

1

SALAAM!

*“The announcer said, ‘Ever since your royal majesty
planted in him the seed of love, he has had
no other desire but for you.’”³*

They say all great works begin with the *Basmala*, the Arabic phrase, *Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim*: In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Indeed, nothing is possible without the Beloved. And what secrets, what prophecy, what abundance are contained within this single phrase! One of the beauties of the Arabic language is the many hidden meanings it conceals within its alphabet and the words and poetry it forms. The *Basmala* is no exception.

The *Basmala* begins with the letter “*bā’*,” equivalent to the letter “B” in sound and alphabetic order. Yet the *Basmala* should have begun with the letter “*alif*,” the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, for *alif* represents God’s oneness. However, that *alif* is hidden within *bā’*. Scholars assert that this “indicates that absolute oneness is concealed within multiplicity.” *Bā’* then, according to this idea, consists of multiplicity. The transition from the greatness of *alif* to a state of humility is rendered as though *bā’* is bowing down.

3 6:4412

There is much to say about the *Basmala's* divine calligraphy, but let's cut to the chase and make one or two brief remarks about it in regards to *bā'*.

In the beginning, when God asked, "Am I not your Lord?" the answer came back, "*Bala*," yes. As you can guess, *bala* begins with *bā'*. Creation then begins at this exact moment. Sufism too takes that moment as its starting point.

"*Bā'*" is written as a line with a dot underneath: the point of unity! Ali the Chosen, of whom Muhammad said, "I am the city of knowledge, Ali is the gate," declared, "Knowledge is a point. The ignorant have reproduced it, but I *am* that point."

Hopefully we have not already tired you out or confused you right off the bat. Our path ahead is long, and we have much to talk about. There is a time and place for everything. Let us just say another phrase that begins with B: "Be patient." Hang in there.

But first we must praise the Glory of God.

Glorification belongs only to God, and praising Him appropriately comes naturally once you thoroughly know His nature and attributes. The hadith state that God has 99 attributes, known as the Beautiful Names of Allah. They appear in the Qur'an, the hadith and other sources. We will mention a few here as we give praise.

O God, You said, "I want to be known and to be loved," and through your love You created Mankind and the world. This is expressed in the holy attribute of "*Al-Wadud*," (The Loving). As "*Al-Muhymin*" (The Protector) You watch over and protect us. And through your manifestation of "*Ar-Rahman*" (The Exceedingly Compassionate), You grant us countless blessings, both physical and spiritual.

We know that as "*Al-Wali*" (The Protecting Friend) You are our unique friend, our confidant, our "*Ar-Refiq al-'Ala*," the highest of companions.

As "*Al-Hadi*" (The Guide) You show us the correct way, the straight path. We, as dervishes, wish to gain understanding and insight into this path.

In accordance with the Beautiful Name of "*Al-Fattah*" (The Opener), it is You who will grant us the possibilities to open our hearts, to reclaim our souls, and to be able to benefit from your beauty and benevolence.

O God! We are your helpless, insignificant, and humble servants – if of course you command us to accept our servitude. We cannot glorify you by describing you. We cannot praise you in a way worthy of your glory. But, by making an effort to absolve You of everything, we are saying that we have infinite praise and thanks for you, O God.

May You grant peace be upon that prophet who is the messenger of both man and jinn, whom you call "*My Habib*" (my love), for whom you reserved the Praised Station in heaven, and whom you have named Ahmed there and Muhammad on earth. And may you grant peace upon His exalted family (*Ahl al-Bayt*), his companions, and our great forebears who have tread down this path and have passed through the gate to His companionship! And we wish peace specifically upon the great Sufis of the Mevlevi order: Bahauddin Walad,⁴ Jalaluddin Rumi, the great Shams Tabrizi, Husamuddin Chelebi, Sultan Walad,⁵ Syed Burhanuddin Mahaqqiq, Sheikh Saladin of Konya, Sheikh Karimuddin, Arif Chelebi, and to all the sheikhs, dervishes, caliphs and lovers.

By opening this book, you have made it clear to us that you intend to set out on the Sufi path. Bravo. Wanting to embark on this journey, and taking the steps to do so, as you have done, is a commendable act.

4 Rumi's father

5 Rumi's eldest son

You are already a kindred soul, a love-seeker. You have a place in our circle. You have joined our conversations. You know though, that we do not turn anyone away, nor do we make anyone stay. However, crossing that threshold and devoting yourself to the Sufi path is no small feat. Sufism is a tough (perhaps the toughest) occupation.

But you know, it is not required. There is no tenet in God's Book that says everyone must become a "Sufi." You may ask, "Aren't those who become dervishes 'chosen'? Why do they get accepted? Do they have something that I do not?" You may even search your heart for these answers.

At first glance, you may be right to ask these questions, but when you look at Sufism from its inner, hidden perspective you need not to worry. Sufism embodies a wisdom that is not readily apparent, as everything has both an interior (*batin*) and exterior (*zahir*) dimension. The *batin* is the unseen purview of the heart, the concealed meaning that underlies an object or an action, whereas *zahir* refers to the physical and visible manifestation of that object or action. Simply put, an action is *zahir*, while the intent is *batin*. You will come to understand this as you labor on the path, removing the patina from the mirror of your heart. The Sufi path is a long, narrow road. Some will lose their footing, and some will not. But won't the guide see them slipping? Of course, but there is such a thing as turning a blind eye. Otherwise how else would the poor dervish move forward in his lessons?

At any rate, there are some that whirl and some that stumble. In Sufism, at this beginning stage the dervish is a traveller, or wayfarer. The diversity of wayfarers is myriad: There is the traveller of the oath and the wayfarer in love. We have the shameless traveller, the incomplete traveller, the authentic traveller, the mad wayfarer, the vulgar wayfarer, the unripe wayfarer, the loyal wayfarer – I could go on, if you'd like.

If you look at the heart of the matter, people these days – I'm not talking about you, believe me – are quite quick to fall in love. They want it all, but they do not want to work for it. They look at us or they read a couple of Sufi books and immediately become enthusiastic. But we are not concerned with enthusiasm. We are here to relieve mankind of temporal pleasures and desires. That is our job.

Does it sound daunting? There is nothing to fear. This is not a personal development course, as is commonly believed. Yes, on this path people undergo a profound change, absolutely, but this path is thorny, rife with hardships, and spiked with traps and ambushes. Will you be able to rid yourself of desire? Think long and hard about it. We are warning you in advance.

