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chapter 7 - commentary on the seven valleys**Chapter 7 – Sufi Symbols in the Seven Valleys**

by Michael McCarron

- Symbol & Allusion in Sufi Discourse
- Historical Development of Iranian Sufism
- Literary Tradition of Iranian Sufism
- Stations (maqamat) of Farrid-din 'Attar, as-Sarraj & Mirza Husayn-'Ali Nuri Baha' Allah
- Baha' Allah's 'Haft Vadi' Symbols in Context

Symbolism described and popularized in the west by Jung has for a very long time held captive our imaginations concerning the unseen and it's representation in artistic expression--poetry, painting, architecture, etc. As is the case in most sciences and disciplines in the west the art of symbol, whether of the great painters of the 19th century or the poets of the Metaphysical Movement, has it's origin in the east. So it is in the study of Symbol that one encounters the voice of God in the immanent and present experiential basis in Sufism. It is interesting that the symbol understood in context in Iran of Sufi origin can be misunderstood in the west thus, it is important to have an idea of what the original context of a Sufi symbol carries in the context of the present page of it's environment or field of relationships. To quote the work of Lewisohn on this subject:

"(the symbolist) Those who approach Sufi poetry as a statement of archetypal logopoeia, that is to say, as a communication derived from the imaginal world ('alam-i mithal) or the realm of archetypal meanings ('alam-i ma'na), understanding it as an expression of precise symbolic meanings working systematically at a supraconscious associative level. Although scholars such as Toshihiko Izutsu, S.H. Nasr, and Henry Corbin have examined Persian philosophical doctrines from this point of view, no one has examined Persian metaphysical poetry from this standpoint, even though this is the mode of classical literary criticism employed by the Sufis themselves. Considering the importance of symbolic structure and meaning as the main criterion of assessing a poem's ultimate meaning among the Sufis, it seems worthwhile to investigate the underlying philosophical assumptions of this poetic symbolism, the study of which has been neglected by Iranologists East and West alike." [1]

In the following study I shall be examining one such Sufi symbolic exposition that of Husayn-'Ali's Haft Vadi. In this work Baha' Allah discusses the typication of the steps of Spiritual progress known in Sufism as the Maqamat (stations) which in the American Catholic tradition can be identified with Thomas Merton's discussion of the Seven Mountains. I shall also be discussing the concepts of Manifestation, Symbolism, and a commentary on key elements of the Haft Vadi.

I. The Sufi Understanding of Manifestation and Intimacy with God (allah):

In Sufism the term used to designate manifestation is mazhar. It is derivative of the Arabic word zuhur, "place of outward appearance". Hence, it is known as manifestation the appearance of an outer expression in form of an internal thought which is unmanifest in the world of appearance. The term in Shi'ite and Sufi circles is strongly associated with the Imam, in the sense of successor to prophet in an interpretive and guiding faculty, not the Prophet nor the wali of God. Waliyat or guardianship is identified by the Kubrawiya Tariqa (sufi order or school) as being intimate with God. Waliyat is "an Arabic verbal noun derived from the root 'wly', it carries the basic meaning of 'friendship', assistance, and 'authority, power'. A fundamental notion of Islamic social and spiritual life, the term is used with a complex variety of meanings related to the function, position, authority of a 'wali'...It appears in Persian as valayat, vilayat and in turkish as vilayet." The Sufi definition of Waliyat is as a charismatic nature associated with miracles (karamat). Al-Jurjani wrote "a wali is in oblivion (fana') of himself but subsisting (baqa') in contemplation." Ala al-Dawlah Simnani wrote of the dual nature of Prophet Muhammad; his prophetic nature and his wilayat or mystical experience. The plural of waliyat is that of the friends of God which is known as the awliya (saints) some hadith, of grade mursal, relating to these awliya are:

"[relating to Muhammad] I am His ear by which He hears, His eye by which He sees His tongue by which He speaks, His heart by which He understands"

"...[the awliya are] under God's tents, unknown to anyone but him."

"Marvelous is their (awliya) story, and they know marvelous stories (hadith)."[2]

The [heavenly] Book stands through them and they stand through it; the Book speaks through it and they speak through the Book."[3] For Ibn 'Arabi walayat is characterized in the following terms by Ibn Arabi: as Prophethood being ended in a stricto sensu sense. Hence, the idea of a genral prophethood (nubuwwa 'amma) is invoked in the idea of walayat. Which is non-legislative being spritual in basis not authoritative.[4]

This Walayat or intimacy with God is seen in symbolic representation in Sufism with the teachings of the Arab sufi Sahl at-Tustari who teaches that the Resurrection (qiyama) will allow man to approach the meeting with God (liqa'u'llah), the vision of Truth (an-nazar ila'l-haqq), and thelife in the permanence of Truth (baqa al-haqq). Thus, in at-Tustari's conception the manifestation of God in the sense of the theophany of the Transcendent Reality is consummated in the resurrection not in earthly existence, it is in this future age that God will manifest Himself to His 'awliya.

Returning to the concept of manifestation (mazhar) we must draw our attention to the early Sufi understanding of this concept. At-Tustari an early Sunni Sufi of Iraq held that mazhar and the term tajalli (effulgence) held the same meaning Kalabadi on Tustari's beliefs writes: "Sahl, said, there are three modes (ahwal) of theophany (tajalli): theophany of the divine essence (tajalli dhat) which is unveiling (muskhashafah), thoeophany of the divine attributes (tajalli sifat al-dhat) which is illumination (mawdi an-nur), and theophany of the divine decree (tajalli hukm al-dhat)."[5]

In at-Tustari's definition manifestation is not a single referent for a unique event but is an term with implications in a differential of appearances we can see a similiar concept in many Sufi authors. Also of importance is the work of Simnani on manifestation he holds that "in order to maintain the absolute transcendence and oneness of Divinity, Simnani incorporates a system of mirror imagery within his scheme of emanation. According to this scheme, a subsequent emanation is the locus of manifestation (mazhar) of the object from which it emanates, the word

mazhar implying a place of appearance or manifestation in which there is an immediate correspondence between the mirror image (or outward manifestation) and the object reflected or manifested therein. This concept endeavors to remove any possibility of divine indwelling (hulul) in a created entity." [6]

Important for the study of manifestation in Sufism is the work of Ibn 'Arabi who held that tajalli (manifestation) is the process of God's Self-Manifestation delimiting Itself or determining Itself for Itself by Itself. (Ta'ayyun, making oneself a particular, individual entity). It is the basis of this self-determination that Ibn 'Arabi holds the universe is a manifestation of. Qashani, Ibn 'Arabi's pupil, relates that according to Ibn 'Arabi there are six levels of manifestation:

1. Reality, non-determined or delimited. Being is still in it's absolute Essence.
2. Determination, the One Self-Determination to Itself.
3. Ahadit, all the active and effective self dterminations are realized as an integral whole.
4. The level of further dterminations of Ahadit into the Divine Names
5. Passive Nature: the unity of passive self-determination those receiving investment.
6. The world, those in actual existence.

Interestingly for Ibn 'Arabi Tajalli is equal to Emenation (fayd). It is written that there are two types of emanations in Ibn Arabi's thought-- Fayd al-aqdas (Most Holy Emenation) and fayd al-muqaddas (Holy Emenation). Qashani writes regarding this emanation:

"The essential self-manifestation is the appearance of the absolute under the form of the permanent archetypes which are ready to receive existence and whose domain is the Presence of Knowledge and Names, i.e. the Presence of Oneness (wahadit). By this appearance the Absolute descends from the presence of Unity (ahadit) to the Presence of Oneness. And this is the 'most holy emanation' of the Absolute, which consists in that the pure Essence not yet accompanied by any Names manifests itself (in the Plane of the Names). So there can be no plurality at all (in actuality) in this self-manifestation which occurs in the visible world as actualization of the Names, which therefore occurs in accordance with the 'preparedness' of each locus."

Thus we can see that there are number of different ways that Sufi authorities discuss the terms of Manifestation and Intimacy. Where manifestation is the substance and intimacy the individuation of that substance in experiential terms in spiritual discourse.[7]

The Historical Development & Literary Background of Iranian Sufism:[8]

The Development of Iranian Sufism, in comparison to other Sufi developments in other nations, has been largely influenced by the poetic imagery of the Sufis. The philosophical description of the world is alluded to through the rhythmic verse of poetry. This development has it's source in the Arabic poetry before the rise of Iranian sufism. These Arab poets such as Qays whose initial depiction of the story of Majnun & Layli is later taken to Persia and popularized. The initial allusion to the usurpation of the Rightly Guided Caliphate by the Umayyad heresy is taken to a mystical level in the writings of the Persians. These writings of Sufi authors in Iran has three categories: adab-- ethical discourses, religious inspiration-- the esoteric tafsir, and Sufi literature proper-- the discourse regarding the steps on the path and the elements of the steps.

