

Muqamaat-E Ru'h

ALLAH has created humans so that they can become 'Insaan'. Insaan basically means 'The one who forgets'. Ulama-e Zhaahir take this in the literal and worldly sense. Insaan forgets the vow taken in the World of the Souls and gets involved in all kind of evils in this 'Aalam-e Maadi. It is only 'Tauba' that can put him/her back on the right track. They quote a 'Hadeeth: "If man did not commit sins, ALLAH would have destroyed the mankind and would have created another creation that would have sinned and asked for forgiveness so that HU could forgive".

Ulama-e Baatin believe in this but also talk about the 'Insaan-e Haqeeqi'. This is explained by Sayyidina Makhdum Jahan Sharf-ul-Haq Wad Deen Ahmad Ya'hya Muniri (RA) of Silsila-E 'Aaliya Suharwardiya in his Maktoobat under the Title 'Tauheed'. He talks about the following four levels of Tauheed:

1. Tauheed-e Munafiqeen
2. Tauheed-e 'Aamiyana and Tauheed-e Mutakallamin
3. Tauheed-e 'Aarifana
4. Tauheed-e Mauhidana

It is the 4th level we are discussing here. There are three sublevel in it. In this level, Tajalliaat-e Sifaat-e Ilaahi descend on the heart with such an intensity that the person forgets everything. In the second sublevel, the person is involved in such a depth that he/she forgets himself/herself. In the third sublevel, he/she forgets about the forgetting. This is also known as Fanaa 'Anil Fanaa. The person who achieves this level of Tauheed is known as 'Insaan', the one who forgets everything in the Divine Love, forgets himself/herself and then forgets about this forgetting. This is the basic purpose of the creation of humans.

Now comes the question "How to become Insaan". This is where a Shaykh is required. When one starts traveling on the Path of Tazkiyya under the guidance of the Shaykh, his/her soul passes through different Maqamat (Stations). These are:

1. Maqam an-Nafs (Station of Egotism)
2. Maqam al-Qalb (Station of the Heart)
3. Maqam ar-Ru'h (Station of the Soul)
4. Maqam as-Sirr (Station of the Divine Secrets)
5. Maqam al-Qurb (Station of the Proximity and Nearness)
6. Maqam al-Wisal (Station of the Divine Union)

Shaykh Hakeem Mo'inuddin Chishti in his book "The Book of Sufi Healing" has given a chart of the Physical and Spiritual ailments that one may come across in these Maqamat. He has also suggested the 'Itr (Essential Oils) that are recommended in these ailments.

Maqam an-Nafs:

When a child is born, he/she is at the Maqam an-Nafs. This Maqam has the following seven levels:

1. Al-Amarra: Listening to the Orders from the Darkness
2. Al-Lawamma: The Stations of Sill Questioning
3. Al-Amina: The Stations of Faith and Trust
4. Al-Mutma'inna: The Station of Security
5. Al-Radhiyya: Not Obeying Anything from the Nafs
6. Al-Mardhiyya: Accepting Without Asking
7. Al-Kamila: The Perfections of the Nafs

The possible Physical ailments are "Criminal Behavior, Heart Attack, Cancer, Jaundice, Hypo-Glycemia, Eye Problems, Gout, Obesity, Alcoholism and Drug Abuse". The suggested remedy is application of 'Itr of Jasmine, Rose, Musk and/or Frankincense.

The possible Spiritual ailments are "Depression, Suicide, Weeping, Fear, Anxiety, Self-doubt, Sexual Perversions, Insanity, Mental Diseases and Selfishness". The suggested remedy is application of 'Itr of Rose, Frankincense and/or Violet.

In order to cross the seven stations of Nafs, one has to fight with it. Gawth 'Ali Shah in his book Tazkara-e Ghawthiyya mentions a hindu who was capable of Intiqal-E Ru'h. When requested for a demonstration, the hindu dropped dead and a dead pigeon started to fly. After a short flight, the pigeon died again and the hindu was alive again. When asked how he achieved this power, he said by fighting the Nafs.

