

# AL-GHAZĀLI ABSTINENCE IN ISLAM

Kasr al Shahwatayn  
(Curbing the Two Appetites)

FROM

Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn  
(Revivification of the Sciences of Religion)

Translation and Notes by  
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## PREFACE

For pious Muslims of the Sufi persuasion, abstinence is a necessary virtue for the conduct of spiritual exercises leading to union with God. They preached against all that which distracted from concentration on the worship of God. They looked upon excessive eating and copulation as the major media of distraction, a sort of ailment to be shunned and if too entrenched, a weakness to be overcome by rigorous exercises. Marriage was recommended only as a last resort for those whose sexual urges were too strong to contain. The Sufi perception tended to contradict the official Muslim conviction that marriage was necessary for the propagation of race and faith and accounted for much of the date that centered on the subject historically.

In *Kasr al-Shahwatayn* (Curbing the Two Appetites) we have a classical Islamic position on how to combat the urge to indulge food and sex. The author of this work, Abu Hāmid al-Ghazālī (1058-1111), is generally regarded as the leading theologian and synthesizer of Sunni and Sufi perceptions of Islam. He is credited with enshrining the Ash'arite system in the main body of Islamic theology as the sole unchallenged creed of Islam. Professor Hitti refers to him as the "father of the church in Islam" and the final authority for Sunni, or Islamic orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup> In his religious experience first as an orthodox theologian then as a mystic, author and traveller, al-Ghazālī came to embody all that Islam itself experienced in its multiple spiritual

1. Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (New York: St. Martin's Press), p. 431.

phases, ranging from the formal doctrinal to the experiential and mystical.

His transformation<sup>2</sup> from a mainliner to a skeptic took place while he headed the famous Nizāmīyah school of theology in Baghdad, designed by its Selcuk founder to serve the educational training needs of the four main rites of Islam (Hanafite, Shāfi'ite, Malikite and Hanbalite). It was after a ten-year period of self-imposed seclusion and meditation in his native Khorasan that he undertook to pen his masterly work, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, the cornerstone of orthodox Islamic theology until today. By incorporating into it the views and experiences of the mystics, he added a dimension that made complete the prevailing experiences of Islam in its two dimensional approach to the worship of God.

Al-Ghazālī's *Kasr al-Shahwatayn* constitutes Book Three of Volume III of his *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Revivification of the Sciences of Religion). The *Ihyā'* consists of forty "books" uneven in length, varying from between thirty eight and fifty one pages in the edited version of the Arabic by 'Irāqī. The *Ihyā'* treats al-Ghazālī's whole system of thought and is the main reason for his unique position among both the ulema and mystics of Islam. Each of the four volumes comprises ten "books" and embraces the following categories: Cultural Practices (I), Social Customs (II), Instruments of Destruction (III), and Means of Salvation (IV).

The contents of volume 3, grouped under headings which the author calls "books", treat in broad terms ten specific categories which in his estimation lead the indulgent to destruction or *halak*, whence the title Muhlikāt (Media of Destruction). These books are: "Explaining the Wonders of the Heart" (1), "Training the Self, Rectifying Morals, and Treating Ailments of the Heart" (2), "Curbing the Two Appetites" (3), "Evils of the Tongue" (4), "Criticizing

2. For more on his transformation, see *infra*, pp. 23-24.

Anger, Hatred and Envy" (5), "Criticizing the (material World)" (6), "Criticizing Greed and Love of Possessions" (7), "Criticizing Fame and Pretension" (8), "Criticizing Grandeur and Pride" (9), and "Criticizing Vanities" (10).

In *Kasr al-Shahwatayn*, the book herein translated and commented on, al-Ghazālī defines what he considers the evils engendered by the cravings of the stomach and the genitals and how they can be overcome. In his arguments throughout he presents the perspective of the Sufi, since it is they who had to undertake the arduous journey that led to *fanā'* or passing away from the conscious self to a sort of union with the imperceptible reality (*al-Haqq*) which could be achieved by them only through an experiential awareness of God's presence within themselves. The process of dissociating themselves from the tangible world around them and escaping the temptations and distractions thereof necessarily influenced their attitude towards men and women alike, particularly to the extent they might be diverted from their mystical journey to God. For them the role model is that of their fellow Sufis who had attained gnosis (*ma'rifah*).

The forty books of the *Ihyā'* have been studied by Arab, English, French, and German scholars. A number of them have been also translated into one European language or another: sixteen in English, six in French, three in German and one in Russian according to currently known bibliographical data. There is what appears to be an incomplete, and not so accurate a translation of this work without any form of annotation and wherein the translator takes the liberty to make honorific and other modifying insertions at will (see Annex). We have besides these translations numerous articles in languages other than Arabic reflecting on one aspect or another of this monumental work of the eleventh century.

The basis for the present translation is the Azhar University edition, one of the earliest and most reliable yet not without problems since there is little punctuation,

few titles, fewer subtitles, lengthy and complicated sentences, and no annotations. Koranic references have been documented in the translation with recourse either to Pikhthall's translation, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, or A. Yusuf 'Ali's *The Holy Qur'ān*. Some of the shorter quotations were retranslated. Where sentences appear ambiguous in the main body of the text, comments and qualifying expressions are inserted to assist the reader in comprehending it. In certain passages some restructuring of the text in English is introduced for the sake of clarity and the avoidance of awkward literal translations. The main concern in such circumstances is with conveying the intended meaning rather than with adhering to the letter if it might confuse the reader.

Al-Ghazālī does not identify all his sources of reference, giving often only partial and incomplete names. He assumes the reader is familiar with them, which is understandable since he wrote for his contemporaries as well as for those fully conversant with the Sufi personalities on whom he relied often for justification of points being made. The process of identification becomes understandably difficult. When no annotation appears for such persons, it is not because of oversight but rather because of the absence of accurate and corroborative evidence. Where the reference is clearly discernible in the context of the material discussed, the data is enlarged from recognized sources.

There is no precise citation of *hadīth* sources. Where scholars of Islamic tradition are in agreement, we had recourse to one or more of the recognized six compilations and they are included in the bibliography. Al-Ghazālī, however, relies often on much less verified *hadīth*, some of which have been relayed on weak or relatively unreliable authority. It seems that he was more interested in the didactic message, used often in the *Iḥyā'* to support a contention, than in what purists of later years might perceive as precision. Apparently he was willing to risk the judgement of posterity and criticism for incorporating traditions that could not be verified.

The Cairo (Tijārīyah) edition of the *Iḥyā'*, and the one

with which we compared the earlier Azhar edition, attempts to cite sources for the little known or recognized *hadīth*, but again with no documented reference to such sources. Since some of the texts cited do not exist in published form, these are conveyed strictly on the authority of the editor.

The problem of sorting out *hadīth* and putting it in perspective is not our immediate concern. Scholars who have studied, analyzed and commented on *hadīth* literature have done so in separate competent works. Our concern is with providing annotation from the known and reliable sources of reference on which scholars tend to depend for corroborative evidence. We were not able to do so in a number of instances. For example, 'Irāqī cites such works by al-Bayhaqī as "Kitāb al-Zuhd" and "Shu'ub al-Imān"; Tirmidhi's "Hadīth al-Miqdām"; Abu Manṣūr al-Daylami's "Musnad al-Firdaws"; ibn abi 'l-Dunya's "Makāyid al-Shayṭān"; Abu Mūsa al-Madyani's "Istihlā' al-Mawt", and al-Ṭabarānī's "al-Mu'jam al-Awsat", as well as other sources which can not be located, even when reference is made to Fuat Sezgin's *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* (9 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1967-84).

Added titles and subtitles designed to facilitate the reader's comprehension are placed in brackets. Sentences are simplified in the translation and often rendered into shorter form in the interest of furthering the reader's understanding of the intended meaning. Whenever a literal translation yielded an awkward equivalent in English, an expression was used to simplify it. Dates are cited in accordance with the Islamic calendar first followed by equivalents in the Christian. The Library of Congress method of alphabeticizing Arabic names is used in the Bibliography, as is its system of transliteration: an apostrophe ( ' ) represents the glottal stop (*hamzah*), the inverted comma ( ' ) is used for the voiced pharyngeal fricative ( 'ayn), and "al-" for the definite article "the." Also used is the popular spelling of "Koran" rather than the more representative equivalent "Qur'ān."

Technical terms like, "Shari'ah", "hadīth", " 'ālim",

“sunna”, “sūra”, and “fiqh” are used in their common spelling and are italicized.

In translating *Kasr al-Shahwatayn* we relied primarily on the Azhar edition of the *Ihyā'* and only secondarily (where clarification was intended) on the Tijāriyah (Cairo, n.d.) reprint. In comparing the two texts it was obvious that the editor, 'Irāqi, had introduced modifications in the wording of the Azhar edition. These were taken into consideration whenever lucidity was a factor.

References to *hadīth* sources derive from this printing and are so acknowledged in the notes. Since the major compilations of verified *hadīth* are well known, when attribution occurs, it is to the compiler and his compilation's title only. Citations adopted from the Tijāriyah printing, particularly to inaccessible sources, are listed where they occur under “Ghazālī”.

I wish to express my gratitude to my wife, Professor Irmgard Farah, for her assistance in the preparation of the manuscript.

This was to have been a collaborative work with my sister, Madelain, who died shortly after drafting part of the introduction. I have completed the work and publish it in her memory.

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January, 1991

## INTRODUCTION

The subject of sexuality is no less sensitive to discuss in the twentieth than it was in the eleventh century. Not all societies, however, view sexual intimacy in the same light. Discussion thereof can range from one extreme to another as pertains to openness, value judgements, and promiscuity due to the injunctions of religion and conditioned social perceptions of sex and its role. Taboos existed for Muslims as it did for Christians. The subject of sexual intimacy is rarely discussed in Islam since it is held to impinge upon personal privacy. Consequently, very few authors have had the courage to write about this delicate subject before Abu Hāmid al-Ghazālī launched a full and uninhibited discussion of its role in family, society, and faith. He is one of those few brave souls who, assisted by his towering prestige in the world of Islam as an unequalled scholar of religious values, could undertake with some ease to delineate the role of sexuality in the life of the Muslim, especially for the pious, without incurring the wrath or reprobation of his contemporaries in the orthodox Islamic community.

In his two works, “Etiquette of Marriage”<sup>1</sup> and “Curbing the two Appetites,” the second part of which deals with carnal lust, al-Ghazālī had the courage to discuss openly such a delicate subject without inhibition. His approach to it, and to other sensitive topics generally in his voluminous writings, stresses the Aristotelian principle of

1. Arabic: *Kitāb Adab al-Nikāh*, being the twelfth book of the *Ihyā'*. Translation and edition Madelain Farah (*Marriage and Sexuality in Islam*). Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984.

the Golden Mean in enjoining against over indulgence whether in sex or in food intake on both moral and health grounds. These fascinating works and supportive arguments are not anchored in society's mercurial and wavering values but in the firmer and more permanent standards established by religious ethics, particularly those enshrined in the Koran and the fundamental law of Islam, the *Shari'ah*.

In the last two decades we seem to have acquired a substantial wealth of knowledge on how to process, analyze, and comprehend economic and political trends but much less, by comparison, on how to understand and assess cultural and social change. We appear to be part of a transitional period characterized by values, attitudes, and lifestyles in a constant state of flux and gradual change, in stark contrast to the rapid pace of change brought about by the electronic revolution and the technological advances of great scientific breakthroughs resulting therefrom in this same time frame. Social changes reflect an attempt to cope with and adapt to the powerful impact of industrialization and urbanization on mankind's values and religiosity.

Social and cultural values of the West have penetrated the Islamic world at a rapid pace in recent years because of a vastly expanding network of communications abetted by the electronic media. Muslims have become familiar with a concept of education which the West deems necessary for other peoples of the world who entertain notions of either attempting to catch up or simply become part of progress considered modern and relevant for achieving a life of ease. To the traditionalists such values gnaw at the fiber of Islamic institutions, not the least of which is that of marriage. The full range of social and psychological effects are still to be assessed. What is clear, however, is that Muslim revivalists everywhere are strongly resisting such an intrusion to the extent that it might tamper with time-honored traditions, besides having negative social and psychological effects upon the individual and his society.

Not until the increase of Western influence and the rise of the feminist movements during the last two decades did pressure build up for a better understanding of sexuality in men and women within the matrix of Islam. Muslim authors have responded, albeit somewhat hesitantly, to the challenge by addressing the social and cultural issues, as well as changes associated with human sexuality. Their response, however, is somewhat reserved and cautious in that the subjects they treat are those that have been discussed since early Islam: rights of women and men, divorce, dowry, choosing a mate, and the like.

These are also the same topics that al-Ghazali dealt with in the eleventh century. None treated directly the question of human sexuality outside the context of religious injunctions. On the other hand, few modern authors explain the biological functions of the body and fewer still resort to illustrative devices. For reference they rely often on English and French sources. There are nevertheless some isolated studies on fertility among Muslim women, birth control and population growth. While, on the other hand, one finds much apologetic literature discussing what is held to be the true status and role of the Muslim woman in family and society.

This type of literature is on the increase because of a felt need among Muslims to counter stereotypical views and fantasies about Arab women propagated by Hollywood and its patented notions of the harem and veiling among Muslims and by a hostile press and electronic media depicting Arab and Islamic societies as backward and repressive of women.

Feminist movements in the West during the last decade have begun to impact women in the Muslim world, their thinking and their perception of what their role should be in the modern world without reference to traditional constraints in Islamic societies. One might delineate, consequently, three broad categories of feminists since the movement began to evolve in the late nineteenth century, centered principally in the Syrian and Egyptian regions.



The first movement was led by Christian (and some Muslim) women who were prepared guardedly to avail themselves of modern ways to improve the quality of family life and the social milieu nurturing it. The second, largely Muslim, consisted of those who would honor the traditional functional roles defined for them by the Islamic *Sharī'ah* but with better safeguards. And thirdly, those who under impetu generated by direct exposure to trendy Western values and social norms of behavior would integrate such experience into their own pattern of behavior.

The first group were the pioneers of Arab and Islamic feminism. They sought the betterment of women's lot in order to enable them better to carry out their family and social responsibilities in a society gradually being impacted through indirect contacts (largely journalistic literature) by Western perceptions of emancipation and freedom. They were not afraid to speak out, nor to institute separate periodical publications of their own to express their views on what their role ought to be.

In addition to these pioneering modernizers, we had also a more restrained Islamic feminist movement that called attention to the Muslim woman's role traditionally as the upholder of family virtues; also to the role of Muslim women as educators, on whom Islam of the Koran anchored the family and made women the the cornerstone thereof. Recognition did not imply partaking of roles traditionally associated with men. While their rights were better defined and protected in the Islamic than in the pre-Islamic era, the notion of "equal treatment" did not come into play as modernists would have it.

The Koran defined woman's role and status, her rights and duties and enjoined modesty in public display. The Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) became the role model for a Muslim aspiring to a life style pleasing to God, as the women of his household provided examples for Muslim women to emulate. His treatment of women in his family reflected much of what became the traditional standard of care and respect for Muslim women folk generally. They were separate but equal in the sight of God. They were

respected and cared for. Yet they had their role and the male members had their role in one and the same society. Together they constituted the twin pillars that upheld family and community and accounted for the coherence and strength of Islamic society when it upheld the teachings of the Koran and of the Prophet. Muslim traditionalists saw no discrimination in this equation.

In focusing on what they construed as the non egalitarianism of Islamic laws, Western critics tended to cite often the laws of inheritance as proof positive of the unequal relationship. They also tended to ignore the economic criterion there for, namely that the male was the chief provider, not only for his immediate family, but for all the women folk in his care—unmarried sisters, mothers, grandmothers, divorcees, widows, aunts, etc... It stood to reason that he would be allocated a larger share of the inheritance in order to care for and provide sustenance of such an assortment of charges. Woman who were married were the wards of their husbands; those unmarried, remained dependent for sustenance on the leading male or family head.

Feminism in the late twentieth century generated confusion, uncertainty and doubt concerning the role of women in the Islamic world, by no means uniform and not subject to detailed discussion in this exposé. Suffice it to say, as young Muslim women flocked to Western centers of education, it was inevitable that they would either develop a certain rapport with their Western counterparts and share in their values and outlooks or be repulsed by the latter's free wheeling attitude, openness and indulging the carnal and material pleasures of life. Which course they chose to pursue tended to depend on the backgrounds they brought with them. Those trained in strict Muslim milieus might have shared with some pleasure the freedom of movement and expression denied them at home but were not prepared to burn their bras, kick up their heels, bare their physical charms and go for it.

The other type, coming largely from upper middle class urban elites and already at home in Western dress and

modes of behavior found little difficulty in blending right in with their indulgent counter parts. This is the element which argued most vociferously that with the triumph of Islam, the women of Arabia lost much of the equality they shared with men in the good old pagan days without particular reference to the harsh and hostile environment in which the ancients labored for survival. Islam was seen as having restricted the freedoms they enjoyed in pagan days by enshrining what they came to regard as male dominance and chauvenism.

It is this third category of feminists who seek to compete with males today on equal grounds and in every department of social life, even in military service—a phenomenon appealing apparently even to their conservative counterparts, namely the women of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Libya. While the “liberated” move with ease in their modern milieus, their conservative sisters prefer to observe in public the rules of modesty enjoined by a stricter interpretation of the Islamic *Shari'ah* as symbolized in the wearing of the chadur. In their own milieus they expect to participate in all areas of the professions and usually do. Many of those who do not wish to raise families are successful in pursuing professional careers, particularly in education and medicine.

Women in societies dominated by fundamentalist Wahhābi ideologies, like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, are perhaps the most restrained and encumbered. While they may have their own banks and social organizations, they are confined only to certain professions—education, medical, social services and the less strenuous undertakings. They are the most dissatisfied with their lot and frequently avail themselves of the opportunity to escape their confining milieus for the less restraining and more liberal surroundings of Western capitals like Paris, London, Geneva and Vienna, where they can interact, albeit for a short while, on equal terms with their European counterparts.

To understand this dichotomy in social aspirations and behavior of Muslim women, one must have recourse to the fundamental laws of Islam governing deportment in Islam

for females. Behavior in Islam is governed by the *Shari'ah*, a code of law undefined in the same context as we understand, for example, the constitution of the United States, yet a living and growing organism. It is the result of a continuous process of unfoldment over a period of fourteen centuries and yet flexible enough to allow for adjustment in interpretation. Since every utterance and act of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is regarded by Muslims everywhere as divinely inspired and guided, the socio-religious implication thereof is one of permanence and finality. He becomes the exemplar for all Muslims whose conduct and mode of personal behavior are to be emulated.

Prior to the rise of the Sufi orders after the twelfth century, devoted mystics stressed asceticism and detachment from the world around them. Their perception of women as a force for distraction governed their attitude towards them. They did not regard them as inferior when they insisted on a life apart but rather that they should be less visible to avoid temptation, particularly for those who were commencing the arduous task of denial, abject humility and withdrawal. If women are perceived by the extremists among them as agents of temptation, this is not to attribute malicious intent to them, but rather to highlight the inherent weakness in those males who might not have been qualified, or were even ready, for the spiritual journey to God. Those who are not familiar with Sufi literature on love, excessive love, and the position of women in Sufi undertakings are understandably misled by their symbolisms and similies.

Those who would interpret the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet strictly (namely subscribers to the fundamentalist Hanbali rite) argue for permanence and finality in the interpretation and application of the *Shari'ah* thereby setting limits to notions of progress and reform. To them the law of the faith as inherited is both inviolable and immutable. There is, consequently, widespread dissatisfaction today with this authoritative socio-religious system that had been endorsed in the ninth century by the fundamentalist ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855), jurisconsult and

spiritual godfather of present day Wahhābi fundamentalists, because it ignores Islam's potential for adjustment and change without compromising its power and essential teachings.

Nevertheless, change in degree rather than in kind is a more likely trend because Muslim societies everywhere accept the authority of Islam to determine the bounds of social progress. Many have reached a level of understanding that necessitates the reconciliation of the new with the old way of life and to fuse the priceless values of the old heritage with the rich possibilities of the new freedoms. But in the final analysis, and as Muslim leaders understand well, all social reforms and advances must be carefully justified on grounds of being in harmony with the letter and spirit of the Koran. Therein lies the key, for Muslims today as it was for al-Ghazālī nine centuries ago.

#### Relevance of "Curbing the Two Appetites"

His work "Curbing the Two Appetites" is as relevant today as it was in yesteryears because it represents a synthesis of existing and acceptable views among orthodox Muslims which prevailed up to Ghazālī's own times. Like no other author or theologian, al-Ghazālī restated and summarized the Islamic views on sexuality in law and applicability from the beginning of Islam until he undertook authorship of his monumental work, *The Revivification of the Sciences of Religion*. In this landmark of Islamic religious reflections on a Muslim's status in faith and society, al-Ghazālī delineated the Islamic perceptions of marriage and sexuality, which still hold validity for the Islamic world until today. He addressed in depth and perspicacity those issues which twentieth-century authors have generally reiterated while juxtaposing Western views with their own interpretations. The question regarding lack of information could be attributed either to issues considered sensitive or to the fact that modern Muslim authors have not been able to reconcile the forces without with those within themselves, those issues that inhibit them from applying the teachings of

Islam to twentieth-century notions of sexuality and to social research dealing with changing values and mores.

In the light of these observations, one need not wonder why the principal authority today is the same al-Ghazālī of yesteryears, a towering figure, scholar and intellect, who dared to challenge the conventional thinking of his predecessors and contemporaries alike. He was, and still is, widely read and cited as an unquestioned authority on Muslim sexuality. As one authority put it in his assessment of al-Ghazālī: "Islam has never outgrown him, has never fully understood him. In the renaissance of Islam which is now rising to view, his time will come, and the new life will proceed from a renewed study of his works."<sup>2</sup>

In "Curbing the Two Appetites," al-Ghazālī speaks against homosexuality as constituting a practice contrary to the decrees of the Koran and God's laws. His exposé on the lust of the genitals is designed to stress abstinence, albeit his premise is that of the Sufi (mystic) as evinced in the numerous citations from their known and revered leaders. This is understandable since prior to writing his *Ihyā'* al-Ghazālī had gone into a ten-year period of withdrawal and when he emerged he had become a confirmed Sufi. With this in mind one can see clearly the heavy stress on abstinence and moderation in food and sex as necessary preconditions for spiritual exercises and disciplining the lower self, which the Sufis regard as an obstacle to achieving unity with the Divine.

One of the major controversies that has persisted for centuries in the world of Islam revolves around the question of celibacy versus marriage, and the impact, or lack thereof, on one's religiosity and quest for the pious life pleasing to God whether within or outside the realm of the mystic. Sunni Islam enjoins marriage on Muslims while the Sufis were divided on the subject. The prevalent view among them was that marriage impedes the process of

2. Claude H. Field, *The Confessions of al-Ghazali* (Lahore: Asraf, n.d.), p. 10.

concentrating on God. The debate was still raging when al-Ghazālī undertook to bridge the gap in his *Ihyā'*.

#### The Transformation of al-Ghazālī

A brief account of the author's life will help elucidate the transformation he underwent from a pure *ālim* (a scholar of formal Islam) to a mystic. His experiences in both realms contributed materially to the task of reconciling the two perspectives on Islam, the legalistic and the experiential.

His name might have derived from his father's profession as spinner (*ghazzāl*) or from a grand uncle who distinguished himself as a scholar of Islamic learning and went by the name "al-Ghazālī." His brother Ahmad was an established and highly regarded Sufi who no doubt had a telling impact on al-Ghazālī's conversion.

Scholars refer to al-Ghazālī as an outstanding reformer, a great and original thinker who excelled both as a jurist and mystic. He was born in Tus in 450/1058 and educated at Nishapur, one of the great centers of Islamic studies in Khorasan. It was at an early age in his life that he began to reject the acceptance of religious dogma on authority (*taqlīd*), that is as handed down by former traditionists and interpreters. He was schooled by Imām al-Haramayn, Abu 'l-Ma'ālī al-Juwayni,<sup>3</sup> a brilliant theologian, with whom our author remained until he died, following which he came to Baghdad and joined in 1091 the Nizāmīyah, an institute of higher theological learning first established by the Selcuk Turks under the able administrator Nizām al-Mulk, after whom it was named. Ghazālī soon rose to headship of the institute but a few years later became skeptical concerning the certainty of cognitive knowledge (*ilm*); and when intellectual striving failed him, he sought the intuitive approach. Suffering a spiritual crisis in 1095, he left the Nizāmīyah and went to

3. Died in 1085 in Nishāpūr. He is the author of the important work *al-Irshād* (Right Guidance). Fr. translation by J.-D. Luciani, Paris, 1938.

Mecca on a pilgrimage at the end of 1097 following a brief stay in Jerusalem then retired from public service.

