

Shaikh Sharfuddin Maneri

Letters from a Sufi Teacher



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Letters from a Sufi Teacher

Shaikh Sharfuddin Maneri

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a Sufi Teacher

Translated from the Persian by
Bajjnath Singh

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Publisher's Note

This book was originally published as *Letters from a Sufi Teacher*, Benares and London: Theosophical Publishing Society, n.d. (ca. 1908). The original system of transcription has been preserved. A few misprints have been corrected, and the style of references has been made uniform. The terms "Mohammadan" and "Mahomedan" have been replaced by "Muslim." The term "Theosophy", occasionally used by the translator to refer to *Tasavvuf*, has been replaced by "Sûfism."

Foreword

Shaikh Sharf-ud-dîn was the son of Shaikh Yahiâ. His birthplace is Maner, a village near Patna in Behâr (India). A love of knowledge and the religious life, and signs of spiritual greatness, were found in him from his early childhood. A strange Being was once seen by the cradle of the baby. The mother, frightened, reported the matter to her father, Shahab-ud-dîn, a great saint. The latter consoled her, saying that the mysterious Presence was no less a Being than the Prophet Khezâr¹ Himself, and that the baby was expected to be a man of great spiritual advancement. He acquired secular knowledge under Ashraf-ud-dîn, a famous professor of those days. He first refused to marry, but had to yield when, being ill, he was advised by the physician to take to marriage as the remedy for his disease. He left home after the birth of a son, travelled in many places, and was at last initiated (at, or near Delhi) by Najib-ud-dîn Firdausî. The latter made him his deputy on earth under a deed drawn twelve years earlier under the direction of the Prophet of Islâm Himself, asked him to leave the place, and quitted his body shortly after.

On his initiation, Sharf-ud-dîn lived for many a long year in the woods of Bihiâ and the Râjgiri Hills. In his later days he adopted Bihâr (now a subdivisional town) as his residence, at the request of some of his friends and disciples. He died on Thursday, the 6th of Shawwâl, 782 Hijra, in the opening years of the 15th Century A.D. His titular name is Makhdûm-ul-Mulk, "Master of the Kingdom or the World." He was equally proficient in secular learning and esoteric Knowledge, and possessed superhuman powers. His tomb at Bihâr is still resorted to as a place of sanctity by a large number of devout

¹ A mysterious Personage, according to some, a Prophet; according to others, a *Walî* or "Friend of God." He is supposed to be an Immortal Being, an invisible Teacher and Helper of Mankind. Moses was sent by God to seek His instruction. "*Khezâr*" literally means "green", a metaphorical expression for auspiciousness, blessedness, wholesomeness and fertility.

FOREWORD

Muslims. He wrote many works, of which three only have yet been published. These are:

(1) *Maktûbât-i-Sadî*, a "Series of a Hundred Letters" (or rather essays on definite subjects) addressed to his disciple Qâzî Shams-ud-dîn in 747 Hijra.

(2) *Maktûbât-i-Bist-o-hasht*, a "Series of 28 Letters", being replies to the correspondence of his senior disciple, Mozaffar, the prince of Balkh.

(3) *Fawâed-i-Ruknî*, a number of brief Notes prepared for the use of his disciple Rukn-ud-dîn.

The present booklet consists of the translation of copious extracts from *Maktûbât-i-Sadî*, the most elaborate and comprehensive of the three published works, with Notes occasionally added from the other two with a view to elucidate or complete the subject in hand. These extracts, it is hoped, will cover the greater part of, if not all, the *principles* inculcated in these books, and are expected to give the reader a fair knowledge of the *Teaching* of the Author in *all its phases*. Matters relating to mere exoteric rites, legends and traditions have been omitted. The translation does not pretend to be always very literal, but an honest attempt has been made to present a faithful rendering of the original to the English-knowing public, that they may be able to better appreciate the Teachings of Islâm, and that the Brotherhood of Creeds may have one more advocate to plead its cause before the tribunal of the human intellect.