Incidentally, there are some imposters who will say, "Oh, you cannot leave once you have been accepted into the dervish order. They will beat you," or "they will rob you." This institution is neither a mafia nor a secret organization. If you cannot cut it, you may leave. You apologize to your sheikh and say your goodbyes. You trade in your *khirqqa*⁶ for the burden that you had come in with, you kiss your mentor's hand, and you return to your normal life and no one is offended. Everyone goes his or her own way.

Perhaps you have noticed that we say, "path." Sufism is a path. Those without a path are lost. Lacking direction has been a problem since the beginning of time. Our ancestors have said as much.

Like all paths, the Sufi path leads from one place to another. We will talk about where it begins and where it goes. We will discuss the first stop, and whether there is in fact a final stop. Islam has also emphasized the path. Let's say that it marked the journey. But do you know just where the history of Islam begins?

6 The woolen robe worn by dervishes.

The event that started it all was the Hegira, Muhammad's emigration from Mecca to Medina. But this was no ordinary journey. It symbolizes the transition from Mecca's merchant aristocracy, whose interests were threatened by the message that Islam was spreading, to a civilization that would transform Medina into the beating heart of social justice. This was a revolution, even in terms of concrete facts. But that's not all. The Hegira was fundamentally the "second" journey of Muhammad's life. Muhammad's first journey was a spiritual one: the Mi'raj. The Night Journey, as it is also known as, took Muhammad through the seven heavens to the foot of God's throne. Now we are getting to the heart of the matter. The universe functions in such a way that everything is first created in meaning before it becomes manifest and visible. You see, Sufism is a path from the esoteric to the exoteric, from the *batin* to the *zahir*, from intention to action. We won't go into it too much here, but let's say that first came the Mi'raj, then the Hegira. We'll leave it at that.

Returning to Sufism, there are many ways to describe it, but I will offer one of them: Sufism is perfecting the ability to transform the science of love into *marifat*, ultimate knowledge and awareness of the divine. Sufism is the methodology for teaching it.

You will learn the methodology of love so that you can bring to the world prosperity and relief. This is our main purpose. This is the "eye of *mim*," our difficult and selfless task. The "eye of *mim*" refers the tiny space enclosed within the twenty-fourth letter of the Arabic alphabet. Mi'raj begins with the letter *mim*. And if you take *mim* from Ahmad, Muhammad's celestial name, you get Ahad, the One, God. Take a look then at the letter *mim* and notice the little, tiny point in its belly. Now see how Rumi uses this alphabetic metaphor to describe the struggle towards perfection:

“O Gracious One! Like *alif*, I possess nothing, save for a heart more constricted than the eye of *mim*.”⁷

The late Ahmed Avni Konuk, an expert on the *Masnavi*, clarifies Rumi's verse:

“In other words, ‘Oh God most Gracious! Like the letter *alif*, which has neither shape nor dot, I too own nothing. I have nothing other than a heart more constricted than the space within the letter *mim*.’”⁸

This beautiful verse brings us back to the *Basmala's alif*. You will see that in Sufism everything is connected and tied together. Perhaps by now you are saying to yourself, “If I have to keep following all these tangents...” But what do you talk about when you are sitting with your friends? What are the topics of your conversations? Don't forget the saying, “Tell me who your friends are, and I'll tell you who you are.” The friends in the adage are whom God is talking about when He says, “I am friends with those who mention my name.” I am cautiously proceeding and presenting this knowledge gradually, so bear with me.

Returning to the topic of travel, it is on this journey that a person's true character comes to the fore. “The road lays bare the authenticity of a friendship,” say the wise men of old. When we look at who aided Muhammad on his travels, we see an extraordinary cast of characters. The archangel Gabriel accompanied Muhammad on the Night Journey to the point at which the angel could not cross. Then when Muhammad set off for the Hegira, he left Ali, the Lion of God, in his place in his bed so that the Prophet's assailants would not know he had fled. And it was with the Abu Bakr, the Great Friend, that Muhammad undertook the Hegira. So not only is the path you set out on important, but also whom you set out on that path with.

7 6:2329

8 A. A. Konuk; *Mesnevi-i Şerif Şerhi* (İstanbul: Gelenek Kitabevi) XII, p. 140.

In the *Masnavi*, Mevlana illustrates the importance of choosing the right friends in the parable of the mouse and the frog. It goes something like this: One day the mouse met a frog down by the bank of a river. They began to chat and soon struck up a friendship. They decided to meet there often to chat, but since the mouse could not go into the water, it needed a way to keep in touch with the frog. So the mouse suggested that they each tie an end of a long string to one of their legs.

One afternoon while the two friends met on the riverbank, a rapacious raven swooped down and snatched up the little mouse. Since the two creatures were tied together, the poor frog was also lifted into the air. Those who witnessed this curious event remarked, "Look at the raven's cunning! With what graft has it managed to catch a frog?"

As the frog set out on its last voyage, it said to himself, "This is what happens to those who make friends with someone inferior and incompatible."

Here Rumi is advising us to consort with people who are of a good and compatible disposition so that we do not succumb to the same fate as that of the frog.

The animals in the parable embody specific meanings and symbolize different aspects of the human soul. The mouse is an animal that can survive only on land and must make its home on the filthy ground. Even the sight of such a creature is repulsive. The frog is a poor wretch forced to live in lakes and reservoirs. If not transformed into a handsome prince by some magical touch or kiss, it is doomed to moan a deep, sorrowful sigh. Then we have the crow, a greedy and ravenous creature. In fact, the crow is one of the five animals in Islam in which there is no harm in killing. The mouse, and its cousin the rat, are also included on this list.

The frog represents someone who desires to gain understanding as it lives in a murky, yet versatile habitat, while the mouse

stands in for a materialistic person. The land on which it lives symbolizes material wealth. Rumi seems to be suggesting here that if you latch onto to a mouse to get ahead it would be the end of you! The mouse will either drag you down into the sewer or send you straight to the belly of the crow. Stay away from friends like the mouse.

Now let's put them all inside the same body. The frog becomes the soul of a person who serves God, but being a novice on the true path, it is incomplete. The mouse is a person's intelligence, which appears to provide solutions to certain problems. So the frog forms a friendship with the mouse, as the frog thinks it lacks intelligence. But what will happen if the frog starts out on such a path? It will inadvertently fall victim to the raven, which Rumi uses to symbolize the greed and desire within us, or – to introduce an important keyword in Sufism – the *nafs* within us. The *nafs* refers to the carnal soul, or ego; it is the little voice within us that urges us to give into our desires. So by using your mind rather than your heart, you will meet your demise at the hand of your ravenous *nafs*.

