



## SIGNIFICANCE OF TAKING BAY'AH

“Bay’ah” means “To be sold”. When one becomes the Mureed (disciple) of a Peer-o-Murshid (spiritual guide), he sells his heart, life and wealth to his Murshid. After this sale he is to follow everything that his Murshid tells him, whether he understands the wisdom behind it or not. Bay’ah is a firm pact and a pledge of allegiance, not only with the Murshid, but also with all the Saints of the Silsila and through them with the Beloved Rasool (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and ultimately with Almighty Allah. We cannot physically pledge allegiance to Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) the way the blessed Sahaabah did, but when we give our hands to one whose spiritual chain reaches up to him, it is in reality the same thing.

A good example of the meaning of being sold is that of a certain Mureed of Hazrat Shaikh Yahya Maniri (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh). This Mureed was about to drown when Hazrat Khizr (Alaihis Salaam) appeared to him and said, “Give me your hand and I will pull you to safety.” The Mureed replied, “I have already given this hand to Shaikh Yahya Maniri. Now I will not give it to anyone else”. Hazrat Khizr (Alaihis Salaam) disappeared and Shaikh Yahya Maniri (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) appeared and rescued his Mureed from drowning. [*Al-Malfooz Shareef, Vol. 2*]

The Mureed accepts the Peer-o-Murshid as his spiritual master and puts himself under his instruction for the correcting of his lower self (Nafs) and his heart (Qalb). The Murshid is the spiritual doctor in this world, a shining light and an ocean of knowledge. Huzoor Ghaus-e-Azam Shaikh Sayyiduna Abdul Qadir Jilani (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) states that if a person wants to learn any art form or gain knowledge he will seek help from an expert in that field. Knowledge of Allah Ta’ala’s Zaat (Being) is the most difficult and hidden secret in the universe. It can only be achieved with the help of its experts, who are the Awliya Allah. Only these people can be accepted as Murshids. [*Al-Fathur-Rabbani*]

The Holy Qur’an commands us to seek a means (Wasilah) to reach Allah Ta’ala in the following verse: “O you who believe! Fear Allah and seek the means of approach to Him, and strive in His way that you may obtain prosperity.” [*Surah 5, Verse 35*] This means of approach is our Beloved Rasool (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), and the means to reach Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) are the Awliya Allah. It is absurd to imagine that one could access Almighty Allah without an intermediary.

On one occasion A’la Hazrat Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) was asked why a Muslim who had grown up in a Sunni home and had the Holy Qur’an and Hadith to guide him in his daily affairs, should seek a Murshid. A’la Hazrat (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) responded by saying that the Holy Qur’an and Hadith contain everything, that is, Shariah, Tariqah and Haqiqah. However knowledge of Shariah has been handed down from one generation of scholars to another; had this not been so, the ordinary people would have no way of knowing right from wrong. This being the case with matters related to the Shariah, it was even more vital that there be a similar chain (Silsila) for the transmission of the knowledge of Tariqah and Haqiqah, which cannot be extracted from the Holy Qur’an and Hadith without a teacher/guide (Murshid). To try to do so is to embark on a lonely dark road, and be misled along the way by Shaitaan.

Some people argue that it is possible to attain spiritual development by studying the Glorious Qur’an, the Ahadith of the Beloved Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and the books written on this subject by the Saints of the past. The reply to this is that theoretical knowledge derived

from books cannot be, and was never designed to be, a substitute for association with those experienced travellers who have completed their journey along the road and have reached their Goal, and have now returned to guide others on the same path. The Holy Book of Allah itself was not sent alone; it was sent through the medium of Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) who was at the same time its conveyor, its commentator and its living interpretation. Furthermore it was he who, by training and instructing the Blessed Sahaabah in the light of the Glorious Qur'an purified them and elevated them to the heights of Godliness.

Allah Ta'ala states in the Holy Qur'an, "Surely those who swear allegiance to you indeed swear allegiance to Allah. The Hand of Allah is above their hands. But whoso breaks his oath, he breaks it to his own loss, and whoso fulfills the promise which he had made with Allah, then Allah shall soon give him a great reward." [Surah 48, Verse 10] This verse discusses the allegiance that was sworn by the 1400 Noble Companions in Bay'atur Ridwaan which Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) had taken at Hudaibiyya. From this we learn that to pledge an oath of allegiance on the hands of the pious is the practice of the Noble Companions. [Tafseer Noorul Irfaan] In another verse Allah Ta'ala states, "Certainly Allah was pleased with the believers when they were swearing allegiance to you under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts. So He sent down on them tranquillity and rewarded them with an expeditious victory." [Surah 48, Verse 18] Because of the Pleasure of Allah at the Bay'ah that the Noble Companions took at the hands of Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), it became known as Bay'atur Ridwaan. [Tafseer Noorul Irfaan]

The Noble Companion, Hazrat Abaada Ibn Saamit Al Ansari (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) narrates, "We pledged Bay'ah to the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) in all our matters of good and misfortune, in all trials and tribulations. We pledged to consult the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) in all our matters and to unflinchingly follow his orders and not to query his commands." [Fatawa Afriqa by A'la Hazrat Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh]

It is often asked by those who are not acquainted with the path of spiritual development, which is in reality the ultimate goal of Islam, whether it is imperative for everyone to become a mureed of a Murshid. The answer to this is that it is not imperative in the sense that it is a decree of the Shariah, or that it has been prescribed as an indispensable condition for salvation in the Hereafter. In the same way it may be asked whether it is absolutely necessary to educate one's children. Here again the answer will be that it is not absolutely necessary in the sense that an uneducated person will not be able to remain alive in this world, or will not be able to lead the life of a responsible citizen. But it certainly is imperative in the sense that without it, many latent qualities of the children will never be developed, and they will never bloom into that, which they are truly capable of.

