

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

ختم شریف

حضرت شیخ شمس تبریزی

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, MOST KIND MOST MERCIFUL

KHATAM SHARIF

IN HONOUR OF THE VENERABLE

Shaykh Shams e Tabrizi (رضی اللہ عنہ)

The tale of generosity

A vast, unforgiving landscape, the desert is a truly beautiful place to discover. I was once travelling alone in the desert, when due to the ferocious wind my journey unexpectedly came to a standstill. Being many miles away from the neighbouring village, I quickly sought shelter from the sandstorm. With the sand blowing in all directions, I covered my face and continued to travel. After a short while, I noticed a large tent pitched in the horizon withstanding the strong gusts of wind.

On approaching the tent, I tapped the tent flap to make the inhabitants aware of my presence. I enquired, "O dwellers of the tent, will you show some generosity and offer this wanderer sanctuary for a while. I will not be a burden upon you; a resting place and a glass of water is all I ask for."

The flap was quickly drawn back, and a middle aged grumpy man ushered me in. Before I could offer my gratitude, the man began to berate me; 'You insult me sir! You ask me to be generous by offering you sanctuary. What you say is an insult to me and my noble ancestors,' he shouted out.

I remained silent with this somewhat peculiar greeting as the man now began to tap his chest with force whilst saying, 'I am an Arab! We are the people renowned for our hospitality. My ancestor, Hatim at-Tai, was celebrated for his generosity, even gaining the praise of Rasul Allah ﷺ. Such was his fame that the ruler of his time was jealous of him and offered a reward for his capture.

One day whilst in hiding, Hatim overheard an old couple's conversation. The lady commented on how fortunate they would be to capture Hatim and claim the reward. The husband was disgusted by his wife's suggestion and rebuked her for such a mindless thought. Hatim having heard enough; introduced himself and offered to go to the ruler with the couple, so that they could claim the reward. The principled husband refused to take such an offer. Hatim then in reverse threatened to report them to the King, for harbouring him. Reluctantly, the couple then agreed to Hatim's plan and escorted him to the King's court.

The King was overjoyed at Hatim's capture but his mood soon changed when the couple blurted out the truth behind Hatim's capture. Hearing the account, he stepped off his throne and embraced Hatim; admitting defeat, he said, 'Forgive me Hatim, no one can be envious of your rank amongst the people, you are prepared to sacrifice your life for their happiness. Truly you are the most generous.'

Remarkable story, I thought to myself; he speaks of generosity and how this ancestral quality has been passed down through generations. However, I wonder if it has reached him or not. What else would explain his lack of hospitality, in not offering me a glass of water to quench my thirst?

Thankfully, he was stopped when his wife tapped him on the shoulder and scolded him, saying. 'That is enough. You talk about being a good host, but do nothing but talk. Stop giving our guest a lecture. Make sure he is comfortable, give him this glass of water and let him relax, he must be tired. What is the point of speaking about generosity when unaccompanied by actions? Sit and I will prepare some food for our guest.'

Having offered my gratitude to the couple, I sat down to drink the water. I noticed the couple also had a child; a boy in his teenage years who exchanged greetings with me. The boy then asked his father what matter had caused him to become animated. His father mentioned it was no serious matter but felt it important to highlight the deep rooted history of generosity in his ancestors.

Virtues of generosity

Following a few moments of silence, the boy said to his father, 'I have heard a *Hadith* from my teacher about being generous. He told us that Rasul Allah ﷺ said, 'Generosity is a tree in Paradise, and a generous person holds onto a branch. He will not let go of it, until it takes him to Paradise.'

The man nodded in approval and commended his son on remembering the *Hadith* and spoke softly saying, 'My dear son. It is a very beautiful quality in a person, bringing such immense reward. It is also affirmed in the Holy *Qur'an*.' He then beautifully recited the following verses of *Surah Al-Lail*,

'Far from it, (the flaming fire) will be the righteous, who gives his wealth, that he may grow in goodness. With no other motive for reward but seeking the purpose of his Lord, the Most High. He does not owe anybody a favour for which reward is expected of him, in return. But spends solely for the pleasure of Allah.'

