



## ***Extracts from the Works of Sayyidina Ghawth ul Aazam Shaykh ‘Abd al Qadir al-Jilani***

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### ***Revelations of the Unseen (Futuh al-Ghaib)***

#### **Forty-fifth Discourse On blessings and trials**

The Shaikh (may Allah be well pleased with him, and may He grant him contentment) said:

There are two kinds of people: Those who are blessed with good fortune, and those who are tried by what their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) has decreed.

As for the fortunate ones, they are not exempt from all vexation and annoyance in the enjoyment of their blessings. Such a person may be very comfortable indeed, when along comes destiny to distress him with various afflictions, like diseases, ailments and disasters affecting himself, his property, his family and his offspring, which ought to teach him a lesson. It seems to him now as if he had never been favored, and he forgets that good fortune and how sweet it was. Yet as long as the rich man is secure in his wealth and position, with male and female servants and safety from enemies, he is in a state of bliss as if trouble did not exist.

All this is due to his ignorance of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). If he knew that his Lord "is Doer of what He will" (11:107), and that He changes and transforms, sweetens and embitters, enriches and impoverishes, exalts and abases, honors and humbles, gives life and causes death, brings forward and puts back, why would he be complacent about his good fortune, why would he be deluded by it, and why would he despair of happy relief while in the state of affliction? The problem is also due to his ignorance of this world, where he felt secure, and expected to find a serenity uncontaminated by grief, forgetting that it is the abode of trouble and distress, of bother and worry, that trouble is its norm and comfort only incidental to it. This world is like the aloe tree, the first fruit of which is bitter, while the last is sweet as honey. No man can get at its sweetness till he has swallowed the bitterness of it, so he will never reach the honey without enduring the bitter taste with patience. Anyone who bears its trials patiently will eventually savor its blessings.

The laborer is given his hire only after the sweat of his brow, the exhaustion of his body, the agony of his spirit, the constriction of his breast, the loss of his strength, the humbling of his selfish nature, and the breaking of his passions, all in the service of a creature like himself. Only when he has swallowed all these bitter pills will he finally enjoy good food, tidbits and fruit, fine clothes, comfort and happiness, if only in very small measure.

What the world has to offer, then, is bitter at first, just as the top layer of honey in a jar is marred by a bitter taste, and the eater cannot reach the bottom of the pot to get at the pure part until after he has taken the top layer. Thus if the servant perseveres in performing the Lord's commandments (Almighty and Glorious is He) and observing His prohibitions, and in submitting with complete trust to the course of destiny [qadar], and if he swallows all the bitterness and bears all the burdens involved, opposing his passions and giving up his self-willed desires, Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) will reward him with a pleasant existence in later life, with lavish care, comfort and dignity. The Lord will become his guardian and nourish him, just as He nourishes the suckling babe, without his having to worry or bear any trouble and strain in this world and the hereafter, so he will be like the person who relishes the honey at the bottom of the jar, after eating the bitter layer on top.

The servant who is blessed with good fortune must therefore never feel secure from the cunning tests of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He), deluding himself into believing that his prosperity is bound to last forever, forgetting to be thankful for it, and letting it slip loose by omitting that gratitude. As the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) has said: "Good fortune is a wild beast, so tie it up with gratitude." Thanks for the blessing of wealth are offered by acknowledging the gracious benefactor, namely Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He), by telling oneself

about it under all circumstances, by recognizing His favor and grace. The servant must not put himself above his Lord, nor transgress the limits He imposes, nor fail to observe His commandments in the matter. Gratitude is then further shown by discharging one's duties in respect of the alms-due, expiation, votive offerings and charitable donations, by helping the distressed, visiting the needy and those who are in dire straits through the vicissitudes of circumstance and reversal of fortune from good to bad, meaning that times of prosperity and plenty have given way to wretchedness and misery. Gratitude for good health in the limbs and organs of the body is shown by enlisting their aid for works of obedience, and refraining from unlawful actions, bad deeds, sins and offenses.

This is how to keep blessings from roaming and wandering off, how to water their tree and encourage the growth of its branches and leaves, ensuring that it bears good fruit, sweet to the taste and wholesome to digest, delicious to chew and easy to swallow, contributing to the health and development of the body. Then its beneficial effect on the limbs and organs will become manifest through various acts of obedience, good works and invocations of remembrance. As a result of all this, the servant will then enter in the hereafter into the mercy of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He), and abide forever in the gardens of Paradise together with "the Prophets and the champions of truth, the martyrs and the righteous; the best of company are they!" (4:69).

If the servant does not act like this, however, if he allows himself to be deluded by the superficial glamor of this world and by the taste he gets of its pleasures, if he is content with the brilliance of its phantom show and lightning flashes, with its early morning breeze on a hot summer's day, with the smoothness of the skins of its snakes and scorpions, if he is forgetful and blind to the deadly poisons lurking in its depths, to the pitfalls and traps it has set to catch and ensnare and destroy him, then he should be given a welcome to perdition and rejoice in rapidly impending ruin and destitution, with humiliation and scorn in this world and torment to come in the fire and flame of Hell.

As for one who suffers tribulation, he will sometimes be tried as a punishment and retribution for an offense he has perpetrated or a sin he has committed, at another time as an expiation and purification, and finally, for the sake of elevation in spiritual degrees and advancement to high stages, to join those versed in knowledge, people with experience of all states and stations. This they have received through the providence of the Lord of creation and of mankind. Their Lord has sent them to ride the fields of misfortune on the mounts of friendliness and kindness, and refreshed them with the breeze of loving looks and glances while in movement or at rest, because their trial was not intended to destroy them and hurl them into the abyss. Rather did He put them to these tests for the sake of choice and selection, so drawing from them the reality of faith, which He purified and separated from polytheistic association [shirk], pretensions and hypocrisy [nifaq], and presenting them with all kinds of knowledge, secrets and enlightenment. Then He made special favorites of them, entrusted them with His secrets, and granted them the pleasure of His company.

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said: "The patient poor are the guests of the All-Merciful on the Day of Resurrection, in this world and the hereafter," meaning in their hearts in this world, and physically in the hereafter. For those trials have the effect of making their hearts pure and free from sinful association, and from attachment to creatures, worldly means, wishes and self-willed desires. They are instrumental in melting them and smelting out the pretensions and passions, and the expectation of returns for obedient behavior, in the form of high degrees and stations in the hereafter, in paradise and its gardens.

The sign that trials are being inflicted as retribution and punishment is lack of patience while they last, as well as anxiety and complaining to creatures and people.

The sign that the tribulation is for expiation and purification of sins, is the presence of beautiful patience, without complaint or expression of anxiety to friends and neighbors, and without irritation with the performance of commandments and acts of obedience.

The sign that the trials are for the sake of spiritual progress is the presence of contentment, harmony, self-composure, quiet trust in the working of the God of the earth and the heavens, and annihilation within them until their eventual removal with the passage of time.

### ***The Sublime Revelation (Al-Fath ar-Rabbani)*** **Sixtieth Discourse**

It was in the late evening of Tuesday, the 13th of Rajab, A.H. 546, that the Shaikh (may Allah be well pleased with

him) said:

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Part of the excellence of a man's Islam is paying no attention to that which does not concern him.

The more excellent and truly confirmed a person's Islam becomes, the more he devotes his attention to that which concerns him, and avoids getting involved in things that are none of his business. To busy oneself with that which is irrelevant is the distraction of idle fools. Deprived of the good pleasure of his Master [Mawla] is he who fails to put into practice what He commands, and who occupies himself with things he has not been instructed to deal with. This is deprivation its very self, death its very self and banishment its very self.

Your involvement in this world requires that you have a righteous intention [niyya salihah], otherwise you deserve to be viewed with disgust. You must concentrate first of all on the cleanliness [tahara] of your heart, for this is an obligatory duty [farida]. Then turn your attention to deeper knowledge [ma'rifa]. If you miss the root, your preoccupation with the branch will not be accepted of you. There is no benefit in cleanliness of the physical parts of the body combined with defilement of the heart. You must cleanse your physical limbs and organs by following the Sunna, and your heart by putting the Qur'an into practice. Take care of your heart, so that your physical body will be taken care of. Every vessel exudes its own contents. Whatever is in your heart will ooze out from you through your physical parts.

