



BISMILLAHIR RAHMANIR RAHIM

ESOTERICS OF THE SUFI WAY
An Investigation into the Meanings of Words

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ESOTERICS OF THE SUFI WAY

An Investigation into the Meanings of Words

Preface

Please enjoy these dissertations on various aspects of the Esoterics of spiritual healing. In them I hope to reiterate, in contemporary terms, the keys to understanding the classical viewpoints of Islamic Sufism. These are, to the best of my knowledge, the understandings of all the great Sufi masters, as derived from lifetimes of personal experience and practice within a classical Islamic context.

These writings are my personal understandings of some terms, meanings and significances accrued as a result of my many years of contemplation, study and practice of the concepts and disciplines included in the body of knowledge commonly referred to as 'Islamic Sufism'. They are not proposed to be the final word or final analysis. They are not even proposed to be definitive. They are simply my personal understandings and come from the essence of my heart.

To firmly anchor the relationship of Gnosis (knowledge of God) to Healing, let me state that it is the assertion of the Sufis, and indeed a majority of the Healing Community at large, that a true and functioning knowledge of God (Gnosis – Ma`arifat) is the beginning and the end of the highest and most effective form of healing.

Sufi masters unanimously assert that their understandings are rooted in the Divine knowledges brought to them by the revelation of Islam. It is my hope to present to you some of the fundamental practices and understandings of this science in such a way as to stimulate your interest, hope and enthusiasm for the same kind of personal development that is exemplified by the saintly Sufi masters of the past and present.

These understanding work for me. I fully and sadly realize the foolhardiness of proposing them as universal truths even though at their essence, they purport themselves to be just that. This is, however, most likely to be taken as 'YAR', "Yet Another Reality", in a world already full to nuclear explosion with ultimate realities and spiritual worldviews. One thing that I can guarantee about them is that I use them every day and that they are effective and useful to me on my path of progress toward the One. It is only my sincere hope that they may be as useful to the reader as they are to me.

*** A note on the text. It is a pet project of mine to help English become a truly universal and possibly even a committed spiritual language (like Sanskrit, Arabic, Urdu and so many others) by adopting into its vocabulary sufficient words and meanings from the Islamic and other traditions of spiritual knowledges. As a contribution to this endeavor, it is my intention to use as much possible of the common Arabic terminology as used in a normal Sufi conversational context. Should a word or two pop up that the reader does not understand and to which there is no attached meaning, please refer to a proposed glossary of terms, whenever it is completed.

*** A note on the use of the masculine gender word "HE" as the personal pronoun denoting the existence of Divine Benevolence: Please realize that there is of course no gender whatsoever to The Divine Reality, either real or implied. The word 'He' is the closest realistic, easy and practical translation for the Arabic word 'HU', which, when used in human context, is the third person pronoun denoting masculine gender. But when it is used in the context of referring to The Divine, it is as genderless as the finger that points to the moon. It is, in this case, another one of the Divine Names and Attributes indicating 'His' Existence as "The Divine Cause, both separate from and linked inexorably and inexplicably to our own."

INTRODUCTION

"I am known only by you, just as you exist only by me.
Who knows you knows me, although no one knows me,
so that you too are known by no one."
Ibn `Arabi's Fusus (I, 92, pp. 248-254)

This is a brief exposition of some points of the Sufi Science of Gnosis - Knowledge of God. It assumes interest in the subject and offers no further proof of Divine Existence. Most people interested in this subject matter are already convinced and want simply to set foot on the path of knowledge. This treatise may be a first step on a joyous, but not necessarily easy, journey.

Sufism is nothing if not a certifiable chain of transmission. All "mystic" knowledge consists of two equally important parts, the outward teaching of description and instruction, and the inner core of true, full-body realization. These might be compared or paraphrased as the indications, signs (ayats), and the meanings, or "the Teachings" and "the Practice", or the lesson and the comprehension.

Once the actual comprehension is reached, the teaching may become more personalized, because all things from the source lead to the source. But until that point, the teachings must be studied and the practices practiced with devotion, faith and sincerity.

Each person of understanding will attempt to publish "the Way" in some manner or other. This writing may be a "new" rendition of the teaching, but it is coming from its source and is designed to point the reader in the right direction. How the conveyer reached these conclusions is a matter of biography, and of little interest. Important is how well the reality is represented.

The science of Creation, and thus of knowing God, is documented in many languages from many times. The most recent and arguably complete exposition of this science came with the life of Muhammad, the revelation of the Qur'an and the experiences of the myriad of followers who embraced this knowledge wholeheartedly. The teachings of the masters are famous, but there must be living representatives to give it life, otherwise it is dead. And the knowing is eternal and unchanging, but the knowers are as varied as humanity itself. Indeed, the spirit moves where it will.

The Goal of this exposition is to call to the way of eternal, everlasting peace, one person at a time. It can be done. Personal circumstances are irrelevant. Once the knowledge is known, a simple remembering is sufficient to bring an increase of peace to the body and mind.

Peace (of mind) is the sole most significant healer in any time. Surrender (to the will of the Divine) brings the Real Peace to the body and mind and allows for the immediate disappearance of tension and anxiety, which is the root cause of all other physical and mental imbalances. Continuation brings Joy.

THE ROLE OF SUFISM IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Many of our upbringings were in the darkness of unbelief in the Divine light of it all. But that duality is a basis for the struggle of life which is theoretically the joyous interplay of light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. It is the reality of that struggle which makes life a real test and thereby a process of discovery and self-improvement which becomes the means to the gratitude and awareness that life is created to inspire. In other words, the hardships exist so that their sadness and frustration may be transformed into victory, joy and wisdom. In search of the praiseworthy diamonds we dig forever in the common soil. Discovery is to make known and to make known is to praise.

In the search for archetypal role models of the spiritual type we have reluctance stimulated by fear of extremes. On the one hand we have the righteous fear of religious fanaticism in which all other beliefs and non-beliefs are wrong, and where it is the religious and spiritual duty of the true believer to join the crusade to save the world. On the other hand, we have the nightmare and desolation of the all-consuming fear for personal survival, with faith in nothing other than dreary personal productivity and acquisition. This is the 'cog in the machine' mentality, and represents basically no religion at all.

In the first chapter of Qur`an (Al-Fatihah) is mentioned the two consequences of disbelief in objective (revealed) truth. One is the incurring of disfavor, i.e. the accrual of 'bad karma', exemplified by a joyless, lifeless existence, and the other is the 'going astray', or religious egotism, which is the basic misunderstanding leading to fanaticism, judgmental attitudes and extremes of indulgence, among other things.

Few people actually understand the real and general purpose of life itself, and even fewer are contemplative enough to be able to perceive the real purpose of individuals in their own surroundings. Yet this is exactly the understanding that is most needed. The healing power of this understanding is truly transformative.

I wish to propose the possibility of discovering a personal balance, and the possibility of the existence of a general cure-all in the form of a knowledge and a knowing. An 'objective truth', if you will, the study and practice of which leads the seeker to satisfactory understandings concerning the nature of humanity and his/her personal role in it, and/or salvation from it.

THE GOAL OF SUFISM

The Growth and Transformation of the Holistic Health Movement

The flower children have reached maturity. The illusions of youth have long since passed, and the realizations sought after are being attained. We broke loose in the 60's, studied and practiced in the 70's. Blended in and mellowed out in the 80's, and have risen by the power of Truth in the 90's.

In the 70's Holistic Health was the study of physical disease and therapeutics. In the 80's it was patience, work and digestion. The main thrust of Holistic Health in the 90's was spiritual realization as a means to personal and societal ideals. Looking seriously at the realities of social reformation, spiritual truths have become the tools available for the attainment of personal goals. Personal goals will include societal and environmental goals. Theology is a major force in intellectual and psychological reform and the studies and practices of the Sufis have risen as a means of understanding and achievement.

The Goal of Sufism (Self-purification) is to know and live in The True Love of The Divine. That goal, maintain the Sufis, is the original intent and highest aspiration of the human heart. Love is the true force of creation. Creation is a manifestation of Divine Love.

Assuming that, let's explore the various meanings and manifestations of Love and their impact on the human individual and society. We might define the basis of human motivation as "to love and be loved". The Sufi loves and is loved in the truest and ultimate sense. S/he lives in the certain and experiential knowledge of God's Love for creation and humanity and therefore strives to know and become truly human. S/he spends his/her time doing deeds of self-effacement and purification, studying knowledges that will increase the orientation toward the One True Source and decrease the likelihood of falling into error and delusion, at the same time manifesting by every means available that same love in human understanding to all creatures. By coming to know his/her own needs and the means to their fulfillment, s/he comes to know the needs of all humanity and the means to their satisfaction.

The Loss of Love

It certainly seems like the materialist society (whose goals are all the same) is simply putting the cart before the horse. We all feel the need for material stability, but why? If we were to look deeply, we would find that we feel material stability would be an adequate (even requisite) platform from which to manifest and receive love - from family, friends and society in general. The difficulty with this is simply that, as we all know, the life of this world is

fleeting and thereby the search for material stability becomes all consuming and can lead to tragedy. The primary motivation (Love) becomes lost in the unending search for the unattainable, and never becomes attained. The goal becomes lost in the search for the means.

A man constantly caught in the quest for material stability will never have the time to love and receive love from his wife and family. This is the sad tragedy of the "American way".

To this we say "Love Now!"

Put yourself right with Love. This is not an unpopular theme in the world of contemporary psychology. Let love flow from you now and you will discover from within yourself the very source of life itself, without which it is but a hollow shell. You'll no longer be lost in the priorities of your mortal existence, and all self-concern and egoism will depart. This does not mean to say that you will become irresponsible. Quite the contrary. You will fulfill your responsibilities all the more effectively since your motivation will be from the ease of love rather than from the hardship of concern and worry.

The truly enlightened beings of the world, Bodhi-Sattvas, Mahatmas, Buddhas and Sufi Masters (etc.) have reached (at least) the stage of realization called 'Subsistence in Divine Love', and their only concern is to provide for their family (humanity) that same subsistence. Hence their need to manifest. They, like God, possess a secret that wants to be known.

This level of existence is what we all aspire to. It is the aspiration and goal of Sufism. It is the ultimate and at the same time the beginning of "to love and be loved" - to know and live forever in Divine Love. A family, community or society based on such a principle is going to stay together through thick and thin.

You're Never out of touch with Love!

THE GNOSTIC CLAIM - GOD IS KNOWABLE

God IS Knowable. What's more, Such as It is, Divine Nature makes Its knowledge incumbent upon creation. Ignore It at your peril. The good news is that it is possible. It would not be asked of us if it were not.

All words have meanings. All meanings are meant to be explored. Meaning is the source of knowledge. Knowledge is the understanding of meanings. Meaning is that which is indicated (by a word). A meaningless word nullifies its own existence.

