



Sufism's Contribution to Social Peace through the Spirit of *Futuwwa*

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Abstract

The Sufi discipline, with knowledge of the human being and the Creator its central aim, aims to elevate the human being to the pinnacle of noble conduct and character. This endeavour in the Sufi parlance is *futuwwa*. It can be argued that the concept of *futuwwa*, or spiritual chivalry, which encompasses such moral qualities as self-sacrifice, altruism, goodness, assistance, philanthropy, acceptance of others and self-discipline, rests on such concepts as *ihsan* (perfect goodness), *mahabba* (love) and *ithar* (selflessness). On this account, the Sufi is not only someone who maintains their relationship with God, but who is simultaneously a productive member of society. As such, believers who have succeeded in rendering such a spirit their temperament and morality were exceptionally adapted into their societies and became exemplary personalities. It is thus possible to argue that Sufism's contribution to social peace needs to be sought in the spirit of *futuwwa*.

Keywords: İhsan, Muraqaba, Mahabba, İthar, Futuwwa, Sulami.

Tasavvufun, Fütüvvet Ruhü Vasıtasıyla Sosyal Huzura Yaptığı Katkı

Öz

Ana gayesi insanı ve Yaratıcı'sını tanıma şeklinde özetlenebilecek olan Tasavvuf disiplininin, insanı, yüksek ahlakın zirvede temsil edildiği bir konuma yükseltme çabası da olduğu muhakkaktır. Bu çabanın Tasavvuf terminolojisindeki önemli bir karşılığının "fütüvvet" olduğu söylenebilir. Fedakarlık, diğergamlık, iyilik, yardım, hoşgörü ve nefesine söz geçirme gibi ahlaki nitelikleri kapsayan bir kavram olan fütüvvet, ihsân, muhabbet ve îsâr kavramlarının üzerinde temellenmiştir denebilir. Sufi, sadece kendisi ile Allah arasındaki münasebeti koruyan değil, aynı zamanda topluma faydalı bir birey olmak durumundadır. Fütüvvet ruhunu kendilerinde bir huy ve ahlak haline getirmeyi başaramış müminler topluma fevkalade uyumlu, faydalı ve örnek şahsiyetler olmuşlardır. Tasavvufun toplumsal huzura yaptığı katkının fütüvvet ruhunda aranması gerektiğini söylemek mümkündür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İhsân, Murâkabe, Muhabbet, Îsâr, Fütüvvet, Sülemî

Introduction

The religion of Islam in a general sense approaches the human being both at an individual level as well as from a societal perspective. Thus, it would not be erroneous to suggest that Sufism, "A spiritual physician, teacher and guide in recognising the spirit and delivering the human being from spiritual ailments,"¹ urges the human being to surpass the norm and to attain perfection in just about every matter. Constantly nurturing the notion of social peace with its *futuwwa* concept, Sufism equips the individual with elevated moral norms, filling a vital gap vis-à-vis rendering the individual conformable within social life on the one hand and in their servanthood to God on the other. This can also be described as the guidance that Sufism offers in way of elevating the individual to the level of being at peace both with themselves and with the rest of society.

Important contemporary scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr articulates the mission of Sufism saying, "In the field of education also the role of Sufism has been profound, for the central task of Sufism is the education of the whole of the human person until it reaches the full realization and perfection of all its possibilities. The direct participation of many Sufis such as Khwajah Nizam al-Mulk, the Seljuq vizier, in the establishments of universities or *madrasahs* as well as the role of the Sufi centres (*zawiyah* in Arabic, *khaniqah* in Persian) in the administration of education makes the influence of Sufism inseparable from the development of education in Islam."²

While *futuwwa*, which can also be referred to as the general principle Sufism propounds with a view to rendering the individual a beneficial member of society, is multifaceted in spirit and meaning, it can be said that it is intrinsically founded on the concepts of *ihsan*, *mahabba* and *ithar*. The first of these, *ihsan*, is the essence, soul and perfection of belief according to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (751/1350).³ *Mahabba*, as indicated by Abu Bakr al-Kattani (322/933), is "preferring the Beloved after forsaking all,"⁴ while *ithar*, which is, in the words of Jurjani, "Preferring the interests of others to one's own self-interest,"⁵ signifies the great sacrifice and altruism realised by the Sufi.⁶ These concepts have served to reveal the spirit of *futuwwa* and have ensured that those Muslims possessing such a spirit were well adapted to their societies and became models worthy of imitation. In other words, at the essence of *futuwwa* is the believer's rushing to the service of humanity in the path of earning God's good pleasure and approval, and exerting themselves

¹ Selçuk Eraydın, *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar* (Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1997), p. 152.

² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, (New York: SUNY Press, 1991), p. 19.

³ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Madarij al-Salikin* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 2004), p. 612.

⁴ Qushayri, *Al-Risala al-Qushayriya*, ed. Halil Mansur (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 2009), p. 352.

⁵ Sayyid al-Sharif al-Jurjani, *Kitab al-Ta'rifat*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya., 1983), p. 31.

⁶ *Ibid.*



constantly in the way of seeing to the needs of others.⁷ It would not be erroneous to suggest that the ideal human model that Sufism puts forth in the name of building social peace originates from this understanding. Moreover, it is precisely at this juncture where the Prophetic Tradition, "God will aid a servant [of His] so long as the servant aids his brother,"⁸ assumes precedence.

An attempt will be made in this article to examine the spirit of *futuwwa* within the framework of these three constituent principles. In so doing, the idea that Sufi thought envisages not a reclusive and ascetic life, but far from it, a way of life that is actively intertwined with others and of benefit to the rest of society, will be highlighted.

Ihsan

There is another concept in Sufi thought complementing this meaning. *Ihsan*, which is defined as perfect goodness and is accepted to be the backbone of *futuwwa*,⁹ is used lexically in two ways: One of these is *ahsanahu*, meaning, "(Did) the best thereof and followed what is best." The other is '*ahsana 'ilayh*, to mean, "Did good."¹⁰

On the basis on the first meaning, perfect virtue can be said to be the effort to carry out everything that one undertakes perfectly, and in a manner allowing for them to be presented before God. A sense of goodness towards, thinking well of and doing good to others is the manifestation and overflowing of such a consciousness of perfect virtue which has become one with the human spirit, such that it can be considered the natural outcome of the first meaning. The Prophetic principle expressed as, "wanting for your brother what you want for yourself,"¹¹ can also be considered here.

By means of *ihsan*, which leads a person to, "worship God as though you see Him"¹² and which is endowed with a totalising capacity, merging in itself all the actions of the heart and doors to realities,¹³ an individual is able to perform their acts of worship in a manner and consciousness as they were seeing Him. To the extent of their ability to realise such, this consciousness would then be expected to spill over from their worship even to their mundane dealings and affairs.

⁷ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, p. 260.

⁸ Bukhari, *Riqaq*, 7; Muslim, *Birr*, 15.

⁹ Selçuk Eraydın, *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, p. 341.

¹⁰ al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Al-Mufradat*, s.v. "h-s-n." Zabidi, *Taj al-'Arus*, XVIII:143.

¹¹ Bukhari, *Iman*, 7; Muslim, *Iman*, 7.

¹² In the Prophetic Tradition known as the Jibril Hadith, *ihsan* has been described as follows: "*Ihsan* is to worship God as though you see Him, for — even if you do not see Him — yet truly He sees you." (Bukhari, *Iman*, 37; Muslim, *Iman*, 1)

¹³ Jawziyya, *Madarij al-Salikin*, p. 612.



This notion can also be considered in relation to the prescribed prayer preventing a person from every kind of impropriety and immorality,¹⁴ for a sound prayer that is observed in full consciousness of its purpose and meaning keeps a person away from unseemliness and misdeed. In the words of contemporary Qur'anic exegete Hamdi Yazır (1360/1942), even if the prescribed prayer, "Does not ensure a prohibition or pulling away from in the absolute sense, it presumably necessitates it. When the prescribed prayer is maintained duly and completely, acts of goodness increase. As stated in the Qur'anic chapter Ta-Ha, 'So worship Me, and establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions for remembrance of Me,'¹⁵ the purpose and wisdom behind the ritual prayer is remembrance of God. It is, in other words, to remember God and by this means to attain the state of being remembered by Him, as per the Qur'anic verse, "So always remember and make mention of Me (when service to Me is due), that I may remember and make mention of you (when judgment and recompense are due)."¹⁶ Just as the servant can become elevated with propriety and sincerity by shunning wrongdoing in His Exalted Presence – overt or hidden – when they remember God with His majesty and beauty, when they reflect upon His remembrance of them, they also become filled with a sense of goodness at each moment, in order to attain God's good pleasure and approval. As nobody would want to be remembered in the Divine Presence with even the slightest misdeed. And, assuredly, this feeling is a greater means of deliverance than the former."¹⁷

The complementary concept of *muraqaba*, Qushayri (465/1072) views as the "very root of all good."¹⁸ The expression, "even if you do not see Him, He truly sees you," which is employed in the famous Prophetic Tradition as the definition of *ihsan* indicates the state of *muraqaba*.¹⁹ Describing *muraqaba*, or vigilant awareness as, "Realising the spiritual station of *ihsan*," *Kitab al-Luma'* author Abu Nasr al-Sarraj al-Tusi (378/988) points to this complementary function.²⁰

Literally meaning, surveillance, preservation, being in expectation of some calamity or misfortune to befall another,²¹ *muraqaba* is indicated in such Qur'anic verses as, "God is ever watchful over everything,"²² and "And He is with you, wherever you may be."²³

¹⁴ The relevant verse is as follows: "Surely, the Prayer restrains from all that is indecent and shameful, and all that is evil." Qur'an 25:45.

