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POWER OF THE PLEDGE (*BAYAH*)

By Shaykh Zulfiqar Ahmed

The Force of Change

Allah ﷻ has put extraordinary power in the pledge of allegiance (*bayah*) that a seeker (*salik*) gives to his *shaykh*. This *faqir*¹ was sitting at the train station in a foreign country when a young man passed by. He had a bottle of alcohol in his hand, and it was clear that he had been drinking.

Shortly thereafter, he came back and stared at me, finally saying, “I want to be like you.” This *faqir* failed to fully understand him since he had been drinking, so this *faqir* assumed that my white robes and turban fascinated him. This *faqir* asked, “You like my white clothes and my turban?” This young man smiled and said, “No, I want to be like you because I see light on your face.”

This *faqir* was astonished and said to him, “It is very easy for Allah ﷻ to change people’s hearts. You can be even better than me.” This young man looked at me in disbelief and said, “Are you sure?” When this *faqir* said “Yes,” the

¹ *Faqir* literally means ‘poor, dependant person,’ and here it is being used by the author to humbly denote his poverty before the Self-Sufficient Lord ﷻ and his perpetual dependence upon Allah’s ﷻ mercy.

man asked this *faqir* to wait while he went to the washroom. There he threw away the bottle he had been drinking from, rinsed his mouth, and freshened himself. He returned and asked, “Ok, now tell me how I can be like you.”

The young man was very handsome, and he introduced himself as a Masters graduate in Computer Science from Tokyo University currently managing a computer firm. He explained that it was impossible at his age and in the profession that he was in to save himself from sin; almost every business meeting would invite him towards evil. He asked me how he could protect himself from evil when the society around him was inviting him to sin every moment. This *faqir* explained that this may be difficult for us human beings, but it is very easy for Allah ﷻ to protect us if we only submit to Him.

He again asked me what he should do, so I explained to him the process of taking *bayah*. This *faqir* said to him, “Connect your heart with our great elders in Islam, and then see your heart and condition change.” This young man agreed and pledged fealty with this *faqir*, who then went back home on the next train.

Three months went by and this *faqir* received a letter from him in which he had written two things: he had become regular not only in his five prayers but also in tahajjud, and that he had adopted the white sunnah dress and turban and grown a beard. Hearts transform if one has a sincere intention to change and connect to the elders in Islam. The prayers of our elders surround and protect us, and it is written in stone that Allah ﷻ will protect from sin whoever enters into this Naqshbandi Path (*silsala*). People

do not become *Abdal* or *Qutb*² overnight but one begins to see obvious changes within oneself.

The Police Chief

After a scheduled speech in a Multan³ colony, this *faqir* noticed that one person was being overly insistent that the man sitting next to him give *bayah*, but that person was being very evasive. This *faqir* said that one should not be so forceful, and the man replied, “This is my younger brother, and this is why I am being slightly forceful.” His brother in turn said, “Hadrat, I am too old and have spent all my life in rebellion. What possibility is there of change now?” This *faqir* smiled at him and said, “Why don’t you just try and see what happens, even as you say it is toward the end.”

The man sighed and said, “Hadrat, I am the Chief of Police here. You know our income, and you know our livelihood, and sitting in the mosque, I am telling you that I have committed every sin that you can possibly imagine. So if this is my life, then what good is a pledge?” This *faqir* replied, “Taking *bayah* will certainly benefit you, because you have nothing to lose and only to gain. By all means break your *bayah* if you do not see any benefit.”

This *faqir* says this to everyone, so pay attention. If you sincerely give *bayah* and carry out your daily duties (*mam’ulat*) as instructed, and yet do not note any progress or benefit, by all means break the *bayah* and join with someone else. The *mashaikh* are not after votes in this

² *Abdal* and *Qutb* are terms that apply to individuals who have attained a specific status of spiritual enhancement.

³ Multan is a city in the northern Punjab province of Pakistan.

world, nor favors but only the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. If anyone does not act righteously, then he is an ingrate and spits in the face of this blessing. If you disrespect this blessing, then there is only hardship and depression. On the contrary, it is a guarantee that those who carry out their duties sincerely will notice a difference.

So this *faqir* placed his finger on the man's breast and pronounced the words "Allah! Allah! Allah!" This finger and these powerful words join the person's heart to Allah ﷻ like a welder's torch bonds the two pieces of metal that he is welding.

Roots of the *Naqshband*

Hadrat Bahauddin Naqshband ؒ is a famous and blessed shaykh from our *tariqah*⁴. His name was Bahauddin but he became known as Naqshband and listen to the reason. Look at your hands and you will see that they form the letters of the word *Allah*. Hence, he used to outline the name of Allah ﷻ whenever taking someone's *bayah* and, putting his fingers on his chest, would say the words with so much emotion that it would seem to the *salik* that someone had engraved the name of Allah ﷻ upon his heart.

