

## The Stages of Mystical Behavior

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### Abstract

The spiritual exercises practiced by the wayfarers on the path of Truth should be done in different stages, so that the traveler on the mystical path gradually and rightly realizes spiritual perfection. Most mystics and scholars believe in the existence of seven stages – as number seven is always revered and held sacrosanct in our religious texts and national narratives. Some thinkers, like Ibn Sina, contend that the first step is the seeking or demanding, other philosophers maintain that it is doubt, while others, including Khwaja Abdullah and Imam Khomeini, believe that it is the awakening. Of course, such different views share similarities. The authors of this study will attempt to highlight the frequency of the stages of the Truth path wayfaring as well as discuss the differences and similarities on the stations of wayfaring, while trying to choose the best view on the order of the stages of wayfaring, especially the first stage. Of these stations, the valleys of intention, seeking, repentance and penitence, vigilance, sorrow and annihilation have the highest frequency in the view of authorities.

**Keywords:** Mystical journey and wayfaring, mystical stations, valleys of wayfaring, the stations of the travelers

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## **Introduction**

The term *tasawwof* (Sufism) in Arabic means “wearing woolen clothes” – a lifestyle custom practiced by some Muslims in past eras as a sign of abandoning the luxuries of life and caring about Allah alone, and because they usually wore woolen clothes, they became known as Sufis. Some influential sufi thinkers provided different definitions of Sufism as mentioned below:

In *al-Luma'*, it was narrated that Junayd was asked about Sufism and he answered: "Sufism is to be with Allah without dependence on anything (else)." He assessed that: "Sufism is a battle in which there is no peace" (Sarraj 1380 Sh,25). 'Attar in *Tadhkirat al-awliya'* and Qushayri in his *al-Risalah*, as quoted from Ma'ruf Karkhi, said: "Sufism is finding the truth of existence, and the disappointment from what people have" (Qushayri 1388 Sh, 127-28). Abu Bakr Kattani defines Sufism as "purification and vision" (Qushayri 1388 Sh, 127-28). Sufism consists of two truths: the first is the purification of the heart and refining one's interior, which refers to practical mysticism and traveling to Allah; the second, witnessing truths and reaching spiritual realities, which refers to theoretical mysticism. Sinhun, asked about Sufism, noted: "Sufism is to own nothing, and not to be owned (Qushayri 1388 Sh, 127-28). Ibn 'Arabi gives an important definition: "Sufism is to adhere to the laws of religion in the exterior and interior, which is the very Divine Practice" (Ibn 'Arabi, n.d., 28). Sayyid Haydar Amuli believes that Sufism means turning to divine moral precepts in speech, action and thoughts, and maintained that a Sufi is a person who does not oppose the laws of religion and in reality acts according to the truth of religion (Amuli 1386 Sh, 59-60).

## The Stations of Spiritual Wayfaring

Historically, the first person who segregated the stations of spiritual wayfaring into seven was Muhammad ibn Ali al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi in his book *Manazil al-qasidin ila Allah (The Stations of the Travelers to Allah)*. The reason these valleys are often divided into seven stages is that number seven is sacred in our religious texts and national culture. For example, in Firdawsi's *Shahnameh*, both Rustam and Isfandiyar pass through seven stages. However, the mystics after Tirmidhi further divided the seven stages into forty, a hundred, a thousand, and even a thousand and one stations. Some Sufi scholars, according to Ruzbahan Baqli, have termed these thousand stations as "the one thousand sciences" (Dhu l-Nun), "one thousand palaces" (Junayd), or "one thousand obstacles" (Junayd) ('Attar 1383 Sh, 700-1). For example, Khwaja Abdullah Ansari holds that the stations of the travelers on the mystical path are a hundred. In this article, besides delivering an explanation of the stations of mystical wayfaring, we intend to discuss the similarities and differences of the views of mystics, scholars and philosophers, such as Ibn Sina on the order of the stations.

Some researchers argue that the mystical journey comprises fourteen main stages: repentance, spiritual struggle, solitude, seclusion, piety, asceticism, reticence, fear and hope, sorrow, hunger, abstinence, humility, and modesty (Sajjadi 1375 Sh, 475). In the following section, each of these stations will be explained from the perspective of the mystics, the scholars, and the philosophers respectively.

