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## MEMORIAL OF GOD'S FRIENDS

### Author's Introduction

*Praise be to God—generous with the finest of favors, benefactor of the greatest of gifts, praised at the loftiest summits of honor and grandeur, adored with the most beautiful of adorations from the depths of the earth to the heights of the heavens, possessor of majesty, might, and magnificence, of glory, sovereign right, and resplendence, the one on high who is veiled from the eyes of onlookers and from the vision of the discerning by the lights of splendor, sanctity, and praise, the one here below who lures the gaze of those who are consumed in the fire of distress.*

*He joins the final vision of those who plunge into the depths of the sea of his unity to the extinction of the self. He blends the noble extinction of those who are immersed in the profundity of his radiant proximity with genuine subsistence in him. In the glory of poverty in him, he enriches them beyond the humiliating reliance on things. He grants them success in offering praise for what they have received from the treasure house of blessings. Through passing away, he frees them to abide, and through abiding, to pass away. Then they plunge into the light of the extinction of extinction and are purified of the whim of craving. They dismount with intimacy in the courtyard of sanctity, bidding farewell to the extinction of extinction. Eminent among the masses, towering over creation, they withdraw from the delusions of error and the wavering shadows into the true and perfect light.*

*We praise him for protecting us from the deceit of anyone who opposes us concerning him and for defending us from the evil of anyone who is hostile toward us in his heart or who injures us with his tongue and for distracting from us everything that distracts us from him and for uniting us with everything that unites us with him and for making us his devoted servants and for honoring us with his sublime words and his noble book and for making us followers of his beloved Mohammad and then counting us too among his lovers.*

*We bear witness that there is no god but God, the One—he has no partner who is his equal and he has no peer who is his like. If we look to the attributes of divinity, there is no God but him, and if we ponder existence, nothing exists but him.*

*We bear witness that Mohammad is his servant, his messenger, his Prophet, and his true friend. He sent him in truth to all creation. From his lofty position, he untied the knots that bind those who deviate in error. With his divine ordinance, he reduced the ranks of disgrace and humiliation. With his light, he extinguished the fire of sin. He settled his companions in the abode of guidance. He illuminated the hearts of the rightly guided with the glistening pearls of faith. He made them fit to acquire the glorious treasures of certainty. He made them understand the obscure secrets of the prophets. He singled out the elect and the pious among their followers—those who have wiped the dust of the two worlds from their hands, those who have dismissed from their hearts any concern for the comforts of this world or the next—by means of the hidden and unseen evidence of that which the eye's gaze does not perceive and to which the sun of intellect and the stars of speculation do not ascend. He allowed their hearts to attain that which was revealed by their furthest quests and utmost ambitions. He dispelled the clouds of sorrow from their innermost selves by that which shone upon them from their utmost goals. He purified their spirits of blemished lights and murky darknesses by the lights of the holy revelations that he possesses. May God bless him and his family and his companions.*

*After him, no sun of favor will rise in the East of divine grace, and no distant evening star will set below the horizons of banishment. No lover will be afflicted with remoteness. No guiding bolt of lightning will flash from a solicitous cloud. No truthful speaker will utter a word of love. No passionate step will stir in the desert wastes of ecstasy. May God grant him peace.*

Leaving aside the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet, there are no words loftier than those of the masters of the path—God have mercy upon them. Their words are the outcome of experience and inspiration, not the fruit of memorization and quotation. They come from contemplation, not commentary; from the innermost self, not imitation; and from divine knowledge, not acquired learning. They come from ardor,

not effort, and from the universe of *my Lord instructed me*, not the world of *my father taught me*,<sup>1</sup> for these masters are the heirs of the prophets—the blessings of the Compassionate be upon them all. I saw that a group of my friends took great delight in the words of this folk, and I too had a strong inclination to study their lives and sayings. If I had collected everything, it would have gotten too long. I gathered some for my friends and family—and for you too, if you are among this intimate company.

If anyone wants more than this, many of these sayings will be found in books by early and recent members of this clan. Let him look for them there. If a seeker is seeking a full commentary on the sayings of this folk, tell him to study these books: *Commentary of the Heart*, *Unveiling of the Secrets*, and *Knowledge of the Self*.<sup>2</sup> It is our opinion that none of the sayings of this clan will remain obscure to him, except what God wills. If I had given a commentary on them here, it would have required a thousand sheets of paper. Taking the path of brevity and abridgment, however, is sound tradition: as the Messenger of God (may God bless him and give him peace) boasted, "*I was given all the words, and the word was abbreviated for me.*"<sup>3</sup> I have also omitted the chains of transmission. There were sayings that were related by one sheikh in one book and by one sheikh in another. There were also additions to the stories and differing anecdotes. I exercised caution to the best of my ability.

Another reason for not giving commentaries is that I did not consider it proper to put my words in among theirs and did not find it to my taste. Nevertheless, in a few places remarks have been made to ward off the fancies of the vulgar and the uninitiated. Another reason is that the most suitable thing for anyone who happens to need a commentary is for him to look closely at the words of God's friends and interpret them again.

Another reason is that the friends of God are different: some are adherents of mystical realization and some of proper conduct; some are adherents of love and some of unity; and some are all of these. Some are self-possessed, and some are ecstatics. If I had given a commentary on them one by one, the book would have gone beyond the limits of brevity. And if I had given notices on the prophets and Mohammad's companions and his family, it would have required another, separate book. What capacity does the tongue have to describe a people who are mentioned by God and the Prophet and praised by the Qur'an and the

traditions? That realm is another universe, another world. The prophets and Mohammad's companions and his family are three groups. God willing, a book will be collected memorializing them, so a perfume compounded of these three will remain as a memento of the apothecary 'Attār.

I had several motives for collecting this book. The first motive was to please the brethren of the faith who implored me for it. Another was to leave some memento of myself behind, so that whoever reads this book will find some comfort in it and will remember me well in his prayers: perhaps I will be comforted in the grave for having comforted him. So it was that when Yahyā ebn 'Emād<sup>4</sup>—the imam of Herat and teacher of Sheikh 'Abdōllāh Ansāri—passed away, someone saw him in a dream and asked, "What did the mighty and glorious Lord do with you?"

He answered, "God spoke to me: 'Yahyā, I had some harsh things to say to you, but one day you were praising us at a prayer meeting, and one of our friends was passing by. He heard what you were saying and had a moment of rapture. I forgave you to gratify him. Had it not been for that, you would have seen what I would have done with you.'"

Another motive is that they asked Sheikh Abu 'Ali Daqqāq<sup>5</sup> (God have mercy upon him), "Are there any advantages to listening to the words of true believers when we cannot act on them?"

"Yes," he answered, "there are two advantages. The first is that if the person is a seeker, his aspiration will be strengthened, and he will seek further. The second is that if he perceives any pride in himself, it will be broken. He will expel pretense from his mind. His good will seem bad, and if he is not blind, he will contemplate himself."

As Sheikh Mahfuz<sup>6</sup> (God have mercy upon him) said, "Do not weigh people according to your own standards, but weigh yourself according to the standards of the men of the path, so you will know their credit and your own bankruptcy."

Another motive is that they asked Joneyd (God's mercy be upon him), "What advantage does the disciple gain from these stories and anecdotes?"

"The words of God's friends," Joneyd said, "are one of the armies of the mighty and glorious Lord. If the disciple's heart is broken, he

will be strengthened and aided by that army." The proof of these words is that the Real most high states, "*We make your heart firm with all the stories of the prophets that we relate to you.*" [11:120]<sup>7</sup>

Another motive is that the Master of the Prophets (peace and blessing and salutations be upon him) states, "*Mercy descends when one recalls the pious.*" If someone sets a table that mercy rains down upon, perhaps he will not be turned away from it empty-handed. Another motive is that perhaps the succor of their holy spirits will come to this destitute man and cast a propitious shadow over him before his final day.

Another motive is that I considered the words of God's friends to be the finest words after the Qur'an and the hadith and considered all their words to be a commentary upon the Qur'an and the hadith. I threw myself into this task so that if I am not one of God's friends, at least I might make myself resemble them: "*Whoever imitates a people is one of them.*"<sup>8</sup> So it was that Joneyd (God's mercy be upon him) said, "Regard pretenders kindly, for they are seeking certainty. Kiss their feet, for if they had not had high aspiration, they would have pretended to something else."

Another motive is that it is necessary to master Arabic vocabulary, grammar, and syntax to understand the Qur'an and the traditions. Most people were unable to grasp a portion of their meaning. These sayings are a commentary on them, and both the common people and the elite can share in them. Although most of them were in Arabic, I translated them into Persian, so everyone could be included.

Another motive is that I see plainly that when anyone says anything against you, you seek revenge and hold a grudge against him for years on account of that one word. When an idle word has such an effect on your soul, a true word can have an effect a thousand times greater, even if you are unaware of it. So it was that they asked Imam 'Abd ar-Rahmān Akkāf<sup>9</sup> (God's mercy be upon him), "Does the Qur'an have any effect on someone who reads it without knowing what he is reading?"

He replied, "Medicine has an effect on someone who takes it without knowing what he is taking. How can the Qur'an fail to have an

effect? Yes, it has a powerful effect." And how much more so when someone knows what he is reading!

Another motive is that my heart would not allow me to speak or listen to anything but these words, except reluctantly and by necessity or compulsion. As a result, I took on the responsibility of relating the words of God's friends to the people of the age, so that I might perhaps drink a cup with them from this table. So it is that Sheikh Abu 'Ali Seyāh<sup>10</sup> (God's mercy be upon him) says, "I have two desires. One is to hear one of God's words. The other is to meet one of his people." He added, "I am an illiterate man. I can't write or read anything. I need someone to speak his words, and I will listen. Or I will speak, and he will listen. If he will not converse in paradise, then Abu 'Ali is through with paradise."

Another motive is that they asked Imam Yusof of Hamadan (God have mercy upon him), "When this age passes, and this clan withdraws behind the veil of concealment, what will we do to remain spiritually sound?"

"Read eight pages of their sayings everyday," he said. Thus I considered it my utmost obligation to compose some daily prayers for the negligent.

Another motive is that from childhood on, for no apparent reason, love for this clan has welled up in my soul, and their words have always brought joy to my heart. In the hope that "*a man will be with the one he loves*,"<sup>11</sup> I have set forth their words to the best of my ability. This is an era when this way of speaking has disappeared entirely. Pretenders have emerged in the guise of spiritual folk, and people of the heart have become as rare as the philosopher's stone. As Joneyd said to Shebli (God have mercy on them both), "If you find anyone in all the world who agrees with one word you say, stick close to him."

