

IBN °AṬA°ILLĀH AS-SAKANDARI
&
HIS ṢŪFISM

by

Dr. Abul Wafa° Al-Ghonemi at-Taftazani, past Vice president, Cairo University;
Shaykh ul Mashaykh of the Ṣufi Turuq of Egypt

translated by

Al-Ma°ddawi Moḥamed az-Zirr, Senior Advisor, International Labor Organization, Geneva;
Governor of the Red Sea Province, Egypt; Head of Zakat Department, International Islamic Bank

revised by

Shaykh Nooruddeen Durkee, Founder and past President, Dar al-Islam Foundation;
Abiquiu, New Mexico; Director of the Green Mountain School and an-Noor Foundation, Charlottesville,
Virginia, USA

What do you think of Who does not vanish....
Oh slave, as you have surrendered to Me in creating My land and sky
all by Myself alone,
surrender your existence to Me.
You are Mine.
Do not plan with Me because you are with me.

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INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allāh, and *ṣalat* and *salām* be on our master Muḥammad,
his family and his friends.

The subject of this research is Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh as-Sakandāri and his Ṣūfism, both the theoretical and practical aspects of it. It is a subject which has not previously received the due attention of researchers in spite of its importance. Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh is an Egyptian Ṣūfī personality who had an impact on Egyptian Ṣūfism in particular and Islamic Ṣūfism in general. He was a good representative of Egyptian Ṣūfism in the second half of the seventh century Hijra and the early part of the eighth century. Moreover he was the first to fully develop the doctrine of dropping self-management in Islamic Ṣūfism. He was a great literary scholar who had high status in eloquence and in Arabic Ṣūfī literature. Additionally he was one of the leaders of the Shādhīhulī Ṣūfī school.

The importance of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh is not confined only to Egyptian and Islāmīc Ṣūfism. It extends even to Christian mysticism. Asin Palacios, the well known Spanish orientalist, relates in one of his researches that the famous Spanish mystic San Juan de la Cruz was influenced in his doctrines by the Shādhīhulī school as represented in Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's *Maxims* and Ibn ʿAbbad ar-Rundi's explanation of them. Palacios relates that he observed that influence due to the strong resemblance between the views of San Juan de la Cruz and the views of the Shādhīhulī school on many Ṣūfī subjects, and also because ar-Rundi, who was born and lived in Spain, was near to the school which De la Cruz represented.

If what Palacios says in this respect is true, it means that the views of our Shaykh as-Sakandāri found their way from Egypt to Spain and had their impact on the doctrines of Christian mysticism.

Moreover, Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's views on Ṣūfism were circulated in a way that was never the case with others. His *Maxims*, which are most conspicuous in revealing his Ṣūfī doctrine, were interpreted by numerous commentators from the eighth century till now and in various countries, e.g., Spain, Morocco, the Arabian Peninsula, Turkey, India, Malaysia, etc. They were also translated into and interpreted in non-Arabic languages, such as Turkish, Malaysian and now English.

When I started this research I had two objectives in front of me. 1) to explore the history of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's life, his status, his contributions to the Ṣūfī movement in Egypt and the relation between his Ṣūfī life and Ṣūfī doctrine; and 2) to reveal (in an objective way) his Ṣūfī doctrine in a comprehensive inter-related picture which indicates its importance and its novelty.

Consequently, this research is comprised of two main divisions. In part one of the first division, I have dealt with the events of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's life in some detail, showing his birth, upbringing in Alexandria in the second half of the seventh century Hijra, and his learning from the best teachers in his time. I then deal with his teaching career in Cairo and his residence and death there, studying the history of his life in the light of his time from religious, political, and social angles.

Part two of the first division deals with Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's Ṣūfī life. I relate how it started, how he progressed in his Ṣūfī path under the supervision of his Shaykh Abul Abbās al-Mursī, how he became a complete Ṣūfī calling to Allāh on the Shādhīhulī Path. I also try in this part to show the characteristics and traits of Egyptian Ṣūfism and the role of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh in it. I also relate the dispute between him and his contemporary Taqīʾddin Ibn Taymiya, and also explain what biographers of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh have stated of the miraculous wonders related to him, to show in the light of modern psychology his status as a true Ṣūfī.

Division one ends with a chapter on Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's works and their commentaries. It includes a comprehensive survey of his books and the characteristics of each of them showing whether they were Ṣūfī, literary, or psychological in intent.

Division two of this research deals with Ibn 'Atā'illāh's Ṣūfism from both the theoretical and practical angles. This division includes seven parts, which are closely related to each other in two ways. First, they are related in subject matter such that each part is connected with the best of what precedes it and is based on it. This sort of connection shows how the traveler progresses in the Ṣūfī path and the nature of his taste of what he comes in contact with, starting with the dropping of self-direction, then the struggle against his lower self through moral exercises, seclusion, isolation, *dhikr*, abiding by and sticking to the ethics of behavior, and further progress and escalation in the stations and states, culminating in ascertained gnosis of Allāh and beholding the Divine Oneness by direct taste and vision, and not by analogical reasoning or proof. I did not labor to find this inter-relationship because the texts of Ibn 'Atā'illāh naturally lead to it. The second way is the inter-relationship in the doctrine itself. For the Ṣūfī doctrine of Ibn 'Atā'illāh is self inter-related, as we have elaborated upon in this division, and is in its entirety founded upon the dropping of self-direction and planning with Allāh, and full faith in His Decree. No one understands any section of it apart from other sections. Ibn 'Atā'illāh explains it in a special way and with specific logic, which he sticks to from the beginning till the end.

In this second division we have paid attention to the practical Ṣūfism of Ibn 'Atā'illāh in addition to our study of his theoretical Ṣūfism. We have dealt with his practical exercises (e.g., moral exercises, seclusion, isolation, hunger, silence, keeping awake by night, *dhikr* in all its forms). We have done so because we firmly believe that practical exercises are – in fact – the frame in which experiential interactions revealing later Ṣūfī doctrinal temperaments (ideas) take place. We have frequently asked ourselves the following question when dealing with any of Ibn 'Atā'illāh's views: what were the psychological circumstances which enveloped Ibn 'Atā'illāh when he expressed his taste that way?

We have, in our study of Ibn 'Atā'illāh's Ṣūfism (both practical and theoretical), when the occasion called for it, done a comparative study between Ibn 'Atā'illāh's doctrine and the doctrine of some Christian mystics to show similarities and differences between them, between his experiences and theirs, and between his vocabulary and theirs. In addition, we did not forget to study some of Ibn 'Atā'illāh's thought in the light of modern psychology and modern philosophical doctrines.

At the end of our research we have presented some interpretations of Ibn 'Atā'illāh's doctrine in explaining the reality of existence, which imply that it was a pantheistic doctrine similar to Ibn 'Arabi's, or that it was another form of the doctrine of divine incarnation. We have proved otherwise and demonstrated that Ibn 'Atā'illāh's doctrine is based on beholding the Divine Oneness in existence through Ṣūfī taste or eye-witnessing, instead of mental proof and deduction.

Furthermore, we have also taken efforts to support the research by stating the texts which we have utilized to reach to our conclusions, thus explaining the numerous references to them in the text and in the footnotes. This has a two-fold value. First, references endow the research with objectivity that reveals itself in Ibn 'Atā'illāh's own views and as expressed in his own language and own way. Secondly, they help other researchers to go back to the original references if they desire further information.

If research in science bases itself on experiments supported with tangible observation, then research in Ṣūfism, to be practical, should be based on a long progression of texts and quoting them as they are, in order to demonstrate how the conclusions were deduced from them. A text in literary research replaces an experiment in scientific research, or at least it should be considered as such.

We hope we have succeeded in revealing the history of that Egyptian Ṣūfī as-Sakandāri, his Ṣūfī doctrine, both practical and theoretical, its importance and its place in the history of Egyptian Ṣūfism in particular and Islamic Ṣūfism in general.

Allāh ﷻ is the grantor of success and unto Him is everything.

Cairo 1st Ramaḍān 1377 H.
21 March 1958 AD

Abu'l Wafa al-Ghonemi al-Tafatazani
Faculty of Arts, Cairo University.



Maqām of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Illāh in the Muqattam Hills, Cairo

DIVISION ONE: Ibn 'Atā'illāh's Biography

CHAPTER ONE: IBN 'ATĀ'ILLĀH AS-SAKANDĀRI AND HIS TIMES

1- Introduction

It is not easy to give a clear and accurate picture of the life of Ibn 'Atā'illāh as-Sakandāri. Previous biographical works did not delve into the details of his life in a way that could reveal its numerous facets and the various phases of its development. Many of the biographies of Ibn 'Atā'illāh are extremely concise, and some of them do not exceed a few lines. It was obvious, however, that we had to look into all of those previous biographies and to combine them in such a way that they would complement each other, and to draw from them information which would enable us to form a picture (of his life).

In compiling those references we looked into all kinds of sources. In order to make our search as complete as possible, we did not confine ourselves to Şufibooks or Şufibiographies, but also searched in the biographies of the scholars of jurisprudence, in history books, and in commentaries on his works. After gathering what we could from these, we went on to compare that information with what Ibn 'Atā'illāh wrote about his own history and life – although admittedly he wrote very little on that topic.

In addition, we studied the biographies of his professors, disciples, and contemporaries, an especially laborious task with regard to the biographies of professors who taught him jurisprudence, grammar, and *ḥadīth*. We were sometimes obliged to read entire books in search of his professors' biographies within the biographies of their contemporaries.

We hope, however, that our effort, even with such scanty resources, has unveiled some of the aspects of the life of this great Sūfi, Ibn 'Atā'illāh as-Sakandāri.

2- His name, ancestors, and family

Biographers of Ibn 'Atā'illāh have stated that his full name was 'Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abdul-Karīm ibn 'Atā'illāh.' He is also known as Tājuddīn, Abu'l Faḍl, and Abu'l 'Abbās. Ibn 'Ajība gave his name and ancestors in some detail, saying: "He is the Imām Shaykh Tājuddīn, speaker for the gnostic-knowers, Abu'l Faḍl Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abdul-Karīm ibn Abdur-Raḥmān ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Īsā ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Atā'illāh ..."

His biographers state that he was from Alexandria. They further say he is called al-Iskandarāni, or as-Sakandāri, or al-Iskandāri. Others add that he is descended from the tribe of Juṭḥam, follows the Māliki school of jurisprudence, and follows the Shādhḍhuli way in Tasawwuf.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh was of Arabic origins. His ancestors were the Juṭḥamis, who traveled to Egypt and settled in Alexandria after the Islamic conquest.

With regard to his immediate family, we do not know much. We know only that his father was called "Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Karīm ibn 'Atā'illāh" and that he was a contemporary of Shaykh Abu'l Ḥasan aṣḥ-Shādhḍhuli, founder of the Shādhḍhuli Ṭarīqah, who died in the year 656 A.H. We know this from a statement in *Lata'if al-Minan (Subtleties of the Endowments)*, written by Ibn 'Atā'illāh himself. It says: "My father, may Allāh have mercy on him, said: 'I entered into Shaykh Abu'l Ḥasan's place when I heard him saying, 'By Allāh, you may ask about something for which I have no answer, yet I may find the answer written in the ink pot, the carpet, and the wall.'"

It seems that members of his family were engaged in religious teachings. His paternal grandfather, Shaykh Abu Muhammad °Abdul-Karim Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh as-Sakandāri, was a well-known scholar of Fiqh in his time. Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh grew up to be a scholar like his grandfather and was keen to reach his grandfather's position. Biographers of Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh did not mention this grandfather. However, we found his biography in *al-Dibaj* by Ibn Farhoun, which implied that he was an Imām in fiqh, principles of fiqh, and Arabic language, and that he was a companion of the Māliki Faqih Abu Amr ibn al-Ḥajib, who died in 646 A.H. Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh's grandfather and ibn al-Ḥajib were students of Shaykh Abu'l Hasan al-Ibyari, the greatest Māliki scholar in Alexandria at that time, who composed *al-Bayan wat-Taqreeb fi Sharh al-Tahdhib*, a large book containing various kinds of knowledge and strange and unusual statements. He also summarized the *Tahdhib* and the *Mufasssal* of az-Zamakhshari. As-Suyūṭi stated that he died in the year 612 A.H.

Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh mentioned his grandfather in more than one place in *Lata'if al-Minan*, though not by name. He implied that his grandfather had been a leading scholar of jurisprudence (*faqih*). He wrote:

“When I entered into his place (meaning the place of his Shaykh Abu'l °Abbās al-Mursi) he said, ‘When the *faqih* Nasiruddīn recovers, he will put you in the place of your grandfather. He will sit on one side and I will sit on the other. You will, *in sha'Allāh*, speak in both branches of knowledge,’ and what he said became true.”

He also mentioned his Shaykh's words: “By Allāh, I will not be content only to see him in his grandfather's place, if he is not also given a senior place in Tasawwuf.”

It seems that his grandfather did not believe in Ṣufism, and that they (the Sufis) were patiently enduring his mischief. This is clear from one of the statements in *Lata'if al-Minan*, in which Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh wrote:

“Some of al-Mursi's companions said that the Shaykh said one day, ‘When the son of Alexandria's faqih comes (meaning Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh) tell me of his arrival.’ When you came, we told the Shaykh. He said to me ‘Come in,’ so I stood in front of him. He then said ‘Jibrīl came one day with the angel of the mountains to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ when Quraysh rejected him. The angel of the mountains greeted Muḥammad ﷺ, and told him: ‘O Muḥammad, if you wish I can squeeze them between these two mountains.’ The Prophet replied, ‘No, for I pray to Allāh that some of their posterity will believe in Allāh's Oneness.’ He endured them, hoping that they would give birth to believers. In the same way we endured the grandfather of this faqih for the sake of this faqih.”

Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh mentioned his grandfather's family in a poem of which we quote the following:

“Aḥmad does not hope for anything
Except the Prophet's support in time of hardship
And his father Muḥammad, pardon him
And grasp him with near and tender kindness.
Your slave, [Abdul-Karīm] Oh Generous, please grant him
And give him the best lot and portion
°Aṭā°Illāh, his father, please endow him
With a blessing from You, O You who veils misdeeds”

Aḥmad in the first line is a reference to his own name. Muḥammad (in the third line) is his father's name. His grandfather's name Abdul-Karīm (Slave of the Generous) is referred to in the next line. °Aṭā°Illāh, mentioned in the seventh line, is the name of his grandfather's father.

It is clear now that Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh was an Egyptian national of Arab origin born in Alexandria. This is important for two reasons: first, because he thus represents the Egyptian Ṣufism of the seventh century

Hijra, and second, this fact refutes the claims of some orientalist scholars who state that Arabs are not spiritually qualified for Ṣūfism. In their view, Ṣūfism was an Indian or Persian product, or it was a reaction of Islam to other mentalities. These and other similar suppositions lack any proof.

Before Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, there were other founders of Egyptian Ṣūfism, such as Dhu'n Nun al-Misri, Abu Bakr al-Zaqqāq, Abu'l Ḥasan Bannan al-Hammāl. There were others who appeared in Syria, for example Abu Sulayman ad-Darāni and Abu'l Ḥasan al-Hawari. Harith al-Muhāsibi was in Basra (Iraq). Also there was 'Umar ibn al-Farid, the Egyptian Ṣūfi and poet of Syrian origin. There were other famous Sufis of the Maghrib whose origin goes back to al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, the grandson of the Prophet (*salla Allāhu alayhi wa sallam*). Not to mention the whole maghribi-Egyptian line of the Shādhḍhuliyyah. The existence of these Sufis refutes the claims which allege that the phenomenon of Ṣūfism is of a foreign (non-Arab) origin, and that the Arab mentality is incapable of plunging into its realities or tasting its spiritual meanings. The above-mentioned Sufis undoubtedly prove the value and merit of the Arabs in the founding of Islamic Ṣūfism since its inception.

3- His birth, upbringing and education in Alexandria

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh was from Alexandria, but we do not know exactly when he was born.

We have found some references which help us to determine approximately the year of his birth. All of his biographers agreed that his death was in the year 709 A.H. Only ash-Sha'rani disagreed, stating that his death was in the year 707 A.H. We accept the first date because there is no proof for the second. We also know that Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh died in his late manhood, as Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani stated. What could his age have been then? The definition of "late manhood" as it appears in the dictionary, *al-Muheet*, is the age of a man whose hair is becoming grey; a man between the ages of 34 and 51 years. In another dictionary, by Ibn al-Athir al Juzri, the definition is: "between 30 and 40 years, or between 33 and 50 years."

Based on the above and taking into consideration that Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's death was in 709 A.H., his birth could have been between 658 and 679 A.H. Determining his birth year in this way is not useful because it is neither accurate nor definite. We therefore compared the above results with other texts, which reveal the following:

- 1- Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh was a disciple of Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursi and accompanied him for 12 years.
- 2- Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursi died in the year 686 A.H.
- 3- Thus, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's training with Abu'l 'Abbās started in the year 674 A.H.
- 4- We also know that before he accompanied al-Mursi, he was himself a faqih, learning exoteric knowledge. There was at that time a dispute between him and the Shaykh's disciples, and he went to visit the Shaykh when he heard him talking about duties decreed by the Shari'a. That meant that he was an adult before 674 A.H. and that he was knowledgeable enough to differ from the students and to understand the speech of the Shaykh.

If we compare what we have earlier deduced from the above, two results implying that his company with his Shaykh started in 674 A.H. and that he was then a young man, with what we have stated before, with the proof that his birth fell between the year 658 and 679 A.H., it is evident that his birth could not have been around the year 689 A.H. That date would place his company with his Shaykh al-Mursi about 5 years before his birth, which is impossible. We therefore think that Ibn Hajar must have meant that he died around the age of 51 or so. It also means that he must have been born in the year 658 A.H. He then would have accompanied Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursi when he was 16 years old, a suitable age for someone to begin the study of exoteric knowledge in Alexandria. He was, however, already married, so he may have been a few years older than that.

We consequently assert that Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was born in the second half of the seventh century of the Hījra and we can distinguish three phases in his life, two in Alexandria and the third in Cairo.

The first phase in Alexandria falls before the year 674 A.H. He was brought up during that period as a student of the religious sciences of his age, e.g., tafsir, fiqh, uṣūl, nahw, literature, etc. He was tutored by the best professors of that time. The second phase began in the year 674 A.H., when he accompanied Shaykh Abu'l ʿAbbās al-Mursi, and it ended when he left Alexandria for Cairo. During the second period he followed the Shādhīdhuli Ṣufi School, though he did not stop learning and also teaching the religious sciences. The third phase began with his move to Cairo and ended with his death in the year 709 A.H. That was the phase of his maturity as a Ṣufi and a faqih.

In his first phase in Alexandria, Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh forcefully denied and rejected Ṣufism and was completely “pro-fiqh”. He wrote about himself:

“I denied his knowledge (meaning the Shaykh’s knowledge). I refused and contested him... until there was a discussion between me and one of his companions, before I met him. I said to that man, “There is nothing but exoteric knowledge, and those people (the Ṣufis) pretend to immense things which the Shari‘a refuses...”

The second phase begins with the end of his denial when he met his Shaykh al-Mursi. He was greatly fascinated by al-Mursi and took from him the Ṣufi path, as we shall see in detail in the second chapter, which deals with his life as a Ṣufi.

It is worth mentioning that Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh did not halt his study of the religious sciences when he became a Ṣufi, but continued learning under the direction of his Shaykh. In the beginning, he feared that his company with the Shaykh might interfere with his pursuit of knowledge. However, he became convinced that keeping company with the Shādhīdhulīyyah did not require divestment of outward activity or leaving the study of exoteric knowledge, or any other worldly affair for that matter. In this connection he says:

“...I had heard students say, ‘He who accompanies the Ṣufi Shaykhs will not gain anything in exoteric knowledge.’ I found it hard to miss such knowledge, and it was also hard for me to leave the company of the Shaykh. So I went to see him (Shaykh al-Mursi) and I saw him eating meat with vinegar. I said to myself, ‘I wish the Shaykh would put a bite in my mouth by his hand,’ and I did not even complete the thought when the Shaykh thrust a piece of meat in my mouth by his own hand. He then said, ‘If a merchant accompanies us we do not say to him, ‘leave your commerce and come. Neither do we say to the artisan, ‘leave your craft and come,’ or to the student of exoteric knowledge, ‘leave your studies and come.’ On the contrary, we confirm every person in what Allāh has stationed him in.”

Thus, we see that Shādhīdhuli Ṣufism does not contradict working for a living. In other words, it does not exclude anyone from the society in which he lives or prevent his acquiring knowledge. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh himself wrote, in the introduction to *Tanwīr fī ʾIsqāṭ al Tadbīr*, “So know that he who wishes to arrive to ʾAllāh should enter from His door by the means He has provided.”

In the time of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, Alexandria was an important center of knowledge in Egypt. Many notable scholars in fiqh, tafsir, ḥadīth, uṣūl, and the other branches of Arabic and Islamic sciences lived there. In addition, Alexandria was full of pious Sufis. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was a student of the most prestigious scholar of fiqh living in Alexandria at that time, namely Nasiruddin ibn ul-Munir al-Garawi al-Juthami al-Iskandari. Ibn Farhoun said of him that he was a distinguished Imām in Fiqh and Arabic language. He was the leading scholar of Alexandria and died there in the year 683 A.H. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh mentioned him:

“When I entered into his place (meaning the place of his Shaykh Abu'l ʿAbbās al-Mursi) he said, “When the *faqih* Nasiruddin recovers he will put you in the place of your grandfather. He will sit on one side and I will sit on the other. You will, *in shaʾAllāh*, speak in both branches of knowledge,” and what he said was realized.”

From this text, it is clear that what Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursi foretold of Nasiruddin's appointment of Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh for the chair of fiqh had been realized. Thus, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh must have been a student of the faqih Nasiruddin, who appointed him when he saw him deserving of that position. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh was also a student of many of the best professors of his time. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani stated in his book *The Hidden Pearls* that Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh took knowledge from al-Abarquhi, and studied language (*nahu*) with Muhyi al-Mazuni.

Al-Abarquhi, as Imām Suyuti wrote in his book *Husn al-Muhadarah*, was Shaykh Shihabuddin Abu-l Ma'ali Aḥmad ibn Ishaq ibn Muhammad ibn al-Mu'ayyad, who lived in Egypt, and died in Makkah while on pilgrimage in the eleventh month of the year 701 A.H. He died at the age of 87. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh mentioned his name in *Lata'if al-Minan*, stating that he had attended his discourses in ḥadith.

As for Muhyi al-Mazuni, to whom Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh was a disciple in grammar (*nahu*), al-Suyuti mentioned his name within his biography of Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Nahhas al-Halabi, who died in the year 698 A.H. Al-Mazuni and Ibn Nahhas were considered to be of the same caliber, and each of them was called in his time the "Shaykh of Egypt." Ibn Shakir stated in his biography of Ibn Nahhas that al-Mazuni took residence in Alexandria.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh stated in *Lata'if al-Minan* that he studied ḥadith with Shaykh Imām Sharafuddin Abu Muhammad Abdul Mu'min ibn Khalaf al-Dimyati, of whom as-Suyūṭī wrote that he was a knowledgeable Imām. He was born in 613 A.H., studied ḥadith and excelled in it. He also traveled, and assembled a wonderful collection of ḥadith. Shaykh Sharafuddin graduated under the tutelage of al-Mundhiri. He died in 705 A.H.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh may have been a disciple in fiqh, philosophy, and logic of the distinguished professor Muhammad ibn Mahmud ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abbad, known as Shamsuddin al-Isbahani, who was, as Subki said, "an Imām in logic, philosophy, *uṣūl*, a peerless leader, devoted, amiable, and he was a vigilant and sincere worshipper." We are apt to believe this because Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh always mentioned his name in his books preceded by "our knowledgeable Imām and Shaykh." That was stated when he related the visit of Shaykh al-Isbahani to Shaykh al-Mursi. He said: "...professors of our time used to ascede to him (Al-Mursi) in this field. Our Shaykh, the knowledgeable Imām Shamsuddin al-Isbahani and the learned Shaykh Shamsuddin al-Ayki used to sit in front of him like other students who went to benefit and learn from him."

Shaykh Shamsuddin al-Isbahani was originally from Isfahan, Persia. He left there when he was young and went to work in Baghdad. He then traveled to Aleppo, Syria where he was appointed as a judge. Then he traveled to Cairo, Egypt where he was appointed as judge of Qus (near Luxor) by Shaykh Tājuddīn ibn bint al-A'azz. Many men learnt from him and it is reported that Shaykh al-Islam Taqiyyuddīn al-Qushayri used to attend his lessons in Qus. He died in Cairo in the year 688 A.H.

It is worth mentioning that Shaykh al-Isbahani also taught philosophy in Egypt at that time. Imām Subki said about him: "...his habit was that when a student went to him to learn philosophy, he would dissuade him and say to him, 'This would not be until you are fully conversant in the Shari'a.'" That shows that philosophy was not fully dead after Imām al-Ghazālī's war against it in the fifth century of Hijra. There were those who were still teaching it in Egypt in the seventh century and those who were learning it, such as Shaykh Bazinbari, who was a student of Shamsuddin Isbahani and excelled in *uṣūl* and logic, as Imām Subki mentioned.

At that time, Shaykh Qutbuddin al-Shirazi also came to Egypt. He was a commentator on philosophy and a student of Nasiruddin al-Tusi, and died in the year 710 A.H.

So we see that Egypt was a landmark for those who studied philosophy and logic in the seventh century, and some Egyptians were keen to study philosophy with the professors who came there. Most probably, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh was one of them.

To sum up: Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was born in Alexandria in the second half of the seventh century of Hijra. He was a student of the most distinguished professors of his time in all branches of knowledge. Through his connection with them, he accumulated a linguistic, jurisdictional, and overall academic culture, in addition to his Sufic knowledge, which was gained from his companionship with his Shaykh, Abu'l ʿAbbās al-Mursi.

This is a picture of his life in both the first and second phases in Alexandria. Then came the third phase of his life, which started with his departure from Alexandria to live in Cairo and ended with his death in the year 709 A.H. That was the phase of his maturity in both fiqh and tasawwuf, and his utilization of both in teaching his students.

4- His teaching career in Cairo

After the death of Shaykh Abu'l ʿAbbās al-Mursi in 686 A.H., Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was the heir to his knowledge and the trustee of his *Tarīqah*. Even before al-Mursi's death, Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was teaching fiqh in Alexandria, as mentioned above. His biographers stated that he left Alexandria to live and work as a teacher and a preacher in Cairo. We do not know exactly the year in which this occurred; however, we know that when his Shaykh Abu'l ʿAbbās al-Mursi died in 686 A.H., Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was himself in Cairo and had probably moved there a little before that year.

Imām Subki stated in his *Tabaqat*, "Shaykh Tājuddīn lived in Cairo preaching and guiding people." Al-Munawi stated also in this context: "He was originally from Alexandria, then he lived in Cairo preaching and guiding people."

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh became a teacher in the greatest Islamic university of that time, al-Azhar mosque. Ibn Hajar stated, quoting Imām Dhahabi: "Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh used to teach in al-Azhar mosque from a chair. His lessons were inspiring. He mixed Ṣufi teachings with the teachings of the predecessors and the various fields of knowledge. The number of his followers increased, and his face always shone with goodness."

In the book *Ta'atir ul-Anfas*, it is stated that "He was – may Allāh bless him – an ocean of knowledge. He used to speak on the thoughts of the people who listened to him. Many of those who listened to him became his followers. Most of his lessons were given in al-Azhar mosque, where he taught both inward and outward knowledge. No scholar in Egypt objected to him."

Shaykh Dawud ibn Bakhlā described the lessons of his Shaykh (Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh) and the impact he made on his listeners, saying:

"As for the great and distinguished scholar who revived the teachings of the Sufis, who revealed their words and waved their flags high, he was our Shaykh and Imām, the distinguished scholar Tājuddīn Abu'l Faḍl Aḥmad Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh – may Allāh be pleased with him, and make Paradise his lodging and final resting place, and grant him all his desires and wishes. In this matter, he was the most wondrous of wonders, and every open-hearted illuminated man attested that for him. All of his lessons were wonderful, useful, blessed, efficacious, and luminous. He was very well known among the people. Each of his lessons combined beneficial advice, wisdom, and subtle indications on the Path of the righteous and elect slaves. How many people repented in his presence, and changed their state from bad to good? How many forgetful people woke up, how many ignorant people gained knowledge, how many hard dark hearts became soft and illumined?"

Ibn Taghri al-Barri stated in his book *an-Nujum az-Zahira* that Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh "...was a knowledgeable right-acting man, who used to give lessons in a chair, and many people attended his lessons. His preaching moved the hearts, and he was fully versed in the words of the folk of *Haqiqah* and the men of *Tarīqah*."

From the picture given to us by Dawud ibn Bakhlila and Ibn Taghri al-Barri, we can may realize the immense caliber of our Shaykh Ibn 'Atā'illāh as-Sakandāri as a Ṣufi who guided people to and in the Path of Allāh . We can also see how famous he was in Egypt in his time.

Many fuqaha and Sufis attended the lessons of Ibn 'Atā'illāh, the most famous among them being Imām Taqiyuddin al-Subki (d. 756 H), the father of Imām Tājuddīn Subki (d. 771 H), who authored the famous *Tabaqat*. Taqiyuddin al-Subki was a leading scholar of his period to the extent that Ibn Taymiyya did not respect anyone in his time more than him. Taqiyuddin al-Subki also praised Ibn 'Atā'illāh for his reply to some of his works and thoughts. Tājuddīn Subki stated in his biography of his father that he (his father) accompanied Ibn 'Atā'illāh and was his student. He also mentioned in the biography of Ibn 'Atā'illāh that he was a teacher for his father in Ṣufism. Ibn Hajar stated: "One of Ibn 'Atā'illāh's students was Taqiyuddin al-Subki. The daughter of al-Subki told me, quoting her father, that: "I heard Ibn 'Atā'illāh saying (and he said some of his words)." Al-Munawī also stated: "Many eminent people learned from him. One of them was the Shaykh of the Shāfi'īya, Taqiyuddin al-Subki – may Allāh be pleased with him."

Hence, we understand that many of those who were considered Imāms in their own right were students of Ibn 'Atā'illāh . That is a proof of his high caliber and that his Ṭarīqah – as Imām Suyuti stated – had no deviation in it whatsoever. In other words, it dealt completely within the Qur'ān and Sunna. Imām Suyuti said:

"Imāms used to attend the lessons of Shaykh Ibn 'Atā'illāh, such as Shaykh Taqiyuddin al-Subki, the Imām of his time in tafsir, ḥadīth, uḥq, philosophy, and uṣūl. No one who came after him was like him and he had no equal for a long time. Imām Subki stated in some of his books that he benefited from Shaykh Ibn 'Atā'illāh and that he quoted him in many of his sayings. He said the Shaykh was the speaker for Shādhḍhuli Ṣufism. And in one of the glossaries of al-Subki, he stated that he read his book *al-Hikam (the Maxims)* in front of Shaykh Ibn 'Atā'illāh and studied it with him. Had there been any degenerate aspect or deviation in the Shādhḍhuli Ṭarīqah, Imām Subki would never have praised it as he did, and neither would his son, nor the Imāms of his time and their peers."

Among those who followed Ibn 'Atā'illāh was also his student and heir in the Shādhḍhuli Ṭarīqah, Shaykh Dawud ibn Omar ibn Ibrahim al-Shadhḍhuli, better known as Ibn Bakhlila. Imām Suyuti stated in his biography that he was one of the well-grounded Imāms. He learned Māliki fiqh, wrote numerous books and used to speak about the Path. He died in Alexandria in the year 733 A.H.

Imām Sha'arani wrote a full biography of Ibn Bakhlila in which he related many of his sayings and descriptions of his states. He also said his name was Dawud ibn Makhila (with an 'm' not a 'b'). Dawud ibn Bakhila is also known by the Shādhḍhuli *murids* as Dawud al-Bakhili, and it appears as such in the "Chain of Authority" (*silsilat at-Ṭarīqah*). One of his well-known books is *Laṭīfa Mardīya bi Sharh Hizb al-Shādhḍhuliyya*, which contains many of his views about Ṣufism, especially on such topics as the words of the Awliya, intellectual and spiritual knowledge, and the sciences of the Divine Wisdom.

Also among the students of Ibn 'Atā'illāh who took the Shādhḍhuli path from him was Shaykh Abu'l 'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Maylaq al-Iskandāri. He was a preacher himself, as Imām Suyuti records, whose words would always move the hearts of his audience. He died in the year 749 A.H. It is also known that Shaykh Abu'l Ḥasan 'Alī al-Qarafi received the Path from Ibn 'Atā'illāh.

Thus, it is evident that our Shaykh Ibn 'Atā'illāh was a renowned scholar in his time and that many well-known scholars in fiqh and Ṣufism were his students. Now that we have examined the three phases of his life, we shall move to draw another picture for him, based on the period of time in which he lived, showing the political and social characteristics and his relationship to them.

5- The Religious Characteristics of his Time and his Role in the Alexandrian Māliki School of Law

The life of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh as-Sakandāri fell between the second half of the seventh century of Hijra and the first decade of the eighth century. What were the characteristics of that era in Egypt from the religious point of view?

History tells us that the Shi'a madhāb disappeared from Egypt after Sultan Salahuddin al-Ayyoubi intervened in the year 564 A.H. Sunni doctrines have prevailed since then. Al-Maqrizi says in this respect, "Sultan Salahuddin Yusuf ibn Ayyub began in the twelfth month of the year 564 A.H. to change the state... He established a school for Shāfi'i scholars and another school for Māliki scholars and discharged all Shi'a judges from their posts all over Egypt. He never appointed a judge in Egypt who was not a Shāfi'i. People then showed themselves either to be Shāfi'is or Mālikis. The Shi'a, Isma'ilia, and Imāmiya doctrines disappeared from the entire land of Egypt."

When Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh began his studies during the second half of the seventh century, he found that Māliki madhāb, of which he was a follower, was on an equal footing with any other Sunni madhāb. He also found the doctrine of Abu'l Ḥasan al-Ash'ari to be highly regarded. Al-Maqrizi draws a picture of the religious life in Egypt and other Muslim countries at that time as follows:

"When Sultan al-Zahir Bibars al-Bandaqdari came into power, he appointed in Egypt four judges, a Shāfi'i, a Māliki, a Hanafi and a Hanbali. That system started in the year 665 A.H. and no other doctrines prevailed except those four doctrines and the doctrine of al-Ash'ari. Schools, hostels, and other places of religious learning and gathering were made for them. And those who did not follow these doctrines were considered to be hostile. Scholars all over these areas gave legal verdicts that only these doctrines were to be followed and all others abandoned."

Religious doctrines prevailing at that time had their influence on Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh's religious direction. He was a Māliki and at the same time followed the Ash'ari philosophy.

During Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh's lifetime, there were many renowned Shāfi'i, Māliki, Hanafi, and Hanbali scholars. In Alexandria, there was a well-known Māliki school established by Shaykh Abu'l Ḥasan al-Ibyari, who was one of the greatest Māliki scholars of his time and who died in the year 618 A.H. Among al-Ibyari's students were the grandfather of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, who died in 612 A.H., and Shaykh Ibn al-Hajib who died in 646 A.H. The great scholar Nasiruddin ibn al-Munir presided over the school after al-Ibyari's death. He was counted among the greatest religious leaders of Egypt. Shaykh Izzuddin ibn Abdus-Salam said of him: "The land of Egypt is proud of two men, Ibn al-Munir in Alexandria, and Ibn Daqiq al-'Eid in Qus." Ibn al-Munir died in the year 683 A.H.

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was associated with the Māliki school described above. As mentioned earlier, he became a student of Ibn al-Munir, who appointed him to teach fiqh when he found him quite qualified for the post though Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was then still a young man.

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh went on during his maturity to teach Māliki fiqh in al-Azhar mosque, in addition to teaching Tasawwuf and preaching to the general masses. Ibn Farhun, a renowned Māliki scholar, compiled a biography of him in his book *al-Dibaj*. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh also wrote books on Māliki Fiqh, and al-Suyuti mentioned one of them.

6- Political and social aspects of his time.

Political life during the second half of the seventh century was unstable due to the continuous struggle between the Tartars and the Mamluk Sultans, which threatened Egypt during the years 670 and 702 A.H. The life of al-Iskandari began during the rule of the maritime Mamluks, which started with al-Mu'izz Abyak al-Turkmani, who died in 656 A.H.

That period was one of dictatorial rule, in which Sultans held the reigns of power and authority. Power struggles and conspiracies among Mamluk princes for the sake of ruling the country were prevalent. The population in Egypt were divided – as people have said – into two distinct groups; one was the Mamluk group which included the ruling military oligarchy, and the other included the rest of the Egyptians who had no say whatsoever in ruling the country. We believe that there was a third group which, though belonging to the people, was highly esteemed by the Sultans. This group was the real barrier between the dictatorship of the Sultans and the people. These were the faqihs and Sufis.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, as an eminent faqih and Sufi, was among this third group. He did not fear the terror of Sultans and believed that the first duty of a Ṣūfī was to instruct kings of their duty to be just and to refrain from oppression if they were not following the upright path. They should be compassionate to all people, help the poor and aid them and prefer them above the rich and the worldly among the kings and princes. In this regard Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh writes: "Among the qualities of the Ṣūfīs...is that they should enjoin justice and forbid injustice and evil, especially to those who have power and authority like kings. They should serve the poor, be kind to them and to all people. Among their qualities is that they should give priority to the poor instead of to the rich and worldly..." Yet in spite of this advice, numerous Sultans of that age were a source of many hardships for the people.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh relates a personal story in *Lata'if al-Minan* indicating that in a meeting with the Sultan Mansur Lajin, who ruled Egypt from 696 to 698 H, he advised him for a long time, explaining to him that he could be just and generous and that he should show his gratitude to Allāh by establishing justice among the people and driving away hardship from them. Due to the importance of that meeting we quote here the following statement:

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says: "When I met the Sultan Mansur – Allāh have mercy on him – I said to him, 'You have to be grateful to Allāh ﷻ. Your rule is bountiful and the people admire you. Bounty is not gained or attained by kings as are justice and generosity. He said, 'What is gratitude?' I replied, "Gratitude is in relation to three: the tongue, the limbs and the heart. Gratitude of the tongue means mentioning the favors of Allāh, as when He said: "As for the favors of your Lord, mention them." Gratitude of the limbs means obeying Allāh Who granted His gifts to you, as when He said: "O family of Dawud! Work acts of gratitude." Gratitude of the heart means attesting to and realizing that any bliss or bounty either you have or the creation has comes from Allāh and none else, as when He says: "And there is no bounty which you possess except that it is from Allāh." The Sultan then asked, "What should the grateful do to be grateful and show their gratitude?" I replied, "If he has knowledge, he should show gratitude by teaching and guidance. If he is rich, he should show gratitude by being generous and sharing his wealth with the people. If he has authority, he should show gratitude by establishing justice and driving away hardship."

Thus we notice a very honorable stand for Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh in front of one of the Sultans of his time. It shows, in our opinion, his nobleness and his refraining from worldly aspirations, and his trust in Allāh and himself. In addition, the situation itself is a bright page in the history of Egyptian Ṣūfism, which proves that the people did not always surrender to their despotic Sultans, but that there was always a Ṣūfī like Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh who could stand up in the face of a Sultan and council him whenever he found he was in need of advice. He would persuade the Sultan to be grateful to Allāh by establishing social justice among the people and driving away hardship from them.

7- His death, tomb, and mosque

After a life that was devoted to calling the people to the Path of Allāh and to guiding and training the seekers (*salikin*), our Ṣūfī al-Iskandāri died in the year 709 H. This date is agreed on by all biographers except al-Sha'arani, who states that it was 707 H. However, we agree with the first date since there is not enough evidence to back up the second. Some biographers specified the month in which he died, others specified the day of his death.

Imām al-Subki stated that the death of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was on the fifth month of the year 709 H. Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalani said it was on the middle of the fifth month. Imām Suyuti specified the day, and said it was on the thirteenth day of the fifth month of the year 709 H. (November 19, 1309 A.D.).

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh died in Cairo, as related by Ibn Farhoun and Imām al-Subki. Imām Ibn Hajar added that his death was in the Mansouriyya School in Cairo, and Imām Suyuti agreed with him. Al-Maqrizi described that school as being inside the great hospital which was built in Bain al-Qasrayn quarter in Cairo by King Qalawoon (678-689 H) at the hand of the Prince ʿAlameddin Sangar. He ordered that it should offer lessons in the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, in medicine, *ḥadith*, Qurʾān exegesis, and also should have a section for preaching. All of these lessons were only given by the best scholars of the time. The hospital, school, and the dome next to it were completed in the year 682 H. Professor Lane-Pool states that the building included three divisions, the mosque, the hospital, and the dome under which the founder was buried.

We are inclined to believe that Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh used to teach or preach in that school, and that he died in it. The funeral procession, as Ibn Taghri al-Barri stated, was well-attended and dignified.

Al-Munawi stated that Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was buried in the graveyard near to the tombs of Bani Wafa. Mr. Muhammad Ramzi specified the place of his tomb by saying: "The tomb of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh is still there in the graveyard of Sidi ʿAlī Wafa, which is under the Muqattam mountains east of the graveyard of Imām Layth. His tomb falls 300 meters southeast of Sidi ʿAlī Wafa's mosque. Next to the tomb on its western side lies a dome under which Kamal ed-Din Muḥammad, popularly known as Ibn Hammam, is buried, and on the northwest side is buried ʿAbdullāh ibn abi Gamra."

I visited his tomb when I began this research and I found it to be an open tomb which is surrounded by a falling fence. It also seemed as though the area around the tomb used to be a mosque, or some quarter for devotional worship and meditation. That supports what Kawhan stated in his book, namely, that Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was buried at the foot of the Muqattam mountains in the quarter (*zawiya*) in which he used to pray.

Around the tomb of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh there are other tombs of his well-known contemporaries like the tomb of Ibn Daqiq al-ʿEid, which is not far from the tomb of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh. Shams ad-Din al-Zayyat stated that in the graveyard of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, there are also buried a lot of scholars, pious people, noblemen, and faqihs, one of which is Muhyideen al-Maghribi, father-in-law of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh.

The tomb of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh is neglected, and the Ministry of Awqaf, or others who belong to the Shādhī Path, should pay attention to it, in recognition of the value and merit of its dweller.

There is a mosque in Alexandria which bears the name of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, although Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was not buried there.

{Note: A new and modern mosque was built in the sixties over his tomb with an asphalt road leading to it. The mosque was built by the late Abdul-Halīm Mujahid and was inaugurated by Dr. Abdul-Halīm Mahmud, Ex-Rector of Azhar, and author of the first two books in this volume.}

8- His status

Biographers have confirmed the immense status of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh after his death as a scholar and a Ṣufi. These biographers were not all biographers of Sufis, but the majority of them were historians and writers about fiqh and its people. Possibly the testimonies of historians and writers about fiqh are more accurate concerning his status than the testimonies of Ṣufis themselves, since the testimonies of historians are less prone to bias and exaggeration and the Ṣufis might exaggerate due to their great love.

Among the first group is ʿAfif ad-Din al-Yafiʿi al-Yamani, who died in the year 768 H., and who

described Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh as: "The great Shaykh, the knower by Allāh, the expert, a leader in the two paths and the Imām of the two parties, guide of the *Tariqa*, tongue of the *Haqiqa*, and support of the purified and noble *Shari'a*." He esteemed his various books, saying they included secrets, knowledge, *Maxims*, and that they were models of excellence.

Imām Tājuddīn al-Subki, who died in 771 H., said that he was a knowledgeable Imām, who had his allusions and wonders, and that he had a firm foot in Ṣufism.

Ibn Farhoun, who died in 799 H., mentioned his fame in his book *ad-Dibaj*, which is a biography of renowned Mālikis. He said that he was knowledgeable in all branches of Islamic knowledge, such as tafsir, ḥadith, nahu, fiqh, uṣūl and others, and that he was a wonder of his time in Ṣufism. He also mentioned that a great number of people followed his Path, benefitting from him, and that he also wrote good poetry.

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, who died in 852 H., explained that he was the tongue of Ṣufism in his time, and had an awesome air about him and a great impact on the souls of people.

Abdul-Ra'uf al Munawi al-Misri (died 1031 H.) draws for us a picture of Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's comprehensive achievements, saying: "He was an Imām whose crown of knowledge was lofty, his merit was renowned, well-known, and whose pearls of wisdom were spread wide. His compositions were beneficial, and memories of him will always remain fresh. He abandoned sleep, and had he only composed his book entitled *The Illumination, (on the Ceasing of Self-Direction)* and no other book, that still would have been enough to establish his position. He had the upper hand in outward knowledge and inward gnosis. He was a leader in tafsir, ḥadith, uṣūl, and an ocean of knowledge in fiqh. His sermons and words were sweet to the hearts and souls. He was primarily trained in *Shari'a*, then he grasped its wisdom until he became the leader in Ṣufism, and his leadership in both domains was honorable and well-accepted."

His Shaykh Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursi had foreknown that status for him when he saw his capacity and his assiduity in accompanying him. He said to him while he was still his student: "By Allāh, you will have a great station," and he said, "Stick to this Path, for by Allāh if you stick to it, you will be a Mufti (authority) in both domains (meaning *Shari'a* and *Haqiqa*)."

CHAPTER TWO: THE ŠŪFĪ LIFE OF IBN ʿATĀʾILLĀH

1- Introduction

We mentioned in the previous chapter the various phases of the life of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, the characteristics of his time from the political, social, and religious angles and his status. We stated that in the first phase of his life he was a student of religion in Alexandria and that he rejected Šūfism. Then in the second phase of his life, when he met Abuʾl ʿAbbās al-Mursi, he became a Šufi, but he did not stop studying religion. He then became a teacher of religion in Alexandria for some time when he was considered competent for teaching. In the third phase of his life, he became a complete Šūfī and guide.

The above statements indicate that Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was not a Šūfī from the beginning. On the contrary, he used to disbelieve in the Šūfī path. What changed his psychological state and got him to accept Šūfism and become one of its eminent leaders?

We were confronted with this question while writing a biography for him. Due to its importance, we decided to devote a special chapter to it, in which we shall analyze the various psychological states which he passed through and which impelled him to choose the Šūfī path. We shall deal with his life as a beginner in the Path who was traveling under the guidance of his Šaykh, and we shall end the chapter by a picture of his life as a complete Sufi, guiding to the Way of Allāh ﷺ. We also indicate in it his role in the Shādhᎁhulī Šūfī school in particular and in Egyptian Šūfism in general. Finally, we shall mention and analyze the wonders related about him to show his status as a Šūfī who had reached the end of the Path.

2- The beginning of his Šufi life

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh began by discrediting the Šūfis, their tastes, the kind of knowledge they expressed and their means of expressing. That was due to his being brought up in the environment of *fiqh* which is bound by the outward or literal sense of the Šariʿa, and which could not swallow Šūfism, since it deals with the inward and the rules governing it. His paternal grandfather was one of the *fuqaha* of his time who were intensely opposed to Šūfism, as we mentioned before.

