

Fana-fi-Sheikh

An Original Sangatha

by

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This paper was classified as a Sangatha by Murshid SAM.

The papers on this level from Hazrat Inayat Khan were withheld

from him by the Sufi Movement et. al., so he wrote his own.

“An Original Sangatha” has been added to the title—Ed.

Toward the One, the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,
the Only Being, United with All the Illuminated Souls
Who Form the Embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance.

1. To instruct mureeds in fana-fi-Sheikh is of the utmost importance in Sufic training. Fana-fi-Sheikh means assimilation or ego-self effacement in the living personality of the teacher. There are five aspects of the teacher as it is said in Salat: “a loving mother, a kind father, an innocent child, a helpful friend, an inspiring teacher.” In the inner instructions we shall be concerned here with the latter. This is to effect spiritual growth.
2. According to *The Unity of Religious Ideals*, the spiritual hierarchy is as real or more real than creation itself. This is verbal. In the esoteric instructions and in the inner life of the unfoldment of disciples, this becomes a reality. The hierarchical chain in a sense is both of persons and of teachings. This is called **Silsila Sufian**. Strictly speaking, a silsila is a chain of personalities; this can also be a line of descent. In Sufism the teachings offered by personalities reflect the age. In the Indian teachings as in the Upanishads it might seem that there are crystallized traditions handed down from person to person, and that these teachings are in some way identical. This can only be true when the consciousness is limited to the mental level. Words like “same” and “different” apply only to the finite aspects of manifestation.
3. When teachings emphasize only traditions, it is as if they are placing God in the past. The result is that there have been reactions to this and in these reactions God may be likened to a steadily growing tree or flower whose fulfillment is in the future. Both of these are erroneous outlooks. Teachings arise from that which is beyond time and place. Also the teacher may be a constantly changing personality. We can read in *The Inner Life* how the devotee is subject to changes. Indeed all disciples should study *The Inner Life* and its commentaries preparatory to this work.
4. When God-attainment is regarded as for the future, there may be an over-emphasis upon prophetic and imaginative outlooks. Naturally one who has not yet attained will see spiritual unfoldment as a project extending into the future. This is not wrong but as it is said: “the Sufi does all he can to reach his attainment here and now.”
5. Spiritual evolution as material evolution involves unfoldment, progression, and purpose. Those who adhere to such outlooks often proclaim reincarnation and metempsychosis. While Sufis do not dogmatically hold to any view, it becomes more and more clear that evolution may be an absolute process fulfilling the purpose of every atom of creation, of every being, of every entity. But in the path of **fana-fi-Sheikh**, it becomes just as important or more important to sublimate the ego as to proclaim any teaching or doctrine.
6. The spiritual teacher represents both God and hierarchy. In the *Gayan* it is said, “it is the pupil that makes the teacher.” The ego-personality is not the teacher any more than it is an electrical pole that functionalizes an electrical cell. An electrical cell depends upon two poles and media; a

spiritual teacher depends upon both the representative of the chain of Sufis and disciples. They go together. Or to put it another way, this exemplifies what Jesus said, "I am the vine and ye are the branches thereof."

7. The first Murshid is the mother who embraces the child with her heart and attunes the child to her breast. While we may see also the Murshid in the kind father, the innocent child, and the helpful friend, the process of attunement and spiritual growth only develop when one has passed from the parent to the realized teacher. Attunement to the teacher may be voluntary or accidental. It is voluntary when the disciple becomes a devotee. It is natural when the teacher by her development in refinement, purification, deepening, and strengthening of the breath-processes is able to reach others, who by their attunements can begin to absorb the wisdom and blessings which are in the sphere.

8. Tasawwuri means attunement. It can be done internally or externally, but internal development will always result in external development, and external development will always result in internal development when it is properly performed. Therefore, disciples are taught to breathe and walk in concordance with the teacher. (There is of course another line of development in spiritual unfoldment and it occurs when a community or group, in the absence of a teacher, learns how to attune together to a common ideal or for a common purpose. But this line may be separate from **fana-fi-Sheikh**.)

9. In fana-fi-Sheikh, it is important to control the imagination as well as the lower nature, but to give full freedom to the heart and the expansion of all aspects of love.

10. Ability in Murakkabah or concentration may proceed initiation in the **fana-fi-Sheikh**. Disciples in Sufism are always given instructions in some forms of concentration. The concentration may be mental, intuitional, or devotional. It is the last which helps most in and towards **fana-fi-Sheikh**.

11. The disciple in fana-fi-Sheikh has to be on constant guard against his or her ego. But if the **idea** of acting against the ego becomes firmly fixed, this idea itself is ego-centric and can be a very great obstacle. Refinement in breathing makes egocentricity difficult. This is either taught or affirmed in the Gathas. It is also mentioned in some of the literature.

12. Devotees feel enlightenment in the breath. They are taught the process of Latif. This is connected with both individual and classroom esotericism. Also with heart concentration.

13. On receiving Bayat, devotees are not directly placed in fana-fi-Sheikh. They have a pledge to the teacher; they were pledged to the order; they have a pledge to the Sufis in chain and to the hierarchy. Much may depend, however, on their inner Bayat, on their inner experiences which may have occurred before their being admitted into the Sufi Order, or which may occur after their first practices.

14. Practical problems require practical solutions. The teacher may not help disciples directly, but

works in order to promote their growth in all directions. If a teacher solves a problem the disciple may be released from pain, but will not grow in spirit or in consciousness. It is often pain itself which removes obstacles from one's path. The pupil may not know this. The wise teacher may, and does, help the disciples in a balanced fashion toward their growth inwardly and outwardly.

