

# AL-ĞUNAYD AL-BAĞDĀDĪ AND THE SIGNS OF THE PATH TO ALLĀH

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Mysticism is a universal spiritual urge dating back to the early history of humanity. It indicates a certain type of spirituality, gnosis and practice and diver gently emerges in different cultures of the world. al-Ğunayd al-Bağdādī, who lived in the beginning of the third century after Hiğra, is one of the greatest mystics of Islam. He is commonly known among *sūfis* as the "leader of the community of mystics" (*sayyid al-tā'ifa*). In his view, mysticism (*taṣawwuf*) consists of following divine rituals and observations without any compromise. It is a path to Allāh through which disciples (*ṣālik*) travel under the guidance of a master (*muršid*). This path is exclusively for the lovers of God and for the ones who like to purify themselves by submission to His will. Progress in the path is through stations (*maqāmāt*) the first of which is repenting from sins while last is the acquisition of a special knowledge about the unity of God (*tawhīd*). This paper will explore all the stations al-Ğunayd explained such as asceticism, poverty, patience, contentment and reliance on Allāh. The core of all stations, for al-Ğunayd, is a ceaseless awareness about all-encompassing divine presence (*murākaba*). al-Ğunayd's mystic views met a notable acceptance in the lower and higher ranks of Muslim community and survived until today among Muslim mystics. This, I will argue, because he grounded his path on the Qur'an and the Sunna while also emphasising that the highest station for a human is to be a perfect servant of God, which is in accordance with the common Islamic theology.

Islamic mysticism, which is commonly known as *taṣawwuf*, is usually traced back to a well-known saying of the Prophet Muḥammad where he stated that the most perfect state in religion (*al-iḥṣān*) is attained by worshipping God as if you see Him, even if you do not seem He sees you<sup>1</sup>. Yet, it is easily observable that mysticism, in the broadest sense of the word, is used to refer to a particular attitude towards life and to the question of knowledge, which exists in all the major cultures of the world. Mysticism is, therefore, a universal phenomenon that transcends beyond the boundaries of particular national and religious cultures and civilisations. It thus constitutes its own nation with a distinguished concept of civilisation and religion. Mysticism is, then, a spiritual urge which exists where man is. Its core is abstention from mundane pleasures, and its final destination is the Heavens. It is the source of all goodness, blessing and illumination. From this perspective, *taṣawwuf* is the name for the intellectual and spiritual endeavour some Muslims undertake with the purpose of knowing God through experience and getting close to Him through pious deeds. The *sūfis*, who were sincerely loyal to their religion and civilisation, followed within

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* II, 426, IV, 129, 164; al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ: İmān* 37; Tafsīr sūra 31; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ: İmān* 1; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan: Sunna* 16; at-Tirmidī, *Sunan: İmān* 5; Ibn Māğa, *Sunan: Muqaddima* 9. See for further explanation: Muslim *Ṣaḥīḥ* I, 157-158.

Islam a particular way to reach to Allāh and formulated, in accordance with it, an ideal way of life. This paper analyses the teachings of al-Ġunayd who was one of those righteous ascetics who strictly observed the rules of religion and thus reached the highest spiritual states and levels. A *sūfī* according to al-Ġunayd is a migrant to Allāh and to his Prophet Muḥammad who was the most knowledgeable about Allāh and the most strict in the worship to him<sup>2</sup>. The focus of the paper is on the views of al-Ġunayd on this spiritually elevating journey which involves going through several stations called *ahwāl* and levels called *maqamāt*.

### al-Ġunayd al-Baġdādī

al-Ġunayd lived in the third century of Islam (d. 279/909) during which *taṣawwuf* began to reach its maturity. This was observable in the life style, intellectual and esthetic products. In this age, the principles for the study of *taṣawwuf* had also been developed whereby most of them endeavoured to develop a spiritual philosophy, occasionally resembling to the puritan (*salafī*) religious attitude. al-Ġunayd also contributed to this process. His views on cleansing the heart had been distinguished from others with their clarity<sup>3</sup>. Eventually, he gained the title "leader of the community" (*sayyid at-tā'ifa*), that is the leader of the *sūfīs*<sup>4</sup>.

