

TASAWWUF AND CHARACTER BUILDING

Translation Of Prof. Abdur Razzaq, s Book

Tasawwuf aur Tamir-e Sirat

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DAR-UL- IRFAN

Munara, District Chakwal - Pakistan

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SECTION ONE

THE LATĀIF

CHAPTER ONE

LATAĪF - AN OVERVIEW

This is a routine fact which we observe in our daily lives that two types of people live in this world, the first are those who follow others in their lifestyle, that is as the saying goes 'follow the wind whichever way it blows'. These people have a very narrow outlook towards life, but they constitute the majority. The reason for this complacency is that such people do not have to make any effort. They just follow the ways of others. The other types are those who do not follow the ways of others but lead their lives according to what they think is right, no matter which way the world is going. This is a bit difficult, especially when there is a lot of opposition to face. These people are certainly very brave and have much courage and strength.

In a society which is drowned in the darkness of ignorance, if a person starts remembering ALLAH by acting according to *His* commands and ignoring all the worldly traditions, which is nothing but a display of one's wealth or vain desires, then he is either called stupid or crazy. It may be possible that your relatives may ask you why do you go to Munara, and what is the reason of going every year? The main motive behind the question is not because they want to find out the reason but in fact, they want to stop you from the path you are following or they want to create a feeling of indecision in your heart. It is also possible that a question may arise within you, but if you are aware of your goal then you will satisfy yourself, but it will not be easy to satisfy your friends. It is necessary to know all the answers to the questions that arise. It is a simple fact that to acquaint yourself with your Creator you have started using the method prescribed by ALLAH Himself, and that is *Zikr ALLAH*. Every year in Munara a refresher course is organised to renew our zeal and enthusiasm, acquire further knowledge, examine our past efforts, and learn the way to work together in the future with love and understanding for each other. But it looks strange in a society obsessed by the secular trends and one has to really prepare oneself to face the mental pressures generated by it.

Zikr ALLAH by itself is the goal, because ALLAH has not only commanded a believer to practise Zikr, but has at many places in the Holy Book used the word *kathira* which denotes abundance. It is mandatory for the human beings to always obey ALLAH, their Creator, *Who* commands 'Obey Me.' This is what is meant by *His* declaration:

I have not created jinns and humans except that they should worship Me. (51:56).

Zikr ALLAH is the means to achieve the goal, that is the nearness of ALLAH. This goal can be achieved by practising Zikr ALLAH with sincerity. The nearness of ALLAH is indeed the very purpose of one's creation. The highest degree of this nearness is called *Ihsan* and the terms Taşawwuf and Sulook are also used for it.

Some people think that Taşawwuf is an innovation. Of course, it is correct for to be careful before adopting anything, but to ignore the Qur-ān, Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and practices of the great saints of yore is foolhardiness. The Holy Qur-ān commands: *waqtarib*, which means come closer. In another place the Qur-ān praises those people who have acquired the nearness of ALLAH in these words:

And those foremost (in Faith) will be the foremost (in the Hereafter). These will be those nearest (to ALLAH). (56:10-11).

According to a Ḥadīth, ALLAH declares: "When a person moves towards *Me* by a hand-length, *I* move towards him by a fore arm length, and when a person moves towards *Me* by a fore arm length, then *I* get closer to him twice as much, and when a person walks towards *Me*, *I* run towards him."

By this we understand that the effort to acquire the nearness of ALLAH is greatly approved by ALLAH and his beloved Prophet (SAW). This is the acme of human excellence. Let's see what do we benefit by practising Zikr ALLAH. It has been stated in another Ḥadīth "My servant keeps acquiring my nearness by voluntary prayers. So much so that *I* start loving him and he becomes *My*

special slave. When I start loving him, I become his ears and he hears by Me, I become his eyes and he sees by Me, and I become his feet so that he walks by Me." This is a typical way of describing the nearness of ALLAH and it means that a person will not do anything against ALLAH's Will. This signifies that when a person acquires the nearness of ALLAH, he feels a deep sense of attachment to *Him* and he starts leading his life according to ALLAH's pleasure and consent. As a result, his life becomes balanced, controlled and ideal because everything he does is according to the Divine will. Obviously he is living a normal life in the world, behind every action, his main aim is to please ALLAH and by doing so he is actually planning and building up a successful life in the Hereafter. This fact is enough to reject the view of some who think that if a person enters the field of Tasawwuf he does not remain fit to lead a normal life. This is absolutely wrong. As the above Ḥadīth proves that a person learns the art of living an ideal life, according to the wishes of ALLAH, through Tasawwuf. Therefore, Tasawwuf in the language of the Holy Qur-ān, is the nearness of ALLAH. In the said Ḥadīth it is stated that voluntary worship is the means to achieve the nearness of ALLAH. As there is no limit for voluntary prayers, there is also no limit of ALLAH's nearness. But we also have to keep in view that a man can only worship ALLAH to the limit that his strength allows. Once a Companion requested the Holy Prophet (SAW): "The mandatory Divine duties which we have to perform are limited, but the voluntary worships are so many that I do not have the strength for all of them, and the desire to perform all the worships does not let me rest. Therefore, show me a way by which I can fulfil my desire of performing all the worships." The Holy Prophet (SAW) answered, "The best way to achieve this purpose is to keep doing Zikr all the time so that your tongue is always saturated with the Zikr of ALLAH." This shows that the best way to achieve the nearness of ALLAH, as prescribed by the Holy Prophet (SAW) is the continuous Zikr ALLAH till the end of worldly life.

When we think of 'nearness', it automatically occurs to us that the Being *Whose* nearness we want to achieve is away from us. There is a distance between us. To travel this distance is called *Sulook*

and the traveller is called a *sālik*. The words 'nearness' or 'distance' should not give rise to the feeling that the Being Whose nearness is sought has some physical form and is at a particular place, and only on getting there shall we achieve nearness. ALLAH is free from such limits. We cannot define any form for *Him*, nor is *He* at a particular place. *He* is Omnipresent, so the meaning of nearness would be that a special relationship should develop between us and our Creator. The veils that are the barriers should be lifted. There is a popular saying in Urdu: "Though you are far away from me yet I feel you close by." This denotes a heart to heart relationship. Such a nearness is indicated in the Ḥadīth quoted earlier that a person develops such a strong relationship with ALLAH that he dares not do anything against *His* wishes. All the organs of his body obey ALLAH in toto as if *He* operates through them.

It is a regular feature of our day to day life that, to fulfil worldly needs, a person tries to get closer to the high ranking officials or people of influence. To achieve this aim, he has to first find out their likes and dislikes. Then he tries to acquire their pleasure by various means to achieve his goal. Whatever be the need, a person makes much effort. He sacrifices his own rest, his likes and dislikes and much more to get in the good books of the one who can benefit him. In today's world, this is the most successful way to achieve something and is a very good example for us to follow. We know that all our needs here and in the Hereafter, both physical and spiritual, can only be fulfilled by the Benefactor *Who* runs this universe. And we have already found out that *His* pleasure lies in practising *His* Zikr at every moment of our lives. But before taking the decision to start ALLAH's Zikr, we must first determine our motive, that is to achieve *His* pleasure. When *He* is happy with us, *He* will certainly bless us with *His* nearness.

We must also remember that this aim cannot be achieved by our mere effort. It can only be achieved by *His* consent and blessings. As stated earlier in the Ḥadīth, if a person makes a little effort to acquire the closeness of ALLAH, he will find *His* reward and blessings much greater than his effort. This journey of nearness requires

much sincerity and resolve, and the reward is bestowed in the form of Divine blessings.

Look at these youngsters who are sitting over here. They have left behind them, those pastimes wherein were they usually involved, like visiting cinema houses, clubs or just hanging around places to pass their time. But have these youngsters come here by themselves? No they have been brought here by our ever loving Creator, they have been pulled out of the darkness they were in and their attentions have been now diverted towards ALLAH and the remembrance of His name, and this is a big favour granted by ALLAH to a human being. You are very fortunate that ALLAH has picked you among so many people to practice the Zikr of His Holy Name. Your head should be bowed in gratitude and never for a moment should you feel proud of yourself that you have done something great. You have not done anything yourself, as everything you achieve is by ALLAH's blessings and pleasure.

"All Praise be to ALLAH Who has guided us to this (felicity). And we could not have guided ourselves, had ALLAH not guided us." (7:43).

Think of the different steps of a simple task. For example, you first made a decision to come here. If you had not made the decision then you would most probably have stayed at home. This decision was created in your mind by ALLAH, Who directed you towards this place and created an enthusiasm and desire in your heart. The course has been planned by ALLAH for you, so do not let this impression come in your mind that you have done all this according to your own wishes.

The next topic to discuss is that sometimes the new students are confused during the Zikr session. When the Shaikh announces the first *latifa* saying "lets go to the first *latifa*," or when he says, during meditation, "lets go to *Aḥadiyyat*," or other stations, the new students do not understand. They know that everybody is still sitting there so what does this phrase 'lets go' really mean? This needs a little explanation. We practice Zikr to achieve the nearness of ALLAH and ALLAH is everywhere. There is no special place assigned for Him.

The human body is solid and made of clay, how can a person take this body to those high stations? Actually, this journey is not undertaken by this body, but by the Rūḥ which is the real person inside this physical body. The Rūḥ travels towards its goal of ALLAH's nearness and these *laṭā'if*, these meditations and these stations are different stages of that journey. When the Rūḥ acquires familiarity with its Creator, it finds strength to move forward with renewed eagerness and love.

At this point another doubt arises. We have found proof, from the Qur-ān and Sunnah, of the fact that every person should acquire the nearness of ALLAH, but where is the proof of the different stations a Rūḥ travels to, and what actually are these stations? If these questions are asked just to satisfy the inner curiosity, then it is all right. But usually the case is that these questions are asked with a motive that others should be misled. However, we will explain this for the curious beginner, who wants to move forward with all sincerity. First of all we must understand that the solution to such doubts can be worked out as follows: First there is a goal, secondly there are ways and means to achieve this goal. Then there are forms of support for the means and ways used. For example, you are travelling from Lahore to Karachi by a train or bus, whichever means you choose, the journey is long and tiresome and you most probably want to find out how much of the journey you have covered and how much is left. Automatically your eyes turn to the road side signs which give you these details. And you come to know the distance which has been travelled and the distance still to cover and you feel relaxed and excited as you come closer and closer to your destination. Suppose these road side signs are not posted on the way as you travel to your destination, does that mean that you cannot travel? Of course, you will still travel and reach your destination, but the difference is that these signs will make your journey more interesting and exciting as you near your destination. If on the other hand these are posted in the middle of the road, instead of being helpful they will become a hindrance to you. Taking this example in view, let us consider our spiritual journey, by *Sulook* we mean to move forward, but which way? To move forward to the nearness of ALLAH, to *His* pleasure and consent, the journey takes a lifetime and

if there are no side signs on the way, and we do not know how much of the journey we have crossed, then we may start feeling discouraged, and it may be possible that we may decide not to continue any further. Therefore, the masters of this art, who have travelled on this path, are well aware of all the problems and obstacles. For this reason they have established the signs on the way so that a *sālik* (the person travelling on this path) feels encouraged and continues with excitement and happiness. However, if the *sālik* stops at any of these stations it will serve as an obstacle instead of a help. That is why a sense of proportion is required, so that the real destination should not be lost sight of and these side signs should act as encouragement. These stations are not an absolute requirement. They are used to indicate to a *sālik* that he is getting closer to his destination, so that his enthusiasm increases with time. From here onwards we will refer to these side signs as stations. The stations which we come across while travelling from one place to another in the world are different from the stations we are going to explain now. As these spiritual stations have particular influences associated with them which affect a person in his practical life. The great Sufis of the past have given an indication of these stations. And every station has its own effect, and a person who reaches a particular station should feel this effect on his worldly life. We will, therefore, discuss these stations and their positive effects briefly.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FIRST LATIFA QALB

To understand the basics of *latā'if* we must consider ourselves as patients. When a patient seeks medical help, the doctor prescribes medicine and also the dosage and directions for taking it. Have you ever seen a patient arguing with the doctor about the prescriptions or dosage or selection of the medicine or why should he not suggest a cure for himself? On the contrary, a person goes to a doctor he puts his complete confidence in the knowledge and experience of the doctor. In spite of the fact that he may have read many medical books he still has faith in the experience of the doctor. This is the correct attitude. To make this point more clear let us understand that certain parts of the body are called the vital organs. If these organs are functioning properly then the entire system of the body runs smoothly. This is the reason why the doctors take special care to check these vital organs first. In the same manner, the spiritual system also comprises some vital parts, which are called *latā'if*, and the spiritual doctors take special care to cure them. Just as the great scholars of medicine follow Bu Ali Sina, renowned for his authentic research in the Greek system of medicine, the spiritual teachers also follow the guidelines and ways of the skilled masters in the art of Tasawwuf, and it is observed by the experience of the past centuries that usually patients are cured by such methods of treatment.

Among the various *latā'if*, the first *latifa* is the *Qalb* (the subtle Heart) where the treatment begins. Let us consider this example: If a person is dirty and has not washed himself for days, or if the food he is eating is exposed to germs and is unhygienic, then he will definitely fall ill very soon as he will be inviting harmful diseases because of the filth and dirt his body is exposed to. Similarly, the *latifa Qalb* also falls sick because of its continuous disobedience to **ALLAH**, which results in the accumulation of layers of rust on it. **ALLAH** has pointed out this fact in the Holy Qur-ān as:

Their hearts have rusted because of their conduct. (83:14):

Bad company, illiteracy, wrong upbringing, can also make the heart rusty, and this sometimes may happen unconsciously, as in the case of a person who has had a bath, put on clean clothes, and enters a factory where there is a lot of dirt and pollution. His clothes will certainly be affected by the polluted environment, no matter how much he tries to be careful. The same rule applies to the fact that if somebody lives in an environment where ALLAH's orders and commands are always violated then the *laḥifa Qalb* is badly affected. Therefore, the *Qalb* has to be cleansed of all its impurities. But what is the method used to clean the heart? Let us see this Ḥadīth first: 'Abdullah Bin 'Umar (RAU) has stated that the Holy Prophet (SAW) had said that every dirty object can be cleaned and polished, and the polish to clean the heart is ALLAH's Ḍikr. It is the method applied to clean and purify the heart, by practising ALLAH's Ḍikr and striking the Divine Name on the *laḥifa Qalb* to an extent that the darkness of evil is replaced by the splendour of the Divine Light. ALLAH declares in the following verse:

Is the one whose heart ALLAH has opened to Islām, so that he has received light from ALLAH. (39:22).

When the Holy Prophet (SAW) recited this verse, the Companions requested an explanation. The Holy Prophet (SAW) explained 'To feel inclined towards the life of the Hereafter, to feel disgusted with this world and its luxuries and to display the desire for death before death.' That is, to prepare for death before hand. When such feelings develop in the subtle heart, we can say that the *Qalb* is following the right path, which now shows that the very first lesson of the sublime Path revolutionises the life of a person. His whole attitude towards life changes, he now realises the importance of the eternal life and the permanence of the Hereafter and develops a colder attitude towards the temporary luxuries and comforts of this world. His worldly life spent according to the Will of ALLAH shall earn him a successful life in the Hereafter. Tasawwuf does not teach forsaking the world; infact it teaches to forsake the love of this world. Since love demands total devotion to the beloved, therefore if the heart is full of desire for the world, how can it develop a love for ALLAH? The love

for **ALLAH** requires that **ALLAH** should always remain in your heart. And when the heart lights up with the Divine Name, then the seeker must analyse himself. Every action performed by him must be for the pleasure of the Creator and for a happy life in the Hereafter, and not for worldly pleasure. If a person who practices *Ẓikr* finds no change in himself, if he still indulges in the material desires of the world, does not care for what is legal and illegal, then surely the Sublime Name of **ALLAH** has not reached his heart. A flash of lightening may have been sensed followed by total darkness.

To understand this better, think of an engine which has been filled with steam in order to function properly. But in spite of the steam the engine does not work, nor does it move forward then what is the use of that steam? Similarly, the result of practising *Ẓikr* should be that a person feels an enthusiasm, a strong inclination to move forward in the direction of **ALLAH**'s pleasure. The motive behind every deed and action should be that **ALLAH** will be happy with me. To achieve **ALLAH**'s nearness it is mandatory that all his actions should be subservient to the Divine Will. For a *Rūḥ* to achieve the heights of nearness a person should perform virtuous deeds. So, when we say that the first *laḥifa* has started working, we mean that a person feels inclined towards all goodness and starts disliking all those sins which he once cherished. A person reaches this point when his attention is directed towards **ALLAH** all the time.

There are people who usually object that it is not possible to practice **ALLAH**'s *Ẓikr* all the time. As one is always busy talking, meeting and socialising with other people, so where is the time to practice **ALLAH**'s *Ẓikr* all the time? Apparently this is right, but our experience proves it to be otherwise. Practising *Ẓikr* verbally all the time is something else, but to be attentive to **ALLAH** all the time from the very depth of your heart is something else, which is not impossible. A person is busy in his day to day business and he remembers to act according to Divine Will. He reminds himself not to go near anything which is forbidden, because the strength, the capability and knowledge of doing his work has all been given by **ALLAH** and if he uses these blessings of **ALLAH** in the wrong way, it would

make him a terrible sinner. He is practising ALLAH's Zikr here, and this in no way shall be a hindrance to his work but would help him in treading the right path.

An example of concentration can be found easily in our daily lives. Many people usually experience it. A person who is driving a vehicle has his concentration fixed upon the road but he is also operating the gears, controlling the steering and above all, talking to his companions if any, or maybe listening to the radio, but not for a moment does his attention leave the road or the car that he is driving. When a driver can perform a simple task of concentrating on the road as well as on the vehicle why can't a person divert his attention and concentration towards ALLAH all the time?

By now you must have understood the meaning of a strengthened subtle heart. Those fortunate people who have benefitted from this blessing must critically analyze their practical lives, beliefs, ethics and dealings, and must keep a vigilant eye on them, since they have set out on the path to get closer to ALLAH and to win His Pleasure. Closeness to ALLAH depends entirely on noble deeds. The stations of the Sufi path act as the steam which moves the engine of practical life.

Hadhrat Rampuri writes:

When we say that the *laṭīf* are working, we do not mean that they are moving or the Divine Lights must be observed. It indicates the fact that a person always feels inclined towards ALLAH and the love for the world and its luxuries starts to diminish. If a person has started to feel this, then by ALLAH's blessing, he is progressing.

May ALLAH bless us with His Divine guidance. We believe, and have faith in Him and to Him we submit for all our needs.

'And do not disgrace me on the Day when they are raised up. The Day when neither wealth nor sons will avail. But only he who brings to ALLAH, a pure heart.' (26:87-89).

The verse which I have quoted shows that in order to achieve salvation a person must return with a pure heart to ALLAH. Pure heart means a heart which is not sick, should be cured of all ailments as the biggest ailment of the heart is disbelief and polytheism, that is faith in many gods. If the heart is surrounded by such ailments then

salvation is impossible. **ALLAH** has declared for the disbelievers: Their hearts are ailing. But there are numerous minor ailments which a heart becomes prone to, as a result impurities start to accumulate and the heart starts losing its capability to do good. In the presence of such ailments, the heart can still achieve salvation but after going through a vigorous cleaning up. We are grateful to **ALLAH** Almighty that he has saved us from the disease of disbelief in *His* Unity, but we are very much entangled in the minor ailments and these ailments darken our hearts and we lose the capability to perceive **ALLAH**'s Greatness. The method to purify the heart as prescribed by the Holy Prophet (SAW) is *Ẓikr ALLAH*. By practising the *Ẓikr* of **ALLAH** all these small ailments start to disappear and the heart becomes healthy and is strengthened by the Divine Light. If now, after acquiring health and strength, it still clings to the bed and does not work, then it is handicapped. But the heart which is healthy and does not do anything, it is trying to run away from its responsibilities, and is just lazy.