Gayâ (Behar)

Baijnâth Singh
1908

TRANSLATION

On Monotheism (Tauhîd)

Masters of the Path have divided monotheism into four stages. The first stage consists in repeating, vocally, without any inner conviction, "There is no God save Allâh."¹ This is hypocrisy, and does not profit on the day of resurrection. The second stage consists in repeating the said *logion* vocally with an inner conviction based upon conventional imitation (as in the case of ordinary people), or some form of reasoning (as in the case of an intellectual theist). This is verily the visible body of monotheism, frees one from gross polytheism and from hell, and leads to heaven. This second stage, though safer than the first, and less unstable, is for all that a low one, fit for old women.² The third stage consists in Light shining in the heart, which reveals the One Agent alone as the root of all phenomena, and the non-agency of all else. This is quite unlike the conviction of ordinary people or that of an intellectual theist. Such a conviction is a fetter to the soul, whereas the vision of the Light breaks all fetters. There must be difference between one who believes a certain gentleman to be in his house, on the testimony of others (as in the case of ordinary people), another who infers the residence of that gentleman in the house, because he sees his horses and servants at the gate (as in the case of the intellectual theist), and another who actually sees the gentleman in the house (as in the case of the third stage). In the third stage one sees the creatures and the Creator, and distinguishes them from Him. This much of separation still persists —hence it is not perfect union in the eyes of the Masters.

¹ *Lâ elâha ill' Allâh.*

² Weak souls.—*Trans.*

The fourth stage consists in the pouring forth of the Divine Light so profusely, that it absorbs all individual existences in the eyes of the pilgrim. As in the case of the absorption of particles floating in the atmosphere in the light of the sun, the particles become invisible—they do not cease to exist, nor do they become the sun, but they are inevitably lost to sight in the overpowering glare of the sun—so, here, a creature does not become God, nor does it cease to exist. Ceasing to exist is one thing, invisibility is another. . . . When thou lookest through a mirror, thou dost not see the mirror, for thou mergest it into the reflexion of thy face, and yet thou canst not say that the mirror has ceased to exist, or that it has become that reflexion, or that the reflexion has become the mirror. Such is the vision of the Divine Energy in all beings without distinction. This state is called by the Sûfis, absorption in monotheism. Many have lost their balance here: no one can pass through this forest without the help of the Divine Grace and the guidance of a Teacher, perfect, open-eyed, experienced in the elevations and depressions of the Path and inured to its blessings and sufferings. . . . Some pilgrims attain to this lofty state only for an hour a week, some for an hour a day, some for two hours a day, some remain absorbed for the greater portion of their time. . . .

Beyond the four is the stage of complete absorption, i.e., losing the very consciousness of being absorbed and of seeking after God—for such a consciousness still implies separation. Here, the soul merges itself and the universe into the Divine Light, and loses the consciousness of merging as well. “Merge into Him, this is monotheism: lose the sense of merging, this is unity.” Here there are neither formulae nor ceremonies, neither being nor non-being, neither description nor allusion, neither heaven nor earth. It is this stage alone that unveils the mystery: “All are non-existent save Him”; “All things are perishable save His Face”; “I am the True and the Holy One.” Absolute

unity without duality is realised here. “Do not be deluded, but know: every one who merges in God is not God.”

The first stage of monotheism is like the outermost shell of the almond; the second stage is like the second shell; the third stage is like the core; the fourth stage is like the essence of the core—the oil of the almond. All these are known by the name of the almond, but each differs immensely from the others in status, result, and use.

This note should be studied patiently and intelligently, since it deals with the basis of all developments, activities, and supersensuous phenomena. It will explain the phraseology and the allusions in the writings of the saints, and throw light on the verses on monotheism and the stages thereof.

O brother! though an ant, thou mayest turn out to be a Solomon. Do not think thou art an impure sinner: though a gnat, thou mayest become a lion. . . . God raises the monotheist out of the dualist, the faithful out of the faithless, and the devotee out of the sinner.—*Letter 1.*

[The following extracts on monotheism from *The Series of 28 Letters*, another work of the Author, may be aptly added.—*Trans.*]

According to a tradition of the Prophet, all beings were created out of Darkness, but each took in Light according to its capacity, and thus became luminous. Hence all beings are sparks of the Divine Light, and their luminosity is derived from It. Now one can fully understand the sacred verse: “God is the Light of heaven and earth.”—*Letter 17.*

Thou-ness and I-ness pertain to our world. They do not exist in the region of the Beloved. He is the one Reality: futile is the assertion of any existence but His.—*Letter 2.*



Turning to God, or Conversion (Taubâh)

Taubâh literally means to turn back. But the nature of the turning must be different with different individuals according to the difference in their conditions and stages. Ordinary people would turn from sin with apology in order to escape punishment; middling ones would turn from their deeds to secure the regard of the Master; the Elect would turn from all worlds, here and hereafter, and feel the insignificance and non-existence thereof in order to realise the glory of the Maker. The turning of a beginner cannot be permanent. A saint says of himself: "I turned back 70 times and failed each time; but my seventy-first turning proved steady, and I failed no more."

