

THE SHAIKH WRITES:

(Following is the translation of extract from the book "Miftah ul Muqat-tiyat" by our Shaikh Dr. Shah Meerza Ikhtiyar Hussain Kaif Niazi)

Two important terminologies are given below:

1. Tafseer = explanation
2. Ta'weel = interpretation

Ta'weel relates to interpretation of the introvert aspects of Quran and Hadith.

Quran has pointed out clearly that the right of interpretation i.e. Ta'weel belongs to those who are entrenched in and imbedded with complete knowledge (referred to as "*rasikhouna fil ilm*").

Interpretations sometimes seem to digress from the common explanation but it should be kept in mind that interpretation i.e. ta'weel tries to decipher the introvert meaning which may seem different from the explanation i.e. tafseer. Allegations have been levied on Sufis, especially, due to their interpretation of Quranic verses and Ahadeeth. Since this book is based on ta'weel, therefore a few interpretations of Sahaba and Sufi saints would be interesting. Initially, Hazrat Ibn e Abbas (RA) stood out amongst Sahaba for his interpretations. The interpretations of the Sufi saints are based on their religious and spiritual knowledge gained through *aen ul yaqeen* (believing through sight – the eye of Certainty) and *haq ul yaqeen* (believing through experience – the total reality of Certainty). Hazrat Shaikh Shahabuddin Suharwardee (RA) explains in his book "*Awarif ul Ma'arif*" that the hearts of Sufis are like ponds and lakes which accumulate water (interpreted as knowledge) and the hearts of pious and learned persons get purified from this. These people are gifted with more spiritual fences around them to hold knowledge and wisdom just like the ponds and lakes that are able to accumulate and hold water due to the fences.

Hazrat Masrooq (RA) said that when I was in the service of the Sahabas of the Prophet (SAW), I found them like ponds and lakes because their purified hearts were the guardians & cleansers and their hearts had become the placeholders of knowledge and wisdom due to this purification. Hazrat Abdullah bin Hassan (RA) narrated that when the ayah which translates to "and those ears should listen that can remember" was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW), he said to Hazrat Ali (KAW) that "O Ali! I have prayed to Allah that He makes your ear like these (which listen and remember)". Hazrat Ali (KAW) said that after that day I did not forget anything I heard.

Hence, the hearts of Sufis are guardians of Allah's secrets of the introvert. Due to piousness and righteousness they got purified while due to godliness their hearts were cleansed from which the love for the worldly desires was banished.

The passages to their inner selves opened up and they started listening from the ears of their hearts. Therefore the Sufis rounded up the knowledge which was a combination of both extrovert & introvert. With this comprehensive knowledgebase they derived the rules. Utilising their jurisprudence and knowledge they referred to provision of God. These Sufis safeguarded the religion and promoted exegesis, jurisprudence, study of faith (with its intellectual proof) and introduced the discipline of ta'weel.

One common example of ta'weel, from the era of Sahaba and leading to various Sufis, explains the introvert meaning of one of the ayahs which is different from the apparent meaning. Allah says (translation): "And He enabled the descent of water from the sky and then the rivers and brooks started flowing according to their capacities" Quran 13:17.

Hazrat Ibn e Abbas (RA) interpreted that water is knowledge and rivers & brooks are people's heart.

Hazrat Abu Baker Wasti (RA) interprets that Allah created a huge pearl that was pure and bright. He viewed it with His Glory and the pearl melted and started flowing. The ayah points to this and the hearts that received this water from the melting pearl were purified.

Hazrat Ibn e Ata (RA) says that this ayah is metaphorical and is revealed for His followers. When the water flows from the rivers and brooks, it takes away with it the dirt and filth; similarly the flow of enlightenment washes away the darkness of ones inner self.

Some Sufis have interpreted the flow of water from sky in this ayah as the flow of various marvels of Allah and every heart got its due share. The rivers of exegesis and jurisprudence emanated from the hearts of scholars. The stream of introvert knowledge stemmed from the hearts of the Sufis and they got the share according to their capacities. All the worldly desires were washed away from the hearts of these Sufis and since they had the maximum capacity, they got maximum knowledge. Based on this knowledge, Sufis not only shared the dignity of the common scholars but in fact stood out as superior to them.

Hazrat Shaikh Mohiuddin Ibn e Arabi (RA) is the most revered Sufi who laid down the principles and rules of Saufism in a defined form and gave it proper vocabulary and terminologies. He preached and believed in Wahdatul Wajood (Oneness of Being). His writings are studded with ta'weel due to which accusations of infidelity were leveled against him by the extrovert scholars of his time.

ED's NOTE:

Ilm or knowledge (as it is commonly defined) is the basis of a person's efforts towards greater realities. Knowledge transforms itself into actions only if there is a will to attain the experience which the knowledge conveys to a person. Repeated performance of these actions manifests them into a habit. A habit gradually forms part of the character of a person and is reflected not only in his daily chores of life but when evidenced in the light of Sufi teachings, helps elevate a person to the next level on the spiritual ladder.

An evident example that can be referred to is the *khilafat* (deputation) of Prophet Adam (AS) as the representative of Allah in this world. Upon Adam's (AS) creation, angels pointed out to Allah that Adam (as a race) would spread mischief in the world. In response, Allah taught Adam (AS) "*ilm ul asma'a*" which is commonly translated as the knowledge about names (of things present in the universe). However, Sufis interpret this (defined in simple words) as the Divine Knowledge of Allah. Then Allah asked the angels to bow down to Adam (AS) which in essence was prostration to the Reality behind the physical manifestation called Adam.

Hence the main reason to make Adam (AS) as the vicegerent (*khalifa*) of Allah was knowledge. Knowledge manifests itself in various forms and takes different means for communication. People may have direct relationship with the teacher while some may prefer to rely on the books only. Some people prefer to gain knowledge through experience only while there are those who use their skills to infer from sundry aspects of life; including their dreams.

The dwellers of the Sufi path use all of the methods that are available to them for acquiring knowledge. They use the book, the teacher, their experiences and whatever is happening around them to pick the gems of knowledge. The primary source of knowledge, though, remains the Teacher i.e. the *Shaikh*. The *Shaikh* has not only acquired knowledge from all the available sources but has also experienced every bit of it. He is thus most adequately poised to guide the seekers of Truth. The seekers use the knowledge to further develop their spiritual selves and experience the Reality.

