



Letters of a Sufi Master (III)

The Shaikh al-‘Arabî ad-Darqâwî

The sickness afflicting your heart, *faqir*, comes from the passions which pass through you; if you were to abandon them and concern yourself with what God ordains for you, your heart would not suffer as it suffers now. So listen to what I say to you and may God take you by the hand. Each time your soul attacks you, if you were to be quick to do what God orders and were to abandon your will entirely to Him, you would most certainly be saved from psychic and satanic suggestions and from all trials. But if you begin to reflect in these moments when your soul attacks you, to weigh the factors for and against, and sink into inner chatter, then psychic and satanic suggestions will flow back towards you in waves until you are overwhelmed and drowned, and no good will be left in you, but only evil. May God guide us and you on the path of His Saints, Amen.

The Venerable Master, the Saint Ibn 'Atâ-Illâh says in his *Hikam*: “Since you know that the Devil will never forget you, it is your business not to forget Him who *grasps you by the forelock*.” (XI, 56). And our Master used to say: “The true way to hurt the enemy is to be occupied with the love of the Friend; on the other hand, if you engage in war with the enemy, he will have obtained what he wanted from you and at the same time you will have lost the opportunity of loving the Friend.” And we say: All good is in the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God, and the only way that leads towards Him is through renunciation of the world, keeping apart from people, inner and outer discipline. “Nothing is more useful to the heart than solitude, thanks to which it enters the arena of meditation,” as the Venerable Master Ibn 'Atâ-Illâh says in his *Hikam*. And we say: Nothing is of more profit to the heart than renunciation of the world and the fact of being seated between the hands of God's Saints.

Dethronement of the ego is a necessary condition, according to us and according to all the Masters of the Way, and in this respect one of them said: “The very thing you fear from me is what my heart desires.” But you, *faqir*, should not say this before having said it to your own soul and having forced it to follow this road and no other.

* * *

Letters of a Sufi Master - The Shaikh al-'Arabî ad-Darqâwî (III)

Nothing makes us so vulnerable to psychic and satanic attacks as concern for our sustenance. And yet our Lord (be He exalted) vowed to us by Himself: *Your sustenance and all ye have been promised is in Heaven; by the Lord of Heaven and earth, this is as true as it is true that ye have speech* (LI, 21-22). And he also said: *Prescribe prayer for thy people and be constant therein. We ask thee not to provide sustenance; We will provide for thee and it is piety that will gain the issue* (XX, 132). The same meaning is to be found in many other passages from the Koran as also in many sayings of the Prophet (may God bless him and give him peace).

There is also the saying of the Saint Abu Yazid al-Bistami (may God be well pleased with him): "My part is to worship Him, as He commanded me, and His part is to feed me as He promised me," and so forth. I mention all this only because I am afraid you may lapse into the misfortune that afflicts most men. For I see them busy with many activities, religious as well as worldly, and fearing nothing so much as poverty. If they knew what riches are to be had from being occupied with God, they would forsake their worldly activities entirely and busy themselves with Him alone, that is, with His commandments. But in their ignorance they keep on increasing their worldly and religious activities while remaining uneasy from fear of poverty or from fear of creatures, which is serious forgetfulness and a deplorable state; and this is the state in which the majority of people - almost all - exist ; may God preserve us from it !

Therefore be on guard, my brother, and devote yourself entirely to God; then you will see marvels. Do not give yourself up to the world as most people do, lest you be afflicted with the same misfortune. By God, if our hearts were close to our Lord, the world would soon come towards us and even into our homes, let alone to our doors; for our Lord (be He exalted) says to it: "O world, serve those who serve Me and render weary those who serve you!" By God, if we belonged to our Lord, the entire cosmos and all that it contains would soon belong to us as it has belonged to others, for God would have made the world our servant, inasmuch as He had made us His servants. But we have put that of which we ourselves are lords and masters in the place of our Lord and Master (be He exalted) and are not ashamed of it; "There is no strength and no power save through God!"

Our attention should be devoted to religious activities at all times and today more than ever, for in these days one might well imagine that no such thing as religious activity without worldly attachment had ever existed; nevertheless it certainly has existed even if it exists no longer; God bears witness to what we say. We observe (but God knows best) that in these days no one is able to say to the multitude of believers: "reduce your worldly activities and increase your religious activities; God will replace you (in your business) as He has done for others." Today nobody will listen to you - and God knows best - unless you say: "cultivate (your fields), earn, trade" and so forth. But if you say: "leave it, abstain (from the world) and be content," there are very few, even among the elect, who will listen to you - the others even less. Hear what the Saint Abu '1-'Abbâs al-Mursî (may God be pleased with him) has said about this: "Other people have their business, but our business is faith in God, fear of God; God (be He exalted) has said: *If the people of the towns had but believed and feared God, we would indeed have opened up to them the blessings of Heaven and of earth* (VII, 94); and at another time the Saint said: "Other people have their affairs, and our affair is God."