Khwâjâ (Master) Zoonoon of Egypt observes that the Taubâh of ordinary people consists in turning from sins, that of the Elect in turning from heedlessness.

Khwâjâ Sobaid and many others are of opinion that Taubâh consists in remembering one's past transgressions and being ever ashamed of them, so that one may not grow proud of one's many virtues. On the other hand, Khwâjâ Junnaid and many others hold the view that Taubâh consists in forgetting past transgressions, i.e., in expunging their impressions from the heart, so that it may become as pure as if it had never committed them.

Taubâh is obligatory for all pilgrims at all times, since for each pilgrim there is always a stage higher than his present one. If he halts at any stage, he stops his pilgrimage and commits sin.

Taubâh consists in a firm and sincere resolution to abstain from sins, so as to assure God of one's unwillingness to commit them in future; and in compensating, to one's best ability, those one has harmed in any way. . . .

Taubâh is the basis of all developments, as the ground is for the foundation of a building. The chief requisite is *Îmân*

(peace, faith, or moral sense). Taubâh and Îmân appear together, and the latter illumines the heart in proportion to the former.

The real Taubâh lies in turning from one's nature. When the disciple turns from his nature he becomes another; i.e., he does not become another man, but his qualities change. Then he unfolds true Îmân, which sweeps away many-ness and leads to unity. Ere the turning, Îmân is but conventional and nominal. "How long will you worship God with your tongue only? This is no better than worshipping desires. So long as thou dost not become a Moslem from *within*, how canst thou be a Moslem merely from *without*?" The lame ass of conventional faith and the lip-behaviour that we have cannot help us to tread the Path.

None ought to despair under any circumstance whatsoever. Here work is without a motive, and requires no payment. Many are instantly raised from the level of image-worship to a stage higher than the angels and heaven. The Lord does whatever He wishes. "How" and "why" find no room here. May God make thee a seer of His, and remove thee from thyself! Do thou aspire high, though thou art low at present. O brother, human aspiration should stoop to nothing, either on earth or in heaven! "Such men are so constituted as to care for neither hell nor heaven. They seek God and God only, and spurn what is not He."

Sûfism (*Tasavvuf*) is ceaseless motion, since standing water becomes stagnant. A man may corporeally be in his closet, yet his spirit may run to the Malakût¹ and the Jabrût.² Rapid motion, like the morning breeze, can neither be seen nor grasped.—*Letters 2-4.*



¹ The lower mental plane.

² The higher mental plane.

On Seeking the Teacher

The Saints on the Path—blessed be they—unanimously declare that it is incumbent upon a neophyte, after the maturity of his conversion (Taubâh), to seek a Teacher, perfect, experienced in the elevations and depressions of the Path, its joys and sorrows, possessed of balance, and versed in the internal ailments of a disciple and their remedies. . . .

Though in the beginning one does not need a Teacher, and the seed can be sown merely with the help of Divine Grace, the seed, when sown in the soil of the heart, does need a Teacher for its further growth, for the following reasons given in the books of the saints:

1. Since one cannot go to the Kâbâ¹ without a guide, albeit the way is visible and sensuous, and the pilgrim possesses eyes and feet, it is impossible without a guide to tread the occult Path trodden by 120,000 prophets, which has no visible track and is supersensuous.

2. As there are many thieves and robbers on a sensuous way, and one cannot travel without a guide, so on the occult Path there are many robbers in the guise of the world, the desire-nature and the elementals, and one cannot travel without the guidance of a Master.

3. There are many precipices and dangers on the Path, leading to one or other of the many heretic schools formed by those who, having entered the Path without a Perfect Guide, on the strength of their own intellectual resources, fell and perished in the forest and deserted the Law. Others, more fortunate, have safely crossed those dangers under the protection of Masters, and have seen the victims, and known where and why they fell. All pilgrims are liable to these dangers. If one secures the help of a mighty Teacher, one can be saved and

¹ The Sacred Shrine at Mecca.

progress with the help of His secret hints and instructions, else one may fall into some heresy and lose the fruit of one's labor.