This Sufi literature is written in a style of quatrains (ruba'i), rhyming couplets (mathnawi) or sonnetic (ghazal).

There are several literary devices used in Sufism the important element in literary works of Sufism is the concept of allegorical similitude (mathal). This is initially derived from the writings within the Qur'an where it is recorded that God disdains not to speak in allegories (Surah al-Baqara). In Sufism, the literary devices are symbol (ramz), gesturing (ima), metaphor (kenaya) and allusion (ishara) [see Chapter 1].

Allegory has been a large stumbling block to others outside the Sufi tradition in understanding the symbolic utterance of the Sufis. Perhaps the most important element of Sufi utterance is that of Shathiyyat, the ecstatic utterance relating the sufis perception of reality and identification within the sufi as being a part of the object of his direct contemplation thus unifying object with subject in an ecstatic moment. This is the basis of the famous utterance by the al-Hallaj: "I am the Truth (Haqq)". It has been arguably related that this is not an utterance with a literal truth but is an utterance full of symbolic meaning relating the Sufis love and intimacy with the object of his contemplation. It is also seen in Mirza Husayn-'Ali Baha' Allah's writing that "I am He and He is I" (Anna Huwa wa Huwa anna).

One of the greatest Sufi and scholars of Islam al-Ghazzali writes of the use of symbolic metaphor in Sufism as:

"We mean by metaphor or analogue (mathal) to render meaning (ma'na) into the external form (surah). So if one sees its inner meaning, he finds it true. But if he sees only its external form, he finds it deceiving...The prophets can talk to the people only by means of the metaphors (amthal), since it is necessary to talk to the people in accordance with their intellect. Their intellect is on the sleeper's level. So it is necessary to make use of metaphors to explain to the sleeper...their understanding does not go beyond the apparent meaning, because of their ignorance of the interpretation, called 'metaphorical interpretation' (ta'wil), as the decipherment symbols in dream is called 'the interpretation of dream' (ta'bir)" [Ihya, IV, 23-24] [9]

The Evolution of Sufism in Iran is intimately tied to the literary sources of Iranian Sufism. This literary sources can be divided into critical periods of development the first of which is the early period. The Early period authors of Iranian sufism is founded by Abu'l-Hasan ibn 'Uthman Hujwiri (d. 465/1071) with his Kashf al-Mahjub (the Unveiling of the Veiled). Active also during this period is the first poet of Iranian Sufism Abu Sa'id Abi'l-Khayr (d. 440/1089), a contemporary of Baba Tahir. Also, is the early sufi works of 'Abd God 'Ansari (d. 1089), whose Manazallut (the Sent Down) is quoted by Baha' Allah in the Haft Vadi, his famous work the 100 Fields and the Manazil as-Sairin became fundamental works for later Sufi thought. The development of Sufism after this early period is a development toward the concept of Mahhabat.

The "School of Love" is founded by the concept of the ultimate and supreme concept of love by God and of God. The members of the school of love where:

1. Ahmad Ghazzali (d. 1126) the famous philosopher.
2. Surhrawardi, the famous Ishraqiyun founder and poet. He was the last author of a visionary treatise until the early work of Mirza Husayn-'Ali Baha' Allah, Baha' Allah.
3. Ruzbihan Baqli, the author of The Jasmine of Lovers
4. Fakhr al-Din 'Iraqi author of Lama'at (Divine Flashes)

5. 'Abd al-Rahman Jami, author of Lawami (Flashing Lights).

After the school of love was the highly esoteric writings of 'Ayn al-Qudat (solace of the eyes) Hamdani, the martyr saint, who was a great formulator of Sufi ideas. His work the Complaint of the Stranger was written while he was imprisoned shortly before his martyrdom at the hands of the government clerics. Similiar to the martyrdom in the 19th century of Sayyid 'Ali-Muhammad Shirazi.

Following the works of Hamdani is that of the middle period the formulation of the Kubrawi tradition in Iran. The early works written in mathnawi style where those of Sana'i (d. 1150) whose Hadiqat al-haqiqah (the Garden of Truth) was the first mathnawi. Following his work is that of Farid al-Din 'Attar, who we shall see more later, and of course the master of the mathnawi Jalal al-Din "Rumi", the founder of the Mevlevi Sufi Order in Konya and the author of the famous Mathnawi, an esoteric commentary on the Quran. Other authors of interest are thse of Awhad al-Din Kirmanif (d. 1238) a shaykh of the Suhrawardiyah order. He expounded a doctrine of beauty and was a supporter of Ibn 'Arabi. Later, was the work of Shaykh Mahmud Shabistari (d. 1320) author of the Gulshan-i Raz (the Garden of Divine Mysteries).

Another group of poets is that of the Shirazi college. The poets of Shiraz where known as the expounders of strong jurisprudential and mystical tendencies. Sa'di (d. 1296) the author of the Gulistan was a member of the Suhrawardiya order. The poet Shams al-Din Muhammad Hafiz (d. 1389) was also a member of the Shirazi college.

"Hafiz was not only a poet but also a scholar knowledgeable in the religious sciences, literature, philosophy, and in sufism, to which he was devoted. He had an extra-ordinary talent to combine the profoundest thought with the most delicate poetic images. In his poetry one observes the final and most perfect wedding between exalted spirituality and vivid sensuality. He speaks of the Divine Names and Qualities while describing the hair of the beloved moving gently in the morning breeze. He aludes to the more esoteric of Sufi doctrines while emphasizing the importance of the Shari'ah...the spiritual and the the sensual are woven together in a poetry which is itself a vehicle that carries man to the exalted proximity of the Divine Empyrean".

The Seal of the Persian poets was 'Abd al-Rahman Jami (d.1492), he was a Naqshbandi Sufi, the author of Haft Awrang (Seven Thrones), including the story of Layla & Majnun. After Sadi the high point of Persian Sufi poetry declines with a few brilliant stars appearing in remote instances. It is interesting to note the resurgence of Sufism in general during the 19th century and hence, the development of strong sufi poetic tendencies in the mystic Mirza Husayn-'Ali Baha' Allah, Baha'u'llah.

It is important to trace out the development of the Kubrawi order in Iran as it shall be seen that this is a major source of influence upon all Sufis in Iran and specifically, the majority of Sufi authors quoted by Mirza Husayn-'Ali Baha' Allah are members of the Kubrawi order. The Kubrawi order developed out of the Sunni tradition of Iran before the conversion by royal decree of the populace to Ithna Asharism. The Kubrawi was founded by Najm al-Din Kubra (d. 1221) he was an expounder of a unique visionary experience based on Divine Lights. This doctrine was followed by all the major Kubrawi Shaykhs. Following the Silsalah of the Kubrawi we see the major Shaykhs of this order such as Majd al-Din Baghdadi the teacher of Farid-Din Attar. After Majd we see Baha al-Din Walad (d. 1231) who was the father and teacher of Jalal al-Din Rumi. Following Baha we see Najm al-Din Dayah ar-Razi (d. 1256) and later we have the important sufi doctrinal expounder 'Ala al-Dawlah Simnani (d. 1336). Simnani's legacy can be seen not

only in the Kubrawi but also in the Naqshbandi order and writings of Shah Wali'llah, especially the doctrine of Wahdat al-Shuhud.

The influences on Mirza Husayn-'Ali Baha' Allah can be seen through Rumi and 'Attar in poetic terms. In doctrinal terms there is a great similarity between Simnani and Baha' Allah and Baha' Allah's son, Abbas Effendi Abdu'l-Baha. Other influences or similarities on Mirza Husayn-'Ali can be seen from Shah Wali'llah and Ansari.

