

Purifying And Striving Against The Ego (*nafs*)

by Shaykh `Abd al-Qadir `Isa



THE PRACTICAL METHODS OF SUFISM

(1.) PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

In a previous chapter on the importance of Sufism, we explained that the soul possesses vile qualities and blameworthy character traits, and that removing these qualities and traits is individually obligatory - as was stated by the generality of the jurists. Having said that, the deficient qualities of the ego are not removed by mere wishful thinking, [or by] knowing the ruling of purifying it, and reading the books of Sufism and good character. In addition to all that, there must be real and actual spiritual striving, practical purification, and weaning the ego from its unruly tantrums and tempestuous desires.

*The self is like an infant child -
if you leave it, it will grow up loving to suckle,
but if you wean it, it will soon be weaned away.*

Al-Raghib al-Isfahani said in: Mufradat Gharib al-Qur'ân:

Jihad and mujahada: striving with one's utmost in repelling the enemy. Jihad is three types: striving against the outward enemy, striving against Satan, and striving against the ego. All three of these are included in Allah's words: { Strive for the sake of Allah with a true striving } Sura (22) al-Hajj: 78 and { And strive with your wealth and lives in the path of Allah.} Sura (9) al-Tawba: 41 The Prophet ﷺ said: "Struggle against your vain desires just as you struggle against your enemies." fn1

Striving against the ego is done by weaning it and forcing it to carry out that which is against its blameworthy desires, as well as committing it to implement the law of Allah (swt) , in both prohibition and command.



(2.) Its Evidence From The BOOK AND THE SUNNA

Allah (swt) said: { Those who strive for Our sake, We shall certainly guide them unto Our paths.} Sura (29) al-'Ankabut: 69 fn2

From Fadâla b. 'Ubayd رضي الله عنه : The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The mujahid is he who struggles against his self for the sake of Allah." In another narration it says: "...who struggles against his self in Allah."fn3

(3.) ITS RULING

Purifying the ego is individually obligatory as we explained, and since it is not completed save by striving against the ego (nafs), striving is also individually obligatory, as the principle states: 'What is necessary in order to fulfil an obligation is itself an obligation'. Shaykh 'Abd al-Ghanî al-Nablûsî said: "Striving against the ego is an act of worship and it is not acquired save through knowledge. It is individually obligatory on every legally responsible adult."fn4



(4.) THE POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE

There is no doubt whatsoever that the human character has the potential for change and that it is possible to remove its bad character traits and habits and replace them. If this were not the case, then there would be no benefit in (Allah) sending the noble Messenger ﷺ and there would be no need for inheritors after him among the practicing scholars and righteous spiritual guides. If it is possible for many predatory birds and other beasts of pray to change many of their supposedly innate character traits, then certainly humans - whom Allah (swt) has honoured and created in the best of forms - can change their character a fortiori. The intent behind struggling against the ego is not a complete and total eradication and effacement of its character, rather, it is to elevate it and pick it up from bad to good, and force it to travel according to Allah's will and in pursuit of His good pleasure.

Anger is blameworthy when one exhibits it for his own ego, whereas it is praiseworthy when he exhibits it for the sake of Allah -as the Messenger of Allah (swt) would get angry if the rights of Allah were violated or if any of His limits were transgressed against. On the other hand, whenever he would be harmed for the sake of Allah,

struck, or pelted - as he was on the day he was in Ta'if - he would not get angry for his own sake, rather, he would pray for those who harmed him, asking for their guidance. He would give them excuses and say: "O Allah! Guide my people for they know not!"^{fn5}

Likewise, arrogance is also blameworthy when a Muslim behaves arrogantly towards his Muslim brothers. On the other hand, when he behaves proudly in front of arrogant disbelievers, this trait becomes praiseworthy because it is for the sake of Allah (swt) and within the bounds of the Sacred Law. The same may be said for most blameworthy character traits. They can be transformed through spiritual struggle and elevated to praiseworthy characteristics.