This newsletter is aimed to contribute its share in expanding the knowledgebase and to pass on what one learns and experiences under the guidance of the *Shaikh*.

Talib

MOON MIRRORS SUN

by: Hasan Meerza

Mevlana Rumi (RA) in his Masnawi (Book I- story 14) narrates the following story.

The Chinese and the Greeks disputed before the Sultan which of them were the better painters; and, in order to settle the dispute, the Sultan allotted to each a house to be painted by them. The Chinese procured all kinds of paints, and coloured their house in the most elaborate way. The Greeks, on the other hand, used no colours at all, but contented themselves with cleansing the walls of their house from all filth, and burnishing them till they were as clear and bright as the heavens. When the two houses were offered to the Sultan's inspection, that painted by the Chinese was much admired; but the Greek house carried off the palm, as all the colours of the other house were reflected on its walls with an endless variety of shades and hues.

(Translated by E.H. Whinfield)

Reflection always connotes a single presence despite the appearance of two. In front of a mirror, an illusion of two objects occurs but in reality, only one exists. How wondrous that a mirror shows back exactly what appears before it. Paradoxically, it assists in finding someone who is not lost. How magical that despite existing at a distance from the object, it seems to hold that object within!

A reflection brings diversity within unity when in a house of mirrors; a single face gets reflected in every mirror in its totality. Hence, one appears many, yet remains one. This is the manifestation of mirror in the physical world but there exists an esoteric mirror too, which is another name for the spiritual heart i.e. *Qalb*. As per Sufi tradition, *Qalb* is such an esoteric mirror, which is capable of reflecting divine attributes in the most glorious way possible.

In a typical Sufi way, Rumi paints picture of the *Qalb* with a metaphor of 'reflection' in the above story. A message is conveyed that a pure heart, in a subtle way, is capable of reflecting every single throbbing atom in the Universe. This is how the *Qalb* echoes beautiful attributes of Allah.

When a seeker realizes this truth, impressions of the egoistic realm which are present as ripples of chattering thoughts in his mind gets stilled and the kingdom of heart surfaces up. Once, painting of life with the brush of an egoistic attitude is undone, *Qalb* gets illuminated with the reflection of divine attributes. It makes one aware that Self-realization is none other than God realization when egoistic identity ceases to exist. A mirror actually shows the truth. Under the spell of

reflection, it makes one aware that duality or multiplicity is nothing more than an illusion of sight otherwise there is just one presence everywhere.

A Sufi Master always advises his disciples to cleanse their hearts from the impurities, like dust from the mirror. Heart, in its original form, can be seen as an immaculate mirror where dust of ego based activities starts settling in with time. An individual, as an infant is pure innocence and carries an untainted spiritual heart. However, as he grows older, mental conditioning and attempts of fulfilling never ending desires starts covering the mirror of heart with stains of selfishness, hunger for power, possessiveness etc. Such a preoccupation with self-centeredness brings heart to a state of forgetfulness where God becomes a distant reality. In order to find that lost paradise, a Sufi disciple treads the path of remembering Allah at all times which tends to bring God closer to him enabling the mirror of the spiritual heart i.e. *Qalb* to glow with reflection of the eternal Sun of the suns.

Mevlana Rumi describes different states of seekers in the above story. Chinese reflect a state of mind that focuses on the outward show of objects unlike Greeks who proved to be at the higher rung of spiritual ladder by presenting external world in the mirror of internal realm. As per materialistic point of view, outer approach seems more plausible as it leads to worldly riches capable of impressing like-minded people; however path to inner contentment takes a different route where introspection takes the lead. One needs to realize that an extrovert approach in life destines for desiring more and more worldly possessions, which burdens heart due to weight of attachments. On the other hand, an introvert approach is capable of discovering inner space unburdened by any mental possessions. However, it does not mean that one needs to escape from the world in order to live a spiritual life, rather emphasis is to maintain a balanced state of mind which is aptly described by a Sufi saying, "*Dil ba yaar, dast ba kaar*" i.e. heart is to be with Beloved even when the hands are at work. Mirza Ghalib (one of the greatest philosophical poet of Urdu) in a most unusual manner has penned down beautifully such a balance of worldly and spiritual life in his following couplet:

*Latafat bae kasafat jalwa paeda kar nahin sakti
Chaman zangaar hai aaina-e baad-e bahari ka*

Subtleness without denseness cannot manifest itself
Garden is the verdigris on the mirror of the spring breeze

Just as the spring becomes imminent in the verdigris of garden, likewise outward show of

life becomes meaningful once reflected in the mirror of inner reality.

With this long introduction, please read the following *Quranic* verse:

Lo! We offered the trust unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it; surely he is tyrant and ignorant; (33:72)

From the teachings and guiding light of our Hazrat Peer-O-Murshed, I want to present a Sufi way of looking at this *Ayah*. First of all, is it possible to accept such a translation on the face value? How can anyone justify that the man, who has accepted the trust of God, can be tyrant and ignorant? Then, why was he trusted! Can Allah bestow His trust upon a tyrant and ignorant human being? It is like presenting flowers to a beast. Is it not the same human being, before whom even angels bowed?

And when We (Allah) said unto the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam, they fell prostrate (Quran 2:34)

The actual Arabic words used in this verse for tyrant and ignorant are *zulumann* and *juholann* respectively. *Zulumann* refers to *Zulmat-e-Adum* or *Ahadiyat* or *Ama* i.e. darkness of inactive activity from where the light (*Nur*) of creation emanated. In the flight of evolution, both subtle and dense realms evolved. In this verse, heavens refer to subtle or angelic state while earth and mountains reflect dense state. Neither angelic beings nor dense objects on their own were capable of holding that Trust of Allah as either they belonged to the world of light or the realm of darkness. Man is the only exception where both angelic and earthly dimensions merge together. Hence, divine attributes reflect only in a human being, when his dense nature serves as verdigris on the manifestation of his angelic qualities. This is how; only *Man* is worthy of Divine trust in the world of created forms.

