

WHAT IS TASAWWUF?

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WHAT IS TASAWWUF?

Hakimul Ummat Hadhrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thaanvi (rahmatullah alayh) said:

*“The avenue of tarbiyat has been completely closed. Even the Mashaaikh are not concerned with it (tarbiyat). A collection of a few things is been called Tasawwuf (Durwaishi and Buzrugi). Neither is there any **firmness on A'maal (righteous deeds)** nor on correctness of statements. Whatever is desired is done, and whatever comes to the mouth is blurted out. The field of tarbiyat is extremely delicate.”*

TARBIYAT

Tasawwuf is Tarbiyat or moral training. It is *Islaah-e-Nafs* (the reformation of the nafs) which consists of the suppression and control of the evil motional qualities known as *Akhlaaq-e- Razeelah*, and of the cultivation of the noble attributes of moral excellence called *Akhlaaq-e-Hameedah*. This is the sum total of Tasawwuf, nothing more and nothing less.

While Fiqh deals with the Shariah's rules pertaining to the *zaahiri* body (the external/physical side), Tasawwuf is concerned with the rules of the *baatini* dimension of the human body, i.e. with the Rooh, Nafs and spiritual heart. But today even among those who are supposed to be sheikhs and khalifas, there prevails stark ignorance of the scope and function of Tasawwuf The avenue of Tarbiyat as mentioned by Hakimul Ummat has been closed by this ignorance.

THE GUIDES

The spiritual guides of this age are themselves lost in diversions and in activities which are unrelated to Tasawwuf. While some guides assign *Tarbiyat* a secondary or an insignificant pedestal, most of the new crop of khalifas which have recently mushroomed are blissfully ignorant of their duty and obligation As stated by Hadhrat Thaanvi (rahmatullah alayh), a few items or man-made rituals have been lumped together and presented as Tasawwuf when in reality these rituals and exercises are not within the scope of Tasawwuf just as the matters of Fiqh are not within the scope of Tasawwuf

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EMPHASIS

The emphasis of those who are supposedly the spiritual guides is on prescribed forms of thikr which are not related to the Sunnah. Although there is much benefit in the various *athkaar* prescribed by the senior Mashaa-ikh for their muredeen, these are spiritual medicines and treatments for spiritual ailments and for the acquisition of concentration, etc. These exercises are not the goals of Tasawwuf But lack of understanding of the true meaning and goals of Tasawwuf has deflected the khalifas from the fundamental function of *Tarbiyat*. Now they emphasise group thikr, public thikr ceremonies and the like in the same way as the Ahl-e-Bid'ah have become addicted to.

DEFLECTION

Most of the newly appointed guides have become deflected from the Path of Tasawwuf. They themselves do not understand Sulook (the Road), hence they lean on the crutch of these exercises to keep themselves going and groping in their newly-acquired spiritual 'offices' which for many of these young guides are means for satisfying their *hubb-e-jah* (love for fame). They themselves suffer from all the ailments which they are supposed to doctor. But they do not even understand what their function as spiritual guided is.

Apart from suffering from all the ailments (Akhlaaq-e-Razeelah), of greater concern and danger is their ignorance of the Tareeq or Tasawwuf. Some Shaikhs have opened up a gateway for considerable spiritual harm by appointing even the most unqualified persons to the pedestal of *masheekhat* (or being spiritual guides).

If a physician himself is suffering from disease, he can still diagnose and prescribe as long as he is qualified and an expert in the field. But if he is a quack, then he constitutes a danger to the life and limb of his patients. Similarly, the unqualified spiritual guide who has no understanding of Tasawwuf and its goals (*Maqaasid*) constitutes a grave danger to the Akhlaaq and Imaan of those whom he has initiated as mureeds.

A FALSE COVER

Some of these guides have devised their thikr sessions to cover their inability of providing spiritual guidance and *tarbiyat* to their mureeds. Their *ta'leem* or the emphasis of their *ta'leem* is prescribed *athkaar* which to them is the very soul of Tasawwuf. Their 'naseehat' is pure conjecturing

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of the mind. Far from indicating the Road (Sulook) to their muredeen, they imprison their underlings in deception.

The spiritual ailments of the mureeds are not treated because the guides themselves possess no understanding in this sphere as well as for some other reasons which Hadhrat Hakimul Ummat mentions and which appear elsewhere in these pages.