### 1. Repentance

Repentance means turning away from wrongdoing and sins. 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani states that repentance means refraining from opposing the law of the Real, and until the wayfarer knows that what he is doing violates the law of the Real, his repentance is not accepted (Kashani

1354 Sh, 21). Repentance is of three types: General repentance, which belongs to all people; special repentance, particular to the immaculate; and very special repentance, exclusive to wayfarers (Tusi 1361 Sh, 71-72). Sarraj also in *Al-Luma'* contends that repentance is the first station (Sarraj 1371 Sh, 84). Generally speaking, repentance is deemed as the first station by almost all schools of mysticism. Mansoori Larijani argues that repentance shall meet three conditions: “Regret, apology, and abstention from wrongdoing and disobedience” (Mansoori Larijani 1391 Sh, 264). ‘Attar, however, maintains that desire is the first station; he writes:

When you come to the valley of seeking

You will meet with a hundred miseries each moment.

In every breath, a hundred adversaries come in

The parrot of turning flies is there...

You must wallow in your blood,

And you must leave all...

When your heart is cleansed from attributes

Thy essence will catch the light of the Real. (‘Attar 1384 Sh, 180-81)

‘Attar believes that the light of seeking is reflected upon the heart of the wayfarer, out of divine care and kindness. Hence it is said that: “The seeking is denied and the pathway is locked, whereas the Beloved is infinite.” (Sam‘ani 1391 Sh, 449). Khwaja Abdullah Ansari states: “The mystic seeks because he has found, not that he finds because he is seeking, as the obedient finds obedience due to pure devotion, not that he attains pure devotion because of his obedience, and he finds the means because of seeking for meaning, not that he finds meaning

because of the means” (Ansari 1393 Sh, 55). Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadani takes a step backward arguing that the first stage in the spiritual journey is “doubt” and the second is seeking. Thus, the travelers down the mystical path always maintain doubt alongside with seeking, although they believe that not all doubts are equally valid. Nasafi, however, argues that the intention is the first station, and hence the traveler should look for a spiritual Master (Raisi 1394 Sh, 72). Of course, it would not be incorrect to think intention is equal to seeking, as intention and demand always collocate with one another. When the wayfarer decides to follow the mystical path, selecting a guide could be the most significant stage. On this path, the traveler needs two types of a guide and Master. One is the general guide and the other is a special guide. The general guide is the Master who guides the wayfarer through the initial stages of the spiritual journey. However, when the traveler realizes the stage of witnessing and manifestation of the Attributes and Essence of God within himself, he no longer needs a general guide but a special instructor, who, according to some Shiite mystics, are the Prophet, peace be upon him and his household, and his deputies; and along his life, he will remain in constant need for the companionship and instruction of the special guide. From the viewpoint of Nasafi, the intention means not only that the traveler should seek God, purity, moral conduct, knowledge or intuition and unveiling, but also he should make all that is potential within him actual (Nasafi 1386 Sh, 138-39).

Imam Khomeini, like Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, holds that the first stage is awakening and that man should, first of all, wake up from the slumber of ignorance; so that in subsequent stages, he seeks the other valleys of wayfaring (Khomeini 1357 Sh, 77). Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, as mentioned hereinabove, maintains that the first step is awakening and the following stage is repentance; however, he believes the importance of the former surpasses that of the latter, as a prerequisite for repentance

is the awakening and awareness of the sins and wrongdoing we perpetrate (Ansari 1386 Sh, 6). Ibn Sina, on the other hand, argues that the first stage of the spiritual journey is determination, i.e. one's inclination to the firm divine rope, following one's acceptance of God that takes two forms: (1) acceptance by demonstration, and (2) acceptance by faith. In his view, the mystic in this stage is called "the seeker" (Ibn Sina 1368 Sh, 446). Ruzbahan Baqli also believes the first step is preparation and readiness (Ruzbahan Baqli 1973, 20), which follows the stages of determination and seeking.