4. The pilgrim may pass, on the way, through certain spiritual conditions, and the soul may put off the physical garment, catch the reflection of the Divine Light, display superhuman powers as a Divine agent during the continuance of the experiences, taste the relish of "I am God, the Holy One," and become proud of having reached the goal. The pilgrim cannot understand this intellectually: but if the soul, during the continuance of these experiences, is not helped by a mighty Master, he may, it is feared, lose faith, and fall a victim to a false notion of unity.

5. The pilgrim on the way unfolds supersensuous powers, and sees supersensuous phenomena—devilish, passional, and divine. But he cannot understand them, as they are spoken in a supersensuous language (i.e., revealed through an unfamiliar medium). . . . If, at this stage, he is not aided by a Teacher, helping him on behalf of God, and versed in the interpretation of supersensuous words and symbols, he cannot progress further. . . .

When God opens the eyes of a man, so that he distinguishes good from evil, and resolves to follow the one and avoid the other, but does not know how to do it, he must betake himself to a Divine Man and make a firm determination to change his condition. Then the Divine Man will take him up, help him to subdue the desire-nature, gently induce him to abstain from his defects and blemishes, and keep him away from bad companions. A disciple can, with the help of a Teacher, do in an hour what he would do unaided in a year. . . .

It is said: a disciple may reach the goal with the help of a single Teacher, or of more than one Teacher. (In the latter case) each Teacher may be the means of the revelation of one stage only; yet it is more consistent with decency and politeness for the disciple to refrain from looking upon such a stage as the

limit of development attained by his Teacher . . . inasmuch as the Perfect Ones are not at all concerned with the business of stages and conditions. But one cannot leave one Teacher for another without the permission of the former. Who does so deserts the Path.

It is the practice of the Masters—blessed be They!—to impose a threefold discipline on a student. If he observes it, he receives the Robe (the real one, not the conventional)—else he is rejected. The threefold discipline consists of: 1. Service of the world for a year. 2. Service of God for a year. 3. Watching the heart for a year.—*Letter 5*.



On the Qualifications of a Teacher

Broadly speaking there are five qualifications:

(1) Devotion to God. One cannot be thus devoted, unless one is free from servility to all save Him.

(2) Capacity to receive truths direct from God without any intermediary. One cannot unfold this capacity without completely getting rid of the lower human nature.

(3) Nearness to God. One cannot approach God unless one is equipped with the Divine character, and one's Spirit reflects the light of the Divine attributes.

(4) Acquisition of knowledge from God without any intermediary. For this the heart should be cleansed of all impressions, sensual and intellectual.

(5) Being an Elect of the Heart Doctrine, which relates to the knowledge of the Divine Essence, the Divine Qualities, and the Divine Works. One cannot attain to this stage without a second birth. "One born of the mother's womb sees this world;

one born of the Self (i.e., quitting the lower human nature) sees the supersensuous world.”

Nevertheless it is said that the qualifications of a Teacher are indescribable and innumerable. A Teacher is not the body, the head, or the beard, visible to man. He is in reality the inner being by the side of God, in the region of Truth, clothed in Divine mercy and glory. . . . Here is a query: How can a beginner find out such a Teacher and Guide, know and follow Him? It is not meet for a beginner to weigh Divine Men with the balance of his little intellect and to look at Them with his limited vision. Nor is it meet to follow another on his mere assertion. Then how to know if such a one is a genuine Teacher or a mere pretender?

Answer: Each seeker is furnished with materials appropriate to his lot. He cannot transcend them . . . nor can anything hinder him from using them.

Query: Is there any sign whereby to distinguish a pretender from a true Teacher, the worthy from the unworthy?

