



FOUNDATIONS OF TASAWWUF – 2020

Compiled by Shaykh Husain Abdul Sattar

The following is a draft of notes presented at the Foundations of Tasawwuf seminar held annually at the Sacred Learning Center. These notes are accompanied by a series of audio lectures that are available under the Tasawwuf classroom at www.sacredlearning.org Of note, several of the hadith below are from “Haqiqat al-Tariqa min as-Sunnah al-Aniqa” [©Turath Publishing 2010].

PREFACE

Adab (etiquette) is essential for seekers to maximize benefit from any gathering. Hence, before we begin, we should remind ourselves of one of the important etiquettes of sitting together.

It is related on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar (Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Straighten the rows, line up the shoulders, fill in the empty spaces, don’t push against your neighbor, and don’t leave any space in between for shaytan.” [Abu Dawud]

INTRODUCTION

Tasawwuf is the Islamic discipline that focuses on the spiritual purification of the believer. It is a major branch of our din and was a defining function of the Prophet ﷺ. After erecting the kabah, the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) made dua for a messenger that would serve multiple roles, including purifying the believers:

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ ۗ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Our Lord, and raise up among them a messenger, from among themselves, who will recite to them Your revelations, and teach them the Book and wisdom, and spiritually purify them. You are the Almighty, the Wise. (2:129)

Allah ﷻ accepted this prayer, sending the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ with the following functions:

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِنْكُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ

Just as We sent to you a messenger from among you, who recites Our revelations to you, and spiritually purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know. (2:151)

Note here that Allah ﷻ accepted the dua of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) almost verbatim. Hence, the famous statement of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ indicating that he was the result of the dua of his spiritual father Ibrahim (peace be upon him). Additionally, note that tazkiyah (spiritual purification) has been brought forward in the sequence of roles, highlighting its relative importance.

In summary, the functions of the Prophet ﷺ as broadly outlined by the Holy Quran include:

1. Recitation of the verses of Allah's book ﷻ
2. Spiritual purification of the believers
3. Teaching the book (Holy Quran) and wisdom (the sunnah)

The central role of spiritual excellence is also established by numerous hadith. Particularly noteworthy is the famous hadith in which the angel Jabril (peace be upon him) was sent by Allah ﷻ to teach the Companions about religion (Islam, iman, and ihsan). This hadith is known as the hadith of Jabril (peace be upon him).

Umar ibn al-Khattab (Allah be pleased with him) related the hadith in which Jibril (peace be upon him) posed certain questions to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. In that hadith the Angel asks, "What is ihsan?" The Messenger ﷺ replied: "It refers to worshipping Allah as though you see Him. (i.e, with sincerity and presence of mind) And, if you do not see Him, He certainly sees you." [Muslim]

PRESERVATION OF TASAWWUF

With the passing of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, our scholars sought to preserve his teachings. This knowledge was so vast that it resulted in numerous branches of Islamic sciences (e.g., hadith, fiqh, tafir, etc). The branch that focused on preserving the spiritual realities present at the time of the Prophet ﷺ became known by multiple names including tazkiyah, tasawwuf, tariqah, ihsan, and suluk. These names (and the science) are meant to capture a reality that existed at the time of the Prophet ﷺ. However, we should not get caught up in names. At the time of the Prophet ﷺ tasawwuf was a reality without a name. Today, unfortunately, it has become a name without a reality.

THE REALITY OF TASAWWUF

The Sahabah (Allah be please with them) had a foundational consciousness of Allah ﷻ that permeated their acts of worship, which in turn drove them to do good deeds, avoid sin, make taubah, prefer the life of the hereafter over this world, and to embody the noble characteristics of the Prophet ﷺ. In essence, the Sahabah were able to take the potential energy of worship and convert it into the kinetics of good deeds and manners. Examples of their characteristics included:

1. Humility, reserving greatness for Allah ﷻ alone
2. Compassion to all of creation
3. Kindness and warmth
4. Avoiding arguments, anger, and hatred of others
5. Love for others, to the extent that one begins to favor others over oneself
6. Generosity
7. Forgiving others and overlooking mistakes
8. Cheerfulness
9. Being soft spoken and avoiding exhibition
10. Fulfilling promises
11. Contentment, appreciation and gratefulness towards Allah ﷻ

SEMINAR GOAL

The goal of this seminar is to re-energize our focus on this important branch of din. Of note, on occasion we will reference narrations from a collection of hadith compiled by Hazrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (the Mercy of Allah be upon him) termed, “The Reality of Tariqah from the Refined Sunnah.” I recommend taking the time to read this important work, as it provides a strong foundation for many of the principles of our way.

OVERRIDING PRINCIPLE

Just as all of din in general and each of the branches of din in particular, tasawwuf is derived from the Holy Quran and the Sunnah and is bound by the rulings of Sacred Law. The Sacred Law and Prophetic sunnah are the way of the true salik [one who travels on the spiritual path]. As the Holy Quran states,

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحِبُّكُمْ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Say, "If you love God, then follow me, and God will love you, and will forgive you your sins." God is Forgiving and Merciful (3:31)

This ayah highlights that the Prophetic sunnah is the only path that can lead to spiritual ascension and the Love of Allah ﷻ

ESSENTIAL WARNING

Throughout our history excesses have arisen in all branches of din, which, in turn, have been countered by our scholars. Given its spiritual nature, this is especially true with tasawwuf. Hence, before beginning, we must be absolutely clear on one point: There is no tariqah (spiritual path) without sunnah and shariah (Sacred Law).

This principle is perhaps best embodied by Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi (mercy be upon him), whose work to refine tasawwuf lead him to be classified as a mujaddid (reviver of religion). He writes:

After rectification of beliefs, one must learn the rules of fiqh (sacred law). It is also important to learn the necessary acts, the obligatory acts, the lawful (halal) and unlawful, the Sunna, the desirable, the questionable, and undesirable (makruh), and to practice din according to the requirements of fiqh. Once one has acquired the two branches of beliefs and fiqh then, if Allah ﷻ permits, there is also the path of the sufis.