His full name is Abū l-Qāsim al-Ġunayd ibn Muḥammad. He is considered one of the most leading figures in the field of *taṣawwuf* who set the signs in the path to God in an understandable way. Many ascetics benefited from him. His family came from Nihāwand but he was born and educated in Iraq. His father was Abū Yabi az-Zaġġāġ. For this reason, he was called *qawwārīrī*, the glass seller. He was a jurist in the school of Abū Tawr, who was the friend of aš-Šāfi'ī. al-Ġunayd began issuing religious verdicts (*fatwa*) at the age of twenty in the presence of his teacher. His opinions were regarded by respect. He died in 297/909 in Baghdad. His grave still

<sup>2</sup> The Prophet is reported to have said: "It is I who is the most respectful to Allāh and the most knowledgeable about Him". In another narration: "By God! I know Allāh most and I am the most fearing of Him". See: al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ: Imān* 13; *Fitṣām* 5.

<sup>3</sup> The following report sheds light on this issue: Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥarīrī narrated that he heard al-Ġunayd saying: "We have not acquired *taṣawwuf* from hear-say but from hunger, thirst, abstention from worldly pleasures, quitting the habits and comfort, for *taṣawwuf* is the purity of relationship with Allāh, and its core is staying away from mundane goals. The companion of the Prophet Haritha stated this as follows: "I kept my soul away from worldly pleasures until its gold and stone looked the same for me. I stayed up praying during the nights and remained thirsty [i.e. I fasted] during the day time". See: as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt* 158; al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* I, 106; al-Ḥatīb al-Baġdādī, *Tarīḥ* VII, 246; al-Isfahānī, *Ḥilya* X, 277-278; Abū Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 128; Ġa'far n.d.:397.

<sup>4</sup> as-Subkī said about him: "The leader of the Community [of *sūfīs*], the forerunner of the Congregation [of *sūfīs*], master (*imām*) of the People of *ḥirka* (humble *sūfī* dress), guide of the *sūfī* path, the flag of the saints in his time and the champion of the gnostics". as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 26.

draws visitors<sup>5</sup>. al-Ğunayd is considered one of the leaders, *imām*, both in the external (*zāhir*) and internal (*bātin*) sciences. His knowledge<sup>6</sup> was a consequence of his sincerity in his relationship with God and his abstention from using the human free will against the Divine will<sup>7</sup>.

The path (*tariq*) according to the People of True Knowledge (*ahl al-haqīqa*) consists of observing the rituals and respecting the rules through the best conduct by staying away from permissible acts (al-Ğurġānī, *Ta'rifāt* 61). The *tasawwuf* in Islam has two levels: Path (*tariqa*) and Truth (*haqīqa*). The former is called the science of conduct while the latter is called the science of exploration. In other words, they are called vocation (*sulūk*) and gnosis (*ma'rifa*). *Tariqa*, as al-Ğurġānī defines, is a special vocation for the seekers specialising in how to go through the spiritual states and levels.

Spiritual progress, according to the Prophet Muhammad, requires the greatest of all struggles. On the way back from a battle, he is reported to have said that: "now we are going from the smaller struggle to the greatest struggle". It is interpreted that he meant the struggle against the passions and mundane desires. The Qur'ān also states that "Those who struggle for Our cause, surely We will show them our paths. Allāh is with the those who try to attain perfection in their conduct" (Q. 29.69). al-Ğunayd also followed the same tradition. According to al-Ğunayd, the ideal path to Allāh never allows a person to abandon observing religious rules and regulations because one, regardless his spiritual level, is always a servant of Allāh. Abū 'Abdallāh as-Sulamī narrated from Abū Bakr who related from Abū Muhammad al-Ğarīrī who said: "I heard al-Ğunayd while he was talking to a man who mentioned from gnosis (*ma'rifa*) and said that the people who reach to this level are allowed not to perform five daily prayers and other acts of worship for Allāh. al-Ğunayd said to him: This is the opinion of a group who advocate that the obligation to worship ends for some people. Yet for me continuing the worship is the best way. Those who commit adultery and steal other's property are in a better spiritual state than those who advocate such a view. The Gnostics (*al-ʿarifūn bi-llāh*) took the forms of worship from Allāh and they always refer to him on this issue. If I live for a thousand years, I would never decrease the worship I am performing now unless it becomes

<sup>5</sup> See: as-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt* 155-163; al-Isfahānī, *Hilya* X, 255-287; al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* I, 105-108; al-Ḥaṭīb al-Bagdādī, *Tārīḥ* VII, 241-249; Ibn Ğawzī, *Sifa* II, 416-424; Ibn Hallikān, *Wafayāt* I, 373-375; as-Subkī, *Tabaqāt* II, 260-275; as-Šaʿrānī, *Tabaqāt* I, 72-74; Abū Yaʿlā, *Tabaqāt* I, 127-129; Ateş 1993.