¹⁵ Qur'an 20:14.

¹⁶ Qur'an 2:152.

¹⁷ Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili* (Istanbul: Eser Neşriyat ve Dağıtım, n.d.), V:3780.

¹⁸ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, p. 225.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Sarraj, *Kitab al-Luma'*, p. 82.

²¹ Murtada al-Zabidi, *Taj al-'Arus* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1994), II:31; Abu al-Fadl Muhammad ibn Mukarram ibn 'Ali al-Ansari Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab* (Cairo: Dar al-Sadr, 1308) I:424.

²² Qur'an 33:52.

²³ Qur'an 57:4.



Muraqaba is a person's knowing without a doubt that God is aware of everything occurring to their heart and all the preoccupying thoughts deterring them from remembrance of their Lord and Master.²⁴

Muraqaba on the one hand entails a person's monitoring their heart at each breath, every action and behaviour with a view to earning God's good pleasure and enabling their heart to become a site where God directs His gaze. On the other hand, it involves their feeling themselves to be under God's watch at each thought and deed and attaining the realisation that they can never leave the sphere of His disposal.²⁵

A sense of *ihsan* and consciousness of *muraqaba* draw attention with respect to their contribution to social life in addition to their contribution to a person's own individual life.

Mahabba

Denoting, "Love, the opposite of disfavour, inclination of the heart and an attachment to a particular thing or person,"²⁶ *mahabba* has arguably reached its pinnacle in terms of richness of meaning within Sufi thought and action. *Mahabba* can be categorised into three components: God's love for His servant, the servant's love for God and servants' love for one another for the sake of God.

Mahabba, which Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami (412/1022) describes as "the essence of *futuwwa*,"²⁷ can also be linked in his definitions to such concerns as establishing close ties with the people, being faithful to old affections and relationships, deriving joy from helping the people, listening to them and receiving guests and showing hospitality to them, treating people with respect, compassion and grace, loving each other for the sake of God and maintaining close relations, loving the downtrodden and giving them their due, and sharing in the joy of the people.²⁸

Qushayri describes love as a noble state that God Himself has confirmed as a quality belonging to a servant, and that God has made known His love for His servant,²⁹ declaring, "A people whom God loves, and who love Him."³⁰ This famous Hadith Qudsi also expressly illustrates God's love:

Whoever shows hostility to My saintly servant, I will surely wage war on him.
My servant cannot draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than

²⁴ Abu Nasr al-Sarraj al-Tusi, *Kitab al-Luma' fi'l-Tasawwuf*, eds. 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud and 'Abd al-Baqi Surur (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthanna, 1960), p. 82.

²⁵ Yilmaz, *Anahatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar* (Istanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 1994), p. 164, 165.

²⁶ Raghıb, *al-Mufradat*, "h-b-b."

²⁷ Sulami, *The Book of Sufi Chivalry: Futuwwa* (New York: Inner Traditions International, 1983), p. 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-35.

²⁹ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, p. 348.

³⁰ Qur'an 5:54.



fulfilling the things I have made incumbent on him. Then, My servant draws nearer and nearer to Me through supererogatory acts of worship until I love him. When I love him, I become his ears with which he hears, his eyes with which he sees, his hands with which he grasps and his feet on which he walks. Were he to ask (something) of Me, I would surely grant it to him, and were he to seek refuge (from something), I would surely take him under My protection.³¹

God loves his worthy servants – in whatever manner is the sublime and exalted love behoving Him – and renders the manifestations of His love for them visible upon them. And, of course, if God loves one of His servants, He becomes their guardian, protector and, as mentioned in the hadith, assists them in their every undertaking and affair. He causes them to act righteously, make the right decisions, look at and speak of what is right.³²

God's love for His servant is His willing to confer special favour and bounty upon that servant. This is identical to His showing mercy to His servant by bestowing blessings upon them. Accordingly, mercy is more particular than will and love more particular than mercy. In other words, God's willing to grant blessings to His servant is termed mercy, while His conferring a distinct nearness and exalted spiritual states to His servant is a manifestation of His love for that servant.³³ The Divine Will assumes different names in accordance with the different acts to which it is connected. If it is connected with punishment, this is known as wrath (*ghadab*). If it is connected to universally bestowed bounties, it is called mercy (*rahma*) and if it is connected with particularly bestowed blessings, namely to making His proximity felt, it is referred to as love (*mahabba*).³⁴

As for the servant's love for God, it is a state experienced in their heart and defies description and words. This state drives them to glorify God, pursue His good pleasure and approval and renders them completely unable to be without Him. They thus turn to remembrance of Him, with a view to experiencing constant intimacy in their heart, and a ceaseless sense of reverence and rapture.