Be sensible! This is not the behavior of one who believes in death and is convinced of it. This is not the behavior of one who is looking forward to meeting Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He), and dreading His reckoning and His interrogation. The sound heart is filled with affirmation of Divine Unity [tawhid], absolute trust [tawakkul], certitude [yaqin], helpful guidance to success [tawfiq], knowledge ['ilm], faith [iman], and nearness [qurb] to Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). He sees all creatures in their essential weakness, lowliness and poverty, yet he will not be arrogant toward a little child amongst them. He becomes like a lion when battle is joined with the unbelievers [kuffar] and hypocrites [munafiqun], out of zeal for Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). In His presence he becomes a discarded piece of flesh, and he is meek and humble toward those who are righteous [salihun] and piously devoted [muttaqun wari'un]. Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) has described the kind of people who have such attributes, for He has said:

Hard against the unbelievers, merciful among themselves. (48:29)

Woe unto you, O heretical innovator [mubtadi']! No one but Allah is capable of saying: "I am Allah." Our Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) is a Speaker [Mutakallim], not a dumb mute, and this is why Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) has emphasized the point in his speech to Moses, for he said:

And Allah spoke directly to Moses. (4:164)

He possesses speech [kalam] that can be heard and understood. He said to Moses:

O Moses, I am indeed Allah, Lord of the Worlds. (28:43)

By His words, "I am Allah," He means to say: "I am not an angel [malak], not a genie [jinni] and not a human being [insi], but the Lord of the Worlds [Rabbu'l-'alamin]. So Pharaoh was lying when he said: 'I am your Lord the Most High' (79:24), and when he laid claim to divinity [ilahiyya], disregarding Me. I am Allah, not Pharaoh or any other creature."

When Moses fell into that agony and anguish, his faith [iman] and conviction [iqan] showed through. When he fell into the gloom of night and the gloom of sorrow for the wife, on account of the agony she was suffering, Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) revealed to him a light, so he said to his habits, his dependants, his strength and his material means:

Stay here awhile, I notice a fire. (28:29)

"I have seen a light. My innermost being [sirr], my heart [qalb], my inner content [ma'na] and my kernel [lubb] have seen a light. My predestined grace [sabiqa] and my guidance have come to me. Independence from creatures has

come to me. Saintship [wilaya] and deputyship [khilafa] have come to me. The root [asl] has come to me and the branch [far'] has departed from me. Dominion has come to me and the dread of Pharaoh has gone from me, and the fear has passed over to him."

He bade his family farewell, committed them to his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) and moved on, for surely He would appoint a successor to him amongst them.

This is how it is for the believer [mu'min] when Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) draws him close and summons him to the door of His nearness. His heart looks about to right and left, to the back and to the front, and he sees that all avenues are blocked except in the direction of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). Then he addresses his lower self [nafs], his passions [hawa], his physical limbs and organs [jawarih], his habits ['ada], his family and everything he has been involved with, saying: "I have spotted the light of nearness to my Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), so I am moving on toward it. If I have a return, I shall come back to you."

He bids farewell to all creatures. He bids farewell to everything produced [muhdath] and everything made [masnu'], and he moves on toward the Maker [Sani'], for surely the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) will take care of his wife and children and all his material means [asbab].

Part of the spiritual condition [hal] is kept hidden from those who are remote, but not from those who are near, from those who hate but not from those who love. It is kept hidden from the majority, but not from the few. When this heart is sound and pure, it can hear the call of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) from each of the six directions [right and left, above and below, in front and behind]. It can hear the call of every Prophet [nabi], Messenger [rasul], champion of truth [siddiq] and saint [wali]. At this stage he draws near to Him, so that his life comes to be nearness to Him and his death remoteness from Him. His contentment comes to be in his intimate conversation [munajat] with Him, and he is satisfied with this to the exclusion of everything else. He does not care about the loss of this world. He does not care about hunger and thirst, nakedness and indignity.

The seeker [murid] finds contentment in acts of obedience [ta'at], while the knower ['arif], who is sought [murad], finds contentment in nearness to Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). O you with your affectations, what is this you are up to? This business cannot be achieved through fasting by day and keeping vigil at night, eating rough food and wearing rough clothes, while still being influenced by the lower self [nafs], the passions [hawa], natural inclinations [tab'], ignorance and the opinions of other people. Nothing can come about through this. Woe unto you! Be sincere [akhlis] and you will be saved [takhlus]. Be truthful [usduq] and you will attain your goal, draw close to your aspiration and ascend to the heights. Surrender [sallim] and you will be safe and sound [salimta]. Be compliant [wafiq] and you will be helped to succeed [wuffiqta]. Be content [irda] and you will be approved of [rudiya 'anka]. You must make a start, then the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) will bring things to completion for you.

O Allah, take care of our affairs in this world and the hereafter. Do not entrust us to our own lower selves [nufus], nor to any of Your creatures!

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) is reported as having said:

Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) will say to Gabriel: "Put such and such a person to sleep, and make so and so get up."

There are two ways of taking this [the first being]: "Make a certain person-the lover [muhibb]-get up, and put another person-the beloved [mahbub]-to sleep. The former has claimed that he loves Me, so I must certainly examine him and put him in his proper place, until the leaves of his being with any but Me fall from him. Make him get up, until the proof of his claim is established, until his love is confirmed. And put a certain other person to sleep, because he is My beloved. He has long been toiling hard. Not a trace is left with him of any other than Me. His love for Me has become single, and confirmed are his claim, his proof and his fulfillment of My covenant. It is now My turn to fulfill his covenant. He is a guest, and the guest is not made to serve and toil. I shall let him sleep in the chamber of My tender care, and I shall let him sit at the table of My gracious favor. I shall entertain him in My nearness and I shall remove him from the presence of all others besides Me. His affection [mawadda] has proved to be genuine, and when affection is authentic formalities are dispensed with."

The other interpretation is: "Put so and so to sleep, for I dislike the sound of his voice, and make that other person get up, for I love to hear his voice."

The lover becomes a loved one only when his heart is purified of everything apart from his Master (Almighty and Glorious is He). When his realization of the Divine Unity [tawhid] is complete, as well as his absolute trust [tawakkul], his faith [iman], his conviction [iqan] and his direct knowledge [ma'rifa], that is when he becomes a loved one. His suffering then departs and comfort comes to him.

Suppose someone loved a certain king, but was separated from him by a great distance, so love overwhelmed him and he set out in a daze, heading in the direction of the king's country. He travels by day and by night, enduring all kinds of hardship and danger. He enjoys neither food nor drink until he reaches the door of his palace. The king has had news about his condition, so he sends his servants out to welcome him. They take him to the bath [hamam] to get him cleaned up, dress him in the finest clothes and make him fragrant with perfumes. Then they bring him into the presence of the king, who entertains him, talks to him, asks him about his condition, marries him to the most beautiful of his slave girls and grants him a portion of his kingdom. He becomes the beloved favorite of the king, so what reason could he have, after all this, to be afraid or weary or to wish to go back to his own country? Why should he wish to part from him, when he has come to be established and trusted in his presence?

This heart, when it has attained to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), comes to be endowed with His nearness and His intimate conversation, secure in His presence, so it has no desire to leave Him again and go back to any other. The way for the heart to reach this station [maqam] is through the performance of the obligatory religious duties [fara'id], patient renunciation of unlawful things [haram] and carnal desires [shahawat], obtaining things that are permissible [mubah] and lawful [halal] without passion [hawa] and lust [shahwa] and involvement [wujud], and the practice of salutary restraint [wara' shafi] and perfect abstinence [zuhd kamil]. It is the giving up of everything apart from Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He), opposition to the lower self [nafs], the passions [hawa] and the devil [shaitan], the cleansing of the heart from all creatures whatsoever, and equal indifference to praise or blame, to receiving gifts or having them withheld, and to the hard life of the desert [hajar] or the comfort of civilized living [madar]. The first stage of this business is bearing witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah [shahadatu an la ilaha illa'llah], and the last is equal indifference to rough or civilized living. When a person's heart is sound, he is so closely connected with his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) that desert and town, praise and blame, sickness and good health, riches and poverty, worldly success and failure are all on an equal footing as far as he is concerned.

When someone has genuinely reached this stage, he experiences the death of his lower self [nafs] and his passions [hawa], his natural urges cease to flare up, and his devil becomes humbly submissive to him. This world and its lords [arbab] become insignificant to his heart, while the hereafter and its lords acquire great importance in its sight. Then he turns away from both these worlds and moves toward his Master (Almighty and Glorious is He). His heart finds a track in the midst of creatures [khalq], on which it can pass through to the Truth [Haqq]. They step aside for him to right and left, pull back and clear the path for him. They run away from the fire of his truthfulness [sidq] and the awe-inspiring dignity of his innermost being [sirr].

When someone has genuinely reached this stage, no opponent can make him turn back and no obstacle can bar his way to the door of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). His banner cannot be repulsed, nor his army put to flight. His birds [of good omen] cannot be silenced, and the sword of his affirmation of Unity [tawhid] cannot be blunted. His steps do not falter. His task is not difficult for him, and neither door nor lock can hold fast in front of him. Doors and locks fly apart, and all avenues are opened up. Nothing stands before him until he stands before the Lord. Then He will treat him kindly and let him sleep in His chamber. He will give him to eat of His gracious bounty and to drink of His intimate friendship [uns]. At this point he will see what no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no human heart has ever conceived.

This servant's return to creatures is for the purpose of guiding them aright and ruling them. They are all subject to the dominion of this servant, who has attained to Him, who has seen Him and regards everything apart from Him as the work of creation. He becomes useful to the people as an expert [jahbadh], a mediator [safir] who points the way to the door of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). Now he is called great in the spiritual kingdom [malakut]. All creatures are under the feet of his heart and find protection in his shade.