<sup>6</sup> The manuscripts of al-Ğunayd's writings had been found [Süleymaniye Library, Sehîd Ali Pasa 1374] and translated to English. See: Abdel-Kader 1962. For a discussion of al-Ğunayd's works, see: Ğaʿfar 1980:303-309; Ateş 1970; Corbin 1977:212; Ateş 1993.

<sup>7</sup> al-Ğunayd said: "*Tasawwuf* is giving up exercise of the free will. If you see *tasawwuf* with, at the same time, a claim for the exercise of free will, be sure that it done for others, but not for God". See: Ğaʿfar n.d.:414.

impossible for me. This strengthens my knowledge and state" (as-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt* 158-159; al-Isfahānī, *Hilya* X, 278; al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* I, 106).

There is the Path (*ṭarīqa*) to Allāh, the seeker (*sālik*) who enters the path and the Guide (*mursīd*) leads the seeker through the pitfalls and passages of the way. The Prophet Muḥammad is seen as the first Guide after he learn the true faith<sup>8</sup>. He is the one who opened the way to perfection in worship to Allāh while he retreated to the cave of Hirā' where he completely dedicated himself to supplication, prayer, worship and contemplation. One enters the Path through an act of allegiance to the Guide following the example of the Prophet who also made act of allegiance by those who accepted Islam for the first time. For instance, it is well-known that ten people gave him allegiance in the early days of Islamic history under a tree which is known as the Allegiance of the Blessed (*bay'at ar-riḍwān*)<sup>9</sup>. The beginner in the path is called *Murīd* who after passing the elementary stages becomes *sālik*. Those who complete the progress are called *al-mursīd al-mubaqqiq*.

The *sūfi* is on constant migration towards his Lord. His acts are entirely intended to please Allāh, not even to gain Paradise nor to save himself from Hellfire. The spiritual migration is then either a migration to Allāh which is in the heart and soul, whose principle is the strong will, constant awareness and sincerity, or it is a migration to the Prophet whose pillar is the submission to the law of God which is conveyed by his Messenger and to the example of the Prophet in all the acts, speeches and relations. al-Ġunayd used to say: "The path to God is entirely closed to the creation except for those who follow the footsteps of the Prophet, peace and greetings be upon him, in the field of law and customs, and strictly adhered his path. Then the gate of all good things become open for him" (as-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt* 159). He was asked about the interpretation of the following verses from the Qur'ān: "We will read it for you, then you do not forget" (Q. 78/6). al-Ġunayd said, "We will read" that is the Qur'ān with recitation. "You do not forget", that is to say do not forget to practice it. The address is for the general people although it was initially addressed to the Prophet<sup>10</sup>.

### Signs of the Path

This path to Allāh is peculiar to the friends of Allāh (*awliyā' Allāh*), and to those who love him because of the purity of their souls in their relationship with Allāh. It is the journey of the seekers to Allāh as they go through states and levels. It consists of the beginning and the end of the path as well as the stages in between. The beginning is repenting (*tawba*) while the end is Allāh, his knowledge and faith

<sup>8</sup> See al-Buḥārī *Sahīh: Imān* 13, and *Ftiṣām* 5.

<sup>9</sup> See an-Nağğār n.d.:245-253.

<sup>10</sup> See al-Manūfī 1967:I, 144; II, 149.

about his oneness. As to the stages they are states (*ḥāl*) and levels (*maqām*). Repenting is the first level. The *sūfīs* explained its prerequisites as follows: faith (*īmān*), persistence (*tabāt*), intention (*niyya*), truthfulness (*sidq*) and sincerity (*ihlās*). Thereafter, the levels follow each other with the states in between them.