Another motive is that when I saw that an age has come when *good is evil* and when evildoers have forgotten the righteous, I prepared a collection of the biographies of the friends of God and named it *Memorial of God's Friends*, so that the wretched of this age will not forget this fortunate folk and will seek out recluses and hermits and take delight

in them so that by the gentle breeze of their good fortune, they might be united with eternal happiness.

Another motive is that these are the best of words in several regards. First, they make people's hearts cold to this world. Second, they make the mind dwell continually on the afterworld. Third, they bring out the love of the Real in people's hearts. Fourth, when people hear this sort of discourse, they begin to prepare provisions for the endless road. So, in accordance with these principles, collecting such words is one of our obligations. It can be truly said that there is nothing better than this book in creation, for the words of God's friends are a commentary on the Qur'an and the traditions, which are the finest of all words.

It may be said that this is a book that will turn weaklings into men and turn men into lions and turn lions into paragons and turn paragons into pain itself. How can it fail to turn them into pain itself? Whoever reads this book and reflects on it as he should will become aware of what pain there was in the souls of God's friends to bring forth such deeds and words like this from their hearts.

One day I came to visit Imam Majd ad-Din Mohammad of Khwārazm<sup>12</sup> (God's mercy be upon him). I saw him weeping. "I hope it's for the best," I said.

He replied, "Here's to the commanders who have lived among this people! They are like the prophets (peace and blessing be upon them). As Mohammad said, *The learned among my people are like the prophets among the Israelites.*" Majd ad-Din continued, "I am weeping because last night I prayed, 'Lord, your actions are inexplicable. Make me one of this folk or one of their onlookers, for I cannot tolerate any other group.' I am weeping—perhaps my prayer has been answered."

Another motive is that on the morrow of the resurrection they might look on the work of this weak man and intercede on his behalf and will not turn me away in despair, even if I am all skin and bone, like the dog with the companions at the cave.<sup>13</sup>

It is related that Jamāl of Mosul<sup>14</sup> (God's mercy be upon him) suffered and agonized and squandered his property and reputation so he could obtain a place for his grave opposite the area of the cemetery of the Master of the Prophets (peace and blessing be upon him). Then he

gave this final testament: "Write on my tombstone: *Their dog stretches his front paws across the threshold.*" [18:18]

O Lord, a dog took a few steps following after your friends, and you made it part of their affair. I too claim the friendship of your friends and tie myself to their stirrups and occupy myself with their words and utter them again. O Lord! O King! Although I am unworthy of these words and know that I am among the least of the travelers on this path, still I love their sayings and stories, their mysterious and allusive teachings. By your unchanging oneness, by the souls of your prophets, messengers, and archangels, by your majesty's friends, elders, and scholars, do not veil this weak stranger from this company. Let this book be the reason that you bring him near your presence and not the reason you cast him into the far abyss. *Truly you have the power to answer this prayer.*

∞ 1 ∞  
Ja'far as-Sādeq

The sultan of the people of Mohammad, the proof of prophetic argument, the trustworthy scholar, the world of verity, the lifeblood of God's friends, the heartbeat of the prophets, transmitter of 'Ali's teachings, heir of the Prophet, the knowing lover, Ebn Mohammad Ja'far as-Sādeq—may God be pleased with him.

We had said that if we were to memorialize the prophets, Mohammad's companions, and his family, it would require a separate book. This book will consist of the biographies of the masters of this clan, who lived after them. But as a blessing, let us begin with Sādeq (may God be pleased with him) for he too lived after them. Since he among the Prophet's descendants said the most about the path and many traditions have come down from him, I shall say a few words about this esteemed man, for they are all as one. When he is remembered, it is the remembrance of them all. Do you not see that the people who follow his school follow the school of the Twelve Imams? In other words, the one is twelve, and the twelve are one.

If I try to describe even his attributes, my words will not come out right, for without exaggeration, his expressions and allusions in all branches of knowledge were perfect. He was the exemplar for all the

masters, and everyone relied on him. He was the perfect model, the sheikh of all the men of God, and the imam of all the followers of Mohammad. He was both the leader of the adherents of intuition and the guide of the adherents of love. He took precedence among the believers and was honored by the ascetics as well. He was outstanding in recording the inner truths and without peer in the fine points of the inner mysteries of revelation and exegesis. He handed down many great sayings from Bāqer (may God be pleased with him).<sup>1</sup>

I am amazed by those people who have the idea that there is some difference between the followers of the tradition and consensus and the followers of the Prophet's family, for in reality the Sunnis are followers of the Prophet's family. I cannot believe that anyone is caught up in this vain fancy. I believe that anyone who has faith in Mohammad (peace and blessing be upon him and his family), but has no faith in his offspring and family really has no faith in Mohammad (peace and blessing be upon him). It reached the point that the great Imam Shāfe'i (God's mercy be upon him) loved the family of the Prophet so much that they accused him of heresy and imprisoned him. He composed a poem on this topic, and here is one verse from it:

*If love of the Prophet's family is heresy,  
then let all men and jinn bear witness—I am a heretic!*

If acknowledging the Prophet's family and companions is not one of the fundamentals of the faith, you will accept a great deal of useless and unnecessary foolishness. If you acknowledge even this, there is no harm in it; indeed, it is only just that when you acknowledge Mohammad as the king of this world and the next, you must acknowledge the position of his viziers and of his companions and of his descendants in order to be a Sunni of pure faith. Do not take sides against anyone close to the king, except for just cause.

So it was that they asked Abu Hanifa (God's mercy be upon him), "Who was the noblest of the Prophet's followers (peace and blessing be upon him)?"

"Among the elders," he replied, "Abu Bakr and 'Omar; among the young men, 'Osmān and 'Ali; among his daughters, Fātema; and among his wives, 'Ā'asha (may God be pleased with them all)."<sup>2</sup>

It is related that one night the Caliph Mansur<sup>3</sup> said to his vizier, "Go, bring Sādeq, so we can put him to death."

The vizier said, "He lives in an out-of-the-way place and has retired from the world. He occupies himself by serving God and has renounced all interest in worldly power. He causes no trouble for the Commander of the Faithful. What use is there in harming him?"

Whatever the vizier said, it did no good. He left. Mansur told his guards, "When Sādeq comes and I take off my hat, kill him."

The vizier brought Sādeq in. Mansur immediately jumped up, ran toward Sādeq, set him on his throne, and knelt down before him on both knees. The guards were shocked. Mansur then asked, "What can I do for you?"

Sādeq said, "You can stop summoning me before you and let me go back to serving the mighty and glorious Lord."

Mansur then gave an order and sent Sādeq on his way with all due honor. At that moment, Mansur began to tremble. He lowered his head and fainted. He was unconscious for three days, or according to one account, until the time for three daily prayers had elapsed. When he came to, the vizier asked, "What happened to you?"

"When Sādeq came through the door," Mansur said, "I saw a dragon—it put one lip under the throne and the other above. The dragon said, 'If you harm him, I will swallow you up along with this throne.' I was so afraid of the dragon that I didn't know what I was saying. I apologized to Sādeq and fainted."

It is related that Dāvud-e Tā'i once came to see Sādeq and said, "Descendant of the Prophet, give me counsel, for my heart has grown dark."

"Dāvud," said Sādeq, "you are the ascetic of the age. What need do you have of my advice?"

"Offspring of the Prophet," said Dāvud, "you are superior to all creatures, and it is your duty to give counsel to all."

Sādeq said, "Dāvud, I fear that at the resurrection, my forefather will lay hold of me and ask, 'Why didn't you live up to your duties in following me?' This affair has nothing to do with sound lineage or powerful ancestors. This affair has to do with conducting oneself in a way that is worthy of the presence of the Real."

Dāvud wept and said, "O Lord, when one whose clay is kneaded with the water of prophecy, one whose forefather is the Messenger and

whose foremother is the chaste Fātema, when one like this is so bewildered, how can Dāvud be pleased with his own conduct?"

It is related that Sādeq was seated with his associates one day. "Come," he said, "let us make a pact and take an oath that whoever among us is saved on the resurrection will intercede for all."

"Descendant of the Prophet," they said, "what need do you have of our intercession? Your forefather is the intercessor for all creatures."

Sādeq replied, "Because of my deeds, I will be ashamed to look my forefather in the face at the resurrection."

It is related that Sādeq secluded himself for a time and did not appear in public. Sofyān-e Sōwri came to the door of his house and said, "The people are deprived of the benefits of your inspirations. Why have you withdrawn from the world?"

Sādeq replied, "The present looks like this: *The age has decayed, and brothers have changed.*" And he recited these verses:

*Faithfulness has fled, as flee the fleeting yesterdays,  
and people are torn between their fancies and desires.  
They make displays of love and faithfulness,  
but their hearts are dens of scorpions.*

It is related that Sādeq was seen wearing an expensive fur coat. Someone said, "Descendant of the Prophet, this is not the sort of clothing your family wears."

Sādeq took the man's hand and put it inside the sleeve of his coat. He was wearing sack cloth that chafed the man's hand. "The one is for the people," Sādeq said, "and the other is for the Real."

It is related that they said to Sādeq, "You have all the virtues, asceticism, and inner generosity. You're the apple of your family's eye. But you're very highhanded."

"I'm not highhanded," Sādeq said. "Rather it's the loftiness of the One on high. When I rose above my haughtiness, his loftiness came and took its place. One should not be high-handed because of haughtiness, but should be high-reaching because of his highness."

It is related that Sādeq asked Abu Hanifa, "Who is wise?"

"One who distinguishes between good and evil," Abu Hanifa said.

"Even a beast can distinguish between those who beat it and those who feed it," Sādeq answered.

Abu Hanifa asked, "In your opinion, who is wise?"

"One who distinguishes between two goods and two evils so he can choose the better of two goods and pick out of the lesser of two evils."

It is related that a purse of gold had been stolen from someone. The man grabbed a hold of Sādeq and said, "You stole it!" even though he did not recognize him.

"How much was it?" Sādeq asked.

"A thousand dinars."

Sādeq brought the man home with him and gave him a thousand dinars. The man later recovered his gold and brought a thousand dinars back to Sādeq. "I made a mistake," he said.

"We do not take back anything we have given," Sādeq replied.

Later the man asked someone, "Who is he?"

"Ja'far as-Sādeq."

He turned away ashamed.