Among the Šūfis opposed by Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was Šaykh Abuʾl ʿAbbās al-Mursi, the most renowned Šūfī of Alexandria in his time. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh stated in this connection, “I did not believe him (meaning Abuʾl ʿAbbās). I objected to him not for anything which I heard from him or anything which was correctly attributed to him. I continued in this state until an argument arose between me and one of his followers. I said to him, “There is only the Šariʿa, and these men (the Šūfis) talk about great things which the Šariʿa disagrees with...”

Thus Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh disbelieved Šaykh Abuʾl ʿAbbās not for anything he had heard from him or quoted after him, but rather as a product of his bias to *fiqh* and its partisans. At that point Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was not ready or prepared in his first phase of life as a Šūfī.

However, his discussions with al-Mursi’s companions, his dispute with them, and the deep disbelief in their Šaykh all aroused his thoughts, causing him to review them within himself. That self-review became so strong that he felt oppressed for discrediting the Šaykh without any reason. He was inwardly forced to go to Abuʾl ʿAbbās al-Mursi to find out the truth about him; to judge his knowledge and to ascertain for himself whether his disbelief was well founded or not. He writes, “... the reason for my meeting with Šaykh al-Mursi was that I said to myself, after that debate with that man, ‘Let me see him, because truth has its own signs which always manifest.’ So I went to see him and I heard him speaking about the threefold nature of the *Dīn*. He said, ‘The first (part) is surrender (*Islām*), the second is faith (*Imān*), and the third is excellence (*Ihsān*). Or if you wish you could say, the first is worship (*ibada*), the second is devotion (*ubudiyya*), and the third is complete slavery (*ubuda*). Or if you wish

you could say, the first is *Shari'a*, the second is *Haqiqa*, and the third is realization (*tahawquq*), or something of that manner. He did not cease from saying, 'or if you wish you could say...' until my mind was bewildered, and I came to know that he was drinking from a lordly spring, and Allāh erased from my heart all the negative thoughts I had about him."

Ibn 'Atā'illāh therefore accepted Shaykh Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursi, and recognized his knowledge and merit. His distrust of him vanished and his mind was overwhelmed by what he heard from him about the nature of Reality, which he had not tasted before. He had been a young *faqih* whose knowledge stopped at the limits of the *Shari'a*, and it did not grant him the inward peace which only comes with the knowledge of the Reality taken directly from the Divine source.

What occurred after that meeting between Ibn 'Atā'illāh and his Shaykh?

Ibn 'Atā'illāh tells us that he returned to his house that night in a state of mind which caused him to seek solitude instead of being in the company of his family. Strange ideas and pressing thoughts occupied him and his intellect was incapable of deciphering them. He said, "That night I returned to my home but found no desire in me to be with my wife as was my habit. I experienced a strange meaning within me which I could not comprehend, so I went to an isolated place and looked into the sky, its stars, and what Allāh has created in it. That urged me to return back to him."

Ibn 'Atā'illāh was absorbed by one of those unique existential states of being, a state of compelling anxiety whose reality is incomprehensible and whose cause is unknown. He expressed it as being a strange meaning which he did not know. It could have arisen from his reflection upon the universe and its Creator, and his attempts at understanding the unknown, and other similar thoughts which came to him unrelentingly. He then plunged into introspection in the attempt and hope to understand the reality in the depths of his soul, but he came to nothing and found neither benefit nor the answer which he hoped for.

This state of anxiety, in our view, is the beginning of his walking the *Ṣūfī* path. It was caused by the interaction of contradictory urges, because on the one side, he started contemplating existential problems, and on the other hand, he could not find any answers for these problems. Like other Sufis, he found a way out for himself through resorting to Allāh ﷻ. Emile Boutroux writes: "The starting point and the first instant (in relation to the *Ṣūfī* psychological aspect of life) is a psychological state which is hard to define... It is a state of an unexplained urge and anxiety which is severe and sometimes even painful. It cannot be specified or interpreted with regard to subject or motive... It is a state of turning to the unknown, of turning to the heart which the mind cannot bear. For the *Ṣūfī*, it is a constant and deep state which drives away rest and sleep." Boutroux later adds that it drives the *Ṣūfī* to ponder the limitless, eternal, perfect being (Allāh) as being his or her supreme wish and desire. This is what *Ṣūfīs* call, "the resorting to Allāh."

Ibn 'Atā'illāh could not but resort to Allāh because of his incapacity, as he could not reach satisfaction of the heart by his thinking or knowledge.

He consequently thought of returning to Shaykh al-Mursi, as he was a man who knew Allāh and "knows the lanes of heaven." He could take him as his ideal model and it was only he who could drive away his suspicions and doubts.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh continues, "I went to him and I was given permission to enter and see him again. When I entered into his room, he stood up and welcomed me cheerfully and generously, so much so that I thought I was unworthy of his greeting. The first thing I said to him was: 'Sidi, I love you by Allāh.' He replied, 'May Allāh love you as you love me.' Then I complained to him of my distress and depression. He said, 'A slave's states are four and no more. Bliss, hardship, obedience and disobedience. If you are in bliss, you are required to be grateful to Allāh. If you are in hardship, Allāh requires of you to be patient. If you are obedient, Allāh requires you to see that obedience as being a grant from Him to you. If you are disobedient, Allāh requires of you to repent and seek forgiveness.' I

left his presence feeling that my distress was like a garment which was removed from me. Some time later he asked me, 'How are you?' I replied, 'I search for distress and do not find it.' He replied in words of verse:

My night is luminous by Your face,
while darkness overwhelms the people.
People are in the grasp of darkness,
while we are in the illumination of daylight.

Then he told me, 'Stick (to the Path assiduously), for by Allāh, if you stick to it you will be an authority in both domains.' He meant the domain of outward knowledge of the *Shari'a*, and the domain of inward gnosis of the *Haqiqa*."

When we review these statements in which Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh describes his second meeting with his Shaykh, we see that the psychological anxiety which he had was changed into a state of psychological stability. The reason for that stability was that he went back to his Shaykh with love filling his heart. He complained to him of the distress which weighed down on him and which caused – as it also causes those who tread the Ṣūfī path – some sort of a psychological complex. In this connection, Suhrawardī states in his book *'Awarif ul-Ma'arif*:

"If a student keeps a secret which he does not reveal to his Shaykh, either explicitly or implicitly, he will have an inward obstacle on his Path. When he speaks that secret to the Shaykh, that obstacle will be removed and disappear."

Shaykh al-Mursi, due to his knowledge of the states of the heart, was able to drive away all the distress from the hearts. He had welcomed him so cheerfully that Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh felt undeserving of his warm and generous welcome, and it left a great impact on him. Then his Shaykh proceeded to determine and diagnose his inward state, and discovered his brightness and readiness and potential to be a great Ṣūfī and faqih, speaking in both sciences with authority.

Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursi was therefore a spiritual doctor, who knew the states of the hearts, their perfections, defects, maladies, treatments, and was fully capable of giving guidance. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh took him as an ideal in his Ṣūfī life, and looked at him with much esteem and adoration. He said, "Our Shaykh, Imām, and leader in this affair (i.e. tasawwuf), the unique one of his time, the scholar of his era, the sign-post of the gnostics, the pivot of the guided, the revealer of the sublimity of the *Haqiqa* and the marks of the *Tariqa*, knowledgeable of the Names and letters and circles, gatherer of inward and outward knowledge, our master and patron Shihabuddin Abu'l 'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Umar al-Ansari al-Mursi ash-Shādhḍuli, may Allāh sanctify his secret. It was from him that we gained light and upon his tracks we followed the Path. It was by him that our secrets were moved to catch up with those before us, and by him that our tongues were made to speak. He planted knowledge in our heart and its fruit became ripe and its scent became fragrant. It is he who, with the grace of Allāh, promised us and helped us to speak with authority in both branches of knowledge. Only to him are we related and upon him in this affair do we depend."

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh accompanied Shaykh al-Mursi for 12 years, and from him he took the Shādhḍuli *Tariqa*. The following section outlines a picture of his life as student, receiving guidance and directives from the Shaykh.

3- His life as a wayfarer

The basis of the way of al-Mursi (the successor of ash-Shādhḍuli and Shaykh of Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh) was gathering one's concentration on Allāh, non-dispersal, perseverance in spiritual retreat and invocation. He would have a way with every *murid*, and would place the *murid* on the way most suitable for him.

He did not like the *murid* who did not earn his own living. In addition, he would not prevent the *murid* from seeing other Shaykhs. He used to quote his teacher ash-Shādhḍhulī's saying: "Accompany me, and I will not prevent you from accompanying others. For if you find a spring sweeter than this, than go to it."

Among his eminent qualities as a Shaykh was that he always honored his students when they came to him, and would prohibit that any student be kept waiting. He used to say: "A murid always comes with enthusiasm and keen aspiration, so if he is told to wait, then his aspiration might die down and become cold." He would not direct the murid to difficulties and would not ask him to take up any hard tasks. He would quote his Shaykh Abu'l Ḥasan: "The true Man is not he who directs you to your hardship. Rather, the true Man is he who directs you to your ease." This attitude was no doubt a strong cause for the love of his students for him and their persistent companionship with him.

Such was Abu'l 'Abbās's dealings with his students, among whom was Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh. He used sound pedagogical methods, uniting them to Allāh and mapping out for them a specific path unique to each.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh was furthermore always very close and assiduous in keeping his company, even more so than other students of the Shaykh, and for that reason al-Mursi loved him greatly.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh mentions to us some of his states on the Path and the directives that the Shaykh gave him. For example, in the beginning of his path he used to suffer from continual doubts and suspicions about purity and whether his ablution was complete or not. He could not overcome this doubt except with the guidance of the Shaykh. In this respect, he writes: "I often doubted the completeness of my ablution, and the Shaykh came to know of it. He told me, 'I heard that you doubt your ablution.' I said yes. He then said, 'This group (the Ṣūfis) play with the Shaytan, and the Shaytan doesn't play with them.' Some time later I came to his place and he said to me, 'What is the state of your suspicions, do you still have them?' and I said I still did. Then he told me, 'If you do not get yourself rid of them, then do not come to us again.' That remark was hard on me, and that caused the suspicions to vanish."

Sometimes unbecoming thoughts used to cross his mind persuading him to pursue a desire (open or hidden), or other types of the ego's ambitions. One of these was his desire to live in divestment (*tajrid*) without any outward means of livelihood. That was because he found himself occupied with the study of outward knowledge and imagined he would not be able to walk the Path unless he abandoned his studies and became completely devoted to the company of his Shaykh.

As Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursi used to draw for every student his own Path, so in this case he drew for Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh a way out of his desire for divestment. He advised him not to follow his desire, but instead to remain where Allāh had placed him. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says in this respect: "I went to him (Shaykh al-Mursi) with the desire for divestment in my mind. I convinced myself that arrival to Allāh could not be attained except through it. So when I met him, he said to me without my telling him anything: "A man from Qus named Ibn Nashi accompanied us, who was a teacher and a deputy judge. He tasted something of the fruits of this Path through me, and said, 'I want to leave what I am involved in and concentrate on keeping your company.' I replied to him, 'The matter is not as you imagine. Rather, remain in the position Allāh has placed you in, and what has been decreed for you will no doubt come to you through us.'"

"Then the Shaykh spoke to me and continued: 'This is the way of the utterly veracious (*siddiqin*). They do not leave anything on their own accord, but let Allāh take charge of that.'

"I left his presence feeling as if Allāh had washed away those thoughts from my heart. They were as a garment over me which was taken off by his words. From then on I was satisfied in what I was involved in."

We would not be far from the truth if we claim that this directive in behavior from Shaykh al-Mursi had formulated Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's Ṣūfī doctrine in its entirety. In this way the practical Ṣūfī life had a great impact on his theoretical Ṣūfī ideas and doctrines.

That directive asserted that the Ṣūfī be satisfied and content with Allāh in whatever station He places him. He should not expedite moving from one station to another by his own will. He has to surrender in his behavior and attitude to the wisdom of Allāh in whatever station He chooses for him.

As long as Allāh ﷻ had placed Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh in the search for and study of exterior knowledge, then it would not be courteous, according to the Principles of Ṣūfī courtesy, for him to desire leaving it and wishing to live in divestment. For in that he would be following a hidden caprice. Who knows! Allāh might have wanted him to remain in his station for a certain matter to be completed in Allāh's knowledge.

This directive also formulated Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh's theory of 'dropping of self-direction.' He often repeated the following statement: "Your desire for divestment while Allāh has placed you in a means of livelihood is a hidden passion; and your desire to have a means of livelihood while Allāh has placed you in divestment is a fall from lofty aspiration."

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh used always to place the Shaykh in front of his eyes whenever he fell into a hardship. This is in no way strange, as he was always looking to his Shaykh as an ideal model in behavior and ethics. He states how one time he was affected by the behavior of his Shaykh and how he always followed him:

"As for his forbearance, he never retaliated for himself nor was he ever on his ego's side. I once entered his presence when he said to me: 'What do you say of so-and-so (referring to someone who had caused the Shaykh great harm)? Some of his friends came to me (who were in a high position in society and who used to frequent the Shaykh's company), and told me, 'This man has harmed you and caused you many difficulties, and we want to beat him and disgrace him in the two cities.' So what do you say yourself, O Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh?"

"I replied to him, 'That would be good.' He refused and said to me, 'Why did you say that?' I replied, 'To seek retaliation from him.' He replied, 'I do not retaliate from anyone. Never follow me with a desire to retaliate from someone in your heart.' So I felt humiliated. Nobody ever harmed us after that. That man himself fell into a hardship and my soul started to rejoice, but I quickly remembered the Shaykh's words, 'I never retaliate on anyone,' almost as if I could literally hear them being spoken. So the desire for retaliation left me.

"It happened that 15 years later, the man who harmed the Shaykh strove to harm us. But he fell into a hardship, and Allāh saved us from having to retaliate against him and from rejoicing in his hardship. And the Shaykh used to previously tell me, 'This person whom I asked you about earlier, he will try to do the same with you as he did with me. So do the same to him as we did with him.' These are the teachings of the great men among the Ṣūfis, which are imprinted in the hearts of their students. Until, when the occasion comes wherein those words could be applied, Allāh re-surfaces them as if you hear them in that very moment. It might be that Allāh brings the Shaykh into your thinking, through which He talks to you, or maybe He might bring his memory to the imagination disconnected from forms, or maybe he actually appears physically when the difficulty occurs, so that the *murid* is strengthened and guided aright."

In such a way Abu'l ʿAbbās passed on to his students a lesson in etiquette, namely, that one should not seek retaliation for himself, but instead endure people's harm, and not rejoice in their disasters. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh followed that directive faithfully. Among his directives also was that Ṣūfis should give up seeking their rights and dues, apologize to people and not get people to apologize to them, should stand by and support people and not support themselves, should endure harm from others and not harm others, bear (the difficulties) that come from people and not let anyone have to bear him...all of that while maintaining a clear conscience with no grudges against anyone.

In his *Hikam* (*Ṣūfī Maxims*), he summarizes his philosophy in this respect and speaks to the *muridun* saying: "If it pains you that people do not come to you, or only come to you with harm and censure, then return to the knowledge that Allāh has of you (and be content with Allāh's knowledge). But if you are not content with Allāh's knowledge of you, then your calamity at not being content with His knowledge is greater than your calamity coming from the hands of the people." And he also said: "He only caused harm to come from people's hands (to you) so that you not repose with them. He wanted to incite you away from them so that nothing preoccupy you from being with Him."

We can summarize everything that preceded by saying that Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh – as is the case with all other *muridun* – surrendered to the guidance of a perceptive Shaykh, who would supervise him and who was a knower of the Path to Allāh. He was always striving against his self and driving away unbecoming thoughts and wishes, out of a desire to arrive at the perfection of character. We can consider his first meeting with the Shaykh as the turning point from a normal life to a Ṣūfī life. Robert Thouless, a contemporary psychologist, calls this change 'mystical conversion,' i.e., the change from the normal religious life to the Ṣūfī life due to the strong and continuous attraction which the Ṣūfī experiences towards the more sublime. It is a sudden change that overwhelms the Ṣūfī and singles him out from others. It is different from what he calls 'ordinary conversion,' which is the change from a non-religious life to a religious life.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, as we have seen, was leading an ordinary religious life as a *faqih* in the first phase of life. At that time, he was against the Ṣūfīs and used to attack them, so he was not ready yet for *tasawwuf*. He was not ready for that sudden change from his current ordinary life to the other Ṣūfī life until he met Shaykh Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursi, whose words on the nature of reality had a far-reaching impact on him. That impact urged him to contemplate his inward self and the universe, and its Creator and the marvels He originated in it. So he separated himself from the company of people and began to contemplate, trying to find an answer or an explanation which would satisfy his need to know and give his soul its much needed tranquility, diving deeply down into his self. When he could not find a way to solve his existential problem, and when his restlessness overpowered him, he set out to return to Shaykh Abu'l 'Abbās a second time, seeking from him a remedy for his agitated soul in its search towards understanding the unknown reality in life and the creation. He took the Shaykh as an ideal in gnosis and behavior, and came towards him with a heart full of love so that he might travel under his guidance on the Ṣūfī Way. And indeed, the Shaykh was able to cure his ailing soul and point him to the right direction. So his agitation faded away, his self found serenity, and when he searched for distress later on he could not find it!

His Shaykh did not cease taking him step-by-step upon the Path until divine gnosis (*ma'rifa*) was instilled in his heart and its fruits ripened. There is no doubt that arriving at the direct and experiential gnosis of Allāh was the most sublime level Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh reached, which is equally true for all Sufis on the Way to Allāh.

4- His life as a complete Ṣūfī

In this way, and under the guidance of his Shaykh al-Mursi, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh became a complete Ṣūfī, one who has arrived at the Goal with gnosis of the Divine Reality. After that, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh began his role as a Ṣūfī Guide in his own right. He concentrated his life endeavors to calling to the Way of Allāh and upbringing the *muridun* in the Shādhḍhuli Path, and he had a tremendous position in it!

a) His role in the Shādhḍhuli Tariqa

As we said earlier, Egypt during the second half of the seventh century (Hijra) was an important center of *tasawwuf*, to which Ṣūfīs from other Islamic countries came, as they could find a response to their call and kindness from the Sultans.

Among the most eminent Ṣūfis to come to Egypt was the Shaykh ‘Alī Abu’l Ḥasan ash-Shādhḍhulī, together with a group of his students. They settled in Alexandria around 642 H. and established the well-known Ṣūfī school which is named after him. Among the most eminent of ash-Shādhḍhulī’s students who came with him was Abu’l ‘Abbās al-Mursī. He took over supervision of the Tariqa during Abu’l Ḥasan’s life and after his death, and carried it on until his own death in the year 686 H. He had another very important student, the Qutb Yāqūt al-‘ARSHI, who was also a transmitter of the path (Note: see previous section of this book) but who left no books. However, his successor was his most notable Egyptian student, Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh as-Sakandāri.

The Ṣūfism of ash-Shādhḍhulī, al-Mursī, and Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh, the pillars of the Shādhḍhulī School, was removed from the current of Ibn Arabī’s school and its “Oneness of Being.” None of the Shādhḍhulī masters promulgate that philosophy. This did not mean, however, that there were no links between the two schools, and in fact they both sprouted from the same source in the Maḡrib, namely, the very well-known and saintly Ṣūfī, Shu’ayb Abu Madyan al-Ghawth al-Tilimsani, who died in 594 H. His doctrine expresses quite explicitly the annihilation in the Divine Oneness. Ibn Arabī was one of his students, as were many of ash-Shādhḍhulī’s Shaykhs.

In addition to the above, there were meetings in Egypt between ash-Shādhḍhulī and some of Ibn Arabī’s companions in which they exchanged views about Ṣūfī truths. For example, Ibn Ayyad ash-Shādhḍhulī narrates of a meeting between Sadr ud-Din al-Qunawi (the student of Ibn Arabī) and ash-Shādhḍhulī, and writes: “When Shaykh al-Qunawi, who was the student of Ibn Arabī, came to Egypt, he met with the Shaykh Abu’l Ḥasan ash-Shādhḍhulī. He spoke in his presence about various branches of knowledge while the Shaykh (ash-Shādhḍhulī) sat with lowered head, until Sadr ud-Din finished his words. Then the Shaykh lifted his head, and said, ‘Tell me. Where is the Qutb of the time now, and who is his friend, and what is his knowledge?’ So the Shaykh Sadr ud-Din became quiet and could not answer.”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh himself also relates in his book *Lata’if al-Minan* of the meeting between Abu’l Alam Yasin, another of Ibn Arabī’s companions, with ash-Shādhḍhulī, in the gathering of ‘Izz ibn Abdus-Salam.

In spite of all that, however, Imām ash-Shādhḍhulī and his followers, including Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh, remained on one side, and Ibn Arabī and his followers remained on another side (separate from one another). It appears that because of ash-Shādhḍhulī’s sticking firmly to the Qur’ān and Sunna, he did not approve of Ibn Arabī’s tasawwuf, because it differed (albeit only outwardly) with these two principles.

As much as ash-Shādhḍhulī and his followers (including Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh) were far from Ibn Arabī and his theories, they were in the same degree close to the tasawwuf of Imām al-Ghazālī, which was fully surrounded by Qur’ān and Sunnah. We relate here some of the statements made by Imām Shādhḍhulī and Imām Mursī to show how much they esteemed Imām al-Ghazālī, and how they would direct their students to take from his example and path. For example, ash-Shādhḍhulī used to say to his muridun: “If you have any need from Allāh, appeal to Him through the Shaykh Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī, so that the need will be fulfilled for his sake.” And he said also, “The book of *Ihya*’ (by Ghazālī) bequeathes knowledge, and the book of *Qut al-Qulub* (by al-Makki) bequeathes light.” And Abu’l ‘Abbās al-Mursī would say: “We bear witness to his occupying the station of greater veracity and sainthood (*siddiqiyya ‘udhma*).”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh also mentioned Imām Ghazālī in many of his writings, always with respect and reverence, just as his two predecessors had. He was also influenced by him in his ideas, as we shall make clear in the second part of this book.

It should be noted that although ash-Shādhḍhuli, al-Mursi, and Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh took the approach of al-Ghazālī in most of their ideas, they nevertheless did not censure or attack those Ṣūfis who subscribed to the philosophy of *Wahdat al-Wujud* ("Oneness of Existence"), or Divine indwelling, nor Suhrawardī's Illuminationist Philosophy (Abu'l 'Abbās used to love his poetry and quote it), nor Abu Yazid al-Bistami and those like him, who were known for their sometimes extreme outbursts and statements. That could either be because they did not like to fill their time with judging others' doctrines, or because they thought of some of them with honour and high status, such as Abu Yazid and Hallaj whom – as Professor Massignon writes – ash-Shādhḍhuli and Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh and other later Shuyukḥ used to esteem. Also, they could have considered those who made extreme statements as being overwhelmed and taken away from their intellects, and not to be held responsible for their words, which if taken literally would be unacceptable. Their position would be like the one of Imām Junayd, who used to find excuses for them and defend them, as al-Khuldi relates:

"It was said to Junayd, 'Abu Yazid says: 'Glory be to me, I am my Lord ﷻ,' to which Junayd responded, 'The man was consumed and overwhelmed in beholding the Divine Intense Majesty, so he uttered what he was consumed with. Allāh has caused him to forget his own self (in that moment), so he only saw Allāh and mentioned Him.'"

The Shādhḍhuli Path, to which our Shaykh Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh is related, is based on five principles:

- 1) inward and outward God-consciousness,
- 2) following the Prophetic example in words and acts,
- 3) not looking upon people in their coming to and going away from one,
- 4) contentment with Allāh in moments of plenty and scarcity, and
- 5) returning to Allāh in good times and bad.

Also, among its most eminent doctrines is the "*dropping and ceasing of self-management and personal choice*," which is actually the foundation on which the whole Path is established. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh expanded and deepened it, and made it a complete doctrine in Ṣūfism.

Neither Imām abu Ḥaṣan ash-Shādhḍhuli, nor his successor Shaykh al-Mursi, nor Shaykh al-Mursi's other successor, the Qutb Yāqūt al-'Arshi, left behind any books. All that they left behind were their oral statements and teachings, and some supplications and litanies memorized by their students. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh was the first to gather their sayings, advice, and supplications in writing, and to compile their biographies. He therefore preserved the Shādhḍhuli spiritual heritage, and without him, that heritage would have been lost. In addition, he was the first to compile complete books dealing with the teachings of the Tariqa, both theoretical and practical; hence, his immense importance in the Tariqa and its explication to all who came after him.

And if Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh had this importance in preserving the heritage of the Tariqa theoretically and practically, he also had the important distinction of circulating and spreading it in Egypt and other Islamic countries. In other words, his importance lay in continuation and preservation of the Tariqa through giving the '*Ahd*, or 'initiation by the hand.' He succeeded Abu'l 'Abbās al-Mursi in giving the initiation to numerous students who went into many Islamic countries and spread the Tariqa. All of the Shādhḍhuli chains of transmission in Egypt either go back to Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, or to the Qutb Yāqūt al-'Arshi, another student of al-Mursi, and the majority of the chains of transmission in the Maghrib go back to Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh.

The author of the book *Ta'tir al-Anfas* writes: "As for the followers of Shaykh al-Mursi, they are countless. The most eminent of them were Sidi Yāqūt al-'Arshi and Sidi Tājuddīn Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh as-Sakandāri. Consequently, the Shādhḍhuli Tariqa emanated only from them. Sidi Muhammad Wafa took

the Path from Sidi Dawud al-Bakhili, who took it from Sidi Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh, who took it from Sidi Abu'l-Abbās, who took it from Sidi Abu'l Ḥasan ash-Shādhᎁhuli (may Allāh be well-pleased with them all). Sidi Shamsuddin al-Hanafi took the Path from Nasiruddin Ibn al-Muballaq, who took it from his grandfather Shihab al-Muballaq, who took it from Sidi Yāqūt al-'Arsh, who took it from the Shaykh Abu'l °Abbās al-Mursi. From these two (Sidi Muhammad Wafa' and Sidi Shamsuddin al-Hanafi) the Shādhᎁhuli Tariqa split and spread wide... Most of the people of the Maghrib took the Tariqa from Shaykh Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh."

After going through numerous writings and chains of transmission of later Shādhᎁhulis in Egypt, we have noticed that the majority of them are linked to Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh, because Shihab al-Muballaq, who took the Tariqa from Yāqūt al-'Arshi, also had a connection of transmission to Sidi Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh. We can consequently say that all the Shādhᎁhuli Paths are connected to Shaykh Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh.

b) His role in Egyptia Šūfism

In addition to being a main pillar in the building of the Shādhᎁhuli Way, Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh was the most conspicuous representative of Egyptian Šūfism in the second half of the seventh century Hijra.

The first Šufi in this respect (who planted the seeds of Šūfism in Egypt) is Dhu'n Nun al-Misri, who died in 245 H. He was the first Egyptian Šufi who talked about the stations and states of the Path. His knowledge was such that all the Shuyukᎁ took from him and depended on him. Two other Šūfis shared in his role and heritage, and they were Abu Bakr al-Zaqqāq al-Misri and Abu'l Ḥasan ibn Bannan al-Hammāl (d. 316H.).

During the fourth and fifth centuries, the Šūfī movement went on spreading in Egypt. Among its eminent leaders were Abu "Alī al-Rudᎁhari (d. 322H.), Abu'l Khayr al-Aqṭa' (d. 343H.), Abu 'Alī al-Katib (d. 340H.), Abu'l Ḥasan ad-Dinawari (d. 331H.), Abu Bakr ar-Ramli an-Nabulusi (d. 363 H.), Ibn Tarjuman (d. 448H.), and Abu'l Qasim as-Samit (d. 427H.).

In the sixth century Hijra there appeared a large Šufi school in Upper Egypt, whose founder Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh later recognized and esteemed. It was founded by Abdul-Rahim al-Qunna'i (d. 592H.), who was, as al-Mundiri relates, a very notable and well-known worshipper. After him, the school was led by Shaykh Abu'l Ḥasan as-Sabbagh (d.613H.), who had a great number of followers at that time in Upper Egypt.

One of the most eminent Šūfis of the century in which Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh lived was Sharafuddin Umar ibn al-Farid, who was rightly given the title "Sultan of the Lovers," and who died in the year 632 H.

When Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh was raised in Alexandria, there were in it a great number of Šūfis known for their piety and scupulousness, such as Abu'l Qasim al-Qubbari al-Māliki (d. 662 H.), Yāqūt al-'Arsh al-Ḥabashi (d. 732 H.), Sharafuddin al-Busayri, author of the famous *Burda* (d. 695 H.), who was a student of Shaykh al-Mursi, and whose poetry in praise of the Shaykh al-Mursi Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh quoted in *Lata'if al-Minan*.

In the lifetime of Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh, the Šūfī movement spread and flourished, and there were many Šūfī schools and orders, such as the Tariqa Rifa'iyya of Shaykh Aḥmad Rifa'i who died in Iraq in 570 H., the Tariqa Aḥmadiyya of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Badawi who came to Egypt in 634 H. and died 675 H., and the Tariqa Burhamiyya (which was a purely Egyptian school) of Shaykh Ibrahim Dasuqi al-Qurashi who died 676 H.

Ibn °Aṭā°Illāh also participated in spreading the Šufi movement in Egypt in his time, as the leader of the Shādhᎁhuli Tariqa after Imām Shādhᎁhuli and Imām Mursi. It seemed however that many of the Šufis in his time were actually pretenders, and were not qualified to represent the true tasawwuf. That is why we find him censuring them in some of his writings, revealing their false pretences and warning his students against them.

We have noticed the following after scrutinizing all sayings and doctrines of Egyptian Ṣūfīs from the third until the seventh century (of the Hijra):

1- None of them advocated or taught the doctrine of Pantheism or Divine incarnation. That was due, in our view, to their environment in Egypt, in which people relied solely on the Qur'ān and Prophetic Sunnah, and rejected any other sources for their teachings.

2- The Tasawwuf of each of them was clear of all foreign non-Islamic influences, so that their tasawwuf represents pure Islamic Ṣūfism. Egypt at that time was far from foreign doctrines which were spread in India and Persia. That was contrary to early Persian Ṣūfīs, who lived in various Persian cities, eg. Isfahan, Shiraz, etc. They were influenced by the ancient religions and creeds and their Tasawwuf was mixed with foreign elements.

3- All Egyptian Ṣūfīs were characterized by the special attention they paid to the moral practical side of Ṣūfism without the indulgence in the theoretical aspects. This would explain why there were no Ṣūfīs in Egypt who got involved in theoretical pursuits, like Hallaj, Suhrawardi, Muhyideen ibn Arabi, Sadrudeen al-Qunawi, 'Afif ad-Din al-Tilimsani, Ibn Sab'een, and other Ṣūfīs who mixed their Tasawwuf with philosophy.

The proof of the preference of Egyptian Ṣūfīs for the moral practical aspect of tasawwuf instead of the doctrinal and theoretical was that when Ibn Arabi and Qunawi came to Egypt, they did not find any acceptance or echoes for their words. No Egyptian became a student of Ibn Arabi or his followers. On the contrary, other representatives of tasawwuf whose teachings dealt with the moral and practical, such as al-Wasiti, al-Badawi, ad-Dasuqi, ash-Shādhḍhuli, found resounding echoes and acceptance. Their words and teachings flourished and took root in Egypt from the seventh century Hijra to the present time.

What was true of Egyptian Ṣūfīs in general was also true of Ibn 'Atā'illāh:

1) He never advocated pantheism or Divine incarnation or hypostasis between the Creator and the created. Rather, he was fully in line with the Sunna and the Ash'ari doctrine. In this respect we could say that he was linked with Egyptian Ṣūfism first and to the Maghribi Shādhḍhuli doctrine second. Both are based on the Qur'ān and Prophetic Sunna.

Imām Suyuti writes in this connection: "The sayings of Shaykh Ibn 'Atā'illāh and his books revolve around the Qur'ān and Sunna, are bound with Shari'a, and reject all ideas which are against the Shari'a." He also said: "If you look into the *Risala* of Imām Qushayri, the statements of Imām Shādhḍhuli, and the books of Shaykh Ibn 'Atā'illāh, you will never find a word like that (such as Absolute Oneness of Creator and created, or the eternity of the world, or the everlastingness of spirits, or other ideas out of the teachings of Islām, nor any evidence of philosophical Ṣūfism like that of Ibn Sina). If any such words about the "Oneness of Being" are found, then what they mean is the Oneness of Allāh, and that all existence in its reality comes from Him, not what those others mean (i.e., that the Creator and creation are one)."

2) His Ṣūfism was a pure Islamic Ṣūfism, free from foreign influences and ideologies, for he was brought up in a purely Islamic environment. Furthermore, he followed the tasawwuf of Imām Shādhḍhuli, which had no place for foreign influences. He lived in Egypt, in which supremacy belonged to the schools of Ahl us-Sunna, and the belief system of Imām al-Ash'ari, and where other doctrines were rendered unacceptable, such as the Shi'a, Imāmiya, and Isma'iliya. We can thus say that his Ṣūfism was a purely Islamic Sunni Tasawwuf, aiming first and last at moral elevation and spiritual enrichment. He also had an Egyptian spirit in his style and in expressing the Egyptian life in his time.

3) His Ṣūfism pays great attention to the practical side. He wrote books about Ṣūfi exercises like *Dhikr*, *Khalwa* (seclusion), etc., which are practiced by the Shādhḍhulis to this day.

Shaykh Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh elevated the standard of Egyptian Sūfism, in that his doctrine prevailed in Egypt in his time, and also his views and theories were kept alive and spread wide to other Islamic lands at the hands of his students and successors, and also by the interpreters of his book *al-Hikam*, about which we have much to say in the following chapter.

Although neither Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh or his Shaykh taught Pantheism or incarnation, they however were not safe from the attacks and censures of Ibn Taymiya who, it was said, wrote a book against Imām al-Shādhḍuli. It is also said that there was a dispute between him and Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, and, in what follows, we shall analyze that dispute.

c) The Dispute between him and Ibn Taymiya

Our Sufi Imām al-Iskandāri was a contemporary of Ibn Taymiya (661-728 H.), who used to actively assault Sufis and wrote many books retorting to their sayings. He exaggerated on many occasions in his animosity against them. He even accused some of preaching doctrines of pantheism and divine incarnation: Sūfis such as Hallaj, Ibn al-Farid, Ibn ʿArabi, ʿAfif ad-Din Tilimsani, and others who walked their ways.

It is, however, strange to find Ibn Taymiya casting blame and censure on Imām Shādhḍuli and his school, because his school, as we mentioned above, is a Sunni Sūfī school based entirely on the principles of Qurʾān and the Prophetic Sunna. No exaggerated aberrations have ever been related to its followers, that they should be placed together with pantheists and incarnationists. It is also said that Ibn Taymiya wrote a book against what Imām Shādhḍuli said in his “Greater Litany” (*Hizb ul-Kabir*).

Alusi, in his book *Illuminating the Eyes*, explained that, and wrote that Ibn Taymiya criticized some of the statements of Imām Shādhḍuli in his Litany. Alusi mentioned these statements and Ibn Taymiya’s criticism of them, and then went on to add that those statements have satisfactory interpretations (in contrast to what Ibn Taymiya thought).

It was therefore natural that there would be a dispute between Ibn Taymiya and Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh. They were contemporaries: one of them a devoted enemy of the Sūfis, and the other their spokesperson. The first criticized Imām Shādhḍuli, and the second esteemed and defended him. About this dispute, Ibn Hajar writes: “...Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh strongly refuted Ibn Taymiya’s sayings.” Karl Brockelmann also said that Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was one of the strongest opponents of Ibn Taymiya.

With us, there is a statement of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, and it is highly probable that it was Ibn Taymiya who he had in mind when he made that statement. He warns his murideen about listening to the enemies of Sūfis or those who falsely accuse them, and says: “My brother, never listen to those who are enemies of the Sūfis, or who belittle them. Otherwise, you will fall from the eyes of Allāh and will deserve His anger. Indeed, Sūfis have sat with Allāh on the basis of truth, sincerity, loyalty, and watchfulness of the breaths...they submitted their reigns to Him, placed themselves between His Hands, and abandoned seeking victory for themselves out of modesty before His Divinity. They are wholly sufficed with His Dominance, so that He did for them what they could not do for themselves. He fought those who fought against them, and conquered those who waged war against them. Allāh has tried this group (the Sūfis) through the people of external learning, among whom it is rare that an illuminated soul could be found...so beware of them, and run from them as you would run from a lion.”

d) Wonders related about him

Some biographers of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh attempted to show another side of his Sūfī life besides those aspects which we have already mentioned. They stated some miraculous wonders related about him and considered them proof of his high status as a perfected Sūfī who has arrived to gnosis of Allāh.

Ibn Hajar quotes Imām Dhahabi as saying: “It was said that three people were on their way to the session of Imām Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, and one of them said, ‘If my family would be taken care of, I would go

into a life of divestment.' The second one said, 'I pray and fast, but do not find any trace of holiness in me.' And the third one said, 'My prayer does not please me, so how can it please Allāh?' When those three walked into the session, Ibn 'Atā'illāh said, 'and among people, there are those who say...' and he repeated their words exactly."

One realizes after examining this statement of Imām Ibn Hajar that Ibn 'Atā'illāh was able to grasp the hidden thoughts. This ability, in our view, is a grant which is given by Allāh to a select few, namely, those whose hearts have been purified from distractions and impurities. No one who knows the true reality of the Ṣūfī can deny this special type of persipacity; for, if the Ṣūfī strives against his lower self, conquers his selfish desires and remains assiduous in the invocation, then his spirit rises to new heights, and he acquires a novel kind of perception unlike any other. For that reason, it is not far-fetched to accept that Ibn 'Atā'illāh, whose soul and heart were purified through his Ṣūfī training, had acquired that type of visionary insight. Furthermore, through this perception, he was able to perceive and grasp the thoughts that circulated between the mentioned three men and to repeat their statement word for word. In the Ṣūfī technical vocabulary, this type of perception is given the name *firasa* (persipacity), which to the Ṣūfis means the heart's perceiving and witnessing the unseen realms by the light of Allāh (cast in it), in accordance with the Prophetic statement: "Be wary of the *firasa* of the one confirmed in belief, for he sees with the light of Allāh." It is not actualised except for the one whose heart has been purified from all attachments and distractions, as the Shaykh Aḥmad Zarruq writes:

"That which is termed *firasa* in the religion is a light of *imān* which expands in the heart, and allows its owner to differentiate between things and discern their realities. For every believer, there is a portion, but no one arrives at its reality except one whose heart is free from wordly attachments and impurities..."

al-Munawi relates two other occurrences, one of which is during Ibn 'Atā'illāh's lifetime, and the other after his earthly passing. He narrates:

- 1) "And among his wonders which are related is that Kamal ibn Hammam visited his grave and read Surat Hud until coming to the Words of Allāh: "...and among them are the wretched and the blissful," and Ibn 'Atā'illāh answered him from under his grave with a loud voice: "Oh Kamal, there is no wretched among us." Afterwards Kamal willed that he be buried there.
- 2) "And among his wonders which are related is that a student of his went on the Pilgrimage, and he saw his Shaykh (Ibn 'Atā'illāh) going around the Ka'aba, behind the Station (of Ibrāhīm upon him be peace), between the two hills, and in the hill of 'Arafat. When he returned after his pilgrimage to Egypt, he asked if the Shaykh had gone to pilgrimage while he was away, and they replied no. He went to him, greeted him, and the Shaykh said to him, 'Who did you see in your travels?' and he said, 'I saw you, Sidi, wherever I looked or went.' The Shaykh smiled and said, 'The macrocosmic man fills the world, and had he called the Qutb from some remote corner, he would have responded.'"

In these two narrations we are faced with two people: Kamal ibn Hammam and an unnamed student of his. The first states that he heard the voice of Ibn 'Atā'illāh from his grave, and the second that he saw his Shaykh everywhere he went in the Pilgrimage and wherever he looked, even though his Shaykh had not gone on Pilgrimage or left Egypt.

However, can the voice of a dead man be heard from his grave in such a way? Or was Ibn 'Atā'illāh, during his lifetime, one of those for whom long distances were folded short so that he could move supernaturally between Egypt and the Hijaz in such a short time as to elude anyone's eyes?

In fact, this question is one about which the modern Muslim scholars differ greatly. For as we find the Mu'tazila denying any sort of these supernatural occurrences in nature, we also find the Ash'aris and the other traditional Islamic schools of thought (*Ahl us-Sunna*) believing in them and accepting their

reality. Each group supports their views with proof-texts from the Qur'ān and Prophetic Sunna, or even with purely intellectual and rational arguments. Because plunging into this subject would take us beyond the subject of this study, we will suffice ourselves by examining these two incidents in light of modern psychology, and perhaps in the process throw some new light on these phenomena. So we say:

It appears that these two people strongly believed in the sainthood of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, and it also appears that each of them was not in a normal psychological state when they said what they said.

As for Kamal ibn Hammam, he was known to regularly experience unusual psychological states, in which he would be made absent from his senses. Imām Suyuti said about him in his writings: “Shaikh Kamal ibn Hammam had the states of those who are granted the *Karamāt* (miraculous wonders) and *Kashf* (unveilings of the Unseen). In the beginning he would divest himself of worldly means and the company of people, then the People of the (Ṣūfī) Path told him, ‘Go to the people for they are in need of your knowledge.’ The *Warid* (Divine inspiration) would come upon him, but he would quickly abandon it so he could mix with the people. One of his friends related that he was in his (Kamal’s) house, and said, ‘A *warid* overcame him, and he stood up and grabbed my hand, and dragged me with him until he came to the sea port. He said to the sailors, ‘What are you waiting for?’ They replied, ‘The wind stopped, so we have no choice but to wait.’ He said, ‘It is He (Allāh) Who moves you and stops you,’ and they replied, ‘Yes, that’s true.’ Then, the *Warid* left him, and he said to me, ‘I may have been hard on you,’ to which I replied, ‘Yes, by Allāh, my heart almost stopped because of running behind you.’ Then he told me, ‘Do not blame me, because I didn’t realize what I was doing.’”

It is evident therefore that Hammam was one of those who would experience these psychological states of being which would overwhelm him, during which, in spite of himself, he would become absent from his senses. It is what Jurjani alludes to when he writes: “The *Warid* is whatever comes over the heart of the spiritual meanings from the Unseen without that coming from the slave’s will or volition.” This would come to him and overcome him, so that he would act in an unusual way, such as running in the streets even though he was a well-known scholar, or speaking to the sailors without being cognizant of what he said or did. If this is clear, then we could say that it would not be far off if Kamal ibn Hammam was in one of these states of being when he heard Imām Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh speak from his grave, and we could thus conclude that it was a sort of pseudoperception. But of what sort?

Was it a pseudoperception based on sense data, or some kind of imaginative perception based on extra-sensory data?

It is evident that it was an imaginative perception, which allowed him or caused him to sense certain realities that which were not really existent. In other words, there was no outer stimulus that could be perceived by others as well if they were beside him. This kind of perception is called by modern psychologists “auditory hallucination” which is inspired by auto-suggestion.

What could be said about Kamal’s perception (that it could be auditory hallucination) could also be said about the other student, who saw his Shaykh Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh in the Pilgrimage wherever he looked. This could have been because of his absolute belief in the sainthood of his teacher, and because of his immense love of him and constant invoking of him in his consciousness. Along those lines we could say that his perception was a sort of “visual hallucination,” whose inspiration was his intense feeling for the Shaykh that overcame him.

If the intended goal of these biographers who related these miraculous wonders of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was to prove his high station through them, thinking that these experiences and wonders raise his status, then they have made a mistake, especially with him. For he himself never attributed to these wonders which Allāh grants to His Friends any weight whatsoever, and he was like those ascetics who give no value to worldly goods. He believed that they were veils which could veil one from Allāh, or were stepping-stones to conceited illusions of grandeur. He further-more believed that these wonders could easily

occur with someone whose sainthood is not completed or perfected. Along these lines he writes in *al-Hikam*: “Someone might be endowed with a *Karama* while he has not yet become fully upright and righteous,” and “Not all who are most certainly among the chosen go on to perfect their liberation.” He also explains that the true *Karama* is the breaking of the habits of the self, and not of Nature, and says: “How can the habits of Nature be ruptured for you so that miracles result, while you, for your part, have yet to rupture the bad habits of your self?” And, “Your being on the lookout for the vices hidden within you is better than your being on the lookout for the unseen realities veiled from you.”

Therefore, the *Karamāt*, which are when the habits of nature are broken, do not have any worth with those who are firmly realized in the perfection of Tasawwuf. In this they follow the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, for they paid no attention to the *Karamāt*. As the historian Ibn Khaldun writes: “The Prophetic Companions had an immense share of *Karamāt*, however, they paid no attention or value to them...such as the numerous wonders related of Imām Abu Bakr, Imām ʿUmar, Imām ʿUthmān, and Imām ʿAlī (may Allāh be well pleased with them all).”

Our Shaykh Ibn ʿAtaʾIllah, in spite of what had been related of him of perspicacity and wonders, was a true Ṣūfī who practiced Tasawwuf as deeds and as knowledge. He had a lofty status in the history of Tasawwuf, demonstrated by, but not dependent upon, his *Karamāt*.

CHAPTER THREE: IBN ʿATĀʾILLĀH'S BOOKS

1. Introduction

Biographers of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh mentioned his books, each one of them indicating either the books which he believed to be important or simply those known by him. None of them made a comprehensive classification of his books; not even Hajji Khalifa, whose work cannot be considered exhaustive. A modern researcher wanting to compile a list of all of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's books must therefore compare and combine what has been mentioned by all previous biographers.

Carl Brockelmann, in his book *History of Arabic Literature* (originally in German), undertook some research into this subject. He included in his work all he knew of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's books. He mentioned, with each book, whether it had been published; and if the book was printed, he gave the date of publication. If the book was still a manuscript, he mentioned which library carried it. We have relied greatly on Brockelmann's work in our own research.

There is another reference for the works of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh made by Muḥammad ibn Shānab, who relied on Brockelmann's work in addition to others.

We have compared what has been stated by the biographers of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh with what Brockelmann stated. After a lengthy study, we were able to produce a comprehensive classification with explanation and interpretation. We have also corrected some of Brockelmann's mistakes. We included printed books and manuscripts that he did not mention, giving their numbers and the libraries in which they can be found. In addition, for each book we have indicated its subject; the reason for writing it; its Ṣūfī, literary, and philosophical characteristics; its importance; and its chronological order.

2. Comprehensive Classification of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's Books

1) Proverbs or Maxims: *al-Ḥikam*

It seems that the *Ḥikam* was the first major composition of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh. He referred to the proverbs and quoted passages from them in all his other books, including *Illuminated Guidance on the Dropping of Self-Direction*, *Subtleties of Endowments*, *The Bride's Crown*, and *The Sign of Success*.

Hajji Khalifa stated that when Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh completed the *Ḥikam*, he showed it to his Shaykh Abuʾl ʿAbbās al-Mursi, who said to him: "My son, you have included in this text the objectives of the *Ihya* (of Imām al-Ghazālī) and even more." If what Hajji Khalifa said is true, then the *Ḥikam* must have been written before 686 A.H., the year in which al-Mursi died. The *Ḥikam* was therefore one of the early works, written when Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh was still young.