Given the rule that the paths to Allāh is equal to the number of the children of Adam, as the *sūfīs* say, then the number of the states and levels vary from one *sūfī* to the other because their experiences and potentials also vary. Some said there are seven levels while others said there are nine or ten levels. Some others increased it even to hundred. All these indicate the variance in the *sūfī* experience and show the absence of a single paradigm or a binding principle. But the sole principle almost all the *sūfīs* accept is the necessity of a comrade (*rāfiq*) or a guide (*muršid*), food and preparation. The comrade is the *ṣayḥ* who earlier completed the journey in the path learned is risks and secrets. As to the food it is the *diker* or the constant remembrance of Allāh. The *ṣayḥ* and the *diker* are two pivotal principles of in the *sūfī* education. During this education, the most important phase is cleansing oneself from the attributes of common people and internalising the attributes of God. This is a consequence, on the moral level, of the *sūfī* education which is called journey (*sulūk*). The *sulūk* is completed by the perfection of sincere worship (*‘ubūdiyya*) to Allāh as the will of Allāh becomes the will of the servant. Yet the real goal is obtaining the true knowledge about Allāh, which is an aspect the *sūfī* does not speak about with others in public.

It is known that al-Imām al-Ğunayd spoke about *taṣawwuf* with clarity that both commoners and the educated groups understood his message. Both the critics and advocates of *taṣawwuf* acknowledged this superior quality of him at every age (as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt* 155; as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 260; Corbin 1977:212). Yet, at the same time, there are some highly refined remarks by al-Ğunayd that some found difficult to interpret (Ateş 1993:VIII, 121).

al-Ğunayd proclaimed his faith in *tawḥīd* and accepted that Allāh is beyond any limitation and imperfection. He refused reincarnation of God into a person. Regardless how many secrets are unveiled to a person in the path to Allāh, it is not permissible for him to claim that he passed the level of worship and God reincarnated in him (as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt* 158-159; al-İsfahānī, *Hilya* X, 278; al-Manūfī 1967:II, 151). Thus it would be a mistake to accept the claim that al-Ğunayd talked about the reincarnation of God into man. In reality, al-Ğunayd was convinced with the *ḥadīṭ qudsī* of the Prophet Muḥammad where he relayed from Allāh that “I will be his hearing with which he hears”<sup>11</sup>. He strictly remained faithful to the mainstream creed and spoke with caution which does not allow any objection against it. He uses the terms “divine gift” (*lutf*), “divine guidance” (*hidāya*), “divine endowment of

<sup>11</sup> See al-Buḥārī, *Sahīḥ:Riqaq* 38.

success" (*tawfīq*) or "divine support" (*ta'yīd*). It is impossible to find any expression in the writings of al-Ġunayd that implies reincarnation<sup>12</sup>.

al-Ġunayd derived the basic principles of the *ṣūfī* path to Allāh from the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet Muḥammad which made his teaching more appealing to the majority of the Muslims. Regarding this issue, he used to say: "Our knowledge is anchored in the Book and the Sunnah. If someone does not memorise the meaning of the Qur'ān, he must have its knowledge and a deep understanding about it. If he does not write *ḥadīth*, nor does he study Islamic law (*fiqh*), he is not qualified to be followed." He used to say: "The path to God is entirely closed to the creation except for those who follow the footsteps of the Prophet, peace and greetings be upon him, in the field of law and customs, and strictly adhered his path. Then the gate of all good things become open for him"<sup>13</sup>. Tāġ ad-Dīn as-Subkī said about him the following: "al-Ġunayd ibn Muḥammad ... the leader of the Community and the guide of the Congregation. He is the *imām* of the people of *ḥirqā*, simple *ṣūfī* dress. Master of the *ṣūfī* path. He was the highest of the saints in his time and the champion of the Gnostics" (as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 260).

### Spiritual Levels (*maqāmāt*)

al-Ġunayd explained that the path to Allāh begins with repenting sincerely (*at-tawba an-naṣūh*) which is uprooting all the sins. A man asked him: "How is the path to Allāh?" He said: "It is repenting (*tawba*) that prevents from insisting in mistakes, fearing (*hawf*) that cleans pride, hoping (*raġā*) that motivates to performing good deeds, and observing Allāh's actions in what emerges in your heart" (al-Isfahānī, *Hilya* X, 269; Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Sifa* II, 42; as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 260). He also added that: "*Tawba* is based on three principles: the first one is regret, the second one is determination to leave what is forbidden and to perform what is required, and the third one is work to pay the rights of others" (al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* I, 258-259). The one who repents and unties the rob of insistence in the mistakes keeps moving forward in the ladder of *taṣawwuf* and levels of mystic knowledge until he reaches to a level whereby he forgets all the sins which kept him away from reaching Allāh. Thereafter, he reaches to a high state where he does not remember anything except for Allāh. This is the level of those who have the true knowledge, *al-muḥaqqiqūn*.