(5.) THE PATH OF SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE

The first stage in spiritual struggle is for one to not be satisfied with his self and to believe in the description of his self that his creator and originator informed him of when He said: { *Indeed, the soul commands to evil.* } Sura (12) Yusuf: 53 He must also know that of the things that sever him and cut him off from Allah, the biggest of them is his own ego (nafs) ^{fn6}, and at the same time, it is the greatest thing that shall cause him to arrive unto Him. When the ego commands its owner to evil, it takes no delight except in acts of opposition and disobedience, yet after spiritual struggle is waged against it and it is purified, it becomes pleased and well pleasing and is not delighted in anything save acts of obedience, agreement, and intimacy with Allah (swt).

When the servant uncovers the defects of his self (nafs) and is truthful in his pursuit to remove them, he will have no time to busy himself with the faults of other people and waste his life enumerating their mistakes. Know that he who spends his time enumerating the mistakes of others and is heedless of his own faults is an idiotic ignoramus.

Abu Madyan (*rahimahu-Allah*) said:

*Regard not any fault but that acknowledged within you
As a manifest, clearly apparent fault, though it be hidden* ^{fn7}

And others said:

*Condemn not a person for doing an action
To which you are equally ascribed*

*He who blames something while at the same time doing it himself
Has only demonstrated his own ignorance*

For this reason, they said: "Do not see someone else's faults as long as you have your own faults - and the servant will never be free of faults." When the Muslim comes to realize this, he will hasten to wean his ego from its lower desires and deficient day-to-day habits, and he will oblige it to implement acts of obedience and deeds that draw close (to Allah).

Spiritual struggle is a step by step process that changes course according to the progress of the aspirant in his journey. In the beginning of his affair, he is to remove all of the acts of disobedience that relate to his seven body parts. They are:

- 1.The tongue
- 2.The ears
- 3.The eyes
- 4.The hands
- 5.The feet
- 6.The stomach
- 7.The private parts fn8

Afterwards, he should adorn his seven body parts with acts of obedience appropriate to each of them. fn9



These seven body parts are the windows into the heart that shall either be smeared and sullied with the darkness and grime of disobedience, thereby making the heart sick, or they shall be made clear to allow the light and illumination of acts of worship enter it.

After waging spiritual struggle against his seven body parts, the aspirant should then focus on the inward traits, replacing his lowly character traits such as: pride, ostentation, and anger, with complete character traits such as: humility, sincerity, and forbearance.

Since the path of spiritual struggle is a rugged one with numerous side paths and it is very difficult for the spiritual wayfarer to enter it alone, it is of practical significance for him to accompany a completed spiritual guide who knows the defects of the soul and knows the path of spiritual struggle and treatment. By keeping the company of a spiritual guide, the spiritual aspirant gains practical experience in the ways of purifying his soul, just as he obtains the sacred spiritual effulgence of the Shaykh who pushes him to perfect his own self and personality; raising him above the defects and evil traits. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the spiritual guide of the highest rank and the greatest purifier who trained his noble

Companions and purified their souls through his statements and spiritual state - as Allah described him: { It is He who sent a Messenger unto the unlettered ones, reciting unto them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the wisdom, whereas before they were in manifest error.} Sura (62) al-Jumu'a: 2 fn10

When the spiritual aspirant keeps close company with his guide and surrenders unto him just as the patient surrenders himself to the physician, he shall find uprightness and benefit. When Satan injects the heart of the aspirant with the delusional idea that he is independent, and he becomes conceited and feels that he does not need to associate with his Shaykh, he will fail utterly and be debarred from the path, whereas he thinks that he is still on his journey, and he will be cut off whereas he thinks that he is arriving.

