

AN EVALUATION OF TAWASSUL IN AL-BURDAH AL-MADĪḤ OF SHAYKH MUHAMMAD AL-BUṢAYRĪ

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Abstract: *The imperativeness of tawassul has become a supplicate, or plead in achieving or attaining what one aspires among the Muslims generally, specifically the Ṣūfīs. As a matter of fact, tawassul is used as a means of attaining any targeted desire either mundane or celestial one. Specifically, tawassul by the honour of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is much found among the Ṣūfīs and is considered as one of their inevitable doctrine. Equally, beside the Ṣūfīs, some non-Ṣūfīs also believe that tawassul bi-Nabiyy is part of Islamic doctrine, while some among them claim that it is an un-Islamic practical doctrine. This first category of scholars expressed that tawassul is unislamic because the Prophet had died and making any plea by him has been terminated. They critically oppose tawassul bi'n-Nabiyy. The second argued that the death of the Prophet does not thwart the efficacy of making tawassul by him because it is tested and trusted after the Prophet's death. Against this background, this paper aims at studying the views of a renowned Afro-Arab poet who was also a Ṣūfī; Shaykh Muhammad al-Busayri in his work tagged al-Burdah al-Madīḥ (the Poem of Mantle). The methodologies adopted in the work are historical and analytical. The objective of the paper is to assess the view of al-Busayri in pros and cons on the concept of tawassul in reference to the Qur'an, Prophetic traditions and scholars' views on the subject matter. It also entails discussion on tawassul and some scenarios that have taken place during the life time of the Prophet and after his death. The paper concludes that the death of the Prophet did not hinder the efficacy of his tawassul, and that the view of al-Busayri on tawassul bi-Nabiyy is within the preview of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and analogy of the scholars. Therefore, generally, the concept of tawassul is Islamic and is more paramount among the Ṣūfīs.*

Keywords: Tawassul, Al-Burdah Al-Madīḥ, Shaykh Muhammad Al-Buṣayrī

INTRODUCTION

Tawassul bi'n-Nabiyy (making plea through the honour of Prophet Muhammad) has created a lot of debates and controversies among scholars. The Ṣūfīs in their mystical creativity incorporate it as one of their profound doctrines. They make use of it in their spiritual journeys and some of their terrestrial affairs. Their belief on the Prophet as regards his *tawassul* cannot be over-emphasized. They hold the view that the death of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) can never be an hindrance to enjoy his intervention to elude evil or facilitating goodness for his *Ummah* (community). Many of the Ṣūfīs have used *tawassul* by the Prophet to subdue their challenges and problems, while some have used it to make a livelihood or attain exalted position from Allah. A prototype of them is Shaykh Muhammad al-Buṣayrī which shall be discussed later.

Ironically, with the indefatigable belief of the Ṣūfīs on *tawassul*, some non-Ṣūfīs critically abhor the doctrine claiming that it is act of *kufr* (hypocrisy). According to them, the door of *tawassul* had been closed after the death of the Prophet. And that the work of al-Buṣayri on *tawassul* is a prototype of such *kufr*. Ibn Taymiyyah and some of his students,

especially Muhammad Abdul-Wahhab is known as anti-*Tawassul* scholar¹. In Nigeria, Alhaji Mahmood Gunmi (d.92), and his *Izālah* movement were very popular as anti-*Tawassul*. To them the recitation of *al-Burdah*, *Dalāilu'l-Kayrāt* and some other books containing *tawassul bi'n-Nabiyy* are revoked which should not be invoked by ideal Muslim. As a result of this controversy, this paper attempts to study the eighth stanza of *al-Burdah* composed by al-Buṣayrī which is titled *at-Tawassul bi'n-Nabiyy* (making a plea by the honour of Prophet Muhammad).