(The *Ḥikam* has been produced in different prints, of which Brockelmann mentions Bulaq Print (1285 A.H.), Cairo Print (1303 A.H.), another Cairo Print (1306 A.H.) with the commentary of ash-Sharqawī, a Cairo Print at the end of the commentary of Ibn ʿAjība (1331 A.H.), and another Cairo Print (1350 A.H.) by Tadamun Akḥawī Press. There are several modern translations, the best being by the late Victor Danner of Indiana University.).

Literary Characteristics of the Ḥikam

The *Ḥikam* of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh is considered to be amongst the most eminent works of Arabic Ṣūfī literature. The *ḥikam* genre has an artistic heritage whose importance has not been fully studied. Through short statements of only a few words each, *ḥikām* bear an immense amount of meaning. Most *ḥikām* are written as an address to the *murid* traveling on the Ṣūfī Path, alerting the student to the rules of the Path he must follow. There is no logical sequence between the various sections, and the author did not classify them by subject. *Hikām* are expressions of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's perceptions, written without any intention of being classified.

The author made an effort to select words which would leave an impact on his listener. Any listener, even a non-Şūfī, would rejoice when listening to the *Hikam*. One can only imagine their great impact on the Sufi. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh paid close attention to similes, metaphors, and literary refinements. Frequently he used rhetorical questions or exclamations. He would also express one meaning through various different statements. However, he rarely used logical progression in the sequences of the proverbs. As an example of his use of metaphors, consider his statements to the *murideen*:

"Bury your existence in the earth of obscurity, for what grows without having first been buried, flowers imperfectly."

"The establishment of sanctity does not necessitate that the attribute of human nature be nonexistent. Sanctity is like the light of the sun in daytime; it appears on the horizon but is not part of it. Sometimes the suns of His Attributes shine in the night of your existence, and sometimes He returns you to your existence. So daytime is not from you to you, but instead, it comes upon you."

"Sometimes He makes you learn in the night of contraction what you have not learned in the radiance of the day of expansion. You do not know which of them is more beneficial to you."

"The branches of disgrace only grow from the seeds of ambitious desire."

"Travel not from creature to creature; otherwise you would be like the ass at the mill. Round and round he goes, his destination the same as his departure point. Rather, go from the creatures to the Creator, and the final end is unto your Lord."

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh also used rhyming, but in a manner that did not lessen or corrupt the meanings of his proverbs. Rather, it enriched them and added power and sweetness to them. For example:

His providential care for you is not due to anything coming from you.
Where were you when He confronted you with His providence
or met you face-to-face with His care?
Neither sincerity of deeds nor the existence of spiritual states
has any reality in His Eternity.
Instead, only pure bestowing and sublime giving are there.

And also when he writes:

How can your subsequent asking be the cause of His prior giving?
Far be it for the Divine Decree of the Eternal to be subject to contingent causes."¹
Or when he speaks of the methods and truths of gnosis, saying:
"Meditative reflection is of two types: the reflection of confirmation and faith,
and the reflection of contemplation and eye-witnessing.
The first is for the adepts of reflective thought;
the second is for the adepts of contemplation and insight.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh sometimes uses paronomasia,² as when he says:

"It is possible to fulfill some obligations sometimes,
but it is impossible to fulfill the obligations of every moment,
for there is no moment wherein Allāh does not hold against you a new obligation
or a definite matter. So how can you fulfill, in that time, someone else's obligation
when you have not fulfilled Allāh's?"

¹ Add transliterated Arabic in footnotes to show the rhyming style.

² Paronomasia means here a play on words that deliberately exploits confusion between different meanings of words for rhetorical effect.

The meaning of 'moments' in the first statement is the known meaning of the times of religious obligations, but the meaning of 'moments' in the second statement (in the Ṣufi context) is the inward dealings which Allāh brings upon the slave.

He also uses antithesis to strengthen his words. Listen to him when he says, for example:

“Disobedience which bequeaths humiliation and need (to Allāh)
is better than obedience which bequeaths ostentation and pride.”

Or when he says:

“Be established in your attributes, and
He will extend to you the support of His Attributes.
Realize your lowliness and He will support you with His Sublimity.
Realize your incapacity and He will support you with His Power.
Realize your weakness, and He will support you with His Might and Force.”

Or when he writes:

“No search pursued by the help of your Lord remains at a standstill,
but any search pursued by yourself will not be made easy.”

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh also uses the rhetorical question extensively:

How can the heart be illumined
when the forms of creatures are imprinted on its mirror?
How can one travel to Allāh while he is chained to his passions?
How can one think of entering Allāh's Presence,
while he has not purified his carelessness?
How can one dare to unfold secrets while he has not given up his folly?

He said of his murideen, with regard to the ethics of friendship, “If you accompany an ignorant one who knows his ignorance and admits it, it is better than accompanying a learned man who is proud of himself. Is there really any knowledge in a learned man who is proud of himself? Is there really any ignorance for an ignorant man who confesses his ignorance?” He said, advising his murideen to resort to Allāh and not to rely on people: “Do not stretch your hand to a man, requesting his support in a matter that Allāh has passed over you; how can one be lifted up if Allāh has put him down? How can one lift up another when he cannot lift up himself?”

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh uses many expressions in his proverbs for a single meaning. He says, for example: “Not everyone who has been supported by *Karama* has been fully established,” meaning that not every Ṣūfī who has been endowed with ‘*Karama*’, has freed himself fully from the dictates of his soul. He expresses the same meaning by saying: “A man might be endowed with *Karama*, while he has not become righteous.” He also expresses it differently by saying to his murideen: “Looking into what has been concealed of your defects is better than looking into the unknown.”

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh rarely used logical sequence in his proverbs, as when he says to his *murideen*:

“The truth is not veiled. It is you who are veiled from beholding Him. If anything veils Him, it is covering Him. But anything that covers, hides and dominates; and He is the only One who is Dominant over His servants.”

These are some of the literary and rhetorical characteristics of his proverbs. We will now turn our attention to their subjects and Sufic characteristics.

Subjects of the Hikam:

Ibn 'Atā'illah put his Ṣūfī thoughts in his *Maxims*. We do not exaggerate when we say that they include his entire doctrine and that all that appear in his other books are but explanations of them.

Some of his *Maxims* deal with Shāria rules with respect to their influence on worshipping travelers. Some of them deal with soul exercises and the stations that are related with them. Some of them revolve around knowledge, its essence, tools, systems, and the ethics of knowers. Some of them include metaphysical viewing in the explanation of existence, its relation to Allāh and man's relations to Allāh. Some of them initiate codes of general behavior which must be regarded by the traveler during his exercise, states, stations, and knowledge, in other words ethics of the path from its beginning to its end.

Their Ṣūfī Characteristics:

The *Maxims* as a Ṣūfī classification are characterized by symbolism. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, in using a symbolic style, was in fact following Ṣūfīs who intentionally on many occasions disguise their tastes by using their own phraseology, and thus their sayings may have two meanings, one derived from the outer meaning of the words and the other deduced by analysis. This meaning can be closed completely for a non-Sūfī. That symbolic meaning, as At-Toussi refers to it, is "an interior meaning stored under its words and is not gained except by its people".

Symbolism with Ṣūfīs also means the amalgamation of many meanings in a few words because we are jealous of them and want to keep them away from deniers or skeptics.

The *Maxims* of As-Sakandāri were symbolic because on one hand they included a lot of the interior meaning stored under normal sayings, which no one except Ṣūfīs could certainly understand, and on the other hand, their few words express a lot of content. Sometimes one maxim may, in spite of its brevity, include a complete Ṣūfī doctrine.

An example of *Maxims* of few words that mean a lot and which need deep insightful thought to be understood is his saying to his mureed:

1. "He got you to behold before he got you to attest, so creations attested His Deity, and hearts were ascertained with His Oneness."
2. And his saying: "Not everyone who has been chosen has been ascertained fully."
3. And his saying: "The universe is established by Him and established in His Oneness." The first statement refers to the previous witnessing of the human soul of the Oneness of Allāh in another world, i.e. the world of light particles, before it ascended to the body and that man is required in this world to attest to Allāh's Oneness. Knowledge of Allāh ﷻ, though a prerequisite for the outer world, is in fact intuitive in origin.

The second statement refers to the basis on which the soul exercise stands, i.e. the following of Allāh's attributes through witnessing Him in as much as humanly possible because a Ṣūfī will only get out of his mean qualities by witnessing the attributes of Allāh ﷻ.

As for the third statement, it refers to a doctrine in interpreting existence to the effect that the universe is created by Allāh ﷻ, consequently creations do not really exist by themselves vis-a-vis the Oneness of Allāh, which is the real existence.

When I first got engaged in this thesis, I could not understand many of the *Maxims*. Then when I read other books by Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh and returned to the *Maxims*, their real meaning started gradually to appear for me.

It seems Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh meant that his *Maxims* were addressed only for the few. It also seems that he did not mean to express their Ṣūfī realities explicitly. He believed, like other Ṣūfīs, that explicit expression of these realities is not a quality of an ascertained Ṣūfī, because revealing them would make them cheap and common. He refers to this in one of the *Maxims* by saying to his mureed: “He that you see answering every question expressing everything he saw and saying all that he knows is proving his ignorance.”

Al-Rondi tells us that when he started to express the *Maxims* of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, he was afraid because their words were symbolic. He said: “We are unable to comprehensibly gather all that the book includes because the sayings of walis (*awliyyaa*) and knowers by Allāh are full of hidden secrets and concealed wisdom that are only described to them. It is only by taking from them that one can know of them. In these words which we write, we do not pretend that we aim to explain the sayings of the author nor that what we say is the reality of his doctrine. If we pretended so, that would be impossible.”

There is another characteristic of his *Maxims*. They deal with faith and they are in accordance with the Kitab (Qurʾān) and Sunnah. They do not include any imaginary or deniable statements. Ibn Ajiba, one of interpreters of the *Hikam*, refers to the system which its author followed by saying: “...the system used in them is a system which singularizes Allāh, which cannot be accused by anyone...”

Ibn Mughayzel al Shādhīdhuli sees that the *Maxims* do not include anything like pantheism or other degenerate doctrines. He says: “Had there been a single particle of a pantheism or deviation in them, As-Subki would have never read them...”

Their Ṣūfī Merits:

The *Maxims* have great Ṣūfī merits. They summarize Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh’s Ṣūfī doctrine and they are considered like a constitution for travelers on the Shādhīdhuli path. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh was known among his companions by his *Maxims*. They called him ‘the owner of hikām’.

The *Maxims* became famous among those who came after Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh in Egypt and other Islamic countries, especially in countries of the Maghrib (Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Libya) and in Andalusia, where the *Hikam* was studied, and many scholars managed to interpret them.

Ibn Ajiba stated, with regard to their Ṣūfī worth, that Shaykh Al-Arabi (a later Maghribi Shādhīdhuli) heard a faqīh called Al-Banani saying, “The *Hikam* of Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh are almost like revelation. If salāt were correct without the Qurʾān, it would be correct by the *Hikam*.”

The *Hikam* was not only famous among Ṣūfīs who came after Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, but they also found their way to professors at Al-Azhar. Many Egyptian scholars gave lessons in them; among them was Shaykh Al-Madabghī who died in 1170H, Shaykh Al-Adawī who died in 1189H, Shaykh Mohammed Ibn Barri who died in 1193H, Shaykh Al-Sharqawī who died in 1227H, Shaykh Al-Sharnoubi and others.

Ibn Zaki Mubaarak stated that the *Hikam* were studied in Al-Azhar in this century (twentieth) by great professors like Shaykh Mohammed Bakheit (Mufti of Egypt) who used to teach them after Asr prayers each day in Ramaḍān in Al-Hussein mosque. He said he had himself taken some of these lessons and that he was highly impressed and illuminated by their meaning.

Nowadays, the *Maxims* are still taught in some Ṣūfī gatherings. That shows that the *Hikam* is undeniably more than a vivid relic, and still teaches in spite of the lapse of centuries.

The *Maxims* were variously interpreted and explained in different times and different ages and different languages and they were described, as Hajji Kḥalifa said, by those whose taste was refined due to their artistic meaning. There is probably no other Ṣūfī exposition that has been equally explained.

Professor A.J. Arberry is of the opinion that the *Maxims* of Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh were unusually accepted and that is manifested by the large number of interpretations which were written on them. He describes them as a small attractive and eloquent book.

The Spanish orientalist Miguel Asin Palacios noted the importance of the *Maxims* and their explanations by Al-Rondi in a thesis which he wrote about the interpreter and the possibility of his and the Shādhḍhuli influence on the views of the Christian San Juan De La Cruz of Spain.

The English Orientalist A.J. Arberry translated a few of its statements. We give below a list of the interpretations of the *Maxims* (as available to us) chronologically classified.

Interpretations of His Maxims:

1. The interpretation of Al-Rondi who died in 792H (1389 AD). He was from Andalusia. His interpretation was mentioned by Hajji Kḥalifa and also by Brockelmann. He said, it was one of the school Ṣufibooks in Zaitouna mosque in Tunisia. It was published many times; Brockelmann mentions Boulak 1285H, Cairo 1297H, and Cairo 1306H. On their margin there is an interpretation by Shaykh Al-Sharqawi. We add to these dates of prints, Boulak 1287H, 1299H, and Cairo 1304H, 1310H, 1313H, and 1317H.

2. An interpretation by Al-Rondi's son, which was mentioned by Hajji Kḥalifa and was described as a small mixed interpretation.

3. An interpretation by Shaykh Zarrouq, who died in 899H. It was mentioned by Hajji Kḥalifa and Brockelmann. Brockelmann mentioned its Cairo prints 1288H and 1289H. Hajji Kḥalifa said that Shaykh Zarrouq mentioned in some of his interpretations that he studied the *Maxims* fifteen times and that he wrote by hand each time a different interpretation of them. We have found the written copies of Shaykh Zarrouq's interpretation in the library of Al-Azhar. It's said that these were his seventeenth interpretation of them. Their numbers are (106) 6150 and (1314) 44809. It is also said that Shaykh Zarrouq wrote over thirty interpretations of the *Maxims*.

4. The interpretation of Safiuddin Abil Mawahib Al-Shādhḍhuli, which was referred to by his student Al-Axora'i, Hajji Kḥlifa and Brockelmann. We were lucky to find a written copy of it in the Garret collection under the number 1582 in Princeton's University Library, USA.

5. The interpretation of Al-Axora'i, which Hajji Kḥalifa mentioned; its author wrote in Mecca in 903H (1497 AD). Brockelmann mentioned two written prints of it, one in the Berlin Library under the number 869415, and the other in the Gotha Library under the number 890.

6. The interpretation of Al-Hanbali, who died in 971H. It was mentioned by Hajji Kḥalifa, but not by Brockelmann.

7. The interpretation of al-Muttaqi al Hindi, who died in 977H (1569 AD). Brockelmann mentioned a written copy of it in the Berlin Library under the number 8696.

8. The interpretation of Shaykh Al-Manawi, who died in 1091H (1622 AD). It was mentioned by Hajji Kḥalifa and Brockelmann said there was a written copy of it in the Berlin Library under the number 8697/8, another copy in the Paris Library under the number 5324, and a third copy in the Egyptian National Library (no. 200 Ṣufism). We add two written copies in Al-Azhar Library, no (50)3175, and (753) 28638.

9. The interpretation of As- Siddiqui, who died in 1033H (1623 AD). There is a written copy of it in the Egyptian National Library under the number 4128 Ṣufism.

10. An interpretation by an anonymous author written in 1055H. The written copy of it is in the Egyptian National Library under the number 41490.

11. The interpretation of Shaykh Ibn Zikri, who died 1144H. Brockelmann mentioned a copy of it in the Paris Library under the number 1351, one in the Egyptian National Library, no. 230 Ṣūfism, another copy, no. 4139 Ṣūfism, and a third copy in Al-Azhar Library, no. (756) 28641.

12. The interpretation of Al Madani, who wrote it in Al-Madina in the year 1145H (1732 AD). Brockelmann mentioned a copy of it in the Algerian Library, no 3523.

13. The interpretation of Al-Madabghī who died in 1170H. It is never mentioned by Brockelmann or by others. There is a copy of it in Al-Azhar Library, no. (752) 28637.

14. The interpretation of Shaykh Al-Bayyumi, who died in 1183H. It is mentioned by Al-Jabarti and Brockelmann. There is a copy of it in the Egyptian National Library under the number 206 Ṣūfism.

15. The interpretation of Shaykh Ibn Barri Al-Adawi Al-Māliki, who died in 1193H. He wrote it following the interpretation of his own Shaykh ('Alī Al-Adawi who died in 1189H). He finished it on Sunday 18th of Ramaḍān 1182H. It was neither mentioned by Brockelmann nor by anyone else. There is a copy of it in the Egyptian National Library under the number 115 Ṣūfism.

16. The interpretation of Shaykh Ibn Karran. It was mentioned by Brockelmann who said there are two copies of it, one in Fez and the other in Rabbat.

17. The interpretation of Al-Yamani, mentioned by Brockelmann.

18. The interpretation of Al-Hindi. Brockelmann mentioned a copy of it available in the Rampour Library no. 1370354.

19. The interpretation of Al-Wazīri. Brockelmann mentioned a copy of it in the Shaheed 'Alī Library under the number 1323.

20. The interpretation of Ibn Ajiba Al-Fassi. It was neither mentioned by Brockelmann nor by Hajji Kḥalifa. It was started by its author in the first month of the year 1211H, and completed the same year. It is printed in Cairo, the year 1324H and 1331H.

21. The interpretation of Shaykh Al-Sharqawi, who died in 1227H. It was mentioned by Al-Jabarti. It was frequently printed on the margin of Al-Rondī's interpretation.

22. The interpretation of Shaykh Al-Sharnoubi. It was mentioned by Brockelmann. Sarkis mentioned in his dictionary that it was printed the year 1304H.

23. The interpretation of Maher in Turkish. It was mentioned by Brockelmann and printed in Istanbul in 1323H.

24. An interpretation in Malaysian by an anonymous writer printed in Mecca. Snouck Hergronie mentioned it in his book 'Mecca' part 2, page 387 as Brockelmann stated.

24. An excellent translation by 'Abdu-l-Jabbār (Victor) Danner published in English in 1973 by E.J.Brill in the Netherlands and in other editions as well.

The Maxims in Poetry:

As many have concerned themselves with the explanation of the Maxims, many others have concerned themselves with composing them in poetry. The following are what we have ourselves seen of them:

1. A composition by Kamal Addin Ibn 'Alī Sherif, who died in 906H. Brockelmann mentioned a copy of it in the Berlin Library under the number 8699.

2. A composition by Adul Karim Mohammed Ibn Arabi mentioned by Brockelmann under the number 1321 in the Fez Library.

3. A composition by Ibrahim Ibn Malik. Brockelmann mentioned two copies of them, one in Algeria Library under the number 2429, and the other in the Egyptian National Library, but we could not trace it.

4. A composition by 'Alī Shihab Addin Ibn Moḥammed Ibn Saaduddin, mentioned by Brockelmann under the number 1356258 in the Rampour Library.

5. A composition by °Abdullāh Ibn 'Alī Al-Māliki. It was neither mentioned by Brockelmann nor anyone else. There is a hand written copy of it in the Egyptian National Library under the number 219 Ṣūfism.

The Classification of His Maxims:

Another Ṣūfi classified the Maxims. He was Ala'uddin 'Alī Ibn Husam-uddin Abdul Malik Ibn Kadi Khan, known as Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, who died in 977H. There are several copies of his classification of the Maxims in Al-Azhar Library.

Commentary:

As we have seen, the *Maxims* have been numerous explained from the eighth century of Hijra up to the present time. They found their way from Egypt to other Islamic countries, e.g. Spain, the Maghrib countries, the Arabian Peninsula, Turkey, India, and Malaysia. They consequently became a living Ṣūfi heritage.

No other books by Ibn °Aṭā'illāh received such attention, in spite of their high worth. His other books are important because they explain the symbolic indications of the *Maxims*. All interpreters of the *Maxims* relied on them greatly, and without those books, they would not be able to understand the *Maxims* or disclose their inner objectives.

2) Ibn Ata'illa's Supplication:

He has a Ṣūfī supplication which is considered one of the best pieces of his Ṣūfī literature. It is a petition to Allāh, and most probably he composed it simultaneously with the *Maxims* because its language is similar to theirs. We relate here some paragraphs of it to prove the worth of Ibn °Aṭā'illāh as a writer who wonderfully expresses his emotions and could reveal his feelings in a way that attracts his listeners and conveys to them his piety and devotion.

Ibn °Aṭā'illāh starts by saying:

“My Allāh, I am poor in my wealth, how can I not be poor in my poverty? My Allāh, I am ignorant in my knowledge, how can I not be ignorant in my ignorance? My Allāh, the diversity of your planning and the suddenness of your destiny stopped your knowing slaves from leaning on any grant but not to despair in calamity. My Allāh, I am worth my meanness, and You are worth Your generosity.”

He then goes on in his supplication expressing his feelings and states. He speaks about his knowledge of Allāh by faith and not by proof:

“My Allāh, how can anything prove Your existence while it is in its very existence depending on You? Can anything beyond You be more obvious than You as to show up? When are You absent, so that a proof of You is needed to prove You? When have You been far away so that creations can lead to You?”

His rhetorical talent then shows up in words which until now people reflect on. He says:

“My Allāh, my humiliation is so obvious to you.

My state is known to you.
 By You I ask You to reach to You and by You I prove You.
 Please guide me by Your light to You
 and place me by the righteous of slavehood in front of You.”

He then explains his dropping of self-direction with Allāh in a language that bears the devotion of a Ṣūfī:

“My Allāh, please abandon me with Your planning from my planning
 and by Your choice for me from my own choice.
 Please place me in the station of need to you...
 My Allāh, by You I ask You for victory, please give me victory.
 On You I rely, do not abandon me. I ask You, do not send me away. In Your bounty I wish, do not
 deprive me. To Your presence I trust,
 do not let me be distant.
 By Your gate I stand, do not dismiss me.”

He then expresses feelings of knowledge, love, and proximity to Allāh in a language that in my view was never surpassed by any Ṣūfī. Reading his petition to Allāh:

You have illuminated the hearts of Your walis as they knew and singularized You.
 You have driven away the otherness from the hearts of Your lovers, so they did not love but You
 and never want of others. You delighted them when creation did not look to them. You guided
 them until everything became clear to them.
 What does he find who had missed You,
 and what has he missed who had found You?

He goes on in this manner until the end of his supplication, expressing his Ṣūfī states sincerely and beautifully. This supplication had and still holds a high esteem for Shādhḍulis. They reflect on it late at night in petition and worship.

Interpretation for his *Maxims* also explained this supplication, and it was practiced numerous after the end of the *Maxims* and their interpretations, also after the end of *Taj Al-Aruss*. Brockelmann was wrong when he stated that it was only written and not permitted.

3) *Advice to His Companions in Alexandria: Waṣiya ila-l Ikwān bi-l Iskandariyah*

It is advice which Ibn ʿAṭāʾillāh sent to his companions and mureeds in Alexandria in the early days of the month of Rabiʾ Al-Awwal (third month) of the year 694H. He explained to them heavenly attention, love, gratitude, *Tawba*, seclusion, litanies, etc.... It starts as follows:

“In the name of Allāh, most Merciful, most Compassionate, peace of Allāh, grace and benediction on my loving friends and beloved sons. May Allāh protect them, guide and safeguard them.... Know, Allāh bless you, that heavenly attention, though unknown, has a sign that reveals it and indications that lead to it....”

Brockelmann stated that that advice was handwritten but it is not so. It was printed at the end of *Subtleties of Endowment* in the year 1322H.

4) Illuminating Guidance on the Dropping of Self-Direction: *at-Tanwīr fī Isqāt it-Tadbīr*

Because Ibn 'Atā'illāh's entire doctrine revolved on one axis, being man's dropping of his own self-direction for the direction of Allāh and being content with Allāh's choice for him, he singled out a special book to explain his doctrine and prove it with all sorts of proofs. Brockelmann described the book "Illumination" as revolving around the idea of full resort to Allāh. Ibn 'Atā'illāh said in this respect:

"...know my brother, may Allāh make you of His lovers and enrich you with his proximity, get you to drink from the drink of his beloved, safeguard you with his continuous nearness to you from His aloofness... that he who wants to reach to Allāh, should enter to Him from His gate and reach Him by the means He set for that. The first thing he should do is to purify himself from self-planning and contesting with fate. I have written this book to show that, and I called it: "Illuminating Guidance on the Dropping of Self-Direction" so that its title should express its subject and its words should tally with its meaning...."

The first chapter includes proofs for His doctrine from the Kitāb and Sunnah, the reasons for dropping self-direction, undesirable self-direction, desirable self-direction etc.... The second chapter is an application of his doctrine in the field of livelihood and learning and earning a living. He quotes several āyāt (āyāt:verses) from the Qur'ān, and prophetic ḥadīth in support of his views. He also gives examples of material matters to support them. He wrote it in a preaching language and filled it with similes and metaphors that reveal his rhetorical talent. Listen to him saying, in urging his murid to drop self-direction:

"The example of a slave with Allāh is like a tree that has been planted by someone who wanted its growth and fruit. The tree knew, if it has knowledge, or in other words our knowledge is that that man would never plant it and deprive it of water. How could he do that, when he is keen to have its fruit? In the same way, you, slave, are the tree of Allāh. He planted you and waters you every moment. He gives you nutrition. Do not accuse Him of planting the tree of your existence and then depriving you of water after planting you. He is not forgetful nor is he inadvertent."

Also listen to him urging his murid to do good deeds for his hereafter and to forsake depression emanating from getting involved or obsessed by livelihood:

"The one that is obsessed by his livelihood, in negligent avoidance of his hereafter, is like a man that has been attacked by a lion which is about to kill him. At that moment, a fly falls on him. He becomes busy in driving away the fly and leaves the lion. That is an ignorant slave. Had he been wise, he would have got himself involved in escaping from the lion first...."

Ibn 'Atā'illāh ends his first book by a chapter in which he summarizes his doctrine in the form of a petition to Allāh which is based on the realities of His own planning and sufficing His slaves. It also reveals his rhetorical talent. He says:

"Oh slave. I have been for you by my own planning before you were for yourself.
I have cared for you before you existed.
Now I am still caring for you.... Oh slave, I am still singular in the creation and shaping. I am
singular in the judgment and direction.
You have not participated with Me in My creating and shaping so do not participate with Me in My
judgment and direction....
Oh slave, look to your relation to My universe;
you will find that you are vanishing in the annihilated.
What do you think of Who does not vanish...."

Oh slave, as you have surrendered to Me
in creating My land and sky all by Myself alone,
surrender your existence to Me.
You are Mine. Do not plan with Me because you are with me."

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh mentioned that he started writing it in Mecca and completed it in Damascus in the year 695H (1296 AD). Brockelman mentioned its' prints being "Cairo 1281H, 1290H, 1300H, 1313H, and 1323H." We add: Cairo 1301H, 1321H, 1345H, and 1350H. There are two new translations in the US, one from Fons Vitae and one from an-Noor Foundation (used above).

5) *Subtleties of Endowments in the Merits of Shaykh Abu-l-'Abbās Al-Mursi and his Shaykh Abu-l-Ḥassan ash-Shādhḍhuli: Laṭā'if al-Minan:*

He wrote this book after his book *Illumination*, more precisely, he wrote it in the year 698H, as we have deduced from some of its statements, which show that it was written after the death of the Sultan Lajien. He wrote it when he found that his duty was to preserve for those who came after him the basis of the Shādhḍhuli tariqa, its ethics, and the history of its Shaykhs (shuyukh). He wrote a biography for his Shaykh Al-Mursi and his Grand Shaykh Abu-l-Ḥassan Al-Shādhḍhuli. He stated their merits, litanies, words, and advice. He was the first to do that. He wrote about this, saying: "I meant the book to include some of the merits of our Shaykh, the Qutb of knowers, the flag of the dedicated, the master of Ṣufism, the guide of travelers...he who has reached to Allāh and who unites others to him, Shihab-uddin Abu-l-'Abbās Ahmed bin Omar Al-Ansari Al-Mursi... I also mention his Shaykh from whom he took, the stories that are related to him and which I have heard myself from him, his wonder, knowledge, secrets, and his dealings with Allāh... I do not know of any of our Shaykh's friends who has classified his words, stated its secrets, knowledge, and wonders. All that urged me to write this book."

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh, however, did not only include what he has mentioned above, but he also added some of his own perceptions in Ṣufism. He wrote an introduction about the significance of prophethood, walihood, and other Ṣufi subjects such as annihilation, existence, knowledge, interpretation of existence, and heavenly love, and followed it by a chapter on wonders and his doctrine on asceticism. In it also, he stated some stories about his own Ṣufi life.

All those who wrote biographies for ash-Shādhḍhuli relied on the book of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh, therefore it has the merit of being the pioneer in commemorating the heritage of the Shādhḍhuli Tariqa.

Among all books by Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh, this one is singled out by being systematically classified according to a scientific order.

He finished this book by a short conclusion. Brockelmann mentioned the following prints of this book: Tunis 1304H. Cairo 1321H. We add: Cairo 1322H, Cairo 1357H (1938 AD).

6) *The Bride's Crown including the Soul's Refinement: Tāj ul-Arūs il-Ḥāwi li Tahdhīb in-Nufūs*

ʿAtāʾIllāh wrote this book after the *Illumination* and *Subtleties of Endowments*. It is based on them. As Ibn Ajiba says: *the Bride's Crown* included Ṣufi preaching by which its author urges his mureeds to stick to Shari'a and Ṣufi ethics.

It is clear he meant the common people by this book and not the Sufis only. Listen to him saying in its introduction:

“You slave. Ask for repentance from Allāh at all times.
Allāh has ordered you to do that by saying: “Repent to Allāh, all of you believers,
so that you may win.”
Allāh also said: “Allāh loves those who repent and loves those who purify themselves.”
The Prophet said: “My heart sometimes rusts and I ‘astaghfir Allāh’
seventy times a day.”

If you want Tawba, you should not stop meditating on what you have done all your day.
If you find obedience, thank Allāh for it.
If you find disobedience, blame yourself, resort to Allāh and repent.”

He then goes on, giving examples sometimes, as when he says:

“...disobedience is like fire. Darkened is its smoke.
He that had fire in his house for seventy years, would not his house become black?!
Similarly, the heart darkens by folly.
It is only cleaned by *tawba*.... A slave is like an iron pot.
When fire is kindled under it, it become black,
but if you go on washing it, it will be clean.
If you leave it, cook in it time after time, black will be a part of it until it is broken.
Washing will not help it.
Tawba washes the darkness of the heart.
Deeds will then show up with the smell of being accepted.”

It is clear that Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh meant the commoners only by his preaching. This book has other titles....

Brockelmann was wrong when he considered that the book entitled *The Masterpiece of Sufism* was different from the *Bride’s Crown*, because it seems he concerned himself only with the title and did not read the book.

He was wrong once again when he considered that a written copy found in the Berlin Library under the number 3217 was another book and not the *Bride’s Crown*. Al-Azhar Library has another copy.

That leads to the deduction that Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh did not give a title of his preachings included in the *Bride’s Crown*. It seemed some of his mureeds classified them each on his own and consequently they were given different titles. The *Bride’s Crown* was printed several times under this singular name.

7) *The Sole Goal in Knowledge of the Singular Name: al-Qaṣd ul-Mujarrad fī Ma‘rifat il-Ism il-Mufrad*

This book is a message written by Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh to cover his doctrines in theologies. They revolve around Allāh’s Essence, Attributes, Names, Acts, the way to know Him, etc.

In this epistle, the philosophical and theological brilliance of Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh manifests clearly, showing in his usage of the technical vocabulary of the philosophers and theologians concerning eternity and contingency, categories of existence, and what relates to the accidents, such as movements, stillness, change, etc. He also uses ideas about what is necessary and what is possible to justify his own Sufi views.

Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh’s experience in Ashaari doctrine shows up clearly when he speaks about the ‘being’ and its attributes. He says, for example:

“Know that all attributes of Allāh are all attributes of deity and qualities of it.
This is not to say that they are He or that He is them....”

The “Sole Goal” does not include mental subjects only, but it also includes Ṣufi tastes related to ethics, as when the author speaks of trying to follow Allāh’s attributes in one’s life, and the what of that. It also includes other tastes related to knowledge, as when he speaks of knowledge of Allāh and its ways, the meaning of ‘beholding’ and its doctrines and other Ṣufi subjects in this connection.

This message has been mentioned by both Ibn Ajiba and Hajj Moḥammed Al-Kawhan under the title: *The Pure Saying in the Knowledge of the Singular Name*.

It was printed in Egypt in the year 1348H (1930 AD).

8) *The Key to Success and the Lamp of Spirits: Miftāh al-Falāh wa Miṣbāh al-Arwāḥ*

This work is considered among the most important of Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh’s books, as it includes rules for practical Ṣufi exercises, e.g. dhikr, seclusion, isolation, etc. It is written in a scientific way and according to a definite system. It falls into two parts: the first includes an introduction and basics.

In the introduction, he speaks about the essence of dhikr (supplication), his views about the human soul, its grades, and the impact of supplication on it.

In the first part, he gives proofs for the value of Ṣufi supplication from the Kitāb and Sunnah. He then deals with the practical value of supplication, what to choose of it, the ascent of the traveler in it. Then comes a chapter about Ṣufi seclusion and what is related to it.

The second part gives an explanation of the litanies. It includes linguistic, philosophical, and basic research into the meaning of “there is no God but Allāh”. It includes a chapter which deals logically with the proofs of Allāh’s singularity. After that it includes Ṣufi subjects related to supplication by “there is no God but Allāh”, and other supplications.

The conclusion includes times of supplication and in incantation (*ar-Ruqa*) and what is connected with it. Here, Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh reveals his views about singularity, knowledge, states of travelers to Allāh, and what they should impose on themselves from ethical points of view, etc.

His book’s stories show how deep he was in linguistic, logical, and philosophical subjects. On the one hand they show how scientific and logical he was in dealing with these subjects, and on the other hand, show a picture of him as a faqih and a linguist. His philosophical experience shows up clearly when he mentions proofs of philosophies of the singularity of Allāh in some detail. He says, for example:

“If we suppose that there are two things that exist due to self-existence,
and that each of them is sharing the other in existence but different from it,
and that each of them is composed of the existences that the other shares him in,
and the difference which made him different from the other.
If each of them needs all its parts, which are not him,
and each composition needs its components,
to say that self-existence can be more than one is impossible.”

This book has a different title: *The Key to Success in Remembrance of Allāh Al-Karīm Al-Fattāh*, as mentioned by Hajji Kḥalifa.

Brockelmann stated that it has been printed on the margin of *Subtleties of Endowment*, Cairo 1321H, and we add to it a print by Shaykh Ahmed Matar in Cairo, the date is unknown, and a print by Dar Al-Sa’aada 1322H, and AL-Malijia 1322H.

9) *The Sign of Concord in the Ethics of the Tariq: 'Īnwān at-Tawfīq fī Ādāb at-Tariq*

This classification is an explanation of a poem in the ethics of companionship by Shaykh Abu Madyan Al-Gawth Al-Tilmisāni, who died in 594H. He was one of the most eminent Sufis of Maghreb. The poem starts:

“No pleasure in living except in accompanying Sufis.
They are the sultans, the masters and the princes.”

This explanation is mentioned by Hajj Al-Kawhan. It was printed in Cairo in 1353H. It is composed of twenty-one lines. Ibn Ata'illāh explained it in his rhetorical style. He shows its Ṣūfī meanings in accompanying others and in conduct.

10) *A Message on Allāh's Saying: "When those believe in Our revelations come to you, say peace be on you..." : Risālah fī Qawlihi Ta'āla...*

It is not a short message in which Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh speaks about the meaning of faith, grades of people in it, Allāh's Being, His attributes, etc. There is a written copy of it in the Egyptian National Library under the number 81, Ṣūfism. It was not mentioned by translators, nor by Hajji Kḥalifa, nor by Brockelmann.

11) *Poems: Qaṣā'id*

Brockelmann stated that Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh had a collection of poems and he mentioned a hand-written copy of them in the Berlin Library, number 7846. When we referred to the index of the Arabic manuscripts in the Berlin Library, we found these poems.

One starts by:

“By Allāh, no life has ever been happy
except by proximity of the beloved.”

Another poem starts:

“My desire from You is to forget my desire
because I really want to reach to harmony.”

We found the first poem printed at the end of *Subtleties of Endowments*. It is composed of sixty-two lines and we found the other poem in *Illumination* and it's lines are twenty-two.

12) *The Ascent to the Eternal Shrine: al-Marqā ila-l Quds il Abqā*

This classification was mentioned by Al-Suyyouti. Moḥammed Ibn Shenab also mentioned it, but Brockelmann did not. We have not traced it yet.

13) *A Summary of the Refinement of Students by Barādhi'ī: Mukhtaṣar Tahdhīb al-Mudawwana lil-Barādhi'*

Al-Suyyouti mentioned this book and he said it was on Fiqh. It is called *Abridgement of 'summary of the Mudawwana'* in Maliki fiqh. Mohammed Ibn Shenab also mentioned it, but it was not mentioned by Brockelmann, and we have not yet traced it.

Brockelmann mentioned it under this title and stated there is a manuscript of it in the British Museum, no.2372. Reerring to the index of Arabic manuscripts there, we found *Religious Precepts and Maxims*. It starts as follows: “The Shaykh and Imām, Taajuddin Ahmed Bin Al-Shaykh and Imām and the scholar Fakḥruddin AbuBakr Moḥammed, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh Al-Iskandāri, a wise man is known by three things: by restraining himself from his passion, reigning it in anger...etc.”

15) Sermons: *Mawā'idh*

Mentioned by Brockelmann, there is a hand-written copy of one in the Paris Library, no. 1299.

16) The Litany of Rescue: *Ḥizb un-Najāt*

Mentioned by Brockelmann, there is a manuscript of it in the Rabat Library, no. (9) – 306.

17) A Message in *Ṣufism*: *Risālah fī't Taṣawwuf*

Mentioned by Brockelmann, there is a manuscript of it in the Asif Library, no. 1,368,105.

18) A Warning in the Path of Sufis: *Tanbīh fī Tarīq il-Qawm*

Mentioned by Brockelmann, there is a hand-written copy of it in Zaitouna Library in Tunis, no. 111 168, 1882e.

19) A Message in Behavior: *Risālah fī's Sulūk*

Mentioned by Brockelmann. There is a hand-written copy of it in the Rampour Library, no. 214 *Ṣufism*, 2150 *Ṣufism*, 1598 and *Ṣufism*.

20) Litany of Light and Complete Happiness: *Ḥizb un-Nūr wa Tamām is-Surūr*

Mentioned by Brockelmann, and there is a hand-written copy of it in the Egyptian National Library under no. 214, 2150, 1598 *Ṣufism*.

21) Petition: *Du'ā'*

There is a hand written-copy of it in the Egyptian National Library among a *Ṣufi* collection, no. 1632 *Ṣufism*.

22) A Companion's Masterpiece in Explaining Advice of Brothers: *Tuḥfat ul-Khillān fī Sharḥ Naṣiḥat il-Ikhwān*

There was a hand-written copy of this classification in the Egyptian National Library, no. 1401 *Ṣufism*, and it is now considered missing. We could not trace any other copy.

3- Commentary:

We see from the above that Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh left a large number of books which are distinguished from one another in their subjects and the objectives for which they were written. They also differ in volume and style. They have gained unusual attention and a wide circulation in many Islamic countries ever since the seventh century Hijra.

These books reflect clearly the knowledge of their author. Some of them reflect his image as a writer who has a rhetorical style. Some reflect his image as a *Ṣufi* of certain taste who examines the smallest psychological states in the traveling to Allāh. Some reflect his image as a linguist and a faqīh who is conversant with logic and philosophy. Some reflect his image as a preacher who guides people to the Path of Allāh in a strong and penetrating language.

Thus Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's classifications are a clear sign of their author's comprehensive knowledge of various components.

We can classify his work into three groups, each having its own characteristics with regard to style and way of writing.

1 – Some of them are in the form of symbolic statements of few words that mean a lot and they cannot be easily disclosed, e.g. *Hikam*.

2 – Some of them are messages for certain purposes, systematically classified, e.g. *Subtleties of Endowments*, *The Pure Intention in Knowing the Singular*, and *The Key of Concord*.

3 – Some of them are messages with a preaching purpose written in an oratorical style, e.g. *The Bride's Crown*, *Illumination*, and the rest of what he has written as advice to his companions and friends.

4- Conclusion:

We wish to conclude this investigation into the life, times and work of Shaykh Ibn 'Atā'illāh with a supplication from *Illuminating Guidance on the Dropping of Self Direction*:

O Allāh! You have planned everything before the existence of everything,
and we have come to know
that there will never come to be anything except what You will,
and this knowledge will not be of benefit to us
unless You will the (benefit).
So will Your good for us,
and elevate our station by Your grace.
Seek us with Your providential care,
and surround us with Your protection,
and clothe us with the raiment of the people of Your friendship,
and cause us to enter into the existence of Your safekeeping,
for You are capable of everything!





Maqām of Sidi 'Abū-l-'Abbas al Mursi

DIVISION TWO: Ibn 'Ata'illāh's Doctrine

- 1) THE DROPPING OF SELF-DIRECTION (TADBĪR)
- 2) THE HUMAN SOUL (NAFS)
- 3) STRUGGLE AGAINST THE SOUL (NAFS)
- 4) THE SOUL (NAFS) AND ETHICS OF BEHAVIOR
- 5) THE SOUL (NAFS) BETWEEN STATIONS AND STATES
- 6) GNOSIS (MA'RIFAH)
- 7) BEHOLDING THE DIVINE ONENESS IN EXISTENCE

CHAPTER ONE: THE DROPPING OF SELF-DIRECTION (TADBĪR)

We shall divide this vast topic into four parts:

1. The main idea of his doctrine
2. The negation of human will and faith in fate
3. The meaning of self direction and dropping it
4. Dropping self direction in livelihood

“In every breath of yours, you have an obligation for Him which He has predestined.”

“Relieve yourself from self direction. What others do for you, do not do it yourself.”

“Your toil in what had been insured for you and your negligence in what is required from you is a proof that your insight is veiled.”

“He knew that slaves look for an exposure of the secret of His attention, as He said: ‘He selects whom He wishes with His Mercy’. He also knew that if He left them as such, they would neglect deeds, in dependence on predestination, so He said, ‘The mercy of Allāh ﷻ is near to those who do good.’”

1. The main idea of his doctrine:

From the beginning, Ibn Atā'illāh's main theme was that man had no will in relation to the Will of Allāh ﷻ. Who rules the whole universe including man.

This theme might have been adopted by other Ṣūfīs, but Ibn Atā'illāh's uniqueness was apparent in applying it and in the important role it plays in his entire Ṣūfī philosophy and in the various results based on it. We shall not be far from the truth, when we say that our Shaykh Ibn 'Atā'illāh has placed the idea of dropping self direction behind every other Ṣūfī concept and that it is the firm foundation of his entire Ṣūfī doctrine.

According to our Shaykh, the beginning traveler who strives against his self should fully drop his self-direction and will. He should not be proud of his deeds, obedience or jihad and should not relate them to his own will, because these deeds and obedience are caused by the support of Allāh ﷻ. Jihad of the self can be considered a negative effort made by the traveler, because it does not necessarily lead to Allāh ﷻ. We do not consequently see him stressing its utmost importance in behavior, in the way many other Ṣūfīs do. He, on the contrary, leaves a space for attraction, which is a Ṣūfī state in which a Ṣūfī reaches to the knowledge of the pure attention of Allāh ﷻ, without the labor of jihad on the tail of ascent to stations and states of the path.

All ethics of conduct applied by the traveler in his self jihad revolve, as Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh believes, on one pole, i.e. the complete dropping of self direction and will by the traveler due to what Allāh ﷻ had predestined for him, because Allāh's will, ﷻ, entirely covers every minute detail of his life. There is consequently no room for him to choose for himself. We therefore find that all ethics of conduct with him, e.g. deprivation, applying means of having, petition, granting, interest, etc, lead the traveler to one result, which is the dropping of self direction and will with Allāh ﷻ.

All the states and stations that meet the traveler in his self jihad, as mentioned by our Shaykh Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh, are based on also dropping self direction. So *tawba*, abstinence, patience, gratitude, fear, hope, reliance on Allāh u, contentment, and love, which are the stations of the road to Allāh ﷻ, will not be correct, in his view, unless the traveler is ascertained with the dropping of his self direction. What is said about stations can be said about states, e.g. joy, depression, merriment, annihilation, existence, are not of the traveler's own making, but he is endowed by them from Allāh ﷻ. Good behavior regarding them implies that the traveler should know that he moves from one of them to the other by the will of Allāh ﷻ. He should be in them without any will of his own.

A traveler then reaches to the end of the path after his ascent in states and stations to the knowledge of Allāh ﷻ. This knowledge, as Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh sees it, is essentially a knowledge of dropping self direction. It is an intuitive matter within the soul that emerges from the agreement between the soul and Allāh ﷻ on dropping self direction before time, in the sub-atomic world, before the soul descended to the body.

Then, knowledge of Allāh ﷻ leads to the beholding of the Oneness in the universe in a Ṣūfī sense and tasting in a way in which the Ṣūfī does not see except One existence, i.e. the existence of Allāh ﷻ alone. Creations other than Allāh ﷻ do not really exist, or you can say that their existence is imaginary. Beholding the oneness in existence implies the necessity of dropping self direction with Allāh ﷻ, because he who beholds the greatness of Allāh ﷻ and His singular real existence annihilates his will in the way of Allāh ﷻ totally. He will not have in such beholding any involvement and capability for planning for himself.

We consequently find that Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's doctrine is composed of fully harmonious related parts, in which one cannot be understood separately from the other.

In our view, Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh was the first to lay down the doctrine of dropping self direction in its full form in Islamic Ṣūfism. What previous Ṣūfis have left of writings or words about dropping self direction were about two stations only, being reliance on Allāh ﷻ and contentment, which could not be considered a complete and coordinated doctrine as is the case with the doctrine of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh.

We therefore consider our Shaykh a Ṣūfī founder, because his Ṣūfī philosophy, as we have mentioned and we shall classify in a later chapter, is based on one foundation which explains Ṣūfī questions, both practical and theoretical, according to a special logic which its author sticks to from the beginning to the end.

Because the beginning point in the travel to Allāh ﷻ, in Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's doctrine, is the dropping by the traveler of his will to Allāh ﷻ, and because all stations on the road, in spite of their differences, are based on this foundation, we shall start by explaining in this chapter the views of our Shaykh with regard to the dropping of self direction. We shall then expose the path he draws for his mureeds, showing, in the following chapter, how he uses his doctrine of dropping self direction and will in all aspects of the path and the various psychological, ethical, and metaphysical results of his doctrine.

2. The negation of human will and faith in fate:

As we have said, the main issue in Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's Ṣūfī doctrine is that man does not have in reality a will beside the will of Allāh ﷻ. Consequently, Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh considers that man does not act except with the act of Allāh ﷻ, does not chose except with the choice of Allāh ﷻ, and declares that acts of man are created by Allāh ﷻ whether they are good or evil.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh's doctrine with regard to human acts coincides with the doctrine of human followers who have declared that all a man's acts are created by Allāh ﷻ simultaneously with his act not before it or after it. Allāh ﷻ said: "Allāh ﷻ has created you and what you do."