I am giving you the most basic interpretation of this parable for starters. But Mevlana enriches this tale with a trove of hidden meanings and with a profundity that is too complex to get into just now. If you can wait, we will discuss this later on.

For now, don't be the mouse or engage in its mouse-like ways. Mevlana goes on to tell us:

“If a thousand of mice rose up, the cat would feel no fear or apprehension. Please, how could the mice rally before the cat? They have no power in their souls to amass themselves.”⁹

The crucial factor lies in the soul's ability to find the Beloved. God is the true friend as are the friends of God. If in this life you can wear their dervish mantles, you will be protected. Through

9 6:3042-43

the pen of Rumi, God is saying, "You cannot protect yourself with anything but this mantle. No other covering can withstand My light."¹⁰

This mantle is that black cloak worn by the Mevlevi order. Black is the color of absence. "Here you are," they say. "If you are prepared to annihilate your self then wear this."

That mantle is the cloak that Muhammad sent to Uwais al-Qarani, a Yemeni Muslim mystic who lived during the time of the Prophet. When you wear it, God ignites you with fire but will never allow the pharaohs to burn you, because that fire is not the same as the fire of hell's burning logs. It is not the fire of flame, but of spiritual light that sets you aglow!

Rumi writes:

"Should even Mount Qaf try to eclipse it, that light would obliterate it like Mount Sinai."¹¹

That light manifests itself in the true friends of God:

"By the power of God, the bodies of the saints endure this unconditioned light...

Their bodies are the lamp niche and their hearts the lamp. This lamp illuminates the heavens and the throne of God."¹²

I once saw that light literally. My master had met his Maker and I was full of grief. But one night he appeared in my dream. He sat next to my bed and had me recite some verses. I looked at his body and at his face. It was as though a lamp was shining from inside of him. The light emanated straight from his heart, just how Rumi had described it!

They say the stars are the light of the heavens, yet they disappear when the sun comes out. "Hence," says Mevlana, "those

¹⁰ 6:3064

¹¹ 6:3065. Mount Qaf is the highest, most remote mountain in Persian mythology.

¹² 6:3066, 3069

disappearing stars are astonished at the never setting sun, the everlasting light, within the saints, precisely because they never set!"¹³ I'll give you another verse:

"The Seal of the prophets has told us what God Almighty has said:
'No place can contain me, not the heavens or the earth, nor minds
or souls.

Yet I unquantitatively and unqualitatively fit into the heart of
the believer, unrestrained by time and space.'"¹⁴

That light which manifests itself in the heart is the light and spirit of Muhammad. This is what is worn, and what offers refuge. It was under this cloak that Muhammad took his family under protection. Muhammad covered himself, his daughter Fatima, her bridegroom Ali, who was also his nephew, as well as his two grandchildren, Hasan and Hussein. He then asked God to protect them, his family, *Ahl al-Bayt*. The mantle, according to the legend of Uwais al-Qarani, crisscrossed the world, passing from hand to hand through the ages to the heirs of the Prophet's wisdom.

If you become a dervish, you too will receive a piece of this mantle and come under its protection. This cloak is the Dervish Dowry bestowed upon those who can wear it, who are worthy of wearing it. What it looks like is not important; it is not some kind of Sufi crown, after all. But meaning is derived from symbols, as the interior is reached from the exterior, as the *batin* is attained from the *zahir*. This, my friend, is why we use symbols.

Now that we are on the subject of clothing, let me make mention of the "*faraji*," another name for the dervish cloak. There is a little chapter in Book V of the *Masnavi*. Although the chapter is tiny in length, it is huge in meaning. It explains "the reason

13 6:3070

14 6:3071-73

why the name *firaji* was first given to the garment known by that name." The answer is quite simple actually:

"A certain Sufi tore open his robe. He found great relief afterwards.

He called the torn robe a *faraji*. And so this nickname spread and became well known!"¹⁵

Relief. There is your answer. *Farah* means relief, as in breathing room. A *faraji* is then something that offers that relief. The symbol of relief appears again during the *Sama* ceremony. This ceremony is commonly and erroneously referred to as a "whirling dervish show." Don't ever call it a show. We can't stress this point enough that the *Sama* is a religious ceremony. It is worship. During the ceremony's fourth and final *salaam*, or movement, the head sheikh rises from his place and advances toward the middle of the circle. He then thrusts open his metaphorical mantle as though to rend it and free his constricted heart.

The *Sama* is a reenactment of the *Mi'raj*. During the ceremony's climax, the sheikh can no longer contain himself and, enrapt in ecstasy, he reaches a state of non-existence.

During the ceremony's first *salaam*, the dervishes discard the black *khirqqa* symbolizing absence and start to spin towards heaven in the circle of love wearing their white skirts, whose color represents purity. The sheikh joins them in the final phase of the rite. Like I said before, the *Sama* is a rehearsal, a representation, a reenactment of the *Mi'raj*. If you give your due, you too will experience it! The black cloak is your body; break open your chest and offer up your heart to its owner. Then you will find release. Rend that *firaji*, which you call the skin, and see how you attain pure joy!

The lines I have just been citing from the *Masnawi* offer you a summary of Sufism, or rather an outline of "a dervish's logbook."

15 5:354-55

If you examine this section carefully, you will find that all the concepts, states, and stations you will experience on this journey have been presented to you on a platter of delicious wording. All that is left for you to do is to consume those morsels of meaning. Try to take in and understand as much as you can as we go over them.

From the Sufi's woolen raiment Mevlana then segues to the topic of purity. In fact, the word Sufi comes from "*suf*," which refers precisely to the wool mantle, but also means "pure" in Arabic. Rumi is saying that you have to separate the pure essence from the dregs, and that you must deliver yourself from impurities. "It is difficult, but despair not," he adds. Suddenly he alludes to death: "Death is the exquisite path to life."¹⁶

"If you want release, rend your robe so that you may emerge from that purity."¹⁷

The critical juncture is found here in this verse.

