

Sultân al-‘Ârifin

R Shaikh Mahmûd Sâmi
RAMAZANOĞLU

THE SULTAN OF GNOSTICS

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MUSA TOPBAŞ

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Musa TOPBAŞ



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Translator's Foreword

Musa Topbaş, the author of this book, was born in Kadınhan, a small town located in the Konya region of Turkey. He was the son of the Ahmed Hamdi Effendi, who was a businessman, and he was the grandson of Ahmet Kudsi Effendi, who was the successor to Khalid al-Baghdadi. Musa Effendi moved with his family to Istanbul while he was still young. He finished his middle school education in Istanbul, and then went on to begin his high school studies. His family wanted him to learn about Islam, and so he studied Islam and Qur'anic interpretation under M. Hamdi Yazir, a well known scholar and Qur'anic exegete in Turkey. He also learned Classical Arabic under Mustafa Asım Yoruk Effendi who was a member of Ayan Meclis (Ottoman Parliament). He was fluent in French, having studied the language with a private instructor. Musa Effendi was also very much interested in calligraphy, and studied this under Hamid Aytaç.

The Topbaş family had always supported Islamic

institutions, and they provided salaries to scholars who had been left without jobs after the establishment of the Republic. Musa Effendi benefited from almost all of the great scholars of the Ottoman period, such as Bekir Hâkî Efendi, Ali Yektâ Efendi, Ömer Nasûhî, and Bediuzzaman Said Nursî. He continued his father's commercial practices and until the 1970s he worked very actively mostly in the textile sector. After this time, he left his business to his sons and brothers, and devoted much of his time to spiritual service. His main philosophy was sharing the spiritual and material gifts of Allah with others.

Musa Effendi met Mahmud Sami Effendi for the first time in 1950 in Bursa, and his life was completely transformed. He used to pay him visits, and eventually he was initiated into his path in 1956. He describes his experience of initiation as follows:

When I met our respected Ustadh Sami Effendi, I knew little about tasawwuf. I thought that he would give us some wîrd and that I would recite this, and nothing else. I did not know about spiritual advancement. I had thought that the spiritual path was no different from other kinds of formal education. However, I came to realise that this meant implanting love firmly into the heart. If the disciple is wise, then he understands the significance of the path, and in a short time he will take great strides along the path of tasawwuf.

After meeting Sami Effendi, Musa Effendi's whole worldview changed, and he dedicated his life to the service of Islam and to the service of his shaikh, Sami Effendi. He pioneered the establishment of the Erkam publishing house

and the monthly magazine Altinoluk. He spent almost half a century of his life in the service of Islam based upon the path of Ahl As-Sunnah and the lives of the Companions ؓ.

Musa Effendi, together with his sheikh, Sami Effendi, emigrated to Madinah in 1979 out of his love for the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. He spent long periods of time in the Makkah and Madinah. In 1998 he had to return Turkey for health reasons, although he would return every winter to the Holy Land.

In 1984 Musa Effendi received the Ijaza to continue the Sufi tradition of the Naqshbandi order, and from this time he dedicated all his time to the service of Islam. He was himself like a foundation; he set apart special portions of charity for different causes such as building mosques, hospitals, for the care of orphans, and buying medicine for the poor and sick.

Musa Effendi's greatest characteristic was his love, service and loyalty to his teacher Sami Effendi. He was so annihilated in him that if the title of the book were to be changed to Musa Effendi from Sami Effendi everything he wrote would certainly apply to himself. His loyalty to Sami Effendi was even stronger after Sami Effendi's death. He would always describe Sami Effendi's characteristics in his sohbat, and would always teach Islamic manners to his followers by referring to Sami Effendi as the best example. Hence, in this book we can see the lives of two friends of Allah. May Allah allow us to benefit from their example.

On June 16, 1999, Musa Effendi passed away. May Allah have mercy for him.

Publications

Musa Topbaş Effendi published most of his books under the pen name Sâdık Dâna:

1 - *İslâm Kahramanları (Heroes of Islam)* (3 volumes). The first volume studies the heroism and courage of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions. The second and third volumes examine the courage of Muslims in the Saljuq and Ottoman periods.

2- *Altınoluk Sohbetleri (Discourses of Altınoluk)* (5 volumes). A collection of Musa Effendi's articles on *tasawwuf* published in the monthly magazine *Altınoluk*.

3- *Allah Dostunun Dünyasından (From the world of a saint: Musa Topbaş Efendi)* Interviews made with Musa Effendi in the last period of his life.

4- *Sultânü'l-Arifîn: eş-Şeyh Mahmûd Sâmi Ramazan-oğlu (Sultan of Gnostics)*. The present work by Musa Effendi examines the life of Sami Effendi, who was his spiritual guide.

Süleyman Derin

Dear Reader,

In daring to undertake the challenging task of writing this biography, I was motivated by the desire that both present and later generations may learn about the life of a true friend of Allah (*walî*). In this work I have strived to illustrate the meaning of the Perfect Master (*al-Murshid al-Kâmil*), in order that others may come to love and respect him. It must be borne in mind, however, that such an account can only ever be a mere drop of water in what is a vast and mighty ocean.

The friends of Allah do not seek publicity or praise from other people; Allah the Almighty Himself praises them and loves them. In elevating their ranks, He even regards those who love the friends of Allah, in reality, love Allah. Among these friends of Allah, is the Sultan of Gnostics, Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu of Adana.

Through his deep love of Allah, all his actions were carried out in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ, the Pride of the Universe. All the virtues of the blessed Prophet's character were united in this

man; and so those who read his life story with care and consideration will, *inshallah*, derive benefit from doing so. As this work is neither a story nor a novel, but rather illuminates the spiritual realities from the life of a saint, it is recommended that before beginning reading, the reader should perform *wudhu* (ritual ablution) in order to obtain maximum spiritual benefit from the words contained herein.

May Allah guide us to become perfect servants who are worthy of His love. May Allah make us a members of His Beloved Prophet's community, and His worthy followers; and allow us all to benefit from the intercession (*Shafâ'ah*) of the friends of Allah. May Allah, *Glory be to Him*, forgive us the faults and sins that we have committed knowingly or unknowingly, and may He protect us from the Hell-fire, Amin!

Musa Topbaş

HIS BIRTH

Mahmud Sami was born in 1892 in Adana in the district known as Tepedagh. Adana was and still is an important coastal town on the Mediterranean Sea, in the south of Turkey. He passed away in Madina on February 12, 1984 corresponding to the date of 10 J. Awwal 1404 of the Hijra Islamic calendar in the early morning hours of the day at 4.30 a.m.

Mahmud Sami came from a noble lineage. Through Nuraddin Shahid, his family lineage is traced back to Khâlid b. Walîd, the Prophet's ﷺ renowned military commander.

There is a narration that just as he was born, Hadhrat Khidr *'alaihi salâm* (as) came to the family home and called to his mother. Although his mother did not wish to speak to the visitor, since normally Muslim women do not like to talk to strangers, Khidr (as) insisted on talking to her. His mother finally came to the door and talked to him from behind the door.

O my daughter! Do you know that you are pregnant? Through you a great person will come to the world. There will be a large black spot on his left shoulder. He will serve Islam for a long time. You must therefore be careful that you obey Allah's commandments and refrain from what He has forbidden. You must name this child Mahmud Sami.

After this conversation Khidr (as) asked for a shirt as a reminder of that day. However when those inside returned to the door he had already disappeared.

After a short while this great personality Mahmud Sami was born. He served Islam through his exemplary conduct and preaching, and by guiding his followers. He devoted his whole life to the service of Islam and as a result a great number of people benefited from him.



THE FIRST CHAPTER
HIS CHARACTER AND SPIRITUAL
QUALITIES

HIS CHARACTER AND SPIRITUAL QUALITIES

Mahmud Sami *quddisa sirruhu* (qs) was of medium height, but the awe he inspired in the hearts of people made him seem much taller. His skin was of the colour of wheat, his beard was not too thick, and his hair was curly. He was slim, but not skinny, and his eyes were hazel. His appearance would often change. Hence it is impossible to draw an accurate picture of him, and it is difficult describe the beauty of his face in words.

He had a very kind personality, possessing the best qualities a human can have. He responded to different situations according to the needs of the time, and he would do so with moderation and wisdom. However, he would also act with extreme courage when the circumstances required. Although he always had a smiling face he was serious at heart.

His close friends and those who knew him closely would refer to him as 'the Angel Sami Effendi' due to his

high standards of morality. A poet once described him in the following way:

*A noble king in this world was he,
to the Almighty a sincere friend
A guide to pure and upright souls;
for the Ummah a radiant treasure
The highest of morals and true modesty,
he possessed until the end
The qualities possessed within him,
great and awesome in their measure.*

He would wear simple and plain clothes. He did not let his beard grow longer than the grasp of his hand, and he sometimes grew his hair down to his ears.

He would walk in a slow and dignified manner. Although he walked slowly he would travel quite quickly and his companions would hurry to catch up with him. A poet described his walking thus:

*In his slow walking there was a natural speed.
Those who walked as though running were left behind.*

He ate very little, and slept very little. He talked very little and most of the time he would prefer to keep silent. He would only speak when necessary, and even then his words were brief. When he talked to someone he would not ignore the background and status of that person. He said not a single word more or less than what was necessary. He would speak clearly and slowly, repeating three times when he wished to emphasise something.

The subjects of his talks concerned mostly explanations of the verses of the Qur'an and the sayings

of the Prophet ﷺ the stories of the other Prophets. He would explain the lives and good character of the friends of Allah, and their patience and sacrifices for the sake of Allah. He would gather information about all of these things and present it to his murîds (those whom he undertook to guide).

Among these subjects, always one particular theme occupied an important place in his talks; this was the subject of the heart and its training. He would always narrate the famous hadith of the Prophet ﷺ that states: "Beware! There is such a piece of flesh in the body that if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good, but if it gets spoilt the whole body gets spoilt, and that is the heart." He would also add that the heart is the only place where Allah manifests Himself. Hence the heart is more important than the Ka'ba (The sacred sanctuary in Makka) because the latter was built by the Prophet Ibrahim (as), that is, it is something constructed by a human; whereas the heart is constructed by Allah, and is hence a direct creation of the divine.

Whenever he witnessed the shortcomings of his murîd he would feel very sad, but he would never speak behind their backs, even by implication. All his dealings with others were within the bounds of kindness and mercy. He would strongly aspire for his followers to be trained in the best manner, possessing the best moral qualities, such as sincerity, intelligence, modesty, sacrifice, generosity, mercy, and many other good and noble characteristics. People would benefit from his talks and conversations according to their level of sincerity and ability. Those

who followed his advice and performed the *wird* (A daily prayer usually given to those entering a Sufi order) he had instructed, would traverse the spiritual path quickly, this would be observed easily by others.

Their vices were replaced by virtues.
Their pride was replaced with modesty,
Unbelief with belief,
Jealousy with respect,
Greed with selflessness,
Laziness with diligence,
Cowardice with courage,
Rudeness with kindness,
Cruelty with mercy.

Sami (qs) never argued with others, indulged in backbiting, or entered into heated debates. Sami (qs) did not hold bad opinions of others; instead he forgave the mistakes of others. Like other friends of Allah, his personality was characterised by forgiveness and mercy.

He always gave hope to his followers, and those who visited him always left his presence with a feeling of relief and happiness, even though they may have not come into his presence with appropriate manners.

Mahmud Sami (qs) was very fond of murîds who possessed good manners, and he would pay special attention to them. He never behaved heedlessly. He was one of those distinguished persons we rarely witness over the centuries, since Allah bestowed upon him the best characteristics which He bestows only upon His elected servants. He demonstrated the true meaning of the Arabic phrase *Addaba-nî Rabb-î* (My Lord has refined me).

He was a person filled with a great many noble qualities; he lead an ascetic life, and always perfected the manner in which he dealt with others. As a spiritual guide he also had great powers. If the murîd was a sincere person, he could take him through different stages of *tasawwuf* in a single moment. As a result the murîd purified his heart from worldly loves and was filled with the love of Allah. The heart of the physical eye would be replaced by the eye of the heart. As a result the murîd would have the insight to discriminate what is true from what is false. In short, the faith of the murîd, which was based on imitation, was internalised by spiritual enlightenment, as a result of the *baraka* (spiritual grace) of our Ustadh Mahmud Sami (qs). The positive transformation in the spiritual life of some of his murîds was often extraordinary.

Conversely, many people failed on the spiritual path. They either did not follow a spiritual guide, or they followed the wrong guide. Such people, even if they performed many good deeds, undertook fasting, and did all other manner of good actions, nevertheless failed to reach their destination because they could not purify their hearts from the love of worldly things such as wealth, family and children. Even worse, sometimes the amount of their worship made them think that they were better Muslims than others and this boasting caused them more trouble, since they could not see their mistakes, and saw only the mistakes of others.

Our Ustadh (qs) would never get angry with his friends. He would not discriminate between those who

praised him and those who criticised him. He would also forgive those who railed against him if such a person understood his mistake and sought his forgiveness.

When performing his ritual prayers he would always look straight ahead. Before starting his *suhbats* (Sufi discourse) he would always ask a *hâfidh* (a person who has memorised the whole of the Qur'an) to recite a portion of the Qur'an. He would also ask us to recite surah Al-Fâtiha (The opening chapter of the Qur'an) once and surah Al-Ikhlâs (Sincerity) three times, presenting them as a gift to the souls of our previous masters. Although he spoke with a low voice, everybody would be able to hear him, even those who sat in the far corners of the room. In most *suhbats* he would either ask someone to read a religious book or he would read one himself. However when the subject was concerned with matters of the heart, he would speak from his own mind without following a book. He would very often read the following verses:

Surely We created man of the best stature (Tîn, 95:4)

We have honored the sons of Adam (Isrâ, 17:70)

Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).
(Hujurât, 49:13)

According to our Ustadh, *taqwâ* means that the servant knows Allah as He deserves to be known, follows His commandments untiringly, performing them in the best manner, refrains from the *harâm* (the acts which

are forbidden by Allah) and follows the Sunnah (the example) of the Prophet in all his actions. He would also repeat the following verses:

What did you then think that We had created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us? (Mu'minûn, 23:115)

Does man think that he will be left uncontrolled (without purpose)? (Qiyâmah, 36)

Allah the Almighty wills His servants to recognise their Lord and to bow in front of His majesty in modesty. In this way the servants can fulfil their duty of servant-hood towards their Lord. After knowing Allah, a Believer is asked to obey the commandments of Allah which are prescribed in the Qur'an. However it is necessary to know that obedience of the body to the commandments of Allah is not enough. Similarly, the heart should willingly accept the worship of Allah, and should sever external bonds with worldly things. Without the consent of the heart, the mere obedience of the external limbs is not satisfactory in order to reach the knowledge of the divine (*al-Ma'rifah al-Ilâhiyyah*).

In order to emphasise the significance of this spiritual training the Prophet ﷺ uttered to his Companions the following when they were returning from the battle of Tâbûk.

"We have returned from the lesser Jihad to the greater Jihad."

The battle with the *nafs* (the lower self) is more significant than the battle with the enemy. Abdul-Qâdir Jailâni, the great pillar of the Sufi path, said:

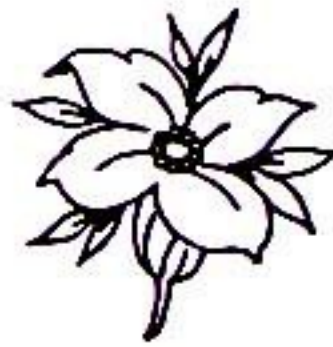
The battle with the *nafs* is harder than the battle with the enemy, because the enmity of the *nafs* is continuous at all times since the *nafs* is a part of the human personality. Why is it so difficult to do battle with the *nafs*? To fight with the *nafs* is to fight with one's own self. It means giving up the bad habits and the desires of the self to follow the commandments of the Divine Law. Whoever leads those who fight such battles with the external and the internal enemy, Allah will reward such a person both in this and in the next life." (*al-Fath al-Rabbâni, Suhbat, 8*)

Abu Bakr al-Saydalâni said:

"There is life in the death of the *nafs*, the life of the heart is dependent upon the death of *nafs*."

"The greatest victory is to escape from your *nafs*, since it is the greatest veil between you and your Lord."

"It is impossible to beat the *nafs* with the *nafs*. Only by the help of Allah can you have a victory against your *nafs*. This means that your will submits to the will of Allah." (*Tadhkirat al-Awliyâh, 752*)



HIS OBEDIENCE AND LOVE FOR THE PROPHET ﷺ

The character and conduct of our respected Ustadh (qs) were in complete accord with that of the Prophet. This conformity between them was extraordinary. Such conformity is only possible by divine grace and is not the result of human endeavour.

