

Descent And Lineage

Excerpts from

THE WAY OF BANI 'ALAWI

Of: Al-Habib 'Abdallah
bin 'Alawi bin Hasan al-'Attas

Naf'anAllahu Bih

Translated by: Dr. Mostafa al-Badawi

We are fortunate to have in our possession the *kitab* (book) titled **Al-Ilm un-Nabraas fi't Tanbeeh 'alaa Minhaaj i'l Akyaas** by Tahir al-Anfaas al-Habib 'Abdallah bin 'Alawi bin Hasan al-'Attas, which has been translated as **The Way of Bani 'Alawi** by Dr. Mostafa al-Badawi. First the noble descent and lineage of the Bani 'Alawi is explained after which excerpts from the book are presented so that we can learn about the lives of the *Awliya* Allah or Friends of Allah.

The Bani 'Alawi are the *ashraaf sadat* (noble descendants) of our beloved Prophet Muhammad Mustafa *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*. They trace their ancestry to Imam 'Ali Al-'Uraydi, son of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, son of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, son of Imam 'Ali Zainul 'Abideen, son of Imam Husain, son of Sayyidina 'Ali and Sayyidatina Fatima az-Zahra, the blessed daughter of our Beloved Prophet Muhammad Mustafa *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*.

Our Beloved Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* is *Khaatam-un-Nabiyyeen* (the last of the Prophets, *'alayhimussalam*).

Sayyidina 'Ali *Rady Allahu 'Anhu* is the Gate of Knowledge.

Sayyidatina Fatima az-Zahra *Rady Allahu 'Anha* is the leader of the women in Paradise.

Sayyidina Imam Husain *Rady Allahu 'Anhu* is the leader of the martyrs.

Imam 'Ali Zainul 'Abideen is *As-Sajjaad*, the pride of all worshippers of Allah.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir is a sea of knowledge.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is Imam u'l Muslimeen of his time.

Imam 'Ali al-'Uraydi was the blessed son of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq. He was born in Madina. After his father passed away, he left Madina for the town of Al-'Urayd where he became the *shaykh* of all Bani Hashem and the *Naqib* (prefect) of the descendants of the noble Prophet, *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*. He was a man of great knowledge, a transmitter of Hadith Shareef (the blessed Prophetic Sayings), and he has been quoted in a large number of books written by the famous '*ulama* of his and subsequent ages.

He had a son named Imam Muhammad who was also born in Madina. After his father passed away, he left for Basra in Iraq where he became the Naqib of the *Ahl-u'l Bayt* (the blessed Household of our Beloved Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*). He was a man of great learning who preferred isolation and was known for his *zuhd* (abstinence).

Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-'Uraydi had a son named Imam 'Isa. He was also a great '*alim* (learned scholar) and '*arif* (spiritual master) who was known as al-Naqib because he shouldered the responsibility of this position in Basra.

Imam 'Isa bin Muhammad had a son named Imam Ahmad who was born in Basra. Tabari, the famous '*alim* and historian, held him in great esteem and gave him immense respect. He kept the company of Bishr ibn Al-Harith among others. He performed Hajj in 318 A.H. and migrated to Hadramaut in that year where he called people to Allah. He was given the title Al-Muhajir (the Emigrant) primarily because he had travelled the path to Allah and secondarily because he had emigrated from Iraq to Hadramaut where his descendants became the illustrious '*Alawi sadat*. He passed away in 345 A.H.

His grandson who also became a great Imam was the first one to be named '*Alawi* from whom the name Bani '*Alawi* is derived. Thus all the '*Alawis* of Hadramaut, India, Hijaz, Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar (formerly Burma), and the rest of the world relate to Imam '*Alawi* bin '*Ubaidullah* bin Ahmad bin '*Isa* Al-Muhajir who traces his ancestry directly to Rasulullah *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*.

Naf'anAllahu bihim, may Allah *Sub'hanahu wa Ta'ala* make us spiritually benefit from them all, *Aameen*.