In the words of Konuk, Mevlana is saying, "Oh my son, way-farer on the true path of God, if you desire spiritual peace, tear your robe. That is, abandon physical human qualities and all the strictures of the body! By eliminating these qualities, purity of spirit and intention will immediately emerge from the cloak of your body."¹⁸

Well, how do we accomplish this? The following verses examine the "procedure" involved. If you stay tuned during our conversation, we will have a chance to process everything step by step. But first, let's try to commit the following verse to memory:

¹⁶ 5:361

¹⁷ 5:362

¹⁸ Konuk, IX p. 135

“The true Sufi is one who seeks purity. Do not think that purity means wearing wool, mending your tattered garments, or ambling slowly down the street.”¹⁹

Sufism is not a look nor is it ever a display of vanity. We are concerned only with grasping the essence. This path is not how you think or imagine it to be.

Therefore, “Go beyond the image until you reach its essence. Be not like those who merely worship images.”²⁰ Pursue that image towards its source like a cat following the scent of milk.

“O, you who searches for love, this scent is the guide. This scent of love opened Jacob’s eyes.”²¹

Take note of the word “scent.” This is another key term in Sufism. We have now brought together love and scent. We make it a guide for us. Look at what happened when Jacob, the father of Joseph, breathed in the scent of his son’s shirt. His eyes began to open as if a curtain had began lifted.

And what an emotional hymn he began to sing, “I was Jacob, from the land of Canaan...”

Perhaps you are thinking that I am beating around the bush, maybe even speaking in riddles. Let it go; this path is a meandering one. We will pause now and again to smell the flowers. After all, Rumi has basically just said, “Smell, and let your eyes be opened!” The lines continue:

“Illusion serves as the guardian called struggle that prevents you from prowling around the curtain of Divine Beauty.”²²

Pay attention in this line to the word “struggle.” What really was your desire to come to us?

19 5:363

20 5:366

21 Konuk, IX p. 136

22 5:367

"Our desire is a sip from that hidden goblet You have poured out from the cup of the noble saints onto the parched earth."²³

You have come to us to drink. But, which thirst will you quench? And you will indeed quench a thirst! Soon you will quaff down the sweet elixir of the ney flute. You may call this wine, but Rumi calls it "medicine."

"When the Cupbearer of Alast poured a drop upon this wretched, arid earth,

The earth seethed, and in that seething we become another price-less drop."²⁴

We are that parched earth. After all, were we not created from a fistful of clay? Look at what just one drop from the Cupbearer does! Clay made flesh is no small thing.

I hope you are not yet bored. You came to us and said, "I am here to join the order," and look where we have led you. Just remember with what verse we started our conversation: "He has had no other desire but for you..."

This line occurs in the parable of the princes at the end of the *Masnavi's* sixth and final volume. The king's announcer introduces the petitioner to the monarch as an admirer. He says, "Your majesty, this person has fallen in love with you."

You too are clearly a petitioner. But are you in love?

A man once came to Rumi in order to be his disciple. Rumi asked him, "Have you ever been in love?" When the initiate looked straight ahead and turned red with embarrassment, he said, "My son, first go and fall in love. Then come to us." This path begins with metaphor.

Love is a strange bird. Yunus Emre, that great Turkish Sufi poet, wrote a beautiful ode to the nightingale, the one which begins, "I know you are in love with the rose." It brings tears to my eyes

23 5:372

24 5:390-91

every time I hear it. "Do not sing so strangely, nightingale / Don't add fuel to this pain in my heart." Indeed, love is like that. We really do get angry at the nightingale for reminding us of our separation. But we also become jealous of him. We are jealous of his love, and we lament the fact that we are not the lover.

But in a world where even the heart of the nightingale, mere "fauna," is burning with love for the "flora," how could it be that man's heart has never burned!

And we are of course talking about divine love. We strive to fall into His favor. Even the great Yunus beseeches the nightingale to put in a good word in for him, basically asking the songbird for intercession: "As you sing, 'Hak, Hak,' at twilight, nightingale, do not forget me too."²⁵

Before I get too sentimental, allow me to take refuge in Rumi and let him be the interpreter of our hearts: "The worldly dominion is legitimate only to those who worship the flesh. We are servants to the everlasting kingdom of love."²⁶

That verse also comes from the parable of the princes. You will read and understand this story later.

To be in love and to endure love is a matter of "disposition." Rumi emphasizes this over and over again in the tale of the princes. He likens disposition with wheat, saying, "When they show up at the mill without wheat, only their hair and beard turn white."²⁷

"But to those who bring wheat, this mill yields bread, prosperity, and abundance."²⁸

Here we have arrived at the "mill" metaphor. The mill symbolizes the mentors who grind the wheat – the disposition – that the disciples bring. If what is brought is indeed wheat, then the

25 Hak is another name for God.

26 6:4421

27 6:4431

28 6:4433

mill grinds it. The metaphor goes even further: It is no coincidence that in order to make bread from wheat, the blades of the windmill must turn round and round. It diligently grinds, without strikes and stoppages, providing nourishment and love.

The murshids are dedicated to serve. They creak and moan as they turn like a "woeful waterwheel." We spoke of Yunus Emre's nightingale a moment ago. Now consider this poem of his: "Waterwheel, why do you moan, for I have woes I moan/ I fell in love with God, for this I groan."

The travellers of this road are woeful in every respect, both inside and out. On the one hand they weep and moan out of their love for the Creator, and on the other, they see people suffering and grieve over what they can do for them. They struggle selflessly and self-sacrificially for the sake of God.

You will soon realize that Sufis are altruists. The *Masnavi* frequently mentions a great saint by the name of Abu al-Hassan al-Kharaqani (963-1033 CE), whose sacred tomb lies in Kars in Eastern Turkey. This sublime individual once said, "From Turkistan to Damascus, if a thorn in the field pricks someone's finger, that finger is my finger. If someone's foot stumbles on a stone, that foot is my foot. I too feel his pain. And if there is pain in someone's heart, that heart is mine."

The dervish is – to express it in contemporary terms – a romantic, an idealist. His heart is wounded. He searches for a dervish lodge that will be able to open up his heart. The dervish lodge is "a club for wounded gazelles." Within its walls, these poor creatures can mend their broken hearts before once again returning to the world to help and comfort other wounded gazelles. But finding the right lodge for you takes effort. Say if you were considering joining a social club, wouldn't you want to look for some common ground? It is the same with us. We are gazelle hunters or perhaps more correctly, gazelle seekers. Is there a "wounded gazelle" inside of you?

Do you suffer alongside those who suffer, or are you a party to their suffering? Let me tell you something: We are not here to profit nor are we concerned with taking. We are a club founded on the principle of giving. Realize this and don't be afraid to ask.

