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**The American University in Cairo**

**The Contemporary Sufi Heritage of Shaykh Ahmad  
Ibn Mustafa al-'Alawī: The Seven Spiritual Stages  
of the Sufi Path**

*MA Thesis– Dept. of Arab and Islamic Civilizations*

*by*

Omneya Nabil Muhammad Ayad

Supervisor

Dr. Saiyad Ahmad

16th December, 2013

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This thesis is dedicated to examining and analyzing one of the Sufi works of Shaykh Ahmed b. Mustafa al-‘Alawī (1869-1934) who was born in Mustaghānim in Algeria and is considered to be one of the contemporary Sufi revivalists of the Twentieth century. The testimonies that were attested by many Western and Eastern intellectuals confirm the essentiality and the profound effect of his writings that were spread not only throughout North Africa but also found its way to Europe and took Paris and Marseille as centers for spiritual teachings.

Shaykh al-‘Alawī wrote and published between 1910 and 1930 more than ten works and several of them found their way to a second edition. The publication houses varied in location between Algiers, Tunis, Cairo, Damascus and Mustaghānim.

### Literature Review

Though the relative spread of Shaykh al-‘Alawī's work within the mystic circles, the Western academic spheres rarely discussed his works. Martin Lings found this issue quite "abnormal"<sup>1</sup> as even specialists like Brockelmann did not include Shaykh al-‘Alawī in his catalogue. Lings adds further that a copy of Shaykh al-‘Alawī's writings was not found in the Bibliotheque Nationale or the British Library until recently.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century: Shaykh Ahmad al-‘Alawī, his Spiritual Heritage and Legacy*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

There were passing references of Shaykh al-‘Alawī found in the writings of Dermenghem who mentioned him as one of the most celebrated mystic Shaykhs of our time.<sup>3</sup> Also Massignon occasionally made reference to Shaykh al-‘Alawī but it was never more than a passing reference.<sup>4</sup> The first real introduction of Shaykh al-‘Alawī to the Western intellectual world was by Martin Lings through his book "*A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century, Shaykh Ahmed al-‘Alawī : his spiritual heritage and legacy*". This book was first published in 1961 and went for a second publication in 1971 and a third edition was printed in 1993 by the Islamic Texts Society in Cambridge.

### **Martin Lings' Work on Shaykh al-‘Alawī**

In Ling's work, half of the book is dedicated to the biography of Shaykh al-‘Alawī and a lot of excerpts from the testimony of Shaykh al-‘Alawī's doctor, Marcel Carret were included to give an indication of the personal dimension of Shaykh al-‘Alawī's character and personal traits.<sup>5</sup> The second half of the book is dedicated to discussing some themes of a major work of Shaykh al-‘Alawī titled *al- Minaḥ al- quddūsiyya* or the divine awards. This book is a commentary on a book in prose written by ‘Abd al- Wāhid Ibn ‘Ashir al- Fāsī (1582-1631) who was a famous Moroccan Sufi, Jurist and logician. The book is divided into three sections, the first of which deals with the Oneness of Being or *al- Tawḥīd*, an issue which took a good portion of Ling's book. Lings after that delved into the second section of the book which discusses the Islamic rituals and the inner meanings that would elevate these rituals from mere physical appearances to an ascending vertical journey to arrive at the final destination of entering the realm of divine presence in which the belief of the *ghayb* or the unseen transforms to real witnessing or

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<sup>3</sup> Emile Dermenghem, *Vies Des Saints Muslumans*. 1<sup>st</sup> edition (Paris: Éditions Baconnier, 1940), 30.

<sup>4</sup> Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century: Shaykh Ahmed al-‘Alawī , his Spiritual Heritage and Legacy*.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*,13-33.

*mushāhada* where one does not need reason or proof to the existence of God because he reached a level of a true encounter with Him. In this part of the book, Lings sufficed himself with explaining the inner spiritual meanings of the ritual purification and prayers.

The second of Shaykh al-‘Alawī's books which Lings referred to is entitled "*al-Unmudhaj al-farīd*" or the Unique Archetype. In this book Shaykh al-‘Alawī explains in details the way to the full realization of the Oneness of God through the envelopment of all the heavenly scripture of the Quran in the point of the Basmalah and more precisely the point that is placed under the letter Bā'. The point represents the secret of the Essence which is called the Oneness of Perception (*Waḥdat al-shuhūd*), and the letter *Alif* represents the One who is Alone or (*Waḥid al-wujūd*). Then comes the letter Bā' which represents the Supreme Spirit from which the rest of the letters came to existence.

Towards the end of Ling's book, a special chapter is dedicated to an aspect of Sufism that was not extensively written about which revolves around the role of earlier prophets before the dawn of Islam and the resemblance that could be found between some Sufi saints and some earlier prophets. This shining prophetic radiance of pre Islamic prophets transfers its beams of lights to some Sufi saints so some affinity could be found with one or more of the prophets.

Lings ends his book with quoting some aphorisms from Shaykh al-‘Alawī's *Ḥikmatu-hū* or as called in French *Sa Sagesse*. In these aphorisms, Shaykh al-‘Alawī explains his Sufi paradigm in terms of the relationship between the Creator and the created and the differences between the rememberer of God and heedless. Regarding Shaykh al-‘Alawī's aphorisms, I had

the privilege of having a copy of the English translated rare manuscript of Shaykh al-‘Alawī which contains his aphorisms and was translated by Professor Saiyad Ahmad.<sup>6</sup>

### **Thesis purpose**

An exact half century has passed since the first edition of Ling's introduction of Shaykh al-‘Alawī to the Western academic sphere, since then there was no sufficient treatment of the works and the teachings that were offered by Shaykh al-‘Alawī through his multiple writings. Therefore this thesis is dedicated to studying the life of Shaykh al-‘Alawī through examining closely the different spiritual stages that the wayfarer has to go through in his divine path to God. A historical background of major works dedicated to this subject will be examined and four main sources of reference will be tackled. A separate chapter will be dedicated to discuss the contribution of Shaykh al-‘Alawī on that subject in comparison to major previous works. Our main source of reference is the book of *al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya* which is composed of a bundle of aphorisms written by Shaykh Shu'ayb Abū Madyan, who was one of the famous Sufi Gnostics in Tunisia, and the commentaries on them were written by Shaykh al-‘Alawī.

### **Primary Sources**

Shaykh al-‘Alawī's literature is mostly printed and published in the publishing house of Shaykh al-‘Alawī in Mustaghānim, Algeria.<sup>7</sup> Second editions can be found published in other

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<sup>6</sup> Dr. Saiyad Nizammudin Ahmad is an Assistant Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations in the American University in Cairo. I want to express my deepest gratitude for the author who made the unpublished manuscript available to me on Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>. 2011.

<sup>7</sup> All the primary sources that will be used for the purpose of this study are being downloaded for free in a PDF format from the official website of the Zāwiyat al- Tarīqah al- ‘Alawiyah <http://alalawi.1934.free.fr/index.php/maktabah/50-kutub-alawi.html>

publishing houses in North Africa. Unfortunately, not many writers introduced the works of Shaykh al-‘Alawī to the Western sphere as was mentioned earlier except for Martin Lings with his book on the biography of al-‘Alawī. The third edition of Martin Lings' book will be used to refer to the biography and early life of Shaykh al-‘Alawī. What sets the literature that is going to be used in the treatment of the work of Shaykh al-‘Alawī apart is that most of his works were published in his life time either under his personal supervision or with the close scrutiny of his disciples. This fact eliminates the doubts on the usual authentication of these works and the fabrication that can be associated with some of the writings of famous scholars.

### **Historical brief on the French Colonialism in Algeria (1830-1900) and the role of the Sufi orders in Algeria**

Before delving into the biography of Shaykh al- 'Alawī and his contribution in the field of Sufism, it would be beneficial to have an overarching historical look on the political situation of Algeria at the time of the French colonization of Algeria in 1830 until early 1900s along with the role of the Sufi orders in Algeria in fighting against the French occupation. This historical background would help us appreciate the rise of Shaykh Ahmed b. Mustafa al-‘Alawī and his Alawī Sufi order as an addition to the Sufi orders in Algeria which contributed in shaping the Algerian persona both intellectually and spiritually and had a positive role in fighting against the French aggression; a fact which reflects the role of Sufism as a spiritual movement in the political history of Algeria and North Africa at large.

When the French debarked in July 1830 in Algeria, they were driven by the idea of building a collective colonization in Africa after finding themselves totally driven out from the

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Western political game of power and sovereignty. The opportunity that was laid out for the French to build a New France in Algeria was not crystallized until 1868 when one of the brightest thinkers of France, Prevost Paradol, who was elected as a member of the French Academy, showed the rapid decrease of France in terms of population and the eminent threat faced by other neighboring countries such as the UK which extended its influence on many quarters in the world, the Slavonic races which began to find their place under the sun and the importance of taking up arms against both Prussia and the German states to face their potential danger. Paradol believed that the only chance for France to recover its loss in Europe is to colonize Algeria with French speaking population.<sup>8</sup>

The ultimate aim of the French colonization of Algeria was to extend its influence to both Morocco and Tunisia to establish the Mediterranean empire which will be as Paradol said "not only a satisfaction for our pride, but will also certainly be in the future development of the world, the last resource of our grandeur."<sup>9</sup>

Since the fourteenth century, Sufi orders in North Africa became an important factor in social and political life. The masters of the Sufi orders were well known for their leading position in securing social cohesion of local communities in times of political strife and the decay of the central power. The Sufi orders usually acted at these harsh times as a mediator between warring parties.

When it comes to the Algerian resistance to the French colonial plans, we find that multiple Sufi orders in Algeria played an essential part in resisting the French existence on the Algerian soil. The Algerian historian, Shaykh ‘ Abdelrahmān al- Jīlānī stated that the spread of

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Willing Balch, "French colonization in North Africa," The American Political Science Review, 3.4 (1909) : 539-540. Web. 22 Dec. 2012.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid* 540.



the Sufi orders in the Islamic world was crystallized by the 14<sup>th</sup> Century C.E. and the number of Sufi orders reached eighty. In Algeria the number of Sufi orders reached twenty three in 1897 as many branches were developed after the advent of the Ottomans though there were two major well established Sufi orders prior to the advent of the Ottomans; namely the Qādiriyya and the Shādhiliyya orders.<sup>10</sup>

It was reported that the Shaykhs of the Sufi orders commanded all Algerian citizens to take up arms and stand united against the French occupation of Algeria in 1830. For this reason it is not a surprise to figure out that all the revolts against the French colonization were conducted, planned, managed and led by the Sufi Shaykhs and the Sufi disciples in lodges.<sup>11</sup>

In Algeria, the Qādiriyya order spread all over the Islamic world and had a wide range of religious activities especially in Africa. In Algeria the Qādiriyya order had a leading role in taking up arms and uniting with the military national movement to fight against the French occupation. The Amīr ‘Abdel Qādir al- Jazāiri (d. 1883 C.E.) was well known for his unwavering zeal to resist the French aggression and fought against their existence in Algeria for seventeen years.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Salah Mu’ayad al- ‘Aqabi, *al- Turuq al- Sufiyyah wa - l- Zawaya bi -l- Jaza’r* (Beirut: Dar al- Buraq, 2002), 131-132.

The Qadiriyya Sufi order is the first established Sufi order in the Islamic world and the oldest to be established in Algeria where it found a fertile soil to blossom especially under the Ottoman Empire. The name of this Sufi order was taken after Shaykh ‘Abdel Qader al- Jilani who was born in the city of Jilan in Persia in 1077 and then moved to Baghdad which was vibrant with luminary scholars, erudite jurists, and renowned traditionists along with legendary Sufi Shaykhs. In this scholarly environment Shaykh al- Jilani received his education which placed him among the top notch in his field. Shaykh al- Jilani became so popular that more than seventy thousands people attended his Sufi lectures. ‘Abd al- Mahmoud al- Jili, *Nazarat fi -l- Tasawuf al- Islami*, (Abu Dhabi: Mashyakhat al- Tariqa al- Sunniyya, 1998) 408.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 72-73.

<sup>12</sup> Salah Mu’ayad al- ‘Aqabi, *al- Turuq al- Sufiyyah wa - l- Zawaya bi -l- Jaza’r* (Beirut: Dar al- Buraq, 2002), 143-145.

The second oldest Sufi order in the history of Algeria is the Shādhilī<sup>13</sup> Sufi order. This Sufi order witnessed a rapid spread in Algeria and had a major influence on the other newly established Sufi orders in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century with its moderate teachings and refined methodology. Shaykh al- Shādhilī despite his old age was always adamant on fighting against the Crusades and this spirit of resilience spread to encompass his disciples in Algeria as they stood united to face the French occupation.<sup>14</sup>

The third well spread Sufi order in the history of Algeria is al- Rahmaniyya. The name of the order was taken after Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abdelrahmān who was born in Algeria yet travelled to Egypt for religious learning which lasted for 25 years. When he came back to Algeria, his Sufi order was spread in Algeria in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century H, 1769 C.E and had a leading role in declaring sacred jihad against the French occupation especially in the area of the Aures Mountains. During his stay in Egypt, he accompanied a number of luminary Sufi Shaykhs and the most influential of them was Shaykh Muhammad Sālim al- Hifnāwī who granted Shaykh ‘Abdelrahmān the permission to lead the Khalawatī Sufi order and spread its teachings in the Sudan and India.<sup>15</sup>

Shaykh ‘Abdelrahmān was active in emanating the Sufi teachings of the Khalwatī order and his message was well accepted and gained many followers. The name of the order later changed to al- Rahmāniyya but its essential teachings stem from the Khalwatī Sufi order. The

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<sup>13</sup> This Sufi order was established by Shaykh Abu al- Hassan ‘Ali ibn ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abd al- Jabbar al- Shadhuli. He was born in Morocco in 593 H. and was well known for his strong hold in religious sciences and his mastership of Islamic scholarship. His mentor was the luminary Shaykh ‘Abd al- Salam ibn Mashish who directed him to go to Tunisia where he accompanied many great scholars and took Egypt as his final residence where he died in 656 H.

<sup>14</sup> Salah Mu’ayad al- ‘Aqabi, al- Turuq al- Sufiyyah wa - l- Zawaya bi -l- Jaza’ r, (Beirut: Dar al- Buraq, 2002). 149-152.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid* 155

main areas which were known for the well spread of al- Rahmāniyya order are Middle, Eastern and Southern Algeria. As for the followers of this order most of them were from the impoverished working class, peasants and small merchants. This type of hard workers usually share the bigger brunt of sacrifice in hard times and probably this is the reason behind the remarkable position which al- Rahmāniyya order had in fighting the French colonization. By the year 1898, the number of the lodges of al- Rahmāniyya Sufi order reached around 177 lodges. Aside from the prominent role of this Sufi order in igniting the spirit of jihad in the hearts of Algerians to fight against the French occupation, it had an influential impact on spreading the Islamic culture and keeping the zeal of memorizing the Quran day and night in their lodges. These efforts helped in keeping the characterizations of the Arabic Islamic identity intact for decades in Algeria.<sup>16</sup>

Another prominent Sufi order which the European countries especially France and England called it as its number one enemy in Algeria is al- Sanūsiyya Sufi order. This order was established by Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Alī al- Sanūsī al- Idrisī whose lineage went back to the Adārisa dynasty in Morocco. He was born in a city near Mustaghānim in Algeria in 1787 and was known for his zeal for religious learning and his companionship to erudite scholars from Algeria and elsewhere. He was known for his passion for travelling and meeting scholars and along his journeys, he met a lot of Sufi scholars especially during his seven year stay in the city of Fās in Tunisia. During his journeys, he settled in Makkah for some time during which he established his first Sufi lodge in the Mountain Abu Qubais which is a mountain in the eastern frontier of Makkah in Saudi Arabia in 1837. At that time the French colonial power wanted a fatwa to be issued to state the impermissibility of fighting against the colonial powers because

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 157-158.

their number outweighs that of the jihadists and therefore there would be no point of fighting against them, Shaykh al- Sanūsī expressed his staunch refusal of the fatwa that was about to be issued unlike many other scholars who conceded the fatwa.<sup>17</sup>

After his long journeys across the Islamic world, he found his way home to Algeria but learned that he was being pursued by the French army to hunt him down so he went to Barqah in Libya and settled there. It was a successful choice because Barqah was a strategic place as it resides in the middle of the cities in which he was eager to spread his Sufi teachings and ignite the flame of jihad in the hearts of Muslims. He established his major lodge there and was known as the white lodge or *al- Zāwiya al- Bayda*. The name was taken after the white paint with which the walls of the lodge were painted. This name extended to a whole city which was known as *al- Bayda* city. The colonial powers especially France and England announced that the Sanūsī Sufi order and its founder, Shaykh al- Sanūsī, are their first and foremost enemy in Africa. France on its part was adamant on sewing discord and dissonance between the Ottoman caliphate which was waning and the Sanūsī Sufi order through spreading rumors about the potential danger and the eminent threat which this Sufi order presents to the Ottoman empire.<sup>18</sup>

The colonial powers continued its hostile campaign against the Sanūsī order in its different media outlets and the animosity reached its peak when the Sanūsī followers engaged in battles against the Italian colonial powers in Libya which lasted for about 50 years. The spirit of jihad which was ignited in Libya had a deep effect on the jihadists in Algeria and other parts in North Africa. The Sanūsī order and its loyal followers offered great sacrifices to stop the Italian colonial flow in North Africa especially in Libya. One of the prominent Sufi jihadists is ‘Umar

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, 182-184.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 185-186.

al- Mukhtār who under his leadership the Sanūsī order showed unprecedented resilience to fight the Italian powers who in turn exerted all their efforts to lure them in through seducing them with money, privileges but faced an emphatic refusal from the Sanūsī order.<sup>19</sup>

The Sanūsī order was not only known for its fierce opposition and struggle against European colonial powers but also their lodge was famous for spreading knowledge and eradicating illiteracy among people. Shaykh al- Sanūsī established a huge scholarly library which contained around eight thousand volumes in Islamic jurisprudence, Quranic exegesis, prophetic traditions, history, literature, astronomy among other fields of knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

The Sanūsī order was successful in graduating each year hundreds of Sufi advocates who spread across Africa and reached Chad, Somalia and Senegal in the West along with Niger, Congo and Cameroon. These advocates liberated many children who were taken as slaves in slave trade caravans coming from the Sudan. They adopted these emancipated children and funded their religious education to guide and teach their people in their home countries when they go back.<sup>21</sup>

Another influential Sufi order is the ‘Āmeriyya which was established by the Tunisian Shaykh ‘Amir ibn al- Hajj Sālim al- Mazūghī. He resided in the city of Fās in Morocco and later moved back to Tunisia where he dedicated his time to religious learning in which he spent 10 years and was granted the permission to spread the teachings of the Shādhilī Sufi order. He gathered many followers and built a major lodge for his order in 970 H. and at this time Tunisia fell under the Spanish protectorate. Shaykh ‘Āmer had a leading patriotic role in fighting against

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, 196.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 187-188.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 195-196.

the Spanish colonial powers in North Africa which treated Tunisians with outrageous injustice and practiced all sorts of aggression, persecution and humiliation against them.<sup>22</sup>

After briefly examining the most important Sufi orders in Algeria, later in this chapter we will discuss the rise of the ‘Alawī sufi order and its impact on the political history of Algeria.

### **Brief Biography on Shaykh al- ‘Alawī**

Before delving into the intellectual work of Shaykh al- ‘Alawī on the spiritual stages of the Sufi path to God, it would be beneficial to shed some light on the biography of Shaykh Ahmed b. Mustafa al- ‘Alawī (1869-1934) on whom Martin Lings provided the personal narrative of Shaykh al- ‘Alawī's private doctor, Marcel Carret, who had the fortune of spending quite a long time with the Shaykh which would help us to have an insider view.<sup>23</sup>

Another major source for reading about the biography of Shaykh al- ‘Alawī is the narrative which he wrote in his own hands about himself towards the end of his life and which will be used in the next few pages to draw some basic guidelines on his life, his Sufi mentors and his spiritual development which led him to be the Sufi saint of the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup>

In the early years of Shaykh al- ‘Alawī, he did not have much knowledge about the science of Sufism *per se* yet he was very interested in the science of Islamic theology and finding intellectual proofs of the issue of God's existence. He narrates that when he became aware of Sufism through reading the Sufi classical literature and encountering some of the Sufi saints of his time, he started conducting conversations with his close friend and business partner, al-Hajj

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 253-255.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, 13-33.

<sup>24</sup> The biography written by Shaykh al- ‘Alawī is available through his official website <http://alalawi.1934.free.fr/index.php/maktabah/50-kutub-alawi.html>

b. ‘Awdah b. Sulimān, about the importance of having a Sufi mentor or a Shaykh to guide their way to God but Shaykh al-‘Alawī said that at that time he did not believe that he would ever find a mentor. It turned out that Shaykh al-‘Alawī was right, his mentor found him. Reading Shaykh al-‘Alawī's narration of the first encounter between him and his revered Sufi mentor Shaykh al- Buzaidī leaves the reader wondering how destiny brought them both together as he was meant to be one of the greatest Sufi saints of his time.

Shaykh al-‘Alawī's business partner, Bin ‘Awdah, knew about Shaykh Buzaidī and hoped that he might be their mentor to guide their way to God but Shaykh al-‘Alawī did not know about Shaykh Buzaidī before their first encounter. One day Shaykh Buzaidī was passing by their store so Bin ‘Awdah took the opportunity and asked him to come over their store and spend some time with them and Shaykh Buzaidī accepted the invitation and he became a frequent visitor to their store. During these visits Shaykh al-‘Alawī was not involved in the conversations that were mainly conducted by Bin ‘Awdah. Shaykh al-‘Alawī held in his heart great reverence for the visiting Shaykh Buzaidī that prevented him from speaking before him, and other times he was busy in handling the store that he wasn't following the conversations closely.

One time during Shaykh Buzaidī's visits he gazed at Shaykh al-‘Alawī's face and told Bin ‘Awdah that the Shaykh had a potential for treading the Sufi path and he would be like Shaykh Muhammad bin ‘Isa, a revered Sufi saint. Shaykh al-‘Alawī smiled politely while in his heart he felt it is a farfetched possibility as at that time he didn't think of himself apt for the great honor.

The turning point which sparked the spiritual connection between Shaykh al-‘Alawī and his mentor Shaykh Buzaidī is when Shaykh Buzaidī knew of Shaykh al-‘Alawī's special gift of holding and handling snakes without being bitten by them. Shaykh Buzaidī asked Shaykh al-‘Alawī if he is able to handle any snake and Shaykh al-‘Alawī replied positively. Shaykh Buzaidī told him that he has a bigger snake that is even more poisonous than any other snake and that if he was able to handle it then he would be a sage man and this snake is his lower self.

These words as Shaykh al-‘Alawī narrated kept echoing in his ears and made his head spinning over their meanings. After this encounter, only a short time has passed before Shaykh al-‘Alawī's real attachment of love and reverence for Shaykh Buzaidī started to grow gradually in his heart.

