



TASAWWUF AND SULÛK

**Abridged from Tadhkîrul Ahbâb after the Demise of
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Meerthî Sâhib (Dâmat Barakâtuhum)**

The purpose of sulûk (and tasawwuf) is that the heart of a person become desirous of the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ just as the body is desirous of food, and he becomes desirous of His ﷻ ibâdat just as a healthy body needs food and water. This will happen when the heart brims with the love and greatness of Allâh ﷻ and it becomes free of the love and greatness of anybody besides Allâh ﷻ. As long as the love and greatness of others are of such a nature that it conflicts with the love and greatness of Allâh ﷻ, one cannot be a true seeker of the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ and cannot be completely saved from sin. To establish the love and greatness of Allâh ﷻ in the heart is called Tajliyyah and to remove the love and greatness of all else from the heart is called Takhliyyah. Upon these two things i.e. Tajliyyah and Takhliyyah, the desire for the pleasure of Allâh ﷻ increases, seeking Him becomes firm, and the hatred for sin becomes strong. Then, if such a person even intends any sin, in his heart fear and such restlessness is created that one will abstain from committing sin. If purchase, any sin occurs, then agitation and restlessness will increase in his heart that he will be compelled to quickly repent because without a sincere repentance, one will not have any peace.

In other words, one can understand sulûk to be تعمیر الظاهر والباطن i.e. to keep the heart and outward limbs involved in the obedience and service of Allâh ﷻ following the way of the Guide of humanity, Rasûlullâh ﷺ. His Sharî'ah becomes one's habit and to practise on his Sunnah becomes a natural habit and no difficulty remains.

Hadrat Nabî ﷺ was the most moderate of the creation with regards to his internal and external. Thus, all his movements and actions i.e. all his habits were on complete equilibrium. By following it, every person will become moderate. Since the heart has been granted a special connection with the limbs, therefore when a Muslim makes effort that besides ibâdah even in habits, one keeps in mind the way of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, then in his limbs, equilibrium will be created and crookedness will be removed – the effect of this falls on the heart until eventually the heart becomes disgusted with evil character and becomes imbibed with noble character, thus attaining equilibrium. This equilibrium is called *nisbat* by which the heart rules over the limbs in a different way. In the heart, a light is created which does not allow any doubt in the difference between obedience and sin. In the belief of unseen things, the heart gets so much of sweetness which cannot be compared to any enjoyment or bounty of this world. By the zikr and fikr (contemplation) of Allâh ﷻ, such *uns* (attachment) is attained that to leave it for one second-called *ghafat* (negligence) – is more disliked and weightier than losing the rulership of the whole world and even one's honour.

In short, this Sharî'ah which Rasûlullâh ﷺ taught, is the main thing and this is tarîqat, but this will only be found when it surpasses the limbs and reaches the heart and one's actions become the fruit of this relationship and love.

Actions, with regard to its pinnacle and final result has been given many other names i.e. tasawwuf, sulûk, tarîqat, ma'rifat, tashîhul-akhlâq (correction of character), islâh-e-nafs (reformation of the nafs), tazkiya-e-bâtin (purification of the internal), ilm-ul-âdâb, etc.

The fountain head of this field is Nabî ﷺ regarding whom Allâh ﷻ revealed يُزَكِّيهِمْ (and he purifies them) and وَأَنْتَ لَعَلِي خُلِقَ (And verily you are upon great character) Nabî ﷺ himself has said, بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ (I have been sent to

complete noble character). Due to Nabî's ﷺ tarbiyat (moral training) and tazkiyah (spiritual reforming), his servants according to different abilities, were granted such high status that they became protected from the snares of shaytân, truth became manifest on their tongues, shaytân would not walk on the road on which they walked, the Angels felt shy of them, and they were the swords and lions of Allâh ﷻ. Their Îmân was weightier than the Îmân of the entire Ummah. Their good actions were equal to the stars in the sky. They will be called from every door of Jannah. They are the doors of knowledge. Qur'ân has to be learnt via them. We are commanded to follow them. Allâh ﷻ is pleased with them and they are pleased with Allâh ﷻ. Jannah desires them. They are the companions of Nabî ﷺ in Jannah.

Whoever has caused them pain has caused Nabî ﷺ pain. None should speak evil of them. If any error had occurred from them, then it should not be discussed. Their two rakâts are better than two hundred thousands rakâts of any other person. Whoever speaks ill of them then send on them curses of Allâh ﷻ. In short, the appearance of their reformation was found in different ways.

