

Fana-fi-Pir - Various Selections by Tansen

Murshid SAM mentioned frequently that he would be known for the practice of Fana-fi- Pir, which involves the continuing guidance in the inner world of the Pir after his passing from the earth plane.

It is clear to me from personal experience that the writings of Murshid SAM provide us all with the opportunity to actively engage in the practice of Fana-fi-Pir.

In these few pages you will find various references to the practice of Fana-fi-Pir and how Murshid SAM described it. May these words help awaken your inner being and inspire you to explore this practice further.

Tansen

You must remember that I said on the previous page that your father selected me for certain missions because I might remain longer in the flesh than certain other peoples. The same is true about you, that whatever be the impulses of people in Geneva and Holland, they are not surrendering to any ultimate-will-of-God. Good hearts, even, are not awakened souls.

There is a total ignorance on the part of most of them of the real nature of Sufism. In 1926 your blessed father gave me the gift of his experiences which literally took my breath away. He gave me a look which he has apparently not given to anybody else. They saw the saint; I saw the master and the prophet. No one can take this from me.

The stages in Sufism are fana-fi-Sheikh fana-fi-Rassoul (2) fana-fi-lillah (3) and fana-i-baqa (4), with a possibility of fana-fi-Pir between the first and second. All disciples of Sufi Inayat Khan, and I know as yet no exception, have accepted even tasawwuri-Murshid. I say this and do not care who or what personalities were and are included, living on the earth or in the unseen.

Not only is God my witness but myself have been trained in fana-fi-Pir and more so in fana-fi-Rassoul, and having that had thoroughly corroborated within and without, I can at least say that until disciples are willingly to go on the tremendous adventures of the Inner Path they cannot spread the Message of God. I am no novice. I have lived now 36 years as a disciple of Tasawwuf, maybe longer.

5 August, 1956 Murshid SAM letter to Pir Vilayat

The Sufism of Hazrat Inayat Khan presented fana-fi-Sheikh; fana-fi-Rassoul and fana-fi-lillah. There is a possibility that I may be known in the future for adding fana-fi-Pir between fana-fi-Sheikh and fana-fi-Rassoul. For in fana-fi-Sheikh one learns from the living teacher and this learning may continue after death. But in fana-fi-Pir one learns from other than one's own initiator, from some great soul—which has been my case with both Moineddin Chisti and Abdul-Kadiri-Gilani (Ghaus-i-Azam) but after entering fana-fi-Rassoul this seldom happened and perhaps was not necessary. But I do have the poetry from St. Chisti and the much greater poetry from Mecca Shereef.

1st December, 1970 Murshid SAM Letter WD Begg.

So your Murshid took himself to Allah and there are four ways in which Allah communicates: fana-fi-Sheikh; fana-fi-Pir; fana-fi-Rassoul and kashf. In fana-fi-Lillah, there is no longer communication but becoming and self realization.

Murshid SAM Letter Saadia 18 October 1962

Your Murshid sometimes wonders about ego-statements which may be true. The difference is that your Murshid makes the statements as if in fana-fi-Sheikh, fana-fi-Pir, fana-fi-Rassoul or fana-fi-Lillah rather than third heaven, which matrices one may increase the Imam and by using strange terms, while true, it is confusing. One spoke on what looks like a forbidden subject so one says that one works in fana-fi-Rassoul, that one does not use empty words, “seek wisdom even to China,” that one has studied the Chinese wisdom and has all the blessing from Insaan-i-Kemal (Mohammed) and is very serious, even when one does not appear to be devout. The Hebrew Bible says, “The awe of God is the beginning of Wisdom” and one spoke in awe, in reverence and in brilliant light and the words came out of the mouth, and in the light and so the self was not. It was fana more than half. But by that one was able to give the Baraka because one was in tune with Mohammed (from whom is Peace) and the keynote with, a triumphant yell was Peace Is Power, following in all things others, our Saint Mian Mir.

Murshid SAM Letter Saadia undated

One has to type over one’s paper on “Real Mysticism versus Pseudo-Mysticism,” which has been accepted by the universities, but not by the public. This is based on the experiences of fana-fi-Sheikh, fana-fi-Rassoul and fana-fi-Lillah and also on something that will not be read of in books, fana-fi-Pir.

This person holds, with Al-Ghazzali, that Tasawwuf consists of experiences, not syllogisms. It consists of the recognition of the Living God. We use the neck-vein in our repetitions of Zikr to make us realize the nearness of the neck-vein and then of Allah. This is experience.

