

The Book of Ascension  
to the Essential Truths of Sufism

*Mi'raj al-tashawwuf ilā ḥaqā'iq al-taṣawwuf*

# بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the Name of God,  
the All-Merciful and Compassionate*

**P**RAISE BE TO GOD Who has affirmed the essential truths (*al-ḥaqā'iq*) and made clear the paths (*al-tarā'iq*). May blessings and salutations be upon our master Muḥammad, the first of creation, chosen to receive the extraordinary and miraculous, and may God be well pleased with his Companions by whom His religion was manifested in the furthest east and the furthest west.

The science of Sufism is the foremost of the [religious] sciences and both the goal and heart of the Revealed Law. And how could it be otherwise when it is the exposition (*tafsīr*) of the station of excellence (*maqām al-iḥsān*), the station of direct perception and vision, in the same way that theology (*ilm al-kalām*) is the exposition of the station of faith (*īmān*), and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) is the exposition of the station of surrender (*islām*), all of which are contained in the ḥadīth of Gabriel.<sup>1</sup>

If Sufism is thus, then to immerse oneself in this science is the most excellent way of drawing near to God Most High. Indeed, it is a means of realizing gnosis (*al-mā'rifa*), the knowledge which comes from vision. As such, Sufism involves rare and strange truths and

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1. The well-known ḥadīth, reported in Bukhārī, *Īmān*, B. 37, H. 50, (vol. 1, p. 19) and Muslim, *Īmān*, B. 1, H. 8/1, (vol. 1, p. 24), describes how the angel Gabriel came to the Prophet Muḥammad in the form of a traveler and questioned him about the meaning of surrender (*islām*), faith (*īmān*), and excellence or impeccability (*iḥsān*).

subtle expressions which the Sufis use when speaking of them, and anyone who wants to understand this science needs to understand these expressions.

Therefore I wished—through the power and strength of God—to assemble a useful summary of these essential truths and the terms used to express them in hopes that God might benefit thereby those who want to understand this science, and I have called it (*The Book of*) *Ascension to the Essential Truths of Sufism*. All success is in God and He is the One Who guides to the right path.

For each of these essential truths, I will mention what pertains to it in the beginning, middle and end of the way.

### 1. Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf*)

Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf*) is the science of how to journey into the presence of the King of kings. It is to inwardly purify ourselves from vice and beautify ourselves with virtue, to pass away from creation through consciousness of the Creator and then to return. Its beginning is knowledge, its middle practice, and its end a gift [from God].

The word *taṣawwuf* is said to be derived either from “purity” (*ṣafāʾ*) because it is centered on purification, or from “attribute” (*ṣifa*) because it leads to the attributes of virtue, or from “porch” (*ṣuffa*), that is, the porch outside the Prophet’s mosque, inasmuch as the Sufis, in their orientation towards God and their devotion, resemble the People of the Porch, or from “wool” (*al-ṣūf*), because the Sufis are wont to wear this material in their renunciation of the world, choosing it because it is the material from which were made the garments of God’s prophets ﷺ.

Linguistically, this last derivation is the most suitable and also most closely fits the literal meaning of the word. [Referring to] a garment of wool is an external description based on appearance, and thus simplest and most direct, while the others are inner interpretations. Just as we say *taqammaṣa* to mean “he put on a shirt (*qamīṣ*),” we say *taṣawwafa* to mean “he put on a garment of wool,” and the person so garbed is called *ṣūfi*.

Sahl said, “The Sufi is one who is pure (*ṣafiya*) of turbidity and full of reflection, one who has turned away from human kind in order to turn towards God. For the Sufis, gold and pebbles are of equal worth, for they desire nothing else but the Guardian Lord.”

And al-Junayd said, “The Sufi is like the earth: they cast upon it what is

vile and there blossoms forth from it what is beautiful, and upon it both the virtuous and the sinners tread. The Sufi is like the sky which shades all, and like the rain from which all are given to drink.”<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Repentance (*al-tawba*)

Repentance (*al-tawba*) is the return from every deed that is ugly to one that is beautiful, from every trait that is base to one that is noble, or from a mind engrossed in the world to one immersed in consciousness of the Divine.

Its conditions are that we regret [our sin], rid ourselves of it, and refuse to persist in it. Also, if our sin is one that has wronged another human being, we must try to correct that wrong, but our repentance may be accepted without having done so, just as repentance for one sin may be accepted even while another remains.

For the generality of believers, repentance is from sins, for the elect, it is from faults, and for the elect of the elect, it is from everything that distracts the soul from the Divine Presence.