It is important to point out the development of the Kubrawi order after the 15th Century. The Kubrawi order branched into two different orders after the 15th century. The two branches where both Shi'a orders, it was not until after the branching and the rise of the Shi'ite monarchy that the Kubrawi left it's Sunni heritage. The two branches where the Dhahabi Order centered in Shiraz. And the Nurbakhshi order which became allied with the Shah and had several murids of the order appointed as ministers in the Shah's administration. It is important to note regarding the Dhahabi order that the order had some interesting parallels to later Bahai teachings and influences. These include hermetic influences, the use of gold in symbolism, the use of talismans and the emphasis on visions relating to the hidden Imam.[11]

Mystical Discourse through the Symbol:

In the previous section we touched upon the use of symbol (ramz) in Sufism. In Sufism the symbolic is expressed through a varied ways of expression. No longer do we have the common literal meaning attached to things. No longer is a light merely a collection of photonic discharges, but is an expression of divine source or enlightenment, a non-physical non-literal expression attached to a common literal object but having an internal vocabulary known to the adept which reveals itself in a code which can exalt the adept to a higher plane understanding the code attached to the literal object which is a symbol of the esoteric. Nicholson writes of the Sufi symbolic style:

"...the Sufis adopt the symbolic style because there is no other way of interpreting mystical experience. So little does knowledge of the infinite revealed in ecstatic vision need an artificial disguise that it cannot be communicated at all except through types and emblems drawn from the sensible world, which, imperfect as they are, may suggest and shadow forth a deeper meaning than appears on the surface." [12]

The 'Seven Valleys' (Haft Vadi), Commentary and Comparison to Farrid-din 'Attar [16]:

It is known that the Haft Vadi [17] was written in the mountains near Sulayman, in Iraqi Kurdistan. It was written in response to questions on the spiritual stations of the way of God posed by members of the local Naqshbandi order. Mirza Husayn-'Ali Nuri, Baha' Allah, was regarded as a shaykh of importance and was known as Darwish Irani at this time in Iraq. The stations (maqamat) are a very critical element in Sufism. Defined by Hujwiri as:

"Maqam (station) denotes the perseverance of the seeker in fulfilling his obligations towards the object of his search with strenuous exertion and flawless intention. Everyone who desires Divinity has a station (maqam), which, in the beginning of his search, is a means whereby he seeks Divinity.....'None of us hath a certain station' (Quran 37:164)" [14]

The early development of the maqamat can be traced back to the Imam Muhammad ibn Husayn and to Imam Jafar as-Sadiq who wrote of three spiritual stations. Other non Imami writers on the Maqamat are those of Dhu'l-Nun, the Egyptian (d. 861), and Yahya ibn Mu'ad (d. 872). The writing of seven stations first appeared in the writings of As-Sarraj (d.988). Of course in Persia the famous 'Abd Allah 'Ansari wrote of 10 stations: Irada, Zuhd, Tawakkul, Sabr, Huzn, Khawf,

Ra'ja, Sukr, Mahabba and Shawq. And in the writings of Ruzbihan Baqli (d.1209) we have 10 stations: Ubudit, Wilayat, Muraqabat, Khawf, Raja, Wajd, Yaqin, Qurbat, Mukashafa, Mushahad, Mahabbat, and Shawq. The most famous of the Seven Stations are those of Farid-din 'Attar who wrote of seven valleys. It was his 'Mantaq-i Tur' (Conference of the Birds) which became the same archetypal format that Mirza Husayn-'Ali Baha' Allah used to write of the spiritual stations using the same names of stations as Farid-Din Attar: Vadi-ye Talab, Vadi-ye 'Ishq, Vadi-ye Marifat, Vadi-ye Istighna', Vadi-ye Tawhid, Vadi-ye Hairat, Vadi-ye Faqr wa Fana.

In the following I shall be comparing the use of the The Seven Spiritual Stations by Sarraj, 'Attar and Baha' Allah:

The First Station:

'Attar's Valley of the Quest:

"When you enter the first valley, the Valley of the Quest, a hundred difficulties will assail you...you will have to give up all that has seemed precious to you and regard as nothing all that you possess...You will still need to detach yourself from all that exists." This valley depends on right seeking that is good intentions and the seeker must possess hope and love for the goal of his search.

Baha' Allah's Valley of Search:

"The steed of this Valley is patience; without patience the wayfarer on this journey will reach nowhere and attain no goal. Nor should he ever be downhearted; if he strive for a hundred thousand years and yet fail to behold the beauty of the Friend, he should not falter."

"It is incumbent on these servants that they cleanse the heart--which is the wellspring of divine treasures--from every marking, and that they turn away from imitation..."

In every face one sees the object of his search. And abandons all but the object.

In the above we see that the first station on the path is referred to in differing degrees of a similar concept, namely the repentance of one's sins and turning away from what is distractive from the Will of Divinity in the world. This uniform starting point is where we find the point of departure is for the path amongst the authors. We see that for Sarraj we will see the development of the stations along an less poetic form, as is the case with Farid al-Din 'Attar and as we progress through time the luxuriant symbols of Mirza Husayn-'Ali take on an atmosphere which is clearly removed, intellectually, from the world of phenomenon.

Baha' Allah points out the primary necessity of patience to succeed on this path. Patience in Arabic is Sabr. It is written in Qur'an 13:22 "In patience (the believers) seek the inner reality, countenance, of thier Lord" [wa al-dhiyna sabruwa abtaghaa' wajh Rabbikum] The idea of the inner reality shall be an important concept as we progress through this study. In this instance we speak of seeking God's inner reality. However, our own inner reality must be transformed for us to seek the inner reality of God, eventhough we realize it is an impossible task in material and metaphysical terms. To be an enlightened being according to the Qur'an is to be a Muhsin (a doer of good). It is recorded in the verse: "And who can be better in religion than one who submits his essential being to God; and he is a Muhsin. And follows the religion of Abraham-- Hanifa. And God did take Abraham as an intimate friend." (4:125) [wa min ahusan diynaa mim man islam wajhah God wa huwa muhsin wa atba'a millat Ibrahim haniyfaa wa atakhda God inrahyma khalya] Muhsin is the turning of ones inner life to the reality of God. So in this sense it

is Sufistic, the turning away from outer distraction to inner tranquility. Abdullah 'Ansari writes of Patience:

"Patience is observed over afflictions on account of (true) love and it produces three things: onesidedness of the heart; discerning knowledge ('ilm); light of sagacity. The patience of (or abandonment of) sins is due to fear of Divinity Almighty and it produces three things: intention in hearts; acceptance of the supplication; light of cleanliness. The patience over (or indulgence in complete) obedience is due to hopefulness. It also generates three things: disappearance of the calamities; grant of sustenance unexpectedly; inclination toward virtues." [18]

The Second Station:

'Attar's Valley of Love:

The face of the lover must be aflame. With love and good and evil cease to exist. Reason is overcome with love. "Love should tear aside your prudence Love changes your attitude. To love is to give up your ordinary life and forsake your tawdry pleasures."

"Lovers who have staked their lives for their love have entered on the Path. In the life of the Spirit they are united to the object of their affection."

Baha' Allah's Valley of Love:

"...and be dissolved in the fire of love. In this city the heaven of ecstasy is upraised and the world-illuminating sun of yearning shineth, and the fire of love is ablaze; and when the fire of love is ablaze, it burneth to ashes the harvest of reason."

The seeker loses self-consciousness and enters a stage of unawareness of differentiation in existence.

The Valley of Love is the second station in the maqamat path of 'Attar and Baha' Allah. We see that it is important to understand the development of the Concept of Love (Mahabbat) in the ideas of the Sufis.

Love (mahabbat) is written of in a mystical sense by Imam Jafar Sadiq where love is a spring of marifat (gnosis). Love is written of extensively by the female Sufi Saint, Rabia'a al-'Adawi (d. 185/801) she wrote:

"I love you (God) with two loves, a selfish love and a love of which You are worthy."

And 'Abd God 'Ansari wrote of love as being the supreme field that all mystical fields are contained within and in this configuration it is seen to be similar to the transcendence of God and God's immanence within the that which is surrounded. And the Saint Ayn al-Qudat writes of love as having three aspects:

"1. the lesser love ('ishq-i saghir), which is our love for Divinity; the greater love, ('ishq-i kabir), which is Divinity's love for Himself-- it has no trace by which it can be recognized, and because of its surpassing beauty it is describable only by cypher and parable (baramzi wa mithali); the in-between or mutual love ('ishq-i miyana), which he also despaired of describing-- in it one at first finds a difference between witnesser and witnessed, until it reaches the limit, when they become one."

In terms of the use of symbol it is interesting to note the reference to the greater love as being only accomplished through symbol and allegory (ramz wa mithali) it is in the realm of imagination not literalism that the ultimate Love is voiced to the creation of God which also was an act of love.

The Third Station:

'Attar's The Valley of Understanding

"Understanding, for each traveller, is enduring; but knowledge is temporary. The soul, like the body, is in a state of progress or decline; and the Spiritual Way reveals itself only in the degree to which the traveller has overcome his faults and weaknesses, his sleep and his inertia, and each will approach nearer to his aim according to his effort."

Baha' Allah's The Valley of Knowledge

"He in this station is content with the decree of Divinity..."

"The wayfarer in this valley seeth in the fashionings of the True One nothing save clear providence, and at every moment saith: 'No defect canst thou see in the creation of the Divinity of Mercy: Repeat the gaze: Seest thou a single flaw?'"

The wayfarers of this valley seeth neither first nor last. They have passed beyond such attributes. This is the last plane of limitation.