I will be mentioning different accounts from the life of Anbiya (AS) as an example of the stations. But this should not be taken as a defect or weakness (Na'ooz U Billah). We believe that all Anbiya (AS) are M'asoom. All these accounts are only for the Tarbeat of the Khalq not because of any weakness.

Al-Amarra:

At this station, the Nafs is in our heart and speaks in the voice of shaitan that speaks to it. We are in love with the worldly affairs and listen to the orders from the darkness and are the slaves of our desires. Listening to the voice of the shaitan by Hadhrat Adam (AS) when He was sent out of the Jannah is an example of this.

Al-Lawamma:

When we start fighting the Nafs, the shaitan gets furious. It sits near the Nafs and starts putting questions in the heart. The meeting of Hadhrat Musa (AS) and Hadhrat Khidhar (AS) is an example of this station. This is a very difficult station. Recently, a person asked someone "Why a Sunnah Mokada and a non-Moqada? Sunnah is Sunnah, Why the difference? Why not Fardh prayer only?" and the answer given was, "Well, is it not enough for you as a Muslim to know that the Prophet did it?"

I would like to quote a great scholar, Imam Fahr-ud Deen Razi (RA) here. He had more than 300 logical arguments for Tauheed (ALLAH's Oneness). He once said that he can discuss 10,000 Masail (Problems) from Surah al-Fati'ha. People laughed at him. He wrote down these 10,000 Masail as a proof and then said that he can discuss 10,000 more Masail from Surah al-Fati'ha. Such a great scholar. Upon his death-bed, shaitan came and started arguing about Tauheed. One by one Hadhrat (RA) gave the arguments and the shaitan rejected them with logic. When he was at the last argument, his Murshid who was in another city, suddenly stood up and said in an angry tone, "Why don't you say that I believe in Tauheed without an argument?" and that was when shaitan left moaning.

Al-Amina:

The nafs is still inside you and the shaitan is beside you but cannot talk directly to the nafs. If we do not want to listen to him, we do not hear his voice. So, he starts using the tactics of "Waswisa & Hope", such as, "I have done enough Zhikr today", "Why should I Pray, I am not pure yet. This is Munaafiqat", "Why should I recite Astaghfar, I have not done anything wrong" etc.

Al-Mutma'inna:

Both the nafs and the shaitan get silent. There is no resistance in the Azhkaar and other Ibadaat. The heart is activated and we see with it.

Ar-Radiyya:

This is the entrance into Tauheed-E 'Aarifana. At this stage, we stop listening to the nafs and the shaitan. "Noor-E Baseerat" is created in our hearts and we achieve Mushahida that "Faa-'il-E Haqeeqi" is HU. We see ALLAH everywhere, in everything. We start obeying ALLAH in the true sense. A lot of Riqqat (Urge to cry) is experienced because of the happiness of achieving this level and the guilt of not reaching here earlier.

Because the shaitan has no power over us anymore, he changes his stance and tries to push us into Shirk by manipulating our Mushahidaat. In the absence of a Shaykh, anyone can either stay permanently at this station, or go into "Gumraahi and Disbelief".

Al-Mardiyya:

Love conquers everything including the nafs and the shaitaan. We have this Mushahida that everything is "Min Janib ALLAH" which results in accepting everything without any questions. The eye of our heart is completely open and we start speaking the language of the soul.

Al-Kamala:

This is the Maqam of perfection and is the entrance to the Maqam al-Qalb. At this Maqam, the nafs is purified completely.

Q. Could you tell something more of the soul. What is its name in Arabic? What are its faculties? It is clearly different from the nafs (the lower self; the ego) as you give the nafs your separate attention. The word ruh I'd reserve for spirit. So I'm interested in your answer.

A. Actually we use the word Ru'h for Soul and use Nafs for Spirit.

For the carrying on of this spiritual warfare by which the knowledge of oneself and of Allah is to be obtained, the body may be figured as a kingdom, the soul as its king, and the different senses and faculties as constituting an army.

