

The Shadhili Tariqa

1. Knowing the Path

THE main emphasis of the tariqa may be characterized as attachment of the heart to Allah Most High. Allah describes the way to this in His command to the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace),

“Say: ‘If you all love Allah, follow me, and Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. Verily Allah is forgiving and compassionate’” (Koran 3:31).

To *follow* the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) in his lifetime was a simple matter for his Companions, who but said, “We hear and obey.” As for afterwards, the Companions passed on their knowledge to those after them, and so on down to our own times, so that Allah’s remembrance might be preserved, both His word, the Holy Koran, and the other wisdom brought by the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace). Allah Most High says,

“Surely, We have revealed the Remembrance; and We shall surely preserve it” (Koran 15:9),

which Allah, in His wisdom, has brought about through those who have borne the trust down through the ages, the scholars of this Umma. For the sake of scholarly quality and excellence we rely on the very foremost of them in each discipline, the Imams of the field, whether in Sacred Law, Koranic exegesis, hadith, Koran recital (tajwid), or the other disciplines. In this connection, our sheikh, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Shaghouri, says,

“What the Imams have recorded *is* our religion.”

One consequence of this is that all who are in the tariqa follow one of the four Sunni *madhhabs* (schools) of fiqh: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi‘i, or Hanbali; as well as one of the two schools of tenets of faith, Ash‘ari or Maturidi. Our sheikh is a Shafi‘i, but accepts any other school that the student may wish. He prefers that all follow the Ash‘ari school in ‘*aqida* (tenets of faith), because he finds it sounder on some questions.

A second consequence is that we do not take our *din* or religion from those who are not Imams, especially orientalist or authors without a traditional Islamic education at the hands of the tradition’s sheikhs. University degrees, academic acclaim, and works in print all indicate the earnestness and effort of those who possess them, but cannot take the place, for religious purposes, of having an unbroken line of teachers extending back to the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), who is the source of all religious knowledge (‘ilm). This is perhaps even truer of Sufism than other religious sciences. Ibn ‘Ajiba says:

In the path of Sufism, keeping the company of others (suhba) is of tremendous

consequence in the journey to Allah, in accordance with the wont of Allah Most High and His wisdom. Some have even said, “Whoever has no sheikh [but travels the path alone] has the Devil as his sheikh.” Another has said, “A person is like a [fruit] tree growing up in the wild: if not trimmed and pruned, it becomes a scrub.” And Abul ‘Abbas al-Mursi has said, “Whoever has no sheikh in this matter is not to be rejoiced over” (*Iqadh al-himam*, 95–96).

In this regard, one may note that English literature on Sufism is plagued with efforts by the unqualified to write about the field, among them a group of authors dedicated to spreading the anti-Islamic concept of the universal validity of all religions. Besides being a lie against the high, pure way of Sufism, this idea is *kufir* that places those who hold it outside of Islam—in hell eternally, if they die on it—by negating the basic tenet of faith that Islam is the final religion that abrogates all previous religions. Their books are often as eloquent as dangerous, and one must know them for what they are, though we may at least infer how rare and precious the way of *tariqa* is from the number of highwaymen upon it to rob the unwary. The matter also points up the need for genuine Islamic knowledge, and the relevance of the traditional maxim “If the *wali* [friend of Allah] does not know the entrances the Devil uses, the Devil will enter.”

The true literature of the *tariqa* is copious, though mostly in Arabic, and consists, first and foremost, of the *Hikam al-‘Ata’iyya* of the second successor to Imam Abul Hasan al-Shadhili, Ibn ‘Ata’ Illah (may Allah be well-pleased with them both), together with its many commentaries, among the best of which is the *Sharh Ibn ‘Abbad* [commentary of Ibn ‘Abbad (al-Rundi)], which Sheikh ‘Abd al-Rahman recommends for those who have not yet entered the *khalwa* or ‘solitary *dhikr* (invocation of Allah) under the sheikh’s supervision’; as well as the *Iqadh al-himam fi sharh al-Hikam* [The awakening of spiritual ambitions: a commentary on the *Wisdoms*], by Ibn ‘Ajiba, which he recommends after the *khalwa*, though it contains much valuable material, as he says, “for the person at the beginning, the middle, or the end of the spiritual way.”

From its inception, the Shadhili *tariqa* has been one of scholars and scholarship, and many excellent books exist in print by its sheikhs. Few books in Sufism are of benefit in the path besides those of authorized sheikhs, and it is more beneficial when they are from the spiritual line of one’s own *tariqa*, preferably the more recent of them, among the best being the spoken lessons of one’s sheikh that have been taped. But the best way to take knowledge of Sufism is still the traditional way of sitting with the sheikh, listening, asking questions, and then applying the knowledge one has taken.

Spiritual Works

Masters have always emphasized that the *tariqa*, while grounded at every step in Islamic knowledge, is not concerned with words or books as such, but with spiritual sincerity, illuminating the heart with the love and knowledge of Allah that He bestows on those who follow the way of the prophets and purified ones in spiritual effort and *dhikr*. Now, the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) has said,

“Works are only according to intentions” (*Muslim*, 3.1515–16: 1907. S),

so Sufis engaged in spiritual works have always taken care to devote their intention, their whole mind, heart, and being—to Allah Himself, the limitless immensity of His greatness, His majestic exaltedness (*kibriya'* literally, “haughtiness”), and the thanks that is due to Him—not to the divine reward for such acts, or other ends of the self. Allah Most High says,

“So whoever longs to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and not associate with his Lord’s worship anyone” (Koran 18:110).

The rewards for acts mentioned in Koran and hadith, according to the masters of the way, are bestowed by Allah to manifest His limitless generosity to His servants if and only if these acts are for Him alone; not when reward as such is the reason for performing them. It is not suitable for spiritual works in the path of sincerity to be primarily for self interests, in this world or the next. Some scholars, such as Imam Ghazali in his *Minhaj al-‘abidin*, have even held that to seek nothing beyond an act’s reward nullifies its entire value with Allah. But the sounder position is that Allah in His mercy and kindness may inspire such a servant to eliminate the defective intention by disclosing to him the reality of his own self; that Allah alone created it and its worship, and that He has a better right to be what is intended therein. Superior still is that the sole devotion to Allah, as an “intention,” accompany only the beginning of the act, to be then superseded by one’s “absence” from the work, solely beholding Allah in the heart, for Allah loves those who behold Him.

If these are the states of those at the end of the path, beginners, for their part, reach them by successive approximations, as a person after a long illness strengthens unused muscles by practicing walking a little farther each day, to be eventually able to walk as far as he wants.

There is little need to dwell on those who perform acts of worship out of habit, automatically, without having any particular intention in their hearts: they are neither worshipping Allah nor other than Him, and can expect nothing from their acts except to pass time.

Mujahada (Spiritual Struggle)

The main work of the tariqa is to steadfastly perform all acts that are obligatory (*fard*) and the confirmed sunna (*mu’akkada*), to eat and live from a lawful income, and to eliminate every blameworthy trait and acquire every praiseworthy one, with the Sacred Law as one’s guiding light.

The sphere of outward *mujahada* or ‘spiritual struggle’ in our tariqa is that one first strive to eliminate all that is unlawful (*haram*) from one’s life according to the standards of one’s own school of fiqh, and after this, to eliminate all that is offensive (*makruh*) in it. This is the foundation for all higher reaches of the path. If one succeeds at this, and the

time and inclination to learn exist, one may go on to do the same with the other schools.

The sphere of inward *mujahada* consists in training the heart—by love, dhikr, and gratitude—as ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Dabbagh says,

to be attached to the Real (al-Haqq) Most Glorious and Exalted; keeping ever at His door; taking refuge in Him with every motion and rest; fleeing from the moments of inattention that intersperse those of presence, and in short, disciplining oneself to hold ever fast to Allah Mighty and Majestic, and persisting therein—even though one is not engaged in a great deal of outward worship (*al-Ibriz*, 2.60),

Ours is thus not a way of hunger, thirst, and spiritual austerities, but of thankfulness to Allah and presence of heart. The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) has said, “Verily, Allah is well pleased that the servant should eat a meal and praise Him for it, or take a drink and praise Him for it” (*Muslim*, 4.2095: 2734. S).

In accordance with the teachings of Islam, those of our tariqa do not smoke, watch television, or countenance the mixing of men and women other than for business, education, or necessity: whenever and wherever possible, men sit with the men, out of view of women with the women. Sheikh al-Hashimi has said, “This path has nothing to do with those who sit with women.”

A cardinal principle of the tariqa is *zuhd* or ‘nonattachment to other than Allah.’ One should always leave what does not concern one, meaning one’s needs in this life or the next. Our sheikh often repeats two verses of poetry that mean:

The meeting of people will never enrich you,

save with the gibberish of useless gossip.

So diminish your meeting of people,

except for knowledge or to improve your condition.

This applies with special force to media such as advertising, entertainment, and the internet. Masters say, “Increase in the physical, and you will decrease in the spiritual,” and this pertains to everything but what benefits one, now or in the hereafter. This is why the *salik* or ‘traveller’ shuns the din of hucksters, prefers clothing devoid of writing or trademarks, unplugs from the internet except to buy, sell, or benefit the Muslims, and in a word, finds in the Absolute that which suffices him from the limitary.

WHEN one first takes the tariqa, the sheikh asks about one’s prescribed prayers during the previous forty days. If one has missed or delayed any past their lawful time, one’s first spiritual effort is to get forty days in a row without a single missed prayer.

After this, one begins a series of lessons in *muraqaba* or ‘spiritual vigilance’ that

incorporate the “prayer of repentance” (salat al-tawba), from the rigorously authenticated hadith conveyed by Abu Bakr and ‘Ali (Allah be well pleased with them) that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said,

“No man commits a sin, then makes ablution (wudu) and makes it well, then prays two rak‘as and asks forgiveness of Allah Mighty and Majestic, save that he is forgiven” (Ahmad, 1.2. S).

This sunna is practiced always, whether for each wrong committed, as is superior, or at least for the last wrong committed on that day, conjoined with a “general repentance” from all wrongs entirely, which is “valid without specifying them individually, even when one knows them” (al-Laqqani: *It-haf al-murid*, 255). It seems particularly useful to travellers in the spiritual way, which is one of continual repentance (tawba). Repentance is, the sheikh notes, “the soul of all spiritual stations,” and in this connection, it is noteworthy that one of the greatest benefits of taking the tariqa is that disciples take care to fulfill the rights that are obligatory upon them: giving Allah His due by making up any prescribed prayers missed since entering Islam; and giving others their due by paying off any debts and restoring anything wrongfully taken from them, whether before or after entering Islam. These are necessary to succeed in the path—and to meet Allah on the Last Day.

One should not entirely neglect any kind of spiritual work recommended by Sacred Law, for as Ibn ‘Ata’ Illah says, each type of work has a spiritual light proper to it, and whoever leaves it unperformed will lack that light. One may fast days that are sunna to fast, such as Mondays and Thursdays, the Day of ‘Arafa, and so on, but the main emphasis of our way is not fasting, but rather dhikr, and learning Sacred Law and living it.

Because learning Arabic is necessary to gain sound Islamic knowledge, it too enters into the *mujahada* of our Shadhili path. Sheikhs often test disciples with something that represents a challenge, and in our tariqa it is learning Arabic. The benefits are many. First, the path of a Sufi is not a path at all, but the work of a lifetime, in which knowledge plays a key role. Because of the *baraka* or ‘spiritual blessing’ of knowledge, at the end of the path one finds a world of difference between, say, a good-hearted soul who knows only the Fatiha and a few suras, and another who is conversant in Arabic and has cultivated himself and benefited from the recorded experience of centuries of previous masters. Moreover, the Arabic Koran *is* the Islamic revelation, and therefore the book *par excellence* of the Sufis. Great as the reward may be for reciting it without understanding, it is not like that of someone who recites it as it has been revealed and is changed by it to the very core of his being. As Allah says in Surat al-Zumar,

“Are they equal, those who know and those who do not know?” (Koran 39:9).

Finally, the purpose of a true sheikh is not to gather an army of followers around himself, but to produce Sufis who can ultimately walk on their own two feet in the path, able themselves to distinguish truth from falsehood, whose *din* does not disappear when the

sheikh does—all of which requires that they be close to the primary texts of the Koran and sunna.

To summarize the whole matter of *mujahada* in our path, the *wali* or ‘friend of Allah’ is someone whom Allah has made victorious over his four enemies: the ego, this world, caprice, and the Devil. Because this victory generally entails spiritual struggle, the difference between the Shadhili path and others is not that it lacks all *mujahada*, which all paths must have; but rather in its attitude towards it. In other tariqas, spiritual struggle and its resultant change are regarded as a means to reach Allah. In the Shadhili path, reaching Him itself is regarded as the greatest means to this change.

Change

The touchstone of the spiritual way is a heart occupied with nothing besides Allah, and its sign, in the words of al-Junayd, is “that Allah (al-Haqq) slay you from yourself and give you life through Him”; that Allah, in the fullness of one’s destiny, free one of all low traits and adorn one with high ones. The tariqa is not concerned with the possibility of this happening as a miraculous gift, all at once, but rather with the means that normally bring it about. Sheikh ‘Abd al-Rahman emphasizes that the two strongest ones are *dhikr*, making remembrance of Allah, and *mudhakara*, learning traditional spiritual knowledge of the *din* in its three pillars: Islam (shari‘a), Iman (‘aqida), and Ihsan (tariqa).

Operationally, one strives to attain the states of the Koran—explained in the famous hadith of ‘A’isha (Allah be well pleased with her) as the character traits of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) (*Ahmad*, 6.91. H)—first by hearing about, then living, and finally internalizing each trait as a permanent station (maqam). One needs high aspiration (himma) for this, though our sheikh cautions that blind haste can deprive the path of spiritual blessing (baraka), and ultimately success, since love and knowledge of Allah reach their perfection only in a balance between the faculties of the soul, without blameworthy extremes.

The Shadhili tariqa has never had any distinctive dress or apparel; initiation into the tariqa rather meant to *change*, much in the way described by the Sheikh al-Akbar (Muhyiddin Ibn al-‘Arabi) in his explanation of the conditions for donning the patched garment (khirqa) of the Sufis:

The conditions for this well known garment resemble the form manifested by Allah for covering one’s shameful parts: One clothes the shame of lies in the garment of truthfulness, the shame of faithlessness in the garment of keeping one’s word, the shame of treachery in the garment of loyalty, the shame of showing-off in the garment of sincerity to Allah, the shame of base character in the garment of noble character, the shame of blameworthy traits in the garment of praiseworthy ones; clothing every low attribute in the garment of every high one, exchanging attachment to worldly means for the unity (tawhid) of relinquishing them, exchanging reliance upon things for reliance on Allah, and exchanging thanklessness of blessings for gratitude to the Bestower (al-

Ghumari: ‘*Ali ibn Abi Talib*, 127).

In short, taking the *tariqa* means to transform the soul, the means for this being somewhat different in the Shadhili path from others. For there are perhaps two basic approaches to Sufism—considered as the knowledge of the divine entity, which it grasps through direct vision. The first, the way of many *tariqas*, consists of uprooting bad characteristics from the heart, one by one, and so eventually to become pure enough to behold the divine presence.

The second is the way of our masters, and consists of the sheikh initiating the disciple into the divine presence through the invocation of the Supreme Name, a means through which Allah may grant *ma‘rifa* or direct knowledge of the Divine to the disciple, who in virtue of this knowledge then frees himself of low traits, one after another, but less by way of spiritual struggle than out of gratitude before the majesty of God. Attaining *ma‘rifa* in our *tariqa* is thus not a diploma certifying one is “finished,” but rather one perfection of the way that is a key to others, in a sense, the *beginning* of the Shadhili path. And its centrality to the *din* is emphasized by the well known hadith about spiritual excellence (*ihsan*) “It is to worship Allah as though you see Him” (*Muslim*, 1.37–38: 8. S).

Here, the means of *seeing* is not the eye, which can only behold physical things like itself; nor yet the mind, which cannot transcend its own impressions to reach the Divine; but rather the *ruh* or spirit of a human being, the subtle faculty in each of us which is not bound by the limitations of the created universe. The food of this *ruh* is the remembrance of Allah.

2. Travelling the Path

PERHAPS the best description of the path, certainly one of the most frequently cited among Sufis, is the hadith of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace):

Allah Most High says: “Whomever is hostile to a friend of Mine I declare war against. My slave approaches Me with nothing more beloved to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him, and My slave keeps drawing nearer to Me with voluntary works until I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he seizes, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks Me, I will surely give to him, and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely protect him. I do not hesitate from anything I shall do more than My hesitation to take the soul of the believer who dislikes death; for I dislike displeasing him” (*Bukhari*, 8.131: 6502. S).