As for the believers loving one another, the Qur'anic verse, "The believers are but brothers,"³⁵ is noteworthy. In addition to using the qualifier *innamā* ('Only') in emphatically drawing attention to the topic at hand, the verse uses the plural *ikhwa*, which is used to denote siblings, in lieu of the word *ihkwan*, meaning brothers more generally, thus stressing a second point.³⁶

³¹ Bukhari, *Riqaq* 38.

³² Abu Hamid, al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2001), IV:285.

³³ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, p. 348; For the same meaning, see also Sarraj, *Kitab al-Luma'*, p. 86.

³⁴ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, p. 349.

³⁵ Qur'an 49:10.

³⁶ Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), XXVIII:129; Alusi, *Ruh al-Ma'ani* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, (n.d.)), XXVII:151.



When relating the characteristics of the people who will be given shade in God's shade on the Day of Judgement, the Messenger of God includes those who love one another for His sake, who meet and part for that reason alone.³⁷

The two Prophetic Traditions below are noteworthy with respect to their associating love and belief:

By the one who has my soul in His hand, you will not enter the Garden until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I inform you of something which will make you love one another? Make the greeting widespread among you.³⁸

None of you can truly be said to believe until he wants for his brother what he wants for himself.³⁹

It can be concluded from these Traditions that so long as believers do not love one another, they cannot attain perfection in belief. It appears as though the believers' finding reasons upon which to love one another is presented as an obligation. The emphasis on the 'Peace Building' that the Prophetic Traditions make is thus a good deal self-evident. The believer is required to love everyone who shares their belief, regardless of their race, colour, nation and language. And this should not be restricted merely to love; they should also act with a sense of responsibility towards them.

Ithar

In the Sufi lexicon, *ithar* comes to mean, "A person's using the resources at their disposal in meeting the needs of others, even when they themselves are in need, and their self-sacrifice for the good of others."⁴⁰ The words *jud* and *sakha'* are also essentially synonymous with the term. While these words, which denote 'bountifulness' and 'generosity', can be interchangeable, there are nuances between them. According to Qushayri, *sakha'* is the first degree, *jud* the second, while *ithar* is the third and highest degree.⁴¹ Abu 'Ali al-Daqqaq (405/1014) sees no difference between *sakha'* and *jud* with respect to

³⁷ Bukhari, Adhan, 36, Zakat, 16, Riqaq, 24, Hudud, 19; Muslim, Zakat, 91; Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 53. The following hadith is in the same vein: "Allah Almighty will say on the Day of Rising, 'Where are those who loved one another for the sake of My majesty? Today, on the day when there is no shade but My shade, I will shade them.'" (Muslim, Birr, 37)

³⁸ Muslim, Iman, 93-94; Tirmidhi, At'ima, 45; Ibn Maja, Mukaqqima, 9.

³⁹ Bukhari, Iman, 7; Muslim, Iman, 71.

⁴⁰ Mustafa Cagrci, "Ithar", *TDV Islam Ansiklopedisi* (DIA) (Istanbul: TDV, 2000), XXII:490. Also see Raghib, *Al-Mufradat*, s.v. "i-s-r"; Majd ad-Din Muhammad ibn Yaq'ub al-Firuzabadi, *Basa'ir Dhawi al-Tamyiz* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Ilmiyya, n.d.), III:300; Ghazali, *Ihya'*, III:257; Isma'il Haqqi al-Bursawi, *Kitab al-Natija*, eds. Ali Namlı and İmdat Yavaş (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1997), II:258; Isma'il Anqarawi, *Minhaj al-Fuqara'*, ed. Saadettin Ekici (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1996), p. 263; Ethem Cebecioğlu, *Tasavvuf Terimleri ve Deyimleri Sözlüğü* (Ankara: Rehber Yayınları, 1997), p. 400; 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani, *Tasavvuf Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2004), p. 94-98.