He mentioned that these verses were attributed to Sayyiduna Abu Bakr al-Siddiq رضي الله عنه whose generosity had no equal. He related a story to illustrate the point, 'One day, Sayyiduna Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه saw an Abyssinian slave being tortured by his master. Sayyiduna Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه offered to purchase the slave from the owner, who described his slave as being useless and questioned why he would want to buy him. A price was negotiated and the owner said in jest, 'You cannot be a good businessman, I would have sold him for a lot less'. Sayyiduna Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه responded, 'I consider the price cheap,' and then left, leaving the owner bemused.

The slave addressed Sayyiduna Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه as 'master' and thanked him for releasing him from the torture. Sayyiduna Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه replied, 'I am not your master, we are brothers,' and then accompanied the slave to meet Rasul Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم saying, 'Your two slaves are here, I freed him in Allah Almighty's name.'

The boy had listened attentively to the narration and said, 'Father, you did not name the Abyssinian slave. I have been told it is Sayyiduna Bilal رضي الله عنه'. The man confirmed this, and furthermore added that there are numerous stories about Sayyiduna Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه and his generosity.

So far I had been a silent observer to their discussion but the man now turned to me and asked me to share my views. I had only taken a couple sips of water and my thirst had not been satiated, so I quickly commended both for their narrations on generosity. Expecting far more than acknowledgement, they both waited attentively for me to say more.

I drank more water to satisfy my thirst and then mentioned the following *Hadith* that had come to my mind whilst they were waiting, 'The *Abdal* from my nation will not enter heaven by their actions but they will indeed enter Paradise by the Mercy of Allah and by the generosity of the soul.'

The boy's attention was drawn to a book that was with me and as soon as he had a chance he quizzed me about it. The book was called *Divan e Shams e Tabrizi* by Mawlana Jalal ad-Din Rumi رحمته الله; a book of poetry in honour of his master.

The man's wife, who had been occupied in preparing food, came and sat beside her son. She heard me mention Mawlana Rumi رحمته الله and so politely asked, 'I have heard about Mawlana Rumi رحمته الله; his fame needs no introduction, his poetry is world renowned and his masterpiece is the *Mathnawi*. I have heard a great deal about Mawlana but very little about his master. Whilst the food is cooking, please tell us about him.'

Shaykh Shams e Tabrizi رحمته الله

Relating the background of Shaykh Shams e Tabrizi رحمته الله was no easy task, as there was limited information about his life. What I had come to know about him was from a book called *Maqalat e Shams*, the discourses of Shaykh Shams رحمته الله and from the works of the great *Naqshbandi* master Mawlana Jami رحمته الله on the biographies of the *Awliya*.

His full name is Shams al-Din Muhammad bin Ali bin Malik Ta'ad Tabrizi ®, and he was from *Tabriz*, an area in Iran renowned for people with good business acumen. Although his father was not a very spiritual person, it was well known in *Tabriz* that he was a very generous man, having a very tolerant nature and it was often said that no matter what the situation, he would maintain a smile and offer assistance.

As a child, Shaykh Shams ® would go without food for many days, which would be a cause of concern for his parents. They would constantly request him to eat but he would still not eat even a morsel of food. His father once asked him, 'What is wrong with you?'

Shaykh Shams ® replied, 'I have no appetite and so do not eat. After four or five days, if I feel a moment of weakness it soon disappears leaving me stronger than before. So strong, that I could fly out of the window like a bird.'

He felt like a stranger in his own home because he was not able to share his experiences with his father who was unable to comprehend or relate to them.

Shaykh Shams ® mentions, 'During my childhood, when I was at the *madrassa*, forty days would pass and I would have no desire for food. I would not feel hungry or suffer from fatigue. The only reason I touched food was to comply with the Sunnah of Rasul Allah ﷺ.'