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Some works have been done on *al-Burdah* by scholars, yet no attempt had been made on the study in pros and cons on *tawassul* by the honour of the Prophet as contained in *Burdah*. For example, M.O. Abdul-Rahman (2002), in his work titled *Sharaf al-Din al-Buṣayrī an Afro-Arab poet and the making of the mantle ode (Al-Burdah)* discusses briefly the biography of al-Buṣayrī, the usefulness of *al-Burdah* for mundane and spiritual purposes. He further explains that some of the amulets of the poem are used for curing ailments. He concludes that “*al-Burdah* is memorized as a means of supplication especially among the *Ṣūfīs*, and that the ode attracts different commentaries in different perspectives, which no other odes could withstand”. Abdul-Rahman M.O. (2002). The work is useful via the biography of al-Buṣayrī contained therein, but not directly related to this present work. Also, Usman Thaqāfī (1999), in his article analyses the major objectives of *al-Burdah*. He categorises the content of the poem into seven. That is, “*an-Nasib* (lineage), *al-Madh* (eulogy), *al-Waṣf* (description), *al-Qiṣah* (story), *al-Ḥikmah as-Ṣufiyyah* (mystic wise sayings), *ad-Duʿa* (supplication) and *at-Tawassul*”. The work gives us the highlights in the contents of *al-Burdah*.

On the commentary notes of *al-Burdah*, the work of al-Bajūrī (d.1277A.H) is a useful one. He titled his work as *Shariḥ al-Bajūrī ʿalā al-Burdah*. The book contains a brief biography of al-Buṣayrī and complimentary note on every amulet of the *al-Burdah* as well as al-*ʿIrāb an-Nahawī* (grammatical analysis) of each of the poetic verse. Thaqāfī, U.A (1999). The work is useful as a reference, but does not discuss *tawassul* sagaciously as focused in this work. Equally, Kineene in his article titled “Al-busayri and Muhammad Mshela: Two Great Sufi Poets” discusses the similarity between these two gurus vis-à-vis their poetry works and their belief on the personality of the Prophet Muhammad. All these works mentioned so far serve as useful references and sources of information in one way or the other to this present work. Kineen wa Mutiso, (2008).

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF AL-BUṢAYRĪ:

His full name was Al-Imām Sharafu'd-Dīn Muhammad bn Sa'id bn Aḥmad Mushini Sanhaji Hilal as-Sahaji al-Buṣayrī. He was an Egyptian poet of Berber origin (Morocco) and was born on 1st Shawwal, 608AH/ 7th March, 1213CE in Busayri near Dalas in Upper Egypt. He grew up in the town of Busir hence his *nisba* (nom de plume) is Busir. It was said that one of his fore-parents originated from Dalas. But “a popular opinion is that al-Buṣayrī was from Sanhaji Berber tribe of North Africa”. Abdul-Rahman M.O., (2002).

Al-Buṣayrī had his early education in Egypt in one traditional religious schools of his time. He committed the glorious Qur'ān into memory at the age of thirteen. He had sound

knowledge in the glorious Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions. He also studied the principle of Islamic jurisprudence, history and development of Islamic thought, Qur'ānic exegesis and recitation, the *Hadīth*, classical Arabic literature, Linguistic, Logic and Sufism. Hence, he became a renowned *Ṣūfī*, a traditionist and a celebrated reciter of the glorious Qur'ān. Beside all these knowledge, al-Buṣayrī learnt the calligraphy as a professional work which made him become a skilled calligrapher. Unfortunately, the poor background of al-Buṣayrī shirked him to have a highly standard education of those days. Therefore, the circumstance intimidated him to earn his living at the early age through calligraphic work. He also worked as a copyist and a scribe. Thaḳāfī, UA (1999)

Having spent ten years in Jerusalem, al-Buṣayrī moved to Biblis (a town in the Eastern Nile Delta). In the town, he held a minor administrative job of an accountant where he started composing poems occasionally to enrich his incomes. Al-Buṣayrī never settled in one place permanently, but travelled throughout the Egypt praising the wealthy people with his poem. For example, he eulogised one major of Mahala, a town in Southern part of Cairo where he was paid monthly. In his old age, al-Buṣayrī became devoted and committed to Islam and having had contact with Abdus-Salām bn Mashish al-Husun, a Muslim leader. Al-Buṣayrī was a *Shāfi'ite* school of law.