Similarly, if the first *laṭīfa Qalb* has started to strengthen and there is no change in his practical life, then one can say that he is strong no doubt, but just plain lazy. If a person who is unarmed gets beaten up by an enemy, we may sympathise with him as he does not have the strength to fight back, but when a person is strong and supplied with weapons and still does not fight back, what would you call him? A coward, therefore, when the first *laṭīfa* has lit up a person is required to defend himself from his eternal enemy Satan. He has now been blessed by **ALLAH** with all the weapons he needs. But if he still stays a coward then he will definitely be attacked by the enemy, and above all will earn for himself the annoyance of his Creator. He will have to answer for not using the strength he had been blessed with. He will not be able to escape the wrath of **ALLAH** because he did not appreciate the great favour bestowed by *Him*.

Another point about *laṭā'if* is that, when the *Ẓikr* is being practised on the *laṭīfa Qalb*, it is usually said that it is under the feet of *Ḥadhrat Ādam* (AS). What is meant by this? The masters of the art of *Taṣawwuf* explain that the blessings of the Holy Prophet (SAW) reach

us through Ḥadhḡrat Ādam (AS). To understand this better, take the example of the sun. The rays of the sun, when they reach us directly, there is no colour, but if the rays have to pass through coloured glass then the rays will acquire the colour of the glass. If the glass is green then the rays will also be green.

The Holy Prophet (SAW) is the real source of all blessings. He is like the shining sun, the bright lamp for this universe. All the blessings acquired by the followers of the past Prophets, were actually originating from our beloved Prophet (SAW), transmitted through the Prophet of that particular period (AS). The Prophets acted as intermediaries to convey the blessings of the Holy Prophet (SAW) to mankind. All Prophets of ALLAH (AS) were perfect humans in every respect, but one particular attribute always distinguished them from others. So when we say under the feet of Ḥadhḡrat Ādam (AS), we refer to that particular quality of Ḥadhḡrat Ādam (AS) which has been enhanced by the blessings of the Holy Prophet (SAW). A *sālik* practising Ḥikr feels the same quality in him or we may say he tries to follow in the footsteps of Ḥadhḡrat Ādam (AS) which bestowed him with such strength. But we must remember that possessing strength and then using it practically, are two different phenomenon. If a person who is following this path does not bring into use this God given strength, then he is answerable for not appreciating what had been given to him and he also proves himself unfaithful to the Holy Prophet (SAW).

The special quality which comes to the forefront in the nature of Ḥadhḡrat Ādam (AS) is that when he had committed a mistake by the mischief of Satan, he felt very repentant and ashamed, and very humbly asked forgiveness from ALLAH by the following words which had been taught to him by ALLAH himself:

"O our Rabb! We have wronged our own souls. If You do not forgive us and do not bestow upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be lost." (7:23)

Thus it is the quality of a human being, that when he commits a mistake he should feel ashamed and ask for forgiveness. On the other hand, when Satan was asked the reason for his disobedience, he replied:

I am better than him. (7:12).

That is he insisted on what was wrong because he was obstinate. This means that to insist on something wrong and forbidden, and then to be obstinate about it is the trait of the Satan. After *latifa Qalb* gets illuminated, a person who is but human, commits a mistake, he feels repentant and ashamed immediately, and asks for forgiveness from his Creator from the very core of his heart. The sublimity of the Divine Light warns a person when he starts to go astray from his straight path and shows him the right path again. But if he still indulges in the wrong deeds, this light of ALLAH creates a feeling of repentance and he seeks the pardon of his Creator. On the other hand, if a person keeps ignoring these warnings inside him, he is very unfortunate and has put off the light of guidance within him, himself. That is why a *sālik* should always scrutinize his actions in life.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SECOND LATIFA RUH

When the heart functions properly in the human body, fresh blood starts to circulate through veins and arteries, positively affecting the other vital parts of the body. The proper function of the heart is, therefore, very important for a healthy body. Similarly, when the first *latifa*, that is the *Qalb*, is illuminated the other *latāif* are also affected. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "There is a lump in the body, if that is healthy, the whole body will be healthy. But if that is sick, the whole body will fall sick. Hearken, that is the *Qalb*!" The meaning of the term, 'The *Qalb* has been illuminated,' can be easily understood by the following example: Think of a spring where the water is forcing its way down in a stream and continues to flow until it makes its way into the sea which is its last destination where it merges. Similarly, when the *Qalb* is illuminated by the Divine Light after practising ALLAH's *Zikr*, this light starts to circulate and enters the other *latāif* illuminating them also and the spirit of the devotee becomes stronger in its flight towards the nearness of ALLAH. When the first *latifa* is illuminated, the second *latifa* is very strongly affected and, therefore, under the guidance of the Shaikh, the initiation of the second *latifa* starts.

During the training of the second *latifa*, the spiritual teachers leading the *Zikr* call out, "under the feet of *Ḥadhrat Nuḥ* (AS) and *Ḥadhrat Ibrāhīm* (AS)." When ALLAH's *Zikr* is continuously practised on this *latifa*, it is revived and it starts shining. The blessings of the Holy Prophet (SAW) reach the devotee through these two Exalted Messengers. These Prophets, besides being very pious and virtuous in nature, possessed some prominent traits which shall be explained now.

ALLAH Almighty describes the continuous efforts of *Ḥadhrat Nuḥ* (AS), saying that he continued to invite his people towards ALLAH for nine hundred and fifty years, he was never weary, tired or disgusted and never did he give up his effort. One may of course think

that in such a long period he must have had many followers who accepted his preaching, but no. It was just the opposite. Over a period of nine hundred and fifty years only a few accepted his message, maybe a hundred or a little more, which means that only nine people accepted his teachings per hundred years. Just imagine, ALLAH's beloved Prophet makes endless efforts to invite people towards ALLAH. He said:

"O my Rabb! I have called to my people night and day."
(71:5).

What was the result?

"But my call only increases their flight (from the Truth)."
(71:6).

In spite of this sad fact, Ḥadh̄rat Nuḥ (AS) did not stop preaching. In the end, when he knew by his Prophetic vision that this part of the earth was of no use and the people living there will never accept his teachings nor will their children ever turn towards ALLAH, he finally raised his hands in prayer.

"O my Rabb! Leave not of the unbelievers a single one on earth. For if You leave them, they will but mislead Your slaves and they will breed none but wicked ones." (71:26-27)

The devotee learns two lessons from these facts. First, he should be grateful for the gift he has received from ALLAH, and therefore should spread it as much as possible among other fellow humans. He should not stop inviting people towards ALLAH, no matter what the situation is. A person usually gets disappointed quickly because he expects quick success. But when the result is not according to his expectations, then he is very disappointed and loses hope. As a result he stops making any more efforts in that direction. This is a very dangerous turn because the reason for his disappointment is, ALLAH forbid, he wants to become a God himself as he wants events to occur according to his desires. This can be only true for ALLAH, as *He* is the Greatest and can do whatever *He* desires. The duty of a servant of ALLAH is to obey ALLAH's orders and leave the result to ALLAH, *Who* is the Manager of the entire system of this universe. When hu-

mans try to trespass into ALLAH's domain, the result is disappointment and difficulties. Therefore, a devotee, regardless of the results, should keep on inviting people towards ALLAH. He should never let disappointment and weariness hinder his way, no matter what the circumstances are. ALLAH Almighty consoles the Holy Prophet (SAW) by saying, "Why are you so worried about the people, that they do not listen to you?" ALLAH further explains, "To guide them is not your job, this is up to Me, your duty is to keep inviting towards ALLAH." These instructions are for all followers of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

The second lesson which the devotee learns, from the incident of **H**adhrah Nuh, is that he is not a Prophet himself. The Prophets are granted greater vision by ALLAH to foresee future events. Whatever a Prophet says or does is according to ALLAH's will. Similarly, ALLAH Almighty had informed his Prophet, the Holy Prophet (SAW) that those people would not acquire faith even after his utmost efforts. The scholars write, that after the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet (SAW) did not preach to Abu Jahal any more. In the past he used to feel that his preaching did not have any affect on him at all, but even then he kept inviting him towards ALLAH. Hence a devotee should understand that he is only a servant of ALLAH and a follower of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and his duty is to just continue preaching ALLAH's Zikr and invite people towards ALLAH.

It is usually seen that while preaching ALLAH's Zikr, if a person comes across arguments and obstinacy, the best thing to do is to remember the important Do's and Don'ts of preaching. The person who does not keep in mind the important points of preaching, does not only face disappointment himself, but is also responsible for the rude attitude of the person being addressed. Therefore a devotee should be aware of such expected mishaps. It is wise on the part of the devotee to think of the person whom he is addressing as a patient. Next he should think of himself as a doctor who is only concerned about his patient's welfare. This is the best way to deal with the other person. Fights, debates and discussions are certainly not the way recommended to preach Islām.

Let me put forward an example. Suppose you are asked to explain

the superiority of Zikr in a certain gathering, and later you have to lead the Zikr . There is one person there who is against you and vehemently opposes the method of Zikr . It is quite obvious that the reason for his opposition is just stubbornness. The best and wise way to act in such a situation would be to explain your point very clearly and briefly, then invite others by saying, "I have found Zikr to be very beneficial to me. I request you to think it over at home. If you also agree with me, then you can start at once with ALLAH's blessing. But if on the other hand you feel that whatever I have said is not important at all, then you are free to forget it and continue with whatever you think is right." Our friends have had a similar experience in the past. They said that the person whom they had assumed to be against them, sat through and listened to the whole speech. During the speech they noticed tears in his eyes. Afterwards when the Zikr started, they found him doing Zikr . ALLAH Almighty is Great, *He* can turn the hearts in a moment. Therefore, while preaching, the preacher should always pray to ALLAH for *His* help because his efforts will bear no fruit against the Divine Will.

The next name after Ḥaḍhrat Nuḥ (AS) is of Ḥaḍhrat Ibrāhīm (AS). His character is like a beacon light for the whole mankind, but there are a few traits which are very prominent. ALLAH himself has pointed out one such trait:

There is for you an excellent example for you to follow in Ibrāhīm and those with him, when they said to their people, "We are clear of you and of whatever you worship besides ALLAH. We have rejected you and there has arisen between us and you enmity and hatred for ever, unless you believe in ALLAH and Him Alone." (60-4).

When Ḥaḍhrat Ibrāhīm (AS) started inviting people towards ALLAH, the members of his family turned against him. His Father opposed him, his relatives started to harass him, the whole town turned against him, but his determination did not waver for a moment and he continued his duty of preaching. He announced to all those who opposed ALLAH's commands that he was disgusted with their ways and beliefs. Ties of friendship were severed and relation-

ships terminated. Yet in spite of all this, Ḥaḍhrat Ibrāhīm (AS), desired the welfare of his people, deep in his heart. He said, that he shall pray to ALLAH, and ask him to bestow faith and belief in the heart of his father, and remit him of all his sins. This shows that while working for Islām, one may come across such situations where one's near and dear ones seem like strangers. But one does not sacrifice one's duties for the sake of relations and friends, but leaves those who come in his way or who become obstacles and hinder one's progress on the path to ALLAH's closeness. We must remember that the feeling of disgust and anger is not for the people themselves, but it is for their way of thinking and their beliefs. If they change themselves and acquire faith and belief in ALLAH and follow the ways of the Holy Prophet (SAW) then all the feelings of enmity will subside. If on the other hand they do not change themselves, the devotee should at least pray to ALLAH for them.

There are many other examples which we have come across. There are a few youngsters sitting in front of me, who have been threatened by their relatives to be disowned. They have been accused of defaming the family's name and honour, and also for disfiguring their faces because they have kept a beard according to the Sunnah. These kinds of accusations are usually heard nowadays which prove that the epidemic of alienation from religion and Sunnah is spreading very fast. Disillusion and misguidance are so common these days that our elders are also a victim to this incurable disease. We have seen those times when parents and other relatives would worry if the child went astray. Nowadays the situation is just the opposite. If a youngster inclines towards religion and wants to acquire the closeness of ALLAH, the elders start to worry about him or her and try their utmost to stop them from following this path. Therefore, in such circumstances, even more effort, courage and strength is needed. If we do not worry about ourselves, ALLAH will have nothing to lose, in our place, he will appoint some other nation to accomplish His mission. The religion of Islām shall always be there, whether we are there or not.

Obstacles and hindrances are not something unusual in this path. They are very natural, they rather act as stimulants for the heart and strengthen the desire to work. However, it is not surprising to see

a common man being disappointed by hindrances and obstacles, because every person does not have as strong a determination as Ḥadhrat Ibrāhīm (AS). But to stop one's efforts completely is an insult to the claim of love. It is observed that the total voltage generated by a power house does not reach the consumers. The voltage received by the consumers depends upon the resistance of the electrical cable. It has also been established that although high resistance may drop the voltage, it can never completely block the flow of current. Then isn't it pitiable if a well equipped seeker gives in completely to the hindrances he faces? The overall view of the sacrifices of Ḥadhrat Ibrāhīm (AS) astonish the human mind. He left his father, relatives, house, and yet there was more to come. He was bestowed with a beautiful son in his old age, and was commanded by ALLAH to leave his son and dear wife in an arid desert, where there was no water or food. As he was returning after leaving his wife and son in the desert, his wife asked him, "Who are you leaving us with?" He replied, "With ALLAH", and moved on. His wife was also a strong lady with firm faith and she said, "If you are leaving us with ALLAH, then there is nothing to worry about, ALLAH shall not destroy us." Physicists claim that iron can be magnetised through a process known as induction. It is a simple process in which a non-magnetic piece of iron is kept in close contact with a magnet, for some time. As a result the non-magnetic piece of iron also becomes a magnet. Truly, the lady after living with Ḥadhrat Ibrāhīm (AS), too, had developed the same level of trust in ALLAH.

By going through these details, our main motive is to explain to the devotee, that, when the *laṭīfa* Rūḥ is strengthened and illuminated, his practical life should be affected. His conduct should prove that he is following the footsteps of these two Exalted Messengers of ALLAH. The desire to preach Islām and ALLAH's Zikr should always be there. His trust and faith in ALLAH should strengthen. He should work hard for all his needs but his utmost trust should be in ALLAH and not in his efforts. His responsibilities are twofold. First he should be careful not to lose this great blessing of ALLAH, the preservation of which is quite difficult in today's environment. The

age and period we are living in is of false pretences and display in every walk of life. People are trying to show off as much as possible. In such circumstances it is very difficult to ignore the alluring attractions, for example, a working person, he has to fight attractive offers made to him as bribe. If he is a labourer, then the desire to work less and earn more lures him. A businessman may be enticed to employ unfair means to earn more profit, thus derailing him from the right path. If the devotee has complete faith and trust in ALLAH then this weapon should be enough to fight all the evils of the society. The second responsibility is not just to worry about saving one's ownself, but to worry about all those who are near him and who are in need of guidance. Whatever hindrances and obstacles come in the way, he should face them bravely. The ways of Ḥadh̄rat Nuḥ (AS) and Ḥadh̄rat Ibrāhīm (AS) should act as the beacon of light, and in every situation one should always trust in ALLAH Almighty.

May ALLAH guide all of us on the right path, and may *He* protect Islām and all Muslims. Ameen.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE THIRD LATĪFA SIRRI

"O my Rabb! Truly I am in (desperate) need of any good that You send me." (28:24).

In the last two chapters the topic discussed is, in short, as follows. A *Sālik* is required to move forward on the spiritual path, and the journey will be termed as being progressive only when the stations he has reached will start affecting his practical life. If, on the other hand, there is no positive change in his everyday life, his character, his day-to-day dealings with others, then it is evident that he is burdening himself with extra responsibilities and is ignorant of the fact that one day he will be answerable to ALLAH. The two *latāif* have been explained in the previous chapters. The third *latīfa* is called *Sirri*. When a person is practising *Zikr* on this *latīfa*, it is said, "under the feet of Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS)". The meaning of this phrase must be understood by now that the blessings of the Holy Prophet (SAW) reach the *sālik* through Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS).

There are a few traits in Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS)'s character which are more outstanding than others. The first is Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS) had been commanded by ALLAH:

"Go both of you to Pharaoh. For he has indeed transgressed (the bounds). But speak to him mildly." (20:43-44).

Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS) possessed much anger in his nature and the king, Pharaoh, was extremely proud and arrogant, but the command of ALLAH was to be patient and soft. The reason for this is as ALLAH explains:

Perchance he may take warning or fear. (20:44).

Just imagine how difficult was this task. The fact is that Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS) was brought up in the king's house and it is but natural that a person should not annoy someone who has been very good to him. Then again Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS) belonged to a nation which was

under Pharaoh's rule, and leading a life of slavery and helplessness. They could not dare to raise a voice against him even when thousands of their innocent children were killed every year at his behest. But the duties of a Prophet and his ways of thinking are different. The best way to return all the favours of the King was by saving him from ALLAH's wrath and hell. Then again Ḥaḍhrat Mūsa (AS) was to explain something which the arrogant ruler was neither ready to hear nor accept, and that too without any weapons or arms to defend himself. In case he was attacked. Without any material support, he did go unarmed with his brother Hārūn (AS). Why was it so? The reason being that ALLAH had thus commanded him, and the duty of a servant is to just obey the orders without any questioning.

Let us visualise the whole incident. Ḥaḍhrat Mūsa (AS) approaches the Pharaoh and invites him towards ALLAH. The king's answer is as expected. He reminds Ḥaḍhrat Mūsa (AS) of all the favours he had enjoyed:

"Did we not cherish you as a child among us, and didn't you stay among us many years of your life?" (26:18).

The Pharaoh again says sarcastically:

"And you did a deed of yours which you did, and you are an ungrateful." (26:19).

It is obvious that Pharaoh is trying to make Ḥaḍhrat Mūsa (AS)'s invitation towards ALLAH look unimportant by distracting him. First he reminds him of his favours and then tries to scare him by threatening to impose the punishment of murder. Ḥaḍhrat Mūsa (AS) answers both these allegations by telling him:

"I did it then, when I was in error." (26:20).

As far as the favour of the Pharaoh were concerned, isn't it enough of a favour, that Pharaoh had engaged the entire nation in worshipping him instead of the One ALLAH?

At this point the Pharaoh pauses and asks about the Creator towards whom he is being invited. Ḥaḍhrat Mūsa (AS) answers by praising ALLAH and describing his attributes. Now the Pharaoh makes a political move and asks a question to exploit the feelings of the public. He questions:

“What then is the condition of the previous generations?” (20:51).

It is evident that if Ḥadhrat Mūsa (AS) had said that they had died in ignorance, then the public would have turned against him. But the Prophetic way of preaching is very special. Ḥadhrat Mūsa (AS) answered this question by saying, “Whoever shall be punished or whoever shall be blessed is up to the Divine Will as ALLAH is always right.” This conversation proves that a person should invite others towards ALLAH with all sincerity and nothing should distract him from this duty, whether it is wealth, fear of persecution, sarcasm or mockery. Whatever it is, a person should care only about his duty towards ALLAH and keep in mind the principles of preaching wisely. If the person who is being addressed starts to get annoyed, then it may be possible to defeat him by logical arguments, but a feeling of withdrawal and anger may arise in him, which cannot in any way be cured.