Shaykh al-‘Alawī accompanied his mentor for good 15 years full of spiritual knowledge which left Shaykh al-‘Alawī in total preparation to be a mentor himself in the Sufi path. Shaykh al-‘Alawī faced a lot of tragedies and encountered a lot of challenges which should have burned him out yet the divine light fueling his heart always guided his way to safety. Right after the death of his beloved mentor, his wife died in less than a month and he found life pretty unbearable in Algeria and wanted to emigrate to Morocco. He prepared for his travel by selling his home and his business store yet again he encountered some difficulties in issuing a license for travel and he was forced to remain with no source for income. During all these hardships he always managed to give Sufi lessons about divine knowledge and soon enough he had a lot of followers whose numbers were in thousands towards the end of his life.

The Sufi works which he left provide us with glimpses of how Shaykh al-‘Alawī's knowledge was like and how he succeeded in enriching the Sufi heritage with his profound



inspiration and divine knowledge. His outer appearance did not fall short to reinforce the nature of his writings as was narrated by Dr. Carret, his medical doctor, that when he saw Shaykh al-‘Alawī for the first time, he was struck with his Christ like face. This issue was highlighted further by an article that was written by Michel Valsan<sup>25</sup>

Shaykh al-‘Alawī managed a fine equilibrium between delving into the inner meanings of divine law and its spiritual manifestation and between the outer shell of keeping religious rituals and following the prophetic example and his application of the revealed law. This revealed law is the shell which covers the spiritual core of divine knowledge.

Some orientalist fell into the pitfall of generalization and depending on false information which led some of them such as Arberry for example to believe that Sufism in later centuries was lying on its death bed. While holding such negative view of Sufism, when Arberry's attention was directed towards Shaykh al-‘Alawī, he freely admitted that he was a man whose sanctity recalled the golden age of mediaeval mystics.<sup>26</sup>

### **A comprehensive list of all the written books of Shaykh al-‘Alawī**

Shaykh al-‘Alawī wrote around 34 scholarly books encompassing different fields of Islamic studies and the most significant of his works are the ones on Sufism. In the spirit of introducing Shaykh al-‘Alawī to the non Arabic readership, it would be of use to list all the works of Shaykh al-‘Alawī with a brief account of each of them in order to give the reader a

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<sup>25</sup> Michel Valsan, " Notes on the Shaikh al-‘Alawī ," Journal of Studies in Comparative religion vol. 5 no. 3 (1971).

<sup>26</sup> Martin Lings, *What is Sufism* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2005), 123-124.

glimpse of his intellectual heft and we will start with the book which will be used as our reference point in this thesis.<sup>27</sup>

1- *Al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya*: This valuable book is composed of a bundle of aphorisms written by Shaykh Shu‘ayb Abu Madyan, who was one of the famous Sufi Gnostics in Tunisia, and the commentaries on them were written by Shaykh al-‘Alawī.<sup>28</sup>

2- *Al- Abhāth al- ‘Alawiyya fi-l- Falsafa al- Islāmiyya*: this is a philosophical treatise published by Ahabab al- Islam, Paris, printed in Arabic and French in 1984. This book combines a collective research papers that were written at different time periods by Shaykh al-‘Alawī and he made it available for wayfarers to benefit from in proportion to their capacity. These researches sum up his opinions on the truth behind creation and the role of humans in their respective societies. He also pointed out the dire need of societies to have a legal authority to care for people's affairs. He maintained his long standing position that the civil and positive modern human- made laws and legislations are apt to change and do not replace the significant role of divine legislations which are unchanged and free from personal interests which characterize human made laws.<sup>29</sup>

3- *Risālat al- Nāsir al- Ma‘rūf fi-l- Dhabb ‘an Majd al- Tasawwuf*: This treatise was divided into parts and was first published in some editions of *al- Balāgh al- Jazā’ irī* journal and was signed by *al- Nāsir Ma‘rūf* and written by Shaykh al-‘Alawī. Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-

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<sup>27</sup> The list of books of Shaykh al-‘Alawī is published by the 'Alawi publishing house in Mustaghanim under the title of *Manshurat al Maktabah al Diniyyah le al Tariqah al Sufiyyah al 'Alawiyyah*.1987.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>29</sup> *Manshurat* 8.

Hashemī al- Tilmisanī combined all parts together into a book and published it in defense of Sufism.<sup>30</sup>

4- *Nūr al- Ithmid fī Sunnat Wad‘ al- Yad ‘ala-l- Yad fī-l- Ṣalah*: This small treatise was written in response to a question that he received from Shaykh Muhammad ibn Khalīfa ibn al- Hajj ‘Umar al- Midanī al- Qusaibī in the coast of Tunisia regarding the issue of the placement of one hand over the other during prayers.<sup>31</sup>

5- *Al- Risāla al- ‘Alawīyya fī-l- Aḥkām al- Shar‘īyya*: This treatise is composed of around one thousand poetic verses and entails the most important religious rulings in regards to both the creed of monotheism and the rituals and rites found in fasting, pilgrimage, alms giving along with other fundamental issues that are indispensable for Muslims to conduct their lives. He concluded his treatises with a book on Sufism in 132 poetic verses in which he eloquently explained and analyzed the essentials of Sufism.<sup>32</sup>

6- *Manhal al- ‘Irfān fī Tafsīr al- Basmalah wa- Suwar min al- Qurān*. This book includes three different books all related to the exegesis of the Quran.

7- *Al- Unmudhaj al- Farīd al- Mushīr l- Khālīṣ al- Tawhīd*. In this book, the author revealed the hidden gems and secrets lying in the dot of the Arabic letter *bā’* in the very first verse with which all Quranic chapters start except for chapter 9.

8- *Lubāb al- ‘Ilm fī Surat wa-l- Najm*: in this valuable book, Shaykh al-‘Alawī delved into the issue of prophethood and its underlying truth along with the issue of messengership and revelation. He also discussed the reality of the issue of the possibility of seeing God and

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, 9.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, 10.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

the angels along with explaining the miraculous prophetic journey from Makkah to Jerusalem and his ascension to heaven. He eloquently deducted some Sufi hermeneutics of these verses.

9- *Miftāh ‘Ulūm al- Sir fī Tafṣīr Surat wa-l- ‘Aṣr*: in this book, the author expounded on interpreting the chapter of al- ‘Aṣr and unveiled its hidden secrets and distinguished between the different statuses of humans on the scale of spirituality and faith along with the position of the perfect man whose traits are well explained in the Quran.<sup>33</sup>

10- *Mi‘rāj al- Sālikīn wa- Nihāyat al- Wāsīlīn*: this is a valuable manuscript that was first published after 80 years of being totally unknown. It is one of the earliest writings of Shaykh al- ‘Alawī in the realm of Sufism. This published book elucidates the text that was written by his mentor Shaykh Muhammad ibn al- Habīb al- Buzaidī.<sup>34</sup>

11- *Al- Qawl al- Mu‘tamad fī Mashrū‘iyyat al- Dhikr bi-l- Ism al- Mufrad*: this treatise was published in the journal of *al- Balagh al- Jaza‘rī* in its 69<sup>th</sup>, 70<sup>th</sup>, 71<sup>st</sup> editions. It was later collected by Shaykh Muhammad ibn al- Hashimī al- Tilmisanī and was published for the benefit of wider readership.<sup>35</sup>

12- *A‘dhab al- Manāhil fi-l- Ajwibah wa-l- Rasā’l*: this book was compiled by Shaykh Muhammad al- Ghumārī and it includes 93 questions and answers by Shaykh al- ‘Alawī along with 37 letters and a long intimate conversation with God (*munājāh*). These questions and answers are pertinent to theological and juristic methodological issues along with some Sufi questions on morality and spiritual discipline.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, 12.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, 14.

13- *Ḥikmatuhū*: These are aphorisms that were written by Shaykh al-‘Alawī and were translated into French. These aphorisms crown all the mystic knowledge that Shaykh al-‘Alawī attained during his long fruitful saintly life.<sup>37</sup>

14- *Al- Minaḥ al- quddusiyya*: The Divine Awards is a commentary on a book in prose written by ‘Abd al- Wahid Ibn ‘Ashir al- Fāsī (1582-1631) who was a famous Moroccan Sufi, Jurist and logician and his prose was titled *Guide to the Essentials of Religious Knowledge*. Although Shaykh al- ‘Alawī’s commentary is only one of many, it differs in that it transposes the two lower realms of religion *islām* and *imān* into the third higher realm which is *ihsān* or excellence. Shaykh al-‘Alawī presented a purely mystical interpretation both to the doctrine and the rites.<sup>38</sup>

15- *Mazhar al- Bayyinat fi-l- Tamhīd bi-l- Muqadimāt*. This book includes a rich introductory section composed of twenty five chapters discussing one of the most ultimate questions perplexing the minds which is the necessity of having divine legislations to administer the affairs of human beings. Also in this book Shaykh al-‘Alawī refuted the philosophers’ persistence to use their intellect in the metaphysics where it is naturally beyond the intellectual capacity of the mind to grasp this realm.<sup>39</sup>

16- *Al- Qawl al- Maqbūl fī ma Tawaṣṣal ilayhī al- ‘Uqūl*: This treatise is the 24<sup>th</sup> of the treatises that were published in the book *A‘dhab al- Manāhil* and is composed of three sections

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 16.

which includes essentials of monotheism and faith that are necessary for Muslim adults to be aware of.<sup>40</sup>

*17- Risālat al- Qawl al- Ma‘rūf fī-l- Radd ‘ala man Ankar al- Tasawwuf:* This treatise came out as a response to some skeptics who raised their doubts about the authenticity of Sufism and its veracity. So Shaykh al-‘Alawī wrote an eloquent capacious rich response elucidating the significance of Sufism as the core essence and the kernel of Islam.<sup>41</sup>

*18- Miftāh al- Shuhūd fī Mazāhir al- Wujūd:* Although this book is pertinent to astrology and the knowledge of the celestial sphere, after close examination of Shaykh Al-‘Alawī's writings, we find that it addresses the issue of monotheism and how one can find his way to God through the universe.<sup>42</sup>

*19- Mabād ‘ al- Ta’yīd fī Ba‘ḍ ma Yahtāj ilayhī al- Murīd:* This book is composed of two parts and the first of which is published. It is pertinent to juristic issues relevant to rituals and rites in Islam. This book is characterized with its simple style and eloquent elucidation of matters of interest to Muslims.<sup>43</sup>

*20- Al- Nūr al- Dāwī fī Hikam wa- Munājāt al- Shaykh Al-‘Alawī:* Although this book is small in size yet its value is self evident as it contains intimate conversations of Shaykh Al-‘Alawī with God. The value of these conversations is so overwhelming that it is recommended for the wayfarer to make a litany out of it and read it every Friday and Monday.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 17.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 19.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

21- *Majālis al- Tadhkīr*: This book is composed of a series of articles that were published in the *Murshid* journal pertinent to issues of invocation of God and treading the Sufi path.<sup>45</sup>

22- *Dawhat al- Asrar fī-l- ṣalah ‘ala-l- Nabiyy al- Mukhtār*: This book is a valuable contribution unveiling the hidden secrets of the invocation of peace and blessings on Prophet Muhammad.<sup>46</sup>

23- *Minhāj al- Taṣwwuf*: The available edition of this book is composed of two poems, the first of which is about Sufism, its meaning and the etiquettes of the wayfarer in dealing with his Sufi mentor. He also mentions the necessary qualities and traits that the Sufi Shaykh must possess to be eligible to become a mentor. The second part of the book is a poem written by Shaykh Ibn ‘Āshir elucidating the principles of Sufism.<sup>47</sup>

24- *Al- Dīwān*: This is a collection of poems containing 135 poems that are divided into three sections. The first of which is for Shaykh al-‘Alawī and the second is for Shaykh Muhammad ibn al- Habib al- Buzaidī al- Mustaghānami and the third is for Shaykh al- Hajj ‘Udda ibn Tunis al- Mustaghanami. This collection of poems works as a blueprint for the Sufi path describing the different spiritual stations that the wayfarer traverses in his perennial quest to reach the Divine.<sup>48</sup>

25- *Tanbīh al- Qurrā’ ila- Kifāh Magalat al- Murshid al- Gharrā’*: this book is composed of two parts published by Shaykh ‘Udda ibn Tunis in the journal of *al- Murshid* that was widely circulated both in Arabic and French. The number of published articles reached 230 articles

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<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, 20.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, 21.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, 22.

discussing different important religious and political issues that occupied the mind of Muslims in the Arab and Islamic world.<sup>49</sup>

26- *Fakk al- 'Iqāl 'an Tasarruf al- Af'āl*: This book deals with the rules for Arabic grammar and syntax along with the division of verbs and its different functions.<sup>50</sup>

27- *Al- Rawda al- Saniyya fī-l- Ma' āthir al- 'Alawiyya*: This book contains the autobiography of Shaykh al- 'Alawī and his valuable contributions in the realm of Islamic scholarship.<sup>51</sup>

28- *Al- Shāhs' d wa-l- Fatawa*: This book consists of four sections including a number of correspondences and letters from people around the world expressing their gratitude and admiration to the unique character and prestigious position that Shaykh al- 'Alawī enjoyed both in Islamic scholarship and civil work.

29- *Al- Durra al- Bahiyya fī- Awrād wa- Sanad al- Tariqa al- 'Alawiyya*: This book contains regiments and litanies taken from Shaykh Muhammad ibn al- Habīb al- Buzaidī written for the wayfarers of the Sufī path to God.<sup>52</sup>

30- *Al- Bahr al- Masjūr fī Tafsīr al- Qurān bī- Maḥḍ al- Nūr*: This book contains the exegesis of parts of the Quran in Sufi hermeneutics but unfortunately Shaykh al- 'Alawī died before completing his work on all the chapters of the Quran.<sup>53</sup>

31- *Al- Hulal al- Marḍiyya 'ala-l- Risāla al- 'Alawiyya*: This book is an illustrious voluminous book discussing issues pertinent to theology, juristic rulings and Islamic law. The

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<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, 23.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 24.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, 26.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, 26.



depth of this book is presented by the significant number of hadith entailed along with the vastness of the commentaries that Shaykh al-‘Alawī included and were written by traditionists and hadith scholars.<sup>54</sup>

*32- Burhān al- Khuṣūṣiyya fi-l- Ma`āthir al- Buzaydiyya:* This is a unique manuscript that remained undiscovered for more than seventy years and the only copy of the book was found by Muhammad Rashid al- Bady who is the manager of al-‘Alawī publishing house. This manuscript was written by Shaykh al-‘Alawī in which he narrates the biography of his own mentor Shaykh al- Buzaidī. He mentioned some of his mentor's unique traits and fine characteristics along with his long chain of Shaykhs which extends to Prophet Muhammad.<sup>55</sup>

*33- Qawā`id al- Islam:* this book was written in French and was addressed to Muslims who are unable to read Arabic. The book is more of a manual on how to perform prayers with illustrative pictures to help French Muslims to learn how to pray properly.<sup>56</sup>

*34- Wiqāyat al- Dhākirīn min Ghiwāyat al- Ghāfilīn:* this book was dedicated to discussing the issue of the invocation of God and the eminent status of the invokers and the rememberers of God. The book is filled with a lot of Quranic references and hadith traditions in support of the prominent position of *dhikr* among other kinds of worship.<sup>57</sup>

### **History of the al-‘Alawī Sufi Order**

The above mentioned Sufi orders were the most influential Sufi orders in North Africa and had a deep effect on Algeria at the time of the French colonization. The most contemporary of the Sufi orders which was established as a culmination of a long history of Sufi orders in

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 27.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, 29.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, 29.

Algeria is al-‘Alawī Sufi order. This Sufi order was established by Shaykh Ahmad b. Mustafa al-al-‘Alawī (1869-1934) and was known for its organizational skills and ability to reach out to people. Since the dawn of its establishment, the order used the most modern technological means of communication such as issuing newspapers, printing books, conducting seminars, giving lectures, founding clubs and civil syndicates to spread the Islamic teachings in and out of Algeria.<sup>58</sup>

Shaykh al- al-‘Alawī established the very first newspaper in Algeria titled *Lisān al- Dīn* in 1923 and the issuance of an Arabic newspaper was needed at the time to fight back against aggression pointed at both the Islamic identity and the Arabic language. In 1927 Shaykh al-‘Alawī published another newspaper titled *al- Balāgh al- Jazā’ irī* in which a series of articles were written to raise the awareness of the Algerians against the issue of adopting the French nationality and the impermissibility of doing so under the French occupation. Also in this newspaper a number of pressing issues were addressed such as the issue of prostitution which was widespread in all the Algerian cities and villages with the blessings of the French colonial powers. The newspaper was not only concerned about internal Algerian issues but equally showed interest in Islamic issues outside its borders. For example the newspaper condemned the position of the Kemalists and their movement against the Ottoman caliphate. The late Algerian historian, Ahmad Tawfiq al- Medanī, commented on al- ‘Alawī's newspaper by praising its role in spreading the moderate Islamic teachings and reinforcing the Algerian national identity.<sup>59</sup>

Following the death of Shaykh al- ‘Alawī, Shaykh 'Udda ibn Tunis took over the command of the 'Alawī Sufi Order and revived the publications of the 'Alawī Order. After three

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<sup>58</sup> ibid. 263.

<sup>59</sup> ibid., 265-268.

years of suspending the *Balagh* newspaper, Shaykh ‘Uddah ibn Tunis issued a magazine titled *al-Murshid* in 1946 to act as the voice of al-‘Alawī Sufi order and focused on different social and religious issues in the Arab and the Islamic world. The unique addition of this monthly magazine is that it was published in both Arabic and French to attract a wider readership. The magazine adopted a number of issues on which it focused such as the issue of Sufism and its true meaning, the importance of adhering to the right religious teachings and principles, exerting all efforts towards solving the unprecedented contemporary issues facing the Islamic world and the vitality of instilling the religious inspiration within the hearts of Muslims. Over a span of six years, more than 230 articles were published in the magazine in different social, religious and political issues in the Islamic world and henceforth these articles can very well be considered as historical documents registering a critical period in the history of Algeria.<sup>60</sup>

Al-‘Alawī Sufi order was successful in establishing numerous lodges in and out of Algeria and gained a huge crowd not only among Algerians but its popularity spread to places such as Europe, America, Asia and Africa. Al-‘Alawī Sufi order took a major interest in teaching Quran among various Islamic sciences along with conducting introductory meetings to teach people about Islam and its tolerant moderate teachings. These efforts paid off greatly as hundreds of people converted to Islam and acted as sincere advocates to its compassionate teachings. One of the effective ways which al-‘Alawī Sufi order used to spread Islamic teachings is its printing house in Mustaghānim in which a huge number of treatises, publications, religious books both in Arabic and French addressing the non Muslims are published and highly circulated.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, 269-270.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, 271-272.

## Chapter Two

### The Historical Background of the Sufi Spiritual Stages in Major Works

Before examining the work of Shaykh al-‘Alawī on the subject of the spiritual stages of the Sufi path, it would be beneficial to examine four main sources of reference which represent major Sufi works on the subject of the spiritual stages of the divine path in order to have a clear historical background on the development of the spiritual stages until the time of Shaykh al-‘Alawī. The four main references are the book of *Manāzil al- Sa’rīn ila-l- haqq al- Mubīn* by Abū Ismāīl al- Harawī (d.481H. 1089 CE)<sup>62</sup>, *al- Risāla al- Qushayriyya* by Abū al- Qāsim al- Qushairī (d. 465 H. 1072 CE)<sup>63</sup>, *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al- Dīn* by Abū Hamid al- Ghazālī (d. 505 H. 1111 CE)<sup>64</sup> and *al- Futūḥāt al- Makkiyya* by Muḥyī al- Dīn ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638 H.1240 CE)<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, "al- Harawī," (S. de Beaucueil). His biographers are unanimous in praising his piety, the breadth of his knowledge in all branches of the religious sciences, and the indomitable fervour of his devotion to the Qur’ān, the Sunna. In the field of mysticism, he bared his soul in the *Munādjāt* and other writings in *sadj’* or in verse, which are considered to be among the masterpieces of Persian literature; the *Manāzil al-Sā’irīn*, a valuable spiritual guide, impresses by its originality, its conciseness and its masterly psychological analyses (the number of the commentators on this work alone places it in an eminent position in the history of Ṣūfism).

<sup>63</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, "al- Qushayrī," (H. Halm). He is a theologian and mystic. His great mystical *tafsīr*, the *Laṭā’if al- ishārāt*, was composed before 410/1019; the *Tartīb al-sulūk* is an introduction to the practice of *taṣawwuf*, and the famous *Risāla* (composed in 438/1045) is a most important compendium of the principles and terminology of Ṣūfism (analysed by R. Hartmann).

<sup>64</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, "al- Ghazālī". He is outstanding theologian, jurist, original thinker, mystic and religious reformer. He was one of the most prominent men in Baghdād, and for four years lectured to an audience of over three hundred students. At the same time he vigorously pursued the study of philosophy by private reading, and wrote several books. In 488/1095, however, he suffered from a nervous illness which made it physically impossible for him to lecture. In this period of retirement at Damascus and Ṭūs al-Ghazālī lived as a poor ṣūfī, often in solitude, spending his time in meditation and other spiritual exercises. It was at this period that he composed his greatest work, *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* ("The Revival of the Religious Sciences").

The seven spiritual stages which would be the focus of this chapter and the coming one are Fear and Vigilant Awareness of God, Satisfaction and Submission, Reliance on God, Poverty, Sincerity, Love and the Oneness of God. The reason for choosing these specific seven stages is because Shaykh al-‘Alawī in his book entitled *al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya* based himself on these seven spiritual stages which he deduced from the aphorisms of Shaykh Shu‘ayb Abū Madyan (d. 594 H. 1197 CE)<sup>66</sup> who was tackling the issue of the spiritual stages in his book entitled *Uns al- Wahīd wa Nuzhat al- Murīd*.

For further illustration of these spiritual stages, we will use selected citations from the book of *al- Hikam al- ‘Attā’iyya* for Shaykh Ahmed Ibn ‘Attā’illah (d. 709 H. 1309 CE)<sup>67</sup> with

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<sup>65</sup> *EI*<sup>2</sup>, "Ibn al-‘Arabī," (A. Ateş). He is known as al-Shaykh al-Akbar. He was one of the greatest Ṣūfīs of Islam. Ibn al-‘Arabī was certainly the most prolific of all Ṣūfī writers. Many of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s books, both those written by himself and those owned by him, passed to Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Kūnawī , his disciple, who left them as waḳf to the library which he founded at Konya; in spite of later neglect, many of these survive in the Yusuf Aḡa Library at Konya and in other Turkish libraries; and in what follows, especial emphasis will be laid on these and other exceptionally authoritative manuscripts.

<sup>66</sup> *EI*<sup>2</sup>, "Abu Madyan," (G. Marçais). He is a renowned Gnostic in North Africa. The place which he occupies amongst the most important figures in western Islam is not due, strictly speaking, to his writings; at least, his only surviving writings are "a few mystical poems, a waṣiyya (testament), and an ‘aḳīda (creed)" (A. Bel). It is because of the memory of him handed down by his disciples, and the maxims attributed to him, that he has been considered worthy to be regarded as a ḳuṭb (pole), a ḡhawth (supreme succour), and a walī (friend of God). The maxims proclaim the excellence of the ascetic life, of renunciation of this world’s goods, of humility, and of absolute confidence in God. He used to say: "Action accompanied by pride profits no man; idleness accompanied by humility harms no man. He who renounces calculation and choice lives a better life". He often repeated this line: "Say: Allah! and abandon all that is material or has to do with the material, if thou desirest to attain the true goal".