Shaykh Isma'îl al-Haqqî (*rahimahu-Allah*) said in his Qur'anic exegesis:

Many in the intermediate part of this path (meaning the Sufis) are afflicted with numerous pitfalls in their spiritual wayfaring. These pitfalls present themselves when their souls become bored of the spiritual struggles and tired of the spiritual rigors. Satan comes to them and whispers to them and their lower selves, fooling them into thinking that in their spiritual wayfaring, they have reached such a level that they are no longer in need of keeping the company of a Shaykh or submitting their affairs to him. As a consequence, they leave the company of the Shaykh and begin their pursuit in accordance to their egos, falling into the trap of failure and becoming the laughing stock of Satan.fn11



(6.) Statements Of The Gnostic Spiritual Trainers And Guides CONCERNING SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE

Abu 'Uthman al-Maghribî (*rahimahu-Allah*) said: "Whoever imagines that he shall obtain a spiritual opening in this path or have anything of it unveiled to him without being steadfast in spiritual struggle, then he is in clear error."fn12126 Imam al-Junayd - may Allah the Exalted have mercy upon him - said: "I heard Sarî al-Saqatî say: 'O assembly of youth! Take the path with resoluteness before you become weak and unable as I have.' He said this, even though none of the youth could outstrip him in worship."fn13 Abu 'Uthman al-Maghribî said: "No one who is pleased with himself can see his own faults. The only one who can see his own faults is he who accuses his own soul in all states."fn14

Abû 'Alî al-Daqqâq (*rahimahu-Allah*) said: "He who adorns his outward self with spiritual struggle, Allah will fill his inward self with the secrets of Divine beholding. Allah the Exalted said: { And those who struggle for Our sake, We shall certainly guide them to Our paths.} Sura (29) al-'Ankabut: 69 You should know that he who is not given to spiritual struggle in the beginning of his affair will not even smell the fragrance of this path. fn15

Imam al-Barkawî (*rahimahu-Allah*) said:

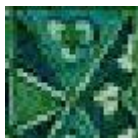
"How quick to destruction is he who lines not know his own faults, for indeed, acts of disobedience lead to disbelief."fn16 Shaykh al-Islam Zakariyya al-Ansarî (*rahimahu-Allah*) said: "The salvation of the soul rests in the ability of the servant to oppose its vain desires and force it to carry out what its Lord has ordered it."fn17

Imam al- Barkawî (*rahimahu-Allah*) said:

Spiritual struggle is: weaning the soul and forcing it to go against its base desires at all times. It is the commodity of the devout worshippers, the capital of the ascetics, and the crucial factor for rectifying and reforming the soul. It is the prerequisite for purifying and cleansing the soul so it can arrive in the Divine presence of He who is the Possessor of all might and honour. O spiritual wayfarer! If you desire Allah's guidance, you must see to it that you roll up your sleeves and forbid your lower self from its vain passions, and force it to struggle. Allah (swt) said: { And those who struggle for Our sake, We shall certainly guide them to Our paths.} Sura (29) al-'Ankabut: 69 And: And whoever struggles then he does so only for the benefit of himself.} Sura (29) al-'Ankabut: 6 fn18

Ibn 'Ajîba (*rahimahu-Allah*) said:

When the initiate into the spiritual path enters it, he must first exert himself in rigors and struggle as well as truthfulness and belief. These things will make clear and manifest his end state -for he whose beginning is illuminated will have his ending illuminated. He who we witness seeking after the truth in earnestness, spending out his possessions, self, soul, honour, and prestige -all for the sake of attaining the rank of actualizing slavehood and fulfilling the rights of Godhood -we know that his ending will be illumined by reaching his Beloved. On the other hand, he who we witness in a state of laxity we know that he will not reach it.fn19



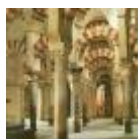
Muhyî al-Dîn Ibn 'Arabî (*rahimahu-Allah*) said in his book: The Meccan Revelations, in the section on spiritual rigors, solitary retreats, spiritual struggles and their effects:

When the intellects of the people of faith in Allah (swt), saw that Allah ordered them to know Him after having already known Him by way of discursive proofs, they came to realize that there is yet another type of knowledge regarding Allah that is not reached by contemplative thought. As a consequence, they engaged in acts of spiritual rigor, solitary retreats, spiritual struggles, severing the binding day to day habits, being alone and sitting with Allah in empty spaces, and purifying the heart from bad thoughts - for everything attached to such thoughts are related to the created world. They took this path from the Prophets and Messengers and they heard that the Real (Allah), the Mighty and Majestic, descends to His servants and treats them kindly, therefore they came to know that the path to Him by way of Him is closer to Him than the path of mere contemplative thought.