Al-Buṣayrī used to attend the lectures of a Shadhili *Ṣūfī Shaykh*, Abu Abbas Ahmad al-Marsī (d.648AH/1287CE). Al-Marsī later influenced al-Buṣayrī into Shadhili Order. He later died in 695AH/1296CE in Alexandria. Thaḳāfī, UA (1999). His grave is found in the town old city beside Imam Shāfi'ī grave. His grave is visited by the pilgrims of those days. Notable among the works of al-Buṣayrī include the followings:

- i. *Al-Qaṣīdah al-Lamiyyah*;
- ii. *Al-Qaṣīdah al-Haiyyah*;
- iii. *Al-Qaṣīdah ad-Daliyyah*;
- iv. *Al-Qaṣīdah al-Mimiyyah*;
- v. *Al-Qaṣīdah al-Amaziyyah (Umu'l-Qur'an fi madh khayri'l-wara)*;
- vi. *Al-Qaṣīdah al-Baiyyah* and *Al-Qaṣīdah al-Mimiyyah*, which is also known as *al-Kawākib ad-Duriyyah fi madh khayri'l-Bariya (al-Burdah al-MadīḤ)*;
- vii. *Al-Qaṣīdah al-Muhammadiyyah fi ṣalat al khayri'l-Bariyya* and
- viii. *Al-Qaṣīdah bi'l-Qur'an*, and among others. (Mohammed Jamiu Yekeen, 2016)

THE BOOK: AL-BURDAH AL-MADĪḤ

Al-Burdah is a very popular poem, and has attracted different translations and commentaries by the scholars. Some even make use of it for supplications and spiritual subscription (*naqal*). Al-Buṣayrī unveiled the circumstance that led to the composition of *al-Burdah*, as a result of paralytic stroke that affected him. According to him, all his doctors and physicians gave up all hopes of his recovery after having exhausted their trials. In the state of helplessness, faint-heartedness and despair, he started composing the poem expressing the grandeur and legend of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He composed the poem as a devotional hymn supplicating Allah and praying for quick recovery from the ailment. Al-Buṣayrī expresses his experience as thus:

The reason for this work, *al-Burdah*, was that of the paralytic stroke sickness I have. Every physician was

unable to cure. The half path of my body had paralysed, and had disfigured my outlook. I had gone tired and felt nearly to the grave. I was inspired during the time of *saʿīdah* (time of acceptance of payer) to compose poem of eulogy of Prophet Muhammad. I started the work with the hope of sustaining the relief and cure. I received blessing of Allah for making the inspiration at ease. When I finished the work (*al-Burdah*), I saw the Prophet (*al-Mustafah*) in my dream. He descended to me and rubbed all part of my body with his blessed hand. Instantly, I was cured from the ailment, and recovered back my previous state of health, and my physical outlook was beautified. Thaqāfī, U.A (1999)

It was included that al-Busayri isolated himself in a place one Thursday night with complete devotion, concentration and sincerity. After he woke up from the dream, he found a scarf/shawl on his body which he had seen the Prophet placed on his limb. This was why he tagged the poem as *Qaṣīdah al-Burdah al-Madīḥ*. Actually, *Al-Burdah* is a set poem of eulogy of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The book is considered by many scholars as one of the best poems of eulogy on the Prophet. It is composed to instill and fortify one's love for the Prophet. Regarding its popularity, over ninety commentary works have been written on *al-Burdah*. The work of Ibrahim al-Bajūrī (d.1276AH) and that of Ibn Ashur (d.1296AH) of Cairo are very commendable. The poem is also translated into different languages such as Turkish, Berber, English, French, German, and among others. The poem which is 160 verses is divided into ten tracks. The following are the hierarchical subheadings (tracks) of the poem:

- i. The love and longing for the Prophet
- ii. Restraining from lust and carnal desires
- iii. The eulogy of the Prophet
- iv. The birth of the Prophet
- v. The Miracles (*Muʿjizat*) of the Prophet
- vi. The honour of the glorious Qurʾan
- vii. *Al-Israuʾ wal-Miʾraj* (The ascension to the heaven)
- viii. *Tawassul biʾn-Nabiyy* (Intercession through the Prophet)
- ix. *Jihad an-Nabiyy* (the wars fought by the Prophet) and
- x. Supplication and seeking for salvation

CONCEPT OF TAWASSUL IN ISLAM:

Generally, *tawassul*, which means fervent plea, petition, request and so on, is one of the contending issues that had generated a very serious debate among scholars, especially between the *Ṣūfīs* and anti-*Ṣūfīs* (*Salafīs*). Literarily, *tawassul* in Islam means plea for help or assistance through the personality of the Apostles, the Saints, *ʿIbādah* (worship) one offered before Allah, good deeds, the Qurʾan and many more. The glorious Qurʾan unveils the legitimacy of *tawassul* as Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ
وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“O you believe! Do your duty to Allah and fear Him, seek the means of approach unto Him, and strive hard in His cause as much as you can, so that ye may be prosper” (Q5:35).