Shaykh Shams ® studied the *Sha'fi fiqh* at his local *madrassa*, and his focus from an early age gives an insight into his personality and how focused he was on nurturing his soul to attain the level of the generous soul. He would question himself saying, 'Our preoccupation should be about the purpose of our existence. What are my roots? What am I going to do in this very hour, what is my focus?'

It was due to this focus that at first Shaykh Shams ® spent his time with the *darwishes*, as he felt the jurists were ignorant of the spiritual states. However, when he realised that many were false *darwishes*, he became disillusioned and became eager to join the company of the jurists who he now appreciated because at least they struggled to attain knowledge.

Having mentioned so much, I was interrupted with a question. The man asked, 'So what was Shaykh Shams ® then, a *faqih* (jurist) or a *darwish*?'

'He was both a *faqih* (jurist) and *darwish*' I replied, explaining he possessed both knowledge and spirituality. His poverty was of such nature that it could not be spoken of. The matters he spoke about were beyond the boundaries of knowledge.

The boy now spoke, he was eager to know if Shaykh Shams ® finally found a true *darwish*. There were many true *darwishes* that Shaykh Shams ® did meet. I made mention of their names including Shaykh Abu Bakr ® of *Tabriz* and Shaykh Rukn ad-Din ®.

Shaykh Shams ® also kept association with a *Qalandari* master, in whose hands he felt like a captive bird, being torn up constantly. The master observed his condition and said, 'Shams ® is still raw, he is not ready until he catches fire and becomes a *qalandar*, he has to have a spiritual longing and must keep on moving to attain that.' This I related to because I was constantly on the move, however, there was no fire burning within me, not even a flicker.

It was after these spiritual experiences, that Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ met his spiritual master, Shaykh Baba Kamal Jundi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, who further nurtured his soul and gave him *ijazat* (permission) in spiritual matters.

One day he was in the presence of his master, Baba Kamal رحمۃ اللہ علیہ along with a fellow *murid*, Fakhr ad-Din رحمۃ اللہ علیہ who recited some poetry about his own spiritual state. Baba Kamal رحمۃ اللہ علیہ turned to Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and asked him to also relate his experiences. Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ replied, 'Fakhr ad-Din رحمۃ اللہ علیہ is very eloquent and can express his feelings. What I am feeling, I cannot articulate into words.'

Baba Kamal رحمۃ اللہ علیہ realised that Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ had a higher spiritual state and foretold the following; 'My son, Allah Almighty will grant you a companion who will express these things which are hidden in your heart. Your wisdom will be articulated on his tongue. What you cannot express, he will express it for you.'

The boy was excited by this statement and asked, 'Baba Kamal رحمۃ اللہ علیہ was talking about Mawlana Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ right? So how did Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ meet Mawlana Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ then?'

The Qalandar

He seemed eager to know about the meeting of these great personalities. Just like all good storytellers, I withheld that epic meeting for the climax and I wasn't going to offer it up, just yet. I politely feigned short term deafness and continued to relate the background of Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ.

Following the words of Baba Kamal رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ travelled from Iran to many places. He travelled alone, his state remained hidden from people, to avoid undue attention. Instead, he presented himself as a merchant, and many people thought he was a poor one of that. He spent his time frivolously; often sitting with children and playing games.

During his travels, he once referred to a local executioner who was passing by as a 'man of God.' The people protested at the title given to a man whose job was gruesome. Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ replied, 'True his job is to behead people, but one day he beheaded a man of God. The man of God was pleased that he was releasing him from the torment of this world and he uttered, 'I will give you my title.' So there you have it, he is a man of God.'

He also travelled to Damascus, regarded as the centre of learning during that time period. Here he attended the classes of a spiritual master which were open to the general public. The master also held private classes where subtle, deep matters were discussed. However, he did not give Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ permission to attend these classes, due to his unpredictable nature.

It was in this city, that one day Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ noticed a young student coming out of a local *madrassa*, carrying books in his hand and walking with his friends. Suddenly Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ appeared in front of the boy and kissed his hand and quickly fled from view, without any introduction or exchange of words. The young student, whose name was Jalal

al-Din رحمته, was bemused by the actions of a stranger but put it down to a case of mistaken identity.