⁴¹ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, 281.



meaning and scope. The essence of *jud* is aimed at spending freely in the way of God not being a burden on the human being.⁴²

According to *Manazil al-Sairin* author 'Abd Allah Harawi (481/1089), *ithar*, which denotes "setting aside or preferring, preferring others to oneself,"⁴³ also has such meanings as, "Holding or preferring something or someone above others, having an affection for something, attaching priority and honouring."⁴⁴ Describing *ithar* as, "A person's preferring the interests to their own interests, or protecting them from any harm first and foremost," Jurjani indicates that such an understanding is the highest degree of a faith fellowship.⁴⁵ In his discussion of the '*fata*', or spiritual knight, Ibn 'Arabi asserts, "*Ithar* is the adornment of the *fata*... They give preference to another even when all they are completely engulfed by their own whims and fancies."⁴⁶

Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn 'Uthman al-Hujwiri (465/1072) makes the following observations concerning *ithar*, or preference:

The true nature of preference consists of maintaining the rights of the person with whom one associates, and in subordinating one's own interest to the interest of one's friend, and in taking trouble upon oneself for the sake of promoting their happiness, because preference is the rendering of help to others, and the putting into practice of that which God commanded to His Messenger: "Adopt the way of forbearance and tolerance, and enjoin what is good and right, and withdraw from the ignorant ones (do not care what they say and do)" (7:199).⁴⁷

Declaring, "...and (indeed) they prefer them over themselves, even though poverty be their own lot," the Qur'an⁴⁸ refers to the highest level of preference. The following incident that was the reason for the verse's revelation is significant in terms of underscoring the attitude of the believers of the Age of Happiness:

It is related that Abu Hurayra said: "A man came to the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, and said, 'Messenger of God, I am afflicted by great hunger.' So he sent word to his wives and he did not find any [food] with them. The Messenger of God said, 'Who will host this man tonight?' A man from the Ansar by the name of Abu Talha stood up and said, 'I will, O

⁴² Qushayri, *al-Risala*, 280.

⁴³ 'Abd Allah al-Ansari al-Harawi, *Manazil al-Sairin* (Bursa: Emin Yayınları, 2008), p. 102.

⁴⁴ Isma'il ibn Hammad al-Jawhari, *al-Sihah* (Cairo: n.p., 1982), II:575; Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, IV:7.

⁴⁵ Sayyid al-Sharif al-Jurjani, *Kitab al-Ta'rifat* (Beirut: n.p., 1997), p. 31.

⁴⁶ Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futuh al-Makkiyya*, ed. Ahmad Shams al-Din (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1999), I-IX; III:349.

⁴⁷ 'Ali ibn 'Uthman al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjub*, "The Revelation of the Veiled" Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson, (England: Gibb Memorial Trust Publishing, 2000), p. 190; 'Ali ibn 'Uthman al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjub*, ed. Süleyman Uludağ (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1982), p. 302.

⁴⁸ Qur'an 59:9.



Messenger of God.' He went to his family and asked his wife whether there was anything at home to offer him. She told him that there was only enough food with which to feed the children. He said, 'When the children ask for supper, put them to sleep and put out the light (to give him the impression that we too are eating). We will bind our bellies tonight.' She did just that. In the morning, he went to the Messenger of God, who said, 'God was pleased with – or smiled on – So-and-so and the woman So-and-so (for the treatment they showed their guest last night).' Then God revealed the verse, 'Those who, before their coming, had their abode (in Madina), preparing it as a home for Islam and faith, love those who emigrate to them for God's sake, and in their hearts do not begrudge what they have been given; and (indeed) they prefer them over themselves, even though poverty be their own lot.' (59:9)⁴⁹

The following incident experienced at the Battle of Yarmuk, which took place during Abu Bakr's caliphate, is a striking exemplification of the profundity and scope of *ithar* between the Prophet's Companions. Hudayfa, who participated in the battle and witnessed the event firsthand, relates the extent of self-sacrifice exhibited:

The ferocity of the Battle of Yarmuk had subsided and the Muslims who had sustained spear wounds during the battle began to perish on the hot sands of the battlefield. At this time, I summoned all my strength and began looking for the son of my uncle amongst them. After walking among the martyred and injured who were on the verge of death, I found him lying in blood on the burning sand. He was about to die and was scarcely able to even gesture. Indicating the waterskin that I carried with me, I asked him whether he wanted water.

It was clear that he did because his lips were as good as parched. I was just offering it to him when Ikrima's voice was heard: "Water! Water! Please, a drop of water!"

As soon as my uncle's son Harith heard Ikrima, he gestured that I immediately take the water to him. I hastened to the groaning one, proceeding from among the martyrs lying across the scorching sands, and extended my waterskin to him. Ikrima had not yet taken the waterskin when a similar groaning was heard.