15. Many mureeds have had either a religious or psychic background or both. The teacher does not try to upset this or even to correct them, if they are not entirely pure. Of course if there are signs of obsession, the neophyte is given the Wazifa training.

16. Sufism has been called the mysticism of divine love; yet by definition, Sufism means divine wisdom. The two must be in equilibrium. Many people use the word "love" as if the more positive person should become negative to others. This is not love; this is pampering. True love always guides. True love removes obstacles set up by the ego. If a disciple is lacking in love, the teacher does not correct them outwardly, but gives some concentration. For example, in the first year's work, the symbols of the heart and the dove are part of the regular curriculum.

17. The teacher is a bridge, not an idol. Sufis do not agree with certain schools of devotion where the chela sits in adoration before a person or a picture. There is no objection on the part of the Sufi to paths which use such methods, but there is a question as to whether they are efficacious. There were many methods of Hindus challenged long ago by Lord Buddha as being useless or inefficient towards spiritual liberation and despite all the efforts of Lord Buddha they persist to this day and many people believe they lead to liberation, although there is no evidence for it.

18. Sometimes a pupil is given a concentration on the teacher. The danger here is that this may be dualistic. A better way is to walk with the teacher. Or to sit in silence before the teacher and breathe in concordance with her or him. And then there are the methods of walk which terminate in Tasawwuri, which means to say full attunement with the consciousness of the teacher.

19. There are many aspects of Tasawwuri and these are also presented in the Githas on Murakkabah and in the commentaries on them.

20. In the first stage of fana-fi-Sheikh there may still be dualism; the pupil sees the teacher as different. A pupil has to find a way between the two extremes of blind devotion or seeming independence. But teachers who are qualified teachers will rise above this dualism; they will see the disciple as a self on the way toward perfection. Teachers are not interested in the shortcomings of a disciple; they are interested in the facets of those shortcomings which can be developed into living virtues. This process of perfecting may also be called alchemy.

21. In the mirror state of fana-fi-Sheikh, it is important for the pupil to recognize some quality or perfection in the heart of the teacher. A pupil does not have to see the teacher as the author of it, but as an example of some kind of perfection. We may read in the search for the teachers of Gurdjieff, that each one of them had some perfection without individually being an all-around perfect being.

22. Jesus has said, "I am the vine and ye are the branches thereof." The teacher sees both the perfectibility of disciples and the one single family in the parenthood of God, but every branch has the essence of tree-hood. Look at the number of branches taken from the original Bo tree and from them all now being proper trees. Another aspect of this also is in the story of Tannhauser whose staff blossomed.

23. There is a spiritual fluid or essence which may be called **Baraka** (barocha in Hebrew) which is an emanation from a living force, a vital force. As one assimilates it, one becomes more alive and so advances on the spiritual path.

24. The spiritual world differs from the worldly life in that one does not wait for trial or disaster before growing. It is very important to accept the teachings of the prayer Khatum and listen for the voice which comes constantly from within.

25. The great work of the spiritual teacher is to raise the pupils from illusion. Saint and Master have their special duties in life, but the function of the teacher is to have extreme regard for disciples and to practice as if their growth and his or her growth were one and the same.

26. Spiritual development does not mean the termination of personality. It may mean the sublimation of ego-personality, it may be the awakening and establishing of the divine life within. This is called **baqa** by Sufis.

27. The intellectual interpretation of Nirvana makes it appear as negative. The fana of Sufis is negative; the baqa positive. Both of these are aspects of spiritual growth and development.

28. There is **no one way** toward life's fulfillment. There may be certain common ways for all mureeds and yet each mureed has her or his own path toward perfection.

29. A question may arise: how should a teacher behave before the generality? A liberated soul is a liberated soul; a wise person is a wise person. Such a one may be an adept in **kashf**. To become a teacher toward and in spiritual liberation means that the heart has been awakened and is functioning. True, there are almost exact instructions in the papers for spiritual teachers in Sufism. But there is also the published *Moral Culture* in the books of *The Sufi Message* and the commentaries thereon. Only it is the unwise who analyze such teachings and then misapply them. People endowed with wisdom and compassion have quite different outlooks.

30. There is no one attitude for the initiator to take before the applicant. The supreme faculties of kashf and shahud enable the wise to see into the eyes and hearts of seekers. They also understand the shortcomings and sufferings and work toward alleviation of these.

31. Sometimes people, often the young in age, have visions or occult experiences which indicate their worthiness and readiness. The age old dictum, "When the pupil is ready, the master appears," is not changed because of the order of the day.

32. There may be times when those receiving bayat progress slowly; there are times when they may progress rapidly. The teacher becomes aware when the disciple is ready for fana-fi-Sheikh. Often this will be due to the raising of veils, to the purification of dreams and visions, to increased insight and to other factors.

33. In the Indian teachings and especially from Papa Ramdas, the idea is that the Guru is God embodied. The Sufi would better say Guru is a Guide. The Spirit of Guidance often manifests in the more advanced souls and they are thus able to help others.

34. The teacher does not expect too much from disciples in their earlier stages. *The Path of Initiation and Discipleship* has been presented in Volume 10 of *The Sufi Message* and commentaries thereon are available for advanced colleagues.

35. The teacher is under no compulsion to elevate the mureed. It is mureeds who must prove themselves worthy. If the teacher through weakness or favoritism elevates the disciple this may impede further progress. Sufi Thoughts say God is the only Teacher.

36. Consultations and conferences are often necessary between teacher and pupil. The teacher by his or her magnetism, by atmosphere, by control of breath, by knowledge of breath, by the enlightenment of heart, and by the vision of soul, is able to help disciples and others according to their needs, according to wisdom.

