science can apprehend. Any expression describing Him, if affirmative, does not enter the conceiving mind without the traces of anthropomorphism, and if negative, is not conceived by it in a manner secure from the scandalous negation of attributes (*ta'til*).

Therefore, the leader of the elect, the exemplar of the saints (*awliya'*) and the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad Mustafa, may God bless him and his Household, said:

لا أحصي ثناء عليك. أنت كما أثنيت على نفسك, وأنت فوق ما يقول الغائلون

I cannot reckon Thy praise. Thou art only as Thou hast praised Thyself, and Thou art above what the describers say (in describing Thee). [1](#)

May a myriad fold greetings, kudos, and blessings be upon his sacred soul and on the spirits of the pure ones of his Household, especially the Infallible Imams, as well as the elect of his Companions, by Thy right, O God!

After writing the book entitled *Nasirian Ethics (akhlaq-e Nasiri)*, which discusses the noble dispositions and the sound policies of moral conduct according to the way of the philosophers (*hukama'*), the writer of this treatise and the author of this discourse, Muhammad al-Tusi, had it in his mind to write a concise treatise describing the ways of the *awliya'* and the methods of the seers according to the principles of the wayfarers of the Path (*tariqah*) and the seekers of the Truth (*haqiqah*) and one based on the principles of reason and tradition, containing the subtle theoretical and practical points that constitute the kernel and essence of that discipline.

However, countless preoccupations and vain obstacles did not permit him to carry that out, and what he had in mind could not emerge from potentiality to actuality, until this moment, when this idea materialized at the compelling behest of his honour . . . , the master of the sword and the pen, the elect of the eminent from among the Arabs and the non-Arabs, the sun of the truth and the faith (*shams al-haqq wa al-din*), the glory of Islam and Muslims, the chief of the viziers, the holder of the high office of the dominions, the pride of the elite and the nobility, the embodiment of justice and benefaction, the world's most meritorious and perfect, the refuge and shelter of Iran, the lover of the *awliya'*, Muhammad ibn Sahib al-Said Baha' al-Din Muhammad al-Juwayni, may God strengthen his helpers and increase his power twofold.

As opportunity became available and time and circumstance became conducive, the plan at last materialized, to the extent that the mind would assist and was feasible in view of the various obstacles and numerous preoccupations, of compiling, in compliance with his order and in obedience to his command, this brief treatise in several chapters, expositing those truths and describing those subtleties. In every chapter, he has for witness' sake cited a verse of the glorious revelation, which is such that:

...لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ

“Falsehood cannot find way into it from before it or behind it.” (41:42)

And where he could not find something that was expository of the purpose at hand he has confined himself to that which was more accessible. He has named it *Awsaf al-ashraf* and were it to be viewed with favour by his noble eye, its purpose would be achieved; otherwise, in view of what has been already stated in way of excuse, it is hoped that his noble self, with his noble disposition and sublime virtue, will overlook its lapses and cover them with the mantle of his forgiving grace, so that God, the Glorious and the Exalted, may bestow upon him of divine grace and everlasting sovereignty in the real world in the same way as He has chosen him for mastery and leadership in this realm of appearance. Indeed He is Gracious, and answers prayer.

Prelude

It would be proper at the outset to mention the contents of this brief treatise. There is no doubt that when one contemplates over one's state (reading *ahwal*, instead of *af'al*), one would find oneself to be in need of something besides oneself, and that which is in need of something else is deficient.

And when one becomes aware of his deficiency, there arises in his inner being a yearning to seek perfection. This prompts him to undertake a journey in the quest of perfection, which is called `wayfaring' (*suluk*) by the people of the *Tariqah* (the mystic path). And one who desires to undertake this journey stands in need of six things.

First, the guidance for this journey and that which is necessary for the journey to be made, and this is similar to the provisions that one needs for a physical journey.

Second, overcoming the hindrances and obstacles in the way of the journey.

Third, making the movement which takes one from the starting point to the destination; it consists of wayfaring and the states of the wayfarer during its' course.

Fourth, the states which occur to the wayfarer in the course of his wayfaring from the start of the journey to the point of destination.

Fifth, the states that befall those who have completed the journey (*ahl al-wusul*) after wayfaring.

Sixth, the end of the journey and the culmination of the way faring which is called *fana'* (annihilation) in *tawhid* (Divine Unity).

Each of these consists of several matters, excepting the end of the journey wherein there is no multiplicity. We shall discuss these six matters in six chapters, each having six sections, with the exception of the last chapter which does not allow of any multiplicity.

It should be known that in the same way as in a physical journey the traversing of every part of the road depends on traversing of a preceding part and is succeeded by another part—excepting the last part—each of these states is an intermediate stage between the end of the preceding stage and the beginning of the next, so that every stage is the sought after goal as its previous stage nears its end and is left behind and abandoned as one approaches its succeeding stage.

Hence every stage is a perfection in relation to its previous stage and remaining in it is a defect when one ought to turn to the next desirable stage. Hence the Prophet, may God bless him and his Household, has said:

من استوى يومه فهو مغبون

One whose two days are equal is a loser. [2](#)

And that is why it has been said:

حسبنا الابرار سيئات المقربين

Merits of the virtuous are vices for the saints. [3](#)

[1](#). Sunan Ibn Majah, ii, 1262, hadith 3841, ed. by Fu'ad `Abd al-Baqi, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr li al-Taba`ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi`.

2. Ibn Abi Jumhur, `Awali al-l`ali, i, 284, ed. by al-Hajj Aqa Mujtaba al Iraqi, 1st edition, 1403/1983, Qum. Matba`ah Sayyid al-Shuhada' `alayh al-salam.
3. Al-Fayd al-Kashani, Mahajjat al-bayda', vii, p. 89, from al-Imam al-Sadiq ('a).

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