He would always continue to recite praises and prayers for the Prophet ﷺ. In his daily life he always took the Prophet ﷺ as his guide in eating and drinking, in travelling, and in his devotions such as fasting and performing the obligatory prayers. In his relations with his family and his wife, and in his dealings with others he would take the Prophet ﷺ as his sole example. He would do so out of a very deep love for the Prophet. The life of the Prophet was a mirror through which he would evaluate his own actions.

Allah the Almighty says:

Whoever obeys the Messenger, he indeed obeys Allah, and whoever turns back, We have not sent you as a keeper over them. (Nisâ', 80)

Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful, (Âl-i Imrân, 31)

The Believers who wish to receive Allah's grace should follow and imitate both the religious and the worldly practices of the Prophet ﷺ in their lives. A small amount of worship and prayer in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet is greater than a large amount of worship without following his example. Those who followed the Prophet ﷺ with care attained very high spiritual degrees and stations because of their obedience to the Sunnah; whereas those who did the opposite failed to reach the high stations because of their laziness in the observance of the Sunnah.

The Prophet always chose moderation in his daily life, and with regard to this he said, "The best of conduct is that which is done in moderation (*Khayru l-umûri awsatu-hâ*)". There is a famous hadith concerning three Companions of the Prophet ﷺ who decided that they would lead pious lives by following an exaggerated form of asceticism. So they decided to lead a life without marrying, dedicating all their time to devotion and other prayers as well as fasting. The Prophet ﷺ did not approve of this excessive form of practise. He said on this matter:

"A little amount of action in accordance with my Sun-

nah is better than a large amount of action that is not in accordance with it. Every act which is against my way is misguidance, and every misguidance will be in the Hell-fire."

Many people think that attaining higher degrees on the spiritual path corresponds to the performance of a large amount of worship. However, real progress in this path depends on leading a life in which the disciple feels that they are in front of their Lord at all times, observing the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ, and doing what is necessary at each specific time of the day and in each situation. There are many people who perform a great deal of voluntary worship, fast continuously, perform the night prayers and undertake other kinds of devotions; but who cannot progress because they speak ill of their friends behind their backs, they do not observe the injunctions of Allah, and they do not undertake their dealings with others with an Islamic character. Many people also pay no attention as to whether what they eat is harâm (forbidden) or halâl (permitted). It is preferable that they pay more attention to the halâl and harâm matters and gave more importance to attaining an Islamic character, than carrying out such voluntary acts of worship while neglecting these other things.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"Whoever earns from lawful means, eats from what is lawful and follows my example so that the people feel safe from the work of his hands (with no harm therefrom) such a person will definitely go to Paradise."

The great saints of this path have spent their lives in

devotion, praying and fasting, taking only a little food and sleep. These saints first purified their inner worlds, then their exterior worlds by the grace of Allah. In this way they annihilated their mundane selves and freed themselves from the shackles of the body.

The following hadiths stress the importance of following the Sunnah of the Prophet. In order to follow him one needs to remember him with his tongue first by saying prayers for him:

"He informs us that those who are closest to me are those who mention my name by praying for me." (saying: Sall Allahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam)

"For those who pray for me, Allah will give them a light on the Bridge of Sirât."

"It is clear that the people of light will not be from the people of fire i.e. they will not fall into the fire of Hell."

"When a person prays for me once, Allah shows that person compassion ten times over."

"Praying for me is better than freeing a slave."

"Let those who are in difficulty pray for me, since praying for me erases difficulties and it allows sustenance to be abundant."

"For those who take up my morality and follow my way when my community corrupts morally, there will be reward for that person as that of a hundred martyrs." (Kanz al-'Irfân)

'Alâ Addîn 'Attâr (qs) said:

"Those who do not oblige themselves to follow the Sunnah are incomplete in their observance of Islam. The

external and internal purification is only possible by way of following the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ."

From all the above sayings of the Prophet ﷺ and great Sufis, it is understood that only by following the Sunnah of the Prophet can a disciple attain the love of Allah.

Sayyidinâ 'Umar ؓ said:

"I heard that a supplication which is not accompanied by a prayer on behalf of the Prophet, it will be suspended between the earth and sky and will not reach Allah (*Glory be unto Him*)."

In many other hadiths the Prophet ﷺ advised us to say prayers (reciting supplications such as *Allâhumma salli 'alâ Sayyidi-nâ wa Nabiiyi-nâ Muhammad*) on the Prophet's ﷺ behalf. He also added that reading prayers and salutations for Him is like giving charity. He also asked his Ummah to request *wasîlah* (intercession) for the Prophet from Allah (*Glory be unto Him*). When the Companions asked, "What is *wasîlah*?" He replied, "*Wasîlah* is the highest grade in Paradise, and only one person will attain this level. I hope it will be me." (*Tanbîh al-Ghâfilûn*)

The Prophet ﷺ further advised:

"O my Ummah! Fear Allah, and obey your ruler. Accept what the Qur'an dictates as halâl and harâm without distorting these. Accommodating guests and looking after them is a virtue. Never go to the house of the person to whom you have loaned money, and do not eat the fruits of their trees."

"Those from my community who followed my example, who earned their livelihood by lawful means,

and those with whom people felt safe (i.e. from them doing harm) will enter Paradise. Those who practise the contrary to these things will enter Hell. Those who follow my example will receive the reward of a hundred martyrs. The best Believer is the one who follows my example in the best way. I love those who follow my path and who love my Sunnah. They will enter Paradise alongside me. Those who follow my Sunnah in practice and with care will attain the good of both this world and the next. You cannot be a perfect Muslim unless you love me more than your parents and children and all the people of the world." (Marifatnama)

In continuous devotion and supplication

Our Ustadh (qs) disliked travelling at night and would travel only if absolutely necessary. When he travelled he preferred to do so on Mondays and Thursdays. He would plan his trips very carefully in advance, and he always took the necessary things with him. He would fold his clothes in layers of white in a very organised manner.

His trips would begin and end according to a prepared plan. If any problem occurred while travelling he would not decide upon a course of action unless he had first consulted his travelling companions. He would never show signs of impatience, recklessness or sorrow.

At the start of his journey he would recite the verses of the *Âyat al-Kursî* (the verse of the throne: verse 255 of *al-Baqara*) and other prayers for travellers. He would emphasise the significance of supplication to Allah, and add that supplication is the essence of prayer.

As a supplication he preferred verses of the Qur'an such as those of *al-Fâtiha* (The Opening), *Âyat al-Kursî*, and other selected verses. In addition he would use the supplications of our beloved Prophet ﷺ or other Prophets (as). He did not invent new words of supplication whether in Arabic or in Turkish.

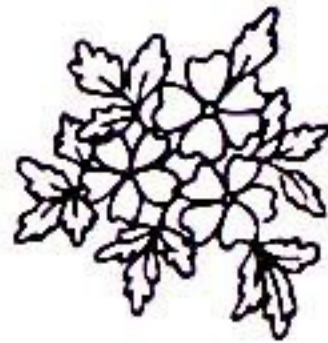
Although he did not care to speak using highly ornamented words, the words he spoke conveyed a deep sense of power and beauty. Those listening were very much affected by his suhbats. As a magnet attracts pieces of metal, his listeners were attracted to him and did not want to leave his gatherings.

For him an essential part of supplication was always to have *wudhu* (state of ritual cleanliness) and to always renew his *wudhu* even if he already had it. During the Hajj pilgrimage he would renew his *wudhu* without giving a thought to any extraordinary difficulties that this may involve. He would say that renewing the *wudhu* over the old one is *nûr 'alâ nûr* (light upon light). He would perform his ablutions with great care and respect, always feeling the presence of Allah the Almighty.

During his stay in the Hijaz (the region of western Arabia containing Makka and Medina) he would attend all the congregational prayers in the Holy Mosque. He would spend most of his time in prayer and supplication, and as a result he would return home very tired and exhausted. Nevertheless, if there were disciples who came to see him he would give a short suhbat in order to soften their hearts and to not send them away empty-handed.

Although in a physical sense he appeared weak due to his thin body, he would attend all the prayers with a great willingness and energy. This persistence in worship was a great favour bestowed upon him by Allah. Especially in his old age he would rest on his bed in his daily dress in order to save time. He would consider any time spent in putting on and taking off his dress to be time wasted. All of the friends of Allah are very careful with their time, and do not like wasting their time on worldly things. Because of this extra care he would always read his prayers in good time. In addition, he would pray all the voluntary acts of prayer such as the *tahajjud* (voluntary night prayer) as if they were obligatory.

He would advise his family members, his disciples, and those whom he loved to be firm in following the path of Islam. For him sincerity, trustworthiness and following the straight path were very important principles to which all the Believers should adhere to.



HIS ABSTINENCE FROM THAT WHICH IS *HARÂM* (UNLAWFUL)

Our respected Ustadh (qs) migrated to Istanbul in 1953. As the head of a family he needed to work in order to provide for the needs of his family. Hence, one of his disciples offered him a job as an accountant in his firm. This firm was in Tahtakale, an important commercial district of Istanbul.

Our respected Ustadh (qs) did not accept the job immediately. He first checked all the business dealings of the company to make sure that they were clear of any unlawful transactions such as borrowing money with interest, whether the commodities they bought and sold were legal, or whether commodities were hidden from customers and sold on the black market. After checking over all of these issues he suggested to the owner of the business that he make some adjustments to his business transactions so that they would be in full accordance with the injunctions of the Qur'an. After

all these conditions were met he accepted the post and worked there as an accountant.

As we can see in his working life our respected Ustadh (qs) was very careful to check whether earnings were halâl. Whenever someone came to visit him in order to benefit from his advice, the first question he would ask was the occupation of that person and whether his earnings were halâl. He would also ask people whether they were careful about the lawful and the prohibited with regards to dealings connected with earning money for their families. After having learnt this initial information about his visitor, he would give the most necessary and beneficial advice to that person.

Having a job which is Islamically acceptable and earning one's livelihood through legal transactions is one of the most important foundations of a religious life. If we need to test someone's piety and sincerity in practising Islam, the first thing to investigate is that person's source of income. If the income of a person is from exploiting others or earning from interest, such a person cannot practice Islam with sincerity.

One day someone praised another person in the presence of Hadhrat 'Umar ؓ. Hearing this praise he asked the man, "Did you engage in trade with this man?" "Were you a neighbour to him?" or "Did you go on any journeys with this man?" When he answered no to all these questions 'Umar said, "Then you do not know this man." The lesson here is that the man's trust had not been tested by any of these three types of dealings, and they are the most important tests in revealing a person's character.

All the Prophets, the Companions of the Prophet and the friends of Allah (*Most Glorious is He*) were nourished with lawful earnings. They never took to earning their livelihoods by prohibited means. The voluntary extra prayers one performs are not the truest indication of one's piety; the real indicator is whether someone earns their income by lawful means, and has good conduct in their transactions with others.

Our respected Ustadh (qs) always told us that for the Believers, "To have integrity (*istiqâmah*) is a never-ceasing obligation. All other obligations are confined to specific times, such as the times of the ritual prayers. However, there is no limit upon integrity; a Believer should always be upright. If one leaves their integrity, even for a second, he or she might lose all the effects of the good deeds he or she has performed. Worse than that, he or she will lose the Hereafter. May Allah protect us from falling into such situations where we abandon our integrity and lose our place in the Hereafter.

The following story is narrated concerning 'Ali b. Shihab (qs), a great saint from the past.

'Ali b. Shihab (qs) once said:

"The body which was nourished on lawful food will not be decayed by the earth and it will not be eaten by it."

His son added that the scholars of Islamic law disputed over his words and told him:

"This is only true for the Prophets and martyrs."

His son continued:

“This dispute dragged on after my father passed away. His words that the earth would not destroy the body which is fed on lawful food became famous to such an extent that it was on the tongues of everybody. Finally someone suggested that they should check the trustworthiness of the words of ‘Ali b. Shihab by opening his grave. When they opened the grave twenty-one years after the burial they all saw in great amazement that the body of my father was as fresh as the first day when he was put in the grave. Everybody submitted to the truth of his words, and all those who had previously rejected them asked Allah’s forgiveness for their mistakes.”



HIS GENEROSITY

The generosity of our Ustadh Mahmud Sami (qs) was so extraordinary that we cannot sufficiently describe it here. There are so many examples in his life with regard to his generosity.

At one stage he was working as an accountant in Adana, a southern city of Turkey, earning only a limited amount of income. One day, a beggar suddenly appeared and begged him for charity. He had just received his monthly wages in an envelope; and the pure soul gave the man the envelope with all the money inside, without even opening it! His employer saw this incident and narrated it with great amazement. It was very difficult for someone to give away all of their salary for the sake of Allah, especially at a time when people in general were poor and getting enough income was a great struggle.

Whether at home or on a journey, he would always provide charity to others. If he was asked for charity he would never leave someone empty-handed. He

would always give more than they needed and would do so happily without showing any sign of burden or irritation.

One day we were travelling together in central Anatolia. Someone near Ürgüp waved for us to stop the car, and when we stopped he asked for money to buy cigarettes. His friends did not want to give him money. However, our Ustadh said that since he had asked for our help it was better to give something. The poor man, when he saw this kind behaviour, told them he had changed his mind about the cigarettes, and would buy bread with this money instead. And he left us with great pleasure. He was so tolerant of others that he would never turn away poor people on the basis of minor excuses.

On another occasion his friends complained to him that one of the poor people he was helping had been eating at expensive restaurants. However, he did not stop providing help to this man; instead he said, "I see that this man spends more since he is accustomed to eating food of a high quality, therefore we must increase the amount of money we give to him."

It was in his nature to give and give and give more. He was in the habit of giving away the most precious gifts to others such as carpets, prayer rugs, rosaries, pens and so on. His generosity was as vast as the oceans and as luminous as the sun. It was unthinkable for him to turn someone away empty handed if he or she had asked for help. He would give great amounts of charity without the slightest hesitation. It was as if Allah the Almighty had given him the keys to His hidden treasures.

In his house large amounts of food were cooked although he would eat very little. This large amount of cooked food would be served to his guests and what remained would be sent to his neighbours.

For those who asked for his prayers in order to get his help to get rid of a difficulty, Our Ustadh would advise them to give charity in addition to him praying for the individuals' well-being.

The good conduct of giving charity

If a Muslim wants to give charity to a poor person, the best way is to place a sufficient amount of money (depending upon the financial position of the person) into an envelope and wait until he finds a needy person in a lonely place. Then he or she goes to the needy person and in a modest and affectionate way asks them:

“Could you please accept this *amânah* (contribution in trust)?”

In this way the needy one is spared from being humiliated. In the understanding of our Ustadh (qs), the one who gives the charity should be more thankful than the one who receives the charity, because the presence of the needy is a cause for the wealthy to do a good deed. If there were no needy, the rich could not fulfil their duty in paying charity and alms.

We must also be careful when we choose the persons to whom we wish to give charity. We must seek the truly needy people who do not wish to reveal their need. Concerning beggars on the streets, it is better to give them

a small amount of charity rather than giving nothing. In other words we must always prefer to give to others rather than not to give. When a Believer neglects to give charity, the lower ego of the human becomes pleased and then finally becomes accustomed to being miserly.

We must always be moderate in our spending and save money. We benefit from this in two ways. Firstly, we never fall into the position where we need the charity of others; and secondly, as a result of moderate spending we can possess enough money to give charity to others. Unfortunately wasting money has become the norm, both amongst the rich and the poor. This habit contravenes the injunctions of the Qur'an, since in the Qur'an Allah says: *Allah does not love those who squander* (7:31). What can be worse than displeasing Allah by wasting one's wealth? On the other hand Allah also says in the Qur'an: *Allah loves those who are generous (muhsînîn)*. Hence generosity is something that attracts Allah's love and mercy.

In days past, even the poor would have the means to give charity since they did not waste their income. Hence they would also taste the pleasure of helping others and live happily in their homes. Unfortunately these days even the rich have no chance to spend in charity, as they squander their wealth in many unnecessary ways.

During our travels by a car, sometimes our beloved Ustadh (qs) would see a needy person on by the road and ask us to stop. By the time we had stopped we had already travelled on so far that the needy person was far behind. However, rather than letting us reverse the car our Ustadh would walk back to the person himself. Doing so made

him very cheerful, and he would return to the car in great happiness. Sometimes such an incident would occur more than once on a journey. How lovely it is to worship Allah in such a state of great happiness and love!

One of the reasons why our Ustadh (qs) served Muslims and Islam with such great love and happiness is that his Ustadh prayed for him with the following words:

“I ask from our Lord and Creator, the Almighty, that He increase the willpower and love (of Mahmud Sami) to serve the sacred Islamic law and the enlightened Sufi path, and to benefit from the men of the Unifiers (*Muwahhidîn*) both in terms of their knowledge (*qâl*) and station (*hâl*). Amin”

Our Creator states in the Qur’an:

By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love; and whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it. (Âl-i Imrân 3:92)

In a hadith the Prophet ﷺ explains to us how difficult it is to give charity:

“Surely a man cannot be able to give charity without plucking seventy hairs from the beard of Satan.”