It is related that one day Sādeq was going down the road alone, saying, "God, God."

Down on his luck, a man walked along behind him, saying, "God, God."

"God," Sādeq said, "I have no cloak. God, I have no shirt."

A suit of clothes appeared on the spot, and Sādeq put them on.

The hapless man went up and said, "Mister, I was saying God along with you. Give your old ones to me."

This pleased Sādeq, and he gave the man his old clothes.

It is related that someone came to see Sādeq and said, "Show me God."

Sādeq said, "Come on, haven't you heard that Moses was told, 'You shall not see me?'" [7:143].

"Yes, but this is the community of Mohammad. One calls out, 'My heart sees my Lord,' and another exclaims, 'I do not worship a lord I do not see.'"

"Tie him up and throw him in the Tigris," Sādeq said.

They tied him up and threw him in the Tigris. The water pulled him under and tossed him back up again.

"O Son of the Messenger! Help! Help!"

"Water, pull him under!" said Sādeq.

The water pulled him under and tossed him back up.

"O Son of the Messenger of God! Help! Help!"

Once again Sādeq said, "Water, pull him under!"

It pulled him under and tossed him back up like this several times.

Having completely given up hope in creatures, this time the man said, "O God! Help! Help!"

"Pull him out," Sādeq said. They pulled him out and made him sit for a while until he recovered. Then they asked him, "Did you see the Lord?"

"As long as I appealed to another," the man said, "I was veiled. When I despaired and sought refuge in him completely, a window was opened within my heart. I looked into it. I saw what I was searching for. Until there was despair, it was not there. *Who answers the despairing when they call on him?*" [27: 61].

Sādeq said, "As long as you kept saying 'Sādeq,' you were lying. Now take good care of that window through which the world of the mighty and glorious Lord descended. Whoever says that the mighty and powerful Lord is over something or in something or from something is an unbeliever."



"Every sin that begins in fear and ends in repentance brings God's servant to him. Every devotion that begins in faith and ends in conceit drives God's servant away from him. To be devout with conceit is to sin, and to sin with repentance is to be devout."

They asked Sādeq, "Who are nobler, the patient poor or the thankful rich?"

"The patient poor, for the hearts of the rich are in their purses and those of the poor are with the Lord."

"Worship does not come out right except through repentance, for the Real most high gave repentance precedence over worship, for as he said, *'The penitents, the worshipers'*" [9:112].

"To recollect repentance while recollecting the Real most high is to remain oblivious of recollection. To remember the Real most high truly is to forget all things beside the Lord, so that the Lord most high takes the place of all things."

"Concerning the meaning of the verse *He reserves his mercy for whomever he pleases* [2:105 and 3:74]—He has removed the means, the reasons, and the causes, so that you may know that his mercy is a pure gift."

"One who believes stands by his self. One who realizes stands by his Lord."

"Whoever struggles against his self for the sake of his self attains wonders. Whoever struggles against his self for the sake of the Lord attains the Lord."

"Divine inspiration is one of the attributes of the blessed. Rationalizing without inspiration is one of the marks of the cursed."

"The ways that the mighty and glorious Lord deceives his servant are more hidden than the motion of an ant going across a black stone on a dark night."

"Love is divine madness. It is to be neither condemned nor praised."

"My innermost divine vision was confirmed when they stigmatized me for madness."

"It is a man's good fortune when his enemy is wise."

"Beware of associating with five kinds of people: first, liars, for you will always feel overconfident around them. Second, fools, for when they want to do something good for you, they will do something harmful and not realize it. Third, misers, for they will cut you off from the

best of times. Fourth, cowards, for they will leave you in the lurch in your hour of need. Fifth, the corrupt, for they will sell you out for a piece of bread and they hunger after the smallest pieces."

"The Real most high has a paradise and a hell here in this world. Paradise is sound health, and hell is hardship. Sound health is referring your own works back to the mighty and glorious Lord, and hell is performing the Lord's works for your self."

*"Someone who does not have any secrets is dangerous."*

"If the company of God's enemies were harmful to his friends, Āsiyeh would have been harmed by her husband, the pharaoh. If the company of God's friends were beneficial to his enemies, Lot's and Noah's wives would have benefited. But there was nothing more than a contraction and an expansion."

Sādeq has many sayings. We speak a few words as a foundation and conclude.

∞ 2 ∞

Oveys of Qaran<sup>1</sup>

The compass for the second generation of Muslims, the exemplar for the Forty Substitutes,<sup>2</sup> the hidden sun, the friend of the Merciful, the Canopus of Yemen, Oveys of Qaran—God's mercy be upon him. The Prophet (God bless him and his family and grant them peace) said, *"The most virtuous of my followers is Oveys of Qaran."* How can my tongue properly describe and praise one whom the Prophet himself praises? Sometimes the Master of the World (peace and blessing be upon him) would turn toward Yemen and say, *"I find that the breath of the Compassionate comes from Yemen."*<sup>3</sup> The Master of the Prophets also said, "On the morrow of the resurrection, the Real most high will create seventy thousand angels in the likeness of Oveys, so that Oveys may rise up among them on the plain of judgment and go to heaven, and no creature will know which among them is Oveys, except as God wills. In the abode of this world, he worshiped the Real under the dome

## LIVES AND SAYINGS OF SUFIS

A dervish said, "I saw Habib held a high rank. I thought, 'But he's a foreigner after all. How did he attain this rank?' A voice came: 'Yes, he's 'Ajami—the foreigner—but he is also Habib—the beloved.'"

It is related that they were stringing a murderer up on the gallows. That very night the murderer was seen in people's dreams strutting through the meadows of paradise wearing precious silk. "Weren't you a murderer?" they asked. "How did you attain this rank?"

"At the moment they were hanging me from the gallows, Habib-e 'Ajami passed by and looked at me from the corner of his eye and said a prayer. All of this is from the blessings of that."



### Rābe'a-ye 'Adaviya

Veiled with a special veil, hidden by the curtain of sincerity, burned up in love and longing, enamored of proximity and immolation, deputy of the virgin Mary, accepted among men, Rābe'a-ye 'Adaviya—God most high have mercy upon her. If anyone asks why we placed her memorial among the ranks of men, we reply that the Master of the Prophets (peace and blessing be upon him) declares: *God does not regard your forms*. It is not a matter of form but of right intention. If it is right to derive two-thirds of religion from 'Ā'asha-ye Sādeqa (God be pleased with her), then it is also right to derive benefit from one of his maid-servants. When a woman is a man on the path of the Lord most high, she cannot be called woman.

Thus it is that 'Abbāsa of Tus said, "When on the morrow on the plain of resurrection they call out, 'O men,' the first person to step into the ranks of men will be Mary." When Hasan of Basra would not hold a prayer meeting unless a certain person were present, then certainly that person's memorial can be entered in the ranks of men. Indeed, to tell the truth, where this folk are, all are the nothingness of unity. In unity, how can the existence of "me" and "you" remain, much less "man" and "woman"? As Abu 'Ali of Fārmad (God's mercy upon him) says, "Prophecy is the essence of might and sublimity. Noble or common do not enter into it." Being God's friend is thus also exactly like this. This is especially so for Rābe'a, who in her age

had no like in proper conduct or realization. She was esteemed by the eminent people of the age and was a decisive proof for those who lived in her time.

It is related that on the night she was born, there was no lamp in her father's house, nor a drop of oil to anoint her navel, nor so much as a piece of cloth to swaddle her in. Her father had three daughters, and Rābe'a was the fourth. And so they called her Rābe'a, meaning "the fourth one."

His wife said to him, "Go to the neighbors and ask for a lamp's worth of oil."

Rābe'a's father had sworn not to ask any creature for anything. He got up, went to the neighbor's door, and returned. "They were asleep," he said.

He fell asleep sore at heart. He saw the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) in a dream. The Prophet said, "Don't be sad. This girl is a noble lady who will intercede for seventy thousand of my community." He went on to say, "Go to see 'Isā Rādān,<sup>1</sup> the emir of Basra, and say, 'This last Friday, you forgot how you send your blessings to me a hundred times each night and four hundred times on Friday. Give me four hundred gold dinars in atonement.'"

When he awoke in tears in the morning, Rābe'a's father wrote this dream down on a piece of paper and took it to the door of the palace of 'Isā Rādān. He gave it to someone to deliver. When the emir examined it, he commanded that ten thousand dirhams be given in alms, in gratitude that the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) had remembered him. And he ordered that four hundred dinars be given to Rābe'a's father and said, "Tell him, 'I want you to come in, so I may pay my respects to you. But I do not consider it right that one like you, delivering the message of the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) should come to visit me. I myself will come and sweep the dust on your doorstep with my beard. By God, whenever you happen to need anything, let me know.'"

Rābe'a's father took the gold and spent it.

When Rābe'a grew older, her mother and father died. A great famine occurred in Basra. The sisters were separated, and Rābe'a fell into the

hands of a wicked man who sold her for a few dirhams. Her master ordered her to work long and hard.

One day on the street, she fled from a stranger. She fell and broke her hand. She put her face on the ground and said, "My God, I am homeless without mother or father. I am a captive, and my hand is broken. None of this saddens me. All I need is for you to be pleased with me, to know whether you are pleased with me or not."

She heard a voice say, "Do not be sad. Tomorrow a grandeur will be yours such that the closest of the heavenly company will take pride in you."

So, Rābe'a went to the house. She fasted continuously and prayed all night, remaining on her feet until daybreak. One night, her master started from sleep. He heard a voice. He looked and saw Rābe'a prostrate in prayer, saying, "My God, you know that the desire of my heart is in accord with your command and that the light of my eye is in service to your court. If the matter were in my hands, I would not rest a moment from serving you. But you have put me in the hands of this creature. Because of this, I came late to serve you."

Her master looked and saw a lantern hanging suspended over Rābe'a's head without a chain and the whole room filled with light. He arose and said to himself, "She cannot be kept in servitude." He then said to Rābe'a, "I free you. If you wish to stay here, we are entirely at your service. If not, go wherever you have a mind to." Rābe'a asked leave to go, departed, and immersed herself in devotions.

They say she used to perform one thousand rak'ats of prayer a day. From time to time, she went to Hasan of Basra's prayer meetings. One group says that she lapsed into being a singer, repented again, and dwelled in a ruin. Afterward, she retired to a meditation cell and worshiped there a while.

