

Tarbiyatussālikeen

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WHAT IS TASAWWUF?

"Verily, he who has purified the heart is successful and he who has despoiled it has lost."

A lot of people have misunderstandings about tasawwuf. Many think that it is something beyond Qur'ān and Sunnah. Errant Sufis as well as the superficial Ulama, although on the opposite ends of the spectrum, are together in holding this mistaken notion. Consequently the first group has shunned the Qur'ān and Hadith while the second group has shunned tasawwuf. Actually, although the term tasawwuf, like many other religious terms in use today, evolved later, the discipline is very much part of the Shar'iah. The department of the Shar'iah relating to external deeds like Salāh and Zakāh is called fiqh while the one dealing with the internal feelings and states of the heart is called tasawwuf. Both are commanded in the Qur'ān. Thus while commanding Salāh and Zakāt, the Qur'ān also commands gratefulness and love of Allah and condemns the evil of pride and vanity. Similarly, in the books of Hadith, along with the chapters on Ibādah, trade and commerce, marriage and divorce, are to be found the chapters on riya (show-off) takabbur, akhlāq, etc. These commands are as much a mandatory requirement as the

ones dealing with external deeds. On reflection it will be realized that all the external deeds are designed for the reformation of the heart. That is the basis of success in the hereafter while its despoiling is the cause of total destruction. This is precisely what is known technically as tasawwuf. Its focus is Tahzeebul Akhlāq or the adornment of character; its motive is the attainment of Divine pleasure; its method is total obedience to the commands of the Shar'iah.

Tasawwuf is the soul of Islām. Its function is to purify the heart from the lowly bestial attributes of lust, calamities of the tongue, anger, malice, jealousy, love of the world, love of fame, niggardliness, greed, ostentation, vanity, deception, etc. At the same time it aims at the adornment of the heart with the lofty attributes of repentance, perseverance, gratefulness, fear of Allah, hope, abstention, tauheed, trust, love, sincerity, truth, contemplation, etc.

To diagnose and treat the diseases of the heart normally requires the help of an expert mentor or Shaykh. Here are the qualities of a good Shaykh.

1. He possesses necessary religious knowledge.
2. His beliefs, habits, and practices are in accordance with the Shar'iah.
3. He does not harbour greed for the worldly wealth.
4. He has himself spent time learning from a good Shaykh.
5. The scholars and good mashā'ikh of his time hold good opinion about him.
6. His admirers are mostly from among the people who have good understanding of religion.
7. Most of his followers follow the Shar'iah.
8. He sincerely tries to educate and morally train his followers. If he sees anything wrong in them, he corrects it.
9. In his company one can feel a decrease in the love of this world and an increase in the love for Allah.
10. He himself regularly performs zikr and shughal (spiritual exercises).

In searching for a Shaykh, do not look for his ability to perform karamat (miracles) or to foretell the future. A very good Shaykh may not be able to show any karamat. On the other hand, a person showing karamat does not have to be a pious person --- or even a Muslim. Prominent Sufi Bayazid Bistami says: "Do not be deceived if you see a performer of supernatural feats flying in the air. Measure him on the standard of the Shar'iah."

When you find the right Shaykh, and you are satisfied with his

ability to provide spiritual guidance, you perform bayah or pledge. This is a two-way commitment; the Shaykh pledges to guide you in light of Shar'iah and you pledge to follow him. Then the Shaykh will give his mureed (disciple) initial instructions. They include the following:

1. Perform repentance for all the past sins and take steps to make amends, e.g. if any Salāh has been missed so far in the life, you start making up for it.

2. If you have any unmet financial obligations toward another person make plans to discharge them.

3. Guard your eyes, ears, and tongue.

4. Perform Zikr regularly.

5. Start a daily session of self-accounting before going to bed. Review all the good and bad deeds performed during the day. Repent for the bad ones and thank Allah for the good ones.