He also writes:

The Sharia guarantees success of the material world and the Hereafter, and Tasawwuf is a vehicle of this Sharia.

Khawaja Muhammad Ma'sum (his son) writes:

Everyone is obligated to follow the Sharia, be it majority or minority. Tasawwuf does not have the audacity to abrogate the laws of the Sharia and free its followers from following them. One of the most firm beliefs of the Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamah is that no one, while conscious and sober, can reach a level that frees him from adherence to the commandments of the Sharia. Whoever believes any different has left the fold of Islam.

REALITY OF DEEDS

Deeds are comprised of an outer form with an inner reality. While the outer form is necessary, it is the inner reality that is the true essence of the deed. Hence, for a believer to be successful they need to master both the inner and the outer aspects of each act of worship.

It is related on the authority of Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “The true emigrant (muhajir) is a person who leaves behind everything that Allah has forbidden.” [Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, and Nasa’i]

The outer form of an act of worship is the foundation to attain its inner spiritual reality. Otherwise stated, the outer form is the vessel that holds the inner spiritual realities.

Uqbah ibn Amir رضي الله عنه related that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “When a person performs a perfect ablution and offers two cycles of salah in such a manner that his heart and face (internal and external self) are totally devoted to them, Paradise most certainly awaits (becomes obligatory for him).” [Muslim]

THE NEED FOR COMPANY OF THE MASTERS

An essential premise of our din is that the company of masters is required to attain inner spiritual realities.

When the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) completed the kabah, he made dua for a messenger to be sent from among the people. Similarly, in the hadith of Jabril, the angel was sent in the form of a person. Both these examples highlight the importance of the company of masters.

Shaikh Mujaddid (mercy be upon him) writes:

Attainment of purification is based on the fulfillment of good deeds that achieve the pleasure of Allah ﷻ, which rests on the sending of prophets. Therefore, without the sending of prophets, true purification is not attainable

As a further example of this principle, the Prophet ﷺ testified to the greatness of three generations. Each was defined, however, by the company that they kept. For example, sahabah are sahabah because they came in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ in a state of iman. Hence, it was as if the status of sahabah was transferred to the hearts of those who came in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ in a state of iman.

This principle similarly applies to all subsequent generations of Muslims. Allah ﷻ states in his Holy Book:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

O you who believe! Be conscious of God, and be with the sincere. (9:119)

The truthful here represent those who aim to be truthful in their words and their deeds, in their outward form and in their inner spirit. Although such individuals are difficult to find, especially with the passing of time, they are invariably present as otherwise the command would be impossible to fulfill (which is counter to the tenants of din).

NISBAH

The heart is both a transmitter and a receiver. When sahabah sat in the company of the Prophet ﷺ they received the transmission of his spiritual excellence. They then transmitted that spiritual excellence to the next generation. The masters of spiritual development term the transfer of spiritual excellence as “nisbah.” Each of the three great generations attained this nisbah by coming in the presence of their predecessors in a state of iman.

As the ummah aged and fitna increased, however, the spiritual dimensions of the din became more and more difficult to achieve. Seekers would search for qualified mashaikh from whom they could obtain this nisbah of spiritual excellence.

At the same time, the mashaikh recognized that the transfer of this nisbah required a pure heart and a subdued nafs. Hence, they assigned routines of dhikr, spiritual exercises, and struggle against the nafs in order to prepare the heart of the seeker for the transfer of the nisbah. Through these routines, seekers would purify their heart to attain spiritual excellence.

It is worth noting here that transfer of the nisbah over generations forms a chain or silsilah that spiritually traces back to the Prophet ﷺ. The routines of dhikr and struggle against the nafs vary among different silsilahs. Each remains valid so long as its practices remain bound by the guidelines of the shariah and the Sunnah. At any moment in time, any given chain can be verified by this key criterion: there is no tarqiah without sunnah and shariah.

BAYAH

The Prophet ﷺ regularly took pledges from the sahabah to make firm their commitment to din with particular emphasis on seeking forgiveness for shortcomings and avoiding future sin. This pledge is called bayah of tawbah, and it is referenced in both in the Holy Quran as well as hadith. Allah ﷻ states,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ لَا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَانٍ يَفْتَرِينَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا يَعْصِيَنَّ فِي مَعْرُوفٍ لَّا فَبَايِعُهُنَّ وَاسْتَعْفِر لَّهُنَّ اللَّهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

O Prophet! If believing women come to you, pledging allegiance to you, on condition that they will not associate anything with God, nor steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill their children, nor commit perjury as to parenthood, nor disobey you in anything righteous, accept their allegiance and ask God's forgiveness for them. God is Forgiving and Merciful (60:12)

Multiple hadith also support the regular occurrence of bayah between the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions.

It is related on the authority of Awf ibn Malik al-Asjai that he said, “We were in the company of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, nine, eight, or seven of us, when he ﷺ said, ‘Will you not pledge your allegiance to the Messenger of Allah?’ As we had only recently pledged our allegiance to him, we said, ‘We have already pledged ourselves to you, O Messenger!’ Yet

again he asked us, ‘Will you not pledge yourselves to the Messenger of Allah?’ So we extended our hands and said, ‘To what are we to pledge ourselves, O Messenger of Allah?’ He replied, ‘That you worship Allah and not associate anything with Him. That you perform the five daily prayers. And that you hear and obey.’ Then he whispered something to us. He said, ‘And do not ask anyone for anything.’ Since then, I have seen people of that group drop their whips [while mounted] and not ask anyone to hand it up to them.” [Muslim, Abu Dawud, and al-Nasa’i]

Ibn Abi Khathir related that Abu Sahl رضي الله عنه said: “A woman passed by me (in the street) and I brushed against her (being overcome by lust). However, I immediately took my hand away (out of fear for Allah). The next day, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was accepting pledges of allegiance, bayah from people and I went (to him for the same purpose). He said to me: ‘are you not the one who touched (that woman) yesterday?’ I replied: Indeed O Messenger of Allah! But I will never do that again. He ﷺ then took the Pledge of Allegiance from me.” [Razin]

Ubadah ibn as-Samit related that while a group of Companions were around him, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Give me your pledge that you will not ascribe partners to Allah and that you will not steal.” [Bukhari and Muslim]

In light of the above, mashaikh of tasawwuf take bayah of taubah from seekers who would like to develop themselves spiritually. The bayah allows the seeker to make taubah from past sins and to show resolve to avoid future ones. In addition, seekers can make intention to take the shaykh as a guide to assist in attaining the goals of the bayah. This bayah forms the framework for the relationship between the murid (seeker) and the shaykh.