Later, she resolved to make the hajj and went into the desert. She had a donkey upon which she loaded her belongings. In the middle of the desert, it died. The people in the caravan said, "We'll carry your things." She said, "I have not come this far by putting my trust in you. Go on ahead."

The caravan departed. Rābe'a said, "My God, is this the way kings treat a helpless woman? You summoned me to your house, then

killed my donkey half way along the road and left me alone in the desert."

At once, the donkey got up. Rābe'a loaded it and went on. The narrator of this report said that sometime later he saw that little donkey being sold.

While Rābe'a was on her way to Mecca, she was stranded in the desert for several days. She said, "My God, I am sore at heart. Where am I going? I am a clod of earth, and that house is a rock. I must have you."

The Real most high addressed her heart without intermediary: "Oh, Rābe'a, you wash in the blood of eighteen thousand worlds. Don't you see that when Moses (peace be upon him) desired a vision, we cast a few notes of epiphany upon the mountain, and it shattered into forty pieces!"<sup>2</sup>

It is related that she was going to Mecca another time. In the middle of the desert she saw that the Ka'ba had come out to welcome her. Rābe'a said, "I need the lord of the house. What am I to do with the house? Its power means nothing to me. What delight is there in the Ka'ba's beauty? What I need to welcome me is the One who said, *'Whoever approaches me by a hand's span, I will approach by an arm's span.'*<sup>3</sup> Why should I look at the Ka'ba?"

It is related that Ebrāhim ebn Adham (God's mercy upon him) traveled fourteen years to reach the Ka'ba. He said, "Others have crossed this desert with their feet. I will cross it with my eyes!" He performed two rak'ats of prayer for every step he took. When he reached Mecca, he did not see God's house. He said, "What's happened? Could there be something wrong with my eyes?"

A voice said, "There's nothing wrong with your eyes! The Ka'ba has gone to welcome a weak woman who is on her way here." Ebrāhim roared with jealousy, "Who could this be?" As soon as he saw Rābe'a coming, walking with a cane, the Ka'ba was back in place.

"Rābe'a," Ebrāhim asked, "what is this fuss and frenzy that you've caused in the world?"

She said, "It's you who've caused this frenzy in the world, tarrying for fourteen years before you reached God's house!"

"Yes, for fourteen years I traversed the desert in supplication!" Ebrāhim said.

Rābe'a said, "You traversed it in supplication, I in destitution."

She then performed the hajj and wept bitterly and said, "My God, you promised good things both for performing the hajj and for enduring misfortune. Now, if my hajj is not acceptable, this is a great misfortune. Where is the reward for my misfortune?"

Then she came to Basra, staying until the following year. She said, "If last year the Ka'ba came to welcome me, this year I will go to welcome the Ka'ba." When the time came, so Sheikh Abu 'Ali of Fārmad relates, she set out into the desert and crawled for seven years until she arrived at 'Arafāt. A voice called out, "O claimant, what quest has drawn you here? If you want me to manifest myself just once, you will melt on the spot!"

She said, "O Lord of might, Rābe'a does not have the means to attain that rank. I wish only for a drop of poverty."

The voice called out, "Rābe'a, poverty is the drought year of our wrath, which we have placed in people's path. When no more than a hair's width remains before they arrive in the presence of union with us, then things turn around, and union turns into separation. You are still within the seventy veils of your life. Until you come out from under all of these and take a step on our path and pass these seventy stations, you cannot speak of our poverty. Otherwise, behold!"

Rābe'a looked and saw a sea of blood suspended in the air. A voice called out, "This is the blood of our lovers who came seeking union with us. They alighted at the first way station, so no trace or sign of them appears anywhere in the two worlds."

Rābe'a said, "O Lord of might, show me one characteristic of their estate."

Immediately they appeared before her, making excuses. A voice spoke, "Their first station is to crawl for seven years on our path to pay homage to a clod of earth. When they near that clod, they themselves cause the road to be closed before them."

Rābe'a writhed with affliction and said, "O Lord, you do not allow me into your house. Nor will you let me stay in my house in Basra. Either leave me in my house in Basra or bring me to your house

in Mecca. At first, I did not bow to the house—I wanted you. Now I am not even worthy of your house.”

She said this and returned. She came back to Basra and retired to a place of meditation.

It is related that two sheikhs came to pay their respects to her. They were hungry and said to one another, “We’ll consume any food that she brings—it will be ritually pure.” Rābe’a had two loaves of bread and set them before her guests. Just then, a beggar cried out. Rābe’a picked up the bread from in front of them and gave it to the beggar.

They were astonished, but at that moment a serving girl came, carrying an armful of warm bread. She said, “The lady of the house has sent these.” Rābe’a counted; there were eighteen loaves. “Take them back,” she said. “You’ve made a mistake.”

“There’s no mistake,” the girl said.

“You’ve made a mistake. Take them back.”

She took them back and told the story to her mistress. She added two more loaves and sent them back. Rābe’a counted; there were twenty. She took them and set them before her guests. They ate them and marveled. Later they asked her, “What’s the secret behind this?”

She said, “When you came, I realized that you were hungry. I thought, ‘How can I put two loaves before two eminent men?’ When the beggar came, I gave them to him and prayed, ‘My God, you have said, “For each thing given, I will return tenfold.” Certain of this, I just gave away two loaves to please you, so that you would give back ten for each one.’ When she brought eighteen, I knew that there had been some filching or that they had not been meant for me. I sent them back so she could bring me all twenty.”

It is related that one night she was praying in her cell. She fell asleep. A reed pierced her eye, but in such a way that in her total passion and absorption, her utter devotion, she was unaware of it. And one night a thief entered and picked up her chador. As he was trying to carry it off, he could not see the way. He put it back and recognized the way out. He picked the chador back up but again could not see the way. Seven times this happened. A voice came from the corner of the cell: “Man, don’t trouble yourself! Several years ago now, she entrusted herself to us. Satan himself doesn’t have the gall to come around her. How could

a thief have the gall to come around her chador? Don’t bother, you petty crook. If one friend is sleeping, the other is awake.”

It is related that one day, after Rābe’a had not eaten for many days, her serving girl was preparing a soup from lard. She needed onions and said, “I’ll get some from the neighbors.”

“For forty years,” Rābe’a said, “I have had a covenant with the mighty and glorious Lord not to ask for anything from anyone other than him. Say, ‘Onions we’ll do without.’”

All of a sudden a bird swooped down from the sky and tossed several onions, already peeled, into her pot. Rābe’a said, “I’m not safe from being tricked.” She gave up the soup and ate plain bread.

It is related that one day Rābe’a had gone up on a mountain. Wild goats and gazelles gathered around and gazed upon her. Just then, Hasan of Basra showed up. All the animals shied away. When Hasan saw this, he was perplexed and asked, “Rābe’a, why do they shy away from me when they were so familiar with you?”

Rābe’a asked, “What did you eat today?”

“Soup.”

“You ate their lard. Why wouldn’t they shy away from you?”

It is related that one time Rābe’a happened to pass by Hasan’s house. He was sitting on the roof of his meditation cell, weeping so much that water was dripping from the rainspouts. Several drops landed on Rābe’a. She investigated to find out where this water was coming from. When she realized what was happening, she said, “Hasan, if this weeping is from the foolish whims of the self, hold back your tears, so a sea will well up within you, such a sea that when you seek your heart there, you will not find it *except before a most powerful king*” [54:55].

These words were hard for Hasan to take, but he said nothing. One day he saw Rābe’a on the banks of the Euphrates. Hasan threw his prayer rug on the water and said, “Rābe’a, come here! Let’s perform two rak’ats of prayer.”

Rābe’a said, “Teacher, are you going to display the goods of the afterworld in the market of this world? You must do what others of your species are incapable of doing.” So, Rābe’a threw her prayer rug into the air and said, “Hasan, come here, where you’ll be hidden from

the people's gaze." She then wished to win Hasan's heart over again. She said, "Teacher, what you did, a fish can do, and what I do, a fly can do. The real business is beyond both."

It is related that Hasan of Basra said, "I was with Rābe'a for one full day and night. I was talking about the path and the truth in such a way that the thought 'I am a man' never crossed my mind, nor did 'I am a woman' ever cross hers. In the end when I got up, I considered myself a pauper and her a devotee."

It is related that one evening Hasan went with some friends to visit Rābe'a. Rābe'a had no lamp, and they needed one. Rābe'a blew on her fingertips—they blazed like a lamp until daybreak.

If someone asks, "What was this like?" we answer, "Just like the hand of Moses (peace and blessing be upon him)."<sup>4</sup> If they say, "He was a prophet," we respond, "Whoever follows a prophet has a portion of those wonders. If the prophet performs miracles, the friend of God performs wonders by the blessings of following the prophet. As the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) declares, 'Whoever returns a farthing of what is forbidden has attained a degree of prophecy'; that is, anyone one who gives back to the enemy Satan a penny of what is forbidden achieves a degree of prophecy."

He also said, "The true dream is a quarter share of prophecy."

It is related that Rābe'a once sent Hasan three things: a piece of wax, a needle, and a hair. She said, "Like the wax, give light to the world as you yourself burn. Like the needle, be naked and work continually. When you have acquired both these traits, be like the hair, so your work will not be in vain."

It is related that Hasan said to Rābe'a, "Do you long for a husband?"

She said, "The marriage knot can only tie one who exists. Where is existence here? I am not my own—I am his and under the shadow of his command. You must ask permission from him."

"Rābe'a," he asked, "how did you attain this rank?"

"By losing in him everything I'd attained."

"How do you know him?"

"You know the how. We know the no-how."

It is related that one day Hasan came to her meditation cell and said, "Say a word to me about the knowledge that, untaught and unheard, came down to your heart without the mediation of any creature."

She said, "I had spun some skeins of yarn to sell and earn a bit of food. I sold them for two silver dirhams. I took one in one hand and one in the other. I was afraid that if I took both in one hand, they would join forces and lead me from the path. My victory today was from this."

They said to Rābe'a, "Hasan says that if he is deprived of the vision of the Real for one moment in paradise, he will weep and moan so much that all the people of paradise will take pity on him."

She said, "This is a fine thing to say. However, if he fails to remember the Real for one moment in this world and it leads to the same anguish and weeping and moaning, then it is a sign that the same thing will happen in the afterworld. Otherwise, it will not be so."

"Why don't you take a husband?"

"I am dismayed by three concerns," Rābe'a said. "If you relieve me of them, I'll take a husband. First, at the moment of death, will my faith be sound or not? Second, will they put the book of my deeds in my right hand or not? Third, which group will I be in on that hour when they lead a group on the right to paradise and a group on the left to hell?"