In this station we have Baha' Allah's speaking of knowledge, in this case the type of knowledge is that of the inner knowledge or gnosis. It is important to realize the designation in Arabic between 'ilm and marifat, 'ilm designates the knowledge of the science of something and is similar to french savoir, whereas marifat is to know something in an interior and close sense not so much a science but an experience and it is similar to french 'faire'. So we see that the valley of knowledge (marifat) is not a scientific knowing but is more emotional and direct. The great sufi doctrinarian Hujwiri, writes about marifat as:

"The Apostle said: 'If ye knew Divinity as It ought to be known, ye would walk on the seas, and the mountains would move at your call'. Gnosis of Divinity is of two kinds: conditional ('ilmi) and emotional (hali)....Theologians, lawyers, and other classes of men give the name of gnosis (marifat) to right cognition ('ilm) of Divinity, but the Sufi Shaykhs call right feeling (hal) towards Divinity by that name. Hence they have said that gnosis (marifat) is more excellent than cognition ('ilm), for right feeling (hal) is the result of right cognition, but right cognition is not the same thing as right feeling, i.e. one who has not cognition of Divinity is not a gnostic ('arif), but one may have cognition of Divinity without being a gnostic." [19]

This type of knowledge is critical in the understanding of waliyat, since a wali is not known as an 'uluma (cleric) of the outer religious law but is a knower of the inner truth it is similarly expressed in terms of the Imamate of 'Ali by Tustari who writes of a hadith attributed to Ali ibn Abi Talib:

"They (those firmly rooted in knowledge) are those who are disclosed (mukashafun) three kinds of knowledge ('ulum), since those possessed of knowledge ('uluma) are of three kinds: rabbaniyyun (those who perceive Divinity as Lord), nuraniyyun (those who perceive Divinity as Light), and datiyyun (those who perceive Divinity as Essence), in

addition to four kinds of knowledge: scriptural revelation (wahy), theophanic revelation (tajalli), innate knowledge (al-'indi) and intuitive knowledge (al-ladunni).'[end of hadith] Baqli's variant considers the rabbaniyyun, nuraniyyun, and datiyyun as representatives of three kinds of knowledge by unveiling (mukasafah), and determines scriptural revelation, theophanic revelation, innate knowledge and intuitive knowledge as the principles (ahkam) of this knowledge."[20]

IV. The Fourth Station

'Attar's The Valley of Unity:

In this valley the seeker perceives unity through duality.

"When the spiritual traveller enters this valley he will disappear and be lost to sight because the Unique Being will manifest himself; he will be silent because this Being will speak.

'The Part will become the whole, or rather, there will be neither part nor whole. In the School of the Secret you will see thousands of men with intellectual knowledge, their lips parted in silence. What is intellectual knowledge here? It stops on the threshold of the door like a blind child."

Baha' Allah's The Valley of Unity:

"In this station he pierceth the veils of plurality, fleeth from the worlds of the flesh, and ascendeth into the heavens of singleness. With the ear of Divinity he heareth, with the eye of Divinity he beholdeth the mysteries of divine creation. He steppeth into the sanctuary of the Friend, and and shareth as an intimate the pavilion of the Loved One. He stretcheth out the hand of truth from the sleeve of the Absolute; he revealeth the secrets of power. He seeth in himself neither name nor fame nor rank, but findeth his own praise in praising Divinity."

Tawhid is the unitive principle within Islam and as the primary unity is the basis of the main argument of Islam: La illa illah God (there is no Divinity but Divinity) which is understood as the belief in the Absolute Transcendence of God. In the Valley of Unity we see the mystication of the doctrine of Tawhid which is understood in this case as the supreme origin of all spiritual stations, although not in a substansive sense. The intermediary of the spritual station is the Ruh (Spirit) the sufi definition of Ruh is: "The Universal Spirit (ar- Ruh), which is also called the 'first intellect' (al-'Aql al-awwal), is described asometimes as created and uncreated. Uncreated in it's immutable essence, yet created insasmuch it is the first cosmic entity."

V. The Fifth Station

'Attar's The Valley of Independence and Detachment:

The valley where theri is neither the desir e to posses nor the wish to discover.

"This Valley is not so easy to cross as you in your simplicity perhaps think. Even when the blood of your heart shall fill the ocean, you will only be able to make the first stage. Even if you were to journey ov er all the ways of the world you would still find yourself at the first step. No traveller has seen the limit of this journey neither has he found a remedy for love. If you halt you are petrified, or you may even die; if you continou on your way, always advancing, you will hear unti eternity the cry: 'Go still further.' You can neither go nor stay. It is no _advantage either to live or to die."

Baha' Allah's The Valley of Contentment:

"In this valley he feeleth the winds of divine contentment blowing from the plane of the spirit. He burneth away the veils of want, and with inward and joutward eye, percieveth within and without all things the fday of: 'Divinity will compensate each one out of His abundance.' Form sorrow he turneth to bliss, form anguish to joy. His grief and mourning yield to delight and rapture."

In this valley we see that 'Attar and Baha' Allah both speak of the contentment in God. It is a station marked by a lack of movement from God nor toward God but a remaining in God and absorption so to speak of consciousness in the awareness of God and God's beautiful creativity in creation. 'Abdullah 'Ansari writes of content (jamam) "that it signifies receiving salvation from three things: disturbance of heart; bad intentions ; and disturbance of time."

VI. The Sixth Station

'Attar's The Valley of Astonishment and Bewilderment:

"...where one is prey to sadness and defection., There sighs are like swords, and each breath a bitter sigh; ther, is sorrow and lamentation, and a burning eagerness. It is at once day and night. There, is fire, yet a man is depressed and despondent. How, in his bewilderment, shall he continue his way? But he who has achieved unity forgets all and cforgets himself. If he is asked: 'Ar you, or are you not? ...He will reply with certainty: 'I know nothing, I understand nothing, I am unaware of myself. I am in love, but with whom I do not know. My heart is at the same time both fulll and empty of love."

Baha' Allah's The Valley of Wonderment:

"After journeying through the planes of pure contentment, the traveler cometh to the Valley of Wonderment and is tossed in the oceans of grandeur, and at every moment his wonder groweth. Now he seeth the shape of wealth as poverty itself, and the essence of freedom as sheer impotence..."

"Indeed, O Brother, if we ponder each created thing, we shall witness a myriad perfect wisdoms and learn a myriad new and wondrous truths."

Perhaps, aside from the mystical aspects of this passage, most interesting is the comment on relativity and unicity in the work of Baha' Allah and 'Attar on this plane of spritual awakening. In these works we see the ideal of abandonment of the illusory for the appreciation of the Real (al-Haqq). In Islamic philosophy the understanding of the relationship between unicity and duality is similar to that of numerological developments. Out of the one we get two. Hence, the further one is from the primary root of one the more numerous the divisions and multiplicity. So to suggest seeing the unicity in the duality is not only the recognition of the manifest oneness in all things but also to grow nearer in conscious awareness toward the unicity of origin. In the case of the Sufi this origin is God.

Another example is that of the fractal. Fractals existing in multiples still maintain their original shape and form of thier mother. A fractal, in fact, is a configuration composed of each element being the same as the other elements that in their totality maintain the structure and shape of each element. As paradoxical this may seem the theory of manifestation is one which supposes the similar idea. Counter this with the Qur'anic denial of giving God any natural or anthropomorphical analogs we realize that what we see in creation of the Creator may very well indeed be the plan of the Creator not the creator itself. Thus, we realize that the manifest

oneness is the one word of the Command to create, namely, "Be" and it is. (Kun yafakun). Later we shall see how this promotes the idea of annihilation into God's Will.

The Seventh Station

'Attar's The Valley of Deprivation & Death:

"The essence of this valley is forgetfulness, dumbness, deafness and distraction; the thousand shadows which surround you disappear in a single ray of the celestial sun. When the ocean of immensity begins to heave, the pattern on its surface loses its form; and this pattern is no other than the world present and the world to come. Whoever Declares that he does not exist acquires great merit. The drop that becomes part of this great ocean abides there for ever in peace. In this calm sea, a man, at first, experiences only humiliation and overthrow; but when he emerges from this state he will understand it as creation, and many secrets will be revealed_ to him."

Baha' Allah's The Valley of True Poverty and Absolute Nothingness:

"This station is the dying from the self and the living in Good, the being poor in self and rich in the Desired One. Poverty as here referred to signifieth being poor in the things of the created world, rich in the things of Divinity's world..... He who hath attained this station is sanctified from all that pertaineth to the world."

"This is the plane wheron the vestiges of all things are destroyed in the traveler, and on the horizon of eternity the Divine Face riseth out of the darkness, and the meaning of 'All on the earth shall pass away, but the face of thy Lord...' is made manifest."

In this passage we see in Baha' Allah's comments the exposition of self-poverty in the ego sense and being a desirer of the beloved which is God, this is orthodoxically stated in the Quran as seeking the Countenance of God. The idea of poverty is explicated in the Nimatullahi sufi manual as:

"Poverty (faqr) signifies destitution, impoverishment, and neediness, as contrasted to 'wealth' (ghana), which connotes 'independence' and self-sufficiency'. Poverty is in reality a devotee's attribute, whereas wealth is an attribute of the Lord. In this sense, the Quran declares: 'O Mankind,! You are poor in relation to God, and God is the Rich, the Glorious'. (Qur'an 35:15)

The Term Poverty has various meanings:

Sometimes poverty implies straightened circumstances and material need.