<sup>67</sup> *EI*<sup>2</sup>, "Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allah," (G. Makdisi). Arab mystic, follower of the doctrines of the mystic al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258) as a disciple of the mystic Abu ‘l-‘Abbās Aḡmad b. ‘Alī al-Anṣārī al-Mursī (d. 686/1287). Brockelmann (see Bibl.) lists twenty works by Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh, principally on mysticism and asceticism, of which six are in print and the rest in manuscript. By far the most celebrated of his works is a collection of maxims of a distinct beauty of expression, *al-Hikam al-‘Aṭā’iyya* , with numerous commentaries down to modern times.

the commentary of Shaykh Ahmed Ibn ‘Ajība (d. 1224 H. 1809 CE)<sup>68</sup> in his book *Iqādh al-Himam fī Sharḥ al-Ḥikam*. Also we will use references from the book entitled ‘*Atf al-Alif al-Ma`lūf ‘ala allām al-Ma`tūf*’ by Shaykh Abū al-Hassan al-Daylamī. Frequent citation of the *Dīwan* of ‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632 H. 1235 CE)<sup>69</sup> will be of use as well.

Before delving into the Sufi explanation of the different terms used for identifying various spiritual stages, it would be of benefit to explore its linguistic origin and meaning in the Arabic dictionaries. The dictionary that will be used throughout the chapter is *Mu’jam Lisān al-‘Arab* by Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711 H. 1311 CE)<sup>70</sup>. It would be of further benefit to define different Sufi terms according to the Sufi dictionary to compare any possible variations from its original meaning or usage in the Arabic linguistic dictionaries. The Sufi dictionary that will be referenced is *Mu’jam Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Sufiyya* by ‘Abd-l-Razāq al-Kāshānī (d. 887 H. 1482 CE)<sup>71</sup>.

### **The History of the Development of the Spiritual Stages in Major Sufi Works**

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<sup>68</sup> *EF*<sup>2</sup>, "Ibn ‘Ajība," (J.-L. Michon). He is a Moroccan *Ṣūfī* of Sharīfian origin, was one of the most distinguished representatives of the mystical order of the Darḳāwa. His literary output was most prolific and it reveals a great pedagogic ability, in which the teaching of the *faḳīh* is harmoniously integrated in an original mystical experience, and in which exoteric knowledge ( *al-‘ilm al-zāhir* ) provides the basis for achieving esoteric knowledge ( *al-‘ilm al-bāṭin* ).

<sup>69</sup> *EF*<sup>2</sup>, "Ibn al-Fāriḍ," (R.A. Nicholson- J. Pedersen). He is a celebrated Sufi poet. He led a life of a solitary devotee. The *Diwan* of Ibn al-Farid, though small, is one of the most original works in Arabic literature. Possibly the minor odes, which exhibit a style of great delicacy and beauty and a more or less copious use of rhetorical artifices, were composed in order to be sung with musical accompaniment at *Ṣūfī* concerts (Nallino, in RSO, viii, 17); in these the outer and inner meanings are so interwoven that they may be read either as love-poems or as mystical hymns.

<sup>70</sup> *EF*<sup>2</sup>, "Ibn Manẓūr," (J.W. Fück). The author of the famous dictionary of *Lisān al-‘Arab*. His *Lisān al-‘Arab* (completed in 689/1290; printed Būlāḳ 1300-8 and 1349-) is based on five earlier dictionaries.

<sup>71</sup> *EF*<sup>2</sup>, "al-Kāshānī," (D.B. MacDonald). He is a celebrated *Ṣūfī* author. He was the author of a large number of works, several of which have been published. His *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, or Dictionary of the technical terms of the Sufies is of special interest because in the preface he states that it was written after he had finished his commentary on the *Manāzil al-Sā’irīn* of al-Harawī in order to explain the *Ṣūfī* technical terms which occur but are inadequately explained in that work.

The writing on the spiritual stages of the Sufi path started towards the end of the second Hijri century with the treatise of Shaqīq al- Balkhī (d.194 H.) entitled *Adab al- 'Ibādāt* and he outlined four spiritual stages that the wayfarer has to go through and listed them in this order: *al-Zuhd, al- khawf, al- Shawq, al- Maḥabba*. During the same period another book on this subject entitled *Maqāmāt al- Qulūb* authored by Abū Hussein al- Nūrī (d. 295 H. 907 CE)<sup>72</sup>. He mentioned four spiritual stages for the heart to be illuminated with divine knowledge and he justified his choice of this number due to the fact that God in the Quran identified the heart with four different names which refer to four different stages. The four names are *sadr, qalb, fu'ād, lubb*. On the same path, another book was written by al- Hakīm al- Tirmidhī (d. 320 H. 938 CE)<sup>73</sup> entitled *Manāzil al- 'Ibād wa-l- 'Ibāda*. Al- Niffarī (d. 354 H. 965 CE)<sup>74</sup> wrote a book on the same subject entitled *al- Mawāqif wa-l- Mukhāṭabāt*. Al- Sirāj al- Tusī (d. 877 H. 1472 CE)<sup>75</sup> as well dedicated a whole chapter to the issue of the spiritual stations and states in his book *al-Luma'*. The same pattern was followed by Abū Tālib al- Makkī (d. 386 H. 998 CE)<sup>76</sup> in his book entitled *Qūt al- Qulūb*. A big section was written on the same subject by al- Qushairī (d. 465) in

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<sup>72</sup> *EF*, " al- Nūrī," (Annemarie Schimmel). He is Ṣūfī mystic, of Khurāsānī background. The language of al-Nūrī, called by 'Aṭṭār laṭīf zarīf', "fine and elegant", is highly poetical, and a number of brief poems is attributed to him; the imagery of the heart as a garden which is fertilised, or else destroyed, by rain and in which laud and gratitude are the odoriferous herbs, prefigures Persian garden imagery. Al-Nūrī is called "the faithful one, ṣāhib al-wafā", and "prince of hearts", amīr al-ḳulūb, and, as a true love mystic, was one of the most remarkable companions of D̲junayd. who said at his death, "half of Ṣūfism is gone".

<sup>73</sup> *EF*, " al- Tirmidhī," (Y. Marquet). He is a traditionalist. He preached esoteric knowledge interpreting Ḳur'ānic verses in the most fantastical manner, and approving of the in-depth interpretation of ḥadīth.

<sup>74</sup> *EF*, "al- Niffarī," (A.J. Arberry). Ṣūfī mystic who flourished in the 4th/10th century, Al-Niffarī's literary reliquiae consist of two books, the *Mawāḳif* and the *Mukhāṭabāt* (ed. A.J. Arberry, London 1935).

<sup>75</sup> *EF*, " al- Tusī," (U. Rudolph). He is an important religious scholar of the 9th/15th century. He underlines that the rules of logic and the results of mathematics and astronomy are incontestable; should the statements of revelation be in contradiction with them, they must be interpreted allegorically. In the doctrine on the soul, too, al-Ṭūsī is a representative of philosophical notions (the soul lives on after death; spiritual enjoyments have precedence over physical pleasures, in both this world and the hereafter).

<sup>76</sup> *EF*, " Abū Tālib al- Makkī," (L. Massignon). He is a muḥaddith and mystic, head of the dogmatic madhhab of the Sālīmiyya [q.v.] in Baṣra. His chief work is the *Ḳūt al-Ḳulūb*, Cairo 1310.

his book entitled *al- Risāla al- Qushayriyya*. Al- Kalabādhī (d. 380H. 990 CE)<sup>77</sup> wrote a chapter on the subject of the spiritual stages in his book *al- Ta'arruf*. A treatise that was later praised by al- Harawī was written on the same subject by Abū Mansūr al- Asfahānī entitled *Nahj al- Khās* on which he divided the spiritual stages into forty chapters. Around the same time another treatise was written by 'Abd al- Rahmān al- Sulamī (d. 412 H.1021CE)<sup>78</sup> entitled *Manāhij al- 'Ārifīn* in which he listed different spiritual stages that were briefly mentioned by earlier works.<sup>79</sup>

All these efforts were culminated with the book of al- Harawī entitled *Manāzil al- Sa' rīn* in which he categorized different spiritual stations that the wayfarer has to go through in his way to God and divided them into 69 stages. Al- Harawī commented on all the previous works written on the subject of the spiritual stages by saying that most of them lacked proper arrangements and suitable educational style in writing. He further elaborated that some of the earlier authors referred to abstract concepts without supplementing them with details. Other

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<sup>77</sup> *ET*, " al- Kalabādhī," (P. Nwiya). He is the author of one of the most celebrated manuals on Ṣūfism. Of the five or six works by al-Kalābādhī, two have come down to us, one of them unpublished and the other is *Ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, a basic work for the understanding of Ṣūfism in the first three centuries of Islam (tr. A. J. Arberry, *The doctrine of the Ṣūfis*, Cambridge 1935). The work is divided into three parts. The first, historical, section defines the meaning of the word ṣūfī and gives a swift survey of the most important figures of Ṣūfism; the second part is apologetics, going back to the articles of the creed al-Fiḫ al-Akbar II to demonstrate the accord between the doctrine of the Ṣūfis and Ash'arism (see Arberry, *Sufism*, 69); through using quotations from the Ṣūfis and commenting on them, the third part sets out the major stages on the mystic path. The author frequently quotes al-Ḥallādī, indicating that he lived in an environment favourable to mysticism but one in which Ṣūfism had begun to deteriorate. According to the introduction, the book was written in response to this decay and with the intention of delineating true Ṣūfism.

<sup>78</sup> *ET*, " Sulamī," (G. Böwering). He is an important Ṣūfī hagiographer and Ḳur'ān commentator. Al- Sulamī was a prolific author who eventually employed his future biographer, Abū Sa'īd Muḥammad b. 'Alī al- Khashshāb (381-456/991-1064), as his attendant and scribe. He composed the long list of his works, amounting to more than a hundred titles, over a period of some fifty years from about 360/970 onwards. Some thirty of his works are known to be extant in manuscript; many have appeared in print. These writings may be divided into three main categories: Ṣūfī hagiographies, Ṣūfī commentaries on the Ḳur'ān, and treatises on Ṣūfī traditions and customs. Each of these categories appears to be represented by a major work.

<sup>79</sup> 'Abd-l- Razāq al- Kāshānī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al- Sa' rīn* ed. Mohsin Bidarfar 3rd ed. (Qum: Shari'at publishing house, ND), 7,8, 9, 10, 13, 15.



authors chose to narrate gnostic stories at full length without paying much effort to summarize them or to situate them under the right category.<sup>80</sup>

Although most Sufi writers chose to identify the different spiritual stages of the wayfarer as "stations", Ibn 'Arabī had another name for it and preferred to call them as *asfār* or journeys in his book entitled *al- Futūhāt al- Makkiyya* and the same term was widely used by Mulla Sadra (d. 1050 H. 1640 CE)<sup>81</sup> in his work *al- Asfār al- Arba'a*.<sup>82</sup>

In his commentary on the spiritual aphorisms of Shaykh Abu Madyan, Shaykh al- 'Alawī deducted from the 170 aphorisms seven spiritual stages that the wayfarer has to go through in his path to God. The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to examining these seven stages in earlier major Sufi works to trace the historical development of these stages in the Sufi writings along centuries.

### **1- The Spiritual Stage of Fear and Vigilant Awareness of God (*al- Khashya wa-l- Murāqaba*):**

Before delving into the spiritual stage of *al- Khashya*, it would be of benefit to explore its linguistic origin and meaning in the Arabic language. In the dictionary of *Lisān al- 'Arab*, the verb *khashya* means to fear something or someone.<sup>83</sup> As for *al- murāqaba*, when it is associated

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>81</sup> *EF*<sup>2</sup>, "Mulla Sadra," (D. MacEoin). He is a leading Iranian Shī'ī philosopher of the Ṣafawid period. Ṣadrā laid the basis for what was effectively a new school of theosophical Shī'ism, combining elements from several existing systems of thought to form a synthesis usually referred to as the "Transcendent Wisdom" ( *al-ḥikma al-muta'āliya* ). The ideas of this school, which may be seen as a continuation of the School of Iṣfahān of Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh-i Bahā'ī, were promulgated after Ṣadrā's death by his pupils, several of whom became noted thinkers in their own right, including Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī [q.v.] and 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhiqī. Although Ṣadrā's influence remained limited in the generations after his death, it increased markedly during the 19th century, when his ideas helped inspire a renewed Akhbārī tendency within Twelver Shī'ism (Morris, *Wisdom*, Introd., 49). In the modern period, his works have been widely studied in Iran, Europe and America.

<sup>82</sup> *al- Kāshānī, Sharḥ Manāzil al- Sa'rīn*, 22.

Ibn Manẓūr, *Mu'jam Lisān al- 'Arab*, vol 4 (Beirut: Dar Ihia al- Turath al- 'Arabī, 3rd ed, 1999), 105. <sup>83</sup>

with God it indicates fear of Him.<sup>84</sup> In the Sufi language, al- Kāshānī explains that the term fear indicates at its initial level the fear of death before repentance. The second level of fear is the fear of losing the pleasure of the divine company and the weakness of willingness. The last level of fear for Sufis is the fear of squashing before the presence of God's majesty and total annihilation in awe and fear of God's divine supremacy.<sup>85</sup> As for *al- murāqaba*, al- Kāshānī defines this state in Sufi terms to be the stage of constant watchfulness to God by the heart while treading the divine path accompanied with ultimate glorification and unwavering motivation to keep the wayfarer on the divine path.<sup>86</sup>

For Shaykh al- Harawī in his *Manāzil*, he categorized the stage of fear and vigilant awareness of God into three stages. The first stage combines between awe and longing for proximity; this combination leads to a unique feeling of inner pleasure for the wayfarer. Shaykh al- Tilmisānī (845H. 1441CE)<sup>87</sup> in his commentary said that awe occurs out of veneration and reverence for the majesty and glory of God Most High whereas all else are merely insignificant dependent creatures.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, 280.

<sup>85</sup> 'Abd-l- Razzāq al- Kāshānī, *Mu'jam Iṣṭilāhāt al- Sufiyya* (Cairo: Dar al- Manar 1st ed, 1992), 208-209.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, 228.

<sup>87</sup> *ET*, " al- Tilmisānī," (M. Yalaoui). his piety, modesty and asceticism, plus his vast erudition in all branches of knowledge: exegesis (he wrote a commentary on the Fātiḥa ), Mālikī fiḥ (a commentary on the Mukhtaṣar of Khalīl b. Iṣḥāk) and mysticism (glosses on al-Ghazālī's Iḥyā' ).

<sup>88</sup> Abū Ismā'īl al- Harawī, *Manāzil al- Sā`rin ila-l haqq al- Mubīn* vol 1. ed. Afif al- Tilmisānī (Tunisia: Dar al- Turkī, 1989), 170.

In this regard al- Junayd (d. 298 H. 910 CE)<sup>89</sup> said that whoever is in a state of constant watchfulness of God only fears missing his share of divine rewards because of the slightest diversion of his heart.<sup>90</sup>

Al- Qushairī in his *Risāla* iterated the same meaning when he commented on the hadīth of *Ihsān* in which Prophet Muhammad said "for if you are unable to see Him, He surely sees you". This part of the hadīth summarizes the issue of constant and vigilant awareness of God. For al- Qushairī this state is preceded with a state of self accountability for every action performed or word uttered, otherwise the wayfarer would be far away from reaching his ultimate destination of communicating with God.

Ibn 'Arabī in *al- Futūhāt al- Makkiyya* explored the stage of fear and identified it as the stage of godly men and saints due to the contradicting feelings that are combined in their hearts at this stage. They fear both from the veil of separation and from lifting it alike. They fear the veil because of their ignorance about what the veil hides or what lies beneath it and equally they fear lifting the veil due to their fear of being squashed in God's majesty so they lose the pleasure of witnessing His absolute beauty. Therefore, for Ibn 'Arabī the stage of fear is a stage of confusion as the saints are unable to prefer one option over the other.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *ET*, "al- Djunayd," (A.J. Arberry). He is a celebrated Ṣūfī, nephew and disciple of Sari al-Ṣaqaṭī, a native of Baghdād, studied law under Abu Thawr, and associated with Hārīth al-Muḥāsibī. Djunayd reiterates the theme, first clearly reasoned by him, that since all things have their origin in God they must finally return, after their dispersion (*tafrīk*), to live again in Him (*djam'*): and This the mystic achieves in the state of passing-away (*fanā'*). Of the mystic union he writes "For at that time thou wilt be addressed, thyself addressing; questioned concerning thy tidings, thyself questioning; with abundant flow of benefits, and interchange of attestations; with constant increase of faith, and uninterrupted favours" (*Rasā'il*, fol. 3a-b).

<sup>90</sup> Abū al- Qāsim al- Qushairī, *al- Risala al- Qushayriyya* (Cairo: al- Maktabah al- Tawfiqiyya, ND), 262.

<sup>91</sup> Mohyi al- Din Ibn 'Arabī, *al- Futūhāt al- Makkiyya* vol 13. ed. 'Uthmān Yahia (Cairo: al- Hi'a al- 'Amma li-l Kitāb, 1990), 610-611.

Shaykh al- Harawī considered the wayfarer's watchfulness of God's vigilant awareness of his servant as the second stage in this spiritual station. In this stage the wayfarer has to desert any sort of rejection or discontentment towards God's actions or unseen destiny. Deserting rejection extends towards not only God's actions but also attributes. Also vigilant awareness of God yields getting rid of the wayfarer's inner thoughts or feelings of self existence which may block the wayfarer's connection to God and form a veil of separation.<sup>92</sup>

Shaykh Abū 'Uthmān al- Maghribī (d.373 H.) who was one of the leading Sufi saints in the 4th Hijri century elaborated on the vitality of purifying the heart by saying that a Sufi saint once advised him that whenever people gather around him seeking knowledge, he has to be vigilant of his own heart as people watch what is apparent and God watches what is concealed.<sup>93</sup>

Dhū-l- Nūn al- Maṣrī (d. 246 H. 861 CE)<sup>94</sup> defined the issue of vigilant awareness of God in practical terms through indicating signs, he said: "The sign of vigilant awareness is choosing what God Most High chooses, making great what God Most High makes great and belittling what God Most High belittles."<sup>95</sup>

Ibn 'Attā'illah confirmed the importance of the two types of preservation in one of his aphorisms in which he said: "When He makes you submissive to His command and provides you

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<sup>92</sup> Al- Harawī, *Manāzil al- Sa`rīn ila-l- haqq al- Mubīn*, 71.

<sup>93</sup> Al- Qushairī, *al- Risāla al- Qushayriyya*, 263.

<sup>94</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, "Dhū-l- Nūn, Abu 'l Fayd" (M. Smith). Dhū 'l-Nūn was a practical mystic, who describes in detail the journey of the soul on its upward way to the goal, and gives the Ṣūfī conception of the unitive life in God. He was the first to teach the true nature of gnosis ( *ma`rifā* ), which he describes as "knowledge of the attributes of the Unity, and this belongs to the saints, those who contemplate the Face of God within their hearts, so that God reveals Himself to them in a way in which He is not revealed to any others in the world".

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, 160.

with resignation to His power inwardly, then he has enhanced the greatness of the favor accorded to you."<sup>96</sup>

Shaykh Ibn 'Ajība commented on this aphorism by stating that submitting to God's commandments in the world of outward manifestations is a proof of perfection of the revealed law *al-sharī'ah* and realization of servitude. On the other hand surrendering to God's divine power is a proof of the perfection of the path and reaching the ultimate truth. The combination of both states earns the wayfarer a state of utter perfection because God relieved the wayfarer from the distress of disobedience outwardly and the burden of resentment and discontent inwardly.<sup>97</sup>

Shaykh al-Harawī in the third stage of vigilant awareness of God eloquently mentioned the necessity of getting rid of the state of vigilant awareness. He explained that vigilant awareness is tightly connected with the feelings of self existence of the wayfarer and acts as an indication of his remaining; a fact which goes against the ultimate aim of the wayfarer which is self annihilation in God, a state in which the wayfarer does not need to resort to vigilant awareness because he is simply not aware of his own existence anymore.<sup>98</sup>

## **2- The Spiritual Station of Satisfaction and Submission (*al-Riḍa wa-l-Taslīm*)**

*Al-riḍa* means satisfaction which is the total opposite of wrath and anger.<sup>99</sup> As for *taslīm*, the term originally comes from God's attribute *al-Salam* which is the one who is void of any shortage or deficiency.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ahmed Ibn 'Attā'illah, *Sufi Aphorisms* trns. Victor Danner (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 39.

<sup>97</sup> Ahmed Ibn 'Ajība, *Iqadh al-Himam fī Sharḥ al-Ḥikam* (Cairo: Jawami' al-Kalim, 2005), 260.

<sup>98</sup> Al-Harawī, *Manāzil al-Sa'rīn ila-l-haqq al-Mubīn*, 173.

<sup>99</sup> Ibn Manzur, *Mu'jam Lisān al-'Arab* vol 5, 235.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, 342.

Al- Kāshānī explains in Sufi terms the different levels of the stage of *taslīm* as it initially means submitting oneself to the legal rulings without showing any objections or questioning its reasons. At a higher level the term is related to surrendering oneself to attributes which go against its innate nature such as patience instead of hastiness, altruism instead of greed along with embracing the values of justice and moderation to keep the self in balance and avoid deviating to extremes.<sup>101</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī in his *Futūhāt* tackled the stage of *riḍa* and said that it indicates the happening of small things out of great ones. This means that the servants are satisfied with small things that are bestowed upon them by God out of etiquette *adab* and discipline which stem from having faith and reliance on God.<sup>102</sup> God has described himself with satisfaction with what His servants give in terms of worship even if the servant did not exert all his efforts because if the servant took it upon himself to exert all what he can in worship, he will place himself in intricacy and difficulty and God relieved us from falling in such hardship. Therefore, God is satisfied with the worship which is within one's own abilities and without falling into hardship. The servants as well are satisfied with the reward which they gain due to their worship.<sup>103</sup>

Al- Ghazalī in his *Ihyā'* further illustrated this concept through the following example. He mentioned a story of an ascetic who dreamt about a lady shepherd who will be his bride in heaven, so he kept looking for her until he found her and asked her if she performs any extra acts of worship and she replied in negative. So he asked her if she can remember a special act she does and she replied, "well, there is only one small characteristic of mine, if a calamity befell on me, I wouldn't wish for prosperity to come along and if I was sick, I wouldn't wish to get well

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<sup>101</sup> Al- Kāshānī, *Mu'jam Iṣṭilāhāt al- Sufiyya*, 243.