You are not rightly guided. You lay claim to that which does not belong to you, and to what you do not possess. Your lower self [nafs] is in control of you, and creatures and all of this world are in your heart. In your heart they are greater than Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). You are outside the limit of the people [of the Lord] and their estimation. If you wish to attain to what I have hinted at, you must devote your attention to the purification of your

heart from all things. You must obey the commandments and observe the prohibitions [of the Lord], be patient with destiny [qadar], and expel this world from your heart. After all this, come here to me, so that I may talk with you and tell you about what lies beyond all that. If you do this, you will obtain what you wish, but anything said beforehand would be senseless jabber.

Woe unto you! You need a bite to eat, you lose some trivial little thing, or you suffer an insult to your honor-and it is the end of the world for you! You protest against Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). You vent your rage by beating your wife and children. You curse your religion [din] and your Prophet [nabi]. If you were a sensible person, one of the people of wakefulness and vigilant awareness, you would hold your tongue in the presence of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). You would look upon all of His actions [af'al] as a blessing for your benefit and in your interest. If you pause and do not quarrel, if you are thankful and not ungrateful, if you are content and not dissatisfied, if you are quiet and do not complain, you will be told:

Will not Allah defend His servant? (39:36)

O hasty one, be patient and you will have good and wholesome food to eat. You do not know Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). If you really knew ['arafta] Him, you would not complain about Him to others. If you really knew Him, you would hold your tongue in His presence. You would not demand things of Him and would not pester Him with your supplication [du'a']. No, you would rather comply with His wishes and be patient with Him. Be sensible! You do not need any justification. Everything He does is beneficial. He puts you to the test to see how you will behave. He examines you to find out whether you are confident of His promise, whether you realize that He is Watching you and Aware of you.

Surely you must realize that if the day-laborer [ruzkari] were to beg for a handout while inside the king's palace, this would amount to impudence and greediness on his part. He would be evicted at once from the palace, and would be told: "This fellow needs to go begging." The faith [iman] of the believer [mu'min] cannot be complete as long as his heart still contains any cupidity, greed or importunate demand, or any creatures on whom his fears and hopes are pinned. To achieve this completeness he must practice constant reflection [fikr] and studiously examine the basic sources [usul: 'roots'] and the practical applications derived from them [furu': 'branches']. He must reflect upon the spiritual states [ahwal] of the Prophets [nabiyyun], the Messengers [mursulun] and the righteous [salihun], on how the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) delivered them from the hands of their enemies and helped them to triumph over their foes, and on how He gave them relief and a way out of their problems.

It is through genuine reflection that absolute trust [tawakkul] becomes truly established. This world disappears from the heart and it forgets about jinn, human beings, angels and all creatures, while it remembers the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). The owner of this heart comes to be as if no one else had been created. He comes to be as if he were the only one subject to the [divine] commandments, there being no other creatures; as if he were the only one subject to the [divine] prohibitions, likewise, and as if he were the sole recipient of the [divine] blessings. It seems to him that all obligations rest on the neck of his innermost being [sirr] and his heart. He sees the mountains of obligations, in all their variety of forms, as a mission [risala] from the One who imposes obligations [al-Mukallif], so he undertakes it in order to prove the reality of his servitude ['ubudiyya] and his readiness to obey [taw'a'iyya]. He becomes a carrier for creatures, while the Creator carries him. He becomes a physician for them, while his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) is his own physician. He becomes the door for creatures to reach the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), and a mediator [safir] between them and Him. He becomes a sun from which they receive light on their path toward Him. He becomes the food and drink of creatures, for he is never absent from them. He becomes their interest and welfare entirely, and forgets about himself. He comes to be as if he had no lower self [nafs], no natural inclinations [tab'] and no passions [hawa]. He forgets about his own food and drink and clothing. He becomes forgetful of himself, mindful of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). He takes his heart away from his own self and from creatures, but remains with his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). All he seeks is the well-being of other creatures. He has committed his own self [sallama nafsahu] to the hand of the judgment [qada'] of his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He), letting go of it completely.

Such is the character of one who is willing to undertake the task of conducting people to the door of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). As for you, you are a crazy fool, ignorant of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He), His Messengers [rusul], His saints [awliya'] and His special favorites [khawass] among His creatures. You claim to practice abstinence [zuhd], yet you are always craving [raghib]. Your abstinence is a cripple with no feet. Your only yearning is for this world and creatures. You have no yearning for your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Be careful how you stand in front of me! Come with good thoughts and good manners, so that I may guide you to your Lord

(Almighty and Glorious is He) and make you familiar with the path to Him. You must take off the clothes of arrogance and dress yourself in the clothes of humility. You must be put to shame, so that you may receive honor. You must humble yourself so that you may grow in stature. All that you are now engaged in and involved with is crazy foolishness. Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) pays no attention to it. This business does not come about through the actions of the physical body. Our Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace) used to say:

Abstinence is in here. Pious devotion [taqwa] is in here. Sincerity [ikhlas] is in here.

-and he would be pointing at his breast.

If someone wishes for success [falah], let him become a piece of ground beneath the feet of the Shaikhs. What is the character of these Shaikhs? They are those who give up this world and creatures, who bid them farewell, who say goodbye to everything below the heavenly Throne ['arsh] down to the surface of the earth, who leave all things behind and bid them the farewell of one who will never be coming back to them again. They say goodbye to all creatures, including their own selves. Their existence [wujud] is together with their Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) in all their states [ahwal]. If anyone seeks the love of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) together with the existence of his own self [nafs], he is indulging in delusion and fantasy. The majority of those who behave like ascetics [mutazahhidun] and devout worshippers [muta'abbidun] are actually the slaves of creatures, whom they treat as if they were partners of Allah [mushrikuna bihim].

You must not put your trust in material means [asbab], making idols of them and depending on them, because you will incur the wrath of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), of Him who is the Originator of all means [Musabbib al-asbab], the Creator [Khaliq] of them and the One who keeps them at His disposal [al-Mutasarrif fiha]. It is the firm belief [i'tiqad] of those who follow the Book of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the Sunna of His Messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace) that the sword does not cut because of its nature [tab'], but that it is Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) who cuts with it; that fire does not burn because of its nature, but that Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) is the One who uses it to burn; that food does not satisfy hunger because of its nature, but that Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) uses it to satisfy our hunger; that water does not quench thirst because of its nature, but that Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) is the One who quenches our thirst with it. Likewise with all material means in the variety of their forms, Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) is the One who controls and applies them, while they are merely instruments in His hands, with which He does whatever He will.

Since He is the Doer [Fa'il] in reality ['ala'l-haqiqa], why do you not resort to Him in all your affairs, let go of your needs and make a regular practice of affirming His Oneness [tawhid] under all circumstances? His instructions are obvious; they are not concealed from any intelligent person. The slave gets beaten with a stick, but a nod is enough for the free man. You must obey Him, for He will honor those who obey Him. Do not disobey Him, for He will dishonor those who disobey Him. Triumph and failure are in His hand. He honors with triumph whomever He will, and dishonors with failure whomever He will. He honors with knowledge ['ilm] whomever He will, and dishonors with ignorance whomever He will. He honors with nearness whomever He will, and dishonors with remoteness whomever He will.

### ***Utterances of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qadir (Malfuzat)***

#### **Excerpt**

A man said to him: "Pray for me [ud'u li]," so the Shaikh (may Allah be well pleased with him) replied:

O Allah, let me find all I need in You, to the exclusion of all creatures, and let him find all he needs in remembrance of You, without having to ask.

When someone no longer has any need of creatures, he clings to the door of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He), who then enriches him with His nearness. When He has enriched him with His nearness, he becomes too preoccupied with remembering Him and thanking Him to consider asking Him for anything.

When you are deprived of food and water out in the deserts, a fountain will gush forth for you in your own home.

Creatures are the most powerful weapon Satan has against you.

Beautify your heart, then your external appearance [zahir].

The distraction, the whole distraction, resides in the abode of creatures and their dwelling place.

A worthy lover goes forth in search of his beloved. Joseph (peace be upon him) went forth in search of Jacob. Anyone who set eyes on him found him attractive and fell passionately in love with him. He took to wearing a veil, but he was thrown in prison. His only goal was Jacob, none of the others. [In the words of the poet:]

Would that all between me and thee might flourish, and all between me and the rest of the world might lie in ruins!

The crier of the Lord of Truth has come. Abandon the building of creatures:

Until the prescribed term is fulfilled. (2:235)

There is nothing worth talking about until the water has drained away from your frog [difda']. Until the dry land is clear for His worship, your innermost being [sirr] is with Him aboard the ship of His power [qudra]. As He told him [Noah] by inspiration:

In the Name of Allah shall be its course and its mooring (11:41)

-in the ocean of knowledge ['ilm].