The word *naqsh* in the Urdu language is *engraving*, and the word *band* is *enclose*. Hence, it would seem that Hadrat Bahauddin would engrave Allah's Name ﷻ and enclose it in the heart with his spiritual power. Our *silsala* was named *Siddiquia* before this, after Hadrat Abu Bakr Siddique ؓ, but then took on the name *Naqshbandia*. One of our

⁴ *Tariqah* literally means 'way,' and the Naqshbandi *tariqah* is one of the four prominent methodologies (*madhabs*) of spiritual development.

previous *mashaikh*, Hadrat Khwaja Fazal Ali Qureshi رحمۃ اللہ علیہ of Miskeenpur Sharif used to say, “That heart upon which the finger has been placed cannot die without reciting the affirmation of faith (*Kalimah shahadah*).”

An Elegant Transformation

So this *faqir* accepted *bayah* from the police chief and left Multan. It so happened that there was another program in the same mosque after a few months. After the program, we prayed the *Asr* prayer and got up to leave, at which time a man came up and hugged this *faqir*. This *faqir* was a bit surprised because he did not know of anyone so close to him in Multan that would come up and hug so familiarly. He loosened his grip and this *faqir* was pleasantly amazed that this man, now with a beard, was the same person who had been hesitant to pledge a few months earlier. He said to me, “Hadrat, I am your servant. The day that you said the words ‘Allah! Allah! Allah!’ upon my heart changed my life. Now I regularly pray tahajjud and come into this mosque to give the prayer call (*adhan*) of *Fajr*.”

This *faqir* has not only seen this but also seen thousands of such examples where people’s lives have been changed. This *faqir* believes that Allah ﷻ will change a person’s life if he keeps to his prescribed lessons and duties the way he believe that two plus two is four. This *faqir* firmly believes this and is steadfast upon it.

Innumerable Blessings

This *faqir* has seen people change even in filthy and evil places like the streets of Manhattan in New York, America.

People walk naked in the streets, and every day from every direction, women and girls are inviting men to sin. In this unholy environment, people are coming together by the blessing of this *tariqah*, and Allah ﷻ grants them the blessing of becoming scholars.

A friend that this *faqir* knew since kindergarten was dying. His son was telling people in the mosque that all his father's children gathered by the bedside and started reciting the *kalimah* so that the father would also recite this in his last moments.

The son said that he sat by his father's head and started reciting very loudly, but his father's lips would not move. His sister indicated that their father's legs had gone completely limp, so they knew that the time of death was upon him. The father's lips still would not move and were as if sewn. The son dreaded lest his father should pass from this world without having recited the affirmation. He beseeched Allah ﷻ in tears, "O Allah ﷻ, my father has *bayah* with a great individual, and he in turn with those above him, and this chain continues to Your Prophet ﷺ. If this noble connection holds any status in Your Eyes, then please make my father recite the *kalimah* through the blessings of this *silsala*." This young man continued, and his father's lips opened at almost that very instant, and he recited the *kalimah* loudly five times and went to Allah ﷻ on his fifth uttering.

Saving Ourselves

Today we are hypocrites in every thing we do. Even the noble scholars have been infested with those who chase this

world greedily. However, not every *shaykh* is such a hypocrite and thief, and this does not mean that one should judge all *mashaikh* based on this. There are still honest and sincere people who are doing and spreading the work of this noble *tariqah* and will continue doing so until the Day of Judgment. We need to seek out such people and join our hearts with them.

Today we are in the last days and are surrounded by evil and darkness. If we are able to find such an individual in these times, then we should consider this a blessing and value it. Treasure this blessing from Allah ﷻ and do your lessons and duties diligently. These duties are six in all.

- One should conceptualize throughout the day that Allah ﷻ is watching him in every condition, whether he is standing, sitting, or lying down. We focus on several different things during our day so we should be able to train ourselves to be attentive to Allah ﷻ also. Throughout the day we should be aware of our heart and have our heart's focus on Allah ﷻ. This is called *wuquf al-qalbi*.
- The second is *muraqaba*, where one sits secluded with head bowed and eyes shut, focusing on the light of Allah ﷻ descending on his heart. In this state one should conceptualize that this light is cleansing the heart of all filth and sin, and the heart is saying "Allah! Allah! Allah!" in gratitude for His Mercy. There is no movement of the limbs or

tongue in this, but one is merely listening to his heart.

- The third is to send salutations, *Durood Sharif*, upon the Prophet ﷺ two hundred times within a day: one hundred in the morning and one hundred in the evening.
- The fourth is to recite *istaghfar* and beg repentance two hundred times a day: one hundred in the morning and one hundred in the evening.
- The fifth is daily recital of the Holy Quran.
- The sixth is to keep in contact with the *shaykh* and keep him informed of your condition, whether by letter or telephone.

This spiritual connection is to be treasured and valued. It changes a person's direction and leads him to Allah ﷻ. May Allah ﷻ give us the wisdom to value this blessing and change our hearts, *amin*.

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