I don't know what your expectations of us are, but we do not demand anything from you for ourselves. This path cannot be bought with money. If someone asks for your money, they are not one of us. We ask on your behalf. We ask God to help you. But we do want something from you in return.

We kindly request you to keep a strict moral code and serve the people in the name of God, because this is the pinnacle of happiness in this world as well as in the next. Try it and see! If only people knew that making others happy could make them happy as well. But unfortunately they do not.

I know we keep grilling you on whether or not you have what it takes to carry this responsibility once we have given it you. Please forgive us; such are the ways and conventions of this path. We must trust this responsibility to someone we know will hold onto the faith and the tradition of the Prophet. Understandably we must keep a tight hold on this business, especially these days. No offense, but today's generation takes matters of this kind too lightly. At some point it became fashionable to cut corners. But don't expect any shortcuts here. However much an ordinary person must work for what he or she wants, God Almighty makes the dervish work two or three times as hard. Why? Is it to torture you? Not at all! Think about an athlete, a runner for instance, and the workouts her coach makes her do.

If an athlete shows potential the coach works her extra hard. This potential is what we mean by disposition. The coach may make the promising runner run six to twelve miles in one practice, but what about your workout? Life is longer than a marathon. You must not become short of breath on that track called Sufism. It won't do to bow out of the race. There is no giving up. Think about that.

You must also think about the flipside of the coin. So far we have just discussed whether you are right for us. But are we right for you? You should also look at the issue from that perspective.

Do you get what I mean here? We have to be careful as we set out on this path. In this profession there are many imposters and fakes out there. How will your heart discern true gold? If you get taken advantage of, well then, "Too bad, son!" Right? God forbid.

Let's set this aspect aside for now and suppose that the door you knock on is solid, that behind it lies sincerity and benevolence, and that the murshid is in fact a true friend of God. Very well. You have taken a liking to him and your heart has lit up. But have you crossed the threshold and been admitted yet? No.

We only have one goal in Sufism. While our destination is the same, there are many roads, many lodges, that will carry you towards it. "Where does this variety originate from?" you may ask.

It comes from each of us. We are all different. Are the five fingers on our hand all the same? In difference there is abundance and wealth. But difference is also a necessity. Without difference how could we struggle to attain unity? Has there ever been an aggregate in which there was no difference in the sum of its parts?

These concepts are deep, so don't let me drown you in these waters. My point is this: You should start down this path if it is in your destiny. If not, you must find another way suited to your disposition, temperament and spiritual nature. You know how prospective students painstakingly deliberate over choosing which universities to apply to. Well, university lasts only four years, whereas this education, this path of knowledge, lasts a lifetime. So take your time and be particular about choosing your path.

We, the dervish orders, are essentially the same. We use more or less the same methods. Some methods will guide you by disciplining the human soul and focusing on piety. Others steer

you towards the maturation of the spirit. There are yet others that apply both methods in varying combinations. The choice is up to the murshid. I have even witnessed different treatments for different dervishes of the same lodge. Everything has a reason, seen or unseen.

The question we must ask is this: "Are you destined?" The second would be, "Does your destiny lie with us?"

These answers however, rest with God. They crystallize and manifest starting there. The choice is neither yours nor mine. It belongs to Him. When the order comes from on high, neither one of us can go against it. You are forced to accept it, and I am forced to offer it. That is how the system works.

I will now explain to you how the system works and what you will encounter along the way, starting from the time you are initiated. I will outline the stages you will pass through and the kinds of situations you will find yourself in. What you will get in fact is a kind of Sufi guide, or better yet, "a dervishes logbook."

On board every ship is a logbook, right? In it the captain records all the details of his voyages. This is how we will proceed with you. Perhaps you know this, but Sufi literature makes frequent use of metaphors such as ocean, sea, and the great deep. The path of God is an eternal sea, with neither shore nor bounds. We, or rather our bodies, are the ship, the vessel. The sea shines with all its magnificent beauty, but is also fraught with storms and peril. One must be fearless on such a sea, and entrust themselves to the company of a competent captain.

The spiritual journey is indeed like venturing out into the deep, blue sea. Do you like sailing? If so, all hands on deck! The great ones called this boat, the "Ark of Noah." Are you ready?

Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi and Sufism: The Dervish's Logbook relies heavily on the works of Rumi. You will follow the disciple's road map found in the *Masnavi*. We will draw on the matchless verses of Mevlana, the master, in order to impart on you what you need to do and in what order you need to do it.

That said, this is not an exercise devoted to the rules and conventions particular to the Mevlevi way. Yes, every order abides by different precedents, uses different terms, and even practices different rituals. However, this diversity does have a limit. The orders share more similarities than differences. We will choose tenets from the *Masnavi* that are generally accepted by all Sufi orders.

What I have in mind is the way in which Rumi describes in great detail the mentor-disciple relationship. The *Masnavi* remains to this day the leading source on this topic. No matter what the Sufi order, all the great mentors have certainly benefitted from the *Masnavi* in this respect, and have even done the customary *Masnavi* readings themselves.

I would like to warn you though before we start. We have taken you in as a “*nevniyaz*,” an initiate. As such, we will present you with concise, succinct and coherent information. If we continue with the ocean metaphor, think about the “sea foam,” that effervescent froth that laps the sandy shore. If you can grasp what is washing over the sandy beach and slipping back into the sea, that knowledge will benefit you immensely. But you must remember this: Sufism is deep water. We will not throw you in before you have completely learned to swim. Hopefully you will one day join the ranks of those spirit divers who plumb the oyster fields of the deep to fetch pearls of wisdom.

Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi and Sufism: The Dervish's Logbook is a guide for initiates. It is a spiritual handbook, a Sufi primer. We will leave the “door” ajar for you. If you cross the threshold, you will begin to experience firsthand what we are talking about with you. Sufism's depth and complexity will become more apparent to you the further out you wade.

We reference many verses from the *Masnavi*. If you wish to go back and read those passages in their entirety and within the context of the *Masnavi*, we have provided a works cited list in the beginning of the book, complete with online resources.

There are also various Rumi and Mevlevi conferences all over the world that discuss the Sufi master's great works and ideas. You too have participated in these meetings, in a sense. It is one thing to read the *Masnavi* verse by verse from cover to cover, but it is quite another to go so far as to extract a sort of "concept catalog" from the book's content and explain them in context. That may be an indication of a true Mevlevi dervish.