A *sālik* usually comes across three types of people when inviting towards ALLAH’s Ḥikmah. The first kind is of those who want to listen and understand with sincerity, they should be approached with love and concern. The second type are those who just want to argue for the sake of argument, the conversation with them should be logical, but the aim should be to make the point as clear as possible, rather than imposing our opinion on them, and as a result annoying them. The third type are those who are experts in absurd reasoning and irregular arguments and want to show off this capability. It is better not to involve oneself too deeply with these types, the best way to deal with them is to just say that I think ALLAH’s Ḥikmah must be practised, if you agree with me it is fine, but if you do not, I shall not force you:

You are absolved of what I do and I am free of what you do.

(10:41)

The second problem which Ḥadhrat Mūsa (AS) had encountered was that, the people whom he had delivered from years of slavery, and had trained and instructed to acquire excellence, started to complain and cause hindrances in his mission. For example, when Ḥadhrat Mūsa (AS) was taking them out of Egypt, and the soldiers of the Pharaoh were in pursuit, they started complaining:

"We have had nothing but trouble, both before and after you came". (7:129).

They really meant to say that they had been leading lives of misery before he rescued them and now they felt even more insecure. As the danger approached them, they did not see any way of being at peace. They felt that before they were at least living, even if it was in torture but now they feared that Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS) will definitely be a cause of their death. You can see for yourself that despite their most annoying attitude, Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS) calmed them down in a very loving way.

Yet again when they were passing through a country where people worshipped idols, they demanded: "O Mūsa! Look at these people who have such beautiful gods. Please make us a similar god who shall be as beautiful as theirs." Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS) felt very angry but still controlled the situation with prophetic wisdom. When they were given prepared food by ALLAH during their journey, they started to complain by saying, "We are fed up of the same food everyday. Please pray to your Creator to grow colourful vegetables for us from the earth like lentils, onions, and garlic, as our tongues want to change the taste of food." Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS) explained to them very patiently, that this demand has unreasonable, but they persisted, and Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS) finally prayed for their demands to be fulfilled then again they started to complain: "We are dying of thirst in this desert, please supply us with water." Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS) according to the Divine instructions smote a rock (or stone) with his staff since he knew the nature of his men, he must have prayed accordingly. Therefore, twelve springs sprung out so that the people who were divided into twelve tribes each had a spring of their own to quench their thirst.

When Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS) was summoned to mountain *T̄ir* to receive the Torah, his people started worshipping a calf in his absence. Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS), on his return could no longer control his anger as he could not, bear to see that these idiots had violated the basic belief and faith in the Unity of ALLAH. They had crossed their limits and this could not be tolerated. Then Ḥadhḥrat Mūsa (AS) ordered them to attack a village to rescue ALLAH's slaves from the

persecution and tyranny of their cruel ruler, and they answered, "O Mūsa , you and your Creator should go and fight. We shall not move from here." There are many other such situations which Ḥadh̄rat Mūsa (AS) had to face at the hands of his people. Thus, we come to learn from these incidents that a *sālik* should always be patient and considerate with his friends, if he faces such situations. But if it is beyond his control, then he should leave the matter to ALLAH. At this point, Ḥadh̄rat Mūsa (AS) had finally prayed to ALLAH: "O ALLAH! Please create a separation between us and the people who are disobedient." According to the status of a Prophet, he is endowed with powers to perceive the facts. A Prophet is endowed with special insight and vision. The duty of a *sālik* , in such circumstances, is to pray and ask for the help of ALLAH, as he is All-Knowing and Wise and will, change things for the better at *His* Pleasure.

Preaching and inviting towards ALLAH is a difficult and sensitive task, and you will surely come across hindrances, and may well commit blunders unknowingly. For example, a friend of ours was asked about something, and, he answered, saying it is forbidden which made matters worse. If a scholar had come across such a situation, he would have controlled it by proving his point logically, but since our friend was not a scholar and had announced his verdict without thinking about the result, he had landed himself into trouble. Since most of us are not scholars, it is safer to confine our preachings to the following four topics:

- Be regular in the obligatory worships, especially the congregational Ṣalah.
- Remember ALLAH at all times, especially in the morning and evening.
- Keep away from the forbidden.
- Avoid lies.

Apart from this if anyone asks you a question, just answer, "I am not a scholar. It is better if you consult some scholar about it."

Let me tell you a joke. I am calling this incident a joke because, although it is a simple question, it is very interesting. Otherwise this is not a joke but a fact. Once a person asked me a question saying

what do you think of the act of kissing the thumbs on hearing the *Azān* (Call to Prayers)? In return I asked him why has this become necessary? If you do kiss your thumbs then you must have proof for this act, and now since you are asking my opinion it shows that you are not very sure of this act. He answered "I notice that some people kiss their thumbs and some do not." I agreed with him on this point. He then asked about those who do kiss and wanted to know the reason. I answered that they kiss out of love. He again questioned for those who do not. I answered, "It is again out of love." This perplexed him and he said, "If both perform such an act out of love, then why do their actions differ?" I answered "The reason for this is that people differ in nature. There are people who feel that the person who has commanded us to love has also taught us the ways to display our love, therefore, the best way to show one's love should be according to his teachings. Others although know that the command to love is there, no doubt, but they want to display their feelings according to their own wishes and it is obvious that our feelings may differ from the Divine commands. That is why we come to see different faces of love around us. Now it is up to the person to decide, whether the commands of the beloved are more important or whatever he feels is more important." My friend understood this explanation and I thanked **ALLAH** and prayed to *Him* to bless all of us with the knowledge of the religion Islām, and always guide us onto the right path. Ameen.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FOURTH LATIFA KHAFFI

In the path of *Sulook Tasawwuf* the title of the fourth chapter is *latifa Khaffi*. During the training of this *latifa* it is said, "Under the feet of Ḥaḍhrat 'Esā (AS), which means that, when ALLAH's Zikr is being practised on this *latifa*, the blessings of the Holy Prophet (SAW) reach the Rūḥ of the *sālik* through Ḥaḍhrat 'Esā (AS). After his birth as a Prophet, Ḥaḍhrat 'Esā (AS) lived for a very short period amongst his people. During this time, Ḥaḍhrat 'Esā (AS), came across two types of people. Firstly, the enemies who opposed him, and secondly, those who had faith in him and claimed to obey him. Ḥaḍhrat 'Esā (AS) had to go through a lot of trials and problems due to both these groups.

First of all, the adversaries questioned the chastity of his mother which also meant accusing him indirectly. As we all know and believe that Ḥaḍhrat 'Esā (AS) was born without a father, according to the Will of ALLAH but the enemies whose hearts were ignorant made his mother a target of vulgar accusations. They said: "O, the sister of Hārūn! Your father was not a bad man and your mother was also not a bad woman. Why have you done such a horrendous thing?" Although Ḥaḍhrat Maryam Siddiqa was being addressed, but actually Ḥaḍhrat 'Esā was also being accused. Ḥaḍhrat Maryam (RAU) knew that all that had taken place was a miracle, that is why instead of answering herself, she gestured towards the child. Naturally a new born baby cannot speak, but ALLAH Almighty gave the young child the power to prove his status as a Prophet. The holy words of Ḥaḍhrat 'Esā (AS) were:

"I am a servant of ALLAH." (19:31).

This simple sentence said everything required: 'I have been born according to ALLAH's Will and I am a creation of ALLAH. I cannot be referred to, as a Divine being and my life shall be spent in ALLAH's obedience, *Who* has created me. The fact is that I have

been blessed with the status of a Prophet and my duty is to teach the servants of ALLAH to obey their Creator and to acquire His nearness.' It is an obvious fact that this duty cannot be given to that person whose birth is a matter of suspicion or whose character is not impeccable. He further proved his mother's innocence by saying:

"I have been commanded to worship ALLAH all my life, and to always obey my mother." (19:31).

He did not say: 'I have been commanded to always obey my parents', and by these words he made it clear, that he had been born without a father, and that he is one of ALLAH's creations, and his mother is above all accusations. Just imagine who would be so callous that in spite of hearing all these facts from a new born baby, would still not accept the truth?

After these tokens the enemy should have been satisfied. But when Ḥadhrat 'Esā (AS) grew up and started inviting people towards ALLAH, the enemies came back to challenge him with renewed energy and opposed him with full force, with the support of the government. The law of the country denounced Ḥadhrat 'Esā (AS) as a criminal, and the enemies were successful in their scheme. The command for execution was announced and someone resembling him was finally hanged. But the Prophet, who was a miracle of ALLAH, his life was, and still is, a symbol of Divine Power. ALLAH announced the protection of Ḥadhrat 'Esā's (AS) life in following words:

Surely they didn't kill him. Nay, ALLAH raised him up unto Himself. (4:157-158).

This is a brief account of the enemy's activity and the story of those who had claimed to love and obey him. They refused to believe Ḥadhrat 'Esā's (AS) statement that he was a servant of ALLAH. They went to the extreme and started believing ALLAH's creation as ALLAH's son and concocted the belief of trinity in the Unity of ALLAH, that is, the concept of the father, son, and the Holy Ghost. The enmity could have at least subsided as an enemy realises sooner or later that whatever he is doing is out of hatred. Therefore, it is possible that his conscience may prick him someday and finally he may realise his mistake and ask for forgiveness from ALLAH. But extremism in love is such a disease which has no cure, because such a person thinks he is correct, and obviously he will not give up what he

thinks is right. He cannot even imagine doing it. ALLAH has given us a view on what will happen on the Day of Judgement.

And behold ALLAH will say, "O Esa the son of Maryam! Did you say unto people 'Take me and my mother as two gods beside ALLAH'?" He will reply, "Glory to You! Never could I say what I have no right (to say)...Never did I say to them aught except what You did command me to say, 'Worship ALLAH, my Rabb and your Rabb'." (5-116).

This proves that although the pains inflicted by the enemy are unbearable no doubt, but the arrogance of friends is no less painful. The *sālik* should be mentally ready for both dangers, and, in spite of the hatred from enemies one should not turn away from them or suppress the desire of being concerned about their welfare. The greatest concern one can have is to keep inviting them towards ALLAH so that the people adopt the right path and save themselves from ALLAH's annoyance. This is what ALLAH refers to as the great victory:

Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Jannah will have succeeded. (3:185).

The greatest danger from friends is one which is not considered as danger. It is rather a treat for the self because one feels very happy when praised and admired. As a result a feeling of self conceit, pride and arrogance is born in a person. If a *sālik* comes across such circumstances that others look up to him then he should feel even more grateful to ALLAH that he has been blessed with so much in spite of his being nothing. This feeling of gratitude to ALLAH and his own humbleness should increase as time goes by. Arrogance and haughtiness are those diseases which cannot be cured and these are weapons of the Satan which had been tried and tested by Satan himself, and he himself earned the wrath of ALLAH because of them. This is why he tries his best to induce the same feelings in humans, so that he can turn them into one of his own kind.

O ALLAH! Please protect us from the mischief of our soul and also protect us from the evil effects of our misdeeds. Ameen!

CHAPTER SIX

THE FIFTH LATIFA AKHEA

Now has come to you a Messenger from amongst yourselves: it grieves him that you should suffer, ardently anxious is he over you: to the Believers he is most kind and merciful. (9:128).

We have explained the facts in the last chapters and, it has been made clear that when a *latifa* is illuminated by the Divine Light, the Rūḥ of the *sālik* acquires strength, and with the help of this Divine Light, A *sālik* starts to analyse his practical life, and see if there are any positive changes, because the illumination of the *latāif* should affect his behaviour and conduct. There are two ways in which a *latifa* can affect a *sālik*. Firstly it affects his personal character, and secondly, it prepares him to go out in the field and help others according to his capability, in order to build an environment where ALLAH's Commands would be obeyed.

Today we shall explain the fifth *latifa*. It is called *Akha* and the blessings reach the *sālik's* Rūḥ directly from the Holy Prophet (SAW). In the words of Tasawwuf it is said, "under the feet of Muhammad Rasool ALLAH (SAW)." When this *latifa* is strengthened, it means that the *sālik* is now capable of obeying the rules of the Sunnah and he feels a desire and urge to follow every action of the Holy Prophet (SAW). The personality and attributes of the Holy Prophet (SAW) cannot be encompassed but a few of his qualities are so outstanding that ALLAH has announced them very clearly. One of his (SAW) attributes has been described in the following way.

*"We have sent you not except as a Mercy for all creatures."
(21:107).*

Among ALLAH's creations, there are *jamadaat* (whatever is incapable of growth e.g. stone, fossils; mineral etc.), *nabataat* (vegetation, grass, etc.), *haiwanaat* (animals of all kinds), humans, jinns, angels etc. and it may be very much possible that there may be more creations of ALLAH which we are not aware of. To

explain clearly the fact that the Holy Prophet (SAW) was sent as a blessing for ALLAH's creations is not possible for me, as I do not have such a vast knowledge. However, it can be said briefly, that the way the Holy Prophet (SAW) proved a blessing for different kinds of creations, can be seen through numerous incidents and examples in his holy life. The preaching of the Holy Prophet (SAW) also proves that he was a blessing for mankind and other creations as he not only defined the rights of human beings but also outlined the rights of other creations like *nabatū*, *haiwanū*, Jinn, Angels and also non living objects like *jamadū*, and instructed each and everyone to keep in consideration the rights of others. If you want a view of the human rights at the time when the Holy Prophet (SAW) was bestowed with Prophethood by ALLAH, then go through the history of various nations of the world. Everywhere, humans were no more than beasts. In the subcontinent, the Hindu culture had confined human beings to categories like Brahmins, Wesho, and Shooders and had targeted them with continuous hatred and discrimination which had touched the extremes. Sometimes language sparked a feeling of hatred among people, whereas sometimes the geographical limits lead to confrontations between people. Yet at some places, colour and race were the source of enmity, and people with white skins looked down upon other humans of the world. In short the world was in a state of chaos and confusion before the advent of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

The Holy Prophet (SAW), eliminated all such discriminations between humans and revoked all the restrictions and traditions, which people had imposed upon themselves, and announced to the world: "All of you are children of *Hajhrat Adam (AS)*, and *Hajhrat Adam (AS)* was created from clay." Then why this arrogance? How can a person feel so proud of himself that he looks down upon his brothers in disgust and hatred? The Holy Prophet (SAW) not only preached these facts verbally, but also trained and instructed his followers to the right path and practically established such a society, where the proud Quraish, who had never considered anyone as high as themselves, started to feel pleasure in calling the black skinned Bilal (RAU) as Syedena (our master) Bilal. After eliminating all the artifi-

cial discrimination, the Holy Prophet (SAW) laid down a universal principle and standard of honour and nobility:

The most honoured of you is the most righteous of you.
(49:13).

This means that nobility and honour are directly in proportion to one's relationship with ALLAH, and there can be no discrimination between humans on the basis of colour, caste or creed. The people who had previously led a life of enmity and hatred, and had made life miserable for others, had with the advent of the Holy Prophet (SAW), changed so dramatically, both in mind and heart that they were listed among one of the best people of the world. Previously, they found pleasure in hurting and plundering others, but now the same people became custodians and protectors and saved the honour of others and felt happiness in doing so, and all this was because of the blessings and mercy of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

Human history cannot produce any parallel to the perfection of His mercy and grace found in the person of the Holy Prophet (SAW). His (SAW) beloved uncle, Ḥaḍhrat Hamza (RAU) was martyred by Wahshi, a slave, who later wanted to embrace Islām and approached the Holy Prophet (SAW). The entire scene of the brutal killing is flashed on the inward eye, how mercilessly he had killed Ḥaḍhrat Hamza (RAU) and pulled out his liver and chewed it. The brutal murderer now stands helplessly in front of the Holy Prophet (SAW), and begs his pardon. The Prophet of Mercy (SAW) has full power to take revenge, but forgives him and accepts him as a Muslim. All that the Holy Prophet (SAW) says is: "Go and live in some other city, because when I look at you I am reminded of my uncle's brutal murder."

For thirteen years the people of Makkah tortured the Holy Prophet (SAW) as much as they could, in ways which we cannot even bear to think of. At the conquest of Makkah, all these criminals with ferocious and beastly natures were brought in front of the Holy Prophet (SAW). By law they should have been executed and their bodies should have been thrown away so that they would rot and become a feast for animals. Then how would the display of mercy destined for everything and everyone be possible? The Holy Prophet (SAW) declared general amnesty and forgave everyone who had inflicted pain

and torture on him by announcing: "There is no burden on you today. You may go as you are free." Who else can display such magnanimity except the Prophet of Mercy (SAW)?

The illumination of this *laḥifa* demands that the same traits of mercy characteristic of the Holy Prophet (SAW) must reflect in *ṣālik's* character. He should comfort the broken hearted, pacify those who are angry, be a pillar of strength for those who are weak, guide those who have lost their way, save those who are destroying themselves, cure the ones who are sick. He should put aside the enmity of enemies and, keep himself away from undue praises of friends. His love should be for the pleasure of ALLAH and his hatred should also be for the sake of ALLAH, to the extent that his every action proves that the purpose of his life is to uphold the Name of ALLAH in the whole world.

Secondly the qualities of the Holy Prophet (SAW) have been declared by ALLAH in the following words:

The life of the Holy Prophet (SAW) is the best example for you to follow. (33:21).

This does not mean that we should follow only some aspects of his (SAW) life, but every aspect of his (SAW) character must be obeyed and followed. Whether it is a ruler or the public, rich or poor, a prosecutor or an accused, a judge or the jury, a soldier or a general, a businessman or a customer, the guidelines to lead a perfect and peaceful life are found in the life and character of Prophet the Holy Prophet (SAW). That is, in every sphere of life the secret to a peaceful existence can be achieved by obeying and following the examples the Holy Prophet (SAW) has set for us. The second point to remember is that this is not restricted to a certain period or a certain nation, but the Holy Prophet's life is a complete example, for all times to come, for every human being to follow.

When this *laḥifa* is illuminated and strengthened, it means that the *ṣālik* is now capable of following every Sunnah. He should now take into account his daily life and with a lot of care, sincerity and love, and should ensure he doesn't step outside the Sunnah. In succession of these facts we should also understand and keep in mind that

there is a difference between abandoning the Sunnah and acting against the Sunnah. Actions against the Sunnah, will definitely lead the *sālik* towards destruction. If a person's activities are not according to the Sunnah, then naturally they are according to his own wishes or to some traditions which he has imposed upon himself. Whatever the circumstances are, the fact is, the way of the Sunnah has obviously been rejected.

Acting against the Sunnah, may be due to several reasons. Firstly, it could be due to lack of knowledge and although this may be a reasonable excuse, it has its disadvantages. For example, if a person takes poison by mistake, he can not be accused of suicide, but his ignorance will not save him from death. On the other hand, if a person deliberately abandons the Sunnah, this would be an extremely criminal action. Because when a person takes a vow that I shall accept the Holy Prophet (SAW) as a guide in every matter of his life, and then deliberately acts against his vow, he is actually breaking his promise, and this is an act of extreme arrogance. May ALLAH save us from such folly and stupidity. Ameen

The mercy and blessings of the Holy Prophet (SAW) are for everyone and every creation is receiving its share of mercy, but to follow the holy ways of the Prophet one must have two qualities, as indicated by ALLAH:

For him who hopes in ALLAH and the Ākhirah and who remembers ALLAH much. (33-21).

The thoughts and reflections of a person should be towards ALLAH and he should sincerely believe in his heart that one day he will be standing in the court of ALLAH and will be answerable for every act and deed he had performed in the world. The pattern of all the actions should be such that the heart should be absorbed in ALLAH's remembrance every moment of life and the actions and deeds performed should prove this fact. Thus, if the heart is not absorbed in ALLAH's *Ẓikr* all the time, it is not possible to follow the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (SAW). Continuous *Ẓikr* ALLAH is a stimulant for obeying the Sunnah, and when a *sālik* illuminates his *laṭāif* through *Ẓikr* - submission to the Sunnah becomes easy.