THE WAY OF SENIORS

The tareeqah of our Akaabireen in the field of Tasawwuf was always to treat the spiritual ills of their mureeds. Never did they emphasise on *athkaar* and *ashghaal*. But in the present day the complete opposite is being practised by the new crop of khalifas. They are at pains to justify their diversion from true Sulook by citing such modern-day mashaa-ikh who are among the *asaaghir* (juniors) and who cannot in any way be compared with the *Akaabir Mashaa-ikh* of Tasawwuf.

If the prime occupation of a spiritual guide – Shaikh-e-Tareeqat – is not Tarbiyat, he should not be accepted as one's guide. Such a 'guide' will be a misguide and deflect the mureed from the true goal which has to be pursued and attained. Wusool (Attainment of the Divine Goal) is not possible without Tarbiyat. In this, there are no two opinions. Therefore, never be hasty when pledging allegiance (becoming bay't) to a person.

PRESCRIBING AURAAD TO THE SPIRITUALLY DISEASED

Hadhrat Hakimul Ummat said: "Nowadays most Mashaa-ikh (i.e. the junior guides who feel that they have become great Shaikhs) have understood that only *auraad*, *wazaa-if* and *kaifiyaat* are the Maqsood (goal) of Tasawwuf. (*Auraad* and *Wazaa-if* refer to formula of thikr. *Kaifiyaat* are spiritual states which develop in the wake of abundance of *wazaa-if* and *auraad*).

They prescribe these rituals regardless of the mureed being filled from head to toe with spiritual ailments (Akhlaaq-e-Razeelah). Reformation of the nafs is not considered necessary by these people. But *wazaa-if* are believed to be incumbent. Diseases cannot be cured in this way. On the contrary, in this state there is a greater danger of the diseases becoming more destructive. If in a spiritually diseased person develops some kaifiyat in consequence of the observance of *auraad* and *wazaa-if*, he will be deflected life-long. He will not then be bothered about his spiritual

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ailments. He will believe that he has attained the goal. It is obvious that this attitude is most dangerous for the mureed. In spite of being diseased, he will not understand this. Ailments cannot be cured by means of *auraad* and *wazaa-if*."

ADVISING THE GUIDES

Hadhrat Thaanvi (rahmatullah alayh) advising the spiritual guides who endeavour to increase the number of their circle (by indiscriminate bayt) and who refrain from reprimanding their mureeds and who abstain from Amr Bil Ma'roof for the fear of losing followers, says:

"These people who claim to be exponents of Tasawwuf and leaders (in this field), should think of the time when they will be alone in the grave without any comforter. Will they be able to gain glitter (in the grave) from their circle of mureeds? If the answer is in the negative, then they should develop here something which will provide light and glitter for them in the grave. And that is the Bond with Allah Ta'ala. Allah's Bond is adequate for enhancing the dazzle of one's circle. Therefore, attend to the ailments of mureeds irrespective of the number of mureeds increasing or decreasing (as a result of reprimanding and rebuking).

FEMALE MUREEDS

The issue of initiating female mureeds is very delicate. However, the inexperienced spiritual guides of this age have no hesitation in this sphere. They unhesitatingly and eagerly accept females into their bay't. Some even do so without the husband's permission.

Women should be extremely wary of guides who adopt a free and an informal attitude towards them. Hijaab is of imperative importance. The shaikh is a ghair mahram, hence all the Shar'i rules of Hijaab apply strictly in relation to him. Bid'ati peers (guides) are notorious for taking advantage of their female mureeds. This evil is slowly creeping into the ranks of guides from even our School of Thought (Maslak).

SHAMELESS

One such spiritual guide insisted that his female mureed discusses all her problems and matters personally with him telephonically, not via correspondence. This shameless shaitaan is a highway robber in the pursuit of robbing the unsuspecting and stupid woman of her hayaa (shame) and akhlaaq (morals).

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Another shaikh again would go with his car to pick up his female mureed from her place of work where she was working under supervision of her husband. This so-called guide brazenly took the woman away from her husband presenting the excuse that he wants to do her 'islaah' (moral reformation) in privacy where the husband is not allowed to be present. Later when the husband who was also his mureed could no longer tolerate this lewdness, he gave his 'shaikh' the boot.

