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# **The Foundations of Sainthood**

By

**The Light of the Age, the Reviver of the *Deen*, the  
Sword of Truth and *Amir'l-Mu'mineen***

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful, may Allah bless our master Muhammad, his family and Companions and give him much peace.

Says the poor slave in need of the mercy of his Lord – **Uthman ibn Muhammad ibn Uthman** (who is Fulbe by lineage, Maliki by school of thought and al-`Ash`ari by doctrine of belief). All praises are due to Allah the Lord of the worlds. May the best blessings and most perfect peace be upon our master Muhammad, his family and all his Companions. May Allah be pleased with the masters among the *Taabi`uun*, the right-acting scholars, the four *Imams* who exercised independent judgment and with those who follow them until the Day of Judgment.

To continue: this is the book called –

### **The Foundation of Sainthood And It's Prerequisites**

I say and success is with Allah – realize my brother that the foundations of sainthood and its prerequisites are built upon: [1] adherence to the Book and the *Sunna*; [2] avoiding passions and heretical innovation; [3] extolling the sanctity of the *shaykhs*; [4] envisioning the non-existence of creation; [5] persistence in the litanies; and [6] avoiding immoderation.

Abu'l-Qaasim al-Junayd, may Allah be pleased with him said: “All the paths (*turuq*) are closed except following the footprints of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.”

Sahl ibn Abdullahi, may Allah be pleased with him said: “Our foundations are six things: [1] the Book of Allah and the *Sunna* of His Messenger; [2] consuming what is permissible (*halaal*); [3] preventing harm; [4] avoiding sins; [5] repentance; and [6] fulfilling rights.”

Abu'l-Hamza al-Baghdadi may Allah be pleased with him said: “Whoever knows the path to the Lord of Truth traveling it is made easy for him.” He also said: “There is no guide to the path to Allah ta`ala except in following the Beloved Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Whoever makes his soul adhere to the courtesies of the *Sunna* Allah will illuminate his heart with the light of direct experiential knowledge of Allah. For there is no spiritual station more noble than following the Beloved Messenger, may Allah less him and grant him peace in his commands, deeds, words and character.”

As-Shaybaan may Allah be pleased with him was asked about the reality of *tasawwuf* and he said: “It is imitation of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.”

Realize that the textual evidence concerning the above issues are many.

Success is with Allah.

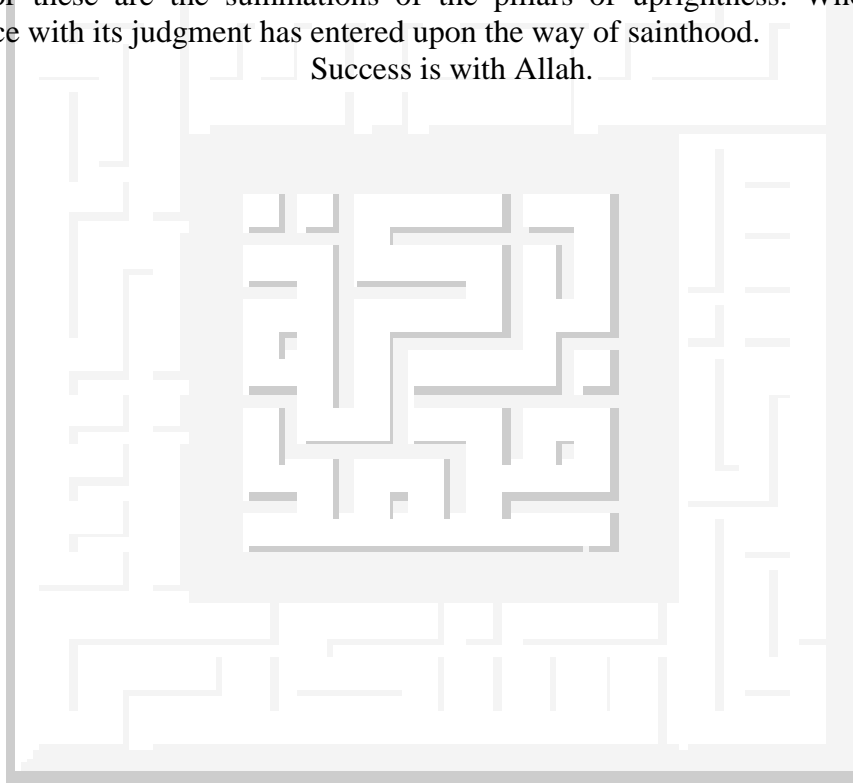
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## **On the Pillars of Uprightness in Obedience to Allah, the Mighty the Majestic**

The pillars of uprightnes are five as Ibn `Abd `s-Saadiq said in his Hidaayat `l-`Abeed: “The first is that you worship Allah due to the fact that you are a slave. The second is that you recognize that you are an expended creature utilized for other than yourself and that you are not working for yourself. The third is that you recognize the wealth that is in your hands is from the wealth of the One who expends you. The fourth is that what you disperse for yourself or for others like your family be from what is in your own hands. The fifth is that you see His blessings which He gives to you as bounty from Him and the afflictions which He descends upon you as atonement for your past sins.”

For these are the summations of the pillars of uprightnes. Whoever acts in accordance with its judgment has entered upon the way of sainthood.