It is seen that a person usually submits to someone whom he feels is concerned about him and loves him. Therefore, ALLAH has highlighted this attribute of the Holy Prophet (SAW) that he (SAW) feels our pain in his heart, and is always concerned about our welfare. Who would be more concerned about us than the person who has these two qualities? Despite this knowledge, if someone does not adopt the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (SAW) in every matter of his life, then he is extremely unfortunate.

The Holy Prophet (SAW) had explained this aspect of his personality in one of his *Hadith*, which can be comprehended by studying the following example: on a dark night, in the wilderness of the jungle, a man lights up a fire. Moths fly over from all sides around the fire. The man is trying to keep the moths from falling into the fire, but the moths do not keep away and in spite of his efforts they are still falling into the fire. The Holy Prophet (SAW) said, "I am like this person who is trying to keep the moths away from the fire, and you are like the moths, as you are driving yourselves towards hell and I am continuously trying to save you from falling into the darkness of hell." It is obvious that if the moths are saved from the fire, the person who was trying to save them does not gain anything, and if they do fall in the fire, he does not lose anything either. But as he is continuously trying to save them, it proves that he is, from the depth of his heart, very sincerely concerned for their well-being, and the motive behind this struggle of saving them is genuine love and sympathy.

There is a big difference between obeying the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and following his Sunnah. Obeying means obeying a command, but to follow means not to just wait for instructions and commands, but to observe the likes and dislikes of the beloved and formulate the pattern of life according to it. Every expression and action of the beloved must be loved and every gesture and motion should be anxiously imitated. This can only be possible when the person who is to be obeyed and followed is also a beloved. Otherwise obedience would be just a procedure and routine and not from the depth of the heart, as the feelings of love and sincerity would be missing.

The example of the Holy Prophet (SAW) is not just of a person who is to be obeyed, but a beloved guide who must be followed. Therefore, the Holy Prophet has himself declared (SAW): "A person cannot be a perfect Momin until his love for me is the strongest compared to his other relationships of love." Love is a passion, a desire of the heart. There can be many misunderstood faces of love as there is a difference between an outward display of love and the real love felt in the heart. Sometimes the superficial love can be misunderstood for real love. The outward face of love is limited to display and glamour and all the efforts are used for artificiality and advertisements. Since some people do not feel satisfied by following the Sunnah, they add a little more of their traditions and customs, and hence, change the real face of the Sunnah. There is no doubt that by doing this an alluring view and appreciation from the public is achieved, but it is certainly an insult of the Sunnah for example if you dilute pure petrol with some other oil, the quantity will of course increase but it will result in the destruction of the engine, as a result the car will be useless. When some other oil is mixed with petrol, the quality and effectiveness is reduced. Therefore, one should remember never to go for face value, as the results may turn out to be disastrous and one may discover many hidden facts. For example:

- * When the face of the Sunnah is changed by adding new ideas, it shows that ALLAH forbid, the Holy Prophet (SAW) left the religion of Islām incomplete and now this person is making it complete with his new ideas.
- * (ALLAH forbid) The Holy Prophet (SAW) made a mistake in preaching Islām and what has been further added was also related to Islām but was forgotten by the Holy Prophet (SAW)
- * The improper action of altering the Sunnah shows denial of the finality of Prophethood of the Holy Prophet (SAW). The person who thinks in such a way actually thinks himself to be suited for the job of a Prophet, though he may not say so verbally but to fix a certain way for worship and other deeds is the job of a Prophet and nobody else.

A love which is pure in its desire, shows in its own way. There is no artificiality or display in it, nor is it required for anyone to cry

or shout and prove one's love to others. Our beloved the Holy Prophet (SAW) indicated a standard which would prove our love for him. He (SAW) says, "Those who love my Sunnah are true in their claim of loving me", otherwise displaying ones feelings in a hundred ways is nothing but pretence.

In short, when the fifth *laḥifa* is illuminated, it proves that the capability of following the Sunnah, has become strong, and the *sālik* starts guiding others towards the right path and stops people from adopting the wrong ways, and, he feels concerned about ALLAH's creations. These qualities should progress as the journey progresses. The *sālik* should exist for preaching ALLAH's name, His religion Islām, and all his actions must be endorsed by the teachings of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

Just imagine, how many people entered the circle of Islām during the thirteen years of the Holy Prophet's (SAW) life in Makkah? Then there were the six years of freedom spent in Madinah when they were completely cut off from the people of Makkah. In the 6th year of Hijra, at the time of the Truce of Hudaibiyah there were about fourteen hundred men with the Holy Prophet (SAW). When the Truce was to be signed there was a condition placed, that the people of Makkah and the Muslims shall freely communicate with each other, and as a result we see that after two years, when Makkah was conquered, the number of Muslims had increased so much that their entrance into Makkah seemed like the waves of a vast ocean. Whatever the reason the scholars write about this fact, one cannot deny, that when the Non-Muslims met the Muslims of Madinah and had a chance to come close to them, they felt in their hearts, that, although these people were from their country and tribes, there was a big difference between them, and, the difference seemed like, that of a human and an animal. They had to admit that the teachings of the Holy Prophet (SAW) were so praiseworthy and creditable that they decided to join the circle of Islām. The very existence of the companions was for the preaching of Islām, their thoughts, their reflections, their deeds and actions, their way of life, their environment, their language, said all that, for which a preacher needs a stage and a microphone to say. But the result is not

as effective because the words come out of the tongue and are lost in thin air. Therefore the duty of a *sālik* is to adopt the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (SAW) in every aspect of his life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SIXTH LATİFA NAFS

In the expression of *Sulook*, the sixth *latıfa* is called the *Nafs*. A human being has been endowed with a faculty which arouses in him the desire for certain things. The feelings of desire can be for the good or can also be for the bad. Due to the difference in feelings, a *Nafs* goes through different stages and has different names accordingly. For example, we know that the *Nafs* is usually attracted towards the forbidden, and seeks immediate pleasure. If the *Nafs* desires something bad and does not feel ashamed, then this type of *Nafs* is called *Nafs Ammarah*, or *Hawa-i Nafs*. But if the *Nafs* seeks evil and later feels regretful, then this type is called *Nafs Lawwamah* the Accusing Soul, and finally, if this desire of the *Nafs* always seeks goodness and virtuousness, then it is called *Nafs Mutmainna*. (The Soul at Peace).

Zikr ALLAH is practised on this *latıfa* so that the *sālik*, with the help of the Divine Light, makes his *Nafs* capable of always desiring the virtues of life. When this *latıfa* is illuminated it proves that this power of the *sālik* is working towards the right path. That is, he now feels attracted towards piety, and feels disgusted about anything evil. Although the Satan is an enemy of man since eternity, but the mischief of the *Nafs* is even bigger than the Satan. This very *Nafs* had led the Satan Astray when he had displayed haughtiness out of self praise. Therefore, it is very difficult to suppress the *Nafs*, and that is why the Holy Prophet (SAW) has said that the war against the *Nafs* is the greatest war. ALLAH has declared in the Holy Qur-ān :

Do not obey the whisper of the Nafs, for it will lead you away from the path of ALLAH. (38:26).

At another place ALLAH defines a principle to follow:

And as for such who had entertained the fear of standing before their Rabb and had restrained his Nafs from lower desires, his abode will be the Jannah. (79:40).

This proves that the obedience of desires of the *Nafs* will definitely lead a person astray, and only that person is successful who has saved

himself from obeying this type of *Nafs*. There are no limits to the desires of the *Nafs*. It is like a dense jungle, and the person who is trapped inside can flutter and struggle but cannot come out. Although lust is evil, it is attractive, since it leads to the fulfillment of desires, which are never satiated, but increase as the time goes by. A person toils day and night to fulfil the desires of the *Nafs Hawaii*. Sometimes it is the love for money and at other times it is the desire for status and luxuries. Humans strive hard for the fulfillment of these desires to the extent of exhaustion, but, alas, they still do not find peace. The more they toil for these desires, the more their thirst increases.

By the blessings of *Zikr ALLAH*, the force of these desires is harnessed, and gradually the *Nafs* starts seeking all that is good and virtuous. A brief explanation of what is good and virtuous is: A real good deed is any deed done according to the examples set by the Holy Prophet (SAW) and to live one's life with determination according to the principles of the Holy Prophet (SAW). Obviously, by doing this a *sālik* withdraws his likes and dislikes for the likes and dislikes of the Holy Prophet (SAW). The main theme of Sufism has been misunderstood by most people, and they think that when a person enters Sufism, he is required to altogether eliminate the force of the *Nafs*, which is wrong. In *Tasawwuf* a person is not required to completely eliminate his *Nafs*, but is required to harness and employ it towards the right path so that a person can acquire the excellence of character and conduct. If the *Nafs* is completely eliminated then the ability to desire something, whether good or bad is also lost, and that means leading an extremely boring life. Let us consider this example: If a blind man claims that he never looks at any woman, does it mean anything? Since he is blind, if he does not look at any woman, he cannot be given any credit for it. On the other hand, if a person has the sense to appreciate beauty, has eyes to set on something or someone attractive, but still does not do so, we may ask why? The answer is that the force of the *Nafs* has been taught not to look at anything forbidden, as our Beloved Prophet always lowered his eyes and refrained from looking at anything forbidden. Therefore, although the eyes are open, they will not lift up to anything wrong.

In a way we can say that elimination does take place. But the elimination is not of the *Nafs*, but of the force which leads it to desire evil. The effect of this *laṭīfa*, when illuminated, is that the *sālik* feels a withdrawal from the material pleasures of the world, and seeks the everlasting love of the Creator, and the pleasures of the ultimate life. As this desire for the right path becomes strong, he sees with the help of the Divine Light the straight path indicated by ALLAH as *Sirat al-Mustaqim* and the Holy Prophet (SAW) standing there, gesturing him to come towards the right path:

"This is my way, I do invite unto ALLAH, with a certain knowledge, I and whoever follows me." (12-108).

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SEVENTH LATIFA SULTAN ul-AZKĀR

Surely the hearing, the sight and the heart, all of those shall be questioned of. (17-36).

The six *laṭā'if*, their training, their influences on the *sālik* and their relationship with the *sālik's* practical life have been explained. Today the seventh *laṭifa* shall be explained. The technical name of this *laṭifa* is *Sultan ul-Azkār*. It is also called *laṭifa Qālbīyah*.

When the heart is illuminated, the whole personality is affected. When the inside is purified, the outside displays it. When a battery becomes charged it illuminates bulbs, makes motors work. When new cells are put in a torch it starts spreading light. Without cells a torch is merely hollow, a toy. It cannot carry out the job it is designed for. No matter how expensive the motor car is, if the battery is down or dead, it will not act as a means of conveyance. Unless the inside is not purified the outside will be rendered worthless and aimless. As long as the heart is not illuminated, the person is surrounded by darkness. Purification of the inside or the illumination and strength of the *laṭā'if* is like the charging of a battery, the storing of steam power. Now we must make use of this battery or steam. This was all preparation for the field work, the foundation of practical work.

When man does some sort of work his limbs become his tools. The intention materialises in the inside and sets the limbs into motion. The human body is a collection of a few limbs. The training of *Sultan ul-Azkār* is such that while doing the *Zikr* of ALLAH's Name, its influence flows throughout and envelops the whole person. It is like touching an electric wire, when the current flows through the whole body and every single cell feels its effect. Similarly, through *Sultan ul-Azkār* the whole body, all the limbs, every single strand of hair and every single drop of blood is suffused by the remembrance of ALLAH. The sincerity of the *laṭifa* means that the blood rushing through our veins and arteries has been induced with the corpuscles of peace and piety. The strength that it gives to the mind diverts the di-

rection of its thoughts to the Will of ALLAH. If a hand is to rise it will rise for the welfare of all creations and to aid justice. The eyes will refuse to witness injustice. The ears are only prepared to hear the truth. In short, every limb in the body is engaged in the exaltation of justice and the welfare of all creations. Since the seat of acquiring the nearness of ALLAH, rests in actions and the instruments of these actions are the limbs, the questions concerning the execution of the Divine injunctions will be directed towards the limbs. The ordinance of the Creator is:

Surely the hearing, the sight and the heart, all of those shall be questioned of. (17-36).

Most of the information is acquired by man through the senses of hearing and sight, and in the light of this information the intentions of actions arise from the heart. Therefore, questions will be directed towards these faculties and those who misused these powers, will so acknowledge it. And they will say:

"Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we should not (now) be among the dwellers of the Blazing Fire." (67-10).

Over here a point of wit has, by the way, come before us. One usually comes across two types of human beings. The majority are those who put their confidence in learned people and, by listening to them, determine the road of life. They can only be called the following cadets. There are others who, instead of putting their confidence in skilled people, try to ascertain things all by themselves. If they are really capable of ascertaining and adhere to the requirements of objective judgement, they find the path of guidance, they only hesitate to follow any particular scholar formally. And since all those who claim to do their own research and reject the idea of following scholars, are not capable enough to carry out thorough research work, they simply end up following one of the schools of thought without even realising it. Therefore, from this verse of the Holy Qur-ān we have found out that there are only two ways to escape from the torment of hell and acquire salvation, one is in following the accomplished people of true verification, and the other by thorough individual research and acquisition of knowledge.

Now that we are talking about responsibilities and accountability, never let this question arise, that will the tongue, which we use for speaking the truth as well as telling lies, become mute at that time? All the actions in our life are not solely carried out by the tongue. According to their ability, all the limbs take part in the business of life. Then mankind is habituated in using this tongue for both truth and falsehood. For example, someone imprints his thumb on paper but later on denies that it is not his thumb print. But when the matter is brought before an expert he concludes that the thumb print is his. The tongue had denied this but the hand couldn't. Similarly, on the day of judgement, when we are called to account for our lives on this earth, the situation will be as described above.

The ordinance of the Creator is:
That Day shall We set a seal on their mouths. But their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness to all that they did. (36:65).

On the second occasion the picture of the calling for accountability is drawn in detail:

At length when they reach the it (the Fire) their hearing, their sight and their skins will bear witness against them, as to all their deeds. (41-20).

On hearing this those people will drown in amazement because those organs were the witnesses of their innocence, what had happened to them? These thoughts will not be limited to their minds. On the contrary:

They will say to their skins, "Why bear you witness against us?" They will say: "ALLAH has given us speech; He (Who) gives speech to everything". (41-21).

The influence of the illumination of *latifa Qalbiyah* and its demand is that, a human should keep a strict eye on his practical life. In the use of his ears, eyes and all other organs he should keep in mind the approval of the beloved. His ears are not ready to hear anything improper. His eyes cannot lift up to see any obscenity, no matter how attractive it may be. His tongue cannot utter anything improper. His feet refuse to walk in the wrong direction and his hands can never be a source of pain to others. The centre of his thoughts and reflections is

nothing but the pleasure of **ALLAH** and the ways and means to achieve this goal.

If the purification of the innerself does not take place, or if the *laḥiḥa* *Qālbīyah* is not affected, then the example of a person is like a car whose tie-rod is loose and though the steering is in the hands of the driver, but the car is out of his control. It may either smash into a wall or fall into a ditch. The driver cannot stop the car as it is beyond his control. If you want to observe this practically, all you have to do is look around you, at the younger generation of today and their engagements. You will cry out instantly that these youngsters are like vehicles with damaged tie-rods, or in other words they do not have any tie-rods at all. Look at our youngsters who gather round radios or television sets, the song has not started yet but just by listening to the music they can tell you the film for which it has been recorded. The thoughts, the visions have all gone astray. In the past, when the elders would come across such scenes they would look on in stunned silence. But now it is a different story. Our elders very proudly gather the family in front of the T. V. to watch programmes which are vulgar and shameful in nature, and the most surprising part is that they enjoy every moment of it along with the youngsters.

You might say that there is no one who can claim to be absolutely pure, and above committing mistakes. This is very true as there is no one who is absolutely free of faults except the Holy Prophets (AS), but there is a difference between making a mistake unintentionally, and doing something wrong purposefully and insisting on it. The latter form is like committing suicide knowingly and the former condition is like a disease, and every disease has a cure and the following cure has been prescribed by the Holy Prophet (SAW). "He who repents after stumbling in the darkness, who feels grieved after committing a sin, shall be as if he committed no sin." After repenting, if he continues with his efforts towards righteousness and **ALLAH's** Pleasure, then **ALLAH** says for such people:

Indeed the good remove the evil. (11:114).

A **LLAH** is Great and Ever-Forgiving to his servants. *He erases all the sins committed and replaces them with goodness when a per-*

son sincerely asks for forgiveness. Do you not see that ALLAH has endowed His super creation with such intelligence and capability that he himself can erase all his evil doings so that not a trace of the past can be found? You might ask as to how this can be possible? For example, let us suppose, a lover of vulgar songs records some songs in a cassette so that he can hear them to his heart's content, but later his conscience starts to prick him and he finally awakes from the deep sleep of ignorance. he now wants to erase all the vulgarity he has heard in the past. To start with he has to get rid of all the vulgar songs he used to hear which acted as a stimulant for his deeds, he does not want to throw away the cassettes, so he records Qir'at (Recitation of the Holy Qur-ān) or Nāt (Verses in praise of the Holy Prophet (SAW), over the songs he had previously recorded. We know now that the cassette is the same, but the vulgar contents have been replaced with the heart soothing Qir'at or Nāt. Similarly, virtue and piety can take the place of evil and bad, if a person sincerely repents and asks for forgiveness from ALLAH. An evil doer is bad indeed, but there are some who are not so bad after all. They are the ones who do indulge in sins, but when their conscience pricks them, they do not stubbornly insist on their deeds but feel grieved and repentant and cry desperately in front of ALLAH for forgiveness and firmly resolve never to indulge in anything wrong again.

When this *latifa* is illuminated and strengthened, a *sālik* should observe all the aspects of his practical life, individual or collective. Whether the purification of the innerself has influenced his outward behaviour or not, as the beginning of this journey towards ALLAH's Pleasure requires that the innerself and the apparent self of a person should both be corrected. By doing this he becomes a good person individually, and a noble member of the society. Maulāna Thanvi (RUA) says, when the innerself is illuminated with the Divine Lights, the limbs and the vital parts of the physical body become a witness to this fact. The main base for the spiritual journey are the *latāif*. That is why a devotee is taught the *latāif* as the first chapter of *Tasawwuf* or the spiritual Journey. Therefore, in every chain of the Sufi Order whether it is Qadriah, Naqshbandiah, Chishtiah, or Suhar-

wardiah, the *laṭā'if* are accepted as the basis of *Sulook*. In Naqshbandiah the training and education of these *laṭā'if* are through *Ẓikr ALLAH*. A devotee starts his training by *Ẓikr Khaffi* (Hidden) and his final lesson is also *Ẓikr Khaffi*. In the other Orders, a devotee is first taught *Ẓikr Lisani* (*Ẓikr* by the tongue) and later when his concentration gets deeper he goes on ahead to practice *Ẓikr Khaffi*. In the order of Naqshbandiah the *Khaffi* *Ẓikr* of Divine Name is taught to the devotee and its superiority is quoted in the Ḥadīth. In other Sufi Orders, the seeker is made to practice *Ẓikre Lisani Jehri*, which means *Ẓikr* in an audible voice. The *Ẓikre Jehar* which has been declared as *Bidah* or innovation is never taught in any Order. Only the recommended form is practised, that too conditionally. Firstly, it should not be done excessively, secondly, the tone should be moderate and it should not disturb people. If the seeker cannot achieve concentration by moderate *Ẓikr*, then he is sent away from habitation so that he can practise *Ẓikr* loudly and attain concentration. *Ẓikr Ilahi* was either of Negation and Affirmation (*Nafi Athbāt*) or of the Divine Name. There are four stages of *Nafi Athbat*. Firstly *Ẓikr Nasooti* i.e. *La Ilaha illALLAH*, secondly *Malakooti* i.e. *illALLAH*, third *Jabarooti* i.e. *ALLAH* and fourth *Lahooti* i.e. *Hu, Hu*. The Naqshbandiah Order practises *Ẓikr* of the Divine Name. The other Orders recommend *Ẓikre Jehar* only to the beginners, but later on they all teach *Ẓikre Khaffi*, since the true *Ẓikr* is *Ẓikr Khaffi Qalbi*.