Sayyidina Imaam Ghazali (RA)

The translation of Ru'h is usually given as "soul". It can also mean the breath of God, the angel Gabriel, the Quran, revelation, or prophecy.

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Remember that the Ru'h, or soul's essence, is not the same thing As spirit (nafs). The latter is the divine force that activates the physical phenomena in the body, including mental process. The Ru'h is more intimately felt and is superior to the spirit.

Hakeem Ghulam Mu'een ud Deen (RA)

Q. Can you say in which ways the ruh (soul, breath) is superior to the nafs (spirit)? I am following your renderings into English, from below. thank you.

A. The nafs is more like shadow of the soul. It is always in anguish to please the desire and the material aspect of the self and is inclined towards evil. The soul, on the other hand, is the actual essence. It, if groomed under the guidance of a Shaykh, is the friend of Allah. It believes in the oneness of Allah, is truthful when it proclaims the Shahada (a testament of belief), is thankful and patient, is knowledgeable, is satisfied and accepts the rules of Allah, is secured against the fire of hell and is contented and happy.

Allah speaks to this soul directly as presented in the Qur`an in Surah 89 (The Dawn), Verse 27-30:

27. (To the righteous soul will be said:) "O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction!"

28. "Come back to thy Lord, - well pleased (thyself), and well-pleasing unto Him!"

29. "Enter thou, then, among My devotees!"

30. "Yea, enter thou My Heaven!"

Source: To Know Your Self is to Know Allah by AbuBakr Karolia

Q. A little confusion here. You mention that

> The nafs is more like shadow of the soul.

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> The soul, on the other hand, is the actual essence.

However, in the verses you quote from the quran, the term used in the quran is "nafs" itself.

A. 'Uloom:

1. Shari'at
2. Tareeqat (Baatini of Shari'at)
3. Ma'rifat (Baatini of Tareeqat)
4. Haqeeqat (Baatini of the Baatini 'Uloom)

Sayyidina 'Abdul Qaadir Jeelani (RA)

I'll try to explain why the word Ru'h is used in the translation for the word Nafs here. In the 1st level of 'Uloom, the nafs is considered to be an initial state of the Ru'h itself. Once the state of Mutmainna is achieved, the word nafs is discarded and the word soul is used. In case of the 2nd level of 'Uloom, the two are supposed to be different but because the nafs is conquered completely at the level of Mutmainna, it dies and the Ru'h carries on.

So, you see that Ru'h and Nafs are sometimes taking each other's position as quoted by Brother Siraj.

The levels 2-4 of the 'Uloom are basically based on Mushahidats. Two different persons may see the same thing in different context according to their own achievements. This is my understanding of Brother Siraj's comment: "It is often the case that several Sufis have given their own set of terms to the subtle faculties". And this is why a Sufi does not reject the terms used by another sufi.

Maqam al-Qalb:

This is the second main station of the soul. At this level, the Saalik feels good about himself/herself and the world. He/She has the feelings that he/she has love for everything in the world and that the life is wonderful.

The possible physical ailments are Toxic Irritability, Aches, Pains, Diarrhea, Nausea, Headache, Fevers, Kidney Disease and Skin eruptions. The suggested remedy is application of 'Itr of Amber, Rose and/or Musk.

The possible spiritual ailments are Severe anger, Hypocrisy, Self-Importance, Financial instability, Inconsideration, Excessive emotions, Fear of failure and Lack of concentration. The recommended remedy is application of 'Itr of Jasmine, Sandal, Violet and/or Frankincense.

Following are the seven levels of this station:

1. At-Tawba: The Return to God
2. At-Taslim: The Surrender to God
3. Al-Adab: The Politeness
4. Al-Khawf: The Fear of God
5. As-Sidq: The Station of Righteousness
6. Al-Haqiqat: The Station of the Truth
7. Al-Muhabba: The Deep Love

At-Tawba: The Saalik wants to do Tawba to clean himself/herself and to wipe away all his/her mistakes. He/She feels Riqqat at all times.

