

Summary of JAMI' AL-SA'ADAT, Part IV

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Unity of God with respect to Actions (TAWHID-I AF'ALI)

Tawhid (monotheism), which is belief in the oneness of God, is the opposite of polytheism. *Tawhid* has a number of aspects. One is related to the divine essence, which means God does not have any parts and is not divisible even in imagination and that His attributes are exactly the same as His essence. Another aspect of *tawhid* relates to refuting plurality with respect to necessity of existence, i.e. there is only one being whose existence is necessary, and that is God. Another aspect is related to unity of action and causation, i.e. all actions and causations belong to God. In this article, we will focus on the latter aspect of *tawhid*.

There are four levels of *tawhid*:

- 1) To verbally confess to *tawhid*. That is, saying the sentence “لا اله الا الله” (there is no god but God), while one’s heart may not believe it. This kind of *tawhid* is merely a verbal confession and does not have any merits except that the person who says it will be safe from punishment in this world.
- 2) To believe by heart in the meaning of “لا اله الا الله” (there is no god but God). This is the level of the general believers and the kind of belief that ordinary people have. The person who is in this stage is considered a *muwabbhid* (monotheist), that is, he does not lie about what he holds in his heart. However, this kind of belief does purify the

heart, but it saves the individual from punishment in the Hereafter, if he dies while having this belief and if it is not weakened by commitment of sins.

- 3) To witness *tawhid* by the divine light. Although the person who is in this stage sees the multiplicity of objects, he views them all to be from God. This is the level of people who are close to God (*muqarrabun*). The individual who is in this stage is also a *muwahhid*, meaning that he does not see more than one doer and cause in the universe.
- 4) To see nothing but the One. The people of knowledge call this level annihilation (*fana*) in *tawhid*. This is because the person who is in this level does not see anything except the One; he does not even see himself. Thus, by not seeing himself, since he is immersed in the One, he becomes annihilated in *tawhid*. The individual who is in this level is also a *muwahhid*, and this is the final stage of *tawhid*.

The question may arise about how the fourth stage of *tawhid* in which a person does not see anything other than the One is possible, even though everyone sees a multitude of objects around him, such as the earth, the sky, and other material objects. How can multiplicity be considered oneness?

In response to this question, we shall say that if a person is certain that all contingent beings are non-existent in themselves and totally dependent on God for their realization, then if the light of the divine magnificence shines luminously on the person's heart and God's love occupies him such that he forgets everything other than God, it is by no means far-fetched that such a person shall see nothing other than God and everything other than Him shall disappear from his view. This is because the person's inner eye is devoted to something that is true and real.

As an example, if a person is engrossed in observing a king's grandeur and magnificence, he will certainly not notice anyone else. And a lover who is immersed in watching his beloved and is completely overwhelmed by his love will not see anyone else, even if there are other people around him. The stars are in the sky during daytime as well, but they are not seen because their light is subdued by that of the sun. Thus, if it is normal that the light of the

sun subdues the light of the stars in such a way that makes them disappear from the view, how can it be far-fetched that the light of the Real Being subdues the weak and contingent beings in such a way that they all disappear from the view of the mind and the inner eye?

The Relation between Tawakkul and Tawhid

It is not possible for man to really put his *tawakkul* (trust) in God unless he reaches the third stage of *tawhid*. It is this stage that is related to *tawakkul*, not the other stages. This is because the first stage is merely verbal, and the second stage does not bring about the real *tawakkul*, since the majority of *muwabbhidun* are in this stage but they lack the true *tawakkul*.

Therefore, *tawakkul* comes at the third stage of *tawhid*. And the third stage of *tawhid* is when it becomes clear for the servant, through the light of God, that there are no doers or causes except Him and that the source of every being and every action, such as creating, providing, granting, denying, wealth and poverty, health and disease, honor and shame, life and death, etc., is God Almighty for whom there are no partners. After realizing this, the servant does not pay any attention to anything other than God, and his hope and fear are all directed to God; he puts his trust only in Him, for God is the only doer. Everything is in His hands and under His control; nothing, other than Him, can by itself cause the smallest effect.