DRAWING ATTENTION

Some young sheikhs or khalifas are keen to draw the attention of female mureeds to them. They will invite their female disciples to discuss just everything with them. The females are expected to report every trivial argument they have with their husbands and take advice. Let it be well understood that it is not within the scope of the shaikh's function to embroil himself in the private and marital life of his mureeds. He should not advise people on the choice of marital partners nor should he conduct himself in any way that will induce the woman to behave audaciously towards her husband. He should not decide any dispute between husband and wife. If the matter pertains to Shar'i fatwa, he should refer them to a proper Mufti. At most, he should make dua for his mureeds so that Allah Ta'ala alleviates their problem.

The shaikh should not converse telephonically with his female mureeds. He should not request them to prepare any foods or delicacies for him as is the disgraceful habit of some of these guides. The female mureeds should not eat of any left-over food of a young shaikh thinking it to be food of barkat. If the shaikh is an old man of outstanding taqwa it will not matter. But, for a young shaikh to send the plate of his left-over crumbs to the ladies of the home where he has been invited for meals is shameless and not permissible according to the ruling of the Fuqaha. When a ghair mahrarn male has ate of the food or drunk of the water, then she should not eat and drink that food and water. It is Makroch for her to do so. The same is true for men when they are aware that a particular female had drunk water from the glass or ate from the food in a plate. The psychology of sexual allurements has been well understood by the illustrious Fuqaha.

WARNING OF THE AULIYA

The Akaabir Auliya and Mashaa-ikh have warned against the display of tenderness towards female mureeds. In fact, they have made it very

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clear that inclination and tenderness shown to female mureeds are spiritually destructive.

NOT SINLESS

Spiritual guides are not *Ambiya*. They are not *ma'soom* (sinless). They possess all the emotional and human frailties. Women in their innocence and *ghaflat* should not become over trusting of their shaikh. If they observe the slightest misconduct in him, they should immediately sever their bay't with him. A sheikh is in a position of trust. Women according to the Qur'aan Majeed are *Ghaaflaat* (trusting, oblivious and gullible) They, labour under the impression that their shaikh is a paragon of Taqwa and there is absolutely no spiritual or moral dangers by freely associating with him. This is a fatal error. When either the mureed or the shaikh relaxes his/her guard, the nafs will overwhelm them and plunge them into the worst evil. May Allah Ta'ala save us all from the evil lurking in our nafs.

ADVICE FOR THE KHALIFAS

The first requisite for a spiritual guide is constant self-examination and soul searching. He should be concerned with his own islaah, more than what he is concerned with the islaah of his mureeds

The shaikh should not hanker after a following. He should not intentionally embark on any plan to increase his circle of mureeds.

The one who has just been appointed a khalifah by some buzrug should not become swollen headed and bloated with *ujub* and *takabbur*. This is generally the case with khalifas who are not Aalims. He should not labour under the notion that he has attained the goal of Tasawwuf by virtue of his appointment. In fact, as long as his own insignificance, inability and inexperience are not discernible to him, he should understand that he suffers from many spiritual ailments.

It is common, especially in this age, for unqualified persons to be appointed as khalifas. The appointing Shaikh is misled by an external show of piety of the mureed. The Shaikh mistakenly believes his mureed to be qualified for *masheekhat*, hence he appoints, him as a khalifah. It should be understood that Mashaikh are not *Ambiya*. Their decisions are not corroborated by Wahi. They too err.

NOT A CERTIFICATE

The appointment of a mureed to the pedestal of *masheekhat* is not a certification of *Wusool* (i.e. having attained the Goal of Tasawwuf, viz., Allah Ta'ala). It does not mean that a man who has been appointed a khalifah has become a buzrug or durwaish- by virtue of the appointment. It is therefore necessary that prospective mureeds thoroughly scrutinize the man – his life and actions – before they enter into bay't with him.

ISLAAH

The shaikh should concentrate and emphasise on moral reformation, not on *athkaar* and *ashghaal*. To assist him in this delicate task, he should consult the works of Hakimul Ummat Hadhrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (rahmatullah alayh) or of some other recognized Senior Mashaa-ikh whose silsilah he is following. He should not parade his opinions because he is no mujtahid in the field of Tasawwuf. Adherence to the advises, methods, principles and teachings of the Akaabir Mashaa-ikh ('The Senoir Shaikhs of Tasawwuf) is absolutely necessary.