"We don't know."

"With such anguish before me, how can I worry about taking a husband?"

"Where do you come from?" they asked.

"From that world," she said.

"Where will you go?"

"To that world."

"What are you doing in this world?"

"Grieving."

"How so?"

"I eat the bread of this world and do the work of that."

"Such a sweet tongue! You are fit to be an abbess."

"I am abbess of myself. I do not bring out what is within me. I do not let in what is outside me. If anyone enters and leaves, it has nothing to do with me. I watch over my heart, not mud and clay."

They said, "Do you love the presence of majesty?"

She said, "I do."

They said, "Do you hate Satan?"

She said, "Out of love of the Compassionate, I do not engage in hatred toward Satan. I saw the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) in a dream. He said, 'Rābe'a, do you love me?' I said, 'O Messenger of God, is there anyone who doesn't love you? But love of the Real has so enveloped me that there is no place in my heart for love or hatred of another.'"

They asked her about love. She said, "Love came down from eternity without beginning and passed over to eternity without end. It found no one in eighteen thousand worlds to take a single drink of it. It arrived at last to the Real, and of him this expression remains: *He loves them and they love him*" [5:54].

They said, "Do you see the one you worship?"

She said, "If I did not see, I would not worship."

It is related that Rābe'a was always weeping. "Why do you weep so much?" they asked.

She said, "I'm afraid of being cut off, for I've grown accustomed to him. No voice must cry out at the moment of death, 'You are not worthy of us!'"

"When are God's servants contented?" they asked.

"When they are as thankful for tribulation as they are for bliss," she said.

"If sinners repent, does he accept them or not?"

"How can they repent, unless the Lord gives them repentance and accepts them? Until he gives them repentance, they cannot repent."



"O children of Adam, from the eye, there is no way station to the Real. From the tongue, there is no path to him. Hearing is the highway of complainers. Hand and foot dwell in perplexity. The matter falls to the heart. Strive to acquire a wakeful heart. When the heart is awake, it has no need for a friend." In other words, the wakeful heart is one that has

been lost in the Real. When someone is lost, what is he to do with a friend? Extinction in God is here.

"Asking for mercy with the tongue is the business of liars."

"When we repent ourselves, we need the repentance of another."

"If patience were a man, he would be generous."

"The fruit of realization is turning to the mighty and glorious Lord."

"The fully realized are those who ask the Real for a heart. When he gives them a heart, they immediately give it back to the mighty and glorious Lord, so it will be protected in his grasp and hidden from creatures within his veil."



Sāleh-e Morri<sup>5</sup> (God's mercy upon him) often used to say, "If you knock on a door, it will open in the end."

Once Rābe'a was present. She said, "How long will you say, 'He will open it again'? When did he close it that he will open it again?"

Sāleh said, "Amazing! An ignorant man and a wise weak woman."

One day Rābe'a saw a man saying, "Oh, sorrows!"

She said, "Say it this way: Oh, without sorrows! For if you *were* sorrowful, you wouldn't have the gall to breathe."

It is related that once someone had tied a bandage around his head. She asked, "Why have you tied the bandage on your head?"

"My head hurts."

"How old are you?"

"Thirty."

"In these thirty years, have you been mostly healthy or sick?"

"Healthy."

"Have you ever, in these thirty years, tied on the bandage of gratitude? And now because you have a single headache, you tie on the bandage of complaint?"

It is related that she gave someone four dirhams, saying, "Get a blanket for me."

"Black or white?"

She immediately took back the dirhams, threw them in the Tigris, and said, "Because of an unpurchased blanket, division appeared; must it be black or white?"

It is related that in the springtime she went into a house and did not come out. Her serving girl said, "O mistress, come outside and see the effects of the creation!"

Rābe'a said, "You come in for once and see the Creator! *Witnessing the Creator has kept me from gazing on the creation.*"

Once a group went to see Rābe'a. They saw her tearing apart a piece of meat with her teeth. They said, "Don't you have a knife?"

She said, "I've never owned a knife for fear of being cut off."

It is related that once she did not break her fast for seven days and went without sleep. On the eighth night, hunger overwhelmed her. Her self cried out, "How long will you torment me?" Just then, someone knocked at the door, bringing a bowl of food. She took it and set it down to get a lamp. The cat came and spilled the food.

She said, "I will go and get a jug of water and break my fast." When she left, the lamp went out. As she tried to drink the water, the jug fell from her hand and broke. Rābe'a heaved a sigh that might have burned down the house. She said, "My God, I am so helpless—what are you doing to me?"

She heard a voice say, "Beware, Rābe'a! If you wish, I will bestow the bliss of the world upon you, but I will remove the grief for me from your heart, for the bliss of the world and grief for me cannot be joined in one heart. Rābe'a, you desire one thing, and we another. Our desire and yours cannot be joined in one heart."

She said, "When I heard this speech, I so detached my heart from the world and cut short my hopes that for thirty years now I have performed each prayer as though it would be my last—I *pray the prayer of farewell*. I made myself so independent of creatures, so cut off, that when day broke, for fear that the created world would distract me, I prayed, 'O Lord, so distract me that no one will distract me from you.'"

It is related that she lamented continually. People said, "There's no apparent reason for it. What's the cause of her lament?"

She said, "I have a sickness within my breast that physicians have proved unable to cure. The salve for our wound is union with him. I procrastinate until the morrow when perhaps I will attain my goal. Although I am not among those racked with pain, still I liken myself to them. Anything less than this is impossible."

It is related that a group of great people went to see Rābe'a. Rābe'a asked one of them, "Why do you worship the Lord?"

He said, "The seven levels of hell have a majestic power, and everyone must pass through them, disheartened by the fear and dread of him."

Another said, "The stages of paradise contain an excellent way station, wherein much repose is promised."

"It is an evil servant," Rābe'a said, "who worships his Lord out of fear or reveres him desiring a reward."

So, they asked, "Why do you worship the Lord? Have you no desire?"

She replied, "*The neighbor, then the house,*' as they say. Isn't it everything to us that we have been commanded to worship him? If there were no heaven or hell, then it wouldn't be necessary to worship him!? Wouldn't he deserve to be worshiped without intermediary?"

It is related that a great man came to visit her. He saw her clothes in tatters. He said, "There are many people who would look after you if you would just give the word."

Rābe'a said, "I am ashamed to ask for things of this world from someone who has them on loan."

That great man said, "Behold the lofty aspiration of this weak woman! He has brought her to such a height that she refuses to spend her time making requests."

It is related that a group went to see Rābe'a to put her to the test. They said, "All the virtues have been dispersed among men. The crown of nobility has been placed upon the heads of men, and the belt of magnanimity has been tied around their waists. Prophecy has never descended upon any woman. What do you have to boast of?"

Rābe'a said, "Everything you said is true. But egoism, egotism, self-worship, and *I am your highest lord*<sup>6</sup> have not welled up in any woman. And no woman has ever been a pederast."

It is related that one day Rābe'a fell ill. She was asked about the cause of her illness. She said, "In the morning, an inclination for paradise appeared in my heart, and the friend punished me. This illness is because of that."

Hasan of Basra visited her in her sickness. He said, "I saw a rich gentleman of Basra with a pouch of gold sitting and weeping on the doorstep of her cell. I said, 'Why are you weeping?' He said, 'Because of this devoted ascetic, dear to our age. Without her blessing, humankind will perish. I've brought something to take care of her, but I'm afraid she won't accept it. Intercede for me, and perhaps she will.'"

Hasan said, "I entered and delivered the message. Rābe'a looked at me from the corner of her eye and said, 'He does not withhold the daily bread from someone who insults him: will he withhold it from someone whose soul seethes with love for him? Since I've come to know him, I've turned my back on created things. How can I accept someone's money, not knowing whether it's lawful or not? Once I sewed up my torn shirt by the light of the sultan's lantern. A turn of fate had sealed my heart. Until I tore the shirt up again, my heart was not opened. Beg my pardon from the gentleman, so he won't put my heart in bondage.'"

'Abd al-Vāhed ebn 'Āmer<sup>7</sup> relates:

With Sofyān-e Sowri, we paid a sick call on Rābe'a. We couldn't speak for awe of her. They said to Sofyān, "Say something."

He said, "Rābe'a, pray, so the Real most high will ease this pain of yours."

Rābe'a said, "Sofyān, don't you know that the Real most high has willed my pain?"

"Yes."

"You know this and still you tell me to request what is at odds with his will. It is not proper to be at odds with the friend."

Then Sofyān said, "Rābe'a, what do you desire?"

She said, "Sofyān, you are a man of learning. How can you talk this way? By the Lord's might, for twelve years I have desired fresh

dates, and you know there's no shortage of fresh dates in Basra. I still haven't eaten any. I am God's servant, and what business does a servant have with desire? If I wish for something and my Lord does not, this is infidelity."

Then Sofyān said, "I can say nothing with regard to your situation. Say something with regard to mine."

She said, "You are a good man, but isn't it the case that you love this world?"

"How so?" he asked.

She said, "By reciting hadiths," meaning that this, too, is a sort of pomp.

Sofyān said, "I have been lax."

I, 'Abd al-Vāhed, said, "O Lord, be pleased with me!"

Rābe'a said, "Aren't you ashamed to seek the good pleasure of someone with whom you are not pleased?"

Mālek-e Dinār related:

I went to visit Rābe'a. I saw she had a broken jug that she used for ablutions and drinking water. Her reed mat was old and worn, and she had a brick to rest her head on. This hurt me to the core, and I said, "Rābe'a, I have wealthy friends. If you permit, I'll ask them for something for you."

"Mālek," she said, "You're mistaken. Don't I and they have the same provider?"

I said, "Of course."

She said, "Has he forgotten the poor because of their poverty? Does he aid the wealthy because of their wealth?"

I said, "No."

She said, "Since he knows my condition, why should I remind him? He wills it so. We in turn will whatever he wills."

It is related that Hasan of Basra, Mālek-e Dinār, and Shaqiq of Balkh (God most high have mercy upon them) went to visit Rābe'a (God have mercy upon her). The conversation turned on the question of sincerity. Hasan said, "No one is sincere in his claim who is not patient under the blows of his master."

Rābe'a said, "This talk stinks of egoism."

Shaqiq said, "No one is sincere in his claim who is not grateful for the blows of his master."

Rābe'a said, "We need something better than this."