37. As teachers advance, their magnetism, wisdom, light and atmosphere become more radiant and more powerful. As pupils advance, their responses to magnetism, to wisdom, to light, to radiance and to the awakening of their own innate faculties become more evident.

38. Tasawwuri Murshid is often confused with fana-fi-Sheikh. Indeed they overlap. Tasawwuri Murshid is the outer effort of the disciple to attune with the teacher. The pupil's own personal will helps here. But in fana-fi-Sheikh it is the surrender of will which is most helpful. This applies to all types of fana.

39. Tasawwuri Murshid is chiefly beneficial for those in the outer world. It can be adapted in all aspects of the practical existence. It does not need retirement or seclusion. One can find Allah so to speak in every activity of the day, in every moment of life. In fana-fi-Sheikh, the body and even the mind may be quiescent.

40. Intellectual explanations do not help much on this aspect of spiritual development. Feeling and surrender are all-important. When the teacher extends the Baraka (blessings), it awakens a similar power and aptitude in disciples according to their innateness, their goals and their psychology.

41. The teacher may seem to be practicing indifference and composure. The greatest of power, the greatest of beauty, the greatest of blessings arise from the most peaceful attitude.

42. Spiritual indifference does not mean absence of sympathy. The loving heart and the peaceful soul do more to help those in need than anything else.

43. The heart of the true teacher is affixed on the heart of God. In the *Gayan* it is taught that the teacher is as a cupid between the soul of a lover and God. The one who awakens the disciple or even the general public to their own worthiness may help for the first step, for the elementary stages. But the true teacher acts as a companion, not as an executive toward disciples and aspirants.

44. There are disciples who exhibit great love and devotion to the teacher, and even joyfully render personal service. This brings one very close to Bhakti Yoga. Such devotion to the teacher is valuable when it does not become the supreme goal in life.

45. A teacher need not correct those students who are over-zealous toward her or him, but a teacher should use this over-zealousness as a means to help students toward God Realization. Sufism differs from Yoga and Vedanta in that Bhakti, Jnana, and Karma overlap and fuse.

46. Tasawwuri Murshid is most valuable when the devotee sees the Murshid in every living being. People pray: "we greet Thee in all humility," but no one greets God in humility who does not greet the servants of God and the creatures of God also in humility.

47. Love for the personality of the teacher is not spiritual love, but it can be used toward promoting spiritual love. Any form of love can be used to promote spiritual love. But there is no love, no real love, toward the teacher when it is also not exhibited toward those who are his or her close associates.

48. Development in meditation is developed in **fana** (self-effacement). The development in concentration is development in **baqa** that is life's expression. The two may go together and exercises and disciplines in them may seem very similar. But concentration means expression **by** the person and meditation means expression or non-expression **through** the person. The 10 Sufi Thoughts are often considered seriously until one has bayat and then they are regarded as elementary. But actually they are the foundation. A house is built on foundations; they may form the lowest part of the house, but without them the house would not stand.

49. Few people may reach fana-fi-Lillah, which is to say effacement in God-consciousness. This is impossible for those who think in terms of self and other. But this is reached after meditation and concentration blend into contemplation.

50. Actually all forms of fana are aspects of fana-fi-Lillah. Salat says, "Thy Light is in all forms, Thy love in all beings," and "Allow us to recognize Thee in all Thy holy names and forms," but without a teacher one very seldom reaches these profound recognitions and then chiefly through Divine Grace. But we find that Divine Grace manifests chiefly when one has real humility toward a living creature.

51. There is a middle path between idolatry—that is recognizing God in all sorts of names and forms—and egotism which is the absence of recognition. But as the heart awakens one does find divinity in all names and forms, from the tiniest of forms to the greatest of God's representatives.

52. Outwardly, teacher and pupil are two; inwardly, they are one. The pupils may feel differences and may take advantage of these differences to help elevate themselves. The teacher will feel oneness and take advantage of this oneness to help elevate others.

53. In fana-fi-Sheikh, attitude and action are important. But the attitudes and actions of teachers are often inexplicable. Despite long discussions of this even in the literature, many disciples and devotees expect logic and consistency from a teacher which is not always possible and in mystics often totally absent.

54. Both Jemalic and Jelalic disciples practice fana-fi-Sheikh. The teacher never breaks down factors, faculties and attitudes of disciples, but tries to elevate them, integrate them and assimilate them into a higher state of life.

55. The training of the mureed is really the training such as is mentioned in the mystery that Allah-God passes from and through deep-sleep, dreaming, awakening and grades of realization until the finality of Divine reunion.

56. There are many types of disciples and instructions to teachers in Sufism on how to deal with them. It is essential for teachers to keep in mind always that God is the only being and that they have to lift veils, that they have to peel off certain strata, that they have to dig deeply to find the very treasure in every disciple. But the disciple is also innately anxious to have perfection and liberation.

57. From the standpoint of the teacher every instant is an opportunity. Every person is God asleep, whom the living, wakening God wishes to have aroused. In the Sufi poetry, it is taught that creation arose because God fell in love with God. But you can't have this kind of love (ma'abud) unless there is a manifestation as if different.

58. The path of God may be regarded as a journey. This is explained in *The Inner Life*. Many hold that no teacher is necessary. The only way they can prove this is to give instances of spiritual awakening in which there has been no teacher. There is no complete spiritual awakening until the all-in-all manifests in and through a person. We can read this in the spiritual poetry of Edward Carpenter and Edna St. Vincent Millay as well as in Sufi poetry and in the works of many mystics.

59. Meditation can be performed best either in the presence of a teacher or in a chamber hall which has been impregnated by the spirit of the teacher or in places where devotees or groups have performed their devotions. Saum, Salat, and Khatum were given to the world in order to prepare such atmospheres. Pir, Nabi, and Rassoul were given to the world in order that devotees and mureeds can get the full benefit of the divine blessings which are in the atmosphere, which are in

the space.