Some sheikhs are duped by their nafs which fans their ego and nafsani desire of ujub (self- esteem). They therefore organise public thikr gatherings. This pomp and imagined glitter give them immense satisfaction. But the Akaabir with whom we are linked did not engage in such practices.

ULTERIOR MOTIVES

When a man who is supposedly a spiritual guide craves for initiating mureeds into his circle and goes to the disgraceful level of instructing his 'khaadims' (Close aids) to persuade and pressurize ignorant people to enter into his allegiance (bay't), it indicates the crookedness of his intention. His desire is to bolster the number of his following. He believes himself to be worthy of a big following. He hankers after the nafsani desire of fame and perhaps he suffers from greed of wealth because usually bay't of this type comes along with its perks of *hadaayah* (gifts to the shaikh). This attitude of these spiritual guides is mercenary. Such 'guides' in the words of Hadhrat Thaavi (rahmatullah alayh) are dacoits who rob people of their Imaan.

It is most dishonourable for a spiritual guide to desire that people enter into his circle. It is even more dishonourable for him to canvass for mureeds. Regarding the desire for increasing one's circle of mureeds, Hadhrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thaavi (rahmatullah alayh) said:

"I do not like latitude in bay't. The only result of this (i. e of the policy of indiscriminate bay't) is the increase (in one's following) of people of corrupt understanding and little intelligence. I am not enlisting volunteers for an army. It is sufficient to have a (spiritual) relationship with a couple of intelligent persons."

STUDENTS AND BAY' T

During his student-days, Hadhrat Hakimul Ummat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thaanvi (rahmatullah alayh) requested Hadhrat Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (rahmatullah alayh) to accept him as his mureed in bay't. Hadhrat Gangohi said:

"While you are engaged in the pursuit of Ilm (Deem knowledge), consider the thought of bay't to be a deception of shaitaan."

Hadhrat Gangohi and our other Akaabir were true Roohaani Guides. They were highly qualified experts of Tasawwuf. They understood all the subtleties of Sulook, the wiles and ploys of shaitaan and the nafs. Hadhrat Gangohi immediately detected that shaitaan was conspiring to deflect the young Student of Deeni Knowledge from the pursuit of Ilm-e-Deen. There is nothing which shaitaan abhors and fears as much as an uprighteous Fageeh/Aalim of the Haqq. Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: *"One Faqeeh is harder on shaitaan than a thousand Aabideen (pious worshippers)."*

Shaitaan's ploy is to wean students of the Deen from the pursuit of Ilm. He employs a variety of tricks to achieve his aim. He will approach the Student from even Deeni avenues in the attempt to divert him from Ilm.

Shaitaan was attempting to deflect Hadhrat Thaanvi (rahmatullah alayh) from the Path of Ilm by focusing his attention on bay't. Bay't generally is accompanied by prescribed forms of thikr and shaghl, especially if the guide is not very discerning and lacks understanding of the pitfalls and dangers of Sulook. Once the student's mind is diverted from dim and focused on ashghaal and athkaar, he has fallen into shaitaan's trap. Ilm will become secondary and things which are not among the goals of the Shariah will assume primary importance in the mind of the student.

Islaah of the nafs is waajib at all times, whether – one is a student or a person in any other activity or profession. But islaah of the nafs is not dependent on athkaar and ashghaal. The acquisition of kaifivaat (states of the rooh) is not related to the pursuit of Islaah-e-Nafs. Islaah is to struggle – mujaahsdah – against the demands and desires of the nafs. It is to apply

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pressure against the futile, haraam and excessive demands for pleasure and futility of the nafs. It is to control the tongue and eyes. It is to adopt solitude and curtail mingling with people. It is to occupy oneself fully with the books of knowledge if one happens to be a student of the Deem: It is to respect Ustaadh and cultivate humility and taqwa. In short, it is to be alert and fight shaitaan and the nafs.

Since bay't is an impediment for the Student of Deeni Knowledge, Hadhrat Gangohi (rahmatullah alayh) who was among the greatest, if not the greatest, Mashaikh of recent times, said that for the Taalib-e-Ilm (Student of Deeni Knowledge) the idea of bay't is a deception of shaitaan.