“Generosity is a tree whose roots are in Paradise, and its branches are in the world. Whoever catches a branch of this tree, this branch takes him to paradise.”

“Miserliness is a tree whose roots are in Hell and whose branches are in the world. Whoever catches a branch of this tree will be taken by it to Hell.”

Allah the Almighty describes Muslims in the following way:

And those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them love those who have fled to them, and do not find in their hearts a need of what they are given, and prefer (them) before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones. (Hashr, 59:9)

O you who believe! spend (benevolently) of the good things that you earn and or what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad that you may spend (in alms) of it, while you would not take it yourselves unless you have its price lowered, and know that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy. (Baqara, 2:267)

Allah the Almighty warns Muslims not to listen to Satan, who invokes miserliness in the hearts of people:

Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to be niggardly, and Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing. (Baqara, 2:268)

The Prophet ﷺ gives the following warnings for those who do not spend in the way of Allah:

“Those who amass wealth have perished, except those who spend it righteously (i.e. in charity.)”

The Prophet ﷺ also informs us that charity does not refer only to material things; in fact he states that the best of charity is to acquire useful knowledge and to teach this knowledge to others.

He also said that Allah is most generous, and he added that Allah loves those who strive to be generous also. According to the Prophet ﷺ, generosity is one of the most essential attributes of Allah the Almighty. Hence he ﷺ advises that if we want to be treated and rewarded generously by Allah we must be generous towards others.

Our Ustadh (qs) continuously reminded us about the merits of generosity. Here I will narrate two instances:

Allah the Almighty revealed to 'Isa (as): *Go and tell my servant so and so that I will give half of his life richness and the other half poverty. Ask him which one he prefers first.*

When 'Isa (as) informed the man about Allah's will for him he answered: "Let me ask my wife about this, then I will answer." His wife was a wise lady, so he described the situation to her and told her his own ideas: "O my wife, Allah revealed our situation to 'Isa, and offered two options concerning our lives. I think we should choose poverty first and wealth in the latter part of our life since it will be difficult to bare poverty when we are old."

His wife who had wisdom and knowledge did not agree with her husband and told him:

"No, we shall first choose riches but will share our wealth with others. We will share our food and our clothes with others."

Because they shared their wealth and their material benefits with others their richness did not end. Allah says in the Qur'an that if his servants give thanks to Allah, He

will be most generous. Hence, He increased their wealth and did not replace it with poverty.

The second thing I will narrate from my Ustadh is the following story:

There was once a man who was excessively miserly. In times of famine he told his wife and daughter:

“Do not give any food from this house to anyone.”

However, when he left the house for some reason and came back he saw a poor man with a loaf of bread in his hand. He asked him: “Where did you get this bread?” The poor man indicated the miserly man’s house as the source of the nicely cooked bread. The man was furious that his daughter had not listened to his words and had given food to the poor man. He immediately returned home and chopped off the hand of his daughter from her wrist. The innocent girl lost her hand because of her good heart.

After some years this girl grew up into a beautiful young woman. Many young men proposed to her and finally she was married to a rich boy. Meanwhile her father who had chopped off her hand died in poverty.

At the first breakfast with her husband, the bride was eating the food with her left hand. Her husband asked her to eat with her right hand. The girl had concealed the absence of her hand from her husband and kept eating with her left hand. Upon this the husband insulted his wife saying:

“What can I expect from you? Poor people like you know no manners.”

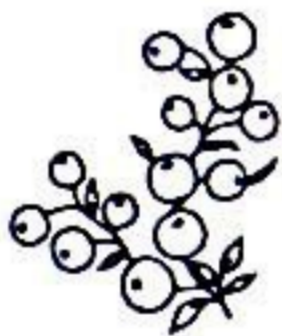
Upon this the young bride heard a voice from nowhere:

“Take out your right hand.”

When the young bride extended her right hand she saw that it had been restored to her. This was a reward for her giving charity and having a good heart. So she started eating with her right hand.

Our Prophet ﷺ said:

“Allah the Almighty shows mercy to those who show mercy to others. Show mercy to those who are on the earth and those who are in Heaven will show mercy to you.”



HIS COMPASSION TOWARDS ALLAH'S CREATURES

In 1968 we performed the blessed Hajj together. During our visit to Madina Munawwara, we stayed in the house of Sayyid Hasan Effendi. The house was very old and damp, which was an ideal environment for insects. The house was also occupied by some snakes, scorpions and some dangerous insects. Because of the difficulty of climbing to the upper floors of the house, our Ustadh was staying on the first floor where the most of the insects lived. In his room there was a hole from which a snake would appear, returning to it after wandering around the room. This concerned me deeply and I informed him that we wanted to move his bed to the second floor and kill the snake. When he learnt that there was a snake in his room he did not feel surprised and told us not to kill the snake but to let it be. He did not permit us to kill the snake, because if a Believer fears the Creator, he has no fear of creation. Even the wildest of beasts would never harm the friends of Allah.

During another Hajj season, our Ustadh was staying with us in the house of Abdul-Sattâr Effendi of Turkistan. The house was near the Ka'ba in the Jiyâd area of the town. Our Ustadh's room faced the street. At midday he came to our room and told us there was somebody outside the house in need of food. I prepared some food and went outside but could not see anyone, so I returned home. Our Ustadh came to our room a second time and informed us, "He came again and looked inside the house." Once more I went outside, where I saw a hungry dog with its tongue hanging out due to its hunger. I immediately gave all the food to the dog, which was so hungry that it ate it all up.

These are but some examples of the compassion that characterises the friends of Allah. Our Ustadh would not even ignore a hungry dog in need. Our Ustadh referred to animals as *servants of Allah*, a term he also used for human beings.



HIS MODESTY

We cannot adequately describe the modesty of our Ustadh (qs) in a limited number of words. He would consider everybody as superior and higher to himself without exception. He would visit the poor and weak, who were looked down upon by others. He would ask for their supplications for himself and he valued these prayers most highly. He would respect all people in accordance with their piety because they were all the creations of Allah.

He would show great love and care for his family, but his appreciation of the people who had upper ranks in the spiritual realm was even higher. He would respect and appreciate them even more than his own family members, especially those who had memorised the Qur'an, those who had knowledge about Islamic sciences, and those who had good character.

Rich or poor, young and old, scholar or layman, a bureaucrat or an ordinary man; to all of them our Ustadh

(qs) would show great modesty and compassion. When he was in the Masjid al-Harâm (the Sacred Mosque) in Makkah, he would kiss the hands of the servants and doorkeepers of the Ka'ba, most of whom were uneducated people. With such deep respect shown to them, these people in return respected and loved our Ustadh greatly. They loved and respected him so much that they used to guide him and his companions to some of the holiest places around the Sacred Mosque, especially the place of Ashâb al-Suffah, even during the most crowded times of pilgrimage.

Among those people who also frequented the area of Ashâb al-Suffah were the previous Mufti of Van (a town in the eastern part of Turkey near the border with Iran) and a Shâdhili Shaikh. Both of them dealt with others quite harshly, and they would immediately rebuke anyone who made a mistake or showed a lack of good manners. However after they experienced the refined and tolerant manners of our Ustadh Sami (qs), who truly possessed the character of a disciple of Muhammad ﷺ, they came to love him deeply. As a result, they changed their own attitudes, and replaced their harshness with mercy, their attitudes of anger with tolerance and forbearance. This was the result of appreciating the a true wayfarer on the path towards Allah the Almighty. Even though such followers do not speak much, their manners speak and teach lessons to others.

Among those who served in the Masjid al-Harâm was a disabled man called Abdul-Qâdir Effendi. Although physically disabled, spiritually he was a man of great strength. Our Ustadh very often would invite

him to dinner and seat him next to him. Abdul-Qâdir Effendi's hands used to shake due to his disability, and he sometimes spilt food on Ustadh's garments. However, our Ustadh would not be concerned about this and he would never embarrass him. He would clean his clothes only after his guest had left.

To have sincere modesty is to possess a great strength. The degree to which one possesses modesty is the degree of his share in humanity. Modesty is the miraculous characteristic of a Believer.

A poet once composed the following verses concerning modesty:

Modesty lies at a highest level of a lofty building
Looking down below you can see Paradise

The modesty of our Ustadh (qs) was not a result of showing off; it came from a deep sincerity, and it was engraved in his nature. The following experience I had with him is one of many examples.

Once he went to the sacred cities of Makka and Madina in the month of Ramadan. His family and one of his spiritual sons accompanied him. He planned to spend all of Ramadan in both of these Holy cities, and to wait until the time of Hajj, spending a total of four months in the Hijaz. Because of his advanced age, they rented a ground floor for his family and the first floor for me, who had the intention of serving them. Two days later, the month of Ramadan started. Everybody began fasting and performing *Tarawîh* (the special prayers offered in the evening during Ramadan.)

The *sahûr* (a pre-dawn meal eaten before a day's fasting) provides energy to those fasting during the daytime. Our Ustadh (qs) and his wife would prepare a large *sahûr* meal for their accompanying friends, and our Ustadh would climb the very steep stairs in order to give the food to the friend who had come to serve them. I was much younger than our Ustadh Sami (qs). Even so, he would not call me to come down to take the food, but would personally carry it upstairs, despite his age.

I would tell him, "We came here in order for me to serve you, please let me come and collect the food from downstairs." Nevertheless the great Ustadh Ramazanoğlu Sami (qs) continued to do what he was doing out of modesty. I could not hold back my tears before such benevolence.

Our Ustadh (qs) gathered all the best characteristics in his personality. His face was always friendly and smiling, his speech was always pleasant and beneficial to his followers, and all his actions with others were gentle and friendly. He would never refuse anything as long as it was in accordance with Islamic Law. He would forgive any mistakes done against him if the person responsible apologised. He was full of mercy towards all his friends without bearing any grudge or lingering thoughts on the matter. All his dealings with others were undertaken with the deepest sincerity.

Because he was so modest he would dislike an excessive show of respect towards him. When people in the two Sacred Mosques, in other holy places, or in meetings showed him a great deal of reverence and love,

he would respond to them; "I am only a poor servant of Allah."

One day when one of his spiritual sons asked him to remove the state of *kabz* (a state of excessive spiritual stress on the disciple without knowing the reason) from him he answered:

"O my Son! I am a poor slave of Allah. (It is He who helps the needy). Ask forgiveness from Him and ask the help from the soul of the Prophet and recite the following supplication:

Allahumma sallî 'alâ Sayyidi-nâ Muhammadin tibbi l-qulûbi wa dawâ' i-hâ wa 'âfiyati l-abdâni wa shifâ' i-hâ wa nûri absâri wa diyâ' i-hâ wa 'alâ âli-hi wa sahbi-hi wa sallam.

O Allah! Benedictions be to Muhammad, the curer of hearts, the healer of bodies, the light of the eyes. Benedictions be upon his family and his Companions.

After this, the brother followed the advice and his state of *kabz* was replaced with that of *bast* (spiritual happiness) with the permission of Allah, the help of the Prophet ﷺ, and the spiritual assistance of our Ustadh (qs).

Our beloved Prophet ﷺ gave us much golden advice about being modest, such as the following:

Allah the Almighty commanded me to be modest.

If one shows modesty for the sake of Allah, He raises him to a high rank.

You can not be an ascetic unless you are modest.

It is of modesty to accompany the poor.

Shall I inform you the people of the paradise? They are

always the people of modesty, if they swear by Allah, Allah grants to them their wishes. Shall I inform you the people of the Hell? They are tyrants, rough and proud people.

What a beautiful characteristic it is to show modesty without one humiliating himself and what a good characteristic it is to earn halâl (Islamically permissible) sustenance without resorting to harâm (Islamically prohibited) and what a felicitous thing it is to accompany those who have knowledge of Islamic law and wisdom.

It is through Allah's purification (of one's character) that He guides him (to the truth) and beautifies his appearance. He raises him to a high rank with his modesty. Allah bestows four characteristics upon those whom He loves:

- 1 - Not speaking needlessly and with bad words
- 2 - Trusting in Allah
- 3 - Modesty
- 4 - Keeping aloof from evil people

Generosity is *taqwâ* (Being conscious of Allah), Modesty is a high honour, and a strong faith is the richness of heart.

A Believer must be modest and accompany the poor. In that way he or she earns a high place in the sight of Allah, and this removes pride from the heart.

Modesty only increases one's value. Be modest so as Allah will raise your (status).

One day the Prophet ﷺ said: "What is happening that I cannot see the sweetness of worship in you?"

The Companions asked what was the sweetness of worship he ﷺ replied:

“Modesty!”

The Prophet ﷺ once said:

“Allah commanded me to be modest, so let none of you become proud.”

Those who desire the perfection of faith should show modesty and give charity in a state of poverty. These two characteristics take one to the status of the Perfect Human (*Insân Kâmil*).

Uways al-Qarnî (qs) said:

“I searched for a high station and found it in modesty”.

Ahmad b. Antaqî said:

“The best kind of modesty is the one which removes arrogance (*kibr*) and destroys anger (towards others).”

Junayd al-Baghdâdî (qs) described modesty in the following way:

“Modesty is to feel need only of Allah (*Glorified is He!*), and not to consider yourself as superior to the people of the two worlds.”

Abu Bakr Warrâq (qs) said:

“The knowledge of certainty (*yaqîn*) makes the heart modest and perfects it.”

Ibn Sammâk said:

“The best modesty is that you do not consider yourself better than any other person.”

Abdullah b. Mubâarak (qs) said:

“Modesty is to show pride to those who are proud and to show modesty to those who are modest.”

Sulayman Dârâni said:

“Modesty is not to have pride because of your religious deeds and not to spoil your *nafs*” (believing that you have done enough good deeds for the Hereafter.)

He also added that:

“As long as the servant of Allah sees himself and his actions as the sole owner and agent of the good deeds he does and ignores Allah’s help, he or she can never be considered a modest person.”

Fudhayl b. Iyâdh emphasised a different aspect of modesty when he said:

“It is to accept the Truth (*Haqq*) from whoever or wherever it comes, even if it comes from a child or an ignorant man.”

Ahmad al-Rifâ’î said:

“The signs of wisdom are three: To be patient in times of difficulty, to be modest in times of ease and richness, and to undertake every action in moderation.”

Some ignorant people think that *tasawwuf* consists of *qîl* and *qâl* (idle talk), performing certain rituals, and other external things such as wearing special garments, but this is not true. A Sufi can only attain perfection through spiritual acts such as modesty, being upright, tolerance of the mistakes of others, by forsaking worldly things and by spending wealth for the sake of Allah (*Glory be to Him*).”

On another occasion he states that to be a good slave of Allah one needs to have the following four characteristics.

1-To have an upright character

2-To be modest

3-To be generous

4-To act against the desires of the lower self

Modesty brings love towards others, and to have the characteristic of being happy with little, it brings comfort and happiness into one's life.

According to Yusuf b. Asbât (qs) the final station of modesty is to regard the people you meet in the street as better than you.

"A little fear of Allah brings more reward than a little worship, and a little modesty brings more result than striving."

Yahya b. Mu'âdh (qs) said:

"Modesty is the highest point of piety."

Hamdûn Qassâr (qs) said:

"Modesty is to see others not in need of you, both in this world and the next."

Ahmad al-Farûki al-Sirhindi (qs) said:

"Be like earth (in modesty) and you can give life to roses. It is roses which support roses."

The Prophet 'Isa (as) once said:

"You can have a good harvest in soft earth with

plenty of rain. In the mountains and in harsh soils you cannot have a good harvest. Similarly wisdom grows in modest and soft hearts, not in the hearts of those who are not modest. If one raises his head he hits it on the roof and gets injured. If he keeps it low, the roof shades him and benefits him."

Amr b. Shayba said:

"I was between Safâ' and Marwâ in the holy city of Makkah when I saw a man with members of his entourage. He was treating them badly. There were many signs that the rich man lived an opulent and luxurious life. After many years when I was in Baghdad, I saw a man in old, worn-out clothing, with bare feet and head. I remembered his face from somewhere. When I stared at the man carefully he asked me why I looked at him so intently. I told him that I remembered him from somewhere. The man said, "I am the one you have seen before in the holy places. Because I showed arrogance where I should have been modest, Allah caused me to come into this bad situation."

Muhammad Bahâ'uddin Naqshband (qs) said:

"On this path the disciple should be modest. People say that why there is no long fasting and difficult worship (*riyâdhah*) on this path? Is there anything more difficult than attaining modesty?"

Our Ustadh (qs) would read the biography of Salmân al-Fârisî ؑ to us, since there was great wisdom in this story. In the early stages of his life Salmân ؑ was a fire worshipper. But because of his love for Allah and the

true religion he left his homeland, his family and parents. In his long life he suffered all sorts of difficulties and tortures. These difficulties he faced did not decrease his strong desire to find the truth. Rather, they increased his will to do so. He served many people free of charge for the sake of Allah. Finally he heard about the Prophet ﷺ and spent whatever he had in pursuit of finding him. Because of his sincerity, he finally found the Prophet, He who is the honour of the world.