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## On Mentioning the Fundamental Traits of Uprightness

They are fifteen traits that were delineated by Ibn `Abd `s-Saadiq in his book Hidaayat `l-`Abeed. Imam al-Ghazaali arranged them in his Manhaj in a manner, which needs no addition. The first is knowledge (*`ilm*), which includes what has been made incumbent upon us to know from the science of the foundation of the *deen*, jurisprudence, and *tasawwuf*. The second is repentance (*tawba*) from every sin between you and your Lord and the sins between you and His creatures. The third is austerity in this world except with what is necessary. The fourth is withdrawing from creatures except during times of prayer, times of study or other than these from the times of religious benefit. The fifth is making war with Satan by means of seeking refuge and seeking defense from him. The sixth is struggling against the soul and bridling it with the bridle of fearful awareness. The seventh is reliance upon Allah concerning the matter of provision. The eighth is resigning matters over to Allah ta`ala during times of danger. The ninth is contentment with the decrees of Allah. The tenth is patience during affliction. The eleventh is persistence in fear of the punishment of Allah at all times. The twelfth is persistence in the hope of Allah at all times. The thirteenth is negating showing-off and pretension by means of the sincerity of actions. The fourteenth is negating conceit by means of remembrance of the favors of Allah ta`ala. The fifteenth is persistence in praise and gratitude for the blessings of Allah the Mighty the Majestic.

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## On Clarifying the Path of *Tasawwuf* and On What It Is Constructed

Ahmad Zaruuq says in his *Umdat 'l-Murid 's-Saadiq*: “Realize that jurisprudence and the *tasawwuf* are brothers in the proofs concerning the judgments of Allah subhaanahu wa ta`ala. This is because the reality of *tasawwuf* falls under the area of sincerity of attention to Allah ta`ala, while jurisprudence and the foundations of the *deen* are conditioned by it. For that which is conditioned can never be sound without its condition being fulfilled. Allah ta`ala says: “*And the ingratitude of His servants does not please Him.*” For this shows the necessity for the realization of true *Iman*. Further Allah ta`ala says: “*If you are grateful He will be pleased with you.*” For this shows the necessity of acting in accordance with *Islam*.

Therefore, there can be no *tasawwuf* without jurisprudence since you cannot know the outward legal judgments of Allah except by it. Likewise, there is no jurisprudence without *tasawwuf* since there is no reality to knowledge except by correct actions and correct actions cannot be had except with sincerity of attention. Finally, these two (*tasawwuf* and jurisprudence) are not possible except by means of *Iman* since they cannot be sound except by means of it.

Know that the discernment of jurisprudence is confined to what will remove difficulty in ones worship. While, the discernment of the foundations of the *deen* is confined to what certify the principles, which are *Iman* and the *Sunna*. Finally, the discernment of *tasawwuf* is concerned with preparation for what will unite one to perfection, which is what is the goal in the issues of *Iman* and the *Sunna*.

This perfection is sought by the *Sufi* in the issues of the foundations of the *deen* in order to beautify *Iman* with certainty (*yaqeen*) until it becomes the very source of eye witnessing. As for jurisprudence, the *Sufi* always takes hold of the highest legal opinion by following that which is the best and most perfect interpretation. This is in accordance with His words: “*Those who hear the word and follow the best interpretation.*”

It is for this reason that the *madh'hab* of the *Sufis* in doctrines of beliefs has been the *madh'hab* of the early ancestors regarding the doctrine of incomparability (of Allah) and the negation of resemblance (to Allah) without commenting on howness or interpolation. Their *madh'hab* with regard to legal decisions is the *madh'hab* of the partial jurist, who only take from the *madh'habs* that which is confirmed by the prophetic traditions. This is in order to combine the light of imitation with the light of guidance, while at the same time adhering to a single *madh'hab* without opposing the rest in the most sound and well-known opinion except when necessary. Their *madh'hab* in the issues of the superogatory acts of worship is the *madh'hab* of the people of prophetic traditions. For they do take that which has been falsely attributed to the Prophet, like the prayer for the week and the like. This is in spite of the fact that Abu Taalib affirmed this sought of worship during the rituals of pilgrimage and he was followed in this by *Imam al-Ghazaali*.

The *Sufis* distinguished themselves in their *madh'hab* of moral training through the principle of gathering their hearts to their Master by whatever way they are able. This is regardless if it is based upon what is clearly permissible, concessions or on that in which opinions differ.

They have also made statements that have been rejected by those who do not understand their objectives. The rejecters demanded for a return to what the *Sufis* themselves have demanded, regarding correct worship in accordance with what is the safest and choosing preference for the most authentic.

*Imam* al-Junayd, may Allah be pleased with him indicated that foundation by his words: "Everything which gathers the slave to his Lord is permissible." Al-Qushayri said on the authority of Abu Ali 'd-Daqaq, may Allah be pleased with him on the authority of the *shaykhs*, that they said: "What gathers your heart to Allah, then there is no problem with it."

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## On the Supports of the Path of the People of *Tasawwuf* and Its Foundations

*Imam* al-Ghazaali said: “The supports of the path of *tasawwuf* are two matters: [1] avoiding that which preoccupies you from Allah; and [2] persistence in the remembrance of Allah.” As for as its foundations, they are five things, as Ahmad Zarruq delineated. The first is fearful awareness of Allah (*taqwa Allah*) in secret and open. Fearful awareness is demonstrated by uprightness with the obligations and scrupulousness with the prohibitions. The second is following the *Sunna* in words and deeds. Following the *Sunna* is demonstrated by safeguarding it and excellent character. This means that everyone is required to behave in accordance with what is easiest for him except when it contradicts the *shari`a*. The third is turning away from people coming and going. Turning away from people is demonstrated by showing patience and being in a state of reliance upon Allah. The fourth is contentment with Allah in little and much. Contentment with Allah is demonstrated by satisfaction and with leaving matters over to Allah. The fifth is resigning to Allah during ease and hardships. Resignation to Allah is demonstrated by being in a state of praise, gratitude and giving in to Allah during hardships.