However, Satan whispers in the heart of mankind, saying, "How could everything be from God while so-and-so provides for you with his own choice, without anyone forcing him?" or saying, "That other person is able to kill you, if he chooses to. So why not be afraid of him, and why not pin your hopes on him if your fate is in his hands?"

There is no doubt that such thoughts are the result of ignorance about the reality of matters, for if a person discovers the reality of the world, he will know that heavens, stars, winds, clouds, rain, humans, animals, and all other creatures are dominated by and under the control of the one God, and none of them has independence in its existence and actions.

Therefore, man's reliance on different creatures for his survival is like the condition of a person who was sentenced to death, but a governor or a king forgave him and ordered his scribe to write down that person's release order. However, that person starts to praise the paper, the ink, or the scribe, saying, "If the paper, the ink, or the scribe did not exist, I would not be saved." Such a person considers his survival to be from the paper, the ink, or the scribe and not from the ruler, but someone who knows that the ink and the scribe do not have any independence here does not pay attention to them and praises none other than the king. He becomes so engrossed in thanking the king that he forgets the paper, the ink, and the scribe.

Now, it is the command and permission of God that is behind all actions in this world. God says in the Quran, "And you did not throw when you threw, rather it was God who threw" (Quran 8:17)

Therefore, we should give our gratitude to God and put our trust in Him.

Evil Thoughts and Temptations

One disease of the Power of Intellect is the occurrence of *waswasa* (an evil thought or temptation), which is in contrast to *ilham* (a good thought that inspires righteousness).

Until the soul leaves the body, the human mind remains the abode of *waswasas* and *ilham* and it is *never empty of* impressions and thoughts. A thought is something that occurs, thus it inevitably has a cause. If the cause is Satan, the thought is a "temptation" (*waswasa*), and if the cause is an angel, the thought is an "inspiration" (*ilham*). What prepares the heart for accepting *waswasas* is called *ighwa'* (misguidance), and what prepares it for accepting an inspiration is called *lutf* (favor) or *tawfiq* (success).

The Types of Thoughts

There are two types of thoughts: One is the type that quickly occurs in mind but does not lead to action. These are unreal wishes and vain thoughts. The other type is the thought that stimulates one's will to take an action. The

sources of actions are thoughts: thoughts provoke desire, desire provokes will, will provokes intention, and intention puts one's limbs to work. As pointed out earlier, the second type of thoughts, if leading to righteousness, are called *ilham*, and if leading to evil, are called *waswasas*.

The first type of thoughts has many subordinate types:

- Wishes, no matter whether they are achievable or not, and whether the wished object is good or evil. An example of this type is one's thought that "I wish I had—or had not—done this."
- Recalling the experiences one has had, such as imagining his possessions and becoming happy or thinking about one's pains, diseases, or disruptions and becoming sad.
- Taking something for a good or evil omen.
- Questioning one's beliefs, but not to the extent that establishes doubt in his heart and destroys his faith.

Based on this, it is clear that these thoughts are either about the past, which cannot be changed, or about the future, which is out of our control. Thus, becoming occupied with these thoughts is a waste of time. It is a great loss to forget God even for a brief moment to think about permissible things, let alone getting occupied with evil thoughts that will lead to destruction of one's faith and life.

The Army of Angels and the Army of Devils

We said that temptation comes from the devil and inspiration comes from the angels. There is no doubt that every soul at the beginning of its creation can equally be influenced by angles and devils, and one of these two gains superiority depending on whether the individual follows his lustful tendencies or turns to piety and righteousness. If the soul turns to objects of lust and hate, the devil will find his way to enter the individual's heart. However, if the soul turns to remembrance of God, the influence of the devil will decrease and an inspiring angel will enter the individual's heart.

However, the army of devils conquers most hearts, and by various temptations call for abandoning the Hereafter and choosing this world. The Quran quotes Satan as saying,

I will surely lie in wait for them on Your straight path. Then I will come at them from their front and from their rear, and from their right and their left. (Quran 7:16-17)

Thus, deliverance from the hands of devils requires austerity and struggle. A person who does not rise to struggle with them, his soul will become the target of the arrows of the devils' temptations, and he will finally become one of them.

