

Four Gems of Tasawwuf
by Shaykh Ahmad ibn 'Ajiba

Four Gems of Tasawwuf

by

Shaykh Ahmad ibn 'Ajiba

Translated by Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley

Copyright © Diwan Press Ltd., 2021 CE/1443 AH

Four Gems of Tasawwuf

Published by: Diwan Press Ltd.
311 Allerton Road
Bradford
BD15 7HA
UK
Website: www.diwanpress.com
E-mail: info@diwanpress.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publishers.

Author: Shaykh Ahmad ibn 'Ajibah
Translated by: Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley
Edited by: Abdalhaqq Bewley

A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN-13: 978-1-914397-11-0 (paperback)
978-1-914397-10-3 (casebound)
978-1-914397-12-7 (ePub and Kindle)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO IQADH AL-HIMAM, THE COMMENTARY ON THE HIKAM	1
PREAMBLE	1
FIRST INTRODUCTION: THE SCIENCE OF TASAWWUF	3
1. Definition	3
2. Subject matter	7
3. Founder	7
4. Name	9
5. Sources	10
6. Legal Ruling	11
7. Understanding its parameters	12
8. Degree of Excellence	13
9. Relationship to Other Sciences	14
10. Benefits	15
IQADH AL-HIMAM	16
1. A sign of your reliance on action is losing hope	16
2. Your desire for divestment	23
3. Things aspired to in advance	29
4. Give up the management of affairs	31
5. Your exertion in respect of what is guaranteed to you	35
6. Do not let a delay in the timing of the gift	37
7. If something that is promised does not happen	40

8. If He opens up a way of making Himself known to you	44
9. Types of action are of various kinds	49
10. Actions are simply set-up images	51
11. Bury your existence in the earth of obscurity	54
12. Nothing benefits the heart like a period of seclusion	62
13. How can a heart be illuminated	70
THE PRAYER OF THE QUTB IBN MASHISH	75
HIS BIOGRAPHY	76
THE SALAT OF IBN MASHISH	87
THE KHAMRIYYA OF IBN AL-FARID	141
THE STRING OF PEARLS CONCERNING FATE AND THE DECREE	237
1. EXPLANATION OF FATE AND THE DECREE	239
2. EVIDENCE FOR THE DECREE FROM THE BOOK AND THE SUNNA AND THE WORDS OF THE RIGHTEOUS SALAF	241
3. ELUCIDATION OF WISDOM AND POWER	252
4. ON THE FALLACY OF CONTAGION AND OMENS	256
5. ACQUIRING CERTAINTY AND ITS ELEMENTS AND PLACES	269
GLOSSARY	279
SELECTIVE BIOGRAPHIES	287

INTRODUCTION
TO IQADH AL-HIMAM,
THE COMMENTARY ON THE HIKAM

PREAMBLE

by the slave in need of his Lord Who has no need of anything, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ajiba al-Hasani

The best thing, which hearts have intended, tongues have expressed and pens have written, is praise of the Victorious, the All-knowing, the Generous, the Benefactor. Praise belongs to Allah who fills the hearts of His friends with love of Him, singles out their spirits to witness His immensity and paves the way for their secrets to bear the burden of direct knowledge of Him. Their hearts rejoice in the meadows of the gardens of His gnosis, their spirits walk in the meadows of His *malakut* and their secrets swim in the seas of His *jabarut*. So their thoughtful reflection produces precious jewels of knowledge, and the gems of their wisdom and the fruits of their understanding roll fluently off their tongues. Glory be to the One who chooses them for His presence and singles them out for His love. Some are wayfarers and some *majdhub*, some are lovers and some are loved. He annihilates them through love of

FOUR GEMS OF TASAWWUF

His Essence and then causes them to go on by witnessing the traces of His Attributes. Peace and blessings be upon our master Muhammad, the fount of knowledge and light, the mother lode of gnosis and secrets. May Allah be pleased with his righteous Companions and the pure people of his House.

In the ranks of the sciences, *tasawwuf* is one of the proudest, greatest, and most important. It is their most radiant sun and brightest moon. And how could that not be the case when it is the core of the *shari'a*, the very pathway of the *tariqa* and through it shine out the lights of the *haqiqa*? This is the central topic of the wisdom sayings of Ibn 'Ata'allah's *Hikam*, which are no less than gifts direct from the Divine and secrets direct from the Lord. The book articulates thoughts from the Pure Presence and presents secrets from the *jabarut*.