It was during this period of seclusion (1097-1106) that he wrote his well-known works: *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* (Jewels of the Koran), and *Kīmiyā' al-Sa'ādah* (The Alchemy of Happiness). *The Ihyā'* was actually begun in Jerusalem and finished in Damascus, before he began his long retreat and mystical contemplation from which ensued his version of St. Augustine's Confessions under the title *al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*.<sup>4</sup> After teaching for a short while at the Nizāmīyah school of Nishāpūr in 1106, he retreated once again to the contemplative life. Returning to Tus, he lived with some of his disciples and followers in a Sufi *khanqah* (monastery) until he died on December 19, 1111.

The *Ihyā'*, from which this book derives, immortalized al-Ghazālī's name and earned him the reverential title of "Imām, Hujjat al-Islām (Proof of Islām)", ranking him in importance only next to the first four rightly-guided caliphs of Islam.<sup>5</sup>

Because of a career that committed him to the perceptions of Islam as held by both *ulema* and Sufis, al-Ghazālī consciously undertook to present the points of view of both in his treatment of all issues pertaining to religion, including sex and food or abstinence therefrom. The Sufis, however, were not afraid to confront sensitive subjects avoided by the *ulema* because it had a direct bearing on their concentration on God. Due to their total commitment to the process of meditation, Sufis sincerely believed that marriage and excessive food intake would prove distracting. The meditation process in Sufism re-

4. Translated with al-Ghazālī's *Bidāyat al-Nihāyah* (beginning of the end) under the title of *Faith and Practice of al-Ghazali* by W. Montgomery Watt (London: Allen & Unwin, 1953, 1963).

5. Known as the Orthodox caliphs whose collective leadership lasted from 632 (death of the Prophet) until 661. For more, see W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 7-19 and Farah, *Marriage*, 6-7.

quired a rigorous undertaking of the concentration that was entailed in following the path to achieve union with God through intense physical and spiritual exercises.

#### The Pious Stress Celibacy

Renouncing the world was considered the proper course for those who could not otherwise concentrate on strenuous and uninterrupted spiritual exercises. Marriage was avoided by the most pious. Rābi'ah al-'Adawīyah (d. 185/801)<sup>6</sup> turned down numerous offers of marriage, including that of the extremely wealthy Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Hāshimī (d. 172/788-89),<sup>7</sup> a scion of the house of 'Abbās, owners of the caliphate at that time,<sup>8</sup> with the conviction that renunciation of the temptations of the world leads to peace while indulgence in its ways brings sorrow. She preached that the pious should curb their desires and control themselves and let not distractions or others control them. Thanking al-Hāshimī for his offer she stated that God could grant her all that he would and more and that she would not be distracted from concentrating on His worship for a single moment.<sup>9</sup>

6. Most celebrated woman mystic of Islam. Born in Baṣra, she was described by her biographer as "that woman who lost herself in union with the Divine, that one accepted by men as a second spotless Mary." One of the earliest and truest mystics, she turned down many suitors claiming that she was already wedded to God, and that her hand in marriage must be asked from Him. She died in 185/801. Margaret Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* (London: Luzac & Co., 1972) p. 10-12. A. J. Arberry, *Saints and Mystics* (Chicago: University Press, 1966), p. 39-51.

7. A merchant of Baghdad renowned for his wealth whose name was linked with Rābi'ah al-'Adawīyah in accounts dramatizing her rejection of the world and its offerings in favor of concentrating her powers of love on God alone.

8. Their caliphate lasted from 750 to 1258, from the time they wrested it from the Umayyads until their capital, Baghdad, was destroyed by the Mongols under Hulagu.

9. The principle is discussed in some detail in al-Ghazālī's 23rd book of the *Ihyā'*; for comments, see also Bercher, "Extrait" in Hesperis, 40 (1953), 313-31.

Eating only the minimum of what was required to keep the body from expiring was considered essential to disciplining the lower self and preventing it from being distracted from acts of worship. This course was universally recommended by all disciplined Sufis.<sup>10</sup>

Their enjoining against marriage was based on the conviction that whoever marries inclines toward the temporal or phenomenal world. Only by showing contempt for the world and shunning its snares and attractions can a person pursue purification of the self on the path to God. Retiring from the affairs of the world was a necessary adjunct of pursuing the mystical path and celibacy as well as reduced food intake were considered necessary by most Sufi teachers. Curbing the two appetites thus becomes a subject of special consideration for al-Ghazālī. He argued that the greatest pain afflicting man is the lust of both his stomach and genitals, citing in support of his thesis the affliction of Adam and Eve when they succumbed to temptation and ate the forbidden fruit, thus opting for the abode of humiliation and impoverishment over that of felicity. Such are deemed the results of unlawful lusts triumphing over the rewards of denial. Hunger and restraint are counseled by al-Ghazālī in keeping with the proclivity of the pious among Sufis. By denying the self its lusts, it is humbled and submits to God.

But complete denial is not what al-Ghazālī preaches, rather it is moderation that he stresses. One's needs are divided in thirds: food, drink and the self. He enjoins against indulgence to satiation and seems to dwell on the negative impact of meats on health, which he claims leads to obesity and sluggishness and, eventually, illness. Indeed, he recommends weight reduction, which is best achieved, in his line of reasoning, by reducing food intake and exercising at the same time. One thus attains the sought-after goal gradually, in steps, achieving two desiderata: health through moderate eating and a shar-

10. Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, 184.

pened awareness of what concentrating on God requires. Gradualness is the key to success in his view because one's temperament will not bear an abrupt change.

Al-Ghazālī undoubtedly would have frowned upon the myriad of dietary recommendations so widespread today with emphasis on instant slimming without regard for the risks to body and mind and the higher goals of moral and spiritual contentment. In his arguments supporting reduction of food intake, al-Ghazālī remarkably points to the ill effects on health of salt and red meats and in stressing weight reduction, it appears that he was aware of the positive effects thereof on one's health. One thus has the impression that he was eight hundred years ahead of his time, particularly when one notes that in the ninth century, as today, food contests and over indulgence were popular in the affluent cities of the Islamic empire where catering to gluttonous appetites was a sport.

Not all Muslim writers antedating al-Ghazālī endorsed the life of indulgence. Some like the noted historian cum geographer al-Mas'ūdī (d. 957) wrote on the art of cooking as lauded by poets of his day with special reference to what was then considered a healthy satisfying dish called "harīsa", which the Prophet himself spoke highly of. In description of *harīsa* Mas'ūdī writes:

Of all the foods of man the tastiest,  
When host has been oblivious of his guest  
And kid or lamb is tardy on the grill,  
Give me *harīsa*, made by woman's skill—  
For women's hands are resolute and pure,  
They have a lightness and vigour sure.  
Within one saucepan let each other greet  
Kidney and fat of tail, butter and meat;  
Then goose well-fattened, with the whitest cheese  
Deposit, following with little peas,  
Almonds and nuts, the very choicest kind,  
Which first the millstone thoroughly must grind;  
And, lastly, sprinkle salt, galingale  
From knotting which the achings fingers fail.

When with so fine a dish the lads regale  
The diners, every other dish grows pale.  
Behold it on the table, served at need  
Surmounted by a vault of bamboo reed,  
While walls support the balustraded roof  
That from auxiliar pillars rides aloof!<sup>11</sup>

The medicinal value of dieting is better sought in the writings of Avicenna (980-1037) than in the poetry of the times.

This all-purpose authority of his age stated that diet affects the body by its quality, elementary constitution, and its substance. Moreover, since many drugs originate in plants, Avicenna cautioned his audience to avoid such foods that have a high medicinal component to them. The menu which he recommended would consist of meat, preferably young sheep or goat, unadulterated wheat, a sweet dish which agrees with the person's temperament, and a pure fragrant drink. If other food types are to be preferred, the choice should be conditioned by needs of health or the curing of disease.<sup>12</sup>

In concluding our observations concerning some Muslim theories of restraint in the Middle Ages, it is interesting to note that authors like al-Ghazālī were as aware of the physiological as the spiritual benefits of what they recommended to their audiences. With this in mind let us now focus on the full text of al-Ghazālī's *Curbing the Two Appetites*.<sup>13</sup>

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11. Cited in translation from the selection, "La Docle Vita," in Arberry, *Aspects of Islamic Civilization*, 161.

12. Shah, *General Principles of Avicenna's Cannons*, 182-84.

13. Pages 79-107 in the 'Iraqi edition of the *Ihya'*. Cairo, n.d.

## ON CURBING THE TWO APPETITES

### PROLOGUE

**I**n the name of God the Compassionate and Most Merciful.

Praise (be to) Him who is alone in His majesty and grandeur; who deserves adulation, sanctification, praise and loftiness; who is just in what He establishes and what He decrees; who is generous with what He bequeaths and what he fulfills; who takes on the responsibility to safeguard His servant in all his comings and goings; who grants him more than His commitments require that his wishes might be fulfilled; for He is the one who guides him and sets him upon the straight path, and He is the one who ordains when he lives and when he dies. Should he (the servant)<sup>1</sup> become ill, it is He who cures him. Should he become weak, it is He who strengthens him. He is the one who guides him to obedience and contentment. He is the one who causes him to eat and drink; preserves him from destruction; protects him, guards him with food and drink against the agents (lit. causes) of destruction and perdition; who causes him to be satisfied with little food and to be tranquil that he might curb the ways of the devil who haunts him. In so doing he curbs the lust of the self (*al-nafs*),<sup>2</sup> which opposes him, and wards off its (the self's) evil. He worships His lord and fears Him.

1. The masculine form in Arabic is used generically to denote the human species in general.

2. Reference here is to what Sufis term the lower self, which is considered weak and susceptible to temptation and conducive to perdition.

It results from His (the Lord) granting him (the servant) that which he desires and delights him; kindles his initiatives and strengthens his motives. He tries him therewith and afflicts him in order to test how He can curb (lit. influence) his covetousness and whims (lit. preference); (and points to him) how he might safeguard His decrees and desist from what He enjoins against in order that he (the servant) might resume<sup>3</sup> his obedience to God and cease his acts of defiance.

May prayer be upon His enlightened servant Muhammad (pbuh), His illuminating messenger, and may such prayer draw him (the Prophet) ever nearer to God and to (good) fortune, raise his station,<sup>4</sup> and lift him to ever loftier heights.

Know ye that the greatest pain afflicting man is the lust of the stomach. It is on account of it that Adam (pbuh)<sup>5</sup> and Eve were ejected from the abode of tranquility (the garden of Eden) to the abode of humiliation and impoverishment (this world). The fruit of the tree (apple) had been proscribed to them but they allowed their covetousness to overwhelm them, so they ate of it and the evil thereof became clear to them.

In truth, the stomach is the fount of lust and the source of ailment and evil in that its cravings are followed by the craving of the penis for coitus with women.<sup>6</sup> Food and sex lead to intense desire for ostentation and wealth, to all

3. The underlying Sufi philosophical concept implied herein is that man in his pristine stage of development was obedient to God and faithful to His commands.

4. "Station" in the Sufi context connotes an elevated level of reward from God for acts of striving along the path to Him.

5. These initials will be employed henceforth for the formula "peace be unto him" which is reserved in the Muslim scheme of reverence for the prophets of God.

6. Feminists may see this as one-sided, stressing man's lusting powers but not women's. Sufis were predominantly males and the manuals prepared to help the novice train and discipline the self were targeting largely the male audience.

kinds of envy and greed (lit., rivalries and envies). Both give rise to the evil of deception, boastfulness, excessiveness, and ostentation (or, in modern terms, elitism). This in turn leads to hatred, envy, jealousy, enmity, and hostility, which (in turn) induces one to commit (what is) outrageous, objectionable, and adultery. Such are the fruits of yielding to the stomach and its strong demands for food and satiation.

If the servant (of God) were to humble himself through hunger and deprive the devil (power to) work (within himself), the self would meekly yield to the obedience of God, may He be praised and glorified, and would refrain from pursuing the path of arrogance and oppressiveness. It would not cause him to become preoccupied with the world and to prefer that which soon passes away (the transient world) over the (day of) Accounting (Judgment and the Hereafter and its rewards). Nor would he persist in pursuing (offerings of) the world. And should the evil of the stomach's lust intensify (much), then it becomes necessary to view its disasters and evils as (constituting) a warning (to him).

It is incumbent (upon us) to explain the way to combat it (lust) and point out the virtue thereof as an incentive in itself. The same applies to the lust of the penis, in that it follows a similar course. We shall make this clear, with the help of the Lord, in those chapters treating this subject, showing hunger to be a virtue, also how to exercise in order to curb the appetite of the stomach by reducing and delaying food intake. We shall also point out preferences (lit., differences) decreed by hunger, and the virtue thereof, in terms of differing conditions in people, as well as those exercises that are necessary for abandoning lust. Next we shall relate sayings concerning the lust of the penis and why the one who seeks the path (the novice or *murīd*) should set aside marriage and what is required by such an abandonment. Lastly, (we shall recount) the virtue of the one who combats the lust (induced by) stomach, penis (sic) and sight.



## ON THE VIRTUE OF HUNGER AND REJECTION OF SATIATION

The Prophet (pbuh) said: combat the self with hunger and thirst, for the reward thereof is like the reward of the one who strives (*mujāhid*) for the sake of God.<sup>1</sup> There is no commitment dearer to God than that of hunger and thirst. Ibn al-‘Abbās<sup>2</sup> quoted the Prophet saying, “no one who has filled his stomach will enter the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>3</sup> When he (the Prophet) was asked: “who among mortals is the more virtuous?” he replied: “he who eats and laughs less and is content with that which conceals his nakedness.”<sup>4</sup> He also said that the best way to achieve hunger and subjugation of the self is to wear wool.<sup>5</sup> Abu Sa‘īd al-Khudrī<sup>6</sup> quoted the Prophet (pbuh) as having said:

1. No known source for this *hadīth*, Ghazālī, III: 80, n. 1.
2. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalīb, Prophet’s first cousin, a major transmitter of *hadīth*, was thirteen when the Prophet died. Muhammad (pbuh) asked God to bless him and guide him and make of him an exemplar in teaching the basics of the Islamic faith. Died in 68/687. Abu ‘Abdullah Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Kitāb Tadhkirat al-Huffāz* (Hyderabad: Osmania Press, 1375/1955), I: 40-41.
3. No known source for this *hadīth*, Ghazālī, III, 80, n. 2.
4. No known source for this *hadīth*. Details, see Ghazālī, III: 80, n.3.
5. Symbol of the mystic and the name “Sufi” by which he became known is the term applied to the Muslim mystic; hence “to wear wool” is a euphemism for being a mystic.
6. Abu Sa‘īd al-Khudrī is Sa‘īd ibn Sinān al-Ansārī al-Khazraji al-Madani, a leading *‘ālim* among companions of the Prophet, a highly regarded conveyer of *hadīth*, and a *mufti* for a while. His father was martyred at the battle of Uhud (626 A.C.) He has forty-three *hadīths* in the two *Saḥīhs*, fifty-two in Muslim’s compendium, sixteen in Bukhārī’s. He died at the age of 68. Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat*, I: 44. In Abu Nu‘aym al-Isbahānī, *Hilyat al-Awliyā’* (Cairo, 1932), I, no. 75: 369-71, he is referred to as Sa‘īd ibn Mālik Abu Sa‘īd.

"to be fair to the stomach, (one must) dress, eat, and drink for it is a quality of prophethood."<sup>7</sup> Al-Hasan<sup>8</sup> also quoted the Prophet (his own grandfather) as saying: "he who has hungerd the longest and reflected upon God, may He be glorified, enjoys the highest status with God on the Day of Resurrection. He, may He be glorified, detests most on the Day of Judgement the one who eats, drinks, and sleeps, much."<sup>9</sup>

There is a saying that the Prophet (pbuh) used to hunger without need, that is by choice.<sup>10</sup> He (pbuh) also said that God Almighty has proclaimed that "he who drinks and eats less in this world is a rival of the angels."<sup>11</sup> God Almighty has declared: "behold my servant: I have tempted (lit., afflicted) him with food and drink in the world. He was patient and abandoned both. Bear witness, O my angels, for every meal he forsakes I shall compensate him many times more (for it) in paradise."<sup>12</sup> He (Muhammad, pbuh) has stated: "do not deaden your hearts with abundant food and drink, for the heart is like a plant, it will die if overwatered."<sup>13</sup> He also said: "when man fills a vessel with evil from his stomach he believes that little morsels (of food) will strengthen his body. If so, then let a third (thereof) go to (satisfy his need for) food, a third for his drink, and a third for his self."<sup>14</sup>

A saying attributed to Usāma ibn Zayd<sup>15</sup>, and a longer

7. No comment on the source for this *hadīth*. Ghazālī, III: 80, n. 5.

8. Grandson of the Prophet, eldest son of 'Ali and Fātimah, selected by his father's followers to be caliph but was killed in 680 A.C. without showing any strong interest in the office.

9. No known source for this *hadīth*. Ghazālī, III, 80: n. 2.

10. *Hadīth* attributed to 'A'ishah (wife of the Prophet) and transmitted by al-Bayhaqi in his *Shu'ub*. Ghazālī, III, 80: n. 1.

11. Attributed to Ibn Mas'ūd but with a weak chain of verification. Ibn 'Adīy in his *al-Kāmil*. Ghazālī, III, 231: n. 9.

12. A *hadīth qudsīy*, attributed to God but not in the Koran.

13. No known source for this *hadīth*. Ghazālī, III, 81: n.4.

14. Cited form al-Tirmighī's *Hadīth al-Miqdām* in Ghazālī, III: 81. n.5.

15. Ibn Hārithah ibn Sharahīl ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzīy, d. 54/674, a companion of the Prophet, adopted Islam at age 18, and is cited by both Abu Hurayah and Ibn 'Abbās. Ahmad ibn Ibn Hajar al-'Asqānī, *Kitāb Tahdhīb*

one to Abu Hurayrah,<sup>16</sup> both stress the virtue of hunger and state that those nearest to God, may He be glorified, on the Day of Resurrection are the ones who hunger and thirst the longest. His (God's) grief on earth is for the barefooted pious (ones), who if they should bear testimony (to God) would not be recognized and if they should disappear would not be missed. They are scattered on earth and the angels of heaven hover over them. Men enjoy the comforts of the world while they obey God. Men bed down in ease while they (lie down) on their bellies (lit. "fronts") and knees. Men caused the work and manners of the prophets to be lost, while they preserved them. The earth would weep should they disappear and the mighty would vent their anger on every place wherein one of them is not to be found. They pursued not (offerings of) the world as persistently as dogs pursue carcasses. They ate fodder and wore tattered rags. Their hair was dusty and matted. People looked at them and thought that they were ill, but they were not ill. It might be said that they are confused and their minds lost, but their minds are not lost. They obeyed with their hearts the decrees of God who placed them apart (lit., separated them) from the world. To the people of this world they walk mindlessly, but they became wise when the wisdom of men disappeared. They have honor in the Hereafter. O Usāmah,<sup>17</sup> should you encounter them in a town, know ye that they are a trust for the inhabitants of that town. God will not cause a people among whom they dwell to suffer. The earth rejoices in them and the mighty are pleased with them. Take them

*al-Tahdhīb* (Hyderabad: Osmania, 1325-27/1907-10), I, 208; also his *al-Iṣābah fi Tamyiz al-Ṣaḥbah*, (Cairo: Khanji, 1354/1935), I, 89: 45.

16. Abu Hurayrah (lit., father of kittens) al-Dawsi al-Yamani, a companion of the Prophet, known in Jāhiliyah (pre-Islamic) days as 'Abd Shams, acquired his appellation because as a shepherd he found a litter and adopted it. He became known as "al-ḥāfiz" or retainer, i.e., of traditions. He is alleged to have transmitted some 5,374 *hadīths*. He died ca. 58/690. Dhahabi, *Tadhkirat*, I, no. 16: 32-37 and Muhammad Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubra*, IV, no. 2: 55, also Isbahānī, I, no. 850: 376-99.

17. Reference is to Usāmah ibn Zayd.

brethren unto yourself that ye may be saved through them. And should death overtake thee on an empty stomach, (or) a thirsty liver, accept it; for you will attain thereby the honor of the dweller (in Paradise) and you will be among the prophets. The angels will rejoice at the arrival of your soul and the mighty will pray for thee.

Al-Hasan quoted Abu Hurayrah saying that the Prophet (pbuh) declared: "wear wool, roll up your sleeves, and be fair to the stomach and you will enter the kingdom of heaven."<sup>18</sup> And Jesus (pbuh) has declared: "O disciples, starve your livers and bare your bodies so that your hearts will see God, may He be glorified."<sup>19</sup> Our Prophet (Muhammad) has declared the same, as has Tāwus.<sup>20</sup>

They say it is written in the Torah that God detests a fat rabbi because fleshiness is a sign of neglect and much eating. This is objectionable, especially for a rabbi, and because of it ibn Mas'ūd,<sup>21</sup> may God be pleased with him, declared: "God despises the reciter (of the Koran in public) who has grown fat from eating much." In a tradition of limited authenticity,<sup>22</sup> it is alleged that the devil flows through man like blood; thus man must narrow the

18. Cited by Abu Manṣūr al-Daylami in his *Musnad al-Firdaws*, but with weak *isnād* (chain of transmission). Ghazālī, III: 81, n. 7.

19. No source for this saying is listed.

20. Tāwus ibn Kīsān: first among yemenis to believe, which induced the Prophet to say: faith is from Yemen. Iṣbahāni, IV, no. 249: 4-23; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, V: 537-43.

21. Ibn Mas'ūd al-Imām al-Rabbāni, Abu 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Abdallah ibn Umm 'Abd al-Hadhali, companion of the Prophet (pbuh) and his servant, one of the earliest supporters who saw action at the battle of Badr in 624, highly respected as a jurisconsult and transmitter of tradition by the Prophet's early successors. He is regarded as one of the fourteen companions closest to the Prophet and a highly regarded ascetic. He died in Medina in 19/651. Dhahabi, *Tadhkirat*, I: 13-17. Ibn Hajar, *Iṣābah*, I, no 21: 124-39. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III: 150-61.

22. When compiled, the process of authentication reduced some six hundred thousand *hadīth* to some six thousand; those not deemed

passage ways (of the devil) through hunger and thirst.<sup>23</sup> In another tradition (it is stated that) to eat when one is satiated leads to leprosy.<sup>24</sup>

The Prophet (pbuh) declared: "the faithful (one) eats with one gut, the infidel with seven,"<sup>25</sup> that is, he eats seven times as much because his gluttonous appetite absorbs food as does the gut (only seven times more). This does not mean that the gut of the hypocrite is greater than that of the faithful. Quoting 'Ā'ishah,<sup>26</sup> may God be pleased with her, al-Hasan relates: "I heard the Prophet (pbuh) say, 'continue knocking on the door of Paradise, it will be opened for you;' I asked, 'how do we continue knocking on the door of Paradise?' and he replied, 'with hunger and thirst'."<sup>27</sup>

It is related that Abu Juḥayfah<sup>28</sup> vomited in an assembly of the Prophet (pbuh) who told him: lessen your vomiting (by eating less) for those who hunger the longest on the Day of Judgement are the ones who are most satiated in this world."<sup>29</sup> 'Ā'ishah, may God be pleased with her, used to say that the Prophet (pbuh) would never eat to

altogether fabricated were compiled in categories with headings such as "weak" or of "dubious authenticity" not treated as canonical yet useful for illustrative purposes and reinforcing a moral.

23. Attributed to 'Ali ibn al-Husayan, great grandson of the Prophet and cited by Ibn abi 'Dunya in his *Makāyid al-Shayfān*. Ghazālī, III, 82: n. 1.

24. No known source for this *hadīth*. Ghazālī, III, 82: n. 2.

25. Both Abu Hurayrah and 'Umar (the second caliph of Islam, 634-44) concur. Ghazālī, III: 82, n. 3.

26. Young wife of the Prophet who too is alleged to have transmitted *hadīth* (2,210) in excess of what might be verified but challenged, when at all, with much hesitation because of her sanctified position in the eyes of the faithful. For more on her, see Ibn Hajar, II, 133: 39-43.

27. Both Abu Hurayrah and 'Umar concur. Ghazālī, III: 82, n. 4.

28. Wrongly placed in Sarrāj's *al-Luma'* (pp. 119, 138). He is an early companion of the Prophet but not often quoted as transmitter of *hadīth*.