Sometimes poverty implies an individual spiritual impoverishment and need for God....synonymous with the ascetic (zahid), who renounces the world to attain a reward in the hereafter. Synonymous with Sufi, who renounces both this world and the next to attain the Truth. Here, the term faqir is identical in meaning to the Perfect Man (Insan al-Kamil) and the sufi who has attained total mystical reabsorbment (fana) in the Truth."[20]

This station marks the completion of the purification of the individual and the rise of the manifesting of purity that is originated in God's teachings.

A Study in Common Sufi Symbols used in the Haft Vadi:

1. Avicennan and Ghazzalan Recital: "If thou be a man of communion and prayer, soar up on the wings of assistance from Holy Souls, that thou mayest behold the mysteries of the Friend and Attain to the lights of the Beloved. 'Verily, we are from Divinity and to Him shall we return.'" (pg. 17, Haft Vadi) This passage from Baha' Allah's treatise indicates a common sufi stream of thought: the idea of soaring heavenward toward contact with the Luminous. This soaring is not so much a heavenly journey through time and spatial awareness but rather through a metaphysical virtual reality-- the journey of vision. The earliest visionary recital as it is known in the Sufi world is attributed to Ibn Sina whose father and Grandfather were members of the Ismaili Shi'a community. His early recital was later taken up by Ghazzali the once critic of Sufism and Ismailism and later an avid Sufi himself. The Visionary recital is composed of a mystic voyage toward the Heavenly Mountains (Ar. tur as-samawati) as has been seen in Haft Vadi and the writings of 'Attar. Both the Avicennan and Ghazzalan recital use the bird image as symbol for the soul as it ascends to the King. Of course we see this symbol used by 'Attar and in shorter episodes by Baha' Allah.

Corbin summarizes the Ghazzalan treatise as:

"There was a great assembly of the birds; all the varieties of their species and kinds were represented. The birds thought that they should have a king, and that none was worthier to rule over them than the bird 'Anqa. Whereupon they learn that she has gone to dwell in a distant and utterly inaccessible island. Such is their ardent desire, and such the firmness of their resolution, that they nevertheless decide to set out to find her, to put themselves under her protection and be admitted to her court. To be sure, they are warned: before you are endless deserts, vertiginous summits, suffocating vapors, regions of heat and regions of cold. You will faint before you have reached the goal of your desire! But the warning was given in vain. They set out. Each mounted the steed of firm resolution, putting on it the bridle of ardent desire. And what was bound to happen came to pass: those who were from warm countries died in the cold regions, those who were from cold countries perished in the regions of heat; others fell, pitiful victims of the storms and accidents they encountered. Finally, only a small band reached the distant island of the bird 'Anqa.

They begged that the King be informed of their arrival, but she was in an inaccessible castle. They asked that she would at least deign to appear, in order to become their king. But the stupefying answer came: 'You have wearied yourselves in vain. We are King, whether you consent or refuse, whether you come or depart. We have noneed of you.' When they understood that they were regarded as of no account and that their desire was treated with the most contemptuous indifference, they succumbed to despair and shame, they felt disillusioned, helpless. They told one another that the road of return was closed to them: their strength did not suffice to attempt it, their passion had exhausted them. Better to die where they were, even to the last of them.

When they were almost choked by their grief and disappointment, lo! Another message was brought them: 'Away, away with despair of Divinity's mercy (Qur'aan 12:87)'. If our perfect independence of all things demanded that you be treated with scorn and rebuffed, the beauty of munificence demands that you be received and treated with unstinted gentleness. Now that you have experienced the measure of your impotence to know our measure, it befits us that you have here your dwelling ...It befits the King 'Anqa that she choose freely him who has become really conscious of his own unworthiness.' Savoring the joys of familiarity after having known despair, the birds inquired concerning the fate of their companions who had fallen on the road and would never arrive....They were answered: 'Beware, beware! If any goes forth from his house

to flee to Divinity and His Prophet, and death overtakes him, his reward is in the Hand of Divinity (Qur'aan 4:149). 'Say, not of them who have been killed on the way of Divinity that they are dead. Nay, they are alive (11:149).'"[22]

As is seen the typology of the Visionary recitals is the same throughout the works of all the great Sufi authors it is a typology which identifies God as the point of Adoration and that which is moved toward. God does not move toward us but we must move toward God. In this moving is great sacrifice and a transformation of the inner reality of one's soul.

2. Nightengale: "And if a nightengale soar upward from the clay of self and dwell in the rose bower of the heart, and in Arabian melodies and sweet Iranian songs recount the mysteries of Divinity-- a single word of which quickeneth to fresh, new life the bodies of the dead [see resurrection below], and bestoweth the Holy Spirit upon the moldering bones of the this existence-- thou wilt behold a thousand claws of envy, a myriad beaks of rancor hunting after Him and with all their power intent upon His death." (Pg.20, Haft Vadi) As mentioned in the previous example the Nightengale or Bird (tayr) is the vehicle of the soul in sufi symbolism. The bird is written of in the following examples:

"The Divine bird (morgh-i ilahi) refers to the spirit." (Latifa-ye Ghaibi, pg. 13, [translated by Nurbakhsh])

"The bird of the sacred rose-garden (tayer-i goshan-i quds) is said to represent the human spirit. Hafiz: 'I am the bird of the sacred rose-garden; How can I describe my separation? How have I fallen into this trap of transitoriness?'"

"In Sufi terminology, the dove (fakhta, warqa) may be defined as the Universal Soul which is the heart of the world. It may also signify the Guarded Tablet (lawh al-mahfuz), as well as the Manifest Book." (Jorjani, Ta'rifat, 325 [translated by Nurbakhsh])

"The Simorgh or 'Anqa represents Absolute Being or the being of the Absolute. The 'Anqa applies to each universal level of the Unseen, and is the goal and reality for that which lies below it

Mount Qaf represents the lowest level and phenomenal realm, where the Simorgha of spiritual reality (ma'na') resides. The si (thirty) of the Simorgh, as the multiple of ten times three, the three represent, being the Oneness (ahadit), the Unicity (wahediyat), and the angelic realm (malakut).. (Tasawwof wa Adabiyat-i Tasawwof, 216 [translated by Nurbakhsh])

Baha' Allah writes of the persian bird, Gunjishk:

"Thus hath it been made clear that these stages depend on the vision of the wayfarer. In every city he will behold a world, in every Valley reach a spring, in every meadow hear a song. But the falcon of the mystic heaven hath many a wondrous carol of the spirit in His breast, and the Persian bird keepeth in His soul many a sweet Arab melody; yet these are hidden, and hidden shall remain."

"The thoughts thou hast expressed as to the interpretation of the common species of bird that is called in Persian Gunjishk (sparrow) were considered. Thou appearest to be well grounded in mystic truth. However, on every plane, to every letter a meaning is allotted which relateth to that plane. Indeed, the wayfarer findeth a secret in every name, a mystery in every letter. In one sense, these letters refer to holiness." (Haft Vadi)

In the description of the contents of the letters of the Persian Bird "Gunjishk" Baha' Allah defines each consonant as a step in the purification process he identifies "G" with freeing thyself from earthly attachments; "N" with purifying oneself; "J" with purifying one's intentions toward God; "Sh" with thanking (shukara) God for His Grace; and "K" for the unwrapping of limitations of the soul. This can be counterpoised to the similar five steps written of by Jami:

1. Thank thy Lord; 2. Pray and Remember; 3. Dependence on God and Submission to His Will; 4. Patience and Wisdom; 5. Resignation, the denial of resistance to God.

Additionally, the five letters of the Persian Sparrow are similar to the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Order in Kurdistan's concept of Illumination of the Spirit (Tajliya-i Ruh) it is comprised of the following five steps:

1. Obedience to the Shari'a; 2. Separating the relationship the spirit has with the world; 3. The Spirit rejoins the source of its origin which is now the sole object of its tariqa (path); 4. It is guided by Divine Love; 5. When the Illumination of the Divine Essence is revealed like a moth the spirit flings itself onto it and vanishes in its radiance it loses the consciousness of its individuality and a Divine Substance with Divine Attributes is substituted.

We see that what is Holiness in these letters is the steps taken to achieve a "Spiritual" visage in the path of God.[23] In fact one may recollect that another of Baha' Allah's works the Kitab al-Aqdas taken in this context is not merely a book of Adab (ethical duties), rather a concise guide to achieving spiritual purification.