After all the *laṭā'if* are illuminated, the Rūḥ finds strength to direct the body in the right direction. Secondly, it becomes strong enough for its flight to its native land. In other words, the thoughts and reflections are in the right direction and a firm belief in *ALLAH* is created. A change is brought about in the character and conduct of a person and he becomes an obedient servant of *ALLAH* in the true sense in order to live a perfect life in this world and in the Hereafter.

After practising *Ẓikr ALLAH* upon all the seven *laṭā'if* individually, the devotee is directed back to the first *laṭīfa* that is the *laṭīfa Qalb*, which means that the centre of all inward and outward qualities is the heart. There is a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet (SAW)

which asserts that if the heart is reformed, then the whole body is reformed, but if the heart is sick, then every deed and action of the body goes wrong. The heart is the fountainhead of reflections and thoughts, resulting in deeds and actions. The heart is the reservoir of spiritual strength and energy. It is very important to repeatedly remind oneself to exert all efforts in adorning the heart. Since it reflects on all the other laṭāif, friends have used 'heart' as a scapegoat for inactivity, whereas by 'heart', we mean that heart which desires and loves. And one should learn to have control over these desires, otherwise a heart may desire something bad, the motives may not be proper, the desires may be evil. Even if a person happens to go to the Holy K'aba and his heart is full of sin, what will he be able to gain? If a cup is dirty we cannot even think of drinking water in it. A heart should be capable of absorbing Divine love before going to the Holy K'aba. The direction of the heart should be towards ALLAH, and if it leans towards others than the Divine Power, how can the body work for ALLAH's pleasure and love, as the body always obeys the commands of the heart.

It may occur to you that people claim to have reached very high stations in their spiritual journey, but their practical lives do not corroborate this claim. In fact, their acts are not proper and they become a centre of accusations. As a result, the field of Sufism suffers criticism and is said to be a way of abandoning the world. These people are considered as a burden on the society. Why is this so? The first answer to this is that there is a big difference between claiming a certain thing and actually acquiring it. Every claim uttered by the tongue does not turn to reality.

Secondly, a precious thing will always have a counterfeit. The fabricators come into action as soon as they find a chance. You must have noticed the counterfeit currency, but the forgers do not counterfeit coins or small bills, but they try to forge a thousand rupee note or at least a five hundred rupee note. No matter how hard they try, they are ultimately caught, or the bills which they have forged are discovered. But does the fear of counterfeit currency deter us from transacting in money? No it does not, since we cannot carry on without money. Then again we see a lot of quacks who claim to be roadside doctors, and many innocent people fall victim to these quacks and

even suffer for their lives at the hands of these deceitful people, but because of those quacks no one can deny the importance of medical science, it won't be wise? Therefore one should not be disillusioned by such incidents and refuse the acceptance of reality, as this would not be wise, but very foolish.

If you want to see examples of real Sufis, then let us go back in time and peep into the lives of these great masters. Look at that aspect of their lives in which they had preached Islām so that the servants of ALLAH should lead a perfect life according to *His* Divine Pleasure. I am quoting only a few examples:

- Shaikh Ismail Lahori had come to Lahore in the year 1005. Thousands of people embraced Islām by his preaching every day.
- Syed Ali Hijwari (RUA) left his country in 1072 in the period of Ghaznavi to preach Islām. He spread the light of Islām in Lahore.
- Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti (RUA) in 1237 during a journey from Delhi to Ajmair, he converted 700 Hindus into Muslims.
- Bu Ali Qalandar (RUA) converted the Rajputs of Pani Pat into Muslims in the year 1324.
- Bahauddin Zakaria Multani (RUA) in 1180 spread Islām in the city of Multan.
- Syed Jalal Bukhari (RUA) in the year 642 Hijri, had set up the city of Jhang. Many tribes of Rajputs embraced Islām at his hands.
- The king of Kashghar, Taimur Khan embraced Islām at the hands of Syed Jamaluddin (RUA) from Bukhara.
- Syed Jalaluddin Tabrezi spread the teachings of Islām in Bengal in the year 1244.
- In the fifteenth century, the great saints of the Qadriah Order spread the teachings of Islām in Sudan.
- In Sind, Syed Yousufuddin converted seven hundred families into Muslims.

The list is very long, so if anyone is interested in finding out more about these great men, he can look up their biographies.

Take the example of the Waliullah family in our country. Besides the work of Islamic literature, which is a source of light for many, they had to face a lot of opposition from those in power. Read the life

history of Ḥadh̄rat Mujjadid Alif Thani (RUA.). The Mogul King Jahangir had to finally yield to this great Sufi. You will come across many such incidents in history if you read the biographies of these sincere servants of ALLAH. Therefore, it is necessary that you learn to recognise the difference between what is real and what is not, and if you do come across something fake, do not in anyway feel discouraged and deny the reality altogether. The main aim of Sufism and *Su-look* is to change a person practically. He should be a true servant of ALLAH and help mankind to follow the commands of ALLAH. This should be the main purpose of his life in this world.

SECTION TWO

THE MEDITATIONS

CHAPTER NINE

MEDITATIONS - AN OVERVIEW

The basic lesson of Sufism, that is the brief explanation of the *latā'if* has been given in the last chapters, and it has been made clear that when these *latā'if* are illuminated by the Divine Name, the practical life of the devotee is influenced. When the heart is connected directly to ALLAH the desire for the obedience of the Sunnah arises deep inside, as a result the character and conduct of a person change and the environment where he lives is also influenced by him.

Now his goal in life changes from the worldly pleasures to a successful life in the Hereafter. He feels a desire to serve mankind to the extent that he cannot even bear to see anyone in pain and sorrow. Thus by going through these details, it seems that all the efforts which are being made for the eradication of social evils, all the organisations which have been set up for this purpose, all the time and money which is being sacrificed, could be saved if, the people were taught the lessons of Tasawwuf if they are taught the *latā'if*, then all the social evils would automatically vanish from the environment and man can finally live in peace and harmony.

After the *latā'if*, the meditations are taught to the devotee. The three meditations are taught one after the other as the devotee starts to acquire strength of flight in the spiritual world. The literal meaning of meditation is to wait, to observe, and to secure, the *sā'ik* with deep concentration waits for ALLAH, the Divine power to guide him, to bless him and to receive the Divine Lights in his heart, and for all this he should create a receptive attitude so that his heart becomes a source of guidance for his own self and for others, and by ALLAH's blessings his existence becomes a source of peace for the mankind and if ALLAH wills, he shall be blessed by the Divine Lights and Divine guidance, which will adorn his innerself as well as his apparent self. The devotee should keep a strict watch that no emotions or ideas should distract him from ALLAH, and should protect the spiritual treasure that he has acquired in the form of *latā'if*. He shall also entreat

the protection of **ALLAH** Almighty against Satan, be it from the humans or amongst the jinn. In the words of Sufism, Maulāna Thanvi expresses the reality of meditation as follows:

To concentrate strongly on a given subject for sometime so that a person starts feeling the results inside him, to visualise the matter is called meditation. Such an action is directly related to the feelings of the heart.

The following **Ḥadīth** is a proof of this fact. Ibn-e ‘Umar (RAU) relates that the Holy Prophet (SAW) once held my shoulder and said, “Live in this world like a traveller or like a person who is passing to the next destination, and consider yourself to be among the dead.” Including oneself among the dead is an act by the heart, and the positive results of this act are that, the love of the material world starts to diminish from his heart and he starts trusting in **ALLAH** and accepts happily whatever **ALLAH** has in fate for him.

At another point, Maulāna Thanvi writes: “To turn the thoughts with deep concentration towards **ALLAH** and His Divine Attributes or any other such subject and to visualise it from the inner depth of your heart is called meditation.” There is another **Ḥadīth** which supports this point. **Ḥaḍhrat** Abu Bakr Siddiq (RAU) once said to the Prophet (SAW), “O the Messenger of **ALLAH** (SAW), I see that you have grown old”, at which the Holy Prophet (SAW) replied, “Yes, that is so, as Surah **Hūd** and Surah **Waqi’ah** have made me old.” It is obvious that deep concentration and fear of **ALLAH** are the factors which can turn a person old. Therefore, the proof for the act of meditation is quite clear in this **Ḥadīth**.

CHAPTER TEN

AHADIYYAT

MEDITATION OF DIVINE UNITY

After learning in detail the verbal meanings of meditation, we come to our first lesson, that is the meditation of *Ahadiyyat*, (The oneness of ALLAH). During this meditation, there are certain words which are recited verbally or quietly in the heart. The first is '*Faidh ALLAH*' which means that I am now waiting for the Divine blessing to come to me, a person is helpless in front of ALLAH Almighty but ALLAH is All-Giving and All-Loving and free from any needs. The next word thus is '*munazza*'. *He* is such that no one can visualise *Him* and no one can coin any similitude for *Him*, but how do we see *Him* and how do we address *Him*, and how do we know *He* is there? The next words are, '*wa Ilahokum*' that *He* is the worshipped and adored and the only one worthy of worship, and he is not only my Creator but the Creator of the whole universe. A person may go astray while worshipping, so remember to say, '*Ilahun Wahid*' that *He* is the only Deity and no one else. Now we know there is one ALLAH, who is the Creator and *He* is the only one worthy of worship, so start by saying '*waḥḍa Hu la sharika laka ya ALLAH!*' Now you can address *Him* directly, saying 'O ALLAH! There is none like *You*, *You* are the Creator of the whole universe and *You* are not dependent on anyone for help but everything in the universe is dependent on *You*. The universe works according to *Your* Will. The devotee should now absorb himself in meditating this fact with deep concentration so that the results start to penetrate his inner being.

What are the results we are looking for? That the devotee shall practically worship only ALLAH and follow *His* Commands and also the commands of those who teach him the Commands of ALLAH and convey *His* Message. That way our very existence would be an example of worship. We know that ALLAH is the Creator of the universe and *He* is the only one. *He* is All-Powerful and can do whatever *He* desires. *He* can bless some with daughters and others

with sons. *He* can create twins for some and to some *He* may not give anything at all as *He* is the only One *Who* is our Creator, we have trust in *Him* and shall accept whatever *He* has for us and shall always be satisfied. Our share of worldly treasure is also decided by ALLAH. To some *He* gives abundantly and to others *He* gives less than what they desire. Therefore, we are satisfied by whatever *You* have given us, and this satisfaction would save us from avarice, embezzlement, bribe and fraud. This feelings of trust in ALLAH Almighty would stop us from desiring something which is not ours or from comparing ourselves to those who are better off. On the contrary, we shall thank ALLAH for all that *He* has given us and shall endure any calamity with patience and be content that it could have been worse, but ALLAH is All-Kind and Merciful and has saved us from the worse. We shall not be among those who say, "If only you gave us all the wealth you gave to Qarun", but we would rather say, "Isn't it the greatest treasure that you have granted us?" Whatever misery or disaster we come across is according to the Divine Will and when we find courage to face these calamities, we should know that ALLAH gives us the strength to do so.

In short, the main purpose of this meditation is that feeling of love and trust in ALLAH should be so strong that every part of his being cries out in earnest, O ALLAH, "We are content and happy with all that *You* have given me." In other words, the devotee has resigned to the Will of God and this is what the main achievement is, to know about a certain subject is one thing, to experience it is something totally different. The latter is the real goal. There are a few guidelines and principles concerning the etiquettes to exhibit emotions of pain and distress according to human nature. When a person faces distressing circumstances, he usually expresses it in four different ways. First of all he feels the pain and sorrow, secondly tears well up in his eyes. These expressions are very natural and involuntary. Hence, a person will not be answerable for this act as he is helpless. But the next two ways of expressing pain and sorrow are voluntary, such as complaining that what took place was not right and it should not have happened. Shouting and raising the voice to undesired levels, abusing

oneself physically and other such outbursts are very much undesirable, and a person will have to answer for such an impatient attitude.

Such acts have been forbidden by our beloved Prophet (SAW). On the other hand, the Holy Prophet (SAW) has prescribed a meditation for such circumstances. When you come across distressing circumstances, do not say your planning was wrong and if you had used another way the results would have been different. This means that you only trust your planning and have forgotten ALLAH, *Who* is the Greatest Planner, and it is in *His* power to do anything *He* desires. So the best phrase would be that whatever has happened was according to ALLAH's Will and what *He* never Willed did not take place. If a person adopts the latter way, he will not only find peace and tranquillity but will always feel an inner satisfaction within himself, otherwise the former way invites conflict and trouble within oneself and a person is never at peace with himself and with ALLAH.

When this meditation saturates the inner being of a person, strange things happen. The following is a true incident. This meditation had become a reality for Hadhrat Imdadullah Mohajir Makki (RUA). Once a very sick man approached him and begged him to pray to ALLAH for his health. All the devotees who were present at that time, wondered what Hadhrat would do now. They knew that whatever took place, good or bad, Hadhrat always called it a blessing. How would he now pray to ALLAH to remove the pain when pain itself was a blessing for him. How can he ask ALLAH to take away a blessing, and if he refuses, the sick man would be very disappointed? The devotees wondered what would happen now. Hadhrat finally raised his hands in prayer, "O ALLAH! Illness is a blessing from *You* and health is also a blessing. A person cannot endure every kind of blessing. This man is weak. Please change the blessing of illness to the blessing of health as, O ALLAH! *You* are All Powerful and can do everything."

May ALLAH give us the strength and insight to grasp the reality of the meditation of oneness of ALLAH, and may this meditation become a practical example for us in our everyday life. Ameen.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

M'AIYYAT

MEDITATION OF DIVINE COMPANY

This is the second lesson in meditation. During the meditation of the Divine company, the following words and their meanings are absorbed in the mind and the devotee waits for the Divine splendour and bounty to saturate his soul.

The first phrase is, 'ALLAHo *Haziri*' which means ALLAH is present in front of me. The devotee is to contemplate that when such a great being is present in front of me, *Who* is All-Powerful, *Who* is the Sole Owner of this universe, then how can I turn my attention elsewhere? The second sentence is, 'ALLAHo *Naziri*' (ALLAH is watching me). The devotee now observes that when ALLAH is present in front of me, and is watching every move of mine, I should be careful not to annoy *Him* as *He* knows what is inside me as well as what appearance I put on in public. Therefore, my outer appearance should be one of respect for Almighty ALLAH, and my heart should be one of concentration and love and no other thought should enter my heart except the feelings of love and closeness to the Creator as *He* knows everything and nothing can be hidden from *Him*. That is, *He* knows me inside and out. The third sentence is, 'ALLAHo *M'ae*' (ALLAH is always with me). That person who has gained the closeness of Almighty ALLAH, is indeed very fortunate. There is a possibility of error at this point, that the devotee might think that ALLAH is only with him and with no one else, therefore, to avoid this misconception, the fourth sentence is, '*Wa Howa. M'akum Aiyina Ma Kuntum.*' (ALLAH is always with you, wherever you might be).

A person usually feels the need for someone on two occasions. Firstly, in a state of fear, when a person senses danger of any kind for his own self or for his loved ones. He needs someone to help him and to be by his side in time of need. When the meditation of Divine nearness becomes strong a person starts experiencing Divine pleasure, and feels a strong sense of love and protection. Naturally, the

fear diminishes, and no one is as powerful as ALLAH, and when ALLAH is with him, there is no one who can harm him. ALLAH has mentioned many such examples in the Holy Qur-ān . When Ḥadhhrat Mūsa (AS) was commanded by ALLAH to take along his brother and approach Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, and invite him towards ALLAH, he felt that he would be killed right away as they were his enemies and were looking for him. Therefore, how could he invite them towards ALLAH? Almighty ALLAH comforted them by saying, "Do not be afraid, I shall protect you and I am always with you. I shall be watching you and listening to everything you say." This closeness was a source of such strength for Moses that he not only invited the Pharaoh towards ALLAH, but very courageously questioned him and simultaneously, answered all his questions. This proves that the sense of Divine closeness makes a man strong and courageous.

The second occasion was when the Holy Prophet (SAW) migrated from Makkah to Madinah, and according to ALLAH's command, Abu Bakr Siddiq (RAU) had accompanied him. They took refuge in the Cave of Thaur. Meanwhile, the Quraish also reached the Cave in pursuit. Ḥadhhrat Abu Bakr Siddiq (RAU) not only heard their footsteps, but also heard their voices and also saw them searching. Naturally, he was worried that the enemies might harm the Holy Prophet (SAW). But ALLAH was with them and the Divine words alighted through the Holy Prophet's (SAW) lips: *La Talzan InnALLAHa M'ana*. (Do not be afraid, ALLAH is with us). When Ḥadhhrat Abu Bakr Siddiq (RAU) heard this he was reassured and felt no danger at all.

This meditation fills the devotee with such spirit and courage, that in times of danger, he does not panic but knows that ALLAH is with him and shall protect him no matter what happens. Today, a lot of effort is done to boost the morale of soldiers so that they can fight with courage in the battlefield. If only we thought, what was the formula which boosted the morale of 313 empty handed soldiers, that they confronted a well equipped army of one thousand men? The reason for their high morale was their unwavering trust in *Wa Howa M'akum Aiyana Ma Kuntum!*

When a devotee achieves the closeness of **ALLAH**, his conscience stops him from doing anything wrong. To err is human. If he gets tempted toward sins like adultery, bribery, theft etc, his inner self will at once warn him that **ALLAH** is watching you and he knows what you are about to do. Therefore, it is not possible for a *sālik* to commit a big sin. This meditation can change the whole character of a person, as a result the environment is also affected. It is a known weakness of man that he is apt to commit a sin when he knows that no one is watching him. But when this belief becomes strong, that **ALLAH** is watching him as *He* is with him all the time, then only a person without a conscience can commit a sin, or maybe an insane person who has lost his senses.

The details mentioned above should make it clear about the changes which should take place in a person's character after constantly practising this meditation. He does not have to ask others about his progress, but can easily find out for himself by taking in view of the amount of *Zikr* he practices, the Shaikh's attention towards him, whether his practical life has improved or not if it has, he should thank **ALLAH** and continue the progress. But if these facts are limited to just knowledge of the mind, then he should work hard to make it a practical fact, so that every act and every deed should prove that he has achieved the company of **ALLAH** Almighty.

CHAPTER TWELVE

AQRABIYYAT

MEDITATION OF DIVINE CLOSENESS

This is the third meditation. There is a difference between nearness and closeness. Someone whom you feel very near is called close or *aqrab* to you. Therefore closeness is an extreme of nearness. During this meditation, the following verse is recited: '*Naḥmo Aqrabo llaihi Min Ḥablil Wareed.*' ALLAH Almighty affirms that *He* is closer to *His* servants than their jugular vein. By this fact we come to the conclusion that human beings do not achieve the closeness of ALLAH by their own efforts, as ALLAH is beyond their comprehension. ALLAH is so kind and loving that *He Himself* comes close to *His* slaves. The second fact which comes to light is that *He* is not only near *His* slaves, but extremely close to them, closer to them than their very life. A person feels the closeness or distance of a certain thing because of the life in him, otherwise a dead person does not have any sense at all. Therefore the life, which gives us the sense of closeness should be the closest to the self. But ALLAH says, 'I am closer to you than your vein of life'. How can we comprehend this closeness?