<sup>102</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al- Futūhāt al- Makkīyya* vol 14., 260.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, 261-263.

and If I was in the sun, I wouldn't wish to be in the shade." So the ascetic said: "this is no minor characteristic, it is a great one that most worshippers would find hard to do".<sup>104</sup>

In other words, the Gnostics submit gently to God's destiny and bend easily wherever the wind of the divine will blows. Ibn 'Attā'illah confirmed this meaning of submission in one of his aphorisms in which he said: "Sometimes good behavior (*al- adab*) leads some to abandon asking because of confidence in His providence or because of concern for the invocation (*dhikr*) of Him stymies their asking of Him".<sup>105</sup> Shaykh Ibn 'Ajība expounded further that the Gnostics are mostly overwhelmed with a state of self annihilation so they fail to recognize their own existence as they are absent from their senses and immersed in witnessing their Lord. For this reason it would be next to impossible for the Gnostics in this state to demand from God or supplicate for anything.<sup>106</sup>

Around the same meaning the Sultan of lovers, Ibn al- Fāriḍ said,

*The command is Yours so ordain whatever You ordain...beauty has placed me under your command....and if ruining myself is the way for my union with You...hasten it as I will sacrifice my life for Yours..... test my love to You with whatever You wish ...my choice would be that which pleases You...*<sup>107</sup>

The same meaning is iterated by Shaykh al- Harawī when he mentioned the response of Abu Yazīd al- Bistamī when he was asked: "what do you want?" so he said: "I want not to want".

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<sup>104</sup> Abū Hamid al- Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al- Dīn* Vol.4 (Cairo: Al- Maktabah al- Tawfiqiya, ND), 479.

<sup>105</sup> Ibn 'Attā'illah, *Sufi Aphorisms*, 49.

<sup>106</sup> Ibn 'Ajība, *Iqadh al- Himam fī Sharḥ al- Hikam*, 371.

<sup>107</sup> 'Umar Ibn al- Fāriḍ, *Dīwān Ibn al- Fāriḍ* (Cairo: Matba'at al- Fajr al- Jadīd, 2006), 94.

Afīf al- Dīn al- Tilmisānī commented saying that this response shows the true sincerity in bending with God's will wherever it leads him.<sup>108</sup>

The spiritual status of submission to God's divine will leads to the spiritual status of satisfaction *al- riḍa*. Ibn 'Attā'illah explained the issue of affliction further in his aphorism in which he said: "To soften for you the suffering of affliction, He has taught you that He is the One who causes trials to come upon you (*al- mublī laka*). For the One who confronts you with His decrees of Fate (*al- aqdār*) is the same who has accustomed you to His good choice (*ḥusn al- ikhtiyār*).<sup>109</sup>

Ibn 'Ajība commented on this aphorism by saying that the One who afflicted the wayfarer with calamities is characterized with mercy and compassion. If the outcome of the affliction is nothing other than purifying the wayfarer from his pitfalls and getting him closer to God's divine presence, it suffices him.<sup>110</sup>

Ibn al- Fārid in his famous poem *al- 'Ayniyya* mentioned the joy of affliction by saying,

*I enjoy the pain if You are its Causer...and if you test me with calamities, they are favors for me....judge me with whatever You wish...I am obedient to the sultan of love.*<sup>111</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan realized that the path to God is full of calamities which might burn out the wayfarer and lead him astray, for this reason he advised the wayfarer to hold on to patience *al- ṣabr* in his journey to God. Patience is essential for the wayfarer as it pushes him forward against the continuous wave of afflictions.

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<sup>108</sup> Al- Harawī, *Manāzil al- Sa' rīn ila-l haqq al Mubīn* vol 1. , 225.

<sup>109</sup> Ibn 'Attā'illah, *Sufī Aphorisms*, 39.

<sup>110</sup> Ibn 'Ajība, *Iqadh al- Himam fī Sharḥ al- Ḥikam*, 252.

<sup>111</sup> Ibn al- Fārid, *Dīwān Ibn al- Fārid*, 30.



Patience is defined by Shaykh al- Harawī in his *Manāzil* as restraining the self from fleeing from what it hates and restraining the tongue from complaining about it. He categorized patience into three stages, the first of which is for the wayfarer to be patient not to commit sins either out of fear of punishment or out of reverence of God. The second stage in patience is being patient to perform constant acts of obedience. Shaykh al- Harawī explained that what lightens the burden of calamity is remembering God's grace and gentleness which accompanies hardships.<sup>112</sup>

Ibn al- Fāriḍ eloquently talked about the state of enjoying pain for the sake of the Beloved,

*Abandonment is seen as intimacy for me if it doesn't mean deserting me...and anything no matter how hard it is, seems easy if it is other than rejecting me....tormenting me is sweet for me and your injustice in my love is fair enough for me.....*<sup>113</sup>

Al- Qushairī added further that *al- riḍa* is an important indicator to God's satisfaction with the wayfarer because once the wayfarer finds satisfaction in his heart with God's destiny, it means that God is satisfied with the wayfarer.<sup>114</sup>

### **3- The Spiritual Station of Reliance on God (*al- tawakkul*)**

In the Arabic language, *al- tawakkul* originates from God's divine attribute of *al- wakil* who is the guardian and the provider for people's provision and in a literal sense *al- wakil* becomes the sole independent provider for those who rely on him.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Al- Harawī, *Manāzil al- Sa`rīn ila-l- haqq al- Mubīn*, 222.

<sup>113</sup> Ibn al- Fāriḍ, *Dīwān Ibn al- Fāriḍ*, 33.

<sup>114</sup> Al- Qushairī, *al- Risala al- Qushayriyya*, 265.

<sup>115</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al- `Arab*, 387.

Al- Kāshānī explains in Sufi terms the different levels of *al- tawakkul* and defined the initial stage to be related to abandoning regular actions which stem from whims and abiding to actions which are divinely ordained. The next level of *tawakkul* has to do with believing that there is no strength to do a certain action or prevention from another except by God. On a higher level the wayfarer shies away from *al- tawakkul* due to his knowledge that all his affairs belong to God and that he has no control over things because originally he owns nothing. This state leads the wayfarer to annihilate himself into God's actions and be totally oblivious about his own actions as he is totally immersed in his reliance on God to run all his affairs. The ultimate level of *tawakkul* has to do with witnessing God's ownership and majesty over all things and the helplessness of all creatures in standing in worship due to their original state of non existence.<sup>116</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī in his *Futūhāt* defined *al-tawakkul* as the reliance of the heart on God without feeling the tribulation which usually occurs when worldly reasons which people depend on are missing. He stated further that the stage of *al- tawakkul* is closely tied with faith because God Almighty is not obligated to do anything except that which He obligates himself with. Therefore the servant accepts that God does whatever He wishes due to our faith in Him not solely due to our knowledge about Him. Knowledge alone cannot lead us to utter submission and total surrender to God's destiny as this is the work of faith.<sup>117</sup>

He further mentioned that the servant realizes that God has created the world to serve man's best interests. But the servants do not know what would work for their best interest and thus it is mandatory to rely on the One who knows their best interests and care for their affairs in this world and the next one. From another perspective humans are God's deputy on earth and He

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<sup>116</sup> Al- Kāshānī, *Mu'jam Iṣṭilāhāt al- Sufiyya*, 238-239.

<sup>117</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al- Futūhāt al- Makkiyya* vol 13., 152-153.

assigned them a great task on earth. God created all creation to praise and glorify Him, each in its own unique way, yet none of His creation was created on His image except human beings. God described himself with concealment from things and drew veils of separation to prevent His creation from recognizing Him, yet sent a deputy to the world to act as a *wakīl* of God on earth. Therefore there is a mutual reliance or deputyship between man and God.<sup>118</sup>

Al- Qushairī in his *Risala* quoted Abū Turāb an-Nakhshabī's response when he was asked about the condition of trust in God and he said: "Casting down the body in worship, attaching the heart to lordship, and being serene as to the matter of sufficiency. If something is given, he is thankful, and if it is withheld, he is patient."<sup>119</sup>

Ibn 'Atta'illah wrote about the same meaning in one of his aphorisms in which he said: "rest yourself from self direction (*tadbīr*), for what Someone Else (*ghayruk*) has carried out on your behalf, do not you yourself undertake to do it".<sup>120</sup>

Al- Qushairī quoted the three stages of trust in God mentioned by Abu 'Ali al- Daqqāq who said: "there are three degrees for the one trusting God: trust followed by surrender and finally the assignation of one's affairs to God." Al- Qushairī commented on these three stages saying that the one who trusts is at peace with God's promise, the one who surrenders is content with His knowledge and the one who assigns his affairs to God is satisfied with his wisdom.<sup>121</sup> Al- Daqqāq went further explaining that the first state suits the believers whereas the second is the quality of the saints and the third is the attribute of those who assert His unity i.e. the elite of

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<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, 155-157.

<sup>119</sup> Al- Qushairī, *Principles of Sufism*, 116-117.

<sup>120</sup> Ibn 'Attā'illah, *Sufi Aphorisms*, 23.

<sup>121</sup> Al- Qushairi, *Principles of Sufism*, 119.

the elite. He added that the state of trust is the general state of prophets, the state of surrender belongs to Prophet Abraham whereas the state of assigning one's affairs to God which is the highest state belongs to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)<sup>122</sup>

The issue of remembrance and invocation of God took a huge share of the Sufi writings and is largely tied with the issue of reliance on God because for Sufis the real doer of all actions is God and for this reason they would not have had the ability to invoke unless He bestows them with the grace of remembering Him. Ibn 'Attā'illah mentioned the prominent state of invocation in one of his aphorisms: "He ennobled you with three charismatic gifts (*karamāt*): He made you an invoker (*dhākir*) of Him, and had it not been for His grace, you would not have been worthy of the flow (*jarayān*) of the invocation of Him in you; He made you remembered by Him (*madhkūr bihi*) since He confirmed his relationship to you; and He made you remembered by those with Him (*madhkūr 'indahū*), thereby perfecting His grace upon you".<sup>123</sup>

The first divine gift as Shaykh Ibn 'Ajība explained is that God made the wayfarer invoke and remember Him and how can a humiliated servant invoke the name of his renowned master if it weren't for his master's grace on him? The second gift is that God remembers the wayfarer due to the wayfarer's remembrance of Him and this indicates a special position that the wayfarer would have never enjoyed except through God's divine grace. The third gift is that God made the wayfarer remembered by the angels in heaven.<sup>124</sup>

Al- Ghazālī in his *Iḥyā'* mentioned the three degrees of *tawakkul* where he equaled the first degree to trusting the one who handles your affair in case of surety. The second degree is for

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<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, 120-121.

<sup>123</sup> Ibn 'Attā'illah, *Sufi Aphorisms*, 59.

<sup>124</sup> Ibn 'Ajība, *Iqadh al- Himam fī Sharḥ al- Hikam*, 496.

the wayfarer to be with God like a child with his mother who knows no one else but her and turns to no one else except her nor depends on anyone else save her. The highest degree of all is when the wayfarer becomes with God in his stillness and movement like a dead corpse in the hands of its washer. This means for the wayfarer to realize that even if the child did not turn to his mother and clanged to her, she would still seek him and if he did not cry out asking for her, she will pick him up and comfort him and if he did not ask for food, she would still provide him with it. Once the wayfarer reaches this third degree of *tawakkul*, he will cease asking for anything or supplicate to gain anything.<sup>125</sup>

Shaykh al- Harawī talked extensively about the state of *al- tafwīd* or the assignation of one's affairs to God. He says that once the state of *tawakkul* with all its degrees is accomplished, it will yield to the state of assignation which is the core of submission to God. Al- Harawī went further explaining the reason why *al- tafwīd* is a higher state than *al- tawakkul* because *al- tafwīd* has a wider meaning than *al- tawakkul*. In other words, *al- tawakkul* usually takes place after the occurrence of a certain reason whereas the *tafwīd* encompasses both states before and after the occurrence of the reason.<sup>126</sup>

#### **4- The spiritual station of Poverty (*al- Faqr*):**

*Al- faqr* equals the need for something and in a literal sense it is the opposite of richness.<sup>127</sup> Al- Kāshānī explained the term *al- faqr* as a turn back to our original state of non-existence until the wayfarer sees his current existence, actions and states as a divine grace. The

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<sup>125</sup> Al- Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al- Dīn*, 363-364.

<sup>126</sup> Al- Harawī, *Manāzil al- Sa'rīn ila-l- haqq al- Mubīn*, 203.

<sup>127</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al- 'Arab*, 299.

initial level of *faqr* is stripping one's self from worldly attachments. The next level has to do with gratitude for both poverty and richness as providence comes solely from God. The highest state of *faqr* is when the wayfarer sees himself as utterly belonging to God and thus can do whatever He wants.<sup>128</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī in his *Futūhāt* defined the real poverty as the need of the servant to seek His Lord due to no reason other than Himself. Therefore the *faqīr* does not need a certain thing from God as he is sufficed with His presence. God has created humans and gave them the things which work for their best interest and therefore there is no need for them to ask for anything or desire for a certain benefit. But some people do not have such deep perceptive sight so they turn to people to ask for benefits and for this reason God stated clearly in the Quran that all people are in utter poverty and God alone is the Rich as He is the one who has the upper hand in heaven and earth.<sup>129</sup>

Al- Qushairī in his *Risāla* quoted a Sufi who said that there are four elements that should accompany the *faqīr* in his poverty, the first of which is knowledge to straighten his path, and piety to keep him away from wrongdoings, certainty to push his way forward and finally invocation of God to keep him from being lonely.<sup>130</sup>

The same meaning was reiterated by a Gnostic when he was asked about the nature of the real *faqīr* so he said that for the *faqīr* giving is more beloved to him than taking and generosity is not about the rich giving to the poor but real generosity is for the poor to give out to the rich.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Al- Kāshānī, *Mu'jam Iṣṭilāhāt al- Sufiyya*, 279-280.

<sup>129</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al- Futūhāt al- Makkiyya*, 263-264.

<sup>130</sup> Al- Qushairi, *al- Resāla al- Qushayriyya*, 380.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, 381- 382.

Al- Ghazālī in his *Iḥyā'* narrated a story which reveals the unique character of the true *faqīr*, he said that Shaqīq al- Balkhī met Ibrahim Ibn Adham who came from Khurāsān, so al- Balkhī asked him about the status of the *fuqarā'* (the poor people) in Khurāsān, so Ibn Adham replied saying: "If they are given, they thank and if they were deprived, they would be patient", so al- Balkhī said in reply: "this is the status of the dogs in Balkh, the status of the real *fuqarā'* is that if they were deprived, they would thank and if they were given, they would favor others over themselves".<sup>132</sup>

Shaykh al- Harawī discussed the different degrees of poverty and defined the third degree as being the degree of the wayfarers. In this degree the wayfarer encounters a state of *idṭirār* or urgency in which the servant finds himself compelled to turn only to God and enter his divine realm. In this realm, the wayfarer fails to witness anyone else save God.<sup>133</sup>

The same meaning was echoed by Ibn 'Attā'illah when he said in one of his aphorisms: "It is a marvel how Being (*al- wujūd*) has been manifested in nonbeing (*al-'adam*) and how the contingent (*al-ḥādith*) has been established alongside of Him who possesses the attribute of eternity (*wasf al- qidam*).<sup>134</sup>

Shaykh Ibn 'Ajība commented on this aphorism by explaining that Being (*al- wujūd*) and non being (*al- 'adam*) are two opposites which can't coexist. The only Real Being that must exist is God and all else are non existents and amount to mere nothingness. Therefore when the Real

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<sup>132</sup> Al- Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al- Dīn*. Vol.4, 299.

<sup>133</sup> Al- Harawī, *Manāzil al- Sa`rīn ila-l- haqq al- Mubīn*, 310.

<sup>134</sup> Ibn 'Ajība, *Iqādh al- Himam fī Sharḥ al- Hikam*, 26.

Being appears his opposite disappears so He cannot be concealed with non existents as none exists in reality save Him.<sup>135</sup>

### 5- The spiritual station of Sincerity (*al- Ikhlaṣ*)

*Al- ikhlāṣ* comes from the verb *akhlaṣa* which means to choose and *al- Mukhlāṣ* is the one whom God chooses and purifies from filth.<sup>136</sup> Al- Kāshānī explains according to the Sufi language that *al- ikhlāṣ* at its initial stage means not to associate anyone in worship with God. The next level has to do with purifying the intention in doing any action to be solely for God's sake without seeking worldly fame or claiming temporary social prestige. On higher levels of *ikhlaṣ*, the wayfarer should neither see the action he performs nor ask for a reward for it. He also has to feel dissatisfied with the quality of his action and doubting the acceptability of the action performed. The highest level of *ikhlas* is to realize that the zeal to worship and to good acts comes solely out of God's grace and bounty.<sup>137</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī in his *Futūhāt* explains that the one who is sincere in worship is the one who worships God for Himself. In this universe all creatures have an implicit claim of lordship as all creatures have a combination of benefit and harm in them which yields to humiliating oneself to gain its benefit or prevent its harm. Therefore as honorable as man is among all other creatures due to his deputyship on earth, we would find him in need to drink a medicine which he hates its taste due to its curing benefits. In other words, he implicitly worshipped this medicine without even realizing it and if the medicine brings pleasure and has a good taste for the patient, he equally falls in worshipping it voluntarily and out of love. This idea of the need to bring benefits

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<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, 83.

<sup>136</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al- 'Arab*. vol 4, 173.

<sup>137</sup> Al- Kāshānī, *Mu'jam Iṣṭilāhāt al- Sufiyya*, 232.



and prevent harm led the weak souls to worship things other than God. At this point the stage of sincerity gains a great importance because sincerity in worship necessitates that the servant does not see anyone but God as He is the Creator of the reasons of benefit and harm so one should turn to God to bring benefits and prevent harm without putting much weight on reasons as they are merely tools in God's hands.<sup>138</sup>

Al- Qushairī in his *Risala* started his definition of sincerity with mentioning an authentic tradition of Prophet Muhammad which was related on the authority of Gabriel who in turn related about God that He said, "Sincerity is a secret taken from My secret. I have placed it as a trust in the hearts of servants that I love". Abu Ya'qūb al- Sūsi (d. 330 H.), who lived at the time of al- Junayd, commented on the issue of sincerity for the wayfarers saying that "When they perceive sincerity in their sincerity, their sincerity is in need of sincerity."<sup>139</sup>

Ibn 'Attā'illah emphasized on the vitality of sincerity in one of his aphorisms in which he said: "Actions are lifeless forms (*ṣuwar qā'imah*) but the presence of an inner reality of sincerity (*sir al- ikhlāṣ*) within them is what endows them with life- giving Spirit.<sup>140</sup> Ibn 'Ajība commented on this aphorism by indicating that deeds are like ghosts or hollow bodies and their life giving souls are represented by sincerity. The importance of sincerity lies in that deeds are not accepted by God except through sincerity as He is too rich to have any partners or associates. Therefore if the servant during performing any deed associated any partnership to God, the deed becomes unworthy of God's acceptance.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *al- Futūhāt al- Makkiyya*, 323-327.

<sup>139</sup> Al- Qushairī, *Principles of Sufism*, 187.

<sup>140</sup> Ibn 'Attā'illah, *Sufi Aphorisms*, 25.

<sup>141</sup> Ibn 'Ajība, *Iqadh al- Himam fī Sharḥ al- Ḥikam*, 50.

This degree was iterated by Shaykh al- Harawī in his *Manāzil* in which he said that the wayfarer needs to extract himself from witnessing the act of obedience which he performed and cease to ask for a compensation for it and feel dissatisfied with his act and consider it insufficient as his sole purpose is gaining knowledge of God. Afīf al- Dīn al- Tilmisanī commented further on this degree saying that the wayfarer should never be proud of any act of obedience he performs and not to think that he deserves any kind of reward in reciprocity because his good deed was granted by God in the first place so how can he ask for a compensation for something he did not perform? <sup>142</sup>

Similarly in the *Manāzil* of al- Harawī, he iterated the same meaning and considered feeling ashamed of the act of obedience and thinking of it as inadequate though the wayfarer exerted all his effort in performing it, is the second category of sincerity. Afīf al- Dīn al- Tilmisanī defined the meaning of shame of the act of obedience to mean concealing it from being seen by any witnesses and resort the act to its original Doer. This makes the wayfarer feels ashamed of attributing the act to himself regardless of the amount of effort he exerted in it. <sup>143</sup>

This meaning was echoed in one of the aphorisms of Ibn 'Attā'illah in which he said: "Do not seek a recompense for a deed whose doer (*fā'il*) was not you. It suffices you as recompense for the deed that He accepts it." <sup>144</sup>

Al- Qushairī stated that Dhū-l- Nūn al- Miṣrī mentioned three signs of sincerity: one sees praise and blame from men as being equal, one loses the awareness of doing works while doing them, and one forgets the claim of being rewarded in the afterlife for good works. Abu Bakr al-

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<sup>142</sup> Al- Harawī, *Manāzil al- Sa`rin ila-l haqq al Mubīn*, 181.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, 182.

<sup>144</sup> Ibn 'Attā'illah, *Sufi Aphorisms*, 41.

Daqqāq asserted that a major defect in sincerity for the wayfarer is his own awareness of his sincerity. Therefore, if God wishes to purify the wayfarer from hypocrisy, He strips him of being aware of his sincerity and in this case he becomes sincere by God *mukhlas* instead of being sincere on his part *mukhlis*.<sup>145</sup>

Shaykh al- Harawī in his *Manāzil* referred to the third and highest degree of sincerity which is breaking loose and gaining freedom from witnessing the trails of people and the tracks of their existence. Although they are seen as the manifestations of God's power, they still form a veil which blocks the wayfarer from witnessing God.<sup>146</sup>

Ibn 'Attā'illah warned against this type by saying: "Travel not from creature to creature, otherwise you will be like a donkey at the mill: roundabout he turns, his goal the same as his departure. Rather go from creatures (*al- akwān*) to the creator (*al- mukawwin*) {and the final end is unto thy Lord} (53:42)"<sup>147</sup>

Shaykh Ibn 'Ajība commented on this aphorism explaining that the donkey in a mill simply goes in rounds and reaches the exact point where he left off thinking to himself that he actually walked to the destination he has been asked to reach. Shaykh Abu al- Hassan al- Shadhilī said: "you should stand at the doorstep of one door not seeking doors to open for you and it will, and submit yourself to only one master not seeking the submission of others to you and they will".<sup>148</sup>

## 6- The Spiritual Station of Love (*Ḥubb*)

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<sup>145</sup> Al- Qushairī, *Principles of Sufism*, 187- 188.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*, 183.

<sup>147</sup> Ibn 'Attā'illah, *Sufi Aphorisms*, 31.

<sup>148</sup> Ibn 'Ajība, *Iqadh al- Himam fī Sharh al- Hikam*, 127.

In the Arabic dictionary the term love or *ḥubb* is the opposite of hatred and the definition of love is amicability and cordiality.<sup>149</sup> Al- Kāshānī stated that in Sufi terms love indicates a state of delight for witnessing God and the attachment of the heart to Him while distancing from all creatures as the wayfarer stands still at the doorsteps of the beloved not paying attention to anyone else. The signs of this state of love is indulging in the pleasure of worship forsaking all others as the heart is solely occupied with the constant presence of witnessing the Divine.<sup>150</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī defined love as a flowing feeling of purity in the heart unadulterated with the impurity of worldly attachments as the lover in this state has no will or purpose except that of his beloved. Therefore love is an important stage because one of God's attributes is *al- wadūd* or the All- Loving. It was narrated through Prophet Muhammad that God said, "I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known so I created creation and made Myself known to them so they knew Me". This means that God created creation for Himself and not for us and that is why God associated acts with reward and punishment whereas he associated our worship to Him alone. Worship does not equal acts because acts are created by God so it is part of His creation. Ibn ‘Arabī defined utter love as the love that deafens the ears of the lover from hearing any voice except that of his beloved and blinds his sight from any visions except seeing the beloved and silences his mouth from speaking about anyone except about his beloved.<sup>151</sup> This meaning was eloquently written in poetry:

*Your image is in my eyes and your remembrance in my mouth  
your residence is in my heart, so where would you hide?*<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al- ‘Arab*, 7.