One has not been prepared for the young coming, but now knows one must teach the young and let those who are fixed in their ideas go on. “Praise Allah and leave them to their devices.”

One can teach all forms of Tasawwuf, because one has been trained in all forms of Tasawwuf; and recognized from East Pakistan through North Africa and also locally and abroad by the Indonesians. But their kind of Brotherhood is not the kind of “Brotherhood” we have in America, where so many cities have Mosques and leaders who do not recognize each other. I am now a member of the Canadian American Islamic Students organization and recognize the Imams, not because I recognize the Imams, but because Brotherhood requires recognizing the Imams.

I teach, “There is no Power save in Allah.” Not only is it taught, it is demonstrated. There are all sorts of ways of demonstrating it.

Murshid SAM Letter Sufi Barkat Ali January 30, 1967

In the meanwhile this person who seems to have an ear attuned to the Divine Voice, completed his writings on Fana-fi-Sheikh. He asked Allah, “Why not more?” and Allah said, “Enough.” Now my chief disciple, Wali Ali, has just reported a beautiful manifestation to his of Ghaus-i-Azam, and this brought the message, in accord with the above, that this person would be known to the brethren of the future for his literary work on Fana-fi-Pir, which will come in between in a sense, Fana-fi-Sheikh, and Fana-fi-Rassoul. (In the meanwhile, the commentary work on Kashf, based on the writings of Hazrat Inayat Khan, has been completed. Work on Mushahida keeps one busy from time to time.)

We are now getting hundreds and hundreds of Americans to say Allah, and when you get 300 “unbelievers” to join in singing “La illaha el allahu, Mohammeda Rassoul Lillah,” this is something no tablighi group has ever accomplished. Muslims have said to me, “Muslims will not approve.” I said to them, and I say again, “It is not whether Muslims approve, it is whether Allah approves.”

Other than the disturbance alluded to in the first paragraph, the health and strength are not

being recognized. We are also working on “Six Interviews With Hazrat Inayat Khan” which grew out of the original Khizr experience, which Hazrat Inayat Khan accepted and his followers almost unanimously rejected (excepting Mr. Paul Reps, a fairly well-known writer).

Murshid SAM Letter Sufi Barkat Ali Dec. 23, 1970

**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.**

Githeka Series III: Number 8

Fana-fi-Rassoul

The selflessness displayed in the presence of a Murshid is a step towards that true selflessness displayed before God. As the epistle of James teaches, how can one love God Whom one has not seen, if one does not love man whom he has seen. Love is much more than an emotion, it is the surrender of self, so that the lover is not one who cries: “I love thee,” but whose heart says: “In thy presence I am as naught.”

Many think of mysticism as a science which teaches one how to have great visions. There are marvelous experiences recorded in the Scriptures and biographies of saints, but the greatest of these states cannot be recorded, which come through the effacement of the self. Only a selfless being can touch such conditions and this selflessness cannot be forced upon every person.

No doubt there is a time when each one will realize within their being who is a Messenger of God. This may not mean a particular personality, although it does not preclude one who has been upon earth and who is very dear to one's heart, who is mentioned in one's prayers. Often one has a vision of Rassoul before Bayat, and it may come at other times. Sometimes one also has a vision of a Pir, or great Sufi teacher.

What has been called fana-fi-Pir is conscious absorption into the being of a great teacher, whether that one has been upon earth during one's lifetime or whether he walked here in the distant past. Such a vision comes by the grace of Allah, and such a Pir or holy saint may walk by one's side often, protecting and guiding them at every step of the way.

The real knowledge from the Murshid may come from the breath and being of the Murshid. If a question arises, “is it to one's advantage to be under the personal instruction of a Murshid or to have contact with a Pir upon a higher plane,” the answer is that that question shows a person to be wandering in darkness. The Invocation teaches that all illuminated souls are as the embodiment of one Master, of one Spirit of Guidance. It is so easy for the mind to conjecture differences and analyze the different personalities, but in the heart this is impossible.

At the same time, it is also true that when one has advanced on the path, and realized this oneness more and more, by the beneficent Grace of God some Murshid, or Pir-o-Murshid or even Rassoul, the embodiment of the Divine Spirit, may contact one in vision or in consciousness and bring the highest blessing.