29. Cited by Abu Bakr Ahmad al-Bayhaqi, *Shu'ub al-Imām wa Hadīth 'Ā'ishah* (Istanbul, n.d.). Tirmidhi has the original. Ibn Mājah cites the same but makes no reference to Abu Juḥayfah. Ghazālī, III: 82, n. 5.

satiation and "I often wept out of pity for him because of the way he used to hunger. I would rub his stomach with my hand and say, 'I will offer myself as a sacrifice if only you would chew enough (food) to give you strength and prevent you from being hungry'. His reply to that was: O 'Ā'ishah, my brethren, the strong-willed messengers (of God) endured greater hardship (than hunger); they persevered and came into the presence of their Lord, who welcomed them and rewarded their righteousness. Were I to be comfortable in my life, I would be ashamed lest tomorrow I be less than they. To be patient a few days is dearer to me than to lose my fortune tomorrow in the Hereafter. Furthermore, there is nothing more preferable to me than to follow my companions and brethren. It was less than a week later," added 'Ā'ishah, "that the Lord called him unto Himself."<sup>30</sup>

Anas<sup>31</sup> said that Fātimah<sup>32</sup> brought a morsel of bread to the Prophet (pbuh) who asked: "what is this morsel?" to which she replied: "a small loaf which I baked and which it would not have pleased me not to bring you a piece (of it)." His reply (to Fātimah): "this is the first bit of food to enter your father's mouth in three days."<sup>33</sup> Abu Hurayrah related that the Prophet (pbuh) took care of the food needs of his family for three days before departing this world.<sup>34</sup>

30. Cited in detail by Abu Mūsa al-Madyani in his *Istihlā' al-Mawt*. Ghazālī, III: 82, n. 6.

31. Ibn Mālik ibn al-Nadr ibn Damdam, al-Imām abu Hamzah al-Anṣārī al-Najjārī of Medina, servant of the Prophet (pbuh) from the time he emigrated (to Medina) until his death. He is highly regarded companion and transmitter of some 2,286 *hadīths*. He died in 90 or 92/708-711. Dhahabi, *Tadhkirat*, I: 44-45. Ibn Hajar, *Isābah*, VI, no. 386: 316.

32. Daughter of the Prophet (pbuh) by Khadījah, wife of 'Ali, son of Abu Talib, and loyal supporter from the beginning of Muhammad's mission, father of his grandsons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn through whose line the Imamate of Shī'ah Islam evolves. Isbahāni, II, no. 133: 39-43.

33. Cited by al-Harith ibn Abi Usāmah (in his *Musnad*) but with weak *isnād*. Ghazālī, III: 82, N. 7.

34. Cited by Muslim. Ghazālī, III: 82, n. 8.

He (Muḥammad, pbuh) has declared: "Those who hunger in this world are the ones to be filled in the Hereafter. Verily, the most detested by God are the satiated gluttonous ones. The servant who avoids a meal which he craves will earn a (higher) level in paradise."<sup>35</sup>

As concerns effects, 'Umar,<sup>36</sup> may God be pleased with him, said: "avoid gluttony, for it is a burden in life and rot in death." Shaqīq al-Balkhī<sup>37</sup> maintained that "worship is a craft; its form is solitude and its tools are hunger." Luqmān the Wise<sup>38</sup> told his son: "my son, when the stomach is filled, thinking falls asleep, wisdom is silenced, and the organs cease to perform acts of worship." Al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād<sup>39</sup> used to say to himself: "what do you fear? Are you afraid of being hungry? Do not fear it! You are less of a burden to God than it (is for you)." Muḥammad (pbuh), also his companions, would go hungry as if it was being whispered to his Lord: "you caused me to go hungry but not naked; in the darkness of night you sat me

35. Cited by al-Tabarāni in *al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ* on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas but with weak *isnād*. Ghazālī, III: 82, n. 9.

36. Companion of the Prophet, a wealthy Qurayshite who gave up all his possessions and was seen sitting on the ground mending his own garment while his armies reduced the two mighty empires of the day, the Persian Sasanian and the Byzantine, gaining for the nascent Islamic state the Syrian and Persian regions and North Africa from Egypt to present-day lower Tunisia. He gave the Islamic Empire its first constitution and was noted for his transformation from an arrogant domineering erstwhile pagan Qurayshite into a Muslim of great humility and piety.

37. Died 194/810, a pupil of Ibrāhīm b. Adham, founder of the Khorasanian school of mysticism, first to set forth the principle of *tawakkul* or reliance on God as an integral state of Sufism. See Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origines de lexique technique de la mystique Musulmane* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1954), p. 228. For a brief biography, see Isbahāni, VIII, no. 395: 58-73.

38. Hitti refers to him as the Aesop of the Arabs because of his renowned moral philosophy popularized in the fables named after him. *History of the Arabs*, 401.

39. A leading ascetic of the Iraqi school of mysticism; Khorasanian by birth; a strong opponent of the life of comfort and ease; lived in Kūfah but died in Mecca 187/803. Isbahāni, VIII, no. 369: 84-139.

down without a lantern; by what means did you teach what I learned from thee?"

Faṭḥ al-Mūsili<sup>40</sup> would say when overtaken by illness and hunger, "my Lord, you have afflicted me with illness and hunger, thus do you treat your saints; by what deed may I thank you for that which you have bequeathed unto me?" Mālik ibn Dīnār<sup>41</sup> related that he had said to Muḥammad ibn Wasi':<sup>42</sup> "O Abu 'Abdallah, blessed is he who has an ardent desire to satisfy his need and to render him needless of people." He replied: "O Abu Yahya, blessed is he who goes to bed and wakes up hungry and is content with God." Al-Fuḍayl ibn Iyaḍ used to say: "my Lord, you caused me and my family to go hungry, and you left me in the darkness of night without a lantern; but that is how you treat your saints (lit., loyal followers); by what station (level of devotion) have I earned this (favor) from you?" Yahya ibn Mu'adh<sup>43</sup> declared: "the hunger of those

40. Abu Naṣr Faṭḥ ibn Sa'īd, a leading shaykh of Mūsili, a peer of Bishr al-Hāfi, died in Baghdad 220/835. 'Abdullah Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, ed. 'Abdul Hai Habibi Kanadahari (Kabul: Historical Society of Afghanistan, 1962), p. 68-69. Isbahāni, VIII, no. 415: 292-294. Sarrāj, xxv. 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥanbali Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fi Akhbār man Dhahab* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Tijāri, 1966), I: 132.

41. Born of a slave, converted to a life of piety by Hasan of Basra, he became renowned for stressing the need to supplement acts by sincerity of intention without which, he argued, devotion cannot be complete. 'Ali ibn 'Uthmān al-Hujwīri, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb, The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, transl. and ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Luzac & Co., 1967), 89-90; Isbahāni, II, no. 200: 357-89; Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭar, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'*, ed. R. A. Nicholson (London: 1905), p. 26-31; Ibn Ḥajar, X: 14-15; Sarrāj, 43, 322.

42. An associate of the earliest Sufi shaykhs who is said to have originated the notion that God is reflected in all created things, in his words: "I never saw anything without seeing God therein," a forerunner, perhaps of Ibn 'Arabi's (d. 1240) notion that God is mirrored in creation. Hujwīri, *Kashf*, 91-92.

43. Full name: Abu Zakariyyah Yahya abu Mu'adh al-Rāzi, known as an ascetic and preacher, an eminent Sufi praised by all shaykhs, perfectly grounded in the true theory of hope in God. Fear and hope were to him the two pillars of faith. Originally from Ray, he was detained in Balkh

who seek is theft; the hunger of the repentant is tribulation; the hunger of the one who strives is a blessing; the hunger of the patient one is an art (lit., cultivation), and the hunger of the ascetic is wisdom."

It is stated in the Torah: "Fear God; and if you should be satiated (with food) then remember the hungry."<sup>44</sup> Abu Sulaymān<sup>45</sup> said: "it is dearer for me to give up a portion of my supper than to stay up a whole night." He also said: "hunger is a store with God; He grants of it only to those who love Him."

Sahl ibn 'Abdallah al-Tustari<sup>46</sup> used to spend more than twenty nights without eating. One *dirham*<sup>47</sup> satisfied his food requirements for a whole year. He would glorify hunger and exaggerate it, saying: "there is no deed worthy of the Resurrection like abandoning desire for food and

for some time by its inhabitants. He died in Nishapur in 258/871-72, a destitute. Hujwīri, *Kashf*, 122-23; Abu 'Abd al-Rahmān Muḥammad Sulami, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, ed. Johannes Pedersen (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), p. 98-104; Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 51-52; Isbahāni, X, 465: 70-73. There is also Yahya ibn Mu'adh *al-wā'iz* (the preacher) in *ibid.*, no. 463: 51-70.

44. No specific reference is given for this citation.

45. Full name: Abu Sulaymān 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Atīyah al-Dārāni, a leading member of the Baṣra school of ascetics and one of the earliest theoreticians of formal mysticism in Islam; nicknamed "sweet basil of hearts" (*rayḥān-i dilha*), he was distinguished by his severe austerities and acts of self-mortification; he was also the first to preach the science of 'time' (*waqt*) as essential for preserving one's state (*hāl*) and allow hope to predominate over fear. He died in 215/830. Schimmel, 31 and 37; Hujwīri, *Kashf*, 112-13; 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Aḥmad Jāmi, *Nafahāt al-Uns min Ḥadarāt al-Quds* (Teheran: Asadi, 1930), p. 39; Isbahāni, IX, nos. 448: 254-80; Sulami, 68-79.

46. Full name: Abu Muḥammad Sahl ibn 'Abdallah al-Tustari, one of the architects of formal Sufism whose doctrine stressed endeavor, self-mortification (*mujāhadāt*), and ascetic training as the means for combatting the "lower soul" or self (*nafs*). He died in 896. For more on him, see Schimmel, 55-57, and Hujwīri, *Kashf*, 139-40, 195-210.

47. Unit of currency circulating in the early Islamic period in the Syrian-Iraqi region and beyond, from the Greek *drachme*, known to the Persians as *diram*, a unit of silver coinage which, as late as the 1920s was worth about twenty cents.

emulating the eating habits of the Prophet (pbuh).” “To seek profit from anything besides hunger,” he continued, “wisdom and knowledge were placed in hunger; defiance and ignorance, in satiation; there is no better way for the servant (of God) to oppose whim than to abandon that which is lawful.”

It is related in the Traditions that “a third (of one’s acts of devotion) is in food; he who exceeds this is surrendering (a portion of) his good deed(s).”<sup>48</sup> When asked: “what constitutes excess?” he replied: “to exceed the level in eating when refraining is more preferable; and when one hungers for a night, he asks God to make it two (nights); that is when one knows the excess.” He maintained that such a preference can be achieved by constraining the stomach and staying up at night observing silence and seclusion.” He also said that “at the head of every pious act descending from heaven to earth is hunger while heading every licentious one is a full stomach.” Furthermore, “he who allows himself to go hungry will be free of anxiety.” He maintained furthermore that hunger, sickness, and affliction are visited upon the servant chosen by God. “Know ye,” said he, “this is a time when no one will gain salvation except by deadening the (physical) self through hunger, staying awake at night, and striving.” Moreover, “no one passes through this world drinking to fill without committing an act of defiance; and offer thanks to God filled with food.”

A wise man was once asked, “how do I curb my self?” to which he replied: “bind it by hunger and thirst; humble it by stifling its vanity and restrain the penis and the self’s trifles by placing it under the feet of those who have earned the Hereafter (Paradise). Curb it (the self) by forsaking the apparel of the affluent. Deliver yourself of its evils by always thinking ill of it and by opposing its whims.”

48. Ghazālī, III: 87, n. 1.

‘Abd al-Wāhid ibn Zayd<sup>49</sup> used to take an oath in the name of God Almighty saying that He never purified anyone except by (causing him/her to) hunger. “Nor did they (the pure) walk upon water except through Him or the earth cater to them except by hunger.”

Abu Talib al-Makki<sup>50</sup> declared: “the stomach is like a *mazhar*,<sup>51</sup> its tunes (lit., voice) are sweet because it is light and delicate, and because it is hallow, not filled; and because it is empty (hallow), it is sweeter for recitation, more conducive to wakefulness, and requires less sleep.”

According to Abu Bakr ibn ‘Abdallah al-Māzini,<sup>52</sup> God loves three (types of people): he who sleeps less, eats less, and rests less. It is said that Jesus (pbuh) spent sixty days contemplating the Lord without food. It was when bread came to his mind that his contemplation ceased. A loaf was placed between his hands, but he sat up weeping over the loss of contemplation (instead of eating it). An old man suddenly cast his shadow upon him and Jesus said to him: “God bless you O friend of God; please entreat Him on my behalf. I was in state of contemplation when bread came to my mind and I lost it (the state).” The old man cried out: “O Lord, if you knew that bread crossed my mind since I knew you, then forgive me not, for whenever anything came to mind, I ate without thinking or deliberating.”

49. A leading example of the virtue of *wara’* (Abstinence) and of permanent sadness. It is he who helped spread the ideals of his master, Hasan of Basra, by establishing a colony of ascetics in Abadan, on the Persian Gilf. He died in 794. Schimmel, 31; Isbahāni, VI, no. 358: 177-82.

50. Died 386/996, grounded in both theology and mysticism, endeavored to prove the legitimacy of the latter in his well-known *Qūt al-Qulūb* (Nourishment for Hearts), considered by authorities a very successful attempt to argue for the orthodoxy of Sufism and construct an overall design for it. Arberry, *Mystics*, 68.

51. An instrument resembling the lute in construction: hollow bellied with strings.

52. Also Bakr ibn ‘Abdallah, close associate of Caliph Abu Bakr (632-34), a pious ascetic presumably of the tribe of Māzinah, whence his name, and one of the Prophet’s most righteous companions. Sarrāj, 123, 322; Isbahāni, II, no. 181: 224-32; Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, VII: 31; and Nisābūri, *Mustadrak*, III, 578.

It is said that when God Almighty decided to manifest Himself to Moses (pbuh), he (Moses) had already gone without food for forty days — thirty plus ten according to the Koran;<sup>53</sup> another ten were added when he was unable to hold back sleep one day.

53. Thus in the text but not found under such wording in the Koran

## THE BENEFITS OF HUNGER AND ILLS OF SATIATION

The Prophet (pbuh) said: “combat the self with hunger and thirst, for there is reward in that.” One might perhaps ask: “wherefrom is this great virtue of hunger? What is the reason for it when there is but pain for the stomach and harmful suffering? And if it is to be so, then man should be granted greater rewards for allowing the self to suffer such harm in denying the flesh what it craves and forcing it to accept the objectionable and the like.” Know ye that this (question) resembles the saying of the one who drinks medicine and benefits therefrom thinking that this benefit is due to the repugnance of medicine and its bitterness. So he proceeds to taste all that he hates. This is wrong. Benefit derives from the peculiar quality of medicine, not from its being bitter. Doctors attest this particular quality. Likewise, nobody speaks ill of the benefits of hunger but the brokers of the *ulema*.<sup>1</sup> Whoever suffers himself to endure hunger as an act of faith in keeping with the *Shari’ah*’s commendation thereof, he will benefit therefrom, even if he does not understand the effect of the benefit, in the same manner as he who drinks medicine benefits therefrom, even if he does not know the nature of the benefit. This can be explained for those who seek to rise above *imān* (faith) to that of *ilm* (cognition,

1. The class of learned men in Islam who are experts in its basic teachings and laws and counsel the less knowledgeable and officials on how to maintain conduct. They are held to be familiar with decrees and official acts within the parameters of the Koran and the *Shari’ah*. The mystics held them at first in lower esteem, claiming that they, themselves, had not only assimilated what *ilm* has to impart to them but had ascended to realms which only those, like themselves, who attained gnosis could experience God’s knowledge and presence in their hearts and souls.

formal theological knowledge). God Almighty said that "I will raise those who have believed among you and acquired *'ilm* to higher levels."<sup>2</sup>

### The Benefits of Hunger

We say, then, that hunger has ten benefits, the first being purification of the heart and awakening of intuition, as well as giving vent to perception. Satiation causes dullness and blinds the heart. It increases fuziness in the brain, in the same manner as does drunkenness, until it overpowers the elements of thought, burdens the heart, and slows down both the thinking process and quickness of perception. The lad who indulges food is unable to memorize (the Koran); his thinking is distorted, his understanding and perception slowed.

Abu Sulaymān al-Dārānī<sup>3</sup> said: "indulge hunger because it humbles the self, renders the heart tender, and allows one to inherit (lit. acquire) heavenly knowledge." The Prophet (pbuh) said: "enliven your hearts with less laughter and less satiation; (for it is by means of) hunger that they (hearts) are purified and softened."<sup>4</sup> It is alleged that hunger is like unto thunder, contentment like unto the cloud, and wisdom like unto rain. He (pbuh) also said: "he who renders his stomach hungry, increases his thinking and sharpens the awareness of his heart."<sup>5</sup> Ibn 'Abbās<sup>6</sup> alleges that the Prophet (pbuh) declared: "he who sleeps on a full stomach, his heart hardens."<sup>7</sup> He added further that "everything has its nourishment, and the nourish-

2. Part of a longer verse, Koran, 58: 11.

3. *Supra*, p. 43, n. 45.

4. There is no known source for this *hadīth*.

5. There is no known source for this *hadīth*.

6. 'Abdallah ibn al-, nephew of the Prophet, a highly regarded transmitter of *hadīth*. Isbahānī, I, no. 45: 314-29. Immediate ancestor of the long line of 'Abbasid caliphs (750-1258) and the one whom the Prophet allegedly annointed to be educator of Muslims in Islam's true ways. Dhahabi, I, no. 18: 40-41.

7. *Hadīth* attributed by Ibn Mājah to Abu Hurayrah but with weak *isnād*. Ghazālī, III: 84, n.3.

ment of the body is hunger."<sup>8</sup> Shibli said: "I hungered not a day (for the sake of God) without experiencing in my heart, like nothing before, a door opened by wisdom and example."<sup>9</sup>

It is no secret that what one seeks in acts of worship is the contemplation that leads to *ma'rifah*<sup>10</sup> and pondering the truths of God. Satiation detracts therefrom while hunger opens its door (there to). *Ma'rifah* is one of the gateways of Paradise. It is on account of this that Luqmān<sup>11</sup> told his son: "my son, if the stomach is filled, thinking falls asleep and wisdom is muted, and faculties cease their acts of worship."

Abu Yazid al-Bistāmi<sup>12</sup> said: "hunger is (like) a cloud: if the servant is hungry, wisdom rains down upon (his)

8. *Ibid*.

9. Full name: Abu Bakr ibn Jahdar al-Shibli, d. 945; one of the great and celebrated Sufi *shaykhs* who led a blameless spiritual life and enjoyed perfect communion with God. He excelled at the use of symbolism in its subtlest forms. He was often mistaken for being mad, but this he explained to his detractors as a manifestation of intense love for God saying, "May He increase my madness in order that I may draw nearer and nearer to Him, and may He increase your sense in order that you may draw farther and farther from Him." To him, it was "a mark of heedlessness to follow one's lusts and to regard unlawful things, and the greatest calamity that befalls the heedless is that they are ignorant of their own faults." Hujwīri, *Kashf*, 155-56; Schimmel, 77-80.

10. Epitomizes for the Sufi rewards at the end of the mystical journey after his attaining *fanā'* (passing away from the conscious self) to savour *baqā'* (indwelling), however fleeting this ultimate reward from God might be. This experimental awareness of God through strict personal intuitive devices employed on the journey to God leads to loss of all awareness of the mystic's physical self, whence the term "passing away" from the self and dwelling in God, to whom Sufis also referred as *al-Haqq* (truth).

11. See p. 41, n. 38.

12. Tayfūr ibn 'Īsa, also known as Bayezid, d. 261/874, intemperate in his open use of language whose views bordered on pantheism, this Persian of Bistām is regarded as the first of the "intoxicated" Sufis who miraculously escaped a harsh death visited on some of the less fortunate as al-Hallāj, executed in 922 in Baghdad (for more on him, see Schimmel, 62-67) after ejaculating openly in a state of mystical transport, "Glory to Me! How great is My Majesty!" Needless to say,



heart." The Prophet (pbuh) said: "the light of wisdom is hunger and what creates distance between one and God, may He be glorified, is satiation. Nearness to God Almighty is (in) loving the poor and drawing near to them. Do not become filled (with food) lest ye turn off the lights of wisdom in (lit., from) your hearts. He who sleeps with less food, the Houris<sup>13</sup> sleep around him until he awakens."<sup>14</sup>

The second benefit is tenderness and purity of heart, which prepare it to attain the delight of contemplation and the impact of *dhikr*.<sup>15</sup> How often (lit. many) remembrances (*dhikr*) flow on the tongue with the presence of the heart but there is no delight for the heart nor any satisfaction because it is screened by coarseness. Occasionally the heart might soften under certain circumstances permit *dhikr* a greater impact there on; indeed, it might even delight in contemplation. A precondition for this experience (lit. inducement) however is an empty stomach.

Abu Sulaymān al-Dārāni declared: "the best form of worship for me is an empty stomach attached to my back." Junayd<sup>16</sup> said that "one (should) leave between the self

Abu Yazīd's ecstatic utterances (*shathīyāt*) greatly embarrassed his "sober" brethren. He was also the first to take the Prophet's mystical ascension (*Mi'rāj*) as a theme for expressing his own mystical experience. A. J. Arberry, *Sufism, An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 54; Isbahāni, IX, no. 458: 33-40; Schimmel, 47-51.

13. "Companions with beautiful, big and lustrous eyes," Koran, 44:54.

14. Mentioned by al-Daylami in his *Musnad*, attributing it to Abu Hurayrah and alleging that it was a verified *hadīth*. Ghazālī, III: 85, n. 1.

15. Sufi term for embarking upon the path to God by means of a defined litany peculiar to a particular order. It stems from the Koranic injunction to "mention the name of God often."

16. Abu Ḳāsim Muḥammad al- (d. 298/910), a leading theologian and mystic of Baghdad, pupil of al-Hārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857) and developer of the doctrine on *Fanā'*, ultimate quest of the Sufi laboring on the path to experimental unification with the Godhead. He postulated the classical definition of *tawḥīd* (proclaiming the unicity of God) which became standard as "the separation of the Eternal (God) from that which was created in time (man)." Abu Ḳāsim Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Halīm Maḥmūd

and the chest<sup>17</sup> a space free of food in order to discover the delight of contemplation." Abu Sulaymān argued that "if the heart is made to endure hunger and thirst, it would become pure and soft. But should it be filled, the heart becomes blind and harsh. Treating the heart with sweetness and contemplation facilitates thought and gains it *ma'rifah*." This is the second benefit (sic.)

The third benefit lies in submission, humiliation, the elimination of ungodliness, rejoicefulness, and what is more evil, namely oppressiveness and obliviousness of God Almighty. Nothing will curb the self and humble it more than hunger. For through hunger the self reposes in its Lord and reveres Him, becoming thereby aware of its incapacity and abject nature. If its quest should be weakened and its urges circumscribed by means of a morsel of food, the world would turn away from the lower self and cast its darkness upon it (in reward) for not having food or drink for one day. If man does not recognize the abject nature of his self and its limitations, he cannot see the glory of the Lord, nor His power. His happiness lies in always reflecting upon the self with the eye of humility and incapacity, and upon his Lord with the eye of glory and capacity. So let him go hungry at all times and depend on his Lord, a witness for Him by choice. It is for such reason that when the world and its treasures were offered to the Prophet (pbuh) he said: "No, I would rather hunger a day and be filled a day; for if I were to hunger, I would become patient and humble. Were I to be filled, I would be grateful."<sup>18</sup> As he put it, "the stomach and the genitals are gateways to Hellfire." The cause lies in satiation. Humility and submission constitute one of the gateways of Paradise. Both originate in hunger. He who closes one of the doors of the Fire (Hell) opens one of the doors of

and Maḥmūd ibn al-Sharīf (Cairo: Sa'ādah, n.d.), pp. 3 and 136; Hujwīri, *Kashf*, 281; Schimmel, 57-59

17. For technical definitions of what the Sufis understand by *self*, *heart*, *soul*, see Nicolas Heer, "A Sufi Psychological Treatise," *Moslem World*, 51 (1961).

18. *Hadīth* cited by Tirmidhi. Ghazālī, III: 85, n.2.

Paradise by necessity, because they are as opposite as east and west; for nearness to one (is) distance from the other.

The fourth benefit lies in not forgetting the affliction of God and His torment, nor for those afflicted to forget; for, he who is satiated is oblivious of the one who hungers, and of hunger itself. The mindful servant does not see the affliction in others without remembering the affliction of the Hereafter. He becomes mindful through his own thirsting — the thirsting of created beings in the halls of Resurrection — and own hungering — the hungering of those destined to the fire (Hell). Indeed they will hunger, and (they) will be fed humiliation (lit., the big udders) and deadly food. They will be given purulent substances to drink and the puss of corpses.<sup>19</sup>

It is fitting for the servant to be mindful of the torments of the Hereafter and its pains, for it is indeed what excites fear. He who has not suffered depravity, or affliction, or wantonness, or ailment, forgets the torment of the Hereafter and sets no example through himself, nor exercises control over his (own) heart.

It also behooves the servant to endure pain and to experience affliction. The foremost affliction he can endure is hunger. In it are many benefits besides his being aware of the torments of the Hereafter. This is one reason why affliction became the mark of prophets and saints (which is) the greatest example they could set. Joseph (pbuh) was told: "You shall not hunger while in your hands are the treasures of the earth," to which he replied: "I fear in being filled that I would forget the hungry."<sup>20</sup> Remembering the hungry and needy is one of the benefits of hunger, for it invokes mercy and (is conducive to) feeding (those in need) and showing pity for God's created beings, because he who is filled is oblivious to the pain of the hungry.