6. Perform murāqaba-maut (meditation over death) every night before going to bed. Just visualize that you have died. Reflect upon the pangs of death, the questioning in the grave, the plain of Resurrection, the Reckoning, the presence in the Court of Allah, etc This helps bring softness to the heart and break the tendency to commit sins.

7. Develop humility. Even if you observe another individual committing the worst of vices you should not despise him/her, nor should you consider yourself nobler. It is very much possible that the perpetrator of the vice may resort to sincere repentance while the one who despised the sinner become ensnared in the traps of nafs and Shaytān. One

has no certainty regarding one's end. One, therefore has no basis for regarding another with contempt.

The essential idea of Tahzeebul Akhlāq is to bring our natural faculties in a state of balance. The three basic faculties are anger, desires, and intelligence.

Anger:
When in equilibrium it results in valour, forbearance, steadfastness, the ability to restrain anger, and dignity.

Excess will result in rashness, boastfulness, pride, inability to restrain anger, and vanity. A deficiency will result in cowardice, disgrace, and feeling of inferiority.

Desires:
Equilibrium here results in chastity, generosity, haya (decency), patience, and contentment. Its excess leads to greed and lust. The other extreme results in narrow-mindedness, and impotence, etc.

Intelligence:
Equilibrium here makes man wise, sharp-witted and one with great insights. Excess here makes one deceptive, fraudulent and imposture. Its lack results in ignorance and stupidity with the consequence that such a person is quickly misled.

A person will be considered as having a beautiful seerah (character) only when these faculties are in the state of balance and equilibrium. Internal beauty varies with people just as external beauty does. The possessor of the most beautiful seerah was Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam). The beauty of our seerah is based on its closeness to his seerah. o

Malfoozāt

(Statements & Anecdotes)
Shaykh Ashraf Ali Thānwi (R)

G Our saints were never soured. They always maintained a cheerful appearance, smiling with everyone in spite of the fear of Divine Love consuming their heart.

G It is not among the ways of our Akābir (seniors) to praise a person in his presence. Whatever praises Shaykh Gangohi (R) lauded on me were in my absence. Friends conveyed such statements of praise to me. I cannot remember

14 HARMS OF CASTING EVIL GLANCES

By
Ārifbillah Shaykh Hakeem
Muhammad Akhtar (D.B.)

Harm No. 1: Disobedience of Allah

Casting evil glances is clearly forbidden by the clear and explicit text of the Qur'aan. Allah Ta'ala says: "O Nabi – Tell the believing men to lower their gazes." (Sura Nur ; Ayat 30, Juz 18)

(Meaning, do not look at ghair mahram women). Therefore, he who casts evil glances is opposing the clear and explicit command of Qur'ān, and one who opposes the clear and explicit command of Qur'ān is guilty of committing a Harām act. Thus, to save oneself from this sin, it is sufficient to meditate upon the fact that the one who casts evil glances is opposing a commandment of the Qur'ān. In other words, he is disobeying Allah Ta'āla.

A CONNECTION WITH ALLAH TA'ĀLA

From the discourses

of :

ĀRIFBILLAH SHAYKH HAKEEM MUHAMMAD AKHTAR (D.B.)

DECEPTIVE GARDEN

The following poem was published in the Al Haq magazine which is printed in Akhara Khatak;

*“Whoever passes through the garden, inform
the Bulbul,
O Saba! Treasure filled days lie ahead,
So do not attach your heart to the garden.”*

Khwaja Azizul Hasan Majzooob (R) who was the Deputy Collector of Lucknow and also the Khalifah of Hakimul Ummah Shaykh Ashraf Ali Thānwi (R), on seeing the streets decorated with flags and trimmings in honour of the arrival of the Viceroy said to Shaykh Abdul Ghani Phoolopuri (R); “A couplet has just formed in my mind”:

*“O Heart! Do not go towards the glitter and
glamour of time,
This is merely a treasure which has come in
the form of a garden.”*

This world is a deceptive garden. If we spend our youth, our bodies, which are actually sand, in the obedience of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), then this sand of ours shall become valuable and have the added honour of being in the company of Allah and Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

DECOMPOSITION OF BODY INTO SAND

If this sandy body is solely used for eating and drinking, then we have in actual fact sacrificed sand on sand. Why? Well, if we were to ponder a little, then we shall realise that these Shāmi Kebābs, roasted chicken, foodstuff, etc. are all sand.