Consider a child. He is the perfect example of learning by association. When the child is able to read and acquire theoretical knowledge, the necessity of personal association, in the form of a tutor, is imperative. If we consider the reasons why a child cannot instruct himself from books, but requires the instructor to enable him to learn, we shall be able to make clear some of the principles which hold good in the realm of spiritual instruction as well. In the first place, not having had the direct experience of knowledge and not being really aware of his goal, but only having a vague perception of it which may or may not have some relation to the truth, he is unable to direct himself towards his goal, nor can he know whether he is approaching it or receding from it. In the second place, not having travelled along the path of knowledge and being ignorant of his own faculties, of the means by which they can be developed, of the state on the

road of learning as well as of the obstacles he must surmount, he is unable to plan a course for himself and must rely on a seasoned traveller. Not only the goal, but also the way to it, is unknown to him. It is impossible for a student to recognize his own particular weaknesses and strengths, his aptitude and inaptitude, and in what direction he can reach his fullest growth; it is only his tutor who can perceive in what way one pupil differs from another, and prescribe special exercises for him in accordance with his individual needs.

Similarly, the seeker of spiritual knowledge is unaware of his Goal, which is Almighty Allah Himself, and at the most has only a limited academic idea of Him, which may or may not approach to His Reality. He is therefore unable to direct himself towards Him, and cannot know whether he is coming near to Him or going far from Him. The Guide (Murshid) who knows Him, however, can direct the seeker to the path towards Him, and can discern whether he is progressing or regressing in his journey. Secondly, the pupil is unacquainted with the nature of the road, its stages, its obstacles and those spiritual and moral pitfalls which can arrest his progress, and does not recognize what faculties he has within himself and how these faculties can be developed. The novice is unfamiliar with both the Path and Goal, and has to follow in the footsteps and the instructions of the leader, who is the Murshid.

Furthermore, when a person begins to progress in the worship of Allah on his own, arrogance and self-conceit begin to grow in him, and he comes to think that he is one of the good believers. This is a great mistake, for the welfare of a person's Islam rests upon his belief that he is an object of no value, a non-entity, and must seek to become nothing. Because Almighty Allah is not visible to the eye, a man becomes proud in forgetfulness of Him; but when he sits in an attitude of respect before his Murshid, arrogance leaves his heart. When he sincerely acknowledges someone as his spiritual master, and hereby admits that he himself knows nothing but has come to learn, an important change takes place within him, and the road to progress which was blocked by his pride now lies open before him. If someone says that he does not need a master at all, then he is arrogant and conceited and will live under the tyranny of the lower self.

Hujjatul Islam Hazrat Imam Ghazzali (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) has laid it down that a disciple must have recourse to a master to guide him aright, for the way of faith is obscure, whereas the way of Shaitaan are many, and he who has no Murshid to guide him will be led by the devil into his ways. This is further confirmed by Hazrat Sayyiduna Baayazid Bustaami (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) who states that those without a Murshid have Shaitaan as their guide. [*Awaariful Ma'arif*] Therefore the disciple must cling to his Murshid as a blind man on the edge of a river clings to his leader, confiding himself to him entirely, opposing him in no matter whatsoever, and binding himself to follow him absolutely.

Thus A'la Hazrat Imam Ahle Sunnat Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) advised the Muslims to choose carefully and stated that a Peer-o-Murshid should possess four important qualities:

1. He must hold correct beliefs in accordance with the teachings of the Ahle Sunnah Wa Jama'at.
2. He must possess at least minimum knowledge, by which he can personally extract and interpret the Shariah from books of Fiqh, Hadith, Tafseer etc. without the assistance of anyone.

3. His chain of transmission (Silsila) should reach from him, without a single break, directly to the beloved Rasool (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).
4. And finally, he should not be a Faasiq-e-Mu'lin i.e. a transgressor who commits sins openly. [*Al Malfooz Shareef, Vol. 2*]

Huzoor Ghaus-e-Azam Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) has said, "Arrogance, hypocrisy, egoism, are all arrows of Shaitaan aimed at your hearts. One should formulate a strategy to defend oneself from this attack. The correct strategies are explained and demonstrated by the Mashaa'ikh (Guides). You should take heed of their commands and act on them. They will guide you on the path of Allah since they have already travelled on this path. Ask their advice on matters relating to the Nafs (carnal desires), cravings and other weaknesses because they have also suffered their consequences and are well aware of the dangers and harms of evil desires. They have battled these over a long period of time and can confront, control and defeat them." [*Al-Fathur-Rabbani*]

May Allah Ta'ala grant us the Taufeeq to follow in the footsteps of the Noble Companions of Rasoolullah Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam and to take heed of the advice of A'la Hazrat Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh when choosing a Peer-o-Murshid, Ameen.