## **2. The Spiritual Struggle**

The second station in the mystical journey is spiritual struggle. This term refers to obliging one's soul to endure hardship and resist carnal wishes and desires, until the wayfarer realizes spiritual stations (Sajjadi 1375 Sh, 697): "Those who struggle for Our sake We will guide them onto our ways" (*Quran 29:69*). Allamah Tabataba'i calls this stage a resolution, i.e. there are multiple dangers and difficulties on the way of the traveler that seek to dissuade him from the journey; but the traveler armed with patience, trust and firm resolution, stands against problems and overcomes obstacles one by one. He should never be in fear, and so can proceed to higher stages (Hosseini Tehrani 1389 Sh, 90-91). Among the old mystics, only 'Attar believes love is one of the stages of wayfaring, and holds that love is the second stage in the spiritual journey. However, unlike 'Attar, some thinkers use the term "*hubb*" (affection) instead of "*ishq*" (love), as the word "*ishq*" in the Sufi lexicon, is used in its literal Quranic meaning i.e. "*hubb*". This term cannot be defined or transmitted to others ('Attar 1367 Sh, 703). 'Attar writes:

Following this valley, love does appear,

He is drowned in fire, who reaches there...

The lover is he who resembles fire,  
Hot in the face, burning and rebellious.  
It is the moment that knows in faith nor disbelief;  
It is the speck that knows no doubt or certitude.  
For him, good and evil are the same,  
He is like love neither this nor that... (‘Attar 1384 Sh, 186)

### **3. Solitude**

The next stage is solitude. Shah Ni‘matullah Wali says solitude means resisting one’s self and undertaking many ascetic practices, such as “eating little, sleeping little, enduring the time, speaking little, avoiding the companionship of people, keeping constantly the remembrance of the All-knowing King, and rejecting selfish passing thoughts” (Sajjadi 1375 Sh, 359).

Solitude has two types: One is general solitude, where the wayfarer turns aside from whatsoever other than God. The other is a special solitude, where the wayfarer keeps himself away from all people; in general, it means “solitude and distancing self from crowded and noisy places, and from hearing any sound that confuses his spiritual state; the other is the lawfulness of the place and its purity, up to the ceiling and the walls.” (Hosseini Tehrani 1389 Sh, 108). However, Sarraj believes that the third step is piety and refraining from doing the prohibited and the detestable (Sarraj 1371 Sh, 84).

### **4. Isolation**

Seclusion, loneliness, sincere devotion and withdrawal are used as synonyms of isolation. The spiritual Masters take the pathway of

isolation and seclusion to stop their outward senses and turn their attention to the Real (Sajjadi 1375 Sh, 579). Baqli maintains that the fourth stage is Fearing God (Baqli Shirazi 1371 Sh, 84), but Sarraj believes that it is poverty (Sarraj 1371 Sh, 84), unlike 'Attar who argues that poverty and annihilation are the final stages on the path. Sarraj divides the destitute into three groups:

1. The Intimate: those who in appearance and reality do not want anything from anyone and do not expect anything from anyone, and if anything is given to them, they would not accept it.

2. The Most Truthful: the poor does not own or possess anything and does not show his poverty. As a result, he does not demand anything from anyone. However, if something is given to him without asking, he will accept it.

3. The Truthful: The poor does not own anything and if he needs something, he turns to his friends to satisfy the need. However, on asking for anything from his friends, he gives alms in charity (Sarraj 1371 Sh, 91-93). Hujwiri also states: "In true friendship, neither the friend asks a friend, nor the friend denies his friend anything .... He who is named by the Real a mendicant, though a prince he is a mendicant" (Hujwiri 1390 Sh, 35).

Some researchers believe that most of the mystics believe that the fourth step down the mystical path is piety, which makes common people more intimate, yet it is not unnecessary for the elite, it also indicates a lower determination. Mansoori Larijani divides piety into three levels:



1. Avoiding whatsoever is dubious, of course after avoiding the unlawful and the illegal.
2. Ignoring the luxuries of life in order to manage time in the best way.
3. Going beyond piety and looking down at the world of asceticism and ascetic practices. The wayfarer should aim higher than his deeds to reach the valley of the truth (Mansoori Larijani 1391 Sh, 268-69).