This is a must for the people of faith, for they have come to know the statement of the Exalted: "He who comes to Me walking, I shall come to him running", and that his heart (the heart of the believer) contains His Nobility and Grandeur. So, the intellect directs itself to Him (swt), with its all and cuts itself off from everything that takes from it strength. When this is done, Allah pours out to him Divine knowledge from His light, and makes him realize through Divine witnessing and theophany, that no world can encompass Allah (swt), nor can any world reject Him. For this reason, Allah the Exalted said: { Indeed in that...} Sura (50) Qaf: 37, pointing to the knowledge of Allah by way of witnessing: {... is a reminder for he who possesses a heart.}. He did not mention any other power or strength - such as the strength of the intellect - that will cause the slave to reach his Lord.

The heart is known for its constant turning and changing according to the conditions it is in. Just as it does not stay in one state for long, similarly, the Divine theophanies change. He who does not witness the Divine theophanies with his heart will most certainly reject them with his rational mind, for the rational mind binds and controls man's other strengths - save that of the heart, for it is not bound by anything and is ever quick to change in every state. For this reason, the Law Giver said: "The hearts are between the two fingers of the Most Merciful who turns them as He wills."

Hence, the hearts turn as the theophanies turn, whereas this is not the case with the intellect. The heart therefore, is the force of strength beyond the intellect. Had the Real (Allah) meant by the word 'heart' in this Qur'anic verse that it is the intellect, He would not have said: {...for he who possesses a heart}, for indeed, every human has an intellect, however not every human is given powers beyond the faculty of the rational mind - which in this Qur'anic verse is called; 'a heart'. For this reason, He said: { for he who possesses a heart.} fn20



(7.) Responding To Some Misconceptions About SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE

Some might say: "The Sufis forbid the good things and the delights that Allah has made permissible, and Allah has stated: { Say: who makes forbidden the adornment of Allah that He has taken out for His servants, and the good and wholesome provision?} Sura (7) al-A'raf: 32 And the Exalted said: { O you who believe! Do not make forbidden the good and wholesome things that Allah has made permissible for you. And do not transgress the limits. Indeed, Allah does not love the Transgressors.} Sura (5) al-Ma'ida: 87

In response to this, we say: The Sufis have not made unlawful what Allah has made lawful. Their highest aspiration is to conform to the Law of Allah. On the other hand, since they knew that purifying the soul is individually obligatory, and that the self has sinful character traits and vain attachments that will lead its owner to disgrace and hold him back from ascending to the ranks of the perfected, they saw it absolutely necessary to train their souls and liberate them from the prison of vain desires. Expressing this meaning, the major Sufi, al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (*rahimahu-Allah*) said in response to this misconception and those who use the above mentioned Qur'anic verse:

This inference is reprehensible and it entails changing the meanings of words, because we do not mean that these things are unlawful, rather, our intent is to train the lower self in order that it holds fast to proper etiquette and learns how to behave. Do you not know Allah's words: {Say: My Lord has only made forbidden the vile and evil deeds: both that which is hidden and that which is manifest thereof - and sin and transgression without any right.} Sura (7) al-A'raf: 33 Hence, 'transgression' in something lawful is itself unlawful. Take boasting, for example. It is unlawful; arrogantly competing with others is unlawful; ostentation is unlawful; and extravagance is unlawful. So, the self has been prevented from worldly desires only on account of it inclining to these above mentioned things with its heart, which in turn, corrupt the heart. Since I saw the lower self acquiring the adornment of Allah and the good things of provisions while being in a state of boasting, competition and ostentation, I came to know that it was mixing the lawful with the unlawful, thereby causing gratitude to go to waste, whereas it only receives provision so that it can be thankful and not so that it can deny the good things.

