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INTRODUCTION

It is a fact of history now that we in the western world have been confronted in recent years by an explosion of spirituality. In every great religious tradition there has begun this same subtle unfolding of its more esoteric nature, perhaps because people are now more willing to accept the inward, mystical transcendence of religious experience, perhaps because the world is profoundly in need of spiritual guidance and direction.

Any sympathetic reading of religious history teaches us that the intense longing for genuine mystical experience eventually turns the attention of sincere spiritual seekers within as they seek an inner path towards the Divine. As Westerners have striven to satisfy that need by searching among the world's great paths for spiritual sustenance, Buddhist and Hindu traditions have been received enthusiastically in the essentially Judeo-Christian world more familiar to western minds. And in this historic process, so too esoteric Islam has made its own particular inroad into western consciousness.

As in other great spiritual traditions, Islam has within it its own great mystical testament, the Sufi Path. No one familiar with Sufism can fail to note its richness and complexity, nor can one miss the sublime variety of expression of its practitioners. Sufism can show one face in one moment and in the next, reveal itself in quite another aspect.

The Garden of Dervishes is one of those rare books which unite two extremes os spirituality, devotional love and esoteric scholarship, through both the person and the teachings of its author, Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak. Even a cursory glance through its contents reveals the Sheikh's knowledge of complex spiritual customs and practices, traditions and beliefs, as well as his detailed explications of various stations of the soul.

One may read the poetry of Rumi, for example, or any other of the extraordinary Sufi poets, and be overcome by their insight and eloquence, and the wisdom of their devotion. As in all truly great works of hagiographic art or expressions of deep and profound spirituality, the poems (or teachings) are so often the manifestation of nothing else but pure love, the transforming love of the lover for the Divine Beloved.

And then again, one can read in Ibn Arabi the more completely articulated higher teachings, highly complex descriptions of subtle states of consciousness and stations of the soul. One is introduced to a universe of subtle and sublime teachings, a new way of seeing creation itself.

If one responds according to the deepest yearning of one's heart, nothing less than a profound commitment to years of study and training may occur, resulting in a deep and total absorption of profound spiritual teachings of enormous depth. If one is fortunate, a teacher may appear capable of revealing this hidden universe to a sincere aspirant. Or, possibly, in a flash of recognition, one may undergo the deepest surrender, and in those depths, find the soul of the universe hidden within one's own heart.

Sheikh Muzaffer was one of the best classic commentators and contemporary teachers. His life and teachings ranged through the fullest expression of Sufi traditions. His books testify to his extraordinary breadth and depth of knowledge, while his dervishes and friends will testify to his enormous capacity to reflect the Divine love and acceptance he has found for and within himself.

One might pause here and reflect a moment on the metaphorical nature of the title itself, *The Garden of Dervishes*, for in Sufism, nothing is wasted, everything has a meaning and a Divine direction. Any number of analogies immediately come to mind, all with great value, for Sufism operates on many levels. The Sheikh might be the gardener, or rather, the representative of the Divine Power that sustains the universe and all being. The garden might be this world and the dervishes all those who set foot on the spiritual path with longing and desire. One readily welcomes the intense spiritual insights that seem to come quickly as one plunges into Sheikh Muzaffer's world of spiritual illumination.

For the dervishes of the Halveti-Jerrahi Order (or for that matter, anyone interested in spiritual growth), the teachings in this book provide just those insights. What else does a spiritual teaching offer but an atmosphere of guidance and direction, and the answers to unspoken prayers and unasked questions? One's needs are sometimes met according to one's ability to perceive the manner in which help is offered. To those who claim God does not answer prayers, one can only suggest that they have been looking for their answers in the wrong places.

The Garden of Dervishes is one such answer. Sheikh Muzaffer reveals the richness and power of the Halveti-Jerrahi tradition in a manner consistent with life in our own day and age, while at the same time remaining true to its historic roots. Not for him a dry insistence on ancient customs, or a too literal-minded reading of Hadith or commentary. For those who knew Sheikh Muzaffer, Sufism was a

living expression of truth, whose "proofs" were not to be found in dusty pages, but in the loving hearts of its practitioners.

Above all else, the Sufism that Sheikh Muzaffer taught and practiced was and always will remain the Path of Love. Whatever the difficulty of understanding the varieties of specific description or injunctions, we are assured again and again, directly and in the most subtle of ways, that the ultimate goal of all these teachings is simply the complete fulfillment and realization Divine Love. What more could one want?