60. As devotees are able to assimilate the blessings which come from the rays of the sun, the waves of the air, the all-pervading power in space, they grow more and more into self-recognition, the unfoldment of their inner power, and the fulfillment of their purpose in life.

61. Fana-fi-Pir is a stage which may come after fana-fi-Sheikh. While historical Sufism has posited the stages of surrender and assimilation into the living teacher, into the divine ideal, and into the divine spirit beyond ideals, it may be that after the Pir or teacher has left this world, the relationship established on earth between Murshid and mureed may continue. They may not only continue, they may advance. So sometimes a disciple may not only continue practices given to them by the teacher in the flesh, they may learn to commune and communicate with that same being after they have left the physical world. Many occult and telepathic powers may be aroused when there is a true attunement between pupil and teacher.

62. Disciples in the Advanced Study Circle are trained first in Concentration or Murakkabah and then given exercises in Tasawwuri Murshid. These exercises can be obtained from the living teacher, by and from their presence, or from growth in concentrations. Tasawwuri Murshid is regarded as part of the discipline and instruction in Murakkabah or Concentration and fana-fi-Sheikh is regarded as fundamental to esoteric advancement, but from the psychic and mystical views they may overlap or even coincide.

63. The practices of Walks are varied and help one in Tasawwuri without being involved in the fana-fi-Sheikh, for in walking one must be aware in some respects of the body.

64. Without a spirit of devotion, exercises of fana are not always beneficial. When love or devotion, and especially when both together manifest, it becomes simple and easy to assign the practices.

65. It has been said that the mother is the first teacher. There is no question that the child learns to breathe, walk and establish many habits because of attunement to and with the mother. It is really not different in the spiritual life, with the mystical advancement.

66. Tasawwuri may be continued through life and even into the next with benefit. As one feels the heart more and the ego-sense less, there is benefit on all planes.

67. It is stated in scriptures that love can help overcome all limitations. The difference between theological religion and mysticism is that the theologian affirms, believes and strives while the mystic lives. The mystic has no philosophy apart from life itself. When one has an inspiring teacher, and the heart becomes alive, one feels the presence of the teacher.

68. When this spirit is very great, the departure of either the teacher or the disciple to another plane and their seeming separation is no longer a hindrance. When the hearts are attuned, it is of little importance whether the personalities are separated in the time-space of the physical plane or are

functioning in bodies on different planes. The energies communicate and commune.

69. There is a question in heart-development, whether it is by kashf or by ishk, it does not matter. As the heart expands and the ego diminishes, one finds oneself in an expanded life with broad horizons of every type. The feelings become so fine and one increases in joy and empathy and realization.

70. It has been said that the pupils make the teacher. The teacher is therefore careful as to whom he or she assigns practices, and yet the teacher benefits more than anyone else with the advancement of mureeds.

71. All disciples benefit by sitting in the presence of the Teacher. This is fine in Meditation, but in Concentration, one advances as if by oneself. Yet one can learn to attune to the teacher. Besides in Concentration from the very beginning it is taught to hold thought by feeling. This is very simple yet most fundamental.

72. The teaching, "I am the Vine and ye are the branches thereof," always holds in fana-fi-Sheikh. There is a mystical teaching that there is a relation between the cells and the whole body, and the same is true of the Sufi Orders and the Hierarchy. We are not entirely separate and that as we grow in consciousness, the attunement becomes clearer.

73. There are false teachings about expansion of consciousness. Some expansion may arise when the breath becomes more subtle but there is otherwise no change. It is like matter in a gaseous state; it is still material. Material substances may change from gas to liquid to solid and back without any "change in consciousness." Matter does not "gain in consciousness" by these changes in state; nor do persons change in consciousness by changes, let us say, from waking to dreaming to deep sleep or other states of consciousness. These may occur, do occur. Buddha taught that we are always subject to constant change. This does not of itself imply advancement. Many have become deluded from such changes. These are not changes in personality; they do not constitute "rebirth."

74. There has been a popular song used by communists, "You have been naught, you shall be all." Something like this occurs in the life of the spiritual devotees, and especially when they can act as if they were not-being. But this is not a concept. Concepts here are delusive and dangerous. And when one feels oneself as "nothing" this is the very universe which is feeling through one. The ego seems to die; the soul seems to become more alive. It is all part of one process.

75. All the states and stages implied or expressed in the prayer "Salat" are experienced in the spiritual life. But it requires long training and careful discipline and attunement before one rises beyond fana-fi-Sheikh. It is here that the Divine Grace becomes evident. The makam or mystical station is the result of the endeavors of the disciples; but the **hal** or mystical state may come through Grace. So it becomes an important part in Sufic training to remove all obstacles to Grace.

76. Fana is not based on conceptions; it is the opposite of conceiving. It is feeling more and more and finding the life in what appears to be absorption in somebody living. All true love is absorption in "otherness."

77. The concept of Rassoul is not easy to grasp intellectually. Some call Rassoul the **perfect human being**. This is not wrong, but the real perfection is of God, and not from the ideas or ideals, or thoughts or intellectual activity of human beings. Some worship their Rassoul. They may call them the servant of God and then give them many names and titles. This is done because the egocentric tend to consider their divine-human as better than all other persons and names. Even Mohammed said, "We make no distinctions or differences between them ..." and his followers considered this as proof he must have been better to say that. But the truth is that he came later. He recognized other Messengers whom his followers in truth do not recognize, but only do so verbally, which is misleading.