The above verse connotes the effectiveness of *tawassul* via the request of Muslims. There are various interpretations of *Mufasssirūn* (Exegetes) regarding this verse. Ibn Kathīr quotes al-Qatadah who opines that *al-Wasīlah* is to draw nearer to Allah with obedience to Allah and the deed that please Him. He also quotes that Ibn Abbās, Mujāhid, Ata’u, abu Wa’il, Al-Hassan, and among others hold the view that *al-Wasilah* is to forbid the forbidden and shun the unlawful things. Ibn Kathir, I (2006), Al-Qurtabī also shares the same view with Ibn Kathīr, while Ibn Jarīr at-Tabari interprets it as only good actions that are pleasing Allah. Al-Bani, M.N (1996), Some propose that it is an exalted platform given to the Prophet. In Tafsīr al-Jalalayn, al-Mahlī and as-Sayūṭī agree that “*wasīlah* is obedience that can keep man in proximity to his God”¹⁴. Muhammad al-Banī expresses that “*tawassul* by the honour of the Prophet is un-Islamic except by the names of Allah.” Muhammad Nasib ar-Rifa’i defines *tawassul* using *Sharī’ah* ideology as:

Tawassul in *Sharī’ah* is moving closer to Allah (The High) through obedience and worship of Him and by adheres to His Prophets and His Messengers, and every other ritual that pleased Allah and loved by Him. Jalalu’d-Din Muhammad al-Mahli et-al (2010)

Whatever may be the case, one tends to know from these scholastic contributions that seeking for *al-Wasīlah* is unopposed in Islam, as Q17:57 also appraised the use of *al-Wasīlah* in the supplication to Allah. However, the *Ṣūfis* see *tawassul* beyond the realm of the *Sharī’ah*. In their understanding about the personality of Prophet Muhammad, stress that *tawassul* by the honour of the Prophet is much inevitable, and that the Qur’ān has given such directive as Allah aptly says:

... And if when they wronged themselves, they had come to you (O Muhammad), and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah accepting of repentance and Merciful. (Q4:64)

In lieu of the verse above, it is well understood that seeking for forgiveness is possibly obtainable through the intervention of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This is to say that Allah endorses *Wasīlah* of the Prophet, and that his death does not hinder his intervention for the servant of Allah and seeking for help through him. Interestingly, the Prophet was reported to have said that:

I was offered a choice between intercession and having half of my followers enter the Garden (Paradise). So, I chose intercession because it is more general and adequate. Bin Bāz, A.A (2014).

Muhammad Basir Al-Majhisi observes that “*tawassul* through the Prophet as a fundamental tenet of religion of Islam that the Apostle of Allah will intercede at the resurrection for his own people, and perhaps for all people”. Bin Bāz, A.A (2014). As observed by Basir, *tawassul* of the Prophet is of two categories in the doomsday, the general one for the entire humankind (that is *tawassul* before the judgment and after the judgment, which is eligible for the believers. All in all, our position is that *al-Wasīlah* through the honour of Prophet Muhammad is much believed, aspired and made use by the *Ṣūfīs*, not only for affair of the hereafter, but equally for their mundane matters. Thus, this belief and practice persuaded al-Busayri as a *Ṣūfī* to compose *al-Burdah* seeking for recovery from the ailment through Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Arabic Text and Translation of the Track of *Tawassul bi'n-Nabiyy in al-Burdah*:

الفصل في التوسل بالنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم

خدمته بمديح أستقبل به ** ذنوب عمر مض في الشعر والخدم
إذ قلداني ما تخشى عواقبه ** كأني بهما هدى من النعم
أطعت غي الصاب في الحالتين وما ** حصلت إلا على الأثام والندم
فيا خسارة نفسي في تجارتها ** لم تشتتر الدين بالدنيا ولم تسم
ومن يبيع أجلا منه بعاجله ** بين الغبن في بيع وفي سلم
إن أت ذنب فما عهدي بمنقوض ** من النبي ولا حبلني بمنصرم
فإن لي ذمة منه بتسميتي ** محمدا وهو أوفى الخلق بالذمم
إن لم يكن في معادي أخذا بيدي ** فضلا وإلا فقلت يا زلة القدم
حاشاه أن يحرم الراجي مكارمه ** أو يرجع الجار منه غير محترم
ومنذ ألزمت أفكاري مدائحه ** وجدته لخلاص خير ملتزم
ولن يفوت الغنى منه يدا تربت ** إن الحيا ينبت الأزهار في الإكم
ولم أرد زهرة الدنيا التي إقتطفت ** يدا زهير بما اثني على هرم