Likewise the second word is *juholann*, which should not be translated as ignorant in a literal sense. It rather reflects a state of human being when he exists as a mirror of divine attributes reflecting only divine knowledge. His personal knowledge based on his egoistic presence simply evaporates in such a state. A *Hadith Qudsi* – *Qurbe-Nawafil* states:

"Nothing is more pleasing to Me as a means for My slave* to draw near unto Me than the worship I have made binding upon him. And My slave* does not cease to draw near unto Me with added devotions of his free will until I love him. And when I love him, I become the ear by which he hears, the eye by which he sees, the hand by which he grasps and the
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foot by which he walks.”

* *Slave is an incorrect translation of Abd. Abd refers to a human being who exists at the highest rung of spiritual ladder.*

Such a man receives inner or divine knowledge in an unconventional way. He becomes like a flute from where divine song makes itself known. This is why; Prophet Mohammad (SAW) has been called as *Ummi* (un-lettered). He was not illiterate, but source of his knowledge was divine.

Hazrat Niyaz be Niyaz (RA) says in a couplet:

*Jabhi ja ke maktab-e-ishq mein sabaq-e-maqam-e-fana liya
Jo likha parrha tha 'Niyaz' nay so woh saaf dil se bhula diya*

I learned the lesson of egolessness from the school of love

After whatever information, I had gathered Niyaz, had to be completely forgotten.

We need to understand *zulumann* and *juholann* in a respectable manner unlike usual translations because man is the *Khalifa* (vicegerent) of Allah on earth. As given in the Quran:

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth. (2:30)

Such a status of *Khalifat-ul-Allah* cannot be granted to a tyrant and ignorant being. Quran does not degrade man rather enhances his image by calling him '*Zulumi & Juhuli*. Quran again honours man by giving a message: *Certainly We created man in the best make. (95:04)*

Allah says to angels about man in Quran:

So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down making obeisance to him. (38:72)

In the light of above verse, man's spirit reflects divine Spirit and his life (*hayat*) mirrors divine attribute of *AL-HAYY*.

Hazrat Ibn Arabi (RA) has summed it up by saying:

“God is your mirror in which you contemplate yourself and you are His mirror in which He contemplates His Divine Attributes.”

Here, I would like to quote a couplet of our Hazrat Pir-o-Murshed:

*Woh thha apni zaat mein aap gum magar apni deed ko muztarib
Bana aaina wohi khalq mein, hua aainae mein khud ayaan*

(He was engrossed in Himself yet longing to see Himself

He became a mirror in the form of His creation and Himself was reflected in it)

SUFISM AND NEW PHYSICS

contributed by: Shakil Aslam

Following is an extract from an article by Professor Arthur Kane Scott

“The language of physics and the language of Sufism is the language of metaphors. Metaphors point to a deeper reality, to the unexplainable, to the paradoxical and to the ineffable. Metaphors attempt to express the hidden mysteries of archetypes—metaphysical realities and energies beyond human comprehension. Love, for example, describes a metaphorical condition or state that exists both inside and outside of space and time, immanent and transcendent. Ultimately, metaphors point to wholeness and Unity, to the majesty and beauty to Jalal and Jamal of Allah.

The Hubble Space Telescope represents a Gnostic metaphor for a view of the universe that shatters the Newtonian-Cartesian preconceptions of classical physics. At this instant, it relays pictures about the macro cosmos that are grander, more beautiful and astonishing than Galileo ever could image with telescope.

Modern astrophysicists have calculated that since the movement of creation—the Big bang—there are at least 15 billion galaxies and that the galaxies in the cosmos follow the same life cycle described by Sufis of birth, growth, death and rebirth. Stars, like human beings, never die; rather their raw materials of iron, carbon, oxygen and nitrogen are continuously being recycled into space as cosmic dust, new stars, plants and life. Everything in the expanding universe consists of energy, and energy simply changes form one state to another in its cosmic ascent to Allah.

The Hubble captures the beautiful intentionality of Creation expressed in the Hadith:

“I was a hidden treasure desiring to be known, and I created the universe so that I might be known.”

Man, being an integral part of the cosmic story as the steward of the universe, carries the beauty of the entire universe within. We are a micro cosmos of the greater macro cosmos. We are all connected together into a simple, holographic world in which there is no beginning or end, no time or space. We are, as Rumi describes it, “*windows to other universe*”. In short, you and I, the complete ONE, are eternal, timeless and boundless. There is no centre out there; for wherever we are, that is the centre, the still point of the cosmos.

Amir ul Momineen Hazrat Ali (KAW) understood implicitly, the holiness/wholeness of each person in the web of life when he declared:

**“You, though a part small;
Whereas in you there is a universe,
The greatest.”**

KOANS: MYSTIC TEACHINGS OF ZEN BUDDHISM

contributed by: Sheeza Asim

A “koan” is a fundamental part of the history and lore of Zen Buddhism. It consists of a story, dialogue, question, or statement; the meaning of which cannot be understood by rational thinking, yet it may be accessible by intuition.

Koans reflect the enlightened or awakened state of such persons and sometimes confound the habit of discursive thought or shock the mind into awareness. Zen teachers often recite and comment on koans, and some Zen practitioners concentrate on koans during meditation. Teachers may probe such students about their koan practice using “checking questions” to validate an experience of insight or awakening. Responses by students have included actions or gestures, “capping phrases” and verses inspired by the koan.

In Zen practice, a koan is not meaningless, and teachers often do expect students to present an appropriate response when asked about a koan. Even so, a koan is not a riddle or a puzzle. Appropriate responses to a koan vary, as different teachers may demand different responses to a given koan, and answers may vary by circumstance. The master is looking not for an answer in a specific form, but for evidence that the disciple has grasped the state of mind expressed by the koan itself. Zen teachers and practitioners insist that the meaning of a koan can only be demonstrated in a live experience. Texts (including koan collections and encyclopedia articles) cannot convey that meaning.

Two widely known koans are given below with possible interpretations.

1) “Two hands clap and there is a sound; what is the sound of one hand?” (oral tradition attributed to Hakuin Ekaku, 1686-1769, a reviver of the koan tradition in Japan).