Being in the company of the servants of Allah is like being in the company of a lion; fear and wariness are appropriate in both cases. As long as the lion has something else to keep him satisfied, he will not concern himself with you, because all his attention is directed elsewhere, but if you go and bother him instead of retiring to a safe distance, he will savage you. To be in the company of the champion of truth [siddiq] is much the same, because that is how they are in the company of the King.

Among the companions of al-Junaid there was a man who was having doubts about the spontaneously arising notion [khatir]. Al-Junaid was made aware of this, so he asked the man: "What they are saying about you, is it true?" He said, "Yes," [so al-Junaid said:] "Let an utterance come through your heart." The man said, "Very well," and when asked what he had uttered [inwardly], he replied: "I uttered such and such." But [al-Junaid] said: "No, [that wasn't it]!" Then the man tried again, and when he reported [what he had uttered inwardly], he was again told: "No!" He then let one more utterance come to him through his heart, and reported to al-Junaid, who yet again said: "No!" So the man said: "O Shaikh, my experience is genuine, so you had better check your own!" To this al-Junaid replied: "I knew that everything you told me was true. I simply wanted to test the purity of your heart and its steadfastness."

Their hearts [the hearts of the people of the Lord] are the channels of His will [irada], the treasure houses of His knowledge ['ilm], the bosom of His mystery [sirr], the treasure houses of destiny in the Valley of Destiny [wadi'l-qadar]. Whenever their innermost beings [asrar] go on a tour within the precincts of the palace of destiny, they become acquainted with all kinds of knowledge ['ulum] and secrets [asrar].

What can be built with well-propped timber! What can be made of outer forms [suwar] with no inner content [ma'na]?

Deaf, dumb, blind, so they do not understand. (2:171)

A certain person wrote three hundred and sixty stories, delivering one story every day to the local prince [amir]. He never got too bored to keep trying, until at long last he received the official seal of approval he was seeking to obtain. In your case, however, you devote a few short days or a few short nights to making requests of Allah (Exalted is He), then you get bored and resort to creatures instead. Why not remember the man who wrote all those stories?

As long as you remain attached to creatures, you will not prosper. You must turn in repentance from creatures to the Lord of Truth, and let your standing in waiting be at the threshold of the door of His nearness. The hand of love and nearness will draw you in. You will come to be a permanent fixture [hils] of that mansion. Eventually, as you experience all the facilities and amenities, comfort will come to you from every side. Your wing will grow strong and you will fly up to the battlements of that mansion. Those battlements will come to be your tower. If you fall, you will fall into the palace courtyard. You will spend all your time in the presence of the Owner of the palace. You will be a petitioner whose requests are granted.

If you wish to promote the welfare of your fellow creatures, this is how you must go about it, instead of spouting useless drivel. (The Shaikh-may Allah be well pleased with him-was getting at the sermons delivered to the people by the preachers [wu"az].)

To perform the prayer [salat] is to make a connection [sila] with Allah (Exalted is He) after becoming detached from everything other than Him. The body cannot be divided up between two situations, detachment [infisal] from creatures and attachment [ittisal] to the Lord of Truth. This refers to the prayer of the people [of the Lord]. As for the prayer of ordinary servants ['ibad], the way they go about it is to set the Garden [of Paradise] to the right of the heart, the Fire [of Hell] to the left of it, and the Narrow Bridge [sirat] in front of it, with the Lord watching over it. As for the prayer of the lovers [muhibbun], it is detachment from creatures and attachment to Him.

The sure sign that your lower self [nafs] is genuinely in need of food is that you hear something crying from your inner [batin], like the sound made by young chickens. When you hear that sound, you must provide it with what it needs for its survival.

As Allah (Exalted is He) has said:

And He has inspired it [the self] with what is wrong for it and what is right for it. (91:8)

It is He who makes us laugh and makes us weep. (53:43)

You cannot put these two verses of the Qur'an into practice until after the heart has entered the presence of its King. It is only then that the action and the inspiration come about. Before the entry has been made, you must distinguish between a direct inner receiving [warid fi batinika] and a suggestion inspired [ilham] by the devil [shaitan], by a natural impulse [tab'], by a selfish instinct [nafs], or by an angel [malak].

If you wish to join someone's company for the sake of pleasing Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He), you must perform your minor ablution [wudu'] with meticulous correctness, while the mind is inactive and the eyes are not wandering. Then proceed to perform your prayer [salat]. You will open the door of the prayer with your ritual purity [tuhur], and the door of your Lord with your prayer. Then ask Him, when you have finished: "Whom should I take as a guide [dalil]? Who is the one who can report on Your authority? Who is the one singled out [mufrad]? Who is the deputy [khalifa]? Who is the delegate [na'ib]?" He is Generous [Karim], He will not let you suffer disappointment. Without a doubt, He will grant inspiration [yulhimu] to your heart. He will grant revelation [yuhi] to your innermost being [sirr]. He will show you a clear sign. He will open the doors to shed light on your path. Someone who seeks and strives will surely find [man talaba wa-jadda wajada].

As for those who strive in Our cause, surely We shall guide them to Our paths. (29:69)

The decisive factor lies within you, not in what he [someone you are thinking of joining] has to say, so when all the angles have converged from your heart's point of view, and everything points to a particular individual, go ahead and join his company. Your fellowship with him should be for you like the fellowship of lions and snakes. Pay no attention to his poverty, the gaps in his pedigree, his straitened circumstances, his shabby appearance and his clumsy mode of expression. What is really significant [al-ma'na] about him resides in his inner being [batin], not in his outer [zahir], not in his physical constitution and not on his face.

Do not be in a hurry to speak, and do not try to get his attention straight away. Be on the lookout for the useful service he performs on behalf of his Lord. He is the clerk, and the instructions he notes down are not for himself but for others. He is an ambassador. He is the waiter, and the dish is for someone else. He is the communicator, and the communication is for someone other than himself. You must therefore be ready to receive what Allah may disclose by means of his tongue. Do not wander out of his sight. Do not overstep his limit, but always stand waiting with head bowed in silence, fearful and timid. Do not harbor doubts concerning his spiritual state [hal], nor about his words and his actions. You must consider him superior to any clever person, and let him steer you from his presence toward his Lord, not toward any other.

The joker you should not encourage. The prattler you should not respond to.

We have been given the same natural disposition as the animals, but the intellect ['aql] discriminates, the sacred law

[shar'] discriminates, knowledge ['ilm] discriminates, nearness [qurb] discriminates, direct experience [ma'rifa] and obedient service [ta'a] discriminate, while the original source is One.

If they put their knowledge into practice, when they came across a dead man they would bring him back to life, or in the case of a sinner they would remind him to mend his ways.

Bowls are brought to him in his house, for other people. He proceeds to collect the tax [kharaj] and then, when he has collected it, he hands it over to the King. He also has a salary [jamikiyya]. He takes from the people, but not for himself.

When Allah wishes you well, He wakes you up and makes you aware of your own faults.

Your learned scholar ['alim] is an ignorant man. Your ignorant man is a slanderous liar. Your pious abstainer [zahid] is full of worldly desires.

Do not exploit your religion [din] for worldly gain. Only the hereafter can be gained through religion.

The Shaikh (may Allah the Exalted be well pleased with him) also spoke about His words (Exalted is He):

Call upon your Lord humbly and in secret; He does not love those who go too far in the wrong direction [al-mu'tadin]. (7:55)

He gave this verse of the Qur'an its literal interpretation, since in this context the obvious meaning of al-mu'tadi [singular of al-mu'tadini which sometimes means 'aggressors'] is a person who calls upon anyone other than Him, one who puts his requests to anyone apart from Him.

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud used to say to his companions: "You are the polish [jila'] of my heart." If a person is ready to listen to me for the sake of Allah and for the benefit to be derived from my words, he will be a kind of polish, but otherwise he should stay away from me, for his presence will cast a cloud.

When Abraham (peace be upon him) had escaped from the fiery furnace, and his livestock and servants had come to be many, he had a mansion built in Syria, with numerous entrances. He retired to live there after he had paid off the cost of construction, and said farewell to his people. He went into retirement in order to provide training for his successors [khalaf].

What is "bosom friendship" [khulla]? It is companionship [suhba], loving affection [mahabba] and togetherness [wusla].

Question: Should one follow the verbal teaching [qal] of the guide, or his spiritual state [hal]?

The Shaikh (may Allah be well pleased with him) responded to this by saying:

The verbal teaching is what the common people ['awamm] follow, while the spiritual state is emulated by the special few [khawass]. Which group do you belong to? Let me feel your pulse, so I can diagnose your condition, show you how serious your sickness is, and cure you. The regular practice of our Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) included visiting the sick. We have been prevented from doing that, but we do visit the healthy with our spiritual influence [himma]. Our legs have been prevented from walking to your houses, and our hands from taking your property. We have been so commanded by virtue of the spiritual state [hal] and the decree of destiny [qadar].