This hadith describes the means to the *change* that is central to spiritual realization, in conformity with the teaching of the sheikhs of the path who define a *Sufi* as “a scholar of religious learning (*faqih*) who practiced what he knew, so Allah bequeathed him knowledge of what he did not know.” While people differ in their capacity both to learn the religion and to attain the consummate awareness of *tawhid* or ‘divine unity’ expressed in the above hadith, everyone who travels the Shadhili path must know the works needed

to “practice what one knows.” If one is great in them, one will be great in spiritual attainment, and if one is weak in them, one will be weak in spiritual attainment, unable to pass from transitory experiences (ahwal) to permanent realization (tahqiq).

These works fall into three categories, faith, *wirds* or ‘daily spiritual works,’ and character. Or one might say, knowing, doing, and being.

Knowing: The Validity of One’s Faith

The works of knowing consist in certitude in eternal truths, the tenets of faith of orthodox Islam. They will be treated first, since they alone guarantee the validity of everything else in one’s religion.

The tariqa is a deepening of faith, a putting of things in their true perspective until eternal truths are more palpable than the transient world around one. According to Ibn al-‘Arabi, the path may be described as “knowledge (‘ilm) become perception (‘ayn)”; or in the words of our sheikh, “reflection (i‘tibar) becoming stronger than eyesight.” These works include:

Belief in Allah

One must know that Allah is one, without any co-sharer in His entity (dhat), attributes (sifat), actions (af‘al), or rulings (ahkam). One must also know that “there is nothing whatsoever that is like unto Him” (Koran 42:11): His entity does not resemble anything, nor anything resemble Him. Created things, for example, are bound by time and space, while Allah is the Creator of time and space, and transcendently beyond them, for which reason He cannot be “in” any particular place, as anthropomorphists believe; or “everywhere,” as some of the unlearned believe; or “nowhere,” as atheists believe, meaning thereby to negate His existence: He is transcendently beyond all these descriptions, which apply to created things.

“Belief in Allah” also entails knowing that He has no co-sharer in any of His attributes. For example, the divine attribute of *wujud* or ‘being’ belongs to Him alone. Nothing is, besides Allah and His attributes and His actions and His rulings. This is what is meant by the Sufi term *wahdat al-wujud* or ‘oneness of being.’ It should be understood, not only to enlighten ignorant critics, but because it is the metaphysical counterpart of *ma‘rifa* or ‘knowledge of Allah’ that is the basic emphasis of the Shadhili tariqa. As Sheikh ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi explains in his *Idah al-maqsud min wahdat al-wujud*, oneness of being does “not mean that the created universe is God, for God’s being is necessary (wajib al-wujud) while the universe’s being is merely possible (ja‘iz al-wujud), that is, subject to nonbeing, beginning, and ending, and it is impossible that one of these two orders of being could in any sense *be* the other; but rather, the created universe’s act of being is derived from and subsumed by the divine act of creation, from which it has no ontic independence, and hence *is* only through the being of its Creator, the one true Being” (Author: *Reliance of the Traveller*, 1020).

So *wahdat al-wujud* or ‘oneness of being’ entails that nothing exists except Allah, His attributes, His actions, and His rulings, while created being, as manifest to us, cannot be identified with His entity or attributes, but only with His actions and rulings. In short, our metaphysic is not pantheism, because the world is not Allah. Spinoza’s definition in the *Ethica* of God as “simple substance” (*pantheism* properly speaking), has nothing to do with the experience of those who possess *ma‘rifa*. Rather, the world’s existence is *through* Allah, in Arabic *bi Llah*, the point under the Arabic letter *ba’* being both a point of ontic connection and a point of demarcation. The whole experiential training of the *tariqa* may be said to elucidate this point. The matter is between Lord (Rabb), and slave who *is* through Lord (‘abd bi Rabb). The feet of some of those who attempt to travel the high path of *ma‘rifa*, particularly without a true sheikh, may slip on this point, and the fall is a long way down; for which reason the traveller must not be ignorant of a second tenet of faith:

Belief That Everything Besides Allah Is Contingent

It is plain that the material world which we see is not, according to the teachings of our *tariqa*, the entity (dhat) of Allah (“Allah Himself”), or a divine attribute, but rather is His creative act and rulings (ahkam). In point of being, the created world may be said to have “two faces.”

One face is towards Allah, in respect to which created things are “obliterated,” absolutely indigent to Him, nothing in themselves, inseparably connected to His beginninglessly eternal attributes of knowledge, will, and power. As ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi puts it, they are “outwardly creation, inwardly command.” For nothing that exists lacks a state of being, and no state exists that lacks a divine attribute that governs it and determines its *hukm* or ‘ruling,’ meaning the reality of its case, “what” it really is. The rulings (ahkam) of Allah thus flow over created things, manifesting His attributes in them and determining their specific relations to others; for example, the ruling for this thing is that it is larger, the ruling for that thing is that it is smaller; the ruling for this man is that he is a believer (mu‘min), the ruling for that is that he is an unbeliever (kafir); the ruling for this act is triumph in the next life, the ruling for that is ruin; and so on. The rulings of Allah govern and weigh all things, materially and spiritually, and when things are considered apart from them, nothing remains, not a single relation. That is, in and of themselves they are nothing. “Their substance (madda),” our sheikh notes, “is nothingness (‘adam),” which also describes their temporal past, present, and future: what they were, what they are now (by their intrinsic poverty and total ontological dependence on another), and what they return to—all are pure exteriority from what really *is*. The Koran describes them in terms of this essential attribute as “perishing,” in Arabic *halik*, an active participle that literally refers *to the present*, and only figuratively to the future:

“Everything is perishing except His Countenance. His is the ruling, and to Him you return” (Koran 28:88).

The other face is towards us, as manifestation and appearance, in respect to which created things are “affirmed” (thabit) and temporal, for which reason all Muslims acknowledge

that the ruling for the world, “everything besides Allah,” is that it is contingent and came into being after it did not previously exist. In other words, its ruling is that it is a slave, and Allah created it.

The distinction between the two aspects, expressed in the key aphorism of Ibn ‘Ata’ Illah “Things are affirmed by His affirmation, obliterated through the soleness of His entity,” is essential to understanding why, in the *mushahada* or ‘spiritual vision’ of our tariqa, Allah alone is Manifest (Dhahir) in the universe, while never identified with created things, which are only the sites of His manifestation (al-madhahir). Though essentially ecstatic, the aphorism distinguishes the “affirmation” (thubut) which things possess from the “being” (wujud) they do not. Those who follow the path must know the difference and acknowledge their ruling.

Belief in Allah’s Angels

Angels are beings with bodies of light, honored servants who faithfully carry out Allah’s commands and are capable of changing form to assume various noble appearances.

Our sheikhs do not give revealed truths like faith in angels symbolic interpretations differing from what ordinary Muslims have believed about them since the times of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace). In this context, Sheikh ‘Abd al-Rahman warns disciples not to adopt symbolic interpretations about realities of Islam and Iman (e.g. “Ablution (wudu) means such and such,” or “The Kaaba means such and such”), which only increase one’s distance from Allah, being but new forms for the mind, whereas the task is to pass beyond forms to the unicity of the Divine. This is the journey to Allah (al-sayr ila Llah), and our sheikh emphasizes that to accomplish it, the traveller must turn from two things, or the door may remain closed.

The first is taking legal dispensations (*rukhsas*) in works. The way of tariqa is follow one’s own school of fiqh as its rulings initially exist (‘azima) before dispensations for special circumstances, unless there is genuine need for them.

The second is *ta’wil* or adopting particular figurative interpretations for apparently metaphorical expressions of Koran and hadith (e.g. in Surat al-Anfal, “And you threw not when you threw, but Allah threw” (Koran 8:17)). Although figurative interpretations attested to by classical Arabic usage are a valid form of Islamic exegesis (even *obligatory* to teach ordinary Muslims in times when the *bid’a* or ‘blameworthy innovation’ of anthropomorphism has spread, as today), the way of the Sufis is a second form of exegesis; namely, *tafwid* or the simple acceptance of scriptural expressions as they have come, while acknowledging Allah’s absolute transcendence beyond created things, and consigning the knowledge of what is really meant by such expressions to Allah—until Allah Himself lifts the veil from one. After this, a person does not need figurative interpretations, because the journey is no longer *to* Allah (al-sayr ila Llah), but rather *in* Allah (al-sayr fi Llah), meaning in the knowledge of Him, directly and experientially.

In point of Sufi symbolism, *al-Minah al-quddusiyya* (Sheikh al-‘Alawi’s commentary on

Ibn ‘Ashir’s fiqh manual *al-Murshid al-mu‘in*) and similar works which derive spiritual reflections (isharat) from details of fiqh or expressions of Koran and hadith, have not been written to furnish spiritual travellers with objective lists of “esoteric facts” or “symbols,” to memorize and know and recite by heart. On the contrary, they are intended to direct the traveller’s attention from every detail of his spiritual life and worship towards the One who alone is worshipped. Sheikh al-‘Alawi says,

The purpose of this commentary is to apprise the traveller to Allah to take his indications from everything, as mentioned above in the book’s introduction; but also to imbue the person without previous exposure to Sufis or what they possess with a longing for their way (*al-Minah al-quddusiyya*, 252).

One should accordingly take such books as they are, as existing for *targhib*, to focus one upon Allah, not to bury one’s spiritual ambition under a welter of symbols.

In respect to angels, they are neither figurative nor (as modernists like ‘Abduh have suggested) “natural forces, like magnetism,” but are rather what the generality of Muslims have believed them to be from the outset of Islam, and so too, with the other realities of our faith. Although this may be perhaps less intellectually interesting to some, our way is one of realizing eternal truths, and the erasure of attachment to intellectual forms, rather than the reification of new ones.

Belief in Allah’s Inspired Books

Allah’s Books are those that He revealed to His messengers, including the Tawrah (Torah), Injil (Evangel), Zabur (Psalms), and Qur’an (Koran). *Those that He revealed to His messengers* means the original revelations, not the remnant scriptures in the hands of non-Muslims today, which Allah, the One who revealed the Books, informs us have been textually corrupted at the hands of men (Koran 5:13–17). The original Books were Allah’s word, and everything they contained was the truth.

Belief in Allah’s Messengers

Allah sent mankind and jinn His prophetic messengers (upon whom be peace), who were trustworthy, intelligent, truthful, and fully conveyed their messages. He protected them from sin, and from every physical trait unbecoming to them, though as human beings, they ate, drank, slept, and married. They were the best of all created beings; and the highest of them was him whom Allah chose to be the final seal of prophethood, our prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace).

Though the Sacred Law of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) superseded all previously valid religious laws, it was identical with them in beliefs, such as *tawhid* or ‘oneness of God,’ and so on, a fact that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) emphasized by saying, “Let none of you say I am superior to [the prophet] Jonah,” (*Bukhari*, 4.193: 3412), for the illumination of Jonah’s *tawhid* (upon him be peace)—under the darkness of the storm, the darkness of the sea, and the darkness of the belly of

the fish—was not less than the illumination of the Prophet's *tawhid* at the zenith of his success as the spiritual leader of all Arabia (Allah bless him and give him peace). The light of their message was one, in which sense the Koran says, "We do not differentiate between any of His messengers" (Koran 2:285), showing that previous religions were the same in beliefs, and though differing in provisions of works, and now abrogated by the final religion, were valid in their own times.

As for today, only Islam is valid or acceptable now that Allah has sent it to all men, for the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) has said,

By Him in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, any person of this Community, any Jew, or any Christian who hears of me and dies without believing in what I have been sent with will be an inhabitant of hell (al-Baghawi: *Sharh al-sunna*, 1.104: 56).

This hadith was also reported by Muslim in his *Sahih*, by 'Abd al-Razzaq in his *Musannaf*, and others. It is a rigorously authenticated (*sahih*) evidence that clarifies the word of Allah in Surat Al 'Imran,

"Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam will never have it accepted from him, and shall be of those who have truly failed in the next life" (Koran 3:85)

and many other verses and hadiths. That Islam is the only remaining valid or acceptable religion is necessarily known as part of our religion, and to believe anything other than this is unbelief (*kufr*) that places a person outside of Islam, as Imam Nawawi notes,

Someone who does not believe that whoever follows another religion besides Islam is an unbeliever (like Christians), or doubts that such a person is an unbeliever, or considers their sect to be valid, is himself an unbeliever (*kafir*) even if he manifests Islam and believes in it (*Rawda al-talibin*, 10.70).

This is not only the position of the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence represented by Nawawi, but is also the recorded position of all three other Sunni schools: Hanafi (Ibn 'Abidin: *Radd al-muhtar*, 3.287), Maliki (al-Dardir: *al-Sharh al-saghir*, 4.435), and Hanbali (al-Bahuti: *Kashshaf al-qina'*, 6.170). Those who know *fiqh* literature will note that each of these works is among the foremost *fatwa* or 'formal legal opinion' resources in its school. The scholars of Sacred Law are unanimous about the abrogation of all other religions by Islam because it is the position of Islam itself. It only remains for the sincere Muslim to submit to, in which connection Ibn al-'Arabi has said:

Beware lest you ever say anything that does not conform to the pure Sacred Law. Know that the highest stage of the perfected ones (*rijal*) is the Sacred Law of Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace). And know that the esoteric that contravenes the exoteric is a fraud (al-Burhani: *al-Hall al-sadid*, 32).

AS for the question of whether non-Muslims will go to hell, it is answered by traditional

Islam according to two possibilities:

(1) There are some peoples who have not been reached by the message of the Prophet of Islam (Allah bless him and give him peace) that we must worship the One God alone, associating nothing else with Him. Such people are innocent, and will not be punished no matter what they do. Allah says in Surat al-Isra',

“We do not punish until We send a Messenger” (Koran 17:15).

These include, for example, Christians and others who lived in the period after the spread of the myth of Jesus' godhood, until the time of the prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace), who renewed the call to pure monotheism.

A great Muslim scholar, Imam Ghazali, includes in this category those who have only been reached with a distorted picture of the Messenger of Islam (Allah bless him and give him peace), presumably including many people in the West today who know nothing about Allah's religion but newspaper stories about Ayatollahs and mad Muslim bombers. Is it within such people's capacity to believe? In Ghazali's view, such people are excused until after they have had an opportunity to learn the undistorted truth about Islam (Ghazali: “Faysal al-tafriqa,” *Majmu'a rasa'il*, 3.96). This of course does not alter our own obligation as Muslims to reach them with the *da'wa*.

(2) A second group of people consists of those who turn away from God's divine message of Islam, rejecting the command to make their worship God's alone; whether because of blindly imitating the religion of their ancestors, or for some other reason. These are people to whom God has sent a prophetic messenger and reached with His message, and to whom He has given hearing and an intellect with which to grasp it—but after all this, persist in associating others with Allah, either by actually worshipping another, or by rejecting the laws brought by His messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace), which associates their own customs with His prerogative to be worshipped as He directs. Such people have violated God's rights, and have accepted to go to hell, which is precisely what His messengers have warned them of, so they have no excuse:

“Truly, Allah does not forgive that any be associated with Him; but He forgives what is less than that to whomever He wills” (Koran 4:48).

In either case, Allah's mercy exists, though for non-Muslims unreached by the message, it is a question of divine amnesty for their ignorance, not a confirmation of their religions' validity. It is worth knowing the difference between these two things because one's eternal fate depends on it.

A question might arise here for some; namely, that since Allah alone is absolute, and all forms (presumably including religious ones) are relative, why could He not transcend the forms given in the Islamic Revelation; that is, if He can do anything, why should it be impossible for Him to simply “forgive everyone”?

The answer involves the concept of *al-wajib al-‘aradi* or ‘the contingently necessary,’ which is part of traditional Islamic tenets of faith, but perhaps not familiar to many contemporary Muslims. It is arguably among the most important points one can learn from classical works of *‘aqida*.

The possible or impossible for Allah Most High involves the divine attribute of *qudra* or ‘omnipotence,’ “what He can do.” This attribute in turn relates exclusively to the intrinsically possible, not to what is intrinsically impossible, as Allah says, “Verily Allah has power over every thing” (Koran 2:20), *thing* being something that in principle can exist. For example, if one asks “Can Allah create a square circle?” the answer is that His omnipotence does not relate to it, for a “square circle” does not refer to anything that in principle could exist: the speaker does not have a distinct idea of what he means, but is merely using a jumble of words.