Giving thanks is an obligation. The honorific "*Chelebi*," used often in Mevlevi Sufism, describes a gracious person. Giving thanks and being gracious are the ethical and aesthetic values that make humans human. Unfortunately the capitalist self-interest that dominates the times we live in has made us selfish, rude, and callous. We have all but forgotten how to give thanks. It is not surprising. After all, can we expect these generations who don't even know how give thanks to God, to give thanks to His servants!

Sufism at its heart is civility and decency. We teach this to people. Have we left anything unsaid at this point? Yes, we have. I want to dedicate this work to my initiates, to you. You ought to know how much I love you all. How happy it would make us all if we left in our wake good deeds, virtuous works and committed devotees when we finally go our own ways.

Let's recite a verse that is customarily said at the beginning of every *Masnavi* lesson:

"Do not say, 'We have no access to that King.' Dealing with the generous is not difficult."²⁹

Yes, this journey is headed toward His presence. Let His breath fill our sails! But remember, only the effort comes from us. Our success still remains in the hands of God. Now listen well, for what I am about to tell you is your story.

29 1:221

2 COME!

“He said, ‘O lover suffering from affliction and tribulation! Come now, the door to union is open.’”³⁰

Certainly you have heard the name Rumi before, as he is perhaps the most famous Sufi poet of all time. People the world over know and love him, and his crowning achievement, the *Masnavi*, is an international bestseller. But how much do you really know about him? And how much of that is true?

Perhaps you have heard the following lines before, or something similar:

“Come, come, whoever you are.

Whether you’re an infidel, fire worshiper, or idolater,

Come, still come, for our lodge is not the lodge of despair.

Still come, even if you’ve broken your vows a hundred times over.”

People often attribute them to Rumi, and so they have become associated with him. But these words do not in fact belong to Rumi! They are the words of Abu Said Abul-Khayr, another man of God. But no matter, everyone drinks from the same spring anyway. There exists of course only one source.

To everyone’s credit, Rumi does express similar sentiments in the *Masnavi* as well as in his other works. The important thing

30 3:4682

for us here is the message, “Come!” This is the great invitation, the calling.

Come! Let’s begin today’s conversation with this welcoming imperative. Who is calling? And what is involved in this calling? When we use the word “come,” it is an invitation to communion. The call to prayer heard five times a day in Muslim countries around the world is essentially broadcasting the sentiment, “Come!” Muhammad once lamented, “If people only knew what the call to prayer entailed!” If we only knew, indeed! In its simplest definition, the call to prayer summons us to worship, to prayer. It beckons us towards salvation so that we may enjoy everlasting happiness and prosperity in this life and the next.

Rumi too beckons us to come. Like a muezzin reciting the call to prayer, he invites us to worship. In fact, all the friends of God recite the call to prayer for us, because God has instructed them to do so. He has charged them with telling to the people to come. God says to his friends:

“Do not turn away from the word, *ta’alaw* (come ye!). This word is the most excellent elixir.

If that copper is adverse to you saying this word, do not withhold from him the elixir...

The words, ‘Come ye, come ye,’ is certainly God calling you to His salvation.”³¹

Allow me elaborate a bit: God instructed Muhammad to tell his people, “*Ta’alaw!*”³² in order to separate the pure from the dregs. And so, the heirs to the Prophet’s domain are obligated to exclaim, “*Ta’alaw!* Come, rise up from lowliness!” Do not cut this exclamation short! For this phrase is a very potent elixir

31 4:2025-26, 2028

32 The Qur’an, Ali ‘Imran 3:61

that will turn the lowly copper-level novice into something as perfect as gold.³³ The alchemy metaphor occurs frequently in Sufi literature. Just as alchemists of the middle ages sought to transform base metals, such as copper, into gold using a purifying chemical elixir, Sufism too aims to purify the hearts of the wretched.

When we say “heirs to the Prophet’s domain,” we mean the saints, the murshids, the guides that lead the way along this spiritual path. We have a name for these people of God: *al-Insan al-Kamil*. The perfect human, or the “Universal Man,” as this degree of person is often referred to as. Women can also attain the level of Universal Man; there have been a number of female Sufi saints. The notion of *al-Insan al-Kamil* is a person who has annihilated his ego and attained union with the Beloved. This person then goes on to help others, calling them to the path and guiding them along it.

So come! Do not get left behind. There are those who heed this call and those who do not. Don’t be deceived. Focus on the work at hand. By saying, “Come ye,” Mevlana is emphasizing the message God has given to the people via His friends:

“Save yourself from this egoism; abandon leadership and seek a leader.”³⁴

Let’s say we ourselves had said this, but just for fun, let’s say we sent it to someone via text message. What would they think when they receive that message?

Some people would probably say, “You’re right, I do need to do what you’re talking about, but it’s impossible. I’m a terrible sinner. I’m hopeless. Even if I repent, I won’t be able to change. I have no determination. Don’t get upset, that’s just what’s in the cards. *C’est la vie*.”

33 Konuk, VIII, p. 53

34 4:2029

We will assume this attitude is a response built upon a completely irrational and spiritually broken foundation. It is dangerous to make a mockery of fate like that. If you have made mistakes, those are your mistakes. Do not make God a partner to your sins.

God gives a person power when that person shows persistence. Sufism is the discipline of guiding that change – change in attitude, change in effort – towards perfection.

There is also the matter of “I’m a terrible sinner.”

There was a great, eighteenth-century saint named Ahmed Kuddusi. He was from the small Anatolian town of Bor. Here is one of his poems: “Oh, merciful king / I have come to you with guilt / I have committed an egregious sin / I have come to you with guilt.” If even a saint like Kuddusi is begging God for forgiveness, have we any reason to be so resigned and pessimistic?

Let me provide some context for Ahmed Kuddusi’s words by recounting one of the legends surrounding him. Kuddusi had wanted to visit Rumi’s tomb. But the time had come for the evening prayer and the tomb keeper had just locked the gates. The saint pleaded, but to no avail; the tomb keeper refused him. At that moment, instead of performing his evening prayers, he broke out into a hymn that he had composed for Rumi: “You are the king of saints / Oh Mevlana, your excellency / Forgive me for straying / Oh Mevlana, your excellency!”

Just as he had sung the last line, the gates to the tomb opened up on their own accord. The tomb keeper was bewildered. Kuddusi paid his visit and left. The next day, the Mevlevi sheikhs who had heard about this incident exclaimed, “That had to have been Kuddusi of Bor!”