The Shaikh (may Allah, Exalted is He, be well pleased with him) also said:

Suppose that a certain man is about to die, leaving ten sons to succeed him, all of them on the same level in terms of dutiful devotion to their father. [According to the Islamic law of inheritance], they would each be entitled to an equal share in his estate, but the father's heart is inclined toward one son in particular, and he wishes that he could inherit the whole of his estate. Then along comes destiny with the decree of death for one son after another, until only that favored one is left alive. He comes into possession of the whole of his father's estate, since the judgment [qada'] and decree of destiny [qadar] have taken effect. Is there anything wrong in this? Let us leave it there for now [ila hahuna wa's-salam].

O Allah, keep creatures at a distance from us. Keep the lower self [nafs] at a distance from us, as well as the passions [ahwiya] and natural urges [tiba'].

You said, "I am afraid of this ocean," yet you are swimming in it, which would indicate the very opposite of being afraid.

Only those of His servants fear Allah who have knowledge. (38:28)

Once they have come to know, they become afraid. You have come to know how harmful the thing is, so be on your guard against it and avoid it. Death will come to you inevitably, so work to be ready for it. O you whose house is without a roof, whose dependants have no flour to make bread, no underclothes to wear and no blankets to cover them! The winter is coming, so be prepared. The commander [amir] is coming, so get down off your high horse. The lion is coming, so beware of the lion of death.

What is the meaning of those words you pronounce while performing your prayer [salat]?

You alone do we worship [iyyaka na'budu], and of You alone do we seek help [wa-iyaka nasta'in]. (1:5)

[They mean:] "You alone do we obey [iyyaka nuti'u], and You alone do we acknowledge as the One God [wa-iyaka nuwahhidu]."

When have you ever affirmed the Oneness of the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He)? When have you ever done anything with true sincerity? When have you ever abstained from creatures, from pretense [riya'] and hypocrisy [nifaq] and rowdy contention [sakhhab]? When have you ever submitted humbly to the Lord of Truth, with the kind of humility that is experienced in the heart, in private?

If the carnal desire of the lower self [nafs] interferes with someone's vision of the Lord of Truth, he will feel too ashamed to behold Him, so he must get rid of that lustful desire. When will you see Jacob (peace be upon him) biting the tips of his fingers, in your own private space, when your lust [shabaq] is intense? When will you realize what keeps you chaste? That which preserves your chastity [isma] is the jealousy [ghaira] of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). When Joseph (peace be upon him) met that woman, the divine jealousy intervened, so he turned and ran away.

So it was, that We might ward off from him evil and lewdness; he was one of Our devoted servants. (12:24)

When will your condition be transformed into that of Joseph (peace be upon him)? When Joseph (peace be upon him) was made responsible for preserving chastity in the House of Allah and its sacred precincts, he complied with the will of his Lord in his confinement, and He bestowed chastity upon him in his seclusion. This is how you must be, O servants of Allah, O seekers! Borrow the condition of the champion of truth [siddiq]. Ask for it from Allah!

Absolute trust [tawakkul] means cutting off all material means [asbab], letting everything go. When the servant's heart [qalb] is transformed [inqalaba], it will become an angel [malak]. He will hear what the angel hears. He will experience what the angel experiences. Then it will develop even further, so that it becomes a king [malik] ruling over him.

## ***The Removal of Cares (Jala' al-Khawatir)***

### **Excerpt**

The Thirteenth Discourse

When someone has achieved genuine detachment [zuhd] from creatures, it is correct for them to feel attracted to him. They can derive benefit from hearing what he has to say and from paying attention to him. When the heart has achieved genuine detachment from creatures, and the innermost being [sirr] has become detached from everything apart from Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He), or at least from everything apart from nearness [to Him], that nearness will be his bosom friend [khalil] in this world and his intimate companion [anis] in the hereafter.

When you know creatures through knowledge [ilm] of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) and experience them

through experience [ma'rifa] of Him, their attributes will disappear from you. Jinn and human beings and angels will vanish from you. Your heart will assume a different character, as will your innermost being [sirr]. The shell of your existence [wujud] will be removed from you, the shell of the usual custom ['ada] of the children of Adam (peace be upon him). The law [hukm] will come and form a gown for you to wear, so you will go about the earth clothed, commanding yourself and all fellow creatures of your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He) to obey His commandment. Knowledge Lordly and Divine [al-'ilm ar-rabbani al-ilahi] will come and form a garment over your heart and your innermost being [sirr].

You must not retire to your hermit's cell with ignorance for company, because to isolate yourself from your fellow creatures in a state of ignorance is a great and total perversion. This is why the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) has said:

Complete your studies [tafaqqah], then you may retire.

It is not appropriate for you to withdraw into the hermit's cell, as long as there is anyone upon the face of the earth whom you fear and on whom you pin your hopes. There should be no one left as far as you are concerned, apart from One who is feared and One who is looked to in hope, namely Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He).

Worshipful service ['ibada] means giving up habitual behavior ['ada]. There can be no habitual conduct until you come to be in the situation of worshipful service. You must do away with attachment to this world and the hereafter, and become attached to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). Do not try to pass counterfeit coins, for the assayer has a sharp eye. He will accept nothing from you without applying the touchstone [mihakk]. Take that counterfeit stuff you carry around with you and toss it away. Do not regard it as having any value. Nothing will be accepted from you [as precious metal] unless it has been exposed to the goldsmith's bellows and purified of dross, so do not imagine this to be an easy business. Most of you would claim to be sincere, but are actually hypocrites. Were it not for the examination [imtihan], the claims would be more numerous still. If someone lays claim to tolerance [hilm], we put him to the test by provoking him to anger. If someone lays claim to generosity [karam], we put him to the test by making demands of him. Whatever a person lays claim to, we test him with its opposite.

Woe unto you! You want to get something for nothing, but it will not fall into your hands. You must pay the price and then take it. He who appreciates the value is the one who gets the full enjoyment. You must put up with the care and sorrow of this world, so that you may eventually experience the joy of the hereafter. Our Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace) had to go through long periods of sadness, and he was always given to reflection. He was also dedicated to frequent worship ['ibada], even though he had already been granted forgiveness for his sins, both those in the past and those that were yet to come. He would often pause to reflect (may Allah bless him and give him peace) on what might lie in store for his community [umma] after he had gone.

Whenever al-Hasan al-Basri (may Allah bestow His mercy upon him) went out of his house, the signs of sadness used to emanate from his heart, and sorrow and grief would leave their mark upon his face. Sadness is the normal condition of the believer [mu'min] under all circumstances, until he meets his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He).

The people [of the Lord] remain in a state of dumb muteness until they receive permission to speak to their fellow creatures, waiting until He brings them together with the righteous [salihun]. Then, when they are ready to speak to them and guide them to their desired goal, their speech becomes totally articulate. If their hearts incline toward creatures, along comes the hand of [divine] jealousy [ghaira] to check them and pull in their reins. It locks the door to keep them shut out until they apologize and repent. Then, once their repentance has been confirmed, it reopens the door for them and their hearts are drawn close [to the Lord].

O you who are dead at heart, what is the point of your sitting here in my presence? O slaves of this world and its potentates, O slaves of the rich, O slaves of extravagance and indulgences [rukhas], woe unto you! Even if the price of a grain of wheat should rise as high as one dinar [gold coin], it would not bother me in the least.

The true believer [mu'min] is not concerned about his sustenance, because of the strength of his faith [iman] and his trusting reliance [ittikal] on his Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Do not count yourself among the true believers. Put yourself in a separate category from them!

Glory be to Him who has made me stay here in your midst! Whenever I try to spread my wings and fly, along comes the hand of Power [Qudra] to clip them. Whenever the wing of knowledge ['ilm] spreads itself and tries to fly, it gets

clipped by the scissors of the Law [Hukm].

Pay attention to what I have to say, and accept my good advice. You must follow the indications of the affirmation of Divine Unity [tawhid] and pay close attention to the words of the champions of truth [siddiqun] and the saints [awliya']. Their speech is like inspiration [wahy] from Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). They speak on His behalf and at His command, beyond the competence of the common herd ['awamm tagham]. You are crazy. You compose your speech from the books and then deliver it. If you lost your written notes, what would you do? What if your books caught fire? Or if the lamp you see to read by went out, if your jar broke and the ink got spilled, where would you find your flint, your tinderbox, your matches and your assistant?

When someone acquires knowledge, puts it into practice and does so sincerely, his flint and his assistant come to be within his heart, a light from the light of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). He can then provide illumination for himself and for others.

