

LETTER TWELVE
CONCERNING VARYING SPIRITUAL STATES

With His Glorious Name ﷻ
Allah, Allah, Allah

My honored and respected brother °Āsif Majīd:

As-salāmu °alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuhu.

I was pleased with your letter that was filled with anecdotes of our predecessor’s love for the friends [‘*auliyā*’] of Allah ﷻ. May Allah ﷻ increase your burning love for the ‘*auliyā*’ and pull you toward Him ﷻ. May Allah ﷻ awaken us to reality and bring us into His embrace.

Praise be to Allah [‘*Alhamdulillah*’], it seems that you have received a drop from Allah’s ﷻ endless ocean of love. Although the scholars [‘*ulama*’] have detailed the conditions of constriction [*qabdh*] and expansion [*basṭ*] of spiritual states, and no doubt you have done research on this matter, I will relate some excerpts from the books on this subject.

Often seekers [*sālikīn*] become depressed because they notice a decrease in their spiritual condition. They do not understand the reasons for such ups and downs in their spiritual state. This confuses and depresses them.

The spiritual masters [*mashā’ikib*] have elaborated on this and explained away any misconceptions. A seeker’s [*sālik*’s] spiritual

condition does not remain the same from one point to the next. The *sālik* is constantly immersed in tests from Allah ﷻ. The technical wording for the depression-like change in one's spiritual condition is *qabdh*.

Such a state is described in the collections of Imām Muslim ﷺ and Imām Tirmidhī ﷺ. An example is the story of the Noble Companion Hanzalah ﷺ when he began saying that he had become a hypocrite. There is also the narration that once, in the early days of Islam, the Messenger ﷺ of Allah became depressed when revelation was delayed such that he almost threw himself off a cliff.

The condition opposite to *qabdh* is called *bast*, which is a heightened state of desire in which the heart revels and the spirit [*latā'if*] prospers. In this state the *sālik* must remember to be grateful to Allah ﷻ for giving him this condition--for he himself is weak and must be humble. He should not concentrate on the conditions of *qabdh* or *bast*, but rather on the Creator of those conditions--meaning Allah ﷻ.

Qabdh and *bast* are part of this path, just like prayer [*ṣalāh*] and fasting [*ṣawm*]. Sometimes the *sālik* falls to *qabdh* and at times revels in the spectacles of *bast*. However, this matter of *qabdh* and *bast* is only relevant while the *sālik* is subject to the forces of change within his own lower self [*nafs*]. The heart [*qalb*] and the spirit [*latā'if*] are less affected by *qabdh* and *bast* when the soul graduates from ever changing states to the state of continual

remembrance [*dhikr*]. In this way the spiritual connection [*nisbah*] also graduates from being dim and ever changing to strong and permanent.

If *qabdh* is still manifesting itself, it only affects the outer, but does not root itself in the inner being or the *latā'if*. The *sālik* should always seek repentance as this is the most beneficial route to remove the state of *qabdh*. *Qabdh* can manifest at any time, taking away all the conditions of *bast* and darkening the heart.

*The morning is for repentance, the evening is for
repentance;
Forever is repentance on my lips.
Only You know if my seeking repentance has any effect,
For my only duty is to seek it.*

Although prophets are infallible and above wrongdoing, sometimes a veil can come in front of their hearts, obligating them to seek forgiveness. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said that sometimes a veil would come over his heart, and as a result he would seek forgiveness seventy times a day.

Sometimes this [i.e., the *sālik*'s state of *qabdh*] may come about because the spiritual connection is weak [*nisbah*]. These shortcomings may be physical or spiritual depending on the *nisbah*'s strength or weakness. Until such a time that the *nisbah* becomes firm, the *shaykh* may become aware of these weaknesses

through outward signs. The cure for this and all weaknesses that may cause a *sālik* to falter is love for the *shaykh* and gaining the *shaykh's* spiritual attention [*tawajjuh*], so that the *nisbah* may acquire strength and power and reach extinction [*fanā*].

The spiritual attention [*tawajjuh*] of an able *shaykh* can reduce mountains of darkness and impurity from a sincere *sālik's* heart and render that heart pure. The *shaykh's* *tawajjuh* proves very useful in a state of *qabdh* and brings a *sālik* quickly into *bast*, thus opening the way to spiritual enhancement. Prevention and cure for all lays in the company and *tawajjuh* of the *shaykh*.

However, this is a two way street and there has to be love and submission from one direction and *tawajjuh* from the other. *Hadrat* Khawājah Naqshband Bukhārī رحمته said that our *tariqah* is closer in lineage²⁵ to the Prophet ﷺ than all other *tariqahs* and that he requested such a *tariqah* from Allah ﷻ that was bound to lead a follower to Him ﷻ. The only obstacle for the *sālik* in this *tariqah* is his laziness. A sincere *sālik* will surely find his way if he submits to a true and able *shaykh*.

You have asked about leading prayers in the mosque [*masjid*], so let me tell you that you should lead the prayers if the people ask you to. However, the desire to step forward should not be present and one should always think of oneself as inadequate.

²⁵ The Naqshbandī *tariqah* stems from *Hadrat* Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه who was the closest companion of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. All other *tariqahs* stem from *Hadrat* Alī رضي الله عنه.

You should read and memorize the rules and regulations of prayer from books of jurisprudence such as *Umdatul-Fiqh Kitāb-us-Salāh* or *Zubtatul-Fiqh*. Moreover, one should know enough of the science of Quranic recitation [*tajwīd*] that one is able to lead the prayer sufficiently. You should practice with an able reciter [*qārī*] and spend your time in *dhikr* and *murāqabah*. Aside from this, only Allah ﷻ gives the desire and ability [*tafwīq*]. Regards to the family.

Was-salām maʿal-ikrām,

Faqīr Zulfiqar Ahmad Naqshbandī Mujaddidī