A few addition points about bayah include the following:

1. One of the blessings of the bayah is that it makes the shaykh more attentive to the seeker and makes the seeker more attentive to the shaykh

It is related on the authority of A'waf ibn Malik al-Asjai that he said, “We were in the company of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, nine, eight, or seven of us, when he ﷺ said, ‘Will you not pledge your allegiance to the Messenger of Allah?’ As we had only recently pledged our allegiance to him, we said, ‘We have already pledged ourselves to you, O Messenger!’ Yet again he asked us, ‘Will you not pledge yourselves to the Messenger of Allah?’ So we extended our hands and said, ‘To what are we to pledge ourselves, O Messenger of Allah?’ He replied, ‘That you worship Allah and not associate anything with Him. That you perform the five daily prayers. And that you hear and obey.’ Then he whispered something to us. He said, ‘And do not ask anyone for anything.’ Since then, I have seen people of that

group drop their whips [while mounted] and not ask anyone to hand it up to them.”
[Muslim, Abu Dawud, and al-Nasa’i]

It is related on the authority of Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه that Allah’s Prophet ﷺ said, “O Abu Dharr! I can see that you are weak. And truly, I want for you only that which I want for myself. So, never judge between two parties, and never become responsible for the welfare of an orphan.” [Abu Dawud]

2. Bayah is an act of the heart. Its outward form involves a pledge; however, its essence is a connection of the heart. Hence, it is important, when possible, for the shaykh and the murid to have commonality

It is related that on the authority of Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The souls of humankind were [in the spirit world] as an army gathered. Then those who were acquainted with one another [in that world] will harmonize [in this world], and those who were unknown to one another there will fall into discord here.” [Muslim and Abu Dawud with similar narration in Bukhari]

3. Women made bayah to the Prophet ﷺ, however, this was always done orally. A shaykh should never be in physical contact with a non-mehram. Again, there is no tariqah without shariah.

‘A’isha رضي الله عنها said, “Never once in his life did the Messenger of Allah ﷺ touch the hand of a woman who was not related to him. He did, however, take bay’ah from them orally. And when a woman had pledged herself, he would then say to her, ‘Go. I have accepted your pledge.’” [Bukhari, Muslim, and Abdu Dawud]

4. Bayah can be renewed, particularly for emphasis.

Salamah ibn al-Akwa رضي الله عنه said, “Allah’s Prophet ﷺ called upon us to swear allegiance to him beneath a tree (at Hudabiyah) and so I swore allegiance among the first of those who swore it. Then the Prophet ﷺ continued taking oaths of allegiance from more and more people until when he was through half of them, he called out to me. ‘O Salamah! Swear allegiance.’ I replied, ‘I have already sworn allegiance, among the first people to do so.’ He replied, ‘Do it again.’ So I again swore allegiance to him and, when he noticed I was without a weapon, he gave me a shield. Then he returned to taking the oath of allegiance from more and more people until he reached the last of them. Then he said to me, ‘O Salamah! Why don’t you swear allegiance to me?’ So I said, ‘O Allah’s Prophet! I swore allegiance to you among the first of those who swore it! And then again among those in the middle! Do you now want me to swear with those at the end?’ He replied, ‘Again.’ So he took my oath, and in that manner I swore allegiance three times!” [Muslim]

5. Even those who are unsure of their ability to fulfill the bayah can benefit from bayah.

It is related on the authority of Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه in a lengthy hadith from the Prophet ﷺ concerning the virtues of dhikr that an angel said, after being told by the Almighty that He had forgiven the sins of all of those present in a certain group of people engaged in His remembrance (dhikr), “But there is a certain one among them, a wrongdoer, who is not really one of them, but who was passing by on his own business and simply decided to sit there and rest.” The reply of the Almighty to the angel was, “And I forgive him too! Even those who come only to sit with these people will not be deprived.” [Bukhari, Muslim and Tirmidhi]

BEYOND THE BAYAH

In order to achieve the goals of the bayah, the relationship between the shaykh and seeker involves several key interactions.

- (1) Reminder of the importance of the sunnah and the shariah and of the need to avoid sin
- (2) Assignment of a routine of dhikr. This routine helps to purify the seekers heart so that they can attain the nisbah as described above.
- (3) A connection, or rabita, between the shaykh and seeker. This rabita allows the seeker to present their individual issues and allows the Shaykh to learn of the seeker’s issues so that each seeker’s treatment can be personalized.
- (4) Connection of seekers with other seekers, which help encourage the seekers and develops love between the seekers

Each of these is further explicated below:

Reminder of the importance of the sunnah and shariah and the need to avoid sin

The primary means by which a salik progress is to implement the mandates of the din to the fullest of their ability

Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه related that the Prophet of Allah ﷺ said that God Almighty stated, “Whosoever acts with enmity towards those who are close to Me, I will declare war upon that person! Nothing that My servant does to gain proximity to Me is more loved by Me than his performing the things I have commanded (him to perform). Indeed, as he continues to seek My favor through the performance of supererogatory acts of worship, I will eventually come to love him. Then, when I love him, I become the ears with which he hears,

the eyes with which he sees, the hand with which he strikes, and the feet with which he walks.” [Bukhari]

Each salik should select one of the four accepted madhabs of din and follow that to the best of their ability. At the same time, they should seek to implement the sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. Finally, they should attempt to identify any sins that are holding back their progress and eliminate the environment that fosters those sins.

