# Four Principles[[1]](#footnote-1)



*In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.*

The ways leading to Almighty God are truly numerous. While all true ways are taken from the Qur’an, some are shorter, safer, and more general than others. Of these ways taken from the Qur’an is that of **impotence, poverty, compassion,** and **reflection,** from which, with my defective understanding, I have benefited.

Like ecstatic love, **impotence** is a path which, by way of worship, leads to winning *God’s love*; but it is safer. **Poverty** too leads to the divine name of *All- Merciful*. And, like ecstatic love, **compassion** leads to the name of *All- Compassionate*, but it is a swifter and broader path. Also like ecstatic love, **reflection** leads to the name of *All-Wise*, but it is richer, broader, and more brilliant path. This path consists not of ten steps like the ten subtle faculties of some of the Sufi paths employing silent recollection, nor of seven stages like the seven souls of those practicing public recitation, but of **four steps**. It is reality (hakikat), rather than a Sufi way (tarikat). It is Shari‘a.

However, let it not be misunderstood. It means to see one’s impotence, poverty and faults before Almighty God, not to fabricate them or display them to people. The method of this short path is to follow the practices of the Prophet (UWBP), perform the religious obligations and give up serious sins. It is especially to perform the prescribed prayers correctly and with attention, and following them to say the tesbihat.

The verse,  *“Therefore, do not justify yourselves,” (53:32)* points to the **first step**.

The verse,  *“And be not like those who forget God, and He therefore makes them forget their own selves,” (59:19)* points to the **second step**.

The verse,  *“Whatever good happens to you is from God, but whatever evil befalls you is from yourself,” (4:79)* points to the **third step**.

The verse,  *“Everything will perish save His countenance,” (28:88)* points to the **fourth step**. A brief explanation of these four steps is as follows:

# First Step

As the verse, *“Therefore, do not justify yourselves”* suggests, it is to not purify the soul. For on account of his nature and innate disposition, man loves himself. Indeed, he loves himself before anything else, and only himself. He sacrifices everything other than himself to his own soul. He praises himself in a manner befitting some object worthy of worship. He absolves and exonerates himself from faults in the same way. As far as he possibly can, he does not see faults as being appropriate for him, and does not accept them. He defends himself passionately as though worshipping himself. Even, using on himself the members and faculties given him as part of his nature in order to praise and glorify the True Object of Worship, he displays the meaning of the verse,

 *Who takes as his god his own desires. (25:43; 45:23)*

He considers himself, he relies on himself, he fancies himself. Thus, his purification and cleansing at this stage, in this step, is to not purify himself; it is not to absolve himself.

# Second Step

As the verse, *“And be not like those who forget God, and He therefore makes them forget their own selves” teaches*, man is oblivious of himself and not aware of himself. If he thinks of death, it is in relation to others. If he sees transience and decline, he does not attribute them to himself. His evil-commanding soul demands that when it comes to inconvenience and service of others, he forgets himself, but when it comes to receiving his recompense, and to benefits and enjoyment, he thinks of himself and takes his own part fervently. His purification, cleansing, and training at this stage is the reverse of this. That is to say, when oblivious of himself, it is not to be oblivious. That is, to forget himself when it comes to pleasure, and ambition and greed, and to think of himself when it comes to death and service of others.

# Third Step

As the verse, *“Whatever good happens to you is from God, but whatever evil befalls you is from yourself”* teaches, the nature of the evil-commanding soul demands that it always considers goodness to be from itself and it becomes vain and conceited. Thus, at this step, a person sees only faults, defects, impotence, and poverty in himself, and understands that all his good qualities and perfections are bounties bestowed on him by the All- Glorious Creator.

He gives thanks instead of being conceited, and offers praise instead of boasting. According to the meaning of the verse,

 *Truly he succeeds who purifies it, (91:9)*

his purification at this stage is to know his perfection to lie in imperfection, his power in impotence, and his wealth in poverty.

# Fourth Step

As the verse, *“Everything will perish save His countenance”* teaches, the evil- commanding soul considers itself to be free and independent and to exist of itself. Because of this, man claims to possess a sort of dominicality. He harbors a hostile rebelliousness towards his True Object of Worship. Thus, through understanding the following fact, he is saved from this. The fact is this:

According to the apparent meaning of things, which looks to each thing itself, everything is transitory, wanting, accidental, non-existent. But according to the meaning that signifies something other than itself and in respect of each thing being a mirror to the All-Glorious Maker’s names and charged with various duties, each is a witness, it is witnessed, and it is existent. The purification and cleansing of a person at this stage is as follows:

In his existence he is non-existent, and in his non-existence he has existence. That is to say, if he values himself and attributes existence to himself, he is in the darkness of non-existence as great as the universe. That is, if he relies on his individual existence and is unmindful of the True Giver of Existence, he has an individual light of existence like that of a fire-fly and is submerged in an endless darkness of non- existence and separation. But if he gives up egotism and sees that he is a mirror of the manifestations of the True Giver of Existence, he gains all beings and an infinite existence. For he who finds the Necessary Existent, the manifestation of whose names all beings manifest, finds everything.

# Conclusion

The four steps in this way of **impotence, poverty, compassion, and reflection** have been explained in the twenty-six Words so far written, which are concerned with knowledge of reality, the reality of the Shari‘a, and the wisdom of the Qur’an. So here, we shall allude briefly to only one or two points, as follows:

This path is shorter, because it consists of four steps. When impotence causes a person to give up the soul, it turns him directly to the All-Powerful One of Glory. Whereas when a person on the way of ecstatic love, the swiftest way, gives up the soul, his way directs him to a temporary beloved. Only when he discovers the beloved’s impermanence does he turn to the True Beloved.

Also, this path is much safer, because the ravings and high-flown claims of the soul are not present on it. For apart from impotence, poverty, and defect, the soul possesses nothing so that it oversteps its mark.

Also, this path is much broader and more universal. For in order to attain to a constant awareness of God’s presence, a person is not compelled to imagine the universe to be condemned to non-existence and to declare:  *“There is no existent but He,”* like those who believe in the Unit y of Existence, nor to suppose the universe to be condemned to imprisonment in absolute oblivion and to say,  *“There is nothing witnessed but He,”* like those who believe in the Unity of Witnessing. Rather, since the Qur’an has most explicitly pardoned the universe and released it from execution and imprisonment, the person on this path disregards the above, and dismissing beings from working on their own account and employing them on account of the All- Glorious Creator, and in the duty of manifesting the Most Beautiful Names and being mirrors to them, he considers them from the point of view of signifying something other than themselves; and being saved from absolute heedlessness, he enters the divine presence permanently; he finds a way leading to the Almighty God in everything.

**In Short:** Dismissing beings from working on account of other beings, this way is to not look at them as signifying themselves.

1. From the 29th Letter, The Letters, BSN [↑](#footnote-ref-1)