Before I could continue the boy interrupted me again, 'that's amazing!' he said, 'Shaykh Shams رحمته had met Mawlana رحمته at a young age and that's where his interest in him began. Maybe I should go Damascus and a Shaykh Shams رحمته of this era will take an interest in me?'

'Now, now, my son' his father responded, 'Better you remain here and tend the camels, I cannot see anyone taking an interest in you'. His words amused me but I dared not express them outwardly for fear of another rant. Had he expressed this side of himself when we first met, I might have even taken to him. Even though a smile and a kind word take little effort, if the soul has not been engulfed in generosity it can seem like a difficult task.

The man's wife unimpressed by her husband's mocking of their son gave him some encouragement, 'Do not worry my son. You do not need to go far to gain blessings. Just like Uwais al Qarni رحمته, who was unable to meet Rasul Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم due to his obligation to his mother's care needs, you too can gain immense blessings by being at my side'.

She surely put the husband to shame, and gained my respect for such words. But furthermore she began to speak to me at lengths, 'It is my good fortune by the grace of Allah Almighty that I have been in the presence of a *qalandar*. These types of masters are known as 'fools of God,' they are wandering mystics, who hide their inner state and they carry many divine secrets.

The *qalandar* I met mentioned a historic book called *Qalandar Namah*, written in Persian about *Qalandars*, mystics who are always travelling. The book mentioned the qualities possessed by a *qalandar* such as humility, modesty, unselfishness and detachment from the world. They have absolutely no interest in worldly matters and are totally detached from the world. Their only concern is with Allah Almighty; such is the strong state of their hearts.

Imam Shahab al-Din Shuhrawardi رحمته, the *imam* of the *Shuhrawardiyya Sufi* order has also wrote about the *Qalandriyya* order, stating, 'these people are possessed by such intoxication and tranquillity of the heart, that they respect no custom and reject the regular observance of society. To the outsider they seem undisciplined, but such is the level of their discipline, that their only concern is to keep their heart connected to Allah.'

The *Qalandars* pretend to be foolish people, claiming they know nothing about spiritual matters. In essence, they are the intelligent ones in this world, as Rasul Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم considered those people who had detached themselves from the clutches of the world as the most intelligent of people. The purpose for this pretence is so that no recognition is given to them by the masses. These people have no desires and so are loved by Rasul Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and Allah Almighty.

From what you have mentioned, it seems Shaykh Shams رحمته was indeed a *qalandar*. He personifies the statement of Allama Iqbal رحمته, 'The man of God is neither of East or West'. He

was a free spirit and was only a slave to Allah. He had a secret to share and therefore was in constant search of a person to divulge to. It seems to me such was his temperament that he not only hid his inner state to everyone during his lifetime, but continues to do so today.'

These were her final words before she returned to check on the cooking pots. She had a remarkable insight into spiritual matters. Her words had left me awestruck, but they had allowed my mind to form some clarity.

The Generous Soul

As I ate the food, my thoughts returned to my initial meeting with the man. At the time his words felt like a rant; however apparently there was wisdom behind those very words. The man must have recognised that generosity was an important characteristic to possess and had clung onto this aspect, linking it to his ancestors. Bravo to him, better to follow the good characteristics of ancestors, than mere rituals and customs.

But it was the words of the lady that kept me busy in thought. I had till this moment in my life not paid homage to Shaykh Shams رحمته الله in the manner I now realised he deserved. I had read the works of Mawlana Rumi رحمته الله with great enthusiasm for many years, having been instructed to do so by a pious *darwish*, who had said, 'If you wish to achieve love for Rasul Allah صلی الله علیه وسلم, then read the works of Mawlana Rumi رحمته الله. You will end up loving Rasul Allah صلی الله علیه وسلم more than anything else.