Every station of the way necessitates repentance. In the station of repentance itself, another repentance is needed if the first one lacks sincerity. It is needed in the station of fear (*al-khawf*) if we begin to have an illusory sense of security; in the station of hope (*al-rajā'*) if we experience feelings of despair; in the station of patience (*al-ṣabr*) if we grow restless and worried; in the station of detachment (*al-zuhd*) if we are beset by cravings and desires; in the station of scrupulousness (*al-wara'*) if we start looking for too much license in the Revealed Law or are beset by covetousness; in the station of dependence on God (*al-tawakkul*) if we start worrying about the future, about our choices, or about the means by which our worldly provision will come to us; in the station of contentment and submission (*al-riḍā wa-l-taslīm*) when we become bitter and contrary in confronting our destiny; in the station of vigilance (*al-muraqaba*) for ill behavior (*sū' al-adab*) outwardly and ill thoughts inwardly; in the station of self-examination (*al-muḥāsaba*) for wasting our time with things that do not bring us closer to God; in the station of love (*al-maḥabba*) when our hearts incline towards other than the Beloved; in the station of contemplative vision (*al-mushāhada*) if our innermost consciousness turns towards someone or something other than the One Perceived, or we become

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2. See also Appendix II:1.

fixed on something in the sensory world, or cease our ascent along the pathways of souls.

Thus would the Prophet ﷺ ask forgiveness from God seventy or a hundred times in a single assembly.<sup>3</sup>

As for “sincere repentance” (*tawbatan naṣūḥan*),<sup>4</sup> it is comprised of four things: to ask forgiveness for sin with our voices, to abstain from it with our bodies, to rid our hearts from any desire to persist in it, and to stay away from bad companions. Sufyān al-Thawrī said, “The signs of sincere repentance are four: meagerness, weakness, humility, and solitude.”<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Conversion (*al-ināba*)

Conversion (*al-ināba*) is more particular than repentance. It means to return to God [with our pride] broken and with a renewed aspiration for the spiritual journey. There are three levels of conversion: turning from sin to repentance, turning from heedlessness to vigilance, and turning from separative consciousness (*farq*) to unitive consciousness in God (*jam<sup>c</sup> alā Allāh*).

### 4. Fear (*al-khawf*)

Fear (*al-khawf*) is the heart’s distress at confronting what it abhors or losing what it desires. Its fruits should be a renewed effort to live in obedience to God and avoid transgressions. Lacking this, it is only pretension.

The generality fear punishment or losing some reward [in the Next World]; the elect fear Divine reproach or that they will cease to draw nearer to God; and the elect of the elect fear being veiled from God

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3. The ḥadīth, with the wording “By God, I ask God for forgiveness and turn in repentance to Him more than seventy times a day and night,” appears in al-Bukhārī, *Daʿwā*, B. 3, *Istighfār al-nabī*, H. 6307, (vol. 8, p. 67).

4. This refers to Q. 66:8, *O you who believe, turn to God with a sincere repentance*.

5. This term, from the root TWB, “to turn in repentance,” occurs in the Qurʾān in verbal and nominative forms approximately ninety times, where it is used both with human beings in the sense of repenting, and God, in the sense of turning in forgiveness. One of the Ninety-Nine Divine Names is *al-Tawwāb al-Raḥīm*, the Forgiving and Compassionate One. See also Appendix I:1-5 and Appendix II:2.

by their poor comportment.<sup>6</sup>

5. Hope (*al-rajā'*)

Hope (*al-rajā'*) is the tranquility of a heart awaiting the object of its love, along with effort made to accomplish the means which lead to that object. Hope without effort is but vanity and self-deception.

For the generality of the faithful, hope is to reach the best of destinations as reward; for the elect, it is to attain God's pleasure (*riḍwān*) and draw near; and for the elect of the elect, it is to attain stability in the consciousness of God and progress ever higher in knowledge of the mysteries of the worshipped Sovereign.

Fear and hope in the heart are like the two wings of a bird: it cannot fly except with both. However, it may be that hope is more prevalent with the gnostics (*al-ʿārifūn*) and fear with the virtuous (*al-ṣāliḥūn*).<sup>7</sup>

6. Patience (*al-ṣabr*)

Patience (*al-ṣabr*) is to keep the heart steady before the order of the Lord. For the generality, this means keeping it steady when it is hard to accomplish acts of obedience or avoid transgressions. For the elect, it means to keep the individual self steady in its devotions and spiritual efforts, and to bear the dangers of the way with a heart vigilant in its concentration on God and its search for the veils to be raised. For the elect of the elect, it means keeping the spirit and soul concentrated in the contemplative and essential vision: on-going reflection and sustained concentration.<sup>8</sup>

7. Gratitude (*al-shukr*)

Gratitude (*al-shukr*) is the heart's joy at receiving some benefaction, using the limbs of the body to obey the Benefactor, and humbly acknowledging that the Benefactor is God.

Gratitude thus has three expressions: by the tongue, in its humble acknowledgement of God's gifts, by the body in its readiness to serve,

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6. Forms of the verbal root KhWF, "to be afraid," occur in the Qur'an approximately one hundred and twenty times.
  7. The root RJW expresses the idea of hoping for something or expecting something. In various forms it occurs in the Qur'an about thirty times.
  8. Variations of the root ṢBR are found just over a hundred times in the Qur'an and include the Divine Name *al-Ṣabūr*, the Infinitely Patient. See also Appendix II:3.