Because Ibn 'Atā'illāh's doctrine tallies with the Sunni doctrine, it disagrees with the Mu'tazilite's stance, which establishes existence of a will and a capability for a man and goes on to say that man is the creator of his deeds, good and evil. They denied relating evil or injustice to Allāh ﷻ. They considered those who say so to be infidels or sinners.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh disagrees with them on their saying that man's acts are independent from the acts of Allāh ﷻ. He refutes their belief that man obeys or disobeys by his own will. Listen to him saying: "...Allāh ﷻ says, 'I have created man and jinn only to worship.' He reveals that He has created these two kinds of creations to worship Him, i.e. for ordering them to do it in the same way as when you say to your slave: I have only brought you to serve me, i.e. to order you to serve me and you do it. The slave may disobey and refuse although you have not brought him to disobey you. The Mu'tazilites take the outer meaning and so they say that Allāh ﷻ has created people to obey Him, disobey Him, and commit sins by their own will. We have refuted such a creed...."

Ibn 'Atā'illāh says that Allāh ﷻ, similarly, is the creator of man's obedience and disobedience. That is because of His justice. In this, he says in reply to the Mu'tazilites: "As Allāh ﷻ is the creator of obedience by His own grace, He creates sins by His own justice. 'Say all are from Allāh ﷻ.' Why do these people not understand? In the ayah which is decisive in revoking the Mu'tazilites in their saying that Allāh ﷻ creates obedience and disobedience, Allāh ﷻ says: 'Allāh creates you and what you do.' If they say that Allāh ﷻ says: 'Allāh does not order indecency,' it should be noted that an order is different from judgment or doom. If they say that Allāh ﷻ says: 'Whatever good you gain is a way to get people to be polite with Allāh ﷻ,' He ordered us to attribute good to Him because it befits Him and to attribute evil to ourselves because it befits our existence. In this we shall be polite with Allāh ﷻ."

If the Mu'tazilites say that sin is ugly and Allāh ﷻ does not create anything ugly, the reply of our Shaykh is that sin is an ugly deed from man because it is a refusal of the order. The ugliness is not in the deed but in man who revolts. Beauty is not related to a ring in itself, but to him who clings to it. We therefore see that Ibn 'Atā'illāh finds Allāh ﷻ to be the creator of men's deeds irrespective of those deeds being in obedience or disobedience, ugly or beautiful.

Our Ṣūfī Shaykh's refusal of man's capability to create is shown from his saying to his mureeds: "The negligent looks into what he has alone, but the wise looks into what Allāh ﷻ has done with him." He believed that obedience is a grant from Allāh ﷻ endowed on men in reality, though related to man theoretically. In this connection, he says: "If he wants to show His grace to you, He creates and relates to you..."

His idea that good deeds are grants from Allāh ﷻ and bad deeds are justice from Allāh ﷻ is shown from his saying in his petition: "My Allāh ﷻ, if good deeds are shown from me, this is by Your grace to me, and if bad deeds come from me, this is by Your justice and Your evidence against me."

Both the negation of will and the fact that man's deeds, good and bad, are created by Allāh ﷻ are, in our Shaykh's view, dependent on complete faith in fate and the belief in the One Creator who created and planned everything by His own knowledge. His will is unlimited and so is His choice. His will encompasses everything in the universe and nothing escapes it. He does whatever He wishes and is not to be asked why.

Our Shaykh sees that, as man is completely governed by fate, whatever will he may have, he will not be able to pierce the walls of fate that surround him. In this respect, he says: "Innate power cannot break the walls of fate." Ibn 'Atā'illāh therefore illustrates to the traveler that all his times and moments are but judgments created by Allāh's will, ﷻ. Each is a part of fate which Allāh ﷻ decrees. He says in this

respect: "In every breath of yours, He has a fate on you, which He had predestined for you." Al-Rondi explains this statement, saying: "Breaths are minute times which revolve as long as man is alive. Each breath bears a fate that must be fulfilled, whatever that fate is. If every minutes particle of man is governed by the judgment and fate of Allāh ﷻ, and each qualifies for a duty to Allāh ﷻ for which man is responsible, there will be no room for a slave to plan his life and no reason for pursuing any of his desires."

If man cannot escape from Allāh's fate and destiny, ﷻ, he must therefore stick completely to whatever fate He had ordained for him. This is the attribute which our Shaykh asks his mureeds to stick to incessantly. In this field, he coincides with the sunnah followers in their complete belief in fate. He also coincides with philosophers who believe in fatalism, which claims that man has no power to direct events in the universe as they have all been predestined. Followers of this belief are always content with fate and subject entirely to the Supreme will breathing into the whole universe, and they do not see any free will for man.

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh draws our attention to the relation between the real will of Allāh ﷻ and the so-called human will whenever he says that man's realization of the incapacity of his will leads by necessity to his realization of the incapacity of himself and consequently to his knowledge of Allāh ﷻ in contrast to that. In this respect he says: "...know that the secret in creating self direction and choice is to show His dominance. He wanted to get His slaves to know His dominance so he created in them self direction and choice...When slaves planned and directed themselves, He confronted them with His dominance, so they were shaken and crumbled down. When He got His slaves to know of His dominant will, they understood that He is the Dominant over his slaves. So He did not create will in you, or a will of your own, but to subject it to His will, hence you should know that you do not really have any will...."

We can therefore see that our Shaykh negates any real will for men. This being so, we cannot say that man has any real self direction because he who does not have a will cannot plan for himself.

How can a man plan something for himself when it has already been planned by predestination? How can he plan with Allāh ﷻ, when Allāh ﷻ is the planner for everything by His irrevocable will? The net result for our Shaykh in the negation for human will is entirely to drop self direction, as we shall see below:

3. The meaning of self direction and dropping it:

Self direction is the involvement with the results of things or what they will turn out to be in the future. Man, being of no will against the will of Allāh ﷻ, has no power to dictate results of things to his will or to direct the current of events according to his wish, because this is only with the Creator of all things...Allāh ﷻ.

As self direction will involve thinking into what things will be in the future, it is therefore the most sinful conduct in the travel to Allāh ﷻ and hinders the traveler from reaching, because it implies a partnership with Deity which is exclusive to Allāh ﷻ. It occupies the time of the traveler and hinders him from performing his duties of worship which help him in reaching Allāh ﷻ.

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh indicates to the mureed that directing himself to his evil dictating self means a complete surrender to it along with a high regard for it. And how is this compared to the order of doubting it, striving against it and its passions and desires, with no indulgence in it?

Self direction therefore is an act of the evil dictating self which is not conquered yet. It consequently presents itself to beginners on the road to Allāh ﷻ because they are still battling with themselves and are not ascertained yet by certainty and surety. The dropping of self direction for them is their first duty in the ethics of behavior. Our Shaykh indicates that to his mureeds, saying: "Know that self direction mostly occupies beginners on the road and before they are assured in certainty and surety and solidarity, because wrong doers have answered the Shaytān in sinning and following their lust. Shaytān has therefore no need

to invite them to self direction. If he is to invite them to sin, they will instantly reply because he is not the only one that persuades them. Shaytān mainly enters into the domain of the good from the gate of self direction because he has no other opening to them. He may distract a reciter from his litany or from presence with Allāh ﷻ by getting him to contemplate wishes and desires for himself. He may whisper during the recital of his litany and spoil his clarity of mind by self direction....”

Consequently our Ṣūfī Shaykh states that no traveler will reach Allāh ﷻ unless he drops his will and self direction at the beginning of his travel, and unless he considers that negation of will and capability is the main prerequisite of the road. He is influenced in this saying by what Shaykh Abul Ḥassan As-Shādhidhuli had previously said: “A wali will not reach to Allāh ﷻ while he still has any of his self direction or choice.” We should however note that Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh does not deny the presence of a directing will in man, in the psychological sense of being a special power in him capable of adapting his behavior according to certain designed rules. He does not also deny the happening of a human act according to his own choice and aim because we see him having a big margin for good self direction like tawba, planning for living, and actions of shari’ah and worship with which a traveler draws nearer to Allāh ﷻ. So tawba, for example, is not attained unless one voluntarily stops his passion and unless he constantly thinks of means to stop it. Planning of livelihood should be accompanied by will and planning. Worshipping and shari’ah dealings should also be accompanied by will and choice. Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh does not see anything wrong in a traveler using his will in these fields provided they are not against the decrees of Allāh ﷻ and his messenger.

Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh consequently does not want a traveler who drops his self direction and will to be completely without will in a way that makes him incapable of doing any voluntary act. But being a Shaykh who raises mureeds, he wants his mureed to strengthen his own will by training himself to stop his various passions and he paves the way for him to master his wishes, urges and desires in a way as to get him always to chose the highest urges that can attain ideals in behavior. In this way, he cures the traveler both psychologically and ethically.

As our Shaykh does not deny a writing power in man from the psychological point of view, he utterly denies the presence of any will in man that plans what should happen in the universe, i.e. he denies any metaphysical power in man.

He states that Allāh ﷻ has predestined things for man since his spirit was in the world of atoms. As Allāh ﷻ has planned for man before man’s existence in the witnessed world, He also plans for him after his existence becomes manifest.

If anyone objects, saying: “How can Allāh ﷻ know a thing before it exists?” our Shaykh would reply by saying that for Allāh ﷻ, having knowledge of a thing before its existence is not different from His knowledge of it after it exists, because the knowledge of Allāh ﷻ is beyond time.

As Allāh ﷻ dominates His kingdom, upper and lower, known and unknown, and as man attests that Allāh ﷻ has that power, he should attest that Allāh ﷻ plans for him also, because the relation of man to the universe should get him to know that he is nil.

As planning for man has been predestined, and his relation is nil with the universe, which has also been predestined by Allāh ﷻ, there is consequently no room for saying that man has a will against the will of Allāh ﷻ. The bare truth is that man is fully subjected to the fate planned by Allāh ﷻ and that fate does not run according to man’s will. This is something that is being felt by every person in life.

Does it not happen that man plans for himself things which he thinks will be to his benefit and when they materialize, they work against him? Verily man does not know anything of fate: “Benefits may be the offspring of hardship and hardship the results of benefits. Harm may be in the form of labor and labor may be in the form of harm. Endowments may be concealed in calamities and calamities in

endowments....If the case is so, how can any wise man plan with Allāh ﷻ?"

There is also something else, and that is man is not his own possession. He feels he came to life without his will, he leaves it also without his will, which means that he cannot hold his own reins whenever and wherever he wishes. He is possessed by the reason that gave him life and holds his reins, which is Allāh ﷻ. The case being so, and because man is possessed by Allāh ﷻ who gives him life and annihilates him, how can man pretend that he can plan what he does not possess?

Also, man is not the creator of his deeds, as Allāh ﷻ says: "Your Sustainer creates and chooses whatever He likes." Man must therefore stop planning with Allāh ﷻ because Allāh ﷻ creates everything, He also plans everything. Because man has also no power to create, he has also no power to self direct himself. "So is he who creates like the one who does not create?" Also, as long as Allāh ﷻ chooses, it does not imply that He compels. It is only one of his attributes. It also implies that man should leave choice and direction to Allāh ﷻ, because what is for Allāh ﷻ is not for man.

It appears from the above that our Ṣūfī Shaykh Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh denies the presence of will in man that enables him to get fate to surrender to his own will. Man is a part of existence and Allāh ﷻ plans for all existence by His will to which everything is subjected. It will be contradictory therefore to say that man, who is only a part of existence, has an independent will with which he directs himself or with which he can change the course of predestined events.

Yet, does not predestination and dropping of self direction get the traveler to the imperative result that he should refrain from every deed, become motionless and adopt negative attitudes towards life in which things will be alike and where he cannot chose anything or act for himself?

It seems so from the first look. But he that plunges deep into Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's doctrine will realize that these results are completely contrary to its spirit.

Our Shaykh did not mean that belief in fate is to imply that man should be like a feather that is blown by the wind, but his belief in fate aims at an ethical and psychological target that he puts in front of the traveler, being his readiness to endure all pains and hardships and stand firmly by Allāh's judgment and fate, ﷻ. He should not be a slave either of fear and hope or of pain and joy. He can therefore bear everything by witnessing Allāh ﷻ and resorting to Him, and will be humanly free from reliance on anything else or surrender to human passions and needs.

That is what our Shaykh says about fate. As for dropping self direction and will, we do not think that adopting it will get man to be incapable of choosing for himself a labor in life.

Our Shaykh also aims, by dropping self direction, at a psychological objective which he puts in front of the eyes of the traveler. He urges him to drop his self direction in life and behavior in the sense that he should not be anxious to disclose the future because that occupies his time and tortures his thinking, in addition to getting him to dispute with the Deity, and to try to share in what is exclusively Its own. All these things cut him off from reaching to Allāh ﷻ. But does it mean that Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh believes that self direction and looking ahead is all bad?

As we have said, Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh meant by dropping self direction that the traveler would attain mental peace by not being obsessed in fortune. We do not agree however with him in condemning thinking in the future in all cases because thinking in the future is man's tool to reach higher spheres in life.

If thinking in the future helps one in what one looks for as perfections, it is commendable.

Looking into the future does not imply a contest with the Deity. It will be a bad thing if it becomes a form of sickness that obsesses man and gets him to lose the prescence of living and gets him to live distracted in his own imagination.

The future is truly with Allāh ﷻ, but Allāh ﷻ has also ordered us to work. To work, we have to plan and size up possibilities. In order to plan and size up possibilities, we have to think of the future and what it will bring. Now work will never be successful unless its future is thought of. If any work is done without thinking, it will be improvised, not based on plans or objectives, and it is consequently doomed to failure sooner or later.

Whatever the case is, our Shaykh has meant, by his belief in fate and dropping self direction, the attainment of a psycho-ethical state, i.e. something purely moral. Consequently, there is no room for saying that belief in fate and dropping self direction leads to refraining from doing anything or to becoming motionless and adopting a negative attitude in which things are alike and therefore one cannot chose for himself.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh sees that a traveler can get himself to apply means to earn his living; he can chose for himself within the limits of shari'ah. He can share with people in all aspects of their lives while all these will not prevent him from believing in fate and dropping his self direction and will. If he falls into hardship or distress, he would know that it had been predestined. If he chooses shari'ah conduct, he would know that his deeds of obedience are not created by himself, but they are the grace of Allāh ﷻ on him. If he arranges for earning a living, he should not relate his gains to his will, but to the will of Allāh ﷻ.

When he mingles with people and finds them harming him, he will bear them because of his belief that their harm is a fate from Allāh ﷻ, or because it may be a manifestation of wisdom decreed by Destiny. Therefore belief in fate and the necessity to drop self direction are two moral things which do not end up with getting the traveler to refrain from any work, or to become negative in life, but they help him to live. This idea will be shown more clearly when we find that there is no contradiction between the striving for a living and the belief in fate together with dropping self direction, as Shaykh Ibn 'Atā'illāh sees them.

4. Dropping self direction in provision:

Ibn Atā'illāh sets from the beginning a difference between bad planning and good planning. He also states that any planning to achieve desires for the self is bad. For example, planning for sin, planning for obedience in hypocritically gaining fortunes for pride and loftiness, planning something by disobedience to Allāh ﷻ. These are examples of bad planning because they cut man from reaching Allāh ﷻ.

Examples of planning which helps one to get nearer to Allāh ﷻ are: planning for getting rid if all debts or dues to others; repeating tawba for the sake of improving it; thinking of all that suppresses passion; working for one's living in commerce, agriculture, etc, to eat from it in a halal way, and in order not to ask people. Also, planning to gain a lot of money not for pride and position, but in order to be able to help others. All these are examples of good planning and self direction and who works for them cannot be blamed.

It is clear that Ibn 'Atā'illāh does not disparage involvement in earning a living as long as one is in agreement with the orders of Allāh, on one side, and he does not pursue his personal passions, on the other.

Our Shaykh shows that man is in imperative need of earning his living because Allāh ﷻ created him in need of supplying support to his body, to give him physical power and preserve his life.

He states that this need to Allāh ﷻ for provision is a path to the knowledge of Allāh ﷻ. Man knows the perfect attributes of Allāh ﷻ when he sees his own in-completeness. Listen to the Shaykh saying in this

respect: "...know that Allāh ﷻ wanted man to feel the need for provision either because He wanted him to know Him, or because He wanted him to know Him by feeling the need of Him. Do you not see that need is a gate to Allāh ﷻ and a means that gets you to reach Him? Listen to Allāh ﷻ saying: 'Oh people, you are in need of Allāh. Allāh is the Rich, the Thankful.' He considers feeling the need of Allāh ﷻ is a means of reaching to Allāh ﷻ and staying with Him. In this respect, you will understand our Prophet's saying, ﷺ: 'He that knows his need, poverty, and himself, knows his sustainer's grace, dominance, generosity, and His other attributes....'"

He ﷺ applies his complete responsibility in fate in the field of earning a living by stating that sustenance given by Him to His slaves had been predestined before their existence. In this connection, the Shaykh says: "...and so is the case of the slave with Allāh ﷻ. Allāh ﷻ had provided for him before He created him in this life. Allāh's grace, ﷻ, preceded your existence. Your existence had been preceded by His grace and His grants preceded your coming to life. He gave the destiny before the creation of man and before his striving and work. The destiny of what He has granted since will reach you. Will He stop during your existence what He had already provided for you before your existence?"

Does Ibn 'Atā'illāh mean that because livelihood is insured by Allāh ﷻ by destiny, a traveler can leave his planning for living entirely and live on people's charity or die of hunger? He never comes to such a conclusion. He does not see any objection for a Ṣūfī who lives on his work. On the contrary, he praises such a deed and does not find it in contradiction with belief in fate and reliance on Allāh ﷻ.

He shows that working for a living has shari'ah proofs to support it. No one can blame applying means for living after Allāh ﷻ has said: "Allāh has made selling halal and usury haram," and His saying: "Get a witness for your trading." The Prophet also said: "The best earning is the earning of a worker by his own hand...." And, "An honest, truthful Muslim merchant will be with martyrs on the day of resurrection."

Ibn 'Atā'illāh constantly assumes that applying means for earning a living is praised and is necessary. Applying means for living does not contradict reliance on Allāh ﷻ in sustenance. He explains this by saying: "Know that reliance on Allāh ﷻ for sustenance does not contradict taking means for it. The Prophet ﷺ said in this respect: 'Fear Allāh ﷻ and request of Him politely.' He did not resent requesting Allāh ﷻ for matters of life. If this were contradictory to reliance on Allāh ﷻ, the Prophet ﷺ would have never said it. He did not say, 'Do not request,' but he said, 'Request politely.' The meaning is that if you ask, ask politely. The Prophet ﷺ did not prevent us from taking means for a living....He even urges us to do so."

Ibn 'Atā'illāh confirms the wisdom of using means for a living and its value by stating that Allāh ﷻ knows the fragility of people's belief and their occasion of disbelief in their predestined lot and their incapability of true reliance on Him, so He set them free to use means for living, to appease them and strengthen their hearts.

He then shows that taking means for a living saves one from loss of face and submission to people by asking them. That means he does not agree that a Ṣūfī should live depending on others. He wants a Ṣūfī to be dignified, keeping the gleam of faith showing on him and resorting only to Allāh ﷻ and not to his creations.

Our Ṣūfī Shaykh also states that working to earn a living will occupy a traveler's time and will, therefore give him no chance to disobey Allāh ﷻ or think of disobeying Him.

There is also a social benefit in applying means for a living. Ibn 'Atā'illāh states that Allāh ﷻ wanted people to be involved in the affairs of their living to get to know each other, which is a reason for friendliness, affection, and interrelations between members of the society. Allāh ﷻ said: "Believers are brothers." Planning for a living can be not commendable only in one case, as Ibn 'Atā'illāh sees it, i.e.

when a traveler is veiled by it from Allāh ﷻ, or it prevents his slavehood dues to Him. In this respect Ibn 'Atā'illāh says to his mureed: "Know that things are praised or condemned by the results they lead to. Bad planning is that which veils you from Allāh ﷻ and hinders you from serving Him and dealing with Him. Good planning is what is not like that. It will get you to approach nearer to Allāh ﷻ. Similarly life. It cannot be condemned utterly nor can it be entirely praised. What is not praised of it, is what drives you away from Allāh ﷻ and gets you to forget preparing for the hereafter."

From all the above, it is clear that although Ibn 'Atā'illāh believes in predestination, he does not see any objection for the traveler working for a living and he also sees this does not contradict reliance on Allāh ﷻ. On the contrary, he sees it as commendable and useful because it focuses the slave's heart and helps him to approach to Allāh ﷻ and get along with members of his society.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh's view of the non-contradiction between working for a living and reliance on Allāh ﷻ is considered to be more natural than views of some of the earlier Muslim Ṣūfīs who advocated full seclusion for worship, condemned life entirely, and who believed in, as Nicholson has said, "Reliance on Allāh ﷻ meaning in a way that gets man to be a dead body in the hands of the undertaker." They therefore did not make any effort to earn their living whether directly or indirectly. None of them engaged themselves in business, commerce, or industry; they relied in their livelihood on their Sustainer, who has the safes of the sky and the earth, and who sends his grants to them directly or through some of His creations.

We agree with Nicholson in what he states with regard to the earlier Ṣūfīs who said that reliance on Allāh ﷻ contradicts working for a living. That contradiction creates a negative attitude towards life and reliance on others for a living. Stories related about them in books dealing with their biographies confirm their understanding of reliance as such beyond any shadow of a doubt.

If Ibn 'Atā'illāh does not see any contradiction between earning a living and predestination, he also does not see any contradiction between earning a living and dropping self direction. How?

Dropping self direction with him, as we have mentioned, is a moral thing that a traveler applies on the path and aims by it to attain psychological peace. It also helps in getting him rid of distractions and helps him to concentrate on turning to Allāh ﷻ and reaching Him by not seeing his own deeds, or relating them to his will. This case of making a living is the same, as Ibn 'Atā'illāh states that if the traveler is working to earn his living, he should drop his self direction, i.e. his heart should not be constantly occupied with it and having plenty of it because this will be a veil between him and Allāh ﷻ.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh warns the traveler about laboring hard in earning a living. He shows that toil could be the toil of bodies and during it one should appeal to Allāh ﷻ to support him in it, because if toil prevails over the body, it will distract man from performing his duties in ṣhārī'ah and worship. Toil could also be tiredness of hearts caused by greed, which Ibn 'Atā'illāh psychologically defines as "the latent desire in the self to earn a living and depend on it," which leads to humiliation of the self and surrendering to people. From this toil, toil of the hearts, we have to resort to Allāh ﷻ.

Now, what is the source of greed? Ibn 'Atā'illāh replies that greed "emanates from distrust and weakness of faith, which are both emanating from a loss of light; loss of light emanates from the existence of veils. If the heart is surrounded by the lights and beholds the grants, greed will never approach it. If the light of faith is extended to the heart, it will reveal predestination and a slave will then know that Allāh ﷻ has a deposit for him, which He will get to "reach him".

Consequently, there is no way for man's rescue from greed and tiredness of heart and attainment of psychological peace except by faith in predestination, dropping self direction, and constantly relying on Allāh ﷻ. Then, Allāh ﷻ will bear the slaves' pains and toil. Allāh ﷻ says: "He that relies on Allāh, Allāh will be his ally." How can man involve himself in earning a living while Allāh ﷻ says: "I have not

created Jinn or man except to worship. I do not want them to earn for me or to feed me. Allāh ﷻ is the Razzaq, the Powerful, the Solid.” He also says: “Allāh, Who has created you, gave you rizq (sustenance). He makes you die, then He revives you.” He also says: “There is no living creature on earth which is not assured of rizq from Allāh...” He also says: “In heaven, there is your rizq and what is promised for you. By the Sustainer of heaven and earth, it is as true as your speech.”

What Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh advocates is the bare truth. In our lives, we are in dire need of dropping self direction and in dire need of attaining psychological peace for our wearied minds. We never stop thinking into earning a living and our plans for it, and what our future in life will be. In this way, our minds are tortured and our lives are disturbed. What if we work without looking at the future results, which are in our Sustainer’s hands? Why do we not discard from our imagination the idea that we have the capability to change the course of events according to our will? What if we accept the decrees of Allāh ﷻ contently and do not grumble or complain? What if we turn away fanciful hopes and stop arguing what could be the case if this thing does not happen or what it could be if it happens?

Verily, it is life which has involved and persuaded us and consequently got our hearts to be weary, our sleep to be tiresome, and veiled us from witnessing Allāh’s overall dominating grip over everything in the universe, ﷻ. What are we in relation to the universe?

Consequently, there is nothing wiser than what Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh addresses to the traveler, warning him not to get himself obsessed with life and earning a living. He says: “You labor in what has been assured for you and your negligence of what you should do is a proof that your insight is discored.”

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh also warns the traveler of the worst of what could be understood by faith in fate and dropping self direction, and that is abandoning work in reliance on what has been predestined. Allāh ﷻ did not order that. On the contrary, Allāh ﷻ orders us to work and promises to reward us. Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh addresses the traveler in this connection saying: “He knew that slaves look for an exposure of His attention’s secret, so He said: ‘He selects whom ever he wishes for His mercy.’ He also knew that if He left them as such, they would neglect deeds in dependence on predestination. So He said: ‘The mercy of Allāh is near to those who do good.’”

To sum up:

Dropping self direction in earning a living or anything else in man’s life, as Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh sees it,
implies man’s living in peace,
free from fear, worry, depression,
and free from people.

Yet dropping self direction does not mean that the traveler lives on others; it means that he should live as people live, but he should not agree to the wishes and the passions of his self, and should stop his greed, haughtiness, and pride, because they spoil his worshipping life and cut him from reaching to his highest aim: Allāh ﷻ.

Dropping self direction therefore adds a noble meaning to the life of the traveler,
gets him to be truly free,
to achieve mental peace,
and to reach human perfection in its noblest form.

It does not lead to any contradiction between his life of worship and the society in which he lives.

CHAPTER TWO: THE SELF (*NAFS*)

This chapter will cover six topics:

1. Ibn 'Atā'illāh's attention to the nafs
2. A definition of the nafs
3. Its grades
4. Its relation to the body
5. Appraisal of the nafs being the source of moral evil
6. Classification of motives of behavior

“Know that planning is from the self (*nafs*) because it is veiled.
If the heart is rescued from its dialogue and discourse, it will not be a target for planning.”

“The origin of each sin and negligence is contentment with one's self,
and the origin of each obedience, alertness, and chastity is discontent with the self.”

“If you cannot chose between two things, find out which of them is heavier for your self and chose it.
Nothing is heavy for the self except what is true.”

1-Ibn 'Atā'illāh's attention to the nafs:

We mentioned in the previous chapter that Ibn 'Atā'illāh laid a foundation for his doctrine, being that man has no will in relation to the will of Allāh ﷻ Who rules the whole universe. We have also seen him asking his mureeds to drop their self direction and will entirely. He shows to us that such a thing is the primary prerequisite for striving against one's self, because planning is considered to be the thickest veil between the slave and Allāh ﷻ.

If the nafs of the traveler dictates planning and all lamentable thoughts, he must then really know his self, its urges, and its motives. That is why we find Ibn 'Atā'illāh as an instructing Shaykh fully preoccupied with the human nafs. He analyses in detail the powers of the nafs, diagnoses its diseases, prescribes means for recovery, and classifies motives of human behavior in general. He does all that nor for its own sake, but for helping the traveler on the Ṣūfī road to a dual destination: moral perfection and the knowledge of Allāh ﷻ by taste.

No doubt Ibn 'Atā'illāh is influenced in his view of the nafs by Ṣūfī predecessors who paid great attention to knowledge of the characteristics of the human nafs, such as hypocrisy, hidden passion, hidden polytheism, and ways of avoiding them....” As-Suhrawardi Al Baghdadi has stated, they had a special knowledge about “the nafs, its knowledge, and knowledge of its conduct.”

What is interesting about Ibn 'Atā'illāh's doctrine about the human self is his application of his idea of dropping self direction and will in a way that it becomes the classic pillar of his doctrine with regard to the self, its grades, and motives. This is explained as follows:

2. A definition of the nafs:

Ibn 'Atā'illāh defines the nafs by saying: “The nafs is the subtle vapory essence bearing the powers of living, sensing, and voluntary movements, and is called by the wise man the animal spirit.”

The wise man in this definition is Aristotle. The animal spirit here is what Aristotle calls the sensitive soul: Aristotle states the belief in his book, *The Spirit*, that there is in man, as a living creature, a spirit which is the reason for his life. He classifies this spirit figuratively, not really according to its functions, into three parts: (a) the vegetative spirit, related to nutrition, growth, and multiplying, (b) the sensitive

spirit, which is related to sensing and moving in space, and (c) the wise spirit, which is related to the thinking process. According to Aristotle, man is differentiated from animals by his wise spirit and animal differs from plant by its sensitive spirit.

As the self, according to Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh, is the essence bearing the powers of living, sensing, and voluntary movement, it is parallel with what Aristotle calls the sensitive spirit, which is shared by both the animal and the man, and has in addition to the functions of the vegetative spirit of nutrition, growth, and multiplying, the functions of the sensing and moving voluntarily in space.

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh was not directly influenced in his definitions of the nafs by Aristotle. But what seems rational and logical is that he was influenced in this respect by preceding Sūfis, notable among them Al Farabi and Aviceana, who repeated Aristotle's definition of the self and his classification of its three distinct groups of functions. They both had a great influence on philosophers and Šūfis who followed them.

3. Its grades:

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh believes that the nafs, which is the source of life, sense, and voluntary movement, is placed in between two powers: the body and the heart. The heart according to him is not the piece of flesh known as such, but is that sensing talent which Allāh ﷻ has placed in man. It is called by philosophers 'the speaking nafs'.

The self has three grades:

1. The domineering nafs (*nafs-l-ammara*), which is aligned with the body. It urges pursuing lower pleasures and vile passions. It is the source of sinister acts and behavior, and it pushes the heart downwards. (see Qur'ān 12:53)

2. The reproachful nafs (*nafs-l-lawwama*), which is partly illuminated by the light of the heart and therefore lives to refine itself. Whenever it sins due to its dark nature, it is supported by the heavenly light and so it blames itself. It is moving between the body and the heart. (Qur'ān 75:2)

3. The nafs at peace (*nafs al mutmaʿina*), which has been fully illuminated by the light of the heart and consequently has gotten rid of its sinister qualities and adopted good qualities. It directs itself towards the heart and forces itself completely from any link with the body. (Qur'ān 89:27)

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh, in this respect, follows another Šūfi: Al Ghazali, who states that the nafs, being the human talent deposited in man, has three grades. If it becomes free from the agitation of lust, it is called the *assured* nafs. If it contradicts lust, it is called the *blaming* nafs, and if it surrenders to passion and Šhaytān, it is called the *evil doing domineering* nafs. What is interesting about Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh is that he applies his doctrine of dropping self direction to the field of the human nafs and its grades mentioned above.

The evil domineering nafs, according to him, is the willing nafs, the blaming nafs is the nafs which sways between willing and dropping self direction and the nafs at peace is the nafs which is comforted with the entire dropping of self direction.

As the nafs at peace is the nafs which is "surrendering to the decrees of Allāh ﷻ and is motionless in front of His destiny, supported by His light, free of planning, and contradictory to fate, submitting to its knowledge of Who beholds it... it deserves being addressed". "Oh you nafs at peace, return to your sustainer content and satisfied. Enter among My slaves and into My paradise." (Q 89:27)

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh indicates how dropping self direction will accompany the peaceful nafs, saying that the ayah "Oh you assured nafs..." includes two reasons, each of them calling for the destruction of self direction.

First, Allāh ﷻ describes this nafs as being serene, content, and these attributes will not be realized except

by dropping self direction. A nafs will never be serene unless it drops planning with Allāh ﷻ because of its certainty of Allāh's better planning. When it is content with Allāh ﷻ, it surrenders to Him, follows His judgment, and subordinates to His orders; consequently it trusts His Deity, resorts to Him and cannot therefore be disturbed. When He supports it with the light of wisdom, He assumes it and therefore, it settles down, surrenders to Him and accepts all His decrees.

The nafs, as our Shaykh sees, is ascending in its true phases, i.e. the evil domineering, the blaming, and the peaceful until it reaches to the degree of the heart (or the spirit as he sometimes calls it). In this phase, thoughts of self direction are entirely cut off from it. If they ever come to it, they will soon vanish because the heart in this case is ascertained with faith. The nafs will therefore be assumed by the light of submission to Him. In this connection, Ibn 'Atā'illāh says to the traveler: "Know that the believer is sometimes touched by thoughts of self direction, but Allāh ﷻ does not leave him to them. Allāh ﷻ says: 'Allāh is the Guardian of those who have believed. He gets them out of darkness into light.' Allāh ﷻ gets the believer out of the darkness of self direction into the light of submission to Him. He sends His certainty to drive away their agitation. He says: "We draw truth over fraud so it kills it." A believer is sometimes touched by thoughts of self direction and agitation, but they will soon pass away and do not stay. They disintegrate and will not settle down because the light of faith has settled down within the hearts of believers and will not allow them to share its settlements...."

A sign also of the ascent of the nafs to the degree of the heart is its refrain from taking pride in worldly gains of all sorts. As a distinction between the grade of the nafs and the grade of the heart in this respect, our Shaykh says: "The exterior of creations is deceiving while the interior is wisdom. The nafs sees its exterior as deceit and the heart sees its interior as wisdom."

When a traveler's nafs ascends to the degree of the heart, he should beware the return of his evil domineering nafs to his conduct, meaning he would consequently surrender to his old habits and his reliance on self direction. In this connection Ibn 'Atā'illāh addresses his mureeds, saying: "Know that self direction emanates from the nafs when it is veiled. If the heart is freed from its discourse, it will not be touched by the strikes of self direction...." He also says: "When the heart surrenders to the planning nafs, it would be similar to a drowning man relying on another drowning man. They both sink down. A nafs relying on the heart is similar to a drowning man relying on a strong savior. So never let the heart surrender to your nafs...."

It is evident that the heart, though senior in grade to the nafs, is not secure, in Ibn 'Atā'illāh's view, from the disturbance of self planning and its darkness. He therefore draws the attention of his mureed who has reached the degree of the heart not to plan with Allāh ﷻ, or his heart will not be pure. If his heart is not pure, he will not be able to approach Allāh ﷻ. His heart will be contaminated, like deeds which are contaminated with hypocrisy and showing off, and will consequently be blamed for its hypocrisy. In this respect he addresses his mureeds, saying: "As Allāh ﷻ does not like contaminated deeds, He similarly does not like a contaminated heart. He does not accept a contaminated deed and a contaminated heart cannot steer upwards to Him."

There is another degree, as Ibn 'Atā'illāh says, which is purer than the degree of the heart and that is the degree of the secret (*sirr*). Both the heart and the secret as he sees it are characterized by illumination. He says: "Lights are vehicles of both the hearts and secrets." Ibn Ajiba explains this maxim, saying: "...the heart is the reality delegated with intelligence and the secret is the reality delegated with revelation. The secret is deeper and purer than the heart... lights which are the flowing peaceful ideas and are vehicles for the hearts which carry them to the Knower of the Unknown (Allāh ﷻ). They are also vehicles for secrets which carry them to the Authority of the Mighty."

We should however notice that the nafs, whether domineering, blaming, or assured, and words like heart, spirit, and secret, are all, as Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh and other Ṣūfīs see them, names which describe that human inner power which is the reason for man's life, according to its purity and freedom from the bodily passions.

4. Its relation with the body:

It should not be thought that there are various anfās (plural of nafs), as the different names used by Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh may indicate. With him, the nafs is essentially one, but it differs according to its grade and attributes. In essence, it is completely different from the body. The metaphysical synonymy between it and the body is however characterized by the basic difference in their natures. The nature of the body is obscure and opaque and the nature of the heart (which is a higher degree of the nafs) is luminous. There is a continuous conflict between these two natures which is suffered by the traveler who yearns to achieve moral completeness by conquering the pleasures of his body. Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's view of this conflict is as follows: by its obscure opaque nature, the body tries to pull the nafs downwards. If it is attracted to it and surrenders to its motives and starts to plan and think for evil, it is called evil-domineering. If it is partially freed from its authority by the luminous power of the heart, and hesitates between planning and dropping it, and between bad thoughts and good thoughts, it is called the blaming nafs. If it is however completely freed from the opaqueness of the body and is directed towards then heart, freed from self direction, its motives and all other bad thoughts, it is called the assured nafs.

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh, like other Ṣūfīs, thinks that the body is the prison of the nafs and that the nafs which is chained to its body will not reach to real knowledge and true happiness unless it is purified and ascends up to higher states by means of a heavenly supply. Then, it gets out of its prison to its space of beholding. Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh draws the attention of the traveler to this idea, saying: "He gave a good supply to free you from the prison of your existence to the space of your beholding."

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh believes firmly that the human nafs was in another world before it came to this world (the other world of atoms or the world of command, as Ṣūfīs call it). In that world, Allāh ﷻ showed the nafs His Oneness and it was assured of that knowledge and when it descended to this world, the body intervened between it and its previous knowledge. It is consequently required in front of Allāh ﷻ to attest to His Deity in this world once again. Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh included this idea in his saying to his mureeds in his *Maxims*: "He got you to testify before He got you to behold. The outer things uttered His Deity and the hearts and secrets were assured with His Oneness."

Our Shaykh's view and other Ṣūfīs' views that knowledge is latent in the nafs and that the nafs has known it in another world before its presence in the body is based in their opinion on a Qur'ānic source. Allāh ﷻ says: "*When your sustainer took from the backs of the sons of Adam, their posterity, and got them to testify it themselves, saying, "Am I not your sustainer? They said, "Yes...."*" (Q 7:172)

We find that this view is similar to Plato's view that the human nafs was present previously in another world different from this world, before it descended to the body. It was in the company of the gods and learned through knowledge of symbols. Its knowledge of the symbols after it descended to the body has still some sort of remembrance of its previous knowledge in the company of gods.

To sum up, our Shaykh confirms that the nafs is a distinct entity different from the body and purer than it. The dominance or non-dominance of the nafs over the body explains its grades.

5. Condemnation of the self as being the source of moral evil:

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh states that the nafs linked with the body is the source of all moral evil, bad deeds, and blameworthy qualities. What he says in condemnation of the nafs is either directed to the evil-domineering nafs or the blaming nafs, which moves between folly and obedience, or in other words, the nafs which has not yet been totally freed from the chains of the body.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh in his dispraise of the nafs as being the source of all evil is similar to all Muslim Ṣūfīs who rely in their disparegment of the nafs on proofs from the Qur'ān and ḥadīth, e.g. Allāh ﷻ says: "The nafs is evil-domineering." The Prophet ﷺ says: "Your enemy is your nafs which is inside of you." Ibn 'Atā'illāh shows to the traveler that his nafs, which is within himself and which is related to passions and instinct, is the source of all disobedience. He says: "The origin of all folly, heedlessness, and negligence is self gratification, and the origin of all worship, alertness, and chastity is non-contentment with the nafs."

Ibn 'Atā'illāh urges the traveler to be constantly deprecating his nafs because it is his worst enemy. He addresses him, saying: "People praise you because of what they imagine of you. Discredit your nafs because of your knowledge of it."

He then exaggerates in dispraising the nafs because it calls for bad behavior and dictates it. He advises the traveler to have a scale which can show to him the motives of his behavior and attests to him that he should disobey his nafs continuously. He says: "If there are two things of which you may chose one, look into the harder of the two for your nafs and follow it. Only truth is hard for the nafs."

Our Shaykh then advises the traveler not to accompany someone who praises himself, saying: "If you accompany a non-educated man who does not praise himself, that is better than to accompany a scholar who praises himself. Is there really knowledge with a scholar who praises himself; or is there ignorance with a non-educated man who does not praise himself?"

As the evil-domineering nafs is the source of self direction, the traveler should not agree with the nafs for its self direction because this means acceptance of it. He says to the traveler: "Your self direction is a sign of your ignorance of it. The believer knows that when he drops self direction, Allāh ﷻ will direct him, because Allāh ﷻ says: 'He that resorts to Allāh, Allāh will be his ally.' So real direction should be in dropping self direction, and beholding the nafs should be in non-beholding it."

Ibn 'Atā'illāh's exaggeration in suspecting the nafs and considering it as pure evil, reminds us of the Molamatiah, the Ṣūfī blamers who exaggerate in the dispraise of the nafs, discrediting and blaming it, and to an origin of their doctrine as mentioned by as-Salāmī in his 'Message'. He says: "Among the origins of their doctrine is the continuous accusation of the nafs, i.e. in obedience and folly...."

If the human nafs, linking with the body as the Shaykh thinks, is the origin of moral evil in man, the origin of good is the heart (or spirit). On the basis of the nearness of the nafs on one side and the goodness of the heart (or spirit), on the other side, Ibn 'Atā'illāh sets out a moral psychological theory for motives of human behavior as follows:

6. Classification of motives of behavior:

Ibn 'Atā'illāh relates all motives of behavior to two powers: a) the nafs clinging to the body and its passions and b) the heart or the spirit, which is entirely free from the body. Consequently, motives can be either psychological or spiritual. Motives which, either psychological or spiritual, direct the behavior of the traveler and draw results for him.

The self directed motive, as our Shaykh sees it, is not a commendable motive because it is related to the nafs, which is the source of evil. In it, the nafs finds pleasure and rest because it replies to its passion and aspirations. Such pleasure and rest are resorts only for those who like themselves and worldliness; those who are obsessed with anxiety, and who have no room for the love of Allāh ﷻ in their hearts. For one so characterized, all his deeds will be psychological. Some of his worship or obedience will be pure.

A spiritual motive is a commendable motive because it clings to the spirit. It is only shown from a lover of Allāh ﷻ who is obsessed by Him. There will be no room for the love of worldliness in his heart. All the deeds of one who is so characterized will be described as spiritual. He will not sleep, love, eat, drink,

except because these are necessities or means for ascertaining his worship. A man of this kind, as Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh sees him, is pure in all his deeds and silence.

Our Shaykh also calls the spiritual motive “devotion”. He means by that the purification of the intent of proximity to Allāh ﷻ from all muddles. On the other hand, he calls the psychological motive hypocrisy. He also states that in addition to the psychological and spiritual motives, there are other motives, which are mixtures of the two. The motive can have equal shares of the two, or one in which the spiritual motive is stronger or one in which the psychological motive is stronger. If the mixed motive is composed of two equal sides, it will neither be for the man or against him. If one side is greater, it will add to the traveler in as much as the weaker will degrade him.

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh describes human acts as good or bad in relation to their motives. With him, a human act is good if it emanates from the spirit, bad when it emanates from the nafs, and is swinging between good and evil if the motive is a mixture of the spirit and the nafs. A traveler will not be able to proceed on the path except by striving against his self and getting it to stick continuously to goodness. He who looks deep into the classifications of Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh for motives of behavior will see that he differentiates between the body and the nafs. He then differentiates in the one nafs between two grades, one related to the body and the other related to the heart (or spirit). He then relates sets of behavior to each of the two grades.

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh’s view in classifying human behavior differs completely from what we find with modern psychologists. The difference between what is psychological and bodily is no longer considered. Psychologists nowadays do not set a distinction between the nafs and the body and do not set differentiating boundaries between the power of the one nafs.

What is also noticeable about Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh’s classification of motives of behavior is that Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh has considered the important note of noble human emotions like the love of Allāh ﷻ in directing behavior.

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh’s classification of motives of behavior relates them to the different powers of the nafs, aims at an ethical objective which is the guidance of behavior, ensuing true happiness to the traveler by teaching him the motives of his acts and enlightening him to the goodness or evil of these motives.

Consequently, it can be said that Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh’s search into the human nafs was not for pure research, but in order to reach ethical completeness.

It is to be mentioned that because psychology with Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh and other Ṣūfīs is mixed with morality, it does not belittle the findings of Ṣūfīs about the human nafs, its nature, classification of its powers, its grades, motives, and diagnosis of its ills.

It will be fair if research considers them as pioneers in the field of psychology. From the beginning, Ṣūfīs were psychologists because they used introspection properly. They were not satisfied with the outwardness of the nafs; they plunged deep into the human nafs in an admirable way. They knew its motives and instincts, which they call passions. They might have discovered what modern psychoanalysts call the subconscious and to which they relate different kinds of human behavior.... Their Shaykhs (shuyukh) used analyses for their mureeds and guided them to know what they did not know before about themselves. Some of them speak about the necessity of confession to the Shaykh by the mureed of all that goes on within himself; otherwise there will be a snarl over his heart.

There is a modern philosopher, Emile Boutroux, who has done justice to Ṣūfīs as researchers in the field of the human psyche. He admires them greatly for their system of introspection. Listen to him saying: “...Ṣūfīs themselves were great psychologists. Introspection of inner life was their main concern. We should therefore consider carefully their findings in the field of the human self instead of looking on them all as patients.”

CHAPTER 3: THE JIHAD (STRUGGLE) OF THE NAFS

This chapter will cover the following topics:

1. The Meaning of Striving
2. The Necessity of the Shaykh's Supervision Over the Mureed
3. The Nafs' Exercise
4. Isolation and Seclusion
5. Dhikr
6. Striving and Dropping Self Direction

Were it not for the fields of the nafs, there would have been no travel for travelers as there is no distance between you and Him to cover. There is no gulf between you and Him to bridge it on.

He who has no professor to attach him to the chain of the followers and disclose the veil from his heart, is an illegal son in this matter who has no known father and is an imposter who has no evidence.

Nothing will get you out of your attributes except beholding His attributes.

Only the ignorant discards supplication. Grants are in the other world and supplication ends up in this world. What should be looked after indeed is what cannot be substituted for. Supplication is His demand on you, and you ask Him for His grants. His demand on you is imperative.

Because you will never reach Him except after the annihilation of your folly; you will not reach Him otherwise. But if He wishes to get you to reach Him, He covers your attributes with His, so He gets you to reach Him by what He has, not what you have.

1- The Meaning of Striving:

We have shown, in the previous chapter, the nature of the nafs, its grades, various powers, and its motives as seen by Ibn 'Atā'illāh. We have said that researching these subjects is not a research for its own sake, but a research into what helps the traveler to reform himself in order to reach to ethical perfection and knowledge of Allah ﷻ.

Striving against the nafs, with Ibn 'Atā'illāh and with other Ṣūfīs, is a war against the evil domineering

By struggling, behavior will be good, and the nafs will escalate up by various degrees, ascend into states and stations and finally be assured with the knowledge of Allah ﷻ.

Our Ṣūfī Shaykh Ibn 'Atā'illāh consequently considers the nafs' strife as the beginning of the road to Allāh ﷻ and tells us that without it, travel will be useless. In this connection, one of his *Maxims* says: "Were it not for the fields of the nafs, there would have been no travel for travelers as there is no distance between you and Him to cover. There is no gulf between you and Him to bridge it on." That means that unless there is striving against the nafs, travel will be useless because there is no real distance nor gulf between travelers and their sustainer. The travel on the road to Allāh ﷻ is merely to cross the barriers of the nafs. These words like travel, travelers, fields, gulf, reach, etc., as Al Rondi says, are all words used by Ibn 'Atā'illāh and other Ṣūfīs in pure theoretical subjects which they substitute for physical matters, and they are related to the slave and no one else. From Al Rondi's words, it is understood that the Ṣūfī road and all that is related to it, such as states and knowledge, are all subjective things or personal tastes which the traveler himself finds.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh, like other Ṣūfīs, calls the strife with the nafs "the greater jihad", following the Prophet ﷺ, and he urges the traveler to engage in it. He addresses him, saying: "How can you strive against yourself and you are invigorating it by passion until it conquers you? You do not really know. The heart is a tree

which is watered by obedience. Its fruits are its tastes.... If the heart dries up, its fruits fall down. When it does not bear fruit, repeat supplications frequently, and do not be like the patient who says, I shall not take the medicine unless I recover. It is said to him, you will not recover, unless you take the medicine. Jihad has nothing secret in it. Strive against yourself therefore while you know that it is really severe, i.e. a greater jihad."