I now realised that there must have been someone behind the beautiful teachings of Mawlana Rumi رحمته الله, he must have been nurtured to become the person who wrote in such an engaging manner, using the most simplest of language to explain the most complex of matters. Slowly it dawned upon me that if this was the rank and station of the *murid*, Mawlana Rumi رحمته الله, then what rank did his master, Shaykh Shams رحمته الله attain.

As these thoughts ruminated in my mind, I noticed that the lady had served food but was not eating herself. When I mentioned this to the lady, she said she had already eaten, but it was apparent to me that she had concealed the fact there was only enough food for three people. Having thanked her, I mentioned she was blessed with a generous soul.

She replied, 'When you speak of generous souls, it is those who have association with Rasul Allah صلی الله علیه وسلم that possess such a soul. Even the most ordinary of people associated with him possessed such a soul. Once, a mother came along with her two daughters to meet Sayyidah Aishah رضی الله عنهما. There were only three dates in the house of Sayyidah Aishah and she gave one each to the three guests. The daughters quickly ate the dates but the mother held hers in her hand. Both daughters then looked to their mother, who then broke that date in half and gave them a piece each. The mother had made no mention of her poor state of affairs and left a short while later. It is evident that she too had not eaten in a while.

Sayyidah Aishah رضی الله عنهما was led to tears by the generous act of the mother. Later she mentioned the incident to Rasul Allah صلی الله علیه وسلم who commented that these are the qualities of the people in paradise.'

My eyes became moist from hearing this account. It made me remorseful about the poor condition of my own soul. Narrating incidents about pious people brings our hearts alive. I remember such a feeling stirred in my heart when I heard about the great Indian saint, Hadrat Mehbub-e-Ilahi رحمته الله. He was once sent two trays of rubies from the Sultan of Delhi. Amongst the audience were two poor Hindu men, who wished that the Shaykh would give a little something to them; like a small piece of ruby.

Without speaking to the two Hindus, Hadrat Mehbub-e-Ilahi رحمته الله instructed that both trays be given to them. Hearing this, the two Hindus fainted, as the two trays of rubies amounted to great wealth. Once they regained consciousness, Hadrat Mehbub-e-Ilahi رحمته الله instructed that both trays be taken to their house. When the *khadim* returned from delivering the trays, he asked, 'Why did we not even keep a little bit from the trays, There is no food in the kitchen. We could have served many people with those rubies'.

Hadrat Mehbub-e-Ilahi رحمته الله said, 'I looked at the trays and I looked at their hearts. Their hearts were shining like diamonds, this tray has no value. I was only concerned about pleasing their hearts.'

Indeed, it is the spiritual masters, who are following in the footsteps of the *Sahaba* by adhering to the teachings of Rasul Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. It is well known on a number of occasions that Rasul Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had nothing else to give and so gave the shirt off his back. The *Awliya* follow these teachings and have such trust in Allah Almighty which is beyond description. What makes these spiritual masters different to the ordinary person is that they do not live life by mere actions but by developing the generosity of their soul, till it reaches its pinnacle. What they do is only between them and Allah Almighty yet they are not dismissive of people's problems; they always do their utmost to rectify situations as they are genuinely concerned.

GrandShaykh Abdullah Daghestani رحمته الله used to say, 'I wish we could say it is not our problem, but everybody's problem is our problem.' Sometimes the masters have no money and cannot make a physical contribution but this does not hinder them from being generous. It was the practice of the *Khawajgan* masters every night to pray for all the deceased, for whom there was no one praying.

The man who had been rather silent for a long time spoke and said, 'Yes, it is spot-on that the companions of Rasul Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم were known for being generous, as Rasul Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم transmitted 'the generosity of the soul' to his companions. There are numerous incidents one can narrate about their generous acts.

This is the essence of Rasul Allah's صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم way of life, and this is why throughout the different Islamic periods, we have seen generosity amongst Muslims of all nations. It is only now that we have stopped being generous and as consequence we are faced with many calamities.