3. Inner and Outward, Zahir, Batin and Haqa'iqat:

"O My Brother! Until thou enter the Egypt of love, thou shalt never come to the Joseph of the Beauty of the Friend: and until, like Jacob, thou forsake thine outward eyes, thou shalt never open the eye of thine inward being; and until thou burn with the fire of love, thou shalt never commune with the Lover of Longing." (Pg. 9, Haft Vadi)

Here Baha' Allah identifies love as being the equivalent to Egypt and Beauty of the Friend with Joseph this metaphor is taken from Surah al-Yusuf (Qur'aan Surah al-Yusuf) Where Yusuf (Joseph) is abandoned by his brothers in Egypt or in the wilderness and later proves himself to be a strong guide. It is mentioned of vision that one must open the inward seeing to approach love or see the beauty of the wilderness. Vision in Sufism is accorded as:

"... it emanates out of Certitude (yaqin). God Almighty says: '...they call to mind (Divinity and His commandments) and Lo; they are enlightened (7:201).' The term Basirat means 'clear vision' it is of three kinds: Insight of Acceptance (rida), Insight of Following (Khalifat); and Insight of Reality (Haqq). The insight of Acceptance is the name of access to the place where love is attained... The insight of Following is to strictly follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him)....The Insight of Reality is the sight of the Real Master (Divinity Almighty) with the eyes of heart....the Insight of acceptance lies in the observation of experiences, signs and proofs; the insight of following lies in the Holy Book, the Sunnah and the tradition of our righteous past Muslims. The insight of reality is a lamp in the heart proclaiming that 'it is Me'; it is a voice in the ear that says: 'I am here'. And an illuminous sight telling that 'I am with you.'" [Ansari, 100 Fields]

"Of this hath the nightingale of oneness sung in the garden of Ghawthiyyih. He saith: 'And there shall appear upon the tablet of thine heart a writing of the subtle mysteries of 'Fear Divinity and

Divinity will give you knowledge'[cf. Quran 16:128,23:57]; and the bird of thy soul shall recall the holy sanctuaries of preexistence and soar on the wings of longing in the heaven of 'walk the beaten paths of thy Lord,'(zahir) and gather the fruits of communion in the gardens of 'Then feed on every kind of fruit.'" (batin) (Pg. 4, Haft Vadi) Describing the Haqa'iq: "...besides the orient light of the Essence [see Kubrawiya & Baha' Allah Lights below] in the mirrors of names and attributes--yearning would seize the reins of patience and reserve from out thy hand, and make thy soul to shake with the flashing light, and draw thee from the earthly homeland to the first, heavenly abode in the Center of Realities, and lift thee to a plane wherein thou wouldst soar in the air even as thou walkest upon the earth..." (Pg. 4, Haft Vadi) "...stray not a breadth of a hair from the Law (shariah, the Islamic Law) , for it is indeed the secret of the Path and the fruit of the Tree of 'Truth'; and in all these stages he must cling to the rope of obedience to the commandments, and hold fast to the cord of shunning all forbidden things, that he may be nourished from the cup of the Law and informed of the mysteries of Truth." (Pg. 40, Haft Vadi) In the classical Sufi teachings the distinction between Batin and Zahir is one that is defined as the relationship to the Inner to the Outer. It can have the similitude of the heart, one where the life blood is contained within the vessel of natural tissue of the outer chamber. The Haqa'iq is likened unto the life that is developed out of the relationship of the inner and outer heart working together to nourish the human vessel in it's quest for attaining the nirvana of submission (muslim) to the Will which wills all wills.

4. Qalb: "They who soar in the heaven of singleness and reach to the sea of the Absolute, reckon this city-- which is the station of life in Divinity-- as the furthestmost state of mystic knowers, and the farthest homeland of the lovers. But to this evanescent One of the mystic ocean, this station is the first gate of the heart's citadel, that is , man's first entrance to the city of the heart; and the heart is endowed with four stages, which would be recounted should a kindred soul be found." (Haft Vadi)

In Sufi symbolism the heart is the locus of divine attraction and the seat of righteousness. The early Wahhabi teacher Shaykh Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab reminds us "There is an emphasis on sincerity (ikhlas); for many pretend to call to God when they, in fact, call to themselves.' And the progress of such an understanding develops in stages. First, we must consider the elements of the heart and remembrance. The heart (Ar. Qalb, Per. Dil) in the Qur'an is described as that which allows us the approach with the Lord: 'Behold he approached his Lord with a sound heart.' (37:84) The commentators describe this 'qalb salimi' as a 'heart that is pure, and unaffected by the diseases that afflict others'. As the heart in Arabic is taken to be not only the seat of feelings and affections, but also of intelligence and resulting action, it implies the whole character.' It is the purification of the heart, as mentioned by Baha' Allah in the Haft Vadi, which leads to the purification of our observance of duties of religion and to the obedience of the Will which wills all wills. The heart is also the center of the seating of Faith (iman). The vehicle for such a purification and setting of faith in the heart is that of the remembrance of Allah, It is the prayer and the dhikr (remembrance) which generates a force within the wall of our chest which can withstand the viscidities of the transgressors of the Way. In a Sahih hadith catalogued by Muslim it is recorded that:

"I am near to the thought of My servant as he thinks about me, and I am with him in My heart, and if he remembers Me in assembly I remember him in assembly, better than his, and if he draws near Me by the span of a palm I draw near him by the cubit, and if he draws near Me by the cubit I draw near him by the space of two hands. And if he walks towards me, I rush towards him".

And it is this ascension of the mind with the remembrance of God in the mirroring of the Divine Decree in the heart which engulfs the lover of the Shrouded Supremacy, like Majnun, the

lover to his Layli which enthralls the seeker of the spiritual rapture to the reunion of Certainty. Progress of the lovers soul to al-Haqq is that of travelling through states like a ladder. There are three states (Ar. Hal) of the development of the human soul, coincidentally like that of a child in it's mothers fetus: First is that as described as 'Ammara': "Yet I do not absolve myself: the soul certainly incites('ammara') to do evil. Unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely My Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful". (Qur'an 12:53) This is the stage of the soul commanding to evil. The Second is that of "Lawwama": "And I do swear by the self-reproaching (lawwama) soul." (Qur'an 75:2) This is the soul which commands resistance or is still prone to evil but resists evil. The Third soul is the soul which is called the "Mutmainna" "(to the righteous soul will be said:) 'O soul, in rest and satisfaction ('mutmainna')! Come back thou to thy Lord, well pleased and well-pleasing unto Him! Enter thou, then, among my devotees! Yae, enter thou My Heaven!" (Qur'an 89:27-30) This faithful soul is that of the highest state of all states and is accomplished through the purification of the heart by way to the observance of perfect righteousness (Ar. Taqwa).

The classical Sufi explanation of the four paths of the heart is attributed to Hakim Tirmidhi, also a sahih hadith scholar, who draws on the relationship of the soul to the heart. He correlates four levels of the soul with four level of the heart as:

Degree of the Soul:	Degree of the Heart:
Soul that commands to evil. The submitter with undeepened belief (muslim)	the Breast
Inspired Soul, a person of faith (mu'imin)	the Heart
Blaming Soul, a "knower" (arif)	the Inner Heart
Soul at Peace, one who asserts Divinity to Unity (muwahhid)	the Kernel, or innermost essence of the Heart

Among other interpretations is that of Rashid al-Din Maybudi he writes:

"The human heart has four curtains: The first is the breast (sadr), the resting place of the covenant of submission (islam), according to God's word, 'Is he whose breast God has opened up to submission...?' (39:22). The second curtain is the heart (qalb), the

place of the light of faith, according to His words, 'He has written, 'He has written faith upon their hearts' (58:22). The third curtain is the inner heart (fu'ad), the pavilion of the witnessing (mushahid) of the Real (al-Haqq), in accordance with His words, 'Love for him has rent her innermost heart.' (12:30)."[24]

5. Spiritual Resurrections: "With inward and outward eyes he witnesseth the mysteries of resurrection in the realms of creation and the souls of men, and with a pure heart apprehendeth the divine wisdom in the endless Manifestations of Divinity. 'In the ocean he findeth a drop, in a drop he beholdeth the secrets of the sea.'" (pg. 12, Haft Vadi) "Thus, too, Luqman, who had drunk from the wellspring of wisdom and tasted of the waters of mercy, in proving to his son Nathan the planes of resurrection and death, advanced the dream as an evidence and an example. We relate it here, that through this evanescent Servant a memory may endure of that youth of the school of the Divine Unity..." (Pg. 34, Haft Vadi) In Sufism it is extremely important, especially from the point of view of jurisprudential knowledge, to remember that the term resurrection (qiyamat) is not the Judgement or return of 'Isa that the Quran holds to be the Qiyamat. In Sufism the term qiyamat has another connotation. In the teachings of Simnani we see these teachings laid out.

Simnani uses the term qiyamat in connection with fana which is to say after the annihilation of the individual he subsides (baqa) in the Love of God.