Interpretation:

When one realizes (“makes real”) this identity, then two hands have become one. The practitioner becomes the koan that he or she is trying to understand. That is the sound of one hand

2) If you meet the Buddha, kill him. — Linji

Interpretation:

If you are thinking about Buddha, this is thinking and delusion, not awakening. One must destroy preconceptions of the Buddha. According to Zen master Shunryu Suzuki “Kill the Buddha if the Buddha exists somewhere else. Kill the Buddha, because you should resume your own Buddha nature.”

Now here are two koans to ponder upon:

1. When you can do nothing, what can you do?
2. What is the color of wind?

(source: Wikipedia)

FROM ORAL TO WRITTEN

by: *Muhammad Tauseef Ansari*

Over 1400 years ago: Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) gathers His friends and family members and discloses that Allah has chosen Him as the last messenger and has revealed the verses of the Holy Book. He does not have any written scripture or a tablet of any kind which had these verses inscribed.

A few companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) are sitting around Him and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is reciting to them the verses from the Divine Revelation. Then he explains the meanings of these verses. To a chosen few, he imparts the introvert meaning of these revelations through selective gatherings where he can speak to them in confidence.

Over a 100 years ago: at Jabalpur, India Hazrat Agha Muhammad (RA) is surrounded by his devotees where he is delivering the lecture. At night, a few chosen devotees gather around him and he delivers the selected gems of Sufi teachings.

One can make out a common factor here, that spiritual teachings were always imparted orally. This has been the tradition of our religion whereby the most authentic knowledge was always delivered orally; at least initially. Collection of verses into a book form i.e. the Quran was completed after the physical life of the Prophet (SAW). Hadith were gathered after a substantial time had elapsed after Prophet's (SAW) life. Similarly, exegesis (*tafseer*) was rendered by the scholars quite sometime after the departure of Prophet (SAW). The tradition however changed slightly in the Sufi lineages. Handwritten scriptures made their way into the libraries of the Sufi centers (*khanqahs*) where they were referred to in the closed sessions where introvert aspects of religion were taught to the dwellers of the Sufi path. Even though they were in a written form, these books discussed the matters in a purely metaphorical and allegorical way which, if read by a lay man would not convey things clearly unless a teacher (*Shaiikh*) explained them in detail.

The advent of modern communication techniques and advancement of technology in almost all fields of life also impacted the Sufi orders. Sufi teachers started publishing their books and they were available to much larger strata of readers relatively. However, the Sufi Shaikhs made sure to keep the teachings disguised in metaphors and analogies. What was widely published and readily available were the sayings of the Sufi saints which mostly dealt with ethics and standard religious practices emphasizing on one of the most important issue of doing good and refraining from evil. But the world was yet to witness Sufi writings that discussed in detail

the introvert aspects that are the real essence of the Sufi teachings. This was also awaited by the devotees of almost all the Sufi orders as most of them had access to limited books.

Shaikh Mohiuddin Ibn e Arabi (RA) is regarded as the first Sufi to give Sufism its rules and terminologies. He developed it into a form of knowledge that had its own standards and grammar. He put forth specific terms and concepts in a written form that eventually led to others following his path. But Ibn e Arabi (RA) also used metaphorical and allegorical style of writing which resulted in various exegesis of his books by later Sufis. Famous Sufi Shaikhs that took part in converting the oral traditions into writing in the Indian Subcontinent were Hazrat Moinuddin Chishti (RA), Hazrat Zauqi Shah (RA) and Hazrat Niaz be Niaz Shah Niaz Ahmed (RA). Almost all the Sufi orders have had their scriptures written by the prominent Sufi masters of that order but a few Sufis as mentioned above made available their writings at a much larger scale and in a much simplified form.

The latest contributor to this trend of converting the previously orally imparted knowledge into widely available written form is our Shaikh Hazrat Shah Meerza Ikhtiyar Hussain Qadri, Chishti. He realized the importance of documenting and spreading the real teachings of Sufism to general public when he observed propagation of all other forms of Islamic teachings being spread through various media. Most of the teachings propagated through communication channels were biased towards extrovert meanings of Islamic teachings. Few so called Sufis propagated their own ideologies that were an incorrect interpretation of the Sufi teachings. Our Shaikh took upon the task of spreading the correct beliefs of Sufis that were authentically passed down in person from Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) through Hazrat Ali (KAW) and to various orders emanating from him. His books have paved way for general public to gain an insight into the real world of Sufi teachings and to satiate their thirst for the actual knowledge that has been an asset to the Muslims.

His books cover a wide range of topics from the rituals to the deeply rooted concept of *Tauheed* (oneness) in the light of Sufi teachings. His deliberations revolve around the basic root concept of *Wahdat-ul-Wajood* (Oneness of Being) which is the core belief of the Sufis. His poetic contributions are another medium of conveying the Sufi concepts and experiences in an aesthetical way. He has revived Sufism and its teachings in a very unique way which resembles the achievements of only few Sufi masters in the history. His books are considered to be the most authentic work on Sufi teachings based on Sufi doctrine of *Wahdat-ul-Wajood*.

RUMI's CORNER

One day an illiterate man came to Mullah Nasruddin with a letter he had received. "Mullah Nasruddin, please read this letter to me." Mullah Nasruddin looked at the letter, but could not make out a single word. So he told the man "I am sorry, but I cannot read this." The man cried: "For shame, Mullah Nasruddin! You must be ashamed before the turban you wear." Mullah Nasruddin removed the turban from his own head and placed it on the head of the illiterate man, said: "There, now you wear the turban. If it gives some knowledge, read the letter yourself."

Here are some pointers:

Illiterate Man: A Scholar.

Letter: Spiritual knowledge.

Mulla: A Sufi Master.

With no effort on his own and without passing through different spiritual stations and states, if a scholar tries to obtain spiritual knowledge, he will remain ignorant in the domain of inner knowledge. Even with all the outwardly qualifications, there is no real communication between the scholar and the spiritual Master. Despite scholar's insistence in obtaining spiritual knowledge, a Master will not be able to relate to him because by its very nature, real teaching cannot be passed onto everyone. First of all, spiritual knowledge is not theoretical rather practical. Secondly, even theory in the form of spiritual literature and poetry serve as pointers for the spiritual students. Thirdly, even those pointers can only be understood with the guidance of the Master. Fourthly, a genuine student on the spiritual path works hard in a sincere way with one pointed-ness and goes through the fire of perseverance, only then he receives spiritual knowledge. It is to be understood that spiritual knowledge is like a flame that cannot be kept alive in a rock instead a candle is needed for its transference.