Answer: There are many signs, but it is impossible to describe and fix them. For all that, there is no sign or mood, the presence or absence of which *alone* would mark a Teacher or a pretender. In short, one blessed with the Divine Grace should set his feet on the Path, turn away from sensual pleasures and passional gratifications, and fix his attention on God. Then the glance of some Perfect Teacher will shine in the mirror of the heart. . . . When a true disciple catches such a glance, he instantly contracts a love for the Beauty of His Godly Strength, becomes restless and uneasy, and comes to the Path. This uneasiness forebodes fortune and success. Perfect discipleship consists in perfect love for the Beauty of the Teacher’s Godly Strength. A disciple should follow the wishes of his Teacher, and not his own wishes. . . . In each locality there is a Teacher who protects men living in that area. The King of the time is only one, but there is an ordinary teacher in each town. Ac-

According to tradition there are always 365 Friends of God, who are the props of the world and the channels of the transmission of blessing and mercy from heaven to earth. . . . O brother, know for certain that this work has been before thee and me (i.e., in bygone ages), and that each man has already reached a certain stage. No one has begun this work for the first time. Everything is according to Divine dispensation. Do you suppose 100,024 prophets to have ushered any new work into the world? By no means. They stirred up what lay already in the bosom, and led man to what was ordained for him by God. . . . —*Letter 6.*



On Discipleship

Desire is a craving in the heart for a certain object. The craving produces a stir in the heart, the stir arouses a tendency to seek for the object. The nobler the object, the purer the desire. . . .

Desire is threefold:

(1) Desire for the world. It consists in the absorption of a man in the seeking of worldly objects. Such a desire is a down-right danger. When it clouds the heart of a neophyte, it keeps him back from all virtues, and lures him to failure. A life spent in the gratification of such a desire deprives one of eternal happiness after resurrection.

(2) Desire for heaven. The soul transcends the previous stage, longs for the heavenly state and permanent happiness, and practises lifelong asceticism, so that he may attain his object on the day of resurrection. The desire for heaven is nobler than the desire for the world. . . .

(3) Desire for God. A man (at this stage) unfolds the inner sight, aspires to transcend the created universe, and considers it

disgraceful to seize anything contained in that area—so that he develops a longing for the Creator Himself and is respected in heaven as well as on earth. When a disciple ceases to hanker after the world and heaven, and regards everything save his Object as a hindrance to his (onward) march, he should heartily endeavour to seek God, come manfully to the Path, and resort to a compassionate Teacher, so that the latter may help him in treading the Path, and tell him of its dangers, thus securing him a safe journey without any break or failure.

The Teacher cannot turn an unruly candidate into an earnest disciple. . . . If the spirit of the Path lies latent in a candidate, it will unfold by His company and service. The Divine Law works in this way.



On Discipleship (*Continued*)

When a man calls himself a disciple, he ought to justify the title to the fullest extent and firmly tread the straight Path. He should constantly use the collyrium of turning back (Taubâh), put on the robe of detachment from connections and from self, drink the wine of Seeking out of the cup of Purity, draw the sword of Magnanimity from the sheath of Religion, dismiss the cravings of the infidel Desire, practise absorption, and not care for the higher or the lower worlds. When he has become proficient in the truths of discipleship and the subtleties of Seeking, has gathered the fruits of purification and asceticism, begun to tread the Path and passed through several stages of the journey—then, if asked whether he is a disciple, he can say: “I may be one, God helping.” Thus is discipleship justified, and pretension avoided.

This is the way of those endowed with insight and divine Wisdom. Not to look to personality at any stage, nor to depend upon its possessions. Many saints with a life-long devotion have slipped down from dizzy heights. . . . A disciple who concentrates in himself the purity of all the angels and the piety of all men is self-conceited and sure to fall, if he knows himself to be better than a dog. . . . The beginner has a tongue, the proficient scholar is silent—*Letter 54*.

A disciple is a worshipper of his Teacher. If his rest and movements are in accordance with His commands, he is a disciple; if he follows his own desires, he is a follower of his desires, not of his Teacher. A disciple is he who loses himself in the Teacher. He shakes off his desires, as a serpent casts its slough. If he has even the least remnant of desire left in him, and doubts and protests find room in his heart, he is a worshipper of himself, not of the Teacher. . . . A disciple should be a worshipper of the Teacher, so that he may become a worshipper of God. One who obeys the Messenger verily obeys God.—*Fawâed-i-Ruknî*.

God has concealed precious gifts under the difficulties He has imposed upon these men (i.e., the disciples). A disciple should manfully discharge his duties without fail, in spite of the hardships and trials of the Path. God does not work in one way only, and it is difficult to know which way will lead the disciple to Him—joy or sorrow, gifts or privation. There is a divine secret underneath all sufferings and enjoyments in the world.—*The Series of 28 Letters, Letter 1*.