How does one explore meaning? With conviction, determination, investigation and repetition! The word 'Gnostic' means Knower (of God). The word 'Gnosis' means Knowledge (of God). The word 'agnostic' means to be without knowledge (of God), and therefore, ignorant.

Consider, if you will, the meaning of the word 'ignorant' (Spanish/Latin: ignorante) - one who ignores. To ignore is an act of will and therefore of deliberate denial and uncaring,¹ and therefore unknowing, (of the Divine Nature of Existence). And now consider the consequences of ignorance - singularly the most damaging aspect of human existence. Fear, war, pestilence, disease, all the damaging elements arise from this one human quality. Even the Arabic word "Ins", which means mankind, comes from a root implying "forgetful".

Consider the meaning of the word 'enlighten' - to remove the burden (of ignorance). Consider the meaning of the word 'wisdom' - the understanding and practical application of knowledge. Do we know of anyone born with them? Are they not, then, noble objectives?

Consider the most fundamentally beneficial (and beneficent) aspect of human existence, the Knowledge of the Unity of us all. Is not the Unity Beneficent? Contemplate Divine Unity for one moment and see what happens to you. Is not this Unity sufficient to speak for itself? The slightest contemplation of it can be magnificently inspirational. Unity is the Source of Inspiration. What is it that you listen to when you contemplate Unity?

All religious, spiritual and socially uplifting teachings are inspired by this Unity. All religions, spiritual traditions, and ancient medical sciences and philosophies, from flower arrangement to homeopathy to the arts of war, include as an essential element a never-ending deep contemplation of, and listening to, this Unity.

Consider some alternatives. Would you support the contention that the Unity is incapable of speech? All of creation speaks to its kind and others in some form. Is not then speech an essential attribute of The Unity? If capable of speech, would you consider It incapable of creating one (or more) able to listen? Who were the great spiritual leaders of history? All claimed the ability, by Divine Grace and Will, to speak for The Unity in the language of the people at that time. And was not their message of eternal benefit to those who listened?

¹ Either unconcerned, as in arrogant (lat. rogar - to beg, supplicate; rogante - beggar, supplicant; arrogante - arrogant, non-supplicative, un-asking, not looking), or afraid (as in intimidated, oppressed [by ignorance] or feelings of guilt.)

Should this Unity not have qualities that are beyond our comprehension? And should not this Unity be solicitous of our well-being, since It saw fit to bring us into existence in the first place? Is it not Aware, the Source and Author of a mother's love and a father's concern? Is this Unity not capable of creation? Did we, and the creation of the known and unknown universes, past, present and future, arise acciden-tally, as though somehow without the consent, knowledge, cooperation and willful participation of this Supreme Oneness?

Can there be any thing greater than this Unity? Should this Unity be Knowing but not Conscious? We may have consciousness, but not that in and by which we exist? Should not this Seeing, Speaking, Creating, Knowing, Willing, Compassionate, and Powerful Unity be able to give Itself a name unique to Itself in all languages, that identifies Itself as distinct from all previous concepts and misconceptions? And would you consider this Entity (Unique, Whole and One In Itself) unable to make this Name, and its Will and Purpose, known to Its creation?

Contemplate the meaning of these (Arabic) words! Al-llah! The One, greater than which there is nothing! Ahad! The Unique. Standing Alone, beyond comprehension, without necessity of Creation. He is now as He was. Wahid! The Oneness, the Unity (Existing, Knowing, Seeing, Hearing, Speaking, Will, Power²), Who comprehends all.

The knowledge of Unity is a study; the Knowing of Unity is a practice. The Knowing and living in Unity is a primary obligation on the human heart that supercedes all other obligations in importance and priority. All action or non-action arising from this Knowing will be "Of the Source" and successful. No other knowing can claim this. One moment away from this knowing is damaging and to persist in its ignorance hardens the heart irreparably.

The Knowing of Unity benefits us in many ways.

- Personally, with physical health and well being.
- Socially, with a caring, unified society and the power of love and concern that such a society can bring to the individuals within it, and
- Societally, by allowing the meeting of the races for the purpose of global harmony and balance (of regional deficits).

This Divine Unity is the Source and Creator of all Sciences, foremost among which is the Science of Knowledge (of Divinity) itself.

² These are the seven 'sifat ud-Dhat', or 'Attributes of Essence'. The 'essential qualities of Al-llah!'s Essence, without manifastration.

Divinity has revealed the Science of Knowing Divinity and made it available to those who would seek it. It's called Gnosis, 'Knowledge of God', or 'God Realization' and is often referred to as 'the mystic way'. It has its roots in singular Truth and its origin in before time. The "Way" (to know God) has been espoused by every convinced individual from every religious and spiritual background.

What could be more practical, in any day and age, than the knowledge of the science of knowing the Divine Unity of us all? Divinity exists. Even one's choice to ignore it affirms it. It is not erased from reality by such ignorance, only ignored.

Where does one go to seek knowledge of the Divine? Only the Divine can have complete knowledge of Itself, and only by Divine Will could Divine Knowledge be accessible to humanity. The Sufis say simply, "We know God by God."

SUFISM: THE SCIENCE OF PERFECTING AWARENESS

The word 'Sufism' has no original meaning in English³. It appears to be a symbolic representation (and sometimes trivialization) of a significant and meaningful word in Arabic (Tasawwuf, self-purification). This Arabic word denotes, among other things, the purification process deriving from, and whose existence is solely dependant upon and the sole point of, a definable and observable activity, i.e. the study and practice of Islam (Surrender to the will of the Divine) under the directorship of an authorized and truly matured spiritual master. ⁴

The study and application of the above mentioned purification process, including its practices, analysis and documentation, became the domain of the Sufi masters and students, and it came to be recognized as the Esoterics, or inner knowledges, of the Islamic faith. Hence the similarity of Sufism to western psychology and the derivation of its claim to the title 'Islamic Psychology'.

There are of course obvious and glaring differences between Sufism and western psychology, most notably in intention. But it is a part of the hope and work of the Sufis that as psychologists continue their leading edge search into the spiritual traditions of other cultures, they will be able to unify with and utilize the common intentions and goals of most spiritual teachers.

Although Sufis do not claim their system to be the only way, (as it is both obvious and very respectfully noted that many effective systems have come before it), we do point out that Islamic Sufism is the most recent and complete emergence of the principles of spiritual liberation and is certainly famous for it's efficacy.

Liberation implies 'being set free'. It is not to be equated with rebellion, revolution or self-assertiveness. It can only be accomplished by an unconditional surrender, the reality of which must be tested. The only true

³ The realities of this definition become obvious with a bit of historical analysis, and could be covered later in another discussion called "Origins and Esoteric History of Sufism".

⁴ Note: It shouldn't be denied that the word has come to denote much more in the common English usage by contemporary students of diverse religious and spiritual backgrounds. Regardless of the claims that true Sufism cannot be devoid of it's traditional Islamic origins (which indeed it cannot, but there are more ways than one to view the truth of this statement), it's rather obvious that contemporary usage sees it much more liberally defined as "a science of spiritual realization", and is rather indifferent as to the source, or sources, of the means involved. The argument at this point becomes one of personal goals and degrees of efficacy.

test of a master is by another master. A Sufi adage goes "call no man your master lest he set you free." This kind of spiritual freedom only increases the love, respect and service one has for one's teacher, much the same as one reaches maturity and goes about one's life independently never losing the love and respect for one's caring parents.

All spiritual traditions (religions) have their exoteric disciplines (practices) and their esoteric sciences. These sciences have evolved like any others as a result of study and observation of the beneficial effects of devotion to the practice of the outward disciplines.

The true point of all religions is to provide a formula (teaching) and catalyst (teacher) for alchemy (the spiritual transformation of the student); the guided transformation of lead (the childish ego) into gold (the spiritually mature adult). So all teachings must have their outward formulas, but without the chemist, the alchemist, the transformed teacher to act as guide, these laws are without reality, meaningless and ineffective. Under mature guidance, the religion of Islam is a spiritually and socially transformative influence par excellence, and the Sufi way is widely known as an alchemy for spiritual evolution.

There are three steps toward the perfection of surrender and the goal of self-guidance. They are:
Islam - surrender (to the way of the peace and the love), Iman - correct faith (with certain knowledge), and Ihsan - perfect guidance (finished, liberated, able to guide others).

The Perfection of Awareness

There are three stages to the perfection of awareness (at the end of which you are no longer aware, it is only Al-llah! who is aware). They are:

Islam - Acceptance and Surrender (to the way of the peace and the love) - Surrender begins with the realization that guidance cannot be and should not be 'self-provided', that it must be sought at the hand of a realized spiritual master; and acting in accordance with that knowing. At this point, according to your level of Himma (willingness), you will be put into contact with the classical Islamic learning process.⁵

Iman - Correct faith (with experientially verifiable certainty). The perfection of faith is its conversion to certainty (Yaqin) yielding correctness in behavior and knowledge coming from the complete realization of Truth and a deep

⁵ For more on this point see the section entitled "The classical Islamic learning process".

understanding of the human situation. This process has three phases: Hearing the Truth, Seeing the Truth, and Being the Truth.

`Ilm ul Yaqin - Hearing about this Knowledge. Knowing that there is a certainty. Seeking out and studying this knowledge. Realizing that there must be people and masters of this science and seeking them out.

`Ain ul Yaqin - Seeing the Truth, the Reality. Discovering the Source of Certainty. Coming into the presence and accepting the guidance of the people of this knowledge.

Haqq ul Yaqin - Being the Truth. Attainment. Becoming the reality (a carrier) of this Certainty.

Ihsan - Perfect guidance (finished, liberated, able to guide others). Spiritual Liberation implies the perfection of one's understanding of purpose and purity of intention. It does not imply the kind of liberty that supports childish behavior and undisciplined carelessness. This is the holy station of 'Salik al Majdhubi', the contained and sober intoxicated; the Sufi who is the union of the way of the walking (Shari`at - Muhammadun Rasulullah) and the Ultimate Reality (Haqiqat - La ilaha illa 'llah).

The completion of this process of alignment is the ultimate fulfillment and the end of personal desire and hence the end of the ruling power of the perverse ego (both your own and others'), since ego is the defensive aggressive tool constructed for the purpose of attaining personal desire. Personality is thence put to the uses that Al-llah! intended for it in the first place, namely service, friendliness and education.

THE ISLAM OF THE SUFI MASTER

In all my studies and travels, I have found no complete manifestation of the Islamic spirit anywhere except within the context of the Sufi orders. It was said by the Prophet that there would always be at least forty men in whose hearts would be found the Reality of the Divine Message. Let us be thankful that there are indeed many more than that still available, and hope and pray that they only increase. The spiritual stations, if not all the identities, of these people are known and talked about in Sufi lore -- many of them are the recognized masters of any age and many of them are hidden from view and some of them don't know who they are.