What follow are excerpts from the book.

"Thus it is known that the method of the Bani 'Alawi Sadat is nothing but the Book and Sunnah. They have different degrees with Allah and He is Aware of what they do".

"This is the method of the Husaini Bani 'Alawi Sadat of Hadramaut, they transmitted it from father to son and from generation to generation , and it was handed down from Imam al-Husain to Zain ul Abedin to Al-Baqir, Al-Sadiq and all the great ones among the *salaf* (righteous predecessors), until today".

"They are most concerned with the sciences of the Book, Sunnah and Tasawwuf, especially **Kitab-ul-Tanbih**, **Al-Muhazib**, the books of Imam al-Ghazali and those of Imam Muhyuddin Al-Nawawi.

They paid great attention to the books of Imam al-Ghazali, especially **Ihya'**, **Albaseet**, **Alwajiz** and **Al-Khulasa**. They also paid great attention to Hadith and many among them reached the rank of *hafiz* (who knew the books of Hadith Shareef by heart)".

"Our master Imam 'Aydaros bin 'Umar al-Habshi has written in his book **Taqd Alyawaqit Aljawharia** that the 'Alawi are all Sunnis, Shafe'is, Ash'aris".

"The more they were raised in (spiritual) ranks and stations the more they felt that they were the most insignificant of Allah's creation. They took on the best and purest of moral qualities, established themselves in sciences of the outward, and became such that whenever one of them is seen Allah is immediately remembered".

""The majority of them prefer isolation and dislike prominence and fame. This was indicated by our master Shaykh Abu Bakr Al-'Aydaros, who himself was one of the most illustrious and famous, when he said: "Would that we never had known anyone and that none had ever known us, would that we never were, would that we were never born". Some of them preferred humility and an ascetic life, they were those whom "the ignorant thinks wealthy because of their integrity", content with what little they got from *dunya* (the world), hidden and unknown, their state veiled to the extent of being almost totally unperceivable.

Our master the *qutb* 'Abdallah bin 'Alawi Al-Haddad, who is a critical expert, described those glorious ones thus:

*Their poor is free, their wealthy spend
in the best of ways, hoping for reward from Allah*

*They are dressed in piety and modesty
their aim is The Merciful, when they speak and act*

*Their words are true and their actions guidance
their secrets are empty of cheating and rancour*

*Submitting to their Lord, standing before His Face
imploring Him, Praised and Majestic is He beyond comparison"".*

""And our master the *qutb* 'Ali bin Abu-Bakr has said in his book **Albarqa Al-mushayika** in describing them and their behaviour:

"The descendants of Imam Shihab-ul-Deen Ahmad bin 'Isa came to Hadramaut and settled in Tarim. They are high and noble, their characters are lofty, their merits brilliant, their selves upright, their determination 'Alawi, their wills Mustafawi.....

They erased their forms, annihilated their selves, and preferred others to themselves even when they were in dire need. They did not uphold their rights against others, erased their perception of themselves, and while behaving thus, never felt they were granting others any favours"".

""And he has said somewhere else, may Allah be pleased with him: "There are among Bani-'Alawi many *fuqaha* (jurists), *'ulama* (learned), Imams and venerable shaykhs, *aqtab*, *awtad*, and *abdal* (spiritual masters). They are *'ibad awliya* masters who have turned away from everything but Allah, and whose hearts have become totally immersed in His love. They have joined the perfection of Nabawi honour and Mustafawi lineage to the perfection of following the Book and Sunna, together with sound beliefs. They have received the Muhammadi inheritance, Ahmadi secrets, and the 'Isawi, Musawi, Ibrahimi, and Prophetic heritage.""

"It has been said that the knowledge of (spiritual) secrets and the (spiritual) states of the *'arifin* (spiritual masters) are beyond the limits of reason and not subject to the power of thought or to acquisition by action".

