

On the States That Occur During Wayfaring Before the Attainment of the Goal

This chapter consists of six sections:

Section one: on aspiration (*iradah*)

Section two: on longing (*shawq*)

Section three: on love (*mahabbah*)

Section four: on knowledge (*ma'rifah*)

Section five: on certainty (*yaqin*)

Section six: on rest (*sukun*).

Section One: On Aspiration

God, the Glorious and the Exalted, says:

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ

“And be patient thyself with those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening, aspiring for His Face . . .” (18:28).

‘*Iradat*’ in Persian means ‘desiring’ (*khwastan*), and it entails three things:

i) awareness of the object sought,

ii) awareness of the perfection that it possesses,

iii) absence of access to the object of desire.

Hence if the desired goal is something that is attainable by the seeker and the aspiration is accompanied with the power [to realize it], these two would lead to the attainment of the goal of aspiration.

And if it be something that is realized and existent but not present, these two would lead to the realization of the goal.

Hence if there is a delay in realization (*wusul*), seeking leads to a state called 'longing' (*shawq*) in the aspirer. Longing precedes realization.

And if realization be gradual, the effect it produces is called 'love' (*mahabbah*), which has several degrees, the ultimate degree of it being at the time of complete realization and the end of wayfaring.

As to the aspiration associated with wayfaring, it is entailed, in a sense, by the wayfaring itself, for the desire for perfection is a kind of aspiration, and when aspiration ceases, either as a result of attainment or due to the knowledge of impossibility of realization, wayfaring also terminates.

This aspiration associated with wayfaring is particular to the deficient; and as to the perfect, their aspiration is identical with perfection itself and the goal sought.

It is mentioned in traditions that there is a tree in paradise called Tuba, and whoever has a desire and aspiration for something it is immediately delivered to him from that tree without any delay or waiting. [1](#)

And it has been said that some people are rewarded for their acts of obedience in the Hereafter, [2](#) whereas for some their deeds themselves are their own reward. [3](#)

This also affirms that aspiration and the goal of aspiration are identical for some people, for aspiration ceases for one who attains to the station of *rids* in wayfaring. One of the adept who sought this station said:

لو قيل لي ما تريد، أقول: أن لا أريد.

If I were asked, "What do you aspire to?" I would say: "My aspiration is to have no aspiration."

Section Two: On Longing

God, the Glorious and the Exalted, said:

وَلْيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ

“ . . . and so that they who have been given knowledge may know that it is the truth from-thy Lord and believe in it, and so their hearts be humble unto Him . . . ” (22:54)

Longing (*shawq*) is finding the pleasure of love, mixed with the pain of separation, that accompanies intense desire. In the state of wayfaring, longing is necessary after the intensification of desire. At times longing is attained before wayfaring when consciousness of the ultimate goal is attained without the power to make the journey and with loss of patience over separation.

As much as the wayfarer progresses in this journey, his longing increases and patience diminishes, until he reaches the goal, whereafter the pleasure of attaining perfection becomes pure and free from the traces of pain and longing.

There are people of the Path who call the vision of the Beloved as 'longing,' and this is in the sense that [the wayfarer] seeks union (*ittihar*) and has not yet reached that station.

Section Three: On Love

God, the Glorious and the Exalted, has said:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ

“And amongst men there are those who take to themselves compeers apart from God, loving them as God is loved; but those that believe love God more ardently.” (2: 165)

Love (*mahabbah*) is an ecstatic feeling occasioned by some perfection, or imagination of some perfection, real or supposed, in the object of consciousness.

From another aspect, love is the inclining of the soul towards something consciousness of which is accompanied by some pleasure or perfection. And since the pleasure of perception is associated with realization of perfection, love is not devoid of actual or imagined pleasure.

Love is subject to strength and weakness. Its first stage is aspiration, for aspiration cannot be without love, and thereafter it is proportionate to the longing. With complete realization, whereas aspiration and longing cease, love becomes predominant.

As long as there remains a trace of otherness between the seeker and the Sought, love remains fixed, *'ishq* being extreme love.