Sometimes through the sight of the eyes, sometimes through the ears in hearing, sometimes even by touch, by outer feeling or inner feeling, by thought, by breath, by impression, by intuition, in inspiration, through insight, through union in Samadhi, in many ways one becomes absorbed into the ideal in or out of form. This is the true spiritual development which brings spiritual knowledge.

It is impossible to relate the many ways; it depends upon the development of the mureed and the grace of Allah and the need of the world. If one knew it, God is always striving to reach humanity through His Messengers, whose work is not confined to any one plane or any particular age. But as light does not function in darkness, so the Holy Ones appear to those who have made accommodation for light.

Fana-fi-Rassoul, absorption in the Messenger of God, in the anointed of God, is the ideal state for those, who serve and seek Allah both at the same time.

Self-Protection Githekas Series III

Excerpts from Fana fi Rassoul

2. The first requisite is that we know how to attune ourselves to somebody on earth. If we have not been able to attune to one on earth, how do we know that we can attune to one in the heavens? In Murakkabah, in the earliest stages, the concentration is upon material things, that which is in name and form. It is success in this only which privileges one to advance to the higher accomplishments. This goes on without regard to thought of self. Now fana-fi-Rassoul is the same, for even if one dares to presume one's readiness for it, there is no assurance that God has accepted this claim, there is no sign of success therefore.

7. Those who are not ready for fana are nevertheless not held back. Some pupils desire such a concentration and it is not wrong to give it to them. Sometimes only their failure in it may makes them realize that another practice will be of greater advantage. Sometimes success in it traces the way to the right concentration. Often a person who desires a concentration upon Rassoul and practices will not see Rassoul, or not see the ideal but some other form, some other personality. This generally indicates success in Murakkabah, but inappropriateness of fana-fi-Rassoul.

20. We may sit before a picture of a spiritual teacher who has passed on or we may hold in concentration the ideal of our Savior before us for years and not be in fana-fi-Rassoul. It is only when the heart is opened to the degree that we assimilate directly the spirit of Rassoul that we get the full benefit of it. Therefore it is no shame to go step by step, grade by grade. Often the gradual progress proves best because otherwise there may be disappointment and loss of hope.

21. When we are given for our concentration the teacher in the unseen we may be given the practice of fana-fi-Pir. This has been common among certain schools of Sufis. We may have before ourselves a saint or master, or we may have the Pir of our own school or another school, and particularly if such a one has already appeared to us in vision and offered a blessing. Then to assimilate that blessing we may have before ourselves the Pir and sit in contemplation and keep attuned to him and by that way benefit, our character will change, we may perfect one of his personal qualities and advance in skillfulness along some line which we have chosen in life or which has been placed before us as a need from this spiritual fulfillment.

23. The appearance of a Pir before the talib is generally a mark of Grace. We should consider ourselves blessed if we have such a vision and even more blessed if the heart goes out to the Pir and the Pir's heart goes out to us. This will indicate our line of development and often what has to be done to fulfill our purpose along this line.

25. One cannot say that in the future many holy beings of other schools may not appear before disciples, but unless there is heart love, their appearance is most likely either to confirm the pupil's progress or to bring some special message or to give a blessing and it is not necessary in the line of Sufism to concentrate further on them. Fana-fi-Rassoul and fana-fi-Pir are not to be used as means of spirit communication no matter how glorified they may appear to be.

27 In the prayer of Union the idea is to be linked with all the murshids and prophets in chain. Sometimes an ancient prophet appears before a talib, and sometimes he will be recognized and sometimes not recognized.

This also belongs in the grade of visions and dreams and does not mean the practice of fana-fi-Pir. For in fana-fi-Pir the heart's union is desired and not any vision or dream as of another personality, no matter how great. It is the heart assimilation which marks the spiritual progress.

30. Not every person has to go through the grade—if such it can be called—of fana-fi-Pir. But without ability to love fully one on earth, love for a being of the unseen has limitations, and until one loves fully one in the subtler worlds who can be seen easily, it is very difficult to be sure of the love for one of greater degree who may be harder to hold in vision, and whose love may even be beyond our comprehension.

131. While in the world we deal with names and forms and things, we have the work to do in the world. If we seek fana-fi-Lillah because we consider it a higher state, a more noble state, we recognize neither the sacrifices we must make to sustain nor the neglect we offer our brethren whom sometimes we can help most by pursuing the path before us. Ever remember all is fanafi-Lillah: Fana-fi-Sheikh, fana-fi-Murshid, fana-fi-Pir, fana-fi-Rassoul, love of mother, father, child, friend, love in any form in which there is self-surrender, self-sacrifice, this is the key to all real and holy spiritual development.

