

The Bestowing of Blessing (Selections)

**By
Murshid Samuel Lewis**

Chapter 12 Baraka

It may be wondered why the subjects of magic and sacredness are associated. It has been stated that a study of the history of humanity, and especially of the words dealing with these subjects, prove the relationship between holiness, sacredness, magic and religion. All are connected through the faculty of sympathy, a heart-faculty.

The magus, from whom we get the word magic, was a wise man. He could read signs from phenomena and his ability seemed miraculous to the untrained and ignorant. Among the Persians, Greeks, Hebrews, Hindus and many other peoples the arts connected with religion were regarded as magical. The functions of the priest and soothsayer overlapped, and when they did not the priest often wanted to become a soothsayer and the soothsayer wanted the popularity of the priest. In the end the offices were united and the psychic power which came when there was purity was lost. The magic in the ceremonialism of the ancient mysteries had a sacred beginning; it was preserved for many centuries in Egypt, but mostly in Chaldea, the land of magic, and a little in northern Europe. Anthropologists have given close study to the practice of taboo by uncultured races. These people regard certain places, persons, things, food, etc. as untouchable, which things are sometimes to be shunned, sometimes revered. This custom has no doubt been handed down from the ancient psychism when people knew more directly about the elementals.

Particular attention to such matters is paid in certain Islamic countries, notably Morocco. Although Islam has aided greatly in spreading world culture and in driving out idolatry, it did not destroy magic or the sacred traditions of the countries it invaded. Both Mussulmans and Christians, as well as other missionaries who propagated religion, have tried to assimilate these traditions and refashion them. This is probably for the best from every point of view unless we look upon them as superstition, and people have usually called practices superstitious when they did not know the reasons for them.

In Morocco most of all one hears considerably about “Baraka,” which was originally applied to that which was blessed or was giving out blessing. Places received the epithet Baraka when blessings were supposed to emanate from them. This began with the holy places such as the site of the temple in Jerusalem, the tombs of Mohammed and his first Khalifs in Medina, the Kaaba at Mecca, the cave of Abraham and other places of sacred tradition. Later it came to include many tombs and haunts of holy people.

While taboo has been largely negative, Baraka is essentially positive and life-giving. From Baraka something is always added to life: strength, health, new faculties, new hopes—although in practice it has come to be associated with anything connected with psychic magnetism. The ignorant in Islam have regarded many Sufi saints and sages as “barak” and stood in awe of their persons, their possessions, their tombs and everything associated with their names. This has created a certain amount of opposition to Sufism and to Sufis who have been accused of fostering superstitions. While Sufis do not condone superstition, they have never tried to deprive any people of their conceptions of what is sacred. To the Sufi the idea of sacredness is itself a sacred idea which has spiritual value, and perhaps has Baraka. If the lowly or the learned say a place is sacred, holy, revered, the Sufi accepts it as such and does not reveal his possibly superior knowledge. It is that the idea and ideal of sacredness should be expanded rather than diminished. Therefore the Sufi constantly prays that he be raised above the differences and distinctions that divide, that he might attain the high plane of holy vision.

The personality of the true Murshid has reached a development that it emanates Baraka. This Baraka of the Murshid is sometimes hard to understand. There have been false Sufis who have assumed the possession of Baraka when they did not have it and there have been many pretenders who have not been satisfied until they have proclaimed themselves as Mahdi. This means that there have been those who have deceived themselves and others claimed that they were the representatives of God. Usually after a short career of

success and indulgence wherein the attainment of power was followed by the exhibition of all the weaknesses of human nature, ruin followed in their wake. Terrible is the retribution to false claimants of Baraka, and unfortunately also to their followers and successors who have been drawn into the same psychic stream and maelstrom.

The talib who practices Tasawwuri Murshid may arrive at a true conception and appreciation of holiness. While many long for telepathy and miraculous powers and faculties, few realize that most blessings come from attunement to the teacher and the teachings. Many believe in democracy, are arrogant, have the tendency to criticize, lack faith, are proud or egotistical, cultivate false humility, or are sinful and they cannot comprehend the sacredness of the relation between teacher and pupil. When the teacher holds fast to the Divine Ideal and the pupil holds fast to the ideal which they are capable of holding both may advance together.