Now, a scholar by bringing a letter emphasizes on theoretical understanding of spirituality. He is basically trying to collect information about spiritual knowledge. It is like looking at water from a distance for quenching thirst. A real Master will out rightly reject all such attempts for securing knowledge because it will be like singing a song to the deaf, showing painting to the blind. Infact, a genuine Sufi Master creates situations to filter out wrong people. In this anecdote, when Master ignores scholar by behaving like a man of no knowledge, scholar gets frustrated and sarcastically questions the presence of turban* on Master's head. Immediately Master hands over turban to the scholar telling him to secure knowledge on his own from the turban. This is yet another spiritual message that appearance can be deceiving. A flame from a distance can actually be a tulip flower or the other way around.

* *Turban is a sign of knowledge.*

RUMI REVISITED

contributed by: *Muhammad Owais Ansari*

[Following are translations of a short poetries originally written in Persian by Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (RA) with latent Sufi teachings]

The Three Fish

This is a story of a lake and three big fish that were in it; one of them intelligent, another half-intelligent, and the third, stupid.

Some fisherman came to the edge of the lake with their nets. The three fish saw them.

The intelligent fish decided at once to leave, to make the long, difficult trip to the ocean. He thought, "I won't consult with these two on this. They will only weaken my resolve, because they love this place so. They call it home. Their ignorance will keep them here."

The wise fish saw the men and their nets and said, "I am leaving."

The half-intelligent fish thought, "My guide has gone. I ought to have gone with him, but I didn't, and now I've lost my chance to escape. I wish I'd gone with him."

He mourns the absence of his guide for a while, and then thinks, "What can I do to save myself from these men and their nets? Perhaps if I pretend to be already dead! I'll belly up on the surface and float like weeds float, just giving myself totally to the water. To die before I die."

So he did that. He bobbed up and down, helpless, within arm's reach of the fishermen.

"Look at this! The best and biggest fish is dead." One of the men lifted him by the tail, spat on him, and threw him up on the ground. He rolled over and over and slid secretly near the water, and then, back in.

Meanwhile, the third fish, the dumb one, was agitatedly jumping about, trying to escape with his agility and cleverness.

The net, of course, finally closed around him, and as he lay in the terrible frying-pan bed, he thought, "If I get out of this, I'll never live again in the limits of the lake. Next time, it will be the ocean! I'll make the infinite my home."

The Fish and the Sea

This non-existence is like the Sea
I look like a Fish

And the existence is like a Trap
How can anyone be trapped by the Sea
Recognize its elegance?

The Sea and the Fish

In the Sea of Real
Be like a Fish
That's accompanied
By nothing but fine waters

BOOK REVIEW

contributed by: *Samer Imran*

SUFI CUISINE

By: Navin Halici

"Sufi Cuisine" features over one hundred sumptuous recipes inspired by the teachings of Sufism, alongside lavish illustrations and charming anecdotes surrounding the preparation of each dish.

The eating and cooking of food is intrinsically connected to Sufi religious practices, and the truly inspiring array of dishes here illustrates this beautifully. From chick pea soup and griddle cheese to swordfish casserole and sweet spinach, with desserts such as preserved rose petals and almond halvah, as well as Turkish coffee, these delightful recipes offer the ideal introduction to the art of Sufi cooking.

Has any mystic ever mentioned food as often, or in such detail, as Mevlana Rumi? "I am your spinach, cook me as you desire, sour or sweet...", "O saffron, drink water until you become saffron, and only then enter the zerde...", "I've eaten neither qouma nor tirit nor lentils...". To Rumi, food was the spontaneous language of ecstasy

As Nevin Halici describes in this book, the dervish order Rumi founded in Konya is shot through with food. In the era before the Sufi centers were closed, the kitchen was the heart of its lodge. The chief spiritual adviser was the Aşçõ Dede, or Cook Father, who also oversaw the mundane workings of the kitchen.

Atep-Baz-õ Veli, Rumi's cook, is a revered figure among dervishes as his tomb in a suburb of Konya is a place of pilgrimage. Legend credits him with the opening posture of the devotional dance. Atep-Baz had complained that he hadn't enough wood for cooking, so Rumi told him to put his feet under the stove in place of the wood, and his toes obligingly emitted fire. But because he had doubted, his left big toe was burned, and he covered it in shame. This is said to be the reason that the Mevlevis begin their whirling with the toes of the right foot over those of the left.

The book is a unique combination of scholarship and, what can be called, devotional gastronomy. Halici has studied the early histories and memoirs of the Mevlevis and read through all of Rumi's thousands of ecstatic verses for the food references in them. Some of his verses, as she points out, are virtual recipes. Her recipe for fried carp is based on the famous couplet: "I am like a fish in the market, in the bazaar, in the pan, flipping from one side to the other, turning over and over I burn and blaze."

(source: www.cornucopia.net)

KAHAT KABIR

contributed by: *Murtaza Meerza*

Six hundred years ago Kabir was born in India in 1398 AD. He lived for 120 years and is said to have relinquished his body in 1518. A weaver by profession, Kabir ranks among the world's greatest poets. The hall mark of Kabir's poetry is that he conveys in his two line poems (*Doha*), what others may not be able to do in many pages. Two of his famous dohas are given below with explanation of the great mystic thoughts that hide behind the simple two lines.

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Jab Mein Tha Tab Hari Nahin, Jab Hari Hai Mein Nahin

Sab Andhiyara Mitt Gaya, Jab Deepak Dekhya Mahin

When "I" was then Hari was not, Now Hari "is" and "I" am not

All the darkness (illusions) mitigated, When I saw the light (illumination) within

From the root word "*Har*" (everything) is derived the word "*Hari*" which is used as yet another name or expression for God. In this doha, Kabir explains that till such time we are engrossed within the bounds of our (limited) ego - the mundane "I" - we are not able to experience or realize the all-pervasive attribute of God. Resultantly we are in a state of conflict, chaos and a state of ignorance aptly expressed as darkness or illusion in the doha. This darkness - the state of ignorance - diminishes, rather eliminates, when the all-pervasive effulgence of God (the light within) is perceived, realized or experienced. With this conviction we are able to transcend the bondage enforced by our ego.