I once heard the shaykh of my shaykh, Moulay al-'Arabi ad-Darqawi, may Allah be pleased with him, say that he heard the *faqih* al-Banani say, "The *Hikam* of Ibn 'Ata'allah is almost a direct revelation. If it were permissible to do the prayer by reciting something other than the Qur'an, it would have been with the words of the *Hikam*," or words to that effect.

My shaykh, the gnostic and perfected and realised being, Sayyidi Muhammad al-Buzidi al-Hasani, has asked me to write a medium-sized commentary on the *Hikam*, defining its terminology and clarifying its meaning, relying in that upon the strength and power of Allah, the treasures of His knowledge and wisdom, and the words of past Sufis which

are appropriate to the task. I have therefore responded to his request, hoping that it will provide people with enjoyment and benefit; success is only by Allah, on Him I rely and to Him I turn. I have entitled the book: “The Awakening of High Aspiration: a Commentary on the *Hikam*.” May Allah make this an undertaking which is sincerely for Him alone, by the rank of our noble Chosen Prophet, may the best of blessings and purest peace be upon him always.

We have written two separate introductions to this book: the first outlining the definition of *tasawwuf*, its subject matter, its founder, its name, its sources, its legal ruling, understanding its parameters, its degree of excellence, its relationship to other sciences, and its benefits; and the second detailing the biography of its author, Shaykh Ibn ‘Ata’allah al-Iskandari, mentioning some of his virtues and noble characteristics.

FIRST INTRODUCTION: THE SCIENCE OF TASAWWUF

1. Definition

Imam Al-Junayd said, “[*Tasawwuf*] is that the Real makes you die to yourself and live by Him.” He also said, “It is that you are with Allah without attachment.” It is said that it is adopting every exalted characteristic and relinquishing every base characteristic; that it is noble character appearing at a noble time among noble people; that it is that you own nothing and nothing owns you; and that it is abandoning the self to Allah so that it wants whatever He wills. It is also said that *tasawwuf* is based on three qualities: holding to

poverty and loss, spending on and showing preference to others, and abandoning management and choice; that it is having all hope in Reality and no hope from creation; that it is *dhikr* through gathering, ecstasy through listening, and acting through following; that it is refusing to budge from the door of the Beloved even if He shuts you out. It is further said that it is the purity of proximity after the turbidity of remoteness; that it is sitting with Allah without worry; and that it is being protected from the sight of created existence.

Abu Hamza al-Baghdadi said, “The sign of the true Sufi is that he is poor after being wealthy, lowly after being mighty, and obscure after being well-known. The sign of the false Sufi is that he is wealthy after being poor, mighty after being lowly and well-known after being obscure.”

Al-Hasan ibn Mansur said, “The Sufi is alone in the Essence: no one accepts him and he accepts no one.” It is said that the Sufi is like the earth – all kinds of ugly things are thrown onto it but only beautiful things emerge from it, and both good and evil people tread upon it; and that there is nothing uglier under the sun than an avaricious Sufi.

Ash-Shibli said, “The Sufi is cut off from creation, connected to the Real, as is indicated by the words of the Almighty, *‘I have chosen you for Myself.’* (20:41)” He also said, “The Sufis are children in the lap of the Real.” It is said that a Sufi is someone whom the earth does not carry nor the sky cover over, meaning that he is not encompassed by created existence.

Shaykh Ahmad Zarruq said, “*Tasawwuf* has been defined, delineated and explained in about two thousand different

ways. The basis of all of them, however, is true sincerity in turning to Allah Almighty. They are simply facets of this, and Allah knows best.” Then he said, “The fact that there is such great disagreement about the One Reality simply indicates how difficult it is to grasp its entirety. As all the different definitions derive from a single source, which contains within its compass everything that has been said about it, then the expression used is according to what has been grasped of it. Thus all the statements about it are actually a matter of detail rather than substance, each person expressing that which corresponds to his degree of knowledge, action, state, tasting and so forth. That is the source of the differences found within *tasawwuf* and that is why, when Abu Nu‘aym wrote about most of the people he deals with in his *Hilya*, he added a saying of theirs appropriate to their particular state. It is said that that is the nature of *tasawwuf* – it means that everyone with a portion of true sincerity in turning to Allah has a portion of *tasawwuf* and that everyone’s *tasawwuf* only consists in their true sincerity in turning to Allah, so understand that.”