* * *

Letters of a Sufi Master - The Shaikh al-‘Arabî ad-Darqâwî (III)

As to this professor you told me about who is unable to find the state of presence, tell him not to look towards the past nor towards the future, to become the son of the moment, and to take death as the target before his eyes. Then he will find this state, God willing.

We said to one of our brothers: Let him who wishes to be in a perpetual state of presence restrain his tongue. And we advise you: if you are in a state of perplexity (*hayrah*), do not hasten to cling to anything, either by writing or by anything else, lest you close the door of necessity with your own hand, because for you this state takes the place of the supreme Name; but God is wiser. Ibn 'Atâ-illâh says in his *Hikam*: “Sudden distress heralds feast days for one who aspires”; and again: “Distress is the key to spiritual gifts”; and again: “You will perhaps find a benefit in distress which you have not been able to find in fasting nor in prayer; therefore when it descends upon you, defend yourself no longer and do not be concerned with searching for some remedy, lest you drive away the good which comes toward you freely, and give up your will entirely to your Lord; then you will see marvels.” Our Master used to say when someone was overcome with dismay: “Relax your mind and learn to swim.”

Do not give nourishment to all that arises in your heart, but throw it far away from you and do not be concerned with fostering it, forgetting your Lord the while, as most people do, thus going astray, wandering, losing their way in a mirage; if they understood, they would say: what an astonishing thing the heart, in one instant gives birth to countless sons, some legitimate, others illegitimate and yet others whose nature one cannot discern... How then could anyone who spends his time feeding all this offspring be available for his Lord? What a sorry creature this son of Adam, who effaces the Cosmos until not a trace of it remains and whom the Cosmos in its turn will obliterate until not a trace of him remains, save a faint odour which in a little while fades away altogether.

If you love your Lord, *faqir*, leave your self and your world and people, except the man whose state uplifts you and who shows you God by his words. But beware, beware lest you allow yourself to be deceived by someone, for how many are they who appear to be preaching for God when in reality they are only preaching for their desires. The celebrated Saint, Sayyidi Abu ‘sh-Shitâ (may God let us obtain profit through him), says in respect to this: “By God, we call ‘My Lord,’ or ‘Son of my Lord,’ only him who cuts off our fetters.” The fact is not hidden from you, *faqir*, that what imprisons a man in this world, which is the world of corruption, and holds him fast, is nothing but illusion (*al-wahm*); but if a man gets rid of this illusion, he passes into the world of purity from which he came; and God brings every stranger back to his homeland.

Certainly all things are hidden in their opposites - gain in loss and gift in refusal, honour in humiliation, wealth in poverty, strength in weakness, abundance in restriction, rising up in falling down, life in death, victory in defeat, power in powerlessness and so on. Therefore, if a man wishes to find, let him be content to lose; if he wishes a gift, let him be content with refusal; he who desires honour must accept humiliation and he who desires wealth must be satisfied with poverty; let him who wishes to be strong be content to be weak; let him who wishes abundance be resigned to restriction; he who wishes to be raised up must allow himself to be cast down; he who desires life must accept death; he who wishes to conquer must be content to be conquered and he who desires power must be content with impotence. Which is to say, let him who wishes to be free rejoice in servitude, as his Prophet, friend and Lord (God bless him and give him peace) rejoiced in

Letters of a Sufi Master - The Shaikh al-‘Arabî ad-Darqâwî (III)

it; let him choose it as the Prophet chose it and not be proud nor rebel against his condition, for the servant is the servant and the Lord is the Lord...

* * *

By God, if we were to leave the world, in the end it would seek us out and find us, as we have sought after it and been unable to find it; it would run after us and come to meet us, as we have run after it and failed to meet it; it would weep over us and we would need to console it, as we have wept for it without finding consolation in it; it would yearn for us and need us, as we have yearned for it when it had no need of us; and so forth. God is our Warrant for what we say. It is said that the world comes, despite itself, to him who is sincere in his asceticism and that if a cap falls from heaven it will fall on the head of him who does not wish for it.

The state of the elect, *faqir*, consists of virtue, beauty, measure and equilibrium; it is like a bride of incomparable beauty yet who will be enjoyed only by him who has rid himself of passion, in such a way that he has replaced surfeit by hunger; speech by silence; sleep by wake-fulness; honour by humiliation; eminence by lowliness; wealth by poverty; strength by weakness; power by powerlessness; or, in a word, by a man in whom the blameworthy qualities have been replaced by the praiseworthy qualities. He it is who will enjoy the bride's beauty, her goodness and all the wealth of her virtue; he it is who will see his Lord (be He exalted) and his Prophet (may God pray over him and give him peace); let him but purify his heart of all blameworthy qualities and, as we were saying, and God willing, all his wishes will be fulfilled. Greetings.