At-Taslim: The Saalik leaves his body, his heart, and his soul, and surrenders to ALLAH's will. He/She feels peace and love everywhere. No gain makes him/her happy and no loss makes him/her sad. He/She is always thankful to ALLAH.

Al-Adab: The Saalik becomes quiet and very polite. He/She absorbs the anger (if any) even if someone is rude or insolent and remains polite.

Al-Khawf: The Saalik feels that ALLAH is always with him/her. Although he/she knows that ALLAH is all love, Ra'eem and Kareem, but being close to a king has its fears, fears of the power of the king. Second Khalifa-E Raashid Hadhrat 'Umr (RA) said, "Iman is the name of the feeling between Hope and Fear".

As-Sidq: The Saalik knows that everything ALLAH has said is the truth. The religions and the scriptures are from ALLAH and he/she starts believing in this Truth. This is where he/she starts obeying ALLAH with Iman.

Al-Haqiqat: The Saalik starts understanding the Haqiqat of his/her beliefs and this helps him/her resist the darkness. He/She starts looking at himself/herself as if there is no body, just Noor. The Ibaadat have a different meaning as the level changes from the Ritual to Haaziri and then to Huzoori. This feeling of Huzoori gives him/her the feeling that the Ibaadat he/she is doing is being done with heart and soul not just body. The presence of the beloved inside him/her is very strong. The initial feelings of Fana fil-Shaykh are achieved.

Al-Mahabba: Love for the Prophet (SAW) increases. ALLAH created Muhammad (SAW) as a mirror as He (SAW) said, "I am the Mirror of HIS Husn-E Jamaal" and this Haqiqat is revealed to the Saalik.

Maqam ar-Ru'h

It is almost impossible (There are exceptions off course) to continue through the higher stations without a Shaykh. A person at this level may seem to the others as very affectionate, loving and spiritual. The reason this level is supposed to be impossible to cross without a Shaykh is that this is where one may enter into permanent auto-intoxication and become a Majzub. Moreover, this is a level where shaitaan can again jump in to show to the Saalik that he/she has achieved the goal.

The best example that can be quoted here is of Sayyidina Shaykh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani (RA) when shaitaan tried to prove to him that it was ALLAH talking to him (RA). By the Grace of ALLAH, he (SAW) was able to get out of this deception immediately.

The possible spiritual ailments of this station are Lack of concentration, Selfishness, Degrading others, Self-deception, Forgetfulness, Pride, Arrogance and Giddiness. The suggested remedy is the application of 'Itr of Violet, Rose and/or Sandal.

The possible physical ailments are Psychosis, Auto-intoxication, Muscular disease, Fevers, Fatigue and Corrupted appetite. The suggested remedy is the application of the 'Itr of 'Ud, Hina, Amber and/or Musk.

Following are the seven levels of this station.

1. At-Tafakkar: Silent Remembrance
2. Al-Hubb: The Sincerity of the Love
3. Al-Itlaq: The Station of Freedom
4. Al-'Ubudiyya: The Servant of God
5. Al-Ma'arifa: The Knowing of the Truth
6. Al-Hadhrat al-Itlaq: The Presence of the Freedom
7. Al-Fana: The Annihilation in God

At-Tafakkur: The Saalik stays quiet and starts living in his/her heart. The difference between the self and the heart disappears. Both get united, the heart is filled up with Nur and the Saalik lives with his/her soul. This Nur-Filled heart is, sometimes, an easy prey to the shaitaan's tricks. The Shaykh is responsible for making sure that the Saalik stays on the right path.

Al-Hubb: The Saalik starts hearing with the ears of the Heart. The presence of the Prophet (SAW) is felt and the love for Him (SAW) increases. Everything from the heart is erased except Him, the Beloved. This is the gateway to the knowledge of the secret of the soul.

Al-Itlaq: The Saalik understands the meaning of love. This is where ALLAH's saying "Neither My heavens nor My earth contain Me, only the heart of My faithful believer contains me" is revealed. Here the unity of nafs, mind, heart, souls and Sirr is experienced. All are one. There is nothing, only He.