Mālek-e Dinār said, "No one is sincere in his claim who does not delight in the blows of his friend."

Rābe'a said, "We need something better than this."

They said, "Now you speak."

Rābe'a said, "No one is sincere in his claim who does not forget the wound of the blow in the contemplation of his desired one.<sup>8</sup> There's nothing strange in this. The women of Egypt did not perceive the wound of the cut while they were contemplating Joseph (peace be upon him).<sup>9</sup> Why should it be strange if someone is like this while contemplating the Creator?"

It is related that one of the sheikhs of Basra came to visit Rābe'a, sat at her bedside, and began to condemn the world. Rābe'a said, "You love the world dearly. If you didn't, you wouldn't dwell on it so much. The buyer is the one who disparages the goods. Were you free of the world, you wouldn't remember it for good or ill. You'll recall that 'Whoever loves a thing, remembers it all the more.'<sup>10</sup>"

It is related that Hasan said, "I was with Rābe'a at the time of the afternoon prayer. She was about to cook something. The meat was in the pot when we started talking. She said, 'This talk is better than putting the pot on to cook.' She left the pot as it was while we performed the evening prayer. She brought dry bread and a jug of water so we could break our fast. She went over to the pot to pick it up. The pot was boiling through the power of the Real most high. Then she poured the food in a bowl, brought it over, and we ate some of the meat. It was a dish the likes of which we had never tasted. She said, 'They prepare such a dish for someone who's risen from prayer.'"

Sofyān-e Sowri said, "One night I was with Rābe'a. She went to the prayer niche and prayed until daybreak. I was praying in the other corner. At dawn she said, 'In thanks for our success, let's fast today.'"

*The Devotions of Rābe'a-ye 'Adaviya*

"O Lord, if you send me to hell on the morrow of the resurrection, I will reveal a secret such that hell will flee from me, not to return for a thousand years."

"My God, whatever share of this world you have given me, give it to your enemies, and whatever share of the next world you have given me, give it to your friends. You are enough for us."

"O Lord, if I worship you out of fear of hell, burn me in hell. If I worship you in the hope of paradise, forbid it to me. If I worship you for your own sake, do not deprive me of your everlasting beauty."

"O Lord, if you put me in hell on the morrow, I will cry out, 'I have loved you. Is this what they do to lovers?'" A voice called out, "Rābe'a, do not think ill of us. Be assured that we will bring you into the circle of our friends, so you may converse with us."

"My God, my work and my desire, in all this world, is remembering you and in the afterworld, meeting you. This is what is mine—you do as you will."

And nightly she would say, "O Lord, make my heart present or accept my prayers without my heart."



When the moment of her death drew near, great people were at her bedside. She said, "For the sake of the Lord's prophets, arise and leave the room." They arose, went out, and closed the door. They heard a voice: "*O soul now in peace, return to your Lord, well pleased and well pleasing. Enter among my servants, enter my garden*" [89:27-31].

Some time passed, and no voice was heard. When they went in, she had died. The sheikhs said, "Rābe'a came to this world and left for the afterworld, never having been arrogant toward the Real most high, never wanting anything, never saying, 'Make me thus' or 'Do such-and-such.'"

## FARID AD-DIN 'ATTĀR'S MEMORIAL OF GOD'S FRIENDS

It is related that she was seen in a dream. She was asked, "Tell us about Monker and Nakir."

She said, "When those young gentlemen came to me and said, 'Who is your Lord?' I said, 'Go back and say to the Real, "Out of so many thousand creatures, you wouldn't forget an old woman. Out of all the world, I have only you. Do I ever forget you that you need to send someone to ask, 'Who is your Lord?'"'"

It is related that Mohammad ebn Aslam of Tus<sup>11</sup> and No'má of Tarsus<sup>12</sup> (God have mercy on them both), who gave water to thirty thousand people in the desert, were both present at Rābe'a's grave. They said, "You, who boasted that you would not bow your head to anyone in the two worlds, what state have you attained?"

A voice replied, "May what I have seen be to my good health!"



### Fozeyl ebn 'Ayāz

The vanguard of the penitent, God's esteemed lieutenant, the sun of generosity and benevolence, the sea of intuitive knowing and scrupulousness, contemptuous of both worlds, the elder of the age, Fozeyl ebn 'Ayāz—God's mercy upon him. He was one of the greatest of the sheikhs, a noble vagabond on the path, praised by his peers, and a refuge for the common folk. He was highly regarded for his austerities and wonders and was without equal in scrupulousness and realization.

This was the beginning of Fozeyl's spiritual life: He had pitched his tent in the middle of the desert between Merv and Abivard.<sup>1</sup> He wore sackcloth, with a woolen hat on his head and prayer beads around his neck. He had many friends, all of them thieves and bandits. Since he was their chief, he divided up whatever money they brought to him. Whatever he wanted, he took as his share. Fozeyl never abandoned the group and expelled anyone who did not serve its interests.

Then, one day, a great caravan was approaching. The travelers had heard rumors of bandits. One merchant in the caravan took all the

"Poverty is the elimination of possessions and leaving one's attributes behind."

"Certainty is the reality of the secrets and decrees of the unseen."

They asked Ebn Khafif, "When does worship come out right?"

"When one turns over all one's actions to the Lord most high and is patient with hardships."

They asked, "What do they call a dervish who is hungry for three days and then comes out and asks for an amount of food that will suffice?"

"They call him a liar." And he added, "Eat something and be silent, for if a real dervish comes through the door, he will expose everyone."



It is related that when his death approached, Ebn Khafif said to his servant, "I was a disobedient servant. Put a yoke on my neck and fetters on my feet and turn me to face Mecca like that. Perhaps he will accept me."

After Ebn Khafif died, the servant began to carry out the sheikh's testament. A voice called out, "Hey, you ignoramus, don't do that! Do you want to humiliate one whom we hold dear?"

∞ 28 ∞

### Hoseyn ebn Mansur Hallāj

Slain by God on the path of God, the lion in the thicket of confirmation, the valiant and veracious warrior, drowned in the surging sea, Hoseyn ebn Mansur Hallāj—God's mercy be upon him. His undertaking was an astonishing affair; wondrous revelations were his specialty, for he burned with both passionate yearning and the harsh flames of separation. Hoseyn was intoxicated, the restless and frenzied man of the age. He was a pure and honest lover. He struggled and strove mightily with marvelous austerities and wonders. He had high aspiration and great capability. He wrote many compositions containing dif-

ficult expressions about spiritual realities, secrets, ideas, and insights. He had a way of speaking, an eloquence and a fluency that no one else had. He had a rapture, a vision, and clairvoyance that no one else had.

Most of the sheikhs condemned his actions and said, "He has no standing in Sufism." But Abu 'Abdollah ebn Khafif, Shebli, and Abu'l-Qāsem Qosheyri<sup>1</sup> (God have mercy upon them) accepted him, as did all of the later Sufis, except as God willed. Abu Sa'id ebn Abi'l-Kheyri, Sheikh Abu'l-Qāsem of Korakān, Sheikh Abu 'Ali of Fārmad, and Imam Yusof of Hamadan (God have mercy upon them) have traveled in his way and some have halted there. Thus it is that Abu'l-Qāsem Qosheyri said about Hallāj, "If he is accepted by God, he will not be cursed because of the disapproval of the people; and if he is cursed, he will not be accepted because of the approval of the people."

Still others charged Hallāj with magic, and some of the externalists charged him with irreligion. Some say, "He was an adherent of incarnationism," and some say, "He had an attachment to pantheism." But whoever has received a whiff of unity can never succumb to the fancy of incarnation or pantheism, and whoever says such things has no personal, inner knowledge of unity. Explaining this takes some time, and this book is not the place for it. Nevertheless, there was a group of heretics in Baghdad who, whether through the fancy of incarnation or the error of pantheism, have called themselves Hallājians and have claimed affinity with him, without understanding what he said. They have taken pride in his execution and immolation through blind imitation, so that the same thing happened to two of them in Balkh as happened to Hoseyn. But imitation is not what is required in this case.

It seems strange to me that someone should consider it proper for the voice of "*Verily, I am God*" [28:30] to come from a bush, without the bush intervening—Why then isn't it proper for "*I am the Real*" to come from Hoseyn, without Hoseyn intervening? Just as the Real most high spoke with 'Omar's tongue—for "*Indeed, the Real speaks with 'Omar's tongue*"<sup>2</sup>—so did he speak with Hoseyn's tongue. Incarnation and pantheism have nothing to do with it.

Some say, "Hoseyn ebn Mansur Hallāj is one person, and Hoseyn ebn Mansur the Atheist is another. He was the teacher of Mohammad ebn Zakariyā<sup>3</sup> and the companion of Abu Sa'id the Qarmati,<sup>4</sup> and this Hoseyn was a magician. As for Hoseyn ebn Mansur, he was from Bayzā'-e Fars and was raised in Wasit."<sup>5</sup> Sheikh Abu 'Abdollah ebn

Khafif has said, "Hoseyn ebn Mansur was a theologian." Shebli has said, "Hallāj and I are of one school. But they imputed insanity to me, and I was released. The soundness of Hoseyn's mind destroyed him." If Hoseyn were damned, these two great men would not have said this about him. Two witnesses are enough for us.

Hallāj was constantly performing austerities and devotions and expounding realization and unity. When these words were first revealed through him, he wore the garb of the pious, the legalists, and the traditionalists. But for the sake of the religion and faith, some of the sheikhs rejected him. Thus it was that the sheikhs' displeasure with his intoxication had these results: First he came to Tostar<sup>6</sup> to serve Sahl ebn 'Abdollāh and spent two years with him. Then he set off for Baghdad, being eighteen years old at the time of his first journey. He then went to Basra and fell in with 'Amr ebn 'Osmān of Mecca and studied with him for eighteen months. Abu Ya'qub al-Aqta'<sup>7</sup> gave Hoseyn his daughter in marriage. 'Amr ebn 'Osmān then got angry with Hoseyn, and Hoseyn left there for Baghdad to see Joneyd. Joneyd ordered him to remain silent and go into seclusion. Hoseyn remained patiently in Joneyd's company for some time. Hoseyn set off for the Hejaz and lived in the holy cities for one year. He came back to Baghdad. He went before Joneyd with a group of Sufis and asked him about some controversial issues. Joneyd did not reply, but said, "It won't be long before you turn the gallows red."

"The day I turn the gallows red," Hoseyn said, "you will don the clothes of the formalists."