The teacher cannot perform the practices for the pupil nor can any soul tread the path for another. Even uttering words such as “Bless you” or “God bless you” does not always bestow Baraka. The false sheikh imparts no Baraka with many words, they do not possess the life from which all blessings emanate. The true Sheikh who is attuned to the chain of Masters gives out blessing naturally even without thought thereon. The pupil may receive these blessings as their heart is open and they are responsive. The pupil, however, is not the one to determine the nature of Baraka or the relation between the teacher and Baraka.

What the pupil can do, what every person can do is to expand the horizon of life and the depth of love. As our feelings grow we grow and our tenderness also increases further capacity for spirituality. Spirituality in turn produces more tenderness and sensitivity. Only by two means has this growth been accomplished: by the way of sorrow and tribulation; or by the way or path of initiation. Some people have considered themselves initiates who are not and some have considered their stations higher than they really are. This attitude prepares the way for false teaching. By false teaching is not meant false doctrine given to the generality, to the multitudes, to the exotericists, or contained in the creeds. False teaching arises out of the assumption of a person being what they are not; it is their acclaimed spirituality, not their philosophy which produces the falseness, for spirituality is not, can never be, based upon claim. It is a spiritually false teacher who claims to give out or to be able to give out what they cannot of spirituality, magnetism, Baraka, power or inspiration. Spirituality belongs to life and is beyond words, creeds, doctrines and thoughts.

The future danger as that of the past may not come from the dead or the slumbering. There is more danger to be feared from those who are psychically awake or sensitive, who delude themselves and others that they have the esoteric doctrine and the spiritual faculties. They often write long discourses, claim communication with spirits and lay special emphasis upon their “new revelation.”

The Sufi can easily guard against them by recalling the words of Solomon, “There is nothing new under the sun.” What is all this pretense?

Now the problem before every initiate is how to increase Baraka. For this there must be a willingness to assume responsibility as well as love and regard for everybody. By building up Baraka, constructive movements and good-will follow. By withdrawing Baraka, Jerusalem was brought to its downfall and by Mohammed imparting Baraka to Mecca and Medina, those cities have remained as sacred places for many centuries.

With the spirit of the new age the need for Baraka becomes greater. That is why the prayer has been given, “May the Message of God reach far and wide.” The repetition of the words of the prayer are indeed the first step. The motions which are performed with prayers increase physical and psychic magnetism. When the words are spoken in reverence and sincerity, there is an increased accommodation for Baraka, and the action may follow the accommodation.

Sufis also have two practices which help increase Baraka by the use of the eyes. When the power is concentrated upon a person, thing, place, affair, incident or thing—that which tends to a point, to contraction or kabz, it is called sulp. When the same power is radiated over a larger area, covering many persons, things,

affairs, incidents, it is called tawajjeh. Sulp and tawajjeh are both used with effect, only we find that Shafayat may use sulp most, while the Sheikh will be employing tawajjeh because the consciousness of Sheikh must become an inclusive consciousness. But both these methods, use of magnetism through the eyes in contraction (sulp) and in expansion or bast (tawajjeh) are valuable. Then one should either hold the thought of the Sufic invocation in the mind as a silent Darood or repeat mentally a sacred phrase, among which the praise to God such as the hallelujah of the Hebrews and the Subhan Allah, Alhamdu-lillah of the Muslims are most efficacious.

Chapter 13

Concerning Urouj

All evolution is really spiritual evolution. Even behind biological evolution there is the hand of Providence and some of the scientists with the keen sight have noticed it to a certain extent. The materialist assumes that the growth of mind is the result of natural forces and the Sufi would not contradict them on this point, only the mystic does not limit the natural forces to the terrestrial forces of Nasut; they not confuse nature with matter, with the physical dense atoms of earth.

Study of the sciences physiology and biochemistry shows that people advanced intellectually do not always have the best physical bodies nor do persons with the best bodies always have the best minds. Yet the mystic and the scientist agree in accepting the contention that balance is best. Balance is the great secret and balance is the great safety valve. But balance is not a standing still, balance is equilibrium in motion, in action. Life is motion and stillness is death; the growth of spirituality in the world corresponds to the growth of life and livingness thereupon. Mystics therefore study the stages of activity to obtain the proper rhythm for every experience.

There are some people who overemphasize the Urouj aspects of life; that is to say they seek to increase the scope of activity, the power used, the rhythm, the motion. Then they may want to change conditions and institutions, and the desire for change may become so great as to blind and intoxicate them to the needs of the world. Others express Urouj in their craving for travel, excitement and speed.