It is interesting to note that the station of the mystic is meant to be higher than that of the pious. Even philosophers, such as Ibn Sina, held a distinction between the pious, the devout, and the mystic. Ibn Sina contends that the pious is one who ignores worldly goods and ornaments. He states that the other name of the pious is ordinary mystic, and like Imam Ali, peace be upon him, claims that his devotion is that of the merchants. On the other hand, the devout, he believes, considers only doing what is obligatory and what is recommended, whereas the mystic is interested in the light of the Real and cannot remain separate from Him and His Presence even for a single moment. According to Ibn Sina, the devotion of the mystics is equal to that of the free people (as expressed by Imam Ali, peace be upon him) (Ibn Sina 1368 Sh, 441-42).

## **5. God-fearing**

This term is used to mean piety and turning the soul from evil and corruption. Shibli holds that God-fearing has three meanings:

1. Fearing God in speech and remaining silent on what is meaningless.
2. Fearing God in limbs and avoiding whatsoever is dubious or illegal.

3. Fearing God at heart and abandoning base desires and ill temper (‘Izz al-Din Kashani 1367 Sh, 372).

Sayyid Bahr al-‘Ulum states that the fifth stage is persistence and continuity (Tabataba’i Najafi 1387 Sh, 149). Persistence means the wayfarer should try to establish the immaterial and heavenly forms of his deed in his soul through continuous deeds. Otherwise, the true form of his deeds, which have not penetrated his heart, may perish after practicing them, or even the truth and virtue of his deed would have a reverse effect on him (Hosseini Tehrani 1389 Sh, 95-96). Other thinkers believe that the fifth step is vigilance. Vigilance means the wayfarer should always remember the Real and ensure in all his moments that he never forgets the Real. Vigilance is one of the actions of the heart and has been divided into three categories:

1. The wayfarer in the first step of vigilance should consider the glory of Allah in every moment and avoid whatsoever other than Him.

2. In this stage, the vigilant should consider the kindness of the Real to him and forget not the Real and his blessings even for a moment.

3. In this step, the wayfarer should observe his eternal unity. That is, when the wayfarer is annihilated in God, his traces should be also annihilated and thereafter he needs not to watch over his moments, for now it is God who assures his vigilance (Mansoori Larijani 1391 Sh, 269). Baqli Shirazi calls this stage piety (Baqli Shirazi 1973, 23). ‘Attar holds that the fifth stage is monotheism. Before ‘Attar no one had raised this valley, and the meaning of monotheism had been widely debated (‘Attar 1367 Sh, 703).

## 6. Asceticism (*Zuhd*)

As a word, *zuhd* or asceticism means turning one's face away from something. Some thinkers believe that one should turn his face away from the world and its riches, and others believe that food and drink should be included in asceticism. Other scholars gave a more comprehensive definition of asceticism claiming that all worldly and other worldly blessings and yearning for them are forbidden. Instead of asceticism, Hosseini Tehrani describes vigilance as the sixth stage as discussed earlier in the article (Hosseini Tehrani 1389 Sh, 97). Some scholars hold that the sixth stage is affection, and on the importance of this stage, he explains that showing affection for the Real is an initial step in the journey to the stage of annihilation. They call the intense affection '*ishq* (or love) and claim that affection has three levels, and each of which affects the wayfarer in a certain way.

In the first level of affection, three things take place:

1. Temptations are obliterated.
2. Serving and worshiping Allah becomes delightful for the wayfarer.
3. The wayfarer finally finds tranquility and peace.

This stage of affection has three characteristics:

1. It has its roots in witnessing the blessings of God.
2. It becomes stronger by following the tradition of the Prophet and the Imams, Peace be upon Them.
3. It further grows on considering one's essential dependence.

The second level of affection has the following impacts on the wayfarer:

1. It prompts the wayfarer to prefer the Real to all others.

2. It keeps the wayfarer in constant remembrance of the Real.
3. The wayfarer reaches the stage of witnessing the Exalted Real.