""Shaykh Zarruq has said in his **Rules of Sufism**: "Knowledge is built on research and investigation. (Spiritual) States are built on surrender and belief. When an *'arif*

(spiritual master) speaks from the perspective of knowledge, his words are weighed by their origin in the Book, Sunna, and the sayings of the *salaf* (righteous predecessors) , for knowledge is weighed according to its source. When he speaks from the perspective of (spiritual) state, his (spiritual) tasting is accepted with no objections, for it is only reached in a way similar to his, it is according to his perception, and the imparting of its knowledge depends on his honesty. He is not to be imitated, the validity of this is not general, but limited to those who are like him"".

"All of this, of course, belonged to the source of their perfect nobility, their guide on the ideal even path, for he is, blessings and peace be upon him and his House, the source of unseen secrets and lights of the *Malakut* (Heavenly Kingdom), and whatever anyone receives is but an atom from his overflowing ocean and overwhelming secret.

*The All-Merciful has not sent and sends not
a mercy that ascends or descends*

*In the Malakut of Allah or His Mulk,
of anything particular or general*

*But that Taha, the Chosen, Ahmad,
His beloved, His selected Messenger*

*Mediates it and is its source,
this is known by all men of reason".*

Allah *Sub'hanahu wa Ta'ala* says in the Holy Qur'an Kareem:

And those who strive in Us, We shall guide them to our paths and Allah is with those who excel.

You (O Beloved Prophet) do guide to a straight path, the path of Allah to Whom belongs what is in the heavens and earth. It is to Allah that affairs return.

Here end the translations of verses from the Qur'an. Now to return to quotations from the book.

""Imam 'Abdallah bin 'Alawi Al-Haddad has said: ""The way of Bani 'Alawi is to have accomplished beliefs (*aqida*), attachment to the *shaykh* (spiritual master), concern

from the *shaykh*, and education through the secret. This is the method of the *salaf* (righteous predecessors) such as Hasan al-Basri and others.

Know that the path of the Sadat of the family of Abi-'Alawi is the straight path of Allah. They are among those to whom He has granted the favours of His obedience and that of His Messenger, and the company of the prophets, *siddiqin* (truthful), *shuhada* (witnesses), and *salihin* (pious), and they are the best of companions. Whatever differs from their way and is contrary to it is of the dispersing paths leading away from that of Allah, for their method is based on the beliefs of their *salaf salih* (righteous predecessors), on sound *taqwa* (reverential awe of Allah), renunciation of *dunya* (the worldly), maintaining humility, embracing worship, continuous invocations, feeling fearful, perfection of certainty, excellent character, reformation of intentions, purification of hearts, and avoiding visible and invisible defects.

The reality of the good among people, and the best, is that they are so with Allah. What the words "with Allah" mean pertain to His knowledge of His creation, no one encompasses any of His knowledge save what He wills, His Throne englobes the heavens and earth, and it tires Him not to sustain them, and He is the Exalted, the Formidable.

The most exalted and great among people are those who are nearest to the Exalted, the Great. Nearness to Him is according to the strength of *iman* (faith), certainty, *ihsan* (spiritual excellence), upholding obligatory observances, performing additional devotions in abundance, and taking on the attributes of the Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him and his House, for he has taken on the attributes of Allah Ta'ala, mercy, compassion, transcendence from imperfections and freedom from flaws, giving security, knowledge of the realities of things, exaltation in rank, and all of his other excellent attributes. This is manifest truth, to mention it is to make truth clear by the will of Allah Ta'ala.

There is nothing in Tarim but the words of Allah and His Messenger, and Al-Faqih Al-Muqaddam. The way of the *fugara* (those needy before Allah) came to us from none other than him. Our *salaf* (righteous predecessors) have established matters for us, and we shall follow no others.