Similarly, if one were to ask, “Can Allah terminate His own existence?” the answer is that the divine omnipotence does not relate to this; it is intrinsically impossible (*mustahil dhati*), for the divine nature necessarily entails the divine perfections, of which Being is one. It is impossible that Allah could cease to have this perfection or any other, for otherwise He would not be God.

There are thus things that are necessarily true of God (that He cannot *not* be); and their opposites, things which are necessarily impossible of God. In terms of the question above, the choice “to forgive everyone,” that is, to simply suspend the implications of the Koranic verses and hadiths that indicate that some classes of people will never leave hell, is not intrinsically impossible (*mustahil dhati*) for Allah, in that it does not involve something inherently impossible as does the “square circle,” or negate something inherently true by the very nature of the Divine. Then why didn’t any scholar ever think of it? Because for Islamic orthodoxy, there is another class of both the necessary and the impossible that the divine attribute of omnipotence (*qudra*) has no relation to; namely, that which is necessary or impossible because, although not so *a priori*, it has *become* necessary or impossible by being connected with the knowledge (*‘ilm*) of Allah and His beginninglessly eternal attribute of speech, in His informing us of it.

For example, Abu Lahab was born with apparently the same chance as anyone to hear the Prophet’s message (Allah bless him and give him peace), enter Islam, and reach paradise. But when he persecuted the Muslims, and Surat al-Masad (Koran 111) was subsequently revealed, and Allah manifested His beginninglessly eternal knowledge that Abu Lahab was of the people of hell. Although initially this outcome was merely contingent and possible, when the eternal Word of Allah connected with it, it became necessary, final, and inabrogable, for Allah only informs of what is in His knowledge, and His knowledge only conforms to what truly *is*, which is why “no one alters the words of Allah” (Koran 6:34), for otherwise His words would express ignorance, an attribute impossible for God, or lies, which equally contradict the nature of the Divine.

Abu Lahab is thus necessarily of the people of hell, “necessary” not logically or inherently, but “contingently necessary,” because of the contingent event of Allah having

informed us of it. Everything that Allah has informed us of is of this class of thing, and divine omnipotence (*qudra*) does not relate to their contrary, for His Word shall be realized exactly as He has said, and it is impossible that any of it be nullified.

This is why for Sufis like Muhyiddin Ibn al-‘Arabi, and our own sheikhs, the revealed law in a sense partakes of the Divine, for it returns to Allah’s attribute of *speech*, in the Koran, and to the “unrecited revelation” of the sunna of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) which is Allah’s *act* of inspiration—both of which are inseparable in principle from Allah’s entity. For such Sufis, the *shari‘a* is the *haqiqa*, and this is, after all, the position of Islam itself. To answer our question above, the first premise that “Allah alone is absolute, and all forms are relative,” is plainly wrong, and contradicted by the manifold existence of Allah’s determinations, which, though “*contingently necessary*” (*wajib ‘aradi*) rather than inherently so, are no less absolute than the Divine itself.

Belief in the Last Day

Belief in the Last Day includes faith in the resurrection of the dead, their reckoning, the weighing of their good deeds against their bad ones, their passing over the high, narrow bridge that spans the hellfire (*sirat*), and that some will be put in hell out of justice, and some in paradise out of Allah’s pure generosity. Disobedient believers (as opposed to unbelievers) will be taken out of the hellfire after being requited for their sins. The Imam of tenets of faith ‘Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi records:

The scholars of Ahl al-Sunna and all the previous righteous of the Muslim Community are in unanimous agreement (*ijma‘*) that paradise and hell are eternal, and that the bliss of the inhabitants of paradise and the torment of unbelievers in hell will endure forever (*Usul al-din*, 238).

Imam Taqi al-Din al-Subki relates that there is scholarly consensus (*ijma‘*) on this point, and on the fact that whoever denies it is an unbeliever (*kafir*) by scholarly consensus (*al-I‘tibar*, 32).

Here, as with the abrogation of all religions by Islam discussed above, many of us know Muslims who believe the opposite of orthodox Islam, perhaps due to a literary and intellectual environment in which any and every notion about this world and the next can be expressed, in which novelty is highly valued, and in which tradition has little authority.

The ruling for such people is that if unable to learn the tenets of their religion properly because of being born and raised far from traditional ulama, they are not considered unbelievers until able to learn. As for those of them who are convinced that their ideas make them members of an intellectual or esoteric elite, above common Muslims and their scholars, they have the added onus of arrogance, a quality which, as Sheikh Muhyiddin notes, Allah manifests in those He detests and wishes to enter the hellfire.

Belief in Destiny, Its Good and Evil

Faith in destiny consists in knowing that what hits one was not going to miss, and what misses one was not going to hit. At the level of the *tariqa*, it is essential to know that one's share of success in the path is a matter of destiny, as this allows one to be patient long enough for the medicines of the teachings and the work of the way to take effect on the soul.

TO summarize, travellers must know what '*aqida* they will die upon and meet Allah, and it must conform to that of orthodox Sunni Islam. "Allah does not take an ignorant person as a *wali*," our sheikhs say. The way to God is an ascending path from the knowledge of *iman* and *shari'a*, to applying it in *tariqa*, to the ultimate spiritual reality of *haqiqa*.

Doing: One's Daily Wirds

A dervish is seldom better than his daily works. These include not only one's *adab* or 'manners,' such as silence from bootless words, characterized by Mawlay al-'Arabi al-Darqawi as "of the most important of your daily works and most preferable and excellent of them" (*al-Rasa'il*, 98); and one's outward worship, such as prayer and fasting, but also works of the tongue such as reciting Koran, supplication (*du'a*), and most of all *dhikr*.

Dhikr is the means by which every aim of the *tariqa* is realized, in Sheikh Ahmad al-'Alawi's words, "the cause of every good." To be sure, *dhikr* is but a seed, which must be sown in the soil of true intention, covered over and nurtured with the love of those beloved by Allah, watered by daily effort, and which yields its fruit through the *baraka* of the greater reality one has connected with rather than by one's own might and main. But effort there must be, and organizing one's time in *wirds* or 'regular spiritual works' is one of the greatest means for attaining perpetual presence with Allah.

One should prioritize one's works, so that when exigencies occur such as travel, illness, or guests arriving from out of town, the most important of them are not missed, and that by the *baraka* of one's intention, even those supererogatory works occasionally missed are accepted by Allah as if one had actually done them, as mentioned by the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) in the hadith "When the servant becomes ill or travels, there is inscribed for him the like of what he did when at home and well" (*Bukhari*, 4.70: 2996. S). The following priority order is recommended for *tariqa* members:

1. The Prescribed Prayer

The prescribed prayer, Sheikh 'Abd al-Rahman emphasizes, is the greatest *wird*. The entire path, from beginning to end, is to raise our presence of heart in the prayer. No one attains this but someone in love with the Adored, unattached to the things of this world, who has *taqwa* or 'godfearingness' in his daily life, without which, as Imam Ghazali notes, the *dhikr* in one's prayer may be largely ineffective in guarding one from the Devil

and his distractions.

It is obligatory for all of us, Arab and non-Arab, to check our recital of the Fatiha with a trained *tajwid* teacher, and perfect the parts of it that still need work. Many if not most of us suffer from overconfidence in this matter, reciting the Fatiha as we first learned it, with the early pronunciation mistakes that have become habitual through years of use, though reciting it as it was revealed is a matter of *din*, and of central importance to the path.

Men perform the prescribed prayers with the group at the mosque. One of the greatest blessings of “practicing what one knows” lies in the expiation of sins and raising of spiritual degrees that accompany every step one takes to the mosque. If one misses praying at the mosque, one should pray at the first of the prayer’s time. It is superior for women to pray at home.

It is obligatory to make up all prescribed prayers that one has missed in the past, whether by omission or legal invalidity. Hanafis making up past obligatory prayers must also make up missed *witr* prayers, as well as performing all current confirmed (mu’akkada) sunnas. Shafi’is making up prayers do not have to do either, but should rather substitute their make-ups in place of the confirmed sunnas they would otherwise be performing (e.g. making up a missed noon (dhuhr) prayer before or after the current noon prayer in place of its sunnas), though they should nevertheless not omit the current *witr* prayer or the two sunna rak’as before the dawn (subh) prayer, as these are the most confirmed of sunnas.

2. Sunna Prayers

After the prescribed prayers in importance come the *witr* (obligatory for Hanafis), and the confirmed sunnas associated with the prescribed prayers. The key importance of *salat al-tawba* in the spiritual path has been mentioned on page 8 above. One should also not omit two or more rak’as of *tahajjud* after sleeping at night before dawn (although if one still has make-ups, it is best to do them at this time instead). The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) tells us that in the last third of the night Allah says: “Who shall call upon Me, that I may answer him? Who shall ask Me, that I may give to him? Who shall seek My forgiveness, that I may forgive him?” (*Bukhari*, 2.66: 1145. S). To rise then to tell Allah one loves Him, thank Him, and pray for forgiveness is one of the greatest secrets of the spiritual path. When afraid of missing one’s *tahajjud* or make-ups on a journey or for some other reason, one should pray them before going to sleep. The midmorning prayer (*duha*) is also one of the sunnas done by those with a spiritual path, as are *salat al-haja* (the prayer of need) and *salat al-istikhara* (the prayer of guidance-seeking).

3. Dhikr After the Prayer

Concentration in the dhikrs performed after the prescribed prayers is essential. Among the best is *Subhana Llah* thirty-three times, *al-Hamdu li Llah* thirty-three times, and *Allahu akbar* thirty-four times, which should also be performed before going to sleep. It

is rigorously authenticated that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said,

“There are oft-repeated ones, that whoever says (or “does”) after every prescribed prayer shall never be disappointed: *Subhana Llah* (Exalted is Allah’s perfection beyond any comparison) thirty-three times, *al-Hamdu li Llah* (Praise be to Allah) thirty-three times, and *Allahu akbar* (Allah is greatest) thirty-four times” (*Muslim*, 1.418: 596. S).

This dhikr is almost unique among supererogatory works whose benefit is confined to the doer in being superior even to works that benefit other Muslims (Ibn ‘Abd al-Salam: *Fatawa*, 244–45). One should not let a single word of it pass one’s lips without also moving the heart with admiration of Allah at *Subhana Llah*, love for Him at *al-Hamdu li Llah*, and bowing the mind before the limitlessness of His majesty at *Allahu akbar*. The sheikh strongly recommends that all tariqa members (including Hanafis) do this dhikr directly after the prescribed prayer before praying the sunnas. One should never omit this dhikr, unless necessary for brevity to facilitate numerous make-up prayers.

4. The General Wird

The *Wird al-‘Amm* or ‘General Litany’ is the main dhikr of the tariqa and the sign of one’s connection with it. In it lie many blessings, particularly, our sheikh emphasizes, if it is complemented by being mindful of Allah during the day whenever one buys or sells something. Among the *wird*’s many blessings is that whoever takes it from a true sheikh is protected from the calamities that descend upon those around them, is guarded from harmful jinn, finds unlooked-for blessings from Allah in their life, and help from Him in their religion. It holds the secret of the tariqa. It is recited every morning and evening. The best time in the morning is after the dawn prayer (subh), and in the evening between sunset (maghrib) and nightfall (‘isha’) prayers. But if need be, it can be recited anytime in the “morning” from the coming of dawn (fajr) till noon, and anytime in the “evening” from the coming of midafternoon (‘asr) till dawn. If one joins the midafternoon prayer with the noon prayer at noontime while travelling, one should wait anyway to recite the *wird* until midafternoon.

By having taken the tariqa, performing the *wird* has become like a vow (nadhr), and if one misses it, one should make it up, as with confirmed sunna (sunna mu’akkada) rak‘as that are missed. The other *wirds* mentioned below are not necessary but recommended to make up if missed, though will not have much effect on the heart unless done faithfully.

If every good deed performed for Allah Most High is in the widest sense “dhikr,” the way of remembrance for nearly all dhikrs in the Shadhili tariqa is with the tongue, spoken aloud, meaning at minimum an unvoiced whisper audible to the person saying it, without annoying others. Ours is not a way of silent dhikr.

It is superior to have ablution (wudu) while saying the *wird*, since the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) disliked making dhikr without it, but not obligatory, as even someone in a state of major ritual impurity (janaba) or menstruation may recite these *wirds*, though such a person, if Shafi‘i, must intend the Koranic verses therein as

dhikr, not as Koran recital, which is unlawful for them under such circumstances if intended as Koran, and if Hanafi, must recite them in the heart alone, unspoken. It is best to face the qibla while making dhikr, as it is the noblest of directions (and face the sky during supplications, as the sky is the qibla of supplicants), and to sit where one will not be spoken to, though if interrupted by something during the *wird*, even if the break lasts for hours, one simply returns to the point at which one left off, and completes it. The other *wirds* and *hizbs* (syn. for *wirds*) below however, particularly *al-Hizb al-Kabir*, are recited consecutively without interruption or talking to others in between. If using a *misbaha* or ‘rosary’ is difficult, on the job for example, one may simply estimate the time and recite the approximate number of each phrase using one’s watch.

5. The Gatherings of the Tariqa

It goes without saying that belonging to the tariqa means coming to the *majalis* or ‘gatherings’ of dhikr and instruction established by the sheikh in one’s area, be it the Latifiyya, *hadra*, or annual *suhba* of tariqa members during his visits to other countries.

The Latifiyya is described below on page 46. The *hadra* is a dhikr made standing together in a group, motion and breath in unison, to the singing of mystical poetry. It is discussed in a separate article called *The Hadra* that clarifies its place in Islamic law and its value for the *ruh*, particularly at the higher reaches of the path. Those interested may read this, though it suffices to say here that the *hadra* is part and parcel of our tariqa, and whoever wants something may either take it as it is—or leave it.

The benefits of the gatherings, if sometimes plainer at the end of the path, are many. One is that the *baraka* of the group is the true wind that fills the sails of the traveller, not his own motions. Our *din* itself is a social *din*. A second is that group dhikr is different in kind from that made alone, and no less salutary to the *ruh*. A third is that the food of the heart is wisdom, and if it never hears any, it dies. For all these reasons, “One must gather, listen, and follow, if one is to benefit,” as our sheikhs say. Nothing comes of a disciple who thinks he has no need of the gatherings. Many travellers, ancient and modern, have erred in this and ended their path debarred from its spiritual effulgence from whence they least expected.

If there is no gathering in one’s area, one should recite the Latifiyya aloud with one’s family or others, or alone. One should have the permission of one’s sheikh before attending the gatherings of other tariqas, for not everything that glitters is gold.

6. The Special Wird

The *Wird al-Khass* or ‘Special Litany’ is the Supreme Name “Allah,” without number or limit, termed “special” because it is methodically recited only by those the sheikh has put through the *khalwa* or ‘dhikr in seclusion’ under his strict supervision. Prior to this, those on the second *muraqaba* lesson are permitted to recite the Name sixty-six times a day if they wish, provided they have been personally taught it by the sheikh, though even this is of limited benefit because they do not yet really know what they are reciting. The Name

is not recited without permission.

Sheikh ‘Abd al-Rahman says that only “a few” of those who have taken the tariqa from him have entered the *khalwa*, by no means all who ask, but only those the sheikh’s spiritual intuition tells him can benefit from it, given their state, time, and readiness.

After a disciple has finished the *khalwa*, he must recite the Name each night before bed to consolidate and deepen his spiritual meanings, particularly that of *fana’* or ‘annihilation.’ This is imperative, and no other time of the day will do, though there is no set amount beyond three minutes; it might rather be three hours, or all night, as everyone knows their own need: “Rather, a human being clearly sees himself ” (Koran 75:14). The sheikh sometimes recommends fifteen minutes in the morning and fifteen minutes at night, and a few moments after each prescribed prayer, but the primary basis of the *Wird al-Khass* or is that it is absolute (*mutlaq*), without number or time. It is meant to become perpetual.

Particular divine names such as “Ya Hayy,” “Ya Jabbar,” and so forth, like the Supreme Name, require permission to recite, except in limited numbers of short duration. This is because each divine name carries a particular power, and the heart and mind of the disciple may not be prepared to handle an overload of this power, just as an electrical appliance is designed to handle only a certain type of current.

The Sheikh al-Akbar says:

Those of consideration among humanity are the perfected, no one besides, and they are those whose dhikr is “Allah” and who invoke nothing more within themselves. This is their dhikr, whether to themselves or whether audibly when they are alone. As for in public, it is “La ilaha illa Allah,” and then the other kinds of dhikr . . . (*al-Futuhāt al-Makkiyya*, 4.75).