Refusing to take the water, Ikrima indicated for me to take it to the one groaning – 'Iyash. He did not drink the water either. When I finally reached 'Iyash, he drew his last breath reciting the Declaration of Faith. He had seen the water but did not live long enough to drink it. I immediately rushed to take the water to Ikrima. However, I found him to be also martyred. Then I

⁴⁹ Bukhari, Tafsir, 59/6: Muslim, Ashriba, 172-173.



hastened to Harith, my uncle's son. Unfortunately, he too was lying dead on the burning sand.⁵⁰

In short, *ithar* — a noble feeling, elevated character trait and a manifestation of the love, respect, mercy and fellowship among human beings — is above all else the name given to the self-sacrifice, abnegation and altruism exemplified in its highest form in the life of God's Messenger and his Companions. It is a person's giving the morsel of bread or drop of water that they themselves are in need of, to others and preferring others to their own selves. It is a person's being busy on someone else's behalf and deeply occupied with their troubles and having no thought for oneself.

Futuwwa

Signifying chivalry, bravery and valour, *futuwwa* is a person's not ascribing any virtue, right or superiority to their own self and is their viewing others as more important, worthy and esteemed than their own self. It is sacrifice, abnegation and valour. It is giving preference to the rights and interests of others purely out of humanitarian concerns, and self-sacrifice for the deliverance and happiness of society and all others. It is to provide help and do good without expectation of anything in return.⁵¹

The Qur'an describes *futuwwa*, or spiritual chivalry, with the words, "They were young men who believed in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance (so they adhered to the truth more faithfully)."⁵² However, in the verse, "Some said: 'We heard a young man make mention of them, who is called Abraham,'"⁵³ *futuwwa* is ascribed to Prophet Abraham who smashed the idols the people worshipped to pieces. Each person's idol is his or her own carnal soul (*nafs al-ammara*). A person who possesses spiritual chivalry in the true sense is the person who can oppose the idle passions and vain desires of their carnal soul.⁵⁴

Harawi refers to the essence of spiritual chivalry being a lack of self-worth and the refusal to see oneself as entitled in any way, and enumerates its three degrees:

The first is expelling hostility, overlooking small mistakes and misdeeds and forgetting the wrong done to you. The second is your sympathising with those who distance themselves from you, your treating with kindness those who mistreat you and your accepting the apology of one who wrongs you, not with anger but with lenience, not patiently but lovingly. The third is not concerning

⁵⁰ Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qurtubi, *al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Qur'an* (Cairo: Dar al-Sha'b, 1372), XVII:28.

⁵¹ Ahmet Ögke, *Tasavvuf Terimleri, Tasavvuf El Kitabı*, ed. Kadir Özköse (Ankara: Grafiker Yayınları, 2012), p. 160.

⁵² Qur'an 18:13.

⁵³ Qur'an 21:60.

⁵⁴ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, p. 261.



yourself with any proof on the spiritual path, not expecting anything in return and not being distracted by anything other than God in your witnessing (*shuhud*).⁵⁵

The first two degrees of this triadic classification entail a spiritual chivalry aimed at human relations. Accordingly, just as the first entails refraining from displaying enmity in human relations, a person's overlooking faults and forgetting the mistreatment they have received, the second degree relates to a nobler level, with such elevated virtues as drawing near to those who have drawn away, showing kindness to those who have mistreated you, accepting apologies not by necessity but wholeheartedly, being highlighted.

On the basis of the Prophetic Tradition, "There is no *fata* (valiant young man) like 'Ali and no sword like Dhu'l-Fiqar,"⁵⁶ the Sufis have interpreted *futuwwa* as the total sum of virtues that need to exist in a young person.⁵⁷

Spiritual chivalry has been likened to a tree. As such, the roots of that tree are nourished with the sustenance of righteousness. Its trunk is carrying out acts of kindness and goodness to everyone. The branches of this tree represent cleanliness, its leaves modesty and shyness, its fruits the companionship of God's friends, while its water is mercy.⁵⁸

Spiritual chivalry is, according to Abu al-Hasan al-Bushanji (348/960), "Your refraining from any action of which you would be ashamed of the Noble Scribes (*kiramun katibun*), who record your deeds, witnessing."⁵⁹ Ma'ruf al-Karkhi (200/815) says: "The people of spiritual chivalry possess three qualities: keeping faith without resistance and fidelity without fear; generosity without the thought of praise; and the ability to give without being asked."⁶⁰

Abu 'Ali al-Daqqaq defines spiritual chivalry as perpetually being attentive to the cares of others and being busy on their behalf.⁶¹ The hadith cited in the introduction to this article, "God will aid a servant [of His] so long as the servant aids his brother,"⁶² has served as a source of inspiration for the Sufis in this regard. Extending his observations further, al-Daqqaq has asserted that the Prophet is the highest representative of spiritual chivalry, as while

⁵⁵ Harawi, *Manazil al-Sairin*, p. 104.