Thus it is related that the day that the imams issued the decision that Hoseyn was to be executed, Joneyd was wearing his Sufi clothes and did not endorse the decision. The caliph had ordered that Joneyd's signature was necessary, so Joneyd put on his turban and long robe and went to the seminary. In response to the decision, he wrote: "*We judge on the externals.*" In other words, Hallāj deserves to be killed based on external circumstances—the decision concerns the surface, but only God knows what is within.

When Hoseyn heard no reply from Joneyd about these controversies, he was indignant. He went to Tostar without Joneyd's permission and stayed there for a year. He was met with great approval. He gave no weight to

what the people of the time said, so they envied him. 'Amr ebn 'Osmān of Mecca wrote letters about him to Khuzistan and made his way of life appear repulsive in the eyes of the populace. He also grew tired of the place. He took off his Sufi clothes and put on a coat and began to associate with the people of this world. But it made no difference to him.

He disappeared for five years. For some of this time he was in Khorasan and Transoxiana and for some of it in Sistan. He returned to Ahvaz and preached to the people there. He was accepted by the commoners and elite alike. He preached to the people about the secrets, so they called him *Hallāj al-asrār*, the Cotton-Carder of the Secrets.

Then he donned the patched frock and set out for Mecca. On this journey there were many dervishes with him. When he reached Mecca, Abu Ya'qub of Nahrajur<sup>8</sup> accused him of magic. So, he left there for Basra and returned to Ahvaz. Then he announced, "I will go to the land of the polytheists and call the people to God." He went to India and then came to Transoxiana. Then he ended up in China and Mongolia and called the people to God and prepared writings for them.

When he came back, people wrote to him from the most distant parts of the world. The people of India wrote to him as Father Helper; the people of China as Father Clarifier; the people of Khorasan as Father Love; the people of Fars as Abu 'Abdollāh the Pious; and the people of Khuzistan as Cotton-Carder of the Secrets. In Baghdad, they called him the Uprooted, and in Basra, the Herald. Many things were said about him then.

After that, he set off for Mecca and lived for two years in the sacred precincts. When he returned, his spiritual states were transformed, and the situation took on an entirely different color, for he called people to the inner meaning. No one could comprehend it, so they reported, "They have expelled him from fifty cities, and nothing is stranger than the fate that has befallen him."

They called him Hallāj—the Cotton-Carder—because he once passed by a cotton warehouse. He made a sign, and the seeds immediately separated from the cotton. The people were stunned.

It is related that he used to perform four hundred rak'ats of prayer in a single day and required it of himself. "With the rank you hold," they asked, "why take such pains?"

"Neither pain nor comfort," he said, "have any effect on the affairs of friends. Friends are characterized by extinction, so pain has no effect on them, nor does comfort."

It is related that at fifty years of age, Hoseyn said, "Until now, I have not followed any school of religious law, but have chosen for my self whatever is most difficult from each school. Up to today, when I am fifty years old, I have prayed, and I have performed ablutions for every prayer."

It is related that in the beginning, when he was undergoing his austerities, he had an old cloak that he had not removed for twenty years. One day they removed it from him by force. Many fleas and lice had gotten into it. They weighed one of them; it weighed as much as half a copper coin.

It is related that a scorpion was seen circling around Hoseyn. As they were making ready to kill it, he said, "Don't touch it! For twelve years, it has been our boon companion and keeping us company."

They say that Rashid-e Khard of Samarqand<sup>9</sup> started off to visit the Ka'ba. On the way he was speaking at a prayer meeting. He told this story: Hallāj set out into the desert with four hundred Sufis. Several days passed, and they had not found a thing to eat. They said to Hoseyn, "We need roast lamb's head."

"Sit down," he said.

Then he pulled his hand out from behind his back and gave each one a roast lamb's head with two loaves of bread, four hundred lamb's heads and eight hundred loaves of bread in all. After that, they said, "We need fresh dates."

He got up and said, "Toss me up in the air."

They threw him up in the air, and fresh dates rained down from him until they ate their fill. The rest of the way, wherever he leaned back against a thorn bush, it would bear fresh dates.

It is related that in the desert a clan of Sufis said to Hoseyn, "We need some figs." He put his hand into the air and set a platter of fresh, moist figs before them. Another time they asked for halva. Hoseyn set a plate of warm, sugared halva before them. They said, "This is halva from the Arched Gate in Baghdad!"

"The desert and Baghdad are one and the same to me," Hoseyn replied.

It is related that there were once four thousand people with Hoseyn in the desert. He went to the Ka'ba and stood bare-chested in front of it for one year in the hot sun, until his skin split open and the fat from his limbs ran over the black stone. He did not budge. Every day they brought him a loaf of bread and a jug of water. He would break his fast with the crusts and set the rest of the loaf on top of the jug of water. They say that a scorpion had made its nest in his trousers.

Then at 'Arafāt he said, "O Guide of the Perplexed!" and when he saw that everyone was praying, he too placed his head on a heap of sand. He looked about and when everyone left, he sighed and said, "O God, O dear King! I know you are pure and I call you the Pure, by the prayer beads of all those who count them, by the praises of all those who praise you, by the fancies of all those who imagine you. O my God, you know that I am incapable of thanking you. You thank yourself in my place, for that alone is thanks."

It is related that one day in the desert Hallāj asked Ebrāhim-e Khavvās, "What are you doing?"

Ebrāhim said, "I am walking forthright in the trust of the Lord."

"You've spent your life in the palace of the belly," Hallāj replied. "When will you pass away into unity?" In other words, the essence of trust in God is in not eating. Will you spend your whole life in the belly's trust in God? When will there be passing away into unity?"



They asked Hallāj, "Do the realized have moments of rapture?"

"No," he said, "because the moment of rapture is an attribute of the one who has it, and whoever is content with his attributes is not realized." What he meant is this: *I have a moment with God.*

They asked him, "What is the path to the Lord like?"

"There are two steps and an arrival: Take one step from the world and one step from the afterworld and, behold, you have arrived at the Master."

They asked him about poverty. "The poor man," he said, "is one who looks to God and needs nothing but God."

"Realization consists of seeing things and destroying them all in the spirit."

"When God's servant arrives at the station of realization, he is sent an intuition and his innermost self is made mute, until no thought comes to him but the thought of the Real."

"*An exalted character* [68:4] is one that is not affected by the injustice of people; then it has recognized the Lord most high."

"This is trust in God: As long as you know someone in the city who deserves to eat more than you do, you do not eat."

"Sincerity is purifying actions of the blemishes of resentment."

"The speaking tongue is the destruction of silent hearts."

"Speech is bound up with causes, and actions with polytheism. The Real is void and independent of all. God most high said, '*And most of them do not believe in God without associating others with him*'" [12:106].

"The visions of the seers, the knowledge of the realized, the light of the theologians, and the path of the foremost are all the deliverance from eternity without beginning and from eternity without end, from what comes between, and from transitory occurrence. But how do they know this? *It is for anyone who has a heart and lends an ear, bearing witness*" [50:37].

"In the world of acceptance, there is a dragon that they call certainty; in its maw, the actions of the eighteen thousand worlds are like a mote in the desert."

"All year we search for his affliction like a sultan who constantly searches for dominion."

"The intuition of the Real is that which brooks no opposition."

"The disciple lives in the shadow of his repentance; the master, in the shadow of his purity."

"The disciple's efforts run ahead of his revelations, while the master's revelations outstrip his efforts."

"The moment of a true believer is a shell in the ocean of his breast. On the morrow these shells will be smashed open on the plain of the resurrection."

"Passing beyond this world is the renunciation of the self; passing beyond the afterworld is the renunciation of the heart. Bidding yourself farewell is the renunciation of the soul."

They asked Hoseyn about patience. He said, "It is when they cut off your hands and feet and hang you on the gallows." What's amazing is that they did all of this to him.



It is related that one day Hoseyn said to Shebli, "Abu Bakr, give me your hand, for we have undertaken a mighty task, and we are bewildered by this task, such a task that we are near to killing ourselves."

Since people were confused by his actions, innumerable skeptics and countless supporters appeared and saw him do wondrous things. They started wagging their tongues and conveyed his words to the caliph. They all agreed on his execution because he would say, "*I am the Real.*"

They said, "Say: '*He is the Real.*'"

"Yes, he is all," said Hoseyn. "You ask, 'Is he lost?' Yes, Hoseyn is lost, but the all-encompassing sea will not be lost and will not diminish."

They asked Joneyd, "Is there an interpretation for the words that Hoseyn ebn Mansur utters?"

"Let them kill him," Joneyd replied. "It is not the day for interpretations."

A group of scholars then came out against Hoseyn and condemned his words before Mo'tasem<sup>10</sup> and his vizier 'Ali ebn 'Isā, turning them against him. The caliph ordered Hoseyn to be taken to prison for one year. The people, however, would go to see him and ask him about controversial issues. Later, the people were also forbidden from coming. For a period of five months no one went to see him, except once when Ebn 'Atā went and once when Abu 'Abdollah ebn Khafif did (God have mercy upon them). And one other time Ebn 'Atā sent someone to say, "Sheikh, ask forgiveness for what you said so you will be released."

Hallāj said, "Tell the one who said it to ask for forgiveness."

When Ebn 'Atā heard this, he wept and said; "Do all of us equal even one Hoseyn ebn Mansur?"

It is related that the first night after they imprisoned Hoseyn, they came and did not find him in his cell—they went through the cell from top to bottom and could not see anyone. The second night they found neither him nor his cell. The third night they found him in his cell. "Where were you the first night?" they asked, "and where were you and your cell the second night?"

"The first night," Hoseyn answered, "I was in his presence, so I wasn't here. The second night his presence was here, so both the cell and I were absent. The third night I was sent back in order to preserve religious law. Come and do your job."

It is related that each day in prison he would perform a thousand rak'ats of prayer. They asked, "Since you say, 'I am the Real,' to whom do you pray to?"

"We esteem ourselves," Hoseyn answered.

It is related that there were three hundred people in the prison. When night fell, Hoseyn said, "Prisoners, I release you!"

They said, "Why don't you release yourself?"

"We are the Lord's prisoner and keep the peace. If we wish, we can undo all these fetters with a single sign."

Then he made a sign with his finger; all the fetters fell away. "Where should we go now?" they asked. "The prison door is locked."

Hoseyn made a sign, and cracks appeared in the door. "Now go your way."

"Aren't you coming?"

"We share a secret with him that can only be spoken on the gallows."

The next day they asked, "Where did all the prisoners go?"