Let us consider this example: Suppose you take an envelope and stick a stamp on it. First the stamp was at a distance from the envelope, now it is stuck onto it, therefore, it is obvious that now the stamp is close to the envelope. But think again, there is another thing which is closer to the envelope than the stamp and that is the glue with which you raised the stamp on the envelope. Hence to the naked eye, the stamp is close to the envelope. In the same way the artery of life seems closer to a human beings, but the fact is that ALLAH who has given life to the arteries is much closer to a human being. Maulāna Thanvi (RUA) has written a few words on this fact.

There are many degrees of closeness. First there is actual closeness, which means really comprehending something. No one can achieve actual closeness with ALLAH as

ALLAH is free from the bounds of form and space. A person also cannot perceive **ALLAH** as *He* is beyond human understanding. Therefore 'closeness of **ALLAH**', does not mean physical closeness.

The second degree is metaphorical closeness where the veils are lifted or lessened. Then there is a literary closeness which each and everything in this world has with **ALLAH**. There is one more closeness which is special and that is when we say, "You are far away but still you are always with me." This means a special closeness of the heart where the mind is always thinking of the loved one. The special closeness which the Qur-ān means by mentioning the trait '*Oolaik al-Muqarraboon*,' which is the highest point of human excellence, as it is achieved by extreme faith and belief. This is closeness in the language of the Qur-ān. When a person leads a life according to the principles of Islām and when every act or deed, every move he makes is for the pleasure of **ALLAH** and his beloved Prophet (SAW) then he has achieved his goal. Otherwise if a person tries to achieve the closeness of **ALLAH** and is not following the principles of Islām where **ALLAH**'s pleasure and consent lies, then he is wasting his time, as whatever he is doing is of no use to him. What is received during this meditation is that, in the beginning there is a vast distance between the *sālik* and his beloved Creator, which the *sālik* cannot possibly cover. **ALLAH** is aware of the limitations and weaknesses of a human being and knows that his weak creature cannot cover such a vast distance. Therefore he himself comes closer to man as it is not difficult for **ALLAH** to cover any distance. Hence man does not spiritually join with **ALLAH**, but it is **ALLAH**, the Merciful and Loving who comes nearer to man, and gives him the glad tidings: *Naḥno Aqrabo Ilaihi Min Ḥablil Wareed*.

He goes on:

In the same way when the *sālik* spiritually desires the close-

ness of ALLAH, All his efforts in this direction are certainly not enough to receive the Divine splendour. But when the *sālik* makes an effort according to his capacity and takes a few staggering steps towards ALLAH, ALLAH, the Merciful, comes forward and holds the *sālik*. It is similar to the case when a baby learns to walk, staggers and is about to fall down, and you at once lovingly leap forward and pick him up. Therefore, it is necessary, that a *sālik* should take at least a few steps, like the small child, towards ALLAH and cry out to *Him*.

The fact that ALLAH is close and affirms it *Himself*, is not in jest words but a warning of the reality. That ALLAH is the One *Who* has given life to the main vein of your body, that *He* is the one responsible for your growth and development and has bestowed you with many capabilities. That *He* has entrusted us with a great duty to you by making us *His* deputy. Now *He* is so close that every move, action or deed is being watched, to the extent that *He* knows what thoughts take place in the very depths of our heart. ALLAH warns that after making us *His* deputy in the world, we are answerable to *Him* and we cannot hide anything from *Him* as *He* knows everything and nothing is hidden from *Him*. ALLAH has blessed human beings with such a great gift and *He* expects *His* slaves to be grateful and love *Him* with depth and sincerity and also fear *Him* lest he gets annoyed because of their wrong deeds, but first the feelings of love should dominate the feelings of fear as ALLAH is the beloved. What could be more delightful and a source of pleasure than the fact that ALLAH is so close to us, that one cannot visualise of anything else to be closer?

When the terms, 'near' or 'far', are thought of, the mind naturally starts to wonder about physical distances, but fails to comprehend that the One Who is above all such limits, cannot be imagined within such framework. It is very difficult it express in words the reality of An Incorporeal Being. But Islām explains it in such words that the reality starts to unfold itself on our minds. But often human beings start to form an embodiment in mind. The nature of closeness shared by two material things or beings is 'physical', but the closeness be-

tween an Incorporeal and a material being can never be physical in nature. But, yet the latter is a much stronger bond of nearness; for example, physically, a father and son may be miles apart from each other but yet they share a very strong closeness than two strangers sitting side by side. Thus physical nearness is a very weak bond and it is therefore, a very narrow outlook to confine all forms of nearness within the limits of time and space. ALLAH is indeed very close to His obedient slaves, closer than their jugular vein. This is the kind of closeness which an Incorporeal Being shares with a material being. It is essentially different from the one shared by two material beings. When the *sālik* treads on the spiritual path, he senses this closeness with his inner eye exactly the same way a person sees with his physical eye.

These are the three meditations which have been explained. When these meditations become strong, the *salik's* belief and faith in ALLAH is established. He starts observing the Divine Power and Wisdom. As a result, his heart is totally relaxed, because he knows that whatever ALLAH plans for him will be the best. Therefore, he never thinks of complaining against circumstances. The nearness of ALLAH builds courage in him to fight the false and unsound, and also stops him from going astray. The nearness of ALLAH inspires love within him and gradually the *sālik* progresses on the spiritual path which the Qur-ān mentions in the following words:

Those who believe, love ALLAH most. (2:165).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
DAWA-IR-E THALATHA
MEDITATION OF THE CIRCLES OF
DIVINE LOVE

After the three meditations, there is the circle of Divine love. When we think of the word 'circle' our mind naturally turns towards a centre point, as the centre point is the base for a circle. No matter how big the circle is it always revolves around the centre point. Therefore, the centre point and the circle are always together.

Following holy words are recited during the meditation of the first circle: '*Yuhibbuhum Wa Yuhibbunahu*' (*He loves them and they love Him*). The arrangement of the holy words have a hidden point in them. The commencement is taking place from one side and the reciprocation is coming from the other side. If there is no commencement there would be no result. Let us try to understand the holy words by the following example: '*Yuhibbuhum*' is the action initiated by the centre point. From the centre point the rays of Divine love are spreading around to the circumference. The creation of ALLAH is at the circumference where the reaction of '*Yuhibbunahu*' takes place. The love from ALLAH flows freely among *His* creations and the slaves of ALLAH, whether they are obedient or disobedient, young or old, women or men, fair or dark, everyone is affected by ALLAH's love. How is that one may ask? The answer is, ALLAH has created us, *He* is responsible for our growth and development. *He* instilled love in the hearts of the parents, to raise a child, which would never have been possible without love. ALLAH created all the necessities of life in the universe, and bestowed us with capabilities to acquire them. *He* created limbs in our body so that we may use them as our weapons in the battlefield of life. Is it not because ALLAH loves his creations? Look around ourselves. Everyone and everything is affected by ALLAH's love as *He* loves *His* creations dearly. There is another kind of blessing which ALLAH bestows upon us and that is the Divine guidance which is an established proof of ALLAH's love. Divine

guidance comes to everyone but it is not welcomed in the same way everywhere. There are some who turn their cups upside down when Divine guidance is being showered, so that not a single drop can reach them. There are others who are so eager for ALLAH's guidance and love that when the opportunity arises they are there with open hearts so that every drop is absorbed. These are the servants of ALLAH who reply in earnest to *Yuḥibbuhum* in the form of *Yuḥibbunahu*.

The holy word *Yuḥibbuhum* proves that the beginning is from ALLAH. Someone can enter only when ALLAH opens the door to His closeness. If the love of ALLAH does not reach someone, how would he in turn love ALLAH? But sometimes it also happens that people who run away are selected and brought closer, while others who may be near are rejected. Ḥadhrat 'Umar (RAU) who was an idol worshipper was drawn to the feet of the Holy Prophet (SAW), but 'Abdullah Bin Ubba'i was deprived in spite of being in the Prophet's (SAW) mosque. However this is not the basic criteria. The main principle is the attraction. The love begins from ALLAH, to respond to this love, one needs to make a decision in one's heart and then take the step forward.

We have to now see how the affect of *Yuḥibbuhum Wa Yuḥibbunahu* comes about. For example, let us light a candle and keep a few mirrors at a distance from it. You can see that the rays of light emanate from the candle and the reflection is seen in the mirror. The rays of light are reflected by the mirrors and return. Here the reverse action is taking place. Now remove the mirrors and replace them with a few dirty pieces of glass. You can see now that the rays are still coming out of the flame but the dirty pieces of glass are not properly reflecting them. Do you know why? Because if the pieces of glass were clean, the light would have at least penetrated through. But as they are very dirty they cannot reflect the light.

We shall try to understand from the above example that a devotee who has practised ALLAH's *Zikr* and cleaned his heart of impurities, has enabled his heart to receive the love of ALLAH. The rays of love enter the devotee's heart and return to the centre point. This has to be understood that when reflection occurs, the rays of Divine

love work in two ways. They return to their centre, and during their journey, illuminate the whole environment. Their angle of reflection is not in the opposing direction to their angle of incidence, nor do they fall short of their centre. The devotee has, by now polished his heart, following the method prescribed by the greatest purifier who himself polished the hearts of millions. The Holy Prophet said, "everything has to be polished in one way or the other, and the hearts are polished by ALLAH's Zikr." When the heart of the devotee is cleansed and polished by ALLAH's Zikr only then it responds with depth and sincerity to the Divine words of love *Yuhibbuhum*.

In order to understand the words of *Yuhibbuhum* and *Yuhibbunahu* let us consider this example. Take a magnet and place a piece of rusted iron next to it. It is obvious that the rusty iron will not be attracted towards the magnet. Now, again place a clean piece of iron near the magnet or clean the rusted iron with a sand paper and put it next to the magnet. Now, you can see the attraction of the iron towards the magnet. Why is this so? The reason is that the piece of steel is the same but the rust has been cleansed, therefore the phenomenon of magnetic attraction has initiated. The same is the case with the human heart. When a person becomes rebellious to ALLAH, his heart starts to rust. ALLAH has himself pointed out this fact in the following words:

Because of their misdeeds, rust has settled on their hearts.
(83:14).

When the heart is cleansed of its impurities by ALLAH's Zikr then the rust disappears and it becomes capable of being attracted. When the magnetic attraction of the Divine love reaches him he automatically feels the attraction of *Yuhibbuhum* and cries out in earnest, *Yuhibbunahu*. A group of philosophers have determined the degrees of relationship in the light of their observations which are as follows: Inclination, ranging from feeling oneself bent in a certain direction, to interest, love, passion, and madness. There are two types of experiences that one goes through in a relationship. The arousal and the depth of feeling and their reason. In the same way a person in the beginning senses the relationship between ALLAH and himself, he

then gradually develops a desire for a lasting relationship which is an inclination. He then thinks of building and improvement such a relationship. This shows that his feelings are tending towards a certain direction, he now starts making plans to acquire this relationship and desires to talk and hear only about it. This interest leads him towards love which is the required goal. The words of passion and madness are not mentioned in the Qur-ān, but in the Ḥadīth it is said, "Perform ALLAH's Zikr to such an extent that people start calling you insane." This does not mean that one must lose his sanity, but should be so much involved in the remembrance of ALLAH, that the onlookers say that he is mad.

Anyway, the devotee has now illuminated his *laṭāif* and performed the three meditations. That is, he has passed the three stages of inclination, the bending towards a certain relationship, and an interest and since he is moving forward, the stage of love should certainly come. But before reaching this stage one must enter the circle of Divine love as this is how he shall learn the true way to love.

The first principle of love one must learn is to choose the loved one with care and wisdom. It is not guaranteed that the beloved will love you in return. Secondly, if you choose a beloved among the creations of ALLAH, it will perish one day, so what is the point of loving a mortal? Whosoever you choose as your lover will be dependent in one way or the other on someone, therefore is it wise to love someone who is dependent for his needs? The real principle of love is to love someone who loves you, who is always there and will never perish, who is not dependent on anyone for his needs and he does not want anything from you. Therefore, the first step of love is taken by him, who is All Powerful and Loving, He is such a beloved that he loves you for whatever you are and takes the first step towards you with the holy words of *Yuhubbuhum*.

The second principle the devotee learns is that, when ALLAH is not dependent on anyone, he is not mortal and still takes the first step towards you, then it is the duty of man to be grateful and love him in return and if he does not do so it means he is being unwise, disloyal and shall be deprived and doomed for life.

The third principle which the devotee observes is, by looking at the circle of love one observes that the action of *Yuhibbuhum* starts from the beloved. Therefore those who were at a distance from their beloved **ALLAH** and were also at a distance from their own kind, start to draw closer to **ALLAH** and also each other, as they gradually move towards the centre point. This proves that when a person progresses towards the love of **ALLAH**, he also acquires the closeness of other creations. Therefore, true love for **ALLAH** will also attract mutual love of others as the nature of true love eliminates all kinds of negative feelings and only love and harmony prevail.

During the training of this meditation, the devotee feels an illuminated circle in front of the *latifa Nafs*, both of them have a deep relation with each other. To desire something is the trait of the *Nafs* (Soul). All desires are strong in nature, but if a desire is aimed towards a certain object then man makes endless efforts to achieve it. This lesson in meditation teaches the devotee that this particular trait cannot be eliminated in the *Nafs* (Soul), but it is possible to divert the centre of attraction from the mortal to the Immortal. When the centre of attraction of the *Nafs* is established, love will automatically follow, and the love for the Immortal is our main goal.

How is justice done to this meditation? The answer is that the effects of love should show; the requirement of love is that one who loves, submits to the beloved. This is a fact which is observed daily in the material world for material gains. A person may avoid or ignore many people, but cannot ignore the commands of the beloved. For the sake of the loved one, a person may go to such extents as to sacrifice his life, wealth, and honour. This meditation teaches the devotee to love **ALLAH** with deep sincerity and to only obey **ALLAH** and none else. The Holy Prophet (SAW) has pointed out the symptoms of true love, and the principal standard. He says, "He who likes to adopt my ways, who accepts my advice wholeheartedly, loves me with sincerity." A person who claims to love the Holy Prophet (SAW) but does not feel an urge to adopt the Sunnah, is a liar. This cannot be love but a pretence of love, it is nothing but a farce.

Let us understand the relationship of love and obedience in the following way. Suppose love is the steam and our body is the en-

gine. This engine may work in three different ways. Imagine the first situation when the engine is all right, the parts are all in good shape but there is no steam? There is only one way, it has to be dragged like a cart to move it forward slowly and gradually. When it is not being towed, it will stop. This is the case when a person performs a deed or action without sincerity and love. The second possibility is, the steam is there, and the engine is in good working condition, and is moving forward very fast, rather it is flying and the steam of love is running it without a break.

Keeping both these cases in view it is necessary that the train does not leave its tracks, and if the tracks are lost, then neither pushing would help nor would the steam be of any use. If at all anything is achieved from the steam, it would be the whistles the train would make and that is all. But when a person has a fixed destination in mind, he would never be satisfied with mere whistles. Therefore, to walk on this path, love is necessary which is the steam and the tracks signify the right path of the Sunnah. If the Sunnah is ignored, then everything else would be a waste of time. And one would never reach his goal towards ALLAH. The third possibility could be that the engine is working all right, but there are no tracks. Neither is there any steam. It is obvious that this engine would be of no use except a Museum showpiece. A devotee should keep these points in view and should try his best to follow the path of the Sunnah. There is an important point to be kept in mind that if an engine which is being pushed, without steam, gets derailed, the loss wouldn't be serious. But if the engine is moving at a tremendous speed and is derailed, then the destruction is inevitable. The devotee must be well aware of this danger and must strictly adhere to the Sunnah.

After the first circle of love, there is a second circle, which is bigger than the first one and the words to recite are the same *Yuhibbuhum Wa Yuhibbunahu*, which means that the Divine love is expanding, hence the closeness is increasing. After this there is a third circle of love, which is even bigger than the first two circles. The Divine love is expanding to unlimited extent, the recitation is the same, *Yuhibbuhum Wa Yuhibbunahu*.

Now, the emphasis is on deep and everlasting love. There is a difference between routine work done and work done with love. Whatever the task is, it requires hard work and concentration. These qualities are not readily accepted by the *Nafs* as the *Nafs* seeks pleasures and facilities. The medicine the *Nafs* needs is love. When the rays of love reach the *Nafs*, it will automatically accept any task according to the commands of ALLAH. The strength of love is so great that nothing can withstand it and all actions performed for the pleasure of the beloved are done with full love and concentration. This is the reason why a devotee is made to be intoxicated by the Divine love so that his *Nafs* feels restless to hear and obey ALLAH Almighty.

The relationship of ALLAH with His slaves is one of love not to be confined by regulations. If you study the Holy Qur-ān carefully, you will certainly realise this fact. A command is repeated many times in different ways so that the reader understands its importance and advantages, and remember, ALLAH does not gain or lose anything from it, is this not love? If the relationship was according to rules and laws, the command would have been given just once and in case of disobedience, the slaves would have been convicted that very instant. But that is not so. If human beings disobey the commands of ALLAH, they are given another chance, because ALLAH loves His slaves and does not want them to suffer. Therefore, the relationship of the devotee towards ALLAH should be one of love and not one of formalities.

Love for ALLAH produces a feeling of care and well-being for all His creations, and such emotions are the height of excellence in Islām. According to the Holy Prophet (SAW), "The religion of Islām requires from its followers a feeling of goodwill and welfare for all ALLAH's creations." When a person is honest with ALLAH, he will have an honest relationship with the Prophet of ALLAH (SAW). The trait of honesty requires that a person should always think about the welfare of others and therefore should invite them towards ALLAH in order to save them from falling prey to Satanic ways and earning ALLAH's wrath.

The second effect of ALLAH's love is that when a person comes across such people who disobey ALLAH, it becomes beyond his

control to bear their conduct. Hence, ALLAH Almighty himself points out:

When you hear the Messages of ALLAH held in defiance and ridicule, you are not to sit with them unless they turn to a different theme. if you did, you would be like them.
(4:140).

The Holy Prophet (SAW) has established the degrees of a person's behaviour in such gatherings as follows: "When you see people disobeying the commands of ALLAH, it is your duty to stop them with all the strength you have. If you are not strong enough to do that, then at least try to stop them with words. And if you do not find strength to speak out, then at least you should feel a disgust in your heart. The last behaviour is a sign of the weakest faith." Do you not observe such behaviour in the Assembly Halls when bills are passed, some people just get up and walk out? Why do they do that? Because it is beyond their control to just sit there and watch something they cannot bear.

We shall now explain the three circles of love in detail. The relationship of ALLAH with his servants is that of Creator and created. The creation is an embodiment of flesh with tangible appearance, but ALLAH is free from such limits. It is mentioned in the Qur-
ān :

The eyes can't encompass Him and There is nothing that is the like of Him.

How then do we come to know and feel the closeness of ALLAH? There are ways and means to achieve this and the circles of love are the way to know and feel ALLAH's love and closeness.

The first circle is the circle consisting of the Divine Names. ALLAH the Almighty has said in his Holy Book that for ALLAH are the beautiful Names, and there is a very deep relationship between someone and his name. When you hear a name, your thoughts automatically turn to that person - when you love a person with all your heart, you very naturally love his name also. It is said that when someone asked the famous lover Qais Amiri what he was drawing with his finger in the sand, he replied, "I am writing the name of my beloved Laila, since I cannot reach her I am comforting myself

with her name." **ALLAH** Almighty has many beautiful names, out of which ninety nine are known. Every name holds a Divine Quality, but the name '**ALLAH**' is *His* Personal Name, and the real name holds all the qualities. A real name is a summary of all the qualities a person has. This is the reason why a devotee is asked to meditate the Divine Names of **ALLAH**. In other words a devotee is trained to acquire the closeness of **ALLAH** through his Divine Names.