Deception, Misguidance, and Temptations of Satan

Since there is only one right path but lots of wrong paths, there are many ways in which Satan can penetrate a man's heart. However, there is only one way for the angels. Regarding this, it is reported that once the Prophet (s) drew a line for his companions and said, "This is the path of God", then he drew many other lines to the left and right of that line and said, "These are paths in each of which is a devil that calls man to it." Then he recited this verse: "This indeed is my straight path, so follow it, and do not follow [other] ways, for they will separate you from His way" (Quran 6:153).¹

Because the soul (*nafs*) turns to falsehood easily but turns to truth with difficulty, the paths that lead to falsehood, i.e. the paths of Satan, are clear and open, but the path to truth, i.e. the path of angels, are hidden and filled with obstacles. And it is so difficult to ignore all the open and clear paths and choose a hidden path full of obstructions.

Furthermore, many times Satan makes the paths of truth and falsehood look alike and makes evil seem good in such a way that one confuses his temptations with the inspiration of angels. Thus, the person unknowingly goes astray and unknowingly ruins his spiritual life. For instance, Satan

¹ See Kabir Madani (1409AH 1:377).

might whisper the following thoughts to the heart of a knowledgeable person:

People are sliding towards destruction because of their ignorance; they are like the dead due to their lack of knowledge. Now, you are able to be a transmitter of God's mercy to His servants; you can save the people from their ignorance by your guidance and advice and protect them from eternal damnation. God has shown favor to you by giving you an insightful heart, great knowledge, and fluency. Why do you hide these Godly gifts and do not utilize them?!

Satan constantly tempts a person and eventually makes him engrossed in giving advice to people and making speeches. When he is making a speech, Satan constantly brings the acceptance of public into his mind, and makes the pleasure of fame, the love of mastership, and the thought of being loved for knowledge and fluency dominate the person's heart. Eventually, such a person will guide the people but will go astray himself. He saves his worldly life and ruins his Hereafter. Therefore, he joins the group of people about whom God has said:

Say, "Shall we inform you about the biggest losers in regard to works? Those whose endeavour goes awry in the life of the world, while they suppose they are doing good." (Quran 18:103-104)

He will be among the people about whom the Prophet (s) said, "Indeed God supports this religion by people who do not have a share [in the Hereafter]" (Majlisi 1403AH, 24:361) and "Indeed God supports this religion by unrighteous men" (Payanda 2003, 315).

Hence, it is not possible to be saved from the traps and deceits of Satan except through a luminous inner insight and divine help.

Treatment of Temptations

If the temptations lead to sin and evil, the way to resist and treat them is to remember the consequences of committing sins and its disastrous future in this world and the Hereafter. One should remember the great right of God

and the greatness of his reward and punishment and should keep in mind that being patient in forsaking the sins is easier than tolerating the fire of Hell. If one remembers these issues, and understands their reality through the light of knowledge and faith, Satan will be kept away from him and the temptations will stop, since Satan cannot refute these truths and destroy the certainty achieved through definite arguments.

Temptations that come to mind unwillingly and do not lead to action are very difficult to stop. This is because Satan will continue until the Day of Judgment to misguide the children of Adam. Thus, no one will have freedom from Satan unless all his thought, intention, and effort are one, such that he is always mindful of God and his heart is occupied with God's remembrance. It is with such people that Satan will find no opportunity. When man's heart forgets God, even for a brief moment, he will have no companion other than Satan. God has said,

Whoever turns a blind eye to the remembrance of the All-Beneficent, We assign him a devil who remains his companion. (Quran 43:36)

And Imam Kazim (a) has said, "Indeed God dislikes the servant who sleeps a lot and is idle" (Kulayni 1407AH, 5:84).

This is because when a person stops his permissible activities, Satan inevitably enters his heart.

Therefore, temptations constantly pull the heart to different directions, and there is no cure for this except cutting off all hidden and apparent attachments, unifying all thoughts and concerns, and turning to God. This will be achieved when one contemplates the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and the wonders of God's creation, for if such reflections occupy one's heart, they will repel the temptations of Satan. If a person does not have this kind of contemplation, nothing will save him except becoming engrossed in reciting supplications, *dhikrs*, and the Quran. And this will be effective if it accompanies presence of heart, since reciting supplications and *dhikrs* merely by tongue does not engross the heart, rather it is the inner thinking that engrosses the heart in itself.