For Simnani these resurrections are due to the process of voluntary death (al-mawt al-ikhtiyari) which is the initiation of the mystical experience in this life as a living being and dying to the material world of ego. As such the resurrections are those of al-qiyama as-sughra, the lesser resurrection.

In the broader teachings of Sufism it is related that qiyama is:

"Resurrection symbolizes the turning of the wayfarer's heart from the forms of illusory multiplicity to visions of the theophanies of Majesty at the different levels of manifestation of the divine beauty. At each level, of manifestation which is directed inwards, a resurrection takes place and the phenomenal realm is constantly full of these resurrections. It is in this context that the Prophet said, 'One who dies experiences resurrection,' beginning with the wayfarer's resurrection after voluntary death, and ending with the great resurrection which comes about after natural death." [Nurbakhsh, "Qiyama", Sufi Symbolism]

6. Annihilation: "This is the plane whereon the vestiges of all things are destroyed in the traveler (musallik), and on the horizon of eternity the Divine Face riseth out of the darkness, and the meaning of 'All on the earth shall pass away, but the face of thy Lord....' is made manifest." (Pg. 37, Haft Vadi) The idea of Annihilation (fana) is an essential concept in the Sufi system of purification. Jami writes:

"Annihilation means that the overpowering force of the manifestation of Divinity's Being to the Sufi's inward reality erases his awareness of other than Divinity. It should be understood that 'annihilation from annihilation' is contained in annihilation. That is, if the annihilated traveler is aware of his own annihilation, he is not truly annihilated, since both the attribute of annihilation and the possessor of that attribute are in the category of 'other than Divinity'. Hence, awareness of annihilation negates annihilation."

Annihilation promotes the individual consciousness to seeing all as being originated in the creative power of God. Najm al-Din Kubra describes the process of passing away:

"The possession of a man by a mystical state (al-halah) is stronger than the possession of a state by a man... 1. at first a man passes away (yafna) from his own will (ikhtiyarihi) into the Divine Will (ikhtiyar al-Haqq). 2. Then he ascends and is characterized (yattasifu) by Divine Will, this being more sublime (ajalla) than passing away (al-fana) into Divine Will. This characterization by Divine Will come to an end 3. When he (the mystic voyager) is tried by affliction (ibtula) and tested by the onslaughts of Awesome Majesty (hawahimi'l-'azamah). 4. Thus he pastures alone in the meadows of Majesty (al-jalal) and speeds onwards into the plazas of Awesomeness (al-kibriya'i) and flies in the atmosphere of Essence (or substance, al-huwih) until he is clothed with (Divine) Will (al-ikhtiyar). Then he is a khalif (successor) with full claim (al-'istihqaq) to teaching the Path (al-tariqah)."[25]

It is interesting that for Kubra that the annihilation of the individual is an annihilation of one's will with that of the Divine Will. This is also spoken of to some extent by 'Ali-Muhammad Shirazi and Mirza Husayn-Ali Baha' Allah.

7. Wahdat ash-Shuhud: An important accomplishment of Baha' Allah is the distinction in his system of the Unity of Witnessing rather than the pantheistic leaning Unity of Being doctrine (wahdat al-wajub). Being (wajib) is above all that is created we see this in the phrases:

"Wherefore, the lovers of the face of the Beloved have said; 'O thou, the One Whose essence alone showeth the way to His Essence, and Who is sanctified above any likeness to His creatures.'" How can utter nothingness gallop its steed in the field of preexistence, or a fleeting shadow reach to the everlasting sun? The Friend hath said, 'But for Thee, we had not known Thee.' and the Beloved said, 'nor attained Thy Presence.'" (Pg. 23, Haft Vadi)

It is an interesting concept within the Qur'aan that the worshippers are to seek out Gods countenance when it is clearly stated that Gods countenance or Essence is unattainable. We see this here explained in the doctrine of Wahdat ash-Shuhud as a witnessing to the Countenance of God through the meditant however, the reality of achieving substantial oneness whether physical or metaphysical is a perception not an experience or rather the experience of consciousness which is devoid of other than God. This doctrine was first expounded upon by Shah Wali'llah (Sirhindi) the Naqshbandi Sufi of al-Hind. Some scholars give initial claim to this to Simnani. Baha' Allah further points out on the substantial separation of God from the ascende:

"However, let none construe these utterances to be anthropomorphism, nor see in them the descent of the worlds of God into the grades of the creatures; nor should they lead thine Eminence to such assumptions. For Divinity is, in His Essence, holy above ascent and descent, entrance and exit; ; He hath through all eternity been free of the attributes of human creatures, and ever will remain so. No man hath ever known Him; no soul hath ever found the pathway to His Being. Every mystic knower hath wandered far astray in the valley of the knowledge of Him; every saint hath lost his way in seeking to comprehend His Essence. Sanctified is He above the understanding of the wise; exalted is He above the knowledge of the knowing! The way is barred and to seek it is impiety; His proof is His signs; His being is His evidence." (Pg. 22, Haft Vadi)

8. Muhammadan Reality:

"And I praise and glorify the first sea which hath branched from the ocean of the Divine Essence, and the first morn which hath glowed from the Horizon of Oneness, and the first sun which hath risen in the heaven of eternity, and which hath risen in the Heaven of Eternity, and the first fire which was lit from the Lamp of Preexistence in the lantern of

singleness: He who was Ahmad in the kingdom of the exalted ones, and Muhammad amongst the concourse of the near ones, and Mahmud in the realm of the sincere ones. '...by whichsoever ye will, invoke Him: he hath most excellent names' in the hearts of those who know. And upon His household and companions be abundant and abiding and eternal peace!" (Pg. 2, Haft Vadi)

"If any of the utterances of this servant may not be comprehended, or may lead to perturbation, the same must be inquired of again, that no doubt may linger, and the meaning be clear as the Face of the Beloved One shining from the 'Glorious Station' (Maqamat-i Mahmud, cf. Quran 17:81)."

The concept of Maqam Mahmuda has its origins in Orthodox hadith related by Bukhari.[27] In this conception the Position of Muhammad is exalted at the final judgement and he is given the highest position in paradise. Of course we do not know what this really means. However, in Ismaili thought it has taken on the occurrence of the "Nutq", the point of all-awareness. In Sufism, many have rendered this the most exalted point in terms of knowing.

Hadith 1: "Narrated Ibn 'Umar: 'On the Day of Resurrection the people will fall on their knees and every nation will follow their prophet and they will say, 'O so-and-so! Intercede (for us with God), till (the right of) intercession will be given to the Prophet and that will be the day when God will raise him to a station of praise and glory (Glorious Station).'" [Bukhari, Vol. 6, Hadith No. 242]

Hadith 2: "Narrated Jabir bin 'Abdullah: 'God's Messenger said, 'Whoever, after listening to the Adhan says, 'O God, the Lord of this complete call and of this prayer, which is going to be established! Give Muhammad al-Wasila and al-Fadila and raise him to Maqam Mahmuda, which you have promised him,' will be granted my intercession for him on the Day of Resurrection.'" [Bukhari, Vol. 6, Hadith No. 243]

It is important to point out that the Muhammadan Reality is the Ocean which has branched out and in another sense the Sea which the Throne is set upon:

"The Arabic root for the word prophecy is based on a root connoting the giving of news or tidings. The prophet is one who expounds upon the divine essence, attributes, names, and decrees, as they are revealed to him. He is a realized one, who is primally and essentially the Universal Intellect ('aql al-kulli), delegated by Divinity to inform the Universal Soul (nafs al-kulli) directly and the individual soul indirectly. Each of the prophets, from the time of Adam to that of Mohammad, represents a different manifestation of the prophecy of the Supreme Spirit which is the First Intellect.

The prophecy of the first intellect is lasting and essential, while the prophecy of manifestations is phenomenal and accidental. The Muhammadan reality represents the First Intellect or Supreme Spirit, as indicated in the Prophet's statements: 'First, Divinity created the intellect', 'First Divinity created my light', and 'First, Divinity created my spirit.' [Nurbakhsh, Lexicon: Foruzanfar, Ahadith-i Mathnawi, no. 342]" [Lahiji, Sharh-i Golshan-i Raz, 23]

9. Kubrawi & Baha' Allah Light Symbols: The most common symbol through the spiritually bound Islamic meditators is that of light. Its origin is based in the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet it is used by Baha' Allah and the Kubrawi and all great sufi poets and writers.