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## On Mentioning the Roots of the Foundations of *Tasawwuf*

The roots of the above mentioned foundations are also five as Ahmad Zarruq delineated. The first is resolution (*himma*) is that the most invaluable is always chosen over the most contemptible. This means that Allah ta`ala is the desired aim in worship and not worldly matters, spiritual unveiling or miracles. The second is safeguarding the sanctity of Allah, the sanctity of the *shaykh* and the sanctity of creatures. For safeguarding the sanctity of Allah is by following His commands and avoiding His prohibitions. Safeguarding the sanctity of the *shaykhs* is extolling their business. Safeguarding the sanctity of creatures is by showing sincere compassion for their needs. The third is excellent service that is in conformity with the *Sunna* in all actions. The fourth is showing uncompromising resolve because a person is an enemy that is between two adversaries, the soul and Satan. Thus, when he resolves to perform any religious act these two adversaries oppose him. Therefore, he must be uncompromising in his resolve in opposition to them. The fifth is to exalt the blessings of Allah. Exalting His blessings is by being grateful in order to guarantee their increase.

Thus, whoever raises his resolution has his spiritual ranks elevated as well. Whoever safeguards the sanctity of Allah, the *shaykh* and creatures has his own sanctity safeguarded as well. Whoever makes his service excellent has his nobility established for himself. Whoever safeguards his resolve, and then has made his guidance persistent. Whoever exalts the blessings of Allah has made increase in such blessings necessary.

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## On the Foundations of Behavior

The foundations of behavior are five as Ahmad Zarruq also delineated. The first is seeking knowledge in order to establish the commands. The second is keeping company with the spiritual teachers (*al-mashaayikh*) and brothers in order to gain spiritual insight. This is because keeping company with the righteous is the causative factor in obtaining righteous deeds. When one keeps company with one who is accustomed to praying, then more than likely he too will grow accustomed to praying. When one keeps company with one accustomed to fasting then more than likely he too will fast, and the like. The third is avoiding concessions in order to safeguard oneself. The fourth is seizing the times by means of the litanies in order to obtain presence with Allah. The fifth is stimulating the soul to withdraw from corrupt passions and making it safe from errors.

The harm of seeking knowledge is keeping company with those who are young in years and intelligence. The harm in keeping company with the spiritual teachers and the brothers is conceitedness and excess. The harm in avoiding concessions is showing compassion for the corrupt soul. The harm in seizing the times by means of the litanies is extending one's gaze in doing extra acts of worship. The harm in stimulating the soul is presumption about the excellent state of the soul and its uprightness.

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## On the Roots Which Cure the Sickness of the Soul

The roots which cure the sickness of the soul are five as Ahmad Zarruq delineated. The first is reducing the amount of intake of food. The second is seeking refuge with Allah concerning what comes down from the opposition of the soul when it descends. This is because the barriers of arrival to Allah are four: [1] the soul; [2] Satan; [3] this world; and [4] people.

The barriers of the soul and Satan are stronger than the other two. This is because the barrier of people can be removed by avoiding them. The barrier of this world can be removed by having austerity concerning it. Realize that the barrier of the soul is stronger than the barrier of Satan, since the Satan is repelled by the remembrance of Allah and the gatherings of recitation of the *Qur'an*. However, the barrier of the soul is not repelled by anything except seeking refuge with Allah.

The third is fleeing from a place where it is feared the committing of sins. For example, like a place where there is a prominence of women. The fourth is keeping company with one who reminds you of Allah ta`ala or reminds you of His commands.

The fifth is persistence in seeking forgiveness and persistence in sending the blessings upon the Chosen Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. For the amount of seeking forgiveness from Allah you should perform daily is one hundred to seventy times. The highest amount of blessings you should send daily upon the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace is one thousand times. The median amount should be five hundred times daily. And the least amount should be one hundred times daily.

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## On Mentioning the Roots of Misfortunes

The roots of misfortune are three, as Ibn `Abd `s-Saadiq delineated them in his Hidaayat `l-`Abeed:

The first is being pleased and content with the defects and imperfections of the soul. The second is ceasing to have fear and dread of Allah when you are alone and unaccompanied. The third is being persistent in disobedience and rebellion against Allah.

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## On Clarifying the Paths By Which Humans Can Know the Defects of the Soul

The paths by which humans can know the defects of the soul are four, as *Imam al-Ghazaali* delineated in his *al-Ihya*. The first is sitting in front of a *shaykh* who is acutely aware of the defects of the soul and who is informed about the secret affairs of death. He seeks the judgment of the *shaykh* in the governing of his soul and he follows his designated instructions concerning the struggle against it. This is the affair of the seeker with his *shaykh* and the disciple with his instructor. For the *shaykh* or instructor knows the defects of the soul and he is aware of the road to its cure.

The second is that he should seek out a sincere religious friend and make him a guardian over his soul in order to observe his states and deeds. Thus, he should not be so disgusted with his character, his deeds and faults (whether apparent or hidden) to instruct him about them.

The third is that he benefits in knowing the defects of the soul from what comes from the tongue of his enemies. For indeed sins are uncovered before the eyes of hatred and resentment. Perhaps people benefit more from their enemies who resent them and mention their faults than from the benefit attained from friends who instead always flatter them with praises, commendations and concealing faults. Although naturally the criticism of enemies is usually discredited and his words are always attributed to his envy, nevertheless, the intelligent person benefits from words of his enemies. This is because the tongues will spread his defects about, (he would not have known about his defects otherwise).

The fourth is that he should mix with the people and what he sees that is blameworthy among them that require him to avoid it; he should then impute the same defects to himself. Truly a believer is the mirror for a believer and he sees his own defects in the defects of others. Realize that the disposition to follow vain desires is the same in everyone. For whatever can be attributed to one friend can also be attributed to another. Sometimes sins greater and viler than theirs can be attributed to them as well. So let a person examine his own soul and purify it from all that is blameworthy in others. This alone will suffice him as a reference. For if all people could refrain from doing what they considered undesirable in others, then there would be no need for teachers.