⁵⁶ Isma'il ibn Muhammad al-'Ajluni, *Kashf al-Khafa' wa Muzil al-Libas 'amma Ishtahar min al-Ahadith 'ala al-Sinat al-Nas* (Beirut: b.p., 1405/1985), II:363.

⁵⁷ Hasan Kamil Yılmaz, *Anahatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, p. 275.

⁵⁸ Selcuk Eraydın *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, p. 341.

⁵⁹ Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, *Kitab al-Futuwwa*, ed. Süleyman Ateş (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1977), p. 76.

⁶⁰ Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjub*, p. 213.

⁶¹ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, p. 260.

⁶² Muslim, *Dhikr*, 38; Abu Dawud, *Adab*, 68; Tirmidhi, *Hudud*, 3.



everyone else will be preoccupied with their own troubles and say on the Day of Resurrection, "Me, Me," he will say, "My community, my community!"⁶³

In reference to spiritual chivalry, 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani (730/1329), summates its central moral principles as forsaking enmity, avoiding faults, forgetting any wrongdoing towards one's person, approaching not just those who are out of sight but also those who are out of mind, kindness to those who mistreat you, and accepting the pardon of those who do wrong.⁶⁴

The *futuwwa* concept is one which constitutes the sum total of knightly virtues that a Sufi needs to possess such as self-sacrifice, altruism, goodness, philanthropy, lenience and subduing one's carnal self. When this point into taken into account, the notion of the Sufis' having developed their own views of humanism within the framework of the *futuwwa* chivalric tradition, has also come into discussion.⁶⁵

Sulami is the author of a work exclusively devoted to spiritual chivalry. When his status as a great Sufi is taken into consideration, the role of the *futuwwa* concept in Sufism becomes much clearer. In this work, with paragraphs beginning with the requirements of spiritual chivalry, Sulami enumerates the themes that the concept encompasses. This is how the entire book is set out. Sulami highlights the inter-personal relationships between human beings and, as such, buttresses each and every issue he touches upon with examples from the Age of Happiness and the lives of the Predecessors. For the purposes of our discussion, a brief mention of the themes he examines in his study can be mentioned as follows:

Addressing the needs of one's friends, responding to evil with goodness, not censuring others' faults, refraining from seeking out the errors of others, possessing good character, establishing familiarity and closeness with people, being generous, maintaining old relationships, keeping one's friends' interests at heart, inviting guests, offering feasts and being hospitable, loving and frequenting one another for God's sake, loving and caring for the poor, being truthful, keep one's word and what is entrusted to one, striving to be righteous before appearing to be thus, sharing the joy of others, not expecting anything in return for any act of kindness, being repentant, loving God's friends and not holding their shortcomings against them, being hardworking, treating people as one expects to be treated, constantly deeming one's ego blameworthy, being preoccupied with one's own faults and thus not being busy with the faults of others, being patient and resigned in the face of adversity and not expressing complaint, not wasting a single breath or moment, seeking the company of the good and avoiding the company of the evil, not being attached to worldly things, not quarrelling with one's friends

⁶³ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, p. 261.

⁶⁴ 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani, *Tasavvuf Sözlüğü*, p. 428- 429.

⁶⁵ Süleyman Uludağ, "Fütüvvet," in TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi (DIA) (İstanbul: TDV, 1996), XXIII:260.



on account of worldly interests, ensuring an integrity between one's inner and outer self, not lowering one's state by making demands upon other people, controlling one's lust and sexual desires, wishing for others what one wishes for oneself, preferring others to oneself, refraining from miserliness, being contented, correcting one's state by correcting one's actions, getting along well with and accepting others, expelling pride, self-conceit and all self-approval, behaving toward one's friends in a way that will prevent them from doing something for which they would have to apologise, fleeing from jealousy, sparing no material or spiritual sacrifice, forgetting all the good done to others, being loyal, suppressing one's anger, not betraying others, and being forever faithful in one's friendships and relationships...⁶⁶

Emerging at this juncture are two dimensions of the *futuwwa* concept: the first is obedience to the Divine commands and proper worship, while the other is good character. That is to say, this is a *futuwwa* with the separate dimensions of human–God and human–human relations. While the former is a perfection realised via a consciousness of servanthood (*'ubidiyya*), the latter is displaying a level of perfection in interpersonal human relationships. In this case then, *fata* becomes the individual who possesses an awareness of their servanthood to God and excellent and virtuous in their behaviour towards God's creatures. Expected of the spiritual knight is not just generosity, kindness and helpfulness towards the believer, but for them to maintain this stance towards all creation.⁶⁷