78. No doubt there have been persons who have attained Divine Consciousness. Some have had glimpses of it, some have had occasional experiences and some have reached such a high degree that they are constantly, and in a sense permanently aware of the divine consciousness. But that is their attainment. It does not always help to have such a belief without some corresponding awakening of consciousness.

79. In the Sufic form of development, it is attunement and effacement, not belief, that matter. Many different religions and branches thereof hold to the idea that by a certain belief one can rise above limitation. But the Sufis teach that belief comes first and then love and then knowledge and attainment. And by attunement one may reach the knowledge and attainment, but by belief there is still separation, so the advantages are limited.

80. The repetition "Allaho Akbar" proposes that greatness is of God alone. Any and every name and form is of a different gradient. Still when it comes to love-activities, there must be a name and form that can be grasped. Therefore for the aspirant and devotee there is advantage in having some ideal who may have been in human form and yet whom one can love and idealize to their own benefit. The heart does not grasp conceptions of perfection. There is no polarity in the concept; there is polarity in the ideal and the beloved.

81. The difference between exotericists and esotericists is that the former proclaim their ideal, their messenger, their concept of perfection, while the spiritual devotee seeks to efface herself in the beloved. Therefore beliefs, no matter how held, are of limited value.

82. The devotee may concentrate upon the beloved with the heart until the self is totally effaced. One can see only the beloved. One does not deny the self, one does not belittle the self, one operates as if the self did not exist at all. This is the true fana.

83. Rassoul can be as if all-embracing. We say "United with all the Illuminated Souls Who form the Embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance." Complete love for any of the personalities

named in prayer, or inferred by the phrase, “all those known or unknown,” may lead to a higher perfection of consciousness, to the removal of the ego-self in grandeur.

84. First one must have love for a personality to whom one has been close on the earth-plane. This is fana-fi-Sheikh. Then the heart may open and one may be conscious of the beloved even though that one exists and persists beyond immediacy. This is fana-fi-Pir. Finally one may love the beloved of the Pir or Sheikh and this can constitute fana-fi-Rassoul when the self is effaced. Fana-fi-Rassoul may be fana-fi-Adam—that is to say, the consciousness may be lost in, or awakened in, the totality of humanity. This may happen in what the Hindus call Bhakti Yoga.

85. Bhakti Yoga is based on heart-love. It does not contain practices and disciplines based on the imagination. Heart-feeling is not only supreme, it becomes the all-in-all. In true Bhakti there is nothing but Love but it may have many levels.

86. Bhakti devotees are often criticized for being too emotional. But sometimes the emotions must be aroused to calm the demands of the body and the mind.

87. A psychic life is not necessarily an evil life. It often indicates the growth of consciousness. Yes, in the beginning, it may be wise to arouse consciousness and after the intoxication becomes very real, to balance it. For verily in balance is the perfection and in the perfection is the balance.

88. No one is a world-teacher because their followers declare it. A world-teacher must be acknowledged by the world or they are not a world-teacher. Therefore it is easier and better to awaken the heart by the immediacy of the lover and beloved.

89. Even though there are quantitative factors, in fana, it is the effacement, not the proclamation which is the determinant. Those people who proclaim their beloved have not yet reached the acme of love. In true love, one does not proclaim, one is lost in ecstasy.

90. Perfection in fana means that one has lost oneself in love. It is not based upon whom one has effaced oneself in and with. Many have declared they have been lost in Jesus or in some other of God's Messengers. The truth is nearer to what Sri Krishna has proclaimed, that only a very few that claim to be in love with him or immersed in him, are really so.

91. Very often the Bhakti or lover loses entire consciousness of the ego-self. This is especially good for the young in the early stages of development. But there is some question of the value of a form of Bhakti which takes one away from one's purpose in life. In Sufism one is taught about various forms of intoxication and one learns which ones are helpful in the pursuit of one's purpose in life and also about forms of intoxication which bring enjoyment and limitation.

92. There are some devotees who say, “I do not wish to be honey; I wish to enjoy honey.” This is a limitation. The true devotee loses all sense of self. The Bodhisattva who is generally in a severe state of sobriety never functions that way.

93. Sufis say that as a person takes one step toward Allah, Allah takes ten steps toward them. It is not that Allah actually operates there, but Allah has created humanity so Allah could directly experience life on the surface.

94. Any presumption of fana is not fana. Any presumption of baqa shows that one has not yet accomplished fana. All religions seem in theory to emphasize effacement. Yet it is the development in effacement which brings about the great realization or baqa.

95. When the mureed advances in effacement so does the Teacher. The statement that in Sufism teacher and pupil take the journey together is true and becomes evidenced as one advances from state to state, and stage to stage, in experience.

96. The teacher who has a pupil in fana-fi-Sheikh will generally be in fana-fi-Rassoul, or even in fana-fi-Lillah. The growth of disciples is reflected in the wonder of the teacher and the wonders of the teacher are generally reflected in the greater growth of the disciples.

97. From the Sufi point of view, there is a union with all the illuminated souls who form the embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance. Progress in fana-fi-Sheikh enables the disciple to become more aware of that.

98. The **hal** of the teacher may seem to be independent of the affairs of other people or of her or his relation with humanity. Sufi teachers do not generally adhere to hal, but to a more sober state from which they can be of service to humanity. They thus operate like the Bodhisattva though many of them have never heard of the Bodhisattva.

99. Makam literally means station or place and it generally refers to the mystical or spiritual condition. Makam is the result of effort; hal of divine grace.

100. Progress in fana-fi-Sheikh is evidenced in actual experiences that the disciple has. It may be inner or outer. Outer growth is often characterized by intensities in love or pain or both; sometimes in great joy or ecstasy. The wise teacher therefore watches the mysteries of the disciple with great attention.