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## On What Will Manifest the Falsity of One Who Claims A Status With Allah

Whoever claims a status with Allah and there appears from him one of the five following things, is either a liar or he is one of the abandoned. We seek refuge with Allah!

The first is dispatching the limbs into disobedience of Allah. The second is pretension and affectation in the obedience of Allah. The third is greediness after the creation of Allah. The fourth is causing division among the people of Allah. The fifth is failing to show respect for Muslims as Allah has commanded and which makes Islam complete.



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## On the Conditions of the Teaching *Shaykh*

The conditions of the teaching *shaykh* are five, as Ahmad Zarruq delineated them. The first is sound knowledge that is derived from the Book of Allah and the *Sunna*. The second is sound perceptivity based upon experience. The third is an exalted appearance. The fourth is pleasing spiritual states conforming to the Book and the *Sunna* and in accordance with the *shaykhs* of the Path. The fifth is penetrating discernment by which he is guided from the outward appearances of things into their inner realities.

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## On the Origin of the Spiritual Journey, Spiritual Training and Mastership

Realize that the forebears of the People of Allah did not have a precise system for attaining mastership. Nor did they compose any technical terminologies regarding the spiritual journey. What they had was companionship and encountering. For when one spiritually lower among them would encounter one more advanced, then his spiritual state would benefit by his seeing him. This is because when someone has realized a spiritual state, those who are present with him benefit from it. For spiritual states are inherited. For this reason Ibn al-`Areef, may Allah be pleased with him said: "How can he succeed who has never intermixed with the successful?"

For the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, always gained benefit by seeing the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Companionship to them was in order to learn good courtesy and to gain knowledge. Thus, the loving friendship that one of them for their *shaykh* was the loving friendship for one who is recognized as superior to them. He subsequently, shows gratitude for his teacher's goodness towards him without being excessive in that. Their foundation for that is the words of Allah ta`ala: "*And follow the way of the one who turns to Me in repentance. Unto Me is your final return and I shall inform you of what you used to do.*"

Then when groping about overcame the souls and confusion overcame the hearts, the later *Sufis* made known certain technical terminologies in the training of the souls and in the system of attaining mastership, as it is well known concerning their affair. They took their support from what we previously cited from the words of Allah ta`ala: "*And follow the way of the one who turns to Me in repentance.*" They also took their support from the fact that the Prophet may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to train his Companions. For he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace would give instructions and training to each person what was appropriate to his own station. He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace would council one by his words, like: "Do not become angry." while he would say to another: "Say: Allah is my Lord', then thereafter be upright." He would yet again say to another: "Always let your tongue be moist from the remembrance of Allah." He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to designate for certain people specific forms of remembrance of Allah and exclusive knowledge. He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace once said to Abdallah ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him: "Fast one day and eat the next day." He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace affirmed and allowed Hamza Umar al-Aslami to perform the continuous fast during his life. And other than these from the various forms of training the souls, so understand.

These later *Sufis* proceeded in the same manner according to the requirements of knowledge and reality. They would never initiate a seeker into the station of fearful awareness (*taqwa*), which is performing the obligations and avoiding the prohibitions, without taking an oath (*`ahd*) with the aim of confirming his adherence to the traits of fearful awareness; taking their support for this from prophetic tradition of `Ubada ibn as-Saamat, may Allah be pleased with him to whom the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: "Give your allegiance to me on the condition that you will not associate anything with Allah."

He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to take the oath of allegiance repeatedly on some occasions, as what occurred with Salma ibn al-Akwa` and others as is well known. Further, this was demonstrated in the prophetic tradition regarding the military expeditions. He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace used to invite his Companions to renew their oath in spite of the firmness of their *Iman* and the strength of their direction to Allah, from what was mentioned. His objective in renewing their oaths was in order to reinforce the previous oaths. And Allah knows best.

The *Sufis* never initiate a seeker into the station of uprightness, which is compelling the soul to accept the behavior of the *Qur'an* and *Sunna*, without first teaching him that which best suited to him devoid of excess and deficiency, due to the immensity of this knowledge and the natural ignorance that mankind has of what is suitable for him from it.

The *Sufis* also make it necessary for the seeker to strive for spiritual unveiling by what will connect him to it by means of hunger, wakefulness, silence and solitude. They also make it necessary for the seeker to manifest all that he possesses in order to obtain what they possess. He, thus, becomes in their presence like a dead man in the hands of its washer, as it is well known regarding the conditions of the seeker with the *shaykh*. However they will not necessitate any of this until they see in him the qualifications of union and perfection.

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## On the Conditions of the Aspirations of the Seeker, His Protection and Fortress

*Imam* al-Ghazaali said in his *al-Ihya*: “It is essential for the seeker to know that his preconditions which he must put forward at the beginning of his aspiration. He also has a protection which he must take hold of. And finally he has a fortress in which he must seek fortification, in order to safeguard himself from his enemies who seek to cut him off from his spiritual path.

As for as the preconditions that he must put forward regarding his aspirations, it is lifting the veils that stand between him and the Lord of Truth. The veils that stand between him and the Lord of Truth are four: [1] wealth (*maal*); [2] worldly position (*jaah*); [3] blind imitation (*taqleed*); and [4] disobedience (*ma`asiya*). The manner in which the veils of wealth is lifted is by having one’s wealth submerged and being removed from under his control until there only remains enough for necessities. The manner in which the veils of renown are lifted is by being engaged in labor that will cause the hearts of people to keep away from him. The manner in which the veils of blind imitation are lifted is by avoiding fanaticism for the teachings of the *shaykhs* regarding the science of *tawheed* (divine unity) and by accepting the true meaning of **Laa ilaha illa Allah Muhammadun rasuulullahi** (There is no deity except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) with sincere *Iman*. He must also be intent in the realization of his sincerity by repudiating every deity besides Allah the Mighty, the Majestic. And realize that the biggest deity to him is corrupt passions. Once he is able to do this then the reality of the matter will become manifest to him regarding the true meaning of his beliefs which has seized him. It is improper for him to seek the disclosure of his beliefs by means of disputation because if he is overcome with fanatical adherence to the teachings of a particular *shaykh* and his heart is not wide enough to accept any other, then that will be a shackle and a barrier to him. As for disobedience is concerned, it is a veil that cannot be lifted except through repentance (*tawba*), withdrawing from disobedience, tenacious determination to avoid repetition of such deeds, genuine regret for what has passed, repayment of restitution and reimbursement for acts of injustice and satisfying the claim of former adversaries.