Kuddusi was not afraid to admit sin, for he knew that God was merciful and that he could be cleansed of his sins. Mevlana talks about purification in the following verses:

"Come, come O one whose body has been defiled with superstition and fear! How can you get clean outside the pool?..."

When the pure water said to the defiled man, 'Come into me,' the filthy man said, "I am ashamed before you."³⁵

The defiled one in the story represents a person plagued by sin. As long as people retain a sense of shame, hope that they can extract from their flesh a pure soul still exists. The pure water says to the sinner, "Come, let me wash you." It is not a body cleanse, but a spiritual catharsis that is implied here. The pool represents the murshid's heart. Time is wasted idling outside the heart, for the heart contains the Pool of Abundance. Come, enter this heart. Merely the ability to enter such a heart will purify you.

Rumi goes on to say:

"Doubtless the heart is like a pool, because within it there is a hidden aquifer to the sea."³⁶

Put plainly, there is a hidden channel that connects the heart of the mentor to the ocean that is God.

Some of the people who received our text inviting them to come belong to the "wounded gazelle" category. They are the ones who have experienced the wrath of fate and suffered the pain of love. These are the people who wander hopelessly in limbo or are teetering on the precipice between heaven and hell. A little effort will hoist them to safety, while left on their own they are sure to slip and fall. This is an important group.

For the sake of metaphor, picture yourself in a government office. You see a row of file cabinets. Some of them have a note stamped on them: "First to be spared from the hellfire." These files belong to this group, the wounded gazelles. You cannot abandon them for they will surely perish. They will go up in a

35 2:1361, 1366

36 2:1364

flash. So take them by the hand. Look at them and say, "Come." Their hearts are broken. This is such a critical moment! If you do not mend that wound, the poor gazelle will spiral into a heartless state in which it will attempt to take revenge on fate by breaking the hearts of others. We will take that heart in and repair it, after which we will get back out on the road again to mend other broken hearts. In hymns and poems, they call us, "*Tabib al- Kulûb*," or "doctors of the heart."

Listen to what Rumi says:

"We are physicians, and the disciples of God...

We demand a fee from no one; our fee comes in the form of God's blessings.

You who suffers afflictions of the heart, come to us! We have the medicine you need."³⁷

You may be familiar with a certain a category of well-to-do people known as the leisure class, who live their lives however they feel. This might surprise you, but we say to them too, "Come!" "You consider yourselves the happy few," we say to them, "but we are the true happy few. Come, experience what real pleasure is." Are you surprised?

Let me share with you another story from the *Masnavi*. There was once an evil king who made a great fire and set an idol in front of it. "Whoever bows down to this idol," he declared, "shall escape the fire." His Jewish subjects despaired and grew anxious. As a warning to others, the king forcefully brought before the fire a mother who refused to worship the idol. She stood there clutching her child. "Worship the idol and you may pass. Or else you will burn." The woman was pure of religion and faith. She still refused, enraging the king. The king's soldiers wrested the child from the woman's arms and cast it into fire...

37 3:2700, 2708-09

The mother's heart burned with grief. Just as she was considering prostrating before the idol, the child cried from the fire. And what do you think it said?

"Come!"

"O mother! Come in, it is nice here. It seems as though this fire is a place of delight...

Come in, mother, and see the gift of God and the pleasure and comfort He reserves for the faithful.

Come in and see fire resemble water. Transcend mortality and see this beautiful abode of the soul.

Come near and see the mysteries of Abraham, the rose garden in the fire and the waters of heaven...

Come, come O mother, for the sake of motherhood! Seek refuge in the fire.

O mother! Come, do not let greatness and felicity slip from your grasp.

Come, come, you have seen the contempt of that dog, now look at the power of God...

Come in and call the other believers as well. The greatest feast of pleasure is in here.

O true believers! Come, the sweetness of faith is nothing like the torment of the body and soul.³⁸

As the true believers feast in the fire, Mevlana, the master of metaphor and double entendre, invites everyone to a meal of pleasure at the wounded gazelle club.

The above verses reference the story of Abraham and Nimrod. When the tyrant Nimrod threw Abraham into the fire, "Allah said, 'O fire! Be coolness and safety upon Abraham,'"³⁹ and the

38 1:786, 788-790, 796-78, 800-01

39 The Qur'an, Al-Anbya 21:69

spot where the fire had burned instantly became for Abraham a rose garden. Fire does not burn unless God commands it to.

We also see this in the *Masnavi* story above. The fire in which the mother and her child were cast became extinguished. Yet before the flames went out, the child's coaxing voice riled the people. They lost control of themselves and all dove into the fire, leaving behind a disillusioned and overthrown king.

We should take this story and its wisdom to heart if we don't want to someday find ourselves as sinners – not before temporal deities – but before the true king.

After all, it is pointless to create for ourselves through decadent and self-indulgent living a false heaven, no matter what anyone says, king or not. If you worship that idol known as the ego – the nafs – you are throwing yourself into the fire. But if you wear the dervish cloak made from that fire (anxiety and strife) which burns you in this world, then neither God nor servant will burn you. You will look, and what you had seen as fire will suddenly become the light of God.

It will feel as though you had dove into the cooling waters of a mountain lake. Fire, in this case, is an obstacle to overcome on the true path. Approach it. It is calling. The earth and sky resound with the call to prayer. There are those who hear it, and those who do not.

There are some people who avoid the followers of God, saying, "Thanks, but no thanks. I don't need this. My heart is pure. Don't intervene between God and me. What's it to you, anyway?" Some may even act hostile towards them. I hope for their sake that their hearts are indeed pure. When the time of judgment comes, the scales will weigh true.

There is no clergy class in Islam. True, but can you learn something to the degree of mastery without going to college or without studying under the tutelage of an expert? This topic has led to many very boring arguments, but really, the answer is clear

enough that it does not warrant any further discussion. You cannot truly learn something by going online, for example, and reading about it. A guide is necessary to steer you away from false or inaccurate information. There is a reason why God sent Muhammad as his messenger.

Rumi weighs in on this briefly with a single verse. His answer resounds like a slap:

“Abraham said, ‘Do not intervene! There is no need for an intermediary when you are a true lover!’”⁴⁰

Wait, are we contradicting ourselves? Actually we are not. Allow me to explain. Remember how Nimrod threw Abraham into the fires. At that moment the angel Gabriel appears. He asks, “Do you need anything?” Abraham replies, “No, I do not need anything that you can provide. I need only God.” Gabriel then says, “In that case, ask Him!” to which Abraham responds, “Since he knows the state I am in, there is no need to directly ask anything of him.”

