

On the Tradition of Imām al-Ṣādiq Regarding Ablution

It is reported from Imām al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, in *Miṣbāḥ al-sharī'ah*:

When you set forth for cleanliness (*ṭahārah*) and ablution (*wuḍū'*) your advance to water is your advance to the mercy of God. For God the High has made water a key to His closeness, to intimate communion with Him, and a way to the dais of His worship. Just as His mercy purifies the sins of the servants, likewise nothing other than water purifies apparent impurities. God the High said: 'And it is He who has loosened the winds, bearing good tidings before His mercy and We have sent down pure water from the heavens.'¹ God, may He be glorified and exalted, said: 'We have made from water every living thing.'² Just as by it He has given life to each thing of the blessings of the world, so through His grace and mercy He has ordained the life of the heart through acts of obedience. Contemplate the clarity of water, its delicateness, its purity, its blessedness, and the subtle way in which it mixes with everything and in everything. Use it in the purification of the limbs which God has commanded you to purify and accomplish through it what He has made obligatory and what He has recommended. Indeed, in each one of them are many benefits. When you use water with reverence, a spring of its benefits will gush forth for you. So, live with the creation of God the High in the same way as water mixes with things, delivering to each thing its rightful due without undergoing alteration. Consider the saying of the Envoy of God, may the blessings of God be upon him and his descendants; 'The distinguished believer is like water.' Therefore, your clarity with God in all your acts of obedience should be like the clarity of water when God brings it forth from the heavens and names it pure. Purify your heart with devotion and certainty when you are purifying your limbs with water.³

So, you, O gnostic of the divine gnosis and wayfarer on the path of hidden knowledge, since you intend absolute purity and have left behind the restric-

1 Q.25:48.

2 Q.21:30.

3 Al-Ṣādiq, *Miṣbāḥ al-sharī'ah wa miftāḥ al-ḥaqīqah*, p. 16. * Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. LXXVII, p. 339.

tions of the veils of words and expressions, turn towards the water that descends from the cloud of mercy, purify your outer shell and outward impurities, and set about doing that through the obligatory and recommended observances, because God has established water as the key to His closeness and His intimate communion and the guide to the dais of His service. With your inner being turn towards the water that descends from the heavens of the mercy of forgiveness. Purify the impurities of sin by carrying out the obligatory and recommended observances, which 'Alī, peace be upon him, taught regarding repentance,⁴ because God has established the water of the mercy of forgiveness as the key to His closeness and His intimate communion, and as the guide to the dais of His service. Turn your heart towards the water that descends from the heaven of volition and purify the impurities of the heart and spiritual anguish, because that is the key to spiritual closeness and the guide to the dais of His service. Turn with your spirit to the water that descends from the heaven of oneness and purify the impurities of turning towards the other and otherness, because that is the key to closeness attained through supererogatory acts of worship, and a guide for arriving at the dais of His service. Turn with your mystery towards the water that descends from the heaven of absolute aloneness and purify the impurities of the vision of multiplicity, because that is the key to arriving at the dais of the presence. Turn towards the water that descends from the heaven of the ipseity (*huwīyah*) and purify the vision of the degree, which is the key to the closeness attained through obligatory acts of worship and absolute annihilation and the guide for arriving at the dais of the One who is present.

Up to this point, the cleanliness and purification of the wayfarers to God has been discussed. After this begins the purification of the folk of arrival (*ahl al-wuṣūl*), which is the result of the closeness attained through obligatory acts of worship, which in turn begins from the esoteric and dawns forth from the heart and ends in the domain of the body. Thus, everyone from amongst the folk of arrival has their own specific purification, the detailed explanation of which is beyond the confines of this treatise. The object of refuge, Imām al-Šādiq, peace be upon him, in accordance with this noble tradition, has prescribed contemplation of the different aspects of water and has established that each one is a means of ascension to a degree, for example, contemplation of its clarity, delicacy, purity, blessedness, subtle permeation, and quality of vivification. You should also obey the command of my master, Imām al-Šādiq, the trustworthy, peace be upon him, and establish all its outward aspects as a means of elevation to spiritual degrees.

So, revive your exoteric self by means of purification, remove from yourself

4 * Al-Rāḍī, *Nahj al-balāghah*, saying 409.

sluggishness, indolence, and lethargy through its blessing, give your outward form clarity, and, with your clean and purified exoteric self, turn towards the dais of His closeness and revive your limbs through obedience to your master. Revive your esoteric self through the life of contemplation of the place of the beginning and the end and the point of origin and return. Enliven your heart through the life of faith and contentment. Enliven your mystery through the life of the theophanies of actions, names, and essence, according to their levels. Contemplate the clarity of water, walk with your master with the footsteps of sincerity and clarity, and, through the levels of purity (*ikhhlās*), realise certainty. After this, God willing, we will mention purity and its levels in the chapter on intention.

Live with the folk of God with purity and in the way of God and creation: turn away from exercising your own will. Contemplate the subtlety of the mixing of water with things, for this mixing is for their improvement and causes them to arrive at their own perfection and gives them life. The quality of your social interactions and dealings with the servants of God should also be like this. Look at the servants of God with the eye of affection and kindness. The purpose of their esoteric and exoteric improvement is that you revive them and your guidance of those who go astray and your forbidding of sin to the folk of sin is also for the improvement of their state, not for exercising the implementation of one's own will. If you purify yourself with the aforementioned meditations then, in accordance with the promise of Imām al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, in this noble *ḥadīth*, the springs of gnosis and wisdom will gush forth from your heart and you will enter into the mysteries of purity and its realities, and with unseen assistance and spiritual exercises you will realise their realities and you will be worthy of arriving at the degree of closeness and the dais of intimacy (*uns*).⁵

5 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī dedicates a lengthy section to the concept of intimacy (*uns*) and its ten divisions. See al-Kāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyyah*, p. 276.