The seeker continues in the path to Allāh not only by making all his material gains legal (*ḥalāl*) but at the same time by staying away from speeches Allāh is not

<sup>12</sup> Cf. as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt* 158-159; al-Isfahānī, *Hilya* X, 255-287; al-Munāwī, *Kawākib* I, 214; Ġa'far 1980:232, 305; Zaehner 1961:150.

<sup>13</sup> See: as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt* 159; as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 274; al-Manūfī 1967:II, 149.

pleased with. This principle is probably derived from the following hadith: "Keep your tongue from errors!"<sup>14</sup>.

Thus he reaches to the level of asceticism (*zuhd*) the core of which, according to al-Ġunayd, is cleansing the heart from mundane passions until the servant never forgets Allāh. Once al-Ġunayd was asked about asceticism, he responded: "It is cleansing the hands from belongings and cleansing the heart from desires". When he was asked about mundane desires (*dunyā*), he said: "What is it? It is what approaches the heart and keeps it away from Allāh" (as-Sarrāġ, *Luma'* 72; al-Manūfī 1967:II, 151).

The level of asceticism overlaps with the next level, satisfaction (*qanā'ā*), which is feeling satisfied with what is available without desiring what is far away. This way, the heart becomes ready to receive the wisdom from Allāh as it becomes empty from everything else<sup>15</sup>.

The level of poverty (*faqr*) is the principle of those who aim getting close to Allāh through worship in seclusion. Poverty may have visible signs that distinguish its different types from each other. They are the real poor before Allāh externally and internally. The level of poverty is what distinguished the Prophet Muḥammad from other prophets. Once al-Ġunayd said while he was talking about *taṣawwuf*: "*Taṣawwuf* is built upon eight principles. Each principle is borrowed from a Prophet, peace and greetings be upon them. Generosity (*ṣabā'*) is from Ibrāhīm. Contentment (*riḍā*) is from Ishāq. Patience (*ṣabr*) is from Ayyūb. Pointing (*iṣāra*) is from Zakariyyā. Seclusion is from Yaḥyā. Wearing wool is from Mūsā. Travelling is from 'Īsā. Poverty (*faqr*) is from Muḥammad, peace and greetings be upon him" (aṣ-Ṣa'rānī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 73). The truthfulness in poverty leads the poor to stay away from asking from people due to a complete reliance to what is in the presence of Allāh instead of what is in the hands of people. This also leads to staying away from debate and argumentation about religion. He does not argue with anyone. If someone wants to draw him in an argumentation he keeps silent.

The level of patience (*ṣabr*) indicates enduring the difficulties that come from Allāh. Allāh sends them to sincere believers who mix good deeds with mistakes as punishment for their sins, to the truthful believers as a cleansing from their sins, and to the Prophets for a reason no one knows save Him. The core of the path to Allāh is faith in Allāh the Most High. A believer is required to continue his journey with patience yet the journey sometimes requires higher qualities other than patience which are possessed only by a few people. Regarding this, al-Ġunayd said: "The

<sup>14</sup> at-Tirmidī, *Sunan*: *Zuhd* 60; See also: al-Iṣfahānī, *Hilya* X, 269; al-Quṣayri, *Risala* I, 284.

<sup>15</sup> Once a man brought al-Ġunayd five hundred dinar and said to him: "Distribute this money to your community". al-Ġunayd asked him: "Do you have money other than that?" The man said: "Yes". al-Ġunayd asked: "Do you want more than what you have?" The man said: "Yes". al-Ġunayd said to him: "Take your money back, because you need it more than we do. The need for money is taken away from us". See: aṣ-Ṣa'rānī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 72-73.

journey from this world to the next is easy on the believers. Separation of people from Allāh is very difficult to endure. Travelling from ego to Allāh is hard and highly difficult. Patience with Allāh is even harder" (al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* I, 397-398; as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 264-265).