The *Wird al-Khass* should be accompanied by five or ten minutes of daily readings in the *dhawqi* or ‘experiential’ literature (or tapes) of the tariqa as recommended by the sheikh.

7. The Koran

If one wants a relationship with Allah, one should recite His Word in the way of those of hearts, asking Him once or twice each page for paradise and every noble matter, and seeking refuge in Him from the hellfire and every base one, striving to grasp what He is telling one in His own words, which are a “detailing of everything” (Koran 12:111).

Tariqa members recite the Koran in this way from beginning to end, then begin over, and so on, rather than merely repeating the same suras every day. How much to recite daily depends on one’s *tawfiq* or ‘divinely given success’ from Allah. Ibn ‘Umar (Allah be well pleased with him) tells us in a rigorously authenticated hadith:

The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “Recite the Koran in a month.” I told him, “I find strength [to do more],” and he said, “Recite it in seven

[days], do not do more” (*Bukhari*, 6.243: 5054. S).

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) thus initially recommended finishing the Koran once a month, which means about one *juz*’ (a thirtieth part) per day. This is a good daily optimum for Arab disciples, while they should minimally not do less than a quarter of this. As for non-Arabs, Imam Nawawi mentions in his *Kitab al-adhkar* [Book of dhikrs] that some of the early Muslims (*salaf*) used to finish the Koran in two months, meaning a half a *juz*’ (one *hizb*) per day, a good daily optimum for non-native-speakers of Arabic, while they should not do less than a quarter of that.

The covenant of the *tariqa* is only to recite the *Wird al-‘Amm*, but one’s Koranic *wird* is also essential and should take precedence even over the *hizbs* of the *tariqa* that make up one’s other *wirds*. The least is to read something of the Koran daily, “even,” as the covenant says, “if only a little.”

One should buy a reasonable word-by-word *tafsir* or ‘Koranic exegesis’ (such as Suyuti’s *al-Jalalayn*) to look up difficult words and expressions. Finally, all who recite are obliged to learn the rules and application of *tajwid* or ‘correct delivery’ from a qualified teacher.

8. Sunna Supplications and Dhikrs

There are ten dhikrs from the Koran and sunna, Sheikh al-Hashimi notes, that are obligatory for every Muslim to say once in his lifetime with the intention of the obligation, and that remain perpetually recommended by the Sacred Law thereafter: *A‘udhu bi Llahi mina sh-Shaytani r-rajim*, *Bismi Llahi*, *al-Hamdu li Llah*, *La ilaha illa Llah*, *Subhana Llah*, *La hawla wa la quwwata illa bi Llah*, *Allahu akbar*, *Astaghfiru Llah*, and (both) the blessings and peace upon the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) (*Miftah al-janna*, 6). Disciples may recite these as much as they have the time and inclination for.

One should also breathe *ruh* into one’s life with the sunna dhikrs that are said at daily events such as going out of the house, putting on one’s clothes, entering the bathroom, and so on. People sometimes ask if one should not learn and use *all* the prophetic dhikrs and supplications, and whether their being too many to do this does not show that there is no need for anything besides, presumably including the *wirds* of the *tariqa*.

Three considerations show us that sunna supplications were not intended by Allah to take the place of all others.

First, they are too many to all be said on a daily basis. A single collection of them, Tabarani’s *Kitab al-du‘a* [Book of supplication], contains more than two thousand, the daily reciting of which (assuming one could memorize them) would leave no time for anything else, and life would have to stop.

Second, because Allah does not demand the impossible from His servants, something else must be meant; whether to give servants freshness and variety in their supplications, or to

teach us that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), in the words of ‘A’isha, “used to make dhikr at all of his times” (*Muslim*, 1.282: 373. S), or for some other divine wisdom.

Third, the Prophet himself (Allah bless him and give him peace) taught us that the sunna does not discourage other prayers and supplications, but rather they are part of the sunna, as is attested to by the rigorously authenticated hadith that Burayda (Allah be well pleased with him) said:

I entered the mosque with the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) where a man was at prayer, supplicating: “O Allah, I ask You by the fact that I testify You are Allah, there is no god but You, the One, the Ultimate, who did not beget and was not begotten, and to whom none is equal,” and the Prophet said (Allah bless him and give him peace), “By Him in whose hand is my soul, he has asked Allah by His greatest name, which if He is asked by it He gives, and if supplicated He answers” (*Ibn Hibban*, 3.174: 892. S);

which establishes that when the prophetic Companions made up their own supplications without previous instruction from the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), he did not merely tolerate it, but rather *encouraged* it with the highest degree of approbation and acceptance—thereby legislating until the end of time that supplications other than those he explicitly taught are recommended in a general sense as part of the sunna, and secondly that they should be remembered and transmitted to others, as his emphatically praising the Companion’s supplication in this way ensured it would be.

This is why the prophetic Companions, their students (tabi’in), and the Imams of both the outward sciences (such as Shafi’i, Nawawi, and others) and the inward sciences (such as ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylani, Abul Hasan al-Shadhili, and Ahmad al-Rifa’i) composed their own supplications and litanies of dhikr and passed them on to Muslims, who have recited them from that day to this.

Ulama such as ‘Abdullah Mahfuz al-Haddad tell us that making a dhikr or a supplication at a certain time at one’s own initiative does not become a *bid’a* or ‘reprehensible innovation’ unless it conflicts (tusadimu) with a specific sunna legislated for that occasion (*al-Sunna wa al-Bid’a*, 197). For example, saying *Subhana Llah* forty times immediately after the last word of each call to prayer (adhan) would be a blameworthy *bid’a* because the Sacred Law calls for the blessings on the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) at that time instead, after which one may say what one wishes.

Because *hizbs* or ‘daily dhikrs’ like those mentioned in the following section have a basis in the sunna, it is praiseworthy to incorporate them into one’s spiritual life, though they should not be allowed to compete with one’s other responsibilities, daily Koran recital, or the hadith supplications and dhikrs that are said at daily events, as found in Imam Nawawi’s *Kitab al-adhkar* [Remembrances of Allah], and similar works.

9. Hizbs

The other *wirds* of the tariqa, some of them described below, are for those with the spiritual ambition (*himma*) and time, and one should only take on as much as one can do regularly. Ten of them, written and vowelled in Arabic, have been published in *Awrad al-tariqa al-Shadhiliyya*, translated with the full Arabic text as *Invocations of the Shadhili Order*, both of which are listed in Appendix A “For Further Reading” in the back of the present work. They may be read from the Arabic for a few months to facilitate learning prior to actually memorizing them. Two to four *hizbs* are enough for most people, in view of the *wirds* mentioned above. The times suggested for them are from previous masters of the tariqa, though unlike the general *wird*, if one can only find some other time to regularly do them, one may. The emphasis is on steady, daily effort. As Imam Ghazali notes, buckets of water poured on a rock in a single moment will have little effect, but if dripped on it drop by drop, the water will eventually wear a hole right through. And so it is, he notes, with the effect of dhikr on the heart.

Hizb al-Bahr or ‘The Litany of the Sea’ is recited after the midafternoon prayer (‘asr). Some read it at sunrise, at which time it possesses particular properties, and it is also read whenever one is in particular need of something, in which case one makes one’s intention at the words *wa sakhkhir lana hadha l-bahr* (“and subject to us this sea”). Like all of the *hizbs* of the tariqa, it should be memorized and recited from one’s heart as if it were one’s own words, with complete attention to whom one is addressing it. It is not a magic wand, but an expression of slavehood and poverty. In a general way, the purpose of these *wirds* is not only to train the heart in *du‘a*, but to eventually eliminate one’s absentmindedness from Allah, and one must strive in them to have presence of heart. Though memorized, they are not rote.

Al-Hizb al-Kabir or ‘The Grand Invocation,’ sometimes called *Hizb al-Barr* or ‘The Litany of the Land,’ is one of the greatest legacies of Abul Hasan al-Shadhili (Allah be well pleased with him). He is reported to have said of it, “Whoever recites our invocation shall have what we do, and bear what we bear.” He also said (Allah be well pleased with him), “Whoever learns it by heart is one of my companions.” Abul Hasan’s successor Abul ‘Abbas al-Mursi had his disciples recite it after the dawn prayer (subh). One does not speak to others while reciting it except out of necessity, as for example when returning Salams. It is strongly recommended for all men in the tariqa.

Hizb al-Nur or ‘The Litany of Light’ is read after nightfall prayer (‘isha’). It is related that Abul Hasan al-Shadhili was reciting this *hizb* when his illumination came. It is strongly recommended for every woman in the tariqa.

Zayn al-Anfas or ‘Goodly Breathing’ conjoins dhikr with breath, awakens the heart to Allah, eliminates mood swings during the day, and brings serenity. It takes but a few minutes and can be done once or twice a day (preferably before eating) in the morning and evening. It is recommended to everyone in the tariqa, especially those the West. A description of it is among the publications of the tariqa.

Al-Wadhifa or ‘The Work’ consists of the *Salat al-Mashishiyya*, a blessing upon the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) attributed to Abul Hasan al-Shadhili’s sheikh, ‘Abd al-Salam ibn Mashish, interspersed with beautiful dhikrs and prayers by Muhammad Abul Mawahib al-Shadhili al-Tunisi. This *mazj* or ‘mixture’ ends at the words *wa ‘adada kalimati Rabbina t-tammati l-mubarakat* (“and the number of perfect, blessed words of our Lord”); and the rest of the *Wadhifa* is an addendum (*dhayl*) by the great Libyan sheikh Muhammad Dhafir al-Madani. Disciples of Sheikh ‘Abd al-Rahman recite the *Wadhifa* in its entirety, though he permits those without time to omit the final *dhayl*, or even, for those who have memorized nothing else, to recite the *Salat al-Mashishiyya* alone. In content, the *Wadhifa* is among the most profound synopses of Sufi metaphysics that exist, though its special usages are often ecstatic in context and not easy to grasp, and it is well for those with questions to consult one of the many scholarly commentaries on it that explain its dimensions and its accord with orthodox Islam. Most recite it after the dawn (*subh*) prayer, though the brethren of Sheikh al-‘Alawi, who seem to have used the *mazj* alone, used to recite it after both the dawn and sunset (*maghrib*) prayers. It is particularly recommended for those of the spiritual station of *baqa’ bi Llah* or ‘subsistence through Allah’ at the end of the path.

Al-Latifiyya or ‘The Invocation of *Ya Latif* (“O Most Gentle, Subtle, Kind”)’ one thousand times, followed by the supplications and dhikrs that close it, is usually done in a group on Tuesday nights. It may be done by anyone in the *tariqa*, with anyone else (such as one’s family), though disciples living in one area should get together for it if possible. Sheikh al-Kurdi used to relate that both those who recite it and the place where they are enter into the sphere of this divine name and its protection from troubles and afflictions. It may also be recited by oneself after the General Wird (strongly recommended during trials in one’s life), in which case one begins with *A ‘udhu bi Llahi as-Sami’i l-‘Alimi min ash-Shaytani r-rajim* (“I take refuge in Allah the All-hearing, the All-knowing, from the accursed Devil”) three times, then the last four verses of Surat al-Hashr (Koran 59:21–24), and then recites *Ya Latif* 129 times, before finishing it with the supplication used when it is recited in a group.

Hizb al-Nasr or ‘The Litany of Triumph’ is a supplication read for the victory of Muslims over non-Muslim foes. It is not permissible to recite it against particular Muslims, even if enemies, though one may recite it against one’s enemies in general if one does not intend anyone specifically. It is recited after the midafternoon prayer.

MANY other *wirds* exist in the literature of the Shadhili *tariqa*, such as the powerful *Hizb* of Abul ‘Abbas al-Mursi, or the long and beautiful *Munajat* or ‘Entreaties of the Divine’ of Sheikh al-‘Alawi, and others. These are the communal treasures of the dervishes. Whoever takes the *tariqa* is authorized to recite any of them he wants, though of course there is *baraka* in consulting the sheikh, and one should avoid excesses, as a little that one can do always is better than a lot that dwindles to nothing.

10. Other Dhikrs

Dhikrs other than those of the Koran and hadith or of the sheikhs of the *tariqa*, such as

wirds found in books, heard from others, and so on, may be read once for the *baraka*, but are not adopted for daily use without the permission of the sheikh. Whoever takes the Shadhili path will find his own *wirds* of greater *baraka*.

Being: The Works of the Heart

Works of the heart are in a sense the fruits of the works of knowing and doing described above, and have been treated last because they furnish the inward measure of the path, that one *be* something. Abu Bakr al-Kattani has said, “Sufism is character: whoever is ahead of you in character is ahead of you in Sufism.” These works include:

Love of Allah

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), said, “Whoever possesses three characteristics will taste the sweetness of true faith: love of Allah and His messenger above anything else, love of someone for the sake of nothing besides Allah, and to hate to return to unbelief as he would hate to be thrown into the fire” (*Bukhari*, 1.10–11: 16. S).

Love and Hate for the Sake of Allah

A believer does not love or hate individual people because of who they are, but only loves or hates their good or bad traits and actions, those which the Sacred Law praises or blames.

One thing plain from this is that ethnic origin cannot be a basis for positive or negative attitudes towards oneself or others. When one of the Meccan Emigrants struck a Medinan Helper and each group rallied their fellows with cries of solidarity against the other, the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “What is this rallying of each other from the Period of Ignorance?—Leave it, for it makes putrid” (*Bukhari*, 6.191–92: 4905. S). Allah Most High says, “Of His signs are the creation of the heavens and earth, and the difference in your tongues and hues; verily in that there are signs for those who know” (Koran 30:22), that is, signs for wonder and admiration that Allah has brought forth these differences from a single father, Adam (upon whom be blessings and peace). The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) told his Companions:

“Allah Mighty and Majestic has rid you of the arrogance of the Period of Ignorance and its pride in forefathers. Godfearing believer or luckless sinner: people are the sons of Adam, and Adam was of dust. Let peoples cease priding themselves in men, or they will matter less to Allah than the scarab beetle that pushes filth about with its nose” (*Ahmad*, 2.361. H).

A human being cannot choose his parents, and there are no racial laws in Islam: when love and hate are for the sake of Allah, the only importance that attaches to pride is that it is a step backwards.

Love of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace)

It means that one's affection for the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) is pure and real, such that he is more beloved to one than one's self, mother, father, and all other people. It means exalting his station, serving his Umma, following his sunna, and adhering with complete respect and manners (adab) in one's word and state to the overwhelming majority of the early Muslims, of the prophetic descendants, Companions, the Imams of the scholars of his Umma, and the friends (awliya') and knowers of Allah—all out of love for the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace).

Love includes saying the blessings upon him (Allah bless him and give him peace), when he is mentioned and at other times, with presence of heart or even without. At the tomb in Egypt of two of the sheikhs of our spiritual line, Muhammad Wafa and his son 'Ali, there is hand-lettered sign upon one of the walls that reads:

The Pole of the Gnostics Imam al-Sha'rani (Allah be well pleased with him) relates that the Possessor of the Supreme Purity my master Muhammad Wafa al-Shadhili (Allah be well pleased with him) said: "I saw the Liegelord of Worlds (Allah bless him and give him peace) and I asked him, 'O Messenger of Allah, Allah's tenfold blessing upon him who says the blessings upon you once, is that for him who is present in heart?' He said, 'No, it is for anyone who blesses me absentmindedly; Allah bestows upon him the like of mountains of angels, who pray for him and ask forgiveness for him. As for if he is present in heart therein, no one but Allah Most High knows the reward of that.' "

Love for the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) also means emulating his refined and modest character. Jabir relates that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said:

"Truly, among those of you I love best and who shall be seated closest to me on Resurrection Day shall be the finest of you in character. And truly, those of you I detest most and who shall be seated farthest from me on Resurrection Day shall be praters who talk too much, and those who overpronounce the letters of their words for effect, and windbags who affect stentorian tones." They said, "Praters and overpronouncers we know, but what are windbags?" He said, "The arrogant" (*Tirmidhi*, 4.370: 2018. Hg).

Sincerity (Ikhlas) in One's Works and States

Sincerity includes leaving pretension, leaving showing off in spiritual works (riya'), leaving the mention of one's works to gain others' esteem (sum'a), and leaving all hypocrisy. Sheikh al-Kurdi notes:

Levels of sincerity (ikhlas) [in spiritual works] are three: high, medium, and low. High is for a servant to do works for Allah alone, out of obedience to His command and in fulfillment of the rights of his own slavehood. Medium is to do works seeking Allah's reward or to avoid His punishment. Low is for a servant to do works so that Allah may honor him in this world or protect him from its perils [n: e.g. praying (du'a') for such a

purpose, though if it is a *means* to achieve something at either of the previous two levels, it takes their ruling—while all are considered sincerity (ikhlas)]. Anything besides these three is showing off (riya') (*Risala al-tawhid*, 6).