<sup>150</sup> Al- Kāshānī, *Mu’jam Iṣṭilāḥāt al- Sufiyya*, 307- 308.

<sup>151</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al- Futūḥāt al- Makkiyya*, 322-323.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*, 325.

When it comes to divine love, Ibn ‘Arabī explains further that once the lover gets attached to his Beloved, he becomes in a state of constant witnessing of his Beloved who acts as the food for his soul. Therefore, the more the lover indulges in witnessing his Beloved, the more love grows in his heart. Thus meeting the Beloved does not quench the fire of longing in the lover's heart but rather increases it and the more the lover looks at his Beloved the more he misses him and loves Him during His presence.<sup>153</sup>

This meaning was eloquently stated in poetry:

*It is of wonder that I long for them and ask passionately about them  
while they are with me and my eyes cry for them while they are its apple  
and my heart yearns for them while they are in my ribs<sup>154</sup>*

Shaykh al- Harawī in his *Manāzil* defined divine love to be the attachment of the heart with zeal and pleasure in the company of its beloved. Afīf al- Dīn al- Tilmisāni explained the reason for the springing of divine love in the heart of the lover and believed that it is due to the apparent sparkling beauty of the beloved behind the veils of the unseen. When this sparkling beauty turns to a radiant flame, it penetrates right through the heart of the lover and tightly connects it to the beloved.<sup>155</sup>

The second category represents the beloved ones who are residing in the divine presence of their Lord enjoying constant proximity and witness of Him. Ibn 'Attā'illah mentioned this

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<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*, 325.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*, 326.

<sup>155</sup> Al- Harawī, *Manāzil al- Sa'rin ila-l haqq al- Mubīn*, 389.

type in his aphorism in which he said: "God makes some people abide in the service of Him (*likhidmatihī*) and He singles out others to love Him (*bi-maḥabbatihī*).<sup>156</sup>

Shaykh Ibn ‘Ajība commented on this aphorism by saying that there are two kinds of worshippers; the first kind includes those whom God turned towards his service. Some of them resort to deserts to spend the night in prayers and the days in fasting, and some of them God directed towards establishing His religion and preserving its sacred law and these are the scholars and the righteous people. The other kind of worshippers are those that God chose for knowing Him; these are the well versed Gnostics who experienced the path to God and achieved their desired destination. There is a huge difference between the two kinds because the people of service demand compensation in return of labor whereas the people of knowledge lift the veil of separation. The people of service take their compensation behind the door and those of knowledge spend their time conversing with their beloved. The people of service have blocking veils between them and God and for the people of knowledge the veils are lifted up.<sup>157</sup>

The difference between the lover and the beloved or the wanted and the one who wants is explained by Shaykh Abū-l- Hassan al- Daylamī when he drew a comparison between Prophet Muhammad who represents *al- murād* or the wanted and Prophet Moses who represents *al- murīd* or the one who wants. Prophet Muhammad was lifted up to heaven to see God with no exhaustion and no prior request whereas Moses asked to see God and was struck and kneeled down in remorse.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ibn 'Attā' illah, *Sufi Aphorisms*, 34.

<sup>157</sup> Ibn ‘Ajība, *Iqadh al- Himam fī Sharḥ al- Hikam*, 183-184.

<sup>158</sup> Abū al- Hassan al- Daylamī, *'Atf al- Alif al- Ma' lūf 'ala allām al- Ma'tūf* ed. Hassan al- Shafi'i and Joseph Norment Bill. 1st edition (Cairo: Dar al- Kitab al- Misri, 2007), 174.

Al- Qushairī quoted a Sufi poet saying,

*I am amazed at one who says, "I remembered my love."*

*How might I forget so I would remember what I forgot*

*I die if I remembered you and then become alive*

*And if it weren't for my hopes I wouldn't be alive*

*I drank cup after cup of love but the cup kept*

*Brimming over and my thirst remained*

This is echoed by al- Hallāj (d. 309 H. 922 CE)<sup>159</sup> when his two hands were cut off, he said:

*I didn't submit myself to calamities to ruin it...except for my knowledge that connection will revive it...the soul of a lover is patiently enduring pain....for one day the One who made it ill may cure it again...*

Shaykh Abu-l- Hassan al- Daylamī explained in his book '*Atf al- Alif al- Ma'lūf 'ala allām al- Ma'tūf*' that the lover prefers death over life because he wants to remain close to his beloved and this proximity is only attained by meeting Him and His encounter occurs only through annihilation and once the lover realizes this fact his annihilation with proximity is more preferable than staying alive with distance. Annihilation with proximity is connection and remaining alive with distance is separation. For this reason God said to Moses: "O Moses once

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<sup>159</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, "al- Hallādj," (L. Massignon- L. Gardet). He is a mystic theologian. His life, his teaching and his death throw light on a crucial period in the history of Muslim culture, and the interior experience which he describes can be considered a turning point in the history of taṣawwuf.

anyone sees Me, he dies" so Moses said "O God I see You and die is more loved to me than not to see you and live".<sup>160</sup>

The second sign of a true lover is to have constant longing (*shawq*) and pleasure in God's company (*al- uns*). Longing and yearning belong to the beginners of the path to God whereas serenity and contentment with God are the characteristics of the Gnostics who come close to the end of the path. Al- Ghazālī mentioned two categories of longing (*shawq*): the first type ends in the hereafter where the wayfarer sees and meets his Lord. The second type of longing nither has an ending in this life nor the next one. The ending of this type of longing necessitates that God reveals His attributes of majesty and beauty along with His actions and wisdom behind them and that is impossible because God's attributes and actions are endless.<sup>161</sup>

In the same regard, al- Junayd was asked by a group of Sheikhs about love and al- Junayd was the youngest of them, so he lowered his head and started tearing and then said: "a slave that is annihilated from himself, connected with his remembrance of God, engaged in fulfilling His divine rights, gazing at Him with his heart, his heart is burned with the lights of His Essence and his drink is purified with the glass of His intimacy, and the All Powerful revealed Himself from the veils of the unseen, so if this slave talked, it would be by God and if he moved it would be with His order and if he stood still, he is with God so he is by God and with God and for God". The sheikhs cried in response and said: "after this, there is no more to say".<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*, 181.

<sup>161</sup> Al- Ghazālī, *Ihya' 'Ulum al- Dīn*, 446-447.

<sup>162</sup> Al- Qushairī, *al- Risāla al- Qushayriyya*, 429-430.



Shaykh al- Daylamī quoted Samnūn (d. 298 H. 910 CE)<sup>163</sup> saying,

*I never found among worshippers... a lover who was prevented from his love and remained indifferent...as for me my Master I see deprivation as giving...out of my confidence in You and Your good selection for me... I am running out of patience in the full sense of the word ... and I swear with Your love, I never asked you to make me patient...*<sup>164</sup>

Al- Qushairī in his *Risāla* referred to the degrees of love through quoting Yahyah Ibn Mu'ādh when he wrote to Abu Yazīd al- Bisṭāmī saying: "I am drunk because of the huge amount I drank from his cup of love". So al- Bisṭāmī replied saying: "Someone else drank the seas of heavens and earth and his thirst is not quenched. His tongue is hanging out and he is pleading, "Is there any more?"<sup>165</sup>

This was echoed by Ibn 'Attā'illah in his aphorism when he said: " the one who lost You, what did he find? And the one who found You, what did he lose? the one who turns away from You is at a total loss". Ibn 'Ajība commented on this aphorism saying that when the Lord allows the wayfarer to stand before his door and then the wayfarer seeks the door of someone else then he is a loser. It makes no sense to seek refuge in a helpless servant and turn away from the All Sufficient Master.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, " Samnūn," (B. Reinert). He is nicknamed *al-Muḥibb* "the Lover," well-known Ṣūfī of the Baghdādī school. Samnūn became famous for his love of God. In that, it is said, he followed his own peculiar approach and even placed the love of God above the knowledge of God ( *ma'rifa* ). At any rate, he has added a new, emotionally active, dimension to Sarī's idea that God, in order to measure the truth of the lovers' pretensions with their steadfastness ( *ṣabr* ), puts them through well-nigh unbearable trials. In the ecstasy of love, he chafes his legs down to the bare bone; he aspires to fill the whole world with his cry of love. With his irrepressible temperament, Samnūn developed the heritage of his master into extreme forms of thought and behaviour in other respects, as well. Thus he advocated a remembrance of God ( *dhikr* ) in which everything but God is forgotten, so that all experiential moments are filled by it and one, thus, turns entirely into remembrance of God.

<sup>164</sup> Al- Daylamī, *'Atf al- Alif al- Ma'lūf'ala allām al- Ma'tūf*, 166.

<sup>165</sup> Al- Qushairī, *Principles of Sufism*, 335.

<sup>166</sup> Ibn 'Ajība, *Iqadh al- Himam fī Sharḥ al- Hikam*, 597.

## 7- The Spiritual Station of Oneness (*al- Tawḥīd*)

*Tawḥīd* is uniqueness.<sup>167</sup> This spiritual station affirms the fact that when God is manifest no one else remains with Him. Al- Kāshānī explains that in Sufi terms *al- tawḥīd* means to worship God alone for His sake and when one verifies this meaning in his heart no doubt, suspicion or confusion comes across it. After verifying this deep meaning of uniqueness in worshipping God in the heart of the wayfarer, the body should be submitted in worship without paying attention to worldly reasons or temporary effects as the sole doer in the universe is God.<sup>168</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī in his *Futūḥāt* tackled the stage of *tawḥīd* and said that it indicates uniqueness and rareness with no other gods associated with Him. God supported His uniqueness with evidence as He stated that if there were other gods with Him, the whole universe would have been in total corruption but the marvelous creation and meticulous system in the universe is a clear witness to God's unity and uniqueness. Ibn ‘Arabī further added that if there was another god other than God then he would have a separate will which might be in harmony and agreement with God's will or the other god could have his own will which differs from that of God and in this case two scenarios are in place. The first scenario is none of their wills are put into effect and this means neither of them is a god; and the second scenario is that one of them only will be able to put his will into effect which would leave the other god in total incapability and powerlessness and these characteristics do not suit a god at all. This leaves us with only one choice which is that God is one with no associates or partners.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al- ‘Arab* vol 15, 232.

<sup>168</sup> Al- Kāshānī, *Mu’jam Iṣṭilāḥāt al- Sufiyya*, 378.

<sup>169</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al- Futūḥāt al- Makkiyya*, 288-290.

Al- Qushairī in his *Risala* indicated that the oneness of God negates division of His self and resemblance of any of His divine attributes with His creation. Unity also negates having any associates in actions or creation. He narrates that once al- Junayd was asked about the definition of *tawhīd* so he said that it necessitates that the servant becomes like a ghost in God's hands who subjects himself in total serenity to God's fine judgments and faces life's tribulation without resentment as he is totally annihilated from himself and immersed in God.<sup>170</sup>

Al- Ghazālī in his *Ihyā'* defined the optimum level of unity to be realizing that there is no doer in this universe save God and that all creatures' existence, provision, deprivation, life, death, poverty and richness comes solely from God. At this point one would realize that no one can work independently in this universe as all creatures are merely tools in God's hand to execute God's destiny and His divine will. The real hardship in maintaining God's unity in the heart comes when the servant gets distracted with worldly reasons and implicitly finds his heart depending on them such as when we depend on rain for plants to nourish and grow and we depend on clouds for rains to fall and on wintriness for clouds to gather and on wind for the ship to sail. Al- Ghazālī described such attitude with sheer ignorance and pure polytheism which tarnish the purity of God's oneness.<sup>171</sup>

Ibn 'Atā'illah referred to the same meaning in his aphorism in which he said: "How can God (*al- haqq*) be veiled by something, for He is apparent (*zāhir*) and has actual being (*mawjūd hādīr*) in that where with He is veiled?"<sup>172</sup> He also said in one of his aphorisms: "Had it not been

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<sup>170</sup> Al- Qushairī, *al- Risala al- Qushayriyya*, 404-406.

<sup>171</sup> Al- Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al- Dīn*, 344.

<sup>172</sup> Ibn 'Attā'illah, *Sufi Aphorisms*, 54.

for His manifestation in created beings (*al- mukawwanāt*), eyesight would not have perceived them. Had His Qualities (*ṣifāt*) been manifested, His created beings would have disappeared." <sup>173</sup>

Al- Junayd when he was asked about the Oneness of God, he said that the best definition is the one that was given by Abu Bakr (d. 13 H. 634 CE)<sup>174</sup> when he said: "Praise be to the One who did not make a way for knowing Him except through inability to know Him." Al- Qushairī commented on that saying that Abu Bakr did not mean that he does not know the answer because inability is the inability of an existent not of inexistent. Same as a crippled person, he is unable to sit down because he is compelled on it with no willingness or prior action. Therefore the Gnostic is unable to define his knowledge of God because it is embodied in him.<sup>175</sup>

Having now explained the seven spiritual stages of the Sufi path to God in earlier major Sufi works, we now turn our attention in the next chapter to a detailed examination of these stages in the commentary of Shaykh al- ‘Alawī on the Sufi aphorisms of Shaykh Abu Madyan in order to explore the development of these stages in the modern work of al- ‘Alawī.

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<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*, 43.

<sup>174</sup> *EI*<sup>2</sup>, "Abu Bakr," (W. Montgomery Watt). Abu Bakr was the first caliph after Muhammad. His caliphate of a little over two years was largely occupied in dealing with the *ridda* or ‘apostasy’. The great simplicity of his life, with its rejection of all wealth, pomp and pretension, became in later times a legend, though there is doubtless a kernel of truth.

<sup>175</sup> Al- Qushairī, *al- Risala al- Qushayriyya*, 406.

## Chapter 3

### **The Sufi Spiritual Stages in the Work of Shaykh al-‘Alawī**

After examining in the previous chapter the seven spiritual stages of the Sufi path in earlier major Sufi works, the current chapter will examine the work of Shaykh al-‘Alawī on this concept and our main source of reference in this chapter is the book of *al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya* which is a commentary written by Shaykh al-‘Alawī in which he defined seven spiritual stages that the wayfarer has to go through in his Sufi path to God. He deduced these stages from the aphorisms which were written by Shaykh Abū Madyan and reached around 170 aphorisms yet, they were scattered aphorisms without any designed order or specific logical arrangement.

Although Shaykh Abū Madyan wrote his book of aphorisms in the 12th century, it took about 800 years to have its first commentary on them by al-‘Alawī in the 20th century. The importance of Shaykh Abū Madyan's aphorisms stems from the intellectual weight of Shaykh Abū Madyan in the history of western Sufism. Vincent Cornell called him the "Junayd of the West" because he was similar to his third/ninth century predecessor in Baghdad in being situated in the perfect time and place to synthesize and transmit the Sufi traditions into one formally articulated doctrine. Cornell believes that Abū Madyan became the spiritual axis or *Qutb* of his age. Abū Madyan's writings tackled issues of doctrine, methodology and ethics which left an influence on many generations to come. His impact on western Islamic Sufism can be noticed

due to the rise of two influential Maghribi spiritual masters such as Abū al- Hassan al- Shadhilī and Muhammad ibn Sulayman al- Jazulī.<sup>176</sup>

The historical context and the political circumstances which surrounded the period during which Abū Madyan gained his intellectual and spiritual maturity were characterized in the western Maghrib by political instability and profound social change which were caused by a combination of disastrous military defeats at the hands of Christian forces and rivalry among different ethnic groups within the Umayyad society.<sup>177</sup>

It is worth noting that such environment was very similar to the one in which Shaykh al- ‘Alawī grew up as Algeria among other countries of North Africa was suffering from the brunt of the French occupation and was going through heavy political and social changes. Similar to the rise of Shaykh Abū Madyan, we can certainly appreciate the rise of Shaykh Ahmed b. Mustafa al- ‘Alawī and his ‘Alawī Sufi order as an addition to the Sufi orders in Algeria which contributed in shaping the Algerian persona both intellectually and spiritually and had a positive role in fighting against the French aggression.

Both Shaykh Abū Madyan and Shaykh al- ‘Alawī were situated in a period of social strife and political turmoil as one of them witnessed the brunt of the Christian aggression whereas the other lived during the French colonization of Algeria. The role of both Sufi leaders focused on igniting the spirit of jihad in the hearts of Muslims to fight against all types of occupation. Both leaders though were centuries apart yet both had an influential impact on spreading the Islamic culture and keeping the zeal of spiritual tutelage in the Islamic society.

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<sup>176</sup> Vincent J. Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan: The Works of Abū Madyan Shu'ayb* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1996), 16.

<sup>177</sup> *ibid.*

These efforts helped in keeping the characterizations of the Arabic Islamic identity intact for decades in North Africa.

In the introduction of his commentary on the aphorisms of Shaykh Abū Madyan, Shaykh al-‘Alawī stated clearly his driving motives behind commenting on these aphorisms as he said that it has a great spiritual benefit for its readers and carries within its fold a significant intellectual heritage that should be transmitted to future generations. It could be also possible that implicitly Shaykh al-‘Alawī realized that the political atmosphere that Algeria and Morocco among other countries in North Africa along with the sweeping social changes which had its negative impact on religion, urges for a quick remedy of spiritual revival and found in Shaykh Abū Madyan's aphorisms his lost treasure.

Furthermore, the similarities of the political context which both shaykhs lived in forced them to adopt a spiritual method which was heavily oriented towards *‘amal* or spiritual praxis more than its focus on *‘ilm* or esoteric doctrine. This method required in turn a strong commitment from the wayfarer to practice harsh asceticism in an attempt to vanquish bodily desires. Therefore we find that most of Abū Madyan's aphorisms focused on spiritual tutelage which would help the wayfarer in his battle against his own lower, passionate soul which thrives under the defense of egoism and self centeredness represented by the insincere "I". The egoistic nature of the lower self combined with the physical manifestation of whims and desires prevent the wayfarer from actualizing his true celestial nature. Resolving such conflict requires strict spiritual training by a soul's physician which is the profession of the Sufi teacher.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> *ibid.*, 29.

The eagerness of Shaykh Abū Madyan to focus on spiritual praxis was to graduate spiritual leaders who can benefit themselves as well as their societies especially at the time of turmoil. In one of the most famous of his aphorisms he states: "With the corruption of the masses appears the rule of tyranny; with the corruption of the elite appear false prophets who seduce the masses away from religion".<sup>179</sup> His fear of self-claimed hypocrite leaders who speak under the false pretense of religion, led him to exert all his efforts to discipline a new generation of spiritual leaders who have pure hearts and strong spiritual make up to guide people to the right path especially at times of turmoil and deterioration due to political upheavals and rapid social changes. This means that Shaykh Abū Madyan did not raise his disciples as withdrawn ascetics who contemplate God and ignore all that transpires around them. He encouraged his disciples to retreat in seclusion for short periods of time for the sake of personal development without being detached from the Muslim community in which they live.<sup>180</sup>

Through reading Vincent Cornell's book on the life and works of Shaykh Abū Madyan, one can't help but noticing that Cornell was completely oblivious of the commentary book that Shaykh al- 'Alawī wrote on Abū Madyan's aphorisms. This fact is worth noting because Cornell was keen to mention the works that were written on Abū Madyan or the biographies in which he was mentioned such as the travel memoir entitled *Uns al- Faqīr wa 'Izz al- Haqīr* which was written on Abū Madyan and his followers by the eighth/ fourteenth- century jurist and biographer Ahmad ibn Qunfudh al- Qusantinī.<sup>181</sup>

Cornell though translated all the works of Shaykh Abū Madyan into the English language in a book entitled *The way of Abū Madyan: The works of Abū Madyan Shu'ayb*, he failed to

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<sup>179</sup> *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>180</sup> *ibid.*, 33.

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*, 13.



mention that Shaykh al-‘Alawī was the only scholar who made a commentary on Abū Madyan's book of aphorisms entitled *Uns al- Wahīd wa Nuzhat al- Murīd*. The only comment that Cornell made on the book of *Uns al- Wahīd* was related to translation and editing of the book which was compiled through cross checking it with manuscripts in London and Paris as well as a printed partial collection of aphorisms from an edited Algerian work originally written in the eighth/ fourteenth century.<sup>182</sup> But Cornell did not inform us about the name of the author or the title of the edited book.

Cornell also mentioned that it is difficult to imagine any modern version of the Shaykh's writings that could realistically be represented as a final, definitive edition of Abū Madyan's literary output. He further added that the extant manuscript copies of Abū Madyan's writings can be found mostly in fragmentary form in numerous collections on four continents stretching from North America in the west to Asia in the east. The widely scattered materials present difficult problems for the editor and the translator alike not only due to it being incomplete and disparate but also because of the oral nature of their transmission. When it comes to the written manuscripts, the situation is not better because the lengthy manuscripts are seldom identically worded or even have the same length. The issue of authenticity comes on top of other difficulties in editing Abū Madyan's manuscripts because many poems and sayings which were traditionally attributed to Abū Madyan originally belonged to other earlier Sufis who adopted vocabulary and used writing styles that were inconsistent with the literary traditions of the western Maghrib.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*, 37.

<sup>183</sup> *ibid.*, 36.

Cornell's opinion which expressed the difficulty of finding any modern version which could be considered as final and definite edition is controversial because he did not read the modern work of Shaykh al-‘Alawī on Abū Madyan and had no idea of the strenuous effort which Shaykh al-‘Alawī exerted in compiling an authentic version of Abū Madyan's aphorisms.

In the introduction of his commentary on Abū Madyan's aphorisms, Shaykh al-‘Alawī explained that he arranged the aphorisms in a different way than its original arrangement as he categorized them into chapters according to different spiritual stages in his attempt of wider benefit for the readers. Also what encouraged him to rearrange the order of the aphorisms is that they were haphazardly arranged with no logical order as the arrangement differed from one manuscript to the next. After thorough examination of different manuscripts in Shaykh al-‘Alawī's attempt of authenticating the aphorisms to its original author, he rearranged its order in a way that would not jeopardize the original style in which the aphorisms were written yet would make it easier for the reader to find the needed aphorism under the proper title.

Shaykh al-‘Alawī elaborated on the reason behind Abū Madyan's indifference towards arranging the aphorisms in a proper order and said that it is due to the fact that aphorisms in essence differ from authoring a book in which each paragraph should be related to the previous one and should prepare the reader for the next one. In Aphorisms, each aphorism forms a book on its own without necessarily being connected to other aphorisms. Therefore the arrangements of aphorisms seeks wider benefit and facilitates for the reader to have the maximum benefit of what he reads.

Therefore, the unique contribution of Shaykh al-‘Alawī does not lie on merely rearranging the aphorisms for the maximum benefit of the reader but his real addition is

deducting the seven spiritual stages that the wayfarer has to go through in his path to God based on the aphorisms of Shaykh Abū Madyan.