I have been listening attentively to the background of Shaykh Shams رحمته. I must confess I did not hold such masters in high esteem as I thought they suffered from lack of knowledge and were indeed fools. I now realise the real fool must be me, as they are following in the footsteps of the blessed companions of Rasul Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Once, Sayyiduna Umar رضي الله عنه saw Sayyiduna Muaz ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه sat shedding tear after tear, as he was in fear for gaining recognition. He explained to Sayyiduna Umar رضي الله عنه, 'I cry because Rasul Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم have stated that the smallest amount of hypocrisy amounts to *shirk*. Allah loves those pious people who live in unknown corners, so that no one looks for them when they have left a place. When they are in a crowd, no one recognises them. Their hearts are the torches of guidance and they keep away from all the dark and dirty spots'.

I now understand, it is the *Qalandars* that are the pious people being described by Rasul Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم as these are the people who do not care about their fame or reputation; their only focus is Allah Almighty. They view life as a gift from Allah Almighty and are granted more and more blessings as they share the generosity of the soul with people. Please sir, be so kind and share more about the personality of Shaykh Shams رحمته with us all.'

Spiritual Meetings

Taken aback by this sudden enlightenment of the man, I lost my stream of thought. Shaykh Sham's رحمته life had an immediate impact on his understanding. It is certainly evident wherever the pious are mentioned, blessings descends on those gatherings. Without further delay and with fear of losing momentum, I quickly continued.

The words of Baba Kamal رحمته about the meeting of a companion to share his spiritual states and secrets with, had left an imprint on the heart of Shaykh Shams رحمته. It had been indicated to him that the person he was seeking was the son of Shaykh Baha Uddin Walad رحمته, named Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi رحمته. He had seen glimpses of Mawlana Rumi رحمته on many occasions, but nothing had materialised. He had spent almost his entire life seeking this person.

He had reached the age of sixty but had been left in despair, searching many countries, moving from city to city. Finally, in 1244 he came to Konya, where the most prominent scholar, and established spiritual master, Mawlana Rumi رحمته resided.

Mawlana Rumi رحمته was by now thirty eighty years old, married with children and had many followers. He had been trained in following the Kubrawiyya *silsila* by his father, Shaykh Baha Uddin Walad رحمته, and his father's *khalifa*, Shaykh Sayyid Burhan al-DIn Muhaqqiq رحمته. Hence Mawlana Rumi رحمته was no novice in spiritual matters, and was immensely revered by his *murids* and students; it would be suffice to say he was the pride and joy of Konya.

Shaykh Shams رحمته resided at a prominent inn in Konya and presented himself as a business man, offering to build houses. However, his actual state was to fast daily and inside the room he resided in, there was nothing but a broken water pot and an old mat. Nearby to the inn,

was a lodge which Mawlana Rumi رحمته would frequently visit and discuss various spiritual matters with people of knowledge. It was here that Shaykh Shams رحمته saw Mawlana Rumi رحمته and without saying a word, made eye contact with him and began the spiritual transmission.

On another occasion, Mawlana Rumi رحمته was giving *dars* to his students when a mystic in rags walked in, and pointing towards the books assembled on the table and asked 'what are these?' Mawlana Rumi رحمته looked at the shabby clothing of the mystic and dismissing him as an ignorant person, replied 'they contain literature that an illiterate person would not understand'. The mystic, was Shaykh Shams رحمته in guise, picked up all the books and threw them into a pond in the courtyard.

Mawlana Rumi رحمته complained that the books were all hand written and contained rare works of his father and reprimanded the mystic for being so ignorant and careless. When Mawlana Rumi رحمته retrieved the books from the pond, he saw that all the pages were dry. Left astounded, he asked the mystic, 'What is this?' Shaykh Shams رحمته departed, saying 'this is something you would not understand.'

In another encounter, Mawlana Rumi رحمته was riding a mule, accompanied by many of his students making their way to the lodge. Shaykh Shams رحمته stood up and took hold of the mule's bridle. He asked, 'O exchanger of the current coins, can I ask a question'. Having received permission to do so, he asked, 'who is greater, Sultan Bayazid al-Bastami رحمته or Rasul Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم?' Mawlana Rumi رحمته without hesitation said, 'it was obviously Rasul Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. Why do you ask such a question?'