Repentance (Tawba)

Our sheikh mentions that repentance is of three levels: *tawba*, from sins; *awba*, from bad character traits; and *inaba*, from everything besides Allah.

Fear of Allah (Khawf)

This, our sheikh notes, is not fear of His person (for He is the object of our love), but fear of His rank over us (maqam), that is, of the justice we deserve for our sins and shortcomings: Allah says in Surat al-Nazi‘at,

“As for him who fears the station (maqam) of his Lord and forbids his self its whims, paradise shall be his shelter” (Koran 79:40–41).

Hope in Allah

One should always think the best of Allah, no matter what the circumstances, for the outcome of the play of forces is unknown to us, and despair is itself a sin. Scholars note, however, that hope should only predominate at death, while fear should predominate in one’s lifetime, as that is safer.

Thankfulness to Allah

More enduring than either hope or fear, whose scope ends at death, gratitude to Allah is a beatitude that lasts in paradise for eternity. It is the motive for all acts of worship in the Shadhili tariqa, which is known among Sufis as ‘The Way of Thanks’ (Tariq al-Shukr), not only to distinguish it from paths in which spiritual exertions are done to bring about a spiritual breakthrough, termed ‘The Way of Illumination’ (Tariq al-Ishraq); but also because thankfulness is for many of us a more exacting criterion for spiritual sincerity than, for example, love (which may be admixed with self), or fear (which may content itself with a salvific minimum).

Faithfulness (Wafa')

One must be true-hearted and loyal to Allah and His messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace), to one’s *din*, to one’s sheikh, to one’s brethren in the path, to one’s word, and to all Muslims.

Patience (Sabr)

Patience is a mirror of certainty, and needed to attain every high aim. Our sheikh distinguishes three types, saying: “The masters have conveyed to us that three hundred

spiritual degrees may be reached by patience in performing acts of obedience, six hundred degrees by patience in refraining from disobedience, and nine hundred degrees by patience with others.” It transmutes the imperfection of the circumstances one is patient with into the perfection of being with Allah, who says in Surat al-Baqara, “Verily Allah is with the patient” (Koran 2:152).

Accepting Fate

Having done everything in one’s power, one leaves the rest to Allah; past, present, and future.

Reliance on Allah (Tawakkul)

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “If you ask, then ask Allah,” meaning not that it is wrong to ask anything of others, but rather that one should first ask Allah in supplication before asking them, and rely on Him for the results.

Mercy (Rahma)

We show towards others what we ask for ourselves.

Humility (Tawadu‘)

Outwardly, it consists in following the sunna in matters such as eating as a slave, sitting as a slave, speaking as a slave, not complaining, and showing humility to all believers for Allah’s sake. It also entails special respect towards those older than one, to scholars of the *din*, to leaders (*amirs*) of Muslims, to one’s parents, to one’s husband; and that one serve one’s peers as a brother; and that one show kindness to those under one’s care.

Inwardly, humility means freeing oneself of its opposite, which is arrogance (*kibr*). The way to this, in our *tariqa*, is by realizing the radical finitude of self before the limitless majesty of God. Sheikh Muhammad al-Buzaydi has said: “Whomever Allah loves, He inspires with humility. Whomever Allah hates, He inspires with arrogance.” This is necessarily known as part of the religion, for the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) has said,

“No one with the slightest particle of arrogance in his heart shall enter paradise.” A man said, “But a man likes his clothes to be nice, and his sandals good.” The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said: “Verily, Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Arrogance is refusing to accept the truth, and considering people beneath one” (*Muslim*, 1.93: 91. S).

The first point of this definition of arrogance is the crucial test of humility: that when one learns of the truth—in a matter of faith, attitude, or works; especially when attested to by the ulama of Sacred Law—one drops one’s usual habit, personal opinion, or private understanding and follows it. Without this, there can be no humility at all. At its heart lies

the exaltation of the Divine Command, as also with freeing oneself from the second point, “considering people beneath one”: we show humility not because we are greater than others or less than others, but because Allah has commanded us to be humble, in view of which the humility we have been ordered to show is above any human being. Thus Ibn ‘Ata’ Illah says, “The humble person is not he who when he acts humbly, sees himself as above what he has done; but rather he who when he acts humbly, sees himself as below what he has done” (*al-Hikam*, 64: 239).

Abandoning Envy (Hasad)

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “Beware of envy, for envy consumes good works as fire consumes firewood” (*Abu Dawud*, 4.276: 4903. D). Scholars mention that envy is of three types:

- (1) to wish that another person cease to have something good in order to obtain it oneself;
- (2) to wish that another lose something good even if one does not obtain it, as when one already has another like it, or does not want it, this being worse than the previous type;
- (3) or not to wish that the other cease to have something good, but rather to resent his having surpassed one in attainment or position, accepting his parity with one but not his superiority.

All are unlawful, and all object to Allah’s dividing His favor among His servants as He wills, which is ignorance. Allah Most High says in Surat al-Zukhruf;

“Are they the ones who apportion the mercy of your Lord? It is We who have divided their livelihoods among them in this life and raised some of them in degrees above others” (Koran 43:32).

Despite this, some egos are so possessed by envy that even hearing another praised weighs upon them. One must watch one’s heart and reactions carefully, for envy lies at ambush on any path, even spiritual, that involves both a social collectivity and striving in excellence. A Muslim must love for his brother what he loves for himself.

Abandoning Hatred

This refers to hatred of people because of who they are, rather than hatred of the blameworthy traits or actions in them for the sake of Allah Most High, mentioned above. In general, the greater the knowledge of Allah, the less there is to take personally besides Him in the play of events within and without.

Abandoning Anger

What is meant, similarly, is anger not because Allah has been disobeyed, but rather for

one's own ego. A man came to the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) seeking a single comprehensive piece of advice that would join between much of the good, saying,

“Teach me something, but not too much, so that I can grasp it.” He said, “Do not get angry.” The man repeated his question several times, but the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) only repeated, “Do not get angry” (*Tirmidhi*, 4.371: 2020. Sg).

Some ulama of Sacred Law interpret this figuratively, as prohibiting the bad *consequences* of anger, saying that one cannot be held legally responsible to cease being angry whenever aroused, but rather that the hadith forbids doing or saying what anger brings to mind. Other ulama (among them our sheikhs) take the prohibition literally, pointing out that the basis of personal anger is haughtiness (*kibr*), a quality in itself unlawful.

Generosity (Karam)

Teaching the hand to be generous is of central importance to the Sufi work of sublimating the ego not only because of the self's strong attachment to money, but because it is a tendency that increases rather than decreases with age. The opposite of generosity, stinginess (*bukhl*) or avarice (*shuhh*), is considered by masters of the path to be the most odious quality a spiritual traveller can possess. Ibn 'Ajiba says, “The ugliest of the ugly is the stingy Sufi.” Other masters have simply said, “The opposite of Sufism is miserliness.”

A delegation came to the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), and he asked,

“O Bani Salama, who is your leader?” and they said, “Bishr ibn Qays, though we accuse him of being stingy.” The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “What sickness is sicker than stinginess?” They said, “Then who should be our leader, O Messenger of Allah?” He said, “Bishr ibn al-Bara' ibn al-Ma'rur” (al-Haythami: *Majma' al-zawa'id*, 9.315. Hg),

a hadith that is well authenticated (*hasan*) in view of multiple means of transmission, showing that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) actually removed a tribe's leader for cheapness, and that a stingy person is not religiously fit to lead. If all of this is fairly well understood by ethnic Muslims in touch with their traditional values, Western converts often find “being economical” towards others culturally acceptable at some level, and all of us are obliged to study ourselves, our reactions, and our attachments, and to use a generous hand (especially in little things) to produce a generous heart.

3. The Manners of the Path

Roles and Ranks

IT IS related that the Mevlevi order, in the ages after Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, had a number

of ranks of *tariqa* officers to deal with particular aspects of brewing the coffee used in their spiritual sessions, their functions hierarchically ranged from selecting the beans, to roasting them, to pouring the brew, to serving it.

A visitor to our *zawiya* (tariqa hospice) in Amman was wondering about the rank of the *muqaddam* or 'local representative of the sheikh' in the Shadhili *tariqa*. The question provided an opening to clarify the *adab* or proper conduct of dealing with others within and without the order, bringing to mind a number of roles and functions.

The Sheikh

First, the sheikh at whose hands one has taken the spiritual path may be one or several. If the sheikh is one, and the disciple submits his spiritual development to him, the disciple is termed a *salik* or 'spiritual traveller.' If he is more than one, and the disciple's heart is sometimes attached to this one and sometimes to that, the disciple is a *mutabarrik* or 'only attaining the spiritual blessing' of the way. This is certainly not a bad thing, but the fruits of such an association are somewhat less than those of the traveller. Everyone knows this.

The sheikh, then, is in a sense the "father" of the traveller, for it is he who will give spiritual birth to him by initiating him into the higher world, and awaken the capacity in him to know Allah, directly and experientially. His standing in the heart of the disciple, and his authority in the disciple's life are based on this function. Sheikhs of the path such as Muhammad al-Buzaydi point out that if one's natural parents who are the cause of one's appearance in this world deserve the respect unanimously accorded them by human nature, custom, and Sacred Law, then how should one be towards someone who gives birth to one in the world of the spirit for all eternity?

The Grandsheikh

The sheikh of one's sheikh, to return to our metaphor, is like the father of one's father. As with one's worldly grandfather, without him neither oneself nor one's father would have come into being. Like a grandfather, he is shown if anything even greater respect than one's father. A child benefits from words of wisdom heard from his grandfather and remembered for the rest of his life, and Sacred Law makes it obligatory to exalt and obey him. He should visit him, venerate him, and not be ignorant of his august standing and rights over all family members, who, after all, originate from him.

At the same time, the two differ in role. The father is responsible for raising the child, even though the grandfather is older and wiser. It would be a rather rude affront towards the father for a child to pose a question to his grandfather about some point of his father's raising him. Exceptions of course must always be possible, when there are abuses, but under normal family circumstances, only a child devoid of manners and breeding would invoke his grandfather over his father. This too, I believe, is known to everyone.

The Muqaddam

The case of a *muqaddam* is quite different from that of a sheikh. Without stretching our metaphor, he perhaps most resembles an older brother who has been put in charge of his brothers and sisters to carry out something at the father's behest. In past centuries, in rural Morocco and Algeria, for example, where villages were isolated from one another and communication was difficult, the role of a *muqaddam* needed much wider discretionary powers, and obedience to him was obligatory.

In our times, the main tasks of *muqaddams* in various countries who serve the brethren, are to organize gatherings of disciples, distribute the sheikh's instructional materials to them, and teach the gatherings. For harmony, they direct all group activities, from beginning to end. Like other teachers of genuine Islamic knowledge, they must be shown respect. But in non-group matters of the path, they are only entitled to give counsel and serve, and are not considered above other tariqa members in rank, or their views binding, or their example obligatory to emulate. The obligations of tariqa members toward the *muqaddam* are thus twofold:

(1) The first is to respect his authority in leading all group activities; in distributing and clarifying the sheikh's instructional materials such as the lessons of *muraqaba*, in reading Sufi texts to members, and as a counselor.

As for the latter, the *muqaddam* is there because often the sheikh is unable to talk to everyone who has a question, seeks advice, or needs to be calmed down. The *muqaddam* does all these things, and the disciple should benefit to the extent that he can. If he cannot, then he should return to the sheikh, who is, after all, the sheikh—but without ill will, as long as there has been no contravention of the Sacred Law. It may be that Allah has not created one's *rizq* or 'spiritual provision' with this particular *muqaddam*, or that temperaments are too far apart to strike up a deep friendship. In any case, the sign of a true disciple is silence and submission to Allah's will, unless speaking is obligatory to improve something amiss, in this context first between oneself and the *muqaddam*, or failing that, then between oneself and the sheikh.

(2) The second obligation towards a *muqaddam* is to honor him as a tariqa member and a believer. We are obliged to show love and respect to everyone in the tariqa in exaltation of what Allah has exalted; namely, the sacred task each disciple has taken upon himself of drawing nearer to Allah Most High in the spiritual path—above and beyond the love and adab due to all Muslims for the fact that Allah has honored them with *La ilaha illa Llah, Muhammadun rasulu Llah* (There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah), which necessitates for them endless bliss in the next world.

(3) A third obligation, not yet mentioned for its rarity, consists of *tawkil* or the *muqaddam* being made a *wakil* or 'agent' for the spiritual training of a particular disciple. But this is something rare, and is a special function the sheikh explicitly invests him with. It applies to only a few individuals.

Spiritual Ranks

To summarize, the matter of *tarbiya* or ‘spiritual education’ in the path is between sheikh and disciple. Yet these designations are primarily roles rather than ranks. The ranks in this Shadhili tariqa are shared equally by everyone who is in it; namely, the rank of Iman or ‘true faith’ which is the greatest rank on the face of the earth; and the rank of *nisba* or the ‘affiliation’ with *ahl Allah* (those of Allah) by having taken the tariqa, in reality an elite rank within Iman.

The belief by some that certain tariqa members are closer to Allah than others may be mere imagination, or when true, may well change before they die. An unknown copyist writes on the final page of a manuscript of the Andalusian Sufi Ibn al-‘Arif’s *Mahasin al-majalis* [The beauties of the mystical sessions]:

How many a spring there was whose trees and flowers shone, and its folk supposed it all well, when a disaster from the heavens suddenly struck them. Allah Most High says, “Our command reached it by night or by day, and We made it a mowed down stubble, as though it flourished not but yesterday” (Koran 10:24). And how many a disciple, the lights of spiritual will (*irada*) shone in him and the traces of illumination appeared on him, and the telling about him spread to the horizons, and fingers pointed as one at him, and they supposed him to be one of His friends (*awliya*) and of those of His election—when his purity changed to muddiness, and his light to darkness (*Mahasin al-majalis*, 35).

We don’t know what will happen. So the proper *adab* in the tariqa is to elevate everyone—except oneself.

The Inner Circle

It may be inferred from this that there is no “in crowd” within the tariqa with whom one must spend most of one’s time, or whose collective opinion constitutes a decisive case about anything. “In-ness” is often one of the antics of the lower self, and the harm to others that sometimes results from it is described in a piece called “The Inner Ring” by C.S. Lewis that would be of benefit for many of us to read. The real “in crowd” consists of those who are in the divine presence, not this or that clique. One doesn’t have to make it with anybody to be a member of the elect. One has to make it with Allah.

The Hospital

The real nature of solidarity in the tariqa lies in the fact that we cannot do without each other for our spiritual progress, which cannot occur in solitude. Also, as mentioned above, our love and respect for everyone in the tariqa is in exaltation of the sacredness of their quest for Allah Most High on the spiritual path. At the same time, the group more nearly resembles a private sanitarium where sick people are becoming well, than, say, an elite university. This is why sheikhs like Ahmad Zarruq unanimously list *al-ta‘azzuz bi*

al-tariqa or ‘pride in the spiritual path’ as among the diseases of the self.

To understand precisely what this means, and does not mean, we must distinguish between ascribing blessings to Allah and ascribing blessings to ourselves. If one is rejoicing in the *tariqa* as a manifestation of Allah’s favor upon one in being allowed to tread the high path to Him, it is praiseworthy. But if one is exulting to oneself over one’s wisdom and superiority in joining the *tariqa*, one has entered the wing of the hospital for the deluded.

If feelings of superiority are the inward, egotistical manifestation of pride (*ta‘azzuz*) in the path, cultish behavior is its outward, social counterpart. Both are a fundamental misunderstanding of the path, which inwardly leads to the Reality (*Haqiqa*) beyond all forms, semblances, and ranks; leaving those who reach it with nothing to be proud of—as Sheikh ‘Abd al-Rahman calls it, “Bankruptcy from everything but Allah”—while its outward expression is *khidma* or service to Islam and the Muslims.

The *tariqa* is not a cult, and few things put off others more than people obsessed with their collective identity. There is something stealthy and supercilious about cult followers even when they are trying to be polite, and those who meet them are repelled. It is far from the simple, friendly manner of the pure-hearted Sufis we see among the older brethren, for example, of Sheikh al-Hashimi who are still alive in Damascus. “Verily, the noblest of you in Allah’s eyes is the most godfearing” (Koran 49:13).