We can see these various tendencies in the career of the famous dancer, Isadora Duncan. She could not stay in a place long, was not faithful to any man, and her dance movements were based upon accelerated rather than equilibrated rhythms. As the scientist-mystic Havelock Ellis has expressed it, the study of the dance reveals the inner psychological condition. And Miss Duncan was ever restless, never satisfied, never stable and passed away a victim of her own karma. Such people need meditation, need peace, need relaxation, need quiet. Even Miss Duncan sensed that, and she sought the center of her being. Unfortunately she found it in the solar plexus which itself is the Urouj center and her continued concentrations only exaggerated her condition until her body could stand it no longer.

At the same time, Urouj is the cause of civilization. Because of Urouj the great inventions like the railroad and tram car, the speedboat and the motorcar and aeroplane have been given to the world. People have come to use the telephone, telegraph and radio, and this from the same Urouj tendency. Tendencies for new things, new views, rapid action, exciting stories, mysteries, desire to explore new lands, all have come from Urouj. Also the desire to go high into the stratosphere, deep into the ocean, to harness power and control the elements, these are signs of Urouj.

Because of Urouj and out of Urouj we have gained much knowledge and yet these increasing activities have brought forth hitherto unknown diseases. The body does not so readily accommodate itself to new changes nor the mind to new habits. Everything new produces a change in rhythm and a change in breathing. On the one hand constant Urouj may lead to egotism, selfishness, speed and nervousness and so bring on disease and disaster. On the other hand there are tendencies to rapid and impulsive thinking and overconfidence, the fruits of which are not good. All this shows also the absence of intuition, balance and meditation.

Out of this has come the unrest, riots, mob rules and revolutions and wars which are again disturbing the earth. People lose the self-control and ultimately get out of harmony with others. The existence of starvation,

injustice, selfishness and tyranny are made the excuses for destructive action. The tyrants and despots that have appeared on earth and seized power have come because of Urouj; they can be stopped when Urouj is stopped.

Just as Urouj represents the first stages of activity, with their vigorous growth, so Zaval represents the last stages of activity when there is diminishing movement (not stagnation). There are people of Zaval in India, capable of assimilating knowledge, but they have become old and lag behind the times, although neither stagnated nor still.

The Zaval state of slowing down rapid rhythms is excellent as a check upon excitement, frivolity and nervousness. Uncontrolled Zaval can be even worse than Urouj for it lacks the stamina to oppose, it is weak in resistance. It may lead to passivism and does not lead necessarily to justice, kindness or friendliness. Democracy in a country of the educated means liberty and in the country of the ignorant means tyranny. The less developed people may have more liberty with a king than without one; they need guidance.

As we live in an age of rapidity it becomes necessary to adjust ourselves to it, to maintain our rhythms in adjustment to the conditions. When this cannot be done we cannot always avoid ailments. It would not be wrong to say that great epidemics such as the influenza have risen from this cause, through lack of psychic adjustment. The student on the path may protect himself against such disturbances by carefully watching and guarding the breath.

The Urouj condition is dominant in childhood and youth when it is especially needed, also when there is excitement or change. People who have been rich become poor, people lose positions, rank, power, eat wrong foods, depend upon mechanical devices and otherwise lead artificial lives. Thus they pass through all sorts of Urouj conditions. Influenza may be defined as a disease, usually occurring in epidemic form, arising from an excess of Urouj particularly in the psychic stream. Thought as well as habit sometimes diminishes resistances to disease. Guarding against a habit may bring too much concentration upon it and strengthen the habit instead of destroying it. It is better for the initiate to watch the breath. With proper breathing we can face all the vicissitudes of life without harm, and the Sufic instructions offer practical means therefore.

Chapter 14

Mastery of Rhythm

The secret of the power of the Sufi comes in his control of the rhythms Urouj, Kemal and Zaval. Without Urouj life does not persist. Urouj comes at the birth of life, for first must come the birth and then the action. However, if the enthusiasms of action are not checked, the life may be wasted away. Masters of Urouj can make or unmake it. If Urouj is not controlled, we waste our sustenance and burn our candle at both ends, so to speak. Without Urouj there is no candle, no light, no life. Disease may arise from either source: too much Urouj or absence of it.