Defining Sufism as the science of spiritual realization within the Islamic context, we emphasize 'within the Islamic context', but stress that this 'Islamic context' is defined in and by the heart of the Sufi Master. This definition could range from ultimate liberality and nonchalance for one student or community to a strict and intensive learning situation for another.

Massive portions of Islamic knowledge can be learned from books. The libraries and bookstores are full to the brim with contemporary and ancient literature on the subject, and there seems to be no end to the number of seekers in the world today. However it must be realized that the realities and arenas for the practical application of these knowledges cannot be found in books, indeed the best possible description of these realities is that they cannot be even described, let alone transmitted, through writing. Service (*'ibadat*), and seeking (*suluk*), are for the most part forgotten sciences.

Please recognize and honor the true purpose and benevolent nature of the Islamic revelation. This understanding is a prerequisite to Sufihood. For without believing in the Benevolent Nature of The Divine and by extension, the prophets, books, and revealed lifestyles, one would have no reason to accept the teachings of a Sufi master and hence no reason to apply oneself to membership in a Sufi community.

If we do recognize the nature and purpose of the Divine Message, then we will have no difficulty in recognizing the benefit and blessing both to ourselves and to humanity in general, derived from seeking out and applying ourselves to the services, studies and practices indicated by these teachers.

Surrender (Islam) is the key to limitless freedom, while subservience (to personal ambitions) guarantees endless slavery. And illusions are deceptive. That is their very nature. A well-known maxim among the Sufis is that 'the gates of paradise are surrounded by the fires of hell, and the gates of hell are surrounded by the temptations of paradise.' If one sees the fulfillment of one's personal ambitions as the ultimate goal of life, (i. e. the illusion of paradise), and their dead sacrifice in the service of other-than-self as what is being asked of one in exchange for true personal fulfillment and spiritual freedom, one will have a taste of the meaning of this maxim.

The Prophet said that he and Islam (the spirit of surrender) would always be found among the poor. This implies also that many of the rich will be too hopelessly under the sway of fear for loss of what they had gained of worldly wealth and position to be able to offer the surrender and help necessary for the attainment of true spiritual service. And that among the poor is where the service is needed, and the blessings to be found. In reality these fears are unfounded and detrimental to individual and social well being. There have been many very well-to-do individuals throughout history who have realized the benefit of either leaving or offering their wealth and service for the cause of spiritual and social benefit. In Reality nothing is lost. But the social harms and personal dangers that are caused by clinging to a limited, personal concept of life and material substance are extremely evident contemporarily and historically.

The real distinction is between slavery (to everything: self, desire, worldly life, and temptation to evil), and freedom (liberation from said slavery) to serve transcendent goodness and help in the liberation of others. Hence the famous statement "If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem".

THE SCIENCE OF BARAKAH

Defining Barakah as Love, Blessings, Divine Grace, Good Karma, Divine Favor, the Substance of Compassion; mentioning Tawajjuh - Divine Attention (facing, turning toward with healing love and benevolence); and explaining the Magnetic Dynamics of Compassion and Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim.

Attraction, the Barakah of Togetherness

Whether you know it or not, The Divine (Al-llah!, God), in Wisdom, is the Manipulator of Hearts, and by extension all else within the human existence. The palpability of Divine Doings ranges in degrees of subtlety from causing (or allowing) death by violent calamity to the most

imperceptible of subtle influences like molecular intelligence and DNA perceptions, the damaging and healing energies of thought forms, and angelic or spiritual inclinations. Sufi training is aimed at allowing the students further access to subtle perceptions.

It is simply by Divine Manipulation (Will) that the Sufi students come to love their masters so much, because The Divine places that love in their hearts by allowing it to grow in stages after allowing the always present seed of Peace to take root. Peace is one of the fundamental natures of The Divine Reality. It is by the Love and feelings of attraction that peace produces that sufficient continuity is provided to allow the learning process to take hold and flourish. In other words, if you did not like the feeling you get from being around someone, you'd not have the patience or inclination to learn from that someone.

The Divine chooses for each and every one of us the feelings that we experience when we are in the company of or choosing a teacher. If Al-llah! (God, The Divine) wants the student to learn from that teacher, the student will feel the desire to do so. This desire is usually based on "getting a good feeling" from being in the presence of or thinking about the teacher, even when the teacher may be discussing subjects which taken by themselves, would be considered unpleasant or undesirable topics.

As a matter of fact it is almost always only from within the security of an established bond of trust that personal or painful subjects may be allowed to emerge. And equally as often we may find ourselves investigating the presence of someone who is espousing the most desirable principles, but in our hearts we know that this particular person is not for us.

Sufism invests true teachers with three fundamental qualities -- they are not boring, they take your burdens from you, and they speak what is in your heart. These sensations are all coming from the heart of the student, and it is Al-llah! that is placing them there. It is the heart that is seeking for resonance (open to Unity) that will be responsive to Al-llah!'s guidance when it has found it. That's Barakah!

THE MAGNETIC DYNAMICS OF COMPASSION

Barakah is from the Essence of Al-llah!, and it always seeks company. It is the central element of true spiritual magnetism. By true spiritual magnetism we mean that to which hearts are attracted by means of the increase of Barakah gained through proximity, the attraction that influences truly knowing hearts, and has a palpably tranquilizing effect on the unruly control of mortal desires.

Barakah is a manifestation of Rahimiyyah, or Personalized Responsive Mercy and as such, is drawn to those who ask for it, seek it or work for it -- it is the centralizable, attractable aspect of the diffuse and general operational energy of creation.

Rahimiyyah is the manifestation of Ar-Rahim, Al-llah!'s attribute of Personalized Responsive Mercy. It is the magnetic aspect of Rahmah. Rahmah is the manifestation of Ar-Rahman, Al-llah!'s attribute of Overall, Omnipotent Benevolence. It is characterized as the diffuse, generally unalterable Source of Munificence and Overflowing from The Divine which brings Creation into existence.

Barakah is the substance of Creation and as such is everywhere, immediately available. It can be detected and attracted by means of inward sensing for directions of intensity, which invariably leads the seeker to a source, most always a learning circle with a master at the center. Its primary sensation is in the form of personal attention from the Divine Reality, and its most immediate descriptive maxim is "You remember Al-llah!, and Al-llah! will remember you".

BISMILLAHIR-RAHMANIR-RAHIM

For the Sufi, all things begin and end with the name of Al-llah. So the first phrase from the lips of the Sufi Gnostic is Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim. Meaning - beginning with the Name (and thereby, hopefully, with the Remembrance of the Truth and Reality) of Al-llah! (God), The Compassionate, (Whose Compassion extends to all creation, comprehensible and non-comprehensible, and all creatures, no matter how

near or how far), The Merciful. (Whose Mercy is available to all who supplicate.)⁶

All praise is due to Al-llah! (God), who created with no diminishment of Divine Resource. Who supports His Creation without expending energy, and Who has destined it for an appointed term, that His Purpose might be accomplished. And He need not do this at all, but it is for His pleasure, that He, in his Might and Glory, might be known and worshipped by his Creation. And He is surely worthy of worship. And Glory be unto Him, Who in His Wisdom and Power, created man of a living animal kind, and placed upon his head the crown of Knowing, and into his heart, the essence of His Love. Glory be unto Him, Who is high above all that is attributed to Him. And May His Divine Peace be upon all of His messengers, and all Praise and Gratitude is due unto Al-llah! (God), Lord and Creator of ALL Worlds. ⁷

The understanding of the subtle distinction between the generally operational mercy and the direct personal attention from the Divine Reality is represented in the oft used Qur`anic phrase Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim. The Rahmah of Al-llah! is such that existence exists, people exist, and equal opportunity to do evil with one's life exists. It is such a general and diffuse and easily (even unnoticeably) available form of mercy and understanding that mankind is easily misled into thinking that he need only seek out his own personal well-being and that that is all there is to life. But it is also so comprehensive as to include within itself the aspect of responsiveness (al Mujib), and guidance (Al-Hadi) and this personally responsive aspect of Ar-Rahman is Ar-Rahim.

The nature of God and the nature of creation are so vast as to be invisible and thereby incomprehensible. This incomprehensibility is the reason for the obligation upon The Creator to provide guidance. Creation and all its aspects are from the Rahmah (Mercy) of Al-llah! This includes, of course, free will, or the ability to choose, which implies the necessity for all the equally alluring opportunities for wrong-doing, and therefore the necessity for the presence of temptation to evil, the benefit of which is only in its repulsion.

While the general diffused, equally everywhere, existence of Rahmah, or Divine Benevolence, available equally to the good and the bad alike,⁸ is the observable manifestation of Ar-Rahman and the Overall Mercy from which

⁶ The habituation to this phrase serves as a reminder of the nature of the human experience. See part 2, How to change your habits (and your life) for the better - The Sufi Way

⁷ Subhana'llahi wa t`ala, ama yasifun, wa salaamun ala'l mursalin, wal hamdu lillahi Rabbil `Alamin.

⁸ See sections on tawbah, intention, and heart for further explanations.

creation springs, its magnetic aspect, its specific, individually responsive nature is called Rahimiyyah and its palpable manifestation is called Barakah which can actually be accumulated with no depletion or shift in its original source.⁹ It can also be dispensed, and that is the work of the Sufis, particularly the masters. A major carrier and manifestation of Barakah is Knowledge (Ilm), both outward and inward.

Rahmah, or Divine Benevolence, is the source of what is known to us as Universal or Unconditional Love and Caring. Rahimiyyah is its responsive nature that pours out very careful and personal attention upon those who supplicate or seek. Rahmah is the supportive creative ingenuity and reliability of the good man and devoted father, Rahimiyyah is the caring love and consistent personal maternal care of the good woman and devoted mother to her immediate family. Neither is exclusive to the other.

Tawajjuh (facing, turning toward with healing love and benevolence), or Divine Attention, is the primary response of Ar-Rahim. This is why we begin everything with 'Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim'.

With the first word of this phrase we recognize, express gratitude to, and invoke, by name, the ESSENCE of existence, the Essential Being. That without Which there would be nothing, but Which would exist anyway. The Manifestor without manifestation; Al-llah!, the Divinity, the Primal Existence, as He was before creation, So is He now.

With the next word, He is remembered as the Divine and Most Merciful, and gratitude is expressed for the merciful and benevolent nature of His creation, through which He brings His manifestation into existence.

Completion of the invocation is with the remembrance of His Foresight and Responsiveness to Individual Needs; the Nature of Personal Attention from The Divine. Hence the Divine purpose of giving us this invocation is to cause us to remember the Essence, Al-llah!, His intention, the Manifestation of Divine Benevolence, and the personal effect of His remembrance, i. e. personal attention in the form of Peace, patience and the fulfillment of your needs. In other words, to attract more (open yourself up to the realization of) Divine Attention. The palpable, acquirable and dispensable manifestation of Divine Attention is known as Barakah, or blessing, and is commonly felt as Love.