Akbar Marhûm has so beautifully stated:

The mere sight of his (Nabî ﷺ) caused droplets to turn into oceans. It has brightened the heart and granted sight to the eyes. Those who themselves were not on the road became guides themselves. What a sight it was which gave life to the dead

The Sahâbah ﷺ handed over the trust of tazkiyyah to those after them just as their other trusts of tilâwah, teaching of the Qur'ân and the Sunnah was handed over. As the best of eras passed, and there appeared an overpowering of materialism, a need for mujâhadah and spiritual exercises arose. Thus, this knowledge took the form of an independent subject. The details of beautiful character, trust, patience, gratitude, contentment, generosity, bravery, preference, forbearance, forgiveness, humility, ihsân (Allâh ﷻ consciousness), softness, ridâ (seeking Allâh's ﷻ

pleasure), taslîm (surrendering), trust, fear, hope, truthfulness etc as well as the methods of acquiring them were gathered. Similarly, evil character, stinginess, jealousy, anger, hatred, greed, lies, show, fighting, self-esteem, pride, cursing, back-biting, carrying of tales, love for fame etc. , together with their cures were compiled. Many books, like Qûtul-Qulûb, Awâriful-Ma'ârif, Ihyâul-Ulûm, Qushariah, Minhâjul-Âbidîn etc. were written all in the light of the Qur'ân Karîm, Ahâdîth and statements of Sahâbah ؓ as well as pious predecessors. Fours Imâms of this field are more famous and their chain still continues till today. (1) Hadrat Sayyid Abdul-Qâdir Jilânî ؒ, (2) Shaikh Shihâbuddîn Suharwardî ؒ, (3) Khwajah Muînuddîn Chisti ؒ, (4) Khwajah Bahâuddin Naqshabandi ؒ. Before and after them, many other elders had made great sacrifices e.g. Shaikh Mâruf Karkhî ؒ, Hadrat Bâyezîd Bustâmi ؒ, Fudhail Ibne-Iyâd ؒ, Siri Saqati ؒ, Shaikh Muhyiddîn Ibne-Arabi ؒ, Imâm Ghazâlî ؒ, Shaikh Abdul-Quddus ؒ, Sultan Nizâmuddîn ؒ, Khwajah Bâqi Billah ؒ, Hadrat Mujaddid Alfe-Thâni ؒ, Khwajah Muhammad Ma'sûm ؒ, Hadrat Mirza Mazhar Jâne-Jânâ ؒ, Hadrat Shâh Waliyullah ؒ, Hadrat Shâh Abdul-Aziz ؒ, Hadrat Sayyid Ahmad Shahid ؒ, Hadrat Maulânâ Muhammad Ismâîl Shahid ؒ etc. Through the beautiful efforts of these elders, Islam spread. Groups and groups of Muslims purified their hearts by them and were bestowed with the treasure of the quality of ihsân i.e أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه (to worship Allâh ﷻ as if you see Him). Together with the knowledge of Nubuwwat, the akhlâq (character) of Nubuwwat spread. Many times, the occasions of internal conflict with the people of falsehood occurred. Allâh ﷻ granted victory to Islam. Hundreds of thousands of people accepted Islam on the hands of some elders and they imbibed in themselves the character of Nubuwwat from these elders. Thus they were granted nisbat (connection) with Allâh ﷻ.

The Necessity of Bay'at

Faqîhul-Ummah Hadrat Aqdas Muftî Mahmûd Hassan Sâhib ؒ writes, regarding the necessity of bay'at.

"To attain correct beliefs, good actions and noble character, is necessary. To protect oneself from incorrect beliefs, evil character and bad actions is also necessary. This can be either by bay'at, by attainment of knowledge or by companionship of elders. However experience and observation is that generally without taking bay'at to an expert Shaikh, this object is not achieved." (*Fatâwâ Mahmûdiyyâ vol. 1, pg. 150*)

In another place, he writes, "Without striking a connection with a perfect (kâmil) Walî, firstly amal does not take place fully on all the laws of Sharî'ah, secondly, ikhlâs (sincerity) is not created. For this reason, after the demise of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, the Sahâbah ؓ established a connection and took bay'at to Hadrat Abu Bakr Siddique ؓ, then Hadrat Umar ؓ and this continued. This bay'at was not only in obedience in the matters of khilâfat, but also for firmness in internal purity. It is for this reason that the Akâbir-Ulamâ of every era, in spite of proficiency in knowledge, felt the necessity of bay'at, as is seen in the condition of Hadrat Shâh Walîyullâh Sâhib ؓ and the Ulamâ of his family. In the last era, Hadrat Maulânâ Rashîd Ahmad Muhaddith Gangohî ؒ, Hadrat Maulânâ Muhammad Qâsim Nânotwî ؒ, Hadrat Maulânâ Ashraf Alî Thânwî ؒ etc. understood the necessity of bay'at on the hands of Hadrat Hâjî Imdâdullâh Sâhib Muhâjir Makkî ؒ. Through the blessings of this bay'at, they attained much spiritual benefit. (*Fatâwâ Mahmûdiyyâ vol.1, pg. 153*)

In one place, he writes, "It is the duty of every person to attain correct beliefs, good actions, correct speech and noble character. Generally all these things cannot be attained without the nurturing of a Shaikh-e-Kâmil. For this tarbiyat (nurturing), there is a need for establishing a connection of *irâdat* (i.e bay'at) just as there is a need for a doctor or hakîm for cure of physical sicknesses. Countless people, according to their abilities, by choosing this way, attained perfection and made their lives according to the Sunnah. After becoming Walîs and Ârifs they fulfilled the service of guidance to mankind. In every field, there is a need to

differentiate between true and false. (*Fatâwâ Mahmûdiyyâ vol.1, pg. 150*)