Away with you, O sons of babble, O sons of pages composed by the hands of the lower selves [nufus] and the passions [ahwiya] ! Woe unto you, you are quarreling with the lucky one [mahzuz]. You will be crushed and destroyed and will fail to achieve your own good fortune. How can the preordainment [sabiqa] and foreknowledge ['ilm] be altered by your effort? You must be believers who surrender themselves [mu'minun muslimun]. Surely you have heard His words (Almighty and Glorious is He):

Those who believed in Our signs and had surrendered themselves. (43:69)

The reality [haqiqah] of Islam is submissive obedience [istislam]. The people [of the Lord] have thrown themselves prostrate before the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He). They have forgotten 'why?' and 'how?' and 'do' and 'don't.' They perform works of obedient service [ta'at] of all kinds, and their attitude is one of fearfulness. This is why the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) has described them approvingly in these words of His:

They give that which they give with hearts afraid, because they are about to return unto their Lord. (23:60)

[In other words:] "They carry out the commandments of Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He) and observe His prohibitions. They endure with patience the tests I set them and they are grateful for the gifts I give them. They surrender [yusallimuna] their own selves, their goods, their children and their reputations into the hand of My preordainment, while their hearts are timorous, afraid of Me."

O you who are so deluded by affluence and the peace and comfort it affords, the time is already near at hand when your peace and comfort will turn into worry and confusion, your affluence into poverty, and your ease into hardship. You must not be deluded by your present state of affairs. You must make it your regular practice to attend the sessions of divine remembrance [majalis adh-dhikr]. You should always think well of the Shaikhs, in practical matters as well as in the sphere of knowledge ['ilm]. You must listen to them carefully and pay attention to what they have to say. If the seeker [murid] has the correct attitude toward companionship [subha] with the Shaikh, it will feed him through the mouth of his heart, nourishing him with the food and drink of the kind of knowledge that is only acquired by direct experience [ma'rifa].

O you backsliders! You must make your hearts empty of creatures. You have seen fit to indulge in vanity. Tomorrow [at the Resurrection] the people of the Garden of Paradise will be told: "Enter the Garden!" Even today, if the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) examines the hearts of His special few [khawass] among His servants, He will see that they are empty of this world, of the Garden of Paradise, and of everything else apart from Him. He will say to them: "You must enter the Garden, that is, the Garden of My nearness, both immediately ['ajilan] and later on [ajilan]."

Woe unto you! You must not agree with your lower selves [nufus] when they get into arguments with your Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). Your enemies are your own lower selves, as He has made clear to you. Whenever you satisfy their appetites, gratify them, and let them grow fat, they eventually devour you. They turn into savage beasts of prey. You must deny them access to their pleasures and desires. Give them no more than their proper due, meaning the bare minimum which they cannot do without, such as a crumb to stave off hunger and a rag to cover the private parts ['awra]. Even this should only be given on the condition of obedience to Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). You must say to your lower self: "I shall not give you your proper due [haqq] until you obey Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He), by keeping the fast, performing the ritual prayers, and carrying out all the other acts of

worshipful obedience [ta'at] that Allah has commanded you to perform." You must subject it to watchful supervision. Then, if you keep this up, the evil part of it will die, and only its good part will survive. Feed it on lawful food [halal], for then it will lose its vital spark. You should never feel that you can trust it, however, because hypocrisy [nifaq] is its normal habit and its favorite pastime. It will perform the prayers, keep the fast, and put up with all kinds of hardship, until it hears its praises on the lips of fellow creatures, and mention of it made in places where people congregate.

[As the saying goes:] "He who has not seen a successful person [muflih] will never succeed." When the heart of the believing servant has been purified of the filth of ostentation [riya'] and hypocrisy [nifaq], two cycles of ritual prayer [rak'atan] performed by him are worth far more than a thousand cycles of prayer performed by someone whose heart has not been purified of those two vices. O hypocrite [munafiq], all your hypocrisy stems from your lower self [nafs]. You must cut your lower self off from its means of support, and turn to its Creator, for then its evil tendency will come to a stop. The lower self requires education and professional training, so that it can learn to carry your baggage and become fit for useful work. As it is now, it cannot carry a big load. You must train it while it is small, for it is not yet capable of carrying you or your baggage. There is nothing else for it. You must train it, improve it by degrees, and move it along from one stage of development to the next, until it is completely tame, so that it is capable of carrying your equipment and walking beneath your weight through the wastelands and the desert.

You are so enamoured ['ashiq] of your own lower self that you are quite incapable of resisting its demands. It leads you wherever it wishes, day in and day out. Your death may come and snatch you away at any moment, but you have no qualms about putting things off till the morrow [taswif]. You say: "Today I shall repent. Well, tomorrow I shall repent. I shall devote myself to obeying my Lord (Almighty and Glorious is He). I shall prove that I am truly sorry for my sins. I shall do this and that and the other." But while you are going on like this, in the throes of your delusion, along comes death to snatch you away. It will come upon you by surprise, so you cannot escape from it. All your debts, your sins and your acts of disobedience will be left in your debit column. Woe unto you! You are busy amassing one gold coin [dinar] on top of another gold coin, and there seems to be no end to the process of amassing them. But all of this will turn into scorpions that will sting you and snakes that will bite you. Gold and silver coins are nothing but a hoard of cares [ad-dananir wa 'd-darahim dar hamm]. This world is full of distractions [ashghal], and the hereafter is full of terrors [ahwal], while the servant [of Allah] is between the two, until it is decided where his final residence shall be-in the Garden of Paradise or in the Fire of Hell.

You must not consume anything without knowing its source and its derivation. The consumption of unlawful food [haram] results in the darkening of the heart. As long as someone is completely lacking in patience, how can he eat only lawful food [halal] ? No one is going to eat only lawful food, unless he is capable of persevering with patience in waging war on the lower self [nafs], the passions [hawa] and the Devil [Shaitan]. The patient warrior is the one who eats only lawful food.

O Allah, sustain us with lawful food, and keep us far removed from food that is unlawful. Sustain us with the blessings of Your gracious favor, Your goodness and Your nearness. Sustain our hearts, our innermost beings [asarar] and our physical bodies with those same blessings. Amin.

### ***Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth*** (Al-Ghunya li-Talibi Tariq al-Haqq) **Excerpt**

A SERIES OF INVOCATIONS, EACH OF THEM BEGINNING WITH: "IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, WHO... [BISMI'LLAHI'LLADHI...]."

Say: "In the Name of Allah, who utterly transcends any attribution of counterparts [addad]. In the Name of Allah, who is absolutely exempt from any attribution of partners or peers [andad]. In the Name of Allah, who is far removed in His Holiness from the begetting of children [awlad].

"In the Name of Allah, who causes all lights to shine [nawwara'l-anwar]. In the Name of Allah, who honors those who are righteous and fine [abrar]. In the Name of Allah, who has predetermined all destinies [aqdar], and who has enlightened human hearts and eyes [absar]. In the Name of Allah, who manifests Himself to the hearts of the righteous [abrar] in those moments just before the break of day [ashar].

"In the Name of Allah, who allows dear friends to gain knowledge of the mysteries [asarar], for He floods them with rays of light [anwar] and entrusts them with the keeping of those secrets [asarar]. From them He banishes all dangers [akhtar]. He preserves them from being enslaved by jealous rivals [aghyar], and He relieves them of all burdens,

shackles, bonds [asar] and heavy loads [awzar]. For indeed, He has been characterized from all eternity by the attributes of beneficence, abundant grace, and readiness to forgive the sins of those who seek forgiveness [ahl-istighfar]."

Say: "In the Name of Allah, the Name of the One who causes the flowing of the rivers [anhar] and the sprouting of the trees [ashjar]."

[Say: "In the Name of Allah," for that is] the Name of the One who brings prosperity to countries and towns by populating them with truly obedient folk from among His servants ['ibad]. Such people serve as mainstays [awtad], as mountain-like pillars of support, so that, for those who dwell upon it, the earth comes to be as safe and as cozy as the cradle [mihad]. They are the Forty, the pick of the spiritual deputies [abdal], the ones who never let it be forgotten that the Lord is totally exempt from any attribution of partners and peers [andad]. They are kings in this world, and they will be intercessors on behalf of humankind upon the Day of the Final Summoning [Yawm at-Tanad]. My Lord has indeed created them as a benefit to all the world, and as a gift of mercy to His servants ['ibad].

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ON SOME OF THE MANY PRECIOUS BLESSINGS CONFERRED BY "IN THE NAME OF ALLAH [BISMI'LLAH]."

"In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is a treasure for those who remember, a mighty resource for the strong, a protective talisman for the weak, a radiant light for lovers, and a joyful delight for those who are filled with yearning.

"In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is the consolation of our spiritual natures [arwah]. "In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is the salvation of our bodily forms [ashbah].

"In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is the light that illuminates our breasts [sudur].

"In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is the organizing principle that regulates our affairs [umur].

"In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is the crown of the truly confident [taj al-wathiqin]. "In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is the lamp of those who reach their destination [siraj al-wasilin]. "In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is that which satisfies the needs of ardent lovers [mughni'l-'ashiqin].

"In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is the Name of the One who honors certain servants and humiliates certain servants ['ibad].

"In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is the Name of the One who keeps the Fire of Hell in store for His enemies as an ambush [mirsad], and who keeps the Beatific Vision in store for His friends as a promised rendezvous [mi'ad].