To accomplish the second stage of affection the following preparations are necessary:

1. Observing the beautiful and sublime attributes of the Exalted Real.
2. Paying attention to the signs of the Exalted Real.
3. Looking into and going beyond the stations and abodes prior to affection.

The third level which is the highest level of affection, and elevates the wayfarer to higher ranks in the spiritual journey:

1. In this stage the wayfarer avoids speaking and turns to silence.
2. If compelled to speak, he turns to signs and gestures.
3. He never engages himself in description and narration (Mansoori Larijani 1391 Sh, 270).

Baqli Shirazi holds that the sixth stage is purity of the limbs and organs (Baqli Shirazi 1973, 24). Purity includes constant ablution, performing obligatory ritual washing, Friday washing, and other religiously-prescribed washings as possible. 'Attar, however, believes the sixth station and step is bewilderment. Nevertheless, none of the mystics maintain that this stage is a separate stage, though the ultimate end of the mystic could be nothing other than bewilderment ('Attar 1367 Sh, 704). Bewilderment is a state that occurs to the wayfarer and stops him from meditation, reflection and the station of presence (Sarraj 1371 Sh, 345). Khwaja states that "the capital of the mercenary is

bewilderment and the capital of the mystic is objective reality” (Ansari 1393 Sh, 142). Evidently, Khwaja contends that the sixth station is remembrance (Bina 1354 Sh, 71).

## **7. Reticence**

Reticence is the silence of the wayfarer; and as known, keeping the secrets is a prerequisite for the disciple (Baqli Shirazi 1973, 25). Allamah Tabataba’i maintains that the twentieth stage of wayfaring is keeping secrets; claiming that keeping secrets could be related to prayers and remembrances and even inspirations, experiences of unveiling and the spiritual states of the wayfarer. For him, when the wayfarer keeps secrets, the hardships of the mystical path and the journey to Allah decrease (Hosseini Tehrani 1389 Sh, 110). Some scholars however believe that the seventh station is self-examination (Hosseini Tehrani 1389 Sh, 97). Khwaja claims that it is adherence, in the sense that the wayfarer should adhere to and hold the divine cord—natural and spiritual signs, the verses of divine books, the Prophets and their deputies (Bina 1354 Sh, 79). Most of the mystics refer to the seven stage of wayfaring -- the last step in the spiritual journey-- as annihilation, believing that annihilation has three levels as follows:

1. The first level:

- a. Annihilation of knowledge: The eradication of knowledge and the possibility of knowing the Exalted Real.

- b. Annihilation of denial: “Denying the others on seeing the Beloved and the elimination of seeing through the eye.”

- c. Divine annihilation: The elimination of all desires and demands in the wayfarer.

2. The second level:

- a. Annihilation and elimination of knowledge in relation to desires.
  - b. The elimination of knowledge concerning the awareness and knowledge of God.
  - c. The annihilation of the vision of God.
3. The third level of annihilation is “the intuition of annihilation” in which the mystic:
- a. Observes the light of divine essence.
  - b. Attains the station of gathering.
  - c. Steps in the path of subsistence (Shiekh Al-Eslam 1383 Sh, 71).

‘Attar also calls the last stage poverty and annihilation; he states:

After this is the valley of poverty and annihilation,  
How speaking here could be right!  
It is the very valley of forgetfulness;  
It is limping, deafness and unconsciousness.  
When the entire ocean begins to move,  
How the figures may remain on the ocean?  
Both worlds are the figures of that ocean,  
It is an illusion to say they are not.  
The heart in this ocean of absolute peace  
Finds nothing other than bewilderment.  
Once it is relieved from this wander,

It will see the world; it will be given many secrets. ('Attar 1384 Sh, 219-20)

### **8. Fear**

Abu Umar al-Dimashqi is said to have narrated that: "The man in fear is a person who is feared by everything that terrifies people" (Salma 1373 Sh, 394)

The Fear of God means the wayfarer is afraid of the Real's chastisement in this world and the hereafter, and the Exalted Allah has made fear incumbent on people (Qushayri 1388 Sh, 190). In a Quranic verse, God says, "and fear Me if you are believers" (Quran 3:175). God states that true believers are those who fear the state and glory of Allah. On the two stations of fear and hope, the two stations that are usually mentioned together, Khwaja says, "The servant should wander between the three states: First a fear that keeps him away from adversaries; Second a hope that sustains him on obedience; Third a kindness which separates him from himself" (Ansari 1393 Sh, 93-94).