If these things are buried in the ground and uncovered a little while later, we will find that

they have turned to sand.

Likewise, these beautiful humans and these palatial homes are all sand. If we have sacrificed our lives and sandy bodies over these blessings and ignored the Bestower of these blessings, then we have done nothing except sacrificed sand over sand. Our sandy bodies have been sacrificed over these sandy worldly things.

If on the other hand, we have pleased Allah and Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), and we have fulfilled the rights of our families, and our rights as well, and we have earned our livelihood according to the Commands of Allah, not displeasing Him in any way, then on the day of Qiyāmah, our sandy bodies will find a positive affinity with Allah and His Rasul (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), thus making our bodies valuable.

Therefore do not sacrifice this sand (body) on sand (worldly perishable things), but rather sacrifice it on the Creator of the Heavens.

I have compiled a verse in this regard:

*“Do not waste your life on any sandy object,
Sacrifice your life upon Him who bestowed
upon you your youth,
Dying over those who themselves die,
He who is obsessed with the beautiful objects
of this world,
Is oblivious of the higher pleasure.”*

Khwaja Azizul Hasan (R) says, “Do not devote your heart to these bodies which will one day perish and decompose. He who has granted you youth, could have, if willed, snatched it away from you during childhood. Give your heart to Him only, who truly deserves it. He placed your heart in your bosom.”

MUJĀHADAH

"Those who strive in Our Path, We will most assuredly guide them to wards Our Paths." (Qur'ān).

Fudhālah Kāmil narrates that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) said: "The Mujaahid is he who makes Jihād (strives) in the obedience of Allah." (Bayhaqee).

The Nature of Mujāhadah

The reality in Mujāhadah consists of the habitual practice of opposing the nafs (man's lowly desire). In other words, to check and control the physical, monetary, egoistical and mundane desires, delights and preferences of the nafs in the pursuit of the Pleasure and Obedience of Allah Ta'āla.

Two types of benefits accrue to the nafs.

Huqooq (rights or obligations) are such benefits necessary for the endurance and existence of the physical body and life.

Huzooz (pleasures, delights, luxuries) are benefits in excess to the Huqooq.

Mujāhadah and Riyāzah (abstinence-forms of austere exercises designed to establish the control of the mind over matter) are directed towards the Huzooz. In Mujāhadah, reduction or total abstention from the Huzooz. (pleasures) are advocated. (Pleasures here refer to lawful pleasures and not to such pleasures which are forbidden in the Shar'iah). In the employment of Mujāhadah, the Huqooq (rights and obligations) are not destroyed, for such destruction is contrary to the Sunnah. The Hadith states: "Verily, your nafs has a haqq (right) over you..."

Destruction of the huqooq brings about physical weakness and the health deteriorates. When this happens, one finds it difficult to execute even the necessary duties and Ibādah.

EVERY SIN IS A SIGN OF STUPIDITY

Hakeemul Ummah Shaykh Ashraf Ali Thānwi (R) said: "Every sin is a sign of stupidity and foolishness."

Anyone who commits sin, then this is a sign that there is some deficiency in his intellect. He is disobeying such a Being in whose hands is our life and death, our health and sickness, peace and comfort, good and evil end. If his intellect was sound he would never commit sin. As for the one who casts evil glances, Shaykh Thānwi says that he is extremely foolish. By casting glances he attains nothing other than restlessness in his heart. By looking at a beauty, one never attains him/her,



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