The Company One Keeps

An important point raised by this is the matter of *suhba* or companionship with others to get closer to Allah. The path of ‘*uzla* or solitude is not the path of *suluk* or spiritual travel. One can only have spiritual travel by associating with others, listening, and following. This is why there is a *tariqa*, and why the tremendous emphasis on companionship. As our sheikh often says, “One’s nature takes from another’s, so choose for your company him who obeys.” Who, for example? After a few general guidelines, we are all free to choose:

(1) One should not take for one’s companions those who are irreligious and do not pray. If one has such friends, then if there is not some other aim countenanced by Sacred Law in keeping their company such as maintaining family ties, one should taper off one’s dealings with them in a gentle yet effective way, such as by acting bored until they go and find other friends. “It might be that you are doing badly,” says Ibn ‘Ata’ Illah, “but keeping the company of someone even worse than you displays to you your merit.”

(2) One should have as many friends among practicing Muslims as one can, which Allah has made a *sunna* because we don’t know which of our believing friends will make intercession for us on Judgement Day. This is at the level of companionship and acquaintance.

(3) A third level is that of intimate friendship and love; and this should be reserved for

those whom one wishes to absorb the state of. In the case of the spiritual traveller, this means those whose state is *dhikr* or remembrance of Allah, and one should seek out those who both are *salik* or 'travelling' and who motivate one to emulate them. It is at this level that Ibn 'Ata' Illah says, "Do not keep the company of someone whose state does not uplift you or words guide you to Allah."

It is reported that among the first of mankind to ever make coffee was 'Ali ibn 'Umar al-Shadhili, a sheikh of the Shadhili tariqa in Yemen in the tenth hijra century. How he prepared it is not precisely known, but it was probably much simpler than the multitiered method used by the Mevlevis in Turkey. Allah knows best, but there is probably still something to be said for simplicity.

Manners (Adab)

As with most human endeavors, some parts of the path are rough and some are smooth. A traveller cannot control this, but he can control the manners he needs to travel it, and this is what is meant by the words of the sheikhs "The path is wholly manners"—towards Allah, towards one's fellow Muslims, and especially towards those from whom the path is taken. Ibn 'Ajiba says:

Know that this knowledge we speak of is not attained by the prattling of the tongue: it is nothing besides direct experiences and ecstasy. It cannot be taken from papers, but only from the people who possess the experiences. It cannot be reached by gossip, but only through the service of its men and keeping the company of the perfected. By Allah, no one who succeeded has succeeded except by keeping the company of someone who succeeded" (*Iqadh al-himam*, 9–10).

The following sections cannot deal with all aspects of *adab*, but only those most needful, within the compass of brevity.

Manners of Those Looking For a Path

(1) Those looking for a tariqa should not to be misled by people, whether ulama of the outward sciences or others, who say that there is no more Sufism in the world today. All it means is that they have never met a true sheikh of the way, and find it farfetched that anyone else should have either. The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) has told us, "Allah Most High says, 'I am as My servant thinks of me'" (*Bukhari*, 9.147–48: 7405. S), so whoever thinks Allah's door is closed should wonder if they have not thereby closed it on themselves.

What masters of the path in every age have intended by expressions like the words of Abu Bakr al-Wasiti (a student of al-Junayd who died after 320/932) "The spiritual path has gone and so have its people, and nothing remains but regrets"—though the centuries after him saw sheikhs of the path such as 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylani (d. 561/1166), Abu Madyan (d. 594/1198), Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 638/1240), Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (d. 672/1273), al-'Arabi al-Darqawi (d. 1239/1823), Ahmad al-'Alawi (d. 1353/1934), and many

others—is first to warn seekers that pretenders exist who do not fulfill the conditions of a true sheikh; second, to apprise of the dangers of straying from the principles (usul) of the path; and third, to keep themselves and others from feeling complacent with their own states compared with those of the earlier generations. Whatever exceeds this is but the whisperings of the Devil, making as it does a dead letter of a large portion of the religion of Islam.

(2) The seeker of Allah, if he wants to reach Him, must take the path from a sheikh who is a guide (murshid), who inspires him with his state, and who directs him to Allah with his words. Among the sayings of the Sheikh al-Akbar is “Whoever does not take the tariqa from its men only goes from one absurdity to another,” and Hakim al-Tirmidhi says, “People have been prevented from attainment by nothing except their rushing down the path without a guide, gobbling up their desires, and taking dispensations and making symbolic interpretations.” Others have simply said, “The dhikr must be one, the guide one, and the aim one.”

(3) A seeker must know what he is looking for, that a tariqa means a sheikh and a disciple. Masters of the path have recorded conditions for both, of which we can mention a few:

The Conditions of a Sheikh

—Being a Sunni Muslim with valid tenets of faith (‘aqida).

—Being a scholar (‘alim) of Sacred Law capable of answering most questions about what Allah expects of him and his students without having to ask someone else.

—Having a verifiably public authorization from a spiritual guide to be a spiritual guide, connecting him through a chain of transmission (silsila) without a single break back to the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace).

—Being male, as a guide is an heir of the prophets (upon whom be peace and blessings), all of whom were men.

—Being suitable to take as an exemplar in the religion, not disobedient or wicked in his personal life.

—Knowing the fundamental terms of Sufism such as *fana'* (annihilation), *baqa'* (subsistence), *ma'rifa* (gnosis), and the rest, by having actually tread the path under a sheikh and understood them at first hand.

—Exalting the command of Allah in word and deed, and knowing that it is above every

human being.

—Having permission from Allah and His messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace)—beyond the authorization given him by his sheikh—manifest in his *tawfiq* or ‘success’ in inculcating the perfections of Islam, Iman, and Ihsan in his disciples.

—Finding a disciple capable of taking his teaching and absorbing his secret from him; that is, being the sheikh Allah has destined for that disciple.

—Not being self-satisfied, or veiled from his own neediness to Allah by his disciples’ need for him.

The Conditions of a Disciple

—Having a valid aim in taking the path, meaning Allah alone and nothing besides.

—Being genuine, meaning convinced of the secret between one’s sheikh and Allah, and willing to submit, and listen, and follow.

—Having good manners, noble character, and respect for others.

—Having praiseworthy states such as patience, silence, reliance on Allah, nonattachment to material things, and lack of curiosity about what does not concern one.

—Giving selfless service, whether convenient or inconvenient, to Allah, the sunna, the tariqa, and to one’s fellow man.

—Venerating Allah and His messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace), Allah’s religion, Allah’s friends (awliya’), and everything else Allah has exalted.

—Having high spiritual resolve.

—Unflinching carrying out one’s decisions, undeterred by the Devil, this world, one’s ego, or vain caprice.

WHEN someone looking for a tariqa finds a sheikh and finds the longing in himself to reach Allah, he should not hesitate. If he does not find anyone, he should ask Allah to send him someone, and to guide him, for Allah does not disappoint anyone who sincerely asks Him for guidance.

Manners Towards the Path

(1) To always give humanity the benefit of the doubt (husn al-dhann), at minimum meaning to remain silent about them.

- (2) Not to impose on anyone except oneself.
- (3) Never to be pleased with the self, its actions, its knowledge, or its states. Whoever does so has no knowledge at all of the path, no matter what they may know. The cure for this is *tawhid*, awareness of the divine unity in the creation of our acts, first as knowledge, then as certainty, finally as vision and permanent station.
- (4) To negate all low thoughts.
- (5) To have total certainty that Allah will complete your destiny with success in the tariqa.
- (6) Not to complain to anyone besides Allah.
- (7) Not to take pride in the tariqa or try to impress others with it.
- (8) To perpetually return to Allah, through everything, in everything, from everything.

Manners Towards the Sheikh

- (1) To show him the politeness due to him as a Muslim and a scholar.
- (2) To listen to what he says (of anything permissible) and carry it out to the best of one's ability, even if of the contrary opinion. If there is a problem with it, or one later arises, one may re-explain one's circumstances in order to help him decide, though when he has understood, one follows his decision.
- (5) Not to visit other sheikhs of the path without his permission. One should not even ask, unless there is some pressing interest that cannot be otherwise met. One should not take Sufism from any living teacher except one's own sheikh: that is why he has been created. If it happens that destiny joins between oneself and another true sheikh, the same politeness is due to him that is due to one's own sheikh, though it is not necessary to listen to his advice in matters of the path.
- (6) To pray for one's sheikh.
- (7) To watch and wait for the benefit Allah creates in the presence of the sheikh as a cat waits at a mousehole: One does not yawn in his presence, slouch, fidget, look at one's watch, or the like, because of the unconcern it shows and lack of *adab*.
- (8) If the sheikh is in town, one makes time for him and attends all the sessions that he offers. It is disgraceful to intentionally miss a single gathering if one can attend.
- (9) Not to leave any session at which the sheikh is teaching. Allah may bestow a point of knowledge upon one at a lesson that will make one's whole life thrive with new

knowledge and action.

(10) One should believe that one's sheikh is the most complete of the people of the path of his time, and most accomplished of those who exist, so that the validity of one's intention towards the sheikh be as perfect as possible, and one may follow his example in everything without hesitation. If one's intention is otherwise, no benefit will reach one.

(11) The disciple may leave the sheikh and the tariqa whenever he wishes. The relationship is purely voluntary. A disciple may be given a second chance to rejoin, but seldom is there a third.

Manners Towards One's Brethren

(1) Not to cause worry or anxiety to one's brethren in the path in any way, shape, or form.

(2) Not to criticize any of the brethren, rather, mention only their praiseworthy points and refrain from saying anything else.

(3) To see oneself as the lowest of the brethren and not see anyone as below one, for no one knows what life's final outcome will be.

(4) Not to seek to lead or be placed ahead of one's brethren before one is placed ahead of them, but rather to withdraw to behind; and if one has the ability for leadership, not to seek it.

(5) Not to befriend anyone at open enmity with one's brethren, because they are as a single individual, and whatever hurts some of them hurts all.

(6) Not to miss the gatherings of the brethren, for dhikr, learning, and so on, without an excuse.

Manners Towards Oneself

(1) To have total dedication that disregards every obstacle.

(2) To be lowly and heartbroken at being as bad as one is.

(3) To spend one's money, time, and self in the path, and prefer others to oneself.

(4) To keep the company of those close to Allah.

(5) To give one's all to dhikr and worship.

(6) To give the self what it desires only within the limits of the Sacred Law, and to

control it when it wants to vent its emotions on others.

Manners Towards the Devil

(1) To know that the Devil is thousands of years old, that he has seen many human beings, and he knows how they think. It is proper manners not be surprised at anything that comes to one's mind of his whisperings. Abu Hurayra relates in a rigorously authenticated (sahih) hadith:

People came, of the Companions of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), and asked him: "We find in ourselves that which any of us would consider an enormity to even utter." He said, "You have actually found it?" and they said yes. He said, "That is plainly true faith" (*Muslim*, 1.119: 132. S);

meaning, Imam Nawawi notes, "Considering it an enormity to even utter is plainly true faith" (*Sahih Muslim bi Sharh al-Nawawi*, 2.154), indicating that as long as one has fear and disgust for passing thoughts of unbelief (kufr) and the like and does not make them convictions, they do no harm.

(2) To know that the Devil's line of work is sowing doubts in minds about Allah, about oneself, about the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), about the tariqa, about one's sheikh, and about anything else that is valuable in the next world. Whoever sets out for Allah is going to hear some of these doubts, because he has chosen to fight the Devil, whose whole aim is to make him as bad as he was before taking the path, or worse.

In order to see who is paying for an advertisement, one has to look at the bottom line. To see who is behind one's doubts, one follows the thought out to its logical conclusion and sees what it leads to. If the conclusion is "Things are so bad, there is nothing to be grateful to Allah for," or "You've gone this far, you might as well go all the way," or "You can't do everything, so you might as well do nothing"—one can guess who's paying for it.

(3) When one has doubts that one cannot get rid of, to ask the sheikh.

(4) When there is laziness and procrastination, to ask oneself what one wants from the path, and prioritize one's works. One should discard half one's works, if necessary to do a good job on the other half. A favorite trick of the Devil is to pile up works higher and higher until everything collapses.

(5) When plagued by the Devil with *waswasa* or 'obsessive doubts' about one's ablution, one's prayer (salat), one's reciting of the Fatiha, and the like, to relax and do approximately what one should, take things as they come, and leave the rest to Allah. The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) has said,

Verily the religion is ease, and none shall make the religion hard except that it will defeat him. So be moderate, do as best you can, be of good cheer, and seek help in the

mornings, the afternoons, and something of the night” (*Bukhari*, 1.16: 39. S).

(6) To remember that true enmity for the Enemy is to be in love with the Beloved. Our way is to eat well, to sleep well, to dress well, to work well and study well—but with the heart directed to Allah rather than other people. This is the way of Abul Hasan al-Shadhili (Allah be well pleased with him), and the sum of the *adab* of the path.

Getting Married

Choosing a companion to spend one’s life with is a decision of the greatest consequence in the path. Perhaps the best response to the many questions that are asked about marital suitability and the *tariqa* is that disciples may marry anyone they want, as long as the following conditions are met:

(1) That the prospective spouse share one’s own vision of Islam and be religious, meaning that they follow one of the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence (*madhhabs*), pray the five prayers, and if female, cover correctly. They do all of this before ever hearing of marriage. Someone who doesn’t pray but “comes from a good family” is absolutely unacceptable, and one must not be pressured by family members into marrying someone of this description. One’s children could end up in hell by following their example.

(2) That the prospective spouse agree that the household will be run according one of the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence (*madhhabs*) in all matters; if Hanafi, for example, that there be nothing unlawful according to the school in any of the family’s dealings.

(3) That the prospective spouse know that one has a *tariqa* and sheikh and what this entails, knows that one goes to the weekly *majalis* and yearly *suhbas*, and that one’s main interest is Allah. If the person also has a *tariqa*, it must be an authentic one, meaning at minimum that the sheikh and disciple know that the Sacred Law is above the sheikh, the disciple, and everyone else.

(4) That the husband be the man of the family, and the big decisions return to his *istikhara* or ‘prayer of guidance.’

(5) That the husband have a lawful income by which he can support a wife and free her from the need to work, providing for her a *bayt shar‘i* or ‘house guaranteed by Sacred Law,’ meaning her own house which she runs, and has complete security in and everything else she needs, according to the standard enjoyed by women of similar social standing in the same town; and that none of her husband’s family can come into her house, meddle, give advice about her children, count her spoons, or anything else, unless she wants them to. If she doesn’t get along with in-laws, the husband can visit them himself in their home. If a man in the *tariqa* wants to get married, he has to be able to provide all this. Otherwise, he must make plans for the future, with Allah’s help. One need not obey parents’ demands to marry if one is unable to provide a wife with these

basic rights guaranteed by Sacred Law.

It is often preferable wait to marry until one has achieved a sound footing in the tariqa. New converts to Islam in particular should practice and adjust to their religion for a year or two before taking on the additional challenge of marriage. If one suffers from temptation, one may request the “Settling One’s Grounds” program from the sheikh.

ANYONE who marries someone with the above stipulations marries with the sheikh’s complete blessing and best wishes, although there is *baraka* in seeking his permission. Other rules for disciples who are married or considering marriage are found in the booklet “Marriage,” which is available on request.

Money

Having a good job is not a hindrance to the spiritual path, but may rather be a help, as long as it is a means and not an end, and one has the time and concentration left to focus on Allah. The Ottoman Caliph Sultan ‘Abd al-Hamid II had a Shadhili sheikh, illustrating the maxim that “a Sufi is in the world but not of it.”

Because of the imperative of having a trouble-free atmosphere between members of the path for the sake of spiritual progress, Sheikh al-Hashimi used to urge his brethren not to go into business with each other. In our times, if members want to have commerce with one another, the following conditions should be met:

Every transaction between disciples that is not paid for and delivered immediately and exceeds fifty dollars should be written down, dated, and signed in duplicate by the parties, each of whom retain a copy. This includes such things as buying or selling by deferred payment, commissioning another to buy something for one, lending books (no matter what the value) to read or to copy (which should be specified), and other transactions. If done by telephone, the parties must agree on the wording of the deal, which they each write. A single line about it on a slip of paper is sufficient.

As for commercial dealings in the non-Islamic world that we find around us, Imam Zaid Shakir has drawn up a number of guidelines, mentioned below, which the author feels should be observed by everyone in the West concerned about their *din*, including all tariqa members.

