

Tawakkul, Taslim, Tafwiz, and Thiqa (Reliance, Surrender, Commitment, and Confidence)

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Reliance, surrender, commitment, and confidence are the four steps or stations of a spiritual journey beginning with reliance on (or trust in) God, continuing in full awareness of one's helplessness and destitution before God, and ending in entrusting all of one's affairs to God Almighty in order to attain absolute peace and tranquillity of heart. Reliance (tawakkul) means total confidence in God, and feeling troubled or uneasy when it occurs to one that there may be other sources of power (that one can resort to). Without such a degree of confidence, it is wrong to talk about reliance. Moreover, one cannot attain reliance so long as the doors of the heart remain open to others.

Reliance means doing all that is necessary to obtain a desired or intended result, and then waiting in expectation for the Eternally-Powerful One to bring about His Will. After this comes surrender (taslim), which many friends of God have described as one's being before God's Power and Will like a dead body in the hands of a mortician. Then comes commitment (tafwiz), leaving or committing all things and affairs to God and expecting everything from Him. Reliance is the start of a journey, surrender is its end, and commitment is its result. Therefore, commitment has a wider meaning and relates to those who have almost completed the journey, rather than to beginners. Commitment comes after surrender, which requires the conviction of one's helplessness and destitution before God's Power and Wealth, and the ability to feel in one's heart the meaning of: There is no power and strength save with God. It also requires the utmost dependence on and the expectation of help from the heavenly treasure of: There is no power and strength save with God. In other words, commitment means that a traveler on the path to God feels warned by the point of reliance and the point of seeking help in his conscience and, in exact awareness of his or her helplessness and destitution, turns to the Unique Source of Power and Will and says: Hold me by the hand, hold me, for I cannot do without You. If reliance means that one entrusts all worldly and otherworldly affairs to the Lord, commitment means that one is fully aware that it is actually God Who does everything, Who produces every result, and Who creates all things and deeds that many consider to be done by themselves. Reliance means that one relies on God and closes the doors of one's heart to whatever or whoever is other than Him. It can be regarded as the outer fulfillment all duties of worship and the inner attachment to God, the Lord Who is the sole Sustainer and Administrator of all that exists. This is what Shihab expresses in the following couplets:

Rely on the All-Merciful in all your affairs;
One who relies on Him is never in loss.

Confide in God and be patient with His disposal of you,
For you can obtain only as His favors what you expect from Him.

I think 'Umar, the second Caliph, may God be pleased with him, drew attention to the same point in a letter he wrote to Abu Musa al-'Ash'ari: If you are able to submit to whatever or however God decrees for you [i.e. by not objecting to whatever befalls you], this is wholly good. If you are unable to do so, then endure it with patience.

From another perspective, reliance signifies reliance on and confidence in God. Surrender is the state of those who have been awakened to spiritual life. Commitment, meaning that travelers are not detained by considerations of means and causes, is a station special to those of high spiritual achievement.

Even if travelers possessing commitment seem to attach a certain importance to means and causes, this is due to the fact that they live in the material world, the sphere of means and causes, in which God has made any accomplishment dependent on certain preliminary conditions. If they give priority to means and causes, thereby disregarding the fact that God disposes of everything as He wishes, then they will become like vermin crawling on earth, despite their previous resemblance to birds flying in the highest parts of the heavens. It is related in books on the lives of saints that those saintly people who try to advance but become caught in the over-consideration of means and causes hear these words: Give up taking precautions, for involvement in precautions causes perishing;

Commit your affairs to Us, for We are more thoughtful of you than yourself.

Such a commitment is a heroism that can be achieved only by those who persevere in their relations with God while living among people.

Doing what is necessary to obtain a certain result without attributing any creative effect to them may mean different things to different travelers: reliance for everybody, submission for those awakened to realities beyond the visible dimension, and commitment and confidence for those who have attained true peace or tranquillity of heart. How fine is the following saying of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, which combines exerting effort and reliance and commitment: If you were able to rely on God as true reliance on Him requires, He would provide you as He provides birds that leave their nests hungry in the morning and return full in the evening.

This Prophetic Tradition contains different truths for people of different spiritual ranks. What it means for the typical individual is what Rumi says:

Even if reliance on God is a guide,
Fulfilling preliminaries is a practice of the Prophet.
He told (a Bedouin) loudly (in response to his question):
First fasten your camel and then rely on God.

This meaning is what is pointed out in: On God let the reliant rely (14:12).

Those who lead their lives at the level of pure spirituality understand, in perfect awareness of their helplessness and

weakness before God, that they should trust wholly in God's Power and Strength, and become like a corpse in the hands of a mortician: In God put your trust, if you are true believers (5:23). As for those who fly around the summits of "self-annihilation in God" and "subsistence with God," they say, like Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, even while being thrown into fire: God is sufficient for me (39:38) and commit their affairs wholly to Him. It is enough for them that God Almighty knows their condition.

We can also see this greatest degree of commitment in God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. When the feet of those pursuing him during his emigration to Madina were seen from the cave where he was hiding with his nearest friend Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, and their pursuers' voices echoed from the cave's walls, he relied wholly upon God and told Abu Bakr: Grieve not! Assuredly, God is with us (9:40). This is also alluded to in the verse: Whoever puts his trust in God, He will suffice him (65:3).

Commitment and confidence are the highest degrees of reliance on God. Those who have attained these degrees have entirely submitted their reason, logic, and belief, as well as their outer and inner feelings, to God's commandments. As a result, they have become "polished mirrors" in which His Names, Attributes, and acts are reflected. Signs of these degrees are understanding that taking precautions is included in God's preordainment, and thereby finding peace; seeing their willpower as a dim shadow of the Divine Will, and turning to that Divine Will; and being pleased with God's treatment, whether it be favorable or not, and agreeing with whatever happens to them.

The author of Minhaj describes this degree of commitment as follows:

I committed all my affairs to the Dear One,
Whether He keeps me alive or makes me die.

The following words of Wasif of Andarun are also most appropriate: Whatever was destined will certainly happen, so Commit your affairs to God; neither be grieved nor suffer pains.

One of the most beautiful descriptions of commitment belongs to Ibrahim Haqqi, the initial verses of whose Tafwiznama (Description of Tafwiz) are as follows:

God changes evils into good;
Never think that He does otherwise.
One with knowledge of Him watches
In admiration what He does.
Let us see what our Master does;
He does well whatever He does.
Put your trust in God, the Truth;
And commit to Him your affairs
So that you may find peace.
Be patient and agree (with whatever He does).
Let us see what our Master does;
He does well whatever He does.