Two people deserve the gratitude of Bani 'Alawi, Shaykh Ahmad bin 'Isa who removed them away from *bid'a* (heretical innovation) and *fitna* (instigation), and Al-Faqih Al-Muqaddam Imam Muhammad bin 'Ali, who relieved them from carrying

arms and who, when he became a *faqir*, broke his weapons""'. (Note: Imam Al-Faqih Al-Muqaddam came eight generations after Shaykh Ahmad bin 'Isa).

""Our master the Imam of the sciences of deduction and of transmission, Ahmad bin Zayn al-Habshi, may Allah make us benefit from him, has described the method of his forefathers and their party the path of Sadat Abi-'Alawi as: "Knowledge and the practice of it, scrupulousness and fear of Allah, and sincerity with Him, Exalted and Majestic is He"".

""The Imam, Shaykh of Islam, 'Abdallah bin Ahmad Ba-Sudan (the Salman of the House), may Allah be pleased with him, has said in his book **Al-Futuhāt Al-'Arshiah**: "Our 'Alawi Sadat strive, show zeal, and take great care in researching and realising the sciences of transaction, in knowledge, practice, and taste"".

""Our master Habib 'Abdal-Rahman bin 'Abdallah bin Ahmad Al-Faqih Ba-'Alawi was asked about the way of the Sadat of the family of Abi-'Alawi. He replied thus: "Know that the path of the Sadat of the family of Abi-'Alawi is one of the *sufi tariqas* founded on firm adherence to the Book and Sunna, its head is sincerity in being needy and seeing the favours as being freely granted. This is the science of sufism, to use it to travel to Allah Ta'ala is the path of the sufis, its outward is acquiring knowledge and practising it, its inward is to sincerely direct oneself toward Allah Ta'ala in the manner which pleases Him, for the purpose which pleases Him.

They are turned toward Allah and to everything that may draw them nearer to Him. They practice the acceptance of pledges (*'ahd*), transmission of *Zhikr (talqin)*, wearing of *khirqā*, spiritual retreat, striving, and keeping company. The majority of their strivings are in purifying the heart in preparation for exposure to the bestowal of the favours of proximity, on the path to wise guidance, and to drawing nearer to Allah Ta'ala, in the company of those who guide. Together with sincerity in directing oneself toward Allah, the favour of Allah is necessary"".

"Those among them who were wealthy loved to build and maintain mosques, being conscious of the merits of such things, as mentioned in hadith. Some of them have erected many mosques and have assigned for their maintenance and illumination regular sources of income. Their method, may Allah be pleased with them, is to divide and organise their time between worship, gatherings of *'ilm* (knowledge), *adab* (good behaviour), *awrad* and *ahzab* (voluntary regular devotions).

Some of them have collected *dua* (supplications) and *zhikr* (remembrance of Allah) to be recited every day and night, mostly from the *dua* of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, and from transmitted hadith. Some of them have given them the plural form to be recited collectively, so that the benefit may become general. And some assemble gatherings to recite one thousand *tasbih* and one thousand *tahlil*, and offer the recompense to some of the dead, with the aim of receiving help from everyone whom they know had been from the *saliheen* (the righteous)."

""Our master Imam-ul-Ahqaf Umar bin Saqqaf has said: "I exhort you to be arduous in following the way of the *salaf salih* from the House of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him and his House especially the family of Abi Alawi. Hold fast to it and you will win great benefits and massive gifts. The essence of their method and its summation is the organisation and allocation of their time to devotions, assemblies of *ilm*, courtesies, and their *awrad* and *ahzab* (regular voluntary devotions) which are derived from the Prophetic Light, such as the *awrad* of our master, Shaykh Abdallah Al-Haddad, his *ahzab*, Rateb, and other well-known *awrad* of our predecessors"".

"They strove to their utmost in worship, got rid of habits and refused passions and desires. When night fell, they stood on their feet, laid their faces to the ground, and let flow their tears.

They concentrated on their inner selves and regarded this as more important. They used to refer to one another the responsibility of giving fatwa (religious verdict), out of fear of Allah. They were asked many questions but answered only a few, they chose from actions the most wearisome, and from obediences the most precious. They always strove to avoid controversy and the areas of disagreement between '*ulama* (scholars).