And it may be that the seeker and the Sought are united while being distinct in some aspect. And as this aspect (of distinction) disappears, love ceases. Hence the ultimate stage of love and *'ishq* is union.

The philosophers say that love is either innate (*fitri*) or acquired (*kasbi*). Innate love is present in all

existents, for the heaven (*falak*) possesses a love that impels it to its motion. Every element that seeks a natural location possesses a love of that location. The same applies to love in other natural states pertaining to position, quantity, action and reaction.

It is also present in compounds, such as in the magnet which attracts iron, and to a greater degree in plants, wherewith they make movements leading to growth, nourishment, production of seeds and procreation.

In animals it is greater than in plants, as is displayed in their affection and friendly feeling for those of their own kind, the affinity for the opposite sex, and affection for offspring and other members of the species.

However, acquired love is predominant in the human species and its cause pertains to three things:

First, pleasure, physical or non-physical, imaginary or real.

Second, benefit, which is also either illusory—as in mundane love, whose benefit is accidental—or real, whose benefit is essential.

Third, the similarity of substance, which is either commonplace—such as between two persons of similar dispositions and temperaments, who are delighted by each other's dispositions, characteristics, and conduct—or special, as between the men of God (*ahl-a haqq*) and the love of the seeker of perfection for the absolutely perfect One.

The causes of love may at times be composed of two or three of these causes.

Love may also derive from gnosis (*ma'rifah*), and since the gnostic receives all pleasure, benefit, and good from the Absolutely Perfect, he attains to the love of the Absolutely Perfect, which surpasses all other loves, and herewith is disclosed the meaning of:

...الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ

“ . . . **those that believe love God more ardently.**” (2: 165)

The mystics (*ahl-e dhawq*) say that hope and fear, longing and intimacy, expansion (*inbisat*), trust (*tawakkul*), resignation (*rida'*), and submission (*taslim*) are all essential elements of love, for love at the aspect of the Beloved's compassion inspires hope, fear at the aspect of His awe, longing at non-attainment (*'adam-e wusul*), intimacy (*uns*) with the achievement of realization, expansion with exceeding intimacy, and trust with confidence in His care, resignation with relishing everything that He makes to occur, and submission at the aspect of one's inadequacy and inability and His perfection and omnipotence.

Real love is coextensive with submission (*taslim*) when [the wayfarer] knows the Beloved to be the absolute sovereign and himself as the absolute subject [of His sovereignty]. Real *'ishq* is coextensive with *fana'* when he sees the Beloved as everything and himself as nothing. For those who possess this station, everything other than God is a veil, and the ultimate goal of the journey is to turn away from all to attend to Him:

وَالِيهِ يَرْجِعُ الْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ

“To Him the whole matter shall be returned....” (11: 123)

Section Four: On Gnosis

God, the Glorious and the Exalted, has said:

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

“God hears witness that there is no god but He—and the angels, and men possessed of knowledge—upholding justice; there is no god but lie, the All- mighty, the All-wise.” (3: 18)

Ma'rifah means knowledge, and here that which is meant is the highest degree of the gnosis of God, for the gnosis of God has many levels.

The degrees of gnosis have an analogy in fire, which may be known to some people through hearsay as an existent that reduces to nothing anything that comes into contact with it and affects everything that is near it, as something that is not diminished by anything that may be taken away from it, and whose nature is opposed to that which is distinct from it, and that such an existent is called `fire:

In respect of the knowledge of God, the Exalted, those who are such are called imitators (*muqallid*), such as those who affirm the statements of authorities in this regard without considering any proof.

And some are at a level higher than this group and their analogy is that of those who on confronting the smoke arising from fire know that this smoke arises from something. Thereupon they infer that there is an existent whose effect is the smoke.

In gnosis, those whose analogy is such are the speculative thinkers (*ahl-e nazar*) who know through conclusive proofs that there is a Creator, the effects of Whose power bear evidence of His existence.

Above this level are those who have felt the heat of fire by being near it and having benefited from it. In gnosis, those of this rank are the believers in the Unseen, who know the Creator from behind a veil.