Sulami asserts that it is proper for the Sufis to deport themselves according to Sari al-Saqati's (253/867) following description of them:

They firmly pursue five goals: never to be envious of what other people have, never to trouble other people, and always to control their hands, their stomachs, and their sexual desires. They are humble and they follow the ones who are superior to them in mystical knowledge.⁶⁸

Sulami's reference to spiritual chivalry as a primordial human characteristic transmitted through the chain of Prophethood, plays an important role in grasping the value attached to spiritual chivalry by means of the religious criteria and qualities ascribed to it. As such, he defines spiritual chivalry as, "The repentance of Adam, the integrity and piety of Noah, the faithfulness of Abraham, the honest of Ishmael, the sincerity of Moses, the patience of Job, the generosity of David, the mercy of Muhammad, the devotedness of Abu Bakr, the modesty of 'Uthman, the knowledge of 'Ali."⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Sulami, *Kitab al-Futuwwa*. These are some of the issues addressed in Sulami's work, taken from pages 15-94.

⁶⁷ Muharem Çakmak, "Ahiliğin Tasavvufi Temelleri ve Ahilik-Fütüvvet İlişkisi," (*Hikmet Yurdu Magazine*, 7, no:13, 2014), p. 143-158.

⁶⁸ Sulami, *The Book of Sufi Chivalry: Futuwwa*, p. 52.

⁶⁹ Sulami, *Kitab al-Futuwwa*, p. 22, 23.



The following famous episode is one of the examples discussed under the subject of spiritual chivalry: A Magian guest once came to Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham said that he would entertain him on the condition that he surrender to God (accept Islam). So the Magian went his way. Then God Most High revealed to Abraham, "O Abraham, you have not offered food to the Magian as he has not changed his religion, while I have been providing for him for the past seventy years in spite of his unbelief. Could not you offer him even a single meal!" Upon this, Prophet Abraham immediately found the old man and entertained him. When the Magian asked Prophet Abraham why he had done so, the latter related everything that had happened. In response, the Magian asked, "Is this what God said to you in reference to me?" and became Muslim.⁷⁰

On one occasion, Shaqiq al-Balkhi (174/790) asked Ja'far al-Sadiq (148/765) about spiritual chivalry. When Ja'far al-Sadiq said, "What do you have to say in response to such a question?" Shaqiq al-Balkhi replied: "We are thankful when God bestows upon us a blessing and patient when He withholds a blessing." "Our dogs in Madina do as much," Ja'far replied. Shaqiq asked, "O descendant of God's Messenger! What is spiritual chivalry in your view?" Ja'far said, "If we are given something, we give it to someone else, and if we are denied something, we give thanks."⁷¹ This was spiritual chivalry according to him.

The extent to which a person who strives to be of help to those around them on the basis of the principle, "The human being is a slave to goodness," will be loved by the people and be a superior representative of harmony and peace within their society, is self-evident.

Conclusion

A person's leading a blissful life appears to be more contingent on the immaterial than the material. The affluence of a person with psychological problems, for instance, is not enough to make them happy. At precisely this point, Sufism whispers into the heart of the human being that which is to their avail. Or rather, Sufi teaching is forever poised for making the human being happy, in all times and places. Sufism exhorts the human being to establish a close connection with their Creator, in lieu of forming an attachment to the world. Despite the world's not necessarily turning to all those who incline to it, God turns ever more to every servant who turns their face to Him. This inclination is that which promises an indescribable felicity to the human being. From this standpoint, it can be said that Sufism foresees a person's living in harmony with themselves as well as with their Lord. Thus, Sufi thought introduces to the human being the spirit of chivalry, based on an

⁷⁰ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, p. 262.

⁷¹ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, p. 265.



ihsan-oriented vigilant awareness, a love intertwined with love of God, and a preference for others centred on self-sacrifice.

Spiritual chivalry is a way of life. It is the consciousness which leads the individual to hold the interests of the community above their own interests and serves as the means to their endeavouring in the service of humanity. Spiritual chivalry entails an endless self-sacrifice, altruism and preference for others. In it, so to speak, is living for others, finding joy in the joy of others, sharing their sorrows and trying one's utmost to relieve them. In addition to envisaging the need for those people of heart who put forth the spirit of spiritual chivalry to both be with the people and at their service, the Sufi discipline has also made a significant contribution to the peace of the community and indeed all humanity. Only to the extent that this spirit be offered to the people of today can they be delivered from selfishness and egocentrism, and can it serve as a means to their living in peace and harmony.

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