Having mentioned the unique addition of the seven spiritual stages deducted from the aphorisms of Shaykh Abū Madyan, the rest of the chapter will examine closely these spiritual stages with a detailed account of Shaykh al- 'Alawī's commentary on each of them. Before delving in these stages, it would be of benefit to mention the difference between the wayfarer and the Gnostic as these two terms will be used extensively throughout this chapter. Shaykh Abū Madyan drew a distinction between the wayfarer and the Gnostic. He defined the wayfarer as a traveler in the path to reach his ultimate destination which is God whereas the Gnostic is defined as being absent from witnessing his own self or recognizing his own existence. He is totally annihilated and immersed in God and folded in His existence; a state which extracts the Gnostic from his own limited dependent existence to witness the Source of all existence. Also the Gnostic should not be sufficed with whatever God has revealed to him but rather seek more proximity and closeness as the more knowledge the Gnostic gains, the more he becomes speechless from what he sees. For this reason some Sufis would say: "whoever knows God, becomes speechless".<sup>184</sup>

### **1- The Spiritual Stage of Fear and Vigilant Awareness of God (*al- Khashya wa-l- Murāqaba*)**

The first stage that the wayfarer has to encounter is the stage of *al- Khashya wa-l- Murāqaba* or fear and vigilant awareness of God. Shaykh al- 'Alawī started this stage by quoting Shaykh Abū Madyan's aphorism which says: "The Truth (God) perceives the inner thoughts as

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<sup>184</sup> Ahmad Mustafa al- 'Alawī, *al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya* vol. 1 (Mustaghānim: al- Matba'ah al- 'Alawiyah, 2nd ed, 1989), 133.

well as the apparent ones in every breath and state". God's ability to perceive the inner deep down thoughts and the apparent manifestations alike is due to the truth of His essence which combines both concealment *al- butūn* and appearance *al- dhuhūr*.

Nothing can hide from God's knowledge as His knowledge of things is all encompassing and is not preceded with prior ignorance. Therefore nothing in this universe no matter how small it is can go below God's divine radar as God is closer to things than themselves. In other words God is with every soft being softer than its softness till He became out of eye sight and with every thick thing He is thicker than its thickness.<sup>185</sup> Al Shushtarī (d. 668 H.1269 CE)<sup>186</sup> echoed the same meaning in poetry as he said:

*You appeared so You are not concealed from anyone  
And You were concealed so you were not apparent to everyone*

Shaykh al-‘Alawī continues that If the wayfarer occupied himself with contemplating over the meanings of God's superseding knowledge of everything at every moment, his heart will be filled with vigilant awareness which leads him to constant self accountability with every breath he takes.

Therefore, Shaykh al-‘Alawī placed self accountability as a result of contemplation over God's superseding knowledge. On the contrary, al- Qushairī placed self accountability to be the first step towards attaining vigilant awareness of God but Shaykh al-‘Alawī explained that human beings are heedless by nature so it would be better to shift the focus from one self to God.

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<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*, 169.

<sup>186</sup> *EF*<sup>2</sup>, " al- Shushtarī," (Maribel Fierro). He is a Ṣūfī of Muslim Spain and resident of Malaga and Grenada. His masters included Ibn Surāka al-Shāṭibī and other disciples of Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī. But most influential for al-Shushtarī was the philosopher and mystic Ibn Sab‘īn [q.v.], whom he met at Bidjāya in 646/1248 and five years later in Egypt and at Mecca.

The state of constant watchfulness of God yields to the improvement of the relationship with the Divine as the wayfarer favors God in most of his actions over others and this sense of preference is due to the wayfarer's feeling of God's constant watchfulness over him. When God sees a heart that favors Him over all else, He takes care of it and guards it against all hardships. This is a state which the wayfarer can only feel as it is a secret between God and him. The degree of this secret differs based on the degree of preference of God in his heart over all else. The beginner in the path for example would favor God's commandments over anything so he will limit his preference of God to preserving his limbs and apparent senses from wrongdoings. A higher degree of preference is that of Gnostics whose hearts are not occupied with anything save God. These types of hearts are purified from all else so they become an eligible habitat for God to dwell in.<sup>187</sup>

The Gnostic's agony only occurs due to the slightest divergence of his heart from the sole witnessing of God. This divergence of the heart is accompanied with the drawing of the veils of connection and the pain of separation from the divine presence which is excruciating for the Gnostics as some Sufi poet recorded saying:<sup>188</sup>

*Torment me with anything You want except driving me away  
You will find me the most loyal lover, thrilled with whatever pleases you*

The heart is only veiled from God when it leaves its rein to the lower self which subjugates the body's organs to its lustful demands. The wayfarer is entrapped in the tricks of the lower self when he loosens his tight grip over himself to keep a constant vigilance of God at all

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<sup>187</sup> *ibid.*, 170-171.

<sup>188</sup> ‘Umar Ibn al- Fāriḍ, *Dīwān Ibn al- Fāriḍ* (Cairo: Matba‘at al- Fajr al- Jadīd, 2006), 88.  
All Arabic poetry of Ibn al- Farid was translated by the writer of the thesis without resorting to outside English references.

times. Therefore, the stronger his constant vigilance of God, the closer he gets to God till he reaches a stage with which the veil of separation is lifted and the constant vigilance yields to its final fruit of direct witnessing of God (*al- mushāhadah*). Direct witnessing of God is the first stage in the spiritual station of excellence *ihsān* which was stated by Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him when he said: "worship God as if you see Him, and if you don't see Him, He sees you".<sup>189</sup> In other words, the wayfarer has to keep remembering that God is watching him all the time<sup>190</sup> as it is stated in the Quran: "and He is with you wherever you are".<sup>191</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan in his next aphorism advised the wayfarer to watch God's vigilant awareness of him not vice versa. Furthermore, being alert to the uninterrupted constant watchfulness of God to one self prevents the wayfarer from getting involved in any wrongdoing or becoming busy with anyone else. It also leads to lifting the veil of separation between the Creator and the created. On the other hand if the wayfarer paid attention to God through the wayfarer's vigilant awareness of God, the veils of separation will not be removed because the human's nature is characterized with inadvertence, dereliction and heedlessness. This meaning

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<sup>189</sup> This hadith was narrated on the authority of ‘Umar ibn al- Khattab and Abu Huraira and was authenticated and related by Imam Muslim. The hadith was related as well by Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, al- Nasāī , Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah.

Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al- Iman, Chapter of *Ma’rifat al- Iman*. Vol 1, Hadith no. 8. Ed. Muhammad Fouad ‘Abd al- Baqi (Beirut: Dar Ihya al- Turath, ND), 36.

al- Tirmidhi, *Sunan al- Tirmidhi*, chapter on Iman, vol. 5, hadith no 2610, ed. Ahmad Muhammad Shakir and Muhammad Fouad ‘Abd al- Baqi, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cairo: al- Bab al- Halabi publishing house, 1975), 6.

Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, Kitab al- Sunna, Chapter on Qadar, vol. 4, hadith no 4695, ed. Muhammad Mohyi al- Din ‘Abd al- Hamid (Beirut: al- Maktaba al- ‘Asriyya, ND), 223.

al- Nasai, *Sunan al- Nasai*, Kitab al- Iman, chapter *Na’ t al- Islam*, vol.8, hadith no. 4990, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Halab: Maktabat al- Matbu’at al- Islamiyya, 1986), 97.

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad al- Imam Ahmad*, Musnad ‘Umar ibn al- Khattab, vol. 1, hadith no. 82. ed. Shu’ayb al- Arnaout and ‘Adil Murshid 1<sup>st</sup> edition (Cairo: Muasasat al- Risala, 2001), 244.

<sup>190</sup> al- ‘Alawī, *al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya* vol. 1, 172

<sup>191</sup> al- Baqarah 2:115

was mentioned by Shaykh al- Harawī and thus turned our attention to the necessity of getting rid of our vigilant awareness as it is highly associated with our feeling of self existence and acts as an indication of his remaining; a fact which goes against the ultimate aim of the wayfarer which is self annihilation in God.

Shaykh al- ‘Alawī elaborated on what Shaykh al-Harawī stated regarding the importance of getting rid of our vigilant awareness. He explained that the wayfarer can be present with God in one moment and heedless in the very next. For the Gnostics they reach a state of perfection which is the state of utter connection with God where they are not heeded away from being in a constant state of vigilance to God. In this state they watch God with their conscious vigilant awareness of Him. When the Gnostics get back to their senses they watch God with His vigilant awareness of them so in all cases they are well preserved from heedlessness. For this reason the Sufis say: "Be with God wherever He is with you".<sup>192</sup>

Shaykh al-‘Alawī added further that the origin of vigilant awareness of God is fear and the greater the fear the wayfarer has, the closer he gets to his Lord. Veneration does not capture the heart unless it is accompanied with proximity to God which leads to greater fear of God (*khashya*) and the wayfarer is elevated till he reaches a point of being squashed and vanished in the divine reverence of God. Gnostics believe that fearing God is a grace which deserves thankfulness because it is a sign of love. Fear prevents the wayfarer from falling into heedlessness or sins and encourages him towards goodness and to be watchful of God.

Wrongdoing darkens the heart and diminishes the space of light which is created by fearing God. When the wayfarer indulges himself in wrongdoing and allows the lower self to tighten its grip over him, lights are driven away and they hardly ever come back. Therefore the

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<sup>192</sup> *ibid.*, 173.

Gnostics are dressed with fear and when they are in the divine presence, they are overwhelmed with a state of modesty and timidity (*ḥayāʾ*). This noble state is called infallibility (*al-ʿesmah*) for prophets and preservation (*al-ḥefz*) for Gnostics.<sup>193</sup>

The sense of fearing God dwells in the Gnostic's heart as the heart is the central commander in chief and the rest of the body is like soldiers who abide by his orders and do not have the audacity to go against the heart's commands. For this reason the Gnostic would consult his heart before committing any act because of its purity and its containment of God's secret.<sup>194</sup> Shaykh al-ʿAlawī advised the wayfarer who seeks proximity to God, to occupy himself with purifying his heart because it is God's divine dwelling.<sup>195</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan differentiated between two kinds of preservation: the first has to do with preserving the body and the second is concerned with preserving the heart. The preservation of the body is related to safeguarding the body parts from committing sins. The preservation of the heart is attained through abandoning any attachments to others save God. Declaring attachment solely to God entails utter submission to God's destiny.<sup>196</sup>

In conclusion Shaykh al-ʿAlawī explained what Shaykh al-Harawī briefly stated regarding the stage of *Khashya* as it combines both longing and awe. Reverence and awe do not depart from the hearts of the Gnostics, the more they feel expansion (*bast*), the more they feel contraction (*qabd*) and the closer they feel God's beauty (*al-jamāl*), the closer they draw near to God's majesty (*al-jalāl*).

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<sup>193</sup> al-ʿAlawī, *al-Mawād al-Ghaythiyya* vol. 1, 174-175.

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*, 175.

<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*, 176.

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*, 176-177.



Ibn ‘Arabī stated in this regard that in this stage the wayfarers have contradicting feelings as they fear both from the veil of separation and from lifting it alike. Shaykh al-‘Alawī explained the words of Ibn ‘Arabī as the more God makes them feel secure and safe, the more they feel afraid of separation. For this reason although some Gnostics would say that the hardship of religious obligations has been lifted from their shoulder yet we find them the keenest to worship.

## **2- The Spiritual Station of Satisfaction and Submission (*al- Rida wa-l- Taslīm*)**

The next stage in the spiritual quest is the stage of satisfaction and submission or (*al-rida) wa-l- taslīm*. Sheik Abū Madyan eloquently defined submission to God as letting the self wander in the realm of rulings without feeling pity for it as a result of the pain and the calamities which the self might be subjected to. Shaykh al-‘Alawī added that for the Gnostics submission to divine rulings is mandatory because in all times there are new rulings that are passed whether these rulings are explicit or implicit. Submitting to the divine will of God and His ordained destiny is the habit of the Gnostics because who knows the slave better than his master. If the wayfarer on the other hand felt sorry for himself for what has been destined for him, he undoubtedly accused his Lord of not taking care of His creation and wrongly interfered in His kingdom. This act of sorrow is a serious breach to the oath of servitude and leads the wayfarer out of the realm of submission to God and places him in a direct dispute with Him.<sup>197</sup>

Therefore Shaykh al-‘Alawī commented by saying that the wayfarer has to enter the realm of submission to God and leave the house for its constructor, if He wills, He demolishes it and if He wills, He constructs it.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> *ibid.*, 186.

<sup>198</sup> *ibid.*, 188.

The spiritual status of submission to God's divine will leads to the spiritual status of satisfaction *al- rida*. Shaykh Abū Madyan explained that calamities by nature are hateful to the self. The Gnostics depart from the public in their attitude towards calamities as they enjoy and take pleasure in going through calamities. Shaykh al-‘Alawī added further that the secret behind easing the pain and elevating the brunt of calamity is witnessing the causer of the calamity.<sup>199</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan realized that the path to God is full of calamities which might burn out the wayfarer and lead him astray, for this reason he advised the wayfarer to hold on to patience (*al- sabr*) in his journey to God. Patience is essential for the wayfarer as it pushes him forward against the continuous wave of afflictions.

Shaykh al-‘Alawī pointed out the vitality of satisfaction with God's destiny as this will speed up his path. The reason behind the importance of satisfaction in seeking God is that this will lead to His satisfaction with the wayfarer. This mutual satisfaction between God and the wayfarer was echoed by al- Qushairī. So satisfaction with God's revealed destiny is the power with which wayfarers are able to carry a burden that no mountains can bear.<sup>200</sup> This new meaning of satisfaction with God and using it as a power to lead the wayfarer through calamities is a new addition to what Ibn ‘Arabī stated regarding satisfaction with God as he said that it stems out of *adab* or etiquette.

The true seeker of God does not get deviated by any apparent obstacles and these obstacles reveal the real intentions of the seeker and whether he is sincere in reaching his ultimate destination. Shaykh al-‘Alawī explained that most wayfarers stumble in the path to God

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<sup>199</sup> *ibid.*, 190.

<sup>200</sup> *ibid.*, 192-193.

because of either lacking a sincere mentor (*wali murshid*) to guide the way of the wayfarer or due to a lack of knowledge of the destination ahead.<sup>201</sup>

The ultimate destination of the wayfarer is reaching God and it includes believing in God as the most apparent *al- zāhir* in this world that nothing can block his ultimate presence. This leads the wayfarer to witness God in everything as His apparent manifestation leaves its imprints on creation. The Gnostics at this point feel God's presence closer to them than their jugular vein.<sup>202</sup> This fact is clearly stated in the Quran: "and we are closer to him than his jugular vein".<sup>203</sup>

### 3- The Spiritual Station of Reliance on God (*al- tawakkul*)

The next spiritual station that Shaykh Abū Madyan draws our attention to is the station of (*tawakkul*) or reliance on God. Shaykh Al-‘Alawī explained that the essence of (*tawakkul*) is the trust of the servant in his God and to be sufficed with his divine will and the serenity of the heart to what is destined for it without looking forward to anything beyond it.<sup>204</sup>

Shaykh al-‘Alawī drew our attention to the issue of exerting efforts (*kasb*) and that it does not contradict (*al- tawakkul*). Occupying the heart with what is guaranteed for it in terms of provision contradicts reliance on God as it indicates a lack of trust in God and a dispute over His Divine Rulings. Abū al- Ḥasan al- Shadhilī once said: "self direct yourself not to self direct".<sup>205</sup>

Therefore Shaykh al-‘Alawī echoed what Ibn ‘Arabī stated regarding (*tawakkul*) as he

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<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*, 195.

<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*, 197.

<sup>203</sup> Quran 50:16

<sup>204</sup> al-‘Alawī, *al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya* vol 1, 9.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

said that the attachment to worldly reasons and the tribulation that the heart feels when these reasons are missing goes directly against *tawakkul*.

Shaykh Abū Madyan pointed out the optimum state of reliance on God which leads the wayfarer to a status in which his remembrance of God supersedes remembering himself. Shaykh al-‘Alawī explained further that this state is not attained unless the remembrance of God is well mixed with the wayfarer's heart, flesh and blood. If the wayfarer reached this high status, it is a sign of closeness to God because He allowed His Remembrance to be uttered with the wayfarer's tongue and sprang from his heart naturally without the least effort.<sup>206</sup>

So if the wayfarer is not sufficed with God and still keen on seeking the assistance of people and rely on them wholeheartedly, he is eventually doomed because God's creation are in absolute need of their Creator so how can they be of any benefit to others if they can't even benefit and suffice themselves?<sup>207</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan in his next aphorism defined the true slave of God as the one who cuts off all ties of hope except those that are bound with his Master. Shaykh al-‘Alawī explained this aphorism by indicating that this state is natural for the wayfarer who does not see the existence of creation as all things are dissolved in his eyes. For this reason the wayfarer hardly gets distracted by anything as all his hopes and wishes are tied with God and he does not plead anyone except Him. These are the characteristics of the true slave of God as for the rest of the

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<sup>206</sup> *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>207</sup> *ibid.*

people, they are slaves to others. Whoever hopes for anything is partially possessed by it and whoever cuts his hopes from everything, is taken care of by God.<sup>208</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan expressed his wonder of how the Gnostics can get distracted away from God and with Him they find all they look and hope for. Shaykh al-‘Alawī added that for the Gnostics they can't look forward to achieving anything other than God as all they can ever love and hope for exists in Him. In other words, whoever knows God can't be distracted with others as in Him lies all what the wayfarer needs.<sup>209</sup>

The Gnostics are so occupied with witnessing the beauty of their Lord that they cannot turn the eyes of their hearts away from Him. For this reason Shaykh Abū Madyan stated in his next aphorism that the Gnostics determination and hopes are ever remaining at God's door step. Their hearts resided in his Divine presence without the least distraction. Even if the Gnostics tried to see God's creation, they would see these creations saying: "and wherever you turn, you will see the face of God".<sup>210</sup> Therefore, the Gnostics can very well be seen, in appearance, dealing with people, talking and gathering with them, yet their hearts truly remain with God. This noble state is eloquently expressed in poetry by Shaykh ‘Abd-ul- Qadir al- Jilanī when he said: "My heart is residing with my Beloved conversing with Him...and my tongue is with you people".<sup>211</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan ended his bundle of aphorisms in the spiritual station of satisfaction and submission with revealing the end state of this spiritual station which is joy and happiness with God alone. He said that the true slave is the one who feels despair of any joy except the joy

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<sup>208</sup> *ibid.*, 12.

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> Quran 2:115

<sup>211</sup> al-‘Alawī, *al- Mawāḍ al- Ghaythiyya* vol 1,13.

that comes from his Master. Shaykh Al-‘Alawī explained that the true wayfarer finds himself withdrawing from any joy coming from others because he fails to see anyone else save God.<sup>212</sup>

Sufis only recognize the joy which comes from God and therefore they adopted whirling as a way of expressing joy and happiness with their Lord as Shaykh Muhammad b. ‘Abdullah, a prominent Sufi mystic explained. He mentioned a story of a jurist who denied whirling for Sufis and one day a Sufi went to visit him in his house and found him whirling so he inquired about his action and the jurist replied that he found some legal juristic manuscripts that he has been searching for a long time so he danced in happiness. The Sufi replied saying: "I wonder how someone can dance in joy because he found something that is easily replaceable and deny dancing in joy for someone who found God and knew Him". This meaning is eloquently explained in prose,<sup>213</sup>

*Don't you see the bird in its cage oh boy....if it remembered its home, would long for singing... it dances in the cage yearning for meeting...and shakes the people with reason in awe when it sings....same as the souls of the lovers...are shaken with longing for the higher world...can we oblige it to maintain patience when it is yearning...and who can keep his patience while witnessing his Beloved...*

It was narrated that a young boy named ‘Utba came over to see Lady Rabi‘a al-‘Adawiyya and he was wearing a new shirt and walking ostentatiously and that was not his habit. So Lady Rabi‘a asked him about the reason behind this new self pride and admiration that she did not see in his character before, and he wisely answered saying: "and who else could be prouder than me that now I have a Master and I became his servant".<sup>214</sup>

This is the state of those who reached their final destination and resided in the presence of their Divine Beloved and realized the mortal reality of all things so they raised their hopes to the

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<sup>212</sup> ibid., 15.

<sup>213</sup> ibid.

<sup>214</sup> ibid.

Ever Eternal and attached their joy to Him.<sup>215</sup> This state is mentioned in the Quran "Say: In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy: therein let them rejoice. It is better than what they hoard."<sup>216</sup>

#### 4- The spiritual station of Poverty (*al- Faqr*)

The next spiritual station is poverty and it is seen as a source of pride for the Gnostics as Prophet Muhammad was characterized by it and used to say: "poverty is my pride". Shaykh Abū Madyan after stating the high status of poverty and made it a cause for pride, Shaykh al-‘Alawī narrated the endless noble qualities of Prophet Muhammad and quoted a poet saying:<sup>217</sup>

*If people were to gather his noble characteristics... they would fall short at all levels  
Pardon me Messenger of Allah for my inadequate poetry... as excuses are always  
accepted by the generous...*

Poverty is such an honor for the Prophet and the companions that they made the word *faqīr* or poor as a title for anyone who would join their path to God even if he was the richest of the rich. Poverty is a sign for the Oneness of God and this state includes many levels in it. Imam al- Shāfi‘ī (d.204 H. 820 CE)<sup>218</sup> once said: "nothing is a better ornament for the scholars than poverty and contentment". And a poet once said,<sup>219</sup>

*The self refuses to be poor....and poverty is better than richness that would spoil it*

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<sup>215</sup> *ibid.*, 16.

<sup>216</sup> Yunus 10:58

<sup>217</sup> al-‘Alawī, *al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya* vol. 1, 16.

<sup>218</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, " al- Shāfi‘ī," (E. Chaumont). He is the founder, of the Shāfi‘ī school. Al-Shāfi‘ī remained in Medina as a pupil of Mālik until the latter’s death, a period of about ten years (Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Manāḳib al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī*, Cairo 1986, 45). In Egypt he lectured in the mosque of ‘Amr—that al-Shāfi‘ī’s teaching had its greatest impact; his principal disciples were Egyptians and subsequently Shāfi‘ism competed successfully with Mālikism for supremacy in Egypt [see *shāfi‘iyya* ]. It was here that al-Shāfi‘ī composed the new version of his *Risāla* (the one which has survived) and the majority of the texts collected in the *K. al-Umm*.

<sup>219</sup> al-‘Alawī, *al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya* vol. 1, 17.

*The richness of the self lies in sufficiency...and if it refused, all what is on earth won't suffice it...*

It was once narrated that 'Umar b. al- Khattāb (d. 23 H. 644 CE)<sup>220</sup> was in extreme poverty and his shirt had four patches and when he was the Caliph, he slacked one day in going out for Friday prayer and when he finally came out, he apologized saying: "what kept me from coming out is that my shirt was being washed and it was my only shirt." Shaykh al-‘Alawī commented on this story by saying that poverty is usually tied with gnosis and the knowledge of the Divine.<sup>221</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan in his next aphorism about poverty clarified the necessity of concealing one's own poverty and not to subject himself to people's charity. He went further on explaining the reason behind the concealment of poverty by saying that poverty is a light which only remains as long as it is concealed and once you let it appear, its light is gone.<sup>222</sup> Another reason for concealing poverty is to show the steadfastness and patience while bearing poverty without looking forward to what is in the hands of the rich. Moreover when the *faqīr* maintains praising God while in the state of poverty and turns a blind eye on the rich people along with refraining from complaining from his poverty to them, his heart is filled with satisfaction with God which turns poverty to light with which he walks among people.<sup>223</sup> This type of poverty is described in the Quran: "The one who knows them not, thinks that they are rich because of their

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<sup>220</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, " al- Khattāb," (G Levi Della Vida- M Bonner). He is the second caliph. one of the great figures of early Islam, a driving force behind the early conquests and the creation of the early Islamic empire. Upon the death of the Prophet in 11/632, 'Umar played a central role in the events leading to the acclamation of Abū Bakr as caliph [see al-saḫīfa ]. During Abū Bakr's caliphate, 'Umar remained close to the centre of power, advocating hard-line positions which the caliph did not always adopt. Upon Abū Bakr's death in 13/634 he achieved the caliphate in his own right. 'Umar's other accomplishments are said to have included the creation of the office of *qāḍī* [q.v.], the new calendar which dated from the *hidjra* [see ta' rīkh. I. 1. iii], and a great number of religious and civil ordinances regarding prayer, pilgrimage, fasting (see *Ḥadjj*; *ramaḍān*; *Ṣalāt*; *Ṣawm*; *tarāwīḥ*), penal law and indeed nearly every conceivable area.