As for the protection of the seeker after putting forward the above-mentioned preconditions, it is the *Shaykh*. He should cling to him like a blind man walking on the edge of the sea clings to his guide. Thus, when the seeker has put forward the four above-mentioned preconditions, he becomes like one who has purified himself of impurities performed the ablution and he then becomes true and upright prepared for the prayer. He thus is only in need of an *Imam* to follow. Likewise with the seeker, he needs a *Shaykh* or teacher in order to follow. There is no doubt that he will guide him to the straight way. For the way of the *deen* is obscure and the paths of Satan are many and apparent. Hence, the seeker must entrust his affair entirely to his *Shaykh* and he must never be at variance with his *Shaykh* in anything. He must realize that he will benefit even from the mistakes of the *Shaykh*, for when he makes a mistake it will be more beneficial to him than himself, even when he is correct.

As for the fortress of the seeker in which he must seek fortification, in order to safeguard himself from his enemies who seek to cut him off from his spiritual path, they are four. The first is keeping secluded from people except during times of prayer, times of study or any other time of religious benefit. The second is silence, for he should not speak except out of necessity. The third is hunger by choice, for he should not eat except when necessary. The fourth is wakefulness, for he should not sleep except when necessary. These four matters comprise the fortress of the seeker in which he must seek fortification, in order to safeguard himself from his enemies who seek to cut him off from his spiritual goal. For truly the goal and objective of the seeker is to rectify his heart in order to have direct witnessing of his Lord and in order to rectify his encounter with Him.

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## **On the Course of Action of the Seeker Regarding Disciplining His Soul By Altering Blameworthy Character and His Acceptance of the Behavior Which Transform By Means of Training**

*Imam* al-Ghazaali said in his *Ihya*: “The path regarding disciplining the soul is to follow the course that is in direct opposition to every thing that the soul desires and inclines towards.” As for the acceptance of behavior that transforms by means of training, it is absolutely established. *Imam* al-Ghazaali also said in his *Ihya*: “To say that behavior cannot accept alteration and change, would completely defeat the need for preaching, admonition and instruction. For how can the possibility of behavior transformation be rejected in humans when the altering of the instinctive behavior in animals is accepted as possible? Wild untamed animals have been transformed by means of hunting into tame domestic animals. Wild dogs have been transformed from eating what it catches into well-bred guard dogs. Likewise, wild horses have been transformed from being defiant into being submissive and compliant. All of this is simply through the altering of the animals instinctive behavior.”

*Imam* al-Ghazaali also said in his *Ihya*: “Excellent character is obtained in two ways. The first is by the sheer generosity of Allah and through natural original perfection. The second is by means of spiritual struggle and discipline. Whoever, for example, desires to acquire for his soul the character of generosity; the way is to induce himself to the habit of generosity by expending wealth freely. He continues to devote himself assiduously to this in a constrained manner until it becomes natural and easy for him. As a result he becomes generous.

Likewise, whoever desires to acquire the character of humility after being overcome by arrogance, the way is to devote himself assiduously to the behavior of humility for some time during which he strives against his soul and compels it until it becomes humble naturally and innately. Thus, humility becomes easy for him.

All of the remaining praiseworthy characteristics are acquired in the same manner. The objective to be obtained is when these deeds that emerge become a pleasure to perform. So if you have understood that then you realize that all of these beautiful characteristics are achieved through training and discipline. This can also be understood from the following illustration.

If a person desired to become proficient in calligraphy until he develops into a natural scribe, then there is no way except for him to devote his hand assiduously in the science of calligraphy until it becomes deeply rooted in his soul. Then, as a result there will arise from him excellent calligraphy innately just as it appeared from him in the beginning unnaturally.

It is therefore incumbent upon the teaching *Shaykh* to examine the sicknesses of the seeker and the illnesses of his spiritual state and then build his training and discipline upon that. For if the seeker is a novice and ignorant of the limits of the *shari`a*, the *shaykh* first teaches him purification, the prayer and the outward aspects of worship. If, however, he is preoccupied with earning prohibited wealth or he is established in disobedience, the *shaykh* orders him first to leave these.

Then when the seeker's outward has been purified of apparent disobedience and has been adorned with the outer aspects of worship, the *shaykh* then examines states connected with his inner being in order to understand his innate character and the sicknesses of his heart. For example when the *shaykh* sees that the seeker is overcome by the cleanliness of his body and clothing and that his heart is always turning its attention to that and he inclines to that with pleasure, he then causes the seeker to take care of and clean the toilets, other dirty and smoky places along with cooking until his levity is disturbed with regard to cleanliness.

Likewise, when the *shaykh* sees the seeker is overcome with greediness for food, then he makes fasting incumbent upon him along with the gradual decreasing of food intake. He then makes him responsible for preparing delicious meals, serving them to others without allowing him to eat from them himself. He thus accustoms the seeker to patience and is able to break his greediness.