Invoking the name of Al-llah! satisfies a primal and general religious requirement to begin everything in the Name of God, the reward of which is

⁹ By depletion we mean that the source is not lessened, and by shift that it is not moved from somewhere else).

no small thing but in truth depends upon your intention.¹⁰ Secondly, and depending upon you level of awareness (which increases with study), it brings to mind and to heart the awareness of the Reality of God with the invocation of the name of Al-llah! alone. Then with the invocation of the name and primary, all-inclusive attribute Al-Rahman, one is reminded of the Source of Creation and the infinite and benevolent nature thereof, as well as of the endless oceans of Universal love and Compassion available to all who seek it.

With the invocation of His name Ar-Rahim, one is actually reminding oneself of the availability of Immeasurable Bounty and Grace that is one's very birthright and personal freewill gift from the Infinite Ocean of Mercy known as Ar-Rahman, bestowed upon one personally by Ar-Rahim. After that come all the various manifestations of attention, called barakat (pl. blessings), which you may use, spend, or give away, the very act of which may be devoted to the cause of increasing Barakah.

We begin with the invocation of Al-llah!, opening ourselves to His Existence, Help and Guidance in all our endeavors, large and small. We realize that we are totally dependent upon Al-llah! for our very existence, and upon the Mercy and Wisdom of Divinity for our situation in Al-llah!'s Magnificent and Benevolent Creation. Ya Rahman.

By the invocation of the name and attribute Ar-Rahim, we are consciously supplicating (requesting) the Divine Grace (Barakah) that He knows we need in order to be successful and guided in this life. We are affirming that He knows what the true success is and He knows what we need by way of guidance and willingness (Himma) to follow it. So our intention (niyyat) with this invocation is to ask for Surrender to Al-llah!'s (Divine) Will (Islam), because Al-llah! is Knowing ('Alim) and we are not.

For this reason, and by means of this request, Al-llah! sends to us and to all humanity the universally accessible guidance of Islam, which means primarily "Surrender to Divine Will" and implies secondarily "the acceptance of Islamic¹¹ (human and humane) principles and lifestyle". He does this that we may receive and dispense Divine Grace (Barakah¹²) and become fully realized and functional human beings and intermediaries with a heart in heaven (the next world, al-akhirah) and feet firmly on the earth (in this world, ad-dunyah); in other words, Sufis.

¹⁰ Please see the sections on the science of remembrance (dhikr), and intention (niyyat), for further elucidation on this point.

¹¹ Please refer to the section on Sufism and the Islam of the Sufi for an interpretation and context for the term 'Islamic'.

¹² In the form of knowledge, healing, love, mercy and compassion.

And if we seek it, Al-lah! will gift us with the understanding to embrace Islam properly, that we not be led astray by our own misunderstandings from its True Source and Proper Purpose. For the purpose of this guidance and true understanding Al-lah! has guaranteed us the existence of a certain minimal number of teaching masters with both outward and inward proofs that are convincing enough, to which we may be drawn, insha'llah (if Al-lah! wills).

So Sufis begin their praises with Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim and end with the praise of Him from Him, "Al Hamdu lillahi `ala Ni`matul Islami wa kafa biha ni`mah. " "Praise be to Al-lah! for favor of Islam and it is a sufficient favor. "

THE CLASSICAL ISLAMIC LEARNING PROCESS

Shari`at, Tariqat, Haqiqat, Ma`arifat

The Classical Islamic Learning Process has four elements, Shari`at, Tariqat, Haqiqat, Ma`arifat.

The outward meaning of each element is its "definition", in an objective sense. The inward meaning of each element represents a stage of learning.

1. Shari`ah -- The Greater Way - The Road Most Traveled ...

- **Outward:** The Road. The large Avenue. The necessary body of knowledge to be learned and put into practice. It is recommended at this point that the student learn only what is essential for the journey.
- **Inward:** Contact! The learning and practice of the fundamentals of spiritual discipline and walking the path to the Divine.
- This **stage** is the equivalent in faith to `ilm-ul Yaqin. This is a very high realization because it means having heard of and accepted the existence of a knowledge of certainty. It means a belief in its existence and a willingness to learn this knowledge, It is the beginning of the pathway toward the discovery of objective truth.
- The **student** at this stage is known as faqir (needy of knowledge).
- Pure **intention** at this level is to put yourself at one with The Force That Heals The Universe by learning about and adopting into your being the fundamental knowledges and practices of surrender.
- The primary **manifestation** of that intention is study and practice.
- It's **symbol** is the ayat of Qur`an "Laqad kaana lakum fi rasulillahi uswatun hasanatun, liman kaana yarju `llaha wal yaumal akhira,

dhakara 'llaha kathiran. " (33;21) "Certainly in the Prophet of Al-llah! (Muhammad) there is an excellent example for one whose hope is in Al-llah! and the last day, and remembers Al-llah! much."

2. Tariqah -- The Lesser Way - The Road Least Traveled...

- **Outward:** The path. The Way (of the Sufis), the way the road is walked, and the way the lessons are taught. This Way is the walking in Unity between the Shari`at, here representing the outward form, and the Haqiqat, here meaning the Absolute Reality. It also implies the teaching style of a particular master. Masters own their tariqah. They teach their way. Although the Source is the same, they are the interpreter of current events, and it is through their judgement that decree is manifested. It is a manifestation of ijihad, the licensed exercise of individual judgement.
- **Inward:** The contact with, approval of, and learning from, a bona fide source of certain knowledge, i.e. a true Sufi master.
- This **stage** is the equivalent in faith to `Ain-ul Yaqin. It is the seeing and accepting a source of certainty and certain knowledge.
- The **student** at this stage is known as Murid (desirous, knowing disciple).
- Pure **intention** at this level is the attainment of total alignment with and surrender to the Will of the Divine and Benevolent Creator by means of following strictly and to the letter the instructions of the Guide.
- The primary **manifestation** of this intention is service and self-discipline.
- It's **symbol** is the ayat of Qur`an "Sami`na wa ata`na, ghufuranaka Rabbana, wa ilaika al masir", "We hear and we obey. Forgive us Our Lord, for unto Thee is our return."

3. Haqiqah -- The personal unification with (embodiment of) the Reality of certainty.

- **Outward:** In noun form it means The Ultimate Truth, The Reality.
- **Inward:** Realization of Haqiqah is essential for travelling the path. Haqiqah is, in itself, not so much a goal as it is the timeless Reality which must be realized. A true realization of Haqiqah necessitates a knowledge and practice of Shari`ah. For even though one of the manifest qualities is love, the realization of Truth has a fearful aspect also. We quickly realize our need to know how to walk in this reality for (at least) two reasons. One is to show our gratitude, and the second is to avoid error and disrespect. This is why it is said among the Sufis that religion is one hundred percent appropriate behavior, or respect. Qur`an refers to two alternatives to appropriate behavior: "incurring wrath" (the accrual of

'bad karma', exemplified by a joyless, lifeless existence), and "going astray", represented by the results of undisciplined freedom.

- This **stage** is the equivalent in faith to Haqq-ul Yaqin. The embodiment of certainty.
- The **student** at this stage is known as Waliyullah (befriended by Al-llah!, gnostic saint).
- Pure **intention** at the level of Haqiqat is the annihilation of the personal self into the Sea of Divinity with the emerging of the transformed self that is an adequately trained and knowing representative of objective Truth and Reality. The reality of this is a gift from Al-llah! and cannot be 'attained' but can and must be prepared for.
- Its primary **manifestation** is realization, true understanding, and freedom.
- It's **symbol** is the ayat of Qur`an "Ya ayyuhal ladhina amanu, sallu alaihi wa sallimu tasliman", "O you who believe, send upon him your sincere blessings and peace."

4. Ma`arifah -- The Source

- **Outward:** In noun form it means "Recognition, The Known, What is Known, Recognized", meaning The True Wisdom, The Deep Knowing of the Reality (of the human situation).
- **Inward:** A stage of completion, the end and beginning of Tariqah. The certainty of guidance and certification of teaching master. Although it is not necessary to be a teaching master to have glimpses and reasonable quantities of the true wisdom (ma`arifah), it's source is Al-llah!, The Unique, and it is not accidental.
- This **stage** is the equivalent in faith to Huda-ul Yaqin (certain guidance).
- The **student** at this stage is known as `Arif (gnostic, teacher).
- Pure **intention** at the level of Marifat is to continue learning, and to desire for your fellow beings what you have for yourself.
- Its primary **manifestation** is sobriety, responsibility, and availability.
- It's **symbol** is the ayat of Qur`an "Laqad jaa`akum rasulun min anfusikum azizun alaihi maa `anitum, harisun `alaikum, bil mu`minina ra`ufun rahim." "Now there has come to you a messenger from among yourselves who takes your suffering seriously and is concerned for you; caring and responsive to those who believe."

The completion of this process of alignment is the ultimate fulfillment and the end of personal desire and hence the end of the ruling power of the perverse ego (both your own and others'), since ego is the defensive aggressive tool constructed for the purpose of attaining personal desire. Personality is thence put to the uses that Al-llah! intended for it in the first place, namely service, friendliness and education.

THE PRACTICE OF REMEMBRANCE (DHIKR)

There is a science to the use of the names of God (Al-llah!) in Arabic. It is one of the spiritual subtleties of the science of remembering our Reality. Although the true gnostic (realized knower of Divine Reality) knows what s/he is referring to with the mention of the word 'God', there is not yet in the English language a science to bring that realization to the unaware seeker. One of the true bases of Sufi practice is exactly this science.

Compare simply the effect of repeating the word 'God' over and over again to the effects of repeating the name 'Al-llah'. This same principle holds true for all of the names of the attributes of the Divine Reality and is another manifestation of the principle of Barakah. If we were to discover that one practice 'works' and the other doesn't, or that one method is manifestly more 'effective' than the other, what we would be comparing is the Barakah received.

In English these Divine Attributes are objective descriptions, i.e. nouns and adjectives, and truly meaningful only to the gnostic who has already attained an awareness of True Meaning. There is of course some benefit from the contemplation of the meanings of these words, but there is no real established science for total realization using only the English language. There is, however, such a science in Arabic, and this is the science of Dhikr (remembrance) as revealed by the prophet Muhammad and taught by the Sufi masters.

It is said that when man remembers God, God remembers him. It is from this remembering by God of man that he knows his True Reality, and it is this true reality that constitutes the basis for true self-knowledge.

The journey to and through the self can be long and arduous. Without proper orientation, guidance, tools, and knowledge how to use them it is impossible. But that it IS possible at all comes as good news to man, for no effort is too much in the quest for escape from darkness and the plentiful reward of light and guidance from the Divine.

It is helpful for us to think of the journey in terms of stages of awareness. For the traveling through these stations we have the teaching of the Sufi Masters. It is not recommended to attempt this journey without a guide, and the teachings of the guide of this age can be obtained from any of his students.