Explaining the necessity of bay'at, Hadrat Maulânâ Doctor Muhammad Ismâîl Memon Madanî زيد مجدهم has written, "The example of bay'at is like that of a physically sick person who has a very old sickness or is afflicted by more than one sickness. You will delay all your worldly necessities and the first thing you will find out is that for my sicknesses, which expert doctor or Hakîm is more appropriate. You will investigate properly. After investigation if you feel that so-and-so medical expert is more appropriate then you will go to him and will make a pact to cure yourself by him. The medical expert will ask for time to cure. Whatever medication he prescribes, will have to be followed. Whatever he prohibits from, one will have to completely abstain from it. You, the sick person will have to promise to practise on these two conditions. Then the medical expert will say, "After every two weeks, you will have to report your condition and you will have to be examined." If you accept all these conditions, then it is as though a promise or bay'at has been taken. If you practise on this prescription with constancy then Allâh ﷻ will through His fadl (grace) grant you cure.

Similarly, for the cure of spiritual sicknesses, one has to turn to an expert in internal sicknesses. One has to follow his prescribed medication and one will have to stay away from those things which the expert prohibits (i.e. from harâm and some permissible things also). At times, the person will have to inform of his condition. This is called bay'at, iradat or being a murîd. If the spiritually sick person or murîd practises on this pact with constancy, then Allâh ﷻ through His fadl (grace) will grant cure to him from his spiritual and internal sickness and He will include this person amongst His accepted and close ones. An important part of cure for spiritual sicknesses is to stay for a considerable period in the company of one's Pîr (guide). If due to living far away or for any other reason it is not possible to remain in his company,

then one should with constancy keep in contact by means of correspondence. There is no time specified for this cure. As much care is kept of the conditions and etiquettes that is how fast the work will be done. As much negligence there is, that is how much delay will take place. For this, the companionship of the Shaikh is very necessary. Generally, this road is regarded as very difficult. Most people think that to become the Walî and close one to Allâh ﷻ is not easy. Shaytân places a person in this thought and does not allow him to come on this path, whereas it is compulsory for every Muslim to cure his spiritual sicknesses. How can that matter which is so necessary be difficult and impossible to attain? In the past eras, the strength of people was strong. Thus great mujâhadah (sacrificing) was taken from them. After great spiritual exercises and disciplining one would reach one's destination. However since people have become weak today, therefore Allâh ﷻ has made this path easy.

The Qualities of a Shaikh-e-Muhaqqiq and Kâmil Walî

What are the qualities of a Muhaqqiq Shaikh and a Kâmil (perfect) Walî. Faqîhul-Ummah Hadrat Aqdas Mufti Sâhib رحمته اللہ علیہ writes, "His beliefs must be according to the Qur'ân and Hadîth, he should be imbued with the character of Nabî ﷺ, he should have knowledge of the necessities of Dîn and he should be affectionate towards the creation. He has reformed himself in the company of any Kâmil (perfect) Buzurg and this Buzurg has trust on him. The condition of those sitting in his company become more correct day by day i.e. the desire of the world is less and there is more inclination towards âkhirah (the hereafter). (*Fatâwâ Mahmûdiyyâ vol.1, pg. 143*)

In another place, he writes

- (1.) He has necessary knowledge of the Qur'ân and Sunnah, which he has either studied or heard from the Ulamâ.
- (2.) He is firm in trustworthiness and Taqwâ, he abstains from major sins and is not persistent on minor sins.

- (3.) He has no desire for this world (i.e. he is free from love of wealth or love for desire) and he is inclined to the hereafter. He is consistent on stressed forms of obedience and Sunnah Azkâr.
- (4.) He is in the habit of commanding righteousness and prohibiting evil.
- (5.) He has attained sulûk and purification of the internal from Mashâikh and has stayed in their company for a considerable period. (*Fatâwâ Mahmûdiyyâ vol.1, pg. 150*)

The Necessity of a Murshid (Spiritual Guide)

Hadrat Hakîmul-Ummah رحمته writes,

"Generally, to learn outward actions and their Masâil, one needs an Ustâdh. Without an Ustâdh, this will also not be correct. However, for internal actions (اعمال باطنية) in which some things are fard and wâjib and some things are makrûh, or harâm which has been mentioned in tasawwuf and tariqat to gain their knowledge and practise on it, one is more in need of an Ustâdh. In technical terms, the Ustâdh of these Masâil is called a Shaikh, Murshid or Pîr.

To understand and cure evil qualities cannot occur generally without a Shaikh. Thus, for the person who places his foot in this path, it is necessary for him to seek a Shaikh and Murshid. When he gets one, then he should turn towards him and should follow his instructions completely. He will start his actions with taubah (repentance), then he will come to know that to complete it, he will be in need of a Shaikh. Without the guidance of a perfect Shaikh, complete taubah is also difficult. (*Tashîl Qasdus-Sabîl*)

Published By:
 Madrasah Arabia Islamia
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