Likewise, when the *shaykh* sees a young man who is strongly attached to the marriage state, yet he is incapable of getting married, he then orders him to fast. Perhaps if that does not curb his desires, he then orders him to break his fast with cold water without bread one day and then to break fast with bread without water the next. He also prohibits him to eat meat and fatty ingredients until he subdues his soul and curbs his passions. There is no cure in the beginning for breaking passions and desires more beneficial than hunger.

When the *shaykh* sees that anger and rage has overcome the seeker, he imposes upon him forbearance, mildness and silence.

These are the examples by which you can be acquainted with the course of treatment of the sicknesses of the heart by way of summary. It is not our objective to set out the entire issue in detail, because the detailing of the entire issue would be exhaustive. Our main objective is simply to instruct by way of summation that the course of action to be taken in disciplining the soul is to be done by opposing all that the soul desires and inclines towards. Allah has gathered this meaning in one statement: *“But as for Him who fears to stand before his Lord and restrains his soul from lust, truly the Garden will be his home.”*

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## On the Methodology That the Seeker Can Use to Gradually Discipline His Soul By Means of Hunger

*Imam* al-Ghazaali said in his *al-Ihya*: “Realize that the seeker has four ranks regarding his stomach and what he eats. The first rank is that he only eats except what is permissible (*halaal*). There remains three more ranks specific for eating. They are: [2] to estimate the quantity of food one eats, whether much or little; [3] to estimate the speed with which one eats it; and [4] to determine the varieties of food.

As for reduction of one’s intake of food, the way by which one may discipline the soul therein consists in gradualism. The one who is accustomed to eating much and who then is alters his habits all at once to eating little, will not be able to sustain this and will as a result weaken himself. This will result in considerable hardships and distress. He should therefore, proceed a little at a time by eating progressively less and less of his accustomed food. For example, if he customarily eats two loaves of bread and wishes to restrict himself to no more than one, he should reduce his consumption each day by a quarter of a seventh of a loaf. This will enable him to eat only one loaf a day by the end of the month without hardship or any noticeable change. If he likes he can do this with the help of scales or by simply using his own judgment by eating one morsel less than he ate the previous day.

This in turn has four degrees. The highest degree is where one forces oneself to partake only of that which is necessary for one’s constitution. This was the methodology of Sahl. The second degree is when one desire to discipline the soul with a daily diet of non-more than one third of the stomach. The third degree is when one desires to discipline the soul to a daily diet of what is in excess of two thirds.

**Then there is the fourth degree, which brings us to the fifth rank, which has no estimation in it, however it has become the locus of mistakes. It is that one only eats when there is sincere hunger, which seizes him. Its reality is this hunger comes with genuine obsession. However, normally when one is unable to prevent oneself from one or two pieces of bread then the limits of true hunger has not been established in him. His situation is like one who has false cravings. For the signs of genuine hunger has been delineated by the scholars. The first there is no desire for oily ingredients. Rather, one could eat a single piece of bread with fervor regardless of what kind of bread it is. Thus, when there is desire for specific types of bread or oily ingredients then this is not genuine hunger. [SEE PG 28 LINES 8-10].**

**What is correct is that the seeker must estimate for his own soul the necessary amount which will not weaken him from his worship of Allah ta`ala. Thus, when he reaches that point he should stop even if his passion still persists. [CHECK DR. ABD’L-HAKIMS’ DISCIPLINING THE SOUL]**

As for the proper times for consumption of food and the extent to which one can postpone eating, it also has three degrees. The first degree is the highest, which is to remain hungry for three days or more. For there are certain seekers who discipline their souls with hunger by remaining hungry without any limit until some of them end up having nothing to eat for thirty to forty days at a time. There have been many among the communities of the scholars who attained this level of discipline. Among them was Sahl ibn Abdullah, Abd ‘r-Rahman ibn Ibrahim at-Taymi and Sulayman al-Khawwaas. The

second degree is that one remains hungry for two to three days. The third degree is the lowest level is that one limits himself to one meal during the day and night.

As for the varieties of food, which the seeker should consume in, order to discipline his soul, is that it should not be from delicious types of meals. The custom of the one on the spiritual journey of the path of the Hereafter is to prevent himself from consuming fatty foods and always eating with his passions. For whoever is unable to avoid what he craves from food, then he at least must not be heedless of his soul and not become completely absorbed in the passions of consumption.

It is also highly recommended for the seeker not to sleep while his stomach is full. By doing so he will join two inattentions: [1] he will become lazy and listless; and [2] his heart will become hardened as a result. On the contrary, if he becomes sedated, he should then pray or sit and remember Allah ta'ala. This is nearer to gratitude to Allah. The least he should do is pray four *rak'ats* and then glorify Allah with at least one hundred *tasbeehs*. Whenever Sufyan at'Thawri would find himself sedated he would give life to his nights with prayer.

Then realize that what is desired from the disciplining of the soul with hunger is the middle way because the best of affairs is the middle way. Further, what is desired in this is what has been related in the prophetic traditions concerning the merits of hunger. Perhaps someone will have the illusion that excess in hunger is what is desired in all of this. Far from the mark! The knowledgeable person realizes that which is intended here is the middle way. The best is that a person eats in such a fashion where he is not devoted to huge meals while at the same time he does not experience the pains from hunger. This is because the objective of eating is to continue life, while huge meals prevent worship and hunger pains preoccupies the heart from worship.

As far as the beginning of the affair when a person finds his soul defiant, full of cravings after corrupt passions leaning towards extremes, then coming to the middle way in disciplining the soul with hunger will bring no benefit. On the contrary, he must go to some extremes in punishing it by means of hunger in the same manner that one punishes a beast by means of hunger and whippings in the beginning until the animal reaches midway in its training. Then when the animal becomes composed and dependable, return to training the animal in a median fashion and avoid punishing it.