Arabic Text  
of  
The Book of Ascension  
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الرُّبُوبِيَّةِ، وَإِنَّمَا يُظَلِّعُهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَى جُزْئِيَّاتٍ مِنْ نَوْعٍ مَخْصُوصٍ. وَقَدْ أَشَارَ الشَّيْخُ أَبُو الْعَبَّاسِ الْمُرْسِيُّ رحمته الله تَعَالَى إِلَى شَيْءٍ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَقَالَ « مَا مِنْ وَليٍّ كَانَ أَوْ هُوَ كَائِنٌ إِلَّا وَقَدْ أَظَلَعَنِي اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى اسْمِهِ وَنَسَبِهِ وَحَظِّهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى ». وَقَالَ آخَرَ « مَا مِنْ نُظْفَةٍ تَقَعُ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ إِلَّا وَقَدْ أَظَلَعَنِي اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا وَمَا يَكُونُ مِنْهَا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَى ». وَهَذَا مِنْ جُمْلَةِ الْكِرَامَاتِ الَّتِي أَتَمَّحَفَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِهَا أَوْلِيَاءَهُ وَقَدْ يَكُونُ قُطْبًا كَامِلًا وَهُوَ لَمْ يَطَّلِعْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأُمُورِ إِلَّا أَنَّهُ عَارَفَ بِاللَّهِ رَاسِخُ الْقَدَمِ فِي الْمَعْرِفَةِ، وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَنْ يُظَهَرَ شَيْئًا فِي مَمْلَكَتِهِ أَظَلَعَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ لَا يُظَلِّعُهُ. وَقَدْ قَالَ رحمته الله: « وَاللَّهِ لَا أَعْلَمُ إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّي ». قَالَ ذَلِكَ حِينَ صَلَّتْ نَاقَتُهُ فَلَمْ يَدْرِ أَيْنَ ذَهَبَتْ فَتَكَلَّمَ بَعْضُ الْمُتَافِقِينَ فِي ذَلِكَ ثُمَّ أَعْلَمَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِهَا. وَبِالْجُمْلَةِ فَالْإِطْلَاعُ عَلَى الْمَغِيبَاتِ مِنْ جُمْلَةِ الْكِرَامَاتِ، وَهِيَ لَا تُشْتَرَطُ فِي الْوَلِيِّ قُطْبًا كَانَ أَوْ غَيْرَهُ، وَاللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَعْلَمُ.

وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا وَمَوْلَانَا

مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ

وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا.



# بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله الذي حَقَّقَ الحَقَائِقَ وَأَوْضَحَ الطَّرَائِقَ ، وَالصَّلَاةَ وَالسَّلَامَ  
على مولانا مُحَمَّدٍ سَيِّدِ الخَلَائِقِ، المَخْصُوصِ بتَوَاتُرِ المُعْجِزَاتِ وتَظَاهِرِ  
الخَوَارِقِ، وَرَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْ أَصْحَابِهِ الأَعْلَامِ الَّذِينَ أَظْهَرَ اللهُ بِهِمْ  
دِينَهُ القَوِيمَ فِي أَقْصَى المَغَارِبِ وَالمَشَارِقِ.

وبعد: فِعْلُ التَّصَوُّفِ هُوَ سَيِّدُ العُلُومِ وَرئيسُهَا وَوَلبُ الشَّرِيعَةِ وَأَسَاسُهَا،  
وَكَيْفَ لَأَ، وَهُوَ تَفْسِيرٌ لِمَقَامِ الإِحْسَانِ الَّذِي هُوَ مَقَامُ الشُّهُودِ وَالعِيَانِ،  
كَمَا أَنَّ عِلْمَ الكَلَامِ تَفْسِيرٌ لِمَقَامِ الإِيمَانِ، وَعِلْمُ الفِئَةِ تَفْسِيرٌ لِمَقَامِ  
الإِسْلَامِ. وَقَدْ اشْتَمَلَ حَدِيثُ جَبْرِيلَ عليه السلام عَلَى تَفْسِيرِ الجَمِيعِ. فَإِذَا تَقَرَّرَ  
أَنَّهُ أَفْضَلُ العُلُومِ، تَبَيَّنَ أَنَّ الإِشْتِغَالَ بِهِ أَفْضَلُ مَا يُتَقَرَّبُ بِهِ إِلَى اللهِ  
تَعَالَى لِكُونِهِ سَبَبًا لِلْمَعْرِفَةِ الخَاصَّةِ الَّتِي هِيَ مَعْرِفَةُ العِيَانِ. وَقَدْ اشْتَمَلَ  
عَلَى حَقَائِقِ غَرِيبَةٍ وَعِبَارَاتٍ دَقِيقَةٍ، إِصْطَلَحَ القَوْمُ عَلَى اسْتِعْمَالِهَا.

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جميع الحقوق محفوظة لدار فنس فيتي

طُبِعَ فِي ١٤٣٢هـ - ٢٠١١م

مِعْرَاجُ التَّشْرِيبِ  
إِلَى  
حَفَائِرِ التَّصْرِيبِ

للشيخ الإمام سيدي أحمد بن عجيبة

(١١٦١-١٢٢٤هـ)



دار فنس فيتي للنشر والترجمة