Salmân al-Fârisî was a man of impeccable Islamic character. He sacrificed his well-being for others; he was modest and trusting of Allah, and he gave his full devotion to Allah. For these reasons he was very popular among the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. Therefore the Ansâr (the Helpers) and the Muhâjirûn would both claim, "Salmân is one from amongst us." The Prophet ﷺ, to honour Salmân, used to say:

"Salmân is from us, from the *Ahl al-Bayt* (from my family)".

Salmân ﷺ had the purest of hearts. The Prophet would talk privately with him and have conversations with him in the evenings. The venerable Salmân ﷺ had a well-organised life. He would carry out his duties towards his Lord and towards his friends, and he gave each one his due attention.

The following is narrated from Abu Juhaifa:

The Prophet made a bond of brotherhood between Salmân and Abu l-Darda. Salmân paid a visit to Abu l-Darda and found Umm al-Darda dressed in shabby

clothes. He asked her why she was in such a state. She replied, "Your brother Abu l-Darda is not interested in (the luxuries of) this world." In the meantime Abu l-Darda' came and prepared a meal for Salmân. Salmân requested that Abu l-Darda eat with him, but Abu l-Darda said, "I am fasting." Salmân said, "I am not going to eat unless you eat." So, Abu l-Darda ate with him.

Later that night, Abu l-Darda got up to offer the night prayer, but Salmân told him to sleep, and Abu l-Darda slept. After some time Abu l-Darda got up a second time, but Salmân again told him to sleep. Finally, in the last hours of the night Salmân told Abu l-Darda to get up, and both of them offered the prayer. Salmân told Abu l-Darda, "Your Lord has a right over you, your soul has a right over you, and your family has a right over you; so you should make sure you give all those who have a right over you their rights." Abu l-Darda came to the Prophet and narrated to him everything that had happened. The Prophet said, "Salmân has spoken the truth." (Bukhari, v. 3, Book 31, No. 189)

Our beloved Ustadh (qs) told us that we should take Salmân al-Fârisî as an example in both spiritual and worldly affairs. We should not be deceived by the beauty of this world. We should remember that we have been created in the best stature, and that our true place is the Hereafter, not in this world.

In all states, whether they are times of difficulty or times of affliction, we must always be with Allah. This world hides many surprises. Allah manifests Himself to everyone in different ways. The destiny of the Believers is sometimes in wealth and sometimes poverty; in either

of these states we must know that our most important sacred duty is to obey the commandments of Allah. If we sincerely and constantly carry out this duty, Allah the Almighty will be happy with us. As a result we will receive the riches of the two worlds.

The worldly life is very short, only a brief moment. Hence, do not waste it on petty and insignificant things. Submit yourselves to the will of Allah (Glory be unto Him) with all your hearts. Follow the commandments of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of our Prophet ﷺ, and refrain from what is harâm (Islamically prohibited). Do not forget the significance of the prayers and duties prescribed for you. Perform them constantly and sincerely with great care. Always mention the names of Allah with your tongue and remember Him in your heart. Be resilient in your religious and worldly affairs. Always give thanks to Allah the Almighty for the benefits he has conferred upon you. Always try to mix with good and pious people. Serve your people and the Ummah as best you can.

In some of his talks, our Ustadh (qs) would tell us of the sermons of the famous orator Quss b. Sa'idah from the tribe of Iyâd. By keeping the words of these sermons always in our minds, we can truly understand the transitory nature of this world.

He said: "O people! Come and listen to me and learn from what I tell you. The living die and the dead decompose. The earth is given water with the rain and then grass grows. Children are born and they replace their parents. The circle of life goes on and on. However, one day all things created will disappear from the face of the earth.

Look at the peoples of Âd and Thamûd, look at Pharoah and Nimrod, they were more powerful than you are today; take heed from their example. See what happened to them for not obeying the commandments of their Lord. Their mighty lands turned to dust, their bones crumbled, and now there is no trace even of their mighty kingdoms but shells where wild dogs dwell.”

In almost all his talks our Ustadh would talk about the benefits of eating little. He would say that the essence of good health is eating little.

The Prophet ﷺ said that if a Believer eats little for the sake of Allah, Allah (Glorious is He) fills his heart with divine light.

He also said:

“The hearts of those who are accustomed to eating excessively, become hardened (hence they cannot remember Allah)”

The crown of the Prophets, Hadhrat Muhammad ﷺ again said:

“Enlighten your hearts through hunger. In order to fight your *nafs* (lower self), use hunger and thirst as weapons. Knock on the doors of the Paradise with hunger. The reward of those who fight the *nafs* will be as with those who fight the enemy in the battlefield. There is no better deed than training the *nafs* through hunger and thirst. Those who always keep their stomach full cannot enter to the realm of spirituality. Such people cannot get pleasure from spiritual things and cannot get the taste of the worship.”

In another hadith the Prophet drew a parallel between the heart and a tree sapling. He said:

“Do not kill your hearts through eating excessively. The heart is like a sapling; if it is over-watered it will die; similarly, a full stomach kills right thinking and good character.”

“When a man eats little, his heart is filled with Light”

“The mother of all diseases is to fill the stomach excessively”

One of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, ‘Urwah b. Zubair said:

I have never seen a better person than ‘Ali in understanding the meaning of the Qur’an, the obligations of Islam and those things that are harâm, the poetry of Arabs, and the science of genealogy. Some of his reported sayings concerning hunger are as follows:

“Keep knocking upon the door of the King.”

His friends asked:

“How do we knock upon the door of the King?”

‘Ali replied:

“Through hunger and thirst.”

Hadhrat ‘Ali ﷺ said:

“One day I asked Abu Bakr ﷺ how he had attained such a high spiritual state, which was higher than all others. He answered that he had reached this state by performing five things:

1 - I found people either seeking the glamour of this

world or the bounties of the Hereafter. I myself preferred my Lord.

2 - After I became Muslim I have never eaten my fill.

3 - After I became Muslim I have never fully satisfied my thirst.

4 - Whenever I had to choose between striving for this life and striving for the Hereafter, I always preferred the Hereafter.

5 - I always attended the Prophet's suhbats. I never left his company."

Imam Sharânî advised us:

"O my son! One of the causes of following this path in a healthy way is hunger, and not eating excessively. If you want to be registered in the register of the successful you must eat little, only enough to sustain you. If you leave the table after eating only this amount, you will have made a vital gain over Satan."

Sulayman al-Dârânî (qs) once said: "Everything is rusted by something, and the heart is rusted by a full stomach. An empty stomach is a treasure. Allah bestows it on whom He is pleased with. Hunger is the key to the Hereafter and gluttony is the key to being full of worldliness. I prefer eating a morsel less than my normal amount over spending all night in prayer. As the sun sets, the world is covered in darkness. Similarly the heart is covered in darkness through a full stomach. The most enjoyment I receive from worship is the time when my stomach is completely empty."

Junayd al-Baghdâdî said: "We did not attain *tasawwuf* by hearsay. We attained it through hunger."

Bâyazid al-Bistâmi said:

"Hunger is a cloud which produces the rains of wisdom. When the stomach is empty the heart is soft and more perceptive. When it is full however, the heart becomes arrogant."

Dhu'l-Nûn al-Misrî (qs) said that he never filled his stomach, as whenever it was full he either committed sin or was inclined to commit sin.

Ahmad al-Rifâ'î (qs) said:

"In order to purify one's heart and spiritual insight one needs to eat little and drink little. Hunger prevents ostentation, boasting and harming others. The ego is trained through hunger. In my experience I have found that nothing is as effective as hunger in subduing the *nafs*."

Yahya b. Mu'âdh al-Râzî said:

"Hunger is a divine light, eating one's fill is fire, and the appetite is fuel for the Hell-fire. Whenever a servant of Allah eats to his full, he loses a divine favour which he can never replace. Hunger is the food of the truthful (*siddîq*) which is bestowed from Allah the Almighty."

A saint once said: "I seek refuge with Allah from the Sufi who fills his stomach with all sorts of food and thus corrupts it."

The mother of the believers, Aisha ؓ said:

"Try to open the doors of the kingdom of Heaven."

They asked:

“How should we do this?”

She answered:

“Through hunger and thirst.”

The great friend of Allah, Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu (qs), emphasised the significance of eating and drinking little in his book, *Mukerrem Insân* (The Honoured Human) and said:

They asked the doctors, “What is the best of cures?”

They answered, “Eating little.”

The people of wisdom were asked how they found so much power and courage in worshipping Allah.

They answered, “Eating little.”

The ascetics were asked, “What makes the bond between man and Allah stronger?”

They answered, “Eating little.”

The scholars were asked, “What is the best of states for encouraging learning.”

They answered, “The state of hunger and eating little.”

There are so many benefits in eating little:

1- There is purity of mind and heart in hunger. The mind is stronger when the body is stronger. In excessive eating on the other hand there is forgetfulness and stupidity.

2- In hunger there is softness of heart. The heart

benefits from worship and takes pleasure. With a full stomach the heart is hard and merciless.

3- A hungry man thinks of the poor, whereas a man with a full stomach never remembers the poor and the needy.

4- In a state of hunger the desires of the animal soul are weakened. When the stomach is full, the animal soul is strong and the desires are offensive.

5- The body is agile and awake when it is hungry. On the other hand when it is full it feels sleepy and heedless.

6- When the stomach is full one feels lazy in serving Allah. On the other hand when the stomach is empty one feels ready serve Allah.

7- Overeating makes the body weak and unhealthy, lazy and slow. On the other hand eating lightly makes one healthier, faster and lighter.

9- Hunger makes a person more sensitive to the poor, and as a result makes one more generous towards them. Those who do not suffer from hunger at all do not understand the suffering of the poor.

A full stomach urges the *nafs* to act in order to satisfy its base desires. On the other hand, fasting when it is performed without going to extremes opens up the faculties of meditation and makes the human heart more sensitive to the divine realities.

Our dear Ustadh (qs) was very sensitive and careful in eating food. Before eating he would always wash his hands. He would sit on his knees, and never stretch his

back towards a wall. He would eat whatever was served and would not ask for something special. If there were a large variety of food he would take little pieces from each of the offerings. Before he began eating he uttered *Bismillâh* (In the name of Allah) and finish eating with *al-Hamdu lillâh* (Praise be to Allah).

He would start eating his food first with salt. He would then take little pieces of food and chew it carefully without rushing. If the food was very hot he would not blow on it but wait until it was cooler.

He was always very careful, eating food in a state of full consciousness of his Lord, who had provided this food, in silence and peace. He would say that the food which is eaten in a state rushing and carelessness causes heedlessness. If the food is taken carefully it would help the disciple to attain perfection on the spiritual path.

He would always eat his food with great gratitude to Allah, even if the food was a piece of dry bread. He never complained about the food, whether it was salty, under-cooked, over-cooked or anything else.

He would prefer to eat sitting on the ground, but if the meal was served at the table he would not reject it. If the food was served on separate plates for each person, he would wait until the food was served to everyone and never start before then. When everybody was served he would start eating together with everyone. He would eat carefully without spilling the food. He would leave the table leaving his plates and the tissue in an orderly way. He would not leave a mess behind.

He liked to be punctual at mealtimes. He did not like unnecessary delays in serving food.

He would finish the meal with the salt again, and would recite the following supplication:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَطْعَمَنَا وَسَقَانَا وَجَعَلَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ.
 اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ واحْفَظْ صَاحِبَ الطَّعَامِ وَالْآكِلِينَ
 وَلِمَنْ سَعَى فِيهِ وَلِجَمِيعِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤِمِنَاتِ. اللَّهُمَّ
 نَوِّرْ قُلُوبَنَا بِأَنْوَارِ مَحَبَّتِكَ وَذِكْرِكَ يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ
 وَالْإِكْرَامِ. اللَّهُمَّ أَحِينَا حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً بِالصُّحَّةِ وَالسَّلَامَةِ
 وَالْعَافِيَةِ فِي الدِّينِ وَالدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 قَدِيرٌ. اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْأَلُكَ تَمَامَ النُّعْمَةِ وَدَوَامَ الْعَافِيَةِ وَحُسْنَ
 الْخَاتِمَةِ. اللَّهُمَّ زِدْ وَلَا تَنْقُصْ بِحُرْمَةِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ
 عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَبِحُرْمَةِ الْفَاتِحَةِ.

Praise be to Allah who gave us food and drink and made us Muslims. O Allah! Protect the host who has provided this food and show mercy to him as well as those who partook of the food. Show mercy to those who helped in preparing the food, and all Muslims, male and female. O my Lord! Enlighten our hearts with Your light and Your remembrance, O possessor of majesty and bounty. O Lord! Give us a life of health, peace and safety both in religious and worldly matters, both in this world as well as in the Hereafter. You are all-powerful. O my Lord! I ask thee to perfect your favours and continuity of health, and a good

final breath. O my Lord! Increase but do not decrease for the sake of your Messenger ﷺ.

His dislike of being praised

Our respected Ustadh (qs) disliked being praised and would even feel sad if someone praised him. If someone praised him he would never take it personally and would say *Bismillah* (In the name of Allah). In this way he would remind everyone that everything in the universe takes place by the permission of Allah. However, he was careful not to hurt the feelings of his enthusiastic companions.

How happy and fortunate are the modest servants of Allah. They have lost themselves so much in love of Allah that they do not care whether others praise them or reproach them.

He would not praise others in their presence. However he would praise the pious people in their absence so that people would know that they should keep them in high esteem. Praising people to their faces is inappropriate behaviour, but this is quite common nowadays. Due to excessive praising, people become proud of themselves and become boastful. In this way the *nafs* is elevated. We should be aware that the lower self always waits for the disciple to have a heedless moment, and hits back. We must never help the lower self by praising people to their faces. Hence our Ustadh did not praise his disciples in their presence. However, he would show his pleasure with a disciple by smiling and treating him kindly.

The murîds around him would understand their mistakes from his implication and would correct their

behaviour. Most of them had a divine light and insight which would help them to behave correctly in the presence of their master and serve him properly.

The sole desire of the Perfect Guide (*al-Murshid al-Kâmil*) is to take his murîds to Allah by protecting them from the spiritual diseases of the *nafs*. He does not let them become arrogant or boastful, or entertain other vices of the ego. Once the disciple considers himself self-important, it is very difficult to treat this vice. Even the perfect masters cannot help those who possess pride over others and think themselves better than others. Pride veils the disciple from the spiritual world due to the vanity of the *nafs*. Such people cannot respect their masters and cannot accept their mistakes.

Similarly when the patient is in the final stages of a fatal disease a doctor cannot help. When death is destined, no medicine is of benefit. Similarly when the heart is dead spiritually, no master can help. The only thing to be done is to take refuge in Allah from such people.

The heart possesses a unique place on man's spiritual path. Allah manifests Himself in the heart of a Believer. When it loses its purity and spiritual health it is darkened by disbelief and doubts. The owner of such a heart changes from faith to disbelief. He falls from the lofty skies of spirituality to the vulgarity of egotism.

HIS SUHBATS (SUFİ DISCOURSES)

Ustadh Sami (qs) would keep silent for hours and would not speak if there was no need to do so. At such times he would always be in contemplation and in remembrance of Allah. He was similar to Abu Bakr and other great friends of Allah in this respect. When the disciples were in his presence they would sense this. However, when they left his talks they could not keep this spiritual state.

Ustadh Sami (qs) disliked it when the dervishes spoke in his presence unnecessarily. One of his close associates¹ recollects:

“In the early days of my entering the spiritual path I was thinking of asking questions very often and learning about the path. Our Ustadh showed signs of displeasure and frowned when I started questioning him. In this way

1. This is Musa Effendi himself. (Translator's note).

he implied to me that asking unnecessary questions is no good for the development of the disciple. I understood my mistake and changed my behaviour. Although I have served him many years I could not dare to ask him many questions except the very essential ones."

After twenty or twenty two years of my togetherness with him one day I found the courage to ask:

"Sir! I have been serving you many years but I could not ask you many questions. I realise on the other hand that many people ask you questions and benefit from you more. What are your thoughts on this situation?"

He answered:

"The people of submission do not need to ask questions. This is also the opinion of the great spiritual pillar, Abdul-Qâdir Jaylânî."

During his long trips through Anatolia and the Holy Lands, days would pass through uttering only a few words. He would use only essential words, except the words concerning the heart. When the subject was the heart, he would speak for hours, and he would never tire of speaking. He would speak of only that which was necessary.

Our Ustadh (qs) appreciated people who had good manners. He would give extra care to their education and training. He liked them to attain high spiritual characteristics and he prayed to Allah the Almighty for their success.

In Madina he would visit Mawlânâ Ziyauddin Qâdirî. Their meeting would continue for about half an hour. He would say *Assalamu 'Alaikum* (Peace be unto you) when

he entered and say *Assalamu 'Alaikum* when he left, and in between they would not speak at all; They both remained silent.