Al-'Ubudiyya: The Saalik becomes the true servant of ALLAH. He/She believes every word He says without any question at all.

Al-Ma'rifa: Saalik starts knowing the TRUTH. His/Her prayers get special meanings and understandings. He/She starts to know ALLAH and the soul gets cleaned. He/She is Nur and there is no darkness. Eye of the soul is activated. There is nothing, only ALLAH and the Saalik.

Al-Hadrat Al-Itlaq: The Saalik begins to reflect the qualities of ALLAH. This is the stage about which there is a 'Hadeeth-E Qudsi saying "I become their eyes, I become their hands". There is no one, only He in this world, and there is no soul but His soul, La Ilaaha Illa Hu.

Al-Fana': The Saalik starts experiencing annihilation in ALLAH. His/Her stands facing Him at every prayer, soul to soul. He/She does not pray from the body or from the heart, He/She prays with the soul.

Maqam as-Sirr

Sirr means the greatest of all Secrets. Here completes what started at the stage of Al-Hadrat Al-Itlaq in Maqam ar-Ru'h. ALLAH says, "There are certain of my servants who cease not seeking nearness to me by means of voluntary worship, until I become the lips with which they speak, the eyes with which they see, the ears by which they hear, the hand herewith they hold, and the foot by which they step".

At this stage, the whole functionality of the universe is revealed. The does not desire any fame, wealth or anything. He/She exists only for and by virtue of a very exclusive relationship with ALLAH.

The possible spiritual ailments of this station are Disbelief in ALLAH, Forgetfulness, Over-Sensitivity, False Interpretations, Disconnection with Reality, Irrationality, Lack of Life Force and Babbling. The suggested remedy is the application of 'Itr of 'Ud, Hina and/or Sandal.

The possible physical ailments of this station are Fevers, Sense of Suffocation, Heart Burning and Heart Pain. The suggested remedy is the application of 'Itr of Jannat al-Ferdaws.

Following are the seven levels of this station.

1. The World of al-Azal: The Meaning of Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim
2. Laila: The Deep Love
3. Ar-Ruh: The Father of the Spirit
4. Al-Qalb us-Sirr: The Heart of the Secret
5. Al-Ma'a ul-Hubb: The Water of the Love
6. Al-Hadhrat al-Itlaq: The Presence of the Freedom
7. As-Shams ul-Haqqat ul-Qudsiyya: The Holy Sun of the Truth

Maqam al-Qurb:

This is the stage where the Saalik enjoys the nearness of the Beloved. He/She gets glimpses of the next world also.

The possible spiritual ailments of this station are Excessive Ecstasy, Incessant weeping, Incoherence and Silence. The suggested remedy is the application of 'Itr of Rose and Amber.

There are no physical ailments.

Maqam al-Wisaal:

This is the stage of the Union with ALLAH. There are no physical and spiritual ailments. They are usually smiling at all times and have no concern of the world. There is a Hadeeth on the authority of 'Hadhrat Ibn Mas'ud (RA) that mentions 300 people who bear special relationship with ALLAH. They do not walk or talk and do not have to eat, drink or sleep [Please refer to my postings on Taqween for this].

A true Sufi and Wali is the one who enters this group. Usually the people at this level do not die of any disease and are informed in advance of their way, place and time of passing away.

According to 'Hadhrat 'Abdul Qadir Jeelani (RA), there are four 'Uloom:

1. Shari'at
2. Tareeqat (Baatini of Shari'at)
3. Ma'rifat (Baatini of Tareeqat)
4. Haqeeqat (Baatini of the Baatini 'Uloom)

In case of Maqamaat-E Ru'h, the map is as follows:

Maqam an-Nafs: Islam, Shari'at
Maqam al-Qalb: Iman, Tareeqat
Maqam ar-Ru'h: Ihsan, Ma'rifat
Maqam as-Sirr: Haqeeqat
Maqam al-Qurb: Fana Fir RASUL (SAW)
Maqam al-Wisal

ALLAH Knows Best!

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