Assignment of Routine

Seekers are assigned a daily routine of dhikr. Dhikr is the fuel that allows a seeker to progress on the path.

Abdullah ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه related that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to say: “There is a polish for everything, and the polish for hearts is the remembrance of Allah.” [Bayhaqi]

In particular, our daily routine includes the following daily prescriptions:

(1) Quran

It is related on the authority of Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه that Allah’s Prophet ﷺ said, “Never will a group of people gather in a house from among the houses of Allah for the recitation of Allah’s Book, or to study it among themselves, except that a state of spiritual tranquility, sakina, will descend upon them, and they are overcome by Divine Mercy, and they are surrounded by angels, and they are mentioned by Allah as being among those closest to Him.” [Abu Dawud]

(2) Istighfar

It is related on the authority of Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whenever a servant commits an act of wrongdoing, a black spot appears on their heart; and when they desist, and ask for forgiveness, and repent, their heart will become clear. But, if instead [of remaining committed to repentance] they again commits the same wrongs, more and more black marks will accumulate until they overshadow their heart. This is the rust which the Almighty speaks of in the Qur’an.” [Tirmidhi]

(3) Salawat

(4) Muraqabah

These prescriptions energize the believer to avoid sin, to implement the Sunnah in their lives, to rectify their character, and to focus on the hereafter (over the life of this world). The routine begins with a daily intention, progresses with a daily effort, and ends with a daily reflection of what was possible and what was lacking. Each day the routine begins anew, there is no need to make up a prior day's routine. Finally, the routine is supererogatory; hence, the farad should always remain the primary focus of the seeker.

It is related on the authority of Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه that when he was asked about someone who spent his days fasting and his nights in prayer, but who never went to a mosque for congregational prayers, he answered, "He is one of the people of the Fire." [Tirmidhi]

Finally, it is useful to designate a place at home for one's routine to help with both concentration and consistency.

It is related on the authority of 'Utban ibn Malik رضي الله عنه that when he told Allah's Messenger ﷺ that the rains prevented him from making his way to the mosque for prayers and that he would like the Emissary ﷺ to come to his home and perform prayer with him in the place where he usually performed it, Allah's Messenger ﷺ replied, "Yes, we will do it." [Malik, Muslim, Bukhari and Nasa'i]

This place of worship should be simple and without distractions.

It is related on the authority of Al-Aslamiyyah رضي الله عنها that she once asked Uthman ibn Talhah رضي الله عنه what the Prophet ﷺ had said to him when he called him. Uthman رضي الله عنه replied, "He told me he had forgotten to ask me to cover over those two horns. 'For indeed', he said, 'there should be nothing inside here which might distract people from performing their prayers.'" [Abu Dawud]

Connection (rabita)

The connection between the seeker and shaykh allows the seeker to benefit from the nisbah, knowledge, and experience of the shaykh. However, the shaykh also benefits from the sincerity of the seekers.

It is related on the authority of 'A'isha رضي الله عنها that a man once woke during the night and began to recite the Qur'an aloud. So, in the morning, Allah's Prophet ﷺ said, "May Allah bless so

and so. Last night he reminded me of a number of verses that had slipped by mind.”
[Bukhari, Muslim, and Abu Dawud]

‘Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه related: “I sought permission from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to perform umrah. He gave me permission and said, ‘O my brother! Include us in your supplications and do not forget us.’ This was such that I would not agree to exchanging it for the entire world.” [Abu Sawud]

Ideally, the seeker should try to be in the gathering of the shaykh at least once a year so that they can provide an update on their state. However, connection is one of the heart and is not bound by physical presence. Hence, it is possible for seekers to maintain a connection of the heart from a distance.

Anas narrated: “While the Prophet ﷺ was in a Ghazwa he said, "Some people have remained behind us in Medina and we never crossed a mountain path or a valley, but they were with us (i.e., sharing the reward with us), as they have been held back by a (legal) excuse.”
[Bukhari]

The connection is most beneficial when seeker be open about their issues, similar to the way a patient is open with a doctor.

Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه stated, “I said, ‘O Allah’s Prophet ﷺ! I hear you say many things, but I do not remember them.’ He ﷺ replied, “Spread your cloak.’ So I spread it open. Then he related many things to me and I forgot none of them!” [Tirmidhi with similar in Bukhari and Muslim]

Adab is an essential backbone of the relationship; however, adab must be within the limits of the shariah and should be tempered with the preferences of the shaykh.

Anas رضي الله عنه related that: “There was none who was more beloved to the Companions رضي الله عنهم than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Despite this, when they saw him, they did not stand up because they knew he disliked this.” [Tirmidhi]

The barakah of this relationship often leads to useful personalized advice for the seeker.

It is related on the authority of Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه that Allah’s Prophet ﷺ said, “O Abu Dharr! I can see that you are weak. And truly, I want for you only that which I want for myself. So, never judge between two parties, and never become responsible for the welfare of an orphan.” [Abu Dawud]

It is related on the authority of Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه that a man went to Allah's Prophet ﷺ and asked if there was permission for one fasting to embrace one's wife. So the Prophet ﷺ gave the man permission to do so. But when another man came and asked the same thing, the Prophet ﷺ refused to give him permission. The man he gave permission to was an old man, while the man he refused was a young one. [Abu Dawud]

Despite the above, guidance lies with Allah ﷻ and Allah alone.

Al- Musayyab ibn Hazan رضي الله عنه stated that it was in regard to Abu Talib that the verse was revealed: 'Verily, you guide not whom you love; but it is Allah who guides whomsoever He wills. [Bukhari, Muslim and Nasa'i]

Interactions with seekers

- Given the seriousness of their effort, seekers are encouraged to be particular about the company that they keep.

It is related on the authority of Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه that Allah's Prophet ﷺ said, "A person will adopt the ways of his friend. Be, therefore, wary of those you choose to befriend." [Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi]

Interactions between the seekers allows each to gain from the others and allows inexperienced seekers to benefit from those who are more experienced. It also energizes all involved towards the goals of suluk.