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Jyon Naino Mein Putlee, Tiyon Maalik Ghat Mahin

Moorakh Log Na Janhin, Baahar Dhudhan Jahin

Like the pupil in the eyes, the Lord resides inside

Ignorant do not know this fact, they search Him outside

In this doha, Kabir using a very apt simile demonstrates the fact that God is within everyone. The wise thus realize Him by introspection, while the ignorant search Him externally. God is unseen and inexpressible. Anything that is seen, can be counted or measured, automatically becomes mutable. But God is not mutable.

We can see a bunch of flowers, count them, weigh them, but how can we see, count or weigh the fragrance? Same way, the soul of is that representation of God that resides within everyone and is yet unseen, unknown, incomprehensible and inexpressible.

Rajender Krishan (www.boloji.com)

MEMOIRS – Part II

by: Asim Meerza

[This article is in continuation of the article in the previous issue of the Newsletter about the Urs ceremony of Hazrat Shah Agha Muhammad (RA) in Jabalpur, India]

The culmination of Urs ceremonies of Hazrat Shah Agha Muhammad (RA) at Jabalpur India, triggered our preparation for the next destination i.e. New Machgawan (referred to as Machgawan or Singhori commonly). Machgawan is a small village which is approximately two and a half hours' drive from Jabalpur on the Nagpur Highway. The journey to Machgawan and the time we spent there was one of the greatest experience for us in all aspects.

The scenery on the way to Machgawan was beautiful. The landscape is lush green and has hills and forest with fields of wheat, rice, pulses and sugar cane in between. We had loads of fun on our way. One interesting view that often caught our eye on the highway was that of numerous red face monkeys moving around the road side and on the trees bordering the highway. We traveled in the form of a convoy of five jeeps and there were about forty people that were a part of the group from Jabalpur.

During our journey to Machgawan, we made a brief stop-over at a rest-house where we had tea and a bit of rest. We photographed the scenic beauty to keep the memories of the place alive. Some of the villagers had come there to welcome us and had constructed a wonderful welcome gate just near the rest-house. After a short while, we resumed our journey to Machgawan.

We first entered Kahani, which is another small village before Machgawan, and were greeted with flowers. At the entrance of the villages, welcome gates were erected in the honour of Hazrat's visit. We then entered Old Machgawan which is on the border of the New Machgawan. The population there comprised of Hindus mainly except for two families that are Muslims. This portrayed a great example of brotherhood between the Hindus and Muslims where they have lived peacefully together. The Muslim families are devotees of Hazrat. The village also has a school which was closed early for the children to meet Hazrat. This was again a new experience for us as we saw these children line up in quite a disciplined manner (especially in the backdrop of such a remote village) to pay their homage to Hazrat. This village is quite close to our final destination i.e. New Machgawan or commonly called Machgawan or Singhori.

It's a very remote village located three kilometers from the main road. An unmetaled road connects the village to the main

road. Traveling on this road, we realized the difficulties these people face when they travel all the way to Jabalpur to attend the Urs ceremonies each year. On our arrival, the atmosphere at Singhori was overflowing with the feelings of love evidenced in many forms by all of us. Beautiful gates were constructed at the entrance of the village while the villagers had also arranged for a music band and display of fireworks. Thousands of men, women and children gathered at Singhori from surrounding villages and welcomed Hazrat. A colorful tent was erected which covered the path from start of the village to the newly built Sama Khana.

The Sama Khana and Mosque were built by Aghaia Khidmat Committee and a Madaressah (religious school) was also constructed near the Mosque. Scores of people kept pouring in to pay their homage to Hazrat till late night. After Isha prayers, *mehfil e sama'a* (qawwali) took place at the Sama Khan. The qawwal troupe had traveled with us from Jabalpur. The qawwali was brilliantly rendered as the qawwal had prepared some of Hazrat's Hindi poetry for rendition. Dinner and refreshments served after the qawwali were sumptuous and the arrangements marvelous. The occasion of Hazrat's visit seems like a big celebration for the people of Machgawan and its surrounding villages.

The following day we offered Friday prayers in the newly constructed mosque before commencing our journey back to Jabalpur. Around 10 people on bikes accompanied us for about forty kilometers on the way back from the village without considering the impediments of weather and the difficulties of commuting from the village. This portrayed their great devotion and love as they traveled in front of our convoy to clear the roads, although the traffic on the roads was thin.

On the whole, true love & devotion of people towards Hazrat also had an overwhelming feeling of love and association on all of us. Being a small village where different communities have peacefully co-existed, there was no difference between Hindus and Muslims in their display of love. Our hearts were deeply moved by acts of love which we witnessed and experienced in Singhori (Machgawan) and its surrounding villages. The people are not financially strong but their hearts are full of love which is clearly evident whenever Hazrat pays a visit to Machgawan. Men, women and children paid their homage to Hazrat with tears in their eyes triggered by the overpowering emotions of love and devotion. There was a long queue just to pay their respects and to kiss the hands of Hazrat (*dast-boasee*). The Muslims living in the village are all devotees of Hazrat while people of other beliefs also

regard him highly as a spiritual master. The eagerness and the longing to have their Shaikh and a spiritual master amongst them were quite visible and everyone tried to do as much possible to make him feel at home.

After our return to Jabalpur we made preparations and left for our home in Karachi. This marked the end of a great spiritual journey. The memories of this tour will always be a treasure for us.

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TRANSFORMATION

contributed by: Muhammad Owais Ansari

[Below is a translation of a poem by Shaikh Saadi Sherazi (RA)]

A single drop of rain fell from a cloud in the sky
But was filled with shame when it saw the sea so wide.

'Next to the sea then, who am I?
If the sea exists, then how can I?'

While looking down on itself
With the eyes of contempt,
An oyster in its shell,
Took it in for nourishment.

And so it was, that its fate was sealed by this event,
And it became a famous pearl to adore a king's head.
Having descended to the depths,
It was now exalted to the heights.

On the portal of non existence it went knocking,
Until it finally was transformed into being.