When I saw its bad etiquette, I prevented it until it become lowly and subdued. My Lord saw me in a sincere state of spiritual battle for His sake and He guided me to His path just as He promised: { And those who struggle for Our sake, We shall guide them unto Our paths} Sura (29) al-'Ankabut: 69

Because of my spiritual struggles, I entered the state of ihsan with Him and He was with me. He who has Allah with him has the force that shall never be defeated, the guard who never sleeps, and the guide who is never lost. Allah shall cast a portion of light into his (the slave's) heart in the life of this world until it causes him to reach the reward of the next life. Do you not know that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When light is cast in the heart of a slave, it is made expansive and wide"? It was asked: "O Messenger of Allah! Is there a sign for such a thing when it occurs?" He responded: "Yes, being distant from the abode of delusion, and returning to the abode of eternity, and preparing for death

before its arrival." One is able to be distant from the abode of delusion only by way of the light cast in his heart, enabling him to see the blemishes and faults of the worldly life, as well as its pitfalls, traps, and its abasement. This will ensure that transgression, ostentation, seeking to be heard, competition, boasting, showing off, and envy is absent from the heart - because all of that is a result of his heart esteeming and loving the world and its delights. The cause of his salvation from these pitfalls - after Allah's mercy - is his spiritual rigors to prevent his lower self from its vain desires.^{fn21}

Some people in their haste have claimed that Sufism derives its spiritual struggles from Buddhist or Hindu origins, and that it corresponds to the religious deviance of the Christians and others who consider punishing the body and torturing it to be a path towards spiritual enlightenment and freedom for the soul. Some people even believe that Sufism is derived from the monkish inclination of the three men who inquired about the Prophet's worship ﷺ. When they were informed of his worship, they considered their own worship paltry, thus, one of them said: "As for me, I shall perpetually fast and never break it." The second one said: "As for me, I shall stand in night prayer and never sleep." The third one said: "As for me, I shall shun women and never marry." When their matter was presented to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he corrected their mistaken notions and brought them back to the straight path and upright method.



In response to this we say: never has Sufism been a separate way or a new religion. On the contrary, it is the practical implementation of Allah's religion and a complete adherence of His Messenger ﷺ. This misconception only came to the minds of the hasty ones because they found that Sufism placed a great deal of attention and concern on purifying the soul, training and elevating it, and struggling against it according to the confines of the religion and limits of the Sacred Law. This, in turn, caused them to draw a blind analogy between the religious errors of (other) religions and Sufism, without drawing any distinction between them whatsoever.

There is a vast difference between the legislated spiritual struggle that is confined to the strictures of Allah's religion, and the deviance, extremism, arbitrary forbiddance of the lawful, and the bodily punishments that the disbelieving Buddhists practice. It is a manifest slander and wrong to accuse one who strives to purify and struggle against his lower self of having taken his practice from Buddhist or Hindu origins - as is claimed by the orientalist and those fooled by them. It is equally wrong to accuse such a person of following the example of the three men who saw their worship as paltry in comparison to that of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ - as is claimed by those who are simple minded and in haste - despite the fact that the Messenger corrected their mistaken notions and brought them back to his guidance and Sunna.

If there is to be found within the history of Sufism someone who has indeed made the lawful unlawful and punished his body like those of the deviated early religions, then he is an avowed innovator who is far from the true path of Sufism. For this reason, a distinction must be made between Sufism and he who is a Sufi. A deviated Sufi does not represent Sufism anymore than a deviated Muslim represents Islam. The opponents have not made any distinction between a Sufi and Sufism, or between a Muslim and Islam, thus they have maligned the honour of the completed ones by comparing them to the deviated ones.

The loftiest aspiration and hope for the spiritual wayfarers is to elevate their souls. If they succeed in that, they shall reach their goal. By spiritual struggle and spiritual rigor, the human soul is elevated from being ammâra (commanding its owner to evil) to being lawwâma (self-reproaching) to being inspired, pleased and well pleased with, and so on. Spiritual struggle is a necessity for the spiritual wayfarer in all stages of his journey unto Allah (swt). Such spiritual struggle ends only if he reaches the state of infallibility - which is for no one save the Prophets and Messengers - may Allah's peace and blessings be upon them all.