Therefore realize that two devastating tribulations can enter the heart of the one who wants to leave the passions of consumption. These two are more awesome than the passions of consumption. The first is that he unable to leave most of his passions because of his gluttony, but he does not want others to know that he is gluttonous. He thus eats while in isolation what he does not eat when with the people. The second is that he is able to leave the passions of food consumption, however he is happy that others know about his discipline and he wants to become well known for his restraint against his passions. For whoever leaves the passions of food consumption but falls into the passions of showing-off is like one who flees from the sting of the scorpion into the jaws of the snake. His is because the passions of showing-off are more harmful to the soul than the passions of food consumption.

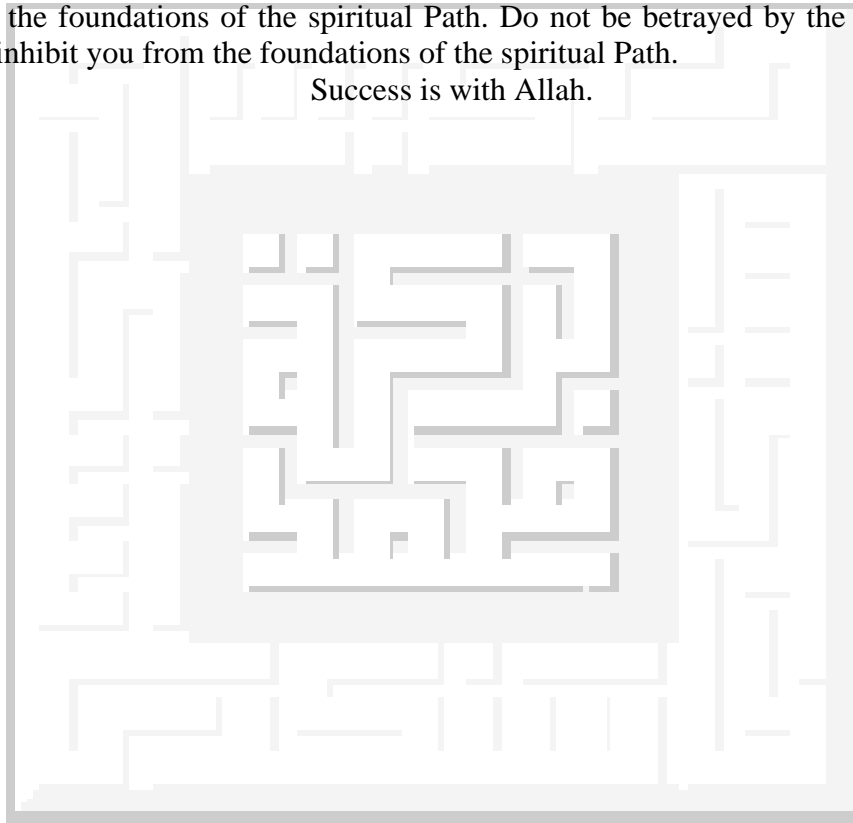
Success is with Allah.



## **On the Disciplining of the Seeker Against the Deceptions of the Lures of Satan and Against Desiring Spiritual Opening Without the Prerequisites**

Oh seeker, do not prefer ignorance to knowledge and do not be among those who exult in noting but the spiritual Path. Be persistent in following the *Sunna* and do not make inroads towards heretical innovation. Follow the people of the Lord of Truth and do not follow the people of falsehood. Do not be among those who are preoccupied with turning the faces of people towards themselves or displaying calling people to Allah devoid of sincerity. Avoid keeping company with the children of this world's life and stop with the foundations of the spiritual Path. Do not be betrayed by the stories of the men that inhibit you from the foundations of the spiritual Path.

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## **On the *Adab* of the Seeker With the *Shaykh* and the Brothers of the Path; and the Forms of Remembrance That the People of *Tasawwuf* Utilize in Their Spiritual Objectives**

As for the courtesies (*adab*) of the seeker with the *Shaykh* and the brothers of the spiritual Path they are five, as Ahmad Zarruq delineated. The first is following the orders of the *Shaykh* even when they go against his own desires. The second is avoiding the prohibitions even when he sees in avoiding them his own destruction. The third is guarding the sanctity of the *Shaykh* when he is absent or present, whether alive or deceased. The fourth is to establish the rights of the *Shaykh* regardless of the place without insufficiency. The fifth is to set aside your own reasoning, knowledge and leadership except that which is in agreement with his *Shaykh*. These five courtesies are the same principles of behavior that he should carry out with the brothers of the Path.

If there is no teaching *shaykh* or he finds discrepancy in him from any perspective of the five conditions of the teaching *shaykh* previously mentioned, he should then deem that to his own disadvantage and behave with the brothers in the remainder courtesies.

As for the forms of remembrance that the people of *tasawwuf* utilize in their spiritual objectives, most of these have not been clearly classified. Among them are those who utilize the name of majesty – **Allah**. Among them are those who utilize the noble word – **Laa ilaha illa Allah Muhammadun rasuulullah**. Among them are those who utilize the words- **Sub'hanna Allahi wa'l-Hamdu lillahi wa Laa illah illa Allah wa Allahu akbar**.

Among them are those who utilize the blessings and prayers upon the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, which is the most beneficial of the forms of remembrances regarding the strengthening of the soul because it is like cool water which revives the soul after its lethargy. Some of the scholars say: “The prayer and blessing upon the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace connects the servant to his Lord and takes the place of the teaching *shaykh* when he fails to find one. All this is due to the *baraka* of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace regarding three things: [1] attaining real miracles; [2] nearness to Allah ta`ala; and [3] arrival at Him.