The Souk of the Travellers

The Sacred Law, as a plan for a whole way of life, deals with every facet of human existence. The traveller to Allah must scrupulously adhere to the Sacred Law in every aspect of his life if his journey is to be successful. The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said:

“O people: Allah is goodly and accepts only what is goodly. And verily, Allah has commanded believers with what He has commanded the prophetic messengers, saying,

‘O Messengers, eat of goodly things and work righteousness: truly, I well know everything you do’ [Koran 23:51]; and, ‘O you who believe, eat of goodly things what We have provided you’ [2:172].” Then he mentioned “a man on a long journey, unkempt and dusty, raising his hands to the sky, ‘O Lord, O Lord,’—while his food is unlawful (haram), drink is unlawful, clothes are unlawful, and he has been nourished upon the unlawful: So how could he possibly be answered therein?” (*Muslim*, 2.703: 1015. S).

We too are on a long journey, out of this world, and we are asking Allah—with our words and acts and state—to reach safety and nearness to Him. So how should we be answered if we are fastidious in our basic acts of worship, but our food is bought with unlawful money, or is filled with pork derivatives and other unlawful and harmful things, or we are constantly committing transgressions with our tongues, like slander, talebearing, and lying? With this key point in view, we are making a few basic suggestions for disciples living in the West concerning the *souk* or ‘marketplace,’ meaning their economic affairs, as this is the area where perhaps not a few travellers sometimes fall into the unlawful.

Most of these suggestions involve the avoidance of interest (*riba*), hence we will begin with a few introductory comments on the subject. A fuller treatment will be developed at a later date, Allah willing.

Dealing in usury (*riba*) is a very grave sin in Islam. It is listed as an enormity (*kabira*) by everyone who has written on the subject, and is the seventh major sin in Imam al-Dhahabi’s *Kitab al-kaba’ir* [Book of enormities]. The gravity of this sin is borne out by the words of Allah:

“Those who eat of usury shall not rise [on Judgement Day] except as those arise who are smitten by the Devil with madness—which is because they say that trade is but like interest, though Allah has made trade lawful and has forbade interest. So whoever is reached by a warning from his Lord and desists may keep what was before [Allah forbade it], and his affair is with his Lord. But whosoever returns, those are the denizens of hell, abiding therein forever.

“Allah extirpates [all benefit from] usury, but makes charity bounteous, and Allah loves no sinful ingrate.

“Verily, those who believe and do righteous works, who perform the prayer and give zakat, they possess their wage with their Lord: no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve.

“O you who believe, fear Allah, and give up whatever remains of interest, if you be believers.

“But if they do not, then be apprised of war from Allah and His messenger, though if you repent, you may keep your principal, neither wronging nor being wronged” (Koran

2:275–79).

There is no other crime in the entire Sacred Law from beginning to end that is declared to merit *war* from Allah besides enmity with the friends (awliya') of Allah. And if Allah, Master of every atom in existence, declares war against someone, who does one imagine will win?

If this were not enough, Ibn Mas'ud (Allah be well pleased with him) relates that “the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) cursed whoever eats of usury, feeds it to another, witnesses it, or records it” (*Tirmidhi*, 3.512: 1206. S). And Abdullah ibn Handhala (Allah be well pleased with him) relates that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “A single dirham of usury that a man eats knowingly is worse than committing thirty-six fornications” (*Ahmad*, 5.225), a hadith whose narrators Imam Nur al-Din al-Haythami said were “those of the rigorously authentic (sahih)” (*Majma' al-zawa'id*, 4.117).

In light of the seriousness of these warnings, the traveller on the spiritual path must disregard all so-called *fatwas* or ‘formal legal opinions’ that declare any form of usury (riba) to be lawful. Such opinions are the product of a psychologically defeated and humiliated Islam that emerged after colonization of Muslim lands and abolishment of the social and political manifestation of the Sacred Law. The traveller should help begin the process of bringing back this manifestation by taking the following steps:

(1) Cease all buying on credit. This includes houses and cars. Credit buying is the widest door leading to usury in the West, to say nothing of the grave consequences of debt in Islam. All existing debts should be paid off as soon as possible. Houses or cars purchased on interest-based installment plans should be sold as soon as possible. This imposes little burden on Muslims in the West as decent housing can be rented, and reliable used cars can be obtained readily at manageable prices. As far as buying clothing and furniture on credit, these purchases are usually wasteful and unnecessary to begin with.

(2) Credit cards are a useful form of identification and handy for renting cars and other items. If one chooses to maintain a credit card, American Express and Diners' Club, which facilitate car rentals but do not apply interest (as of this writing (1999)), are preferable. If the spiritual traveller cannot obtain one of these two cards, and chooses to maintain a regular credit card, he must pay any bills immediately before any interest accrues. If he finds he is frequently tardy in paying such bills, thereby falling into interest, he should discard the credit card immediately.

(3) Taking loans from banks, savings and loans associations, credit unions, and the like should be avoided as much as humanly possible. This will not only help keep the traveller away from interest and debt, it will also help to undermine the banking industry, an industry which is primarily responsible for the economic enslavement and rape of most of humanity, including the entire Muslim world.

(4) If one places one's money in banks, be sure that it is in a non-interest-bearing

checking account. If one has interest from a regular savings account, before one converts one's account to a non-interest-bearing account, the interest should be given anonymously to a non-Islamic charity (e.g. The American Cancer Society) that does not help the strategic balance against Islam. As for the argument that any money in banks should be left in interest-bearing accounts indefinitely in order to make charitable contributions, it is preferable to avoid this practice. The way of Islam is to have one's money working in commercial ventures out in the community, helping both others and oneself.

(5) As for insurance, nothing has changed since the *Reliance of the Traveller* was written: insurance is still unlawful (haram) because it is usurious. A policy is taken out to pay back far more than one pays into it. This suffices for its unlawfulness, but in the words of the *Reliance*:

. . . In addition to the fact that they are usurious, buying and selling insurance policies are unlawful because of the Prophet's prohibition (Allah bless him and give him peace) of sales in which there is a chance or risk (gharar). Muslim relates from Abu Hurayra that

“the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) prohibited sales of ‘whatever a pebble thrown by the seller hits,’ and sales in which there is a chance or risk (gharar)” (*Muslim*, 3.1153: 1513. S).

Gharar is “chance or risk, meaning it is not known whether it will come to be or not, such as selling fish in the water or birds on the wing. . . . It includes transactions of unknown things, the particulars of which are not fully comprehended by the buyer and seller” (*al-Mughrib*, 2.100).

Urging the permissibility of insurance, one Muslim modernist has written that the very precise statistical data possessed by insurance companies concerning the probabilities of various eventualities makes what they are selling determinately *known* (ma‘lum). This argument fails when one realizes that statistical data from a group of events yields probability figures that, properly speaking, are a description of the group as a whole, and are only analogically applied to the individual events within it. When generalized to similar groups of events in the future, such probabilities yield commercially useful knowledge about the likelihood of a particular outcome for these future groups. But they cannot and do not tell what the outcome will be for any particular member of the group, in this case the particular insurance policy. Thus, a “17 percent probability” that circumstances will enable one to collect such and such an amount on a policy is a mere description of the whole group of previous policy holders in similar circumstances, which does not tell whether one will collect the amount or not. One may collect a certain amount or may not collect it, which is precisely the *gharar* that is unlawful.

When one needs a car in a country whose laws force one to have car liability insurance, buying the insurance has effectively become a tax, and is the moral responsibility of the lawmakers, not the person forced to comply (*Reliance of the Traveller*, 942–43).

(6) Anyone working in any industry directly connected with institutionalizing the

unlawful—banks, stores selling pork, alcohol, pornography, and the like—should immediately begin looking for alternative forms of employment, even if they mean less income. A little of the lawful which is blessed is better than a lot of the unlawful which is devoid of any blessing. The search for alternative employment should be sincere and earnest. If a substantial period of time elapses and one finds that one's livelihood is still directly connected to the unlawful, one should seriously consider emigrating to a place where one can find lawful employment.

IF we are inconvenienced by any of these measures we should remember that a Sufi is first and foremost a *mujahid* or 'spiritual warrior.' He is engaged in a battle against his *nafs* or 'lower soul,' and he is engaged in a battle against the oppressive practices and institutions which the Devil and his dupes have initiated to veil human beings from their Lord. Our success in this affair will not only benefit our souls, but provide tangible benefits to all of humanity. And Allah alone gives success.

4. Taking the Path

THE tariqa is a means to raise the veil between the slave and Allah. Put simply, its precondition is the validity of one's Islamic faith and practice; its method is knowledge ('ilm), practice ('amal), and resultant spiritual state (hal); its three pillars are *tawba* or 'repentance,' *zuhd* or 'nonattachment to other than Allah,' and *tahqiq al-'ubudiyya* or 'realizing one's slavehood' by continuous worship, inwardly and outwardly. One but takes a tariqa and a sheikh to make sure that these things happen. A tariqa's spiritual authority is the unbroken series of teachers from the Prophet himself (Allah bless him and give him peace).

The Spiritual Lineage of the Order

In Sufism, as in any serious Islamic discipline such as jurisprudence (fiqh), Koranic recital (tajwid), and hadith, a disciple must have a master or 'sheikh' from whom to take the knowledge, one who has himself taken it from a master, and so on, in a continuous chain of masters back to the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) who is the source of all Islamic knowledge. In Sufi tradition, this means not only that the present sheikh has met and taken the way from a master, but that the master during his lifetime has explicitly and verifiably invested the disciple—whether in writing or in front of a number of witnesses—to teach the spiritual path as a fully authorized master (murshid ma'dhun) to succeeding generations of disciples.

Such transmission (silsila) from an unbroken line of masters is one criterion that distinguishes a true or 'connected' Sufi path (tariqa muttasila), from an inauthentic or 'dissevered' path, (tariqa munqati'a). The leader of a dissevered path may claim to be a sheikh on the basis of an authorization given by a master in private or other unverifiable circumstance, or by a figure already passed from this world such as one of the righteous or the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), or in a dream, or so on. These, as our sheikh notes, "warm the heart" (yusta'nasu biha) but none meets Sufism's condition

that a sheikh must have a clear authorization connecting him with the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), one that is verified by others than himself. Many lies are told by people, and without publicly verifiable authorizations, the tariqa would be compromised by them.

Our Shadhili tariqa has come from its prophetic origin through such a series of formal investitures, from master to master down to Sheikh ‘Abd al-Rahman, who has inherited Sheikh Ahmad al-‘Alawi’s written authorization to Sheikh Muhammad al-Hashimi, witnessed with many others al-Hashimi’s authorization to Sheikh Muhammad Sa‘id al-Kurdi, as well as having Sheikh al-Kurdi’s written authorization to himself. Sheikh al-‘Alawi says, by way of introducing his own *sanad* or ‘initiatric chain’ in a work printed by one of his disciples some thirteen years before his death:

Since the school of the Folk (may Allah’s grace be upon them) is the most painstaking of all schools in realization, and highest of ascending paths in exactitude, it is obligatory for every person who belongs to them to make sure of his initiatic chain in the path in the fullest way. For higher spiritual realities (haqa’iq) are not taken from just anyone who makes claims, but only after establishing in the thoroughest manner possible his lineal chain of authorization—as you shall see (Allah willing) from this contiguous initiatic chain of transmission, the last having taken it from the first in unbroken succession back to the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace)—without the slightest doubt or suggestion of a doubt in a single pearl of its strand. For whoever holds fast to the offshoot has take hold of the parent stock whenever lineal connection is established.

Because some of our sheikhs’ path was not completed without having met two or more sheikhs, we have noted whom they took as a second sheikh in numbered footnotes, as best we knew, and so [have also detailed in subfootnotes the chains of those in the main footnotes who joined between two or more preceding spiritual lines] back to the beginning. We have separated each level with lines drawn between them to perfect the benefit and seek the best way possible. We must realize that most tariqas overlap and depend upon each other’s lines.

Whoever seeks brevity may confine himself to the chain at the top of the page, because it is easier to memorize and preserve, and is the main reliance of our tariqa, as has reached us and as we have taken it from the peak of its glory and fruit of its cultivation, him of pleasing character and astounding secrets, our liegelord and master Muhammad ibn al-Habib al-Buzidi, the noble prophetic scion from Mostaganem—may Allah beautify his resting place and make the exalted presence his dwelling and refuge—for it is from him that we have taken, and he taught us, and he authorized us, may Allah reward him as he truly deserves. And he took it from his teacher Abul Mawahib, our master Muhammad ibn Qaddur al-Wakili, who took it from our master Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Basha and from Abu Ya‘za al-Mahaji, who both took it from Mawlay al-‘Arabi ibn Ahmad al-Darqawi . . . (al-Qadiri: *Irshad al-raghibin*, 40).

This lengthy passage has been quoted in full for two reasons. The first is Sheikh al-‘Alawi’s uncompromising insistence in the first paragraph on the importance of the

connectedness of the initiatic chain through authorized sheikhs. Our sheikh relates that when Sheikh al-‘Alawi authorized Sheikh al-Hashimi in Damascus, he had the authorization stamped and certified by various government notaries in order that there should be no mistake as to its authenticity.

The second reason is that in our times a popular biography of Sheikh al-‘Alawi has apparently confused the issue of al-Buzidi’s disciples consulting with one another after his death as to who should succeed him as their sheikh, with the issue of there being anyone authorized as a sheikh by him at all, be it Sheikh al-‘Alawi or anyone else. The book overlooks al-Buzidi’s other authorizations to Algerian disciples that were public knowledge. Another whom al-Buzidi authorized besides Sheikh al-‘Alawi, for example, was Sheikh Muhammad ibn Yallas of Tlemcen (*Tarikh ‘ulama’ Dimashq*, 1.428). His authorization and that of Sheikh al-‘Alawi were known to, among others, Sheikh al-Hashimi, who had met Sheikh al-Buzidi as a child, and who moved to Damascus in 1911 with Ibn Yallas, whom he relied upon as his own *murshid* in the tariqa.

These men had too much respect for tradition, and too much knowledge of the path, to imagine that anyone could be a sheikh without authorization from a master. And if al-Buzidi did not name a particular sheikh as his *successor* for the brethren in the West, the suggestion that al-‘Alawi was “elected” as a *murshid* of the tariqa by popular consensus of disciples not only makes a lie of the spirit and the letter of his own words above (“he authorized us”), but contradicts the system of *ijazas* in Islam from beginning to end. It is a rather sweeping claim. Sheikh al-Hashimi has said:

Whoever dares to be a sheikh without an authorization is afflicted, deluded, and deceived, and it is to be feared that he will finish life outside of Islam (yukhsha ‘alayhi su’ al-khatima). The Knower of Allah [Ibn al-‘Arabi] has said this, as quoted by [‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Fasi] in *Ibtihaj al-qulub*. This is because of the insolence to Allah it entails, and pretending to mediate between Allah and His servants, and to be a successor of His messengers in guidance and instruction (*Shitranj al-‘arifin*, 48).

If all this is familiar enough to initiates, it is somewhat foreign to the modern mentality, and some authors, Islamic and orientalist, have claimed that certain links of the Sufi chain of initiation, particularly early ones, are not contiguous, to which the hadith expert Sheikh Ahmad al-Ghumari has replied in considerable detail in his *‘Ali ibn Abi Talib Imam al-‘arifin* [‘Ali ibn Abi Talib: Imam of Those of Gnosis], establishing that the Shadhili-Darqawi line is fully authenticated, from al-‘Arabi al-Darqawi back to its prophetic origins, sheikh by sheikh.

The order’s spiritual line is thus from Sheikh ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Shaghouri, from Muhammad Sa‘id al-Kurdi, from Muhammad al-Hashimi, from Ahmad al-‘Alawi, from Muhammad al-Buzidi, from Muhammad Qaddur al-Wakili, from Abu Ya‘za al-Mahaji and Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Qadir, from al-Arabi al-Darqawi, from ‘Ali al-Jamal, from al-‘Arabi ibn ‘Abdullah, from Ahmad ibn ‘Abdullah, from Qasim al-Khassasi, from Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah, from ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Fasi, from Yusuf al-Fasi, from ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Majdhub, from ‘Ali al-Sanhaji al-Dawwar, from Ibrahim al-Fahham, from

Ahmad Zarruq, from Ahmad al-Hadrami, from Yahya al-Qadiri, from ‘Ali ibn Wafa, from Muhammad Wafa Bahr al-Safa, from Dawud al-Bakhili, from Ahmad ibn ‘Ata’ Illah al-Iskandari, from Abul ‘Abbas al-Mursi, from Abul Hasan al-Shadhili, from ‘Abd al-Salam ibn Mashish, from ‘Abd al-Rahman al-‘Attar al-Zayyat, from al-Ghawth Abu Madyan, [from this point only one of the chains has been quoted:] from ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylani, from Sa‘id al-Mubarak, from Abul Hasan ibn ‘Ali Yusuf, from Abul Faraj al-Tartusi, from Abu Faraj ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Tamimi, from Abu Bakr al-Shibli, from Abul Qasim al-Junayd, from Sari al-Saqati, from Ma‘ruf al-Karkhi, from Dawud al-Ta‘i, from Habib al-‘Ajami, from Hasan al-Basri, from ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, from Muhammad the Messenger of Allah (May Allah bless him and give him peace).