Above this level are those who see the fire and their eyes behold other existents in its light. This group,

in respect of gnosis, consists of the seers who are called gnostics (*'urafa'*), and it is they who possess true knowledge (*ma'rifah*).

Others who have higher ranks above this level are also reckoned as gnostics, and they are called 'the people of certainty' (*ahl al-yaqin*). We shall discuss certainty and those who possess it hereafter,

And of them is a group whose knowledge is of the category of direct vision, and they are called 'the people of presence' (*ahl al-hudur*) and to them belong special intimacy (*uns*) and ecstasy (*inbisat*).

The ultimate degree of gnosis is where the gnostic ceases to exist, like something burnt away in fire and reduced to nothing.

Section Five: On Certainty

God, the Glorious and the Exalted says:

وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ

“ . . . and they are certain of the Hereafter.” (2:4)

It is stated in a hadith:

من أعطي اليقين ومن أوتي حظه منه لا يبال بما انتقص من صلاته وصومه.

One who is given certainty, and the one who partakes of it, does not worry about the deficiency of his prayer and fasting. [4](#)

Yaqin in common usage means an indestructible resolute belief corresponding to fact. In reality it comprises of the knowledge of the known object and the knowledge of the impossibility of that which contradicts the former knowledge.

There are various planes of certainty and the Qur'anic revelation mentions 'knowledge of certainty' (*'ilm al-yaqin*), 'eye of certainty' (*'ayn al yaqin*), and 'truth of certainty' (*haqq al-yaqin*) as in the following verses:

كَأَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ

“(No indeed;) did you know with the knowledge of certainty you shall surely see Hell. Again, you shall surely see it with the eye of certainty.” (102:5–7)

وَتَصْلِيَةُ جَحِيمٍ إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ

“But if he be of them that cried lies, and went astray, there shall be a hospitality of boiling water) and the roasting in Hell. Surely this is the truth of certainly.” (56:94–95)

In the analogy of fire mentioned in the section on gnosis, whatever is seen by the means of the light of the fire is like ‘the knowledge of certainly’ (*‘ilm al-yaqin*).

The immediate vision of the substance of fire, which is the source of light that shines on everything capable of being illuminated, is like ‘the eye of certainly’ (*‘ayn al-yaqin*), and that which is enveloped by the fire, its identity so consumed by it that what remains is the fire itself, is ‘the truth of certainty’ (*haqq al-yaqin*).

Although fire stands for punishment, but since ultimate union with it results in the annihilation of the essence of the one who unites with it, its sight from far, from near, and entry into it—the latter resulting in the annihilation of everything that is other than the fire—correspond to these three stations. And God knows best the realities of things.

Section Six: On Rest

God, the Exalted, has said:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۖ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Those who believe, their hearts are at rest in God’s remembrance. Indeed. God’s remembrance gives tranquility to the hearts.” (13:28)

Rest is of two kinds, one which is characteristic of the deficient, prior to wayfaring, when its subject is unaware of perfection and the goal. That is called negligence (*ghaflah*). The other is the one attained after wayfaring and is characteristic of the perfect on reaching the goal, and is called tranquillity (*itminan*).

The state between these two states of rest is called movement, journey, and wayfaring. Movement is necessarily associated with love prior to realization, and rest is associated with gnosis, which is coextensive with realization (*wusul*).

For this reason it has been said that **لو تحرك العرف هلك ولو سكن المحب هلك** i.e. The gnostic would perish were he to cease moving. Some have even gone beyond this state to state that **لو نطق العارف هلك ولو سكت هلك** i.e. The gnostic would perish if he were to speak and the lover if he were to cease speaking.

These are the states of the wayfarer until he attains realization. And God knows best.

- [1.](#) Majma' al-bahrayn, vol. 2, p. 110.
- [2.](#) This is a reference to verses 4:124 and 3:195, and the tradition 36 of Bihar al anwar, vol. 77, p.
- [3.](#) This is a reference to verses 3:30 and 99:7 and the Prophet's tradition reported in Kanz al-'ummal, hadith 38963.
- [4.](#) Al-Fayd al-Kashani, Mahajjat al-bayda ; vol. 7, p. 106.

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