They concealed their worship for fear of falling into ostentation (*ria'*). Should they be giving advice to people and fear, during this, that they may fall into *ria'*, they would leave this activity for another which did not present the same risk, and if they were noticed to weep during the recitation of Qur'an, hadith, or teaching, they would immediately turn it into a smile".

""Imam Abdallah bin 'Alawi al-Haddad has said: "Fame is not the pattern of Sadat Abi-'Alawi. If any of them likes it, then he is small, i.e. in rank, he will however change and dislike it, this is how Allah educates and refines them. Those among them who are perfect neither seek nor want it"".

""Our master Habib Taher Bin Hussein Bin Taher has said: "*Taqwa* has been transmitted in its entirety, wholly and in detail, by our forefathers and *salaf salih* through their transmitted pattern of behaviour, which is the satisfying method and the even path, the most secure hand-hold. It is a clear guiding light, as brilliant as the sun in the midday sky. It is the path of the Messenger and his rightly guided successors, which every seeker was commanded to grasp firmly and securely. It is transmitted through a sound chain extending up to their grandfather the Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him.

As a general indication one can say that it is sciences and practices, purification of the mind from lowly qualities and adorning it with praiseworthy ones, spending one's time in different kinds of obediences and good actions which remain, soundness of intention, keeping the company of the best of people, fighting the worst of people, remaining unknown, avoidance and isolation from the mob, acquiring the noblest of attributes, upright selves, exalted determination, protective scrupulousness, accomplished renunciation, gentleness, sobriety, leaving everyday habitual concerns and concentrating on the Appointed Day"".

"As for the paths of other sound *sufi tariqas*, apart from that of the Sadat Bani 'Alawi, they do not differ from it in their essentials, nor in the reality of travelling (on the spiritual path) and attainment, but only in forms, appearances, and different drinking sources, all of which are aimed at making the seeker's road shorter. The most that can be said is that these differences are similar to the differences in non-essentials between the different schools of *fiqh* (law), differences in secondary matters and small details, and therefore one can say that in reality there is no difference. The one who attains certainty through realisation sees that the truth is one, that there are neither differences nor distinctions between the people of truth and reality, and that no matter how many details there are, the essence is unitary.

They are agreed that a *mourid* (disciple) should not be allowed to take different paths and move from one *shaykh* to another, this may do him harm by fragmenting his determination (*himma*), and dispersing his collectedness. For in his beginnings his heart is as if wounded and would thus suffer if exposed to changes and different winds, until it heals and closes at the hands of the physician it had become attached to, the healer who knows by realisation the cure for it".

""Our master Imam 'Aidaroos bin 'Umar Al-Habshi has written in his book **Tqd**

Alyawaqit Aljawhariya: "Among those who shared in what has been mentioned of perfection, sciences and behaviour are their brothers the Sadat Ahdalia, and the elect of the Sufis from the Hassani Sadat Shaykh Ali bin Abdallah Al-Shazhili the Shaykh of the Shazilis, his Shaykh Abd-as-Salam ibn Mashish, Ahmad Al-Rifai, the author of **Dalail-ul-Khairat** Al-Jazuli, whose disciples numbered twelve thousand *mourids*, Al-Sanussi, al-Badawi and all others who have attained the Highest *Qutbia* and the Greatest *Siddiqia*""".

Naf'anAllahu bihim: may Allah, The Glorified and the Exalted, make us benefit from all the spiritual masters mentioned in this article, *Aameen Yaa Rabbal 'Aalameen*.

Source: Al-Habib Abdallah bin 'Alawi bin Hasan al-Attas, **Al-Tlm un Nabraas fi't Tanbeeh 'alaa Minhajj i'l Akyaas (The Way of Bani 'Alawi)**, tr. by Dr. Mostafa al-Badawi, 3rd. edition, Cairo, 1399 A.H/1979 C.E.

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