The second circle is of the Divine qualities. This circle is very vast. Look at the universe, look at *His* many creations. *His* qualities cannot be defined by any limits. During the meditation of this circle a devotee tries to achieve the love of **ALLAH**, through *His* Divine attributes. Look at the creations of **ALLAH**, from a grain of sand to high peaked mountains, small plants to tall trees, everywhere you will find examples of *His* beautiful creations. From a tiny little ant to a huge elephant in the jungle, all display the wonders of **ALLAH**'s creative Attributes in their life styles. *His* Divine qualities are manifest everywhere. Take a look at human life, everyone is different in nature, colour, structure, words and deeds. You will find innumerable examples everywhere. Hence the more you reflect upon the creation of **ALLAH**, the more you will love him. Therefore in the second circle the love and closeness of **ALLAH** is achieved through the meditation of his Divine attributes.

The third circle is the circle of the Divine Name '**ALLAH**'. This circle is only in name, otherwise its vastness has no limits, it seems to be endless. In this meditation, neither the Names are considered, nor the Attributes. Hence in this circle, the cognition and love of **ALLAH** do not come through meditation of Divine Name or Attributes, but arrive almost directly. It is said that love is based on three qualities: beauty, excellence and beneficence. Whenever any one is loved, it is because of either of these qualities. But one thing is inevitable with such love, that when similar or better qualities are found in some one else, the attention of the seeker will certainly be diverted, and if these qualities diminish, love also diminishes. A devotee is asked to try and achieve the love and closeness of **ALLAH** by reflecting on *His* Divine Name which includes all the Divine Names and attributes.

The question arises, how to visualise **ALLAH**, our beloved Creator? When the eyes cannot behold *Him*, the mind cannot comprehend *Him*, and the thoughts cannot picture *Him*. How do we then visualise *Him*? The whole thing seems very complicated, but let us suppose, we are sitting in a room which is divided by a thick curtain, so that no one can see through it. We are absolutely certain that there is someone behind that curtain who is very powerful but also very loveable. We have not seen him, but we are certain he is there, and though we cannot see him, we know for sure that he is watching us very closely and is listening to everything we are saying. Maybe he has fixed hidden mirrors around the room or maybe there are hidden transmitter sets in the walls. Whatever it is, just think what would be our state in such circumstances. How would we behave? In today's world of modern technology this is not impossible as we usually come across such examples. Let us now take the above example in a much broader sense. Our beloved **ALLAH**, *Who* is All-Powerful is present everywhere. We are certain about *His* presence, and we have faith in the fact that *He* knows everything. Not for a moment do we doubt the fact that *He* hears and sees everything that goes on in the universe. What should our behaviour be after knowing all these facts? The answer is, though we cannot see *Him*, but our movements should prove that we are looking at *Him*, as *He* is present and watching us all the time.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ISM-e ZĀHIR wal BĀTIN

MEDITATION OF THE DIVINE NAMES

THE MANIFEST AND THE HIDDEN

After the circles of love, the meditation of the Divine Names, 'The Manifest, The Hidden' is taught. The following four names of ALLAH, or the four Divine qualities are like the basic pillars of knowledge and cognition. *Awwalo Wal Ākhīro Waz Zāhīro Wal Bātin* (The First, The Last, The Manifest and The Hidden). The words repeated during the meditation are the same: *Howal Awwalo Wal Ākhīro Waz Zāhīro Wal Bātin*. (He is The First, The Last, The Manifest and The Hidden). (57:2).

Think about your own self. You have a beginning, you have an end, you have an outward appearance and an inner self. Not only you but the whole universe and everything in it has a beginning and an end, an outward appearance and an inner self. But the fact that ALLAH is the Beginning means ALLAH is the First before anything or anyone and the fact of his being the End means there is no one after Him. We cannot establish any limits for Him to be the First or The last as ALLAH is beyond any limits. He is always and shall always be.

The Divine quality of being 'The Manifest' means, that ALLAH is Over-Powering and is Predominant over everything and this quality proves His Greatness and Magnificence. 'The Hidden' means the closeness ALLAH has with each and everything. He is closer than their very self. His being the first proves that He was always there and His being the last proves His immortality. The Divine Name of 'The Manifest' shows His Greatness and Magnificence and the Divine Name 'The Hidden' proves His closeness to everything in the universe.

When the devotee meditates upon these two Divine Names of ALLAH, 'The First and the Last'. The truth unfolds before him that everything is dependent upon ALLAH for its creation, and

for its existence. Every creation has an end and will only live for a limited time and is not worth loving. When the devotee meditates upon the Divine Names of 'The Manifest and the Hidden' this fact reveals itself that the existence of everything proves the greatness of the Creator. From a small grain of sand to the burning sun, everything proves the fact that there is someone who has created all this. *He* is responsible for its existence and one day everything will face an end according to his Will. *He* is so hidden that no one can reach the truth. The great scholars of Islām state that these four Divine Names are the main pillars of spiritual knowledge and Divine closeness. The Sufis consider the names 'The Manifest and the Hidden' as strong wings with which the devotee can achieve strength for his flight towards the closeness of ALLAH.

The result of this meditation is that the devotee does not involve himself with material pleasures, but, moves forward on the path where he can achieve the love of ALLAH. A feeling of sincerity develops within him, and he cannot be deceived by outward appearances anymore. Self-pride and self-praise also start to vanish gradually. He feels that there is someone censoring within him. There is a secret monitor within him, so close that every move he makes, every desire that is born in his heart, every thought that enters his heart is being censored. The result is, his whole life changes in a way that whatever he does, he does for ALLAH's pleasure. To achieve the love of ALLAH and His closeness becomes his goal in life. Therefore, his very existence becomes a blessing for the environment he lives in.

The illuminated circles of love which the devotee had felt earlier surrounding his *latifa Nafs*, now illuminate his entire body. He feels the light illuminating his outward body, as well as his innerself and he feels totally absorbed in the Divine Light. Ḥadhrat Mujaddid Sarhandy (RUA) has elaborated upon the names 'The Hidden and the Manifest'. He says:

The meditation of the name 'The Hidden' is a meditation about the concealed, and the meditation of the name 'The Manifest' is of the qualities without actually taking into consideration the Embodiment, whereas 'The Hidden' too is

amongst the Divine Names; but its meditation involves bearing in mind the presence of an Embodiment. This Name is like a shield, which is amongst the many veils between the creation and the Creator. The word 'learning' does not involve an embodiment but the adjective 'learned' involves someone who has knowledge; therefore the meditation of the word 'learning' is the meditation of 'The Manifest' and the meditation of the word 'learned' is the meditation of 'The Hidden'. The relation of all the Divine Names and Attributes may be understood by this example.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN**'ABUDIYYAT****MEDITATION OF SUBMISSION**

The holy words recited during this meditation are:

An-Najmo Wash Shajaro Yasjudan. (The herbs and the trees both bow in adoration). (55:6).

The devotee meditates on the fact that everything in the universe is working according to a certain rule laid down by ALLAH. Everything comes into being, stays for a certain period and then perishes. There is a different set of rules for the non-living things. The sun rises at a fixed time from the east, and sets at a fixed time in the west and vanishes from our sight. The moon becomes full at a given time and at other times it is a mere thin line. It has never been otherwise. All the planets and the stars of the universe are revolving in a certain orbit, which they can not exit. Similarly, all the other creations of ALLAH are obeying the rules set by ALLAH and are symbols of devotion and adoration to their Creator. Let us meditate on the botanical creations of ALLAH. A mango tree will always produce mangoes. You will never see a mango tree producing oranges. A grape plant will never have the leaves of a mango tree. Whatever commands and rules ALLAH has laid down for His botanical creations are being obeyed without any reluctance; disobedience of any kind is out of question. Take a look at the animals, there are definite laws set for them. A lion may die of hunger but he will never eat grass. Similarly, cows and goats will never eat meat. A goat will always give birth to its own kind, you will never see a lion being born from an elephant. Hence, whatever rules and commands ALLAH has given for his creations, they are being fully obeyed. This is what the above quoted verse proves. [The Herbs and the trees both bow in adoration].

The point to ponder here is that human being is a component of the complex machinery of the universe, and that too, a very important component. He has been given the choice to obey ALLAH's commands or do otherwise. But the rules of nature which have been laid

down by ALLAH cannot be changed by even a human being. He is forced to obey them. Yes, he has a free choice to obey the rules which have been explained to him for his own benefit, and this is his test. The free choice which he has been given is the main test and because of this power and authority given to him by ALLAH, human being is termed to be the highest creation of ALLAH. When all the other creatures of this universe obeys ALLAH's commands without any hesitation then if a human being, who is also a creation of ALLAH walks on a different path, the path which does not earn him any reward from ALLAH, it is but natural that the whole system would be affected. Everything around him would be affected as human being is an important part in this vast scenario called the universe. There would be chaos everywhere and the humans would be responsible for the ill-effects. Therefore when the devotee reaches this point, he realises that the only way to achieve peace and harmony is that man also, like the rest of the other creations obeys ALLAH's laws with sincerity. Hence the spirit of the devotee announces earnestly, *Subhana Rabbi Yal A'ala* (Glorified be my Rabb, The Most High). These words are the recognition of two realities: First, ALLAH, Who is my Creator and also the Creator of the universe is free from any defects or any limits of any kind. I bow to his greatness and magnificence. Second, I am totally dependent on my Creator and I am *His* true slave. Therefore, I bow down in gratitude to my Creator. The devotee has discovered the true spirit of these words: 'The one who knows oneself, knows his Rabb'. When a person truly understands his creation, his duties, his faculties and his capabilities, he automatically realises the Greatness of his Creator, and this realisation brings him closer to his Creator ALLAH.

The results of this meditation are that when the devotee recognises his position as a slave of ALLAH, then everyday of his life is witness to the fact that he is and shall always be, an obedient servant of ALLAH and that he is dependent on ALLAH, *Who* fulfils all his needs and protects him. The resolve to obey ALLAH at all times, is just not a temporary decision, but the devotee is determined to obey ALLAH's Commands and remain *His* sincere servant till the end of his life.

When a devotee makes a decision to obey ALLAH all his life, he realises that his duties have two aspects. Therefore the requirements of being a true servant are that both aspects have to be obeyed. When his relationship with ALLAH is clean and straight, he works hard to keep his relationship with other human beings clean and straight also. Hence he does not withdraw from the world, rather he becomes a useful member of the community. Whenever he feels evil forces leading him astray, he at once cries out to his Creator, *Subhana Rabbi Yal A'ala*. Imam Ibn-e-Qayam (RUA) declares that adoration and devotion towards ALLAH depends on two aspects: everlasting love and complete submission.

During this meditation the devotee feels that every part of the universe has bowed down in prostration before ALLAH. Plants, trees, animals, humans, Angels, Jinns, etc. each and every creation is bowing in devotion to ALLAH. This is a very intense feeling which can only be felt by the devotee. To describe it in words is simply impossible.

CHAPTER SIXTEENFANA-O BAQAMEDITATION OF EXTINCTION AND
ETERNITYTHE STATION OF FANA (EXTINCTION)

The verses recited during this meditation are:

T *Kullo Man 'Alaiha Fān Wa Yabqa Wajhu Rabbeka Zul Jalale Wal Ikrān. (All that is on earth will perish. But will abide for ever the Countenance of your Rabb, The Majestic, The Honourable). (55:26-27).*

During the meditation of devotion and adoration a devotee feels that everything in this vast universe is bowing down in adoration in front of his Creator, and there is cry of *Subḥana Rabbi Yal A'ala* echoing in the universe. In the meditation of extinction a devotee feels that everything has vanished. Trees, animals, humans, all have perished, to the extent that the devotee becomes unconscious of his own self. This is a perishable state, a state of extinction. Every devotee experiences different feelings, and these feelings are acquired after deep concentration on the holy verse, *Kullo Man Alaiha Fān*. When the devotee starts to absorb himself in the second verse, he feels that, if there is anything in the universe, it is the Divine Light of ALLAH, *Who* is One and there is none but *Him*. This state is achieved in the meditation of 'Eternity.'

It is true that one cannot express feelings in words. Just try to explain honey and its effect to a person who has never seen honey or tasted it. It is possible that after listening to you, he might get a vague idea of honey in his mind, but it is simply impossible to experience the effect after merely listening to words. Similarly, there are feelings of happiness and grief, but these feelings can only be felt, you cannot express them into words, Extinction and eternity are the feelings of the devotee which when put in words gave rise to two philosophies: (i). Unity

of existence or pantheism and (ii). Unity of Divine manifestation or pathism. Mostly people were influenced by the former philosophy. Much debate and arguments were carried out by followers of both the views, but how far can logic explain feelings?

In short, during the meditation of extinction, a devotee feels that everything in the universe has perished, and in the meditation of eternity he feels that eternity is only for ALLAH, whose Splendour and Magnificence has covered the entire universe. There is none else but ALLAH. To absorb oneself requires that man forgets everything except ALLAH, and his obedience should be only for ALLAH and none else. The heart should be clean of all desires and pleasures. The station of eternity requires, after reflecting on the holy verse, a slave represents the wishes of ALLAH, and ALLAH's wishes become his own wishes.

What are the results of this meditation? According to Maulāna Thanvi (RUA), the effect of *Fana* is that the Nafs stops desiring sins or any other act of disobedience. Unless the wanton desires of the Nafs do not diminish, a person keeps indulging in sins. It is not necessary that a man must totally feel un-inclined towards sins. And it is not very easy either, in fact it is necessary to diminish the desires which lead on the wrong path. Before acquiring the station of *Fana*, it was not easy to stop oneself from sins. Now after *Fana*, one does not desire the wrong and sinful ways. If a person does come across a vulgar sight, he automatically lowers his eyes. This is what is called the station of *Fana*.

THE STATION OF BAQA (ETERNITY)

In *Fana* the state of a person is prevalent. In *Baqa*, the same state is conquered and he experiences peace. The difference is that before there was an emptiness, now he feels himself filled with the Divine Light. Before he used to reach out for the blessings, now he becomes a source of benefit and blessings for others. When this meditation becomes strong and firm, the effects are very pleasant. A devotee (*sālik*)

stops planning his life and finds peace and harmony in the wishes of ALLAH.

While discussing the issue of *Fana* and *Baqa*, Maulāna Thanvi unfolds its reality and explains its effects on a person's daily life.

There are two types of *Fana*. *Fana* in reality, and *Fana* in the light of knowledge. Real *Fana* means, that a person leaves all outward sins, expectations and hopes linked with others, greed, pride and hypocrisy etc. all vanish. This is called real *Fana*, because all the actions and deeds which lead in the wrong direction have perished. In the general term, it can also be called sensory *Fana* or *Fana* of the body. *Fana* in the light of knowledge means that the heart expels all but ALLAH, the ties of knowledge and cognition with all except ALLAH have been severed. The love and yearning it first had for others has now left the heart. Infact the ability to remember is now employed only to remember ALLAH and all the rest are forgotten. Just like in the case of worldly love, the mind is so occupied that there is no time for anyone else. There are different levels in *Fana* according to the capabilities of different devotees. Some of them experience a state of absorption, some feel intoxicated, others feel lost in meditation, yet some, for the completion of certain conditions, or for the guidance of others, return to seek the knowledge of things. This last condition is *Baqa*. The first level helps in avoidance of all that is forbidden by Islām, which is indeed *Taqwa*. The second level helps the devotees in the light of knowledge to avoid indulging in sins and all remote possibilities of committing mistakes. This indeed is the highest form of piety or *Taqwa*.

Here, it would be of great importance to mention the views of Hadhrat Junaid Baghdadi (RUA), about *Fana*:

There are three stages of *Fana*. The first stage is achieved by eliminating one's personal traits, peculiarities and desires so as to follow the Shariah according to the Will of ALLAH and not one's own inclinations, and to extinct the desires of

Nafs Annurah, and obey the Orders of ALLAH. The second stage is achieved when the devotee forsakes sensual pleasures and luxuries, and does not give himself any credit for the noble deeds he does. This stage is related to the mental and inward life. The third stage is the extinction of ego, the devotee feels that he is with ALLAH. His material and physical body is intact but his personality has diminished. This stage is the last stage of *Fana* and the devotee is appointed on the highest rank of *Baqi Billah*. In other words *Baqi Billah* is the fruit and reward of *Fana Fillah*. But even at the level of *Baqi Billah* the devotee can't comprehend the Divine Existence. He may be with ALLAH, but he is not part of *Him*. He is but a humble servant, and ALLAH is beyond all bounds and limits. No one can ever unite with ALLAH physically. The philosophy of *Fana* of devotee is not the last station, but if here the devotee is overcome by absorption or intoxication, it can seriously damage him, because in such a state he cannot fulfil his duties which are imposed on him as a member of the society. When a devotee attains the stage of *Baqi Billah* after *Fana Fillah*, then he returns from the state of intoxication to the state of wisdom and can retain his personal traits and characteristics which now have a deep reflection of Divine Attributes. He thus becomes a guiding force for others and teaches them to follow the Shariah.

The meditation of *Fana*, *Baqi* requires that the *sālik* eliminates his own desires for the Will of ALLAH, and ALLAH's Will becomes the *salik's* wish. This situation has been pointed out in Ḥadīth Nabvi (SAW): "And *My* slave tries continuously to achieve *My* closeness through obligatory prayers, to the extent that *I* start to love him. When *I* make him my beloved, then he hears through me. *I* become his eyesight by which he sees everything, *I* become his hands by which he touches things, *I* become his legs by which he walks." The meanings of this Ḥadīth is that all the limbs of the *sālik* act according to the Will of ALLAH.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

SAIR-E K'ABA

TOUR OF THE K'ABA

In the previous lesson, it has been explained that the relationship with ALLAH has many degrees. In the beginning, the *sālik* feels a need for such a relationship, then he makes up his mind to acquire it and plans accordingly, so that he can acquire the closeness of ALLAH. Soon he progresses and the relationship becomes strong. This inclination to move forward is called *Sair* (tour) in the words of Sufism. The tour is further divided into two major parts. First, tour towards ALLAH, the details of this tour is that the *Nafs* is cured of all its impurities, and it is further strengthened by ALLAH's *Zikr*. The innerself is lighted up by the Divine Light and all hindrances and obstacles have vanished. The negative habits have been eliminated and goodness and piety have taken their place and one feels inclined towards virtue, to the extent that the trait of goodness becomes a habit. Prayers and other forms of worship become very convenient. A person starts caring about the rights of ALLAH, and the rights of fellow humans. Hence the relationship with ALLAH is established. The tour towards ALLAH is complete. After this the tour in ALLAH starts. A person starts reflecting and meditating on the Divine qualities of ALLAH and according to his capability the facts are unfolded before him. The attributes and qualities of ALLAH are unlimited. ALLAH is beyond the limits of imagination, therefore the tour in ALLAH is also unlimited.

When we hear the word 'tour', our mind at once starts thinking that we have to leave behind a certain place and move towards another. By the term tour towards ALLAH, it is understood that we have to move towards ALLAH, but what do we have to leave behind? This can only be understood if we look at ourselves, our habits and hobbies, our interests, then only will it become evident what we have to leave. It is quite obvious that we are entangled in our desires, and stuck in the quagmire of wishes. This is the point from where we have

to turn back and migrate towards ALLAH. This situation is pointed out by ALLAH in the following verse:

Have you seen the one who takes his own vain desires as his god? ALLAH has, knowing him as such, left him astray, and has sealed his heart, and put a cover on his sight. Who then will guide him after ALLAH? (45-23).