Shaykh Zarruq also said, “A rule when it comes to sincere-turning-to-Allah is that its precondition is that it must be done in a way which is pleasing to Allah Almighty and with means that are pleasing to Him. Anything which has a precondition is not valid without that precondition being fulfilled. Since ‘*He is not pleased with thanklessness (kufr) in His slaves*’ (38:7), it is necessary to make one’s faith true, ‘*and if you are thankful, He will be pleased with you*’. So acting according to Islam is essential. And because of this

there can be no *tasawwuf* except with correct *fiqh* since the outward judgements of Allah Almighty can only be known through it. In the same way there can be no *fiqh* without *tasawwuf* since there can be no action without sincere-turning-to-Allah. And neither of these are possible without faith since the validity of both of them is dependent on it. So they must be combined together due to their essential mutual dependence in law, just as spirits are inseparable from bodies – the spirit only knows existence through the body and the body only knows existence through the spirit, the one completes the other.”

Malik said regarding this matter: “If someone practises *tasawwuf* without *fiqh*, he is a heretic (*zindiq*); if someone practises *fiqh* without *tasawwuf*, he is a deviant (*fasiq*); and if someone combines the two then he achieves realisation.” The heresy of the first lies in his denial of personal responsibility by absolute attribution of all his actions to Allah (*jabr*), thereby denying Divine wisdom (*hikma*) and rulings. The deviancy of the second lies in the fact that his knowledge is devoid of the quality of sincere-turning-to-Allah, which is the very thing that stops people disobeying Him, and is devoid of that sincerity which is a precondition for all action. And the realisation of the third lies in his embodiment of the reality (*haqiqqa*) due to the absoluteness of his adherence to the Real. Therefore, recognise and understand that there can be no true reality (*haqiqqa*) except through absolute adherence to the Real, and that no human being may achieve perfection except through the embodiment of that.

2. Subject matter

The subject matter of *tasawwuf* is the Sublime Essence itself since it seeks to know it either through evidential proof or through direct witnessing and vision, the former applying to those who are on the path and the latter to those who have arrived. It is also said that its subject matter is the self (*nafs*), heart (*qalb*) and spirit (*ruh*) since it seeks their purification and refinement. There is no great difference between this definition and the first since “he who knows himself knows his Lord.”

3. Founder

The founder of this science was the Prophet ﷺ taught to him by Allah through Divine revelation and direct inspiration. The first thing brought down by Jibril was the *shari'a*. When that was established, he then brought down the Reality (*haqiqa*), giving it to some people but not all.

The first to speak about it openly was Sayyiduna 'Ali, may Allah ennoble his face. Then Hasan al-Basri, whose mother Khayra was the client of Umm Salama, the wife of the Prophet ﷺ and whose father was the client of Zayd ibn Thabit, took it from him. When Hasan al-Basri died in 110 AH, Habib al-'Ajami took it on, and then Abu Sulayman Dawud at-Ta'i took it from him. When he died in 160 AH, Abu Mahfuz Ma'ruf ibn Fayruz al-Karkhi took it on, and then Abu-I-Hasan Sari ibn Maghli as-Saqati took it from him. Then when he died in 251 AH, the baton was passed on to the Imam of this *tariqa* and the one who made the

signs of the Reality manifest, Abu-l-Qasim Muhammad ibn al-Junayd al-Khazzaz.

Imam al-Junayd's family came from Nihawand although he himself grew up in Iraq. He studied *fiqh* with Abu Thawr and gave fatwa according to his school, even though he spent a lot of time in the company of Imam ash-Shafi'i. He then kept the company of his uncle, as-Saqati, and that of Abu-l-Harith al-Muhasibi and others. Imam al-Junayd's words and deep insights are preserved in many books. He died, may Allah be pleased with him, in 297 AH and the location of his tomb in Baghdad is well-known and much-visited. The knowledge of *tasawwuf* then spread through his companions and continued on from them and will remain ever-present until as long as the *deen* lasts.

