



Letters of a Sufi Master (IV)

The Shaikh al-‘Arabî ad-Darqâwî

A strong man is one who rejoices to see that the world is slipping from his hands, leaving him and fleeing from him; who rejoices that people despise him, and speak ill of him and is satisfied with his knowledge of God. The Venerable Master, the Saint Ibn 'Atâ-illâh (may God be well pleased with him) says of this, in his *Hikam*: “If the fact that people turn away from you or speak ill of you causes you suffering, return towards the knowledge of God in you; if this knowledge is not sufficient, then lack of satisfaction in the knowledge of God is a far greater trial than that people speak ill of you. The purpose of this slander is that you should not rely on people; God wishes to bring you back from all things so that nothing may distract you from Him.”

It is said that by the invocation of God (*dhikru 'Llâh*) a believer attains such peace of soul that the great terror on Resurrection Day cannot sadden him; how then could he be disturbed by whatever trials and misfortunes may befall him in this world? So be constant in the invocation of your Lord, my brother, as we have advised you, and you will see marvels; may God fill us to overflowing with His grace.

Now in our view, invocation does not mean that a man is forever repeating *Allâh*, *Allâh* and praying and fasting and then, as soon as misfortune strikes him, runs to right and left looking for remedies and is in despair because he cannot find one. For men who have come to know the Truth (may God be well pleased with them), invocation demands that he who calls on God should abide by the laws that are strictly prescribed, the most important of which is that he should pay no attention at any time to what does not concern him. Then, if his Lord makes Himself known to him, or let us say reveals Himself under one of His names whether of majesty or of beauty, such a man will recognize Him and not fail to know Him. This is true invocation as practised by those who remember God and not the state of him who is constantly occupied in worshipping God and yet, when his Lord reveals Himself in some form opposed to his wish, entirely fails to recognize Him.

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There are many signs by which he who has reached God may be recognized, namely in that all things, great or small, are in his hand and under his control, for he is to the universe what the heart is to the body (but God knows best.) When the heart is moved, the limbs move also, and when it is still, they likewise are still; if it arises, they arise; if it sits, they sit; if it becomes contracted, so do they contract; if it relaxes, they also relax; if it weakens, they weaken; if it is strong, they are strong; if it is humble, they become humble; if it is proud, they become proud, and so forth. In the same way, he who has made his way to God, who has died to himself in contemplation of God's Infinity and freed himself from the illusion that there is any reality other than God, – such a man finds that existence follows him and obeys him; wherever he turns, it turns. And God is our Warrant for what we say.

The Spirit (*rûh*) is luminous by nature and issues from the very essence of Light (but God knows best). Now it is known without any doubt that God “grasped a portion of His Light and said to it: 'Be Muhammad!' “ This is how It (the Spirit) became and from its light all things were created; understand this. And the Spirit is nothing other than the soul (*nafs*), which became troubled only because it came to depend on the world of corruption; if it were to foresake this world and be separated from it, it would return to its native land whence it came, that is, to the Dominical Presence.

The venerable Master, the Saint Abû Yazîd 'Abd ar-Rahmân 'l-Majdhûb, said concerning the soul:

“Whence comest thou, who art gifted with spirit,
Spiritually with love,
Motionless amid the unfolding of thy glory,
Lordly in all thy states?”

And if you were to say to me: “Our Master, the Lord 'Alî, (my God be well pleased with him) was broad, while you are narrow,” I would answer: he was broad and narrow to an equal degree; he was both gentle and rough, strong and weak, rich and poor; he was an ocean without shores. His knowledge was sweeter than sugar, more bitter than the colocynth. For he was always repeating these words of the Saint Abû'l-Mawâhib at-Tûnisî: “If anyone claims that it is possible to contemplate divine Beauty without having been schooled by divine Rigour, throw him out, for he is an antichrist (*dajjâl*)”...

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When the servant knows his Lord, all creatures acknowledge him and all things obey him.

But God knows more.