Contentment (*ridā*), in al-Ġunayd's view, is a level which does not contain any element of free choice. It requires complete submission to the eternal will of Allāh. The elimination of free will, in this context, does not mean that the servant becomes "predetermined" (*mağbūr*) in his wilful actions. Contentment means gladly accepting what Allāh chooses for one as a trial. The servant does not have any control on these trials anyway. Contentment, correctly understood, indicates a high level in the knowledge of Allāh. al-Ġunayd says on this issue: "The contentment (*ridā*) is the second level of gnosis. Whoever shows ceaseless contentment his knowledge about Allāh reflects the truth"<sup>16</sup>.

The last level according to al-Ġunayd is "reliance on Allāh" (*tawakkul*). It means trusting Allāh about the sustenance of all living creatures as Allāh states in the Qur'ān: "There is no moving creature on the earth whose sustenance is not taken care of by Allāh" (Q. 11.6). When al-Ġunayd was asked about the meaning of *tawakkul*, he said, "reliance of heart to Allāh" (as-Sarrāğ, *Luma'* 79). For him, reliance on Allāh is not simply saying it verbally but it is a state of consciousness that covers one's complete existence and puts his hearts trust in Allāh. al-Ġunayd, therefore, said about the level of *tawakkul*: "*Tawakkul* was a piece of knowledge, but now it became a reality" (al-Isfahānī, *Hilya* X, 267). Yet some people find it difficult how to combine the faith about reliance on Allāh for everyone's living, and working to meet the requirements of life. Likewise, Islam encourages at once both believing in Allāh's support and working for a living. Speaking from an Islamic perspective, there is no conflict between the two teachings. al-Ġunayd set a concrete example on this issue by his way of live: His father was selling glass and he was selling construction materials. While he was working in his shop, his daily custom was to make three hundred *rak'a* voluntary *ṣalāt* with a thousand *tasbīḥa*, praise for Allāh<sup>17</sup>.

This is how al-Ġunayd interpreted the spiritual levels. For him, the path to Allāh required one go through levels. Each level consisted of various type of sincere worship by the saints and selected servants of God.

<sup>16</sup> See as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt* 162.

<sup>17</sup> They asked al-Ġunayd: "Should we look for our living?" He said: "If you know where it is, look for it". They said: "Should we ask from Allāh?" He said: "If you know that He forgot you, then remind Him". They said: "We stay home and rely on Allāh?" He said: "The experience is doubt." They said: "What is the solution?" He said: "Living up the search for solutions." See al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* I, 376; Ibn Tağrī Birdī, *Nuğūm* III, 168-169; as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 264.

### The Essences of the States (*ahwāl*)

The state (*ḥāl*) in the terminology of the *sūfīs*, is a meaning that comes to heart, without an effort on the part of the person, such as sorrow, sadness, anxiety or joy. These states are replaced by other states, which may be similar or not, as other qualities of soul become manifest. If a state continues and becomes a property, then, it is called a level (*maqām*). The states are gifts from Allāh while the levels are earned by people. The states spring from the fountain of divine generosity yet the levels emerge out of efforts spent to gain them (al-Ġurġānī, *Ta'rifāt* 36). The level is not other than some religious rules concerning the etiquette. The *sūfī* applies them with no compromise. He spends his outmost effort to bring about a living image to the real world. But the states are the outcomes of these levels on the spiritual level such as the feeling of "passion", "anxiety" and "joy". The one who belongs to a level resides in his level yet the one who is on a state moves forward from that state. Occasionally, a state serves as an indication of the arrival to a new level but sometimes it is an indication of the level one is at. The state is called state because of its changing nature while the level is called level because of its durability<sup>18</sup>. al-Ġunayd presents us an interpretation of the states that constitute along with the levels the essence of *taṣawwuf*.

The state of observing Allāh's actions (*murāqaba*) is the highest state of understanding true faith in the oneness of Allāh. It involves thinking that the universe received its initial existence as well its continuity from Allāh the Most High. According to al-Ġunayd, the more the servant gets closer to Allāh, Allāh also further approaches towards him<sup>19</sup>.