"In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is the Name of the Single One without number [Wahid bi-la 'adad]. "In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is the Name of the One who endures forever without end [al-Baqi bi-la 'amad]. "In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is the Name of the One who stands firm without supporting props [Qa'im bi-la 'amad].

"In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is the invocation that serves as an introduction [iftitah] to every Sura [of the Qur'an].

It is the Name of the One who brings good cheer to those who practice solitary retreats [khalawat]. It is the Name of the One who brings a sense of completeness to those who perform the ritual prayers [salawat].

It is the Name of the One who inspires us to improve our minds by thinking better thoughts [Dunun]. It is the Name of the One for whose sake we spend the night with sleepless eyes ['uyun]. It is the Name of the One who has only to say to something, "Be!" and there it is [yakun].

It is the Name of the One who is far beyond description in terms of physical touch [misas]. It is the Name of the One who can dispense entirely with human beings [unas]. It is the Name of the One who rises majestically above all comparison [qiyas].

Say: "In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" letter by letter [harfan harfa], for then you will receive the recompense in

multiples of a thousand [alfan alfa], and the burdens of sin will be scooped away from you by the shovelful [jarfan jarfa].

If someone says it with his tongue, that person will witness all that is offered by this world [dunya]. If someone says it with his heart, that person will witness all that is offered by the world hereafter [uqba]. And if someone says it with his innermost being, that person will actually witness the Master [Mawla].

"In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is a phrase that brings a pleasant sensation to the mouth [fam]. "In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is a phrase with which no feeling of unhappiness [ghamm] can coexist.

It is a phrase that brings about the perfection of good fortune [ni'ma]. It is a phrase that brings about the abolition of misfortune [niqma]. It is a phrase that accounts for the special privileges enjoyed by this [the Islamic] Community [Umma].

To utter the whole phrase, "In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate [Bismi'llahi'r-Rahmani'r-Rahim]," is to pronounce a simultaneous invocation of Divine Majesty [Jalal] and Divine Beauty [Jamal], for "In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]" is an invocation of Divine Majesty within an expression of majesty [Jalal fi jalal], while "the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate [ar-Rahmani'r-Rahim]" is an invocation of Divine Beauty within an expression of beauty [Jamal fi jamal].

Those who witness His Majesty are likely to lose their wits [tasha]; whereas those who witness His Beauty are sure to prosper [asha]. The whole phrase represents a simultaneous invocation of Divine Power [Qudra] and Divine Mercy [Rahma], whereby the Divine Power adds together all the acts of obedience performed by the obedient [muti'in], while the Divine Mercy erases all the sins committed by the sinners [mudhnibin].

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CONCERNING THE PROGRESSIVE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT THAT STEM FROM THE INVOCATION: "IN THE NAME OF ALLAH [BISMI'LLAH]."

Say: "In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]," for [when you pronounce these words of His] it is as if He is saying: "With My help, a person arrives at the stage where he is capable of performing meaningful acts of worshipful obedience. Then, by the light of those acts of worshipful obedience, he moves on until he reaches the stage of direct witnessing [i'yan], at which point he is able to dispense with secondhand explanation [bayan]. His heart has now become a vessel worthy of containing both the esoteric mysteries and the exoteric branches of religious knowledge [ulum al-adyan].

"When someone attains to the Loving Friend [Habib], he is safely delivered from woe and lamentation [nahib]. When someone attains to unfiltered vision [nazar], he has no further use for hearsay information [khabar]. When someone attains to the Everlasting Lord [as-Samad], he is safely delivered from grief and sorrow [kamad]. When someone attains to close companionship [rifaq], he is safely delivered from lonely separation [firaq]. When someone attains to noble dignity [majd], he ceases to be affected by emotional upheaval [wajd]. And when someone attains to the Ultimate Meeting [Liqa'], he is rendered immune to painful suffering [shaqa']."

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SOME FURTHER INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ARABIC LETTERS AND WORDS THAT OCCUR IN: "BISMI'LLAHI'R-RAHMANI'R-RAHIM [IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE ALL-MERCIFUL, THE ALL-COMPASSIONATE]."

Say: "Bismi'llah [In the Name of Allah]." According to one interpretation the letter ba' stands for Bari' al-baraya [the Maker of all creatures], while the letter sin stands for Sattar al-khataya [the Veiler of faults], and the letter mim stands for al-Mannan bi'l-'ataya [the Bestower of gifts].

There are some who maintain that the letter ba' stands for Bari' min al-awlad [the One who is Exempt from begetting children], while the letter sin stands for Sami ' al-aswat [the Hearer of the voices (that appeal to Him)], and the letter mim stands for Mujib ad-da'awat [the One who responds to prayers of supplication].

According to another interpretation, the significance of these three letters [in reverse order] is expressed by the

following commands of the Lord: "Offer food to your fellow creatures, for I am the One who provides you with food [Mut 'imukum]. Offer them water to drink, for I am the One who quenches your thirst [Saqikum]. Pay attention to Me, for I am your Eternal Lord [Baqikum]."

Still others maintain that the letter ba' stands for buka' at-ta'ibin [the weeping of those who repent], while the letter sin stands for sujud al-'abidin [the act of prostration made by worshippers (in their ritual prayer)], and the letter mim stands for ma'dhirat al-mudhnibin [the pardoning of sinners].

Turning from letter-by-letter to word-by-word interpretations, we find that some have explained the nuances of meaning as follows:

Allah is the Remover of trials and tribulations [Allahu Kashif al-balaya]. The All-Merciful is the Giver of gifts [ar-Rahmanu Mu'ti'l-'ataya]. The All-Compassionate is the Forgiver of faults [ar-Rahimu Ghafir al-khataya].

"Allah" is for those who know by intuition [Allahu li'l-'arifin]. "The All-Merciful" is for devout worshippers [ar-Rahmanu li'l-'abidin]. The All-Compassionate" is for sinners [ar-Rahimu li'l-mudhnibin].

Allah is the One who created you all, and He is the Most Excellent of Creators [Ahsan al-Khaliqin]. The All-Merciful [ar-Rahman] is the One who provides for you all, and He is the Best of Providers [Khair ar-Raziqin]. The All-Compassionate [ar-Rahim] is the One who is ready to forgive you all, and He is the Best of Forgivers [Khair al-Ghafirin].

We also encounter this alternative explanation:

He is "Allah" from the standpoint of the actual process of bestowing lavish blessings [Allahu bi-isbagh an-ni'am], and He is "the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate" with regard to the qualities of magnanimity and generosity [ar-Rahman ar-Rahim bi'l-jud wa'l-karam]. He is "Allah" by virtue of the fact that He brings us forth from our mothers' wombs [butun]. He is "the All-Merciful [ar-Rahman]" by virtue of the fact that He brings us forth from our graves [qubur]. He is "the All-Compassionate [ar-Rahim]" by virtue of the fact that He brings us forth from the depths of darkness into the light [nur].

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CONCERNING SOME PARTICULAR BENEFITS OBTAINED BY THOSE WHO INVOKE THE DIVINE MERCY BY SAYING:  
"IN THE NAME OF ALLAH [BISMI'LLAH]."

Allah will surely bestow His mercy upon those who refuse to follow Satan [Shaitan], who turn away from sinful disobedience [isyan], who take good care to avoid the Fires of Hell [niran], who make it their regular practice to perform works of charity [ihsan], and who constantly remember the All-Merciful [ar-Rahman], for they never fail to invoke His Mercy by saying: "In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]."

Allah will surely bestow His Mercy upon those who take refuge with Allah, who turn in repentance to Allah, who put their absolute trust in Allah, and who actively practice the remembrance of Allah, for they never fail to invoke His Mercy by saying: "In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]."

Allah will surely bestow His Mercy upon those who abstain from this world [dunya], who long for the hereafter, who endure with patience when they must suffer pain [adha], who give thanks for blessed well-being [na'ma'], and who actively practice the remembrance of the Master [Mawla], for they never fail to invoke His Mercy by saying: "In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]."

Congratulations to any servant [of Allah] who is steering well clear of the Tempter [Taghut], who is expecting nothing more from this world than his basic nourishment [qut], and who is actively practicing the remembrance of the Living One who never dies [al-Hayy alladhi la yamut], for that servant is surely saying right now:

"In the Name of Allah [Bismi'llah]."

***Fifteen Letters*** (Khamsata 'Ashara Maktuban, otherwise known as Maktubat)

**Excerpt**

## Prologue

In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate  
(and invoking the help that only He can provide!)

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of All the Worlds, and may Allah bless our chief, Muhammad, as well as his family and his companions, each and every one.

Let me now explain the nature of the present work: These are fifteen letters, written by the Imam, the spiritual pole-star of Lordly attributes [al-qutb ar-rabbani], the expert teacher [ustadh], the immortal spiritual helper [al-ghawth as-samadani], the bounteous gift of merciful grace [al-faid ar-rahmani], my chieftain and my master, Shaikh Muhyi'd-din 'Abd al-Qadir al-Hasani al-Jilani. May Allah sanctify his innermost being, and may He enable us to derive benefit from him, from his blessed qualities, and from the blessings of his vast range of knowledge. Amin.