101. The internal experiences are often regarded as the more important. This is not always so but these are more definite. For the Sage can tell from the inner patterns just where the disciple is and what the progress is. Manifestation of holy beings is very determinate of itself. When there are many of these, it does not always mean a growth from fana-fi-Sheikh but that the disciple also is experiencing greater depths of consciousness and not in a way that is apart from the teacher. Yet when the signs are given, it is best if the teacher grant the proper initiation and a degree of freedom, especially one which enables the disciple to have great communication and also greater guidance from those who have passed on, from those who form the Embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance.

102. The teacher who has the proper guidance in fana-fi-Rassoul or fana-fi-Pir is often better equipped to help the disciple along than others might be.

103. Generally when the disciple advances the Teacher advances. There are tales, such as those of the relation of Saint Shibli to Saint Junaid, which illustrate this.

104. Tasawwuri Murshid is, in a sense, a variation of fana-fi-Sheikh. It can bring this practice down to earth and help the disciple in his or her outer life. In the highest sense Akhlak Allah is perfect, to act as if in the presence of God. Consciously. But it is often more helpful if the disciple behaves as if in the physical presence of the Murshid or Teacher. This helps the pupil very much.

105. There are a great many practices in Tasawwuri Murshid suggested in the Githas and elsewhere. But they are really connected with the phrase of the Invocation, "United with all the Illuminated Souls." Mostly this is like a prayer or plea. It is most wonderful when it becomes an reality. Then the gain becomes apparent.

106. The work in Tasawwuri has been advanced in the teachings on "Walk" and enhanced by many of the dances. Followers of different religions may benefit through stress on their particular ideal. All persons do not have to walk or behave similarly; or as is taught, "Unity, not uniformity."

107. In performing the walks, the grade of development is not necessarily measured by the practice in group. Individuals benefit more from their own practices, but the community is benefited by group undertakings.

108. There is no absolute measurement. Some disciples have had the Mukti through walk, either through their own realizations or through the Grace that can manifest. The prayer that we can see God through Grace, Glory, Wisdom, Joy and Peace becomes a reality.

109. As one progresses in fana, one may develop childlike qualities. As one merges into the receptivity of what might be called spiritual or angelic qualities in a certain sense one may become more like an angel. This teaching is presented in *The Inner Life* and to some extent in *The Soul, Whence and Whither* and also in many places in the published literature of *The Sufi Message*. In other words, one becomes sensitive to, and responds to, very fine vibrations of the same kind which constitute what the Hindus call Deva-Loka and what the Sufis call Djabrut.

110. As a disciple becomes more of an adept, one does not necessarily contact angels consciously, subconsciously or otherwise. One certainly becomes more attuned to the illuminated souls who form the embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance. Yes, there is a temptation to communicate or commune with angels. It is not necessarily wrong, but without divine guidance, it can become a distraction.

111. It is very difficult to explain the **hal** of one advanced in fana. We cannot explain God at all; nor can we readily explain states of consciousness derived from Divine Grace. As one progresses in

Sufism, one may have deeper and deeper experiences in joy and love, but even if one can express oneself in beautiful poetry, it will not always be clear to others or to oneself, nor is this necessary.

112. The life of Shams-i-Tabriz may inspire others; it may inspire others where the intellect can neither perceive nor be impressed. Those who read about him, and even more those who read his works, or the writings of Jelal-ed-din Rumi on this subject, are often deeply impressed; often their hearts become quite open and inspired.

113. As one advances toward becoming an adept, one's heart expands. It is something like the expansion of a balloon which results when the air within it becomes less dense. But unlike the balloon or anything material, the heart often becomes strong when it becomes tender. The more the devotees advance, the more they may become conscious of this growth in tenderness and strength, in this response to joy and pain simultaneously; but as they grow they will become less and less aware of the ego as a differentiating and differentiated entity.

114. It is not of much benefit to delineate between the various forms of fana. In what is called fana-fi-Rassoul, one becomes aware of knowledge; when one is in fana-fi-Lillah one becomes united with knowledge. In Sufism sometimes the former is called Hakikat and the latter Marifat. But the devotee who is lost or immersed in the Divine Being pays no attention to such differences. There is more or less the same teaching also in the Buddhist Diamond Sutra.

115. As one progresses one may become more and more conscious of the rest of humanity. True by one's own efforts or Grace one may grow beyond this to become conscious of the totality of life, and even of that grand being, Who created all, is all.

116. The true adept does not fall into the trap of superficial sentimentality. Yes, it is far better to be sentimental than to be callous. But it is far more noble to be wise, also. The wise see the totality; they see God in humanity which God made in God's image more than in the other forms of creation; more than in the denizens of the world unseen.

117. True esoteric practices in self-effacement are practices in effacement in God, the supreme, the Eternal, the Only Being. This is the realization which comes when the ego, the **nufs**, is transformed or transmuted; when there is ultimate realization and when one comes to understand one's true self, which is also the true Self, or God-hood or God-head.

118. Practices and disciplines in effacement present one side and perhaps this is the more important side, at least to human beings—to remove the obstacles which prevent them from the full understanding. But every effort and every experience in or towards the overcoming of the ego-self enables the Divine Light and Divine Life which is in all of us, to shine out in fullness, as Jesus Christ has taught.

119. Humanity's growth to realization is called evolution. We find this in the ultimate teachings of both Sufis and Hindus and no doubt of all truly spiritual schools. For there is only One Truth, no

matter how verbalized. This also is the **baqa**, the divine life which is there, but of which humanity is not usually aware.

