

دليل المريدين

إلى كتاب منهاج العابدين للإمام حجة الإسلام الغزالي

للعبد الفقير إلى ربه الغني الحميد

رمزي بن محمود عجم

A Mureed's Guide

to Al-Ghazali's Minhaj Al-Abideen

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CHAPTER THREE

عقبة العوائق

The Third Hurdle: The Impediments (*ʿAwaʿiq*)

- i. ***The Life of this World*** (*Dunya*)
- ii. ***People*** (*Khalq*)
- iii. ***The Devil*** (*Shaytan*)
- iv. ***The Self*** (*Nafs*)

Part I: *The Dunya & Zuhd* (Abstinence)

1. What are the four impediments to worship?
2. What are the four ways to confront them?
3. Why do we need to confront the *Dunya* with *Zuhd*?
4. What is *Zuhd*?
5. How do I get myself to confront the *Dunya* with *Zuhd*?
6. What is the legal ruling of *Zuhd*?
7. How is it possible that something so attractive and delightful can be viewed as dangerously harmful?
8. How can *Zuhd* be realized if the world comprises things we cannot live without?
9. How do I begin practicing *Zuhd*?

1. What are the four impediments to worship?

The seeker on the path of servitude and worship will inevitably face four impediments that threaten his journey unto the One.

They are:

- a. The Life of this World (*Dunya*);
- b. People (*Khalq*)
- c. The Devil (*Shaytan*)
- d. The Self (*Nafs*)

2. What are the four ways to confront them?

The seeker must do his best to confront:

- a. the *Dunya* with Abstinence (*Zuhd*);
- b. the *Khalq* with Seclusion (*Uzla*);
- c. the *Shaytan* with Warfare (*Muharaba*), and;
- d. the *Nafs* with God-consciousness (*Taqwa*).

3. Why do we need to confront the *Dunya* with *Zuhd*?

Zuhd is required for two main reasons:

- a. To improve and increase worship;
- b. To deepen the quality of your works.

That is because worship requires a clear mind, focus and availability, and your attentiveness to worldly matters will occupy you inwardly and outwardly.

4. What is *Zuhd*?

There are two types of *Zuhd*:

- a. *Quasi-Zuhd* (*maqdur*), which is acquired, and;
- b. *Authentic-Zuhd* (*ghayr maqdur*), which is a reality in the heart.

Quasi-Zuhd requires that one:

- a. abandon seeking what he lacks of this world;

- b. part ways with what he possesses of it and;
- c. forsake desiring it.

This last aspect of *Zuhd* is most difficult.

Authentic-Zuhd (*ghayr maqdur*) is the heart's utter coldness to worldly matters, and this is the true reality of *Zuhd*.

5. How do I get myself to confront the *Dunya* with *Zuhd*?

The seeker must not be deceived by the outward appearances of this world because its inward reality is transient, repugnant and rotten. Imam al-Ghazali advises that whosoever loves God must loath His enemy, and the *Dunya* is His enemy.

6. What is the legal ruling of *Zuhd*?

Practicing *Zuhd* is obligatory in matters that are unlawful (*haram*). As for practicing *Zuhd* in matters that are lawful, it is permissible and the prerogative of the *Abdal*⁶. They abstain from lawful matters of the *Dunya* just as one would abstain from the unlawful, unless there is a prevailing wisdom to partake in it. As for what is unlawful in regards to the *Abdal*, their hearts are completely liberated from desiring anything of it, as they have actualized the true reality of *Zuhd*.

7. How is it possible that something so attractive and delightful can be viewed as dangerously harmful?

Those who enjoy the true reality of *Zuhd* within their hearts are like those who find themselves completely averse to a beautifully decorated meal that was secretly poisoned. Their awareness of its lethality prevents them from having any desire for it. As for those

⁶ The "Substitutes" are a category of saints referred to by the Prophet (God bless and give him peace) in Imam Ahmed's Musnad, "The *Abdal* of this community are thirty". Whenever one passes, he is replaced by another.

oblivious to the poison, they are deceived by the outward appearance of the decorated meal. Imam al-Ghazali states that, “*this is analogous to the unlawful contents (Haram) of this world, in relation to those who are ignorant and motivated by desire*”.

Were the meal contaminated with the chef’s phlegm, anyone who had knowledge of this would recoil from the meal with disgust. Imam al-Ghazali states that, “*this is analogous to the lawful contents (Halal) of this world in relation to the same two groups: the people of understanding, and the people of desire and heedlessness.*”

8. How can *Zuhd* be realized if the world comprises things we cannot live without?

Imam al-Ghazali answers,

“You must therefore know that abstinence (Zuhd) applies to excess, meaning that which exceeds what is needed to sustain the human constitution. The purpose of acquiring sustenance and strength is to enable you to worship God (Glory be to Him), not for the sake of eating, drinking, and enjoying worldly pleasures.”

9. How do I begin practicing *Zuhd*?

The seeker’s practice of *Zuhd* begins when he:

1. Uproots from his life all that is *Haram*;
2. Abandons seeking anything *Haram* and;
3. Desires nothing of what is *Haram*.

If the seeker is firmly established in this practice and realizes how the *Dunya* impedes on his spiritual progress, he will begin to reduce the excesses of what he needs to sustain himself of sleep, food, drink, worldly work and play. This reduction in *Dunya* allows him to be available inwardly and outwardly for worship,

and increases his capacity for righteous works with focus and profundity.

If the seeker matures in his practice of *Zuhd* and receives God's enabling grace, he will be granted a coldness in his heart towards all that is *Haram*, thereby realizing the true reality of *Zuhd*.

If God chooses for him to be of His *Abdal*, he will find himself abstaining from what is lawful when it distracts him from worship and his sublime purpose.