The Covenant of the Tariqa

“In the name of Allah, Most Merciful and Compassionate. All praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, Most Merciful and Compassionate, Master of the Day of Reckoning. You alone we worship, in You alone we seek help. Guide us in the straight way, the way of those You have blessed, not of those whom wrath is upon, nor those who are lost” (Koran 1:1-7).

“Verily those who swear fealty to you are only swearing fealty to Allah: Allah’s hand is above theirs. So he who violates his oath but violates it against himself; and whoever fulfills his covenant to Allah, He shall give him a tremendous wage” (Koran 48:10).

The *wird* of this Hashimi-Darqawi Shadhili tariqa, its lineal succession connected to the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace), is that you make remembrance of Allah morning and evening, beginning with “I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Devil” one time and “In the name of Allah, Most Merciful and Compassionate” three times, then:

“Whatever you send ahead for yourselves of good you shall find with Allah is better and greater in reward; and ask Allah’s forgiveness, verily Allah is Oft-Forgiving and Compassionate” (Koran 73:20).

Then you say, “I ask Allah’s forgiveness, I ask Allah’s forgiveness, I ask Allah’s forgiveness,” one hundred times. On the hundredth, you say, “I ask forgiveness of Allah, the Living, the Ever-Subsisting Through Whom All Subsists, and I repent to Him.” Then you say:

“Verily Allah and His angels bless the Prophet; O you who believe: Bless him and pray for peace for him” (Koran 33:56).

Then you say, “O Allah, Bless our liegelord Muhammad, Your servant and messenger, the Unlettered Prophet, and his folk and Companions, and grant them peace,” one hundred times. On the hundredth, you say, “and grant him peace as great in magnitude as the greatness of Your entity, at every moment and time.” Then:

“So know that there is no god but Allah” (Koran 47:19).

[Then,] “There is no god but Allah,” one hundred times, and on the hundredth, “There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” Or if you wish, you may say, “There is no god but Allah alone, without partner, His is the dominion, His the praise, He has power over everything”—if you have time, though if not, you may confine yourself to “There is no god but Allah,” and on the hundredth time: “There is no god but Allah: Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah: Allah bless him and his folk and Companions and give them peace.” Then you read Surat al-Ikhlās (Koran 112) three times, and close with the Fatiha. Then you pray for yourself, your parents, your sheikhs, the dervishes of the Sufis, and all Muslims.

All of us are solemnly obliged to perform the prescribed prayer, honor our parents, and give sincere advice and counsel to every Muslim. We have become brethren in Allah: whoever of us is saved must take his brother by the hand. We take this covenant upon you that you perform this *wird* to the best of your ability, likewise the hizbs of Abul Hasan [al-Shadhili], and to recite the Koran during the day in the amount that you are able, even if only a little. We ask Allah for success; and praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

The Text of the Wird

A‘,dhu bi-Ll®hi min ash-Shayfl®ni r-Raj¬m (1);

Bismi Ll®hi r-RaΩm®ni r-RaΩ¬m (3);

Wa m® tuqaddim, li anfusikum min khayrin tajid,hu ‘inda Ll®hi huwa khayran wa a‘¥hama ajra(n), wa staghfiru Ll®h(a), inna Ll®ha ghaf,run raΩ¬m (1);

Astaghfiru Ll®h (99);

Astaghfiru Ll®ha l-‘A¥h¬ma lladh¬ l® il®ha illa huwa al-°ayya l-Qayy,ma wa at,bu ilayh (1);

Inna Ll®ha wa mal®’ikatahu yu®all,na ‘ala n-Nabiyy(i); Y® ayyuha lladh¬na ®man, ®all, ‘alayhi wa sallim, tasl¬m® (1);

All®humma ®alli ‘al® Sayyidin® MuΩammadin ‘abdika wa ras,lika n-Nabiyyi l-Ummiyy(i), wa ‘al® ®lihi wa ®aΩbihi wa sallim (99),

All®humma ®alli ‘al® Sayyidin® MuΩammadin ‘abdika wa ras,lika n-Nabiyyi l-Ummiyy(i), wa ‘al® ®lihi wa ®aΩbihi wa sallim tasl¬man bi qadri ‘a¥hamati dh®tika f¬ kulli waqtin wa Ω¬n (1).

Fa‘lam annahu l® il®ha illa Ll®h (1),

L® il®ha illa Ll®h (99) [or, if one has time: *L® il®ha illa Ll®hu waΩdahu l® shar¬ka lah(u), lahu l-mulku wa lahu l-Ωamdu wa huwa ‘al® kulli shay’in qad¬r* (99)];

L® il®ha illa Ll®hu, Sayyiduna MuΩammadun ras,lu Ll®h(i), —alla Ll®hu ‘alayhi wa ‘al® ®lihi wa ΩaΩbihi wa sallam (1).

Then one recites Surat al-Ikhlās (Koran: 112) three times, then al-Fatiha once, and then prays for oneself, one’s parents, one’s sheikhs, one’s brothers and sisters of the dervishes of the Sufis, and for all Muslims.

5. Appendices

Appendix A: For Further Reading

THE best book on Sufi metaphysics is the Koran, for as mentioned above, it is, in its own words, a “detailing of everything” (Koran 12:111) meaning not physical details that human beings can find out for themselves, but rather those things that no one can know, except by being informed of them by the Divine, matters that are precisely *meta*– or ‘beyond’ the *physical*. The Koran is higher reality itself, a single atom of which is worth a cosmos of human literature. The books of the Sufis but point up the proper manners of the spiritual traveller *vis-à-vis* this reality.

Books in English About the Path

The true literature of the tariqa has been discussed above on page 3, and what follows consists less of Sufi texts than *maps* of Sufi texts, though maps too have their worth. The following English titles can be listed before some concluding words on the place of books in general in the spiritual path.

A.J. Arberry. *The Koran Interpreted*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986.

(The Koran defies any attempt at imitation or translation; if the fallen giants of those who have tried are many, Arberry with his *Koran Interpreted* must number among the mightiest of the fallen.)

Mawlay al-‘Arabi al-Darqawi. *The Darqawi Way*. Tr. ‘A’isha ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Tarjumana. Norwich: Diwan Press, 1979.

(Letters to disciples by the great Moroccan sheikh whose name our tariqa bears. The translation conveys much of the *hal* or ‘spiritual state’ of the author. The present writer is expositing the Arabic original in a taped series of lessons in Amman called the “Darqawi Letters Interpreted,” to which this translation is a useful adjunct.)

Shahidullah Faridi. *Inner Aspects of Faith*. Karachi: Mahfil-e Zawqia, 1406/1986.

(An English convert to Islam, the author when forty years old was authorized as a *murshid* by his own sheikh in the Chishti tariqa in Karachi, where he taught until the end of his life at sixty-three years of age in 1978. Though some points of practice and theory differ from the Shadhili path, there are many insightful passages, particularly on the general aspects of Sufism and its relation to Islam.)

Nuh Ha Mim Keller. *Interpreter's Log*. Amman: 1992–.

(An unpublished manuscript of conversations with sheikhs and dervishes of the Shadhili tariqa in Syria and Jordan.)

———. *Invocations of the Shadhili Order*. Amman: Author, 1418/1998.

(An English translation with Arabic text of the author's *Awrad al-tariqa al-Shadhiliyya*, (1417/1997) containing the main *wirds* of the tariqa.)

———. *The Hadra*. Amman: Author, 1420/1999.

(A treatise on the *hadra* or 'public dhikr' of the Shadhilis and other Qadiri orders in light of Islamic law and the spiritual path.)

Ibn 'Ata' Illah al-Iskandari. *Wisdoms of Ibn 'Ata' Illah*. Tr. Nuh Ha Mim Keller. Amman: Translator, 1999/1420.

(An English translation with Arabic text of *al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyya*, the principal book of *suluk* or 'spiritual travel' in the Shadhili path.)

Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri. *Reliance of the Traveller*. Tr. Nuh Ha Mim Keller. Abu Dhabi, 1991. Revised Edition. Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Publications, 1999.

(The first half is an English translation of a classic Shafi'i fiqh manual, while the second contains appendices (especially p, q, r, and s) needed by every traveller.)

'Abd al-Karim al-Qushayri. *Principles of Sufism*. Tr. B.R. Von Schlegell. Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1990.

(A translation of important parts of a great book of the path.)

Jalal al-Din al-Rumi. *The Mathnawi of Jalal al-Din al-Rumi*. Tr. R.A. Nicholson. 3 vols. London 1926. Reprint. London: Luzac and Company, 1977.

(Of tariqas whose books have been successfully translated into English, Rumi's is perhaps closest to the path of Abul Hasan al-Shadhili. His symbolic poetry is replete with lessons in the inward manners (*adab*) of the tariqa. Although the translation is sometimes tediously thorough, Sidi Muhammad 'Isa Waley, who has translated poems from the same genre and language, says it is preferable to the contemporary popular translations

which take liberties with accuracy in order to “New Age” the material.)

———. *Discourses of Rumi*. Tr. A.J. Arberry. London: John Murray, 1961.

(A good translation of an excellent collection of Sufi *mudhakara* or ‘teaching sessions.’ In some ways, more accessible than the *Mathnawi* because it is more explanative. As in other works above, the translator is sometimes forced to bluff when he cannot penetrate the author’s intent, resulting in English that merely mystifies.)

William C. Chittick. *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983.)

(A workmanlike exposition of the metaphysics of Rumi’s spiritual path, it touches on points of the ontology of “experiential Sufism” for those who stand in front of that door, as explained in the following section “The Books of the Path.”)

‘Abd al-Khaliq al-Shabrawi. *The Degrees of the Soul*. Tr. Mostafa al-Badawi. London: Quilliam Press, 1997/1417.

(Many insights into the nature and growth of the *ruh* are inferable from the stages of the Khalwati way taught by the author. Sheikh al-Hashimi mentions in a teaching poem the same seven stages, although the means for progressing differ in the Shadhili tariqa, and the dhikrs the author has mentioned are not taken from books, but only from living teachers.)

Hasan Lutfi Shushud. *Masters of Wisdom of Central Asia*. Tr. Muhtar Holland. Moorcote (Yorkshire): Coombe Springs Press, 1983.

(A powerful English rendering of a hagiography of early Naqshbandi masters that contains much Sufism and useful lessons in both the form of the path and its content, its manners (adab) and experience (dhawq).)

Ibn al-Husayn al-Sulami. *The Way of Sufi Chivalry*. Tr. Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi. 1983. Reprint. Rochester (Vermont): Inner Traditions International, 1991.

(An accurate translation of a valuable treatise on the altruism of the spiritual traveller.)

The Books of the Path

Among books by sheikhs of the path there are two complementary types, which interpenetrate and overlap, corresponding to two complementary endeavors in Sufism, the journey to Allah, and the journey *in* Allah.

(1) The first endeavor is the sphere of *Tasawwuf ‘amali* or ‘practical Sufism,’ which consists in perfecting the expression of one’s love for the Divine by freeing oneself from blameworthy traits and acquiring praiseworthy ones. Its literary counterpart is found in

many manuals of Sufism such as Imam Ghazali's *Ihya' 'ulum al-din* [Reviving of the religion's sciences], al-Suhrawardi's *'Awarif al-ma'arif* [Knowledges of the illuminates], the books of 'Abd al-Qadr al-Jaylani, those of Imam al-Haddad, and so on. Their keynote is not literature, but rather *tahqiq* or 'realization,' meaning to persist in successive approximations of the *hal* or 'noble quality as transient experience,' until one becomes characterized (muttasif) by it as *maqam* or 'permanent attribute.'

Such books are translatable into English, and the book list above mainly confines itself to them, as practical Sufism is the basis for all the rest of the path. The benefits of reading them include learning one's *din*, breaking bad habits, renewing one's striving, and absorbing something of the spiritual ambition of those before us by reading about their works. Other than fiqh, however, one should not take daily *wirds* or other works from books, but rather from one's sheikh. So although the list of books above is not exhaustive or even extensive, it provides more than enough reading, for most of us already know what we have to do.

(2) The second endeavor, the "journey in Allah," is the sphere of *Tasawwuf dhawqi* or 'experiential Sufism,' the knowledge of which is its practice. Among the first principles of its literature is that authors confine themselves to what they have personally experienced. The real benefit from such books, aside from mere *targhib* or 'encouragement' to do what the authors have done, presupposes that the reader has experienced something of what is being described. This in turn is the fruit of practical Sufism; of leaving the wrong, of annihilations from the self at the hands of a *murshid*, of folding up the physical and spiritual worlds to know at first hand what is beyond them. In other words, books of experiential Sufism are only valuable *after* one's heart has been opened.

But if this experience is a precondition for benefiting from such books, it in turn presupposes '*ilm* or 'sacred learning,' since students can only take what their sheikh has, and only if his *kashf* or 'illuminatory perception' corresponds to the traditional ontology ('ilm al-tawhid) of the tenets of faith of orthodox Sunni Islam can he be depended upon to safely guide students to the Absolute. The path of true Sufism is extremely high, and the drop on either side is horrendous, stretching as it does into infinity, for which reason many sheikhs confine themselves to practical Sufism, and with every right, for they are responsible to Allah for the people who follow them. Our sheikh emphasizes that the '*ilm al-tawhid* of traditional Ash'ari works of tenets of faith, with its knowledge of what is possible, necessary, and impossible of Allah Most High, is the metaphysics presupposed by high Sufism.

Little of the literature of experiential Sufism has been mentioned above except passages in works of practical Sufism, for the very good reason that there are few reasonable translations. Such works probably cannot be translated with complete fidelity without an *ijaza* or 'formal authorization' to speak in this discipline, for speak an interpreter must. But even given good translations, one cannot become Ibn al-'Arabi by reading Ibn al-'Arabi. The fewness of such books in English has led the present writer to produce tapes to serve in their stead until disciples' strength in Arabic enables them to read the original.

Orientalist Studies of Sufism

Works on Sufism by Orientalists can be recommended against without apology or reservation, for any analysis that subtracts the reality of God from the spiritual phenomena it seeks to explain will be little better than its premises; meaning absolutely worthless. Their Creator describes them as “deaf, dumb, and blind, so they comprehend not” (Koran 2:171). Now, a sane person finding a group of deaf, dumb, blind, and uncomprehending people on his doorstep would not let them in to shampoo his rugs, let alone teach him his *din*. So how should someone with a spiritual path?

The distortional factors in Orientalists’ work range from basic incomprehension of the Divine, to ignorance of matters of fact, to unadmixed contempt for Allah and those He loves. For example, the verses by ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Majdhub (a sheikh of our initiatic chain) about avoiding the dangers of ostentation in the path: “Bury your secret in the earth, seventy fathoms down, / And leave all men in doubt [about you] until Resurrection Day” (Ibn ‘Ajiba: *al-Futuhat al-Ilahiyya*, 46), move French authority on Sufism Louis Massignon to say, “The enduring power of Islamic mysticism is not in the haughty, morose isolation in which Majdhub proclaims: “Bury your secret in the earth, seventy cubits down, / And let all creatures moan until the Last Judgement” (*Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, 11), reading *yashku* (complain, as of illness [“moan”]) for *yashukku* (doubt)—which joins between blindness to the whole point of the verses, deafness to their meter, and incomprehension of the eternal consequences of *ghiba* or ‘slander’ against one of the *awliya’* or ‘friends of Allah.’ Fill the mind with this, and one will have to spend a long time shoveling it out, while others will have already arrived.

Appendix B: Section Index

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ABBREVIATIONS

D a weak (da'if) hadith

d. . . . died

ed. . . . edited by

H a well authenticated (hasan) hadith in itself

Hg a well authenticated (hasan) hadith in view of
corroboratory versions

n.d. . . . no publication date given

n.p. . . . no publication place given

S a rigorously authenticated (sahih) hadith
in itself

Sg a rigorously authenticated (sahih) hadith in
view of corroboratory versions

syn. . . . a synonym for

tr. translated by

vols. . . volumes