Our Prophet ﷺ, the best of Allah's creation, advised us to speak little.

1. The act most loved by Allah is to hold one's tongue.

2. An act better than the giving of charity is to keep the tongue from saying unlawful things.

3. Silence is the best of good manners.

4. To refrain oneself from saying unnecessary things.

5. To refrain from doing so is an act of worship.

6. Silent contemplation is written in the book of deeds and is an atonement for sins.

7. Whoever sees in this world the Gnostic who speaks little and wishes to be near him shall attain wisdom.

8. Silence is wisdom in action; in useless talk many mistakes are committed.

9. Most of the mistakes man makes come from the tongue.

10. On the Day of Judgement the one with the most sins shall be the one who has spoken the most.

11. Our Prophet ﷺ said: "The one who flees from one who talks too much and unnecessarily is one who has fine manners."

12. Guard your tongue; happy is the one who is protected from what is said by it.

13. Men of wisdom have made the following point: They concern themselves with the state of the afterlife and speak not of matters outside of it.

Mu'âdh ibn al-Jabal ؓ said:

“O Messenger of Allah! Give me some advice”

He ؓ pointed to his tongue and replied:

“Be careful of your tongue.”

Mu'âdh ؓ again said:

“O Messenger of Allah! Please give me some more advice.”

He ؓ replied:

“You are missing the point, Mu'adh! The only reason men will be thrown on their faces into Hell will be because of the tongue.”

The Prophet 'Isa (as) said: “Do not talk excessively, lest your heart be darkened.”

One of the Companions ؓ said:

“If you feel hardness in your heart and laziness in your body, and find insufficiency in your sustenance, then you should know that the reason is that you have spoken about unnecessary things.”

Fudhayl ibn Iyâd (qs) said:

“When one considers their own state, one cannot talk much (considering that speaking is an act that will be taken account of), and he or she only speaks of those things that are beneficial. The tongues of those who know Allah are bound and they cannot speak.”

Hasan al-Basrî (qs) said:

“The people of heart prefer silence; they speak only when their hearts compel them to do so.”

The people asked Dhu'l-nûn:

“How can one refrain from sinning?”

His answer was:

“Those who control their tongue can refrain from this.”

Sulayman Dârânî (qs) said:

“Gnosis is nearer to silence than to speaking.”

Abu 'Uthmân Nûrî (qs) said:

“We have two essentials on this path: To keep silent and to be satisfied with the knowledge of Allah.”

Abu Hâzim al-Makkî (qs) said:

“People should take care of their words more than their steps; if speaking is silver, silence is golden. Good and beneficial speech is a miracle. Speaking little is safer, since one commits many mistakes by talking much. One can protect his honour better by talking little. If you want to protect yourself from mistakes you should speak little.”

Suqa b. Muhammad (qs) said:

“O my son! The Muslims before you would not enjoy unnecessary talking. Apart from talking about the divine realities of the Quran, advising people of the good and warning them of the evil they would deem everything else unnecessary.”

Luqmân the Wise once said:

“Silence is wisdom but those who practise it are unfortunately very few.”

One of the people of wisdom said:

“There are seven thousand good things in keeping silent. These are summarised in seven sentences.

1 - Silence is an easy act of worship.

2 - Silence is the greatest jewel that can adorn the human character.

3 - Silence gives awe and respect without worldly power.

4 - Silence is a castle protecting one from harm.

5 - By talking little, one does not need to make apologies.

6 - Silence gives comfort to the personal angels of the servant (since they cannot find something wrong to record).

7 - Silence is a cover for the defects of one's character.

The famous Turkish Sufi and poet Yunus Emre once said:

“Speaking little is a characteristic of man; to make noise (continuously) is a characteristic of wild beasts.”

These words are sufficient for those who understand, if they have intelligence.

In the gatherings of our Ustadh (qs), the following books were read and studied: *Fath al-Rabbani* and *Futûh al-Ghayb* by Abdul-Qâdir al-Jaylânî, *Ihyâ' 'Ulûm al-Dîn*

and *Mukâshafat al-Qulûb* by Imam al-Ghazali, *Hâlat ahl al-Hakîkah Maallah* by Ahmad al-Rifâ'î, *Tanbîh al-Mughtarrîn* by Imam al-Sharânî, Muhammad al-Hânî's *Adab*, Ismail Haqqi al-Bursavî's *Rûh al-Bayân*. Although Muhyiddin Ibn Arabî was dear to his heart he would not read his books in his gatherings. He believed that not everybody could understand the language in his books. Only those who reach the highest level of sainthood can understand him.

Today many of those who do not know the essence of *tasawwuf* read Sufi books without satisfying the necessary conditions needed to approach these books. Hence they do not understand them, and thus misguide both themselves and others.

On the other hand, Allah the Almighty produces many saints at different times, and through them people are guided. They have perfected the level of servitude to Allah. Concerning this,

Baha'uddîn Naqshband said:

"If Hallâj was in our time we would prevent him from saying *Anâ al-Haqq*" (lit. "I am the divine truth" or "I am the Lord". He was executed for this statement and has remained since a controversial figure in Islam)

One of our friends in Adana attained the state of *Anâ al-Haqq* (I am the divine truth). When our master heard this he said: He must say *Anta al-Haqq* (You are the divine truth). As a result this friend's state changed and he left this state.

THE TRADITIONS OF THE PROPHET HE WOULD NARRATE FREQUENTLY

In his gatherings he would read the following hadiths in order to strengthen our faith.

'Abdullah ibn 'Abbâs ؓ said:

One day as I was about to leave the presence of the Prophet ﷺ he said to me:

"O youth! I wish to impress upon you a number of words that you may take heed of. Take care to obey the laws of Allah and you shall meet Him. When you ask for something, ask of it only from Allah; if you wish for something, then wish for it only from Allah. Know that if all of creation were to come together to give you something of benefit or profit, it would not be more than what Allah has granted for you; and if all of creation were to come together to harm you, it would not be any less than what has been decreed for you. The pen has completed its work and has been lifted from the pages.

(Tirmidhi Kiyamet 2518 Musnad Vol P293/303)

The following is another narration from Tirmidhi:

“Take care that you remain aware of Allah and you have love for Him in your heart so that when you are going through bad times you may carry this love with you. Know that according to the divine decrees of Allah nothing can harm you other than what has been decreed for you; and what has been decreed for you, you cannot escape from. Know that help of Allah and patience is together with pain, stress and troubles of heart, with every difficulty there is ease.”

See how the heart of a believer is as a mirror that shines according to the deeds one does. Strive until your final breath and by Allah’s mercy and grace you will be brought safe and sound from the trials of this world and the next!

(‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbâs ؓ)

Therefore in this noble hadith it is explained that everything is always in accordance with the divine decrees of Allah and nothing can happen without the permission of Allah. Therefore, one who knows this sees all things as a sign from Allah.

The slave of Allah sees everything as belonging to Allah, and therefore no matter what happens, be it sadness or misfortune, he or she knows that all comes from no other power but Allah’s. The servant of Allah therefore depends upon no-one else but Allah, the Absolute; neither friend, family, money nor fame.

When the servant of Allah understands that Allah is the sole owner of the universe and all creation is under

his command, he or she does not depend on human beings, regardless of whatever high positions they may occupy. Such a person does not depend on their children, wealth or position. They know that whatever happens in the universe is by Allah's divine will. They know that Allah the Almighty will open a door to salvation for them in times of difficulty and so they show patience when faced with calamities.

Therefore our Ustadh disliked those who always complained about the difficulties of life and displaying impatience with hurt faces. Showing displeasure at one's difficulties is a sign of ignorance and heedlessness concerning the Divine Will (*Qadr*). A disciple should not befriend such people since this kind of spiritual disease can be transmitted to pure souls. We should not talk to them more than necessary.

Ibrahim Dussûkî (qs) said:

"I want to see my disciples cheerful and joyful."

We should understand this, that a disciple should be smiling, and content with his or her situation. Those who attain a tranquil heart (*qalb salîm*) are content with the divine plan of Allah. Such people spread happiness to others and never cause offence. This is the sign of being conscious of Allah.

The second level of this state is not to be offended by the wrongdoings of others (if it is only a personal issue and not against religion; in that case one cannot be silent against the wrongdoers.) This is the characteristic of the lovers of Allah, that they do not give attention to personal

problems. The people of heart do not wait for any reward for their good deeds. They expect reward only from Allah the Almighty:

The day when wealth and sons are of no avail (to any man) "only he (will prosper) who brings to Allah a sound heart" (Shu'arâ, 26:88-89)

Hearts belong to five groups. The rejecters of the faith possess a dead heart. The hearts with love of the world are unhealthy hearts. The heedless heart is the one which is caught between worldly desires and the call of the divine invitation. The awakened heart is the heart of the one who always mentions the name of Allah and always remembers Him. Finally there is the living heart, which belongs to the prophets, the companions of the prophets, and the friends of Allah.

May Allah protect our hearts from all sorts of spiritual diseases such as love of the world and its ornaments. May Allah give us power to fight against the desires of the lower self and the temptations of Satan; may Allah give us sound hearts (*qulûb salîma*).

Ibrahim Dussûkî (qs) said:

"To befriend the people who are contaminated by sinning darkens the heart and the eye. Such a friendship kills the heart and such a person cannot differentiate between the right and the wrong."

HIS MANNERS IN OFFERING SACRIFICES TO ALLAH (GLORY BE UNTO HIM)

In order to attain Allah's pleasure our Ustadh advised the offering of sacrifices to Allah and the giving of charity. These kinds of worshipping protect one from calamities and diseases. Hence our Ustadh would pay for a sacrificial animal and slaughter it. He would choose the best animal, which had no defects. Before the slaughter he would make a big hole for the blood of the animal, and sharpen the knife so that the animal did not suffer greatly. Then he would ask the butcher to bind the eyes of the animal with a clean shirt. He would be near the sacrifice all the time during the slaughtering and skinning. He would wait with great respect as if he were about to perform the prayer. After all the procedures of the sacrifice had been completed, he would go inside and perform two units of prayer in order to thank Allah and ask Him to accept his sacrifice.

On one occasion in Bursa he was waiting for the butcher to finish the slaughtering. The weather was very cold and we asked him to wait indoors. He did not accept the invitation. Then we offered him a chair, but he did not sit. Instead he waited, standing. Nowadays people do not respect the worship of sacrifice. Sufis say that worshipping Allah takes one to Paradise. On the other hand, worshipping Allah with full respect takes one to the vision of Allah.

His Manner of Receiving Guests

Our Ustadh had a very organised life. When someone wanted to visit him he would give him an appointment. He would always receive his guest on time. He would dress up nicely and would not accept the guest in his everyday garments. He would meet the guest outside with a smiling face. He would talk about whatever was good and beneficial for the guest. Depending on the good will of the visitor and his intention, he would benefit from the visit and depart happily. Again, our Ustadh would see the guest off from the outside door.

Especially in Ramadan when hosted *Iftar* (the evening meal for breaking the fast), he liked to serve his guests personally. However, if the guests insisted that he be seated, he would sit down to respect their wishes, and others would serve the food.

At public dinners he would wash his hands very quickly so that others would not be kept waiting. However, when he was alone he would take his time washing his hands. Similarly, when he performed the

ritual prayers he chose short chapters of the Qur'an if someone was waiting, but when he was alone he chose to recite longer chapters.

He would always find something to give as gifts. He would even give something which was given to him a few minutes before as a gift. In that way he strictly followed the advice of the Prophet ﷺ:

“Give each other gifts in order to establish love amongst each other.”

Hence giving gifts to our friends and guests is a Sunnah of the Prophet. One day a poor lady wanted to give something as a gift to Aisha, the mother of the believers. She rejected the gift, thinking that the woman was poor. Hearing that, the Prophet ﷺ told her, “O Aisha, you had better accept the gift and give her something more valuable in return.”

Some people think that not accepting gifts is a more pious behaviour. It is true that some friends of Allah did not accept gifts, but this is an exceptional attitude. Accepting and giving gifts is Islamic behaviour, and should be practiced by the Believers. However, the motivating purpose for this should be the pleasure of Allah. If there is an expectation of worldly benefit it is of no benefit.



HIS VISITS AND SERVICES TO OTHERS

Our Ustadh Mahmud Sami (qs) would always visit Muslim scholars and other Sufis at the times of Eid. Among these scholars and Sufis were the following: Haji Nuri Effendi, Alasonryali Jamal Effendi, Shaikh Abdul-Hay Effendi, Shaikh 'Ali Haydar Effendi, Shaikh Shafiq Arvasi Effendi, Shaikh Mahmud Kotku Effendi, the scholar of Hadith Bakir Haki Effendi, 'Ali Yakta Effendi, Omar Nasuhi Effendi, Sulayman Effendi of Silistra, Mustafa Effendi of Bayindir.

Even though many of these personalities did not return the visit due to old age or neglect, our Master would not get angry with them or become sad about this, and he would continue visiting these people in the same manner he always had. When they apologised for their negligence he would answer: It is our duty to visit you without expecting the return. Since he did not expect any thanks or response he would never feel dispirited.

When our Ustadh was a murîd in the Sufi lodge, all the difficult duties were on his shoulders. He would tend to the garden, as well as deal with the problems of the visitors who came to see the Pir, including the answering of letters which were written to the Pir.

Mustafa Doğanay of Konya remembers that in those days in the lodge Mahmud Sami (qs) would sleep very little. "He would do most of the work such as preparing other people's beds. He would never feel tired. We all would go to bed at the same time. However, after everybody slept he would get up. After renewing his ablution he would perform his devotions until morning time, praising the holy names of Allah and contemplating the secrets of the creation on his prayer rug. Before the Morning Prayer time he would bring wood from the garden and set a fire in the bath to heat water for those who needed to make *ghusl* (major ablution). Because of his kindness and his service to his brethren everybody loved him".

When Allah the Almighty loves one of His servants He puts mercy and love into the heart of His servant, and as a result that servant loves all creation and serves all in the best manner without feeling any hardship.

In one of my Ustadh's visits to Madina Munawwarah during the holy month of Ramadan I was with him. Of the five daily prayers he would perform all of them in the Mosque of the Holy Prophet, and the only prayer he would pray at home was the evening prayer. This was in order to keep his wife happy and so that she would not feel lonely. He would break his fast with our mother (the author uses the term mother metaphorically out of

respect for the wife of the Ustadh) and in that way he would show the best example of how one deals with one's family.

I used to think that between the prayer times he was resting. However, later I found out that during these breaks he was either helping our mother or he was answering letters which were addressed to him. Hence he was not resting in the hot climate of these holy places where most people spend their daytimes in retreat.

In this respect I would like to remind my readers that serving all human beings is a very important concept in this path. Our Pir Hâjj Muhammad Bahâ'uddin (qs) once told his murîds to clean the rooms of the lodge and added:

“Once I used to clean all the toilets in the Bukhara Madrasah (religious school).”

For the spiritual training of his murîd Bahâ'uddin Naqshband Amir Kulâl commanded him to serve his people for seven years. After completing this duty with success he commanded Bahâ'uddin to serve the animals for another seven years.

Baha'uddin completed this duty with modesty and sincerity. Whenever he saw injured animals he would clean them up and heal their wounds. After completing this difficult task he was ordered to clean the streets of the town. Bahâ'uddin Naqshband (qs) so devoted himself to this task that he did not even have time to clean his own dress. At that time there were no gloves and protective covering. Under such difficult conditions he served the creations of Allah for almost twenty years. One day after

cleaning the streets, he wanted to attend Amir Kulal's suhbat. He was tired and his dress was not very clean. Amir Kulal (qs) asked as to who he was:

They replied:

"It is Bahâ'uddin."

Amir Kulal told them:

"Do not let him join the suhbat (spiritual discourse)."

Hence he had to leave the gathering. He was deeply saddened and his *nafs* was revolting against this behaviour of his Ustaḍh. However, he did not listen to the voice of his *nafs*, and told himself:

"This is the door of *Haqq* (Divine truth and reality), I will not leave it whatever happens."

So saying this, he put his head on the step of the lodge door and slept. It was snowing, and by morning time snow had partly covered his head. When Amir Kulal left his house in the morning for the dawn prayer he did not see him and stepped on him unknowingly. When he looked carefully he saw Bahâ'uddin and felt sorry for him. He took him to his house and told him:

"O my son, this holy duty is your right."

(Meaning that Bahâ'uddin would replace his post as master of the Sufi order after he had passed away)

Similarly all the disciples need to have such a strong will to follow this path and to overcome all the difficulties along the way. In this way vices are burnt and the pure gold of the soul is purified from the dust. This is the way to success, not the performance of many superogatory

prayers or continual fasting. In this regard Abdul-Qâdir Jaylânî once said:

“O my brothers in Islam! We did not attain proximity to Allah from performing night prayers or fasting during the daytime or learning and teaching the sciences. We attained this station of nearness (*qurbiyyah*) through modesty, generosity, benefiting others and by the greatness of our hearts.”

