



SERVICE – THE SUFI EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE

Whatever knowledge one receives on the path to Allah is incomplete and useless if it is not brought from the arena of inner knowledge to the outer field of action. Allah’s wish is to develop mature human beings, well integrated in the spiritual and material worlds. This is why the Sufi’s learning is in the world, and where the fruit of his spiritual attainments is meant to be put to use. Otherwise, his position is as if he had joined an intellectual club — rich in concepts, short on action, and absolutely void of any spiritual advancement. It behooves the Sufi to make service to Allah in the world his or her priority.

ON SERVICE

by Hz. Abdul Qadir Geylani

There is *zakat* (alms; poor-due) in *sharia* (Islamic canonical law) and there is *zakat* in *tariqa* (the Sufi path). According to the laws of *sharia*, a certain percentage of your worldly income is given to the needy

As for *zakat* in *tariqa*, it is given from the earnings for *akhira* (the hereafter) and is distributed to the poor and needy of *akhira*. *Zakat* at the same time means *sadaqa* (charity). Allah the Most High has revealed this: “Charity is the right of the poor.” (Qur’an 9:60)

The charity given touches the hand of Allah The Most High even before it reaches the poor. What is meant by this is that it is accepted by Allah The Most High.

Now then, these great personalities donate the reward of their good deeds to Allah’s rebellious servants. Allah The Most High, on the other hand, manifests His forgiving attribute in proportion to their acts of *salat* (formal Islamic prayer), *hajj* (pilgrimage), *tasbeih* (personal Sufi practice of *zikr* [remembrance of Allah]) and *tahlil* (declaration of unity). He covers their evil self [egotism, vanity and such].



Their generosity goes to such extremes that no existence belonging to them remains. They will have [expect] no reward or [admit to any] good deed. The person who enters into this path will have no existence of his own remaining. He lives a *hal* (state of being; situation; status) of bankruptcy (*mufliis*). Allah The Most High is generous. He loves the generous. He loves the one who is bankrupted through generosity. Our Prophet, peace be upon him, explained this as: “The *mufliis* is in the trust of Allah in both worlds.”

Here let us mention a *dua* (prayer of supplication) recited by Rabia Adawiya. She used to supplicate thus:

“O Allah, give my worldly share to the unbelievers. If I have any share in the hereafter, distribute it among Your *mu’min* (believing) servants. I only wish to make *zikr* of You in the world, and only to see You in the hereafter.”

Because the servant and whatever he is holding in his hand is temporary, they all together belong to the Master. On Judgment Day, every good deed will bring a tenfold reward. Allah The Most High reveals this as: “Whoever brings a good deed will get a tenfold reward for it.” (6:160)

Another meaning of *zakat* is the cleansing of *nafs* (egoistic or animalistic nature). When the *nafs* is cleared of selfish, egotistical attributes, *zakat* finds its spiritual value. A little worldly possession given in this world brings a manifold reward in the hereafter. This generous *ayat* (verse of the Qur’an) relays such a meaning: “Who would give Allah a handsome loan so that He may give him a manifold reward?” (57:11) “Whoever purifies his *nafs* finds salvation.” (Shams 91:9)

The loan mentioned in the above generous *ayat* means the distribution of part of your worldly gains among some servants of Allah The Most High for the sake of goodness. In this distribution, only Allah The Most High’s beautiful countenance should be kept in mind and material gains should not be sought. Any goodness done or given for Allah The Most High’s servants must be given with compassion; it must not be done to make them indebted to you. Allah The Most High revealed this to us as: “Do not render your charity null with reproach and abuse [to the one who receives it].” (2:264)

Human beings should not request the benefits of worldly things for their good deeds. Another name for this is “*infaq*” (to spend one’s substance in alms or other good works; supporting others). The following generous *ayat* tells us why and how this is given: “Unless you spend of that which you love, you will not be able to attain piety.” (3:92)

– from *Secret of Secrets*, translated by Shaykh Taner Ansari in *Grand Masters of Sufism*

ON SERVICE

by Hz. Ahmed er Rifai

Try to serve people as much as you can. Be merciful to the feeble elders. Feel sorry for the state of the poor when you are rich and give them much *sadaqa* (alms; charity). With *sadaqa*, *balas* (calamities; misfortunes; trials) are dismissed by Allah. Show hospitality to the guest, because our Prophet, peace be upon him, has accepted this as *ibada* (worship)

*Husn-i akhlaq* (good behavior) is the best of deeds. It is said, “If you cannot make people happy with material things, make them happy with good *akhlaq* (manners, habits). The best of good deeds is good *akhlaq*.”

The people who have good *akhlaq* can attain the same level as people who worship and fast, without doing anything else. Good *akhlaq* is the best *ibada* after [next to] Allah’s *fardz* (compulsory) *ibada*.

If you do *ibada* in an irritable state, what good will it serve? Allah is not in need of anyone or anything. He is *Al Ghani* (The Self-Sustaining One). At the door of servitude, what befits the servant is to wait at the door selflessly. When you are appealing to the Presence of Allah, you must be humble, in a state of fear and awe, admitting your powerlessness and poverty. If you go to the door of Allah, putting your deeds and your *nafs* (egoistic self; man’s animal nature) aside, with utmost humility, then maybe you will be accepted.

– from *Guidance to Mysticism*, translated by Shaykh Taner Ansari in *Grand Masters of Sufism*



Practices Overview



Rabita



Adab



Surrender



Zikr



Sohbet



Contemplation



Service