1. I served him (the Prophet) with praise by which (through it), aspire to be pardoned from the sins committed in my life in the past in (composing) the irreverent poetry and the illegal servitude to others (the noble men).
2. As these shortcomings (abnormal praising and servitude) have taken me into the consequence which I fear, as though I am due to it (the shortcomings) a sacrificial animal.
3. I obeyed the misleading passions of the youth in these two conditions (shortcomings), and I achieve nothing but sin and remorse.
4. Alas! What a great loss and regret of my soul via its transaction! It did not purchase religion at the expense of the world nor did it negotiate it.
5. And one who sells his future (life hereafter) for his present (mundane materials) is surely being defaulted in the sale and negotiation.

6. Even if I have committed sins, (hence) my covenant with the Prophet was not (likely) to be violated nor my rope broken (from him).
7. For verily, I have secured from him due to my name (being called) Muhammad. And he is the most trustful of humankind at the securities.
8. If for his kindness could not take me by my hand (could not rescue from severity) in my resurrection, then, say oh what a slipping foot! (What a misleading life from the right path!).
9. It is never him (the Prophet) that should deprive someone who is hopeful of his grace, or whose neighbours (followers) should return from him dishonourably.
10. Since I have devoted my thoughts (aspirations) to his eulogy (to praise the Prophet), I found him as the best for my sanctuary and salvation.
11. And the bounty (of wealth) would never dry off from him (for his) hand which is full of charity. For verily, the rain causes the plant to bloom flower on the hand.
12. I do not mean the terrestrial flower (secular wealth) which was plucked by hands of Zuhayr over his praises upon *Haram*.

THEMES OF TAWASSUL IN AL-BURDAH

Tawassul which is the eighth track of *al-Burdah* seems to have been the paramount reason for composing the poem. This is because as earlier said, al-Busayri who was affected by paralytic stroke could not sustain cure until he composed the poem. And getting recovery from the ailment seems to have been his fundamental aims at composing the poems. However, the *Ṣūfis* hold the belief on the immortality of the Prophet, and that whatever request made through him would be sustainable. Although, this disposition is critically opposed by the anti-*Ṣūfis*, claiming that the Prophet had died therefore, no assistance could be rendered by him anymore. In contrary to this, the *Ṣūfis* make use of *tawassul* through the Prophet in their desires and endeavours which they sustain most of the time. Hence, this issue shall be discussed later in this work.

As for the poetry work of al-Buṣayrī on *al-Burdah*, from the first to the fifth lines of the poem is mainly on repentance and blaming oneself on the shortcomings and mischievous attitudes that he had committed right from his youthful age. These include praising of people of substance and noble men in order to enrich his purse (sustain his livelihood), using his lavishing tongue to revile people, and among others. Al-Busayri saw these mal-attitudes as a great sin before Allah, which made him profoundly regretted and sought for forgiveness of sin through Prophet Muhammad. Thus this practice is inclined to the following verse:

But Allah was not going send them a
chastisement whilst thou (you) was among them
nor was he going to send it whilst they could ask
for pardon (forgiveness) (Q8:33)

In lieu of the above verse, two credible things are considered, the legend of the Prophet and the efficacy of repentance. Perhaps, these two legends were considered by al-Buṣayrī as they reflect in his poems. In the sixth line, al-Busayri, despite of his mischievous attitude of his youthful age, still install his faith by expressing his sincere loyalty to Prophet Muhammad and putting trust on him over his challenges. He also had belief that his

namesake with the Prophet being called Muhammad can also be used as medium of *tawassul*, and thus sought for Allah's mercy through it. As remarked by al-Busayrī, the scholars, especially, the *Ṣūfis* believe that the name of the Prophet is so important than any of the names among human-folk. The Glorious Qur'an made us known the sanctity of the epithet "Muhammad". For example, Allah cautions the Muslims to avoid absurdity and irreverence in summon the name of the Prophet as in the following verse: "Deem not the summons of the messenger among yourselves like the summons of one of you to another...(Q64:63)". A particular *Ḥadīth* was collected by Imam Al-Bukhārī where the Prophet was reported to have said that:

قال جبير بن مطعم: سمي لنا النبي نفسه أسماء فقال أنا
محمد أنا أحمد، وأنا الماحي يمحو الله به الكفر، وأنا الحاشر
الذي يحشر الناس علي قدمي وأنا العاقب الذي ليس بعده
النبي

Jubayr bn Mat'am said: the Prophet himself mentioned his name for us, he said: I am Muhammad, I am Ahmad, I am *Al-Mani* which Allah used to obliterate the idolatry, I am *Al-Hashir* who will gather mankind at my feet, I am *Al-Haqib* that no one after him there would be no Apostle. Al-Ilori, AY (ND).