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh indicates that the traveler's strife against himself by getting it to stick to obedience is an extremely strenuous matter, because the evil domineering nafs is latently appealed to by sin. In this connection, he says in one of his *Maxims*: "The nafs' lot in sin is quite visible; its lot in obedience is hidden and curing what is hidden is quite difficult." Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh also shows that the self-struggle is at the beginning done against one's wish, but later it becomes a habit which will eventually emanate naturally from the traveler who will be loving to obey and refrain from disobedience. In this he says to the traveler: "You will not be able to cure yourself at the beginning but when your nafs tastes grants, self cure will come voluntarily. The sweetness which it used to find in sin, it will now find in obedience."

The traveler's self-strife must be made under the supervision of a guiding Shaykh who knows the road to Allāh ﷻ; otherwise the traveler will not reach Allāh ﷻ. He may be a man of state, not an ascertained Ṣūfī. The jihad of the nafs, in Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's view, has four integrated stages:

- (1) the nafs exercises (from the ethical point of view), and that is substituting bad behavior by its adverse good behavior.
- (2) going into isolation, seclusion, and dhikr, which are practiced strivings that will yield for the traveler love, annihilation, and knowledge.
- (3) Ordering the nafs to stick to the practiced ethics, which correct anything that stands against the traveler on the road.
- (4) The nafs' ascent in various stations and states.

If the nafs ascends as such during the self-struggle, the traveler will end up with the knowledge of Allāh ﷻ and will be utterly complete in his behavior.

We shall deal in this chapter with the necessity of the Shaykh's supervision over the mureed in his strife and we shall talk about two phases of his struggle being ethical self-strife, and practicing Ṣūfī strife as isolation, seclusion, and dhikr. After this chapter, we shall deal with the ethics of practical behavior, which the traveler has to stick to. We shall then talk about states and stations, and we shall indicate, in all these stages, how our Shaykh applies his doctrine of dropping self direction.

2- The necessity for the Shaykh's supervision over the mureed in the struggle of the nafs:

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh believes that a traveler on the Ṣūfī road, who is striving against his nafs, must be guided by a knowledgeable Shaykh who knows the road to Allāh ﷻ. He should submit to him completely. In this respect he says: "...he who intends to find the road of success, must first find an ascertained Shaykh who has trodden the road, who is assured in the service of Allāh ﷻ and has abandoned his passion... when he finds him, he has to respond fully to his orders and refrain from what he forbids...."

Our Shaykh also says that every traveler on the Ṣūfī road must be related to a guiding professor: "He who has no professor to attach him to the chain of followers and disclose the veil from his heart, is an illegal son in this matter who has no known father and is an imposter who has no evidence. If he has no light, he will be vanquished by his states, he will not accept knowledge or instruction and will not benefit from training."

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh in his belief that a traveler should have a Shaykh follows other Ṣūfis. al Qushairi says in his *Message*: "A mureed must be brought up by a Shaykh. If he has no professor, he will never succeed...."

Also Yazīd Al Bastami says: "He who has no leader, the shaytan will be his leader." al Dakkak says: "If the tree grows by itself without one who plants it, it will bear leaves but will never bear fruit and so is the mureed. If he has no professor to give him the tariqa (path) breath by breath, he will only worship his passion and will not be delivered."

The Shaykh's first job with the traveler is to show him his nafs' hidden side, guide him to Allāh ﷻ, teach him to escape from everything else and accompany him on the road until he reaches its end. Following the Shaykh will be by a grant from Allāh ﷻ. It is Allāh ﷻ alone who will lead the traveler to the Shaykh and will show to him how endeared he is by Allāh ﷻ. Ibn 'Atā'illāh says in this respect: "Following cannot be to a wali who is unknown in the realm of Allāh ﷻ, but it must be to a wali whom Allāh ﷻ has led you to, and shown to you his station with Him. He will aid you by his humanity in his station. You will submit to him and he will lead you on the road of success. He shows you your nafs' follies open and hidden, leads you to Allāh ﷻ, lets you escape from everything else and accompanies you on the road until you reach Allāh ﷻ. He shows you your nafs' evil, and the grants of Allāh ﷻ to you. Your knowledge of your nafs' evil will help you to escape it and not to rely on yourself. Your knowledge of the grants of Allāh ﷻ will help you to steer your efforts towards Him and become grateful to Him...."

The Shaykh guiding to Allāh ﷻ does not do this work, in Ibn 'Atā'illāh's view, by words or statements he says to the traveler only, but also by his moral indication and his states. He frees him from his nafs' passions and cleans the mirror of his heart until he gets him to reach to Allāh ﷻ. In this he says to the traveler: "Your Shaykh is not he whom you have heard from...your Shaykh is he whom you have taken from. Your Shaykh is not he whose words you have heard, but he whose inspiration has flown into you. Your Shaykh is not he who has invited you to the gate, but your Shaykh is he who has unveiled you. Your Shaykh is not he whose words impressed you, but he who has filled you up by his state. Your Shaykh is he who has freed you from the prison of your passion and got you to enter the House of the Sustainer. Your Shaykh is he who cleans the mirror of your heart until it reflects the lights of Allāh ﷻ. He raises you up to Allāh ﷻ and accompanies you until you reach Him. He has been with you until he put you in the hands of Allāh ﷻ and then he said to you: 'There you are. You are with your Sustainer....'"

Ibn 'Atā'illāh indicates that the relationship between the Shaykh and the mureed is a fatherly relationship. As a son is related to his father, a mureed is related to his Shaykh. The fatherhood of the road should be even more looked after. In this he says: "...he that relates a student to a professor who is not his professor, is similar to him that relates a son to someone who is not his father. This fatherhood deserves more attention to confirm...."

Ibn 'Atā'illāh, like Suhrawardi, sees the resemblance of actual fatherhood to the relation of the Shaykh with the mureed. The relation of the Shaykh with the mureed is a spiritual fatherhood.

When the mureed successfully finds a guiding Shaykh and he wants to strive against his nafs, its follies and defects, he should not be embarrassed to show them all to his Shaykh because the mureed, in Ibn 'Atā'illāh's view, is like the patient and the Shaykh is his doctor. A doctor has the right to look at the hidden parts of the patient to cure him. In this he says: "The Shaykh must investigate the conditions of mureeds and the mureeds must tell their Shaykh about everything to the extent of even exposing the interior of their nafs, because the Shaykh is like the doctor and the patient is like a hidden part who had to be shown to the doctor for the sake of treatment." He also says: "A mureed (among the travelers) who exposes his illness will be cured. He may be told what he thought to be illness is not in fact illness or he may be told how to treat his illness."

In this way, Ibn 'Atā'illāh gives us a clear picture of how the relation between the Shaykh and the mureed should be. He that contemplates this relationship will see that it is a spiritual one. A mureed has to be fully respectful of his Shaykh, carrying out all his orders with regard to behavior because he believes that his Shaykh is ascertained with perfection in all its shapes and that he is consequently capable of clearing

out all his follies and directing him to the solution of all his emotional problems.

A mureed, as Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh shows, will be, in a modern psychological sense, constantly submitting to his Shaykh's suggestions, which direct his behavior to an ideal. The guiding Shaykh is like the capable psycho-therapist who knows the ills of his patient (the traveler), and he cleans them all out due to his expert knowledge of the psychological sicknesses and ways to cure them.

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh has referred to another job which the Shaykh does from the psychological angle, i.e. convincing. A mureed may imagine that he has illness within his psyche, and when he reveals it to his Shaykh and the Shaykh finds that it is not an illness, he can convince him accordingly, and so he is cured. If, however, the Shaykh finds real illness, he will cure it psychologically in a way that he gets his patient to get rid of it completely.

3- Exercises of the nafs (self):

The guiding Shaykh advises the traveler to practice self exercises at the beginning of his journey. This is the first stage in the struggle of the nafs. Self exercise, as Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh and other Ṣūfīs see it, is a strenuous effort which the traveler makes to get himself rid of his nafs' follies, like jealousy, grudges, hypocrisy, pride, and other bad qualities which are the greatest barriers on the path to Allāh ﷻ.

Self exercise is based on the Qur'ān and the life of the Prophet ﷺ, as al Rondī indicates in his interpretation of the *'Maxims'*. He says: "Ethics needed by the mureed are external and internal: the external follows the internal. Internal ethics are to adorn oneself in totally improving one's ethics. The Prophet ﷺ said: "My sustainer has refined my manners in a good way. Then he ordered me to practice good manners and said, 'Forgive, instruct for manners and abandon the ignorant'." This will not be attained, after the support of Allāh ﷻ, except by exercise and strife.

The base on which exercises of the nafs stands, in Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's view, is in beholding the attributes of Allāh ﷻ and trying to imitate them as much as humanly possible. Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh therefore indicates to the traveler that he will not get rid of his bad manners except by beholding the attributes of Allāh ﷻ. He says: "You will not get out of yourself except by beholding His attributes."

Imitating the attributes of Allāh ﷻ as much as humanly possible is the traveler's way to true happiness. Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh says: "...the slave's happiness is in his trial to imitate the attributes of Allāh ﷻ in as much as he can imagine of his due merit, until he becomes near to Allāh ﷻ ...nearness is meant to be nearness of stations and grades, not of distance or place."

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh warns the traveler of his nafs' defects, which hinder the path of some travelers. He says: "Defects in the travel to Allāh ﷻ which hinder the road in front of some travelers are ten: a) seeing deeds with admiration, b) growing hope, c) the nafs' whispering of its' reaching walihood, d) envying people's esteem, e) leaning on ru'yas (veridical dreams), f) relying on litanies, g) enjoying inspired ideas, h) contentment with promise, I) being content with make-believe, j) assuredness with Allāh ﷻ without work.

Our Shaykh indicates that non-contentment with Allāh ﷻ and the non-surrender to His judgment, while being content with one's self, is the worst that could come out of a traveler in his travel. He says to him: "Signs of fall from Allāh's eyes ﷻ (attention) are three: self contentment, non contentment with Allāh ﷻ, and satisfaction thinking he is sharing choice in his destiny."

Our Shaykh urges the traveler to tame himself for stopping his own choice and will entirely, and shows to him that these are only confined to Allāh ﷻ. He says: "Signs of confinement to Allāh ﷻ are three: leaving choice, planning, and will."

Consequently, if the traveler abandons choice, planning, and will, becomes content with Allāh ﷻ, and does not try to share with Him in His judgment, he will be doing the best a traveler can do on the Ṣūfī path, and becomes, in Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's view, a member of the chosen people of Allāh ﷻ.

In order to show how exercises of the nafs can be done from the ethical point of view, i.e. being a substitution of bad manners by good manners, we shall, as an example, show the way a traveler can deliver himself from three bad qualities, which have to be exterminated and replaced by their opposite qualities. These are hypocrisy, loftiness (pride), and leaning on people. Their opposites are: sincerity, humbleness, and resorting to Allāh ﷻ. We shall elaborate as follows:

1.) **hypocrisy**, in Ibn 'Atā'illāh's view, is among the bad qualities which hinder the traveler of the path to Allāh ﷻ. He defines it as follows: "Hypocrisy is polytheism and polytheism is a loss of deeds. The worst sort of hypocrisy is that which is a pretending of faith. Allāh ﷻ says: "There is among the people one whose speech about the life of this world will interest you, and he attests to Allāh ﷻ for what he has in his heart, while he is the worst enemy...."

Hypocrisy, in Ibn 'Atā'illāh's view, may be open or hidden. Open hypocrisy may be in the form of someone making a show of his worship in front of people. The hidden may be a show of one's deeds while nobody sees him. On this kind of hypocrisy, Ibn 'Atā'illāh speaks to the traveler. We shall look into al Rondi's explanation of this statement to know its deeper concepts, and he says:

"A man's hypocrisy of his deeds in front of people does not need a proof, but his hypocrisy of his deeds while nobody sees him is a hidden thing, the signs of which are what goes on within a Ṣūfī's heart that people esteem him, place him in congregations and gatherings, and show quickness in responding to his needs.

"If anyone maligns him in giving him the right which he sees for himself, he will protest. He also finds a difference in being hurt and others being hurt to the extent that some idiots warn those who do not quickly respond to them that Allāh ﷻ will punish them and that Allāh ﷻ will not leave them until He makes him victorious over others and avenges for him. If a slave finds these signs within himself, he should know that he is a hypocrite in spite of not being noticed by man."

Commenting on Al Rondi's explanation of hidden hypocrisy as seen by Ibn 'Atā'illāh, we say: "This kind of hypocrisy means that the traveler sees a special station for his worship and obedience, so that he asks reward for them from people or from Allāh ﷻ. It spoils worship and deeds. The opposite of hypocrisy, as Ibn 'Atā'illāh sees, is sincerity (dedication). Ibn 'Atā'illāh says: "Know that anything can be contaminated. If it is cleaned (from contamination), it becomes pure and the act will be purified as such: dedication will be achieved by purifying from all imperfections the intention of getting near to Allāh ﷻ.

"Dedication requires the traveler's deeds and worship to be pure and free from turbidity. He also must hide his own states and the endowments granted to him by Allāh ﷻ. He should not have any intention of circulating them among people in order that they know of his proximity. In this respect, Ibn 'Atā'illāh says to the traveler: "Your longing to see people knowing of your gifts is a proof of your insincerity in your worship."

2.) **Loftiness or conceit** is, as our Shaykh thinks, another among the bad qualities of the nafs which hinder the traveler on the path to Allāh ﷻ. It is a quality that gets a man to treat people from above. If the slave, as Ibn 'Atā'illāh says, is proud of his worship, thinking others are beneath him, full of self esteem, asking people to give him his right and not giving their due to others, he is a haughty one for whom a bad ending is waiting. Consequently, a traveler must eradicate haughtiness from his nafs, and replace it by humility. Ibn Ata'illāh then shows the ethics of humility to the traveler: he should first refrain from asserting humility for himself. He should not think that he is practicing humility, because he who asserts humility for himself asserts in fact privilege for himself at the same time. Ibn Ata'illāh says to the traveler: "He who assert humility for himself is in fact haughty, because to assert humility for yourself is to assert a privilege for yourself which you are giving up." Humility cannot be when one thinks he is doing less than what he has. Humility is only when one thinks he is really less than what he has done."

Humility requires the traveler not to look for fame and publicity, because these are great barriers on the path to Allāh ﷻ, and are goals which have to be abandoned. Our Shaykh warns the traveler not to be asking for fame, and that he should stick to anonymity. In this connection, he says to the traveler: “Bury your existence in the land of anonymity. What is planted without being buried will bear no fruit.” Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh thinks that true humility does not exist except after the traveler beholds the greatness of Allāh ﷻ and has revelations of His various attributes. At that moment, the traveler will feel the nearness to his nafs in relating to the greatness of Allāh ﷻ. Sources of vanity will then be extinguished within him and he will become humble. In this respect, Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh says: “Real humility is that which emanates from beholding the greatness of Allāh ﷻ and the manifestation of His attributes.”

3.) **Reliance on people** is among the worst qualities of the nafs which hinder the traveler’s path to Allāh ﷻ. Reliance on people, as our Shaykh sees it, means dependence on people and not on Allāh ﷻ. This leads the traveler to submit to people and beg for their contentment. He will therefore follow their whims in order to get their acceptance. A traveler on the Ṣūfī path who wishes to reach Allāh ﷻ and become truthful in all his cases must eradicate this inclination from his heart, and make a sole target of all his deeds the contentment of Allāh ﷻ alone. He should turn to Him and not to people in order that Allāh ﷻ may turn to him and accept him. Around this meaning, Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh says to the traveler: “Do not look for the acceptance of people to you, but to Allāh’s ﷻ acceptance, and free yourself from their esteem of you by witnessing Allāh’s ﷻ generosity to you.” Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh sees two other results coming out of reliance on people: greed and humiliation. They are very unworthy qualities, and work against true submission to Allāh ﷻ. Greed is looking for what is in people’s hands. Whenever it is found, there will consequently be humiliation and submission to people. Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh put that meaning in a nice sentence in which he says to the mureed: “Trunks of humiliation grow only on seeds of greed.” He indicates to the traveler that looking for what people have in their possession means entire slavery to them; he says to him: “You are a free man when you do not desire of what people possess and you are a slave of what you look for to possess.”

The opposite of reliance on people, looking for what they own and submitting to them, is what Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh calls: “uplifting zeal”, or what Ṣūfīs call in another word, “devotion”. Uplifting of zeal means that a traveler must not be eager to have what others possess and that he should never resort to others. Ibn ‘Atā’Illāh explains this in one of his poems as follows:

Allāh ﷻ knows that thy zeal discards lowliness by my chastity and purity.
 Why do I not keep out my need from people,
 And show them how kings are noble?
 Shall I show them that I am ready for them,
 while I know that none of them can do anything?
 How can I ask for the bounty of Allāh ﷻ from his creations?
 If I do this, I shall certainly be unloving.
 The complaint of the weak to the weak is incapacity that leads to falling down.
 Ask for the bounty of Allāh ﷻ Who has covered all the people with His mercy.
 Resort to Him in what you wish for.
 Do not deviate from standing by His door.

He also says to his mureed: “The reason of your uplifting of zeal to Allah should be certainty that He has not brought you to His kingdom except to give to you, grant to you, and therefore there is no room for directing your needs to others. If Allah ﷻ has provided Ṣūfīs with the understanding of their assuredness of Him as a replacement for demanding of Him, how can He not get them to understand that their riches come from Him alone and not to ask His creatures?”

In the *Maxims* he states that the knower by Allah should not ask people,

Because exercising of the nafs, as we have seen, is considered to be a complete change of manners, it is consequently an extremely strenuous effort. It is not only a symbolic change of the traveler's interior, but it extends to sticking to certain practiced rules of behavior; hypocrisy, vanity, and reliance on people are not only unworthy qualities latent within the nafs, as our Shaykh sees them, but in addition they produce kinds of behavior with people which are called hypocrisy, vanity, and reliance on people. Sincerity, humility, and devotion are not only moral commendable qualities that are produced within the nafs, but they also produce norms of behavior called sincerity, humility, and chastity. Consequently, we can say that a nafs exercise, following our Shaykh's views, is a rigorous exercise which a Ṣūfī practices to achieve moral perfection in itself on one hand, and in his behavior in society on the other.

Nafs exercises are attained psychologically in three stages: a) abstract thinking, b) feeling the assuredness of the thought, and c) practical application to achieve it. To explain this view, we say: in the first stage, the traveler starts by getting fully convinced that he should get rid of his bad attributes in order to reach Allāh ﷻ. This may be by a suggestion from his Shaykh or by auto-suggestion. In the second stage, the traveler searches for these bad habits within himself until he feels their presence and so the abstract thought dims out to become real realization of them. In the third stage, the traveler takes on various kinds of behavior which are the opposite of these attributes and so these bad habits vanish away and his idea of getting rid of them is realized.

After the traveler tames his nafs by refining its qualities, as we have seen, his Shaykh commands him to go into isolation and seclusion and to practice hard bodily jihad, like hunger, thirst, staying up late at night, silence, and sticking to dhikr, which is a continuous repetition of the Name of Allāh ﷻ in order that his heart is cleaned and becomes ready for annihilation and getting himself to spiritually taste the knowledge of Allāh ﷻ. We shall now talk about isolation and seclusion and then about dhikr and its rules.

4- Isolation and seclusion:

Ibn 'Atā'illāh finds that it is absolutely necessary for a traveler to enter into isolation and seclusion. He says:

Know that if you went to enter into the presence of the Truth and take from Him by leaving people, then this will not happen while you still have in your heart Deity for others than Him...you must get yourself isolated from people and prefer seclusion to aggregation. As much as you are far from people, will be your nearness to the Truth internally and externally....

He also urges the mureed to isolation and seclusion, saying: "Go into isolation and seclusion. He that takes isolation as his way, grace will be his lot. He who is true in his isolation will gain the Truth's gifts and endowments. Their signs are: uncovering of veils, revival of the heart, and ascertainment of love."

Ibn 'Atā'illāh, in his call for the traveler to practice isolation and seclusion, is in fact a follower of Ṣūfīs who preceded him who entirely support isolation and seclusion in a place for worship. They base this doctrine on the Prophet's isolation ﷺ in the cave of Hira before the descent of the divine inspiration until his soul became clean and was ready for the light of the prophethood.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh distinguishes between isolation and seclusion. Isolation, as he sees it, means symbolic, not real separation from people in a way a traveler should always have surveillance over himself, taking care in not occupying his mind in a way with the world or having his heart and organs preoccupied with people. Ibn 'Atā'illāh explains this state to his mureed by saying:

"If you separate from people, do not look to their esteem of you, because what is needed is to abandon occupation with them, and not to abandon their selves for their blunders; otherwise your heart will not be cleaned from worldly wishes."

Isolation must be accompanied by constant continuous thinking together with introspection in order that the nafs discovers its failings. There must be a complete abandoning of thinking of people's affairs, a cessation of involvement in their news. Isolation of this sort is most beneficial to the heart. Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh says in the *Maxims* in this connection: "Nothing is more beneficial to the heart than an isolation that leads to thought (wisdom)." He also says about the thought that accompanies the isolation: "The thought is the candle of the heart: if it does not exist, there will be no light in the heart."

The thought accompanying isolation could be a contemplation of Allāh's creations ﷻ so that the traveler can use them as proofs and signs for the capability of their Creator. This might be what Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh has meant by saying: "The thought is the heart's travel on the road to other things." When the traveler fully ascertains his isolation, and when he finds pleasure in loneliness and in that he can really alienate himself from people, he then enters seclusion.

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh defines seclusion, as an end, by the discourse of the secrets with the Truth when it does not see anything but Him and, as a means to this end, by dedication to Allāh ﷻ and abandoning everything else.

Seclusion will not be correct unless it is preceded by the following:

- 1.) exercise of the nafs by refining behavior and discarding heedlessness (the first stage we mentioned earlier).
- 2.) Reconfirmation by the traveler of his faith according to true sunnah.
- 3.) Learning what makes worship perfect.
- 4.) Tawba (repentance) of all sins.

The value of seclusion, in Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's view, is that it cleans the mirror of the heart completely from marks that have been made on it during the days of neglect and worldly living. These are marks, each of which pile on the other, until the heart rusts with them.

As for how to go into seclusion, Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh tells us that it should be made in a special house and according to certain rules.

The seclusion house should have certain characteristics: its height must be equal to a man's height, its length just sufficient for praying, and its breadth must be sufficient for a man to sit in it. It should have no holes to let light enter. It should be far from noises. Its door should be low and can be shut firmly, and it should be in a house in which people live. Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh differs in this matter from al-Ghazali, who sees only one condition for the house of seclusion: it should only be dark. He sometimes even discards the need for this kind of house, as we understand from his saying: "The value of seclusion is to drive away distraction and to get the traveler to reign over his sight and hearing because these are passages to the heart... this can be only realized in a dark place. If the Ṣūfī does not find a dark place, he can wrap his head or clothe himself in a dress or sheet. In this case, he will hear the call of the Truth and behold the magnanimity of the Divine presence. Do not you see that the Prophet ﷺ reached Him when he was in this shape: "Oh thou wrapped up in thy raiment! Oh thou enveloped in thy dark!"

As for the practical rules which a traveler has to observe when entering into seclusion, the most important of them are the following:

- 1.) He should wash, purify his body, clean his garment, and intend to approach tAllāh ﷻ by his seclusion.
- 2.) He should not tell anybody of it.
- 3.) He should confine his interior not to wander into the universe. The wandering of thinking is most detrimental to seclusion, and will prevent it from bearing its fruit. That means a traveler must focus his attention on Allāh ﷻ alone.

- 4.) He should decrease movement.
- 5.) His meals should be with him or behind the door of his room
- 6.) He should not get utterly hungry or completely filled up.
- 7.) His food should not involve animal meat and he should drink water by sucking it.
- 8.) He should prepare his meal by himself.
- 9.) His dress must be to assure convenience to him
- 10.) He should not sleep in seclusion unless he is forced to sleep
- 11.) He should frequently stop himself.
- 12.) He should only pray fards (obligatory prayers) and other ordinary prayers.

A traveler should be steadfast in his seclusion, silent, not rejoicing in praise or being upset by criticism, and should himself prepare what he needs and not get others to do anything for him.

If he cannot do so, he should leave seclusion, and go into isolation to tame himself. When he tames his nafs, he can go back to seclusion cheerfully, and free from hardship or jihad of the nafs. Our Shaykh warns the traveler about nafs exercises during seclusion, and advises him to do these during the isolation period until he is used to loneliness. In his seclusion, he should not force himself in hunger, thirst, or any other hardship.

In this seclusion, as our Shaykh states, a traveler will be subject to what can be called tidings (*waridat*). Some of them are shatanic and others are angelic. A traveler should know the difference between each of them in order not to be fogged. Ibn 'Atā'illāh explains this difference and its personal effects as follows: "The difference between angelic and shatanic tidings is that the angelic tiding is followed by coolness, pleasure, has no sting, does not stir you up, and leaves knowledge for you. As for the shatanic, it is followed by distraction, pain, puzzlement, and indecision."

For seclusion, there is a special dhikr which the traveler has to repeat in his heart. That is the name of *Allāh* or the name *Huwa*.

The traveler's solitude in his seclusion, as mentioned by our Shaykh above, shows to us how a traveler on the Ṣūfī path should cut off his relation with the outer world in order to live in a limited world of his own in which he turns to himself. That may explain why modern psychologists who have studied Ṣūfism indicate that Ṣūfis are "introverts".

When we also contemplate the rules of seclusion, we shall see that what is important of them is that a Ṣūfī should stop thinking in creations, i.e. he should stop thinking of anything related to the outer world and stick only to one idea, which is the "annihilation in Allāh ﷻ". That is why, in his seclusion, he repeats the name "Allāh" continuously in order not to be dragged by any other idea.

The traveler's submission only to one idea that reigns over him is similar to what modern psychologists call "mono-ideaism". It is a state in which feeling becomes so narrow that there will be no room in it except for one idea of a simple content which occupies the mind in a way that drives away any other idea from arising.

It is also understood what effects reduction of food to what is other than from animal origin, thirst, staying up late at night, silence, and frequently stopping breathing, will have on the psychological powers of the traveler. He will be in a state of trance but accompanied at the same time by a spiritual delight which he alone can taste.

It should be noticed that this sort of nafs exercise, as mentioned earlier, is not confined only to Muslim Ṣūfis, but we also find Christian “Ṣūfis” in the middle ages taking the hard road, which they called “via pūgativa”. It is similar, on the whole, as Nicholson says, to the Ṣūfī path which Muslim Ṣūfis tread. The via pūgativa also calls for hunger, thirst, silence and for self strife. That via pūgativa aims at “communion with God”. It is a series of successive stages for the “communion with God”. It is also the only road that leads to illumination as they see it.

Among the most eminent Christians who took that road was St. Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510 AD), who endured fasting, solitude, and mortification of the nafs.

Any researcher will find a strong resemblance between Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh and the Christian Spanish “Ṣūfī” St. John of the Cross (1542-1591AD) with regard to isolation and seclusion. St. John of the Cross sees, as Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh saw before him, “the necessity to enter into a ‘Vide universal’ and abandon everything”. That means for him that a Ṣūfī should isolate himself from the outer world with all its persuasion. The means to do it, in his view and also in Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh’s, is solitude in a special place, silence, and dhikr in addition to the abandonment of all recollections of the world and sticking only to one thing, i.e. religious recollections only.

5- Dhikr:

Dhikr, or continuous repetition of the name of Allāh ﷻ, is one of the most important practical jihads for the traveler on the Ṣūfī path. Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh paid full attention to dhikr and its practical rules in a way which other Ṣūfī Muslims had not done. He wrote a special book on it, which he called: *The Key to Success*. In this book, he spoke in detail about the ethics of dhikr and how it has been practiced by Shādhīli mureeds since the seventh century of Hijra.

Dhikr exercise with Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh, as with other Ṣūfis, is based on an Islamic foundation from the Qurʾān and sunnah.

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh defines dhikr as “emancipation from forgetfulness by getting the heart to be always present with the Truth; or, it is the repetition of the name ‘Allāh’ by heart or tongue, or repeating one of His attributes, or one of His orders, acts, or anything else that leads to proximity to Allāh ﷻ.”

A traveler should not practice dhikr except after purifying his conduct by nafs exercise and isolation from people and crossing all barriers. These are the stages of jihad of the nafs we talked of earlier.

Dhikr, in Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh’s view, is of two kinds: limited dhikr and unlimited dhikr. The limited dhikr is that which is made during and after ṣalat (prayers), in Hajj, before sleep, after getting up from sleep, before eating, etc.... by it, he means that dhikr which is confined to time or place. The unlimited dhikr, however, is that which is not confined to any time or place. It can be praise of Allāh ﷻ, reciting ayāt (verses of the Qurʾān), or repetition of the Name: ‘Allāh’.

Dhikr may be the names of Allāh ﷻ which are, in his view, the medicine for the traveler’s ailments. He analyses each of these names according to the meaning latent in it, and proposes a certain spiritual benefit of it to the traveler. He says, for example: “His name ‘The Truthful’ (*as-Ṣadiq*), endows the traveler with a truthful tongue, the Ṣūfī with truthfulness of the heart and the knower with assuredness. His name ‘The Resurrector’ (*al-Bā’ith*) is to be repeated by the neglectful and not by those who ask for annihilation. His name “The Forgiver” (*al-ʿAfu*) is good for the commoners because it redeems them. It is not appropriate for travelers to Allāh ﷻ because it implies remembrance of sin and a Ṣūfī’s dhikr should neither include sin nor even a mention of paradise.

He also states that dhikr can be by reciting litanies in an approach to Allāh ﷻ. These litanies can be special supplications set by Shaykhs (*shuyukh*) to their mureeds or part of the Qurʾān to be recited at certain times.

Dhikr by litanies is the way of beginners and it is their most important duty in their travel. He says in this respect: "A beginner should have two litanies, one after the morning ṣalat (*fajr*), and one after the sunset ṣalat (*maghrib*). But for the assured and people who have approached the end, dhikr is their concern at all times."

Ibn 'Atā'illāh, however, warns the traveler of thinking that he has become one of the assured and therefore he may leave his litany, or that he may be affected by any idea telling him to belittle his litany; supplication will be most needed by him to become near to Allāh ﷻ.... Listen to him speaking to his mureed, warning and advising: "Only the ignorant discards supplication. Grants are in the other world and supplication ends up in this world. What should be looked after, indeed, is what cannot be substituted for. Supplication is His demand on you and you ask Him for His grants. His demand on you is imperative."

With regard to the practical nature of dhikr, Ibn 'Atā'illāh sets some rules which we sum up as follows:

It can be an individual dhikr, which the traveler practices in his isolation or anywhere else, and can be a collective dhikr, which is made in special gatherings. Dhikr can be in a low voice or a high voice. It should preferably be low if the traveler is alone and by himself. If he is however among a group, he may supplicate loudly but his recital and tone should be in concord with the group's.

Sitting for dhikr has a certain shape also.

He who sits for dhikr must sit like a needy and humble man. He should get his head to lean over his knees and close his eyes. In this way, the heart is alerted, gets clean from abstractions, and is ready to receive light, tidings, and secrets. His garment should be clean and perfumed.

If the traveler is following a Shaykh, he should always have his Shaykh in his imagination because he is his companion on the path, his guide, and supporter. He should understand that his taking from his Shaykh is considered as taking from the Prophet ﷺ.

As for the wordings of supplication, there are five:

- 1.) supplication by "Lā Illāha Illa'llāh, Muḥammadan Rasūl Allāh"
(there is no God but Allāh, Muhammad is the messenger of Allāh).
- 2.) Supplication by: "Lā Illāha Illa'llāh" (There is no God but Allāh).
- 3.) Supplication by "Subḥan Allāh" (Glory be to Allāh).
- 4.) Supplication by the name "Allāh".
- 5.) Supplication by the name "Huwa" (He).

Supplication by the name "Huwa", in Ibn 'Atā'illāh's view, is the highest degree of supplication. It is an announcement of the end of certainty. It suffices the traveler from anything else because it gets him to be consumed into realities of proximity and to submit his secrets to the True. For him, there will be nothing else to concern himself with. Dhikr has a practical value as a means of purifying the heart of its bad attributes and replacing them by other good attributes.

It also has a gnostic value because it is the traveler's means to know (by taste) Allāh ﷻ and the other heavenly matters. In addition to these, it has a metaphysical value because it is the traveler's means for ascertaining the collapse of creations and establishing the existence of the real One: Allāh ﷻ. In other words, it is the Ṣūfī's means to establish metaphysical rules for the interpretation of existence based on the taste, not on mental proofs.

1- As for the first value, i.e. the metaphysical, Ibn 'Atā'illāh sees that dhikr cleans the mirror of the heart from stains of the nafs and its defects. It is therefore a food for the heart and spirits. Allāh ﷻ says: "Those who believed and their hearts are assured by supplication of Allāh. By supplication of Allāh, hearts are assured (alt: hearts find rest)."

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh, with regard to the purification of the heart by dhikr, says: "...heart is the seat of sincerity. It could be directed not to Allāh ﷻ. The nafs is directed towards people, it is evil-commanding, it is following its passions and leaning to folly. All those are waste that veils the heart from sincerity and from steering towards Allāh ﷻ. The nafs obeys the orders of Shaytān. If it were not so obedient, Shaytān would never have found any entry to it. Its acceptance of Shaytān is a proof of negligence and alienation from Allāh ﷻ. Alienation is a thick veil which is darkness."

"The traveler therefore needs to drive away this darkness and clean away dirt. Darkness is banished by light. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'The ṣalat is light....' He also said: 'The purification of the hearts and cleansing them from rust is by ṣalat on me.' The traveler is consequently ordered, by starting with ṣalat on The Prophet ﷺ, to purify the seat of sincerity (heart) as there will be no sincerity with its remaining ills.... making a lot of ṣalat on the Prophet ﷺ bears in the heart the fruit of loving him. Assured love of him bears full attention for him and what he demonstrated of attributes and manners...."

The repetition of the traveler of ṣalat on the Prophet ﷺ is a sure means to conquer his nafs, purifying it, getting ascertained with the love of the Prophet ﷺ, and following his commendable manners.

2- As for the second value of dhikr, our Shaykh finds there is a gnostic value. Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh thinks that dhikr has three kinds: a) tongue dhikr, b) heart dhikr, and c) secret dhikr. He tells us that the secret dhikr alone is the means for attaining knowledge (gnosis). He sometimes calls it "absent dhikr" or "hidden dhikr". It is the dhikr in which the petitioner is absent from himself completely and is absent even from noticing that he is making dhikr; a case which he called "annihilation" (*fanaa*). Here, the petitioner is faced with knowledge from the "higher sphere". Listen to him explain how dhikr leads to gnosis in a state of Şūfī annihilation: "...if He that is petitioned for, reigns over the heart, and when dhikr vanishes and relinquishes that the petitioner does not look to it not to his heart, there will be annihilation in which man does not see himself, does not feel any of his senses or things latent within him. This will be obsession (annihilation). If it lasts until it becomes a strong habit and a usual feature, the traveler is lifted up to the "higher sphere" where he witnesses real existence. The Malakut is printed on him and he will behold the sacredness of Deity. The first thing he will behold in that sphere is the essence of angels and spirits of prophets in a beautiful shape flowing on him with realities. This happens at the beginning, then he ascends up to other grades which are unexplainable. He is also rewarded with Allāh's authority over everything, ﷻ. This is the fruit of dhikr."

Dhikr is therefore the traveler's means, in Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh's view, to ascertain gnosis by Allāh ﷻ, or, in his own words, "...it opens the door of knowledge in the heart." That shows its utmost importance for the traveler on his path to Allāh ﷻ and that it leads to the most precious targets.

3- As for the third value of dhikr, Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh views it as a metaphysical value. He states that when the rememberer mentions 'Lā Illāha Illa'llāh', he is putting together denial and proof. The whole world will all be grouped for him in one entity and consequently he will not see with the eye of his heart except the One.

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh also shows that dhikr with the name Allāh, which is the singular Name, achieves seven things: 1) beholding everything else (by his taste), 2) esteeming Allāh's orders ﷻ by uncovering (inner beholding), 3) the fall of creations (in the eye of his heart), 4) annihilation in the overall (by being overwhelmed), 5) resorting to Allāh ﷻ (constantly), 6) surveillance of breaths (by his secret), and 7) occurrence of adoration, i.e. not seeing but Allāh ﷻ and not sensing but Him.

It is shown from the above that the petitioner is ascertained at the end of his dhikr by seeing with the eye of his heart the collapse of all creations. For him, they will have no existence side by side to the existence of Allāh's Oneness, ﷻ, which is the real existence. How can this be achieved psychologically? Dhikr, in fact, is not a mechanical repetition which the traveler makes, but it is a repetition accompanied by auto suggestion and a focus of attention on one single subject which is higher than material, i.e. Allāh ﷻ. By

sticking to deep and continuous thinking on this subject in addition to other bodily exercise, the Ṣūfī gradually loses his identity and in this case, the struggle between his body and natural motives on one side and the ideal he wants to attain, on the other, will stop. He achieves a state which Leuba, the modern psychologist, calls: “psychic homogeneity”.

No doubt when the petitioner reaches the state in which he cuts himself off from the world of phenomenon and in which he firmly believes in the existence of the Only One (Allāh ﷻ), he will experience moments in which he feels deeply that the world of phenomenon does not really exist. Ibn 'Atā'illāh explains this state by saying: “The world will all be reorganized for the petitioner as one entity and he will not see with the eyes of his heart...except the One. He will make the “prayer of the dead” on all creations.” He also expressed it by “the collapse of all creations (in the eye of his heart)”. It is a pure matter of taste which the petitioner alone tastes and no one else shares with him this experience.

6- Jihad of the nafs and dropping self direction:

Ibn 'Atā'illāh applies his doctrine of dropping self direction and will in the field of the jihad, and he comes out of this application with a deep and original view.

He states that jihad of the nafs by the traveler, though taming it ethically or through isolation and seclusion and dhikr, is not a reason in itself for conquering the nafs. It is only an aspect of his will, while his will is only illusory and does not really exist in the real reason in His Existence. It is the will of Allāh ﷻ which controls everything in the universe. It is also the reason for the traveler's victory in the battle between his heart and his nafs or between his luminous nature and dark nature. In this respect he says: “Light is the army of the heart as darkness is the army of the nafs. If Allāh ﷻ wishes a slave to be victorious, He supplies him with the army of light and cuts off the army of darkness and others from him.”

The Shaykh then shows that reaching Allāh ﷻ is not by eliminating the bad qualities of man through self jihad, because if that were so, it would be relying on man's will, while man in fact has no will. Reaching to Allāh ﷻ relies on the will of Allāh ﷻ alone, which controls everything in the universe in a way that if Allāh ﷻ wants the traveler to reach Him, He will get him to do so by His sheer attention and grace. Listen to Ibn 'Atā'illāh explaining this meaning to the traveler:

If you think you reach Him after all your defects and allegations vanish,
you will never reach Him.
Yet, if He wishes you to reach Him,
He will cover your qualities with His qualities and your being by His being
and so you reach Him by what He has for you, not what you have for Him.

Jihad of the nafs is therefore, in his view, a negative effort in fact, which the traveler makes and which does not necessarily get him to reach Allāh ﷻ. It has no bearing on the grant and grace of Allāh ﷻ to the traveler. Yet, can man reach to Allāh ﷻ without jihad and endurance in the ascent through states and stations?

Ibn 'Atā'illāh replies to this question by saying that reaching to Allāh ﷻ through jihad is possible. And in this respect he distinguishes between two categories of Ṣūfīs: the category of the “Attracted”, who reach Allāh ﷻ by His Mercy. They know Allāh ﷻ without the toil of ascending through stations; and the category of the “Travelers”, who strive against their nafs, endure ascending in states and stations, and finally reach to the knowledge of Allāh ﷻ.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh shows how each category will be with regard to the exercise of dhikr. The *attracted* have their lights which are ahead of their dhikr; their lights are not results of their dhikr, but are grants from Allāh ﷻ to them. *Travelers* are the opposite. Their dhikr preceeds their lights; in other words, jihad comes before their lights arise. The difference between the attracted and the travelers is shown in what Ibn 'Atā'illāh says to his mureed in one of his *Maxims*:

“There are people whose lights precede their dhikr, and people whose dhikr precedes their lights; people whose dhikr and lights go together, and people who have neither dhikr nor lights. We take refuge in Allāh ﷻ from that. There is a petitioner who supplicates to let light into his heart, a petitioner whose heart is lit, so he supplicates, and a petitioner whose light and dhikr are equal. By his dhikr, he is guided, and with his light he guides.”

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh also shows to us that the petitioner, whether an attracted or a traveler, has no will in reality to rise up into the various degrees of dhikr, but it is all left up to the will of Allāh ﷻ. He says to his mureed advisingly: “Do not abandon dhikr, because even if you find that you are not present with Allāh ﷻ in your dhikr, neglecting petitioning Him is worse than your absent-mindedness which supplicates Him. Allāh ﷻ, with His grace, may elevate you from the state of supplicating him in absent-mindedness to alert supplication, from alert supplication to supplication with presence, from supplication with presence to supplication with annihilation from everything except Him. This is not difficult for Allāh ﷻ.”

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh’s view with regard to considering nafs-jihad as an effort that does not by necessity lead to Allāh ﷻ, and his sayings about attraction, reaching to knowledge of Allāh ﷻ without strife, and ascent into states and stations, is clearly different from the view of other Ṣūfīs who confirm jihad for crossing barriers of the nafs as a means to reach Allāh ﷻ. They strongly stress its importance and the firm relation between jihad and reaching as a cause and effect. There is a difference, for example, between Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh and al Qushairi, who says about nafs-jihad: “He that decorates his exterior with jihad, Allāh ﷻ will decorate his interior with beholding. Allāh ﷻ says: ‘Those who strive for Us, We shall lead them to our paths.’ Know that he who does not start by jihad of the nafs, will not wear a single smell of his tariqa.”

Also, Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh differs in this connection from the view of ʿAbdul Raḥmān as-Salāmī, who is quoted to have said: “He who finds that anything will be disclosed to him or revealed to him in this tariqa without sticking to jihad, will be wrong (to think so).” al-Kamashkhanawi said about Ṣūfī jihad: “...know that the path of exercise and jihad is a must. A traveler will never purify his nafs while animal pleasures are still ruling over him...after (nafs-jihad), he will know himself and witness his Sustainer....”

But doesn’t one feel the presence of a contradiction in what our Ṣūfī says, urging the traveler for nafs-jihad, which he calls the greater jihad that is imperative for purifying the nafs, which can by necessity get the traveler to reach to Allāh ﷻ — and what he at the same time says indicating that this jihad is not real?

It seems at first glance that there is such a contradiction, but a deep look into Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh’s doctrine will definitely show that this contradiction is in fact imaginary and not real.

Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh might have meant that jihad exercise is a must because Allāh ﷻ has commanded it. That gets the traveler to fight against all his passions and to conquer them, by his will, provided that this exercise should be accompanied, spiritually, by dropping self direction and will so that as the traveler reaches Allāh ﷻ, he should not be proud of his voluntary acts and obedience. He should not relate his reaching to his own will, but should feel it was due to Allāh’s grace. This, in a way, can be considered a solution for the whole problem, i.e. the problem of the existence of human will.

But it seems that the truth in this problem is different. When our Shāykh states that nafs-jihad is a means for reaching to Allāh ﷻ, he in fact wants to show the incapability of human will and to show at the same time that the traveler’s reach to Allāh ﷻ is a matter that has been predestined. How can an act of destiny be a result of a human act?

Consequently, whatever Ibn ʿAtāʾIllāh says about jihad of the nafs on the road to Allāh ﷻ does not change the bases of his whole doctrine, that man’s entire life has been predestined and subject to fate. Man cannot be described as having an independent will. He has no real power for self direction. Therefore, the traveler’s nafs-jihad, though it seemingly looks voluntary, is in the end related, like everything else, to the will of Allāh ﷻ. The case is the same with all human acts, which seem voluntary and willful, yet they cannot pierce through the barrier of fate and change any of destiny’s judgments.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE NAFS AND ETHICS OF BEHAVIOR:

“Your wish for destitution, while Allāh has placed you within the state of working for a living, is a hidden folly. Your wish for a means of living while Allāh has placed you in destitution is an abasement from noble feelings.”

“Your demand on Him is an accusation of Him and an absence from Him. Your demand on others than Him is a sign of your impoliteness with Him. It is due to your extremity from Him.”

“A sign of reliance on deeds is the diminishing of hope (of redemption) when falling into folly.”

“Do not travel from a creation to another creation. Travel from creations to the Creator. To your Sustainer is the end.”

“If a traveler’s zeal stops where a revelation was disclosed to him, calls of reality will always tell him: ‘What you need is ahead of you!’ When creations are disclosed, their essences call: ‘We are only a persuasion, so do not become a nonbeliever!’

1. **Ethics of behavior**
2. **Destitution and earning a living**
3. **Time**
4. **Requesting, giving, and rejection**
5. **The balance of deeds**
6. **Pure worship**
7. **Approaching and against persuasion by it**
8. **Commentary**

1- Ethics of behavior:

We have seen, with our Shaykh, how a traveler goes into two stages of jihad of the nafs. In the first, his nafs exercise works ethically by replacing bad qualities by their opposite good qualities in order to achieve ethical perfection within himself, and in his own practical behavior within society. The second is his practice of hard strife, like isolation and seclusion and dhikr, etc. to make himself ready for states of adoration, annihilation, and gnosis of Allāh.

Then comes a third stage in nafs: jihad, in which the traveler tames himself with the ethics of behavior.

Ethics of behavior, with all Ṣūfis, are the general rules which a traveler must apply in all aspects of his conduct. Al Haddād says: “Ṣūfism is entire politeness. There is politeness for each time, politeness for each state, politeness for each station. He that sticks to this politeness will be mature. He that loses politeness will be very far while he thinks he is near, and refused while he thinks that he has been accepted.” Dhul-Nūn Al Masri says: “If a mureed exceeds the limit of politeness, he will return to where he came from.” Al Jariri says: “Ṣūfism is a surveillance of all states and sticking to politeness.”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh pays full attention to the ethics of the travel to Allāh, being a guiding Shaykh who shows the traveler the twists and pitfalls of the road to Allāh. He included these ethics in his book *Al-Hikam (Maxims)* in the form of a letter to the mureed, and advises him never to deviate from them, otherwise he will not reach. These ethics are considered to be the crux of his experience and special taste.

The first of these which our Shaykh deals with are the ethics of destitution and gaining a living, time, requesting, granting, rejection, ethics of deeds and worship, inclination to Allāh, caution against being persuaded in any way. He does not include them all in one volume, but expresses them in various and

remote places, making it difficult for the researcher to combine them together and find out relationships among them.