“A long journey is needed to ripen the raw.” As a fruit requires both sunshine and shadow for its maturity, so a pilgrim requires the dual experience—joy and sorrow, union and separation, presence and absence—for his perfection.—*Ibid.*, *Letter 5*.

There is no bar to the reception of the Divine Light. If there is any, it is due to lack of capacity. How can an unpolished mirror reflect an image? . . . The pilgrim needs patience and endurance, not hurry and unrest. God knows each man as he is, and sheds the Light when he deserves it.—*Ibid.*, *Letter 4*.

Contentment is a *sine qua non*; one without it should abandon occultism and go to the market.

The performance of duties to the best of one's abilities cannot be dispensed with, as it is necessary for the safe passage of the pilgrim. While sane, he should follow Truth. Truth in words and conduct is ever beneficial, never harmful.—*Ibid.*, *Letter 15*.



The Friend of God (The Walee)

The Walee (or the Friend of God) is one who constantly receives the favours of the Deity, which consist in his being guarded against all troubles, the hardest of which is the commission of sins. As a Prophet must be sinless, so must a Friend be protected. The distinction between the two is this: The one is beyond the commission of a sin; the other is liable to commit a sin on rare occasions, but does not persist therein. . . . The Friend is endowed with all possible virtues. . . . Again, it is said, the Friend is he who does not fail in his duties to God and the universe. He does not serve through hope and fear of agreeable and disagreeable consequences. He does not set any value on his individuality. . . .

A Friend may be either known or unknown to the people. If unknown, he is not affected by the evils of fame. . . .

A Friend is he who does not long for the world or for Heaven, who forsakes himself for the Divine Friendship and turns his heart to the True One. . . . The Friends are the special objects of the Love of God. Owing to their devotion, they have been chosen as the Governors of His Kingdom, the channels of His Activities, receive special powers, and are liberated from the bondage of the desire-nature. They do not desire anything save Him, nor feel attachment to anything save Him. They have been before us, are in these days, and will be till the end of the world. . . .

They are to-day the appointed Agents of God to serve as channels for the propagation of the messages of the ancient Prophets, and to govern the world—so that the rain may pour from heaven by Their blessings, that plants may grow from the earth by Their purity, and that the faithful may prevail over the faithless by Their strength.

Superhuman powers are a kind of idols in this world. If a saint is content with their possession, he stops his onward progress. If he turns away from them, he advances the cause of his union with God. Here is a subtle mystery, and it is this: True Friendship consists in the rejection of all save the Beloved. But attention to superhuman powers and reliance upon them means the rejection of the Beloved, and satisfaction with something other than Himself.—*Letter 8.*



The Brotherhood of Friends

[There is a passage on the hierarchy of Divine Friends in *Fawâed-i-Ruknî*, another work of the Author, which is translated below as a supplement to the present subject.—*Trans.*]

There are 4,000 Walees who are not known to the world. They do not know one another, nor are they conscious of their exalted position. They ever remain veiled from the world, as well as from themselves.

There are 300 Akhyâr (the Charitable or the Benevolent) who solve the difficulties of the world and keep the gate of the Divine Sanctuary. There are forty Abdâl (the Substitutes); 17 Abrâr (the Liberated); 5 Nujabâ (the Pure); 4 Autâd (the Pegs); 3 Nuqabâ (the Watchers); 1 Qutub (the Pole), also called Gaus, the "Redresser of Grievances." All these know one another and are interdependent for the discharge of their respective duties. (Total, 370.—*Trans.*)

According to another authority (Majma-us-Sâerîn) there are 356 Walees ever working in the world. When one of them retires, another takes his place, so that there is never any diminution in the number 356. They are made up of $300 + 40 + 7 + 5 + 3 + 1$. The One is the Qutub of the world, the preservation of which is due to His holy existence. If He retired without another to take His place, the world would fall to pieces. When the Qutub retires, one of the Three takes His place; one of the Five fills up the gap in the Three, one of the Seven fills up the gap in the Five, one of the Forty fills up the gap in the Seven, one of the Three Hundred fills up the gap in the Forty, and a man is posted to the vacancy in the rank of the Three Hundred —so that 356 ever continue working in the world, and every spot is blessed by Their auspicious Feet. Their outer life is similar to that of ordinary people, so the latter cannot know Them. Inwardly, They are united with God. Love, Friendship, and the Mysteries have to do with the within, not with the without. They (the Walees) are too strong to be hindered by earth, water, fire, air, plains and hills. Being in the East, They can see and hear men in the West. They can instantly go from the East to the West, come from the West to the East, go to and

come back from Arsh (the Divine Throne). Theirs are many superhuman powers of like nature.