19. Such a vivid description of the wages of sin reflect Koranic dicta for the damned.

20. The story of Joseph, Koran 12, reveals no such immediate utterances on his part. One can assume it is by interpolation the author reached this conclusion.

The fifth benefit, and one of the greatest of all, is in curbing the lusts of all defiances. To take charge of the self is to overcome evil. The source of all defiances is lust and power, and the ingredients thereof. Without doubt, lust is (a form of) nourishment; curbing it weakens every desire and urge (lit., potency). Happiness lies in taking charge of one's self, and misery is in it (the self) taking possession of it. The self is like unto a runaway beast of burden, it can be controlled only when weakened by hunger. Should it be fed to fill, it gains strength, becomes uncontrollable and runs away.

Such is also the self. When someone was told, "why is it with age you have shown no concern for your body, which has deteriorated?" to which he replied: "because it is quick to enjoy merriment in excess of most evil. So I fear that it might overwhelm and hurl me into the abyss. It is better that I make it (the self) endure hardship than to let it propel me towards (committing) excesses."

Dhū 'l-Nun<sup>21</sup> said, "I never was satiated without becoming defiant or being preoccupied by it." 'Ā'ishah, may God be pleased with her, said, "the first innovation (*bid'ah*) after (the passing away of) the messenger (Muhammad, pbuh), was satiation. When the stomach of man is filled, the self propels him into the world" (i.e. towards worldliness.)<sup>22</sup>

In this there is not just a single, but rather a store of benefits, on account of which hunger was deemed one of the treasures of God. A leading benefit is (to be able) to contain through hunger the lust of both genitals and speech. He who hungers is not affected by the lust of inquisitive talk. He is delivered thereby from the evils of

21. Thāwān ibn Ibrāhīm, known as the Egyptian (d. 246/859-60), credited with having first defined *ma'rifah* in its current Sufi context, albeit mystics before him had a similar conception. He is also noted for being an itinerant expounder of the principles of formal mysticism in Islam with stress on love, first to use the term, as Rābi'ah before him, to convey his devotion to God. Arberry, *Sufism*, 52-54; Schimmel, 42-47; Iṣbahāni, IX, no 456: 331-95.

22. In the sense of turning him away from preoccupation with ways leading to heaven.

the tongue, such as backbiting, garrulousness, mendacity, deceiving, and the like. Hunger prevents all this. If, on the other hand, one becomes filled, he would seek desert (lit. fruit), and his desert inevitably leads to his amusing himself with the honor of people. Nothing would hurl such folk into the Fire like the harvest of their tongues.<sup>23</sup>

As concerns the lust of the genitals, its evils are not concealed. Hunger is sufficient to avert such evils. A man who is filled cannot control his genitals, even when restrained by piety, because he cannot avert what the eye sees, and the eye sins as much as the genitals do. Should one control the eye by not looking, he might not control his thoughts; bad thoughts would come to him like the murmurings of the self because of the enticements of lust, thus defiling his contemplations, which might occur in the course of (his) praying.

We have cited the evil of the tongue and of the genitals as examples. However, all defiances of the seven members (of the body) are caused by compulsiveness wrought by satiation. A wise man once said: "every *murīd* (novice) who is patient in his conduct abstains from (eating) pure bread for a year and mixes no lust with it. He eats only on half a stomach. God (already) has relieved him of the need for (lit., provision of) women."

The sixth benefit lies in warding off sleep and (in maintaining) continuous wakefulness. He who satisfies his appetite drinks a lot, and he who drinks a lot sleeps a lot. For this reason a certain (Sufi) *shaykh* said when food was being prepared: "O disciples, do not eat a lot because you will drink a lot and become content a lot, so you lose a lot." Seventy believers were of the same opinion, namely that excessive sleep is wasteful to life, causes one to miss his night prayers (*awrād*), leads to a lazy disposition, and hardens the heart.

Life is a most precious tool and the servant's capital, with which he trades. Sleep is (like) death, by increasing it one, decreases life. The virtue of night prayers are not

23. In the sense of speaking ill of and maligning others.

hidden, but in sleep they elapse; and when sleep overtakes night prayers, there can be no rewards. Moreover, he who sleeps on a full stomach is susceptible to night emission, and that also prevents him from performing his night prayers and obliges him to perform full ablution (*ghusl*) either with cold water, which could harm him, or require a full bath, which might not be possible to have at night, so he misses the *witr*<sup>24</sup> because he was delayed in performing his night prayers. Moreover, he would need provisions for the bath and perhaps his eye would be attracted to a naked body while entering the (public) bath. So there are many dangers, such as we discussed in *Kitāb al-Tahārah*.<sup>25</sup>

All this is the result of satiation. Abu Sulaymān al-Dārānī maintained that being forced to dream (have night emission) is a punishment. He said this because it detracts from many acts of worship on account of one not being able to perform full ablution in every situation.<sup>26</sup> Sleep is thus a fountain of sin and satiation is a magnet for it, while hunger is a cessation thereof.

The seventh benefit lies in facilitating continuous worship. Food prevents many acts of worship because it requires time, thus preoccupying one with eating. Perhaps it would also require time to buy food and to cook it. Then one has to wash his hands and to excrete; this might entail frequenting the bathroom on account of drinking (which accompanies eating). The time spent on all this if spent on *dhikr* and contemplation would redound with greater benefit to him (the worshipper). Sari (al-Saqāṭi)<sup>27</sup> said: "I

24. The *witr* is a Sufi prayer formula, part of the exercises conducted after the night prayer (fifth and last in a day) and consisting of an odd number of prostrations, and for which the devotee is rewarded spiritually at the end of the cycle.

25. Known also as *Asrār Kitāb al-Tahārah* (Secrets of the Book of Purification), third book of the section dealing with *'Ibādāt* (acts of worship) in Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, I: 125-44.

26. Full ablution or *ghusl* is necessitated by sexual intercourse, nightly emissions and, for the woman, the monthly discharge.

27. Eighth century Sufi (d. ca. 867), companion of Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, well versed in all sciences, first to articulate those steps that became

saw a gruel of parched barley (*sawq*) in the possession of 'Ali al-Jurjāni<sup>28</sup> who was picking at it. I said to him: what has made you do this? His reply: Between each picking and chewing I recited seventy praises (of God), and have not chewed bread for forty years." Behold how he carefully apportioned his time (lit. taken pity upon it) and did not waste it in chewing.

Every soul is a precious jewel of life that has no value (in itself), so one must distill from it a lasting unending store for the Hereafter by devoting himself to the *dhikr* of God and obedience to Him.

Among endeavors prevented by much eating is (a state of) continuous purity, (obliging one to) frequent the mosque (for prayer) because it (eating) requires exiting (the place of prayer) for drinking much water and quenching (of thirst). Fasting is another (store). Someone accustomed to enduring hunger finds it easy to fast, pray, practice seclusion (lit. resort to *itikaf*), maintain purity, and spend time away from food. Such inducements to worship yield much benefit. But those who are oblivious, that is the ones who do not appreciate the value of faith, and who are content with life in this world and are satisfied with it, would detest these (benefits). "They know only the outer (things) but of the end of things, they are heedless."<sup>29</sup>

Abu Sulaymān al-Dārāni mentions six sins resulting from satiation: the first, one loses the sweetness of contemplation; the second, one is prevented from retaining wisdom; the third, he is deprived of pity for created beings because when he is full he believes that they too are full; the fourth, worshipping becomes a burden (for him); the fifth, lusts increase; and the sixth, others tarry in

known as stations (*maqāmāt*) and to explain spiritual states (*ahwāl*) achieved along the path. He stated that the custom of God "is to let the hearts of those who love Him have vision of Him always, in order that the delight thereof may enable them to endure every tribulation." Hujwiri, *Kashf*; Schimmel, 53-54; Isbahāni, X, no. 469: 116-27.

28. Presumably 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 393/1002).

29. Koran, 30: 7.

mosques<sup>30</sup> while he moves around garbage piles (looking for more food).

The eighth benefit is in the soundness of body. It is achieved by eating less and warding off sickness caused by excessive food intake and by much mixing in stomach and veins.<sup>31</sup> Sickness detracts from acts of worship, impairs the (functioning of) the heart (*qalb*), prevents *dhikr* and thinking, increases the pressures on life, necessitates blood letting and cupping,<sup>32</sup> (recourse to) doctors and medicine. All this requires provision (money or payment in kind) and expenses which man cannot avoid after much striving to combat defiances and curb lusts. In hunger are the means for preventing all this.

It is told that al-Rashīd<sup>33</sup> gathered together four doctors: an Indian, a Greek, an Iraqi, and a Black. He told them: let each one of you describe the (cause of) disease that has no cure. The Indian replied: "for, me the incurable disease is (caused by) myrobalan (*al-Ihlilāj*);" the Iraqi replied: "it is the white seed of garden peppergrass (*habb al-rashād*);" the Greek said: "for me, it is hot water;" and the Black, who was the most knowledgeable among them, answered: "myrobalan, because it causes constipation for the stomach and this is a disease, while peppergrass renders the stomach slippery, which also is an ailment. Hot water loosens the stomach, and this too is an ailment." He (Harūn al-Rashīd) said to him: "what do you suggest?" And he (the Black doctor) replied: "I say that one should not eat so much food as would (make him) lust for more, and that he should stop (eating) while he is still in need of more." Harūn answered: "you are right."

30. Euphemism for manifesting acts of devotion.

31. Reference here is to the possibilities of harmful substances permeating the system through these two media.

32. Cupping for blood letting was a universal practice in the Middle East until recent times. The assumption is that by letting out "bad blood" the body is cured of what ails it.

33. Harūn, the famous caliph (786-809) whom scholars claim represented the golden age of achievement of the Abbasid caliphate, the epitome of an extravagant life style not in the least pleasing to the God-fearers of the time.

Addressing a certain philosopher and doctors<sup>34</sup> from the People of the Book,<sup>35</sup> Harūn related (to them) the saying of the Prophet (Muḥammad, pbuh): "a third (of food intake) is for nourishment, a third for drink, and a third is for (satisfying) the self." He (the doctor) was surprised and said: "I never heard words about food wiser than these. It is indeed the words of a wise man." He (the Prophet, pbuh) said: "gluttony is the cause of disease; dieting is a source of treatment, so train every body to (accept) what it has been accustomed (to accept)."<sup>36</sup> I (al-Ghazālī speaking) believe that the surprise of the doctor stemmed from this, not the other, saying.

Ibn Sālim<sup>37</sup> said: "he who eats the bread of pure wheat with propriety will be afflicted with no more than the affliction of death." When asked about propriety, he replied: "that you eat after being hungry, and stop before you are full."

An honorable doctor said in condemning excess that the best thing a man can put into his stomach is pomegranate, and the worst he can put in it is salt. Lessen the intake of salt; it is better than to increase the intake of pomegranate. There is a saying: "fast, for through fasting you can cure hunger."<sup>38</sup> In eating less the body is cured of

34. The Arabic word *hakīm*, used to connote this combination, has for basic meaning: *wise, enlightened*, a term that became synonymous for those who could diagnose ailments of the body and mind.

35. Title given to Christians, Jews and other worshippers of the one God whom Muslims also worshipped. They were considered possessing valid scriptures from the one and same God and thus entitled to respect and protection by Muslims as long as they paid the nominal capital tax (*jizyah*) and did not rebel.

36. No known source for this *hadīth*.

37. Abu al-Ḥasan Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad (d. ca. 360/970), a disciple of Sahl al-Tustari and founder of the school of mystical theologians named after him: al-Salīmīyah. He is often confused with his son, Abu 'Abdullah Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Baṣri, a companion of al-Tustari and transmitter of *hadīth* from him. See Sulami 79: 431-34. Sarrāj, *Luma'*, xix. Cf. Hujwiri, *Kashf*, 82.

38. Cited by al-Ṭabarāni in his *Awsaṭ* and by Dhahabi in his *al-Tibb al-Nabawi*, based on the *hadīth* transmitted by Abu Hurayrah but with weak *isnād*. Ghazālī, III: 87, n. 3.

sickness and the heart from the ailment of oppressiveness and excessiveness caused by other things.

The ninth benefit is in lessening the intake. He who eats less requires little money; but he who is accustomed to satiation becomes a constant debtor to his stomach, which has him by the throat every day asking him: "what will you eat today?" So he is obliged either to seek unlawful gain, and thus commit a crime, or (seek) lawful gain, and is thus humiliated. Perhaps he is compelled to extend imploring looks at people, which is an extreme form of humiliation and contemptibility.

The faithful require light provision. A certain wise man said: "I usually satisfy my needs through abandonment. It is more restful for my heart." Another said: "If I had to borrow from others to satisfy a lust or an excess, I would rather borrow from myself, thus abandoning lust, for it is the best debtor for me."

Ibrāhīm ibn Adham<sup>39</sup>, God rest his soul, used to ask his companions about the price of food; and when told that it was expensive, he would reply: "render it cheap by abandoning it." Sahl (al-Tustari), may God forgive him, said that food can be blamed in three situations: rendering a worshipper lazy, afflicting with evil (misfortune) the gainfully employed, and preventing the one who is (easily) affected from giving of himself freely to God Almighty.

In short, the cause of perdition for people is their possessive attitude toward the world; and the cause of their eagerness for things worldly lies in both the belly and the genitals; and the cause of the genital's lust is the lust of the stomach. So in reducing food intake, one finds barriers to all of these entries as they are the gateways to Hell; and

39. A prince of Balkh (d. 160/777; ca. 790 according to Schimmel, p.37) whose legendary conversion to Sufism was reminiscent of that of the Gautama Buddha. He abandoned his princely title and wealth and wandered around in extreme poverty and humility stressing the recollection of God (*dhikr*) and saying: "Thy love ... maketh it easier for me to obey thee ... ." To him "the recollection (*dhikr*) of God." Isbahāni, VII, no. 394: 367-400 and VIII, 3-58. See also Anṣārī, 56, n. 9 and Schimmel, 36-37.

in closing them, the gateways of Paradise are opened. He (the Prophet, pbuh) said: "persist in knocking on the gates of Heaven with hunger. He who is satisfied each day with a loaf of bread is immune from other lusts, is liberated, and is in no need of other people; he is immune to fatigue and is free to worship God, may He be glorified."

Trading (for) the Hereafter is (a preoccupation) by those who are not detracted by buying and selling from mentioning (the name of, i.e. *dhikr*) God. They are not detracted (therefrom) because they have no need for it and because they are content. He who is need of it, however, is detracted regardless (of the circumstance).

The tenth benefit is in being responsive and generous by giving food to orphans and to the poor so that on the Day of Resurrection one would dwell in the shade of His generosity in accordance with a tradition that states: "what one eats is stored in a public lavatory; and what one contributes is stored in the grace of God Almighty."<sup>40</sup> The servant does not possess other than what he contributes. If he hoards and eats, he is lost; if he clothes himself, he is afflicted. So being generous with surplus food is more commendable than (suffering) indigestion and satiation.

When repeating the words of God, "We did indeed offer the trust to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof. Man, however, undertook it and he was indeed unjust and foolish,"<sup>41</sup> al-Ḥasan, may God forgive him, interpreted it to signify that He offered it to the Seven Heavens, to match the paths which He adorned with stars and the bearers of the great Throne.<sup>42</sup> God, may He be praised and glorified,

40. Cited by al-Ḥakīm from *ḥadīth* attributed to 'Uqbah ibn 'Amir al-Juhani (d. 58/67-78), a companion of the Prophet, highly learned in Islamic teachings, an eloquent speaker, who once governed Egypt for Mu'awiyah (Umayyad caliph, 661-80). He is associated with the conquests west of Egypt and his shrine can be seen where he is buried in Qayrawān in lower Tunisia. Ghazālī, III: 88, n. 1; Dhahabi, I, no. 20: 42-43.

41. Koran, 33: 72.

42. Upon which, according to the Koran, the lord will be seated on the Day of Judgment to reward and punish.

asked: "will you bear this trust and all that attends it? and the heavens replied: "what is the reward?" He replied: "if you do good, you will be recompensed; and if you do wrong, you will be punished." They refused (the trust). So he offered it to the earth, and it, too, refused. Then He offered it to the tall, mighty and impregnable mountains saying: "will you bear this trust and what attends it?" They asked, "and what is the reward?" He mentioned both reward and punishment, and they said "No." Then He offered it to man, and he accepted, but he was an oppressor, ignorant of God's command.

We have seen them, by God, purchase this trust with their wealth and cause suffering to thousands; but what did they do with it? They expanded with it their power (lit. role), and narrowed thereby their tombs,<sup>43</sup> while fattening their work horses. They made a mockery of their faith and burdened themselves by running to and fro to the door of the sultan,<sup>44</sup> thus exposing themselves to affliction when they already enjoyed health from God.<sup>45</sup>

One of them says: "I would like to have this and that; bring me this or that" while reposing on the left<sup>46</sup> and eating from that which is not his. His attendants are charmers and his possessions unlawful. Were he to over indulge and become a victim of gluttony, he would say: "young man, bring me something with which I can digest my food!" How contemptible! "It is food you would digest

43. A euphemism for making the rewards of the Hereafter difficult for themselves.

44. Ingratiating themselves with the ruler for selfish gain. In the days of al-Ghazālī, the Great Selcuks were in power and he enjoyed a prestigious appointment from them as rector of the Nizāmīyah which their vizier had established in Baghdad. They were the first to make full use of the title "sultan" in reference to their authority, a mandate from the caliph.

45. God's greatest bequest to man according to Islam is twofold: good health and the capacity to be pious, the only two distinguishing factors between one Muslim and another.

46. Posture taken when eating in a reclined position on the floor, current until today among those who have preserved this nomadic custom, one not unfamiliar to the Romans.

when it is your faith that you should digest! How about the poor? What of the widow? Where is the destitute, or the orphan? those whom God Almighty commanded that you care for! (asks al-Ghazālī).

This (argument) is in reference to the benefit (deriving) from transferring the best food to the poor in order to build up store for reward (in the Hereafter) which is better than for one to consume (the would-be recompense) thus increasing his burdens.

The Messenger of God (pbuh) looked at a pot-bellied man and pointed to his stomach with his finger saying: "were it (stored) in other than this (your stomach), it would have been better for you;"<sup>47</sup> that is, it should have been sacrificed for the sake of the Day of Reckoning by benefiting someone else with it (excess food). Al-Hasan is alleged to have said: "I knew people among whom a man would pass a night with more food than he needed. Had he wished, he could have eaten it, but he would say, instead: by God, I will not have all of this for my stomach, rather I shall give God His due of it."

These are the ten benefits of hunger. From each derives countless other benefits whose rewards are endless. Hunger, then, is a great store for the rewards of the Hereafter. On account of it a righteous forefather once said "hunger is the key to the Hereafter and the gateway to piety, while satiation is the key to the world and the gateway to lust." This is clearly evident in the accounts that we have related. In knowing the details of these benefits, one perceives the meaning of these accounts, a realization based on cognition (*ilm*) and perception. If one is unaware of this and becomes righteous by virtue of hunger, he would be ranked among the imitators of the faith (*muqallidūn*). God knows best what is right.

47. Cited by Ahmad ibn Hanbal and al-Ḥakīm al-Nisābūrī in his *al-Mustadrak*; also by al-Bayhaqī in his *Shu'ub*, from *ḥadīth* attributed to Ju'dah al-Jashmi with good *isnād*. Ghazālī, III: 88, n.2.

## EXERCISING TO CURB THE LUST OF THE STOMACH

Let it be known that the *murīd* has four obligations as concerns both his stomach and what he eats. The first is that he should eat only what is lawful. To perform acts of worship while eating what is unlawful is like building upon the waves of the sea. We have mentioned what needs to be observed (in this regard) in the "Book on What is Lawful and Unlawful."<sup>1</sup> There are in addition three other obligations relating to eating: to assess the merit of food in terms of small and large quantities; to judge the pace (of eating) in slowness and hurriedness, and to determine what type of food to eat and what to avoid.

### Obligations to be Observed

The first obligation is to reduce intake of food and exercise to accomplish this (reduction) by steps. He who is accustomed to eating much, his temperament will not permit him suddenly to eat less. He would become weak and his suffering intensifies. He must build up to it gradually by reducing a little at a time his food intake. If he were in the habit of eating two loaves (of bread), for example, then seeks to accustom himself to eating one loaf, he should reduce his consumption by a fourth of seven loaves, that is one out of twenty-eight or one out of thirty portions in order to reach a consumption level of one loaf a month without harming himself in the process or suffering side effects. Should he choose, he might do it by weight or by estimation, that is, eating each day one portion less than the day before.

There are four steps in accomplishing this, the most

1. *Kitāb al-Ḥalāl wa 'l-Ḥarām* is Book 4 of the section related to Acts of Worship (*Ibādāt*), vol. II, 88-156 of Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

extreme being to master the capacity of being wakeful, which is imperative for him (the *murīd*), and which is also the manner of the truthful (*ṣiddīqīn*). It was also the choice of Sahl al-Tustari, may God be pleased with him, when he said that God imbued human beings with three (qualities): life, intelligence, and strength. Should the servant (of God) respect (lit., abide) two of these, that is life and intelligence, he eats or breaks the fast, if he is fasting, and obliges himself to ask for something should he be poor. If through strength he cannot avoid either, then he should not be concerned if he becomes (so) weak that he (is able to) pray(s) only from a sitting position. He (Sahl) preferred praying sitting up weakened by hunger over praying standing up satiated by much food.

Someone asked Sahl about how he got started (being a Sufi) and what he was accustomed to eating (as a *murīd*). He replied: "my consumption each year was three *dirham*'s worth. I would buy with one *dirham* molasses; with another, rice flour; and with the third, butter. I would mix it all together and make out of it little balls, three hundred and sixty of them. Every night I dined on one of the balls. "At what time?" he was asked. "At no set time," (he would answer). It is said that some monks could satisfy the self with one *dirham* of food.

The second step is to appease the self through training day and night (to accept) half a *mudd*,<sup>2</sup> which is a loaf (sic) and a bit more, equivalent to four (loaves) as a favor to it (the self). Most probably this is equivalent to one third of a stomach (full) for most people, according to the Prophet (pbuh) who did not concern himself with small mouthfuls. This is a form of the plural (of words) applied to a measure less than ten. It used to be the habit of 'Umar,<sup>3</sup> who would eat seven or nine mouthfuls.

2. Equivalent of a bushel or two pints. Today it is the equivalent of 500 grams or 1.1 pounds. The *mudd* is a form of measure equivalent to a bushel or two pints and can vary from country to country. Rev. J. G. Hava, *Al-Farā'id al-Durriyah [Arabic-English Dictionary]* (Beirut: Catholic Press), 1915, p. 712.

3. *Supra*, p. 41, n. 36.

The third step is to appease it (the stomach) to the limit, that is (letting it have) two loaves and a half, which is more than a third of a stomach for most people, approximating indeed two thirds of the stomach, thus leaving a third for drink and nothing for *dhikr*. In some expressions, "a third for *dhikr*" rather than his (pbuh) saying: "for the self."

The fourth step is to increase a *mudd* by a *mann*<sup>4</sup> which, if exceeded, would not be deemed over indulgence or contradicting God's words, "do not indulge (i.e., exceed the limits),"<sup>5</sup> which applies to most people. The need for food differs with age and the individual, as well as the work engaged in. We have here a fifth way that has no value because it is misplaced, namely that one should eat if his hunger is real and hold back if something truly appeals to him afterwards. Most probably he who does not apportion for himself a loaf or two would not discover the limit of true hunger and would resort to estimating this through false desire.

It has been said that true hunger has manifestations, one of which is for the body to reject the eating of condiments in favor of plain bread, any (kind of) bread, but with appetite. However much it covets bread with the eye, or seeks condiments, that is not the result of true hunger. It is also said that one of the signs (of hunger) is spitting without attracting flies, suggesting that the spittle has no grease or fat (in it). This would signal an empty stomach, although verifying it is uncertain.

What is proper for the *murīd* is that he should estimate for himself the amount which would not weaken him so much that he cannot perform (acts of) worship, which is his quest. Were he to attain it, he then should stop. But if his desire should persist, (then it must be assumed that) one cannot always estimate how much is proper to consume since it (the amount) varies according to conditions and individuals.

4. Weight of two rothls or ca. 10 lbs. (in Syria), little over 30 lbs. in Egypt. (Hava, 256). Neither weight would fit into their pattern of rationalization.

5. Part of verse, Koran 7: 31.



Certain companions (of the Prophet, pbuh) nourished themselves on one *sā'* of wheat. If they ate dates, they consumed a *sā'* and a half. A *sā'* of wheat is four *mudd*, thus averaging half a *mudd* each day. This, as said before, approximates a third (of the stomach's need). More dates are required because they are pitted.

