

Manners and Characteristics of a Sufi and Spiritual Child

Talk by Es-Seyyid Es-Shaykh Taner Ansari and Es-Sharifa Es-Shaykha Muzeyyen Ansari
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Bismillah Al Rahman Al Rahim [In the name of Allah, The One Who Acts with Mercy, The Source of Mercy]. All praise belongs to Allah. Allah owns everything. All power belongs to Allah and not to us. May Allah's peace and blessings be on Prophet Muhammad and his family and on all the other prophets and their families.

Manners and Characteristics a Sufi Should Have

All contemplation is good, but what will bring you closer to Allah is your good manners. You have to intend to have good manners that Allah likes all through your life and more, and stick to them, do the best you can do so that you can get to the close quarters of Allah, which is at the fifth level*, where Allah loves you. At the sixth level* you love Allah back, and it means that you don't have any objection to what Allah does anymore. If you call yourself a Sufi you have to have the following manners and characteristics:

Acknowledgement

You have to:

1. accept the truth
2. be open-minded
3. be objective

Allah says, even if it is against you, bear true witness. As my students, what I urge you to do is to be after the truth and nothing but the truth, if you can, the whole Truth, adopt the truth and act with the truth. At least intend to do so. What about the truth? What is going to teach you the truth? What will convey the truth? Our hearts and our connections. The best thing that can convey the truth is Allah through your hearts. That's why we like to be *arifs*, the ones who polish their hearts – so that we can get an unblurred download of Allah's inspiration to our brain. What is the truth? All my life, and all your lives, I am trying to tell you the truth. The traumatic truth is that there is God and it is not you. You are not going to be god. Some paths say you are going to be one with God and then you will be god. When you will be one with God, you are not going to be god. A Sufi has to intend to live with the truth.

Observance

You have to observe and locate the truth wherever you are looking or not looking. You must be able to see. You should not only have an open mind but you should also have open eyes. How do you get open eyes? You intend and do your *wazifa/zikr*. As you cleanse the distance between your brain and your heart, your eyes will also open gradually. But you need to intend. You have to do that with that intention.

A Sufi has to have two bags: one frontpack and one backpack. When you encounter some knowledge or information from certain places, if you don't agree with them or don't understand them, you put them into the backpack. Maybe your understanding level is not ready for that yet, but the information is there. But if you find some information that you can use right now, put it into your frontpack and use it right away.

Look Out for Allah's Signs

Allah says in *Qur'an-i Karim* [Generous Qur'an], "It is not for Allah to talk to a human being other

than (by using these means):

1. inspiration
2. through a messenger
3. from behind a fence/screen/veil”

To the prophets the messenger is Jibril [Gabriel](peace be upon him). To the people, the messengers are the shaykhs and each other.

Respect

When you observe Allah in anything and everything and in all human beings and in all that is created, then you need to respect that Allah’s energy is in creation, no matter what it is.

Ask for Forgiveness

Asking for forgiveness stems from your seeing your incompleteness and your mistakes. Our Prophet (pbuh) used to say *estaughfirullah* [I seek forgiveness of Allah] a hundred times a day. He is the Prophet; what sin did he commit? It is not a matter of sin; it is one of incompleteness. If you could have done this work better and you didn’t, that is incomplete. But you see this the next day. When you look at yesterday, you say, “I could have done that better.” So, it means you gave less service to Allah.

Thankful

The next quality a Sufi should have is that he/she should be thankful first to Allah and to the people that Allah uses as a means to do work in the world to help the creation.

Sharing

You have to share the good fortune that Allah has bestowed upon you with others according to a sensible division which will not jeopardize your own basic livelihood.

Caring

You have to care for all creation.

Service

For the sake of your Creator you should ask Allah to use you as a serving person.

Positivity

Be positive and spread positivity. When you get Allah’s love, then share it. Get love and give love. Unconditional love – the real love, not the word. Our *Tariqa* is based on: *Ya Wadud, Ya Salaam, Ya Jami, Ya Nafi* – Love, Peace and Togetherness in doing Good.

Staying Away from Empty Talk

Keep away from pointless conversations, arguments, politics, gossip, backbiting, etc.

Not Being After Vengeance

Your actions have to stem from Allah’s will – not your emotions, not from your habitual actions, not from tit-for-tat, etc.

Not Judging People or Anything

More than anything you are not Allah’s judge. Allah is doing fine. Allah is the only One Who knows what He is doing. Don’t judge Allah and others. We do not argue; we share opinions.

Softness

You need to be soft. When you communicate, have a good soft attitude. You need to know what

the purpose of your communication is. If the other person is not receiving it, find another way to communicate or just say *salaam* [peace] and move on.