Here, we see the error of some spiritual wayfarers who have not fulfilled one of the conditions of their spiritual journey, namely: spiritual struggle against the self. They are seen claiming Divine love for themselves, speaking the language of the lovers, and singing the verses of Ibn al-Farid in support of their way:

*Concerning my way in love - I have no special way
If ever one day I incline away from it I would have abandoned my religion*

They read such verses, although they are unaware of Ibn al-Fârid's beginning and how he was in his own spiritual struggles against his lower self. Take his own words where he described his spiritual struggles in the course of his journey and the importance of spiritual struggle - keeping in mind that in the beginning of his own journey, it was from the reproachful self first and not starting off with the self that commands its owner to evil. Here he explains that the spiritual wayfarer who has no struggle has no love or journey in the first place:

*Before, my soul was reproachful
When I would obey it, it would disobey
and when I would disobey it, it would obey me
In front of it I presented things, some of which, death was seen as easier
I exhausted it in order that it be a source of relaxation
It returned however and whatever I burdened it with it would carry for me
And if I was easy going and light, it would harm me
In the course of training it, I cast out every delight
Removing it far from its customary ways until it became contented*

*There was not a single struggle for its sake that I did not mount
And I call my soul to bear witness to this without declaring it pure*

For this reason, Ibn al-Farid took to mentioning the claimants of Divine love who have yet to leave their base desires or wage spiritual struggles against their selves:

*Some people have presented themselves in front of passionate love
Yet with their selves they turned away from what is sound
They were well pleased with wishful thinking and were tried by their desires
And attempted to cross the ocean of Divine love
with pretentious claims, they never got wet!
In the course of their journey they have yet to even take off
Or even left their place even though they are fatigued!*



Spiritual struggle is a basic prerequisite for every spiritual wayfarer in every course of his journey. Having said this, it does alter and change according to the status and rank of the aspirant. The example of this may be likened to that of a student: he starts off in primary school, afterwards graduating and moving on to middle school, and finally moving on to high school and then University. In all of these stages, such a person is still considered a student - even though there is a huge difference between the primary school student and the university student. Similarly, there is a huge difference between the soul that commands its owner to evil and inclines to vile deeds, and the soul that is content and going back to its Lord pleased and receiving good pleasure.

(8.) SUMMARY

Spiritual struggle is a fundamental basis of the Sufi path. They have said: "He who realizes the fundamentals will reach the goal, and he who leaves off the fundamentals is barred from the goal." They also said: "Whoever does not have a scorching beginning (with various acts of spiritual struggle) will not have an enlightened end - and the beginnings show the endings."

notes:

fn1 Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân, entry: 'j-h-d':p.l01

fn2 This is a Meccan verse, and it is well known that the physical Jihad against the disbelievers was legislated in Medina al-Munawwara. This proves that the intent behind Jihad here in this verse is the Jihad against the ego. The 'Allama and scholar

of Qur'anic exegesis, Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi said in his commentary on this verse: "This refers to Jihad against the ego". The 'Allama and scholar of Qur'anic exegesis, al-Qurtubî said in his commentary: "Al-Suddî and others said: 'This verse was revealed before the obligation of fighting was prescribed.'"

fn3 Narrated by al-Tirmidhî in the book concerning the virtues of Jihad. He said: "This Hadîth is Hasan Sahih." Al-Bayhaqî mentioned in Shu'ab al-Iman another narration from Fadala which states: "The Mujahid is he who struggles against his self in Allah's obedience and the migrant (Muhâjir) is he who migrates from sins and wrongdoings."-Mishkât al-Masâbih: Kitab al-Imân: book 34

fn4 Sharh al-Tarîqa al-Muhammadiyya: 1/323

fn5 Al-Bukhari

fn6 There are four things that sever and cut one off from Allah: the ego, the life of this world, Satan, and the creation. The enmity of Satan and the ego is obvious. As for the enmity of the creation, it is by taking notice of their praise or condemnation, and in this the spiritual wayfarer is hindered and obstructed in his journey to his Lord. As for the enmity of the world, overly concerning oneself with it, and allowing it to busy the heart is a major factor that severs one from Allah (swt). In a state of poverty, man's worries preoccupy him away from Allah, and in a state of wealth, man is busy with its delights and adornment away from Allah (swt) { **Indeed mankind does transgress. He sees himself self-sufficient.**} Sura (96) al-'Alaq: 6-7 If one removes the love of the world from his heart, it will not harm him, as the Shaykh of the Sufis, 'Sayyidî 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylanî said: "Expel the world from your heart and place it in your hand or your pocket and it shall not harm you."