It is said that to attain a moment of PURE contemplation is WORTH a life time of worship! To know Objective Reality we must have a sign (ayat) to contemplate, a Truth by which we may be guided. For the Sufis and Muslims alike, Objective Reality is indicated by the "Kalimah Tayyibah" (Finest Words).

LA ILAHA ILLA 'LLAH, MUHAMMADUN-RASULULLAH

For the Sufi, the most meaningful words in creation are "La ilaha illa 'llah, Muhammadun-Rasulullah."¹³ We claim unequivocally that this phrase is the Origin of all Knowledge, the Sun of all Meaning, the Source of all Truth, and Health, Warmth and Healing to the heart. ¹⁴

Let's examine the phrase in its two components, "La ilaha illa 'llah", and "Muhammadun-Rasulullah".

Part 1. La ilaha illa 'llah

"La ilaha illa 'llah" is the essence of the matter, a simple but profound summary of the "Knowledge of God". It is the essence (and practice) of the annihilation of falsehood. It is both a statement of Divine Truth, and a lesson on how to know it. It means that there IS ONLY Al-llah!, and demonstrates that the quickest way to "know" is to deny all else. Much like a baby, but consciously, which is not as easy.

"La" means no, nothing, negating of what follows, indicating the negation of and implying the illusory nature of the seeming existence of whatever it is referring to, (which, paradoxically, must first "exist" (in the mind) in order to be negated, denied, refused, diminished to zero relative significance). ¹⁵

¹³ Literally "There is no God but Al-llah!, and Muhammad is His Prophet".

¹⁴ Inni `ala dhikrullahi tatma`in ul qulub. (Certainly in the remembrance of God there is the fulfillment of hearts.)

¹⁵ Mind is the seat of individual perception. Examine the phrases "to be of a mind", "of common mind", "of like mind", "to my mind", and "make up your mind". Mind relates also to meaning. Meaning, in that case, being the significance that the mind places upon something. Existence itself is of the mind. Just close your eyes and ears for a moment. Does anything exist? Is not existence perceived differently by different individuals; by the blind and the deaf? Zen speaks of the "noh" mind, implying the empty, the clean slate, the uncarved block of wood, surrendering itself to its uncarvedness.

"Being of like mind" is exactly the point of any discipline. Behavior comes from the mind. Discipline means molding oneself to a goal, no matter how long it takes, and it may be assumed that any goal worthy of attainment has been attained by another. Apprenticeship is known to be not only an effective way to learn, but in most cases, absolutely necessary as a guarantee of certainty. One who surrenders to (accepts discipline from), a role-model, or "mentor", for the purpose of becoming "of like mind", becomes a disciple (apprentice, student), because of the willingness, nay eagerness, to accept whatever

"Ilaha" is an intensely interesting word, worthy of deep consideration. It means god (little 'g' intended), deity, worthy of worship, deification, edification, respect, subordination, following, service, attendance, consideration. In a word, just about anything that comes from our (individual) minds (mindset, way of thinking), and anything we might care about (our cares), or believe "exists".¹⁶

"La ilaha" can therefore mean "nothing exists", i. e. nothing is worthy of consideration except that which stands by itself and is not in need of consideration. And how do we isolate that Being? By eliminating from our consciousness (mind) all that can be eliminated, even and including all mental concepts (of God), until there is only pure existence itself, pulsing through our bodies and flowing through our veins.

The indication is that the "Knowing" of God is based on the negation of all else.¹⁷ In practice, that negation is based on an exclusive affirmation of The Only Possible Permanent Reality, God Alone. Once the "Knowing" is known, it stands alone and sufficient. There is no more negation necessary or even possible, and everything becomes an affirmation of the Truth in Reality.

In Sufism, the word "annihilation" refers to the mind (giving no credence to). There is no denial of the outward existence, only the negation of any reality other than the Only True Reality (That which is left when all else is gone).

discipline (training) is necessary to mold the student into a "master" of the discipline, or "art".

¹⁶ A true comprehension of this can strike a deep blow to our superficial psychology and will evoke extreme reaction in the novice to this way of understanding reality. Typical reactions are "What! You're trying to tell me that my children (parents, spouse, job, house, car, LIFE) does not matter? Well, Go to Hell, I don't want to hear any more of this dribble." OK, put the book down and go back to the "worship" of whatever is foremost in your mind at the moment. This book was not for you after all, or, maybe later. But note one thing before you go. What's foremost in your mind today will almost certainly not be tomorrow, and is certainly no longer foremost in the mind of the dying person, or the newborn babe, or the person who has already suffered the loss of these "objects of value" that you treasure so much at the moment.

And understand, the purpose of this teaching is to guide the seeker to unification with a "common mind" beyond which there is no other. And this is not to deny the importance of life and all that it contains. No. Quite the opposite. Most of death and destruction is caused by someone's over concern, or "covetousness", if you will. The intention here is to put it into a perspective that optimizes personal and societal success, and for the most part, this means at least leaving it alone, a tough job. It is the contention of this theme that a deep and personal unconcern, or trust, based on "the common mind" must first be indelibly attained before a truly appropriate concern for creation may be demonstrated.

¹⁷ The reality behind the meaning of this interpretation is the root origin of all spiritual conundrums. It is the quintessential Zen koan, and the source of the age-old question "to be or not to be" - to give credence to "existence", to deny it, or both.

Look how even the basest tyrants act according to this law, seeking to physically destroy their enemies and succeeding only at self-ruin. Nevertheless the principle is the same - arriving at the truth by a process of elimination.

"Illa" means only, but, if not, except.

"llah" means Al-llah!, Al-llah! (Arabic) The One. The Conscious, Living Oneness. The Unity. The Divine, The Beyond-Comprehension. The Self-Aware, Who Comprehends All. Existing, Knowing, Seeing, Hearing, Speaking, Willing, The Source of Power. Perfection in and of Itself. Greater than which there is none. Who remains when all else is gone.

This Existence must be both intellectually grasped and physically realized. The Divine "Does" Itself. The full embodiment of the Reality of this Truth is the object in "Quest". Knowing it in our minds may be easy but convincing our bodies takes practice, including verbal affirmations and physical negations. This practice transforms this knowing from a concept to a reality.

Part 2. Muhammadun-Rasulullah

Muhammadun-Rasulullah is a profound summary of the knowledge of creation.

"Muhammad" is the most complex and meaningful word, requiring the study of long eulogies for initial comprehension,¹⁸ so let us summarize. He was indeed the full embodiment of Truth and Reality, and therefore the way for us to attain this also.

Let's start at the beginning.

Divinity being in and of Itself perfect, should not the first of Its creation be perfection?

In the beginning, and there was no beginning, there was Al-llah! alone. The Divine, The Self-Aware, The Source of Power. He is now as He was. His Will and its manifestation are one and the same, and He willed to be known, so that Will manifested in the first of His Creation, Knowing. But Knowing did not exist alone, without a knower, so the knower was the first of His Creation. But the knower did not exist without entity, a name and a suitable

¹⁸ Read the amazing Wazifah of the Shadhiliyyah Sufi Order called the Salatul Mashish, for a deeper understanding of the Sufi's comprehension of this meaning.

environment, so the Name was Muhammad (Arabic: The most highly praised one), and the environment was Creation. ¹⁹

And why should it not be that way? Creating to be known, should He not create Knowing first? Humans have that knowing innate within them, so, as potential 'knowers', are we not the "Crown of Creation"? Should there not be a perfect one, a prototype, a role model, if you will, that we may seek out to follow and emulate in our own individual search for perfection (read perfect annihilation)?

Rasul means messenger. Messenger implies way. Message is the teaching, Messenger is the way. What the messenger can do, the receiver of the message can do. Implying coming from and returning to the Source of the message. In this case, Al-llah! 'ullah means to confirm that - (messenger) from Al-llah!

Evidence from Hadith Qudsi (traditions spoken by Al-llah! Himself).

"I created to be known"

"I was Alone and wished to be known so I created Creation".

"The first of my creations was Muhammad"

"The best of my creations is `Aql" (Intelligence, consciousness, reasoning, intellect, awareness, comprehension. All of these words are related to the Arabic `Aql)

¹⁹ The qualities that distinguish creation from the Creator are Time and Space (i.e. limitation), and the distinguishing essence of creation is its duality. It is both dual in its distinction from its Source (distinguishable in its "existence" or apparent "separation" from That Which Stands Alone), and its nature, in that its nature itself is based on the opposition of dualities. (Near & Far, Hot & Cold, Light & Dark, etc.) For creation to exist within the dimensionless, there must be dimension. Within the Timeless and the Infinite their must also be time and dimension - created.

ENERGY HEALING AND SUFISM

Set against the backdrop of the Unchanging, or 'no change',²⁰ Sufism is the science of change.²¹ It is the journey (should you choose to accept it) of the personal truth (subjective) toward the absolute truth (objective). It is the science of the subject's²² approximation to, and eventual annihilation in, the Object.²³

It has been said by many of the masters that in the early days Sufism (tasawwuf) was a reality without a name, and in the latter days it has become a name without a reality. Tasawwuf means self-purification. It is an event. It is what happens, bi-idhni'llah,²⁴ when one accepts and walks the way of Islam at the hand of a mature and spiritually authorized teacher.²⁵ Therefore, in the early days it was a reality without a name.

In the ensuing attempts to spread Islam by the heart, which was its original intent, only mature masters were sent into foreign countries to assess and blend in with the people at their level of understanding and adapt their presentations of the teachings to acceptable standards. They would become, in all outward aspects, one of the people but the superiority of their moral and ethical virtues would shine forth in an exemplary manner and have a transformative effect upon the populace. Hence the teachings spread. One of the humorists has said that SUFI stands for Suddenly U Find Islam. It is the science of transforming undesirable qualities into desirable qualities.

In this context, only what works, works. Only what works is real. And it must be tested on the touchstone of practicality.

It is stated in tradition that the earth would never be without a unique individual who would be the standard by which success was measured. It is the obligation of all who accept obligation to continue the search for this unique being because he is the center of unity and holds the key to the unity of the people, without which there is no real and practical outward unity. He is the fountain of love, wisdom and mercy for all the worlds. He is

²⁰ The reality of God (Al-llah!) is that He is unique, standing alone, and He is now as He was.

²¹ Sometimes referred to as spiritual transformation.

²² Subject - murid, desirous aspirant with himma (true yearning)

²³ Object - murad, the goal, lit. that which is desired.

²⁴ With the idhn (permission) of Al-llah!; Only by Divine permission

²⁵ Authorized to teach by Al-llah! through the divine successorship of the Ahli-bait, or family of the prophet. This can be argued but it's the fact most overlooked in the world of Islam and singularly responsible for the demise of spiritual power with the Islamic people as a whole.

the Muhammadan successor and the Rahmatun lil `alameen (Mercy for all the worlds).