- Like rabita, the benefits of this relationship are maximized by love and adab.

It is related on the authority of 'Umar ibn Maymun that 'Umar رضي الله عنه said to his son, "Go to the Mother of the Muslims, and say to her that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه asks permission to be buried at the side of his two companions." In the same narration it is related that 'A'isha رضي الله عنها replied, "I had wanted that place for myself, but today I prefer that he should have it." [Bukhari]

It is related on the authority of Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه concerning the verse: "...and who prefer others over themselves, even though poverty by their lot," that "A man from the Ansar had a guest for the night but no food to offer him, except for a few morsels he had put aside for his children. The man said to his wife, 'Put the children to sleep, put out the light, then serve our guest whatever we have.' Then the verse was revealed." [Tirmidhi]

- Conflicts should be avoided and, if they occur, resolved quickly, as conflict can lead to tremendous decrease in the barakah of the efforts.

Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنه related that there was a man from among the Ansar whose home was the furthest from the center of Madina, but who never missed a prayer with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Ubayy رضي الله عنه said, "As we all felt compassion for the man, one day I said to him, 'Why don't you buy yourself a donkey and spare yourself the trouble of walking among the reptiles and through desert heat?' His reply was, 'By Allah! Because I do not wish that my house should be any closer to the house of Muhammad ﷺ.' I was so annoyed at the man's reply that I went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and told him what the man had said. When the Messenger ﷺ called the man, he repeated what he had said before. But he added that he hoped to receive a reward in heaven for every step to and from the mosque. So the Messenger ﷺ said to him, "You will indeed receive the reward you hope for." [Muslim]

It is related on the authority of Abu Umamah al Bahili رضي الله عنه that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, "A person who chooses not to argue when they know that they are wrong will have a house built for them on the outskirts of the Eternal Garden. And a person who chooses not to argue even when they know they are right will have a house built for them in the middle of the Garden. And a person who works consciously to improve their character will have a house built for them in the highest (and best) part of the Eternal Garden." [Tirmidhi]

LOVE

Interactions between the shaykh and the murids create a web of love, which is a backbone for all silsilahs. Murids have a deep love for their mashaikh as they are the conduits that Allah ﷻ has provided them to attain His din. Additionally, murids have a deep love for their companions as they are their support on the path to Allah ﷻ. These interactions of love (along with the piety of the jamah) are further enveloped by the love of Allah ﷻ, the angels, and the creation as a whole

It is related on the authority of Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When Allah loves someone, He calls Jibril (peace be upon him) and says, 'I love so and so. Now, you love him too.' Then Jibril, too, loves that person, and calls out to the inhabitants of the heavens, 'Allah loves so and so. Now, you love him too.' So the inhabitants of the heavens come to love that person as well, and the person is accepted all over the earth. When Allah despises someone, He calls Jibril and says, 'I despise so and so. Now, you despise him too.' Then Jibril, too, despises that person, and calls out to the inhabitants of the heavens, 'Allah despises so and so, now you despise him too.' So the inhabitants of the heavens despise him too, and that person becomes despicable in the eyes of people all over the earth." [Muslim]

The above described layers of love lead to high stations in both this life and hereafter.

It is related on the authority of Muadh ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: “Allah ﷻ said, ‘Those may be assured of My love who love one another for My sake, who sit with one another for My sake, who visit one another for My sake, and who spend on one another for My sake.’” [Malik]

It is related to the authority of ‘Umar رضي الله عنه is that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “Verily, there are people among the servants of Allah ﷻ who are neither Prophets nor martyrs, but whose good fortune will be coveted on the Day of Judgment by the Prophets and martyrs because of the positions they will hold near the Almighty.” The Companions said, “Tell us, O Allah’s Messenger ﷺ, who these people are!” So the Emissary ﷺ replied, “They are a people who love one another for no other reason than for the sake of Allah, who have no blood or financial ties between them. By Allah! Their faces and everything else about them will be light! When most people fear, they will have no fear; and when most people sorrow, they will have no sorrow!” Then the Emissary ﷺ recited the following verse: “Surely the friends of Allah; no fear shall be set them, neither shall they sorrow.” [Abu Dawud]

Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه related in the hadith about the seven people who would be shaded by the Almighty ﷻ on the Day of Judgment, that the Prophet of Allah ﷺ said, “... And two people who love one another for the sake of Allah, who came together because of Him and who depart because of Him.” [Bukhari and Muslim]

Furthermore, the love that bonds the community becomes a means of hope and salvation for those that stumble on the path despite their inability to progress.

It is related on the authority of Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه that he once said, “O Allah’s Prophet! What about someone who really loves a certain group of people, but is unable to do what they do?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “You, O Abu Dharr, will always be with those you love.” [Abu Dawud]

Finally, the jamah become a silent dawah that attracts mankind to the din as a whole.

MUJAHADA

Along with elevating the soul through the routine and good company, the seeker must also make a concerted effort to subdue the nafs. Nafs is a term used to describe the animalist desire present in human beings. When untamed, the nafs drives an individual toward sin and fulfillment of base desires. When tamed, however, the nafs can drive the seeker to success in the hereafter.

Given the central role of the nafs, seekers must make an effort to curtail and tame it. This is done by mujahada, or limiting the fulfillment of one's desires (i.e., crushing the nafs).

It is related on the authority of Jabir رضي الله عنه that one day, as he was returning from the marketplace with a package of meat, Umar رضي الله عنه met him and asked what he was carrying. Jabir رضي الله عنه replied, "We had a craving for meat, so, for a dirham, I bought some." Then Umar رضي الله عنه replied, "And is it that whenever you have a craving for something, you go out and buy it? For the likes of us, it is extravagance enough that we eat everything we desire." [Malik]

It is important to note that the greatest struggle against the nafs comes through the sunnah, as the sunnah represents the balanced model established by the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions (Allah be pleased with them).