Tour towards ALLAH means that you have to leave your false pride behind, leave the corporeal desires of the *Nafs*, abandon the habit of self praise, and move towards your beloved Creator, *Who* loves you much more than you love yourself. You are very stupid indeed in thinking that you love yourself. You do not. In fact you yourself are your greatest enemy. Tour in ALLAH is to reflect on *His* Divine Attributes. The results of the meditation should become a part of our practical lives, so that it becomes easy for us to act according to the Divine Will. The tour of K'aba is in fact a tour in ALLAH, because although the K'aba is a cubicle structure of stones, which the Creator has called a place to bow down before *Him*. The K'aba is a manifestation of ALLAH's Divine qualities, the worshipped, the adored, as ALLAH is the only One *Who* is to be worshipped and adored. The Divine quality demands each and everyone to bow before ALLAH, but we do not see ALLAH when we bow, as *He* is not limited to time and space and *He* is free of any form. Therefore *He* chose the holy K'aba as the symbolic manifestation of His Divine quality and commanded:

Wherever you are, turn your faces in its direction. (2:144).

Although we are bowing before the K'aba, we are really bowing to our Creator, ALLAH.

When a person touches the ground with his forehead in prostration; (*Sajda*), he is actually demonstrating feelings of extreme humbleness and sincerity, and the situation in which a person is prostrating in front of ALLAH is, according to the Holy Prophet (SAW) very close to ALLAH. the Holy Prophet (SAW) states, a person achieves the greatest closeness to his Creator when his forehead touches the ground in adoration to his Creator. Therefore what is the reality of *Sajda*? It is the achievement of heights, while being in a state

of extreme lowliness. It is an event of meeting one's Creator, a way to achieve Divine closeness. This great act of bowing to ALLAH requires a person to be prepared accordingly. When a person goes to meet someone of high status, he prepares for the occasion by grooming himself properly, by wearing impressive clothes etc. For meetings in the material world, one needs to groom physically. Hence before the meeting with ALLAH, a person should also prepare for his inner purification, as the dirt accumulates in the soul because of worldly sins, and it needs to be cleansed by the feelings of repentance. Therefore in this meditation, a *salik's* Rūh, cries out to ALLAH in front of the door of the K'aba at *Multazim* begging for forgiveness for all the past sins. Afterwards the Ṭawāf (Going around the Holy K'aba) starts from *Hijr-e Aswad* (The Black Stone) and every time the *sālik* reaches the black stone he repeats his vow by saying, "O ALLAH! I turn all my attentions, my deeds, my efforts towards achieving *Your* Pleasure and Nearness."

The effect of this meditation on the life of the *sālik* is that his inclination towards ALLAH increases and all his worships acquire greater sincerity. The realisation of ALLAH's Greatness and his own humbleness is unfolded before him and the fact establishes itself in his heart. He feels a disgust for all that is wrong or which may lead him astray from ALLAH's path. During the time of Hajj you must have noticed, people holding on to the *Multazim* door and crying with utmost repentance. Here no one feels ashamed of crying. They are not aware of anyone else except ALLAH, and they keep crying and asking for forgiveness. It seems that there is something special about this part of the K'aba as whoever clings to the door, cannot abstain from crying. But do the people who cry and cling to the K'aba never commit any sins in their lives again? No, such people are very rarely found, because it is the nature of man to forget. Do the clothes which are washed and cleaned, never get dirty again? Of course, they get dirty but they are washed again. Yes, this has never been seen that a person wearing clean clothes jumps happily into the gutter. No matter how much a person tries to keep away from filth, he cannot avoid a little bit of dust and stains ruining his clean clothes. Also his own

sweat and dirt will certainly affect his clean clothes and they will need to be washed repeatedly.

The Holy Prophet (SAW) has conveyed the happy tidings of ALLAH for sinful beings like us so that we may not feel disappointed in our hearts. He (SAW) narrates a Hadith *Qudsi* saying: "A servant of ALLAH commits a sin and prays to ALLAH saying: 'I have committed a sin, O ALLAH! Please forgive me.' ALLAH says, 'My slave has committed a sin and knows that he has a Creator who can forgive him or punish him.' After some time he commits another sin again and says, 'O ALLAH! Please forgive me.' ALLAH Almighty says, 'My slave has committed a sin and he knows that he has a Creator who can forgive him or punish him.' After sometime again the servant commits a sin and asks forgiveness again. ALLAH Almighty replies, 'You may do whatever you want, I have forgiven you.'" The last sentence, should not be considered a permission to commit mistakes. This is ALLAH's way of showing *His* love for *His* slaves. It is a relationship of love between ALLAH who is Forgiving and Merciful and a slave who is full of faults. Only those people, who have experienced deep love for their Creator, can comprehend how a world of forgiveness and blessings has been compressed in this sentence.

Forgiveness is related to sins. The result of sins is hell, the cure and remedy for sins is repentance and asking for forgiveness, and the motive behind repentance is faith and belief in ALLAH. Salvation is based upon faith and belief and the degrees of Divine closeness depends upon noble deeds. When faith and belief in ALLAH are present then one can certainly expect forgiveness from ALLAH, and when a servant has been forgiven, salvation is certain.

SAIR-E SALAH

THE MEDITATION OF SALAH

In the tour of K'aba, a *sālik* has accepted the fact that ALLAH is, the Only one to be worshipped, and instead of revolving around ones own desires, the centre of attention and all the efforts of the *sālik* should be ALLAH Almighty. By asking for forgiveness, a *sālik* has cleansed and purified his innerself, and has also performed the Ṭawāf around the K'aba. Now a *sālik* should move forward. The aim is not to just bow down, but to bow in such a way, which has been taught to us by the Holy Prophet (SAW), and that is to bow down in Ṣalah. In this meditation, a *sālik* has to turn his attention towards four important facts. First, that the manifestation of ALLAH's Divine quality of being worshipped is in front of him, and his attention should be towards ALLAH alone. Secondly, a *sālik* should always remember that he is nothing in front of ALLAH. Third, the state of bowing to ALLAH, and fourth, during prostration with the head touching the ground in adoration. In every situation the primary aim should be the pleasure of ALLAH, and, love for ALLAH. Permanence in attention and concentration towards ALLAH, at all times, is the height of excellence for a believer. The following words which the Prophet had said prove the same point: "A Momin can gain the height of excellence through prayers."

The effect of this meditation is that, a *sālik* learns the way of worship and adoration for ALLAH from no one but our beloved Prophet (SAW), who had said, "Learn the art of bowing to ALLAH from me, look at me carefully the way I perform the prayers, you should also do it in the same manner." The second effect is that a longing develops for the voluntary worships, which is a source of progress towards the closeness of ALLAH, protection against sins, hatred for all wrong actions, and inclination for good deeds is born in a *sālik*. Concentration towards ALLAH, and a feeling of humbleness and sincerity overwhelm his whole existence. These are really the feelings of Divine closeness which never come to an end:

SAIR-E QURAN

RECITATION OF THE QUR-ĀN

In this meditation, a *sālik* reflects on the reality of the Qur-ān and its revelation on the Holy Prophet (SAW).

Verily this is a Revelation from the Rabb of the universe. With it came the Truthful Spirit, to your heart that you may admonish. (26:192-194).

After meditations on these facts, a *sālik* turns his concentration upon his own heart, and by the blessings of ALLAH he prays that his heart should become a torch of Divine Light and be capable of the Divine faith and trust. The *sālik* sees two sides to the act of revelation. It is revealed unto the noble heart of the Holy Prophet (SAW). From the noble heart, the blessings of the Holy Qur-ān acquire two routes. The *sālik's* heart receives the blessings of the Holy Qurānic verses through verbal deliverance from the Holy Prophet (SAW) and through the noble scholars. Secondly, the *sālik* feels his heart receiving the blessings of the spirit of the Qur-ān, its essence and its meanings by the attention of the Holy Prophet (SAW) through noble Shaikh. This results in happiness, amazement, opening of the heart to the explanation of the Qur-ān and knowledge. He realises that this alone can take him to eternal salvation. The *sālik* feels all of revelation, how the Qur-ān was revealed unto the Holy heart of the Holy Prophet (SAW) through the angel Gabriel and how the blessings spread from the holy heart, how the blessings entered the hearts of those who accepted it with open arms, and how the Qur-ān affected their actions and deeds, their thoughts, and the different aspects of their lives.

During this meditation, a *sālik* feels an increase in faith endorsed by his heart and a sense of determination is kindled within him. He feels himself at peace and harmony with other fellow humans and achieves the closeness of ALLAH. He is bestowed with such a gift, that the blessings always increase and never end, to the extent, that

after entering heaven, he shall still enjoy the blessings of the Qur-ān and the progress will continue. The *sālik* is absorbed in conversation with his Creator. His Creator is talking to him and he is listening carefully. The blessings have encircled the *sālik*, and he has lost sense of his material body and its desires, and has achieved immortality of his soul. Then the *sālik* reflects upon the purpose and aim of the Qur-ān and he feels that he can hear the holy words clearly:

Verily this Qur-ān does guide to that which is most right.
(17:9).

It leads straight towards the destination. What is the destination? It is the closeness of ALLAH, the pleasure of ALLAH, and the obedience of ALLAH's commands. The *sālik* then feels that there is a straight road in front of him and he feels himself standing at one end, and the other end which is the destination, there is someone calling out to him:

"Verily, this is my way, leading straight: follow it. Do not follow other paths. They will scatter you about from His Path." (6:153).

"This is the straight path which is also my path. Come to me on this path, and remember to walk straight. There are many small alleys leading out of this path and they are very tempting. Do not be misled by them and do not leave the right path, else you will be led astray and far from your destination, and you will never be able to find your way back."

The *sālik* thinks, who is the one calling out to me. He at once knows in his heart that the person calling out is none other than him who has been assigned the great duty of 'teaches them the Book' (62:2). He will not only convey the book but also teach and educate accordingly. He will teach you the meaning of the verses of the book and also show you its practical side by adhering to the commands of the Holy Book. He will teach his companions to lead a life according to the Qur-ān, so that the following generations do not get confused with the interpretation of words.

The results of this meditation is that a *sālik* observes his own life and tries to reform himself according to the Qur-ān. But reformation means good deeds. In the distance between words and deeds

lies a very delicate point, where people are usually misled. The right way is to understand the true meaning of the holy words and search for its practical example. The true implication of the Quranic words is taught by the Holy Prophet (SAW) who was sent as a teacher of the Qur-ān for the entire human race. The practical side of the Qur-ān can be found in the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and lives of the companions who were trained and instructed by the Holy Prophet (SAW) himself. ALLAH Almighty has declared, that the ideal standard of living is that of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and his companions (RAU).

And (also) those who follow them in good deeds, ALLAH is well-pleased with them as are they with Him. (9:100).

"If you seek My closeness and pleasure, then with all sincerity, follow those people who have been trained by My Prophet (SAW) for twenty three years, and I have announced during their lifetime that they have earned My pleasure and consent." Therefore it is important that a person learns the true meaning of the Qur-ān from that teacher who has been sent by ALLAH for this purpose, rather than following the guidance of one's own knowledge or desire.

After the reformation of one's self, the second requirement is to concentrate upon preaching ALLAH's Zikr. The great gift of knowledge and good deeds which he has acquired, through the Holy Book of guidance, the Qur-ān, should not be just kept to oneself. It should be conveyed to others, so that people who are ignorant and illiterate can try to achieve the closeness of their Creator also. A yearning to seek the pleasure of ALLAH can be borne in them. This is the real goal, for which a *sālik* is trained.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
RAUDHA-E AT-HAR
MEDITATION OF THE TOMB
OF
THE HOLY PROPHET (SAW)

In the last chapter the meditation of the K'aba was explained, alongwith the meditations of Ṣalah and Qur-ān . It had been explained that prayers are a source of achieving human excellence. Faith and belief require that when a *sālik* is standing for prayers, he should feel that he is standing before ALLAH and is conversing with his Creator. This is the reminder of the Night of Ascension when ALLAH, the Creator of the universe, was in conversation with the Holy Prophet (SAW). The remembrance of the Night of Ascension and the closeness of ALLAH was a source of peace for the Holy Prophet (SAW), that whenever he ordered Ḥaḍhrat Bilal (RAU) to call out the Azān , he would also say, "O Bilal! Call out the Azān , as it brings me peace."

The way to stand in prayers and turn one's concentration towards ALLAH has been taught by the Holy Prophet (SAW) in the following manner: "Perform your prayers in the same way you see me performing them." Then, in the case of the study of the Qur-ān , it has been declared that the Qur-ān is that gift of ALLAH, the Merciful, in whose introduction ALLAH had said to the Holy Prophet (SAW):

A Book which We have revealed unto you, in order that you may lead mankind out of the depths of darkness into light.

(14:1).

Hence, both the Divine gifts have reached mankind through the Holy Prophet (SAW). When the *sālik* realises this fact he bows down to ALLAH in gratitude that he was born as one of the followers of the Holy Prophet (SAW). The holy words ring in the ears of the *sālik* . The Holy Prophet is saying, "He, who has come to the K'aba, and does not visit me, has shown a very rude attitude." Therefore, the Rūḥ

of the *sālik* is impatient to appear in the Court of the Holy Prophet (SAW). Hence, after the tour of the K'aba, the next meditation is of *Rauḏha-e Aṭ-ḥar*, or the tomb of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

The holy words recited during this meditation are the Salaams and the *Durood* (Praise and blessings sent to the Holy Prophet (SAW)). The *sālik* feels himself in front of the *Rauḏha*, standing respectfully and with the inner depth of his heart, repeating the Salāms. He is thankful to the Holy Prophet (SAW) for introducing him to ALLAH and blessing him with the nearness of ALLAH, and also blessing him with the gift of communication with ALLAH. The *sālik* also remembers the following words of ALLAH Almighty:

If they had only, when they had harmed themselves, come to you and asked for ALLAH's forgiveness. And the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have indeed found ALLAH Ever-Returning, Most Merciful. (4:64).

Therefore, the *sālik* asks earnestly for forgiveness from ALLAH from the depths of his heart, and requests and implores the Prophet of ALLAH (SAW) to ask for forgiveness for him, and appeals for intercession on the day of judgement. During the whole period, the Rūḥ of the *sālik* continuously repeats the *Durood* and Salāms. The effects of this meditation on the practical life of the *sālik* are:

- He sees very clearly the favours bestowed upon him by the Holy Prophet (SAW) and his heart is always filled with gratitude.
- The love for the Holy Prophet (SAW) deepens in the heart of the *sālik*. Hence, it is clear that faith and belief have found their place in the heart of the *sālik*, and his ears ring with the familiar words of the Holy Prophet (SAW), "You can never taste the sweetness of faith, until you love me more than your mother, father or children, and anyone or anything else in this world."
- His heart is always longing to remain in the presence of his beloved Prophet (SAW).

CHAPTER NINETEEN
MASJID-E NABVI
MEDITATION OF THE COURT
OF
THE HOLY PROPHET (SAW)

After the meditation of *Raudha-e Aḥ-ḥar*, the meditation of the Holy Prophet's (SAW) Court is practised. The verses repeated during the meditation are same as for *Raudha-e Aḥ-ḥar*.

During the meditation, the *sālik* feels the Holy Prophet sitting on a throne, with the Companions sitting in front of him. The *Aulia* are sitting on one side. The *sālik* feels himself sitting in such a pious gathering. His eyes are cast down in respect. He realises his own humbleness and is immensely thankful to ALLAH for granting him such a status. Tears stream down his face with love and happiness and the *Durood* continues from the depth of his heart.

MEDITATION OF FANA FIR RASOOL

In the august Court of the Holy Prophet (SAW), the *sālik* feels that limbs and parts of his body have been cut in pieces and every piece and every drop of blood is earnestly reciting: ALLAH *Huma Salle Ala Muhammad-e nin Nabi yil Ummye wa Ahlehi wa Ṣalḥbehi wa Barik wa Sallim*. After some time the pieces join together, and the same *Durood* continues.

Before understanding the effect of this meditation on the *sālik*, first the reality of *Fana* should be understood. In Sufism the meaning of *Fana* is not perishing, but *Fana* means to eliminate one's ego and pride. When the word *Fana* is added to *Fir Rasool* and the word becomes *Fana Fir Rasool*, it means that the *sālik* has abandoned his standards of likes and dislikes, and he is under the total control of the Holy Prophet (SAW). In *Tasawwuf* this meditation is taught for the

purpose that a *sālik* learns to act according to the following Ḥadīth .
 "No person among you can feel the sweet taste of *Iman*: (Faith and Belief) unless all his desires and deeds conform to my teachings."

When this meditation is established, it affects the *sālik* in the following ways:

- No artificial standard of love is accepted. Only that standard of love is accepted which has been defined by the Holy Prophet (SAW).
- The official standard of love must conform to the following Ḥadīth : "He who loves the way of my Sunnah, is true in his claim of loving me." If the adherence to the Sunnah is missing, it is not love, only plain acting.
- When these changes take place in a *sālik* , he tries to copy the blessed ways of the Holy Prophet (SAW) in the whole pattern of his life, be it the beliefs or worships or day to day dealings with others. If he does something which is not according to the Sunnah, he feels a hatred for his own self and makes efforts to come back to the Sunnah and sincerely asks for forgiveness from ALLAH.
- His outlook becomes broader. He is not concerned about his own well-being, but feels the urge to serve his other fellow brothers.

MEDITATION OF SPIRITUAL BAI'AT

This special meditation is only found in the Naqshbandiah Awaisiah Order, because achievement of blessings from the Rūḥ is possible only in this order. The order we follow is Naqshbandiah, and the training of the *sālik* is done according to the principles of the great masters of Naqshbandiah. We are also related to the Awaisiah system. That is why we do not just claim to acquire blessings from the Rūḥ, but we practically experience this fact.

The greatest source and fountainhead of all the blessings is the Holy Prophet (SAW). This great wealth which was distributed when the Holy Prophet was living in this world, is still distributed by his Holy Spirit (SAW). ALLAH has described the way this great fa-

your is bestowed: "Indeed those who take oath with you, in truth take oath with ALLAH." The same method is used to acquire beneficence from the Rūḥ. The Rūḥ of the *sālik* is now strong for its flight by the illuminated *luṭāif* and the meditations. Therefore the Rūḥ makes its presence in the Court of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and is gifted by the great wealth of taking an oath at the sacred hands of the Holy Prophet (SAW). After the oath, the Prophet (SAW) gives him the responsibility of serving the religion according to his capability. In the world of Tasawwuf, this is the first station in the path of *Sulook*. The other stations start from this point.

This meditation affects the *sālik's* practical life in two ways. Firstly, the reformation of his own self, and secondly, the service of humanity. The biggest change which takes place is that a person realises his own faults, and this is indeed a great change. The Holy Prophet (SAW) has said: "He is fortunate who is conscious of his own faults, and does not find time to criticise others."

Unmindful of our own selves,

We cast searching glances on other's faults,

When our eyes turned to our own sins,

Nobody seems lower to us than ourselves.

This feeling inspires a person to continuously reform himself. The second effect is that one makes endless efforts and finds inner peace by leading the servants of ALLAH on the right path. This is the point where the *sālik* is actually following in the footsteps of his Holy Prophet (SAW). Nobody can ever imagine a greater gift than this.

O ALLAH! Please grant us *Your* love, and the love of *Your* beloved Prophet (SAW), and make us love those deeds which will bring us closer to *Your* love. Ameen,

Glossary

- AS 'Alahi Salam (Peace be upon him)
- SAW Sall allah alehi-wa-Salam (Peace be blessing of Allah be upon him)
- RAU Radhi Allah Unho (May Allah be pleased with him)

HOLY QURAN

Translation
&
Commentary

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