120. There are many aspects and practices in esotericism (ryazat) which help bring this about. But Murakkabah, or concentration, can be used to push one a little; while mushahida, or sublime contemplation actually regards one as already illuminated even when one is not aware of it. It is through the mushahida that one truly becomes the servant of God in the outer plane.

121. Although contemplation (mushahida) is looked upon as one's own effort, actually one is permitting the divine in one to express and live, and no longer the ego-self. For in mushahida there can be no ego-self; the self has to be removed. And when the self is removed as the Sufi Thoughts tell us, God is there and is expressing Himself/Herself in both the outer and inner worlds.

122. When mureeds have reached the stages of Tasawwuri, they may be practicing fana at all levels. Sometimes while still aware of one's ego-self one can come to a state and stage of effacement, so to speak in the Rassoul, whether of one's own faith or of other faiths. But in and with the Message of the day emphasis is given to the historical messengers of God as named in Salat.

123. There is a final stage of development which is called fana-fi-baqa wherein the effacement is in the totality. Then while the adepts seem to be effacing themselves in God, God is also, so to speak, self-effaced in the humna being as represented by the devotee. That has caused some to declare their God-hood, but the true expression cannot be that for in this expression of God-hood there is a supposition that there is also other than God. And to assume there is other than God is itself contrary to Truth (Haqq).

124. The perusal of and devotion to *Gayan*, *Vadan*, and *Nirtan* all help in this development. The words thereof came when the announcer was empty, and his mind was like a crescent moon. The study of the commentaries is still more valuable, but even more valuable is becoming a crescent moon which is most valuable, most important, most exemplary.

125. The practices of Tasawwuri are still more beneficial in this line. Millions have repeated, "Not my will but Thine be done." They have repeated the words and still remain self-conscious. The self-conscious do not advance far in fana and those who advance in fana will not be aware of their ego-selves and the differences and distinctions which divide us.

126. Different religions have verbalized and emphasized differently about humanity's approach to and mergence in God, with God. The Sufi devotee experiences the love and then expresses the love. This becomes real, this becomes actual. There is a traditional hymn, "Beautiful Words of Life." But the words are the shadows, the derivatives of light. Words all come from darkness even when their expressions are derived from marvelous experiences of awakening. Therefore some Zen teachers decry any form of wording and in one sense, at least, they are correct. And when you express in words alone, you reach the ears of another, but when you express with your being, you

reach the heart of another.

127. All processes and teachings which are expressed in words convey the shadow meanings. But it must not be said these shadows have no meanings; they have meanings in those aspects of personality and life which are dependent on meaning. But realization is beyond meaning, beyond interpretation.

128. There is a sense in which God becomes human, acts through a human being. Humanity was created in the Divine Image. We can learn to realize and experience our Divinity but only when the consciousness rises above the differences and distinctions which divide people. As the breath becomes more subtle, as one feels the spirit, let us say, of one's inspiring teacher, one reflects more and more the universal essences in love, in blessing, in tenderness, in power and in wisdom. The less one feels one's separate ego, the more one feels and expresses the whole of life. It is for this purpose one was born in the world of manifestation.

129. When disciples feel the teacher speaking through their mouth, using their mentality and emanating in and from their heart, they can truly be said to be in fana-fi-Sheikh.

130. Yes, there are the grades of fana-fi-Sheikh, fana-fi-Rassoul, fana-fi-Lillah, and finally fana-fi-baqa. But all of these are effacements not self-expressions. And the same is true of what may be called fana-fi-Pir when one truly becomes the instrument of the illuminated souls who form the embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance.

131. The Bodhisattvic Ideal and function is not different from the Sufic expression. When one really reaches the initiation of "Sufi" one becomes a Bodhisattva; and when one reaches the initiation and attainment of the Bodhisattva, one is actually a Sufi though not necessarily in the Islamic line. But we rise above such differences; the lights and magnetisms and wisdoms are more evident, better testimonials.

132. All through devotional literature we find the appeal, "Thy Will, not my will be done." When fana is approached, one can no longer say "I" or "my" at all. One may come also to the state when one cannot say "Thy" or "Thou" because of unity. In extreme cases one reaches the stage of Bistami or Hallaj, which are attainments, yet spread confusions. When such words are used instead of silences, the effects become limited.

133. Baqa is all life, life that is is-ness or deity, one and indivisible. When one realizes the Oneness and Allness of God, one is astonished, amazed and filled with wonder. This is much better than any expression no matter how seemingly marvelous. The expression is always the remains, the shadow, the aftermath of the actual becoming.

134. Every growth in fana may mean the growth in compassion and magnetism. The growth in compassion is in one sense the widening of consciousness so as to include others. In the study and development of hierarchical and saintly functions there is an ever broadening horizon of actual

consciousness and understanding. And yet with this widening there is also a growth of magnetism, especially spiritual magnetism.

135. Spiritual magnetism is not development in exercises. There is nothing that can be done to develop such magnetism, and there is nothing that God cannot do. While *baqa* may be the result of Grace or the manifestation thereof, it brings to conscious actually what has been so often said in and with words. One can become the “great central sun.” One has the etheric and super-etheric ability to act as a condenser and transmitter and functioner of divine rays, divine magnetism, divine blessing.

136. The life in God has been expressed in many ways in the literature and also in the lessons for mureeds. It can become an actuality because in the ultimate sense it is an actuality. What you call yourself is the cover over God and God is the unveiling of the films that hide the essence which is the Reality.