Abu Dharr<sup>6</sup>, may God be pleased with him, used to say: "my food (need) every week since the days of the Messenger of God (pbuh) has been a *sā'* of barley. By God, whatever exceeded it by the slightest, I threw out." I heard him (the Prophet, pbuh) say: "he who dies in the state he enjoys today will be closer (to me) in rank and dearer to me on the Day of Resurrection."<sup>7</sup> In criticizing some of the companions he (the Prophet, pbuh) would say: "you have changed; barley is (now) sifted for you when it was never sifted before; it is baked into thin bread, combined with condiments; your menus have become varied; you arrive with one set of clothes and depart with another. This is not the way it was in the days of the Prophet (pbuh), when nourishment for the pious consisted of one *mudd*<sup>8</sup> of pitted dates per day for each two (individuals)."<sup>9</sup>

Al-Ḥasan, may God be pleased with him, would say: "the faithful (one), like a small goat, is content with a handful of grass and a pinch of dates and a swallow of water, while the hypocrite is like a wild beast; he gobbles up food in huge quantities without satisfying his stomach. He does not curb his appetite for the sake of his neighbor,<sup>10</sup> nor bestows upon his brother from his generosity. Be generous with such surpluses!" Sahl (al-Tustari) used to say: "if the

6. Jundub ibn Jumāda al-Ghifāri, one of the *ahl al-Suffa*, whom the Prophet (pbuh) urged to eat when he had weakened his body by fasting and aroused the concern of his wife. Ḥujwiri, *Kashf*, 81 and 344; Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, IV: 219-37.

7. This *hadīth* is attributed to Aḥmad (ibn Hanbal), cited in his *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, and by Iṣbahāni on his authority. Ghazālī, III: 90, n.1.

8. In the text, the *mudd* is defined as consisting of one *rotl* and a third.

9. Cited by al-Ḥakīm with verification of its *isnād* by Ṭalḥah al-Baṣri. Ghazālī, III: 90, n. 2.

10. Implication: he consumes more than necessary when there might not be enough to go around.

world consisted of flowing blood streams, it would be lawful nourishment for the faithful because the food of the faithful by necessity is judged only by his need to maintain himself (in his state of worship)."

The second obligation concerns the time of eating and the length of its postponement. It, too, has four levels; the highest is to allow three days or more. Some *murīds*, however, would approach their exercises with intention not quantity, up to thirty or forty days. Among the *ulema* who reached the limit are Muḥammad ibn 'Amru al-Qarni, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ibrāhīm, Dāhim and Ibrāhīm al-Tamīmī, Ḥajjāj ibn Farāfisah, Ḥafs al-'Ābid al-Mas-sīsi, al-Muslim ibn Sa'īd, Zuhayr and Sulaymān al-Khaw-wās.<sup>11</sup> Abu Bakr al-Siddīq,<sup>12</sup> may God be pleased with him, used to take six days while 'Abdallah ibn al-Zubayr,<sup>13</sup> seven; as did also Abu 'l-Jawz, a companion of Ibn al-'Abbās.<sup>14</sup> It was related that al-Thawri<sup>15</sup> and Ibrāhīm ibn Adham each used to take three times as much. They relied on hunger to pave the way for themselves to the Hereafter.

One of the *ulema* claimed that "power descends from heaven upon the one who endures forty days (of hunger)

11. Biographies on most of these men can be derived from Ibn Hajar's *al-Iṣābah fi Tamyiz al-Ṣahābah*; al-Suyūti's *Tabaqāt al-Huffāz*; al-Dahabi, *Tadhkirat al-Huffāz*, and other compendia besides individual references in *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, new ed.)

12. Second caliph, 632-34, father of 'Ā'ishah.

13. He laid claim to the caliphate, urged on by his mother Asmā' sister of 'Ā'ishah, but was defeated and slain (692) by al-Ḥajjāj, leader of the Umayyad force out of Syria, then ruling from Damascus, and his brief tenure most of Arabia, parts of Syria, Egypt and Iraq came abruptly to a halt. Hitti, 192-093.

14. *Supra*, p. 35, n. 2.

15. Abu 'Abdallah Sufyān ibn Sa'īd (b. Kūfa 97/715 and d. Baṣra 161/778). He was a ranking 'ālim, *muhaddith*, and a highly regarded ascetic who moved in the circle of Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham. He stressed poverty and founded a school of jurisprudence that lasted about two centuries. Having defied the authorities, Sufyān was forced into hiding in Mecca. 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat*, 129. For samples of his wisdom, see Sulami, 13, *seq.*

for the sake of God.” It is certain that heavenly secrets would be revealed to him. It is related that such a person (once) encountered a monk and discussed with him his state (*ḥāl*), suggesting that he (the monk) might wish to adopt Islam and abandon the state that he (himself) was in. He talked to him much about it, and the monk told him that Christ used to spend forty days (fasting), a miracle reserved only to a prophet or a righteous believer. The Sufi replied: “if I should (fast) for fifty days, would you abandon the state you are in and accept Islam as the (true) faith and concede that it is the truth while the state you are presently in is false?” “Yes,” answered the monk. The Sufi sat without moving (from the same spot) so that the monk could see him until he passed the fiftieth day fasting, then added: “I will increase it for you,” continuing (his fast) for a full sixty days. The monk was astonished and said: “I never believed that anyone could surpass Christ!” And that was the reason he converted to Islam.

This is a great attainment, equalled by very few who have not received revelation or have been totally absorbed in the vision (of God) to the point of becoming separated from their own nature and habits and so taken up by the ecstasy that they would forget hunger and need (physical).

The second step is to spend up to two or three days (fasting), which is not abnormal, indeed attainable by earnest striving. The third step, which is the lowest, is to be content with one meal per day and night. This is the minimum; anything exceeding it is indulgence and commitment to satiation and the absence of a state of hunger. Such is the way of those who seek comfort, which is a departure from the *sunnah*. Abu al-Saʿīd al-Khudrī<sup>16</sup> recounted that when the Prophet (pbuh) took his evening meal he did not have lunch (before then) and if he did take lunch he would not have dinner.<sup>17</sup> The forefathers would consume (only) one meal per day. The Prophet (pbuh) told

16. *Supra*, p 35, n. 6..

17. No original source for this *ḥadīth* as related by al-Khudrī. Ghazālī, III 91, n. 1.

‘Ā’ishah: “do not indulge; two meals a day are excessive; one every two days (leads to) enfeeblement; one meal a day suffices for sustenance, is both proper and the right balance.”<sup>18</sup> It is also lauded in the book of God (Koran), may He be praised and glorified.

He who confines himself to one meal a day and chooses to eat it early in the morning, at dawn or before day break, or right after awakening in the morning, will be able to sustain the hunger of the day for fasting and that of the night for wakefulness. An empty stomach renders the heart free, thoughts tender, and (enables) the self to experience the convergence of energy and tranquility, for it would not contend with him before his appointed prayer time.

‘Āshim ibn Kulayb<sup>19</sup> was told by his father, as relayed by Abu Hurayrah, that “the Prophet (pbuh) never stayed up the way you do even though he stood until his feet were swollen; nor did he persevere as you do although he did delay breaking the fast until dawn.”<sup>20</sup> ‘Ā’ishah related that the Prophet (pbuh) persisted until dawn.<sup>21</sup>

If the heart of someone fasting should be distracted by food after sunset and prevented from concentrating on prayer, it is preferable that he divide food into two portions; if it consists of two loaves, for example, then he should eat one to end his fasting, and another at dawn to quiet the self and lighten the body for night prayers without being made to experience intense hunger during

18. Cited by al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿub* with weak *isnād*. Ghazālī, III: 91, n.2.

19. Ibn Shihāb al-Jarmī, died in the early years of ‘Abbāsīd Manṣūr’s caliphate (ca. 137-39/754-57). Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, IV/2, 341.

20. *Ḥadīth* conveyed in abridged form by al-Nisā’ī but with good *isnād*. Ghazālī, III: 91, n.3.

21. Not found as such but can be traced to a broader *ḥadīth* “whoever wishes to persist, let him do so until dawn” cited by Abu ‘Abdullah al-Bukhārī *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Cairo: Sabīh, n.d.), III, chapter 51, 188: 106-7, on the authority of Abu Saʿīd’s narration: “as for him (the Prophet), he used to persist, which is one of his attributes.” Ghazālī, III, 91: n. 4.

the day. One loaf helps him at dawn, the other contributes to his fasting (during the day). It is acceptable for someone who fasts a whole day and breaks the fast another (day) to eat during the day when he breaks the fast at noon and the day of fasting at dawn. These paths are within the time frame of eating or avoiding (it) and abstaining.

The third obligation concerns types of food (to be eaten) and the avoidance of condiments. The choicest food is the kernel of wheat, which if sifted is extremely delicious. The middle type is sifted barley, and the lowest is unsifted barley. The best of condiments is meat; the worst, salt and vinegar; in between, trimmings and fat without meat.

It is not unusual (lit., customary) for those (proceeding) on the path to the Hereafter<sup>22</sup> to abstain from condiments altogether; indeed, from all appetites. Every sweetmeat coveted and consumed by man enfeebles the self and hardens the heart. He is attracted to the delights of the world, grows accustomed to them and oblivious to death and meeting God Almighty. The world becomes his Paradise and death a prison for him. Were he to deny the self its desires or curb them, in so doing he would strip it (the self) of its delights rendering the world a prison and (a form of) confinement for it. The self would seek to escape, and death becomes its release.

With regard to this (argument) we cite Yahya ibn Mu'adh<sup>23</sup> who proclaimed: "O ye who are righteous suffer hunger (in preparation) for the feast of Paradise." The lust for food is in proportion to the degree of the self's hungering. All that which we have mentioned concerning the evils of satiation applies to eating what one desires and to partaking of delights. So we shall not prolong discussion by repeating them.

Rewards are greater in abandoning desires, even if lawful, and danger is greater in partaking of them. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "the wicked among my people are

22. Reference here is to a Sufi engaged in the exercises required along the path to *fanā'* and *baqā'*.

23. Al-Rāzi, See p.42, n.43.

those who eat the kernel of wheat."<sup>24</sup> This in itself is not forbidden; rather, it is permissible in that he who eats it once or twice does not commit a defiance, nor does one who continues to do so (i.e. to eat). The self, however, is accustomed to luxury and is drawn to the world and its delights, demanding more of the same. This is what induces it (the self) to (commit) defiances. These are the evil members of the community, because this kernel of food leads to committing defiances, which is at the root of the matter.

The Prophet (pbuh) said: "the most evil among my people are those who have been nourished by luxury, upon which their bodies are built; who are preoccupied with all kinds of food and clothing, and who choke on their words (lit. speech.)"<sup>25</sup>

God Almighty inspired Moses (pbuh) to believe that he dwells in a tomb, thus helping (him) to bypass many desires. Forefathers were afraid to partake of tasty food and accustom the self to it. They saw in that a sign of hardship, and in God Almighty forbidding it (a sign of) happiness.

Wahb ibn Munabbih<sup>26</sup> related that two kings met in the fourth heaven. One said to the other: "where are you from?" The other replied: "I was commanded to fetch a fish from the sea which a certain Jew, God curse him, desired." The former retorted: "I was ordered to fetch oil which a certain worshipper desired." In this is a warning that to make easy that which leads to pleasure is not a sign of

24. No original can be found for this *ḥadīth*. Ghazālī, III: 92, n 1.

25. Cited by Ibn 'Adiy in his *al-Kāmil* and relayed by al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ub al-Imān* based on *ḥadīth* attributed to Fātimah, the daughter of al-Ḥusayn (Prophet's grandson). According to al-Dārāqutni's *Tal*, it is close to being accurate. Isbahāni also cited it on the authority of 'Ā'ishah with acceptable *isnād*. Ghazālī, III: 92, n. 2.

26. Abu 'Abdallah, known as *al-Ḥāfiẓ* (the memorizer, i.e., of *ḥadīth*) and as author of the semi-legendary literature and accounts. He was a leading 'ālim of Yemen, born in Ṣan'ā' 34/654. His father came from Herat with the Persian expedition that conquered Yemen, adopting Islam in the days of the Prophet and dying in Ṣan'ā' in 728. Hitti, 50; Dhahabi, I, no. 93: 100-01. Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣābah*, IV, no. 250: 23-81.

prosperity. It is on account of this that 'Umar<sup>27</sup> denied himself a cold drink of water (mixed) with honey saying (to the one offering it): "take it away!" There is no greater (expression of) devotion to God Almighty than to deny the self its lusts and abandon delights, which we have discussed in our book "Riyādat al-Nafs" (Training the Self).<sup>28</sup>

Nāfi<sup>29</sup> related that the son of 'Umar<sup>30</sup> told him that he was ill and asked (him) for a fresh fish. "I looked in Medina," (said he) "but did not find any. Later I found one and bought it for him for a *dirham* and a half. I grilled it and took it to him on a loaf of bread. A bearer came (with it) to the gate. He ordered the servant to wrap it in the loaf and give it to him. The servant said to him (ibn 'Umar): may God set you straight; you wanted it (the fish) for so long and we could not find it; then when you found it, we bought it for a *dirham* and a half; so we should pay him its price; his reply: wrap it and give it to him! The servant asked the bearer: would you take a *dirham* for it? and he answered, yes. So he gave (him) the *dirham* and took it from him. He (ibn 'Umar) told him (the servant): wrap it up and give it back to him (the bearer) and do not take the *dirham* (back) from him, for I have heard the Messenger of God (Muḥammad, pbuh) say: whoever experiences a desire, suppresses it, and influences the self positively, God will forgive him."<sup>31</sup>

27. Presumably the first, the caliph from 634 to 644. 'Umar II, the Umayyad caliph, 717-20, was recognized as a pious man. For more details, see Hitti, 219-22.

28. Full title: "Riyādat al-Nafs wa tahdhīb al-Akhlāq." Book 2 of the section relating to "al-Muhlikāt" of *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. Vol. III: 48-78.

29. Abu 'Abdallah al-'Adawīy al-Madani, known as "al-Imām al-'Ālim", relayed much *hadīth* from his master, 'Umar's son and many of the most trustworthy transmitters including 'Ā'ishah and Abu Hurayrah. Bukhārī considered his *isnād* the most verifiable of all. Dhahabi, I, 92: 99-100.

30. Presumably 'Abdallah, known for his piety and enjoying the Prophet's favor. Isbahāni, II, no. 92: 7.

31. Cited by Abu al-Shaykh ibn Ḥabbān in his *Kitāb al-Thawāb* but with very weak *isnād*. Citation comes from ibn al-Jawzi's *al-Mawḍū'āt*. Ghazālī, III: 92, n.3.

He (the Prophet, pbuh) also said: "if one appeases the dog (sic) of hunger with a loaf and a small jug of pure water, catastrophe will befall the world and its inhabitants."<sup>32</sup> The aim behind this (appeasement) as the Prophet (pbuh) pointed out, is to ward off the pain of hunger and thirst and to avert the ill-effects of both without enjoying the delights of the world.

'Umar (pbuh) learned that Yazid ibn Abi Sufyān<sup>33</sup> used to eat all sorts of food. 'Umar said to one of his attendants: "when you hear that his supper has been brought to him, let me know!" He did so. 'Umar entered upon him (Yazid) at suppertime and sat close to him. Soup and meat were offered, and 'Umar dined with him. When it came time to thank him, Yazid stretched out his hand but 'Umar did not respond saying, "By God, by God, O Yazid, son of Abi Sufyān, when my soul is in His (God's) hands) and when you are turned away from the ways of the ones you defy (the righteous) would you enjoy meals such as this one?"

It is related that Yasār ibn 'Umayr<sup>34</sup> (once) said: "I never sifted flour for 'Umar without being in defiance of him." He also related that 'Utbah al-Ghulam<sup>35</sup> used to knead flour (into dough), dry it in the sun, then eat it saying, "a small piece and a bit of salt to make ready for grilling (of meats) and the good food in the Hereafter." He would take a jar and scoop it with seed lying in the sun the whole day. A female servant would say to him: "O 'Abdallah, if you give me your flour I will bake it for you and cool your water

32. Cited by al-Daylami in his *Musnad* from *hadīth* attributed to Abu Hurayrah but with weak *isnād*, Ghazālī, III: 92, n. 4.

33. Head of the oligarchy of Quraysh at the time of the Prophet's mission. He opposed Muḥammad and persecuted those who accepted Islam. He finally succumbed to the new faith with the fall of Mecca in 630. His older son Yazid, brother of Mu'āwiyah, later (in 661) founder of the Umayyad caliphate at Damascus, was a military commander in the Muslim conquests of Byzantine Syria in 636 while Mu'āwiyah served as standard bearer.

34. There is no cited information on him; there is however reference to Yāsir ibn 'Ammār, a *muhaddith*, cited by compilers or editors of *hadīth* works.

35. Ibn Abbān. Isbahāni, VI, no. 327: 226-38.

for you;" but his reply to her was: "O mother of so and so (the name of the son not known to the author), I have warded off the dog of hunger from myself."

Shaqīq ibn Ibrāhīm<sup>36</sup> said: "I encountered Ibrāhīm ibn Adham in Mecca at the night bazaar during the Prophet's (pbuh) birthday sitting on the curb of a street weeping. I approached him, sat down next to him, and asked, repeating once, twice and three times: what is this crying about, O Abi Iṣḥāq? He replied: O Shaqīq, do not embarrass me! I said to him: O brother, say whatever you wish! He answered: for thirty years I have desired a stew cooked with vinegar and was able through my effort to control it (this desire) until yesterday when, while sitting, sleep overcame me and behold a young man (before me) with a green goblet in his hand from which steam was rising, and the odor of stew! I called upon all my strength to ward it (temptation) off, but he (the lad) insisted, saying: O Ibrāhīm, eat! No, I will not eat, I said, because I have given this (the stew) up for the sake of God, may He be glorified. But God has given you to eat, so eat! was his answer. Since I had no reply, I wept. He said to me: eat, may God be merciful with you! and I replied: we have been enjoined to place in our containers (stomachs?) only that which its origins we know. He replied: eat, may God give you strength, for I have granted it unto you! I was told: O Khidr,<sup>37</sup> take it and feed it to Ibrāhīm ibn Adham's self for the sake of God, who has sanctioned it on account of its long patience and enduring what it had been denied. Know, O Ibrāhīm, that I have heard the angels say: he who gives and does not make a request will not receive. I replied: if that is the case, then here I am (lit., between your hands), ready to enter a covenant with God Almighty. He then turned and behold, I was with another young

36. Of Balkh (d. 184/801), among the first to describe the mystical state of trust in God, or *tawakkul*; in his writings appear for the first time the earliest formal system of self-discipline. Arberry, *Mystics*, 38-40; Schimmel, 38 seq.; Iṣbahāni, VIII, no. 395: 58-73.

37. The Islamic reference to the Prophet Elijah.

person who had been handed something and told: O Khidr (symbolic reference) you feed it to him! and he kept on feeding me until I became sleepy, and its taste remained in my mouth." Shaqīq continued, "I said to him: let me see your palm! He stretched out his palm to me and I accepted it saying: O you who grants the hungry his desire in justification of (his) abstinence; you who grants assuredness to conscience and cures the heart through love, do you see for Shaqīq, your servant, a state (*hāl*)? I then lifted Ibrāhīm's hand to heaven and said: by the deference of this palm (stretched) before You, grant this poor servant (Shaqīq) of Your generosity, benefaction and mercy, even if he does not deserve it! Ibrāhīm rose and walked until we reached home."

It has been told that Mālik ibn Dīnār<sup>38</sup> spent forty years yearning for milk, but would not have it. One day he was given fresh (milk). He said to his companions: "drink it, for we have not tasted it for forty years!"

Ahmad ibn Abi al-Hawri<sup>39</sup> said that Abu Sulaymān al-Dārāni<sup>40</sup> desired a hot loaf with salt and I brought it to him; he took a bite from it then cast it aside and began to weep saying: "I hastened to satisfy my desire after a long resistance and distress (*shaqwa*) and am now determined to atone (for it), so belittle me!" Ahmad went on to say: "before he had finished eating the salt he met the Lord (died)."

Mālik ibn Daygham<sup>41</sup> said: "I passed through the bazaar of Baṣra and looked at the vegetables; my self (*nafs*) said to me: if only you would feed me one night of this! I swore (instead) not to feed it (vegetables) for forty nights." Mālik ibn Dīnār spent fifty years without eating any greens from

38. *Supra*, p. 42, n. 41.

39. Known as Maymūn abu Ḥasan (d. 230/844-45): he was from Damascus, a companion of Abu Sulaymān al-Dārāni and such *shaykhs* as Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah and Marwān ibn Mu'āwiyah and was respected for his asceticism and piety. Sulami, 88-90. Jāmi (65) quotes Junayd who referred to him as the "*Rayhanat al-Shām*" (Sweet Basil of Damascus). Iṣbahāni, no. X: 457, 5-33.

40. *Supra*, p. 43, n. 45.

41. A contemporary of Mālik ibn Dīnār.

the people of Baṣra, not even a bit, declaring: "O people of Baṣra, I have lived among you for fifty years without eating a tiny morsel of vegetables; this has not made you richer, nor me poorer; for I have been divorced from the world for fifty years, forty of which my self has desired food and by God I would not feed it; not even for the sake of the Almighty."

Hammād ibn Abi Hanīfah<sup>42</sup> related that he called on Da'ūd al-Ṭā'i<sup>43</sup> and found his door closed. "I overheard him say to himself: you have desired a carrot, and I fed you carrots, then you desired dates, and I recommended that you do not eat dates ever. I greeted him and entered and found him alone."

Abu Ḥātim<sup>44</sup> one day passed through the bazaar and saw fruit; he desired it; so he said to his son: "buy for us some of this forbidden fruit that we might journey to the fruit that is not forbidden!" When he (the son) bought it and brought it to him, he said to himself: "you have enticed me into buying it, but by God I will not let you taste it." He sent it to the poor orphans instead.

Someone related that Mūsa ibn al-Ashajj once said: "my self has craved coarse salt for twenty years." Aḥmad ibn Khalīfah is alleged to have maintained that his self wanted in twenty years only water to quench its thirst but he would not give it to drink. It was also said that 'Utbah ibn Ghulām coveted meat for seven years, but when it (his self) continued to yearn for it, "I was ashamed to resist it

42. A renowned ascetic of the first order, contemporary of Ibn Adham. Jāmi, 41.

43. Abu Sulaymān Da'ūd ibn Nuṣayr, one of the leading Sufi *shaykhs* equal to Fudayl ibn Iyād and Ibrāhīm ibn Adham in his piety, who gave up his leading position as a *faqīh* (jurisconsult) in preference for the life of seclusion after declaring to a disciple, "if you wish peace, then bid the world farewell (i.e., withdraw therefrom). Jāmi, 41; Sulami, 75; Isbahāni, VII, no. 393: 335-67.

44. Confused also for Abu Ḥāzim. Abu Ḥātim al-ʿAṭṭār al-Baṣri, a companion of the early ascetics who excelled in piety and the fear of God, of the Khorasanian school. Sulami, 136. Probably, the reference is to Abu 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥātim al-Aṣamm, cf. Isbahāni, VIII, no. 396: 73-83.

year after year, so I bought a piece of meat on bread, grilled it, and left it on the loaf. I found a boy and asked (him): are you not the son of so and so whose father has died? Yes, he replied; so I handed it to him."

They say that he began to weep while reciting: "and they feed the poor and the orphan and the captive with food for the love of Him."<sup>45</sup> He never tasted meat after that, but he continued to crave dates for two years. One day he bought a *qīrāt*<sup>46</sup> of date and saved it for the night in order to break his fast with it. But a very strong wind blew and the world turned dark. People were frightened and 'Utbah began to blame himself saying, "this is my punishment for buying a *qīrāt* of date," and addressing his self he continued, "I believe people are critical on account of you and you are not going to taste it!"

Da'ūd al-Ṭā'i bought greens with half a *fals*<sup>47</sup> (or *fil*) and spent his whole life saying to himself, "woe unto thee O Da'ūd; how long your account will be on the Day of Judgement!" After that he would eat only unseasoned food. 'Utbah al-Ghulām said one day to 'Abd al-Wāhid ibn Zayd:<sup>48</sup> "so and so described a stage<sup>49</sup> which he had experienced and I had not, saying: it is because you eat dates with your bread while he eats only bread." I asked, "were I to stop eating dates would I experience that stage?" "Yes," he answered, "and even more!" He ('Utbah) began to weep. One of his companions said to him: "has God caused you to shed tears over dates?" to which 'Abd al-Wāhid replied: "leave him alone; his self recognizes the truthfulness of his intention in abandoning (something), for he is one who should he abandon something he would not take it up again."

45. Koran, 2: 177.

46. Carat, equivalent in weight to four grains of carobs. In terms of monetary value, it is equivalent to one-twenty-fourth of a *dīnār*.