As for the real miracles, Ibn Ata`illah al-Askandari has said in his Hikam: “Sometimes miracles are provided by Allah to one who has not completed his uprightness.” The author is indicating by his words that real miracles constitute the attainment of uprightness and arrival at its perfection, which goes back to the two issues: [1] the soundness of *Iman* in Allah ta`ala; and [2] following inwardly and outwardly all that the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace came with. It is essential and necessary for the servant not to aspire for anything besides these two. As for miracles, with the meaning of breaking normative natural laws (*kharq'l-aadat*), they are of no consequence to the realized ones (*al-muhaqqiqeen*).

As for nearness to Allah, it means the servant's direct witnessing of Allah's nearness to him. Ibn Ata`illah also said in his Hikam: “Your nearness to Him is your witnessing of His nearness.” The commentators said: “It means the nearness of Allah to you. Your share from that is simply your witnessing of His nearness. The benefit of this direct witnessing generates heightened attentiveness, being overwhelmed with awe and

courteousness in speech with Him.” As for you there is no correlation in this except the attribute of servitude to Him and direct witnessing from your soul of Him.

As for arrival at Him, Ibn Ata`illah said: “Arrival at Allah ta`ala which is indicated by the people of this Path is arrival at real knowledge of Allah ta`ala.” I say: Real knowledge here does not mean that the servant arrives at comprehension of the reality of His essence and attributes. What is meant here is that the servant arrives at Allah ta`ala with an experiential knowledge of tasting which is free of created evidence. This knowledge is the very goal of the journey of the travelers of the spiritual Path and the purpose of the conduct of the spiritual wayfarers.

Here ends what we aimed for in authoring the **Usul ‘l-Wilaayat wa Shuruutihaa** (*The Foundations of Sainthood and Its Prerequisites*), by the assistance of Allah ta`ala. O Allah, O One whose generosity cannot be enumerated and whose decrees cannot be prevented. O He whose essence is described by: “**Say: He Allah is One. Allah is eternally self-subsistent. He begets not nor is He begotten. There is non like unto Him.**” O Allah do with us what is deserving of You and do not do with us what we deserve. Truly You are deserving of extending fearful awareness and forgiveness. Blessings and peace be upon the best of Allah’s entire creation. Allah is enough for us and He is the Best of guardians. There is no power or might except with Allah the Exalted the Mighty. All praises are due to Allah the Lord of the worlds. May the best blessings and most perfect peace be upon our master Muhammad, his family and all his Companions. May Allah ta`ala be pleased with the masters among the *Taabi`een*, the right-acting scholars, the *Imams* of independent judgment and those who follow them until the Day of Judgment.

It is complete with praises of Allah and the best of His assistance.

All praises are due to Allah who has guided us to this, and we would not have been guided had not Allah guided us.

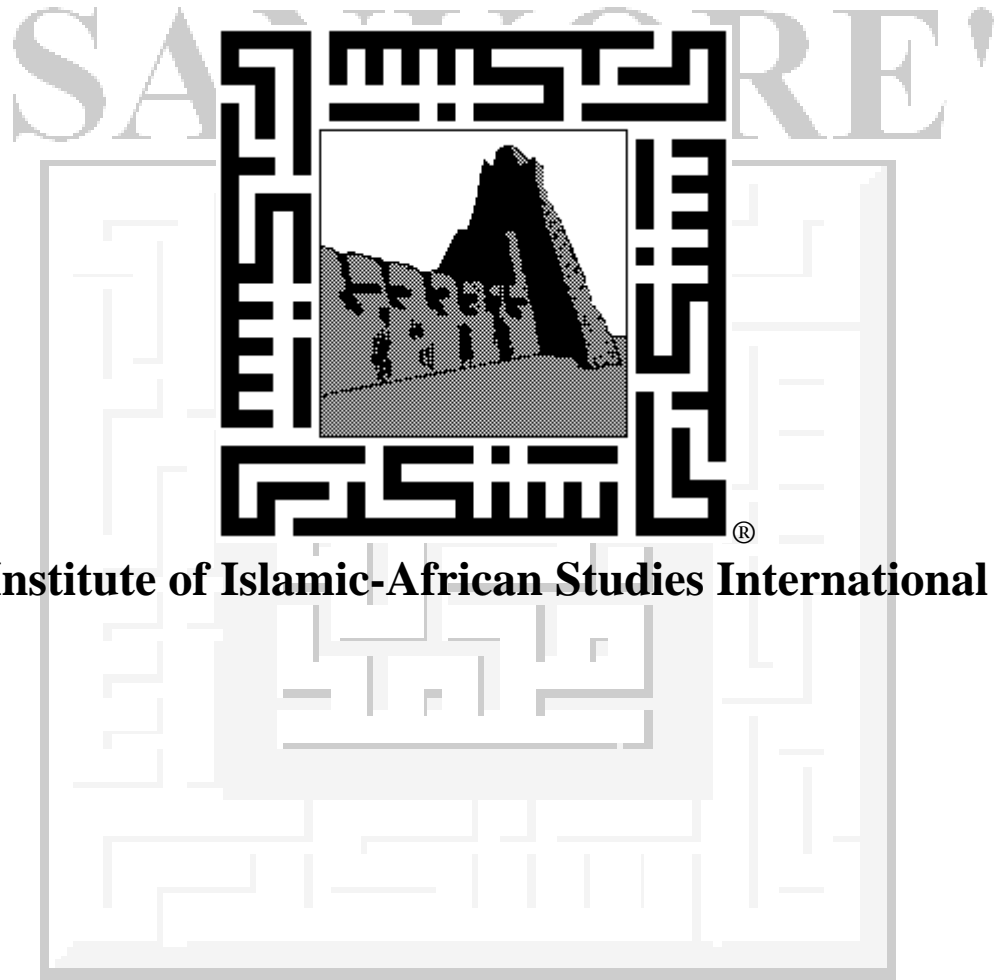
O Allah bless and give peace to our master  
— Muhammad and his family.

THE END

Peace upon those who follow the Guidance.

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# SANKORE'



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