"...Thus when the wayfarer gazeth only upon the place of appearance-- that is, when he seeth only the many-colored globes --he beholdeth yellow and red and white; hence it is that conflict hath prevailed among the creatures, and a darksome dust from limited souls hath hid the world. And some do gaze upon the effulgence of the light; and some

have drunk of the wine of oneness and these see nothing but the sun itself." (Pg. 21, Haft Vadi)

"O My Brother! A pure heart is as a mirror; cleanse it with the burnish of love and severance from all save Divinity, that the true sun may shine within it and the eternal morning dawn." (Pg. 21-22, Haft Vadi)

"The purpose of this is to say that when the mystic sees the effect within himself (which is the acceptance of the words of mystical saints), he put his foot forward on the mystical path with full confidence. He then witnesses the lights, obtains knowledge of the signs of the path, and comprehends the real nature of the removal of the veils and lifting of the covers. It is vital that, until his dying breath, he should not be heedless for one instant, since the veil of darkness falls in every instant in the visible realm which is itself nothing but absolute darkness and nothingness."

Another example of the power of Seven in mystical discourse is presented by Simnani as he summates his mystical stages as:

"The first curtain is of the invisible realm of Satan which is turbid, and 10,000 veils must be lifted at this stage. After this is the curtain of the invisible realm of the soul, the curtain of which is blue, and 10,000 additional veils must be removed at this stage. After this is the curtain of the invisible realm of the heart which is red and ruby-colored, and 10,000 veils must be destroyed in this stage. Then there is the curtain of the invisible realm of the inmost being, the color of which is white and extremely fine and there are also 10,000 veils in this stage which must be lifted. After this is the curtain of the invisible of the spirit. The color of this curtain is a very pleasing yellow and there are 10,000 more veils at this stage which must be illuminated. After this an awesome pure black, and 10,000 more veils must be lifted at this stage. After this is the curtain of the hiddenmost mystery (ghayb al-ghuyub); the color of it's curtain is green and 10,000 additional veils lie at this threshold. And all these veils relate to the mystic's being. It is he who is veiled by these veils which are brought about by Divinity, not Divinity that is veiled. Nothing can veil Divinity." [28]

According to Hadith:

"After the lifting of these 70,000 veils he reaches the veil of 'Divine Grandeur' (hijab al-kubriya) just as the Prophet (upon him be peace) says: 'His veil is of light (fire, according to another tradition). If it were lifted, the splendor of His face would burn whatever turned it's eyes towards it.' "(Reported by Muslim)

It may not in fact be a Kubrawiya influence that we see the use of light symbolism in Baha' Allah's writings. Some may argue that it is, in fact, due to the Suhrawardi tradition. However, it would seem at least they both have a common origin that being the symbolism of discourse of Isma'ilism where there has been a continual tradition of relating spiritual insight in symbols composed of lights, veils of lights and color symbolism. Regarding the Suhrawardian tradition it is interesting to point out that his writings regarding Gabriel identify the Spirit, as Gabriel is sometimes known, as having in idealic state a white color, as the Active Intellect-- one step removed from the Ideal of his existence-- he has a red color and of course the earthly color is represented by the darksome globe.

One author writes of the Light symbolism as it relates to Prophet Muhammad as:

"Divinity calls the Prophet (s) 'Nur' or 'Light' and 'Siraajan muneeran' or 'a Light-Giving Lamp' when He says to mankind: 'There has come to you from Divinity a Light and a

Book for discernment' (5:15) and 'O Prophet! Truly We have sent thee as a Witness, a Bearer of glad tidings, and a Warner -- and as one who invites to Divinity's (grace) by His leave, and as a Lampspreading light' (33:46).

Al-Qadi 'Iyad said: 'Divinity calls the Prophet (s) 'Nur' or 'Light' ... and it is also said that the Light refers to the Qur'an.' (al-Shifa, Part 1, Ch. 3, sec. 14). Ibn 'Abbas explains that 'Nur' means 'Rasul,' i.e. the Light is the Prophet (s), and the Book is the Qur'an (Fairuzabadi, Tanweer al-miqbaas). Ali al-Qari says: "It has also been said that both the Light and the Book refer to Muhammad (s), because just as he is a tremendous light and the source of all lights, he is also a book that gathers up and makes clear all the secrets" (Sharh al-Shifa, 1:505). Qadi 'Iyad said: "He called him a luminous lamp to make his position clear, to clarify his prophethood and to illumine the hearts of the believers and the gnostics ('aarifeen) by what he had brought." Ali al-Qari said: "To illumine the hearts of the believers in general and the gnostics in particular," and "Sirajan muniran means a luminous sun, because of His saying: "He hath placed therein a great lamp and a moon giving light" (25:61). Therefore there is in this verse a warning that the sun is the highest of the material lights (al-anwaar al-hissi) and that other lights are outpourings from it: similarly the Prophet (s) is the highest of the spiritual lights and other lights are derived from him by virtue of his mediating connection and pivotal rank in the overall sphere of creation. This is also inferred from the tradition: "The first thing that Divinity created is my light"" (Sharh al-Shifa, 1:505).

It has been said that "Divinity has extended [amadd] the light of discernment [basira] through the light of his prophethood just as He extends the light of eyesight [basar] through the light of the sun," and this extension of Divinity's light, or madad, extends from the Prophet (s) to everyone; that is why "Divinity called him a lamp and not a sun, because it is impossible to take anything directly from the light of the sun, but it is possible to take many lights from the lamp" (Tafsir al-Khazin)."[29]

Another interesting example of the use of hierachical division is that of the following passage:

"Thus for they move on these three differing planes, the understanding and the words of the wayfarers have differed; and hence the sign of conflict doth continually appear on earth. For some there are who dwell upon the plane of oneness and speak of that world, and some inhabit the realms of limitation, and some the grades of self, while others are completely veiled." (Pg. 21, Haft Vadi)

The tri-hierarchical division is spoken of by Sufis in the following passage the lights are put on three levels and is loosely analogous to the configuration of Baha' Allah in a previous passage:

"The Light-of-Reality (nur-i haqiqat) comprises three levels: Light aligned with Absolute Being, Light aligned with true absolute knowledge. Light which comprehensively circumscribes everything because it has both appearance and manifestation (zahir wa izhar). When considered from the perspective of Unity (wahdat), Being, Knowledge and Light remain invisible and incomprehensible--an plurality exists on the plane of the incomprehensible-- no plurality exists on the plane of the Oneness-of-the-Essence (hadhrat-i ahadiyat-i dhātiya). On the level of Divine Unicity (wahidiyat), however, differentiation between these three comes to exist, in so far as there are many different objects-of-knowledge (ma'lumat), each with its own attachments in contrast to Existence (which is unique). Beings, however, are innumerable in their differentiated manifestation. So the manifestation of being (wujud) is juxtaposed to the nonexistent archetypal objects-of-knowledge contained in Divinity's Knowledge. Pure light cannot be perceived except by its appearance through a being's manifestation (mazhar-i maujud).

Pure light is Divinity's Being and is intellegible when juxtaposed to non-existence ('adam). Be that as it may, non-existence has its own proper self-determination (ta'ayyun) conceptualised in the human mind. Non-existence is darkness, and Existence is light. The world has two aspects (wajh): one facing non-existence and the other facing Existence. The aspect of the world which faces Existence possesses perfection, while the aspect facing non-existence is imperfect." [tr. Nurbakhsh, see Lexicon, Shah Ne'motGod, Risalaha-yi Shah Ne'matollah-i Wali, III 195-6]

In the Quran those who are against the Way of God, and without belief in anything are known as Al-Zalimun, the dark ones. This position is juxtaposed with those who are full of faith (mu'iminun) who are known as having a brilliant light shining from their faces, which may be understood to mean their soul-- the essence of their beings. In fact, the white symbolism of Sufism may be more Quranic than the typical non-Sufi orthodox Muslim may think. Considering the numerous allusions to light in the Quran, it would seem lacking not to have such a symbolism when talking of matters of true belief, inner faith.

In Conclusion

Undoubtedly the Sufi background to the writings of Mirza Husayn-Ali Baha' Allah, Baha'u'llah, are better understood when we actually look at how the Sufi discourse is carried out. The Haft Vadi was not written in a vacuum but spoke directly to the Sufi paradigm, it used Symbolic utterance to convey a message of religious reform and the need for a new "Muslim".

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FOOTNOTES:

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5 Quoted in Gerhard Bowering's The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam. Berlin/New York. De Gruyter (1980)

6 Jamal Elias, pg. 62, in The Throne Carriers of Divinity , Albany. State University of New York Press (1995)

7 See Izutsu, "Manifestation" in Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concept, Berkeley. University of California Press (1984)

8 The following section is a synopsis of the work on Iranian Sufi development of Mohammad Isa Waley Najm al-Din Kubra and the Central Asian School of Sufism and the work of S.H. Nasr and J. Matini's Persian Literature in S.H. Nasr (ed.) "Islamic Sprituality: Manifestations", New York. Crossroads (1991)

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15 See Hamid Algar's The Path of Divinity's Bondsmen from Origin to Return. Costa Mesa Mazda Publishers (1979) for as-Sarraj's maqamat quoted here and throughout.

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