Traveling and Eating Good Food

A Sufi enjoys Allah at all times, on numerous levels. Your relationship to Allah is multi-level. Sometimes He is the Lord, and you are not. Sometimes He is the Feeder, and you are the eater. Sometimes He is the Giver, and you are the taker, etc.

A Sufi Does Not Waste Anything

A Sufi does not waste anything, especially time.

Cleanliness

A Sufi has to follow proper hygiene and cleanliness habits. You must be clean outside and inside.

Tithing

As a Sufi you need to pay your tithing.

In short, look at the Prophet (pbuh); there is an example for you in the Prophet, as Allah says in the Qur'an:

There is no doubt you have an excellent example in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) for those who hope to meet Allah and the hereafter and who make much zikr [remembrance; the Sufi practice of repeating the Names of Allah] of Allah.

*Sura Al Ahzab (33:21)***

You want to and intend to redesign yourself with the Prophet's (pbuh) qualities and traits. If you want to be Allah's beloved, like he (pbuh) is.

The traits of a Sufi are not limited to these, but it is enough to contemplate for now.

In the meantime I want you to remember one thing: the goal is to learn Allah and the goal is to have a loving relationship with Allah. The best way of learning Allah is within yourselves through your own experiences and observations.

Student: "Can you speak about open-mindedness and objectivity a bit?"

Shaykh: Look up into space. What do you see in this space? 150 billion galaxies. Do you see how Allah is vast? How can you understand Allah with that narrow hole you are looking through?

- **Open mindedness:** whatever you think you know, there is always more than that
- **Objectivity:** trying to see things as they are rather than seeing them as you would like them to be. It is also not thinking of yourself, but trying to see the truth and thinking of the truth.

—Shaykh Taner Ansari

Why Are We Doing All This? Why Do We Want to Be a Sufi?

Allah created us to know Him. So, we are trying to learn Allah. Now, what happens when we work on trying to learn Allah? It is like you are in the middle – one way is *nafs* and the other is Allah. When you move closer to your *nafs*, you move away from Allah, and when you move closer to Allah, you move away from your *nafs*. It really is simple at the end of the day. We can

romanticize it and we can feel overpowered by it. We can say we will never know this by ourselves. But don't worry, Allah has set up a system. He has sent all the books and prophets and they all say we can do it. Of course, as if that was not enough, you had to go deeper and then you said you want to be a Sufi and you really, really wanted to know Allah. What happens when you say you want Allah? Allah becomes happy with you and you become happy with Allah. This is the minimum level of what Sufis consider to be a human being. Having a personal relationship with Allah and thinking outside the box is a much more freeing and comfortable place to pass our time on this earth than trying to fit into whole bunch of traditions, rules and regulations.

For example, when we are raising kids, we are very aware of the responsibilities for this child entrusted to us. There is a kind of parent's guilt syndrome out there. We don't want our kids to do this and that. Many parents come up with some weird rules that if they do this, their child will be okay, forgetting that their child is entrusted to them by Allah. We go between love and fear. Are we thinking about our children's future or are we just giving them love? This is not too different from what we are doing in our relationship to Allah with ourselves. Your grandmother has a different set of rules and your father has a different set of rules. It gets complicated. If we just teach the children to connect to Allah and let Allah take care of them through whatever means, we will be much better off.

As Sufis, we also have a spiritual child – *tifl'mani*. This child is the child of your heart, which is your purest self. For this child to come to being your spiritual being literally just grows in your heart, in your connection with Allah and finds strength and it becomes your most beloved, precious possession. Mevlana Rumi said: "People bring their own wood to burn themselves in hell." Our actions are building our places in the next world. We, as Sufis, would like to build our places in the hereafter right now. As we keep doing our *zikrs* and breaking the boxes that our minds have been trained in by society and culture, and stay in the heart language, and as that gets stronger, then our relationship to our best self, the *tifl'mani* gets stronger.

When Shaykh Muhyiddin Ansari was happy, he was totally happy. There was a very pure love, and being almost childlike came through him. Although he was a colonel in military, went to war, played music and spoke different languages, we are not talking about simplicity of mind, but simplicity of being.

—Shaykha Muzeyyen Ansari

*The Names of the Levels of the *Nafs*

1. *Nafs-i Ammara*
2. *Nafs-i Lawwama*
3. *Nafs-i Mulhama*
4. *Nafs-i Mutmaina*
5. *Nafs-i Radziyya*
6. *Nafs-i Mardziyya*
7. *Nafs-i Safiyya*

**Translation of the Holy Qur'an by Shaykh Taner Ansari

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