This time is no different and we are blessed, as tradition states, to see the spread of Islam in the Sufi way and the emergence of an increasing number of qualified teachers. But among the saints, teachers and holy people there is an order and a unique being from whom pours forth the love, mercy and wisdom in a way unique to the time, much needed by the others regardless of their station in life. The schools and work established by this universal guide (murshid) of the Sufi reality are always revolutionary and new in a way that truly fits the place and the needs of the people of the time.

Sufism is not an unknown phenomenon in western culture. Sufi tariqas abound. Prayer, dhikr, contemplation and introspection, spiritual and behavioral transformation are the hallmarks of this spread, and may well be the salvation of the American dream. Ask any prison warden about the transformative effects of Islam on the behavior of some inmates.

But major curiosity has always been present concerning the usefulness and means of blending and incorporating western understandings (particularly psychology) into the Sufi way. It has always been a part of the Sufi way to accept and integrate the contributions of the people to whom it was brought. Common examples are Unani (Greek) medicine, Indian music, Buddhist meditation and Malaysian martial arts, to mention a few. These incorporations always met with resistance from some among the more traditionally oriented populace. For Sufism to be truly accepted and flourish in America, the contribution par excellence and most needed is the spiritually adaptable portion of western psychology which has explored itself to the depths of the human spirit much the same as physics has come to the point of having to accept a Supreme Being. It is now time for our spiritual tradition to arise and embrace the transformative works of the people who have striven to the best of their ability to understand and relieve the sufferings of their people, to meet and offer itself as the natural continuation to their work.

Although it can, Sufism is not meant to 'stand alone' as a panacea to the world's problems. It is not meant to be introduced as a cultural alternative, as in simply adopt a new cultural, in this case Islamic, paradigm, and allow the rest to sort itself out. It is meant to be dynamically unifying, embracing and meeting the needs of the people at their level of understanding. Sufism as an 'alternative' movement creates separation and becomes a practice without a heart²⁶, or with a 'heart' of it's own. In order to be a living,

²⁶ Even as Sufi tariqas claim that Islam without the Sufi connection has become a practice without a heart, or an increase in effect, as in worldly benefit.

dynamically transformative force it must be able to enter almost unnoticed into mainstream life; accepting and transforming (for examples, the music, the corporate business practices, and the next generation of healing arts).

There is no doubt that the plethora of Sufi masters today are holders of very high spiritual stations and are sufficient for the seekers of spiritual realities and for the salvation of their adherents. They offer the vehicle of Islam as a way 'out' of the dangers of contemporary life. But the heart of Sufism is the reality and practice of spiritual transformation - discovering, understanding and implementing the practical means by which tangible results are achieved.

The End is in the Beginning, and a perfect master knows the secret of giving everything at a glance. However in most cases it is then left to the student to do the 'walking' (studying, learning, etc.) by himself, since, even though the stations of the way may be known, without the deep understanding of the love and the mercy, students are largely left to the discipline of self control rather than to the freedom of self transformation.

The acceptance of Islam alone is sufficient to heal through the commonly understood principles of behavioral (energy) modification. By correcting and aligning one's actions, speech, and thoughts (energies) with the Divine plan, one alters the course of one's life, and changes its direction from degenerative and destructive, to regenerative and constructive. This is a most fundamental form of energy healing.

Not to mention the fact that true Sufi masters have always been blessed with the key to energy healing. It is called 'tawajjuh', meaning and implying - to face with intent or intention, to pay attention to or send energy (or love) towards. It is noted in many treatises that this power was exclusive to Sufi masters and their empowered representatives and there was no mystery that it was a dispensation from the Divine; a sufficient portion of, and similar to, what was given to beloved Jesus, upon him peace. The dynamics of this marvelous phenomenon are amply clarified in other chapters. These evidences should be sufficient to satisfy any doubts as to the necessity of energy healing as an integral part of contemporary Sufism, and as to the role of the American Shadhiliyya in the revival of this wonderful science.

THE HEALING POWER OF CONSCIOUS RECOGNITION

It has been my experience that nothing heals as well as conscious recognition, and that nothing heals completely without conscious recognition. Most of healing is dealing with the consequences of inappropriate behavior. The art of healing is the art of correcting the underlying assumptions that are the cause of inappropriate behavior. It is complete when understanding and forgiveness set in.

Energy healing is a pathway to the discovery of truth. When causes are recognized, behavior can be corrected and lessons learned. In order to effect a complete cure we must discover true causes and bring them into conscious recognition. The purpose of a manifestation (symptom) is to draw attention to its source. Energy healing²⁷ is a way to investigate a manifestation (consequence) and arrive at a clear recognition of cause.²⁸ Learning the lesson (i.e. seeing the truth of the situation) brings relief and gratitude, and wounds serve their purpose and may heal.

Gratitude for the healing, and the lesson learned, allows for the process of forgiveness to begin. From the position of relief and gratitude, one may come to an understanding of the distorted motivations that brought about the wounding, and even the causes of these distortions. At which point the forgiveness of deep understanding sets in.

A deep understanding of the causative emotional disturbances will almost always reveal how they were motivated by a distorted interpretation of love, either the desire for it or the desire to express it. And from that understanding, forgiveness may emerge.

The point of spiritual practices and techniques is the release of (divine) awareness. The point of awareness release is to release your awareness (divinity) from the clutches of emotional bondage. Emotional bondage (attachments) is the root cause of resistance, and these emotional bonds are located within your being. Emotional bondage is what impedes the body from complete surrender to the happiness of the soul. When the body is surrendered completely, the soul is then free to explore the treasures of the heart. And that's where the happiness of life begins. To embody divine

²⁷ particularly Emotional Release Techniques such as A. R. T. and Voice Dialog

²⁸ It is a method of return, going back to where you were to see what really happened. In present context, it is a method of rethinking, which in Spanish/Latin is *repentar*, to repent. It is not coincidental that the Arabic word for repentance, *tawbah*, is rooted in the verb 'he returned'.

qualities is to allow them to flow through us unfiltered and uninterpreted. In order to do that, total surrender is required.

Energy healing is a process of identifying and locating these emotional bonds, most of which are in the form of hidden associations with the past. Bringing them and their causes into the present (conscious recognition) is the means by which they are released. Bringing our emotional wounds into conscious recognition, understanding their causes and the compulsions caused by them is the means by which they are healed and appropriate behavior is restored, once and for all.

Real understanding begins with a compassionate interest and the knowledge that underneath every Dominating Energy (or act of frustration) there is a responsible cause that is fundamentally benevolent and healing in nature. We might even call this the "Primary Understanding".

Deep down, every person seeks understanding. True understanding can be felt, and the inner being receives it as vital help and as the necessary prerequisite to being helped, and all of us are needing and hoping in our heart of hearts to be helped. Receiving help is self-affirming and validating of life-efforts. In other words, it helps us to heal our hearts and prepares us to pass it along. Receiving help affirms our understanding and thereby our goals and sense of rightness.

We are all struggling for success. Having a really clear understanding of our true motivations and a compassion for the needs of humanity is a means of achieving success. If we can know and manifest the truly benevolent nature of our own motivations, then we can help others to find theirs. So being understood is a prerequisite to being helped, and we all need help. This is truly the Sufi Way.

It's the right thing to do. Healing and learning to heal is the appropriate behavior of the age. Why do we behave the way we do? And why is our behavior degenerative instead of regenerative? A successful life is based upon appropriate behavior.²⁹ It is therefore appropriate behavior for this society to learn how to repair and heal the consequences of its inappropriate behavior.

In the safety of a sacred friendship, we may ask to be shown the secrets of our hearts, to purify our histories from the effects of distortion, and to bring into conscious recognition the events in our lives that caused repression of spirit, fear, and emotional attachment. This, I suggest, is an underlying

²⁹ The whole of religion is appropriate behavior "Ad-Din Adab, kullahu" - hadith

prayer for help buried deep in the heart of each individual. And this "Way" of ours is the answer to these prayers.

ON COMPASSION, UNDERSTANDING AND HELP

By identifying the prevailing sentiment we may know the dominating energy of the moment. The dominating energy is always the unfulfilled one. It is the energy of desire and is the commanding energy. It is the demanding energy of the moment. It is the energy that is speaking in the unseen and is always the voice, however inept, of the hidden prayer. This is why it is said that Allah! knows the secrets of the innermost heart. If the voice is negative, and projecting in the form of hatred, anger or resentment, then it is the product of (the) frustration (of desires). Frustration is almost always the product of ignorance (as in inability), or distraction (as in lack of focus). In other words, a lack of understanding.

Understanding is the goal of the quest. Understanding is what transforms the murid (desiring, disciple) into the murad (desired, master). How can it be offered if it is not attained? It cannot be feigned. If there are still desires in the heart for it then understanding is not yet achieved. Understanding is the help! It is the victory and the opening.

Real understanding begins with a compassionate interest and the knowledge that underneath every Dominating Energy (or act of frustration) there is a responsible cause that is fundamentally benevolent and healing in nature.

We might even call this the "Primary Understanding". If motivations and primary causes can be truly understood and personal dreams truly honored, then frustrations can be recognized as simple expressions of the challenges to be overcome. This can then take place in cheerful, matter-of-fact discussion.

The implementation of this approach can eliminate the need for the expression of anger and resentment, which are the concomitant reactive hostilities of pointing blame (at a person), or finding fault (with a situation). If these hostilities are already out in the open, then it might be useful to observe that their true purpose is simply to bring focus and constructive attention to the perceived frustrations toward the goal of fulfilling the primary causes.

Questions arise with the suspicion that the underlying causes and motivations are not clearly understood and honored. (Are they then not

honorable? Do they need modification or at least some validation and confirmation? The phrase "Reality Check" springs to mind.) Now the deep work begins and it requires yet another understanding - "why is it important?" This is what separates the men from the boys, so to speak. It is the secret of the phrase "one person at a time".

Tradition has it that if you save one human being, you've saved all of humanity and if you kill one human being, you've killed all of humanity. To Sufis, this means hearts. If you save one heart you've saved all hearts, and if you break one heart you've broken all hearts. If the smallest act of charity (giving) is picking up a stone from a pathway, imagine the significance of bringing one heart to God (fulfillment).

The Arabic words for "charity in the form of help or assistance", comes from the same root as "confirmation", "validation", "truth", "truthfulness". All stem from the same root: sadaqa (to confirm, to verify, to give - some derivatives are sidq, saddaqa, siddiq). Faqir (poor), means one in need (of help, charity). Qur`an states that charity (sadaqa) is for the fuqara`, the truthful poor. And what do we have to give? Just giving. Going out in search is giving. Offering help is giving.