It is related on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه that a certain man went to Allah's Messenger ﷺ and said, "Whenever I eat meat, my appetite for women is stimulated and I am possessed by desire. Therefore, I have forbidden myself from consuming meat." Then the Almighty revealed the verse: "O believers! Forbid not such good things as Allah has made lawful for you." [Tirmidhi]

Scholar of tasawwuf often speak of four majors types of mujahadah - minimizing (1) speech, (2) sleep, (3) interaction with others, and (4) food and drink. These were highly emphasized by the early scholars of tasawwuf. However, in more recent times, scholars have placed a relatively greater emphasis on dhikr and company of the shaykh, as the convenience of modern times has highly limited the average persons ability to strive against the nafs.

ASCETICISM

As a further means of crushing the nafs, people of tasawwuf often maintain ascetism. This is a defining feature of those on the path.

It is related on the authority of Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, "Asceticism is not simply a matter of your denying yourself what is lawful, or of spurning wealth.

Asceticism is your having more faith in what is in the hand of Allah than in what you hold in your own hand. And asceticism is your desiring more a reward for your enduring affliction than an end to it.” [Tirmidhi]

However, asceticism does not preclude having preferences.

It is related on the authority of Jabir رضي الله عنه that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ once entered a vegetable garden owned by a man from the Ansar of Madina who was, at that moment, drawing water from his well. The Emissary ﷺ said, “If you have some water which has stood overnight in a water bag, I’d prefer to drink that. But, if you don’t, I’ll just ask you for a drink from that well. [Bukhari and Abu Dawud]

WASWASAAT

It is not uncommon for those involved on the path to develop waswasat to varying degrees. These are whisperings of shaytan, but are also a sign of true faith.

It is related on the authority of ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ud that when the Companions said: “O Messenger of Allah ﷺ! There are times when we find ourselves thinking of things that, rather than speak of them it would be more desirable to be burned to charcoal, or to plummet to earth from high in the sky”, the Messenger ﷺ replied, “That is precisely what perfect faith is all about.” [Muslim]

Given how common whispering can be, sahabah (Allah be pleased with them) raised this issue with Prophet ﷺ, who provided a handful of treatments. These include:

- Mentioning the name of Allah, Most High

It is related on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas رضي الله عنه that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “Satan will perch himself on a person’s heart. Then, if the person mentions the name of Allah, Satan will slink away. But if the person is negligent [in remember Allah], Satan will begin whispering to that person.” [Bukhari]

- Seeking refuge in Allah and spitting three times to the left

It is related on the authority of Uthman ibn Abu Al-As رضي الله عنه that he said to Allah's Messenger ﷺ, "Satan comes between me and my prayer, interfering with my recitation of the Quran, so that I become confused." So Allah's Messenger ﷺ replied to him, "That is the satan called Khanzab. When you sense his presence, seek refuge in Allah ﷻ from him and spit three times to your left." Uthman رضي الله عنه said, "So, I did that. And when I did, Allah ﷻ made him (the satan) go away." [Muslim]

- Seeking refuge in Allah

Abu Hurairia رضي الله عنه related that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Satan comes to a person asks: 'who created this? Who created that?' He eventually asks 'who created your Lord?' If he reaches such a stage, the person should seek refuge in Allah and abstain (from having such thoughts)." [Bukhari and Muslim]

- Ignoring the whispering completely, which the scholars classify as the greatest cure

Al-Qasim ibn Muhammad رضي الله عنه related that a person asked him saying: "I experienced a lot of doubts when offering my salah." He said to him: "(pay no attention to them) and continue offering your salah (in this way) because even if you try to avoid such thoughts, they will never be repelled. Even when you complete your salah, you will continue thinking to yourself that you did not complete your salah." [Malik]

CONSTANT SURVEILLANCE

Just as those who possess the wealth of this world tend to keep it under constant surveillance, even more so, those who possess the wealth of iman and ihsan also keep it under constant surveillance. This is something that is desirable. However, varying states are part of the path and cannot be avoided.

It is related that Hanzalah ibn al-Rabi' al Usaydi رضي الله عنه, scribe to the Messenger ﷺ said, "Abu Bakr met me and asked how I was. In reply, I said, 'Hanzalah has become a hypocrite.' Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه was astonished and said, 'Glory be to Allah! What are you saying?' I replied, 'When we are with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and he reminds us of the Fire and the Gardens of Paradise, at that moment it is as if we are seeing those things with our own eyes. But when we go out from where he is, we again become so involved with our spouses, our children and our property that we forget everything else.' Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه replied, 'By Allah! I find the same things happening to me.' So the two of us went to the Messenger ﷺ and told him what he

had admitted to each other. Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to us, 'By the One Who holds my life in His hands! If you were to remain in the states you attain while you are in my company, the angels would embrace you in your beds and on the streets! But, O Hanzalah, there is a time for this and a time for that.' He repeated this three times." [Muslim and Tirmidhi]

As part of surveillance, a seeker knows that shaytan never stops trying to steal their treasure.

It is related in the authority of Abu Darda' رضي الله عنه that Allah's Messenger ﷺ once stood and began to perform his prayer. When he had finished, he رضي الله عنه reported to his Companions, "Iblis, the enemy of Allah رضي الله عنه brought a flame from the Fire of hell and tried to put in my face. [Muslim and Nasa'i]

Hence, they never let their guard down, are careful about maintaining their routine, and are constantly aware of the possibility of slipping due to nafs or shaytan

Abu Mulaykah رضي الله عنه related, "I met 30 Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who participated in the battle of Badr (and thus earned special merit). All of them feared hypocrisy for themselves and feared changes in their spiritual states." [Bukhari]

It is related on the authority of Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said [after mentioning the virtues of certain practices], "This is your post! This is your post! This is your post!" [Malik, Muslim, Tirmidhi, and Nasa'i]

QABD AND BAST

The states of the believer are affected by two overlying states called expansion (qabd) and constriction (bast). During qabd, experiences tend to be heightened, leading to excessive energy towards deeds. During bast, on the other hand, experiences are greatly tempered, limiting energy towards deeds. Both of these states are unavoidable, and a seeker often oscillates between the two. Furthermore, the oscillation is often proportional, such that deep qabd is often followed by deep bast, and vice versa.