In view of this, one tends to know that the name of the Prophet is worthy of being revered, and its sacredness is uncompromising therefore, the parameter indicates that using his name as medium of *tawassul* as done by al-Buṣayrī seems to have being justifiable. For example, Muhammad 'Alawī in his work *Abwābu'l-Faraj* discloses that "the name (Muhammad) was written on *Al-'Arsh* (the Throne) and when Adam wronged himself, he asked for forgiveness through the name from Allah and was forgiven" James E. R, (1970). In addition to this, the epithet, *Yā Muḥammadā'u* was reported to have written as motto on the Muslims' flag in the battle of *al-Yamāmah*. Al-Mujahid was also reported that a man got his leg broken, and Ibn Abbas told him to invoke the best (loveliest) person to him, and he said Muhammad, hence, his leg was healed. Al-Bukhārī, M.I (2006). All these illustrations are indication that the epithet "Muhammad" is powerful and therapeutic when invoked.

From the eighth to eleventh lines of the poem al-Busayrī discloses his trust on the Prophet, claiming that whoever relies faithfully on the Prophet would neither taste any hardship in this world nor loose in the last day. The view of al-Busayrī in this regard is inclined to this Qur'anic verse as Allah says: "...And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly attained a great attainment (Q33:71)". In the last line, al-Buṣayrī unveils that his aspiration is not, but celestial enjoyment that is permanent and infinity. However, the lamentation unveils the spiritual motivation of al-Buṣayrī vis-à-vis his poem. Despite the fact that he was seriously ill, he did not ignore the importance of the next world in his *tawassul*, because mundane affair is temporary and trivial. Hence, the Prophet was seen as fairy-godmother for the challenges al-Buṣayrī encountered, and that would be faced in the hereafter. In view of this, one tends to understand that the concept of *tawassul* and *shafā'ah* are embedded in the poetry work of al-Buṣayrī, despite the track was named as *tawassul*.

A DISCOURSE OF TAWASSUL OF AL-BUṢAYRĪ:

In the poetry works of al-Buṣayrī on *tawassul*, two important concepts are observable; *tawbah* (repentance) and *tawassul* through Prophet Muhammad despite of his death. However, it is imperative to discuss this in line with Islamic ideology. As for the *tawbah*, it is acceptable among the scholars that *tawbah* is very significant for the Muslims generally. More importantly, the *Ṣūfīs* are profound of seeking for forgiveness of sin which has even become their daily liturgy. As a fact, this tradition is inclined to the Qur'an and *Hadīth* of the Prophet. Allah says:

... Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is a perpetual Forgiver. He will send (rain from) the sky upon you in (continuing) showers. And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens, and provide for you gardens, and provide for you rivers. (Q71:10-12)

In view of the above verse, one could understand that *tawbah* is prominent for the attainment of Allah's mercy and it also among the prerequisites for the acceptance of prayer. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was also reported to have seeking for forgiveness of sin between seventy and one hundred times in a day. In addition, *tawbah* is a way of showing submission to Allah and also a manifestation of one's humility before Him. Scholars of different disciplines acknowledge the significance of *tawbah*. For instance, a Jurist, Abdu'r-Rahmān al-Jazāirī gives account of the position and condition of *tawbah* as he says:

Repentance to Allah after he had acted against Him (His ordinances) and directly one's attention Him (Allah) as he had earlier turned against Him and stopping committing all sins with full determination. Muhammad 'Alawī al-Maliki, (2012)