"I freed them."

"Why didn't you go?"

"The Real has a reason to rebuke us. I did not go."

This news reached the caliph. He said, "Hoseyn will cause a riot. Either kill him or beat him until he renounces these words." They beat him with three hundred blows. Each time they struck him, an eloquent voice was heard to say, "*Fear not, Ebn Mansur!*"

Sheikh 'Abd al-Jalil the Coppersmith<sup>11</sup> says, "My belief in the man delivering the blows is greater than my belief with regard to Hoseyn. How strong that man's belief in religious law must have been to hear such a clear voice and not to let his hand tremble and to continue to strike!"

Then they carried Hoseyn off again to kill him. A hundred thousand people gathered, and he looked around at all of them and kept saying, "*The Real, the Real, the Real, I am the Real.*"

It is related that a dervish in the midst of the crowd asked him, "What is love?"

Hoseyn said, "You will see it today and tomorrow and the day after."

They killed him on that day and burned him on the second day and threw his ashes to the wind on the third. In other words, this is love.

While this was going on, his servant asked him for a final testament. Hoseyn said, "Busy the self with something worth doing. If not, it will busy you with something not to be done."

His son said, "Give me a final testament."

Hoseyn said, "While the worldly grapple with their affairs, you grapple with one thing, a mote of which is better than the myriad affairs of men and jinn, and that is nothing other than knowledge of the reality."

Hoseyn strutted as he went along the road, throwing his hands up in the air and prancing like a dandy in spite of the thirteen heavy chains around him. "What's this swagger?" people asked.

"Because I'm going to the sacrifice," he replied. He let out a shout and recited:

*Without a hint of injustice, my friend  
gave me the same thing to drink that he drank,  
just as a guest acts with his one-time guest.  
And when the cup came around, he called for  
the sword and executioner's mat. Here's how  
to drink wine with the Dragon in summer.*

When they brought Hallāj under the archway at the Arched Gate, he placed his foot on the ladder. "How are you doing?" they asked.

"For true believers, the heavenly ascension goes to the top of the gallows," he said.

He wore a loincloth around his waist and a mantle over his shoulders. He raised his hands and prayed privately facing Mecca and asked for what he asked. Then he climbed the gallows. A group of his disciples asked, "What words do you have for us, your disciples, and what words for those who deny you and would pelt you with stones?"

Hallāj said, "They have two heavenly rewards, and you have one, because you have no more than a good opinion of me, while they move with the strength of unity in the firmness of the law. Unity in the law is the root, and good opinion is the branch."

It is related that in his youth, Hallāj had glanced at a woman. To his servant he now said, "Whoever glances up like that gazes down like this."

Shebli then stopped before him and cried out, "And did we not restrain you before the world's creatures?" [15:70]. And he asked, "Hallāj, what is Sufism?"

Hallāj replied, "The least of it is what you see before you."

"And what is higher?"

"You have no access to it."

Then everyone threw a stone at him. For conformity's sake, Shebli threw a rose. Hoseyn ebn Mansur sighed. They asked, "Why didn't you sigh over all these stones? What's the secret behind sighing over a rose?"

"Because they don't know, they are forgiven. What Shebli did is hard for me to take; he knows that one shouldn't throw anything."

When they cut off his hands, he burst out laughing. "What's there to laugh about?" they asked.

"It's easy to cut off the hand of a person who's chained up. The true believer is one who cuts off the hand of attributes, swindling aspiration from the highest throne of heaven."

When they chopped off his feet, he smiled and said, "With these feet I used to travel the earth. I have other feet that are traversing both worlds at this very moment. Cut off those feet, if you can."

Hallāj rubbed his two bloody, severed hands against his face and smeared his face and forearms with blood. "Why did you do that?"

"I have lost a lot of blood. I knew that my face had grown pale. You might imagine that the pallor of my face comes from fear. I rubbed blood on my face so my face would look red to you. True believers wear the rouge of their own blood."

"If you painted your face red with blood, well, why did you smear your forearms?"

"I am performing ablutions."

"What ablutions?"

"Only the ablution of blood is adequate for two rak'ats of love."

Then they pulled out his eyes. A tumult rose from among the people; some wept, and some threw stones. Then they asked for his tongue to be cut out.

"Wait while I say a few words," Hallāj said. He raised his face to heaven and said, "My God, do not condemn them for all the trouble that they are taking for your sake. Do not deprive them of this good fortune of theirs. Praise be to God that they cut off my hands and feet on your path! If they remove my head from my body, they will place it upon the gallows, contemplating your glory."

Then they cut off his ears and nose, and the stones began to fly. An old woman came by carrying a piece of linen. "Wrap this handsome little cotton-carder up tight. What business does he have speaking the secrets?"

Hoseyn's final words were these: "It is enough for the joyous lover to make the one single." Then he recited this verse: "Only those who do not believe in the resurrection rush toward it. Those who believe fear it, knowing it is real" [42:18]. These were his final words.

Then they cut out his tongue. When they cut off his head, it was the hour of the evening prayer. As his head was being cut off, Hoseyn smiled and died. The people roared. Hoseyn shot the ball of his fate to the final goal of acceptance. From each one of his limbs came the cry of *I am the Real*.

The next day they said, "The uproar over this will turn out to be greater than when he was alive." So, they burned his body—from his ashes came the cry of *I am the Real*. When he was executed, the form of God's name appeared in every drop of blood that dripped from him to the ground.

Hoseyn ebn Mansur had said to his servant, "When they throw my ashes into the Tigris, the water will well up with such strength that Baghdad will fear being drowned. When that happens, take my robe to the banks of the Tigris, so the water will recede."

On the third day, when Hoseyn's ashes were given over to the water, the cry of *I am the Real* came forth, and the water welled up. The servant took the sheikh's robe to the banks of the Tigris. The water receded, and the ashes fell silent. Then his ashes were gathered and buried. None of the people of the path have had a victory like Hoseyn's.

An eminent person said, "Adherents of the inner sense! Behold what they did to Hoseyn ebn Mansur! What will they do with mere pretenders?"

'Abbāsa of Tus said, "On the morrow of the resurrection, they will bring Hoseyn ebn Mansur to the plain of judgment bound securely in chains, for if they were to release him, the entire resurrection would crumble to pieces."

An eminent person said, "That night, I prayed under the gallows until dawn. At daybreak a voice cried out, 'We informed him of one of our

secrets, and he revealed it. This is the punishment for anyone who reveals the secrets of kings."

It is related that Shebli said, "That night I went to his tomb and prayed until dawn. As morning broke, I spoke privately with God: 'My God, this was your servant, a believer, realized in oneness with you. Why did you afflict him so?' Sleep overpowered me. In a dream I saw the resurrection and heard these words from the Real: 'I did this to him because he exposed our secret to others.'"

It is related that Shebli said, "I saw him in a dream. I asked, 'What did the Lord most high do to these people?'"

"He replied, 'He forgave both groups. Those who took pity on me knew me and took pity for the sake of the Real. Those who bore malice toward me did not know me and bore malice for the sake of the Real. He had mercy on both groups, for both were excused.'"

In a dream, an eminent person saw him standing headless with a goblet in his hand and asked, "What is this?"

Hoseyn said, "He hands a goblet to those who have lost their heads."

It is related that when they put him on the gallows, Satan came and said to him, "Once you said 'I' and once I did. How is it that mercy is the result of your 'I' and damnation the result of mine?"

Hoseyn said, "Because you carried your 'I' within you and I distanced myself from mine, mercy came to me and damnation to you. Know that asserting the 'I' is not good, while driving it away is utterly so."

## NOTES

*fi'l-tasavvof*), which was one of 'Attār's sources of the *Memorial*, Sarrāj was active in Khorasan. He died in 988.

### 24. Abu 'Abdollāh ebn al-Jallā

1. A Sufi associated with Zu'n-Nun and Ebn al-Jallā, d. 932.
2. This is the angel who records our sins.

### 25. Samnun-e Mohebb, the Lover

1. A contemporary of Joneyd in Baghdad; d: ca. 909–10; see *EP*, s.v. "Samnūn."

### 26. 'Ali-ye Saḥl of Isfahan

1. A Sufi from the circle of Joneyd in Baghdad, d. 939–40.

### 27. Abu 'Abdollāh Mohammad ebn Khafif

1. The text reads "forty forty-day fasts": I have amended it based on *Kashf al-mahjub*.
2. This Sufi has not been identified from other sources.
3. 'Azod ad-Dowla here refers to Fanā Khosrow Abu Shoja', the ruler of the Buyid dynasty who ruled Fars province from 949 to 983; see *EP*, s.v. "Aḏud al-Dawla."
4. A companion of Ebn Khafif, Abu Ahmad Hasan ebn 'Ali of Shiraz died in 995, and is probably the Ahmad the Younger mentioned in an earlier anecdote.

### 28. Hoseyn ebn Mansur Hallāj

1. Great Sufi teacher of Nishapur and the author of *Resāla*; see "Translator's Introduction" herein.
2. This saying of the Prophet refers to 'Omar ebn al-Khattāb.
3. This is the famous physician Abu Bakr Mohammad ebn Zakariyyā ar-Rāzi, d. ca. 932; see *EP*, s.v. "al-Rāzī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā."
4. The founder of the sectarian Qarmati movement, d. 913; see *EP*, s.v. "al-Djannābī, Abū Sa'īd Ḥasan" and "Ḳarmaṭī."

## FARID AD-DIN 'ATTĀR'S MEMORIAL OF GOD'S FRIENDS

5. Bayzā'-e Fārs is the name of a village located in the district of Shiraz. Wāsit is a medieval city in central Iraq on the banks of the Tigris (see *EP*, s.v. "Wāsiṭ").

6. Tostar, now called Shushtār, is a regional center in the province of Khuzistan in southwestern Iran.

7. Sufī sheikh of Basra and Mecca, contemporary with Joneyd.

8. Abu Ya'qub Eshāq of Nahrajur was another Sufi resident of Mecca, d. 941-42.

9. This preacher is not identified by Este'lāmi and has not been located in other sources.

10. Hallāj was, in fact, executed during the reign of the caliph al-Moqtader, 908-32; 'Alī ibn 'Isā (known as Ebn Jarrāh, d. 945-46) served as the vizier for several 'Abbasid caliphs, including al-Moqtader; see *EP*, s.v. "Alī b. 'Īsā."

11. 'Abd al-Jalil-e Saffār is not identified by Este'lāmi.