If nafs-exercises by refining manners, which is the first stage in the nafs-jihad, as we have shown, show to us the relation of the traveler with himself to mend his matter, correct his behavior with people and the society in which he lives, nafs-jihad by observing ethics of behavior shows us how the relation between the traveler and his Sustainer should be and what the traveler must consider in order to overcome all obstacles on the road to Allāh. That enables us to say that getting the nafs to stick to the ethics of behavior is itself a correction by the traveler of his relation with his Sustainer in all shapes.

2.- Destitution and earning a living:

The first a traveler should know of the ethics of behavior, in our Shaykh's view, are the ethics of destitution and earning a living. Destitution, as he sees it, means that the traveler should not be concerned with means of living, and concentrate entirely on the requisites of the Ṣūfī road. The traveler is now called the "destitute".

Earning a living means that a traveler is concerned with aspects of life and earning a living.

It is no fundamental condition, with Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, that a traveler on the road should be a destitute. It is preferable, in many cases, that he should earn his living. His earning of his living will not hinder his travel as long as he is not veiled by those means from Allāh and as long as he keeps the rules of behavior in them.

Yet, there is a question which faces us here. Are the destitute and the earner of the same degree as travelers of the Ṣūfī path? We shall let Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh answer this question himself. He says: "They are not so. Allāh will not make equal one who concentrates on his worship with him that works for his own living even if he is pious in it. If, however, the destitute and the earner are equal in the knowledge of Allāh, the destitute is better, higher, and more perfect...."

Our Shaykh makes the destitute equal to the earner with respect to their knowledge of Allāh, yet He prefers the destitute because he thinks that he who is concerned with the means of earning a living would rarely be rescued from offence and would rarely have his worship and obedience so pure as to bring him nearer to Allāh. That is because he mingles with the worldly and forgetful. This view of his explains to us his understanding of the Ṣūfī's relationship with the society in which he lives. He never admits that a Ṣūfī should depend for his living on others, but that he should himself earn his living. True he prefers destitution, but he also believes that earning a living is a noble state. Had Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh preferred destitution entirely and without condition, we would have said that his Ṣūfism urges the escape from society and the full retreat to one's own interior in a way that makes the Ṣūfī useless to others.

Whether destitute, or an earner, a traveler should, in Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh's view, drop self direction entirely. If a traveler works for his living, he should not leave it for destitution, but he should resort fully to Allāh, because it is He Who gets him out of one state to another. Why should he do so, by himself, when he found his benefit in taking means for earning a living? Does not it happen sometimes that when an earner leaves on his earning by his own self, his faith is sometimes shaken and that he goes to begging from people, becomes entirely concerned with worldliness, and is consequently thrown into the ocean of extermination and never reaches to Allāh?!

If the traveler is a destitute, his politeness provides that he should not return by his own will to gaining a means of living. He should never look for what people possess, otherwise the door of grace for what others have will be opened in his heart, and thus he will resort to the darkness of means and their stress. In such a case, the earner will be considered better because he has not walked on and then turned back.

Consequently, in our Shaykh's view, a traveler should not get out of the state of earning to the state of destitution by himself. That will be a mark of his hidden passion. In this connection, he says to the traveler: "Your wish for destitution, while Allāh has placed you within the state of working for a living, is a hidden folly. Your wish for using means of living while Allāh has placed you in destitution is an abasement from noble feelings."

When we think of the ethics of destitution and earning, with Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, we find that they are based on dropping self direction and will. A traveler, whether a destitute or an earner, should be entirely subordinate to Allāh's will wherever He places him, and he should not get out of one state to the other by his own will, against real slavehood in addition to resorting to one's self and subordinating to its passion.

3. Tme:

The entire submission of the traveler to states and ethics of behavior Allāh places him in, and in a way in which he never looks for a transfer from one to the other, is what Ibn 'Ata' Illāh and other Ṣūfis call the submission to the command of "time".

Submission to the command of time, as Ṣūfis say, is among the most cherished ethics in traveling to Allāh. They mean by it what Allāh chooses for them and not what they chose for themselves. They often say someone is under the command of time and they means that he is submitting to what goes on in him by the unknown, not by himself'.

Our Shaykh goes more deeply in analyzing the meaning of "time" and he advises the traveler to submit constantly to the judgment and warns him against producing anything by his own will other than what Allāh has wanted for him in that "time", because this will be a challenge to Deity and a resort to his own will, and both reveal his full ignorance of the tariqa. In this, he says: "Nothing is left but ignorance for him who wants to produce, in a time, other than what Allāh had produced in it."

The value of submission to the command of time, in Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh's view, is that the traveler can give what is due to each "time". If the traveler is in a time of folly, he is due to repent. If he is in a time of obedience, he is due to see Allāh's grant and endowment on him. If he is in a time of hardship or examination, he is due to endure and be patient. If he is in a time of abundance, he is due to be grateful. Consequently, there is for each time its share of slave hood due to Allāh, which he has to give instantly and not to retard for other times.

Consequently, again the traveler should not ask Allāh to get him out of one state to the other or, in other words, from one "time" to another. Politeness requires him to leave it to Allāh's will. In this he says to the traveler: "Do not ask Him to get you out of a state to another. If He so wishes, He will do it without getting you out."

The traveler should know that time does not accept being retarded in any way. He should know that if any of them escapes him, he will never regain it. Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh in this connection distinguishes between two kinds of dues: "dues in time" and "dues for time". The first includes external worship, e.g. salat, fasting, etc. if a traveler retards any of them, he can do it in another time. The other kind is dues for integral dealings, which are required by his states and spiritual condition. Each of them had a "right" on him which he must give instantly; otherwise, he will not reach. In this connection, Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh addresses the traveler, saying: "There are rights for times which can be given back or retarded and there are time rights which cannot be given later because in each time that comes to you, Allāh has an assured right on you in it. How can you give it its right, when you have not given Allāh's right in it?"

We therefore suggest, together with Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, that submission to the command of time is one of the most important ethics of behavior on the path to Allāh, and that it is also based on dropping self direction and choice, because if the traveler is submitting to the command of his time, it means he has

no choice with Allāh in any way. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh exaggerates in getting the traveler to stick to dropping self direction when he forbids him to ask Allāh to get him out of one state to another because such an act is a result of passion of the nafs.

Yet, does it mean that a traveler should not ask Allāh for anything during his travel? The answer is as follows:

4- Requesting, granting, and rejection:

Requesting, or asking people or Allāh by the mureed, is disliked by Ibn AtaʾIllah. As for asking people, it is clear. But how can asking Allāh also be disparaged?! Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh replies by saying that the traveler must be sure of Allāh's endowing him with benefits. If he asks Allāh for anything, it implies that he is uncertain of Allāh. His uncertainty is adverse to his slave hood to Allāh.

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, however, does not carry on saying that asking Allāh is uncommendable. How can asking Allāh be uncommendable, when Allāh says: "Ask me, I will respond to you." He shows that asking will be commendable when it only shows the need to Allāh.

As Allāh responds to the needy if he asks Him, the request of the traveler who shows his need to Allāh will be an indication of Allāh's response to him and granting to him. In this respect Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh says to the traveler: "When he gets your tongue to utter a request to Him, know that He wishes to give to you."

Showing need to Allāh in asking Him coincides, in Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh's view, with the ethics of slave hood. A request for one's own personal desires is not the other request. In this, he says to the mureed: "Do not make your request a means for His grant to you; your understating of Him then will be incomplete. Your request should be to manifest your slave hood and your execution of the rights of Deity."

When a traveler asks Allāh, and no response is shown, it will be impolite to tell Allāh that He has delayed His response. A traveler has to oblige himself to politeness and not ask. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh says here: "Do not tell Allāh that He has retarded replying to your request, but tell yourself you are not yet fully polite."

What Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh wants his mureed to stick to, is to stop asking Allāh in every case due to the following three reasons:

- 1) he should be sure of what had been predestined by Allāh for him. There is no room for asking something that has been formerly predestined for him. If he asks Allāh for something and it is achieved, he should never think that his will has anything to do with it. How can his succeeding request be a cause for a former predestined order? Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh says to his mureed: "How can your late request be a cause for His former grant? The order of destiny is too sacred to have causes."
- 2) A traveler should get himself involved in duties of worship and nafs-jihad and dhikr, so as not to have time left for requesting Allāh. This is clear from his saying to the mureed: "Politeness may indicate to them to stop requesting due to dependence on his predestination and due to their obsessing in dhikr."
- 3) The third reason which urges the traveler to abandon requesting is his full understanding of Allāh's grace and His rejection at the same time. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh thinks that the traveler in the beginning of his travel is usually attracted by his own personal passions, whether sensory or moral. A traveler may look to realize any one of these passions and so he will ask Allāh for it, and Allāh may give it to him. This grant, as our Shaykh sees, is sheer rejection because if Allāh allows a traveler to achieve his passion a lot, he will be veiled with this achievement from Allāh. The contrary of that is the traveler who has not achieved any of

his desires. He will be in a state with Allāh in which he is not distracted by anything to hinder him from giving the dues of slave hood. Allāh’s rejection in this case will be in reality sheer granting. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says in this respect: “He may give you to reject you, and He may reject your request to grant you.” He also says: “When he opens for you the door of understanding in rejection, rejection will be to you real granting.”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh understood the wisdom of granting and rejection and his explanation for them is deep. He considers granting an indication of Allāh’s grace and rejection and an indication of His dominance. When Allāh grants to a traveler and rejects his request, or in other words, He shows him His grace and dominance, it means that He wants the traveler to understand these attributes of His. He says in this connection: “When He gives to you, He gets you to behold His mercy. When He rejects your request, He shows you His dominance. In both cases, He gets you to know Him and approaches you with His kindness to you.”

Consequently granting and rejecting by Allāh for the traveler’s requests is an avenue for the traveler in which he knows Allāh through His mercy and dominance.

We then find Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh plunging deep into psychologically analyzing the ideas of granting and rejection. He states that the traveler must be fully stable, psychologically speaking, when Allāh grants him anything or nothing, i.e. he should be indifferent. He should not rejoice when granted or be depressed when rejected because his joy and depression are indications of his resorting to himself, his will, his desires, and his lot, and these are uncommendable for the traveler. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh tells us that a traveler of this worth is considered, in relation to the assured knowers, as a baby to a mature man. In this, he says to his mureed:

“When you rejoice when you are given, and are depressed when rejected, you should know that this is an indication of your childhood and falseness in your slave hood.”

If we consider this directive of granting and rejection as seen by Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh in our day-to-day life, we shall see how deep he is in analyzing the human nafs and its motives. In our daily life, we rejoice and we suffer. We rejoice when life and its means come to us and in this case we imagine that these are results of our deeds and will. It may also happen that means of life abandon us in spite of ourselves and we become greatly depressed. Due to the succession of joy and depression in our lives, life becomes unbearable because we always concern ourselves with the idea of how to keep hold of life and its means for ourselves. Yet, if anyone is balanced enough that he can see joy should not be exaggerated when life’s means come to him, he will not feel unhappy when they leave him. A man then can endure and accept hardships, stand on his feet in the battle of living, and become very brave and sure of himself.

When a traveler is assured of predestination, gets himself concerned with worship and nafs-jihad, and understands Allāh’s wisdom in granting and rejection, there will be no room left for him to ask Allāh for anything during travel.

A traveler dropping his requests to Allāh is in fact an over emphasis on the part of Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh that the traveler should drop all his will and desires. Dropping the will and desires by the traveler is considered by the Shaykh to be the balance which weighs all acts of behavior during his travel. He calls it sincerity. We explain it as follows:

5- balance of deeds:

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says that the traveler of the path approaches Allāh in his behavior by various acts like salat, fasting, reciting litanies, dhikr, etc. In his early stage of travel, he thinks his dependence on such deeds will get him to reach Allāh, and that without them he will not. You will therefore find him, if he fails in doing any of them or fails in a sin or folly, very miserable, because he believes that such a failure will cut him off from Allāh.

To this beginner who depends on his deeds, Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh says: “A sign of dependence on deeds is the presence of diminishing hope in the case of falling into sin.”

On the contrary, the assured knower, though practicing acts of worship as an avenue for a proximity to Allāh, does not rely on them. If he does not perfect any duties or falls in a mistake, his hope in Allāh does not decrease. He witnesses his neglect or fall as a result of Allāh’s justice because Allāh creates all the traveler’s deeds, good and bad. You will therefore find him in equilibrium in his fear and hope, joy and depression, because he beholds Allāh in all his movement and rest and because of his full faith that, in reality, he has no will of his own and that he is surrounded with the fences of destiny.

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh calls non dependence on deeds and freeing them from human will, sincerity, or devotion. He considers it the essence or spirit of all deeds. He says: “Deeds are symbols and their essence is the presence of sincerity in them.”

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh shows to the traveler that all his deeds and worship are not resulting from his own will, but that they all come from Allāh through His mercy and bestowal. He should not therefore rejoice in them as fruits of his effort because they are not so. He says:

“Do not be happy with obedience if you see it emanating from yourself.
But be happy when you see it coming from Allāh to you.”

“Say, by Allāh’s grace and mercy, they would rejoice. He is more beneficial than all that they gather.”

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh groups travelers into two categories: The advancing and the arriving, and with him, they are both shut off from seeing their deeds and from witnessing states or at best they should be so.

Those who are advancing on the road disregard their own deeds, busy purifying their deeds and states from impurities. They do not see any degree for their deeds or states because they are not yet ascertained with truthfulness with Allāh in them.

Those who have disembarked are in the presence of Allāh. They see nothing but Him. They are absented by witnessing Allāh from witnessing their deeds or states.

Listen to him saying in this respect: “He cuts those who are advancing to Him and those who have reached Him from seeing their deeds and states. As for those who are advancing, that is because they are not yet ascertained with truthfulness with Allāh. As for those who have reached, He made them absent by witnessing Him from seeing Him.”

Consequently, we see together with Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh that the most accurate scale for measuring the correction of behavior is the non-reliance of the traveler on his deeds of obedience or on relating them to his own will. That shows to us the extent to which Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh goes in believing in the doctrine of sunnah followers who believe that Allāh is the creator of all man’s deeds including obedience and folly. It also shows us the extent in which he believes that man has no will to which he can really relate any of his deeds at all.

6- pure worship:

Our Shaykh considered that the traveler’s worship, litanies and dhikr, if performed to gain stations or grants of any sorts, will be imperfect because they include an element of achieving self benefit.

He states that the traveler who strives with his nafs to free it from its worldly desires, in hope of gaining stations and states and ascending from one creation to another, is really revolving around himself. What he has left from the beginning of travel, he returns back to. The Shaykh advises the traveler in this connection: “Do not travel from a creation to a creation....travel from creations to the Creator. To your Sustainer is the destination.”

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh states that a true Ṣūfī is not like that. He does not hope for any personal gain from his worship. He only worships Allāh in fulfillment of rights due to Him, and looking for His attributes of kindness, love, grace, etc. In this he says: "He that worships Him for something he hopes for of himself, or to avoid His punishment, will not be fully giving His rights to Him."

He then deepens his concept of pure worship and applies his doctrine of dropping self direction and will, emphasizing that the traveler should not ask for compensation of any kind for his deeds or a reward or price for them because in reality, he has no choice or deed of his own. The doer is Allāh. He creates the acts of people. Therefore how can a traveler ask for a price for something he has not done?

If he theoretically believes that man has a will and performs deeds, we find him also confirming that the acceptance of man's acts depends in the end on Allāh's acceptance of him. How can man be sure of that acceptance? We therefore find him warning the traveler not to ask for compensation for any of his deeds, saying: "Do not ask for compensation for a deed you have not done. It will be good enough for you as a reward, that He will accept it."

Consequently, the whole matter from its beginning to its end relies on Allāh's will and not on the will of man.

He once again warns the traveler not to ask for compensation for a deed because he is asked in all his deeds for sincerity. Sincerity, as he explained earlier in the "balance of deeds", means dropping the will. How can a traveler's deed be sincere when he asks for compensation for it? In this case, he will no doubt be insincere. Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh says here: "Whenever you ask for a compensation for a deed, you are asked about your sincerity in it."

He also shows that a traveler's obedience is a gift from Allāh to him. How can he ask for compensation for it? Does any reasonable man ask for compensation for a gift that has been presented to him? He says: "How can you ask for a reward for something He has given to you as charity? How can you ask for a price for charity He has bestowed upon you?"

Our Shaykh shows that a traveler's worship should therefore be pure from desires of the nafs. It should be sincere and in it the traveler should free himself from his ideas of power and capability, and base himself on his deep conviction of dropping self direction and will and that man does not create his deeds.

He who studies Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh's commentary about pure worship will find that it is based on analysis, depth, and comprehensiveness. There is a great difference between it and Rabaa Al Adawia's famous worship, which she explained when asked about the truth of her faith. She said: "I have not worshipped Allāh because of fear of His fire, otherwise I'll be like the bad slave who will work if frightened, nor in love for paradise, otherwise I'll be like the bad wage earner who works if he is paid. I worship Him for loving Him and yearning for Him."

Our Shaykh's standing in this connection is the standing of an assured Ṣūfī who bases the rules of his behavior on a profound theory, while Rabia's standing is the standing of a Ṣūfī who expresses her findings when she is overcome by her state. There is a difference between an assured Ṣūfī who has been ascertained and a Ṣūfī who is one of those of passions and states.

Related to the ethics of pure worship with Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh are the ethics of approaching Allāh during traveling and caution of persuasion, as we shall show below:

7- inclination and caution against pervasion:

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh states that when a traveler sees a special degree for his worship and asks for a reward for it, he will be vain. When he is proud of his worship, it means he has committed a mistake on the path which will veil him from Allāh. He will therefore get away gradually from Allāh without

noticing. In such a case, he must correct his leaning to Allāh and should beware Allāh's pervasion of him.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh shows to us that the traveler will either turn himself to Allāh voluntarily or forcefully. It will be good for him and suitable for him that he turns to Allāh voluntarily instead of being examined by hardship and consequently turned to Allāh forcibly. He will then be like a commoner who is forced by hardship and calamities to turn to Allāh because he is involved in his material sensuousness and does not see Allāh's overall grip that holds everything.

Our Shaykh then shows that turning to Allāh voluntarily is caused by witnessing Allāh's grace and by free faith in his kindness. He consequently urges his mureed that his approach to Allāh should be of this sort and warns him not to approach Allāh because he is so forced by hardship and crises. He says to him:

"He who does not turn to Allāh through His kind grace,
will be dragged to Him by the chains of examination."

If a traveler is witnessing Allāh's grace during his approach to Him, he is obliged to perform all requirements of slave hood.

If he however, meets Allāh's grace to him by his continuous misdemeanors, most likely he will be punished. He should be very cautious of Allāh's perpetual kindness to him while he is perpetually misbehaving, because this may be a sort of Allāh's dragging of him away. Ibn 'Atā'illāh says: "Be afraid of His kindness to you while you are always misbehaving, because this may be a dragging of you. 'We shall drag them away while they do not know.'"

Pervasion, or subtle insinuation, is of three kinds as Ibn 'Atā'illāh sees it:

- 1) It can be an obvious punishment. Whenever the traveler misbelieves with Allāh, Allāh will give him some time, then punish him.
- 2) It can be by a hidden punishment, which is a veiling of Allāh to the traveler. That will be by cutting off support from the traveler, leaving him to himself, showing him his own allegations, deeds and will. This punishment, in Ibn 'Atā'illāh's view, is more severe to the traveler than the obvious punishment, because it cuts him off from Allāh without getting him to notice it. To this sort of pervasion and hidden punishment, Ibn 'Atā'illāh says to the traveling mureed: "A sign of a mureed's ignorance is being impolite when punishment is delayed for him. He then says, 'Had there been impoliteness on my part, He would have drawn His support away from me, and have exterminated me.' He may cut off His support from him without getting him to notice it. Cutting off His support may be by stopping an excess of it. He may be placed in extermination without knowing. This may be simply leaving him to his own wishes.
- 3) Pervasion may be by wonders (*karama*), breach of the regular and all other heavenly grants. He states that the traveler may be granted wonders, while he is veiled by them from Allāh Who grants them. Therefore he warns the traveler not to stop where he has been granted karamas (*karamāt*). The real purpose of karama is only to get to know Allāh's capability and singularity and not because Allāh is fulfilling the mureed's desires.

Ibn 'Atā'illāh distinguishes between five kinds of karamāt: visible material karamas, regular and habitual for the Ṣūfī as breathing, and spiritual karamas like knowing Allāh, fear of Him, continuous esteem for Him, hurrying to subordinate to His commands and prohibitions, ascertainment of faith, certainty and surety, and other spiritual Ṣūfī states. He shows that ascertained Ṣūfīs do not pay attention to the breach of the regular and consider spiritual karamas superior to that, and more esteemed.

He warns the traveler of the path from looking for material karamas, as he should better look for refining himself and correcting his behavior. In this respect, he says to him: "Looking for what is latent in you of mistakes, is better than looking for what has been veiled by the unknown."

He also tells him to devalue obvious karamas: "Karama may be granted to one who has not yet become upright." He also says: "Not everyone that has been chosen, has in fact been fully freed (from his mistakes)." He indicates by this that a breath of the habitual may be given to one who has not been uprightly corrected, or to who has not yet been freed from his own desires.

After all this, we still find Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh warning his mureed not to be satisfied with what he is granted of karama, material or otherwise, because they are pervasions. If he is pervaded by them, he will be veiled and cut off from reaching. He indicates to him that whenever any of these karamas or grants occur, he should not stop by them, but he should proceed steadily on his path unobscured by any of them until he reaches his most cherished destination, i.e. Allāh. He says to his mureed in this connection: "Whenever a traveler's desire wants him to stop by what has been revealed to him, tidings of reality will call him: 'What you are asking for is ahead of you.' Whenever secrets of creations are disclosed to him, their realities will always address him. 'We are pervasions. Avoid falling into disbelief.'"

8- Commentary:

We have seen how Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh was an ascertained Ṣūfī who guided his mureeds to ethics of behavior on the road to Allāh.

It is noticeable that Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh's short *Maxims* in which he expresses the various ethics of behavior, e.g. destitution, applying means for a living, time, requesting, granting, rejection, sincerity in worship and obedience, inclination and caution from pervasion, are all expression which are accurate and deep, novel and concise, all of which reveal his spiritual maturity, knowledgeable thoroughness and a rare talent in showing the most minute states of the traveler which occur to him physically during his travel.

Ethics of behavior with him, if we look at them from the psychological point of view, are considered an accurate moral expression of intellectual experiences, which he writes after a thorough search within himself during his journey. They are therefore based on a foundation of introspection and show personal tastes which are not easy for non Ṣūfīs to understand in their latent deep meanings. On the contrary, Ṣūfīs, or those who are ready for Ṣūfī states, will find in these statements strong echoes in themselves and a strong penetration through their minds or hearts.

If we look from the moral angle into the ethics of behavior, as viewed by Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, we find them based on a cautious ethical basis that reveals that the evil commanding nafs is harmful and that bad manners are latent within it. That is why we find that all manners to be applied by the traveler should never get him to rely on himself and the traveler is always warned not to follow his desires, whether obvious or hidden. In addition, ethics of behavior instruct the traveler how he should behave. Thus, they lay down norms for behavior or in other words, draw for the traveler the general rules he should follow in his travel. From a metaphysical point of view, all ethics of behavior are based on three principles:

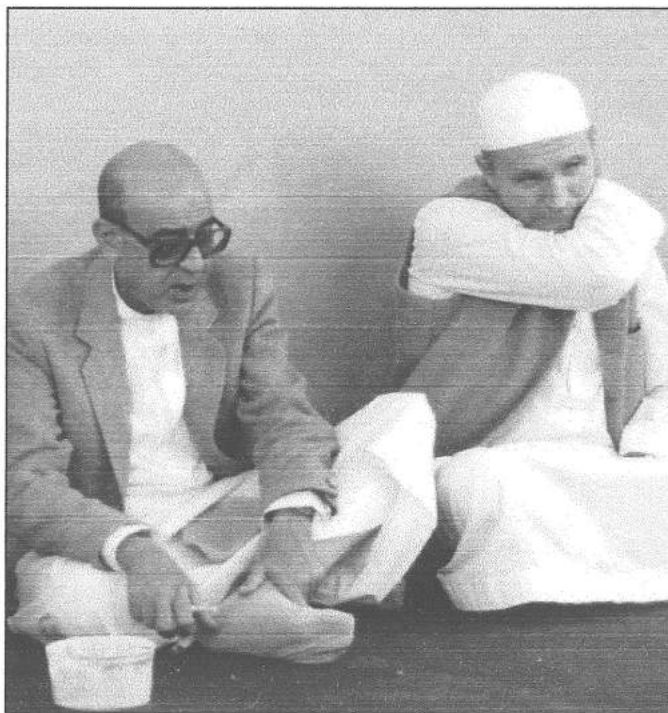
- 1) Allāh's predestination for man
- 2) Absence of human will in relation to Allāh's will
- 3) Man is not the creator of his deeds, obedience, and sin. Allāh is the Creator.

That is why we see Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh obliges the traveler to be without self direction in his destitution or earning, and that he should be submitting always to the command of his time. He should not introduce anything by his own will, and should be sincere in his deeds and worship. He should be cautious

against pervasion emanating from his personal desires. Ibn 'Ata'illāh revolves all ethics of behavior on one pole, i.e. dropping self direction and will in faith and fate and Allāh's predestination for man.

In addition, ethics of behavior show to us how our Shaykh expresses the relation between man and Allāh. He states that Allāh is the Supreme Existence which the traveler yearns to reach. This supreme existence, Allāh, is the willing by His will, which is unbounded by anything. All existence submits to Him and consequently there is no room to say that Allāh's acts are caused by anything from man. We have also seen him denying that a traveler's deeds and worship could be reasons for the reach to Allāh or that the traveler's petition would be a reason for Allāh's grants. We also saw him repeating his advice to the traveler not to rely on his worship or seeing it coming out of himself or by necessity, thus getting him to reach Allāh as he must fully believe in the overall heavenly will in front of which human will vanishes completely.

A lot of the ethics of behavior is based on indications from the Qur'ān. Our Shaykh did his best to quote the Qur'ān to strengthen his *Maxims*, because he wanted to confirm that the content of his maxims of Ṣūfī meanings is driven from the Qur'ān and that they coincide with it.



Dr. Ma'adawi Az-Zirr & Sh. Nooruddeen Durkee

CHAPTER 5: THE NAFS BETWEEN STATIONS AND STATES

“Know that the stations of certainty are nine: tawba, abstention (zuhd), patience (sabr), gratitude (shukr), fear (khawf), hope (rajaa'), contentment (rida), reliance (tawakkul) on Allāh, and love (hubb). None of these will be correct except through dropping self direction and choice.”

“Good deeds are results of good states. Good states are results of ascertainment in stations.”

“Allāh's grants often come abruptly in order that people cannot allege their occurrence by their own preparedness.”

1- What are Stations and States?

2- Stations: Tawba, Abstinence, Patience, Gratitude, Fear, Hope, Reliance on Allāh, Contentment, Love, and Dropping Self Direction

3- States: Occurrence of States, Delight, Delight and Depression, Annihilation and Survival, Categories of Travelers with Relation to States, States and Dropping Self Direction.

1- What are stations and states?

After the traveler performs the general ethics of behavior on the path, he has to correct the stations (degrees) of his behavior and his different states and ascend in them without fearing being cut off from the reach of Allāh.

Ascent in stations and states, in our Shaykh's view and as has been mentioned before, is the fourth and last stage in nafs-jihad and it is the strife from which the traveler arrives at a sure and ascertained knowledge of Allāh through his taste. Stations, with him as they are with other Ṣūfis, are the various stages on the path to Allāh. They are the states which settle down in the traveler's nafs due to his various jihad exercises. It is said for example that a traveler is in the station of tawba if he has really striven against sins and passions, gotten rid of them, conquered their motives, and become the master of his nafs in this field.

The traveler ascends in stations through jihad of the nafs until he completes all stations. These stations, in a modern psychological sense, are personal emotional states that manifest the psychological balance which the traveler has achieved by his behavior.

Ṣūfis have agreed that a traveler cannot be ascertained in a station unless he makes exercise for it. It will be his own earning. Al Qushairi said: “A station is the place in which a traveler is ascertained with what he has performed of ethics, deeds, and endurance. Each man's station is where he is in these conditions and what nafs exercise he is concerned with.”

As for states, they are conditions which overcome the traveler without his working for them. Al Qushairi defines a state as a meaning that comes to the heart (mind) without any effort from the traveler, work or earning. Merriment, sadness, depression, delight, yearning, embarrassment, and esteem are all states that come to the traveler during his journey, but they do not last. Al Junaid defines a state as “An abrupt feeling that falls on the heart, but they do not last.” Stations and states, as Ṣūfis see them, are interlinking, i.e. he who is ascertained in a station can experience states, and a man of states can ascend from them to stations.

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh states that the stations of traveling are nine: tawba, abstinence, patience, gratitude, fear and hope, contentment, reliance on Allāh, and love. His classification of stations differs from Al Toussi's classification of them. Al Toussi states that stations are seven: tawba, scruple, abstinence, poverty, patience, reliance on Allāh, and contentment. Al Ghazali differs from both Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh and

Al Toussi. He finds stations as ten: tawba, patience, gratitude, hope, fear, poverty, abstinence, singularization, reliance on Allāh, and love.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh applies his doctrine of dropping self direction and will in the field of stations. He does not see them as a gain of the traveler’s will, because if they were so, man would be having a will to which deeds could be in reality related. That is against his doctrine which abnegates human will and which believes in Allāh who is the creator of man’s deeds.

In addition, he states that no station will be correct unless it is based on dropping self direction and planning. He says in this connection to the traveler: “Know that the stations of certainty are nine: tawba, abstinence, patience, gratitude, fear, hope, contentment, reliance on Allāh, and love. None of these stations will be correct except by dropping self direction and choice.”

As for states, ‘Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh tells us about some of them like delight, depression, merriment, separation, gathering, absence, presence, sobriety, intoxication, annihilation, and lasting. They come over the traveler and their presence assures him that he really has no will or planning with Allāh.

We shall give in the following paragraphs a picture of the traveler in between his behavior and states as described by our Shaykh which indicates the development of the traveler’s life of devotion and how he can reach to ethical perfection. That will be achieved by the traveler’s trial to live in full harmony with fate while he is in his station. This picture also reveals the nature of his emotional life, and how he should release his feelings which are subjected to his various emotional states. It is a picture which Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh paints through his doctrine, by the color of dropping self direction and planning.

2- stations

1- Tawba (repentance, and determination not to sin again) is the first Ṣūfī station, in Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s view. No station after it will be accepted without achieving it. A traveler should request tawba from Allāh at all times because Allāh has called him to ask for it in His saying: “Make tawba to Allāh all of you believers so that you may succeed.” He also says: “Allāh loves those who often repent and those who purify themselves.”

The way to tawba, in Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s view, is contemplation and seclusion. If a traveler wishes to be deeply rooted in this station, he should revise all his deeds during his day. If he finds obedience, he should thank Allāh, and if he finds disobedience, he should reprimand himself, ask for Allāh’s forgiveness, and return to Him in repentance.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh shows that the station of tawba is the most important station because all other stations depend on it and need it. He also sees that as signs of potential reaching to the end, the correction of the beginnings, of which the most important place is tawba. He goes on to say that correcting the station of tawba for the traveler is caused by the grace of Allāh. He says to the traveler: “If Allāh perfects the station of tawba for you, this will be more beneficial to you than getting you to behold seventy thousand unknown things which get you to lose tawba.”

Among the most important aids that help the traveler to be ascertained with tawba, as Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh sees, is the belief in the absoluteness of Allāh’s will, and that it surrounds and covers everything and that nothing can escape it. When a traveler firmly believes so, he will never despair of getting out of lust and neglectfulness to obedience, by Allāh’s will. He says to the traveler: “He that finds it unlikely that Allāh will get him out of his passions and neglectfulness, will be belittling Allāh’s capability...Allāh is capable of everything.”

What also helps in attaining tawba is thinking well of Allāh. If a traveler falls in a sin, he should not think that it is too big to be pardoned by Allāh, and so he becomes desperate of tawba. If the traveler really knows his Sustainer’s attributes of patience, bounty, grace, and forgiveness, he will find his sin quite tiny, however big it might have been. He will then repent and ask for Allāh’s forgiveness and

will not be desperate about reaching to Him. In this connection, he says to the traveler: “Your folly should not appear so big to you as to get you to abandon thinking well of Allāh. He that knows his well his Sustainer, will find his sin tiny in relation to his forgiveness.” He also says, urging the traveler not to become desperate when he makes a sin, because he might have been doomed for it, “If you make a sin, it should not be the last sin for which you have been doomed.” He that is ascertained in the stations of tawba must also be ascertained in dropping self direction and planning. A repentor must abandon both self direction and planning as he repents from sins and folly of all sorts, because they are worse than sins and folly.

As tawba literally means a return to Allāh from all that He does not like for the traveler, and as self direction is not liked by Allāh because it implies togetherness with Him Who is the only One that directs, it is a disbelief of the grants of Allāh to the traveler, and because Allāh does not like disbelief for his slaves, a traveler must consequently abandon self direction.

A traveler’s tawba from his sins will not be complete, if remnants of self direction are still latent in him. In this case, he will be entirely unaware of Allāh’s good intention for him and his predestination.

When a traveler is assured in the station of tawba and that he has fully fulfilled its dues, he will ascend to the following station which is abstinence.

2- Abstinence

In Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s view, abstinence is of two kinds: obvious abstinence, like abstinence from the excess of halal foods, dress, and other halal worldly pleasures; and a hidden internal abstinence such as abstinence in fame, leadership, and other moral things also related to living.

The motive for abstinence is contemplation: if a traveler contemplates life and finds it a place for others, and finds it as a source for sadness and hardship, he will abstain from it. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says in this connection to the traveler: “He has made it a place for others and a source for the existence of hardship in order to get you to abstain from it.” He also says to him, disparaging worldliness: “Do not be astonished at the fall of hardships on you, as long as you are in this world. It does not produce except what befits it and what is due to its nature.” He also says, urging the traveler not to trust its beauties but to work for the later life: “When the light of certainty shines for you, you will see the hereafter nearer to you as you travel to it, and you will see the beauties of this life lying on annihilation.”

The station of abstinence obliges the traveler to exterminate the love of life and he would envy its people for what they are involved in. In this connection, he says to the traveler: “You will be utterly ignorant if you envy people of the world for what they have been given or occupy your mind with what they have. If you do so, you will be more ignorant than they, because they are occupied with what they have been given, and you will be occupied with what you have not been given.”

Among the most obvious characteristics of abstinence, in Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s view, is that the abstainer should feel indifferent. He should not rejoice when life comes to him, or despair if it turns away from him, because if he rejoices for the presence of something and is depressed for its loss, he will be a slave to it. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says to the traveler:

“You should not be sorry for losing anything and not be happy for the presence of anything.
He who is pleased when he finds something and is sad when he loses it
will be ascertaining his slave hood to this thing,
for its presence pleased him and its loss saddened him.”

How can a traveler achieve this particular characteristic of abstinence, which is indifference? Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh replies that the traveler should not rejoice in attaining worldly joy. In fact, this is extremely difficult. Who among people will not rejoice when life fulfills his desires, or gives him its means? A

traveler however must ascend, as much as he can, over people's ordinary joy when they fulfill their wishes. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says, urging the traveler to stand firmly and be indifferent: "If you decrease the value of what gets you to rejoice, what gets you to be sad will decrease."

Abstinence, as our Shaykh sees it, does not imply that the abstainer must be poor and not own anything of the means of life, but abstinence can be present together with the presence of these means. A sign of an earner's abstinence is not to be occupied with what he owns, and a sign of a destitute's abstinence is the absence of muddle in thoughts and means. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says: "An abstainer in life has two signs, a sign in its loss and a sign in its presence. The sign of life's presence will be his neglect of it, and the sign of losing it, will be peace from its muddle. The neglect will be a gratitude for its presence and peace will be a gratitude for its loss."

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh then plunges more deeply into analyzing the sources which will motivate the traveler to abstinence. He tells us of two motives: one that is related with a complete belief of the hereafter, meaning that if a traveler believes in meeting Allāh in the hereafter and that communion will be near, he will disdain life and uses it as a bridge to cross over to Allāh. The other motive is based on a metaphysical foundation for the interpretation of existence. If the traveler believes that real existence is only for Allāh and that the whole universe has no real existence and that its apparent existence is only illusory, he will abstain in all that does not really exist. He will even ascend over abstinence to non-abstinence, because what does not exist does not qualify for abstinence.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh refers to the first motive by saying: "If faith is assured (in one's heart) inheritance will be abstinence in life, because faith in Allāh provides full conviction of meeting Him. Your knowledge that all that are to come are really very near, should convince you of the nearness of meeting Allāh. This will yield in you abstinence in the world."

As for the second motive, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says: "As a matter of real fact, any abstainer in the world is really confusing its existence...confirming that you are abstaining something is a confirmation of the existence of this subject. Also your saying that you are freed from something is a confirmation of the existence of that subject.... In this respect we have composed a small poem to one of my friends called Ḥassan (ḥassan in Arabic means good).

"It is ḥassan if you abandon the entire creation.
It is ḥassan if you are not occupied with it.
When you understand, you will know
You only abandon what exists.
When you witness other than Him
Know it is only illusion and heart distraction."

Our Shaykh applies his doctrine of dropping self direction and planning to the field of abstinence, saying that the station s of abstinence will not be correct for the traveler, unless he entirely gets out of self direction. He explains it saying: "Abstinence will not be correct except by abandoning self direction, because you are asked really to abstain and abandon your self direction because abstinence is two fold: obvious abstinence and hidden internal abstinence. Obvious abstinence is in the area of abundance of halal food, dress, etc, and the hidden abstinence is in fame and leadership. Also hidden abstinence includes abstinence in planning with Allāh."

The station of patience follows the station of abstinence, as Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh states:

3 -patience:

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh divides patience into three kinds: patience with what is prohibited,
patience within duties, and
patience with planning and choice.

As the one ascertained in patience refrains from what Allāh does not like for him, and since planning and choice are not liked for him by Allāh, those who are in the station of patience must abandon self direction and choice, otherwise their patience will not be correct.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh relates to us that patience with taboos is a patience with human desires, and patience with duties is patience with the necessities of slavehood. The greatest need of these necessities is dropping self direction by the traveler.

For great Ṣūfis, there is an additional and special kind of patience: they are patient with concealing the secrets that are revealed to them. They do not rely on creations, they do not stop with lights in fear of getting veiled by them from Allāh. They bear the harm of people to them, are steadfast with fate, stick to goodness and all other attributes of the traveler.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh believes that the ascertainment of the traveler of the station of patience only occurs by sheer heavenly attention. If Allāh wishes to strengthen the traveler in meeting His examinations, he will cover him with His luminous attributes, so while destiny takes its course, Allāh’s light will precede it, so the traveler will be with Allāh and not left to himself. He consequently accepts destiny with whatever it bears of hardship or pain. As long as the traveler has full faith in fate, is witnessing the appropriateness of Allāh’s choice, His grace, kindness, and grants, and so long as he is dropping self direction and choice, he will not be upset with the presence of calamities and distress, but he will endure Allāh’s decrees and will be certain that Allāh’s kindness is latent in his fate. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh shows the means which help the traveler to be patient and how they are grants from Allāh for those whom He cherishes. “Know that if Allāh wishes to strengthen a slave against His judgment on him, He covers him with lights of His attributes so fate falls preceded by His light, and so the slave will be with Allāh and not with himself. He will be strong enough to bear their stress and hardship. What really gets Ṣūfis to bear His judgment is the flow of heavenly illumination on them. You can also say, that what helps them to bear His judgment is that the door of understanding will be opened for them. You can also say that what helps them to bear His judgment is their beholding of the appropriate choice. You can also say that what gets them to bear what has befallen them is their knowledge that He sees them. You can also say that what gets them to endure His deeds is His revelation of His bounty and beauty for them. You can also say, what gets them to endure His judgment is their knowledge that patience yields contentment. You can also say, what gets them to accept fate is the unveiling of veils for them. You can also say that what helps them to bear the weight of orders is the revelation of the secrets for His deeds to them. You can also say that what gets them to endure His judgment is their knowledge of what has been instituted in them of His kindness and support. These are ten reasons which aid the slave to be patient, stand upright in front of his Master’s destiny, and be strong when orders are passed on him. Allāh is the giver and provider of all these by His sheer grace to those who are within His special circle of attention.”

Patience therefore, in Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s view, is not the earning of a slave; it is a sheer endowment by Allāh, with which He endows those who are within His special circle of attention. In addition, patience should be based entirely on free faith in fate and dropping self direction and choice.

We have also seen how Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s doctrine of faith in fate and dropping self direction is active in formulating his Ṣūfī views about one of the most important stations on the travel to Allāh,

According to Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s classification of the stations of travel, the station of gratitude follows the station of patience:

4- gratitude:

Gratitude, in Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s view, is of three kinds: gratitude of the tongue, which means acknowledgment of bliss: Allāh says: “Of the bliss of your sustainer, you should speak.” Of the gratitude of the organs, which are working for Allāh’s obedience, Allāh says: “Work for the folks of

Dawūd in gratitude”; and the gratitude of the interior is an attestation that Allāh alone is the provider of bliss and that any bliss is from Him alone. Allāh says: “Any bliss that is worth you, is from Allāh.”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh states that there is a kind of gratitude for each man according to his state. If a man is knowledgeable, his gratitude to Allāh for what he has of knowledge is guidance of people. If he is rich, his gratitude in this case will be giving to people and looking after their needs. If he has fame and authority, his gratitude to Allāh will be by pushing away harm and distress from those who come within the circle of his authority.

From Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s words about gratitude there emanates to us a picture of how a good society should be. He says that it is a duty for scholars to guide people. This implies that they should avail people of their knowledge. It also implies that knowledge should not be the scholars’ monopoly but that it should be shared among all people, who benefit from it in refining their manners and improving their lives.

Also our Ṣūfī Shaykh sees that the rich must be generous to the poor, giving them of what they own. If the duty of the rich in society is to help the poor, the duty of sultans, rulers, and leaders is to drive away from people all harm, and they should ascertain social justice among the populace.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh accordingly understands the station of gratitude comprehensively and in a way which reveals that he was not among those Ṣūfis who pull themselves out of society for worship and contemplation and consequently become ignorant of the life of the society in which they live. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh sees an interior and an exterior in gratitude. The exterior of gratitude is the traveler’s subordination to Allāh’s orders and refraining from his prohibitions. Its interior is the beholding of Allāh’s bliss and attestation of it.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh confirms the traveler’s need and obligation to gratitude for Allāh’s blessings. This gratitude will be a reason for them to last and be augmented. He says to the traveler: “He who is not grateful for blessings, exposes himself to their loss. He who is grateful for them, will find them.” He also says to some of his friends in Alexandria around this meaning: “...Allāh has guaranteed an excess for the grateful without any limitation. Allāh says: ‘If you are thankful, I shall give you more.’ If He has guaranteed excess over what He has given to them, how can He not get His previous grants to last with them? He that likes to keep them should tie them up in order not to leave them to run away, so tie up the blessings of Allāh for you by your gratitude to Him.”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh warns the traveler not to be unaware of the presence of Allāh’s bliss. He should fear Allāh’s taking His gifts back so that he knows them after they are lost. In this, he says to the traveler: “He that does not see blessings when they are present, will know them when they are lost.”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh shows that as a sign of the traveler’s politeness, is that he should always be thankful to Allāh, so that when bliss comes to him, his delight with it should not get him to forget thanking its giver, otherwise that will be an indication of his insincerity in his slavehood to Allāh. He says to the traveler: “The flow of bliss on you should not take you by surprise as that you forget performing your duties of gratitude, otherwise you will be demoted.”

Yet, what will a traveler do when any person gives him something? Our Shaykh replies that the traveler should be thankful to people because that is an order of shari’a. He should however know that it is Allāh alone who grants and not people, because of Allāh’s singularity of granting in His kingdom. Allāh however wants that His grants be passed through the hands of His slaves in order to get them to reach to whoever He chooses for His own attention. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says in one of his maxims: “If the eye of the heart sees that it is only Allāh alone who grants, shari’a provides that you must thank his creatures.”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh, as usual, does not forget to apply his doctrine of dropping self direction in the station of gratitude. He shows to us that the meaning of gratitude is that man should not disobey Allāh in

gratitude for Allāh’s grants to him. As mind is Allāh’s greatest bliss for man, a traveler must not therefore disobey Allāh through planning with this mind. Without the mind, man cannot plan with Allāh. Material things cannot plan because they have no mind to look into potential results and get concerned with them. Consequently, gratitude to Allāh for the bliss of the mind, necessitates dropping self direction and planning with Allāh. The station of gratitude will not be correct for a traveler if he still has in his heart yearnings for planning and willing.

After the station of gratitude comes the station of fear and hope:

5- the station of fear and hope:

Fear and hope, in Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s view, are two stations on the path to Allāh and not states as other Ṣūfis think. They both share the traveler’s nafs on his journey to Allāh.

A traveler will be in the station of fear when he becomes afraid that Allāh may take away from him what he has of states and stations, due to his knowledge that Allāh’s judgment is overwhelming and that His will is dominant. If He wants to take them from him, He will do it and He is not to be asked for what He does, but people are asked. In one of his petitions, our Shaykh says: “My Allāh, your overwhelming judgment and dominance will have not left anything for him that has states or him that speaks.” Al Rondi explains this statement, saying: “Understanding this meaning obliges the slave to be in the station of fear and to be ascertained in it. If he is well spoken and in a favorable state, he still cannot be certain of the judgment, as the True overrules everything and His will dominates everything.”

Ṣūfis’ fear of losing these states and stations is the fear of the elite. It is different from the fear of commoners, who fear Allāh’s punishment when they sin and fear fire to burn their bodies. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says: “...commoners have not pierced with the eye of their hearts to witness the grants of the True on them like faith, Islam, knowledge, singularity, and love. They know that Allāh has threatened the disobedient with His punishment, so they fear sinning which will be a cause for punishment falling on them. Their fear is due to their self love; they fear being punished by Allāh. As for the elite (the chosen), and grace to them, they work for maintaining themselves in order to go to Him without being contaminated or unclean.”

A traveler’s fear of losing his states and stations should however obsess him. He should never lose hope in Allāh. Whenever he is afraid, he should know that beyond his fear are the attributes of Who is never to be desperate of His benevolence and mercy. He should know that Allāh has only frightened him to bring him to His company. Fear therefore should be a motive for hope.

Our Shaykh also shows to us that as another motive for hope, the traveler ought to consider grants, endowments, and bliss to him. Here his hope grows and he will think well of Allāh. Yet, as a traveler carries on thinking of his disobedience and offences, he will not get out of fear’s range. In this context, Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says to the traveler: “If you want Him to open the door of hope to you, behold what you do for Him.”

The most important condition for hope, in Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s view, is that it should be accompanied with deeds; otherwise, it will just be wishful thinking. Desiring is contrary to slavehood and what it requires of dropping self direction. A traveler should not therefore be negative in his behavior, but he has always to perform acts of obedience and worship for proximity to Allāh. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says in one of his maxims which is very deep and comprehensive:

“Hope is always accompanied with work,
otherwise it will be wishful thinking.”