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WORDS OF WISDOM

contributed by: Jamil Ahmed

The following contemporary situation illustrates how great things depend on small beginnings, and how the base is the foundation of the apex. From such entertaining and cynical stories we can also learn something about the deeper illustrative value of ordinary tales and jokes in spiritual studies.

Two hillbillies are talking. One asks the other how little Jake is getting on at school. "Not so well," says the other, "because they are trying to teach him to spell 'cat' with a C instead of with a K."

This story reflects the inaccurate expectations of people who have learned things somewhat askew, as well as the need for context and grounding. In this case, that need is reflected in the fact that it is essential to know the alphabet before rendering a mature judgment.

(source: The Wisdom of Sufic Humour by Idries Shah)

سلطان الہند حضرت خواجہ معین الدین بن سبزی جیسری چشتیؒ

مرتبہ: جمیل احمد

حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ ۱۱۳۰ھ رجب ۵۳۶ھ ہجری (۱۱۳۱ء) کو دہلی ایران کے علاقے سیستان کے ایک دولت مند گھرانے میں پیدا ہوئے آپ نسلی اعتبار سے صحیح نسب سید تھے آپ کا شجرہ عالیہ بارہ واسطوں سے امیر المومنین حضرت علی کرم اللہ وجہہ سے ملتا ہے آپ کے والد گرامی خواجہ غیاث الدین حسین بہت دولت مند تھے اور بااخصیبت تھے۔ حالانکہ کثرت مال و دولت کو ان کی تکمیل میں سب سے بڑا منتظر اور دنیا گیا ہے مگر خواجہ غیاث الدین صاحب ثروت ہونے کے ساتھ ساتھ ایک مایوس و زانو شخص بھی تھے۔ دولت کی فراوانی کے باوجود حضرت معین الدین چشتیؒ سچپن ہی سے بہت تواضع پسند تھے۔ جس زمانے میں آپ کی ولادت ہوئی وہ بڑا آشوب دور تھا۔ سیستان اور خراسان لوٹ مار کی زد میں تھے۔ ہر طرف انفرقہ کی کاہل تھا۔ سرسبز و شاداب علاقوں میں آگ بھڑک رہی تھی۔ یہی وہ خوں رنگ و روزہرا اور ڈھانچا جس نے خواجہ غیاث الدین کو بڑے کم سن پر مجبور کر دیا۔ آپ اہل خانہ کو لے کر خراسان چلے آئے اس وقت حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ کی عمر ایک برس تھی۔ انہی بڑا آشوب حالات میں ویرانے چھڑے حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ نے پرورش پائی۔ پھر ایک دن صبر کی تقصیر کرنے والا باپ بھی ۵۵۱ھ ہجری میں دنیا سے رخصت ہو گیا۔ ابھی اس صدمہ کا ٹکڑا ہٹا ہے کہ سنبھل نہ پائے تھے کہ ایک سال بعد ہی والدہ ماجدہ انتقال کر گئیں ان کا ناخوشگوار حادثہ اور انہوں نے آپ کی زندگی کا نقشہ بول ڈالا۔ زونم میں پرورش پانے کے باوجود آپ کا مزاج دوسرے صاحب ثروت خاندان کے بچوں سے قطعی مختلف تھا آپ کو بچپن کا ایک وسیع و عریض باغ اور ایک پن چکی و ریش ملی تھی۔

ایک دن آپ حسب معمول باغ کے کاسوں میں مصروف تھے۔ ہاتھ کام میں اور دل یاد الہی میں مشغول تھا نظریں اٹھا کر دیکھا تو اہم قدموزی باغ میں موجود تھے۔ وہ جو بیت کے رنگ میں روحانیت کے اعلیٰ مقام پر فائز تھے۔ خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ آگے بڑھے اور نہایت ادب سے دست مبارک کو بوسہ دیا اور ایک گھنٹے درخت کے نیچے چادر بچھا دی۔ حضرت تشریف رکھیں۔ آپ نے کہا اور روزگار ایک کونور سے میں پائی لے آئے پھر دوسری طرف بھاگے اور گورکا ایک خوش توڑ ڈکڑ لے آئے نہایت ادب سے دونوں ہاتھوں کا پلید بنا کر کھڑے ہو گئے۔ حضرت اہم قدموزی کی نظر میں ان کی پیشانی پر تھی ہوئی تھیں جیسے کچھ کہہ رہے ہوں پھر اس خوشے سے ایک دانہ گورکا توڑ لیا، 'لو اب تم تمہیں کچھ کھلا لے ہیں' حضرت اہم قدموزی نے فرمایا۔ انہوں نے اپنے قبیلے میں ہاتھ ڈال کر روٹی کا ایک ٹکڑا کھرا کھلا اور اپنے دانوں سے چبانے لگے، خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ بڑی کوشش سے دیکھ رہے تھے۔ جب اہم قدموزی اس ٹکڑا روٹی کا ٹکڑا چھوٹا چھوٹا چھوٹے تو اس کو دیکھ کر مبارک سے نکال کر حضرت معین الدین چشتیؒ کے ہاتھ مبارک میں رکھ دیا۔ اس کو کھانے کا حلق سے اترنا تھا کہ دنیا ہی بول گئی جلیات اٹھ گئے۔ انوار الہی کی لکھی دیش ہوئیں کی آنکھیں کچھ ورد بکھنا بھول گئیں پھر نہایت غصہ اور نہایت ہونے کا احساس کوئی اور ہی دنیا تھی جس کی ہر کوہ لطف ہوئے تھے گرد و پیش کا ہوش نہ تھا، نہ جانے یہ کیفیت کب تک برقرار رہی۔ جب آپ اس کیفیت سے باہر آئے تو کونور سے مش تھوڑا سا پانی تھا۔ چادر پر گورکا خوش رکھا ہوا تھا لیکن اہم قدموزی موجود نہیں تھے آپ بے تماشیا باغ کے دروازے کی طرف بھاگے، جانے والے کے قدموں کے نشان تک نہیں تھے باغ میں آکر ڈھونڈا، ایک ایک درخت کے پیچھے جھانکا، کچھ نظر نہ آیا تک ہار کر بیٹھ گئے۔