Our Shaikh, Hadhrat Maulana Masihullah (rahmatullah alayh) also was firm in his Tareeqah. He would not initiate students of the Madrasah into the Silsilah. His emphasis was always on the pursuit of academic Ilm while the student was in this Path. But nowadays, young guides who have just been appointed as khalifas are blissfully ignorant of this shaitaani ploy. They indiscriminately initiate students and apply them to athkaar when this is clearly in conflict with the Taleem of the Akaabir Masha-ikh.

Neither should students be accepted in bay't nor should any athkaar be prescribed for them. Islaahi advice, tilaawat of the Qur'aan and observance of all aspects of the Sunnah are more than adequate for them.

SOME DECEPTIONS OF SHAITAAN

Shaitaan is a shrewd conspirator. He paints his traps in a variety of hues to lure his victims. To people of the Deen he approaches via Deeni channels. To people of the Madaaris, he approaches via Ilmi avenues.

Shaitaan has the greatest aversion for Ilm-e-Deen. With the weapon of Ilm, the Aalim neutralizes the plots of shaitaan. There are, therefore, numerous calamities in the path of the student pursuing Deeni Knowledge. In the present age, shaitaan's task of diverting students has been vastly simplified by Madrasah Asaatizah (Teachers) themselves. The disease of moving further and further from the ways and methods of the Akaabir Masha-ikh has opened the door wide open for shaitaani manipulation of the Asaatizah, the students and the systems regulating the Madaaris. Among the methods shaitaan has introduced to deflect Deeni students from both Ilm and Islaah are the following:

- Bay't has been portrayed as almost compulsory. Involvement in athkaar detracts students from their primary occupation.
- Debate and lecture sessions.

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- Serving as 'apprentice' teachers in co-ed institutions which are under the control of such men and molvis who have no mid for the Shariah.
- Practising the art of writing articles.
- Practising the art of public-speaking.
- Imitating the methods of secular institutions.
- Indulgence in kuffaar sport with the blessings of the institution.

All these activities are negatory of the *maqsad* for the pursuit of Deeni Ilm. The ego of the novices and students becomes bloated with *Ujub* and *Takabbur* by indulgence in these activities which never constituted part of the Deeni curriculum of the Madaaris while these institutions were under the guidance and influence of our Akaabir Auliy-aa and Ulama.

DIVERSIONS

Let all Madrasah managements understand well that the new ways introduced in the Madaaris and Daarul Ulooms of today retard the *Ilmi and Roohani* progress of the Students. It is time that the authorities of the Madaaris do some soul searching. They surely cannot be so mentally blocked to fail to understand that the wonderful ways and system of the Akaabir who had established the original Darul Ulooms cannot be inferior to any system whatsoever. But, the roohaani blockage has over-shadowed the intelligence, hence the Darul Uloom authorities see goodness in liberalism and in the ways of secular institutions spawned by the kuffaar. They feel that the system and syllabus of the Akaabireen have outlived their utility and are not suitable for these times. It is for this reason that they are increasingly modelling the Darul Ulooms along western kuffaar patterns.

On account of this treason committed by the Madrasaa authorities, the Deeni institutions of learning are today bereft of Taqwa. The aims of students and of Asaatizah are mercenary, nafsaani and worldly. The Deen and Aakhirah are the furthest from their minds. They pursue Deeni knowledge with corrupt motives. Therefore, the evils of western secular institutions have crept into even the madaaris and the *Darul Ulooms*. May Allah Ta'ala save us from these calamities.

DANGEROUS MENTORS

Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) warned that a time will come when men will utilize the Deen to earn material benefit. Many forms of such betrayal of the Deen are to be found. One of the severest forms of plundering the Deen and the Imaan of innocent and unwary believers is for

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"wolves in sheep-skins" to lure unwary and ignorant Muslims into their Imam-Plundering traps. Such men will be found in abundance among the Ahl-e-Bid'ah (the people of innovation). They will be found to be posing as spiritual guides (Shaikhs and Murshids of Tareeqat). They lay great claims of being spiritual masters of tasawwuf. But in reality they are, in the words, of Rasulullah (Sallallahu alayhi wasallam), men with the hearts of wolves, and shayateen inhuman bodies.