fn7 Qasîda Adâb al-Tarîq: al-Ghawth Abû Madyan

fn8 All of these seven body parts have acts of disobedience that may come from them. Among the sins of the tongue: back-biting, tale carrying, lying, vile speech. Among the sins of the ears: listening to: back-biting, tale carrying, vile musical lyrics, and instruments. Among the sins of the eyes: looking at unrelated women and the private areas of men. Among the sins of the hands: harming the Muslims, killing them, taking their wealth with falsehood, and shaking the hands of unrelated women. Among the sins of the feet: walking to sites of sin and lewdness. Among the sins of the stomach: consuming forbidden wealth, consuming the flesh of pig, drinking alcohol, etc. Among the sins of the private parts: fornication, homosexuality, etc.

fn9 Among the good acts of the tongue: reciting the Holy Qur'an, remembrance of Allah (swt), commanding the good, and forbidding the evil, etc. Among the good acts of the ears: listening to the Holy Qur'an and Prophetic Hadîth, as well as good advice and religious exhortations. Among the good acts of the eyes: looking at the faces of the scholars and righteous, looking at the noble Ka'ba, and looking at the signs of Allah in the creation with the intention of contemplation. Among the good acts of the hands: shaking the hands of the believers and giving out charity. Among

the good acts of the feet: walking to the Mosques and gatherings of Sacred knowledge, visiting the sick and going to make peace between people. Among the good acts of the stomach: consuming legally permissible food with the intention of gaining strength to carry out acts of obedience for Allah (swt). Among the good acts of the private parts: consummating marriage with the intention of preserving one's chastity and having many offspring.

fn10 Here we see that purifying is one thing, and teaching the Book and the wisdom is another thing. For this reason, Allah the Exalted said: {... purifying them and teaching them the Book and the wisdom. } There is a huge difference between the knowledge of purification, and the state of purification, just as there is a difference between the knowledge of good health and actual good health. A skilled physician may be very knowledgeable of health while he himself is in bad health, suffering from many illnesses. Similarly, there is a vast difference between the knowledge of asceticism and the state of asceticism - like the Muslim who possesses vast knowledge of all the Qur'anic verses, Hadîth, and proofs in support of asceticism, even though he is not in a state of asceticism and is covetous and craving for the fleeting life of this world.

fn11 Tafsîr Ruh al-Bayan: 2/149

fn12 The Epistle of al-Qushayrî p.48-50

fn13 Ibid

fn14 Ibid

fn15 Ibid

fn16 Ibid

fn11 Commentary on the Epistle of ai-Qushayî

fn18 Al-Hadîqa al-Nadîyya Sharh al-Tarîqa al-Muhammadiyya: 1/455

fn19 Awakening the Aspirations: Explanation of the Aphorisms: 2/380

fn20 The Meccan Revelations: p. 443

fn21 Al-Riyada wa Adab al-Nafs: p. 124

(9.) APPENDIX: THE NATURE OF THE LOWER SELF

In man, there exists the capacity for desire. This capacity is termed the lower self(*nafs*). This capacity includes both virtue and evil. It desires goodness as well as evil. In its development the lower self passes through three stages: the lower self that incites to evil (*nafs ammdra*); the lower self that denounces evil (*nafs lawwâma*); and the lower self that is well pleased (*nafs mutma'inna*).

Nafs Ammâra

At this stage, the lower self is overpowering in desire for evil, and it feels no regret for its evil acts. This lowly stage is also termed *hawa l-nafs*.

Nafs Lawwâma

At this stage, the lower self suffers remorse and regret when afflicted by evil desires.

Nafs Mutma'inna

At this stage, the lower self is tremendously desirous of virtue.