The illustrious Shaikh our Master (may God be well pleased with him) used to say: “When your heart is emptied of beings it becomes filled with Being and from that moment love is born between you and other beings. If you act purely towards your Creator, all creatures will manifest goodwill towards you.” And we will add: when you

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are sincere in contemplation of your Lord, He will try you by manifesting Himself to you in all His aspects and if you continue to recognize Him and do not ignore Him, then the universe and all it contains will recognize you; it will love you and behave towards you with veneration and generosity; it will rally to your side, obey you and want you; it will rejoice in remembering you, show concern for you, be glorified in you, flock towards you, call you; all this you will see with your own eyes. But if you fail to know God when He manifests Himself to you, you also will be unrecognized by all things, denied by all things, humiliated, despised, diminished, made more despicable, worse, heavier, more remote; everything will insult you, shun you, be against you and overwhelm you.

You who are “poor,” if you wish that your wind may prevail over all winds and all adversaries, then be constant in contemplating your Lord while He is trying you, for He will change your ignorance into knowledge, your weakness into strength, your helplessness into power, your poverty into wealth, your lowliness into glory, your loneliness into intimacy, your remoteness into nearness — or, in a word, God, be He exalted, will cover over your qualities with His qualities, for He is generous and bestows immeasurable graces. Greetings of Peace !

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By God, my brothers, I did not believe that a learned man could deny the vision of the Prophet (God bless him and give him peace) in the waking state, until the day I met some learned men in the Qara-wiyyîn Mosque and had a conversation with them on this matter. They said to me: “How ever is it possible to see the Prophet when one is awake, since he has been dead for over 1,200 years? It is only possible to see him in a dream, since he himself said: 'He who sees me, that is to say in a dream, sees me in reality, for the Devil cannot imitate me,' ” I answered: “Of necessity, he can be seen in the waking state only by one whose mind — or let us say, whose thoughts — have transported him from this corporeal world into the world of Spirits; there will he see the Prophet without the slightest doubt; there he will see all his friends.” They were silent and said not a word when I added: “Indeed he can be seen in the world of Spirits.” But after a while they said to me: “Explain how this is so.” I answered: “Tell me yourselves where the world of Spirits is in relation to the world of bodies.” They did not know what to reply. And then I said: “There where the world of bodies is, there also is the world of Spirits; there where the world of corruption is, there also is the world of purity; there where is the world of the kingdom (*mulk*), there also is the world of kingship (*malakût*); in the very place where the lower worlds are, there are to be found the higher worlds and the totality of worlds. It has been said that there exist ten thousand worlds, each one like this world, (as recounted in the 'Adornment of the Saints') and all these are contained in man, without his being conscious of it. Only he whom God sanctifies by absorbing his qualities into His own, his attributes into His own, is conscious of this. Now, God sanctifies many of his servants and does not cease from sanctifying them until their end.”

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The venerable Master and Saint, Lord Ibn al-Bannâ (may God be well pleased with him) says in his “Inquiries”:

Understand, for thou art a copy of Existence
For God, so that nothing of Existence is lacking in thee.
The Throne and the Pedestal, are they not in thee?
The higher world and also the lower world?
The Cosmos is but a man on a big scale,
And thou, thou art the Cosmos in miniature.

And the venerable Master, the Saint al-Mursî (may God be well pleased with him) said: “O thou who goest astray in the understanding of thine own secret, Look, for thou shalt find in thee the whole of existence; Thou art the Infinite, seen as the Way and seen as the Truth, O thou synthesis of the Divine Mystery in Its Totality.”

If you wish what you need to be given to you without your having to search for it, turn away from it and concentrate on your Lord; you will receive it if God wills. And if you gave up your needs entirely and were occupied only with God, He would give you all the good things you wish for in this world and in the other; you would walk in Heaven as well as on the earth; and more than that, since the Prophet (on him be blessings and peace) has said, in the very words of his Lord: “He who by remembering Me (*dhikr*) is distracted from his petition will receive more than those who ask.”

Hear, *faqîr*, what I said to one of our brothers (may God be well pleased with them): every time I was lacking something, great or small, and turned away from it in turning towards my Lord, I found it there in front of me, thanks to the power of Him who hears and knows. We see that the needs of ordinary people are filled by paying attention to them, whereas the needs of the elect are filled by the very fact that they turn away from them and concentrate upon God. Greetings of Peace!