Such fraudulent "peers" employ the system of bay't (initiation of disciples into the spiritual orders of tasawwuf) as a lucrative trading practice, charging at times exorbitant fees as payment for initiation. Alhamdulillah this particular evil has not yet overtaken even the unqualified sheikhs and khalifahs related to the Ulama of Deoband.

The money-making racket does not cease at the "admission" fees. An annual "renewal" fee also has to be paid to avoid expulsion and the inauspicious wrath of the fraudulent "mentor" who acts as the agent of shaitan. Besides the "admission" and "renewal" fees, there are several other side-charges which have to be paid for dubious spiritual acts and customs.

It is essential that Muslims realise that these "peers" among the bid'atees are NOT masters or Murshideen in any of the orders of tasawwuf. They have no relationship whatsoever with the purpose of tasawwuf, which is to attain the spiritual reformation of the Mureed through the agencies of the Shariah, and not via some methods which are a conglomeration of hatch-potch kufr and bid'ah rituals. These fake 'peers' of the Ahle Bid'ah mercilessly plunder the Sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), but audaciously and vociferously trumpet the slogan of "*Hubbe Rasul*" (Love of Rasulullah-Sallallahu alayhi wasallam). There is no relationship between these false "peer" and "*Hubbe Rasul*".

Muslims should not permit themselves to be caught in the web of these tricksters who are out to amass wealth at the cost of Iman. They fall within the purview of the Quranic ayat:

"They trade the Laws of Allah for a miserable price."

It is not permissible to become bay't on the hands of-one who is linked with bid'ah (innovation). If the "peer" is a man of bid' ah, he will never be in position to instruct the Mureed along the lines of the Shariah. The beliefs of bid'ati "peers" are defective and contagious. Association with a bid'ati "peer" will despoil the Imaan and the practice of those who are supposed to be the Mureeds of such an unqualified "peer". A bid'ati "peer" will endeavour his utmost to entrench the Mureed in bid'ah and beliefs of

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shirk. He is not in position to administer *ta'leem* (spiritual instruction) and *nasee-hat* (advice and admonition) based on the Sunnah and Shariah. He will resort to queer and baseless interpretations to justify his anti-Sunnah practices. There, therefore, exists the grave danger of the Mureed being seriously deviated from the Road of Iman. -

The "instruction" and "naseehat" of the bid'ati "peer" will not be imbued with anwar (spiritual lustre) nor will it be efficacious. Divine aid will not be with the bid'ati "peer" in his instruction of the Mureed.

It is therefore of utmost importance in the interest of safeguarding one's, Imaan that one fully recognize the person to whom one is offering the allegiance of bay't. The Auliya of Islam have explained the signs by which a true Shaikh of Tasawwuf could be recognized. These signs of a true Murshid along the Path of spiritual reformation, are enumerated elsewhere in this publication.

IBAADAT AND MUJAHADAH

"RENDER IBAADAT TO YOUR RABB UNTIL THERE COMES TO YOU YAQEEN." (QUR'AAN)

'Yageen' in this aayat refers to Maut (Death). The Qur'aan commands that the Muslim engages in the ihaadat of Allah Ta'ala until the arrival of his death. Since the object of life according to the Qur'aan is only Ibaadat, the Qur'aan, makes perpetual Thikr and Ibaadat compulsory.

Stemming from the Command of Ibaadat until death, is constancy in mujahadah until death. Mujahadah is the Mu'min's struggle against the desires and promptings of the lower Nafs. Such desires are a preponderance of evil and base emotions. The Mu'min is required to offer stiff and resolute resistance against his emotional desires which violate and militate against the teachings and spirit of Islam. Without Mujahadah, spiritual progress is impossible. There is no short-cut in the process of climbing the spiritual ladder to gain proximity to Allah Ta'ala. At every turn of life – the whole day long man is confronted by the tricks, deceptions and traps of the Nafs and Shaitaan. He has, therefore, to be alert at all times and strive against the dictates of his Nafs. It does not matter what spiritual heights of elevation a Mu'min has attained, he is never exempted from Mujahadah. Both the beginner (*Mubtadi*) in the spiritual path and the *Muntahi* (the one who has attained Divine Proximity) are required by the Shariah to remain steadfast in Mujahadah. It is not, lawful for any Muslim to stop at any point in the process of Mujahadah. In proportion to his Mujahadah, the Saalik. (the one who journeys towards

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Allah Ta'ala) will gain Ma'rifat (spiritual knowledge by way of inspiration from Allah Ta'ala).