### **9. Hope (Raja')**

Raja is hope and technically means "the desire of the heart that something we like happens in the future" (Sajjadi 1375 Sh, 409). The people of hope are divided into two groups: 1. Those who seek their pleasures and aim at enjoying the blessings of this world and the hereafter. 2. Those who seek the Real and His satisfaction, and believe that the will and satisfaction of God stands above anything else (Sajjadi 1375 Sh, 411). On hope, other scholars pointed out that: "Hope is the attachment of the heart to a friendship that will occur in the future, as fear is also related to the future. The life of the hearts depends on hope,

and there is a difference between hope and wishing; wishing makes its owner idle... whereas hope is the opposite, and hope is commendable, whereas wishing is blameworthy....” (Qushayri 1388 Sh, 259-60). Allamah Tabataba’i considers that the ninth station is hastening, pointing out that the wayfarer in this stage should hasten to accomplish what he was determined to achieve, given the fact that several obstacles stand on the way of the wayfarer, and the wayfarer should remove these difficulties off his way with care and intelligence, and shall not allow such obstacles to dissuade him from the mystical journey’s pathway (Hosseini Tehrani 1389 Sh, 98).

### **10. Sadness**

Sadness is the sorrow that occupies the wayfarer’s heart when something unpleasant occurs or something pleasant is lost. Thus, sadness comprises three levels:

1. The wayfarer in the first level of the spiritual journey shows laxity in his obedience or devotion, or gets caught into the storm of perdition.
2. In the second stage, the wayfarer’s regret for low attachment to the world and its people dwindles, and he grieves for being in the station of division and for having not proceeded to the station of unity.
3. The wayfarer in this state is sad for fear that his choice may differ from the choice of the Real (Kashani 1354 Sh, 47-48)

Other thinkers termed this station as adoration which implies “adoring the legislator and his true deputies.” The wayfarer through this station purifies himself and the stronger his adoration, the



deeper the effect of his deeds on his soul would be (Hosseini Tehrani 1389 Sh, 98).

### **11. Hunger**

One of the principles of wayfaring is patience over and putting up with hunger. It is said that enduring hunger is the food of the pious and that “The hunger of the repentant is a trial, the hunger of the pious is a discipline, and the hunger of the truthful is a miracle” (Salma 1373 Sh, 111)

Other thinkers noted that this stage is to be courteous. That is, the wayfarer before God and His Caliphs should be well-mannered, “for the essence of manners is being conscious of oneself, and not trespassing one’s limits or doing something incompliant with the requisites of servitude; being humble and diligent before the Necessary being, and as a corollary observing the necessities of the world of diversity. But adoration and love is to be enthralled by the Unique and its one requirement is to heed the oneness.” (Hosseini Tehrani 1389 Sh, 99). Baqli Shirazi holds that the eleventh step is ascetic practices and putting the soul into hardship (Baqli Shirazi 1973, 26).

### **12. Modesty**

Modesty means the wayfarer shall not entertain any sense of superiority before those who are lower than him in state or position; and more importantly before God, he should see himself as a servant and God is his Sovereign and Lord. Modesty has three levels:

1. First: The wayfarer shall act in view of the orders and prohibitions of God. This is the modesty of beginners.

2. In the second level, the attributes of Gods are manifested in the heart of the wayfarer and thus the will of the wayfarer is dissolved into God's will. This is the modesty of average people.

3. In the third level, the divine essence is manifested in the heart of the wayfarer, and the essence of the wayfarer dissolves into divine essence. This is the modesty of the accomplished (Kashani 1367 Sh, 351).