Polytheism, and the Friendship of God

Polytheism is twofold:

(1) The outer, which consists in worshipping a god other than the One Highest God. . . .

(2) The inner, which consists in thinking of a being, other than God, as a helper at the time of need.

Some say that to see anything save Him, is polytheism for an Occultist.

Some say that to refer to any separated self in any way, to be inclined to do anything with one's own will, and to resort to one's own schemes and plans in any emergency, are all forms of polytheism. . . .

The chosen Friend is he who is of God alone, both without and within. He neither acts nor thinks against [the Divine Will]. He does not mix with the desire-nature, forgets his services in the presence of the Master, and cannot do without Him. . . . He is so filled with Him in all respects—both without and within—that it is impossible for anything else to enter into him. . . . He loses his desire, will, and all individual qualities, and exists merely through God's Desire and Will. He gets what he wills—not because he wills anything other than what is God's will, but because his will is one with God's. Nay God unfolds His Will in him.—*Letter 9.*



Lights

When the mirror of the Heart is cleansed of impurities, it becomes capable of reflecting the supersensuous lights. They appear in the beginning as flashes, but gain in power and volume as the heart becomes purer—manifesting [gradually] as the lamp, the flame, the stars, the moon, and the sun. The forms of flashes arise from ablutions and prayers . . . ; those of the lamp, the flame and the stars, from the *partial* purity of the heart; that of the full moon, from its *perfect* purity; that of the sun, from the Soul reflecting its glory in the perfectly purified heart. A time comes when [the inner light] is a thousand times more luminous than the [external] sun. If [the visions of] the sun and moon are simultaneous, the latter signifies the heart reflecting the light of the Soul, the former the Soul itself. The light of the Soul is *formless*, but is seen behind a *veil* distorting the *idea* into the form of the sun.

Sometimes the Light of the Divine Attributes may cast its reflection in the mirror of the heart according to the purity of the latter. . . . This Light distinguishes itself by a feeling of bliss in the heart, which shows that it comes from God and not from others. It is hard to describe this bliss. It is said that the Light of the Constructive Attributes is illuminative, but not scorching; that of the Disintegrating Attributes scorching, but not illuminative. This is beyond the comprehension of intellect. Sometimes, when the purity of the heart is complete, the Seer sees the True One *within* him, if he looks within, the True One *without* him, if he looks to the universe. When the Divine Light is reflected in the light of the soul, the vision gives bliss. When the Divine Light shines *without* the media of the soul and the heart, the vision manifests formlessness and infinity, uniqueness and harmony, the basis and support of *all* existence. Here there is neither rising nor setting, neither right nor left, neither up nor down, neither space nor time, neither far nor near,

neither night nor day, neither heaven nor earth. Here the pen breaks, the tongue falters, intellect sinks into nothingness, intelligence and knowledge miss the way in the wilderness of amazement.—*Letter 12.*



The Unveiling of the Supersensuous

The essence of the Unveiling lies in coming *out* of the veils. The seer perceives things not perceived by him before. The “veils” mean hindrances keeping one back from the perfect vision of the Divine Beauty, and consist of the various worlds—according to some, 18,000 in number, according to others, 80,600—all present in the constitution of man. Man has an eye correlated to each world, with which he observes that world during the unveiling. These worlds are included under a two-fold division: Light and Darkness, Heaven and Earth, Invisible and Visible, Spiritual and Physical—each pair expressing the same sense in different words. . . . When a sincere pilgrim, impelled by his aspiration, turns from the lower nature to follow the Law, and begins to tread the Path under the protection of a Teacher, he unfolds an eye for each of the veils uplifted by him, to observe the conditions of the world before him. First, he unfolds the eye of intellect and comprehends the intellectual mysteries to the extent of the uplifting of the veil. This is called the *Intellectual unveiling*, and should not be depended on. Most of the philosophers are at this stage and take it as the final goal. This stage transcended, the sincere pilgrim comes to unveil the heart, and perceives various lights. This is called the *Perceptual unveiling*. Next, he unveils the Secrets; this is the *Inspirational unveiling*, and the Mysteries of creation and existence are revealed to him. Next, he unveils the

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