<sup>221</sup> *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*, 19.

<sup>223</sup> *ibid.*, 20.



modesty. You may know them by their mark, they do not beg of people at all. And whatever you spend in good, surely Allah knows it well." <sup>224</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan took the spiritual station of poverty to a higher spiritual level which transcends the obvious meaning of emptiness of one's hand from worldly matters to a subtle meaning of emptiness of the wayfarer's hearts from everything save God. When the wayfarer reaches this state, he becomes totally in need of God and seeks his refuge at every step of the way. For this reason Shaykh Abū Madyan explained spiritual poverty as failing to witness none save God. The wayfarer reaches this state through deep and constant contemplation which leads him to realize that creatures amount to mere nothingness and God is the only real existence which nothing unto like Him nor there is a match or competitor. <sup>225</sup>

Whoever is totally immersed with this meaning would not find anything existing save God and would see Him in everything. In other words, if he sees God in everything, is it possible for the wayfarer to be in need of anything save God? <sup>226</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan in his next aphorism delves into even a higher spiritual state which is preserved for the richest of the rich. This title is given to those who God bestowed upon them the recognition of one of His facts. The truth is that God is the Reality of existence and if it weren't for His manifestation in what He created, they wouldn't be visible because their nature is pure nothingness and the eye sight does not recognize the invisible. Shaykh al-‘Alawī warns us against seeing what is created as a separate existing independent entity but rather your sight should fall on the Creator of its existence who provided it with its temporary existence. In other

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<sup>224</sup> Quran 2:273

<sup>225</sup> al-‘Alawī, *al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya* vol. 1, 20.

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*, 21.

words, God created everything and then He manifested Himself in what He created so it became existent.<sup>227</sup>

Shaykh ‘Abdul Qadir al- Jilanī explained further that God did not manifest Himself in any created being as much as He was manifest in human beings. Shaykh al-‘Alawī expounded on this aphorism by saying that though God was manifest in all His created beings with His different attributes, He revealed His manifestation on human beings through His lordship.<sup>228</sup>

God created Adam with His own hands and blew in him with His spirit. He was manifest in him and commanded the angels to prostrate for him and made him His vicegerent on earth. Thus He placed him in the middle between His world of manifestations (*al- mulk*) and His world of divinity (*al- malakūt*) along with sharing parts of the world of power (*jabarūt*). Therefore, the whole being was combined in Adam and his outer shell makes him appear as a speck of clay whereas his inner side shows him as the vicegerent of the Lord of the universe.<sup>229</sup>

The combination of the three heavenly realms and its manifestation in the human being makes him the greatest of all realities of existence but this reality is concealed from recognition by minds and invisible from eye sight. So whoever God reveals this ultimate reality for him, how can he not become the richest of the rich?<sup>230</sup>

On the other hand, the most impoverished of all is the one who God is concealed from him though He is the manifest in all things. It is narrated that the people in heaven would cry in awe like those in the hell fire if God concealed Himself from them for a moment. This meaning was written in prose,

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<sup>227</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> *ibid.*, 22.

<sup>229</sup> *ibid.*, 23.

<sup>230</sup> *ibid.*

*Poverty is the poverty of the heart which is empty from divine encounter.... and richness with anything else save God is extreme poverty....*<sup>231</sup>

### **5- The spiritual station of Sincerity (*Ikhlas*)**

Shaykh Abū Madyan moved to another spiritual station which is deemed necessary for the wayfarer to pass by in his path to God, it is the station of (*al- ikhlās*) or sincerity. Shaykh Abū Madyan in his first aphorism in this station asserted that no deed is perfected until it is accompanied with sincerity and vigilant awareness.<sup>232</sup>

Shaykh Al-‘Alawī commented further on this aphorism by explaining that insincere deeds mount to nothingness (*‘adam*) and are considered nonexistent. Therefore whoever is not sincere while performing the deed is better off not doing the deed as he gains nothing except exhaustion and tiredness. God accepts an atom measure of sincere deeds and rewards for it and refuses tons of mountain measure insincere deeds and utterly rejects them. Shaykh al-‘Alawī then categorized people in the station of sincerity to three categories. The highest of which is the one who considers asking for a reward in reciprocity of doing a good deed lacks sincerity.<sup>233</sup>

The degrees of sincerity is further explained through the story of Prophet Jesus as he was wandering around and passed by a group of worshippers who looked like an old rug out of exhaustion from extreme worship, so Jesus asked them: "for what purpose was your worship?" and they replied: "God caused us to fear His hell fire, so we feared it" and Jesus replied: "God will guarantee you safety from what you feared" and he left them. Jesus's second encounter was with another group of worshippers who practiced even harder worship than the previous group so he asked them about the purpose of their worship and they said: "God caused us to yearn for

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<sup>231</sup> *ibid.*, 25.

<sup>232</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>233</sup> *ibid.*, 52.

paradise and its beauty so we hoped to enter it". Jesus said in response: "God will guarantee you what you hoped for" and he passed them by. Jesus last encounter was with a third group of worshippers so he asked them for the purpose of their worship and they said: "We are the lovers of God, we did not worship Him out of fear of hell fire or out of longing for heaven but out of love for Him and glorifying His majesty." So Jesus said: "you are the true Gnostics and with you I am commanded to stay" and he lived among them.<sup>234</sup>

Abū Hazim al- Medani, one of the prominent Gnostics, said: " I would feel so shy from God if I worshipped him out of fear of his hellfire because that would make me like an ill-mannered slave who does not work unless he fears the consequences of not working, and equally I would feel shy to worship Him for a reward which would make me like the ill- mannered laborer who does not work if he is not given a compensation for his labor. I am rather worshipping God out of love for Him".<sup>235</sup>

Shaykh al- 'Alawī explored the roots of insincerity and resorted it back to the lack of vigilant awareness of God. If the worshipper was aware of God's watchfulness over him, he would not have lacked sincerity because he witnesses the One in all what he is doing.<sup>236</sup> The same meaning was mentioned by Ma'ruf al- Kahrkhī (d. 200 H. 815 CE)<sup>237</sup>, one of the famous Gnostics, when he was asked about the reason which led him to isolate himself from people and dedicate his life to God, he kept silent. So he was asked: "did you remember death?" and he replied: "and what is the value of death?" so he was asked: "did you remember the grave?" and

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<sup>234</sup> *ibid.*, 52-53.

<sup>235</sup> *ibid.*, 53.

<sup>236</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, " Ma'ruf al- Kahrkhī" (R.A. Nicholson- R.W.J. Austin). one of the most celebrated of the early ascetics and mystics of the Baghdād school. He himself was an important influence on another famous Ṣūfī of the earlier period, Sarī al-Sakaṭī [q.v.], who was in turn the teacher and master of one of the most famous exponents of Ṣūfism, al-Djunayd [q.v.].

he replied: " and what is the value of grave?" so he was asked: "was it the fear of hellfire and the desire of heaven?" so he said: "and what is the value of all that, the One who owns all these in His hands if you loved Him, He would make you forget all that and if you had knowledge of Him, he would suffice you all that".<sup>238</sup>

The summary of the Gnostics' statements in this spiritual station is that they don't see of themselves any rank on which they deserve a reward nor they have exerted their efforts in work which would amount to protect them from punishment. Their state is that they have no state with God, their commodity is bankruptcy as they have nothing and deserve nothing. The worshipper is a creation, reward is a creation, punishment is a creation "Isn't to God belong creation and command?"<sup>239</sup> Shaykh al-‘Alawī echoed in this regard what Shaykh al-Harawī stated when he emphasized on the importance of resorting the act to its original Doer. Same meaning was iterated by al- Qushairī when he explained the necessity for the wayfarer to forget any claims of rewards for good deeds.

In a second aphorism Shaykh al-‘Alawī adds to Abū Madyan's tip which would draw a demarcation between sincerity and hypocrisy. The sign of sincerity is to lose sight of people through your engagement in witnessing the Lord. Shaykh al- ‘Alawī added further that once the wayfarer becomes sincere, less acts of worship will suffice him. Some Gnostics said that when the Lord opens up a door of attaining knowledge about Him, the wayfarer does not need to care whether he works hard in worship or not. In other words as long as the wayfarer witnesses people, his work cannot be sincere to God. Equally if the wayfarer is worshipping for the

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<sup>238</sup> *ibid.*, 54.

<sup>239</sup> *ibid.*, 57.

hereafter then he remains insincere because he is a creation works for a creation and where does the Lord fit in all that?<sup>240</sup>

Explaining further the issue of not being distracted by anything save God, Shaykh ‘Abdul Qadir al- Jilanī said: " invocation of God is a veil, prayer is a veil, fasting is a veil, and all types of worship in itself forms a veil". Shaykh Al-‘Alawī expounded on this by saying that these types of worship only become a veil for those who lean with their hearts towards them and were blocked by worship from witnessing the One whom they seek behind their worship.<sup>241</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan in his next aphorism draws the attention of the wayfarer to the danger of depending on his worship to secure himself a favored place in the divine presence. Shaykh al- ‘Alawī warns against seeking God through depending on one's worship because as long as the servant is aware of his worship, then the door to the divine presence remains closed. Whoever attempts to reach God with something he earned i.e. through worship; this worship will become an obstacle between the wayfarer and God. In other words, no one can reach God except through Him.<sup>242</sup>

Shaykh al-‘Alawī turned our attention to how acts of worship can form a block which veils us from the Divine whereas Shaykh al-Harawī focused on the importance of breaking loose from witnessing the trails of people and the tracks of their existence as they form a block which prevents the wayfarer from witnessing God.

## 6- The Spiritual Station of Love (*Ḥubb*)

<sup>240</sup> ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Abū Abū Isma'il al-Harawī, *Manazil al- Sa'rin ila-l haqq al Mubīn T.* [The Stages of the Wayfarer in the Path to God T.] vol 1. ed. Afīf al- Tilmesanī (Tunisia: Dār al- Turkī, 1989)63

<sup>242</sup> al-‘Alawī, *al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya* vol. 1, 67.

Shaykh Abū Madyan moved to an even higher spiritual station which is concerned with love and yearning for the beloved. He started this spiritual station by asserting that whoever lacks spiritual states and physical worship is not qualified to delve into the divine presence of God. Shaykh al-‘Alawī commented on this aphorism by saying that whoever is empty from inside and outside does not qualify for the divine presence of God because he lacks the necessary qualifications which make the wayfarer adequate for spiritual growth. When the wayfarer lacks the zeal and enthusiasm in the path to God, he can't be counted among the seekers of God. He went further explaining the spiritual meaning of states *aḥwāl* and defined it as a bundle of divine inspirations (*wāridāt*) tackling the heart to stir it after its stagnancy and these inspirations may appear on the body so it would shake and bend. The eyes may have its share of the divine inspirations so it could tear.<sup>243</sup>

Shaykh al-‘Alawī narrated a Gnostic story of Dhu-l- Nūn al- Misri who was looking for a Sufi mystic known for her divine love and when he approached her, he heard her saying,

*"O..You are the one who the heart delights with His remembrance...the only one I want is You...You are my wish and goal not people...You are the one who all people submit to You...the nights and entire time vanishes... and my love for you is fresh in my heart and new..."*<sup>244</sup>

Shaykh al-‘Alawī commented on this story and similar ones by saying that these are the states of the lovers and if the wayfarer lacks spiritual states (*al- aḥwāl*) then he must have a good share of physical worship (*al- a'māl*) because the path to God revolves around the two realms.<sup>245</sup>

A worshipper named Hammam came over to ‘Alī Ibn Abū Ṭālib (d. 40 H. 660 CE)<sup>246</sup> and asked him to describe the spiritual states of the pious, so ‘Alī answered: " they are the ones

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<sup>243</sup> *ibid.*, 75.

<sup>244</sup> *ibid.*, 76.

<sup>245</sup> *ibid.*, 79.

whose logic is righteousness, their dress is modesty, their walk is humility, they lowered their gaze from all what is prohibited and dedicated their hearing to listen only to beneficial knowledge, they receive calamities with the delight of prosperity and if it were not for submitting to their time of death, their souls would not have ever resided in their bodies out of burning longing for their Lord... and at night they stand in resilience on their feet reciting the Quran, when they pass through a verse of mercy, they would find comfort and serenity in it and when they pass by a verse of admonishment, they would shiver in awe and they would almost hear the roaring sound of hellfire in their ears and they would kneel down supplicating to God to save them from such miserable destiny"<sup>247</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan reiterated what Shaykh al-Harawī explained earlier regarding the degrees of the seekers of God and categorized them to lovers and beloved. In the first category, the lover is tormented with his love, yearning for proximity and rolls over his burning feelings of longing and suffers the pain of love. Shaykh ‘Abd al- Qādir al- Jīlānī (d. 561 H. 1166 CE)<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, "‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib," (L. Vecchia Vaglieri). He is the cousin and son-in-law of Muḥammad, and fourth caliph, was one of the first to believe in Muḥammad’s mission. Alī was a valued counsel lor of the caliphs who preceded him; but although it is probable that he was asked for advice on legal matters in view of his excellent knowledge of the Qur’ān and the sunna. When ‘Uṭhmān was killed the Umayyads fled from Medina and the opposition remained masters of the situation. Since ‘Alī was the person for whom they had most respect, he was invited to succeed to the caliphate. ‘Alī had hopes of regaining the allegiance of the governor of Syria by opening negotiations with him, but in vain. Mu‘āwiya demanded the surrender of the murderers of ‘Uṭhmān in virtue of a verse of the Qur’ān (xvii, 32/35) which forbids the slaying of any person save for just cause ( *ilīā bi ’l-ḥaḳḳ* ), at the same time according the right of vengeance in the case of anyone slain unjustly ( *mazlūm an* ) to his walī , i.e. his near relative. Mu‘āwiya maintained that ‘Uṭhmān had been killed unjustly; consequently, he proposed to exercise the right accorded by God. In the meantime, he would hold to his refusal to pay homage to ‘Alī. The conflict continued and ended with the assassination of Ali in 40 H.

<sup>247</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>248</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, " ‘Abd al- Qādir al- Djīlānī," (W. Braune). Ḥanbalite theologian, preacher and Ṣūfī, who gave his name to the order of the Qādiriyya. ‘Abd al-Qādir lived at a time when ṣūfism was triumphant and expanding. In the century preceding him a conflict, that had existed long before, assumed an acute form and became the concern of every individual. The consciousness of the individual as well as the whole of society was torn by the breach between secularism, religiously indifferent or religious only in a conventional way, on the one hand, and an intellectualist religion, at odds over theological doctrine, on the other. ‘Abdal-Qādir became one of the best known mediators in Islam.



was asked about love and he said that it is a sort of disruption in the heart caused by the beloved which turns the world in the eyes of the lover tighter and smaller than the circle of a ring. Love is blindness of anyone save the beloved out of jealousy for him and it is blindness of the beloved out of veneration of him. Lovers are drunk and they only become sober when they witness their beloved. They are sick and are not healed except by observing their needed love. They are confused and don't feel serenity and comfort except with their Lord and they invoke no one but Him and don't respond to any caller unless the call is for Him.<sup>249</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan mentioned the signs of a true lover and characterized him as the one who the bounties and manifestations of God left him in awe and his yearning for proximity to God left him in worry. These two characteristics lead the wayfarer to risking his life for the sake of his beloved not paying any attention to the dangers of the path and he would repeat in awe: "how can I find a way of connection with which I may live?"<sup>250</sup>

The second sign of a true lover is to have constant longing (*shawq*) and pleasure in God's company (*al-uns*). Longing and yearning belong to the beginners of the path to God whereas serenity and contentment with God are the characteristics of the Gnostics who come close to the end of the path. Therefore, Shaykh Abū Madyan asserted that whoever does not possess one of these two characteristics is not a wayfarer in the path of God.<sup>251</sup>

One of the Sufi poets wrote in prose talking about love with its concomitant characteristics saying,

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<sup>249</sup> al-‘Alawī, *al-Mawād al-Ghaythiyya* vol. 1, 83-84.

<sup>250</sup> *ibid.*, 94.

<sup>251</sup> *ibid.*, 97.

*If the country with all its trees....were thirsty of love... rain would not be able to quench its thirst...if the land tasted the love of God...the trees would be too occupied with love to bear fruits...and the branches would be leafless from the heat of love...neither iron nor mountains are stronger in bearing love and enduring torment than the humans...<sup>252</sup>*

Therefore, the lover is tormented in his love and has no pleasure in living without his beloved. He is captivated with love and immersed in its ocean with no hope for survival. Shaykh Abū Madyan wrote about his love eloquently in prose saying,

*I was humiliated across countries when you captured me...and I was rolling over the pain of love...if I had two hearts, I would live with one and leave the other tormented in your love...but I only have one heart possessed with love....I am neither content with living nor death seems near...like a squirrel in the palm of a child holding it...tasting the pain of death while the child is playing...neither the child has the intellect to feel sorry for the squirrel nor the squirrel has the feather to fly away...I was called crazy due to the pain of love and I was set as an example of love in the neighborhood... oh people of love die out of longing....just like Qays died due to the torment of abandonment...<sup>253</sup>*

Therefore the one who feels longing and serenity is tormented with love but he takes pleasure in his pain and tastes the sweetness of his torment. He would be found crying in awe as if he is away in his proximity and absent in his presence and if he was asked who he was, he would reply out of extreme proximity: *I am the beloved and the beloved is me* or would say *his soul is mine and mine is his...we are two souls reside in one body...<sup>254</sup>*

He confused the lover and the beloved till he reached a point where he doesn't know if he is the lover or the beloved or does he want or is he wanted. He was drunk with love and immersed in awe longing for the beloved.<sup>255</sup>

Shaykh al- 'Alawī explained the further consequences of lacking these two dominating characteristics in the wayfarer and said that it indicates the lack of love in his heart because if

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<sup>252</sup> *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>253</sup> *ibid.*, 103.

<sup>254</sup> *ibid.*, 104.

<sup>255</sup> *ibid.*, 104.

love was instilled in his heart, the seed of yearning and serenity would flourish. Moreover, when love is instilled in the heart of the Gnostic, he will be surrounded with constant care (*ri'āya*) for his soul and preservation (*wiqāya*) for his body. In other words, the Gnostics' hearts are preserved against any whims or heedlessness and their bodies are preserved against falling in any prohibited or disapproved acts. Thus love establishes a fortress which preserves the Gnostics from any slight heedlessness which divert them away from the divine presence of God.<sup>256</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan referred to another vital characteristic that the wayfarer should possess in his path to God which is constant sorrow and crying. Shaykh Al-‘Alawī explained the need for these characteristics as the wayfarer is always heartbroken with tearing eyes crying over what he missed during his heedless days away from God. If the wayfarer lacked remorse, it would be a clear sign of failure in his path to God as he would be only walking in the path with his tongue not his heart. If the wayfarer is not tormented due to the pain of separation from God, he has a dead heart because if he knew how far away he is from his beloved and how much preparation he missed, he would fly to God same as a thirsty person flying to quench his thirst with water. Shaykh al- ‘Alawī concluded that the eyes that don't cry for not seeing her beloved, blindness suits them better.<sup>257</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan drew a distinction between the one who is dressed with the humility of his incompetency in reaching God and the one who is dressed with the pride of seeking refuge in God. Shaykh al- ‘Alawī explained that the first person is content with separation from God and satisfied to sit back and stay behind with the heedless ones.<sup>258</sup> A Sufi poet said in this regard

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<sup>256</sup> *ibid.*, 98.

<sup>257</sup> *ibid.*, 98-99.

<sup>258</sup> *ibid.*, 101.

*Anything you lose can be compensated  
except for God, if you lose Him,  
there is no compensation for Him.*

Shaykh Abū Madyan then warns the wayfarer against leaning towards anything save God because He may take from the wayfarer the pleasure of conversing with Him. Shaykh al-‘Alawī commented on this aphorism by saying that God is too jealous for his servant's heart to let it lean towards anyone else as God created the heart of the Gnostic to know Him. Taking away the pleasure and sweetness of conversing with God is a major torment for the lovers as they lose one on one conversation between the lover and the beloved in seclusion, proximity and witnessing.

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Shaykh Abū Madyan talked further about the consequences of feeling the sweetness of conversing with God as it leads to deprivation of sleep. Shaykh al-‘Alawī commented on this aphorism explaining that sleep is an indispensable necessity to the physical body though reducing the hours of sleep is affordable through self discipline. It also can be the result of enjoying the sweetness of conversing with God which leads the soul to be in a constant state of awakeness with no heedlessness or sleep. This case is attainable especially when the soul is purified from the layers of thickness caused by the earthly body and moves to a state of transparency. This is why the soul does no longer need to sleep because it is separated and elevated from the earthly body with its sleeping needs. Therefore from one side the soul is still residing within the body and from the other side it is elevated way above bodily needs.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> *ibid.*, 107.

<sup>260</sup> *ibid.*, 108.

When the soul gently flows in the divine presence of Oneness (*al- wāhidiyya*) in which God's names and attributes are manifest, the soul in this state has full recognition of its physical body and becomes aware of all its moves. Though the soul would be in an intimate state of conversing with God, it would be aware of its surrounding creatures as it hears God's speech behind the veil of His creatures. It hears God's speech in letters and sounds because it is still attached to its earthly body and did not rise above it to hear a different form of speech.<sup>261</sup>

When the soul delves into the divine presence of (*al- ahadiyya*) only then it can hear the speech of God directly with no mediators or intercessors. This speech is elevated from being confined to sounds and letters. It is unlike any speech and it is called divine conversation (*Munājāh*). The soul listens attentively to this divine speech without the shackles of the earthly body which hinders its ability to hear the divine speech with no letter or sounds.<sup>262</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan made a distinction between the sort of dwelling in the heart of the Gnostics and the dwellings of world seekers' hearts. The former type is the dwelling for remembrance and abode for seclusion and intimacy with God; as for the latter, it is the dwelling for whims and heedlessness. Shaykh al- ‘Alawī commented on this aphorism clarifying that the heart has only one destination, therefore when it turns towards something, it turns away from all else. So the hearts of world seekers are filled with heedlessness whereas the hearts of the Gnostics are filled with divine secrets and celestial wisdom until the heart becomes a spring for divine knowledge. This is the definition of a true heart and the rest of the hearts are not worthy of its name because it did not fulfill the function that it was created for. They left their hearts unattended, surrounded with heedlessness and whims. The lights of the heart faded and no longer

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<sup>261</sup> *ibid.*, 109.