The greatest enemy, which prevents man from reaching this station, is his *nafs* (lower self) and the love of worldly concerns. The greatest veil between man and Allah is the love of the world. Generosity kills this vice, since giving away worldly possessions removes the love of them from the heart. Similarly, modesty kills the vices of the *nafs*. By the greatness of the heart Allah is manifested in the heart, and the vices leave it. In this way the servant attains proximity to his Lord.

Ibn Atâ'ullâh says in his *Hikâm*:

“Clear away the vices which are obstacles to serving Allah; only then do you deserve to be loved by Allah, and you attain proximity to Him.”

Ubaydullâh Ahrâr (qs) narrates:

“I was in Heri during the reign of Mirza Shahruh. I was completely penniless. My turban was an old piece of cloth. I knotted one end and the other end would fall down due to the wretchedness of it. One day when I was walking in the marketplace a beggar asked me for money. I had no money so I could not give him anything. But I did not want to leave him helpless, so I took him to a

restaurant and told the cook: "My turban is old but it is clean. You can use it to dry the plates. Take it and give this beggar some food. The cook gave food to the poor man and offered back my turban with great respect to me. I did not accept it and left it with him."

He also said:

"I would give my service to many people. I did not possess anything, not even a horse or a donkey. I would buy a new garment once a year when my garment was completely worn out. I would change my coat once in three years."

He had such great mercy for the creatures of Allah that he would serve anyone, without discriminating between acquaintances and strangers.

He said:

"I took the responsibility of looking after three people who were patients, and who lived in the Mawlânâ Qutbuddîn Madrasah in Samarkand. They would wet their beds due to their illnesses. I would clean their beds with my own hands and would personally dress them. Because of my close relationship with them I also contracted their disease and I became ill. Even in this condition I continued serving them by carrying water and washing away their dirt." (Rashahat)

He also said:

"I attained what I have in *tasawwuf* not through reading books on *tasawwuf*, but by serving the people. Everyone has a different path to Allah. I was guided to Him through giving service to His creation".

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“Whosoever sets out to help their brother in Islam shall be rewarded seventy times for every step they take. If they continue to assist their brother until their help is no longer needed, then all their sins shall be forgiven. Should they continue in this manner until their death, they shall enter Paradise without question.”

He also said:

“Whosoever does a good deed for a Believer; Allah Most High sends an Angel. This Angel performs continual worship and gives all of the reward to this person. When this person dies, a gentle Angel of light enters his grave and says, ‘I am the joy you have given to such and such a person by helping them, from this day on I shall love you, intercede for you on the Day of Judgement, and show you to your place in Paradise.’”



SELFLESS (DHÂTÎ) LOVE

Mawlânâ Jami (qs) describes selfless love as the love that one feels towards someone without knowing the cause of why they love and without expecting a reward or personal gain. This sort of love is quite common among people. In *tasawwuf* when a disciple loves Allah selflessly this is called *dhâtî* love. This means to love Allah only for the reason that He deserves our love in essence.

Mawlânâ Jami says again that there was a young man in the circle of Mawlânâ Sa'd al-Dîn Kashqarî, our beloved Ustadh, who was deeply in love with a girl. One day he bought a very valuable gift for her that was adorned with gold and valuable jewels. He left the gift on a main road so that his sweetheart would see it and take it. He did not want his sweetheart to know that he had given this present. However, this young man hid near that place so that no other person would take the gift and leave with it.

I asked him: "Why did you do such a strange thing? You worked hard to buy such an expensive gift? Why

don't you give her the gift yourself so that she will appreciate you more? Or why don't you do something else so that she will know it is you who bought this gift?"

This young man answered me in tears:

"Do you think that I do not know what I am doing? I do this intentionally so that she does not have to feel indebted to me. I do not want any return or reward for my love."

I was shaken by the answer and knew that his love was selfless love.

The lovers of Allah fall into two groups: Those who love Allah for the benefits they get in this world or for the expectations of the rewards in the Hereafter. Such people love Allah for their own good. On the other hand there are those who love Allah for the sake of His own worth. They love Allah for no benefit or any reward. They contemplate his greatness and consider His attributes. Their only concern is to please Allah; they are never concerned with thoughts of Paradise or Hell. These are the friends of Allah who have attained the highest place in the spiritual realm.

Abu'l-'Abbâs, one of the disciples of Ibn Arif, reached such a stage on the spiritual path that when he walked on the moors, different kinds of plants would talk to him and say:

"Take me! I am the cure for such and such a disease"

When Abu'l-'Abbâs informed his Shaikh of this, he retorted:

"We did not instruct you so that you would understand the language of the plants. Allah did not

enforce you to do so. Our only duty is to recognise and know Him. We have guided you so that you would know your Creator. Go back to those places and beware that the plants do not talk to you again.”

In this way the Shaikh wanted to say that on the spiritual path the disciple should not use his spiritual attainments for worldly interests. Sometimes due to spiritual attainments a disciple can work miracles. However, such miracles should not divert the disciple from his main purpose, which is to attain Allah’s pleasure.

Abu’l-‘Abbâs understood this important principle of tasawwuf and gave thanks to Allah because the plants did not talk to him any more.

Hearing this, the Shaikh told him:

“You must give thanks to Allah since he has chosen you for Himself and not for worldly purposes. The disciple should travel to his Beloved and should not waste his time on the way by looking at needless things. If the lover wastes his time on the way by lingering around, the Beloved will not wait”.

‘Ali Sayyid (qs) said that if one gives attention to others than Allah, he or she harms his or her spiritual attainment. This harm can be in two ways. Either they love these things and waste their time in needless ways; or they try to remove the love of the worldly things and once more waste their time. We should not forget that if we have love for anything other than Allah, Allah will not bestow upon us His greatest favour: Meeting with

Him and seeing Him. The highest aim of all prayers and worship is to centralise man's love only for Allah and disengage from the rest of the creation.

Ibrahim Dussûqî (qs) describes the friends of Allah as those who do not have vices such as being jealous of others, backbite, act arrogantly with others, and cheat people or tell lies. The friends of Allah do not feel vain or egotistical. When they go to a gathering they do not desire to sit in a place where they would be the centre of the meeting. They never feel that they are better than other Muslims. They never enter into useless disputes with others and never speak in order to embarrass others. They do not look for the mistakes and defects of their friends.

They especially do not carry bad opinions about the disciples of the Sufi path. They also tolerate other disciples who cannot follow the Sufi principles properly. They do not criticise others but only those who openly behave in contradiction to the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet. Only then do they criticise them and invite them back to the true path.

It is incumbent upon the friends of Allah who spend all their lives in the way of Allah that they do not engage their hearts with the creation. They should not respect people on the basis of their position and wealth. They must treat everyone equally.

The true friend of Allah only loves and reflects upon the divine attributes of Allah. The only things that matter to them are the commandments of Allah and obeying them fully. Hence you cannot find anyone among the friends of Allah who innovates in the religion of Allah from his own

desires. However, due to the lack of knowledge about the friends of Allah and their important place many people fail to benefit from their spiritual states.

The doors of guidance are open to each of us, they have never been closed in the past. However, the friends of Allah are the doorkeepers of the gates. They communicate the answer and the questions between Allah and His servants. But this divine blessing does not make them arrogant. Rather they are truly modest servants of Allah.

Our Ustadh would feel sorry for the lack of understanding in his disciples. He would often repeat the sayings of Farîduddîn 'Attâr's words:

"I was a bird high in the sky. I came down so that I could hunt for prey and carry it back to the high sky, but I could not find anyone who was worthy, so I flew back to my nest from the door I had entered".

As a matter of fact, there were very few people amongst his disciples who would understand the deeper meaning of his talks and follow his advice in their lives accordingly.

The friends of Allah are like orphans in this world. The orphans are divided into two sections. The first group are the children who have lost their parents. People mistreat such children and their rights are withheld since they do not have protection. Only those who feel the fear of Allah in their hearts treat them nicely and give them their due rights without being forced to do so.

The second group of the orphans which are relevant

to our subject are the orphans of Allah, i.e. the friends of Allah. The friends of Allah may have families and children. They might have many relatives and friends. They might have disciples, but they are still alone in society. Even the people very close to the friends of Allah do not understand them. Only a few of their close associates know their reality. As a result, the friends of Allah find refuge only in the love of Allah. They walk amongst us but their hearts are always with Allah. They find solace in the love of Allah and they are in the presence of Allah.

However, their presence with Allah does not prevent them from performing their duties towards their disciples. Our respected Ustadh trained very many disciples who reached great heights in the spiritual realm. As an example of the friends of Allah whom our master instructed and trained are the following: Abd al-Wasi Mirzatabash, Kemal Yetkin, Mehmet Rastgeldi, Mehmet Lekesiz, Abdurrauf Kamer, Mustafa Doğanay, Shaban Kavafoğlu, Mehmet Baysal, Hasan Erturk, Ahmet Dayhan, Hafiz Bekir, Pelivan Effendi of Adapazari. These are not all of them and there are a substantial number of other names, but these are sufficient to make the point.

Muhammad Bahâ'uddin Naqshband (qs) narrates his own personal story of how he served his master in full respect and awareness. He tells that his master told him to leave the Sufi lodge in order to test his fidelity. His *nafs* was greatly disturbed and encouraged him to leave this place forever. However, he did not follow his *nafs*, and he told himself, "This is the door of guidance, the reality."

He placed his head on the doorstep of the Shaikh's house. In this way he did not desert his Shaikh with simple excuses. Complaining about his disciples and their lack of understanding he added:

"In the morning when I leave my house for the Mosque I wish I could see my disciples in the lodge like this. Alas, there are no disciples left anymore; they have all become Shaikhs now!"

Muhammad Bahâ'uddin (qs) instructed many disciples, and from his training important masters of our path grew, such as 'Alâ'addin Attâr and Muhammad Parsa. These great people served the path in the best way, but not all the disciples showed modesty in the lodge.

Ibrahim Dussûkî (qs) also complained:

"Among my spiritual children I could not find one man who followed the men of Allah. Furthermore, I could not find one who was fit to carry the secrets of the path (The secrets in this context means spiritual realities that should be kept hidden from ordinary people)".

Mawlânâ Jalâluddîn Rûmi said that he was leaving this world in a state in which he missed the presence of those who could correctly understand his words.

Rumi complained about the people of his time and said:

"Those who can understand without the movement of lips and tongues should follow me."

The following anecdote adequately explains the reason for all of these complaints:

Once a Sufi Shaikh wrote a letter to another Shaikh

and asked him, "O my Brother, if you have more than enough disciples can you send me some of them and I will teach them."

His friend answered:

"I have no such good disciples since most of them think that they themselves are the Shaikhs and Masters."

His Visits to Damascus

Damascus is one of the most important places as far as the history of *tasawwuf* is concerned. It is a blessed town, full of *Awliyâ'* (Friends of Allah). Therefore our Ustadh (qs) liked this city. He would go to the Hajj pilgrimage via Damascus, and he would spend a few of days there. During his stay he would visit the saints, the graves of the Companions, and other friends of Allah.

When he visited Damascus, the Sufi masters, the men of Allah, and the scholars were very happy; they would organise big gatherings and give feasts. Shaikh Makkî Kattânî, Shaikh Abdul-Wahhâb Al-Salâhî, Shaikh Sa'îd Burhânî, Shaikh Hasan Ha-bannakî, Shaikh 'Izzat and his companions, Shaikh Abdur-Rahmân Majzûb, and many other respected personalities among the scholars would participate in these gatherings. They would listen carefully to our Ustadh Sami Ramazanoğlu (qs). Our Ustadh would give talks in the Arabic language. He would speak slowly and thoughtfully, giving each word its proper right. However, the people of Damascus were obsessed with the wish to witness miracles. Our Ustadh (qs) was aware of this desire and would tell them:

“The best of the Companions Abu Bakr ؓ did not perform any miracles.”

Hence we should not expect extraordinary things, and we must all obey Allah in sincerity. This is the safest path to Allah.

During his stay in Damascus he would dedicate one day to visiting the graves. Among the Companions' graves that our Ustadh (qs) would visit were Bilal al-Habashi, Abu Dardâ', Mu'âdh b. Jabal; and the Sufi Shaikhs Shaikh al-Akbar Muhyi'uddin Ibn 'Arabi and Mawlânâ Ḳhâlid. During these visits one day I came across an extraordinary thing. We had visited Mawlânâ Khâlid and decided to visit Ya'qûb Effendi, the Imam of the Shamsiyya mosque, so we took a taxi there. On the way to the mosque, the driver's spiritual eye began to open, and he started to shout, “I see light! I see light!” He almost lost control of the car. We were all startled. However, the driver controlled the car and thanks to Allah we all safely reached our destination.

Our Ustadh (qs) would respect this Imam in particular. He said that this Imam was one who had attained spiritual states. He would rarely say this of others. Ya'qûb Effendi was of Albanian origin, and could speak neither Arabic nor Turkish fluently. Although there were great orators and preachers in Damascus, our Ustadh would single out only this man for this high position. Ya'qûb Effendi (qs) passed away a few years after he had reached the age of a hundred. He would undertake the Hajj pilgrimage even into the very late years of his life. May Allah make us benefit from his divine intercession, Amin!

His Supplication for the Algerians

At one time we were on one of our visits to Damascus, in which we were the guests of our Ustadh (qs). As we usually did during our trip to the holy lands, we visited the tomb of Muhyi'uddin ibn 'Arabî. When we were there we met a group of fifteen people who had come from Algeria. At that time the war between the Algerians and the French army was taking place. The tyrannical French army was slaughtering the Muslim Algerians with ease due to their technological upper hand. However, against all the odds and great losses the Algerian Mujâhidîn kept fighting and inflicting losses upon the French. The group began supplicating to Allah in order that the French occupiers might be destroyed, withdrawing from their country in humiliation and disgrace. Their supplication continued for half an hour, everybody present was sobbing. Our Ustadh said "Amin" continuously for their supplications. The next day I learnt from the newspapers that the French had lost the war and left Algeria in humiliation, although the war had been going on for twelve years already.

In this regard I will relate another of my recollections. Our Ustadh (qs) would never discuss the food or the drink for the journey to Hajj. However, one day against this custom he told us:

"Buy tea, bread, cheese and halwa for the trip. We will need them in Damascus."

But his companions thought that they could buy these things in Damascus because over there, there were many shops which sold good quality food. They did not listen

to the words of their teacher, and thus they made a wrong decision. Hence we set out for the trip and arrived at the Yarmuk hotel in Damascus. We booked into the hotel and went to the Sanjakdar Mosque for the Morning Prayer. We had just completed the Morning Prayer when we heard the sounds of cannons and machine guns. We found out later that it was the beginning of a military revolt. When we rushed back to the hotel, the sounds of machine guns grew more intense. A curfew was imposed. All the shops without any exception were closed for three days. As a result we could not buy the good quality cheese or bread usually available in Damascus. We had to be content with the small amount of biscuits or other items of food in our suitcases.

Our Ustadh (qs), whose morality was completely in step with that of our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, did not embarrass his companions. However, we all felt shy before him. There are indeed very few friends of Allah whose characteristics are truly similar to those of the Prophet ﷺ. At times, even those who occupy very high stations cannot forgive others and cover their mistakes.

Although our Ustadh (qs) could work miracles, he never valued such extraordinary things. He would always conceal the miracles he worked, though on exceptional occasions he was forced to reveal some miracles when he had to warn his disciples. He would always repeat concerning the subject of miracles:

“The greatest miracle is to lead a virtuous life, to be truthful and sincere, to mention the names of Allah at every breath and to be in the state of modesty in front of Allah.”

Qaddasa Allah Sirrahu

HIS WORKS

Our dear Ustadh (qs) would advise us to print and distribute the works of which he was the author as a result of much endeavour. Thanks to Allah his wishes are realised and we have presented his books for the people to use. All his publications were given at least a second or third edition. Although these books were written in the form of historical narrative and hagiography, they in fact cover a large section of the Islamic disciplines, such as *hadith* (the reported sayings of the Prophet), *tafsir* (Qur'anic commentary), history, *sîrah* (biographical accounts of the Prophet and his Companions); and finally, discussions of various social and spiritual issues. In short, his works covered all of the useful branches of the Islamic disciplines one needs to lead an upright life.