47. A small copper coin, equivalent to a penny as the smallest unit of currency.

48. Ansāri, 96: 112.

49. Sufi term for level of spiritual attainment while conducting self-disciplinary exercises on the path to attaining gnosis.

Ja'far ibn Naṣr<sup>50</sup> related that Junayd<sup>51</sup> had ordered him to purchase Wazīri<sup>52</sup> figs for him. When he bought them, he (Junayd) took one at breakfast and put it in his mouth, then cast it out and began to weep telling Ja'far to take them away. "I asked him why?" and he replied: "because a voice whispered into my heart: are you not ashamed? you abandoned it for my sake (God's) then you returned to it (eating figs)!"

Ṣāliḥ al-Murri<sup>53</sup> (once) declared: "I told 'Atā' al-Sulami:<sup>54</sup> I am going to give you something and do not reject my offer! to which he replied: do as you please! He (Ṣāliḥ) said: I sent him a drink with my son made from *sawiq*<sup>55</sup> with which I had mixed butter and honey and told him (the son) not to leave until he had drunk it. Next morning I took it to him but he returned it to me without drinking it. I rebuked him and blamed him for that saying: praise be to God, you have rejected my generosity! When he noticed how serious I was, I urged him not to be offended (because) I had drunk it the first time and coaxed

50. Known as al-Khuldi, an authority on his contemporaries, like Junayd, and teacher of some; noted as a Koran memorizer and transmitter of the Prophet's sayings. Sulami, 537; Anṣārī, 155 and 184.  
51. Ibn Muḥammad al-Junayd, of Baghdad (d. 298/910), recognized in subsequent times as the "shaykh of the order," i.e., of the entire Sufi movement on account of the erudite manner of his defending when under siege the erratic behavior of the so-called drunken Sufis. He gained respectability for it at a time when Islamic mysticism was evolving into an articulate movement. He took the Islamic *ulema's* conception of *tawḥīd* (proclaiming the unicity of God) and gave it the classical definition of "separating the Eternal from that which was created in time." Qushayrī, 3 and 136; Hujwīrī, 281. See also Arberry, *Sufism*, 57-59; Iṣbahānī, X, no. 571: 255-87.

52. High quality, from southern Iraq.

53. Ibn Bushayr, transmitter of *ḥadīth*, and so moving a reciter of the Koran that one Abu Juhayr, a follower of the Prophet's companions, uttered an intense sigh and dropped dead after hearing al-Murri recite verses from the Koran to him. Sulami, 281 and 322; Iṣbahānī, VI, no. 357: 165-77.

54. A *ḥadīth* narrator who dwelt on *Karāmāt*, "blessings" in rewards from God to those who attained the highest level of spiritual striving. Sulami, 322.

55. A gruel of parched barley.

myself to drink it the second time, but to no avail. Whenever I so wished, I would remember the words of God: He drinks it in gulps but is unable to swallow it,<sup>56</sup> whereupon Ṣāliḥ said: I wept and told myself: I am in one chasm and you are in another!"

Sari al-Saqatī<sup>57</sup> once declared: "for thirty years my self has been urging me to dip a carrot in molasses and I would not respond to it."

Abu Bakr al-Jallā<sup>58</sup> once said: "I know a man whose self told him: I will be patient for thy sake up to ten days; after that feed me what I desire! His reply: I don't want you to wait ten days. I want you to abandon this desire!"

Someone related that an ascetic invited one of his brethren and offered him loaves (of bread). The brother began to sort through them to pick the best. The ascetic said to him: "what are you doing? Don't you know that in the loaf that you reject there is such wisdom and labor (invested in its making)? So many people have labored on it until it became round (the loaf's shape), from the cloud that bears water, the water that gives the earth to drink, besides the winds, the earth, animals and man until it reached you! And after all this you start to sort through them and are not satisfied!"

There is a saying that a loaf does not become round (fully formed) to be placed between your hands except after three hundred and sixty work on it.<sup>59</sup> First among them is Michael (the Archangel) who measures out water from the stores of (God's) mercy; then the angels who draw the

56. Koran, 14:17.

57. Lit., "the huckster," Ibn al-Mughallis, known as Abu Ḥ-Hasan. It is said that he was the maternal uncle of al-Junayd and his teacher, a companion of Ma'rūf al-Karkhi and first to talk about *tawḥīd* in Baghdad where he was from, and head of the sufi *shaykhs* of that city; most of the second category of *shaykhs* (historical reference) are his associates. He died 251/ca. 867 after an illustrious career as a mystic and relayer of *ḥadīth*. Sulami, 41-48; Schimmel, 53-55; Iṣbahānī, X, no. 469: 116-27.

58. Also known as Abu 'Abdallah Aḥmad ibn Yahya. Iṣbahānī, X, no. 585: 314-15.

59. No source can be found for this *ḥadīth*.

clouds, the sun, moon, and heavenly bodies; the angels of the skies and the beasts of burden on earth; and lastly, the baker. "If you count up the favors of God, never would you be able to remember them."<sup>60</sup>

Someone said: "I came upon Qāsīm al-Jaw'ī<sup>61</sup> and asked: what is piety? He answered: what did you hear about it? I recounted to him the sayings (thereon) and he fell silent. I asked him: and what do you say? He replied: know ye that the stomach is the world of the servant; to the extent that he controls his stomach, he gains piety; and to the extent that his stomach possesses him, the world possesses him."

Bishr al-Hārith<sup>62</sup> fell ill one day. 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn al-Muttayīb<sup>63</sup> came to him to ask for something appropriate to eat. He said (to him): "you ask me, but if I recommend something, you won't accept it from me." He told him to describe it, and Bishr said to him: "drink *sakanjabīn*<sup>64</sup> and suck on quince then eat afterwards *isfīzbāj* (sic)."<sup>65</sup> Bishr asked: "do you know anything less that can substitute for *sakanjabīn*?" He (al-Muttayīb) replied: "I do! "What is it", he asked. "Dandelion with

60. Koran, 16: 18.

61. Al-Qāsīm ibn 'Uthmān. Iṣbahānī, IX, no. 453: 322-24.

62. Bishr ibn al-Hārith al-Hāfi (the bare-footed one—he considered shoes to be one of the impediments to reaching God; d. 227/941) of Merv who according to his own account of himself started as a rogue or gangster before being called by God to a life of piety and dedication to asceticism. He is the early articulator of the doctrine of "indifference," i.e., not being concerned about what others say; indeed, he preferred that others believe what they will, even if it meant contriving to let them acquire it. His teachings foreshadowed what became known as the "Malāmatīyah" movement (i.e., invoke the blame of others upon yourself as the medium for attaining the forgiveness of God). For more, see Iṣbahānī, VIII, no. 435: 336-60. and Schimmel, 37-38.

63. Also known as 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Ṭabīb. Ghazālī, III: 94.

64. Consists of two Persian words: *sarkah* and *ankabin*, a drink of vinegar and honey (the meaning of the two words) by which "Sweet and sour" is intended. Al-Bustānī, *Muḥīt*, 976.

65. Apparently misspelled in the edition utilized; most likely *asfinaj* (spinach) is intended. The word reached the Persian and thence the Arabic via the Greeks.

vinegar," he replied. Again he asked: "do you know anything less than quince which can substitute for it?" "Yes," he replied. "What is it?" he asked. "Syrian carob," was his reply. "Do you know anything less than *isfīdbaj* (*asfinaj*?) which can substitute for it?" I asked. "No," he answered but added: "the water of the chick pea mixed with the fat of the well-fed cow, or something like it." Whereupon 'Abd al-Rahmān said to him: "you know more than I do about medicine, so why do you ask me?"

Through this I learned that these people have refrained from every delight and satiation involving food for the sake of the benefits mentioned before. And when at times what is lawful was not available to them, only in cases of extreme necessity did they yield to *shahawāt* (cravings) not regarded as necessities, to the extent that Abu Sulaymān (al-Dārānī) declared: "salt is a craving because it is superfluous to bread, beyond which is excessive craving."

Such is the limit; and he who is not capable of staying within it, must not be oblivious to the self, nor indulge appetites. It suffices someone to eat all what he desires and do all that pleases the self, but he must not persist in eating meat. 'Ali, God be pleased with him, said: "he who abandons meat for forty days his manners would worsen and he who continues to eat meat for forty days his heart would harden."

It is said that constant eating of meat is as harmful as (drinking) wine. Regardless of how much one might hunger and yearn for coitus, he must not indulge or partake of coitus when, (in so doing) he would be granting the self two appetites to overpower it. It is likely that the self might require food to gain strength for coitus, but it is preferable that one does not go to sleep with a full stomach thus combining two foolish acts and becoming accustomed to listlessness, which again causes the heart to harden. So let that person pray or sit and mention the name of God Almighty because it is nearer to gratefulness.

It is stated in the *Hadīth* that one should dilute food with *dhikr* and prayer, and sleep not on food so as not to cause



the heart to harden.<sup>66</sup> The lesser (choice) is to perform four prostrations (ritual prayer), recite one hundred praises (of God)<sup>67</sup> or read a section of the Koran in compensation for each meal (forsaken).

Whenever Sufyān al-Thawri<sup>68</sup> was satiated for one night, he passed it in prayer; or for one day, he passed it continuously in prayer and *dhikr*. One time he would say: "compensate (lit. satisfy) the black man for his toil;" another time he would say: "compensate the donkey for its toil." However much one desires some food and delicious fruit, he must forsake bread and eat only fruit, so it would be for his nourishment and not for pleasure, in order to avoid causing the self to combine a habit with an appetite.

Sahl (al-Tustari) saw Ibn Sālim<sup>69</sup> with bread and dates in his hand and told him to start with dates; if it is enough, then he should stop; otherwise, take only as much bread as needed. Whenever one encounters delectable and coarse food, let him give preference to the delectable, for he would not choose the coarse after that. Were one to eat the coarse first, he would still want the delectable because of its good taste.

A certain companion used to say to others: "do not eat what your appetites crave; but if you do, do not seek it again. Should you desire it once more, do not acquire a taste for it." He asked for a certain kind of bread because he craved it. 'Abdallah,<sup>70</sup> the son of 'Umar, may God be pleased with both of them, said: "we get no better fruit from Iraq than bread." He looked upon bread as fruit.

All in all, there is no need to prevent the self from craving when pursuing what is lawful (*mubāḥ*) and the like under all circumstances. However, for the servant (of God) who responds to his cravings it is feared that he would be told

66. Traced to 'Ā'ishah with weak *isnād* and cited by al-Ṭabarāni and also by ibn al-Sunni in his *al-Yawm wa l-Laylah*. Ghazāli, III, 95, n. 1.

67. Presumably with the aid of the *masbahah*, Muslim rosary used for reciting the ninety-nine beautiful names of the Lord.

68. *Supra*, p. 67, n. 15.

69. *Supra*, p. 58, n. 37.

70. For more on him, see, Iṣbahāni, II, no. 93: 57.

on the Day of Resurrection: "You received your good things in the life of the world and you took your pleasure out of them."<sup>71</sup> To the extent that one combats the self and abandons craving (in this world), he is permitted to enjoy it (the craving) in the abode of the Hereafter.

A person from Baṣra said: "my self craved bread and fish but I denied it both. Its demands continued and got stronger, and the struggle within me not to respond became more intense during the whole of twenty years." After he died someone saw him in a dream and asked him: "what did the Lord do with you?" He replied "I cannot do justice in describing the gifts and graces with which He received me. The first thing He did was to welcome me with fish and bread saying: eat, drink, and enjoy what you craved without end. The Lord said: "Eat ye and drink ye with full satisfaction because of the (good) that ye sent before ye on the days that are gone."<sup>72</sup> What they had stored up is the abandonment of cravings.

It is on account of this that Abu Sulaymān (al-Dārāni) said, to give up a craving is more beneficial for the servant than to fast and pray a whole year. May the Lord bless us with the success that brought contentment to Muḥammad (pbuh), to his household, and to his companions.<sup>73</sup>

71. Part of verse, Koran, 46: 20.

72. Koran, 59: 24.

73. In the Ṭijārīyah edition of the *Iḥyā'*: "with that which pleases Him." III: 95.

**DIFFERENCES CONCERNING THE IM-  
PACT OF HUNGER, ITS VIRTUES,  
AND HOW IT AFFECTS DIFFERENTLY  
CONDITIONS IN PEOPLE**

**K**now ye that the ultimate goal in all matters and manners is moderation, for the best choice and lies in the middle path. Either extreme is frowned upon. What we have discussed concerning the virtues of hunger stresses the need to indulge it. Far be it. Among the secrets of the *Shari'ah's* wisdom is recognizing that there is an extreme side to what temperament commands. In it lies corruption, which is why the law exaggerates means for preventing it, in a way that might cause an ignorant person to believe that what is sought is the opposite of what nature decrees to the extent possible. But the world knows that what is sought is moderation, because if nature decrees extreme satiation, the law must then praise the extreme form of hunger. So in a way, nature is an inducement and law a prevention; the two struggle with each other and the result is moderation. He who can fully curb temperament is compelled to realize that he will not attain the end he desires. He who indulges in opposing temperament will find in the law what points to the abuse of it.

Similarly, God's law exaggerates the praise of praying at night and fasting by day. When the Prophet (pbuh) learned that someone was fasting the entire period and remaining wakeful the whole night, he forbade it. If you are aware of this, then know also that what is more preferable in addition to a temperate nature is to eat without overburdening the stomach or sensing the pain of hunger. Rather, one should ignore the stomach so that hunger would not affect it in the first place.

The purpose of eating is to stay alive and strengthen worship. A heavy stomach deters from worship and the

pain of hunger distracts the heart and preoccupies it (with other than worship). The aim is to eat that which would not have an effect in order to allow one to be like the angels, who are sacredly immune to the burden of food and the pain of hunger. Man's goal is to emulate them. If humans cannot avoid satiation and hunger, then the farthest position from both (extremes) is the medial, or moderation. The best example for a human being is staying away from these opposite extremes by returning to the middle.

It is like unto the example of an ant tossed into the middle of a circle surrounded by a fire cast upon the earth. The ant runs away from the heat of the circumference that surrounds it and prevents it from exiting. But it will not stop attempting to escape until it settles on a point in the middle. Should it perish, it would die in the middle, for the middle position is the farthest one from the heat that engulfs the circle.

Similarly, appetites engulfing man are like unto the circle of the ant. Angels, on the other hand, are outside the circle. Man has no ambition to exit, but at the same time he wishes to emulate the angels in (attaining) salvation. So the closest he can come to resemble them is in distance, and the farthest position from the extreme is the middle. And so the middle becomes the desired end in all related manners.

There is an example in the *Hadith* (which states): the best state is moderation. And in the words of the Almighty: "Eat and drink but do not indulge."<sup>1</sup> To the extent one does not experience either hunger or satiation, worship and meditation become easier for him. He feels lightness and exerts more energy for work because of this lightness. This, however, can come about only after one moderates his nature.

If at the beginning of a spiritual state the self is capricious, strongly inclined to excessive desires, leaning

1. Composite of Koran, 7: 31.

towards indulgence (then) moderation would not benefit it. The only solution is to intensify its pain by hunger, as one intensifies the suffering of a beast of burden which has not been trained by hunger, inflicting a beating, and other (disciplinary) measures until it moderates (its conduct). Should it become moderate and steady and revert to a medial position, (then) one stops tormenting it and causing it pain. It is on account of this necessity (lit., secret - *sirr*) that the *shaykh* orders his novice (*murid*) to do what he does not, that is to endure hunger while he does not; denies him (the novice) fruit and (fulfilment of) appetites while he himself might not (deny it to his self) because he (the *shaykh*) has already completed the training of his own self and no longer needs to discipline it (lit., torment it).

Because the self is naturally inclined towards gluttony, lust, capriciousness, and circumventing acts of worship, the best way to combat this (inclination) in most circumstance is with hunger and pain, until it is curbed. By constraining the self, it becomes moderate and takes food moderately.

There are two types (of individuals) who have set themselves on the path to the Hereafter without the need to have recourse to hunger: a righteous person and a misguided fool. As concerns the righteous person, it is on account of his pursuit of the straight path and not being in need to be led by means of hunger to the Truth (*al-Haqq*, i.e. God). But as concerns the fool, it is because of his having deluded himself into believing that he is righteous and is not in need of self training. He thinks well of it, and in so believing lies the great deception.

This type (of individual) is in the great majority, because rarely does the self become completely trained. Often it is deceived by looking upon the righteous and the way he tolerates his (own) self in order to forgive his own. It is like the patient who looks upon someone who has been cured from his illness and starts to emulate him in what he does, believing that he himself is being cured, and thus perishes.

Proof of (preference for) using food sparingly at a set time and in limited amounts, not for its own sake but rather as a striving for the self that has deviated from the path to God without having attained the rank of perfection is in the Prophet (pbuh) not setting a formal priority or time frame for his meals.

'A'ishah, may God be pleased with her, said that the Prophet (pbuh) used to fast so we would not say he eats not; and he would eat so that it would not be said that he fasts.<sup>2</sup> He would call upon his wives (lit., family) and ask if they had anything. If they answered yes, he would eat; if they said no, he would say: "then I shall fast."<sup>3</sup> Should they offer him something, he would say: "I intended to fast," but would eat.<sup>4</sup>

He went out one day saying that he was fasting. 'A'ishah told him that they had received a gift of *hays*. He replied that he wanted to fast but would have it (*hays*) anyway. Similarly, it was said that Sahl (al-Tustari) was asked: "how was it for you at the beginning of your training?" He responded with examples of exercises, one of which was to feed the self leaves of the *nabq*<sup>5</sup> once and the grind of figs for three years. He claimed that he fed himself with one *dirham* for three years. "How are you doing now?" he was asked. "I eat without limit and at no set time," came the reply. What he meant by eating often at no set time is not that he ate much, but rather that he did not attach much value to what he ate.

Ma'rūf al-Karkhi<sup>6</sup> used to receive gifts of fine food, and

2. A *hadīth* agreed upon by all traditionalists, Ghazālī, III: 97, n.1.

3. Cited by Abu Da'ūd al-Tirmidhi, Ḥasānah, and al-Nisā'i on the basis of 'A'ishah's transmission. Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīh* (Kāzi), III, chapter 51, 146. Ghazālī, III: 97, n. 2.

4. Bayhaqī cites 'A'ishah as having said: "even if I had mandated fasting." It's *isnād* is correct. Muslim cites it in the words: "I had become a fasting person." Ghazālī, III: 97, n. 3.

5. Two possible meanings: crab-apple tree or lote-tree. Hava, 746.

6. Known as Abu Maḥfūz ibn Fayrūz (d. 815), also ibn al-Fayrūzān and ibn 'Alī, a mainline ascetic of the old school, known for his reverence and chivalry, teacher of Sāri al-Saqatī, companion of Da'ūd al-Tā'i. He converted (to Sunni Islam?) and kept it quiet. One day the Shī'ahs

he would eat it. Someone said to him: "your brother Bishr does not eat like this!" His reply: "my brother Bishr<sup>7</sup> is obsessed with the fear of God. I, on the other hand, have already been rewarded with the (gift of) *ma'rifah*"; moreover, "I am but a guest in the abode of my Lord; should He offer me something to eat, I would eat (it); if He causes me to hunger, I will wait patiently. What need have I to object or show preference?"

Ibrāhīm ibn Adham gave money to a brother saying, "buy for us some butter, honey, and white bread." "O Abu Ishāq,<sup>8</sup> with all this money?" he asked. "Woe unto you," he answered; "if it is available, we shall eat the food of men; if it is not, we will endure the patience of men." One day he obtained much food, so he invited a large group, among them al-Awzā'i<sup>9</sup> and al-Thawri.<sup>10</sup> Al-Thawri said to Abu Ishāq: "are you not afraid that this might be a form of indulgence?" His reply: "there is no indulgence in food, but rather in dress and possessions."

He who has received gnosis from *sama*<sup>11</sup> (audition) and

learned about it, so they beat him, broke his ribs and caused his death. He was buried in Baghdad. He preached love as a gift of God, not an acquired quality; "gifts come from striving, not from arguing," he would say. Sulami, 74-79. Schimmel, 38, 53, 395; Iṣbahāni, VIII, no. 411: 360-68.

7. Al-Hāfi, see *supra*, p. 80, n. 62.

8. Reference is to Ibn Adham. See *supra*, p. 59, n. 39.

9. Shaykh al-Islam Abu 'Amru, a famous jurisconsult (d. 774) who labored mostly in Beirut and whose juridical rite found momentary roots in Umayyad Spain until replaced by the Māliki, one of the four major systems of Sunni Islam. Hitti, 398 and 400; Dhahabi, I, no. 177: 178.

10. Sufyān, see *supra* p. 67, n. 15.

11. The process of achieving ecstasy by partaking of a *dhikr* (ritual) which could be based on listening to recitations from the Koran and other hallowed texts or participating in some dance ritual peculiar to certain orders. Junyad was particularly concerned that those who had not fully detached themselves from the world might end up acquiring the wrong form of ecstatic experience. To him involuntary ecstasy is a acceptable for dedicated brethren already proceeding along the path. But no one should seek to produce ecstasy in himself by joining persons already enraptured and participating in their audition. See comments by Nicholson in Sarrāj, 69-81.

*naql*<sup>12</sup> (imitative transmission) according to tradition can accept this from Ibrāhīm ibn Adham and Mālik ibn Dīnār,<sup>13</sup> who claimed: "no salt has entered my abode in twenty years." And also from Sari al-Saqāṭi<sup>14</sup> who alleged that he had a strong urge for forty years to dip a carrot in molasses but would not do so. To such a person this might seem contradictory and bewildering, concluding therefrom that one of them is wrong. Yet he who knows the secrets of *ilm*<sup>15</sup> knows that this is true, but with the additional knowledge that conditions differ (in differing situations). He who hears about these different situations surmises that one is limited, foolish or deceived. The victim might say: "I am not among those who have attained *ma'rifah* (gnostic knowledge), so I should forgive my self because it is more obedient than that of Sari al-Saqāṭi's or Mālik ibn Dīnār's (self)." But these (men) are immune to lustful appetites and one can follow their example. The one who is deluded might say: "my self is not harder on me than Ma'rūf al-Karkhi's or Ibrāhīm ibn Adham's, (each on himself), so I will emulate them and place no limit on what I eat. If I am a guest in the abode of my Lord, why should I object?" Yet if someone fails to respect that person's right, dignity, possession, and self-expression in any way, he would invoke upon himself the retributions of the Day of Judgement. If, rather, he should prefer to occupy himself with acts of defiance (of God), the devil would welcome such a path from the foolish ones.

Raising the limits on food, fasting and cravings is suitable only for those who cast their sights out from the

12. Inherited traditions, recognized as the preserve of the *ulema* in the first instance; Sufis believe largely that one must be versed in both categories of learning: those leading to the fulfillment of Islam and those leading to knowledge of the divine through gnosis.

13. *Supra*, p. 42, n. 41.

14. *Suprā*, p. 55, n. 27.

15. He who engages in acquiring it can be described as a *'ālim* (plural: "ulamā", whence Anglicized "ulema"). When Sufism gained currency following al-Ghazālī's great efforts, it became acceptable for *ulema* to join the ranks of Sufis.

niche of sainthood and prophecy.<sup>16</sup> There is a sign for him in *istirsāl* (abandon) and *inqibād* (contraction)<sup>17</sup> which occur only after the self completely abandons submission to pleasure and habit. He eats or abstains (therefrom) by intention, thereby becoming an agent of God when eating and breaking the fast (*iftār*).

He should learn determination from 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, who noticed that the Prophet (pbuh) loved honey, ate it and did not deny it to himself.<sup>18</sup> When offered a cold drink mixed with honey, he would turn the vessel in his hand and say, "I shall drink it; its sweetness will disappear, and only the after taste would remain. So let it not be (charged) to my account!" Thus did he abandon it.

A *shaykh* must not reveal such secrets to his *murīd*; rather he should limit himself only to praising hunger. He should not even enjoin upon him to be moderate lest he fail in this endeavor. He (the *shaykh*) must counsel extreme hunger for him in order to facilitate (his achieving) moderation. Nor should he mention to him (the *murīd*) that the perfect '*ārif*'<sup>19</sup> does not need spiritual exercise because the devil might attach himself to his heart, telling him every hour: "you are a perfect '*ārif*! what do you lack in knowledge of God and perfection?"

It was customary for Ib̄rāhīm al-Khawāṣ<sup>20</sup> personally to

16. An expression reserved for Sufis so far advanced in their spiritual exercises and attainments (or rewards from God for their efforts) that they can reach the state of sainthood.

17. States attained during traversing the spiritual path to gnosis following the final stage of *fanā*.

18. *Hadīth* attributed to 'Ā'ishah and agreed upon. Ghazālī, III, 98: n. 1.