دوسرے دن خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ نے اپنا باغ اور چکی فروخت کر دی۔ حضرت اہم قدموزی سے ملاقات اور پھر سارا مال و متاع اللہ کی راہ میں لانے کے بعد معین الدین چشتیؒ راہ سلوک کی طرف متوجہ ہوئے۔ آپ نے خراسان سے نکل کر سب سے پہلے مشرق کا سفر اختیار کیا۔ ان دنوں سمرقند و بخارا اسلامی علوم فنون کے اہم مراکز سمجھے جاتے تھے۔ یہاں پہلے آپ نے قرآن پاک حفظ کیا، پھر تفسیر، فقہ، حدیث و دوسرے علوم ظاہری میں مہارت حاصل کی۔ علوم ظاہری کی تکمیل کے بعد مشرق کی تلاش میں نکل کھڑے ہوئے۔ عراق میں اپنے زمانے کے مشہور بزرگ خواجہ عثمان ہارونی کو ملت بڑے تھے۔ حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ ان کی خدمت میں کچھ دن حاضر ہوئے رہے پھر ایک دن خواجہ عثمان ہارونی نے آپ کو اپنے حلقہ و ادارت میں شامل کر لیا۔ حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ اپنے مرشد کی خدمت میں اڑھائی سال رہے آپ اپنے مرشد کیساتھ تھوڑا سا مقدس تشریف لے گئے جہاں حضرت خواجہ عثمان ہارونی نے آپ کو لے کر فائدہ کعبہ میں داخل ہوئے اور عرض کیا 'یا اللہ معین الدین میرے مریض ہے اسکو تیرے حسیب علیہ السلام کا فیض پہنچا ہے تو اسے قبول فرما، ابھی یہ دعا ختم نہیں ہوئی تھی کہ یہ آتی ہم نے معین الدین کو قبول کیا، 'معین الدین اللہ کی جانب سے یہ قبولت مبارک ہو' مرشد نے فرمایا۔ پھر اسکے بعد شہر مدینہ کا رخ کیا، بارگاہ رسالت میں حضور صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے حضور صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم کو لے کر آیا 'و علیکم السلام یا سلطان الہند' مرشد نے مبارکباد دی۔ اسکے بعد پھر مرشد کی اجازت سے تمنا آپ نے ج ادا کیا اور دوسرے رسول پر حاضر کی دی۔ اسکے بعد بغداد کے سفر کے لئے نظر وہاں آپ کی ملاقات شیخ عزم الدین کبرٹی سے ہوئی (ولیا کے کرام میں انتظام بہت بلند ہے)۔ یہاں سے علم لاطنی حاصل کر کے نظر تو آپ کی ملاقات حضرت شیخ عبدالقادر جیلانی سے ہوئی (حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ کی والدہ محترمہ شیخ عبدالقادر جیلانی کے سیکھنے والی تھیں) آپ نے کچھ عرصہ یہاں قیام کیا اور ان کتاب فیض کیا۔ پھر آپ تہذیب تشریف لے گئے اور وہاں آپ نے خواجہ ابو سعید خمریزی سے فیض حاصل کیا۔ چند دن اسکے ساتھ گزارنے کے بعد آپ اصطہان تشریف لے گئے وہاں مشہور بزرگ حضرت شیخ محمود اصطہانی کی محبت سے فیضیاب ہوئے۔

انہی دنوں وہاں ایک نومر لڑکے کو دیکھا جو درویشوں سے نہایت عقیدت رکھتا تھا، حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ کی آمد سے پہلے وہ لڑکا حضرت شیخ محمود اصطہانی کی ذات سے بہت متاثر تھا۔ مگر جب اس نے حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ کو دیکھا تو ارادہ بدل دیا پھر جب آپ اصطہان سے روانہ ہوئے تو وہ لڑکا بھی آپ کے ساتھ ہی ہوا۔ یہی نومر لڑکا حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ کی صحبت میں اولیائے ہند کا تاجدار بنا جسے دنیا حضرت قطب الدین گنج شکر کہا فرمایا۔ حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ نے اس کو دیکھا اور اس کے داد مرشد ہیں۔

حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ اصطہان سے خرقان تشریف لے گئے یہاں آپ دو سال درس و تدریس میں مشغول رہے پھر آپ ایران کے شہر استراآ تشریف لے آئے وہاں آپ نے شیخ ناصر الدین (چکارو واسطوں سے سلسلہ حضرت بایزید بطلانی سے جاملتا ہے) کے یہاں قیام کیا اور ان سے روحانی فیض حاصل کیا، ان بزرگ کی ہر ایک سوسر سال ہو چکی تھی۔ پھر ہرات کا قصد کیا یہاں حضرت خواجہ عبداللہ انصاری کی مزار مبارک پر آپ کا قیام تھا، ہرات سے نکل کر آپ سبز و انظر تشریف لے گئے، ابھی سبز و انظر میں حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ کو چند دن بھی نہیں گزرے تھے کہ نقایا باشندوں نے آپ کی خدمت میں حاضر ہو کر اپنے حالات بیان کئے۔ 'شیخ! ہم اہل شہر کی جانب سے آپ کے حضور ایک درخواست لکھا ہے۔ یہاں کا گورنر بہت ظالم ہے لوگ دم کی بھیک مانگتے مانگتے سو گئے مگر اس پر کچھ نہ ہوا آپ اسکے حق میں دماغ فرمائیں کہ وہاں سے پاجائے پھر اس سے اہل شہر کو جات لے جائے'۔ دوسرے دن خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ کو گورنر کے دربار میں تشریف لے گئے اور وہاں سے کہا کہ 'اپنے حاکم کو تشریف دے کہ اس سے درویش معین الدین لینا چاہتا ہے'۔ گورنر نے وہاں کو جواب دیا کہ 'میرے پاس کسی فقیر سے لئے کا وقت نہیں ہے'۔ وہاں واپس آیا اور جیسے ہی اس نے گورنر کے الفاظ ادا کرنے کی کوشش کی تو اسکی زبان لنگ ہو گئی اور وہ زمین پر گر کر بیہوش ہو گیا۔ حضرت خواجہ معین الدین چشتیؒ کسی اجازت کے بغیر گل کے دروازے میں داخل ہو گئے۔ دوسرے دن وہاں کے ساتھ بھی وہی ہوا جو پہلے کے ساتھ ہوا تھا۔