The definite treatment of temptations is possible through acting upon three things:

- a) Blocking the major doors from which Satan penetrates the heart, such as lust, anger, greed, envy, enmity, selfishness, grudge, pride, avarice, miserliness, love of worldly possessions, tending towards luxury, love of wearing costly clothes, hastiness, fear of poverty, false and unfair prejudices, being suspicious about the Creator and the creatures, and other vices. Satan enters the heart through any of these doors that he finds open, using the temptations related to it, but if the door is closed, he will not have a way of entrance.
- b) Adorning the heart with noble traits and virtues opposite to the above-mentioned vices and with righteousness, piety, and persistence in worshiping God.
- c) Constantly saying *dhikrs* by tongue and heart. Remembrance of God keeps Satan away and completely removes the roots of his rule and influence. However, if the doors of Satan's entrance are not closed from the outset, saying *dhikrs* merely by tongue will not be useful, since the reality of *dhikr* does not realize in the heart except after the heart is cleared of vices and adorned with virtues. *Dhikrs* are useful for repelling the temptations of Satan in those hearts that are free from lustful tendencies and are illuminated with righteousness and piety, as God says,

When those who are God-wary are touched by a visitation of Satan, they remember [God] and, behold, they perceive. (Quran 7:201)

If merely saying *dhikrs* by tongue was enough to repel Satan, everyone would have presence of heart and would be free from temptations while saying their prayers (*salah*), since the highest level of *dhikr* and worship is the prayers (*salah*). But, ironically, during prayers various thoughts come to one's mind—even more than other times, such that sometimes one remembers what he has forgotten about his worldly affairs when saying his prayers. This is because the army of devils attacks man's heart during prayer more than at

other times. They pull the heart to markets, to dealing with merchants, and to finding ways to defeat opponents.

However, saying *dhikrs* while the heart is not present is not totally useless, since there are four levels of *dhikr*, all of which are beneficial to people who say them, though the full benefit of *dhikr* is achieved only in the fourth level. These levels are

- a) Saying *dhikr* only by tongue
- b) Saying *dhikr* by tongue and by heart
- c) Saying *dhikr* by heart in such a way that it fills the heart and dominates it
- d) Saying *dhikr* by heart in such a way that only the One remembered (*madhkur*) remains in the heart, and even the *dhikr* itself fades away. In this stage, the heart does not have any attention to itself or to the *dhikr*, rather it is entirely immersed in the *madhkur*.

The rationale why stopping all temptations depends on purifying the soul and on being persistent in remembering God is because these two make the power of intellect dominant over the faculties of passion, anger, and imagination, which in turn utilizes these faculties in the way to perfection. Thus, the soul becomes able to control the mind and imagination and protect them from temptations. When the state of stability is established for the mind, no evil thoughts or temptations could penetrate it. In this state, the soul reaches the stage of certainty and peace, the heart becomes the place of angels, and the soul becomes luminous by the divine light and will be addressed by the following words:

O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, pleased, pleasing!
(Quran 89:27-28)

Such a soul is the best and noblest of souls. Opposite to it is the miserable soul, which is filled with wickedness and tainted with various vices. It is this soul in which the doors are open to Satan but closed to angles; no good thoughts occur to it but always receives satanic temptations. The sign of this

soul is that warning and advice cannot affect it and it remains blind and deaf when perceiving the truth . Addressing this soul, Holy God has said,

Have you seen him who has taken his desire to be his god? Is it your duty to watch over him? (Quran 25:43)

It is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not have faith. (Quran 36:10)

Allah has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and there is a blindfold on their sight. (Quran 2:7)

In the middle position between these two kinds of souls, there is a third type of soul. Such a soul has acquired different virtues but suffers from various vices. Sometimes lustful thoughts occur to it and call it towards evil, and sometimes virtuous thoughts occur to it and lead it to good actions. The first kind of soul, *al-nafs al-mutma'innah* (the soul at peace), is very rare; and it is the soul of the believers who are absolute submitters to *tawhid*. The second kind of soul is abundant; it is the soul of non-believers (*kafir*). The third kind of soul is found in most believers and has many levels and ranks.

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