As to the love for Allāh (*mahabba*), it is the losing sight of himself on the part of the servant because he is preoccupied with the love of Allāh as he is in constant remembrance of him. He pays his rights and submits his heart and life entirely to him which makes his consciousness completely immersed in the remembrance and love of Allāh. Occasionally, the excess in love leads the lovers to a kind of drunkenness and to say words that are hard to interpret from an orthodox and rational perspective. Yet al-Ġunayd was for accepting the excuse of the true lover while at the same time he put the rule that the lovers must always hold Allāh beyond any imperfection. He said, "the passion is excessive inclination without union"<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> See about *maqām* and *ḥāl*: al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* I, 191-195; cf. al-Manūfī 1967:I, 191; and 1969:97-102.

<sup>19</sup> See as-Sarrāġ, *Lumā'* 85.

<sup>20</sup> The issue of love was raised in Mecca during the period of Pilgrimage where by the *ṣayḥs* expressed their views. al-Ġunayd was the youngest among them. Finally his turn came. They said to him: "O the Iraqi! Tell us what you have!" He bowed his head while tears came from his eyes and said: [A lover] is a servant who gives up himself, continuously connected to the remembrance of Allāh, vigilant to observe

Fear (*hawf*) from Allāh is another state. It indicates that the consciousness of the seeker is controlled by a fear of punishment from Allāh for his mistakes at any time. Thus he does not become arrogant with his good deeds because fear of punishment takes pride away<sup>21</sup>.

Hope (*raġā'*) from Allāh is also another state which motivates the servant to do more good deeds out of expectation from the mercy and forgiveness of Allāh (as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 264).

The passion towards Allāh (*šawq*) is according to al-Ġunayd another spiritual state which urges the seeker to union when he faces an obstacle in the path to Allāh. al-Ġunayd used to control himself while he is at this state with the purpose of not to speak anything that may cause misunderstanding for the general public out of respect to Allāh the Most High<sup>22</sup>.

Intimacy (*uns*) is also another state which manifest itself in the soul out of joy by observing the greatness of Allāh. When al-Ġunayd was asked about it, he said: "Increase of owe with the existence of respect"<sup>23</sup>.

As to witnessing through the heart (*mušāhada*), it is a kind of knowledge about the secrets of the invisible world, or more precisely, it is the knowledge about the invisible. Those who reach to this level are given the name of *mulhamūn*, receivers of news. There are stories from the time of the Prophet about such people. For instance, it is narrated that the third Rightly Guided Caliph 'Umar, cried Sariya, the commander of Muslim armies in Iraq, from the pulpit during his Friday sermon: "O Sariya! The mountain! The mountain!"<sup>24</sup>.

As to the certainty (*yaqīn*), it is, according to al-Ġunayd, accepting the creed with not doubt in the heart, which can happen by cleansing the heart which bring one to the level of opening (*kašf*) and receiving knowledge directly (*ilhām*). This type of certainty is not an outcome of studying the evidences as in the case of Theology. al-Ġunayd said: "certainty is the clearance of doubts". Once he was passing by people

the nights of Allāh, looking towards Him with his heart, when he speaks it is from Allāh, when he moves it is with the order of Allāh, when he rests he is with Allāh. He is with Allāh (*bi-llāh*), for Allāh (*li-llāh*) and with Allāh (*ma'a-llāh*)." The *šayḫs* cried and said: "There is nothing to add on that. May Allāh protect you o the crown of the gnostics." See al-Qušayrī, *Risāla* II, 617, 623.

<sup>21</sup> See: al-Qušayrī, *Risāla* I, 310; as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 264.

<sup>22</sup> See: al-Qušayrī, *Risāla* II, 630; as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt* II, 272; al-Manūfi 1967:I, 216.

<sup>23</sup> See as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt* 161; as-Sarrāġ, *Luma'* 97.

<sup>24</sup> For this reason, the *sūfis* have never claimed that they reached the level of Prophets by their *mušāhadāt*, witnessing through the heart, which is an outcome of abstention, asceticism and worship. A man asked him: "Are not the speeches of the Prophets are signs from *mušāhadāt*?" The *sūfi* smiled and said: "The speech of the Prophets are based on divine revelation and the speech of the saints are signs from the *mušāhadāt* which descend through inspirations (*ilhāmāt*) in the heart." See as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt* 162; al-Manūfi 1967:II, 151.

who immersed themselves in finding rational evidences to prove that Allāh is away from imperfection, he said: "Trying to disprove the existence of a shame where there is no shame is a shame"<sup>25</sup>. Certainty leads to *kašf* (opening) which was denied by those who did not experience it (Haġġaġ 1978:24).