Based on this dialogue, who is able to say, “I don’t need an intermediary,” you or Abraham?

Rumi answers this question in the verse that immediately follows:

“The prophet serves as a link between the believers in this world and God in the next. He is their intermediary.”⁴¹

Now hear Mevlana’s simple words of truth:

“If every heart were attuned to divine inspiration, there would be no need in this world for words and sounds.”⁴²

40 4:2977

41 4:2978

42 4:2979

To put it another way, if every heart could hear divine revelation, there would be no need for the heirs of the Prophet to beckon us to come!

But do the friends of God ever come between servant and the Beloved? Not true friends, as they are far above stooping down to our level. They do not act as a curtain! Quite to the contrary. They are the ones that would tear off any veils or remove any barriers that may come between us and God. These holy men will take and deliver you, the wayfarers, to the divine presence, just as Gabriel took Muhammad up to the *Sidrat al-Muntaha*, that heavenly lote tree marking the boundary of creation. From there it is up to you. The true friends of God will say "Here's you, and that's God over there," before (if you are that fortunate) leaving you face to face with the Beloved. If only there was that closeness between us! It is necessary to understand and discuss like this these truths. You must heed the master who beckons, "Come!" Mevlana again warns us against doing otherwise:

"Your intent was to set to work without a master. But you will die in such ignorance a wailing death."⁴³

Every endeavor has a way, a method, so say the wise. Rumi emphasizes this point again and again. This time, for instance, he does so with a story that will turn the soul of man inside out. We will not reprint the whole story here, for it is a bit risqué. However, you can find the tale in the *Masnawi* and read it on your own. It is the story of a young maid who devised a way to have intercourse with a donkey by placing a gourd over the animal's member so to shorten its length. When the lady of the house learns of this situation, she sends away the maid and secretly tries the donkey out herself. But she does not know the trick of the gourd and is killed in the act.

43 5:1404

The *Masnavi* does indeed contain ribald tales, such as the one above. Ill-intentioned and ill-informed people have often tried to exploit this fact to their own ends. However, Rumi puts this kind of storytelling to didactic use, relating his message to the people on the street, the patrons of the taverns and even to those engaged in the most ignoble professions. As there are such deficiencies in people's base nafs, Rumi presents this tawdriness in the most open way possible rather than suppressing or denying it. But he does not stop there. He whisks the defective person out of his state of lowliness and introduces him, kicking and screaming, to the Qur'an and to the hadiths. He attempts to hammer into him the moral temperament that God prescribes. This quality is obvious in the story. In this story, the great Mevlana grabs the nafs by the collar right in the sludge pit where mankind suffers. He says, "Lustful inclination renders the heart deaf and blind. Its influence makes an ass appear as beautiful as Joseph and makes fire seem like light."⁴⁴ He then describes this disgrace before going on to say:

"Learn from the Qur'an what the torment of disgrace is, and do not give up your life so shamefully. Go down the right path."⁴⁵

I am sure by now understand the ulterior motive behind Rumi's use of shocking language. Rumi's words contain both a literal (*zahir*) meaning as well as a figurative and symbolic (*batin*) one, so beneath even the most lewd and obscene passages lie important symbols which will become more clear to us as we venture out deeper.

Rumi is shouting, "Come, wayfarer, do not resort to these ways. Come and look, I am showing you the true way, the beautiful way. Come, travel down this path I have opened for you. You will certainly see the advantage it offers."

44 5:1365

45 5:1391

The friends of God are calling us to righteousness. Only they are speaking without words. Though they do not speak aloud, their hearts are crying out, "Come!"

"I am deafened by the shrieks, yet he is unaware of them. Even those with superb hearing cannot hear these piercing calls."⁴⁶

Just as fathers pray and wish for a "dutiful child," the friends of God and the murshids beg with all their being for a dutiful disciple. Only instead of progeny, they pray for the path. They look for kindred spirits who will say, "Protect us, father."

And so they summon you silently, from deep within. "Come," they beckon. "Come as you are. Just come." Heed their calls, for the path is fraught with danger and deception. If even foxes and crocodiles can secretly lie in wait, think about the guiles of man. Mevlana writes:

"He is a deadly poison packaged as milk and honey. Venture no further without consulting an adept guide.

All the worldly pleasures are comprised of deceit and hypocrisy, like a flash of lightning in the dark.

This false and fleeting light lasts not even a second, before it is enveloped in darkness. Should this be your path, it is incredibly long.

By its light you can neither read a letter nor ride a horse to your destination.

As punishment for your infatuation with lightning, the beams of morning light turn their back to you.

You walk for miles along the path in the dark of night without a guide but by the lightning's deception.

You stumble on a mountain now and then into a river. Sometimes you stray this way and sometimes that way.

46 6:4627

O seeker of power and status, you do not see the guide, and if you did see him, you would not heed him.

“Though I have traveled sixty miles down this road, this guide tells me I am lost.

If I pay him any mind, he will demand that I begin this journey anew under his guidance.

As for me, I have spent my life on this path. Leave me, O master, come what may!’

You have travelled this far on the assumption of lightning. Travel one tenth of that journey under divine inspiration.

The verse says, ‘Assumption avails not against the truth at all,’⁴⁷ and so for choosing lightning you have been left without that rising sun .

Come, come aboard our ship, or at least tether your boat to ours.”⁴⁸

Is the text not crystal clear? Once again we come across a ship. As we have said before, the dervish lodge of capable mentors corresponds to the Ark of Noah. Rumi is telling you to not wait on the pier, but to cross the gang plank and step aboard. Are we not a sea-fearing people?

I suppose the faint of heart have a point. You should not board the boat of just any captain! What would we want with a ship on the verge of capsizing? We need a leader who can conquer the seas. That is what Rumi means when he says an “adept guide.” Such a mentor is indispensable in this undertaking.

To reiterate, if Sufism is setting sail on the high seas, then we absolutely need a captain. We cannot simply go down to the port, buy a boat, and shove out to sea on our own. It doesn’t work that way. And although we must have a captain, we do not want to embark this adventure with a captain who has scant

47 The Qur’an, Yunus 10:36

48 6:4093-4107