The condition of *tawbah* is also shared by a great *Ṣūfī* scholar, al-Ghazzali observes that "repentance from sin is by taking promise not to do the same evil again, and that to return to God in repentance". Muhamamd 'Alawī al-Maliki, (2012). Blaming of oneself upon the wrong doings is another factor considered as condition of *tawbah*. Nevertheless, our position is that the *Ṣūfīs* lay more emphasis on repentance unconditionally, whether they commit sin or not. They observe that no matter position of a servant before Allah, yet he is not absolutely sanctified before Him. And that *tawbah* is one of the fastest way of attaining pleasure and exalted rank before Allah. *Shaykh* Hassan Cisse in his commentary work on *Rūḥu'l-Adab* of *Shaykh* Ibrahim Ni'ass posits that "repentance is fruitful to the fear of Allah, worship of Him correctly and moving closer to Him". *Shaykh* Abdu'r-Rahmān al-Jazāirī submits in his book titled *Kitab al-Fiḡh 'alā Madhāib al-'Arba'ah* that:

Repentance to Allah after he had committed sin before Him (Allah), and giving Him the necessary attention, as he had before turned against His ordinances, and thus stopping committing sins with full determination. Abdu'r-Rahmān. Al-Jazāyirī, (1392 AH)

In a nutshell, Sholagberu in his commentary work on *Risālatu'l- Tawbah* of Shaykh Ibrahim Ni'ass submits that:

Whatever may be the case, it is certain that no Muslim is above repentance as they are commanded to seek Allah's forgiveness, not necessarily they commit any grave sin, but as a means of glorifying Almighty Allah, as well as expressing gratitude to Him. (Senegal, Medina Kaolack, (ND).

All in all, our position is that *tawbah* is not restricted to a certain phenomenon, but a command from Allah that must be adhered to by His servants. However, it seems there is justification for what was done by al-Buṣayrī as he put forward *tawbah* in his track on *tawassul*. Perhaps, as he was a *Ṣūfī*, and that seeking for Allah's forgiveness and mercy from the sins previously committed for hastening healing from the ailment that bewildered him.

As for the track on *tawassul* through the honour of Prophet Muhammad, the subject has been attracted a lot of debates among the scholars. Some anti-*Ṣūfīs* among the *Salafīs*, such as Ibn Taymiyyah and some of his followers critically condemn this as act of *shirk* (associating of partner with Allah). According to them, they claim that in as much as the Prophet had died, therefore the door of *tawassul* had been closed. This view is critically opposed by the *Ṣūfīs*. They (the *Ṣūfīs*) hold the view that Allah has declared the Prophet as *al-wasīlah* (an agent) for the attainment of Allah's forgiveness as it contains in the following verse:

... and if when they wronged themselves, they had come to you (O Muhammad), and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah accepting of repentance and Merciful. (Q4:64)

Al-Buṣayrī, as well as some other *Ṣūfīs* claim that the verse is an indication that the Prophet can still be used as agent of *tawassul* despite of his death. And that the verse is not abrogated in the Qur'an, which is applicable hitherto. To buttress their view, a particular *Ḥadīth* which was narrated by al-Imām al-Mundhirī quoted as follows:

عن أبي أمامة سهل بن حنيف أن رجلاً كان يختلف إلى عثمان بن عفان في حاجة له وكان عثمان لا يلتفت إليه ولا ينظر في حاجته فلقي عثمان بن حنيف فشكا ذلك إليه فقال له عثمان بن حنيف: أنت الميضاة فتوضاً ثم أتت المسجد فصل فيه ركعتين ثم قل: اللهم إني أسألك وأتوجه إليك بنبينا محمد نبي الرحمة يا محمد! إني أتوجه بك إلى ربي فيقضى حاجتي، وتذكر حاجتك ورح إلي حتى أروح معك قال فأطلق الرجل فصنع ما قال له ثم أتى باب عثمان فجاء البواب حتى أخذ بيده فأدخله على عثمان فأجلسه معه على الطنفسة وقال: ما حاجتك؟ فذكر حاجته فقضاها له، ثم قال: ما ذكرت حاجتك حتى كانت هذه الساعة وقال: ما كانت لك من حاجة فانتنا ثم إن الرجل خرج من عنده فلقي عثمان بن حنيف فقال له: جزاك الله خيراً ما كان ينظر في حاجتي ولا يلتفت إلي حتى كلمته في فقال

عثمان بن حنيف: والله ما كلمته ولكن سمعت رسول الله صلى
الله عليه وسلم يقول وجاءه ضرير فشكا إليه ذهاب بصره. فقال
له النبي "أو تصبر" ... (وهذا الحديث صحيح)