It is related on the authority of Anas رضي الله عنه that the verse: "Surely, We have given you a manifest victory," was revealed to Allah's Prophet ﷺ and that surely the "manifest victory" referred to in the verse was the victory of Hodaybiya. [Bukhari, Muslim, and Tirmidhi]

A'isha رضي الله عنها related in a lengthy hadith that (at the beginning of the Prophethood when there was a pause in revelation), the Messenger of Allah ﷺ became so distressed that he went out several times to fling himself from the mountain tops and kill himself. Each time he climbed the mountain in order to fling himself from it, Jibril would appear before him and say: “O Muhammad! (Do not be distressed). You are most certainly the Messenger of Allah.” His heart experienced ease from this and his soul would come to rest.” [Bukhari]

HUMILITY AND FEAR

As a seeker approaches Allah ﷻ, they become more cognizant of His perfection and only more cognizant of their own shortcomings

It is related on the authority of ‘A’isha رضي الله عنها that, “I asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ if the people referred to in the verse: ‘Those who give of what they are given, with their hearts quaking,’ were those who drink wine and practice thievery. He ﷺ answered me, saying, ‘No, O daughter of al-Siddiq! Rather they are the ones who keep fasts and give alms, and then fear that perhaps their deeds will not be accepted of them. Those are the ones who truly vie in good deeds.’” [Tirmidhi]

APPROACH OF THE MASHAIKH

Mashaikh often leave the ball of interactions in the court of the murid. This should not be seen as a lack of interest. Instead, it is up to us to determine how active we want to be in taking advantage of the connection

It is related on the authority of Ali رضي الله عنه that the Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “What an excellent person is one learned in the ways of Islam! When needed, they are useful; and when others have no need for them, they can be of use to themselves.” [Razin]

SPEAKING AT DIFFERENT LEVELS

It is common for ma’shaikh to speak to individuals at their level. Hence, we should be careful to interpret their statements in the greater context of their iman and general approach to din.

It is related on the authority of Ali رضي الله عنه that he said, “Speak to the people of things they can understand. Would you like it if people started doubting Allah and His Prophet?” [Bukhari]

On the authority of Ibn Mas'ud رضي الله عنه who said, “When you speak to people about things they do not understand, you may be certain that some of them will be led astray.” [Imam Muslim]

SOLITUDE

A seeker should establish pockets of solitude in order to focus on their routine and to avoid/remove the effects of the surrounding environment. Examples of solitude include sitting in the masjid waiting for prayer, minimizing use of the cell phone and internet, being selective about when to leave one's home, etc. The best of solitude is that found during itikaf, which was regularly performed by the Prophet ﷺ during Ramadan. Of note is that solitude is preferred whenever one's din is at risk.

Abu Sa'id رضي الله عنه related that the Prophet of Allah ﷺ said, “Soon (a time will come when) the best wealth owned by a Muslim will be herd of goats with which he may dwell on the highest peaks of a mountain or the lowest of the river beds (so that he may) flee with his religion (intact) from controversies.” [Bukhari, Malik, Abu Dawud, and Nasa'i]

PROGRESS

Progress is defined by a murid's attachment to the sunnah and the shariah, rectification of their character, and a shift in their focus from the life of this world to the life of the hereafter. Seekers should not be distracted by feelings or states as these are passing and are not the goal.

Ibn Mas'ud رضي الله عنه related that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ recited the verse: “whomsoever Allah wills to guide, he expands his breast for Islam,” he commented: when light enters the breast, it expands.” He ﷺ was asked: “O Messenger of Allah! Is there any way of identifying this?” He ﷺ replied: “Yes, avoidance of the abode of deception (this world), attention to the abode of eternity, and preparation for death before its descent.” [Bayhaqi]

Shaykh Mujaddid (mercy be upon him) writes:

It is not of the objectives of this path that different celestial forms and shapes of the unseen appear before him or so that illuminations [anwar] and colors [alwan] become [spiritually] perceptible. They are only diversions and foolery of the material world. In fact, if one performs meditative devotions to attain such things, he puts himself in severe danger; and this is because these visions, openings into the unseen, and lights are like us: only creations. They do nothing more than prove [as all creation does] the existence of Allah.

LIMITS OF PERFECTION

Neither is the shaykh a prophet nor are the murids sahabah. Rather, all are joined together under a cloud of imperfection and should continually seek forgiveness for their mistakes and should strive to advance their stations. In addition, all involved should overlook the mistakes of the other.

It is related on the authority of Abu Ayyub رضي الله عنه that he said, “Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, ‘Were it not for your wrongdoing, Allah most High would have done away with you and created creatures to whom He could grant forgiveness’. [Tirmidhi and Muslim]

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, “By the One Who holds my life in His hand! If you did not do wrong, I would fear something even worse from you: pride.” [Razin]

Where perfection does lie, however, is in the intention of each participant to strive towards their Lord. Hence, all should be seen in the context of this perfection. Indeed, it is this very intention that leads to permanence in the hereafter.

Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Verily, the people will only be raised for judgment based on their intentions.” [Ibn Majah]

With this in mind, each murid should seek involvement in the gatherings at the level to which they can maintain their good impressions and should present themselves accordingly. Students of knowledge would make dua, “O Allah, cover the faults of my teacher from me.” Again, perfection lies in intention, not in actions.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES ARE A MEANS NOT AN END

Some of the spiritual practices of tasawwuf are exercises developed to attain the goals of the science. These are akin to the exercises developed in some other branches of din such as hifz or tajwid. They are not inherently from the sunnah, but are in accordance with it. In this regard, they should be seen as a limited means to an end, and not as independent acts of worship. Shaykh Zakariya states,