THIKRULLAH

"Verily, Salaat prevents from immorality and sin. And, the Thikr of Allah is the greatest." (Qur'aan)

Thikrullah (the Remembrance of Allah) is the best method of thwarting the deception and plot of Shaitaan. Those who abstain from constant Thikr become the camp-followers of Shaitaan. The Qur'aan Majeed says: *"Whoever- refrains from the Thikr of Rahmaan (Allah), We appoint for him a shaitaan who becomes his constant companion."*

When man becomes forgetful of Allah's remembrance, a shaitaan is specially appointed to dominate him. His thinking and deeds then become satanic. According to the Hadith of Rasulullah (Sallallahu alayhi wasallam), when the Mu'min engages in Thikr, Shaitaan flees from him. But, when he abstains from Thikr, Shaitaan returns and sits on man's heart and overwhelms him with a variety of baseless and evil thoughts and ideas. Thus; the most efficacious way of ridding oneself of Shaitaan is to maintain the tongue in Thikrullah. Rasulullah (Sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: *"The tongue of the Mu'min should constantly remain fresh with the Thikr of "La ilaha illallaahu ".*

While the full effect of Thikr is experienced in khalwat (solitude) the Thikr in *jalwat* (public) is also necessary for the spiritual progress of the servant of Allah. It is essential that the entire state of the Mu'min is transformed into Thikr, i.e. remembrance of Allah Ta'ala. The initial stage is verbal Thikr at all times. Thikr should not be confined to specific times. The verbal Thikr which is Waajib (obligatory) on all Muslims, is to be observed throughout the day, while walking, sitting and reclining, at work and at home. At all times the tongue of the Muslim has to be engaged in Thikrullah. The Traveller heading for the Aakhirah cannot afford any idle moment. Every moment squandered in futility is evil and destructive for Roohaani (spiritual) development; hence Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said:

"O Allah! I seek your protection from an evil moment and an evil - companion."

When the Mu'min transforms his very being into a state of permanent Thikr, he will become conscious and alert of all the requirements of Allah's Law. Abstention from transgression and involvement in virtue and ibaadat will then become simple matters requiring only a minimum of

WHAT IS TASAWWUF?

mujahadah (struggle against the nafs). Thikr will create Noor (spiritual glitter) in the Rooh (Soul) and Qalb (Heart). This celestial light will illumine the whole body of man, both his physical and spiritual bodies. True fear of Allah will then enter the heart. The Qur'aan says:

"Verily, the true Believers are those whose hearts become fearful when the Thikr of Allah is made."

It is imperative for the Muslim's success in both worlds that he transforms his mundane life into piety and ibaadat. His every act should necessarily become an act of Thikr which is the ibaadat for which Allah Ta'ala has created him. Allah Ta'ala says in the Holy Qur'aan:

"I have not created jinn and man, but for worshipping Me."

This purpose of life is achieved by way of constant and permanent Thikrullah which is an obligatory duty on all Muslims just as Salaat and Saum are incumbent. When the Muslim fails to observe this compulsory duty, his heart will become receptive for evil it will become the abode of vice and ghaflat (forgetfulness).

THIKRULLAAH THE GOAL OF TASAWWUF

The purpose and perpetual occupation of *insaan* (man) is remembrance of Allah (Thikrullah). Man is required by Allah Ta'ala to be permanently in His remembrance in all states and conditions of life. The Qur'aan and Hadith are explicit in this Ta'leem. Thus the thikr which is not the goal of Tasawwuf is the prescribed formulae which the Mashaa-ikh have developed and introduced for enhancing the power of concentration. The special (non-Sunnah) forms of *athkaar* as well as the *ashghaal* (exercises and penances) should not be confused with the perpetual Thikr which is incumbent on all Muslims in all conditions of life.

OUR MASLAK

"I consider it a great bounty of Allah and His. Grace that He has bestowed to me the ability to remain on the Maslak (Spiritual Path) of our seniors." {Akaabir Mashaa-ikh}. -Hadhrat Hakimul Ummat.

Defining Tasawwuf, the Auliya say: **"TASAWWUF IS ADAB (RESPECT)."** Thus, Tasawwuf is the cultivation of good moral character.



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