Is not his maxim in the meaning of hope worthy to be made use of by people in their day-to-day life? Anyone of us often reverts to himself and wishes for many things. His time is lost in wistfulness, but he never attains any target. If he occupies his time in getting work done instead, he will reach, or at least he will be contributing to reaching what he had desired, without wasting time.

Hope, with our Shaykh and so should it be with all people, must be accompanied with continuous hard work to achieve what one wants to get. Hope, therefore, must be a motive for positive and productive work, and not used as a motive for escape, failure, and losing time in false illusions and imagination.

Hope also, as Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh sees, motivates fear. An ascertained traveler in the station of hope is normally afraid of the heavenly unseen and fears that what he is experiencing of hope might be a sort of test for him or a veil for him from Allāh. In this connection, Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says: “When Ṣūfis hope, they fear. They fear His unknown judgment lying behind their hope. They also fear that what is revealed to them of hope, could be a test for their mureeds: will they stop with the exterior of hope, or will they penetrate to what is hidden in destiny? Hope therefore motivates fear.”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says in one of his petitions about his own ascertainment of hope and fear, that they follow each other within himself: “My Allāh, my hope in You never ends even when I disobey You and my fear does not leave me even when I obey You.”

He goes on to indicate that the stations of hope and fear will not be correct unless by dropping self direction, as with all other stations of behavior. If a traveler is ascertained with the station of fear, it means the burden of fear has penetrated his heart. Is he is so, he will never be able in real fact to plan or direct himself. In other words, fear of Allāh and self direction never combine.

In the same way, if the traveler is ascertained in the station of hope, it means that his heart has been filled with Allāh’s delight and that he is occupied with dealing in deeds with Allāh, because hope must be accompanied with continuous work. Will therefore there be any time left for him in which he hopes to plan for anything with Allāh?

In Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s classification of the stations for behavior, the stations of contentment and reliance on Allāh, follow the stations of fear and hope:

6- stations of contentment and reliance on Allāh:

Contentment, as Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh sees it, is the full acceptance of Allāh’s saying: “Allāh has been content with them and they were content with Him”, and to the Prophet’s saying, peace and blessings be upon him,: “He feels the taste of faith, who is content with Allāh.”

This prophetic hadith explains to us that who is not assured by contentment will not feel the taste of faith. His belief will be like an image which has no life in it or that faith will be an outer faith and not an inner one. He that is assured by contentment will be content with Allāh as his Sustainer. He will submit to Him, subside in his judgment and get himself subordinated to Him. Here he finds happiness and the comfort of submission. When a traveler is content with Allāh as the Sustainer, Allāh will be content with him. Allāh says: “Allāh has been content with them and they are content with Him.”

This sort of concept of contentment, with Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh and other Ṣūfis, is based entirely on an Islamic foundation which refutes what is sometimes said, that contentment with Ṣūfi Muslims is an Indian thought in its origin.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh does not consider contentment as an earning by the traveler. He relates it to heavenly attention. In this he says: “Contentment with Allāh can only be together with understanding, understanding can only be with illumination, illumination can only be with proximity and proximity will never be attained, except by heavenly attention....”

The traveler's ascertainment in the station of contentment is in itself an ascertainment in the station of reliance on Allāh, and therefore there is a very strong link between contentment and reliance on Allāh. As our Shaykh says: "He who is content with Allāh's judgment, submitting to his fate, will always be subordinating to Allāh in everything, relying on Him, sure of the arrival of His benefits to him. This is reliance on Allāh itself. The motive for the station of reliance on Allāh is full faith in the fact that everything is in the hand of Allāh. Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh says in the *Maxims*: "He who is sure that Allāh loves him, will be very sincere in asking Him. He who knows well that everything is in the hand of Allāh, reliance on Allāh will be his lot." This saying of Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh refers to the Qur'ānic ayah: "For Him, everything returns. So worship Him and rely on Him."

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh also shows that the stations of reliance on Allāh and contentment will not be correct except by dropping self direction. In this respect, he says: "Self direction contradicts the station of reliance on Allāh because he that relies on Allāh will submit to Him, rely on Him in everything. This necessitates dropping self direction and subsiding in fate. Dropping self direction in the stations of contentment and reliance on Allāh is more visibly needed than in other station... self direction also contradicts the station of contentment and that is self evident, because he who is content has already been sufficed by Allāh's predestination. How can then he plan with Him when he has already accepted Allāh's previous planning for him? Do you not know that the light of contentment washes the toil of planning from their hearts? He who is content with Allāh, is delighted by the light of contentment and does not need therefore any other planning by himself..."

In the classification of stations by Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, the station of love follows the station of contentment and reliance on Allāh, and it is the last of all stations:

7- the station of love:

Love, with Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, is among the most important stations of certainty, but he does not consider it the most perfect station with which a traveler is to be ascertained on his travel on the path to Allāh. The station of contentment, in his view, is better because the content is freer from the desires of his nafs and free even from requesting the fulfillment of any desire. As for the content, all conditions involving him will be alike, whether they are accompaniment, abandonment, proximity, or extremity, because he is content with Allāh in all of them. The lover is not so, because he desires a continuity of the company and witnessing his beloved. He is with what he likes for himself. Therefore, his station will be inferior to the station of contentment. In this respect, Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh says to the traveler: "Know that love is among the noblest stations of certainty to the extent that pious people differ on which is more perfect, the station of love, or the station of contentment." In our view, the station of contentment is more perfect because the dominance of love may be over the lover's capacity to bear, and his longing may overcome him, so he may ask for what does not befit his station. Do you not see that the lover always wants a continuous beholding of his beloved, but the content will always be satisfied, whether he beholds or even if he is veiled? The lover desires continuous company but the content is content with Allāh, whether He draws him near to Him, or cuts him off because he is not with what he desired for himself, but he is with what Allāh wishes for him. A lover always wants a continuous discourse with his beloved and the content does not yearn for anything. We have a poem in this respect which says:

"In the past, I used to ask for their company,
and when knowledge came to me and my ignorance vanished,
I was ascertained that a slave had no demands.
If they draw near, that will be due to their bounty.
If they go far away, that will be due to their justice.

If they make themselves visible,

They only show their attributes.

If they veil me, their veiling will be esteemed.”

When Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh sees the station of contentment as superior to the station of love, he differs from Al Ghazali, who sees the station of love as the most perfect and highest station. He considers contentment as one of its fruits. This can be derived from his saying: “...love for Allāh is the extreme end of stations and the highest step. There will be no station beyond love, except what can be one of its fruits, or one of its satellites, like yearning, delight, contentment, etc., and there is no station before the station of love, except what can be considered an introduction to it, like tawba, patience, abstinence, etc....”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s preference of the station of contentment to the station of love is only a result of his master idea that directs his Ṣūfī doctrine, i.e. dropping self direction and planning. He sees that the station of contentment, which implies the traveler’s contentment with all commands of Allāh and which, by necessity, calls for dropping of self direction, is more perfect than the station of love, in which the traveler may be stationary with what he desired for himself of being in the company of Allāh or of any of his desired personal. We therefore see him indicating that among the most needed requirements for the station of love, is that the lover should be free from asking for compensation. In other words, the traveler should be free in his love from wishing a fulfillment of his personal desires, because this can be a sign of self will, which is discouraged in the travel to Allāh in relation to what he should always do in dropping his will and wishes.

He says in one of his maxims:

“He will not be a lover who asks for compensation from his beloved or who asks Him for anything for himself. Your lover gives you and he is not your lover who asks you to give him.”

Consequently, a traveler will not perfect his station of love, in Ibn Ata’Illah’s view, unless in his love, he is ascertained with dropping self direction, planning, and is abandoning entirely his personal desires. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says here: “Self direction also contradicts the station of love, because the lover should be consumed in the love of his beloved... the lover has no time to plan with Allāh, because his love for Allāh occupies him. Some people have said: He that has tasted a drop of sincere love for Allāh, it will distract him from anything else.”

8- stations and dropping self direction:

We have been told before of the nine stations of the path to Allāh in which the traveler rises from one to the other. These are tawba, abstinence, patience, gratitude, fear and hope, contentment and reliance on Allāh, and love. We have also seen how each of them will not be perfect without dropping self direction, and will be perfected by so doing in it.

Indeed, Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s trying to base all stations of behavior on a foundation of dropping self direction cannot be considered free from over doing, because a traveler’s ascent through his nafs-jihad cannot coincide with dropping self direction. Ascent in stations is itself a voluntary action which is done by the traveler. Take tawba as an example, which is the traveler’s abandonment of his sins and repressing his passions. It is an act which clearly shows the presence of self will. How can a repent stop laboring in abandoning sin? In this case, he abandons his deeds for tawba, which is really strange.

If Ṣūfis have agreed that a station is what is earned by the slave and are told that: “States are grants, but stations are gains”, and that “stations are gained by making efforts”, our Shāykh does not agree with them, that stations are gained by the traveler, because if he admits that, he will admit that there is real existence of human will, and that it has an entry into the fulfillment of ascertaining stations, which contradicts his doctrine of dropping self direction and planning. That is why we have seen him

introducing heavenly attention when speaking about stations of tawba, patience, and contentment, into their spheres in a way that an accurate researcher would understand that Ibn 'Ata' Illāh does not see stations as gains by the slave, but that they are grants from Allāh with which He endows whomever He likes of travelers.

If stations do occur, as our Shaykh sees, by sheer heavenly attention, why then should a traveler practice nafs-jihad in obliging himself for tawba, abstinence, patience, etc.?

Had Ibn 'Ata' Illāh went on to say that man's will has an entry in ascertaining stations, yet as an act of politeness he should not see them related to himself, but to the will of Allāh, there would have been no contradiction in this respect.

It seems, however, that Ibn 'Ata' Illāh does not like this interpretation, but that he wished to proceed in his doctrine of dropping self direction till the end. He considered that stations of the journey, which we find as real manifestations for the traveler's will, are all related to Allāh's will, which has chosen the traveler to attain them. He clearly shows that his doctrine in its essence is a doctrine of predestination which does not admit the presence of any free will for man.

Now that we have seen how a traveler ascends in stations through dropping his self direction and will, as seen by Ibn 'Ata' Illāh, and how he should practice rules of behavior in those stations, helping to get him to live in free harmony with fate and Allāh's will, we now move to draw a picture for the traveler with respect to the states the flow over him, which will show us how the traveler should also be without will, because the states that he encounters all come from Allāh and are acts of His own will and grace.

3- states

1- the flow of states:

Many states overlap with stations. Among them, as Ibn 'Ata' Illāh has also said, are the states of delight, depression, merriment, separation, communion, absence, presence, sobriety, intoxication, annihilation, and existence.

These states are results of assured stations. Ibn 'Ata' Illāh shows us that being assured with stations will provide good states for the traveler, and that good states will result in good deeds. To this interrelation between stations, states, and deeds, he says in one of his maxims: "Good deeds are results of good states. Good states are results of being assured in stations."

States flow on the traveler without any will from himself for them; they are sheer heavenly grants. They differ according to the difference of *wajidat* (visions) which fall on the heart of the traveler, bearing spiritual secrets that fill states. There is a vision which brings delight, a vision that brings depression, and a vision that yields merriment, etc. Because those visions that flow on the traveler are varied and numerous, the traveler's deeds and states will also be varied. Ibn 'Ata' Illāh says in this reference: "The nature of deeds differ because of the varied visions of states."

Ibn 'Ata' Illāh believes that Allāh gets these states to flow on the traveler to get him to draw nearer to Him. He says: "He gets the vision to flow on you, to draw you nearer to Him." He also explains that the wisdom in getting them to fall on the traveler is to get him to be freed of the others to which he might have subsided due to his desires and his planning for himself. In this respect, he says in one of his maxims: "He brought the vision to you, to take you away from the hands of "others" and free you from the slavery of creations. He brought the vision to you, to get you out of the jail of your existence into the space of witnessing Him."

Our Shaykh indicates that the flow of (tidings) on the traveler distracts his habits and the rashness of his nafs, which means that there is a moral practical function for states: he says to the traveler: "When heavenly *waridat* flow on you, they distract your habits." "When kings enter a village, they ruin it."

He also says to the traveler: “The tiding comes from the Dominant, consequently nothing will ever stand against it without being destroyed. “We throw truth on the fake, it suppresses it and so it dies away.”

The value of the tiding, as our Shaykh sees, is its fruit, which is of the purification of the nafs, not the fulfillment of personal desires. He says to the traveler: “Do not esteem a tiding of which you doubt its fruit. The function of the cloud is not to rain, but to produce harvest.”

A traveler should not also be proud or vain with tidings so as to lean on them and forget their Giver, Who is Allāh. A sign of his leaning on them is his request to get them to stay while they are present. This will not be an act of politeness on the path. His politeness should be in destitution of all personal gains. He says to the traveler: “Do not ask for getting tidings to last after they have already spread their lights and yielded their secrets. You have all the abundance for you in Allāh who will make you in no need of anything, while nothing can ever make you in no need of Him.”

If the traveler corrects his behavior during the fall of the *waridat*, they will yield to him their good fruits in the various states to which he shall encounter. We shall detail those states as follows:

2- delight:

To feel delighted by the company of Allāh is a station which is granted to the traveler by Allāh. Delight in the company of Allāh gets the traveler not to feel delight in people.

A traveler will not be ascertained with the state of delight, in our Shaykh’s view, except by secluding himself from people in isolation. He says to the traveler: “If you get isolated from people, He will open for you the door of delight with Him. Walis have conquered themselves by isolation and seclusion so they heard from Allāh and got delighted with Him. If you want to clean the mirror of your heart from impurities, abandon what Ṣūfis abandoned, which is the delight with people.”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh also says that delight with Allāh does not occur to the traveler except after he has alienated himself from people. In one of his maxims, he says: “When He alienates you from His creations, know that He wants to open for you the door of delight with Him.”

As it is Allāh who opens the door of delight to the traveler, the state of delight comes by the sheer attention of Allāh and the traveler’s will has therefore no entry to achieve it. Listen to Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh supplicating his Sustainer and indicating that gnosis, love, and delight, and only by His sheer grace:

“You have illuminated the hearts of your walis so they knew You and singularized You. You have banished the “others” from the hearts of Your beloveds, so they loved You alone and did not resort to others, but to You. You have delighted them, when creations alienated them....”

Delight with the company of Allāh, in his view, goes together with the station of love for Allāh. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says also in his supplication: “You have got your lovers to taste the sweetness of Your delight, so they stood petitioning to You.”

3- depression and merriment:

Depression and merriment are also states that flow on the traveler on his path to Allāh.

Depression and merriment are two successive psychological states. In depression, the traveler feels worry, sadness, and pain, while in merriment, he feels joy, peace, and contentment.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says that a traveler sometimes gets depressed and sometimes gets merry in spite of himself, i.e. during them, he is without will or planning. How can he produce any of them, while states flow on him by the sheer will of Allāh? Allāh may get him out of them by His own will so that the traveler should not resort to either and should stay with Allāh. In this respect, he says to the traveler:

“He has delighted you in order not to leave you in depression
and depressed you in order that you not rely on merriment.
He delivered you from both of them in order for you not to be for anything but Him.”

In merriment, as our Shaykh sees, there is a gain for the nafs because of the presence of joy. Depression is not so there is no gain for the nafs in it. He says in the *Maxims* “The nafs finds gain in merriment by the presence of joy, and it has no gain in depression.”

As there is gain for the nafs in merriment, and absence of it in depression, knowers, as Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh says, fear the state of merriment because they fear everything in which there is gain for the nafs. On the contrary, in the state of depression, they see themselves near to safety because they find no gain for the nafs. If this is so clear, we shall understand his maxim in which he says: “Knowers, when delighted, are afraid more when they are depressed. Very few only stand by the limits of politeness when they get merry.”

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh consequently prefers the state of depression to the state of merriment because he fears the traveler may get out of the command of his time, which is his most needed requirement in the state of merriment. It is not so in the state of depression. Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh says in this connection: “Merriment is the pitfall of man. It calls for their caution and resorting to Allāh...Depression is nearer to safety because it is the slave's place being in the grip of Allāh who is wholly encountering him. How can a slave be merry if such is his place? Merriment is also an exit from the command of time. Depression also befits this world....”

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh compares depression with the dark night and compares merriment with the shining day and shows the traveler that the night of depression may be more beneficial to him than the day of merriment. A traveler does not really know which is more beneficial to him because both are out of his control and are related to Allāh's will and wish. In this, he says to the traveler: “He may benefit you in the night of depression more than in the day of merriment. You do not really know which is more beneficial.”

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh was influenced in his above comparison by his Shaykh Abu-l -Ḥassan ash-Shādhḍhuli, the founder of the Shādhḍhuli school. Ash-Shādhḍhuli preceded him in making this comparison.

Al Rondi in his interpretation of the *Maxims* indicated that Shādhḍhulis, including Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, have completed all talk about depression and merriment unlike other Ṣūfis who only have left to us a few sentences about depression and merriment.

It is natural to find Al Rondi influenced by Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh with regard to depression and merriment through his interpretation of the *Maxims*. There is research about Al Rondi (died 1392 AD), by the Spanish orientalist Miguel Asin Palacios in which he refers to the probability that the Christian Ṣūfi San Juan De la Cruz had been influenced in his Ṣūfi doctrine by Al Rondi's doctrine. He states that there is a very strong resemblance with regard to depression and merriment between San Juan de la Cruz and the Shādhḍhulis. He states, after explaining the states of depression and merriment as Shādhḍhulis, including Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, see them, that the state of depression compared to a dark night is strongly similar to the state which San Juan de la Cruz calls “Noche Oscura del Alma” (dark night of the nafs), and considers it the real basis of Ṣūfism. He prefers it to the state of merriment, which is seen by San Juan as also seen by Shādhḍhulis as a kind of the nafs' hidden passions which a Ṣūfi has to conquer more actively than any other passion or pleasure. Palacios is inclined to believe that San Juan de la Cruz had been influenced in his preference of the dark night of depression over merriment by Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh and Al Rondi, who confirm, as Apalacios says, that Allāh gives his blessing to the nafs in the darkness of depression more than in the shining day of merriment.

Palacios bases his view of the influence of Al Rondi in San Juan de la Cruz on the fact that Al Rondi was born and lived in Spain and was near historically and geographically from the Escuela

Carmelitana, as represented by San Juan de la Cruz. If it is true that San Juan had been influenced by Al Rondi through his interpretation of Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's maxims, the views of Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh in depression and merriment and other Ṣūfī states must have then been known to Christian mystics of the Middle Ages and had their impact on their mystical doctrines. To go deeper into this point will get us beyond the scope of this work.

4- Annihilation (fana;) and existence (baqa):

After the states of depression and merriment come two more complete states which are annihilation and existence.

Annihilation, as Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh sees it, is an emotional state in which the traveler does not feel or sense any of his external organs, nor what emanates from him, nor what is within himself, but he becomes absent from all these when he is with his Sustainer. If the traveler who is ascertained in the station of annihilation feels that he had completely abandoned himself, that will be a sign of his perfection in his state. Perfection in this respect has to be a complete absence, even from his own annihilation.

Annihilation of annihilation is the objective of annihilation.

Annihilation occurs to the traveler as a result of his continuous thinking of Allāh and concentrating his attention on one special direction for a long time; that can happen in seclusion through dhikr, as mentioned. What Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh states that he who is ascertained in annihilation, will be absent from himself and the outer world, he differs in this connection from Al Suhrawardi, who does not see that absence of feeling is a condition for annihilation. He said in this context: "It is not a necessity for achieving annihilation, that the traveler should be absent of feeling. The absence of feeling may be attained by some people but is no condition in any way for annihilation...."

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh indicates that there are three kinds of annihilation, i.e. Allāh annihilates the traveler from his deeds by His deeds, from his attributes by His attributes, and from himself by His Being.

As for annihilating the traveler's deeds by the deeds of Allāh, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says it means that the traveler will be annihilated of his will and self direction. Allāh takes out the slave's will and self direction so the traveler in this case does not see anybody acting except the True.

As for annihilating the traveler from his attributes by the attributes of Allāh, it is for the traveler to witness the attributes of Allāh, so he tries as much as he can to follow and imitate them.

As for annihilating the traveler from himself by Allāh's being, it means that the traveler is made to see the grandeur of Allāh's Being; therefore witnessing the True will occupy his interior and Allāh's Being will cover his own being. Therefore he will not feel or sense himself.

When a traveler is annihilated by his deeds, attributes, and being as mentioned above, he will be existing by Allāh, and hence the state of annihilating will be in fact an introduction to the state of existence. Annihilation will be, as our Ṣhāykh sees: "A corridor for existence through which the traveler can enter." Again, "He that is truthful in his annihilation will be truthful in his existence."

The state of existence, as seen by him, is more perfect than the state of annihilation, because in it, the traveler is not absent from himself or the outer world as in the state of annihilation. In existence, the traveler is aware of himself, of the outer world, and his presence with Allāh in all times and in everything.

As for the difference between the state of annihilation and the state of existence, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says:

“Annihilation provides excuses for them (Ṣūfis), while existence provides them victory,
 annihilation produces their absence from everything
 and existence puts them in the presence of Allāh in everything,
 and so they are not cut off from Him in anything.
 Annihilation decreases them, and existence creates them....”

He also says about the difference between annihilation and existence: “...he that is annihilated receives from Allāh and he that exists speaks by Allāh. The annihilated's circle of feeling is closed but his sacred presence is opened. He that exists is in the presence of both the circle of his sacredness and feeling. The annihilated is invited to Allāh, but who exists is a caller to Allāh.”

The traveler, as our Shaykh sees, has neither will nor self direction in either his annihilation or his existence, because they are two states which flow on him from Allāh by His sheer will. He says: “...If Allāh wishes, He can get the traveler to stay drowning in the ocean of annihilation. If He wishes, He can deliver him to the beach of existence....”

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh classifies the states in which the traveler (Ṣūfi) is not absent from himself as follows:

5- categories of travelers with regard to states:

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh indicates in his *Maxims* that people are of three categories with regard to heavenly grants:

- 1) A commoner whose circle of sensuousness has been fortified and whose circle of sacred presence has been diminished, so he sees grants from creations and not from the True. He is an unconscious person. He can be considered an open polytheist because he sees grants coming from people, or that his polytheism is hidden because he resorts to people and to their grants and not to Allāh.
- 2) A traveler on the path to Allāh who is overcome by states of absence, annihilation, intoxication, aggregation, and so he only sees grants from Allāh alone because he is absent from himself and from people so completely in all these states.
- 3) A Ṣūfi who has reached his destination and who is perfected. He has been ascertained by presence after absence, by existence after annihilation, by sobriety after intoxication, by separation after aggregation. He sees grants originally coming from Allāh, but he thanks people for them in pursuit of the rules of Shari'a with respect to gratitude. Listen to our Shaykh saying in this respect: “If the eye of the heart sees that Allāh is unique in granting, Shari'a provides that His creations must be thanked.”

People are of three categories in this connection: one who is unaware, and involved in his unconsciousness. His circle of sensuousness has been strengthened, and his circle of sacredness has diminished so he sees grants coming from creatures and does not see them coming from Allāh. From a “belief” point of view, he is a polytheist.

There is the one who knows and who has been absent from people by beholding the True King. He abandoned means because he saw Who creates man. He is a slave facing Reality, its light shines on him, and is occupied by his travel. He is drowning in light and for him, “others” are diminishing. His intoxication is overcoming his sobriety, his aggregation is overcoming his separation, his annihilation is overcoming his existence, his absence is overcoming his presence.

A more perfected person than this person is a slave who had become drunk, but he becomes more sober, was absented, but he became more present. His aggregation does not veil his separation, his separation does not veil his aggregation. His annihilation does not distract his existence, his existence does not distract his annihilation. “He gives each state its due respect and gives right to whoever has a right on him.”

It is accordingly clear to us, as it is to our Shaykh, how he prefers states in which the traveler is not absent from himself or from people like sobriety, separation, existence and presence. He sees that states of absence, intoxication, annihilation, aggregation, are inferior. This is due, in our view, to the fact that he is an ascertained and deeply rooted Ṣūfī who is guiding others to Allāh. Such a man cannot be affected by states of absence in any way.

6- states and dropping self direction:

It has been made clear to us when talking about states that our Shaykh always expresses his view of dropping self direction and will, his faith in fate, and heavenly attention.

He has shown to us that the traveler in his delight, depression, merriment, annihilation, existence, is always without will and without choice, because those states flow over him by the sheer will of Allāh and attention. He also shows to us that a very important prerequisite of annihilation is that the traveler should look for annihilating his deeds by the deeds of Allāh. Allāh takes out his will and choice and so the traveler does not see really any doer except Allāh.

In addition, 'shows to us that the most perfect behavior in states is that the traveler should be without will and without choice to the extent that even if he sees himself ascertained in any state, he does not relate it to his will, or in other words, due to his willing and readiness, otherwise he will pretend something he does not own. That explains why Allāh transmits to him states abruptly so he cannot pretend they are results of his worship and obedience or willful action. In this respect, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says in one of his maxims: "Heavenly *waridat* (tidings) are often abrupt so that no slave can pretend them to be results of his preparedness." Heavenly *waridat*, which yield states, are heavenly grants which He bestows on his slaves. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh agrees in this respect with other Ṣūfīs who have states also, that a state is a meaning that descends on the heart without any will, gain or production." States for this reason are "grants" and not earnings in that they come from "the Source of bounty and not my making effort."



CHAPTER 6: GNOSIS

“Your arrival to Allāh is an arrival to the knowledge of Him. Our Sustainer is too sacred to be connected with anything or that any thing can get connected with Him.”

“He had got you to behold before He asked for your attestation. Organs have confessed His deity, while hearts and secrets have been ascertained with His singularity.”

“Lights may sometimes descend on you to find your hearts full with images of creations, so they return to where they came from. Get your heart empty from creations and knowledge and secrets will fill it.”

“The presence of his creations proves His Names, the presence of His Names proves the existence of His Attributes, and His Attributes prove His Being. It is impossible that any attribute can stand by itself.

He reveals the perfection of His Being to the ‘attracted’, then He gets them to turn to behold His Attributes, then to cling to His Names, then He gets them to return to beholding His creations.

On the contrary is the case of the travelers. The end of the traveler is the beginning of the attracted and the beginning of the traveler is the end of the attracted. They may meet each other on the path; the one while descending and the other while ascending.”

“Knowers by Allāh witness the secrets of ‘malakut’. They have no planning with Allāh as witnessing prevented them from it. How can a slave plan with Allāh, when he is in His presence and witnessing His magnanimity and grandeur?”

- 1- Arrival
- 2- The People of Knowledge and its Nature
- 3- Its Intuitive Being in the Nafs
- 4- Its Two Tools: the Mind and the Heart
- 5- Its Systems: Inference and Beholding
- 6- The Travelers and the Attracted
- 7- Knowledge and Dropping Self Direction

1- Arrival:

We have seen in the preceding chapter how a traveler progresses in his stations and states. We had stated that his progress in these stations and states is the fourth and last stage of his nafs-jihad. The end will be the traveler’s arrival to the knowledge of Allāh. This arrival occurs in a state in which the traveler is annihilated from himself and is existing by the knowledge of his Sustainer. Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Illāh shows to us that if annihilation lasts for the traveler, and that is rare, it will remain as a habit and a feature which will ascend with the traveler to the higher sphere. There he will see the pure real existence. The marks of Malakut will be imprinted and the sacredness of ‘lahut’ will be revealed to him. The first thing that he sees of that world is the essence of angels, the spirits of prophets, and walis in beautiful shapes, and through them, knowledge descends on him. All that happens at the beginning. Then, he ascends to degrees which are too superior to be represented in shapes. He is rewarded by Allāh’s authority to him, to deal with everything as he wishes.

Consequently, if a traveler is ascertained in his annihilation by the knowledge of the True, he will be ascertained with true existence.

A traveler who has been ascertained with knowledge is called ‘the reaching’ or ‘*al wasil*’. His arrival to Allāh is an arrival to the knowledge of Allāh. It is not an arrival like that between things or

creations. Allāh is too sacred for that. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says to his mureed: “Your arrival to Allāh is your arrival to the knowledge of Him. Allāh is too sacred to be connected with anything or that anything can be connected with Him.

Our Shaykh therefore entirely alienated Allāh from all human conceiving. When a traveler reaches to the knowledge of Allāh, he would have completed his travel. There would be no additional ascent to target for him because knowledge of Allāh, as Al Rondi says, is the destination of travelers and the end of the road to the marchers.

In the following pages of this chapter, we shall explain our Shaykh’s view about the knowledge of Allāh with regard to its limit, nature, tools, systems, categories, and all that it related with it. We shall also explain our Ṣūfī Shaykh’s doctrine of dropping self direction and will in this field and the results emerging from its application.

2- The People of Knowledge and Its Nature:

Knowledge as defined by Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh is the awareness of something in its being and attributes.

Knowledge of the Creator, as Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says, is the most difficult kind of knowledge because there is nothing that resembles Allāh. Yet Allāh has ordered all His creations to know His Being, Names, and Attributes.

Knowledge of Allāh may be, in Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s view, in establishing His existence and excluding Him (in esteem), from what does not befit Him, by describing Him as He is and as He has described Himself. This kind of knowledge is required by everyone and everyone is ordered to attain it. It is called the “general” knowledge.

Knowledge can also be a state that is attained by “taste”. The knower here will be a person whom Allāh has gotten to witness His Being, Attributes, Names, and Deeds. This sort of knowledge is called the “special” knowledge. It is the knowledge of Ṣūfis which is not based on the mind, but on taste. Whether knowledge of Allāh is mental or by taste, its scope is the Heavenly Being with regard to His Attributes, Names, Deeds, and everything else that is related to Him.

As knowledge of Allāh’s Being, Attributes, Names, and Deeds, and of Allāh Who is the Absolute Existence, are far above our world and because our human visualizations, whether material, emotional, or mental, are limited and confused, knowledge of Allāh will therefore be the most difficult kind of knowledge, as our Ṣūfi has said, and that concerning it in reality is beyond human capability.

Knowledge of Allāh, with Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh as with other Ṣūfis with regard to this subject, is most obscure, and it is not easy for those who have not taken the Ṣūfī path to understand any detail of it, because realities that are disclosed to the Ṣūfi in his seclusion are personal realities that are realized to his own conviction and cannot be generalized to others. Ask what a Ṣūfi describes of knowledge, and the reply will often be in a symbolic language which is normally pregnant with obscurity, and it will be difficult for a non-Ṣūfi to share with the Ṣūfi, often to a small degree, in tasting what he expresses of knowledge or in understanding the subjects which are latent in his sayings.

3- The Intuitive Presence of Knowledge in The Nafs:

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says that each creation in the universe knows Allāh because Allāh has instilled a share of that knowledge into it, according to its capacity. In this connection, he says: “...Allāh has ordered all his creations including man, jinn, angels, and shaytan to know His Being, Names, and Attributes. Knowledge is recorded into the animal and the non animal. Each creation realizes the existence of its Creator according to its own capacity. Allāh says: ‘There is nothing that does not utter gratitude to Him.’ He included man, angels, material, plants, air, sand, and water.”

It had been previously ascertained by it in a different world. Ibn Al Farid says in this respect to his mureed:

It is the nafs that has been occupied
 By its world before it has its human shape.
 Knowledge had been revealed to it by the Ghaib
 In a world that guided it to understand strange meanings.
 All knowledge was imprinted on it previously
 And was given names by inspiration of the Creator.

Therefore there is knowledge beyond what is known
 Which is difficult for even the most perfect mureeds to cope with.
 I took it from my nafs,
 And my nafs was its source.

4- Tools of Knowledge: The Mind and The Heart:

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, as other Ṣūfis, distinguishes between two tools for knowledge: the mind and the heart.

For him, mind is the talent which deduces knowledge by inference. It is the organ which people know Allāh through mental approaches. As for the heart, it is the talent which gets aware of knowledge by direct feeling (taste). It is not that the price of meat is known as such but it is that inner intelligence which Allāh has instilled in man. It is the organ which is more favored by Ṣūfis to any other organ.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh sees that the heart is positive, not negative. By this he might have meant that the heart is a channel to the certain and assumed knowledge of Allāh, while the mind does not lead to knowledge of Allāh except by negation, and therefore its knowledge does not have the certainty of heart knowledge.

But how can the heart get ascertained with the knowledge of Allāh just by taste (feeling)?

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh replies that whenever the heart proceeds into abstinence of life, leaves its passions, caution, and hope, its singularizations of Allāh becomes perfect. When the heart is filled with the Oneness, as Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says, it clings to the Throne and discards completely its human attributes. Its attributes will shine in the higher sphere and its knowledge of the lower sphere will be high and broad. Its insight will be fully widened by the light of the Being name. It will follow Allāh's Attributes and Names and will be obsessed by beholding and will be annihilated even from its own dhikr. About the heart, there is a hadith qudsi (a saying of Allāh on the tongue of the Prophet): "My throne, my chair, and my sky cannot embrace me, but my slave's heart can embrace me."

The meaning of this hadith qudsi is that man's heart, as our Shaykh explains, cannot embrace Allāh in space, imagination, incarnation, feeling, or judgment, but it can embrace it by singularization, belief, knowledge, certainty, love, and devotion by Allāh's grant and selection.

We see together with Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh how Allāh is beyond all that is related to man's mind, and imagination, and visualization. He denies Allāh's incarnation, and denies that Allāh can be bound by space. He shows that knowledge of Allāh in reality is a pure immaterial abstract thing which fills the heart of the traveler when he abstains from the world and conquers all his passions. This certainty

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itself is primarily a result of Allāh's will, grant, and selection, and not of man's will, earning, or choice.

As man's arrival to knowledge will be by purifying the heart, the traveler must turn always to his heart and purify it from its leaning to desires, passions, neglectfulness, etc., so that his heart shines and proceeds on to Allāh and understands the minute secrets of knowledge. Listen to Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh urging the traveler to purify his heart to achieve all that:

“How can any heart shine when the images of creations are imprinted on its mirror?
How can it hope to enter into Allāh's presence when it is washed with its neglectfulness?
How can it hope to understand minute secrets if it has not yet abandoned its folly?!”

Our Shaykh also shows that, as a condition for knowledge to reach to the heart, the heart must be evacuated from all else. In other words, it should be evacuated from everything except Allāh. In this respect, he says to the traveler: “It is likely that lights sometimes fall on you, but they find your heart full with its images of creations, so they return back to where they came from. Evacuate your heart from the others and He will fill it with knowledge and secrets.”

5-The Systems of Knowledge: Influence and Beholding:

On the basis of distinguishing between the two tools of knowledge, (the mind and the heart), our Shaykh distinguishes between two approaches in this connection; one is concerned with the mind, and that is proving the existence of Allāh through looking into creations and what they have of proofs that indicate the existence of their Creator and His capability. The other is related with the heart, and that is beholding, with which the Ṣūfī feels the heavenly Being in his state of annihilation and absence from the material world.

The mental or rational influence approach is the approach which carries its user to move from one meaning to another, as for example moving from observing the creations of Allāh to the presence of their Creator: Allāh. It is an approach which is used by logicians and philosophers and its deductions are to be trusted.

As for the abstract beholding approach: it does not imply that the mind moves from one meaning to another. It is an approach by which a Ṣūfī feels the Supreme Reality (Allāh), through direct feeling (taste), which has nothing to do with mental deductions. It is also called “Ṣūfī disclosure” (kashf). It is an approach which is only used by Ṣūfis and they prefer it to any other approach for attaining knowledge.

To these two approaches, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says in the *Maxims*: “The thinking process is two-fold: thinking of belief and faith and thinking of beholding and witnessing. The first is for mentalists, and the other is for those with insight.”

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh explains that the “inference approach” with which the knower proves that creations prove their Creator, is based on Allāh's saying: “Say, look into what is in the skies and the earth”, and His saying: “Cannot they look at camels, how they were created?” And to Allāh's saying: “In the earth, there are proofs for the assured and also within yourselves. Cannot you see?”

As for the insight approach with which its user reaches to the knowledge of Allāh by direct taste (feeling), which Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh sometimes calls “proving creations by their Creator”, It is based on Allāh's saying: “Is it not enough for your Sustainer that He is beholding everything”, and His saying: “It is enough that Allāh is beholding”, and Allāh's saying: “Is there any doubt in Allāh? The Creator of the skies and the earth.” Although the mental inference approach is credible, yet the knowledge gained does not add to the existence of Allāh because Allāh is always present. When was He absent to look for a proof for proving His presence? How can He be proved by something when its own existence relies on Him?”

Listen to Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh saying in this respect: “There is a great difference between who proves by Him, and who uses things to prove Him. He that proves by Him, has known reality, but who uses things to prove Him, will not reach Him. When has He been absent, as to have to prove His presence? When has He been alienated, as to use creations to get to reach Him?” Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh also says in one of his sweet supplications:

“My Allāh, how can You be proved by something whose very existence relies on You?

Is anything else more visible than you as to reveal You?

When were You absent as to look for a proof to establish Your presence?

When were You alienated as to use creations to get to reach You?”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh becomes astonished when it is said that creations lead to their Creator. Do creations have any real existence in relation to the existence of Allāh as to lead to Him? Or are they more apparent that they can reveal Him?! If creations lead to the knowledge of Allāh by inference, this is only possible because Allāh has authorized them to do it, so they do it by order, not because they in themselves have any power to do it. Consequently, arrival to Allāh can only be attained by a grant from Allāh. “No one reaches Him without Deifying Him.”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh considers people who use inference and deduction as commoners in relation to people who behold. He says in this connection: “If you like, you can say that there are two domains: one for proofs and deductions, and the other for beholding and witnessing. The first is for mentalists and the second is for those with insight. For the first, there is the ayah: ‘We shall get them to see our revelations everywhere and within themselves until they believe that He is the True.’ For the second, there is the ayah: ‘Say, Allā h, and leave them in their muddle playing.’”

Mentalists are considered commoners in relation to people with insight because people with insight esteem the True in His prevailing Presence and do not need any proof to prove His Presence. How can He who created proofs be proved? How can He be known by something when He himself got people to know that thing?!”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh calls the mentalists, if they are among Ṣūfis, the ‘travelers’, and calls Ṣūfis who rely on the insight approach, the ‘attracted’. We shall see with him the difference between the two:

6- The ‘Travelers’ and The ‘Attracted’:

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh classifies Ṣūfis with regard to the knowledge of Allāh into two groups. The first group is that of the ‘travelers’ who use the creations of Allāh to prove His Names, and His Names to prove His Attributes, and His Attributes to prove His Being. The second group includes the ‘attracted’, to whom Allāh has primarily disclosed the perfection of His Being through direct witnessing. They know Allāh from the beginning, then they turn from knowing the Being to witnessing the Attributes, from witnessing the Attributes to clinging to the Names and then from clinging to the Names to seeing creations.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh calls the travelers’ path, the *path of ascent* and the path of the attracted the *path of descent*. He refers to that in one of his maxims by saying: “He indicated the presence of His Names by the presence of His creations, by presence of His Names, He indicated the certainty of His Attributes, by His Attributes, He indicated His Being, as it is impossible for any attribute to stand by itself. For the attracted, He unveils the perfection of His Being, then He gets them to witness His Attributes, then He gets them to cling to His Names, and then He gets them to witness His creations. As for the travelers, the case is the opposite. The end of the travelers is the beginning of the attracted and the

beginning of the travelers is the end of the attracted. They may meet on the path, one in his descent and the other in his ascent.”

It is shown, then, that a traveler depends on mental deductions as he proceeds from proving a case to proving another case until he reaches to the knowledge of Allāh. His mental deduction is an ascending deduction in which he ascends from the contemplation of creations into the knowledge of the creator. His knowledge is a discursive knowledge.

The knowledge of the attracted is a knowledge by taste (feeling), which is attained by a direct intuition. Allāh primarily reveals the perfection of His Being to the attracted, then He gets him to know His names, attributes, and creations. There is here descending deduction from feeling Allāh's Being to proving the creations of Allāh, or what is called the “world of action”.

Witnessing Allāh by the attracted is not a kind of sensible intuition which deals with outer sensible things. It is neither a sort of rational intuition like the realization of relationships between meanings. It is not a sort of a metaphysical intuition which deals with subjects which are out of the reach of senses as is the case with Kant or other modern philosophers. The attracted when witnessing Allāh does not depend on the mind and its tools, but he gets a direct emotional awareness of a special kind which occurs in a state of absence or annihilation. It is not easy to describe it or to subject it to scientific research, because of its subjectivity. The research into the possibility or impossibility of attaining knowledge by this Ṣūfī awareness, about which Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh and other Ṣūfis speak, will be in our view fruitless unless the researcher is himself a Ṣūfī, who has experienced such awareness.

The following is a diagram showing the different paths of the traveler and the attracted as seen by Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh:

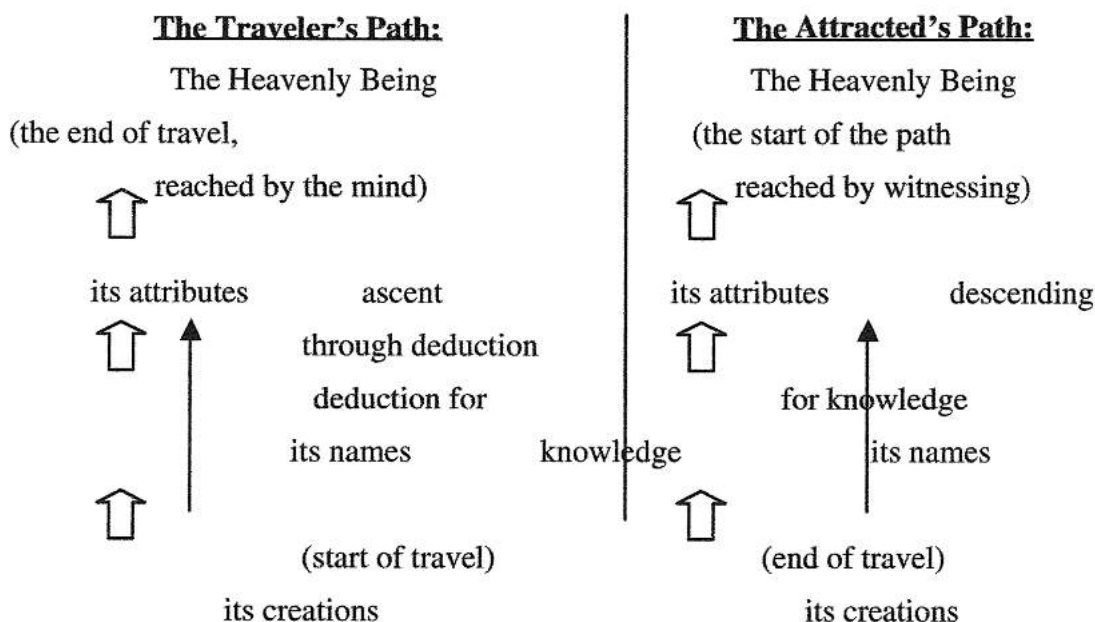


figure (1)

Because Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh sees knowledge by direct feeling or witnessing as more perfect than knowledge by proofs and mental deductions, and because he considers mentalists or rationalists commoners in relation to people with insight, as we have mentioned earlier, that means he prefers the state of the attracted to the state of the traveler with knowledge of Allāh.

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh's preference of the state of the attracted to the state of the traveler is connected with his basic conception of dropping self direction and the reliance on Allāh's attention. How is it so?

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh indicates that arrival to the knowledge of Allāh is not attained by the traveler's nafs-jihad or his obedience or good deeds because if it were so, that would mean that arrival will be caused by human will while man has no real will in relation to Allāh's Will. Hence arrival to Allāh can only be by Allāh's attention. If arrival to Allāh is by the sheer attention of Allāh, why could not it be possible that there are slaves whom Allāh had primarily chosen for his attention? He got them to know Him directly without getting them to strive or toil into the various states and stations. Allāh is not to be asked *why* He does it so.

By that, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh gives a special place in his Ṣūfī doctrine for Allāh's attention, and believes that the attracted is a person whom Allāh had primarily chosen and got him to know His Being right from the beginning. He had folded the road for him and therefore he missed the hardship and difficulties of the road. Listen to him explaining this to his mureed: "Do not think that the attracted has no path. He has a path that had been for him by Allāh's attention. He passed through it quickly to Allāh. We often hear that the traveler is more perfect than the attracted because the traveler experienced the path and the attracted had not. They say that because they think that the attracted has no path. It is not so. The path has been folded for the attracted. However, he that the path had been folded for, does not miss it. He only misses its hardship and length...."

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, and Shādhḍhulis who followed him, esteemed attraction, and their doctrine therefore called for witnessing Allāh right from the first place on the road. In other words, witnessing Allāh in the beginning of the path, and not at its end as other Ṣūfis call for. Shaykh Zarrouq tells us that the degree of attraction as seen by Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh and Shādhḍhulis is the degree of the ascertained knower and not the degree of the traveler which Al Ḡhazali and other Ṣūfis revolve around who look at the knowledge of Allāh as the end of the path, not its beginning. Quite naturally, Shaykh Zarrouq, being a Shādhḍhuli, prefers the first path for the knowledge of Allāh because it coincides with faith, intuition, and sharia's objective in strengthening certainty and piety right from the beginning. In this connection he says: "The variety in a branch is due to the variety of its origin. The origin of Ṣūfism is the station of 'Ihsan (goodness) and it splits into two kinds: to worship Allāh as if you are beholding Him, or because He beholds you. The first is the degree of the knower, the second is the inferior degree. Around the first degree Shādhḍhulis revolve and on the second revolves Al Ḡhazali. The Shādhḍhulis' degree is founded on the bases which each believer has to possess. Intuition helps to realize it, and shari'a is found in it, because it aims at strengthening certainty and ascertaining piety."

Also, Ibn Ayyad Al Shādhḍhuli says regarding the difference between the Shādhḍhuli theory of knowledge and Al Ḡhazali's theory of knowledge: "As for the knowledge of states and stations and ethics related to them which is known for Ṣūfis, people within it are grouped into two groups: the group which witnesses the True (Allāh) from their first step in the path, and that is the Shādhḍhuli theory and its followers, and the other is the Ḡhazali theory, which cares for witnessing the nafs as seen by Allāh and consequently working for uplifting it. Each group loses itself on the prophetic hadith: 'Worship Allāh as if you are seeing Him', and that is for Shādhḍhulis, and the second part of the hadith: 'If you do not witness Him, know that He sees you', and that is for Al Ḡhazali's group."

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's theory of knowledge is quite interesting. On one hand, he does not entirely exclude mental deduction from the Ṣūfī approach, but he considers it as we have seen, a state for the Ṣūfī traveler, yet he thinks it is less perfect than knowledge through insight, with which the attracted is ascertained by his feeling. He therefore does not put down the mind in the way many Ṣūfis do. On the other hand, he considers the attracted's knowledge of Allāh is attained by the sheer attention and will of Allāh, which had decreed that the whole path is to be folded for the attracted from its beginning to the end. This shows that this knowledge occurs at the beginning of the path and not at its end as Al Ḡhazali and other Ṣūfis believe. In addition, there is another interesting point in Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's theory of knowledge and that is his direct application of his idea about dropping self direction and will in this field.