Originally written in the Persian language, these letters comprise nuggets of wisdom and spiritual counsel, couched in various forms of allegory, metaphor, paraphrase and quotation, including approximately two hundred and seventy-five Qur'anic verses. They also contain allusions to the experiences [adhwaq] and spiritual states [halat] of the Sufis (may Allah's good pleasure be conferred upon them all).

An interesting idea presented itself to this poor beggar, 'Ali ibn Husamu'd-din, widely known as al-Muttaqi [the Devout]. It occurred to me that I might produce an Arabic version, and that I could at least translate the substantial meaning of the text, while admitting that I am poorly qualified in the art of expression, especially when it comes to translating from the rich fare provided by the leader of the experts in effective communication [asham imam ahl al-ishara]. Here is the translation I now have to offer:

### The Thirteenth Letter

Concerning the significance of the Qur'anic verse [aya] :

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. (24:35)  
[Allahu nuru 's-samawati wa 'l-ard] 22

-with reference to certain other verses [ayat].

Dear brother!

When the brilliant rays of the lights of :

Allah is the Light of the heavens Allahu  
and the earth. (24:35) nuru 's-samawati wa 'l-ard.

-start shining on the niche [mishkat] of our consciences, the glass of the heart will be so affected by them that it sparkles with the light of :

The lamp is in a glass. al-misbahu fi zujaja :  
The glass is as it were az-zujajatu ka-anna-ha  
a shining star. (24:35) kawkabun durriyyun

The lightning flashes of the discoveries of :

[This lamp is] kindled from yuqadu min shajaratin  
a blessed tree, [an olive]... (24:35) mubarakatin [zaitunatin]

-will gleam forth from the canopies of the clouds of :

neither of the East la sharqiyyatin

nor of the West... (24:35) wa la gharbiyyatin

-and kindle the lamps of the concept of :

...whose oil would almost glow forth yakadu zaitu-ha yudi'u  
[(of itself) though no fire [wa law lam  
touched it]. (24:35) tamsas-hu nar].

The skies of our innermost beings will then be adorned, in their entirety, with the stars of the wisdom of :

And by the stars wa bi'n-najmi  
they are guided. (16:16) hum yahtadun.

-and with the planets of the embellishment of :

We have adorned inna  
the lowest heaven with zayyanna 's-sama'a 'd-dunya  
the adornment of the planets. (37:6) bi-zinatini 'l-kawakib.

The moons of present awareness will rise from the horizons of

Light upon light. (24:35) nurun 'ala nur :

-and ascend to the constellations of the lofty elevation of :

And for the moon We have appointed wa 'l-qamara qaddarna-hu  
mansions. (36:39) manazila.

-so that the nights of the heedlessness of :

By the night when it is wa 'l-laili  
enshrouding. (92:1) idha yaghsha

-acquire the quality of :

And the day when it is wa 'n-nahari  
resplendent. (92:2) idha tajalla

The fragrant perfumes of remembrance [dhikr] will emanate from the blessed grace of :

Those who seek forgiveness al-mustaghfirina  
in the watches of the night. (3:17) bi'l-ashar.

The nightingales [balabil] of the trees of :

They used to sleep only a little kanu qalilan mina 'l-laili  
during the night. (51:17) ma yahja'un.

-will sing their melodious songs of sorrow and grief, until the dawn of the good fortune of :

Allah guides to His light yahdi 'llahu  
whomever He will. (24:35) li-nuri-hi man yasha' :

-makes its appearance, and the suns of the insights of intuitive knowledge [shumus al-ma'arif] begin their ascension  
from the point of :

He whom Allah guides, he is indeed man yahdi 'llahu  
the one who is guided aright. (7:178) fa-huwa 'l-muhtadi.

Into plain view will then emerge the mysteries of :

It is not for the sun to overtake la 'sh-shamsu  
the moon, yanbaghi la-ha  
nor does the night outstrip the day. an yudrika 'l-qamara wa la 'l-lailu  
They are floating sabiqu 'n-nahar :  
each in a separate orbit. (36:40) wa kullun fi falakin yasbahun.

-and disclosed from the shapes of concealment will be the subtle enigmas of the secrets of:

And Allah speaks to mankind wa yadribu 'llahu 'l-amthala  
in allegories, for li'n-nas :  
Allah is Knower of all things. (24:35) wa 'llahu bi-kulli shai'in 'Alim.

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The Fourteenth Letter

Concerning the perfection of intuitive knowledge [ma'rifa], the perfection of religion [din], and the fruits of thereof.

My dear friend!

When the sun of the sky of intuitive knowledge [ma'rifa] has reached the constellations of the perfection of :

Today I have perfected al-yawma akmaltu  
your religion for you. (5:3) la-kum dina-kum

-and the sun of loving affection [yuh al-mahabba] has ascended to the point of complete surveillance over the  
highway systems of :

And I have completed wa atmamtu  
My blessing upon you. (5:3) 'alai-kum ni'mati.

-the brilliant rays of the lights of :

And I have approved Islam wa raditu  
for you as religion. (5:3) la-kumu 'l-islama dina.

-will shine forth, and the eye of certainty ['ain al-yaqin] will witness the explicit proofs of the implications of :

Is he whose breast Allah has expanded a-fa-man sharaha 'llahu  
to receive Islam, so that he is guided sadra-hu li'l-islami  
by a light from his Lord...? (39:22) fa-huwa 'ala nurin min Rabbi-h.

-in the sublime demonstration of :

The truth has come to you la-qad ja'a-ka 'l-haqqu  
from your Lord. (10:94) min Rabbi-ka

It will discover the hidden treasures of the secrets of :

And unto Allah belong the treasures wa li'llahi khaza'inu 's-samawati  
of the heavens and of the earth. (63:7) wa 'l-ardi.

-and survey the subtle details of the real meanings [daqa'iq haqa'iq] of :

And in the earth there are signs wa fi 'l-ardi ayatun

for those who have sure faith, li'l-muqinin :  
as well as in your own selves. wa fi anfusi-kum  
What, do you not see? (51:20,21) a-fa-la tubsirun.

-and become privy to the enigmatic indications of :

So whichever way you turn, fa-aina-ma tuwallu  
there is the Face of Allah. (2:115) fa-thamma wajhu 'llah.

The winds of the copious bounty of :

And We send the winds wa arsalna 'r-riyaha  
fertilizing. (15:22) lawaqiha.

-will blow, and so will the winds of the gracious favor of :

We visit with Our mercy whom nusibu bi-rahmati-na  
We will, and We leave not to waste the man nasha'u wa la nudi'u  
reward of those who do good. (12:56) ajra 'l-muhsinin.

-from the direction of :

Allah is Ever-Gentle Allahu Latifun  
to His servants. (42:19) bi-'ibadi-hi

-in the orchards of :

We do not leave to waste the reward inna la nudi'u  
of one who does good works. (18:30) ajra man ahsana 'amala.

The trees of the gardens of :

Surely Allah is with those who are inna 'llaha ma'a 'lladhina 'ttaqaw  
careful of their duty to Him, and those wa 'lladhina  
who are doers of good. (16:128) hum muhsinun.

-will put forth the leaves direct perception [shuhud], and they will bear the fruits of manifestation [tajalli] to the  
utmost limit of perfection.

The fountains of the attainment of :

Such is the bounty of Allah; dhalika fadlu 'llahi  
He bestows it on whom He will. (62:4) yu'ti-hi man yasha'.

-will flow from the heights of the mountains of

Allah is the Lord wa 'llahu  
of infinite bounty. (62:4) Dhu 'l-fadli 'l-'aDim.

-into the river bed of the valleys of the heart.

Then the mysterious voice of the Unseen [hatif al-ghaib] will use the tongues of creatures to let it be known that :

As for those who believe and do inna 'lladhina amanu  
righteous deeds, the All-Merciful wa 'amilu 's-salihati sa-yaj'alu  
will surely assign them love. (19:96) la-humu 'r-Rahmanu wudda.

The herald of good fortune will pronounce the good tidings of :

O My servants, for you there is no fear ya 'ibadi la khawfun  
this Day, and you are not the ones 'alai-kumu 'l-yawma  
who will be feeling sad. (43:68) wa la antum tazanun.

-and Ridwan [the custodian of the Garden of Paradise] will come to meet them from the abodes of :

A fair land, baldatun tayyibatun  
and an All-Forgiving Lord. (34:15) wa Rabbun Ghafur.

-and he will say :

And therein you shall have all wa la-kum fi-ha  
that you yourselves desire, and therein ma tashtahi anfasu-kum  
you shall have all that you call for, wa la-kum fi-ha  
as an offering of hospitality ma tadda'un :  
from One who is All-Forgiving, nuzulan min  
All-Compassionate. (41:31,32) Ghafurin Rahim.

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