Deep down, every person seeks understanding. Understanding can be felt as help and as the prerequisite to being helped, and all of us are needing and hoping in our heart of hearts to be helped. This makes us fuqara`. Help is divine and from the Divine. What does this make the helper? Divine! That is the secret of Giving. Giving (bismillah) is from the Divine!

Receiving help is self-affirming and validating of life-efforts. In other words, it helps us to heal our hearts and prepares us to pass it along. Receiving help affirms our understanding and thereby our goals and sense of rightness. We are all struggling for success. Having a really clear understanding of our true motivations and a compassion for the needs of humanity is a means of achieving success. If we can know and manifest the truly benevolent nature of our own motivations, then we can help others to find theirs. So being understood is a prerequisite to being helped, and we all need help. This is the Sufi Way.

In order to be truly fulfilled we must be truly fulfilling. In Sufi lore these stages of the completion of the "perfect being" are called "nafs ar-radhiyyah" and "nafs al-mardhiyyah", or, the fulfilled, pleased self and the fulfilling, pleasing self. The requirements for becoming a fulfilled and fulfilling human being are aptly stated in Sufi lore as "Rabbi Haqqah, Ahli Haqqah, wa Nafsi Haqqah". This means (in the short form), give "unto you Lord His (due) rights, unto your family (humanity) their (due) rights, and unto yourself

your (due) rights." These realities will approach when the sincerity of your devotion is confirmed.

THE DYNAMICS OF SADAQAH (CHARITY, GIVING)

Al-lah! says in Qur`an, that if he were to bestow riches upon his servants they would run amok in their mischief making. He also says that were he not to check the actions of some men by the actions of others, oppression would rule the earth. By the same principle, were He not to make giving a requisite to receiving, there would be no good deed done on the planet at all.

Charity is blessed. Giving (for the right causes) attracts barakah (blessing). The proof of intention is action and action is a giving (contribution). The quality of the action (giving) can certainly vary, but you become what you do, and speech is also action.

Sufis are told that the smallest of charity is to toss a rock out of the way of foot traffic. Another small one is to lick a bowl or a plate clean. Another is a smile, or a friendly greeting, and to say "Alhamdulillah" (praise be to God) when asked about your state.

Charity can take the form of learning the things that are required of you for congenial social interaction, studying Islamic law for the purpose of self-application, learning Qur`an properly for the purpose of recitation and teaching others.

The relationship of the person and the receiving (from Al-lah! - of charity) is also very interesting. Al-lah! says in Qur`an: " Antum al-fuqara` , wa Huwa al Ghaniyy-ul- Hamid", "You are the poor, and He is The Wealthy Beyond Measure, The Only Worthy of Praise." While the classical translation of fuqara` (Poor, sing faqir) implies poverty, it is different from the word "miskeen", which also means poor, implying poverty but signifying misfortune, a lacking of means to recover. The Sufis use the word "faqir" to signify one who is acutely aware of his dependence upon Al-lah! for all things, and in another to signify a dervish, or one belonging to a Sufi order. In this significance, the shaykh, master or teacher of the order is the 'owner' of the house, the host at the table of whom sit the guests, the "fuqara`".

Concerning the word Sadaqah, it is used in many ways. Al-lah! says in Qur`an that charity (sadaqah) is for the poor (fuqara`), the traveler, the orphan and widow, and in that respect the masters put up with their students.

ʿASRAR UL-QUDDUS: (SECRETS OF THE DIVINE)

(revealing the distinction between the "enlightened" and the realized)

Everything is done by Al-llah! Every single thing is done by Al-llah! Every moment is a direct manifestation of Al-llah! People will either continue in the illusion that they are the doers or stop (and keep company) long enough to realize that they are not.

This is the difference between the realized and the unrealized, the knowing and the unknowing.

All knowledge has three stages, the knowledge, the witnessing, and the experience of the reality, or the deep knowing. The secret here is that it is only from the divine permission that real awareness is accomplished, and that permission can only be had by those who know its secret. And the reality of that secret is a gift, which Al-llah! bestows upon whom He wills. And the secret is this: that Everything is done by Al-llah! Every single thing is done by Al-llah! Even hearing this is the honor of a great knowing.

When I get up in the morning and look at my day and feel what I feel about it, this is my nafs (self) reacting to its fears, and these feelings need to be recognized, conceded to, looked at, honored, understood and dealt with. That is the day's work. But that was done by Al-llah! Al-llah! causes the work to be there and causes it to be done (or not) and causes the doer to feel the sense of doership. Everything is done by Al-llah!

Al-llah! causes science to behave in a predictable manner and the moon to follow the sun. He causes the outward sciences to behave in one manner and the inward sciences to be in a different form. He causes the knowledges of creation to appear fixed for an appointed time, and allows for energy to move through them predictably and unpredictably in accordance with His will. He is the cause of the predictable events as well as the immediate.

If He wills an event (a healing), He has given it permission to happen from before time, that the event may happen within time, at the appropriate time, not before, nor after. If that event is to appear to have happened at the hand of another of his slaves, it matters not what that slave may know or not, say or not, or do or not, the event will happen as Al-llah! has willed it to happen and appear as Al-llah! has willed it to appear, simply because it is His will and a part of His plan for it to be so.

The occurrence of an event is always for His pleasure alone but is made to appear to be both for its own sake and as the prerequisite to another event, which is destined and to appear as necessary to yet another, and all this is

caused by Al-llah! to produce the appearance of an outcome, rather than by the beginning or the ensuing influences, as most men have cause to think.

These appearances are an integral part of the illusion of a chain of consequences caused that men may be deceived, enlightened and realized in their pathway back to Him. Since all people are in ever different and evolving stages of awareness, there must necessarily be, in the course of the events that Al-llah! causes for his own pleasure, the illusion of sequence, or an analyzable, and with study, predictable science.

This is so that the people whom He chooses to leave in the illusion of the causal world (al-mulk) of humanity (nasut) will be reinforced in their beliefs, and that those whom He chooses to be enlightened will have the illusions to see through, and that those whom He chooses to be realized will have no illusions whatsoever.

ESOTERICS OF DIVINE PERMISSION (‘IDHN³⁰) (With a specific application to healing)

Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim. I begin with the name of Al-llah!, whose mercy is such as to grant an ignorant person such as myself the possibility of a small insight into the workings of His mysteries, that such insight might be revealed and prove useful to seekers on the pathway to Him, the Almighty, the Wise, and the Glorious.

Having written already a small portion on the mechanics of Barakah - specific blessing, or Divine Favor - I am inspired to write down some little understanding I have of the mechanics of Divine Permission (‘Idhn). I will limit my use of this word to a little known aspect regarding the levels of permission owned by Sufi masters and the empowered among their followers.

There are two kinds of ‘Idhn,³¹ limited, and unlimited. Certain masters throughout the ages have had unlimited permission. Not all, but always at

³⁰ In case there is objection to the perception of irreverence in the use of the word 'mechanics', simply know that ‘idhn and barakah are esoterically perceptible entities and there is a science or a perceptible 'mechanics' to their levels and their use. These perceptions have never, to the best of my knowledge, been exposed before in any work done by any Sufi author, but then, my knowledge of the works of Sufi authors is not comprehensive. I write of my knowledge from the permission of Al-llah!, all truth is from His Wisdom, all error is from my ignorance.

³¹ I prefer the use of the Arabic word because it is the true anchor (ayat) of the meaning with which I am dealing. The English phrase 'Divine Permission' is only one, albeit the most descriptive, aspect of that meaning.

least one. It was, for the most part, nearly impossible to manifest this unlimitedness; one of the main reasons being that the society in which they lived was not ready for or in need of it.

Any `idhn is a blessing from The Divine. There is no true Sufi master without `idhn. It is the sole property of Sufi masters and is dispensed through them and by them only.³² There is no unlimited `idhn except by the knowledge of the sole owner thereof. By that I mean that it has been an extremely rare moment in history that two owners of unlimited `idhn have existed side by side without one of them having received it by the grace of the other. I can think of no such example.³³ Of necessity, all `idhn other than unlimited is limited. This is not to imply a diminution of quality or sufficiency for the occasion. No, quite the contrary, `idhn is, by its very nature, more than sufficient for its owner and the people who drink from him (his community). It is possible for there to be more than one owner of unlimited `idhn in any age, but there will always be one source, recognized by the others as having a degree of superiority. From this view, unlimited idhn is available to us all, but the reality is that we are only given what is needed, due to the limitations of our potential to carry more than that.

Within the category of limited permission there are also permanent (owned) permissions and temporary (loaned) permissions. An example of a temporary permission would be the permission to travel, or the permission to speak. These permissions are truly Divine, and vastly different from the self-assumed permissions that we give ourselves in everyday life.

An example of an owned permission is the permission of title (i. e. Khulafat, Shaykh of Tariqat, Muqaddim), and rank, (i. e. Qutb, `Abdal, Wali, Ghauth, etc.) The lowest level of permanent Idhn is the permission to teach. It is considered a permanent `idhn in that there is no expectation of termination, even though there is still the possibility of revocation by the masters.

There is no doubt that the plethora of Sufi masters today are holders of very high spiritual stations which exist only bi-idhni'llah, by an `idhn from Allah! Many of these teachers are firmly established (baqa`) in the unseen and offer the vehicle of Islam as a way 'out' of the dangers of contemporary life, as a means of inward travel, and as a method of transforming the quality of life itself. This is the least of the owned permissions, and is more than sufficient for the seekers of spiritual realities and for the salvation of their

³² It is not to be confused with the merely 'mortal' permissions granted and taken in everyday life.

³³ Even in the case of the simultaneous existence of Sufi Masters of the stature of Shaykh Ahmend ar-Rifa'i and Shaykh `Abdul Qadir Gilani, the former confessed to the uniqueness of the latter.

adherents. Others hold a variety of high degrees of accomplishment in the unseen world of spiritual realities. Miracles, unveilings and healings are accomplished only by Divine permission.

It is also common that its use has trickled down from the lofty heights of high spiritual accomplishment into the mundane world to be used by the people of no true understanding. The best that these people have to hope for is the forgiveness of Al-llah! upon them in that they carry on a semblance of spiritual practice and do believe in and remember His Name. The hallmark of these people is that they accept Divine favor upon themselves, but avoid the practices designed to lift them to the higher stations. They love and are grateful for their own society, their music and their circles of remembrance, but are averse to accepting the way of the prophet and thereby entering into the reality at whose door they are contented to sit.³⁴ Their `idhn is from their mouths only, and has no relevance in the realm of the true men of Al-llah!

From this brief introduction we will proceed to the specific application to healing.

ON THE HEALING POWER OF `IDHN

All events (healings) occur by Divine Permission (bi-idhni'llah). `Idhn (permission) must be granted before an event can occur. `Idhn can be obtained by seeking it.