132. One must feel the not-I, to become the not-I, to breathe and live for the not-I, but this is not a compulsion and if there is a note or sound of it, all is failure. It is by becoming and being it, and finding bliss in it that the gateless gate, so to speak, is opened and one standing before the Lord, answering his cry, "Who is there?", may answer, "Thy Self, O Lord."

Githa Murakkaba Series II.

GITHA: Sufis sees how far they have mastered concentration by seeing the fulfillment of their wishes.

TASAWWUF: That is to say we can really measure our own successes. Many people think they are concentrating or try to obtain some goal in life and make excuses. They forget that God is the Forgiver of our short-comings and at the same time success is needed in life. We do not have to make much of our excuses, God does not. The thing to do is to concentrate upon success or attainment and to work for it unceasingly, and though we fail a thousand times to keep on trying.

As we maintain our inner concentrations, however, we will find that the world does not always place such obstacles in our path. Forces, people, things may come to us or to our help. They may not always be what we have desired and they may help us to gain something else than our original intention, or object of attainment. Yet the forces come to our assistance and this is a sure sign of growth. Practices such as fana-fi-Sheikh and fana-fi-Pir, and the observance of Tasawwuri Murshid are also most helpful and advantageous.

Excerpts from Fan fi Sheikh

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 relation established on earth between Murshid and mureed may continue. They may not only continue, they may advance. So sometimes we may not only continue practices given to us by the teacher in the flesh, we may learn to commune and communicate with this person 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.

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 though he 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 mankind. This may happen in what the Hindus call Bhakti Yoga.

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.

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.

GITHA: There are two great blessings in our lives: power and inspiration. Concentration brings power; meditation, inspiration ... the former being constructive while the latter is toward the ideal of annihilation, which in other words may be called absorption within.

TASAWWUF: We can call power the perfection of Jelal and inspiration the perfection of Jemal. There is a path of power which leads to mastery and there is a path of inspiration which leads to holiness or sainthood. It is a mistake, however, to assume that such power and such inspiration are entirely the result of one's efforts. Yes, we have to perform our devotions and our concentrations. But blessings are the result of Divine Grace.

Here one can observe the difference between fana-fi-Sheikh and tasawwuri Murshid. Fana-fi-Sheikh, as well as the higher stages fana-fi-Pir, fana-fi-Rassoul, etc., means the absorption of the spirit of the disciple in the majesty of an ideal personality. Responsiveness is requisite on the part of the pupils. By that they may increase their telepathic receptivity, they will more readily follow guidance, their inner faculties will be refined and they are walking toward God. They are walking toward God because they are sublimating their ego.

Tasawwuri Murshid enables the disciple to be active and successful. It is used in the everyday life. It also establishes harmony between teacher and pupil but for another purpose. Here the pupils are active, they increase their capacity through effort and deed. They may even become channels by which the spiritual forces touch the earth. The psychic stream assists in the directing of these forces downward. Summing up one may say that concentration enhances the active mind, while meditation brings repose. Meditation enables the disciple to overcome the false self, while concentration helps the true personality to manifest. The inspiration that follows is natural. The inspiration has always been there only it has been covered by the weight of nufs.

Amaliyyat: Psychology—Githa with Commentary Series II

Why, when our Murshid passed it was as if he became more like God nearer than breathing, closer than hands and feet. And his own teachings in Fana-fi-Sheikh, his final creative effort finished two weeks before his fall down the stairs, 'emphasize the, possibilities which subsist in the stage he termed fana-fi-Pir (see lesson 61). This is not 'metaphysics,' but it is tassawuf.

Letter Murshid Moineddin to Sheikh Mansur Johnson April 19 1979.

This is a definite stage in the way of Sufism, particularly valuable for mureed and Pir alike; Murshid's lessons for the Pir give special emphasis to this all-important heart attunement. The Grace of Allah manifests as the mureed's capacity grows; your, or rather Allah's capacity through you, is a grade called fana-fi-Sheikh and if you are seeing Murshid (Moineddin or S.A.M., it doesn't matter) in all beings, the effacement in this stage is improving. The next grade is called fana-fi-Pir, and refers to the same attunement -- but to a Murshid or Saint who has passed from the earth.

Letter Murshid Moineddin to a mureed 1979