In an alternative chain, the knowledge was passed on from Sayyiduna 'Ali to the first of the *qutbs*, his son al-Hasan; and then from him to Abu Muhammad Jabir; then to the *qutb*, al-Ghazwani; then to the *qutb*, Fath as-Sa'ud; then to the *qutb*, Sa'd; then to the *qutb*, Sa'id; then to the *qutb*, Sidi Ahmad al-Marwani; then to Ibrahim al-Basri; then to Zaynu'd-din al-Qazwini; then to the *qutb*, Shamsu'd-din; then to the *qutb*, Taju'd-din; then to the *qutb*, Nuru'd-din Abu-l-Hasan; then to the *qutb*, Fakhru'd-din; then to the *qutb*, Taqiyyu'd-din al-Fuqayr; then to the *qutb*, Sidi 'Abdu-r-Rahman al-Madani; then to the great *qutb*, Moulay 'Abdu-s-Salam ibn Mashish; then to the famous *qutb*, Abu-l-Hasan ash-Shadhili; then to his successor, Abu-l-'Abbas al-Mursi; then to the great gnostic, Sidi Ahmad ibn 'Ata'allah; then to the great gnostic, Sidi Dawud al-Bakhili; then to the gnostic, Sidi Muhammad,

the Sea of Purity; then to his son, the gnostic, Sidi 'Ali ibn Wafa; then to the famous *wali*, Sidi Yahya al-Qadiri; then to the famous *wali*, Ahmad ibn 'Uqba al-Hadrami; then to the great *wali*, Sidi Ahmad Zarruq; then to Sidi Ibrahim Afham; then to Sidi 'Ali as-Sanhaji, known as ad-Dawwar; then to the great gnostic, Sidi 'Abdu-r-Rahman al-Majdhub; then to the famous *wali*, Sidi Yusuf al-Fasi; then to the gnostic, Ahmad ibn 'Abdullah; then to the gnostic, al-'Arabi ibn 'Abdullah; then to the great gnostic, Sidi 'Ali ibn 'Abdu-r-Rahman al-'Amrani al-Hasani, [known as Sidi 'Ali al-Jamal]; then to the famous gnostic, the shaykh of shaykhs, Sidi Moulay al-'Arabi ad-Darqawi al-Hasani; then to the perfect realised gnostic, our Shaykh, Sidi Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Buzidi al-Hasani; and finally to the slave of his Lord and the least of His slaves, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ajiba al-Hasani, and from him many others have taken. All favour belongs to Allah, the High, the Great.

4. Name

The name of this science is *tasawwuf* although there is some disagreement about the etymology of this name. There are five main positions.

The first is that it is derived from *sufa* (a tuft of wool) because with Allah the Sufi is like a tuft of wool at the mercy of the wind, having no say in the direction of his own management.

The second is that it is derived from *sufa* (the hair of the back of the neck) because of its softness. So the Sufi is hidden and soft like that hair.

FOUR GEMS OF TASAWWUF

The third is that it is derived from *sifa* (attribute), since the Sufi embodies praiseworthy attributes and casts off blameworthy ones.

The fourth is that it is derived from *safa'* (purity). This derivation is considered the soundest, and for this reason Abu-l-Fath al-Busti said in a verse of poetry:

People disagree about the word "Sufi",
Ignorantly supposing it to come from wool (*suf*).
I give this name to no one but a pure (*safi*) young man,
who is purified (*sufi*) until Sufi becomes his name.

The fifth is that it is derived from the *Suffa* (verandah) of the Mosque of the Prophet, which was where the people of the *Suffa* lived. This is because the Sufi adopts the same characteristics as those attributed to them by Allah in the Qur'an, when He says about them: "*Restrain yourself patiently with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, desiring His face.*" (18:28) And, as Shaykh Zarruq maintained, this quality of theirs is the source of every derivation.

5. Sources

Its sources are the Book, the *Sunna*, the Divine inspirations of the righteous and the Divine openings of the gnostics. Certain elements from the science of *fiqh* have also been included because of the pressing need of the science of *tasawwuf* for them. Al-Ghazali codified these sources in the *Ihya'* in four places: *the Book of Worship*, *the Book of Everyday Practice*, *the Book of Things Leading to Destruction*, and *the Book of Things Leading to Salvation*. However, apart from those things connected to obligatory acts of worship, these