It is said in a well-known tradition that prayer will avert the decree. Understand that surrender to the lower human nature is surrender to the decree, or "the way things are" and "the way things work". This makes one completely susceptible to all of the apparent laws of "cause and effect" that are part of the illusion, including the physics of health and disease. Fundamentally, the events in your life are governed by your beliefs. Effort is prayer, so choose the direction of your efforts with wisdom. Moving in the direction of a healer is effort and prayer. Moving in the direction of the Sufis is asking to learn about right and effective living. Realization, learning, study, practice and remembrance are efforts rewarded by Barakah, and Barakah heals.

³⁴ Islam means surrender to Divine Decree. It is the gateway to the Garden of Al-llah! You can sing and dance in front of it your whole life long and be perfectly happy never entering into it; even go to heaven when you die, (if you're good). Al-llah!'s garden doesn't need you and you don't need it. it's a gift for the special few who want to know the True Love.

There is no way you can truly learn the healing power of Sufism except by keeping the company of its people. The increase of the power of `Idhn (barakah) is granted to individuals according to their proximity to Reality (Truth). This is because Al-llah! is One and loves Unity, and blesses unified effort.

A manifestation of this is the obvious benefit brought to humanity from communities and community effort. Hadith has it that "the Hand of Al-llah! is on the community". Individual effort to reach truth is rewarding to the community of that individual; one example being that a whole community need not study medicine if there is among them one devoted and successful student/practitioner.

Therefore, the more studious the hakim (healer, wise one, doctor) is of the essential realities of life, and the closer s/he draws to Al-llah! (the Essential Oneness pervading all reality), the more power (`idhn, permission) that Oneness grants to the hakim to pass on to the student or patient. Call it EFFECTIVE education. The effect is that the student benefits from association with the practitioner by a manifest increase in health and understanding.

The nature of healing is that first the permission is granted, then the openings for the spirit of life are made by the elimination (by removal or penetration) of the impedances. When the spirit comes into contact with the soul, the soul becomes inspired to new life, which inspiration moves the body (i.e. brings the spirit of life to the body).

Even the most inexperienced student of Sufism can be instrumental in the most wonderful healing miracles by inviting the friends to share in the benefits of the Sufi circle and meet with the Sufi teacher.

Some Sufis do know the nature of ultimate health, and can manifest/transmit the benefits of that knowledge, by means of which the astute student may also come to know the nature of its Origin. True Sufi masters have always been blessed with the key to healing. It is called 'tawajjuh", meaning and implying - to face with intent or intention, to pay attention to or send energy (or love) towards. It is noted in many treatises that this power was exclusive to Sufi masters and their empowered representatives and there was no mystery that it was a dispensation from the Divine.

"Barakah, Barakah fil hadhrat". Blessing, blessings upon the present. So be Present, if you want the blessings of Presence.

ON THE VALUE OF PROPER GUIDANCE

ALL healing is done directly by Al-llah! who needs no permission to do anything He chooses nor does He need any facilitator. However, in most cases, right guidance is required in order to receive gratitude and reform habits. It is oftentimes difficult to heal if there is no proper arena for regeneration and gratitude. Such an arena also serves as a means of preventing arrogance and falling again into the habits that caused the illness in the first place. Never forget that it is by the decree of Al-llah! that we become ill in the first place. The power to heal is strengthened when there is an avenue of guidance and reparation for the client.

That's why healing is such a famous part of the Sufi heritage. Permission to heal is given concomitant to the acceptance of a proper life style. The power of permission to heal (Idhn) often equates equal to the level of guidance held by the guide, and the level of guidance held by the guide equates to his station in the unseen.

Contemplate the value of proper guidance. Health is maintained. Gratitude is expressed because it can be received and channeled properly. Lessons are truly learned and put into proper context. All sorts of benefits are derived. The client becomes a healer in the least case by witnessing to the 'power' of the healer and sharing the experience with others, all of which goes to the increase of the glorification of Al-llah!, which is the Divine purpose. In other words healing serves the divine purpose of spreading the knowledge of God exactly the same as disease is the result of ignorance of this divine knowledge.

THE HEALING POWER OF INTENTION

The Nature of Intention

Intention is the essence and the purpose of will, and will is the first power. The first realm of creation is al-Jabbarut, the realm of Pure Will (al-Jabbar - the Compeller, Who maintains creation by His Will alone). It is the power of Divine Intention. Intention is the emanate force behind the power of Divine Compelling that manifests, supports, and maintains existence. "Al-llah! was alone and wished to be recognized, so He created. "³⁵

Will is the Essence of deed, act, action, accomplishment, creation, and healing. Will, the act and the power, is solely from The Divine. It is said in

³⁵ Hadith Qudsi

Qur`an "They will and Al-llah! (the Divine) wills. And yet you cannot will except it be the Will of Al-llah! " This ayat is used to describe the ingratitude of the selfish who use the divine gift of will for ultimately damaging ends.

Intention is the key to the power and efficacy of will and that may be the answer to the question of why we are so feeble in our accomplishment of that which we intend.

Why is our healing power so weak when we think of our intention as so strong? Is it that our intentions are not pure enough to attract sufficient Barakah for their successful accomplishment? If Barakah (blessing) is the substance of Creation, let's look at the word 'creation' in two ways. The most obvious is the noun denoting all Manifestation of the Essence of Al-llah!, and another denotes the constructive endeavors of humanity. Again, if Barakah is the substance of creation, and intention is that which attracts Barakah, then does it not stand to reason that intention is the criterion of successful endeavor?

People create in reality! They are not mere metaphor the verses of Qur`an in which it is stated that we are building our homes in eternity. By understanding the nature of Barakah we can, Insha'llah, draw people to it and thereby empower them, by means of education in proper intention, with sufficient Barakah to accomplish their life's work.³⁶ And in general all work is healing; either in this world or in the next, either for self or for others. But if the intention is aimed at healing a greedy wallet then it needs an inordinate amount of amassed physical power to overcome the resistances of the universe (read: deficiency of Barakah). The results, because of their unpraiseworthy intention and thereby natural tendency to defy edification, must necessarily be doomed to the realm of the merely temporary.

Intention is a result of what's in our hearts. Intention is a full half of accomplishment. Tradition states that we are REWARDED (with success?) ACCORDING TO OUR INTENTIONS, and judged by what's in our hearts, so let's discover the ultimate in perfectly pure intention, and purify of our hearts and souls from all illusion, i.e. other than absolute Universal Goodness, Love, Truth and Realization.

Doesn't the process of forming an intention consist of casting an image and exploring the possibility of it's coming true? Isn't this process of 'searching for the right course of action' actually the process of mentally casting

³⁶ Is this not the meaning of the words in the call to prayer "Hayya alal Falah" (Hasten to prosperity/success)?

images in search of the blessing, a green light from above, a sign of (at least potential) success?

Suppose the Real Success is to be found in a course of action that lies outside of our limited body of knowledge.

How can we consciously heal ourselves without first allowing space for the possibility (i.e. giving ourselves permission)? How can we be really well (experience real health) without first knowing what it is and what to do with it? What is it that keeps us ill at ease or dis-eased? Surely it's ignorance. Is it possible that we cannot imagine what it is like to be really well? Who benefits from our ignorance? (Now that's a loaded question.)

Have we really reached the end of our rope? What does that mean? Could it be that we can no longer envision further usefulness for life? Could it be that we have fulfilled OUR LIMITED INTENTION and cannot find anything else or better to do?

Why is it that the Sufis insist that the search for knowledge is incumbent from the cradle to the grave?

Life must have a purpose, and not necessarily a predetermined one, but one which may be discovered in the course of following it.

This brings us to the point of investigating the principle offered by the Sufis of "Purification of Intention".

Purification of Intention³⁷

Intention is most often motivated by desire, so it would seem that our strongest intentions would be guided by our innermost desires, and that the purpose of exploring active imagination is designed to bring out (express, come to terms with) innermost (and all) desires. But intention can also be (and equally often is) motivated by knowledge.

It would seem that there are (at least) two ways to reach a conclusion concerning the realities of the 'inmost desire'. One way is by exploration, the way of western psychology, and the other way is by the acceptance and study of Objective Truth, the Knowledges of which have been interjected into the human experience by Divine Will, or Revelation. This latter way is the way of the Sufi.

Now for those of you who may say that the Sufis do not express the existence of Objective Truth, I can only respond "how little you know." You

³⁷ Ikhlas un Niyat means "sincerity, or purity, of intention."

are aware that the whole job of a true teaching master is to deal with each person according to the level of their willingness to understand (Himmah). Your mere objection to (read: unwillingness to deal with) the concept of objective truth is sufficient reason for any Sufis you know or read to withdraw from dealing with the subject.

Ego is threatened by the concept of 'objective truth' because it implies opposition to, limitation or annihilation of 'subjective truth', which is its (ego's) food and sustenance. Objective truth represents "Father's home!" to the happily mischievous and tyrannically unruly child of selfishness.

However, adherence to false knowledge and ego is that which prevents the positive influences of Truth. Denial of the existence of objective truth or reality is a subjective choice the deliberate and misguided intention of which is to prevent and deter the benefits and influences of the benevolent life force, which is positive and purposeful in orientation, and healing and constructive by nature.

So it is the suggestion throughout the general theme of these writings that you be willing to deal with (investigate) the possibility of the existence of objective truth and the possibility that it might be to your advantage to know how and why to form a firm intention to conform to and comply with the dictates resulting from your investigation. From this you will surely find a whole new meaning to the words 'reality' and 'realization' and a whole new depth of meaning to your Sufi studies. Now that's "Purification of Intention".

Intention in the View of the Sufi

"The body has a single organ the health of which determines the health of the entire body, and that organ is the heart. " -- Imam `Ali

There are (at least) two equally truthful meanings to this statement. The first is the outer, absolute literal meaning pertaining to physical health, but which in reality (Haqiqat) is still dependant upon the inner, esoteric spiritual meaning that true health (spiritual health) is totally dependant upon the heart's being free and clear of anything 'other' than Al-llah!, Purity, Absolute Truth.

Cleansing the heart of all that is 'other' than Al-llah! is the ultimate enlightenment. Tasawwuf (self purification - Islamic Sufism) is the science by which, with the Permission of and by only the Will of Al-llah!, the heart may be so cleansed. The ultimate 'coup-de-grace' (Nirvana, Fana`) is a gift from Al-llah! Himself (what isn't), and cannot be 'attained', but it can and must be prepared for. Such is the goal of the purest of intentions. ie. to

become a TRUE SUFI, whose feet are solidly on earth and whose heart is wholly and certifiably in heaven.

Purity of Intention (Ikhlas un-niyat) and willingness to maintain it (Himmah) are the ultimate healing forces and Surrender to the Will of the Divine (Islam) is the ultimate means of fulfilling that intention. And if you have no intention to fulfill your intention, then you have no intention. Hence the popular phrase "No Islam, No Sufism", or "No Surrender, No Purification".

SURRENDER WORKS!