137. The *nufs alima* is the highest stage which is really not verbal. The *nufs salima* is that stage wherein one can bring blessings and solace and comfort to others. Every adept sooner or later reaches this which is the fulfillment of life’s purpose. Every holy devotee does not become a high wali or *abdal* but every one may be an *ansar*, or helper. Yet it is the fulfillment of God in human beings that matters, and the spiritual state of many, functioning quite differently in the outer world, may be the same. This is mentioned in *The Inner Life* and discussed more fully in the commentaries therein. But if we can actually meet the holy ones in the flesh, we find them acting and operating in a myriad of ways to bring to the earth the Divine blessings and magnetisms for the benefit of humanity and creation. It is people that make distinctions and differentiations; the holy ones do not think of it that way. This is conveyed both in Sufic spiritual literature and in *The Diamond Sutra* of the Buddhists.

138. The Sangathas stress everything and end by stressing nothing. The purpose of humanity on earth is to fulfill the purposes of God, but to do this consciously and fully, uniting the functions of God and humanity.

139. *Baqa* is a state of teaching and giving forth. It may express itself by the positivity emanating or emerging from a person. Such a person is attuned to the divine. It may be because of their receptivity or it may be because of Grace. Both of these are found in the Sufi **Baraka**, the spiritual magnetism which is evidence of the soul itself. As the soul finds greater scope for outer manifestation and expression, there will be greater magnetism. This can be measured, and those people who criticize or condemn the more advanced do so, as Jesus has proposed, because of their ignorance.

140. The spiritual life restores that equilibrium which has been lost due to the intoxication of life. It is from this intoxication that illusions arise. The best way to rise above the illusory life is through willing surrender to a guide whom one can trust. This trust itself grows as one attunes to this person, whether it be mother, father, friend, or teacher. But those people who say they surrender

and surrender only to God (in their words and thoughts) are under illusion. They still relate everything to ego-self and people who admit such thoughts, though they may be otherwise good, are far from the attainment of that which they really seek. They are lost in their own illusory selves.

141. Lovers of God, immersed in love, often do not know how much power is pouring through them. They may be unaware of it and the more unaware, often the greater the power. For just as in electricity there is resistance owing to the nufs of the conducting (or non-conducting) materials, so there is resistance to the divine efflux and effulgence from the nufs and only from nufs. The soul does not resist.

142. All forms of fana are subject to the sways (**wakt**, period of time) of intoxication and sobriety. The sobriety that follows intoxication is often a sign of development but that sobriety which persists in people who have not had the intoxication of bliss is generally a sign of their egocentric resistance to the Divine Essence. They do not know it. It is from this that all orthodoxies originate which so divide humanity.

143. The people of the Western world have been so immersed in the intoxication of life and especially the intoxication of alcohol and drugs, that they have not understood the spiritual intoxication or even the subtle ecstasies. So words are often confusing. But some by meditation have arisen above the disturbances that come to them or come from them. One must rise above these stages if one wishes to help the world and serve God. Mushahida is the state of contemplation which is best pursued when one has risen above all differentiations. Merely to be sober and feel separateness is often a sign of less development.

144. Upanishads teach the relation of higher experiences in bliss to higher unfoldment and awakening. The average person, i.e., the manushic person, is often afraid of such states and not only afraid but condemns them in others. Therefore, sometimes it is valuable to increase the intoxication of the young and the less developed if it makes them aware of their egos; if it makes them see the varieties of living in God.

145. Many people declare they are partners with God because some aspect of magnetism is using their body or even their personality. But until one is absolutely merged with God, this is a sign of delusion. There are many types of magnetism and even of Baraka, which are mentioned not only in the literature of *The Sufi Message* but in other writings. But the writing, no matter how inspiring, is no evidence of magnetism or Baraka excepting in the writer. The question then arises how can one reach a stage wherein one's vehicle, one's bodies and personality, become highways for God, so to speak. It is love and self-sacrifice that avail above all else.

146. The lover does not proclaim herself or himself excepting with respect to the operations of love. The truly humble person does not refer to their self at all. The work *Love, Human and Divine* shows some examples, some possibilities. Those which have been fictionalized do not help the devotee very much unless one can immerse oneself into one of the characters. It is for this reason that some forms of spiritual drama have been encouraged. For in drama one must lay one's own ego

aside. Whatever the purpose, whatever the role one is to fulfill, one must lay one's own ego aside.

147. The instructions called “Walk” are most valuable in helping disciples on the way to fana, though the real fana begins even with Bayat. But self-effacement is not the removal of life, it is the removal of the obstacles to life. Sufism differs from some other Oriental teachings by positing One Supreme Being (**tawhid**) which is often alluded to in other traditions and spiritual methods. But it comes to life in the **tarik** or esoteric path of Islam. The positive is always stressed even when the negative seems to be the only subject-matter. Long under the sway of ego, the phrase “Only Being” is only slowly understood and often only after great effort on the part of the devotee.

148. In one sense the term “Meditation” may be used for all negative approaches and the term “Concentration” for all positive approaches. But the Sufi says that the Path is the road **to** God **by** God **with** God. Many other mystics teach exactly the same. One may take this seriously by a study of the writings on “Mysticism” appearing in *The Sufi Message*.

149. It is not necessarily reading or studying, or even devotion and practice which lead one to the desired goal. Every word of every prayer may be taken seriously, used as subject-matter in both meditation and concentration and also come to fulfillment through realization. As Al-Ghazzali has said, “Sufism is based upon experience and not premises.” Many ancient Sufi writers stressed the lifting of veils. As veils are lifted, a whole new universe seems to come to consciousness. It has always been there; each new vista only makes one better aware of what has always been there.

150. The Message of Sufism is not new. But the methodologies of Sufism may seem new. Those practices which do not bring fulfillment have not only lost their charm but their worth. Buddha criticized methods which did not succeed. Stringent orthodoxies stress the ways, the methods, and so lose sight of the goals. Stringent rules do not produce spiritual liberty.