A list of his printed works are as follows:

- 1 - Hadhrat Ibrâhîm (Abraham)
- 2 - Hadhrat Yûsûf (Joseph)

- 3 - Hadrat Yûnus and Hûd
- 4 - The battle of Badr and the commentary on Sûrah al-Anfâl
- 5 - The battle of Uhud
- 6 - The battle of Tâbûk
- 7 - Hadrât Abu Bakr ﷺ
- 8 - Hadrât 'Umar ﷺ
- 9 - Hadrât 'Uthman ﷺ
- 10 - Hadrât 'Ali ﷺ
- 11 - Hadrât Khâlid b. al-Walîd ﷺ
- 12 - The Companions of the Prophet (in two volumes)
- 13 - Sufi conversations (1-6)
- 14 - The honoured man
- 15 - Commentary of Sûrah al-Fâtihah
- 16 - Commentary of Sûrah al-Baqara
- 17 - Supplications and litanies

Apart from these printed works our Ustadh (qs) also left some important notes in notebooks which are not yet printed. Our Ustadh wanted very much that his works be printed, because they were intended to be solutions to the contemporary problems facing mankind.

THE SECOND CHAPTER
HIS FINAL DAYS

HIS FINAL DAYS

It was in the autumn of 1976. I wanted to visit our Ustadh (qs) in his house in Erenköy. In this way I wanted to solve some personal problems and clear away my spiritual predicaments through discussion with him. He greeted me in a cheerful mood. There were no other visitors. After giving me several pieces of advice he looked at the door. Looking at the door was a sign that he would reveal a secret to me. "The *hijra* (emigration) to Madina Munawwara is coming, with the intention of not returning again. But this is between you and me, let nobody else hear of this."

After six months he also revealed this to his family, our mother Rabia Hanım and the rest of his family. He was continuously supplicating to Allah the Almighty for this plan to be realised. On one side he persuaded his family to emigrate, and on another side he made the necessary applications for the trip.

His followers and friends in Istanbul and Anatolia heard the news, and they all felt very sad about this

decision, but what could they do? The decision was made and this was to be his destiny. Separation is an incredible pain for the lovers and friends of Allah. The friends were right to feel grief for his plans for *hijra*, since they would not see him shining with divine light; they would not hear again the voice which was life-giving, the conversations which had solved all their problems.

However, there is a saying, which the *Awliyâ'* often repeat: "The one with me is in Yemen and the one in Yemen is in reality with me." This means that physical closeness is not very important. There are people around a *Walî* (friend of Allah) but they are in reality very far away from him, as far as Yemen is from Turkey. Similarly, there are disciples who live in far away countries or towns but their hearts are with their Ustadh. So the friends and disciples of our Ustadh sought refuge in this saying.

"By Allah's will and permission, the decision of our Ustadh was realised. After approximately a year and a half he would be able to emigrate to Madinah Munawwara with all the members of his family. He moved into a house built by a good Muslim in the area called *al-Hârah al-Sharqiyya*. Our Ustadh was very happy that his plan had been realised and that he had arrived in this holy city. Allah protects His friends as well as the town in which he lives. He blesses the town where His friends are accommodated, and keeps it safe from all sorts of calamities and catastrophes.

After taking a rest of ten or fifteen days he started receiving visitors. His talks mainly focused on the code of behaviour that one needs to follow when residing in

this holy city. He advised the visitors to behave with great care and respect for the city of the Prophet ﷺ, and not to commit any action which would harm his soul. He recited the famous ode of the Prophet ﷺ, which warned the heedless concerning the right conduct of behaviour in the holy cities. Another important personality who was living in Madina was Mawlânâ Ziya al-Dîn al-Hindî al-Qâdirî (qs), who gave similar advice to his visitors. He said, "Be careful in this blessed land. In this place there are three places you must visit: *al-Masjid al-Nabawî* (Mosque of the Prophet ﷺ), your work place, and your home. Do not wander around seeking out the mistakes of the people of Madina. It is possible that you might see someone committing a mistake, and your love for this place might decrease. As a result you would not benefit from the blessing of this town (since you would have come to dislike its people.)

Years went by and our dear Ustadh dedicated all his time to prayer, supplication and the remembrance of Allah. He led a life of seclusion, spending his time in supplication, prayer, mentioning the names of Allah and other sorts of worship. Our Ustadh's health, however, deteriorated. Medical treatment did not benefit his weak body. His blood pressure was very high and irregular. He was suffering a great deal but he never complained. We never heard such words from him as, "I have a pain in my body" or "I have a headache."

The disease affecting his eyes increased and eventually he lost his sight. But he did not tell anyone

that he had lost his sight. One of his close relatives², however, understood that he lost his sight and called a good doctor. After a successful operation, he regained his sight. At all these times he never ceased supplication and the performance of all sorts of prayer.

His followers obtained a place of burial in the graveyard of Abu Ayyûb al-Ansârî ؓ. Our Ustadh did not like this offer and said:

“If you ask my opinion, my heart inclines to the graveyard of *Jannat al-Bâqî* (the famous graveyard where the Prophet’s companions were buried).”

This pure and sinless servant of Allah was living the last days of his life. He followed the injunction of Allah:

Return to your Lord, well pleased (with him), well pleasing (Him); so enter among My servants, And enter into My garden. (Fajr, 89:28-30)

Ustadh Mahmud Sami (qs) passed away on the 10th Jamadiy al-Awwal 1404 (12th February 1984) at four o’clock in the morning, saying “Allah! Allah!” The famous poet Kamal Adib of Urfa described his death: The Pride of the Gnostics (*Fakhr al-‘Urafâ’*), the full moon hidden behind the clouds (*al-Badr al-Khafâ’*), Hadhrat Sami was hidden behind the clouds. He had left the transitory life and had migrated to the eternal life. After his funeral preparations had been completed, his final prayer was performed in the Prophet’s Mosque. Hence, the dream of this son of the Prophet had come true. He was buried in

2. The author is not mentioning his own name out of modesty, it was Musa Effendi who called the doctor, translator’s note).

Jannat al-Bâqî near Hadhrati Uthman al-Zinnûrayn (the possessor of the two lights) and Abu Sa'îd al-Khudrî.

The news of his death spread very quickly, and in every corner of the world the Believers prayed for him in absentia. He had not cared what he ate and drank, since he was busy serving Allah the Almighty. This great friend of Allah had spent all of his life guiding others to Islam. He illuminated the thirsty hearts of the believers, and he had proved that he was one of the greatest masters who throughout the centuries appear very rarely.

We were very sad, but this was the law of Allah, that one day every soul should leave this life. His friends and associates expressed their sadness in many beautiful poems. I will quote some of these here: The last quatrain of the Nuri Bash;

O my Lord! Have mercy upon him. Make us close to him in the Hereafter.

My heart is full of grief, burning with love.

However, my heart finds solace that the Beloved of Kibriya (Allah) says:

"All the lovers are together" and I have faith in that.

Finally 'Ali Kemal Belviranlı sings:

Yesterday it was a green spring day, today why is the greenery dry?

Why were these high mountains dressed up in darkness?

All hopes have ended, grief has surrounded the horizon

The sun has gone down, the skies are darkened

The nightingales have stopped singing, the roses
have gone dry

Our burning hearts cry in sadness in remembrance
of him

Since this king set the rose garden on fire.

He left a place which no one can fill again.

May Allah enlighten his grave and make the gardens
his abode.

He is already close to the master of the world (The
Prophet ﷺ).

His words and behaviour were an example for those
who desire perfection

All hearts adored his spiritual state.

My sadness cannot be contained in the lines of a
poem

It is not sufficient if I cry on your grave for years.

As the conquerors opened new epochs

My master's death has shaken the world.

When someone asked a question he would never
answer by saying, "Do this!" or "Do not do this!" in an
authoritarian manner. Rather, he would read a verse or
hadith or a rule from the renowned Islamic law book
Majalla. He would, for example, read the following ruling
from the *Majalla*: "Refraining from a harâm thing is
preferred to attaining a good thing". By this he would
mean that it is better to refrain from the forbidden than

to perform voluntary acts of worship. Unfortunately nowadays many people perform a great deal of voluntary acts of worship, but they do not observe the strict rules of the Shari'ah concerning the harâm and the halâl. They go to the extent that sometimes they even ignore the prescribed prayers while they strictly perform the voluntary prayers. This is nothing but pure ignorance. Allah the Almighty states in the Qur'an:

And take provisions (with you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So fear Me, o you who are wise. (Baqara, 2:197)

The first duty of an 'Ârif (Gnostic) is to obey the commandments and refrain from the harâm. Secondly, the ârif should follow the example of the Prophet in all his actions and manners. He must perform the voluntary acts of worship. The Prophet ﷺ says: "Let no one of you reveal to me something bad about my companions. Because when I come to you I want to come with a pure heart." (Abu Dawûd, Adab, Tirmidhî, Manâqib, 2893; Musnad, v. I, s.396)

Our respected Ustadh (qs) wanted always to hear good news from his friends, which gave hope and cheered people up. Hence, no one could speak ill of others in his presence or dare to backbite others. If one tried to do so he would either give no reply or try to explain things in a better way. The following example shows his attitude. Once he was told a rich man had given very little for a charitable cause. Hence people blamed this man for being a miserly person. However, our Ustadh defended him and said: "No, he is not as you estimate. He is a generous man". He also added that once he had given such and

such an amount of money for a charitable cause. In that way he unified the hearts of the brothers and removed bad thoughts from their minds.

The most beloved thing to our Ustadh was to read the Qur'an and listen to the Qârî (reciter of the Qur'an) and to practise the true meanings of the verses in his life. After this he loved most to read the hadiths of the Prophet ﷺ and explain them, and after that to read the life stories of other prophets and the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. He would love to read or narrate the stories of the friends of Allah and to explain what they had advised.

In his meetings always the good and their good actions were mentioned. If possible, we must try to be in their company. In this way hearts find peace and tranquility. In other words, a spiritual link (*Râbitah*) is established with them. On the other hand, the enemies of Allah were never mentioned in his meetings. They are the unfortunate people. We should not talk about them and engage our hearts with them. Of course we can talk about them in order to protect ourselves from their harm and to take precautions. However, this should not exceed the necessary limits and we should immediately turn to the exemplary models of the good. If we keep talking about the bad, their bad characteristics engage our hearts unnecessarily. They make our hearts tense and nervous and harm our belief.

THE THIRD CHAPTER
WHAT THOSE WHO KNEW HIM
SAID ABOUT HIM

WHAT THOSE WHO KNEW HIM SAID ABOUT HIM

Nabi Effendi of Avanoz, the Majdhûb

There was a man in Madina who was a majdhûb (a person who has lost his reason due to the intense love of Allah). He was one of those who knew the high station that our Ustadh occupied and attached his heart to him. When our respected Ustadh prayed in the area called the place of Ashâb al-Suffah in the Holy mosque of the Prophet in Madina, this man would follow him and watch our master continuously without even moving his eyelids. He would lose himself with this watchfulness except during the times of prayer, when he prayed the prescribed prayers.

Although people told him: "Do not behave like this in this holy place, because you are attracting the attention of others." he would tell us things, which implied:

"Do you think it is in my hands to behave like this? Ask the lover what is love."

It is considered good manners for Sufis to look down during suhbats, but not necessarily for the lovers. There are no rules for the lovers. When they behold the divine manifestations in the faces of their Shaikhs, they lose their reason and they gaze at them continuously. They benefit from this and traverse the spiritual path from this.

Love is the best of steeds upon which one may travel on this path. A renowned Turkish Sufi and writer, Ibrahim Hakki of Erzurum, wrote:

O Hakki! Annihilate your existence, and subsist through love

Even the kings travel on foot if they have no love.

Âshiq Pashazade says:

Befriend the lovers (of Allah) and taste the love,

Escape from those who have not tasted love

O love, make your self non-existent now

Know that your being is in your non-existence.

Another Sufi said:

The lovers are pure and sincere people.

They do not change due to torture and pain.

They are nothing but goodness, with pure hearts.

Is the sea ever contaminated by dirt?

Sayyid Shafiq Arvasi

He was from the lineage of the blessed Prophet as his name Sayyid connotes. Hence there was a light upon his forehead. His knowledge, his perfect virtues were

appreciated by all. He was a Qâdirî Shaikh. He occupied the post of being an Imam in the Blue Mosque (named Sultan Ahmet Mosque in Turkish) and led people in prayer with great devotion.

He greatly loved our Ustadh (qs). Even in the worst times of his illness he would jump from his high bed and sit on his knees whenever our Ustadh visited him. He would say to our Ustadh:

“I have conversed with many *Awliyâ'* (Friends of Allah), but I have an exceptional love and respect for you.”

On other occasions if someone visited him from among the circle of our Ustadh (qs), he would respect them and show great care towards them. He would talk about the virtues of our Ustadh continuously. He would also offer the visitor to lead the prayer in the Blue Mosque if the prayer time had arrived (as a sign of respect to our Ustadh). May Allah make us benefit from his divine intercession.

Muhammad Ahmad Kurdî

Everybody in the *Masjid Nabawî* (The Prophet's Mosque in Makka) loved him. He would distribute water in the mosque and most of the time he would not accept money from people. On one occasion in the time of pilgrimage he came to our Ustadh in the place of the *Ashâb al-Suffa* in the holy mosque. Muhammad Ahmad Kurdi's vision was open. He fell to his knees in his presence and said:

“Truly it was you that I have seen. A few months

ago I was sitting here. I was awake. The doors of the Prophet's mausoleum opened and from inside came an esteemed individual. I could not recognise this person. However, now that I have seen you I understand that this blessed man was you."

He would often come to our Ustadh and give him a drink, especially the water of zamzam. He would love to be in his company and would not leave his side.

Abdul-Wahhâb Al-Salâhî (qs)

Abdul-Wahhâb Al-Salâhî (qs) was a Naqshbandi Shaikh. He was also the Imam of the mosque of Halbunî. He was a perfect sage, and was so generous that everyone who came to Damascus would be his guest. He and his three sons served him for months. He would say about our Ustadh:

"Damascus is a centre for the friends of Allah. I always watch this man with great respect and appreciation. The reason is that I have seen nobody else who so much resembles Abu Bakr al-Şiddîq in all his manners."

Sayyid Muhammad Makki (qs)

Sayyid Muhammad Makkî (qs) was a descendant of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the pride of all creation. He was a famous scholar and a great mujâhid. He was a modest friend of Allah. He had great love for all the Muslim brothers and sisters. Hence he would follow the news of the Muslim world. He would feel happy if something good had happened in the Islamic world and would share their concerns. He said about our respected Ustadh:

“In Damascus there was a period of oppression. In such a negative situation he gave the most courageous talks in a scholarly meeting. Therefore I love and respect him with all my heart.”

‘Ali Yakta (qs)

‘Ali Yakta (qs) was a great man of virtue and modesty. He had two great wings: he was a scholar of both the formal sciences and the spiritual sciences. For a long time he was the Mufti of Istanbul. He was unique in the science of *Farâ'idh* (the difficult subject of the Islamic inheritance law). If someone brought him a complex problem concerning inheritance he would ask for pen and paper and would solve the problem in a short time. He was a lover of Allah. Although he was given permission to guide people by his Shaikh, he hid his *Ijâzah* (Document of Permission). People only knew about this situation later on. In his lifetime Emin Saraj, his son in law, came to know about this accidentally. One day he was organising and cleaning the bookcase of his father in law, and saw this document amongst the others. Hearing this, ‘Ali Yakta told him:

“You have found a document amongst my papers. Do not tell anyone about it. Keep it a secret. Mahmud Sami is the rightful owner of this post.”

Ahmad Ağa of Ladik (qs)

Ahmad Ağa was a genuine son of Anatolia. He was a favourite of Khidr (as), and in his service. He was unlettered. Allah knows best, but he was one of the men of the *Ghayb* (The unseen, beyond sight and knowledge

of the common man). He was given to traversing long distances in a short time due to miraculous powers.

He performed many miracles. One day he came to visit our Ustadh in Konya. He was wet all over although the weather was pleasant in Konya at that time. He told us that he had been in Erzurum (an Eastern province of Turkey) just ten minutes earlier.

At times he would have a talk with our Ustadh privately and they would stay together for a couple of hours. In his village there were always people visiting him. If they asked him something he would say: "Wait a minute my brother! I will bring your answer soon." He would leave the room and meet Khidr (as), coming back a few minutes later with the exact answer. If people asked his spiritual guidance and wished to take *Bay'ah* (oath of allegiance to an order) from him he would say:

"I am not allowed (to guide others). Go to Hadhrat Sami and finish your work with him."

A child with high spiritual qualities

On our return from a trip to Anatolia we stopped our car in an empty plot near a shop in a town. There was a fountain nearby and eight or ten children were playing there. Among them was a child who began watching our Ustadh with great care, with his mouth open. He lost himself to such an extent that he totally forgot about playing with his friends.

He was in such a complete state of bewilderment that

even a single hair on his head did not move. When our car left the area the child was still watching us silently. With the permission of Allah the Almighty this boy would be a great Wali in the future. Our master told us about this boy: This boy has a great ability for the spiritual path.

Our master in the course of 25 years never embarrassed us with such questions as why we had not done one thing or another. We never smelled any odour from him even in the most difficult times of Hajj when everybody sweated profusely.

During this very long time we never saw him doing anything that made people's stomachs turn, such as cleaning his nose in a loud way or burping.