Shaykh Shams رحمته replied, 'Well, Shaykh, please explain to me then why did Rasul Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم say, 'O Lord I cannot praise You, as You ought to be praised,' but Bayazid رحمته said, 'Praise be to me. Glory be to me. This is the same Bayazid رحمته who was so strict in his adherence to the *Sunnah* that he would not eat a melon because he stated, 'there was no tradition that suggested how it was cut in Rasul Allah's صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم time.'

Mawlana Rumi رحمته was left confounded, asked Shaykh Shams رحمته to explain the matter. He replied, 'Rasul Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم understood the reality, that Allah is beyond praise, and such was the perfection of his spiritual state that no amount of spirituality overwhelmed him. Bayazid رحمته was progressing through different spiritual states and had not reached the ultimate stage that Allah is beyond praise, and hence he was satisfied with the state he had reached'.

Hearing the answer, Mawlana Rumi رحمته fell into a spiritual trance in which he saw a window open at the top of his head and smoke rise from it ascending to the heavens. He cried out, fell to the ground, and lost consciousness for one hour. Shaykh Shams رحمته, upon hearing these answers, realized that he was face to face with the object of his longing, the one he had prayed to Allah Almighty to send.

Seclusion and Separation

When Mawlana رحمۃ اللہ علیہ awoke, he took Shaykh Shams's رحمۃ اللہ علیہ hand, and the two of them went into seclusion at the house of Mawlana's رحمۃ اللہ علیہ dearest friend, Salah al-Din رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. They secluded themselves for forty days, speaking to no one.

The esteemed scholar, a man with such high rank amongst his peers, honoured by his followers and the ruling dynasty alike, threw everything at the feet of his master. This was no easy feat for Mawlana Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ as his followers opposed Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ for taking their beloved master away from them.

Only Salah al-Din رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and Mawlana's رحمۃ اللہ علیہ son, Sultan Walad رحمۃ اللہ علیہ had permission to bring food. Ghowr Khatum رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, the wife of Mawlana Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ was a very pious lady, she narrated, 'One day, during the period of seclusion, I saw through the gap of the door, six men appear suddenly, all majestic in appearance and they presented a garland of flowers at the feet of Mawlana رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. The men all sat and took part in the seclusion reading and when the time for prayer came, they asked Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ to lead them in prayer. However, Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ nominated Mawlana رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. After completing their prayers, the men all left through the wall. Mawlana رحمۃ اللہ علیہ came out of the room and gave the garland of flowers to me and said it was a gift. I had never seen such flowers in Konya so I sent some away to be checked by perfume merchants. They could not give any information about where the flowers were from. When a spice merchant from India saw the flowers, he mentioned they were from Sri Lanka and queried how it was possible for such fresh flowers to end up in Konya in winter. Mawlana Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ later mentioned to me the six men who had visited him were saints from India.'

The flowers that were given by Mawlana رحمۃ اللہ علیہ to his wife remained fresh and full of fragrance throughout her lifetime. The leaves of the flowers were used to cure anyone suffering from ailment of the eyes.

Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ instructed Mawlana رحمۃ اللہ علیہ to read the works of his father and after a period of time instructed him not to touch any books whatsoever. One day Mawlana رحمۃ اللہ علیہ had a thought, about a matter he had read in his father's book. Instantly, Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ appeared and reprimanded Mawlana رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, saying, 'I have told you to stop reading, do not even think about it, even thinking is reading'.

Shaykh Shams رحمۃ اللہ علیہ departed Konya a short while later, without telling anyone. The followers of Mawlana Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and some of the family members were pleased at this, as they thought they would now get due attention from Mawlana Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. However, after this process, Mawlana Rumi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ was no longer the same person and his grief at being separated from his master was insurmountable; he would hold tightly onto a pillar and lament.