These are the spiritual states, according to al-Ġunayd, in the path to Allāh. It is path to follow for those who want to make journey to Allāh. The *ṣūfī* must strictly observe the rules of the path regardless to his level and state. One saw al-Ġunayd in his dream. He was carrying a rosary (*tasbeḥ*) in his hand. The person who saw the dream asked him: You reached a high level, why do you still carry a rosary? He responded: "This is the means with which I reached high levels. I do not leave it." He always encouraged his students to worship which required them to spend a great effort in the struggle against ego and mundane desires. Therefore he was always saying: "When you oppose your ego's desire, its poison becomes a medicine for you"<sup>26</sup>.

### Education and Moral Growth in Practical Life

Despite all these constructive teachings by al-Ġunayd, he was subject to trials as he had to face a plot against him by Ġulām Ḥalīl. The result was execution of seventy *ṣūfīs* and the imprisonment of al-Ġunayd. Ġulām Ḥalīl was known as someone who fabricated hadith. He was jealous of al-Ġunayd as more and more people were attracted to his teachings. Yet he was not considered a reliable scholar<sup>27</sup>. This shows that the plot against al-Ġunayd was due to a slander by Ġulām Ḥalīl against al-Ġunayd who came to be known as the leader of the Community<sup>28</sup>.

At the end, I would like to include a story which give an idea about how al-Ġunayd educated his disciples and the methods he used to make them grow in morality. This story will also illustrate the way *ṣūfī* way of live is implemented in the practical life.

aš-Šiblī was a pupil of the famous theosophist al-Ġunayd al-Bagdādī. On a conversion, he asked al-Ġunayd: "They tell me that you possess the pearl of divine knowledge: either give it to me or sell it". al-Ġunayd answered: "I cannot sell it, for you have not the price thereof; and if I give it to you, you will have gained it

<sup>25</sup> He also said: "Certain knowledge (*yaqīn*) is the stability of knowledge in the heart in a way that does not change, nor does it gets transformed or modified." See al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* I, 392; as-Subkī, *Tabaqāt* II, 270; as-Sarrāġ, *Lumā* 103.

<sup>26</sup> See al-Ḥatīb al-Bagdādī, *Tārīḥ* VII, 246; Afifi 1963:113-114.

<sup>27</sup> About the views of scholars on al-Ġunayd, see al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* I, 73; al-Ḥatīb al-Bagdādī, *Tārīḥ* VII, 241-243; as-Subkī, *Tabaqāt* II, 260-263.

<sup>28</sup> See as-Sulamī, *Tabaqāt* 155; as-Subkī, *Tabaqāt* II, 260; Corbin 1977:212.

cheaply. You do not know its value. Cast yourself headlong, like me, into this ocean, in order that you may win the pearl by waiting patiently”.

aš-Šibli asked what he must do. “Go,” said al-Ġunayd, “and sell sulphur”. At the end of a year he said to aš-Šibli: “This trading makes you well known. Become a dervish and occupy yourself solely with begging”. During a whole year aš-Šibli wandered through the streets of Baghdad, begging of the passers-by, but no one heeded him. Then he returned to al-Ġunayd, who exclaimed: “See now! You are nothing in people’s eyes. Never set your mind on them or take any account of them at all. For some time you were a chamberlain and acted as governor of a province. Go to that country and ask pardon of all those whom you have wronged”.

aš-Šibli obeyed and spent four years in going from door to door, until he had obtained an acquittance from every person except one, whom he failed to trace. On his return, al-Ġunayd said to him: “You still have some regard to reputation. Go and be a beggar for one year more”.

Every day aš-Šibli used to bring the alms that were given to him to al-Ġunayd, who bestowed them on the poor and kept aš-Šibli without food until the next morning. After a year had passed this way, al-Ġunayd accepted him as one of his disciples on condition that he should perform the duties of a servant to the others.

After a year’s service, al-Ġunayd asked him: “What do you think of yourself now?”. aš-Šibli replied: “I deem myself the meanest of God’s creatures”. “Now,” said the master, “your faith is firm”<sup>29</sup>.

In sum, the path to Allāh, according to al-Ġunayd requires strictly obeying its rules through struggle against ego. al-Ġunayd called to the implementation of *sūfi* principles in the practical life as he advocated that everyone, regardless to the spiritual level he reached, is obliged to carry on his moral and religious duties.

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