Other scholars believe that the twelfth stage is intention, i.e. the wayfarer has no aim but taking the mystical path to Allah, and being annihilated in the essence of God. Intention has three stages, as defined by Imam Ali, Peace be upon him: "The worshippers are of three groups: a group that worships God out of fear, and this is the devotion of the servants and slaves. Another group who worship God out of greed and for the sake of reward, and this is the devotion of the mercenaries. Another group that worships God, out of love, and this is the devotion of freemen" (*Nahj al-balaghah*, wisdom 237).

### **13. Humility**

Humility and modesty mean breaking the idol of pride and arrogance before the Real and His creatures. Humility is divided into three levels.

1. The first level is the wayfarer's sense of humbleness vis-à-vis the orders of God, thereby he stands in utmost humility, submission and obedience in front of God.

2. In the second level, the wayfarer constantly pays attention to the evils and recalcitrance of the soul and, struggles with his soul and its desires.

3. “Observing the sanctity, abandoning extravagant speeches that violate proper manners, opposing extension by contraction, hiding one’s contraction out of humility, cleansing time from duplicity, hiding the states and wonders, and manifesting weakness and helplessness and everything that makes him great in the eyes of people, and if he acquires a virtue he should attribute it not to himself but to the Real” (Kashani 1354 Sh, 50).

After this stage, only Hosseini Tehrani, Baqli Shirazi and Khwaja Abdullah Ansari mention further stages. Baqli Shirazi named the remaining stages as follows: “Earning livelihood, purifying the heart from imperfections, repelling temptations, admonishing the self, caution, auditing, requiring, keeping order, intention, vigilance, caring, waiting, desire, piety, fear, sadness, humility, modesty, contentment, purity of bargaining, the spirit, determination, patience, endurance, fear, hope, trust, submission, compensation, satisfaction, creation, success, servitude, assurance, confidence, and Divine providence” (Baqli Shirazi 1973, 27-34). Allamah Tabataba’i, however, believes that the stages following the thirteenth stage are: Hunger, solitude, keeping vigil, purification, intense supplication, avoiding pleasures, keeping secrets, Master and teacher, rejecting temptations, remembrance and contemplation (Hosseini Tehrani 1389 Sh, 107-15; Tabataba’i Najafi 1387 Sh, 159-72).

## **Conclusion**

Sufism in the Arabic language means “wearing woolen garment”, and the Sufis used to wear woolen clothes as a sign of devotion to Allah and abstention from the luxury of life. In the spiritual journey to Allah, they mentioned several stations and stages, and the first person who

mentioned the valleys of spiritual wayfaring was Hakim Tirmidhi. Other scholars, like 'Attar, Ayn al-Qudat, Mansoori Larijani, and Sarraj, maintained that these stations were seven, while other thinkers argued that they are thirteen (Sajjadi), twenty-five (Hosseini Tehrani), forty (Baqli Shirazi) and even hundreds (Khwaja Abdullah Ansari). However, the mystics and scholars on the stations of wayfaring mainly focused on seven stations, given the sacredness of number seven in Islamic texts. Those scholars also disagreed about the order of the valleys of wayfaring. Some scholars, such as Ayn al-Qudat unlike many others who count the valley of repentance or desire (though with lower frequency) as the first valley, contend that the first step in wayfaring is doubt. Whereas some scholars, including Ibn Sina, argued that it is determination. With regard to other steps of wayfaring, there are disagreements. But the key point here is perhaps the first station in the spiritual journey, as the beginning in everything is the most important part of it, i.e. if we have a good and appropriate beginning, the rest is going to be carried on well. For Imam Khomeini, the first stage is awakening. He believes the wayfarer should wake up from the slumber of ignorance to reach the subsequent stages of seeking and repentance. From the perspective of the researchers also, the first step in the spiritual journey is awakening, then seeking and travelling down the path of God. The last stage in wayfaring has also been a matter of debate and disagreement. Some scholars believe it is annihilation, but others held that it is the trust or unity. Nevertheless, most of the mystics believe this stage is annihilation in Allah. According to Ibn Sina, this stage of annihilation is crowned by thorough achievement; once the wayfarer has institutionalized all the good moral precepts and virtues within himself, he will reach a state that embodies the attributes of God. Then he will have no existence of his own; all his exists will be God's.