His love and separation for his master found their expression in an outpouring of lyrical poems, *Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi*. He himself went out searching for his master and journeyed again to Damascus. Eventually he found his master and it took his son to convince both to return to Konya.

Why should I seek? I am the same as He.

His essence speaks through me.
I have been looking for myself!

At this point, the mother raised her hand as to gain my attention. She then spoke, and I remained silent with great expectation of her revealing further insight into spiritual matters. She said, 'the great poet, Allama Iqbal رحمہ اللہ, himself spiritually influenced by Mawlana Rumi رحمہ اللہ states, "Don't hide this broken heart because the more broken it is, the more priceless it becomes to the One that created it." To be permanently broken hearted brings you closer to Allah Almighty. Once it is shattered, it has no attachment to anything and then becomes an excellent recipient for divine blessings.'

How remarkable was this woman that she understood so much about spiritual matters. Having been a keen enthusiast of Mawlana Rumi رحمہ اللہ, I knew a great deal about his life but I failed to understand the deeper meanings behind his life and works. Without retreating into a period of self loathing, I returned to narrating the remainder of the life.

Once they had both returned to Konya, further seclusions followed to the anguish of the family members and followers. This was the tipping point for the followers, so some colluded to assassinate Shaykh Shams رحمہ اللہ. They martyred Shaykh Shams رحمہ اللہ and threw his body into a well. Again Mawlana رحمہ اللہ was in anguish of separation but Shaykh Shams رحمہ اللہ was never to be seen again.

It was only during Shaykh Walad's رحمہ اللہ time the body was recovered and laid to rest in the *madrassa* of Mawlana Rumi رحمہ اللہ.

With the separation from his master permanent, Mawlana Rumi رحمہ اللہ was like a person burning constantly. The purpose of the agony and the pain of separation was the fire that ignited the Divine Love towards Allah Almighty. It was through his works that Mawlana Rumi رحمہ اللہ expressed his feelings of this message; it was not a message of suffering and despair. He explained that it is only when you are separated, that a person realises how much struggle is required to link up with the One you are separated from.

This is why the masters give people *dhikr*, so a person can reconnect at the initial stage by mentioning the name of Allah Almighty and continue with this to increase the connection and love. Mawlana Rumi رحمہ اللہ mentioned it is the most important matter for a person; to connect with Allah Almighty.

Legacy

The sandstorm in the desert had now subdued and it felt like an appropriate time to say my farewell to the generous hosts. I had now realised that Shaykh Shams رحمہ اللہ was no ordinary master. His act of generosity was based on the Sunnah of Rasulallah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, as he did not benefit just a few companions, but transmitted spirituality to every companion. It is for this reason, Rasulallah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said 'My companions are like the stars, whichever one you follow, you will be guided'.

It was this level of generosity of the soul from Shaykh Shams ؒ that had ensured that Mawlana Rumi ؒ became the revered personality throughout the centuries. Today, he continues to benefit people throughout the world, be it in the East or West, with his works appreciated by the elite and the ordinary, young, old and people of different faiths.

Mawlana Rumi ؒ mentions, 'Shaykh Shams ؒ was a man who possessed the knowledge of alchemy, astronomy, astrology, logic, theology and philosophy. Yet, he kept the company of the man of God and he kept his state hidden. No one knew about his rank in the Divine Presence, and his lifetime purpose was to benefit from holy people and his passion and desire was to find a person who could take what he had to offer.'

Shaykh Shams ؒ was a rare master of a high spiritual rank. The true *murid* is a reflection of his master, and indeed the *murid*, Mawlana Rumi ؒ gave an indication of how great his master was.

It was befitting that before I bid farewell, I leave a token of my gratitude. The book that had accompanied me in my travels, *Divan e Shams e Tabrizi*; I handed over to the mother. Then I left their tent, and made my journey in the direction of Konya Sharif in the hope of seeking blessings from the man behind Mawlana Rumi ؒ, his beloved master Shaykh Shams ؒ.

Al-Fatiha