

# THE GUIDANCE OF THE SHAYKH

by Shaykh Taner Ansari

*Bismillah er Rahman er Rahim* [In the Name of Allah, The One Who Acts with Mercy, The Source of Mercy]. All praise belongs to Allah. He owns everything. All power belongs to Him and not to us. May His peace and blessings be on His Prophet Muhammad and his family and on all the other prophets and their families.

## THE JOB OF THE SHAYKH

When you're a shaykh, it means that you are on Allah's side. In other words, Sufism means you're on Allah's side. When I [the shaykh] see something wrong with you, it's my job to point this out to you. The context in which I point this out to you may be different. Sometimes it's urgent; sometimes not. Now don't get mad at me, when I point this out to you, especially in a case where there is a conflict between two parties, for example, mother and daughter, mother and daughter-in-law, son and father, father and son, two brothers, neighbors. It is not our job as a shaykh to solve the problem. We do not interfere in relationships and business. Our interest in the matter is to see what is wrong with the students that we are dealing with and to correct them so they can go forward towards Allah.

I don't take sides and you shouldn't either. On the other hand, they say, "You are right, Shaykh, *Eywallah*." But I am not after being right either. As the position of the shaykh, Allah is right. What am I after? I am after the Truth, I am after Allah. What Allah says is what I try to do. In Sufism, we say you should not see the right in you.

## THE SHAYKH MAKES SUGGESTIONS

I have some suggestions. So whatever I tell you, unless I give you an order, is a suggestion. It's up to you to do or not to do. If you want to get closer to Allah, you do more. If you listen more of what I say and you ask, "What's wrong with me?", you will improve. If you don't ask what's wrong with me, then I have to tell you.

What I suggest is to try to be on the watch for Allah's signs and to try to be on the watch for what you're doing wrong. Your subject is you. If something is happening again and again and again to you, then it means that you are not learning something. When your daughter is complaining about you, when your daughter-in-law is complaining about you, when other people are complaining about you, then ask yourself, "What am I doing wrong?" You don't have to be doing anything wrong either; there's the other side of this; ask yourself, "What am I not doing right?" There might not be any mistake, but what is expected?

## CONSIDER THE OPTIONS

If your neighbor's tree branch is on your side, legally you can cut it off. But is it ethical to cut it off? Yes, you have the right, but should you? Consider the options. What is our job? To go to Allah; Allah's *Zat* is what we want. You can get closer to Allah by good action and better action and the best action. There's no end to good action. If you are not on the watch for learning, what is going to happen? Nothing. You have to have the intention to do the best action that Allah is pleased with. That is what I am trying to create in you, the intention.

Don't waste your time. Time is short. We have at the most 90 years. In these 90 years, we have to bring ourselves to a place where we are going to be forever. Whatever you make of yourselves in this world is what is going to stay [with you] forever. Do you want to be a person who's bargaining with your teacher all the time (bargaining with Allah). Then that's how you're going

to be for eternity. Are you trying to argue with your teacher? Then that's how you're going to be forever. If you are in the place where you want to learn more, that's where you're going to be.

## GOOD ADAB

If you don't have good *adab* (good manners; courteous behavior; the way to act), you cannot get close to Allah and be in Allah's presence. It is not only knowledge that will help you get close Allah, you must have good *adab*. Shaytan knew everything and yet he did not know everything. Most of the time he was in the presence of Allah but he got kicked out. Why? Because he had no *adab*. Do you want to have good *adab*? That's what we are trying to teach you. Allah praises our Prophet, pbuh. He says, "You have completed the good *adab*, good *akhlak*, good manners, good characteristics." Our Prophet, pbuh, wanted this place of love for you too, but not for free. We think, just because the Prophet said, "Please grant this for my people too." "Okay, I grant it. Here, you are Allah's beloved right away." Christians believe this: "Jesus died on the cross so that their sins will be forgiven." Don't believe this, okay? Your sins are only forgiven by Allah if you do something about it, if you yourself ask for forgiveness. But being the beloved of Allah was not opened until the Prophet, pbuh, said, "Give it to my people too please." So Allah gave it to him. Maybe it was opened before too, but I don't know.

## OUR SIDE IS TRUTH

So have good *dzan* (assumptions) about Allah and good *dzan* about your shaykh. Our intention is not to take sides. If we take sides, we take the side of Truth. Communication is having the same angle. If you're not having the same angle, you're not communicating. If you're having a problem, I can say some things about the relationship. If you're having some problems with somebody, it means that your angles are not matching or there is a *nafs* conflict. He's not giving up his *nafs* and you're not giving your *nafs* up and the *nafs* are clashing. What I try to do is bring you to Allah's angle and bring the other person to Allah's angle, then maybe somewhere along the road, you might agree on something.

First of all, as Sufis, we all agree that Allah is the boss and we are not. So if you agree on this then don't act like a boss. Go to the principle. Always ask, "What does Allah want me to do now? How can I approach this person so that he/she can understand?" Before that you say, "How can I understand this person first? Everything comes within understanding."

To win a war (I was an officer in the Turkish army) the strategy is to study your enemy. You should know your enemy better than they know themselves. What is the weakest point of your enemy? How can you demoralize this enemy so he or she or this country will give up fighting? This is how you win a war. Not only going there and fighting with them, but addressing their issues so that they give up fighting. In a relationship, you also study your person if your intention is to get along with him or her. If your intention is not to get along with them, then look at the negative things and just kick them out. As a shaykh, we cannot do this, we have to exhaust all the efforts to keep and help somebody. If Allah gave up on us, then there would be nothing crawling on the Earth. But Allah defers for a time so Allah's Justice (*Adl*) will take place, but not in your calendar time, in Allah's time, because Allah is looking at other factors. Allah is waiting to give the person a chance to correct himself or herself.

## SHAYKH IS TRUE FRIEND

Shaykh is not your enemy. Shaykh is your *dost*, which means the one who can and is willing to give his life for you, who is willing to do everything and anything for you, a true friend. In truth

it is only Allah who is your best friend and who helps you through your shaykh. My students are not my friends. Your students are not your friends. They are your children. You are all my children. I love you as my children, nothing else. And that's how you should be with your students. If you are a family patriarch or matriarch, then, in my humble opinion, you should love your children and you should learn how to be there when they need you and not be bossy or pushy.

Sufism is hard because nobody wants to hear their mistakes. You don't have to be wrong, but ask yourself: how can I be better? Our Prophet, pbuh, repeated *Estaghfirullah* 100 times a day. He was asked, "You're the Prophet. Your past, present, future sins/ mistakes are all forgiven. Why are you doing this?" He replied, "Well, when I look at yesterday, I see how incomplete I was compared to today." Today, you should be better than yesterday. You have to keep on going, fighting against your *nafs*, divorcing your *nafs*, so Allah can do things through you.

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### Call of the Divine

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