I have never witnessed him missing an appointment or breaking an appointment. I have never witnessed him speaking ill of others.

During this very long time he always performed his prayers with great care and devotion even when he was extremely tired due to travelling or for other reasons except in the days of his last illness. However, we never witnessed him complaining about his health.

'Ali Haydar of Charshamba (qs)

'Ali Haydar (qs) was an Islamic scholar and a virtuous man with very high qualities. He was also a Naqshbandi Shaikh. He passed away in 1961 and was buried in Shehidlik in Istanbul (A special cemetery outside Fatih where many of the martyrs of the conquest of Constantinople are buried, it is also the resting place of many saints).

He would always say of our Ustadh (qs) in his presence:

“You are hiding your spiritual rank. Hide it but when I die you will lead my funeral prayer.”

On one occasion our Ustadh (qs) left for a long trip and ‘Ali Haydar Effendi was very sad, saying:

“Who will lead my funeral prayer? I wish he had appointed someone in his place.”

This shows his closeness and his love for our Ustadh.

Our Ustadh, although it was not his custom to lead prayers, made an exception and led the funeral prayer for ‘Ali Haydar Effendi in front of a large congregation.

Hajj Nuri Effendi of Safranbolu (qs)

Hajj Nuri Effendi of Safranbolu (qs) was one of the senior Khalifas of ‘Esad Erbilî. He had very kind personality. He lived in Sariyer and passed away in 1967. He was buried in the Sariyer graveyard. Because of his senior position he was the first person to be visited during the times of the two Eids. When someone visited him he would ask him:

“Have you brought news from our angelic Sami Effendi”

Mâhir Iz

Mâhir Iz was a poet, a thinker, and a great admirer of Mehmed Akif, the national poet of Turkey. He wrote several books as well. In his early days he was an

opponent of *tasawwuf*. However after his encounter with our Ustadh (qs) he changed his mind and understood that *tasawwuf* is a necessary experience in order to reach the reality of existence. Hence he left his previous stance toward *tasawwuf*, and he began attending the spiritual gatherings of our Ustadh (qs). In this way he traversed the spiritual path and reached a high position among the men of Allah.

He praised our Ustadh (qs) on many occasions and said:

“He is Hadhrat Sami. We have seen so many great personalities since the Ottoman family but never encountered someone who is equal to him.”

The famous Ottoman Sultan Yavuz Sultan Selim says concerning the significance of finding a spiritual guide:

Being the ruler of the world is a useless fight;

Being the servant of a *Walî* (Friend of Allah) is a far greater thing

Hafiz Mustafa of Bayındır

Hafiz Mustafa was the chief of the *Huffâdh* (plural of *Hâfidh*; those who had memorised the entire Qur'an) and the *Qurrâ'* (plural of *Qâri'*; the scholars of the different recitation styles of the Qur'an). He was a very modest person, and would serve both young and old although he was an old person himself. He was respected by the scholars of the time such as Bakir Hâki Effendi.

He had great love and appreciation for our Ustadh. Our Ustadh would visit him during Eid and he would be

very happy from this visit. He would say to our Ustadh, “*Khudh bi yad-î! Khudh bi yad-î*” (“Take my hand, take my hand”). He would repeat these words asking the help of our Ustadh (qs).

Ramadhân al-Bûtî (*Sallama-hu Allah*)

Ramadhân al-Bûtî (*Sallama-hu Allah*) lives in Damascus until today. He is respected by everybody in Damascus due to his deep knowledge and perfection of the Islamic disciplines. He was believed to be the *Qutb* (Spiritual pillar) of Damascus by the people of the Sufi path. He is competent in both the internal (*bâtinî*) and the external (*dhâhirî*) disciplines of Islam.

Almost every year undertakes the Hajj. He prays his obligatory prayers in Makka. Although his spiritual level is very high he would not pray in the same line with our Ustadh (qs), rather he would pray a few lines behind him. In this way he would imply to others that our Ustadh should be respected in the best manner. Our Ustadh really loved him and whenever we visited Damascus we visited him.

Baha Kitapcı

Baha Kitapcı was a well-known dermatologist. He was a man of small stature, and had a wonderful character. He was very good in his job and achieved worldwide fame. He was invited to the U.S.A. very often in order to participate in academic conferences and seminars.

In the years 1962-63 our dear Ustadh (qs) was visiting Izmir. He was a guest in the house of his friend. Every

day we benefited from his suhbats. The renowned people of Izmir also attended these spiritual gatherings.

Dr. Baha was a very eager attendant at these gatherings. Along with himself he took his friends to these spiritual feasts. He listened to the suhbats with the utmost care and in a state of ecstasy. He had realised that there was no other way to reach spiritual perfection except by following a perfect master. Baha Kitapcı was himself appointed as a Shaikh by his previous master and he had disciples. But he was not satisfied with his spiritual state. Hence he became a disciple of our master.

Through his love and through following our Ustadh (qs), his spiritual insight was opened. He really understood the perfection of our Ustadh and persuaded his own followers to accept Mahmud Sami as their new Ustadh. Hence all his followers came to the Ustadh as disciples. This was due to his sincere intention and to the spiritual power of our Ustadh as well as to divine grace.

In 1972, in the month of Ramadan, one of our brothers gave a large *Iftâr* (A meal to break the fast) inviting our Ustadh and other guests. There were approximately seventy to eighty people. Before the *Iftar* our Ustadh gave a talk in order to use the time available before eating. He spoke about Abdul-Qâdir al-Jaylânî. At that very moment something unexpected happened. Baha Kitapcı jumped to his feet and started shouting:

“Aren't you the Abdul-Qâdir of our time?”

He repeated this a few times. Everybody was so astonished that no one could utter a word. Our dear Ustadh

covered his face with the book he was reading, and did not answer this question. If he said yes it would be against his modesty. If he said no it would be against reality and a friend of Allah could not speak something untrue. So he chose silence and after a few minutes he continued delivering the sermon. After the Iftâr the meeting ended, and some of the people left while some others stayed for the tarawih prayer. That year we were praying tarawih in the basement of our Ustadh's house. So some of the guests, including Baha, joined the group in order to perform tarawih. After completing the prayer our Ustadh normally took permission and went for a rest. It would have been impolite to disturb him after the tarawih prayer. However, Baha did not heed our warnings and followed our Ustadh to ask something. When they climbed the stairs to his room, Baha implored him saying:

“Please complete my education in this spiritual path.”

He got what he asked for and he left the house very happily. The same day when they reached Izmir, their hometown, he passed away due to a traffic accident.

Muhammed Hajjar

Muhammed Hajjar was a scholar and Sufi from Aleppo, and was living in Medina. Whenever I met him he told me:

“I have been to many spiritual gatherings but I have never been to any better than that of Mahmud Sami. Once he led a *Khatm-i Hâja* (Nakshbandi dhikr) in Aleppo. I have never seen one so effective and spiritually charged in all my life.”

Muhammad Harranî

Muhammad Harranî was born in Urfa. However his fame became so widespread that he was known as far as Damascus and Bursa. He was one of the spiritual leaders of his time. He could easily answer difficult questions with great clarity and wisdom. In order to keep his high spiritual state covered from the eyes of the public, he would sometimes speak meaningless and unnecessary words. Although he normally talked to people informally, he would speak to our respected Ustadh (qs) with great respect and courtesy. He once said:

“You occupy a state of *tamkîn* (consolidation), whereas we have the state of *talwîn* (changeability). Your state is strong and trustworthy, whereas ours is not like that.”

In approximately 1965 he advised a group of people who were leaving for the Hajj pilgrimage:

“You know Sami Effendi, I know the Earth. I look to all directions of the globe, north, south, east and west and cannot see a friend of Allah who is so similar to the Prophet ﷺ in all his manners and with such a pure heart. He is a person that mankind has rarely encountered throughout the ages. Therefore use this chance to benefit from him.”

Muhammad Harranî passed away in Istanbul and is buried in the Graveyard of Ayub Sultan. May Allah bless his soul.

Rajab al-Tâî (qs)

In 1962 we stopped over in Aleppo on our way to Makka for the Hajj. At that time there was no direct flight

to Makka. We would travel to Damascus by bus and from Damascus to Madina we would travel by aeroplane.

On that trip after spending a night in Konya, the next evening we arrived in Aleppo. We stayed in a hotel which belonged to a good Muslim, Jamâl Iskanderânî. The next day we were invited by Abdullah Sirâjuddîn. Many scholars were invited to attend. After dining we engaged in conversation and performed prayers in congregation.

Among the guests was a person originally from the Black Sea area of Turkey, named Rajab al-Tâî. Since he did not speak any Turkish I can only assume he was born there. After many long and fruitful conversations, in the evening we set out to Damascus, via Hama and Homus. We spent a week in Damascus, visiting the tombs of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and attending suhbats with the eminent Sufi shaikhs of the town.

Rajab Tâî was a person with who had experienced the Sufi *kashf* (unveiling), and was known for performing miracles. He was a good Muslim with very high moral qualities. He gave the following advice to his son Muhyi'uddin Effendi after meeting our Ustadh:

“O my son! I will soon pass away. After me your Shaikh will be Sami Effendi, who has indeed attained perfection (Insân Kâmil). Go to Istanbul and renew your *wird* (litany) with him.”

At that time there were many well known Sufi masters in Damascus, but he had advised our Ustadh Sami Effendi for his spiritual perfection.

Although his son had completed his spiritual training under a Mevlevî Shaikh, he once more followed the advice of his father and went to Istanbul. He confirmed his good manners and high status under the guidance of Sami Effendi, and went back to Aleppo.

Sayyid Nasr of Yemen and Hasan Effendi of Van

These two Shaikhs were to be found in the first row of the Prophet's Mosque in the *Ashâb al-Suffa'* area. Nâsir al-Yamanî usually performed his devotions in the right corner and Hasan Effendi of Van on the centre right. From the point of view of their devotions, they were both very particular and enthusiastic in the performance of their prayers, and were both very honest men at heart taking great care to follow all of the Islamic etiquettes required. Unfortunately, they were a little harsh with others, wishing all to be like they and therefore becoming angered with those who they saw as to not behaving according to correct Islamic etiquette. It was here at the place of Sayyid Nasr al-Yemeni that our Honoured Ustadh when he made the pilgrimage to Makka in 1962 used to pray.

When our Ustadh (qs) arrived at the Mosque he would wish to kiss the hands of the *bawwâbs* (Doormen who usually take the shoes of worshippers in large Mosques for reasons of safety and tidiness) as he handed to them his shoes due to the fact that they were attendants at such a blessed place.

On another occasion, sitting at the front row in the *Ashâb al-Suffa'* area of the Mosque was a saintly

figure from the Sudan. He would also kiss the hand of this individual even though most thought him to be an uneducated man.

None of this was strange to our Ustadh (qs) as he showed the utmost respect to all as he could see their true states within.

Within a short space of time people would come to him to kiss his hand and seek his prayers.

In this way he was able to soften even the hardest of hearts and win the hearts of Nasr al-Yamani and Mufti Hasan Effendi, whose hearts and personalities became as soft and gentle as lambs. They would give the front row positions to no one else but our Ustadh and his dervishes.

Once Nasr al-Yamani and Mufti Hasan invited our master to visit them, he accepted their offer and came to see them. They were deeply impressed and moved by his discourse, not long later they passed away. May Allah's mercy be upon them both, Amin!

Mejzub Jemil Baba

He was from among the lovers of Divine Truth, a native of Kasari, and a saint whose inner eye was open to the Divine. He would often speak before a person had even spoken the words they were about to say. Once, during his younger days he said to an Imam.

“Are you not the man I saw last night in such and such a Mosque on such and such a coloured prayer mat performing the prescribed prayers?”

When the noble Imam heard these words he was struck by them and understood that Mejub Jemil Baba knew many things that had been hidden to others.

When he met our blessed Ustadh he would kneel and show him a level of respect that he did not show to anyone else. He passed away in around 1982 in Kasari. The people of Kasari built a shrine for his resting place, which is still a place of frequent visits by the local people.

A memory of Bursa

It was in 1950 during the closing months of summer. We would always go to Bursa for a summer break as a family to relax. We would stay in a hotel in Cekirge for around ten to fifteen days and then return to Istanbul.

There was something different about this occasion however. This summer we didn't feel the usual peace that we usually felt during a holiday in Bursa, nor did we feel at all relaxed. It was as though we were all experiencing some kind of inner irritation that made us all feel restless.

We guessed what had happened. This year there was heavy rainfall; the trees usually so lush had begun to lose their leaves, the flowers and lilies had become dry and lost their scent. The rain beat down against the great Mosques of Bursa, the Ulu the Yeşil and the Hüdavendigâr. Ulu Dağ, usually so pretty, was reduced to mud with the local villages and their animals taking refuge indoors.

Each day passed this way. One day at the Serinaz Hotel as we sat around the pool, one from our group

spoke up to break the silence he spoke about Sami Effendi of Adana.

“This saintly fellow is a beloved of Allah. Till morning he does not eat, sleep nor drink but prays for the success and well being of the Muslims. His every action is an example to us all, his every movement according to the injunctions of the Qur’an. Everywhere he goes he brings with him divine blessings, he is a cure to those whose hearts are afflicted”

This was the first time that I had heard this name but the words went straight to my heart.

“How can one find such a friend of Allah in these times?”

Our faces all broke into smiles, our troubles vanished. There was the honoured master and two of his friends, in the rain with umbrellas opened continuing at Hüdavendigâr Mosque the ritual prayer, if the sun had been shining then we would never have with them umbrellas, we understood that this was the reason for the rain, that we may recognise them from afar.

We were taken with such attraction and love to see this saintly person that we went to the edge of the garden to await his return.

Ever since I was a child I have had a great love to meet such saintly people as this. I loved to visit them. To sit in their company has always given me great pleasure. It has always given my heart peace to see how sincerely they treat people as though they were of the same family. However, the spiritual aura

that a family can have, and that of a living saint are something quite different.

I approached him hoping that I may enter into his service and receive his prayers. I took permission from his friends and spoke.

“Whatever you wish my car or my services as you like”

He did not accept my offer. However, a few days later we agreed that we would return to Istanbul together.

My love for this perfect master is such that were someone to tell me that all had passed had simply been a dream I would not have found it at all strange.

It is in these times that I begin to recognise the importance of this saintly man. Mahir Iz, the teacher of *tasawwuf* at the Higher Islamic Institute also gave his heart to the Ustadh (qs). He would often say:

“Where is the Sultan of our age? To whom do we look?”

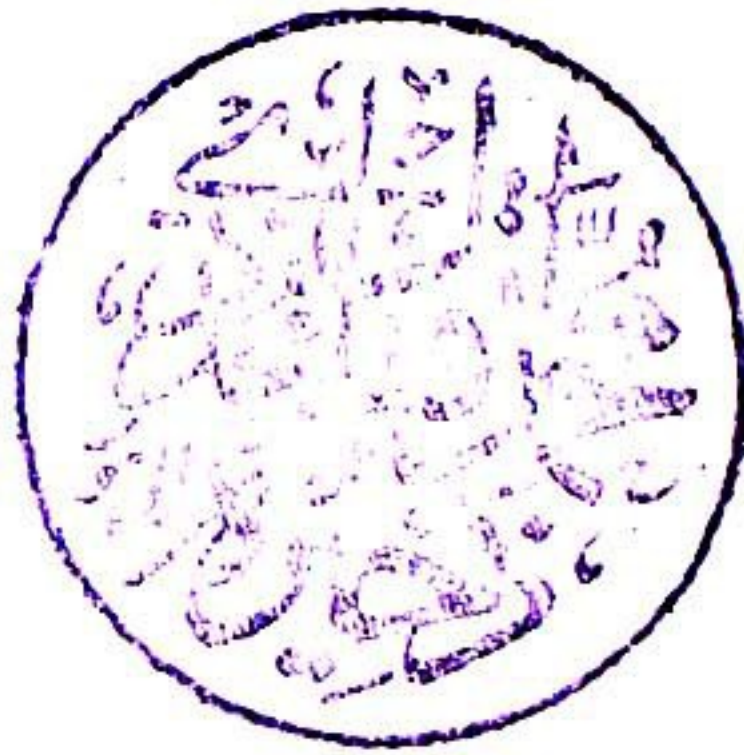
Truly it is the honourable Mahmud Sami”



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R Shaikh Mahmûd Sâmi **RAMAZANOĞLU**

The friends of Allah do not seek publicity or praise from other people; Allah the Almighty Himself praises them and loves them. In elevating their ranks, He even regards those who love the friends of Allah, in reality, love Allah. Among these friends of Allah, is the Sultan of Gnostics, Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu of Adana.

Through his deep love of Allah, all his actions were carried out in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ, the Pride of the Universe. All the virtues of the blessed Prophet's character were united in this man; and so those who read his life story with care and consideration will, inshallah, derive benefit from doing so.