7- Knowledge and Dropping Self Direction:

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh states, as we have seen, that knowledge of Allāh had been instilled in the human nafs since the world of atoms, when Allāh said: "Am I not your Sustainer?" He sees it as a sheer outcome of Allāh's attention. He says to his mureed: "Know that the True has always taken good care of you, all your life and He did that too when He brought you to existence... among his good taking care of you, was that He got you to know Him, so you know Him. He revealed himself to you, so you witnessed Him. He got you to speak and inspired you to attest His Deity so you singularized Him...."

This sort of knowledge of Allāh, as seen by Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, is basically nothing more than a knowledge of dropping self direction with Allāh, because the slave's attestation of Allāh's Deity in the world of atoms means an attestation of dropping planning with Him and dropping partnership with Him in what He alone owns. Dropping planning with Allāh was a bond with Allāh before the existence of the nafs. When the nafs entered into the body and was clothed with it, it started to plan. That means that its knowledge of Allāh was veiled by the thick human veil.

When the Ṣūfī traveler arrives to knowledge, when he witnesses the secrets of the Malakut, and when he faces and finds reality, he will be entirely ascertained with dropping self direction. Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh says: "Allāh has agreed with all his slaves in dropping planning with Him by His saying: "...and He got them to attest when He said am I not your Sustainer? They said yes...." Their attestation necessitated a dropping of planning with Him; that was a bind that had occurred before the emergence of the nafs, which is a seat for disturbance and planning with Allāh. Had the slave remained as before, where veils were disclosed and where he was in the presence of Allāh, he would have not planned with Allāh. Yet, when the veil was fallen, disturbance and planning occurred. Due to this, we find that those who know Allāh are witnessing the secrets of the Malakut and that they have no planning with Him."

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh consequently shows to the traveler who wants to be assured with knowledge that it does not befit him to know Allāh and singularize Him in the world of atoms, and then not to know Him here in this material world where he plans with Him and does not resort to Him in his needs or lean on Him. Has Allāh said: "You believers, fulfill your bonds!" What bond is more important than the bond of dropping planning with Allāh, which in itself is a sign of man's slavehood to Allāh and at the same time a proof for certifying Allāh's Deity.

Add to what has preceded, that the essence of knowledge, as seen by Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh, is that the traveler should not see it as related to his will. It is not connected with his deeds of nafs-jihad, whether much or little. Whenever and wherever Allāh wishes to get it to flow on him, it will flow. His striving will not be a cause for its flow, as Allāh's acts are too sacred to be caused by man. Consequently, the mureed should not subside with his deeds of nafs-jihad or become desperate if he finds them so few or on the other hand expects the flow of knowledge because his good deeds are numerous. In this connection, Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh advises the mureed by saying:

"If He opens for you a door for knowledge, do not bother if you find that your good deeds were so few. He had not opened it for you except because He wants you to know Him. Do you know that it is He Who gets knowledge to flow on you and that your deeds are presentations from you to Him? How far is the difference between what you present to Him and what He gets to flow on you?"

By all this, Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh applies his doctrine of dropping self direction with Allah entirely, showing that it is an intuitive matter with which man had been ascertained in the world of atoms since the time of "Am I not your Sustainer?" On the other hand, he does not relate the occurrence of knowledge to acts of nafs-jihad, much or little, because he believes that man in reality had no will of his own and that the occurrence of knowledge comes by sheer heavenly attention. How many hard working worshipers have not arrived?! How many slaves were chosen by the heavenly attention and the path had been folded for them without experiencing any toil or hardship on the path?!

CHAPTER 7: WITNESSING THE ONENESS IN EXISTENCE

“Knowers do not see any existence or loss for everything. They only see Allāh and that there is nothing with Him as to need any proof to establish His existence.”

“There are two blisses which are given to everybody and everybody needs them: the bliss of becoming and the bliss of succor.”

“He placed you in the middle world between His kingdom and His Malakut to show you your high place among His creations and that you are a gem which is covered with the shells of His creations.”

“The whole universe is dark. It is lit by the illumination of the True. He that beholds the universe and does not see Him in it, or with it, or before it or after it, will be missing light and the suns of knowledge will be veiled from him by the clouds of creations.”

“Creations are established by Him and are obliterated by the Oneness of His Being.”

“Who beholds creations without beholding the True in them is heedless; he who is of them is a slave that is distracted by the influence of beholding. Who witnesses Allāh in them, is a complete chosen slave.”

1- When Does a Şūfi See the Oneness in Existence

2- How Were Creations Created

3- Degrees of Creations

4 - The Relation Between Allāh and Man

5- The Relation between Allāh and Creations

6- The Oneness

7- Categories of Knowers with Regard to Witnessing the Oneness

8- Witnessing the Oneness and Dropping Self Direction

9- A Discussion of Some Interpretations of Ibn ‘Aţā’Illāh’s Theory About the Oneness & His Interpretation of Existence.

1- When Does a Şūfi See the Oneness in Existence:

After a Şūfi is ascertained in the end of the path by the knowledge of Allāh, he proceeds from this knowledge to adopting a doctrine that interprets existence, which is based on a foundation of a Şūfi taste, and not on mental proofs.

This doctrine of interpreting existence which the Şūfi adopts is called by Ibn ‘Aţā’Illāh: ‘Witnessing the oneness’. It means that Allāh is the real existence and that all other grades of existence and everything else in the universe except Him, has no real existence. Their existence, which we think real, is in fact imaginary. ‘Witnessing the Oneness’ in existence is achieved by insight and by taste, and it is a necessity for the knowledge of Allāh. Ibn ‘Aţā’Illāh shows that by saying: “If the Şūfi knows Allāh, Allāh’s existence will be enough for him not to see any other kind of existence, and it will enrich him in a way that he will never consider that he had lost anything. On the other hand, he that loses Allāh will never find anything and he that finds Allāh will never lose anything.

How can one lose anything when he finds Who really reveals it? With knowers, anything except Allāh is neither found nor lost, as there is nothing existing together with Allāh because of His Oneness and there is nothing lost, because only that which exists can be lost. If the veil of illusion is lifted, there will be beholding of the inexistence of creations. When the light of certainty shines, no existence will be seen (“the others”).

Knowers, in their witnessing the Oneness of Allāh in existence, draw their knowledge, as Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh thinks, from the oceans of prophets and Allāh's messengers. He says: "...Knowers by Allāh are witnessing His Oneness and they do not see anything else with Him. If they are so, what do you think of prophets and messengers of Allāh: knowers and mono iests have in fact drawn from their oceans and their lights?"

In order to know Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh's doctrine of witnessing the Oneness, we shall primarily deal in this chapter with Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh's interpretation of existence and his conception of its images, then we shall deal with man's relation with Allāh and show how the knower witnesses the Oneness, then we shall deal with categories of beholders and explain the relation between witnessing the oneness and dropping self direction. We shall end the chapter by a discussion of some misinterpretation of Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh's doctrine about the oneness and interpretation of existence.

2- How Creations Were Created:

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh says that Allāh had created all creations and those creations are dependent on two blisses from Allāh: creation and succor (supply). The bliss of creation is the act by which Allāh gets a thing to emerge out of its previous nonexistence to its following existence in this world. As for the bliss of support, it is the act that is related with creations after they are created because every created thing needs what would maintain and keep its existence. In other words, it needs what protects it from the following existence. Allāh therefore supports it to maintain its existence. In this respect, Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh says in his *Maxims*, "There are two blisses which are given to everybody and everybody needs them: the bliss of occurrence and the bliss of getting supported." He also says in explaining that the existence of Allāh is what keeps and maintains the existence of the world: "Allāh has supported all that exists by His grants. Allāh's existence kept the existence of the world by supporting it." He then says to the traveler, showing that his very existence is a sheer grant from Allāh, and maintaining it is by a sheer grant from Allāh to him: "Allāh has first got you to exist and then He got His support to flow over you."

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh thus conceives that all that exists including man is in need, in its very existence and the continuity of it, of Allāh. He (Allāh) alone establishes for them the degree of existence by getting them out of nonexistence and then by His successive support to them. If that had not happened, they would have not existed, and their existence would have not lasted.

What Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh says as an interpretation of existence by occurrence and support is almost identical with what the two French philosophers Decartes and Malbranche said later in what they called *Creation Continuee*.

Decartes finds that God maintains and helps the existence of the world and that the act with which God made the world to exist is the same act with which He maintains its existence. Decartes says: "...It is certain, and that is common among ideologists, that the act with which God maintains the world is the same act with which he has created it." He also believes that God maintains the existence of man; he says: ".... The fact that we are now existing does not necessarily mean that we shall exist the following moment unless there is a cause for that. It is the same cause that got us to exist. It means that we have to maintain our existence although we know so simply that we do not possess within us any power that enables us to remain existing or to maintain our existence in the following moment...."

As Decartes sees that the world needs the continuous acts of God to keep its existence, Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh sees also that the world needs after the act of occurrence, to get maintained by an act of support (without any gap between the two acts).

As Decartes sees that man has no power to enable him to stay alive or to maintain his life in the following moment unless there is a cause for that which is God, Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh sees also that man depends on Allāh to get him to exist and to maintain his existence for him.

Malbranche has an interpretation of existence similar to that of Decartes and Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh. He says: “If the world is existing, it is only because God is continuously willing to get it to exist. Maintaining the creations (including man) is also made by God as a continuous creation.”

3- Grades of Creations:

Creations which Allāh got to be created, though sharing together the two blisses of occurrence and succor, differ in their grades of existence. Allāh had meant that to be in order to get the various aspects of His will and its cast to be known. Listen to Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh saying here: “...Allāh had created all creations and granted them with bliss of occurrence and support. This may explain Allāh’s saying: “My mercy copes with everything.” But when creations shared is bliss of occurrence and support, Allāh wished to distinguish between them to show the vastness of His will and its wide extent. He had endowed some of His creations for example by growth, like plants, animals, man, and so His will was more visibly seen in them than in other creations which are not growing. When those three creations shared each other in growth, He got the animal to share man in living and that living phenomenon was more visible in them than in the plant, which is also living. Then He wanted to single out man and so He gave him the mind, and man was consequently preferred to animal and with the mind, He completed His bliss to man...”

The difference in the grades of creations is, in Ibn Ata’Illah’s view, a proof of the vastness and extent of Allāh’s will and the fact that man’s being is put on the top of creations, is because Allāh granted him with the mind and consequently man became the best of all creations.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh in his preference of man does not only stop at that limit, but man according to His view, is a reservoir for all secrets of the universe, whether high or low and that man combines the two worlds of “mulk” and “Malakut”. Consequently in man, there is a heavenly side and so he really is the gem of the entire existence. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says in the *Maxims* to the traveler: “He placed you in the middle world between His mulk and His Malakut, to get you to know how preferred you are among his creations and that you are a gem which is covered by the shell of all His creations.”

Because man is a reservoir for all secrets of the universe, and at the same time, He combines the two worlds of Mulk and Malakut, the whole universe cannot enclose man except in his bodily reality. As for his spiritual reality, nothing can surround it because it is from Allāh’s command. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says to the traveler: “The universe copes with you as a body, but it cannot enclose your spiritual existence.” In addition to this: “Allāh made the heart of man a place for His knowledge and secrets.” That shows the high degree of man in relation to the degrees of other creations.

To sum up: creations of Allāh differ, in Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s view, in their grade of existence and the highest of them is man who had been granted the bliss of mind and had been granted the combination of the two worlds of Mulk and Malakut and also the bliss of his knowledge of Allāh. What comes after man in grade are the animal, plant, and material.

But how does Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh conceive the relation between Allāh, man, and the universe? We shall try to explore that in the following paragraphs by explaining his conception of Allāh’s relation with man and then his conception of Allāh’s relation with the universe:

4- Allāh’s Relation with Man:

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh believes that, “Allāh created man to make him the most revealing object of His appearance with regard to His Being and His attributes and to instill into him secrets of knowledge and heavenly lights. Other creations are not so, they have no share of these secrets or lights. Allāh created them with His attributes of power and capability alone. Allāh says: “Allāh is the light of the heavens and the earth”. The light of the heavens of spirits with which they witness Him and the light of the nafs’ earth to obey Him and serve Him. He made the hearts of Šūfī knowers a place for revealing His Being and for the appearance of His attributes. He created man specifically to reveal Him because he

is generally revealed in everything. He shows Himself in man by His light and secrets and in man and other things with His power and capability.”

Allāh's appearance in man however does not mean incarnation, combination or mixture in a material sense, it means that Allāh appears alone with His attributes in man taking into consideration His entire difference from man. Consequently, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, out of esteem, excludes Allāh entirely from all human conceptions or visualizations.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says in excluding Allāh from incarnation and any other human visualizations: "...It is related after Allāh that He said in a hadith qudsi (heavenly saying): 'My throne, My chair, and My sky cannot contain me, but the heart of My slave does.' The meaning here is that the heart can cope with His singularity, and with faith, knowledge, certainty, love, and devotion being grants and selection by Allāh, but it cannot cope with Him with respect to space, imagination, incarnations, sensing or judgment.”

Man, in Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's view, can possibly exist because he draws his existence from the Absolute Giver of existence: Allāh alone. Alone is the necessary existence. Nothing in the universe can even share with Him this attribute. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh sometimes calls this grade of existence "the potential of need". He says: "...If man beholds Allāh's dominating grip, he will know that his need of Allāh is continuous. This need gives man the grade of slave because he has been created, and everything that is created is in need of a supporter and support to supply him. As Allāh is the ever rich, the slave will need Him always. This need does not abandon man in life or in the hereafter.”

As the reality of man is that he is a creation, so his need of Allāh is an essential need. Man should not be proud of being the highest of creation, as Allāh has endowed him with the mind and knowledge, because this richness is temporary. What is temporary cannot substitute for what is inherent in the being itself. Had man been made rich by his being, he would have been able to drive away everything that contradicts his existence which comes to him by the sheer will and dominance of Allāh. Listen to Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh saying to the traveler: "Your need is inherent in you. Means given to you are reminders to you of what had been forgotten by you of it. Inherent need cannot be obliterated by temporaries.”

If man in reality is a creation, then how can he possibly propagate Deity for himself? His behavior in all cases should be by ascertaining his attributes of slavehood. A slave is a slave and the Sustainer is the Sustainer. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says to the traveler: "Cling to the attributes of His Deity and be ascertained with the attributes of your slavehood.” He also says to him: "He prohibited for you to propagate what is not for the creatures, will He allow you to propagate His attributes while He is the Sustainer of all creations?!" He also says to his mureed, reminding him that his being is really in obligatory need to Allāh: "He had not asked from you anything like being in need of Him. Nothing is more speedy in attaining grants than your obligedness and humility.”

All these maxims aim at sacredly excluding Allāh from man's real partnership with Him in any of His attributes.

If Allāh is sacredly excluded in His Deity and attributes from being like any of His creatures, He is also excluded in His acts from the necessity of having a cause or reason for them from man. Allāh's attention, too, cannot be caused by the slave's obedience or deeds, because Allāh's attention had preceded these deeds and obedience. How can then destiny's deeds be caused by the voluntary will of man? Where was man when Allāh had predestined him by His sheer knowledge which is beyond the scope of times' considerations? Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says in this connection to the traveler:

“His attention of you was not due to anything from you.

Where have you been when he bestowed his attention and guidance on you?!

In His destiny there was no devotion in deeds or presence of states.

There was nothing but sheer great endowment and bestowal.”

Allāh’s acts do not even have causes or reasons from Allāh. How can they have causes from man? Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh, in his supplication, says of this meaning: “My Allāh, Your contentment is too sacred to have any cause for it from You. How can it have a cause from me?! You are the Rich by yourself that no benefit can reach You. How can You ever need any benefit from me?!”

Allāh is too sacred for any creature to reach Him in the way beings reach each other. The reach or arrival spoken of by Şūfis is the arrival of knowledge by Allāh, not to combination, not to being incarnated in them, nor in any sort of faulty visualizations.

In this connection, he says to the traveler: “Your arrival to Allāh is an arrival to His knowledge. Allāh is too sacred to get connected with anything or that anything can be connected with Him.”

Exalting Allāh and excluding Him from human visualizations does not stop as such but Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh extends that to his negation of man’s proximity from Allāh as understood between things. The proximity of man from Allāh does not mean anything more than man’s beholding of Allāh’s proximity by taste. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says to his mureed: “You proximity is your beholding of His proximity. Where are you really from His proximity?!”

To sum up all that has preceded, Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh conceives of Allāh as existing by the necessity of existence. He caused man to exist and He is too sacred to be visualized, imagined, or conceived in terms of any human consideration such as filling space, incarnation, arrival as understood between things, or proximity in a material sense. In addition, Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh protects Allāh’s acts from any thought of being caused by man, and that because he believes that Allāh’s will is absolute and free and to it, everything in the universe submits.

5- The Relation Between Allāh and Creations:

Allāh has created creations by His grants of occurrence and supporting supply. But why did Allāh create creations?

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh replies by saying that Allāh has got creations to occur only to get them to be a scope of His relevance in His various attributes. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh considers creations as mirrors that reflect Allāh in such attributes. He says in this connection: “Creations are mirrors of the attributes... creations do not exist to look at them but to see their Creator in them. Allāh’s wish for you is to see them as revealing Allāh and to see them as beings. In this, we composed the lines of poetry:

“Creations have been exposed to you only to see them
By the eye of who does not see them.
Light yourself above them in a way that prevents you
From seeing except only their Creator.”

As Allāh had created all the different creations to reveal His attributes in them and to get man to know Him by such relevance, Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh advises the traveler not to see creations in themselves, but to see them as revelations of Allāh in them. He says to the traveler in one of the maxims: “He has permitted you to see what is in the creations but He does not permit you to stop at their being. ‘Say, see what is in the skies.’ By this He opened gates of understanding for you. He did not say, ‘See the skies,’ because this would only get you to behold bodies.”

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh believes that creations of all sorts have no order of real existence. Real existence is only for Allāh, and He has His Oneness in it. Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh compares the existence of creations with the existence of shade. As shade does not exist as a grade of existence, and is not as real as a grade of nonexistence, so creations are neither existing as grades of existence, nor annihilated as grades of nonexistence. Their appearance does obliterate the oneness of Allāh because He is the One in reality

although His shades may be numerous. Creations are not like Him. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says on this point: "The nearest thing to the existence of creations, if you look with the eye of your insight, is the existence of shade. Shade does not exist as a grade of existence and is not annihilated as a grade of nonexistence. If the shade of creations are established, this does obliterate the Oneness of their Creator (Allāh)...."

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh shows that the existence of creations is an imaginary existence and that it is nearer to nonexistence than to existence, because what exists by something else is in itself characterized by nonexistence. He says: "...creations have no grade of absolute existence because true existence is for Allāh. He has the Oneness in this existence. Creations only have the existence He alone wishes to establish for them. So you should know that what is in existence does not come from itself, it is nonexistence in its nature...."

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh believes that the existence of creations is enclosed in the existence of Allāh because Allāh is attributed by being the 'apparent'. Being apparent means nothing else should be termed as apparent with Him, which means that the evidence is enclosed in His existence. Also being the "hidden" implies that the appearance of anything only emanates from Him because there is no other "interior" with Him. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says here: "He revealed everything because He is the Interior and He enclosed everything because He is the Apparent."

As Allāh is really apparent in all existence, there is no veil whatsoever between Him and the world. Veil is only found in the veiled by their sheer illusions because they have not yet avoided seeing themselves and the "others". Listen to him saying to the traveler: "You are not veiled from Allāh by anything that is with Him. But you are veiled because you imagine the presence of another with Him."

He proves the inexistence of the veil by saying: "The True is not veiled. It is you who is veiled from beholding Him because if He is veiled, there will be something to conceal Him. If he is concealed, it would be existing and dominating Him, while He alone 'is the Dominant over His slaves'."

He also says to the traveler: "...he that beholds the shades of things, they will not hinder him from Allāh as the shades of trees over rivers do not hinder ships from sailing. It is therefore clear to you that the veil is not an existing substance between you and Allāh. If there had been a real veil between you and Him, it must be nearer to you than Him while there is nothing nearer than Allāh. Therefore the reality about veiling is alone imagining its existence...."

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh shows his astonishment at creations being causes for veiling Allāh, because Allāh is apparent in the creations themselves by His attributes. He says: "How can the True be veiled by something while He is apparent, existing and present in it?!"

Allāh is apparent in the whole universe and without His appearance in it, it would have never existed. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says here:

"The whole universe is dark, but it is lit by the appearance of the True in it.

He that sees the universe without beholding Allāh in it or with, or before it, or after it, he would be missing lights and suns of knowledge will be covered for him by the clouds of creations."

If Allāh is apparent in the whole universe, what then are the indications of this appearance in Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's view?

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says in one of his maxims showing indications of Allāh's appearance in the universe as such: "How could it be imagined that anything can hide Him, and it is Him who got everything to appear?! How could it be imagined that anything can hide Him. and it is He who is apparent by everything?! How could it be imagined that anything can hide Him. and it is He who is apparent in everything?! How could it be imagined that anything can hide Him and He is the One with whom

there is nothing else?! How could it be imagined that anything can hide Him and without Him nothing could have existed?!”

What is meant by these phrases of Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh? By Allāh getting everything to appear, he means that Allāh got creations to emerge from the darkness of nihility (nonexistence) to the light of existence by His acts of occurrence and support. His being apparent by everything means that the appearance of Allāh is proved by the creations. His being apparent in everything means that it is He Who reveals Himself in everything by His Attributes and Names and not by incarnation. His being apparent to everything means that He is apparent to creations by His Attributes and Names. His being apparent before the occurrence of everything means that He had been existing before time and before anything that existed. His being more apparent than anything means that creations which they had created are not in reality appearing. His being one without anyone else with Him means that Allāh is existing by all considerations of existence. Creations are not like Him, because their existence is absent in relation to the existence of Allāh, Who is the very essence of existence. His being nearer to us than anything else is obvious due to Allāh’s saying: “We have created man and know his suspicions that are within himself. We are nearer to Him than his jugular vein.”

As for the meaning of Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh saying ‘without Him, there would have been no creation for anything’, it is that without existence of Allāh, no existence would have been established for creations. Attracted people have proved the existence of creations by the existence of Allāh.

This is our explanation of the above phrases which indicate the appearance of Allāh. It is to be strictly cautioned to take these phrases by their outer meaning because this may create misunderstanding and will get them out of what he had meant them to be. We shall explain this in another place in this chapter when we deal with some misinterpretations of Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s conception of existence and we shall comment on them to show their incorrectness.

To sum up, Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh sees that Allāh has created creations in the world to make them expressions of His appearance. These creations, irrespective of their grades, have no grace of real existence but the real existence is for Allāh. Creations in relations to Allāh are similar to the presence of the shadow in relation to whom the shadow emanates from. There is no veil whatsoever between Allāh and the universe and that veil itself is something imaginary.

Is it not that what Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh has said about the Oneness of Allāh and that there is nothing with Him, a doctrine of abnegating creations and establishing the Oneness? We shall try now to show his view in this respect in more detail:

6- The Oneness:

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh concludes his conception that creations are not existing in reality by certifying the Oneness with which there is neither plurality or duality.

Allāh, in Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s view, is the Absolute Existence that is characterized by real existence; His existence is necessity and that everything else other than Him that exists draws its existence from Him, but in itself it is destroyable and vanishing. For Allāh, there is the perfect existence, its continuity. His presence is everlasting and can never be annihilated.

Allāh is attributed by the Oneness. He cannot be split, or composed or synthesized. He is too sacred to be subjected to temporary changes and in general, He is sacredly secluded from all changes.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh also believes that Allāh is the first that ever existed. Nothing was before Him and therefore His Oneness preceded everything. Allāh was and there was nothing with Him. Allāh said about Himself: “I was a hidden treasure. I wished to be known, so I created creations and by Me they know Me.” It is also said: “Allāh was and there was nothing with Him. He is now still what He was.” Time that is implied here, as Al Rondi says, is imaginary and does not really exist. He means that there

is nothing with Allāh because of His Oneness.

As Allāh is attributed by the Oneness, other creations therefore have no existence with Him. Their existence is imaginary in the way Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh has expressed earlier.

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh sums up his doctrine about the Oneness in one of his maxims, which says: "Creations are existing by Him and are annihilated by the Oneness of His Being."

However, what is the way to prove His Oneness?

Using the mind to prove the oneness in the universe is quite possible. Yet our Shaykh does not like this method. He prefers to prove His existence of the oneness in a state of witnessing by taste (feeling). We shall show how this can happen:

7- Categories of Knowers With Respect to Beholding the Oneness:

A Ṣūfī is not ascertained with the witnessing of the Oneness unless his knowledge of Allāh is ascertained. Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh classifies knowers with regards to the witnessing of the oneness into three categories:

There is the knower who reaches the witnessing of the Oneness and the proximity of Allāh by way of insight or the light of the mind. He is a knower that depends on the mind and inferences.

There is a knower who reaches the witnessing of his own nihility in relation to the Oneness of Allāh by the eye of his insight. Although he also depends on the minds and inferences, yet he is more complete than the first.

There is a knower who reaches the witnessing of the Oneness of Allāh in a state of annihilation and absence from himself and the world of creations. He neither sees his existence nor his nihility because witnessing the Oneness overwhelms his heart. He is the Ṣūfī who relies on taste and feeling and not on deductions or proofs and he does not see anything together with Allāh.

About these three categories, Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh in one of his maxims says to his mureed: "The way of insight gets you to see His proximity to you. The way of the eye of insight gets you to see your nihility because of His existence. True insight gets you to see His existence, not your existence nor your nihility."

A Ṣūfī who is ascertained with annihilation, and is wrapped in the witnessing of the Oneness of Allāh, never indicates it. How can he indicate when the language itself fails to express his findings? That witnessing is an emotional matter that occupies him entirely and therefore he is not in fact capable of looking for indications. If this is clear, Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh's following statement will be clear. He says: "A knower is not the one who indicates (explains); he will find Allāh nearer to him than any indication. A knower is the one who does not indicate due to his nihility in his existence and because he is being wrapped in his witnessing Him." A Ṣūfī will be ascertained by witnessing the Oneness of Allāh in the universe only when he is in a state of absence from himself. In other words, he is not ascertained by witnessing the Oneness unless he is absent from himself and does not therefore feel his organs, his inner interactions, or the outer world.

Ibn 'Aṭā' Illāh tells us the Ṣūfī's ascertainment of witnessing the Oneness is achieved by dhikr of the name 'Allāh'. It is the name that combines all attributes of deity, the Sustainer's nature who is singular in real existence. He that sticks to dhikr by this name, will "belittle anything else, glorify Allāh's commands, and will behold the fall of creations. He will be overwhelmed by accompaniment, will be resorting to Allāh, will watch his breaths, he will carry on his dhikr by the name outwardly and inwardly until he is filled with infatuation. That means that his secret melts in his existence and the reality of his witnessing. He therefore does not see anything but Allāh and does not feel anything else."

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh also tells us that dhikr is apt to put the supplicator into a state in which the whole world is aggregated in one entity and he therefore cannot see with the eye of his heart except the only One in the whole existence.

A Ṣūfī is not ascertained with witnessing the Oneness by a logical deduction or by theoretical research. He is ascertained with it through an epical state of taste which no one else shares with him in it. In this state, he feels that the outer world is not characterized by any real existence due to its vanishing in the existence of Allāh as the light of the candle vanishes in the light of the sun.

By this, Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh confirms that there is only one existence. It is Allāh's existence which is characterized by His Oneness. As Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh's doctrine denies the existence of creations and expresses his belief in various statements, e.g. "the fall of creation", "the obliterations of creations", "the incorrectness of creation", and "the loss of creatures", his doctrine resembles in some respects, the doctrine known in modern philosophy as "Acosmism", in which its defenders advocate that the phenomenal world is but a passing shadow of the reality which is beyond it, and that is God Who is the everlasting reality, characterized by perfect existence.

Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh, however, does not proceed in his abnegation of creations to state that the world of creations is, at the same time, its creator or that it is folded in Him as pantheists say. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh believes that the world of creations is deprived of its existence only in a state of Ṣūfī annihilation and that a Ṣūfī should never stand by his annihilation of absence. Perfection would be in that the Ṣūfī should return to a state of existence in which he sees creations standing by the will of their Creator. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh also does not consider the knower who is ascertained with annihilation in witnessing the Oneness as the most perfect Ṣūfī. On the contrary, he prefers to him the knower who is ascertained with existence and witnessing the oneness in a state of sobriety.

There is, as Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh says, a knower who is absent from seeing creations and does not see anything with the oneness of Allāh and he is, in his view, "spelled by the dominance of witnessing". More perfect than him, is a knower who is ascertained with his existence in the witnessing. He sees creations and witnesses Allāh at the same time. In other words, he sees the Oneness of the True manifested in creations and in his view, he is a "perfect chosen slave".

In fact, Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh and all other Ṣūfīs who express the witnessing of the Oneness, most notable among them Ibn Al Farid, do not give us any proof for witnessing the Oneness, except what they call the beholding taste which to them is superior to the mind and its deductions. They are ascertained with that taste in a state of annihilation. Consequently, their interpretation of existence is not strictly a sort of metaphysical theory. Such theories interpret existence on a mental basis and with logical analysis. From this angle alone, we should consider the Ṣūfī doctrine as Ṣūfīs do not trust the mind and its deductions, not the sense and their systems, but they believe in the heart and what is exposed to it by taste (inner feeling).

8- Witnessing the Oneness and Dropping Self Direction:

The most important qualification for he who witnesses the Oneness of Allāh, in Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh's view, is that he should be dropping will and self direction.

As the beholder of the Oneness of Allāh is ascertained with knowledge, and the knower by Allāh is dropping self direction entirely, therefore the beholder of the Oneness of Allāh is also dropping his self direction and will; otherwise he would not be a knower.

That is one side of the subject, and the other is that the knower who has arrived and who witnesses the Oneness of Allāh does not see his deeds as related to his own will because he does not in fact see anything due to his witnessing of the Oneness. Ibn ʿAṭāʾIllāh says in this connection: "He (Allāh) cut off those who are proceeding to Him and those who have arrived from seeing their deeds or noticing their states. As for those who are proceeding, it is because they are not yet fully ascertained with the

Truth with Allāh. As for those who have arrived, it is because HE has drawn them out from seeing them by getting them to behold Him.”

Add to the above that the knower, who is witnessing the Oneness of Allāh in creations, has been ascertained by his facing and his feeling. His cover has been lifted, so what he sees is a successor of his preceding beholding in the world of atoms, since “Am I not your Lord?” For this reason, knowers by Allāh, who are beholding the secrets of His Mulk and Malakut, have no planning with Allāh, as “facing” prevents them from it, and it splits any will from planning. How can a slave plan with Allāh, when he is in His presence and beholding the glory of His greatness?” “If the slave remains as such (as witnessing the Oneness of Allāh in the world of atoms), which implies the opening of covers and remaining in the presence, he cannot plan with Allāh...”

When those who witness the Oneness of Allāh are ascertained by the attention of Allāh and His choice, they would be for Allāh alone, and not for anybody else. Hence, they would have no wish other than the wish of Allāh. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says here: “Those who were proceeding to Him have been guided by the light of their approach. Those who have arrived have the lights of “facing”. The first are directed to the light and the second, lights are directed to them because they are for Allāh and nobody else.” “Say Allāh and keep them playing in their muddle.”

In conclusion, the witnessing of the Oneness in existence is a witnessing of the greatness of Allāh, and even if we don't single Him out in the real existence, then there can be no self planning among those who witness Him and completely submerge themselves with Him.

9- Discussion of Some of the Misinterpretations of Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's view on the Oneness and His Interpretation of Existence:

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh had summed up his doctrine of the Oneness in existence as we have seen by saying that creations are existing by His existence and are obliterated by the Oneness of His Being. His interpreters have explained the word Oneness in various ways:

1) Ibn Abbad Al Rondi interprets the oneness as viewed by Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh by his saying: “The Oneness can not be ascertained unless there is not anything that is stronger or more perfect than it. A sign of its existence is the obliteration and discarding of creations, because if they exist, there would be no Oneness, but there would be plurality and duality.”

The Oneness (singularity), as Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh described, abnegates plurality and duality and being ascertained with it instigates the obliteration and discarding of creations in relation to the existence of Allāh, who is characterized by His singularity. Such an interpretation coincides with what Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh had meant by abnegating creations and establishing the existence of the only real One, which is the existence of Allāh, both by taste and witnessing.

2) The interpretation of Al Rondi was adopted by another interpreter who followed him, Ibn Ajiba Al Hassani.

3) There is, however, another interpreter of Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's doctrine who interpreted it as Pantheism. He interpreted the term Oneness, as viewed by Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, by the same meaning in common with Ibn Arabi's school. That interpreter is Shaykh Abdullah Al Sharqawi.

Shaykh Al Sharqawi says re an interpretation of the Oneness as seen by Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh: “...the Oneness according to the knowers is the Pure Being, i.e. the non-apparent in creations, so creations then will have their existence by the appearance of Allāh in them. They therefore say (symbolically): “Oneness is a sea without waves and singularity is a sea with waves.” Allāh to them is like the sea, creations are like waves which are moved by the sea. So they are not the sea, but nothing other than it. That is the tawhid of knowers. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh has described that in his book *Maxims*.” Shaykh Al Sharqawi then comments by saying: “Many have written about Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's view about the Oneness of existence, which leaves nothing more to be added.”

It is shown by that, Shaykh Al Sharqawi considers Ibn Ata'illah's doctrine as a doctrine of Pantheism and he explains the Oneness as understood by Ibn Arabi and his school.

Ibn Arabi distinguishes between what is called Allāh's oneness or in other words, the Oneness of the singular on one side, and the Oneness of numerousness on the other side. His interpretation of the existence views creations as their own creator. Does Ibn Ata'illah's statement really mean that?

The answer is no. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh does not mean by the Oneness, the Pure Being which is not apparent in creations, as Shaykh Al Sharqawi means. With Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh, it means the attribute of Allāh's Being which is not shared by anything created. The Oneness is Allāh's attribute, which is the absolute existence, and which is the real existence: the necessary existence from which any creation draws its existence by its two fold bliss of occurrence and supplying support. What is other than Allāh of creations, is not Allāh's being, but is a "possibility" that draws its existence from something outside it. From this point, it is in fact nihility in itself. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh says: "Creations do not have any absolute existence, because real and true existence is for Allāh and He has the Oneness in it. Creations have the existence Allāh has established for them. Now then, that what draws its existence from something other than it, is in fact nihility in itself."

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh therefore distinguishes between two kinds of existence: an absolute and necessary existence on one side, and a limited and possible existence on the other side.

In order to confirm this theory, we quote here a statement from Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's book, *The Abstract Intention (Al Qusd Al Mujarrad)*, in which he distinguishes between the existence of Allāh and the existence which is possible. "The difference between the Absolute existence and the limited existence is that limited existence is not free from temporary characteristics, like movement, silence, life, death, space, boundary, aggregation, separation, change, and adversity. What is not free from change and is itself changeable and produced. What is created must have a creator (which is Allāh), Who is not like them or similar to them because if He is like them or similar to them, He would be affected by what affects them, and will be subjected to change and will Himself need a creator. The absolute Oneness (Allāh) is out of the scope of temporary and negative changes, and is characterized by eternal, everlasting, and real attributes. If it is possible that he can be annihilated, he would not be the eternal creator. Allāh is attributed by perfection, grandeur, sacredness, and bounty, which all befit Him alone. He is the One that cannot be split, composed, combined, or synthesized. He is the eternally ancient, a One for whose existence there is no end, the absolutely Rich, who does not need or depend on anything else, therefore He is not in need of anybody because of His Being, Perfection, Attributes, and Deeds... He is singular in the Oneness."

It is evident then, that Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh never believed or thought of Pantheism. He does not see that the existing reality is one is its essence or that creations are the creator Himself, but he confirms that Allāh is inestimably different from all creations, and that creations are only possible and can be annihilated. They are therefore a nihility in relation to the existence of Allāh, Who is the True Existence.

Add to the above that Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh believes that creations have existed by an act of occurrence and he therefore believes in "the creation out of nihility" (creation ex nihility). Ibn Arabi's theory in the Oneness of existence does not admit the idea of "creation of nihility". Ibn Arabi interprets the existence of creations by what is called heavenly flow, which is eternal (was and will still be) and by the appearance of the Real, every moment in unlimited numbers of shapes. This theory is similar to the "theory of heavenly flow" in which the Egyptian Ṣūfī poet, Omar Ibn Al Farid, believes. He says that the Heavenly Being had supplied the different creations by its supply, in which the Being was enumerated and varied after it was One and Absolute and that is due to the readiness of the Heavenly Being to emanate multiplicity from itself.

What also abnegates that Ibn Ata'illah's theory was a theory of Pantheism is Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's saying of the "possible" vis a vis the "necessary". Ibn Arabi's theory in the Oneness of existence does not admit

the possible, which means the changeable and produced creation which in itself is nihility and which is in need for its existence for Allāh Who is the “necessary” in spite of what Ibn Arabi called (the possible creations), as in his view, these possible creations are also necessary because they are created by the power which is really existing, and which philosophers call the “existence by the other”, by which they mean that its existence is necessary by something other than it. Ibn Arabi believes in two grades of existence being the “necessary” and the “impossible”.

Ibn Arabi seems therefore coinciding with the theory because if we consider creations as “possible”, that means that they have occurred in time and that it is not its founder that would be opposed to his theory in which he says that existence is one in reality and enumerated by imagination. Ibn Arabi says: “The secret which is beyond this subject, is that the “possible” are in their state of nihility and there is no existence except the existence of Allāh in the shape of these “possible” (creations) in themselves and entities....”

What is evident from all that had been said, it that Ibn Ata'illah's theory about the Oneness is absolutely different from Pantheism as understood by Ibn Arabi or the other philosophers who advocate Pantheism, and so Shaykh Al Sharqawi has to understand. Shaykh Al Sharqawi was not correct in his interpretation of the term Oneness as understood by Ibn 'Ata'illāh and making its meaning identical with its meaning as viewed by Ibn Arabi's school.

Had Shaykh Al Sharqawi misinterpreted Ibn Ata'illah's theory about the Oneness as being a theory of pantheism, there is another researcher, namely the late Dr. Zaki Mubarak, who has also misinterpreted Ibn Ata'illah's theory as being a theory of incarnation. We shall deal now with what he had said in this connection and we show its share of correctness or incorrectness:

4) Dr. Zaki Mubarak says: “Ibn 'Atā'illāh has said words which are mixed with the theory of incarnation, and which allege the being of Allāh in everything and mean that there is no drop, no plant, no breeze which is not a part of the heavenly Being. This is taken from Ibn 'Atā'illāh's saying: ‘Worshippers and abstainers get themselves alienated from everything due to their absence from Allāh's Being in everything. Had they seen Him in everything, they would have never been alienated from anything.’ Also Ibn Ata'illah's saying: ‘He knew that you cannot endure being away from Him, so He showed you what had emanated from Him.’ This second statement is obvious in his saying of incarnation because it shows clearly that the world is the emanating part of Allāh, and that the believer has to see Allāh in everything that exists.”

What Dr. Zaki Mubarak says is entirely far from being correct, because he had been beguiled in explaining the above two maxims of Ibn 'Atā'illāh due to the fact that he only understood the outer meaning of their words. Witnessing Allāh in everything in the first maxim does not mean according to Ibn 'Atā'illāh's theory that Allāh had been incarnated in creation, or that He had been incarnated in man on the way Al-Hallaj talked about the instillation of Deity in humanity. Ibn 'Atā'illāh rejects entirely incarnation in all its shapes and most certainly incarnation had never crossed his mind when he wrote his maxims and injected his Ṣūfī tastes in them. Considerations of time and space mentioned by Ibn 'Atā'illāh in his maxims or other statements, must never be taken by their outer linguistic meaning. Al Rondi, in his interpretation of the *Maxims*, had stated that caution, because time and space are human visualizations, and Allāh is entirely beyond them. The meaning of that maxim, as we see it, is that worshippers and abstainers are in a state of alienation from all creations because they only see Allāh. This state, which they experience, is however less perfect than the state of the Ṣūfī who is ascertained by the state of separation, who had first dropped seeing creations in themselves and then he got ascertained by witnessing Allāh appearing by His attributes in them, and not being incarnated in them.

Secondly, creations are a field for expressing Allāh's capabilities, perfections, and bounty, and consequently witnessing Allāh in creations means seeing Him manifesting in them His various

attributes, not being incarnated in them.

Also, what Dr. Zaki Mubarak says about Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s saying “He knew that you could not endure being away from Him, so He showed you what had emanated from Him”, means clearly a saying of incarnation because it reveals that the world is emanating part of Him”, is incorrect due to the following two reasons:

1) If we admit that Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh views the world as the emanating part of Allāh, that would not even mean incarnation as the word incarnation means, because incarnation means either a flowing instillation which is “a combination of two things in a way that when you mention one of them, you mean the other at the same time as the flow of the rose water in the rose. That thing which “flows in” is called instilled. The thing that has been flowed by, is called the place for instillation. Instillation can also be by nearness, which means that “one of the two bodies is a partner of the other as the instillation of water in a cup.” The saying that the world is the part that emanates from Allāh means that Allāh had been instilled in the world, which makes the reference to Allāh meaning the reliance to the world. Yet, the world as an emanating part of Allāh, does not mean in any way that Allāh is instilled in the world as water is instilled in the cup. It means something different from what Dr. Zaki Mubarak had understood. It is that Allāh cannot be split.

2) The second reason results from the first reason. It is unbelievable that Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh, who adopts a doctrine in the Oneness of Allāh in which he states that Allāh is the absolute existence which is characterized by real and necessary existence, and that He “cannot be split, composed, or combined”, and who estimably sees Allāh beyond all human visualizations, can contradict himself as to state in one of his maxims that the world is Allāh’s part.

The result which Dr. Zaki Mubarak wanted to extract from Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s maxims is contradictory to rationality and can be refuted by a proof deducted from the meaning of the Oneness.

What is meant by the Oneness is that Allāh is a singular reality that is beyond composition because every composed thing needs each part of its composition and simultaneously each part of it is different from it. Consequently, each thing that is composed needs another. Each thing that needs another is “possible” and consequently, each thing that is composed is “possible”. Allāh, Who is the Creator of all creations, would then be “possible” and that is impossible.

When the Oneness is established, incarnation is obliterated, because Allāh should not be confined in a space; what is confined in space, its left will be different from its right, and everything that is so will be divisible and the One cannot be confined in space and because He is not spaced in, He will never be in anything that is spaced or cornered, and should never be instilled in anything because if it is instilled, it can never be One. He cannot also be a place in which anything can be instilled because He will not then be One.

Consequently, the maxim in which Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh says to the traveler: “He knew you could not endure being away from Him, so He showed you what had emanated from Him”, can never mean incarnation or that the world is Allāh’s part that had emanated from Him, as Dr. Zaki Mubarak has said.

What then is the real meaning?

The meaning of the maxim is related to Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s doctrine of knowledge as we have explained earlier. His saying to his mureed that Allāh had known that you could not endure being away from Him, “...so HE showed you what had emanated from Him”, means that man, due to his previous witnessing of Allāh’s Oneness and his knowledge of it since the world of atoms, cannot endure absence from Allāh. Somehow he always remembers his previous beholding and knowledge. Because Allāh knows this about man, He created the world and revealed Himself in it in all His different attributes and perfection in order that man sees Allāh as apparent in His creations. The emanation of the world, in Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh’s view, cannot mean that the world is Allāh’s part, but means that the

world is revealed by His relevance to it. Emanation, then, means relevance or appearance. That the world is revealed by the relevance of Allāh, means the world is revealed by the two fold act of occurrence and supporting supply. Consequently, it becomes a "possible" existence and is different in its existence from the nature of the Creator's existence.

How can it then be said that the world is Allāh's part, or that the "possible: is a part of the "necessary" or "imperative"?

To sum up, Dr. Zaki Mubarak was not correct in his understanding of the gist of Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's two maxims, which he quoted to prove that Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh had been spreading news of incarnation because he interpreted them both by the outer meaning of the words and not by the provisions of Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's doctrine in the Oneness and the interpretation of existence.

Now that we have shown that Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's doctrine is entirely alienated from pantheism and incarnation, what could it be then?

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's doctrine is a doctrine in witnessing the Oneness in creations only in a Ṣūfī state when the Ṣūfī gets absent from himself and from creations and when he cannot see anything except Allāh in the existence. Yet, that Ṣūfī should not carry on in his abstention of creations so as to state that they are completely annihilated or that creations are enclosed in the existence of Allāh, meaning that speaking of creations will be exactly speaking of Allāh. The Ṣūfī is returned from his annihilating of himself and the world to a state of existence. In other words, he returns from the state of communion to the state of separation where he sees creations standing by their Creator and at the same time not obliterating His Oneness.

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's interpretation of existence, as such, is a matter which has been admitted by the fiercest enemy of Ṣūfism, i.e. Ibn Taymiyya. In one of his messages, Ibn Taymiyya confirms, as Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh confirms, two kinds of existence which are different from each other. One of them is created and produces and consequently the Creator is different from the created. Ibn Taymiyya also confirms that the obliteration of creations is impossible. He claims those Ṣūfis who are absented from seeing creations and also those Ṣūfis who do not see themselves, think that what one has not seen is a nihility in itself and he may therefore fall into speaking of incarnation or instillation. He says: "...this state happens to many travelers. Of whom one may be absent from seeing himself and other creations and who calls this state annihilation. It is a state of absence from seeing creations, and not that creations in themselves were annihilated... from this angle, a group of them fell into incarnation and instillation. One of them may repeat the name of Allāh, until his heart is overwhelmed by the Name. He gets obsessed by it and consequently nothing remains of him to see except Allāh. He would then imagine that creations have been annihilated, his nafs has also been annihilated and may then go to the extent to which he imagines that he is himself Allāh and that creations are Allāh."

Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh most probably wanted to show his theory as being in between the witnessing the Oneness and admitting the duality by saying: "The useful knowledge is the knowledge of Allāh. Yet who carries on in witnessing the Oneness and is not confined to the considerations of shari'a (Islamic jurisdiction) would be thrown into the sea of atheism. The truth is that one should be ascertained with the reality (of the Oneness) and should be at the same time confined by the limits of shari'a. The ascertained Ṣūfī should not fly away with reality, yet he should not stand by the exterior shari'a, but should be in between the two."

In fact, Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh in his expression of witnessing the Oneness is completely well balanced. I have never seen a Ṣūfī statement of his which could be considered as an aberration, of which we find so many examples with Ṣūfis like Al Bustami, Al Hallaj, Ibn Arabi, Afif-Addin Al Tilmissani, and others. That is due to the fact that Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh is influenced by the Shādhḍhuli school, headed by Abū-l-Ḥassan ash-Shadhḍhuli, who used to prefer separation to communion and used to advise his mureeds on equilibrium and balance when expressing realities of the Oneness, in the way Ibn

‘Aṭā’Illāh himself relates in his book *Lata’if Al Minan*, saying:

‘Shaykh Abū-l-Ḥasan ash-Shādhīdī said: “I had a friend who frequently asked me about the Oneness. I said to him:

If you want the unquestionable truth,
that should be by having separation of your tongue
and communion seen in your interior.”

That is in addition to the fact that Ibn ‘Aṭā’Illāh was a guiding Shaykh to the ethics of the path and such a one must be an ascertained Ṣūfī who is free from aberrations.