19. The one who achieved *ma'rifah* (gnosis) or reached the terminus of his spiritual journey.

20. Ib̄rāhīm ibn Aḥmad ibn Ismā'īl Abu Ishāq, favored the path of *tawakkul* (dependence on God), unique in his age, the equal of Junayd and Nuri, died in the mosque of Ray 291/904; his motto was: he who is not patient will not succeed; also, he who trades with somebody else's capital is bankrupt. Sulami, 283-86; also Sarrāj, 47 *seq.*; Jāmi, 136-39; Isbahāni, X, no. 595: 325-31.

immerse himself in every exercise he ordered for his *murīd* so that the latter would not think that his *shaykh* was ordering him to perform exercises which he would not himself undertake. When the strong preoccupies himself with training and reforming others, he must descend to the level of the weak; be like them, and gentle in leading them to happiness. This is a great affliction for prophets and saints.

If the limit of moderation is concealed from every one, resolve and caution decree that it not be abandoned in every situation. With this in mind 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, scolded his son 'Abdallah saying: "have you no mother!"<sup>21</sup> after entering upon him and finding him eating meat sauteed in butter and topped by corn. He said to him: "eat one day bread and meat; another, bread and milk; still another, bread and butter; then bread and oil, bread and condiments and one day, plain bread."

This is moderation; for to persist with meat and lustful appetite constitutes indulgence and excessiveness. To abandon meat completely is niggardliness. Such is the proper position between one (extreme) and the other. God, however, knows best.

21. He meant by it 'someone to watch over you,' a euphemism for inculcating one with good manners.

## IMPACT OF THE AILMENT OF DISSIMULATION ON THOSE WHO ABANDON LUSTFUL APPETITES AND EAT LESS

**K**now ye, he who abandons lustful appetites is afflicted with two great evils which are greater than partaking thereof. One, the self can not forsake certain appetites and desires them but does not want to admit that it desires them. So, he conceals his craving and eats in seclusion what he would not eat in public. This is the secret (sin of) *shirk*.<sup>1</sup> One of the *ulema* was asked about a certain ascetic but he would not answer. He was asked again if he knew anything about that person's strengths; to which he replied that he ate in secret what he would not eat in public, which is a great evil.

It is proper for the servant when afflicted with a lustful appetite pleasing to him that he display it openly because it would be more honest and points to (his) striving with deeds. To conceal it and display the opposite in a form of perfection constitutes two deficiencies. Lying accompanied by concealing constitutes two lies and is deserving of two detestations which cannot be compensated for except by two genuine repentances. For this reason hypocrites were hard pressed. The Lord says: "Hypocrites are in the lowest ring of (Hell) Fire,"<sup>2</sup> because the blasphemer commits and displays his blasphemy then at-

1. The term in Islamic theology is employed ordinarily to describe the act of committing the unpardonable sin of associating anything or anyone with God. Its use here signals Ghazālī's strength of abhorrence and the extreme seriousness with which he views dissimulation.

2. Koran, 4: 145.

tempts to conceal it, and the act of concealment constitutes another blasphemy. He seeks thereby to unburden his heart in the eyes of fellow created beings by attempting to remove this act of blasphemy in open while God, may He be glorified, is not unaware of his motive.

Gnostics are afflicted with appetites, even by defiances, but are not (afflicted) with dissimulation, deception and concealment. The gnostic's perfection is in abandoning such an appetite for the sake of God Almighty. Displaying a lustful appetite should be as an act of belittling the self in the sight (lit., hearts) of created beings. One of them used to buy something he coveted and display it in the house wherein he observed abstinence. He did that in order to conceal his condition and divert the attention of those who were unaware of it so as not to compromise the mystical state he was in.

### The Aim of Abstinence

What is abstinence? True abstinence lies in revealing the opposite thereof, which is the lot of the righteous. He thus reconciles two opposites in one vein, while he who is self deluded seeks to reconcile two lies. The latter is simply doubling the burden of the self and causes it to drink from the cup of patience twice; one time by (literally) drinking, the other by shunning it. There is no crime in so doing. The former will be rewarded twice as much for his (lit., their) patience.

This resembles the way of someone who was offered something publicly, takes it then responds quietly in order to break the self by humiliating it openly and impoverishing it secretly. He who has not had such an experience must not avoid displaying his lust and its defects, and being honest about it. He must not be deceived by the words of the devil: "if you should display something which someone else might emulate, then conceal it out of righteous consideration for the other (person)." If his aim is to reform others, then it is more important for him to reform his own self instead.

This is the aim of pure dissimulation, inspired in him by the devil, in the guise of reforming another person. For this reason it was burdensome for him to manifest it. Know ye that he who is aware of this, would not emulate it in deed; nor would he waver in the belief that he is abandoning lusts.

The second evil lies in one's ability to abandon lusts but rejoices in acquiring the reputation of being immune to lusts. In resisting lesser lust, that of eating, he succumbs to a more evil one, that of ostentation or the hidden lust. Whenever he senses that (lust) in himself, curbing this lust is more certain than curbing the lust of food. So let him eat, it is better for him.

Abu Sulaymān (al-Dārāni) once said: "if you are offered an appetizer after you had abstained from it, take a small portion of it, but do not give free rein to the self. In such a manner you rid yourself of this lustful desire, for you would be disturbing it by not heeding its craving.

Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq<sup>3</sup> said: "should I come upon something appetizing, I (first) look to my self; were it to display lust (for it), I would feed it, which is better than denying (this) to it. Should it conceal this lust and distance itself from it, I would punish it by abandoning it and not letting it (self) have any part of it (lust). This is my way of punishing the self for having this secret lust."

To sum up, he who abandons the lust of food and falls into the lust of dissimulation is like the one who escapes the scorpion and fears the snake because the lust of dissimulation is more harmful than that of eating. God is the guardian of success.

3. Abu 'Abdallah (Muḥammad ibn Ja'far in Ghazālī, III: 99) a relay of *hadīth*. His great grandfather was a companion of the Prophet. He is alleged to have declared that meat is the sauce of prophets. Sulami, 528; Isbahāni, III, no. 236: 192-206.

## SAYINGS CONCERNING THE LUST OF THE GENITAL

**K**now ye that coitus has dominated humanity for two benefits. One of them is to allow humans to experience its pleasures and measure thereby the pleasures of the Hereafter. Should the pleasure of coitus persist, it becomes the strongest of all physical pleasures. Conversely fire and its pain are the greatest pains the body can experience. By inducement and intimidation people are led to happiness, which can be achieved only by experiencing pain and pleasure. That which one does not experience by taste is no great endearment for him.

The second benefit (of coitus) is perpetuating progeny and (mankind's) existence. This is the real benefit. But there is also an evil (side) which threatens with destruction both faith and existence if not controlled, overcome, and moderated. In the words of the Almighty, our Lord: "Do not burden us with that which we cannot bear!"<sup>1</sup> by which is meant intense awareness, as related by Ibn 'Abbās<sup>2</sup> in the words of the Almighty: "And from the evil of Nightfall when it becomes dark."<sup>3</sup> By this is meant the erection of the penis. Some transmitters of *hadīth* attribute this saying to the Prophet (pbuh). However, in interpreting it they meant: if the penis penetrates. It is also said that if man's penis achieves erection he loses two-thirds of his mind.<sup>4</sup> The Prophet (pbuh) used to say in his invocation: "I seek refuge in Thee from the evil of my hearing and my seeing, my heart and my delights and my

1. Koran, 2: 286 states: "On no soul doth God place a burden it can not bear." The implication of this verse is that the Lord will accept from each soul only that which it has the ability to offer.

2. *Supra*, p. 35, n. 2.

3. Koran, 93: 3.

4. No original verification for this *hadīth*. Ghazālī, III: 100, n.1.

desires.”<sup>5</sup> The Prophet (pbuh) also said: “women are the snares of the devil. Were it not for this lust, women would have no power over men.”<sup>6</sup>

It is said that Moses (pbuh) was engaged in one of his sessions when Iblīs<sup>7</sup> came to him wearing a robe that was changing colors. As he came close, he took off his robe, put it down, and approached him (Moses) saying: “Peace be upon thee Moses.” “Who are you?” asked Moses, to which he replied: “I am Iblīs.” Whereupon Moses retorted: “May God not grant thee peace! What brings you here,” he asked. “I came to greet you on account of your nearness to God and stature in His eyes,” replied Iblīs. Moses asked: “What is this that I saw you wearing?” Iblīs answered: “A hooded cloak with which I abduct the hearts of men.” “What does one do to appeal to you?” asked Moses. Iblīs replied: “becoming enamored of himself, magnifying his deeds, and being oblivious to his faults. I caution you in three things: do not seclude yourself with a woman who is not lawful to you, for never has a man secluded himself with a woman who is not lawful to him without my becoming his exclusive possessor, because I enamor him of her and her of him. Secondly, never has the Lord made a commitment that I have not fulfilled. Thirdly, never was there a pious act that I myself did not dissipate. Nor has man made such a commitment and not fulfil it without my becoming his sole owner, thus coming between him and its fulfilment.” Then he departed saying: “Woe unto me; Moses now knows what he needs to know for warning mankind.”

It is related that Saʿīd ibn al-Muṣayyib<sup>8</sup> said: “whenever the Lord sends a prophet, Iblīs despairs and seeks to

5. Discussed under the category of *al-Daʿawāt* (invocations). Ghazālī, III: 100, n. 2.

6. *Hadīth* cited by al-Mundhiri (in his *al-Tarḡīb wa ʿl-Tarḥīb*) based on the transmission of Khālid ibn Zayd al-Juhani with unknown *isnād*. Ghazālī, III: 100, n. 3.

7. The fallen angel later to be identified with Satan.

8. One of the *tābiʿīn*, i.e., next generation to the immediate companions of the Prophet, dubbed “Shyakh al-Islām, Faqīh al-Madīnah,” (636-723?). He acquired *hadīth* from the leading personalities, from

destroy him through women. Nothing frightens me more than them (women). The only homes I enter in Medina are mine and my daughter’s, in which I perform ablution for the Friday (noon) prayers, then I depart.”

Someone said: “the devil tells woman: you are half my army; you are my arrow with which I strike and do not miss; you are the repository of my secrets; you are my messenger in time of need.”<sup>9</sup> Half his army is lust and the other half is anger. The greatest lust of all is lusting after women. It also has its exaggerations, excessiveness, and moderations. Its excessiveness (lies in) overpowering the mind to the point that men dedicate much of their energy to the enjoyment of women and their concubines, thus being distracted from pursuit of the Hereafter. It might overpower faith (to a point that) he commits fornication.

Anyone who indulges these (lustful desires) faces two abhorrent situations: one, partaking of that which strengthens lusts for indulging coitus, as some people take medicine to strengthen the stomach to increase lust for food. Such (a conduct) is like that of someone who has been accosted by ferocious lions and menacing snakes. They might let up (on him) sometimes, but then he would connive further to arouse and excite them (lusts) and is thus diverted towards taming and appeasing them.

Verily, the lust of food and of coitus are pains which man seeks to abandon in order to experience the pleasure of deliverance (from error). It has been related in the (collection of) rare *hadīth* that the Prophet (pbuh) said: “I complained to Gabriel about the weakness of coitus and he

ʿĀʾishah to Abu Hurayrah, with broad knowledge and religious dedication. Dhahabi, I, 38: 54-56. See Sulami, 138, 142, and 322 for examples; also Tirmidhi, *Khatm*, 57, 357, and 432; Isbahānī, II, no. 170: 161-75/ Muḥammad Ibn Saʿd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubra* (Beirut: Sadir, 1957-68), V: 119-44.

9. ʿAbdallah ibn Masʿūd (see p. 38, n. 21) is cited saying: “gazing (i.e., at women) is one of the arrows of Iblīs.” Mundhiri, *al-Tarḡīb*, IV, no. 2784: 106.



ordered me to eat *harīsa*.<sup>10</sup> Know ye that he (the Prophet, pbuh) was responsible for nine women and he had to fortify them with contentment.<sup>11</sup> If he divorced them, he forbade others from marrying them. He sought thereby strength not pleasure.

The second situation: such lust could lead through misguidance to excessive love,<sup>12</sup> which is extreme ignorance of the purpose of coitus. It is excessive even for the female animal, given the limits set for animals. For, he who is in love is not content with satisfying the lust of coitus, which is the worst of lusts and most deserving of shame. Indeed, in my opinion such lust can be curbed only in a special place, whereas the female beast satisfies her lust wherever she might be, and is content with it.

This (lust) can not be satisfied except with one specific person (partner),<sup>13</sup> thus compounding his (own) abasement and (state of) servitude by more of the same until his mind is enslaved in the service of this lust, albeit he was created to be obedient, not to be a slave of lust or to connive to serve its ends.

Excessive love is no more than a symptom of indulging lust. It is a disease of the heart, void and mindless. One must be careful from the very outset. He must not cast a second glance (at a woman) nor contemplate (her) because once it (lust) takes hold (of him), it is difficult (for him) to ward it off.

10. Some sort of mush, see above p. 28. The saying derives from al-'Aqīlī's *al-Du'afā'* and al-Ṭabarani's *al-Mu'jam al Awsaṭ* (unpublished) based on transmission by Hudhayfah. Ghazālī, III: 100, n. 4.

11. Reference is to his wives (at one time eleven). In his post-Khadījah marriages, it was 'Ā'ishah that he favored, particularly toward the end of his life. For more on them, see Bint al-Shāṭi'.

12. In Sufi terms: *'ishq*. Only those who attained near perfection in their striving and approximated the level of sainthood could boast of it without incurring the reprobation of their fellow *shaykhs* given its bordering on the erotic.

13. The implication here is that it takes a particular person to arouse one's lustful desire and, commensurately, to satisfy its ends.

Such is also (the effect of) *'ishq* (excessive love) of possession, ostentation, property, and progeny (not unlike addiction to) playing with birds<sup>14</sup> and *'ūd*,<sup>15</sup> *nerdeshir*<sup>16</sup> and chess. These can overpower a group (of people), diminish their faith and render them captives of the world to the point that they lose patience and are unable to refrain (from succumbing thereto).

The example of someone who seeks to break the grip of excessive love is that of the one who gives the beast of burden full rein as she heads towards a gate to enter. How much easier it would have been to prevent her from doing so by holding back the rein. The example of the one who treats it (*'ishq*) after it has taken hold (of him) is that of the person who allows the beast of burden to enter and go past the gate then grabs her by the tail and starts to drag her backwards. How great the difference between the two oversights in terms of ease and hardship.

So let one be cautious at the start of undertakings because in the later stages they (undertakings) cannot be treated except with great effort; so great, indeed, that it (the strain) might lead to the wrenching of the spirit. Indulgence of lust to the extent that it overpowers the mind is utterly condemned. Permitting it through helplessness or weakness to enjoy the sex partner is also condemned. What is praiseworthy is moderation and obedience to reason and the law of the faith (*Sharī'ah*) in abstaining or responding (to the urge of lust). Whenever it exceeds the bounds, then it should be curbed with hunger or marriage. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "Young men, beware of fornication; he who is not capable of

14. Probably in reference to falconry, used by the Arabs since ancient times for hunting purposes.

15. Whence the English "lute," Ar. *al-'ūd* from which Eng. "wood" derives. It is a large pear-shaped, multi-stringed instrument.

16. Persian for backgammon. There is a *ḥadīth* that says: "playing backgammon is like dyeing one's hand with the blood of the pig." Mundhiri, *al-Targhib*, V, no. 4411: 253.

restraint, let him fast; for, it will diminish his sexual urge  
(*wijā'*)<sup>17</sup>

17. Fuller text of the *hadith*: "He who can afford to marry should; for it will help him refrain from looking (at women) and save his private parts from committing illicit sexual acts; he who cannot afford to marry let him fast, for it will diminish his sexual urge." Bukhāri, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Kazi), III, chapter 31, 129: 72. For details on Islamic notions of marriage as articulated by Ghazālī, see his *Kitāb al-Nikah* (Farah's translation/edition). For Arabic original and comment, see Ghazālī, III, and 101, n. 1.

## MARRIAGE AND ABSTINENCE FOR THE NOVICE

**K**now ye that the novice at the start of his commitment (to the Sufi program of training) must not be preoccupied with the self; nor his heart with marriage, because it is a full commitment and it (marriage) would distract him from (pursuit of) the path and divert him towards intimacy with a wife. He who seeks intimacy with other than God is turned away from God. He (the novice) should not be misled by the multiple marriages of the Prophet (pbuh) because nothing in the world could turn his heart away from God. One cannot compare angels to smiths. For such reason Abu Sulaymān al-Dārāni declared: "He who marries is bound to this world." He also said: "I never knew a novice to marry and remain firm to his initial commitment (i.e. spiritual exercises). "Someone once asked him: "Do you not need the pleasures of a woman?" to which he replied: "May God not cause me to enjoy one, because intimacy with her prevents intimacy with God." He also said: "Whatever turns you away from God, be it family, possessions or offspring, it is a curse upon you."

How can one have any person other than the Prophet (pbuh) as a standard of comparison? He was steeped in the love of God to such an extent that it was like being consumed by fire. Indeed, he feared at times that it would penetrate his heart and demolish it. Sometimes he would tap the thigh of 'Ā'ishah with his hand and say to her: "Talk to me O 'Ā'ishah!"<sup>1</sup> in order to be distracted by her words from what so intensely preoccupied him (i.e. the contemplation of God), because his heart could not bear

1. There is no known source for this *hadith*.

such a heavy burden. His very nature was to be intimate with God, may He be glorified. Thus intimacy with human beings was a (form of) restraint out of sympathy for his body. Moreover, he did not display patience for human company. When he was bored, he would say: "Comfort us O Bilāl!"<sup>2</sup> so he could revert to a state of ease. A weak person viewing this state (in the Prophet) might be deluded, because to assume he is thus enlightened is to be prevented from learning the secrets of his (the Prophet's) deeds.

The state for the novice at the commencement of his undertaking, and until he acquires strength through gnosis, is celibacy—if in the meanwhile he is not overtaken by lust. His enemy is lust. He must curb it by continuous hunger and fasting over a long period of time. If he cannot curb lust in such a manner, or by restraining the eye, for example, even if he restrains his genitals, then it is better that he appease this lust by marriage. Because to the extent that he cannot restrain his eye, his mind cannot be clear and his concerns are multiplied. He might even become afflicted with something which he cannot tolerate. Sinning by sight is one of the greater of the lesser (category) of sins leading one closer to the greater sin, that of the genitals, or adultery. He who cannot lower his sight is unable to safeguard his faith.

Jesus (pbuh) said: "Beware of looking; it plants lust in the heart when it is already rebellious enough."<sup>3</sup> Sa'īd ibn

2. *Hadīth* mentioned in conjunction with the section on prayer of the *Ihyā'* (Ghazālī, III: 101, n. 5). Bilāl ibn Rabāh was formerly an Ethiopian slave, tortured by his Qurayshi master for accepting Islam from the Prophet, freed by Abu Bakr who rescued him when he was barely alive, one of the earliest companions of the Prophet, fought by his side during the critical battles of Badr (624) and Uhud (626) but is renowned for his great melodious voice and his role as the first muezzin (one who calls to prayer) in Islam. *Iṣbahāni*, I, no. 24: 147-51.

3. No particular citation for this saying, or source, given.

Jubayr<sup>4</sup> (once) said: "Rebelliousness came to David (pbuh) through (his) sight,"<sup>5</sup> for which reason he said to his son: "O my son Amos, walk behind a lion, even lions, but not behind a woman!"<sup>6</sup>

John<sup>7</sup> (pbuh) was asked, "what is the beginning of sinning?" to which he replied, "looking and desiring." Fuḍayl<sup>8</sup> claimed that Iblīs says: "It is my old bow and arrow with which I never miss,"<sup>9</sup> by which he means "looking." The Prophet (pbuh) said: "looking is one of Iblīs' poisoned arrows. He who abandons it out of fear of God, God will grant him faith, the sweetness of which he finds in his (own) heart." He (pbuh) also said "Henceforth, no temptation (lit. defiance) is to be avoided on account of its harmfulness to man than (that of) women."<sup>10</sup> He (pbuh) also said: "Beware of the rebelliousness of the world and the rebelliousness of women, for the first rebelliousness by the children of Israel came from women."<sup>11</sup> The Lord said: "Say to the believing men to lower their sights."<sup>12</sup> The Prophet (pbuh) said: "Every human being has his share of sinning. Both eyes sin and their sin is looking. Both hands sin, and their sin is violence. The two legs sin, and their sin is walking. And the mouth sins, and its sin is kissing. And the heart wishes and desires, and that is proved or disproved by the genital."

4. Abu 'Abdallah, noted for his weeping, transmitter of *hadīth* from 'Abdallah ibn 'Abbās, the newpew of the Prophet. *Iṣbahāni*, IV, no. 275: 272-310.

5. Reference is to the beginning of his entanglement with Bathsheba, Uriah the Hittite's wife.

6. No specific attribution is made for this saying.

7. The Baptist.

8. Ibn 'Iyāḍ, see *supra*, p. 42, n. 39.

9. Cited in Mundhiri, *al-Targhīb*, IV, no. 2784: 106.

10. Agreed upon and attributed to Usāmah ibn Zayd (*supra*, p. 36, n. 15). Relayed by Abu al-Sa'īd al-Khudrīy. Mundhiri, *al-Targhīb*, V, no. 4618: 6. Ghazālī, III: 102, n. 2.

11. Transmitted by Abu Sa'īd al-Khudrīy and cited by Muslim. Ghazālī, III: 102, n. 3.

12. Koran, 24: 30.

Umm Salmah<sup>13</sup> related that "the blind (man) Ibn Umm Maktūm sought permission to visit with the Prophet (pbuh) while I and Maymūnah<sup>14</sup> were sitting (with him). He said (to us): veil yourselves, and we retorted: is he not blind? He cannot see us! His answer: but can you not see him?"<sup>15</sup> Here is proof that women are not permitted to be in the presence of the blind as used to be the custom during funerals and feasts.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, it was forbidden for the blind to seclude themselves with women, and for women to consort with the blind and fix their sights upon them for no purpose. It was permitted, however, for women to converse with men and to look at them for recognized need. If he can avoid staring at women but can not avoid looking at boys,<sup>17</sup> then it is better for him (the novice) to be married.

The evil associated with boys is greater than if his heart were to be inclined towards women, because they can become lawful unto him (i.e. in marriage). Fixing one's eye upon the face of a boy through lust is forbidden. Indeed, whenever one's heart is captivated by the image of a beardless one (boy), to the extent that he is aware of the difference between him and the bearded one, then it is not lawful for him to look at him. If someone should say that everyone who can see can tell the difference between the beautiful and the ugly, there is no disputing this because the faces of young boys are not covered. Moreover, I do not mean by this simply discernment of the eye because he should be able to recognize the difference as one would

13. One of Prophet Muḥammad's wives, daughter of Dhāt al-Rakab, young and beautiful when he married her, and the envy of 'Ā'ishah. *Bint al-Shāṭi'*, 401-05.

14. Last of the Prophet's wives, daughter of al-Hārith. For more on her, see *Bint al-Shāṭi'*, 401-05.

15. *Hadith* verified by Abu Da'ūd, al-Nisā'i and Tirmidhi. Ghazāli, III: 102, n. 5.

16. The implication of the Prophet's retort is that what arouses lust in man may arouse lust in woman. Thus the avoidance of lustful desires is commendable for both.

17. Homosexuality is the intended conclusion from al-Ghazāli's remarks.

between a green tree and a dead tree; between pure and polluted water; between a tree in bloom and flowery, and one whose leaves have fallen. One inclines towards the one or the other by sight and temperament. It is, however, an inclination void of lust. For such reason one does not seek to touch flower and blossom, nor pure water with one's lips.

It is likely in a given situation that the eye might be attracted to a handsome grey-haired one (older person) knowing the difference between that and an ugly face, but (again) it is a matter of discernment not lust. One knows this through the self's inclination to nearness and touching. To the extent that one senses this inclination in his heart and recognizes the difference in a handsome face, nice plants, decorative clothes and gold-plated roofs, his gazing is motivated by lust and it is forbidden. This is something people tend to overlook and are led (consequently) to perdition without their knowing it.

One of the companions (of the Prophet, pbuh) said: "I fear not the wild lion as much as I fear the company of a beardless ascetic young man." Sufyān (al-Thawri)<sup>18</sup> said: "if a man cajoles a young man with two of his toes out of lust, he is a Sodomite." One of the forefathers is quoted saying: "there will be three types of Sodomites in this community (Islamic *ummah*): one that gazes, one who embraces, and one who acts." Should the evil of looking for the beginner be great, however much he tries he will fail to lower his sight and control his thoughts. It is more proper (under such circumstances) for him to curb such a lust with marriage. It is possible that the rage of a certain self cannot be quieted by hunger.