“My grandfather, Shaikh Muhammad Ismail Kandhelwi requested Shaikh Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, "I need to talk to you in private." When they were alone he said, "I am a [spiritual] student of Shaikh Muhammad Ya'qub Dehlawi and a student of Shaikh Muzaffar Hussain Kandhelwi. They taught me according to the Naqshbandi method. When I applied the method, my six spiritual ethereal points [of the soul] began turning like a spinning wheel. But I was eager to follow the Sunnas of the Blessed Prophet and was diligent in reading authentic supplications (dua) from the hadith. This is why I had little interest for the practices devised by the spiritual mentors. I would sometimes meditate for ten or fifteen

days, but nothing more. This is my situation and now I am weak and ask that you prescribe for me certain spiritual practices." Shaikh Gangohi said, "Have you achieved ihsan through your own practices or not?" He replied, "Yes, I have." Shaikh Gangohi replied, "Then you don't need to be prescribed anything because practicing the different practices of the sufis after attaining ihsan is like reading Karlma [i.e., an introductory Persian text] after reading Gulistan and Bostan [two advanced Persian texts] which is obviously a waste of time. Getting into the practices and exercises of the sufis for you is sinful and a waste of time."



BAYAH AND THE SPIRITUAL PATH

Compiled by Shaykh Husain A. Sattar

INTRODUCTION

Purification of the believer is an essential part of Islam and, in fact, was a core mission of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him). Allah (the Exalted) states,

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِنْكُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ

Just as We sent to you a messenger from among you, who recites Our revelations to you, and spiritually purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know. [2, 151]

The Islamic science that focuses on spiritual purification is called tasawwuf. Its aim is to purify the soul, so as to achieve the inner spiritual realities of the worship of Allah (the Exalted) as well as the excellence in character, personal relationships, and professional endeavors that results from sincere worship.

BAYAH

Students wishing to follow the path of spiritual development do so by making tawbah (repentance) to Allah (the Exalted) for their past mistakes and pledging to Allah to avoid future sins. This bayah (pledge) of tawbah is referenced in the both the Holy Quran [surah 60, verse 12] and in numerous hadith [Bukhari, Muslim, and others]. At the time of bayah, students (called murids in the science of tasawwuf) also make an intention to take the shaykh as a guide or coach to assist with the goals of their pledge.

ISSUES RELATED TO BAYAH

Given the confusion of the current era, particularly in the realm of spiritual development, it is important to stress that at all times, like with all other Islamic sciences, tasawwuf must be bound by

the tenets of the Sacred Law and the Prophetic Sunnah. Additionally, the following should be noted before making bayah:

- Bayah is highly beneficial, but it is not a mandatory part of our din. Additionally, it is not necessary to make bayah to take benefit from our programs and sessions.
- The goals of the path are simple – to avoid sin and to implement the Sacred Law and the Prophetic Sunnah in our lives to become the best Muslim we can be.
- Each individual progresses at their own pace and to their own potential. We show gratitude for what Allah (the Exalted) allows us to achieve, while continually seeking to improve.
- The role of the shaykh is to advise the seeker along the path of development. The shaykh uses the knowledge and wisdom they have acquired through their training along with their personal experience to provide this advice. The shaykh does not possess a crystal ball or a magic wand. All guidance and ability (taufiq) come from Allah (the Exalted) and Allah alone.
- While there are blessings (barakah) in spending time with the shaykh and in implementing their advice, this barakah is often a reflection of the desire (talab) of the murid as well as the murid's efforts towards the goals of the path. Furthermore, the advice of the shaykh is just that, advice. Hence, it should be weighed with other life factors and coupled with the dua of istikharah (seeking guidance).
- The goal of the routine is to inspire the murid's heart with the desire to practice din. Although the routine is not mandatory, the routine often leads to consistency and sincerity in performance of mandatory acts of din.
- Every Muslim is responsible for themselves on the Day of Judgement. Becoming a murid does not alleviate this responsibility. Furthermore, the bayah does not shift this responsibility onto the shoulders of the shaykh. Note the statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to his daughter Fatimah: "O Fatimah! Save yourself from the Hellfire (through deeds) because I do not have the power to save you from Allah" [Muslim].
- The barakah of the bayah and one's progress on the path can secondarily improve the worldly affairs of the murid. However, worldly benefit should neither be the expectation nor the goal. Should worldly benefit arise, it should be recognized as an opportunity to be thankful to Allah (the Exalted) and to further serve our families and our din.
- In order to avoid conflicts of interest in the murid-shaykh relationship, Shaykh Husain does not accept gifts or personal favors from murids.
- Experiences, including dreams, are not the goal of this path. Hence, we should not seek or expect them.

- Communication between the shaykh and murid is important. Murids are encouraged to respectfully share any concerns throughout their development. Once addressed, however, these should not become a repeated source of discussion.
- Each shaykh has their own temperament. If you find that you are not comfortable with the temperament of the shaykh, it is best for your own spiritual development that you seek another outlet for your growth. Choosing another outlet will not harm you in any way.
- The bayah is non-binding. If at any time you feel that greater benefit lies elsewhere, you are welcome to cancel your bayah and move on. There is no need to inform the shaykh or seek their permission should you decide to move on, and there is no harm that will come to you should you choose to cancel your bayah.
- Finally, it is important for all murids to be aware of our statement of standards. This is present on our website and is also provided below as well.

STATEMENT OF STANDARDS

Sacred Learning is fundamentally committed to the pursuit of spiritual excellence in both personal and congregational matters. That excellence can only be achieved in an environment where the standards of our din and the Prophetic Sunnah are upheld. Spiritual benefit comes from Allah (the Exalted) and Allah alone, and it arises through His established mechanisms of the Sacred Law and the Prophetic sunnah. In fact, violation of these standards leads to nothing more than spiritual decay.

To that end, discrimination, sexual misconduct, predatory behavior, physical or verbal abuse, and exploitation of the student-teacher relationship are not tolerated. In an effort to preserve our standards, Sacred Learning maintains hijab (separation) between genders, particularly in student-teacher interactions, and prohibits gifts, monetary remuneration (in cash or kind), or loans to its teachers. Additionally, Sacred Learning does not compensate (financially or otherwise) Shaykh Husain or any assigned representatives.