On the authority of Abu Amamah Sahl bn Hunayf, he said that: A man came to ‘Uthmān bn ‘Affān for his needs, but ‘Uthmān did not look or attend to his needs. He (the man) met ‘Uthmān bn Hunayf and complained this to him. He (‘Uthmān bn Hunayf) asked him to take a container (for ablution) to perform ablution, then to go to the mosque, to observe two *rak‘ah* prayers and to say the following (prayer): Oh Allah! I seek from You and I look unto You through the honour of Prophet Muhammad- the Prophet of mercy, Oh Muhammad! I look unto my Lord through you in order to get my needs. (He told the man): then mention your request and then take a look with the day-break and I too would be watching of you. The man left and did as directed by ‘Uthmān bn Hunayf. He went back to ‘Uthmān bn ‘Affān (the Caliph). The gateman of the caliph took him to ‘Uthmān bn ‘Affān and be-seated him on the mat beside the caliph. He (‘Uthmān bn ‘Affān) asked him his needs: The man disclosed his needs and was given (granted). He (‘Uthmān bn ‘Affān) asked him that: Why did not you ask for your request before this time? He (‘Uthmān bn ‘Affān) told him that if have any request come to us. When the man came out from him (the caliph), he met Ibn Hunayf. He said (to him): May Allah reward you. He said that: ‘Uthmān bn ‘Affān before neither looked at him nor attended to me, if not you discussed with him (for me). Ibn Hunayf replied that: I swear by Allah! I did not discuss with him, but I witnessed the Messenger of Allah when a blind man came to him, complained his blindness and the Prophet asked him: would you be patient?... (This a sound tradition). Abubakri Al-Jazā’ir, (1392 AH)

The *Hadīth* is an indication that *tawassul* after the Prophet’s death was practiced by the *Ṣaḥābah* and was sustainable. Another scenario is that of Imām An-Nawawī who narrated an *Hadīth* that a Bedouin stood beside the Prophet’s grave, plea through him by saying that: “Peace be upon you O Messenger of Allah, I have heard Allah has said: had they wronged themselves come to you... (Q4:64)”. It was reported that the Bedouin later received forgiveness of sin from Allah through the honour of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) · Beside the *Ṣūfīs*, some theologians also believe in *tawassul* of the Prophet. For example, Alus Baghdad declares that:

There is no objection in making *tawassul* to God through the *jah* (dignity) and exalted position of the Prophet, whether in his lifetime or after his death. Solagberu, A.B (2013)

Supporting this view, Sayyid Ṣabīḥ in his work, *Akhṭāu Ibn Taymiyyah fī Ḥaqq Rasūl wa Ahl Baytihi* enumerates some prominent scholars of different fields supporting *tawassul bi'n-Nabiyy* in their respective works, such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Ibn Al-Khatīb, Ibn ʿAqīl, and many others among the jurists. As for the Commentators of the Qur'an, they are; Al-Qurṭabī, Abdur-Raḥmān bn Zayd bn Aslam, Al-Alūsī, An-Nasafī, and host of others. Other scholars are; Ibn al-Azīr, Ibn Jubayr, Ibn al-ʿAdīm, Abū Al-ʿAbās an-Nāsirī, Abdur-Raḥmān bn Khālidūn, and others among the historians. Al-Imām al-Mundhirī, (2013). By and large, based on the *Hadith*, our position is that *tawassul* is still efficacious and therapeutic. And that is why many scholars are using it for what they aspire. However, what was done by al-Busayri was the same as that of other scholars, and thus in line with Islamic injunctions.

CONCLUSION:

Our discussion so far has highlighted the major factor that led to the composition of *al-Burdah*. We equally looked into the synopsis of *tawassul* as it contained in the Qur'an and the Prophetic *Sunnah*. The text of the track (*tawassul*) is annotatively translated, while the commentary note on the track has been carefully analysed, especially *tawbah* and *tawassul*. From the illustrations, it is obvious that *tawassul* plays a significant role in Muslims' life, and thus make it to become inevitable. Also, making *tawassul* through the honour of the Prophet cannot be over-emphasised despite the criticism by some scholars. Interestingly, scholars of different fields support using the Prophet as agent to plea to Allah. However, the impression of al-Busayri to compose the poem can be considerably assessed as compliance to Islamic tenet. Finally, it is obvious that Muhammad as an intercessor whether broadly or narrowly conceived is the means to God.

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