Another (companion) said: "lust burdened me at the beginning of my commitment (to an ascetic life) with that which I could not bear. I cried out to God (to unburden me), then someone appeared to me in a dream and asked: what is wrong with you? I complained to him and he asked me to draw near (to him) and I did. He put his hand on my chest and I felt its coldness in my heart and in my entire

18. *Supra*, p.67, n. 15.

body. When I awoke, what had troubled me was gone and I remained immune to it for a year. Then it came back to me. Once again I increased my appeal for help (from God) and another person appeared in my dream and said: do you want what bothers you to go away by (my) striking your neck? Yes, I replied. Stretch out your neck then, he commanded, and I did. He then unsheathed the sword of light and struck my neck with it. When I awoke in the morning, what had been disturbing me disappeared and I remained immune for another year. Then it came back to me (once again) even more strongly (than before) and I felt as if there was someone between my side and my chest saying to me: woe unto thee, how often (must) you ask God to lift from you what He does not like to do! After that, said he (the companion), I got married. It put an end (to my suffering) and I begot children."

However much he (the novice) needs to marry, he must not abandon the requirement of his intention (to become a practicing Sufi) at the beginning (of his undertaking) and during marriage. It should start with good intention and continue in good manner, firm conduct, and the fulfillment of required duties. This is something we have explained in detail in the book *Rules of Marriage*<sup>19</sup> and it will not be repeated here in detail.

Proof of genuine intention is in his (the novice) marrying a poor religious woman and not seeking a rich one. Someone said: "he who marries a rich one will be inflicted by her with five demands: excessive dowry, delayed consummation of the marriage, forestalling of service (to God), heavy spending, and, should he wish to divorce her, he would not be able to do so because he would fear the loss of her wealth."<sup>20</sup> All this in contrast to the poor woman."

19. The twelfth book of his larger work, the *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. See translation and annotation (*Marriage and Sexuality in Islam*) by Madelain Farah.

20. Reference is to the dowry paid half in advance to the bride's official guardian. She is entitled to keep it and collect the second half if divorced for unlawful reasons as defined by the *Shari'ah*.

Another person said: "a woman must be inferior to the man in four things, otherwise she would despise him: age, height, possessions, and status. But she should be superior to him in four: beauty, upbringing, religiosity, and good manners."

A sign of true commitment is in perpetuating marriage among human beings. A novice married one woman and continued to serve her until she felt ashamed. She complained to her father: "this man puzzles me; I have been in his house for years and could not go to the bathroom once without him carrying water in front of me."<sup>21</sup>

Another (novice) married a beautiful woman. When the day of consummation drew near, she was afflicted with smallpox and her folks grieved a great deal fearing that he would find her ugly. But the man showed them that he was (himself) afflicted with trachoma and had lost his sight, so she was married to him. Sadness disappeared and she remained with him twenty years. Only after she died did he open his eyes. They asked him: "why did you do that?" He replied: "I pretended it (to be blind) for the sake of her folk so that they would not grieve." Their retort to that: "you are far ahead of your brethren with such a display of manners."

One Sufi married a woman of bad character and was very patient with her. He was asked: "why don't you divorce her?" His reply: "I am afraid someone (else) might marry her, would not be patient with her, and would be harmed by her!" So if a novice marries, he should act in like manner. If he is able to abstain, it would be better for him, especially if he cannot reconcile between the virtue of marriage and (that of) undertaking the path, and if he believes that by marriage he would be diverted from his state.

It was related that Muhammad ibn Sulaymān al-Hāshimī<sup>22</sup> used to earn from this world's yield 80,000

21. In Islam, following major discharge, water not paper is used for cleaning the anal area.

22. *Supra*, p. 26, n. 7.

*dirhams*. He wrote to the people of Basra and its *ulema* seeking a woman to marry. They all agreed that he should marry Rābi'ah al-'Adawīyah.<sup>23</sup> He wrote to her as follows: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. The Lord has endowed me from this world's wealth 80,000 *dirhams* each day, and by the time night follows day it becomes 100,000. I shall be like that unto you and more (i.e., increase his bequests to her). Please answer me." She wrote back to him: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Verily, to abstain from this world is to gain a tranquil heart and body. Indulging it causes one to inherit worry and sadness. When you receive this letter of mine, prepare your provision and get ready for your return (to God) and be a guarantor of yourself and do not let men become your guarantor so they might divide your inheritance. Fast for eternity and let death be your fastbreaking. As for myself, the Lord God, may He be glorified, has given me what he has given you, and many times more. Not by a blink of the eye would I turn my preoccupation away from Him."

This is proof that whatever turns one's attention away from God constitutes a deficiency. Let the novice, therefore, look to his state and to his heart. If he can be content with being unmarried, it is nearer (to what is desired); if he cannot (concentrate) then marriage is better for him.

There are three treatments for this disease: hungering, averting sight, and concentrating on that which preoccupies the heart. Should these three not be profitable, then let marriage be the cure. It is on account of this that the righteous forefathers engaged in marriage and gave their daughters in marriage. Whenever Iblis despaired, he came to Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib<sup>24</sup> as an envoy of women. When he was eighty-four years old, he had already lost the sight of one eye, and was about to depart for the Hereafter when he declared: "I fear nothing worse than women."

23. *Supra*, p. 26.

24. *Supra*, p. 96, n. 8.

'Abdallah ibn Abi Wadā'ah<sup>25</sup> was quoted saying: "I used to visit with Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib, and when I called on him after not seeing him for some days he asked: where were you? I told him my wife had died and I was preoccupied with her, whereupon he responded: why did you not let us know so we could have borne witness for her."<sup>26</sup> When I was about to rise he asked if I would like to have a wife. I replied: may God be merciful with you; who is going to give me in marriage when I only possess two or three *dirhams*? I will, he answered. You would! I exclaimed. Yes, said he. So he praised the Lord and prayed for the Prophet and had me married (sic) with two or, as he put it, three *dirhams*. I rose not knowing what to do on account of my joy. I went home and began to consider whom I should marry and from whom I might borrow. I lit the lamp and performed the sunset prayer. I had been fasting. My dinner was brought forth. It consisted of bread and oil. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. I asked who it was. Sa'īd, came the answer. I thought of every one named Sa'īd except Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib because for forty years he never called on anyone, remaining at home or going to the mosque. I went to answer (the door) and behold it was Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib. I felt it was an inconvenience for him and said to him: O Abu Muḥammad, had you sent for me I would have come to you. No, he replied, you are more deservant that I should come to you. I asked: what do you command? You were an unmarried person, he answered, and now you are married, for I did not wish you to spend the night alone. Behold your wife!

There she stood, behind him, the same height. He took her by the hand and put her through the door and closed it. The woman fell down out of shame. She rose supporting herself with the door then came towards the large bowl containing the bread and the oil. I placed it in the shadow of the lamp so she would not see it. I then ascended to the

25. There is a reference to Asad ibn abi Wadā'ah (d. ca. 137-38/754-55) in ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt*, VII: 461, but not to 'Abdallah.

26. Testifying, that is reciting the *Shahādah*: witnessing that there is no god whatsoever but God.

roof and called out to the neighbors. They came and asked me what was the matter? I replied: woe unto me, Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib has given me his daughter in marriage today and brought her over suddenly tonight. Sa'īd is the one who married you? they asked in surprise. Yes, I replied. They then approached her.

Word reached my mother and she came to me and said: face to face I tell you it is unlawful for you to touch her for three days, until she is made ready.<sup>27</sup> I waited three days praying and then entered upon her. Lo! she was most beautiful (lit., of people), most respectful of the word of God (Koran), the most knowledgeable of *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet (pbuh), and most aware of the husband's rights.

A month went by during which I neither visited Sa'īd nor he me. Soon thereafter, I called upon him while he was sitting in his circle (with disciples) and greeted him. He returned the greeting but did not talk to me until those attending his session departed. He inquired about the condition of "that person" (sic) (meaning his daughter) and I said, fine, O Abu Muḥammad, (she is) in the manner of the righteous not the defiant. He said: if you have doubt about anything do not resort to the stick.<sup>28</sup> I went home and he sent me 20,000 *dirhams*."

'Abdallah ibn Sulaymān related that 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān<sup>29</sup> sought the hand of the daughter of Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib in marriage for his son al-Walīd,<sup>30</sup> the heir

27. In an Islamic wedding, the bride is prepared for three days prior to her being delivered to the bridegroom for the formal consummation of the marriage, thus rendering it legal and binding.

28. Meaning, "do not beat her."

29. Umayyad caliph, 685-705, known as the father of kings because four of his sons succeeded him in the caliphate, and during whose reign the empire was Arabized and formally structured. Hitti, 206.

30. Umayyad Caliph, 705-715, during whose reign Arabs conquered the rest of North Africa and Spain and Central Asia. He was renowned also for the magnificent monuments completed: the Umayyad mosque in Damascus, the Aqsa and Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Hitti, 209-12, 221.

apparent, but Sa'īd refused to marry her to him. 'Abd al-Malik, it is said, did not stop looking for a way, even ordering one hundred lashes inflicted on Sa'īd on a cold day and having a large jug of water poured on him while he wore a woolen cloak, and still he would not change his mind. Sa'īd's hastening to give his daughter away in marriage that night is testimony to the calamity of lust and the need to quench its fires through marriage as ordained by the Faith (Islam). May the Lord be pleased with him and forgive him.

## THE VIRTUE OF THE ONE WHO DEFIES THE LUST OF THE GENITAL AND THE EYE

**K**now ye, this lust (of the genital) is the most overpowering of lusts confronting man and the most defiant when it excites the mind. Moreover, its aims are ugly. One is ashamed of its ends and fears its assaults. When most people abstain from its urges either through impotence, shame or fear, or to safeguard one's body, and not because of any reward therein, it is the result of one coincidence prevailing over another in the self.

The benefits of chastity cannot be estimated, and in abstinences like these are rewards, namely to avert sinning, for he who avoids fornication abandons sinning regardless of how it is done. There is much repentance and compensation in abandoning it out of fear of God Almighty. With determination and increased resistance comes the facilitation of means, particularly when lust is real. Such is the way of the righteous.

The Prophet (pbuh) said in this regard: "he who has loved and abstained, remained silent about it until he died, he is a martyr."<sup>1</sup> The Prophet also said: "the Lord will cast His (protective) shadow upon seven on the Day of Judgment in the shade of His throne, a day when there is no shade other than God's; among them is the man who had

1. Cited by al-Hakīm in his *Ta'rikh* based on *hadīth* transmitted by Ibn 'Abbās with some doubt concerning its veracity. Ghazālī, III: 105, n. 1.

2. A *hadīth* confirmed by all authorities based on Abu Hurayrah's transmission. Ghazālī, III: 105, n. 2.

been enticed by a beautiful woman but responded with 'I fear God, the Lord of the worlds'.<sup>2</sup>

The story of Joseph (pbuh) resisting Zulaikha<sup>3</sup> with firmness in spite of her lusting (for him) is well known. And God Almighty has praised him on account of that in His noble book (Koran).<sup>4</sup> He, Joseph, is a leader (model) for everyone who succeeds in resisting the devil as concerns this great lust.

It was said that Sulaymān ibn Yasār<sup>5</sup> was very good looking. A woman entered upon him and he was tempted but he kept away from her. He fled his home and left her behind. Sulaymān said: "I saw Joseph (pbuh) in my dream that night and found myself saying to him: are you Joseph? Yes, he replied, I am Joseph, the one who was tempted; and you are Sulaymān, the one who was not tempted, referring to the words of the Almighty: And (with passion) did she desire him, and he would have desired her, but that he saw the evidence of his Lord."<sup>6</sup>

Something still more extraordinary is related about him (Sulaymān). It is that he left Medina to perform the pilgrimage (to Mecca) with a companion. When they reached al-Abwā,<sup>7</sup> his companion got up, dined and went to the bazaar to buy something while Sulaymān sat in the

3. Potyphor's wife.

4. For the account of her failed attempts to seduce him see Koran, 12: 22-29.

5. Abu Ayyūb, known as al-Madani (i.e., from Medina) al-Faqīh (jurisconsult), a leader among *mujtahids*; considered by some as wiser than even al-Musayyib; very handsome according to Maṣ'ab ibn 'Uthmān: when a woman entered upon him and attempted to seduce him, he ran away from her. His death date is given as anywhere between 104 and 107/722 and 725. Dhahabi, I, no. 81: 91. Iṣbahāni, II, no. 192 (for Joseph's vision).

6. Koran, 12: 24.

7. A village in the neighborhood of Medina. The name can refer also to a locality some twenty-three miles away where the tomb of Aminah, the Prophet's mother, is located. Yāqūt ibn 'Abdallah al-Hanawī, Jacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (1866; rpt., Tehran: Asadi, 1965) I, 99-100.



tent. A bedouin woman spotted him from the top of the mountain and came down to him. When she saw the beauty of his face, she came closer and stood close before him (lit., between his arms) wearing a veil and cover. She was one of the best looking and God-fearing of women. She removed the veil from her face and it was like a half moon (mark of great beauty). She said to him: "give me a treat!" and he thought she meant food. He took what was left of the meal to give her some of it, but she interjected saying: "I don't want this. I want what a man offers his wife!" "So the devil has arranged you for me," he replied. He placed his head between his knees and began to weep and went on weeping. When she saw that, she put the veil back over her face and returned to her folk.

His companion came back and noticed that his eyes were puffed from crying until he could cry no more and his throat was parched. "What made you weep?" he asked. "You would remind me of my youth?" said he. "No," but by God you do have a story. You do remember the period of your youth, since (age) three or more." He kept urging him until he told him the story of the bedouin woman. The companion put down the meal and began to weep profusely. Sulaymān said to him: "and what makes you weep?" to which he replied: "I deserve more to weep than you because I fear that had I been in your place I would not have resisted her." And so they went on weeping together.

When Sulaymān reached Mecca and performed his *sa'i*<sup>8</sup> and circumambulation of the Ka'bah,<sup>9</sup> he came upon the Black Stone,<sup>10</sup> sat down, wrapped his cloak around his leg

8. Part of the pilgrimage ritual is to move at quick trot between the two hillocks of al-Şafa and al Marwah as enjoined in Koran, 2: 158.

9. First built by Abraham and his son Ismael as a house of worship of the one God, was desecrated when their descendants, having lapsed into paganism, allowed it to become the house of false dieties, some 360 of them at one time. Muḥammad purified the Ka'bah after destroying the idols in 630 and restored it to its original status. Muslims around the world face it when performing their prayers, five times a day.

10. A meteorite but held to have been send down by God for Abraham and Ismael to place it in the corner of the Ka'bah. Today, it is still

and fell asleep. He beheld (in his dream) a comely tall man with fine outward appearance and alluring scent. "God have mercy! who are you?" asked Sulaymān. "I am Joseph," came the reply. "Joseph, the righteous one?" he inquired further. "Yes," came the answer. "There is something to marvel in your affair with the wife of al-'Azīz (Potyphor)!" "But your encounter with the woman of al-Abwā' is more wonderous still!" (answered Joseph).

It is said that 'Abdallah, the son of 'Umar,<sup>11</sup> related that he heard the Prophet (pbuh) say: "three people before you went out one night to a cave, and as they entered it a stone came tumbling down from the mountain and blocked the entrance. They said (to themselves): "nothing will save you from this stone other than to appeal to God Almighty with your virtuous deeds." One of the men proclaimed: "Lord, You know that I had two elderly fathers (*shaykhs*) when before (them) I had no family or money. One day I had to seek a tree<sup>12</sup> but I would not move before obtaining (for them) their evening milk (*aghbaq*). They were, however, asleep. Since I did not wish to have my evening milk before they did, out of respect (for them), not for gain, I stood waiting with the cup in my hand until dawn and boys began to mill around me (lit., play around my feet). They awoke and drank their milk. Lord, if I had done this to please Thee, then relieve us from our predicament and remove this rock!" It moved a little, but not enough for them to exit.

encased in silver and serves as a marker for Muslims about to commence their circumnambulation of the Ka'bah, seven times at each performance.

11. The Prophet, alleged to have favored the son over the father on account of his devotion to fasting and prayer, was eleven years younger than the father. Both emigrated to Medina in 622. Was noted for the accuracy of the *ḥadīth* he relayed, even such leading narrators as Abu Hurayrah relied on him. Died in Egypt in 65/687, when Arab armies were laying siege to al-Fūstāt, their first capital in that land. They were unable to bury him except in his own house because of the civil war being fought in the cemetary's neighborhood between the Umayyad Marwān and al-Zubayr, leader of the Meccan party opposing the Umayyads. Dhahabi, I, no. 19: 41-42. Işbahāni, II, no. 92: 7.

12. Euphemism for evacuating.

The other said: "O Lord, You know that I had a wife who was dearer to me than any other (person). I trained her to be abstemious and she abstained from me until she became afflicted one year (with need). She came to me and I gave her a hundred and twenty dinars on condition that she separate herself from me. She did. When I sought to force her, she called upon me to fear God and not to break the tie except by what is right. It was very difficult for me to stay away from her when she was the dearest person to me. So I abandoned the gold I had given her.<sup>13</sup> Lord, if I had done this to please Thee then grant us relief from our predicament." The rock moved again, but (still) they were unable to exit.

The third said: "Lord, I hired runners and gave all except one their salaries. One man left before collecting his. I kept investing his salary until it had made much money. He came to me after some time and said: " 'Abdallah, let me have my due!" I said to him: "all that which you see of camels, cattle, sheep and slaves are from your salary!" He replied: "O 'Abdallah, you are mocking me." "No," I said, "I am not mocking you; take it!" He rounded them up and led them away leaving none behind. Lord, if I had done this to incur your pleasure, (then) help us out of our predicament!" The rock moved and they exited.<sup>14</sup>

Such is the virtue of those who are able to overcome lust and are fortified against it. It is the lot (also) of someone who can overcome the lust of the eye, because the eye is the start of sinning. To safeguard it is important. It is difficult because it is easily overlooked. One cannot, however, exaggerate the fear it causes because looking is the source of all evil.

Looking for the first time, the unintentional first look, one can forgive; repeating it, however, evokes rebuke. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "the first (transgression) is forgiven,

13. Reference is to the dowry settled on in the marriage contract.

14. The *hadīth* concerning the three in the cave is related by Bukhārī in detail. Ghazālī, III: 106, n. 1.

but the second counts against you."<sup>15</sup> By it he meant looking.

Al-'Alā' ibn Ziyād<sup>16</sup> declared: "let not your sight be fixed upon the raiment of women, because looking plants lust in the heart and rarely can one refrain afterwards from repeating gazing at women and boys. However much he imagines that his intention is good, nature decrees that he cast a second glance. He must then determine within himself that this defiance is the essence of ignorance. For, were he to fix his gaze and like it, the self would be excited by lust and he would not be able to reach his goal,<sup>17</sup> experiencing frustration instead. Should he be repulsed (therefrom), not enjoy (looking) but endures pain after he had set out to experience pleasure, he would not necessarily be immune to defiance and to enduring pain and frustration."

To the extent that one can refrain from gazing, he wards off many evils from his heart. For his eye not to err and his (sexual) organ to be restrained with firmness would require a great deal of strength and would lead to ultimate success.

Abu Bakr ibn 'Abdallah al-Māzini<sup>18</sup> related that a certain butcher was enamored of a slave women belonging to one of his neighbors. Her family sent her on an errand to another village. He followed her and enticed her away from her self. She told him not to do so because "I am more in love with you than you are with me, but I fear God!" "You fear God and I do not?" was his reply. He returned home repentantly and suffered so much thirst that he almost died. One of the prophets of the children of Israel (sic) appeared to him and asked what was ailing him. "I

15. Cited by Abu Daūd and al-Tirmidhi, the latter claiming that much of it belongs to the "rare" category of *hadīth*. Ghazālī, III: 106, n. 2.

16. Al-'Adawi, "the sad preacher" and ascetic. For more on him, see Iṣbahani, II, no. 185: 242-49.

17. Reference is to *wuṣūl*, the terminus of the Sufi path of striving to achieve *fanā'* (passing away from the self) and *baqā'* (indwelling in the Godhead).

18. *Supra*, p. 45, n. 52.

suffer from thirst," he replied. "Come along, let us call for a cloud to shade us until we reach the village." He asked the prophet what righteous work he had done to earn such a favor and suggested he (the prophet) do the invoking (of the cloud). The prophet said to him: "I will invoke and you trust in my invocation." He invoked the Prophet (Muhammad, pbuh) and (the other) trusted. A cloud (appeared and) cast its shade upon them until both reached the village. He escorted the butcher to his place and the cloud departed with him. The prophet (Muhammad, pbuh) said to him: "you claim that you do not possess righteous work! I was the one who invoked and you showed faith and the cloud did protect us both! I accompanied you so you could tell me about your state, so do it!" The Prophet (pbuh) said: "the repentant enjoys a state with God unmatched by any other (person)."

Ahmad ibn Sa'īd<sup>19</sup>, the ascetic quotes his father saying: "there was with us in Kūfa a young worshipful lad who always confined himself to prayer in the mosque. He was good looking, tall, and fine in appearance. An intelligent beautiful young woman looked at him and became enamored of him for a long time. One day she intercepted him on his way to the mosque and said: young man, listen to what I say to you then do as you please! He continued on without speaking to her. She intercepted him again as he was returning home and repeated: please listen to what I wish to say to you! He swerved away from her saying: this is a posture of someone who is being accused and I do not wish to be the target of blame! She replied: may God be my witness, I have not taken this position out of ignorance of your lot! God forbid that worshipers should experience this from me! What has induced me to find you in such a predicament on account of me is the knowledge that what is seen as little may be (regarded as) much to other people. You God fearers are like (something) supple, bending too much for me to shame. In short, what I wish to say to you is that my limbs are totally preoccupied with

19. Mentioned in the context of a narrator. Sulami, 217.

you. God is the master of both, my lot and yours!" He (Ahmad) went on (to say): "the young lad continued on his way home. He wished to pray but his mind was unsettled. He took a pen, wrote a letter then left the house. But the woman was still standing where he had left her. He thrust the letter at her and returned to his home. In it (he wrote): in the name of God, the compassionate, the most merciful. Know ye, O woman, that God, may He be glorified, if defied by a servant will forgive; if the defiance is repeated, He will shield him; but if he (the servant) should disguise it in different forms, He becomes silently angry, to such an extent that heaven and earth tremble, as do mountains, forests, and creatures that crawl. Who is it that can tolerate His anger? If what you say is false, I remind you of a day when heavens are helpless and mountains (soft as) colored wool and nations on bended knee before the great force of the All-powerful (God).<sup>20</sup> God be my witness, I have failed to reform my self; how can I reform others? If what I say is true, I point you to a doctor of guidance who treats festering wounds and scorching pains: He is God of the worlds. Seek Him out with your true state, for I am preoccupied with someone else." In His (God's) own words: Warn them of the Day when hearts are stuck in throats concealing what awaits tyrants, for whom no protectors or intercessors are heeded. He knows what have betrayed eyes and what hearts have concealed.<sup>21</sup> Whereto is the escape from such a revelation?"

She came back a few days later and (again) intercepted his path. When he saw her at a distance, he wanted to return to his home in order to avoid her but she said to him: "young man, do not go back; there will be no more encounters between us after today except in the presence of God Almighty!" She wept profusely and said: "ask God who possesses the keys to your heart to make easy (for me)

20. Allusion is to the end of the world preceding Resurrection and, ultimately, the Day of Judgment as well described in the Koran, 59: 13-18.

21. Koran, 40: 18-19.

what he has made difficult for you!" She followed him to ease her pain with a bit of wisdom which she could attribute to him and provide her with advice that would comfort her. He said to her: "I counsel you to protect yourself from yourself, and I remind you of His saying: It is He who doth take your souls by night, and hath knowledge of all that ye have done by day."<sup>22</sup>

She left crying more profusely than before. When she awoke to her condition, she confined herself to her home and proceeded to pray, continuing that way until she died of a broken heart. The young man remembered her after she died and wept. When asked for whom he was weeping, "when you were the one who caused her to despair of you?" he replied: "I killed her lust for me at the beginning of her state and made of her estrangement (from me) a treasure for myself before God Almighty. I am ashamed to ask back from Him the treasure I have stored with Him."

Thus ends the book CURBING THE TWO APPETITES through His mercy and kindness.

22. Koran, 6: 60.

ANNEX  
and  
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## ANNEX

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ABU HĀMID AL-GHAZĀLI (1058-1111), leading theologian of Islam and the reconciler of its two major trends: mystical and cognitive. His greatest work, *Revivification of the Sciences of Religion*, is the definitive word on Islamic beliefs until today. He was the first appointed head of the famous Nizāmiyah Institute of Theological Learning, established in Baghdad by the Great Seljuks for promulgating Sunni or orthodox Islam according to the four major rites. He emerged after a ten-year seclusion as a Sufi and undertook the successful task of making Sufism acceptable to the theologians. His *al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl* is a testimony of how he found salvation by converting to Sufism thus paving the way for other formal theologians to follow suit.

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