The steady mobile rhythm which has been called Kemalic is usually best and leads toward perfection (Kemal). There are different rhythms for sowing, plowing, planting, eating, reading, weaving, so each has its own Kemalic rhythm. The knowledge of mysticism and the science of breath enable us to discover and control these rhythms.

As we advance on the spiritual path our responsibility may grow and our influence may extend far and wide. The master of breath may affect the atmosphere equivalent to the horizon of their own thoughts. If they can control thought by feeling, that influence will be spiritually beneficent. And as they grow still more, their spiritual perfection may enable them to control affairs around them, even to affect the weather—although the initiate may seldom, if ever, consciously try that, for they seek to maintain their attunement to the Divine Will.

To determine the weather may not be so difficult as it seems. Of course, we have to feel the universal rhythm, for by and through that rhythm the seasons come and go, the plants are nourished, and there are normal periods of cold and heat, rainfall and dryness. When the seasons are irregular, that may be due to irregularity

in the lives of human beings. If we could lead natural lives, even the seasons might maintain more regular rhythms.

To try to influence the weather without feeling the universal rhythms may belong to science or to magic. However, if a magician be able to cause the rain to fall out of season, although in appearance that might show them to be master of the water element, they can thereby become indebted to all the elements, for they have interfered with the universal rhythms. On occasions prophets have, in the name of God apparently brought the rain and there are instances where the multitudes have done this through prayer.

There is a story where the Jews of Jerusalem accomplished this once many years ago. There had been a famine and dry spell and the people were complaining. They were beginning to be excited and to blame the Jews. The Jews have a custom of praying for rain beginning on the day of their celebration called "The Rejoicing of the Law" (Simchath Torah). On that day they went out on a pilgrimage to a holy mountain and were especially dressed for the occasion.

The people went to an official who was also a Sufi. He sent for the Chief Rabbi and said he would have to pray for rain. It was a very hot day and some weeks before the holy season of the prayers. The Rabbi was convinced that his people would be in danger, so he summoned them and he and the other Rabbis put on their winter clothing and went out in the heat on the pilgrimage. But they did not go far; clouds suddenly appeared and they returned home drenched. This is a well authenticated story.

Beyond the universal rhythm there is the cosmic rhythm which can be reached only by adepts, prophets and sages. It requires prayer, meditation and mastery of breath, but most of all selflessness. It would appear that the universal rhythms have a certain relationship with the mind and the cosmic rhythm with the sphere of heart. By the opening of the heart man can become an instrument for the expression of cosmic rhythm.

Emperor Akbar tried to rule his great empire by maintaining rapport with the cosmic rhythm. In one sense cosmic rhythm is nothing but Dharma, spiritual harmony. This harmony does affect humanity; we live and move and have our being in God without always realizing it. We live in a ocean of air which has a pressure of fifteen pounds to the square inch, often without even knowing it. When there is a storm we can feel the horizontal pressure of the wind, but we do not feel the vertical pressure of the air, we have become accustomed to it. So also we are living in mighty cosmic currents of which we are largely in ignorance.

The wise may be able to perceive the affairs of the world before their occurrence and even to soften the blows therefrom. That is why pure prayer may be successful. Ordinary prayer does not reach the highest plane, it may not touch the sphere of heart. Although sometimes the prayers of the generality have been successful, mostly it is not so, for there is something lacking. The initiates, however, do not oppose prayer for they know its value even in the state of limitation. Even if it has no greater effect, prayer sometimes brings a calmness which enables the devotee to experience storms and difficulties without being overpowered by them.

There is one spiritual way by which weather may be controlled, although the sage may be unconscious of it because of their selflessness. This comes through calming the mind within. The calmer the breath, the calmer becomes the air which is the ocean of breath. This ocean of breath may be controlled from within by a great soul, and by such means the Kutub and Ghous help to pacify the world. By this means they spread Baraka into the breath and every breath taken with the praise of God on the lips or in the mind or in the heart may help to radiate Baraka.

By this same principle meditation halls can become the centers of inspiration and healing power, and therefore centers of radiating Baraka. The initiate is called upon to send Baraka in all directions to humanity for every holy purpose. Healing itself is a specialized art in this line, and in the greater sense, holding thoughts of praise for God and blessing for humanity enables the devotee to increase the Baraka in the world, and thereby to overcome the confusion of Nufsaniat (Samsara).