<sup>262</sup> *ibid.*, 109-110.

became a human's heart. As for the Gnostics, they never cease to be always in urge for God and never settle till they enter His divine presence.<sup>263</sup>

Shaykh al- 'Alawī went further to explain the consequences of having a pure heart that is filled with the lights of the invocation of God. He mentioned that a Gnostic once said: " my heart told me that God says..." and this is the characteristic of the pure heart which is empty of all else save God and the veils of separation were left up so mediators between the lover and the beloved are no longer needed.<sup>264</sup>

Reaching this status of closeness and intimacy is unattainable without a strong and sincere determination and zeal (*irādah*) to walk in the path of God. More importantly having a strong determination is pointless if it is not preceded with deep repentance from all kinds of heedlessness as any work coming out of a heedless heart mounts to nothing in the sight of God. Shaykh al- 'Alawī encouraged the wayfarers to walk in God's path with confidence that they would reach their ultimate destination as the spiritual station of the Gnostics starts with sincere repentance. Repentance is the key because God loves those who repent and those who are purified. God readily accepts those who turn back to Him with a broken heart repenting their heedless years away from Him.<sup>265</sup> Therefore, one should never give up as one of the Sufi poets said

*It is all about destiny which may drive a close person away  
and may bring him close when he was far away.*<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> *ibid.*, 111-112.

<sup>264</sup> *ibid.*, 112.

<sup>265</sup> *ibid.*, 112-113.

<sup>266</sup> *ibid.*, 114.

Shaykh al- ‘Alawī then drives the attention of the wayfarer not to think that repentance is only asked from a sinner who commits prohibited actions as this is the general meaning of repentance. But when it comes to the wayfarer he needs to do a special type of repentance even if he never committed a sin because when the wayfarer describes himself as not a sinner is in itself a sin.<sup>267</sup>

Whenever the wayfarer feels that he is adequate to stand before His Lord, then he is still far away from Him. The wayfarer's willingness to walk in the path of God is not rectified until he becomes certain that he has nothing to lean on. Shaykh Abū Talib al- Makkī mentioned the exegesis of the verse which says: "Is He [not best] who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him"<sup>268</sup> and he defined the one who has an urged need as the one who stands before his Lord reaching out his hand in supplication for his need while being certain that he does not have any shred of a good deed standing between him and his Lord which would make his supplications worthy of being accepted.<sup>269</sup>

Shaykh Abu-l- Hasan al- Shadhilī ( d. 656 H. 1258 CE)<sup>270</sup> said in this regard: "If you want to supplicate to God, present your offences before you and say: O God I come with nothing and your prayers will be answered readily".<sup>271</sup>

## **7- The Spiritual Station of Oneness (*al Tawhīd*)**

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<sup>267</sup> *ibid.*, 115.

<sup>268</sup> Al Naml 27:62

<sup>269</sup> *ibid.*, 115.

<sup>270</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, "al- Shadhilī," (P. Lory). one of the great figures in the Sūfism. His teachings launched a *ṭarīqa* which gave birth to numerous, dynamic ramifications. These developed and have constituted a mystical tradition very widespread in North Africa and equally present in the rest of the Islamic world, as far as Indonesia.

<sup>271</sup> *ibid.*, 116.

Shaykh Abū Madyan started this spiritual station with affirming the fact that when God is manifest no one else remains with Him. Shaykh al- ‘Alawī commented on this saying that if God manifested Himself to the Gnostics with His essence and attributes, everything else ought to diminish to nothingness and the only thing that remains for the Gnostic to see is the One. For this reason it is said that when the contingent meets with the everlasting, the contingent dissolves and the everlasting remains. God may manifest Himself to the Gnostic in a way that is inexplicable through words but intellectually understandable. This state is called quashing and annihilation (*al saḥq wa al maḥq*).<sup>272</sup>

Ibn al Fārid referred eloquently to this state in his poem saying:

*My mountains were demolished....out of awe from the Manifest*

*And a concealed secret was revealed... known only by someone like myself*

Therefore, nothing stands with God as all else is a mere illusion and for this reason some Sufis would say: "If I tried to compel myself to see anything save God, I wouldn't be able to". A Sufi poet said in this regard,<sup>273</sup>

*You were manifest so no one denies You*

*Except for a blind who does not see the moon*

*But you were concealed with your manifestation*

*Veiling Yourself so how can someone*

*concealed with veneration be known?*

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<sup>272</sup> *ibid.*, 117.

<sup>273</sup> *ibid.*, 118.



More importantly, when God manifests Himself to the Gnostic, he finds no one else save Him and God's manifestation is not preceded with prior concealment as he is the All Manifest (al- zāhir). For Sufis, God's manifestation refers to the Gnostic's awareness and feelings of Him. Therefore, reaching God is interpreted to mean reaching the knowledge of God because otherwise when was He ever concealed to become manifest? And where did He go in the first place to return?<sup>274</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan elaborated further on the issue of reaching out to God and defined the essence of reaching for the Gnostic to be immersed in God's attributes and stripped off his own traits. Shaykh al- ‘Alawī explained that the existence of the wayfarer is merely an illusion or pure mirage with no substantial reality. Therefore when God appears to the Gnostic with His essence and attributes, the wayfarer's traits simply fade away and mount to nothing.

Shaykh Abū Madyan went further explaining the difference between regular eyesight with which creation is seen and between intuition (*basīra*) with which God can be recognized. Shaykh al- ‘Alawī elaborated on the definition of intuition and said that it is sort of a divine light with which one can realize the reality of things. Everything surrounding us has a certain reality that can only be recognized with intuition, as for the eyesight it can only see what lies before it without being able to see through its essential reality.<sup>275</sup>

Therefore, intuition does not see or recognize the existence of creation because created beings lack substantial reality and their visibility is limited to the regular eyesight, so they are seen metaphorically. As for the Gnostics they reach a point where their eyesight is folded within

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<sup>274</sup> *ibid.*, 118-119.

<sup>275</sup> *ibid.*, 125.

their intuition which makes some Gnostics claim that they have seen God with their own eyes. The truth of the matter is that the Gnostics used their intuition instead of their eyesight in an attempt to see creation and they simply realized the reality of creation which mount to nothingness and recognized that the true real existence belongs to God and they mistakenly thought that they saw Him with their eyesight but all they did was seeing God through their intuition.<sup>276</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan in his next aphorism explained how the wayfarer can attain this unique type of intuition with which he can see God. The first condition for the wayfarer is to die and unless he does, he won't be able to see God. Shaykh al- 'Alawī elaborated on the concept of death in Sufi terms and defined it as denying one's existence or to cease realizing his own being because the veils of separation between the Creator and the created will not be lifted up as long as the wayfarer recognizes the dual existence of himself with God. Therefore death for the Gnostics mean to cease recognizing creation or themselves and this is attainable when God takes them away from all else with no turning back. This real death symbolizes the real life and through it real vision of God is attained.<sup>277</sup>

Shaykh al- 'Alawī said in this regard: "The Real is not encompassed by vision. It is He that encompasses it [all vision]. How could it encompass Him while He is closer to it than itself? Is it possible for the eye to view the eye?"<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>277</sup> *ibid* 128

<sup>278</sup> Ahmed Mustafa al-'Alawī, *Hikmatu- hu Sa Sagesse*. trns. Ahmad, Saiyad. (Mustaghānem: al- Matba'ah al- 'Alawiyah) Unpublished English edition, 17. Aphorism no. 13.

So death metaphorically is a condition for the ability of seeing God and whoever claims seeing God without dying on his own existence is a liar because how can the wayfarer see the One that nothing is unto like him if he still sees the existence of a thing which is himself.<sup>279</sup>

Shaykh al- ‘Alawī said in one of his aphorisms: "Two opposites which can never co-exist: if you are, He is not; and if He is, then you are not. So discard your being, that you may be called to Him."<sup>280</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan in his next aphorism iterated the meaning of death in the Sufi technical language and defined it as isolation from all creation.<sup>281</sup> Therefore Shaykh Abū Madyan provided the wayfarer with a divine formula for enjoying an eternal life. This is attained through being totally annihilated from one's self and immersed in God. Shaykh al- ‘Alawī calls this formula the mysterious treasure because the multiplicity of existence is deemed impossible and once the wayfarer establishes the Sole existence of God, he will start recognizing the existence of all else through God. In other words, the establishment of all existents is not coming out of its own self because they amount to nothing. Therefore the whole universe on its own is a mere nothingness because it could not stand alone without the sustenance and providence of its Creator. Once the wayfarer acknowledges the unity of existence, he gets to recognize all existents.<sup>282</sup> This meaning is eloquently reflected in poetry,

*You made Yourself manifest in all what You created...and without Your existence,  
nothing would have existed.*

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<sup>279</sup> al- ‘Alawī, *al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya* vol. 1, 129-130.

<sup>280</sup> al- ‘Alawī, *Hikmatu- hu Sa Sagesse*, 12. Aphorism no 8.

<sup>281</sup> al- ‘Alawī, *al- Mawād al- Ghaythiyya* vol. 1, 131.

<sup>282</sup> *ibid.*, 135.

The One real being is not veiled by the existence of anything and His existence is manifest in all else.<sup>283</sup> Shaykh Abū Madyan iterated the concomitant consequences of knowing no one else save God and stated that if the wayfarer recognized the independent existence of anyone, failed to recognize the One. Shaykh al- ‘Alawī commented on this by saying that whoever acknowledges the Oneness of God will not associate anything else with Him because He is the Absolute Being. His mentor Shaykh Buzaidī used to say that if the wayfarer had only a lock of hair left stranded outside the Absolute Being i.e. not proven by the wayfarer to owe its existence to God, he remains veiled from God<sup>284</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan tried to delve into the mysterious treasure of the Real Being (God) in his next aphorism by trying to attach some description to Him. He characterized God as being not connected to anything and not separated from anything. Shaykh Al- ‘Alawī added that the divine Oneness refuses all kinds of attachments to it as it is a self independent being.<sup>285</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan defined God as the All -Knowing and explained that knowledge is never separated from His own essence and was never connected to His essence. In other words as Shaykh al- ‘Alawī explained knowledge is attached to God's essence and gains glorification with the glory of the essence. Therefore, whenever the essence exists, knowledge is its attribute because the essence surrounds its attribute and not vice versa. This means that the attribute cannot encompass or surrounds the true essence of God because it is not confined into a certain space to be surrounded with anything.<sup>286</sup> Therefore nothing can be attached or connected to the

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<sup>283</sup> *ibid.*, 136.

<sup>284</sup> *ibid.*, 137.

<sup>285</sup> *ibid.*, 138.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

essence of God out of absolute glory which leaves no room for confinement. In other words, if anything were to exist with God's essence, confinement, sides and limits would exist.<sup>287</sup>

Shaykh Abū Madyan continued saying that whoever takes pleasure in the company of creation, would feel lonely in the presence of God. Shaykh Al-‘Alawī explained further that whoever leans towards people, will be a stranger in the presence of God because opposites can't be combined. Also whoever looks at existents without seeing God before and after and with them is far apart from Him. The Gnostics only recognize existents because of God's manifestation in them otherwise they wouldn't have lifted their eyes up to see any of the existents in the first place.<sup>288</sup> Shaykh al- ‘Alawī said in this regard in one of his aphorisms: "He who has attained to the truth of Infinite-Self Sufficiency (*al- ṣamadāniyya*) finds no room for otherness."<sup>289</sup>

Al- Junayd when he was asked about the Oneness of God, he said that the best definition is the one that was given by Abū Bakr when he said: "Praise be to the One who did not make a way for knowing Him except through inability to know Him." Al- Qushairī commented on that saying that Abū Bakr did not mean that he does not know the answer because inability is the inability of an existent not of inexistent. Same as a crippled person, he is unable to sit down because he is compelled on it with no willingness or prior action. Therefore the Gnostic is unable to define his knowledge of God because it is embodied in him.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>289</sup> al-‘Alawī, *Hikmatu- hu Sa Sagesse*, 18. Aphorism no. 14.

<sup>290</sup> Abū al- Qasim al- Qushairī. *al- Risala al- Qushayriyya*. (Cairo, al- Maktabah al Tawfiqiya,ND) 406.

## Conclusion

After meticulously reading the commentary that Shaykh al-‘Alawī wrote on the aphorisms of Shaykh Abū Madyan, some conclusions can be drawn. Shaykh al-‘Alawī realized that the ultimate purpose for Shaykh Abū Madyan's 170 aphorisms is for the wayfarer to get rid of his own existence and to vanquish his own self to reach a state of extinction *fanā* through which he can reach God. Shaykh al-‘Alawī calls this formula the mysterious treasure because the multiplicity of existence is deemed impossible and once the wayfarer establishes the Sole existence of God, he will start recognizing the existence of all else through God. In other words, the establishment of all existents is not coming out of its own self because they amount to nothing. Therefore the whole universe on its own is a mere nothingness because it could not stand alone without the sustenance and providence of its Creator. Once the wayfarer acknowledges the unity of existence, he gets to recognize all existents. Shaykh al-‘Alawī added that this formula of the mysterious treasure can be attained through the entrance of the wayfarer to God in the realm of submission to God and leave the house for its constructor, if He wills, He demolishes it and if He wills, He constructs it.

Shaykh al-‘Alawī added that for the Gnostics submission to divine rulings is mandatory because in all times there are new rulings that are passed whether these rulings are explicit or implicit. Submitting to the divine will of God and His ordained destiny is the habit of the Gnostics because who knows the slave better than his master. If the wayfarer on the other hand felt sorry for himself for what has been destined for him, he undoubtedly accused his Lord of not taking care of His creation and wrongly interfered in His kingdom. This act of sorrow is a serious breach to the oath of servitude - which is a unique term that Shaykh al-‘Alawī introduced - and

leads the wayfarer out of the realm of submission to God and places him in a direct dispute with Him.

Shaykh al-‘Alawī concluded another major factor in reaching the mysterious treasure which is attained through realizing the vitality of satisfaction with God's destiny. Most people are well acquainted with destiny and often relates it to helplessness as it is beyond their control. Shaykh al-‘Alawī on the contrary declared that God's revealed destiny is power with which wayfarers are able to carry a burden that no mountains can bear. This new meaning of satisfaction with God and using it as a power to lead the wayfarer through calamities is a new addition to what Ibn ‘Arabī stated regarding satisfaction with God as he said that it stems out of mere *adab* or etiquette.

Shaykh al-‘Alawī was keen to motivate the wayfarer in his path to God through driving his attention to the elevated status that human beings enjoy above all other creatures in order to fuel his zeal to continue his spiritual path to God. He said that God created Adam with His own hands and blew in him with His spirit. He was manifest in him and commanded the angels to prostrate for him and made him His vicegerent on earth. Thus He placed him in the middle between His world of manifestations (*al- mulk*) and His world of divinity (*al- malakūt*) along with sharing parts of the world of power (*jabarūt*). Therefore, the whole being was combined in Adam and his outer shell makes him appear as a speck of clay whereas his inner side shows him as the vicegerent of the Lord of the universe.

The combination of the three heavenly realms and its manifestation in the human being makes him the greatest of all realities of existence but this reality is concealed from recognition

by minds and invisible from eye sight. So whoever God reveals this ultimate reality for him, how can he not become the richest of the rich?

In short the contemporary works of Shaykh al-‘Alawī are characterized with his adamant attitude to strike a balance and create a harmony between the outer forms and shapes of worship and the inner meanings that should light the heart of the wayfarer to guide him in his path to God. He is one of the few Sufi saints as Lings described him, who has an extensive treatment of the subject of ritual worship and its deeper inner meanings that should be present in the mind of the wayfarer at all times. In Sufi terms, he would present an excellent example of combining both *maqām al- shari‘ah* and *maqām al- haqīqah* or the station of the revealed law and that of the ultimate reality.

Shaykh al-‘Alawī referred to *maqām al- shari‘ah* as the one that is relevant to servitude and pointed out that the closeness and love *maḥabbah* of the created beings to the creator and vice versa is prior to the issue of servitude; a fact which makes servitude as only an expression to this closeness and a starting point to a spiritual ascending journey to be back in full unity with God in which one loses himself totally by being in an indescribable awe as he reaches a complete overwhelming status of self annihilation or *fanā’*, a status where one diminishes to nothingness as he dwells into the divine presence of God. Between *maqām al- maḥabbah* and *maqām al- fanā’* lies a wide range of ascending stations which the wayfarer needs to traverse in order to reach his final destination.

The work of Shaykh al- ‘Alawī on the spiritual stages among other works are good candidates for deep studies as they were not treated and rarely explored in Western scholarship. Also, in total these works offer us an insightful guideline and sketches a clear map which draws



the way of the wayfarer to reach his spiritual destination while striking a balance between the outer forms and inner meanings so they would end up being two faces of the same coin.

In the past three chapters, I have aimed at demonstrating the spiritual stages in the divine path to God represented by Shaykh al-‘Alawī both at the theoretical level and its pragmatic application on ritual worship. Although writing about an erudite towering figure like Shaykh al-‘Alawī in only a hundred pages does not do his noble contributions any justice, it aimed at introducing this great scholar to a broad swath of the English speaking audience who did not have the privilege of being exposed to his prominent intellectual scholarly Sufi output.

As was reiterated before, only two attempts were made to introduce Shaykh al-‘Alawī's works to a wider English readership; the first was made by Martin Lings who introduced Shaykh al-‘Alawī to the Western intellectual world through his book "A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century, Shaykh Ahmed al-‘Alawī: his spiritual heritage and legacy". This book was first published in 1961 and went for a second publication in 1971 and a third edition was printed in 1993 by the Islamic Texts Society in Cambridge.

The second attempt was made by Dr. Saiyad Ahmad<sup>291</sup> who translated the unpublished manuscript of Shaykh al-‘Alawī 's aphorisms, known in French as *Sa sagesse*. This humble contribution of mine would be the third in line to make available for wider audience the veritable scholarly accomplishments of Shaykh al-‘Alawī in the realm of Sufism and his strong hold in religious scholarship. The works of Shaykh al-‘Alawī strike the reader with its flow of genuine Sufi knowledge, eloquence in the writing style along with a captivating feelings of veneration and reverence to such luminary scholar.

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As a contemporary Sufi revivalist as Shaykh al-‘Alawī is, his intellectual legacy and his scholarly output can very well fit the golden age of Islam. The mystical meanings that are flowing from his writings and the divine radiants of knowledge encompassing his works make it quite hard to place him in the modern time. It is more fitting to include him among the towering Sufi scholars of the 7<sup>th</sup> century H as his breadth of knowledge, profound insight and sharp intellectual discernment makes him an eligible candidate to join the elite of the golden age of Islam.

Shaykh al-‘Alawī managed a fine equilibrium between delving into the inner meanings of divine law and its spiritual manifestation and between the outer shell of keeping religious rituals and following the prophetic example and his application of the revealed law. This revealed law is the shell which covers the spiritual core of divine knowledge and Shaykh al-‘Alawī was an ardent scholar who penetrated from the husk to the kernel and dug out the hidden gems of the Sufi path to help the wayfarers in their mystical quest to unite back with the Divine.

Throughout his work that I have treated in this thesis, Shaykh al-‘Alawī was adamant to base his entire Sufi paradigm on a solid Quranic principle from which stems his Sufi doctrine. He based his Sufi theology on monotheism (*tawhid*) and surpassed the classical orthodox understanding which suffices itself with blind faith to demand a continuous witnessing of God along with a pristine cognition of Him by the Saints to an extent that even if they try not to see God's manifestation in all things, they would miserably fail. This failing attempt is due to the fact that their sight cannot get in acquaintance with non existents. Shaykh al-‘Alawī took the quest for a further level by demanding from Gnostics not to recognize their own selves and to be wholly immersed in God and annihilated in witnessing His divine names and attributes. This

sense of total annihilation leaves the Gnostic speechless as he is confronted with waves of divine lights emanating from His divine essence yet reaching God's essence is beyond human capacity.

Therefore Shaykh al-‘Alawī affirms Shaykh ‘Abd al- Karīm al- Jīlī's (d. 832 H. 1428 CE)<sup>292</sup> findings when he said that all the descriptive statements of God fall short of encompassing his divine essence which has no compatible match in this world. For this reason whoever talks about the essence of God is silent and whoever is moving from one thought to another in describing God is actually standing still. Realizing His essence cannot be achieved by our limited intellectual ability so no mind can capture even a glimpse of His essence.

This profound experience of the universe as a theophany of God's divine names and attributes has its impact on the pragmatic aspect of ritual worship. In the ritual act of prayer the wayfarer raises his hands up for *tabkīr* and once the lights of divine manifestations shine on him, he begins to draw himself in little by little and the first shrinkage is letting down his hands to his sides or putting them on his breast, after they had been on a level with the top of his head. In other words the nearer the worshipper approaches His Lord the more he draws himself in. Prayer starts with reciting *al fātiha* which is the opening chapter in the Quran. The opening chapter is the intimate discourse and the divine conversation that the worshipper is asked to conduct in the presence of God when he is standing before Him. This divine dialogue takes place once the divine lights of God's holy presence shine on the worshipper. These divine lights indicate a level of spiritual closeness that allows the wayfarer to converse privately with his Lord.

Shaykh al-‘Alawī eloquently interpreted every movement in prayers to have a deep Sufi meaning as prayer for him is a divine journey that the wayfarer embarks on to ascend to heaven.

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<sup>292</sup> *ET*<sup>2</sup>, "'Abd al- Karīm al- Djīlī," (H. Ritter). He is a Sufi mystic who wrote about thirty books and treatises, of which *al- Insān al- Kāmil* is the best known and had several printed editions in Cairo.

All other ritual worships like fasting, paying zakat and pilgrimage hold their own spiritual significance and have a deep Sufi hermeneutic interpretation.

During this profound Sufi experience which starts with a deep theological belief with a practical application on ritual worship, the wayfarer traverses through many spiritual stations in his perennial quest towards the Divine. Shaykh al-‘Alawī started from the station of vigilant awareness and ended with the spiritual station of oneness on which his whole Sufi theology was based. Therefore, it is palpable that Shaykh al-‘Alawī was connecting the dots between the beginning and the end to reach the true oneness in which the wayfarer is absent from witnessing anything save God. Going through all these different spiritual stations needs a mentor as a prerequisite for embarking on this divine quest.

Therefore, this thesis with its different chapters sketched a blueprint for the wayfarer who is ardent to embark on a divine journey and join a perennial quest to reunite back with the Divine. This journey is based on a solid theological belief with profound practical meanings coupled with a mentor to walk side by side along the wayfarer till he reaches his ultimate destination and harbor in the divine presence of God where there is no return.

My hope is that this introductory thesis to one of the prominent Sufi works of Shaykh al-‘Alawī and his descriptive blue print of the Sufi path stimulate the appetite of academic researchers to investigate and analyze the scholarly works of this luminary figure in order to dig out the hidden gems in his works. Shaykh al-‘Alawī's works were not given its due attention and are worthy to be the subject of deeper analysis. Reading the works of Shaykh al-‘Alawī is like breathing a fresh air in the contemporary 20th century blended with a mesmerizing scent of the classical Sufi legacy of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century H.

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