The Sufi Path of Self-knowledge

Lecture Seven

Knowledge and Truth
Levels of Religious Instruction

• **Introductory**: *Shariah*, Exoteric
• **Intermediate**: *Tariqah*, Mesoteric
• **Advanced**: *Marifah / Haqiqah*, Esoteric
The key to success in worship lies in meditative reflection (*fikrat*)...whoever persists in such reflection in the heart will behold the invisible realm in the spirit.

Whoever contemplates God through keeping watch over the thoughts which pass through his heart will be exalted by God in all of his outward deeds.

–DHū’l-Nūn Miṣrī in ‘Attār: Tadhkirat, 154-155
One cannot behold God by the eye of ratiocination derived from reason, for only through the eye of the heart, which is known as the faculty of inner vision, can one behold God. As long as you do not focus this eye, so as to sharpen its vision with the collyrium of asceticism, spiritual conduct, purgation of the soul, purification of the heart, and illumination of the Spirit, you will be unable to witness the Friend’s Beauty in contemplation. All the masters of the Path are in accordance that this reality can be realized only through the guidance of a Perfect Man who knows and contemplates God.

—Lāhījī: Mafātīh, 66
The outer law (Shariah) is my word,
The spiritual path (Tariqah) my actions,
And the inner reality (Haqiqah) my inner states.
–Prophet Muhammad, Hadith

If someone requires of himself the conduct prescribed by the divine Command (Shariah), God will illuminate his heart with the light of realization (Haqiqah). There is no station nobler than the station of following the Beloved in the orders he gave (Shariah), the actions he took (Tariqah) and the character he possessed (Haqiqah).

–Ibn Ata in Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism by Al-Qushayri
There is an organ in the body that, if it is righteous, ensures that the whole system will be righteous; and if it is corrupt, the whole body will become corrupt. This organ is the heart.

There is a polish for everything that takes away rust; and the polish for the heart is dhikr, the remembrance of Allah. –Prophet Muhammad, Hadith

قلب Qalb, Heart:

ق Qaf (100) +

ل Lam (30) +

ب Ba (2) = 132 = 32 + 1 = 33

Muhammad: (م) Mim (40) + (ح) Ha (8) + (م) Mim (40) +

(م) Mim (40) + (د) Dal (4) = 132 = 32 + 1= 33
When you are separate from the Kaaba, it is all right to turn toward it, but those who are in it can turn toward any direction they wish.

–Bayazid Bistami
In general, it is to the measure of one’s alienation from one’s own ego that one attains direct knowledge of one’s Lord... I heard Abu Ali al-Daqqaq say, “One of the tokens of the gnosis of God is the achievement of deep awe and reverence for God. If someone’s realization increases, his awe increases.” And I heard him say, “Gnosis requires stillness of heart, just as learning requires outward quiet. If someone’s gnosis increases, his tranquility increases.”

—Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism*
Wherever the delusion of your selfhood appears – there’s hell. Wherever “you” aren’t – that’s heaven.

–Abū Sa‘īd in Ibn Munawwar: Asrār at-tawhīd, ed. Shafī‘ī-Kadkanī, 299
Search for what you are asked about in the sanctuary of knowledge, and if you do not find it there, then in the battlefield of wisdom. If you still do not find it, weigh it with the Unity. If it is not to be found in any of these three places, strike Satan in the face with it.

—Ahmad bin Ata in Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism by Al-Qushayri
[Al-Jurayri] said that whoever does not establish awe of duty and vigilance in his relationship to God will not arrive at disclosure of the unseen or contemplation (mushahadah) of the divine.

—Al-Qushayri, Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism
When the seeker realizes the station of contemplation (*mushāhida*), which is witnessing God’s Essence comprehending and encompassing all phenomena – “Does not your Lord suffice, since He is witness over all things” (41:53) – he continually witnesses lights from the *mundus invisibilis*. From such a mystic’s perspective, this world and the hereafter are one and the same. This can only be realized by a vision that is all heart and spirit, not a view bound by mere mud and mire.

–Ibn Karbalā’ī, *Rawdāt al-janān*, II 164
Those who have no knowledge say, ‘Why does not Allah speak to us, or come to us a sign?’ So said those who were before them, [words] similar to what they say. Alike are their hearts. We have certainly made the signs clear for a people who have certainty.

—Al-Baqarah [2:118]

Knowledge does not come about except by the prior fulfillment of its conditions—that is, one must examine things in a pertinent and relevant way. Then when hints of the divine become continuous and clear demonstrative evidence has been obtained, the perceiver, through the succession of lights and his deep reflection upon them, becomes seemingly independent of the consideration of proof. This is the state of certainty.

—Al-Qushayri, Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism: On Certainty
The gnostic is purified of base characteristics and the disasters of his nature. He stands patiently at the door of God and remains secluded in his heart. He enjoys the good graces of God and corroborates Him in all of his states. He has cut off the whims of his own self. He does not permit a thought in his heart that would summon to other than God. He becomes a stranger to the creation and is liberated from the catastrophes of his ego. He is cleansed of attachments and distractions and in his secret being is always conversing with God Most High. His every glance returns to God Most High. The Truth inspires him with the intuition of His secrets—the secrets of the course of His Omnipotence. This is why such a person is called an arif, a gnostic, and his state is called marifah, direct knowledge.

—Al-Qushayri,

Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism
Practice

• Continue to develop your self-observation and self-awareness throughout the day, becoming conscious of your thoughts, words, feelings, and deeds. At the end of each day, sit down to reflect on how well you did.

• Sit down in a comfortable meditation posture (whether on a bench or chair in the Western style, or any comfortable position you can maintain, such as the lotus or half-lotus). Afterward, empty your mind of all thoughts, preoccupations, memories, and worries.

• Pronounce the Chinese mantra WU to help silence the mind, pronounced like a hurricane or wind: Wwwwuuuuuuu...

• After mantralizing out loud for a period of thirty or more minutes, pronounce the mantra in a whisper, and then do so silently, mentally.