Louis Rogers
Pir Publications

PART ONE

THE GARDEN OF DERVISHES

Exoteric knowledge is necessary. It is a prerequisite for those who would acquire esoteric knowledge. Just as there is a road to be traveled from metaphorical love to real love, there is also a road that leads from exoteric knowledge to esoteric knowledge. The roads to God are as many as the different breaths we creatures breathe. Any aspect of exoteric knowledge can be the starting point for esoteric knowledge. If something has an exterior, it also possesses an interior. Only a fool would accept the one and not the other.

DIVINE CREATION

MAN AS MACROCOSM

As created beings brought into this transitory world, each of us has a duty: to find out where we came from, why we came, where we are going, who brought us into this world, and who will take us away again. Having discovered the One who brought us into this world, we must know and understand the extent of His might and power. Then it becomes the first and foremost obligation of every creature to obey Him and love Him as He deserves.

As intelligent beings, we are bound to acknowledge that He, Allah, possesses the might and power to bring us into this world, and to remove us from it, without our prior consent, in the manner described in this Verse of the Noble Quran:

Oh mankind, if you are in doubt about the Resurrection surely We created you from dust, then from a spermdrop, then from a blood clot, then from a little lump of flesh, formed yet unformed, in order to show you clearly. And We keep in the wombs whatever We will until an appointed term, and We deliver you as infants, then let you reach maturity. Some of you die, and some are reduced to the most abject senility, so that they know nothing after having had some knowledge.

And you see the earth barren, but when We send water down upon it, it quivers and swells and shoots up plants of every splendid kind. (22:5)

The manner in which human beings are created is a great marvel of wisdom, majesty and power, and to deny this would be a sign of tragic ignorance.

Mankind was created neither in vain nor by chance. Does man suppose he will be left in futility? (75:36)

On careful reflection, it is clear that the creation of a human being is no different, for Allah the All-Glorious from the creation of this whole vast universe. The material and spiritual properties of mankind are inherent in the entire creation. Indeed, man is the "macrocosm" or greater world, while the universe is the "microcosm" or lesser world. The Masters of Truth and Reality teach us that man, though outwardly small, is inwardly great, whereas the universe, created outwardly great, is inwardly inferior to man.

All that exists, be it this lower world and what it contains, or the Hereafter with its Paradise, Hell, Bridge and Balance*, everything that can be seen or known has been created and brought into being for the sake of mankind. As for man, he has been created for the sake of the Divine Truth. To deny God is therefore to deny oneself.

When a work of art exists, the author of that work must surely exist. Even if we cannot see the artist in person, we can see him in his work. When we witness his artistic expression, we believe that he himself exists. To behold a painting is to know the painter; to behold a sculpture is to know the sculptor.

If we recognize the splendor of our own being with all its strength and power, we should bow down before the One who endowed us with that strength and power. We cannot doubt His Existence and Oneness:

Your God is One God, There is no god but He, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate. (2:163)

HUMAN DESTINY

Man is not the author of his own fate. Human destiny is decreed and predetermined by none but our Divine Creator. If it was otherwise, our birth, death, and selection of parents would be of our own choosing. Man has indeed been given a will of his own, but he is free to exercise it only within the limits of a particular framework. Destiny is in the Hand of God, meaning that it is a universal will.

The following analogy may serve to illustrate the distinction between the particular will-power conferred on human beings, on the other hand, and the universal will on the other.

Imagine a set of passengers on a bus, train or steamer; see how they move about to this side or that, to the front or the back, sitting down or leaving their seats, eating and drinking. These actions are examples of the exercising of our particular freedom of will. Meanwhile, however, the vehicle or vessel is proceeding along its route or course, controlled by the driver or captain. Here we have a simile for the universal will. The passengers' movements have no effect on the direction and speed of the train or boat; likewise human destiny cannot be influenced by the measure of free will that has been granted to human beings. Odd cases may seem like exceptions, but such instances are themselves divinely determined. There is nothing beyond the scope of destiny.

Man is entirely circumscribed, inwardly and outwardly, by the will of the Divine Truth, just as he is surrounded in the material sense by the atmosphere. As we witness the facts that our life is confined within a limited compass, bounded by obstacles visible or invisible, known or unknowable, that we are incapable of achieving our every wish and desire, that we cannot attain all our goals, that life and death are beyond our control.