The views of the mystics and scholars on the seven stages of wayfaring are briefly listed below:

1. **The first stage:** Larijani, and Sarraj: repentance. ‘Attar: seeking. Nasafi: intention. Khomeini and Ansari: awakening. Ayn al-Qudat: doubt. Ibn Sina: determination. Baqli Shirazi: preparation and readiness. Hosseini Tehrani: abandoning habits, conventions and proprieties.

2. **The second stage:** Sajjadi: spiritual struggle. Larijani: remembrance. Sarraj: piety. ‘Attar: love. Ansari: repentance. Ayn al-Qudat: seeking. Baqli Shirazi: imitation. Hosseini Tehrani: resolution.

3. **The third stage:** Sajjadi: solitude. Larijani and Ansari: auditing. Sarraj: piety. ‘Attar: knowledge. Baqli Shirazi: spiritual struggle. Hosseini Tehrani: care and kindness.

4. **The fourth stage:** Sajjadi: isolation. Larijani: piety. Sarraj: poverty. ‘Attar: self-sufficiency. Ansari: turning back to God. Baqli Shirazi: God-fearing. Hosseini Tehrani: fulfilment.

5. **The fifth stage:** Ezz al-Din Kashani: God-fearing. Larijani: vigilance. Sarraj: patience. ‘Attar: unity. Ansari: contemplation. Baqli Shirazi: piety. Hosseini Tehrani: persistence and continuity.

6. **The sixth stage:** Larijani: affection. Sarraj: contentment. ‘Attar: wonder. Ansari: remembrance. Baqli Shirazi: purity of the limbs. Hosseini Tehrani: vigilance.

7. **The seventh stage:** Baqli Shirazi, and Hosseini Tehrani: reticence. Larijani: annihilation. Sarraj: trust. ‘Attar: poverty and annihilation. Ansari: adherence.

Among these stations, valleys such as intention, determination, seeking, repentance, turning back to God, solitude, isolation, piety, fear, worry, spiritual struggle, auditing, awakening, vigilance, sadness and annihilation had the highest frequency in the view of scholars. For the researchers, the valleys the wayfarer should go through one by one may be ordered as follows: Awakening, seeking, repentance, spiritual struggle, (which includes finding a Master or a guide and going through solitude, auditing, piety, etc under his guidance) patience, contentment, and annihilation. The reason these stations have been ordered is that if we look closely we see that the first and most important stage to step in a road is man's attentiveness. We see that in the holy Quran, the Exalted Allah asks many times a rhetorical question (which lays down more emphasis than a simple statement): "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" Therefore, the reasoning and reflection is the first step in every work, and unless we are aware of our ignorance, we will be unconscious of the need to know and will not take a step in that direction. In other words, unless the wayfarer becomes aware of his ignorance, he cannot conceive the notion of spirituality in his mind, let alone setting out on the mystical journey. Once he is awake, he becomes aware that he lost something that he must find, and thus he enters the valley of seeking and begins the search for his true self. However, unless he repents in this station, he cannot rub the rust off his heart and see the lights in his heart to make them signposts on the road. In this station, he must regret all the facets of ignorance, negligence and egoism to see divine lights shining in his heart. Following this valley, he will step with all his might into the valley of spiritual struggle, which includes choosing a Master, solitude, God-fearing, piety, and spiritual exercises, and all along this road he will look into his deeds and conduct. Having reached this station, the wayfarer comes to more challenging stations, including patience, contentment and annihilation.

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The wayfarer, after undergoing solitude, does multiple spiritual practices and endures the difficulties of the mystical path to reach the station of patience. The more he practices in this station, the closer he becomes to the station of contentment; the person who endured the hardship of the station of patience will never fear the valley of contentment. As a lover, he will earnestly undertake whatsoever his beloved likes and will press ahead in the journey, until he is annihilated by the love of his Beloved, when the Beloved and the Beloved only will remain. The mystics believe that this stage is equal to the unity with Allah, which Ibn Sina calls the perfect fulfillment and places it into a separate station.

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