

Tazkiratu'l Awliya'

MAWLANA OSMAN WALI 'ABD-U'L-KARIM رحمة الله عليه (1309-1377 A.H, 1892-1958 C.E)

(Please recite رحمة الله عليه **Rahmatullahi 'alayh** / رحمة الله عليها **Rahmatullahi 'alayha**, may Allah have mercy on him / her, after the names of the personalities who have passed ahead).

All Praise is for Allah سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ and may He bless and bestow peace in perpetuity on our Beloved Holy Prophet Sayyidina Muhammad al-Mustafa صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

Mawlana Osman Wali 'Abd-u'l-Karim رحمة الله عليه is a Wali Allah (Friend of Allah), a **sufi** saint who was born in Mombasa, Kenya in 1309 A.H, 1892 C.E; and passed ahead in Mombasa on 27th Ramadan 1377 A.H, 1958 C.E. I saw him when I was a child. He was a Mu'min (Memon) whose father had migrated from India and settled in Kenya. He was in a permanent state of **wajd** (spiritual ecstasy), absorbed in the love and remembrance of Allah سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ. He was such a humble and saintly **darwesh (dervish)**, that in his own life-time, he came to be referred to as a **wali** (Friend of Allah), **sufi** master. I have seen many saintly Muslims, and he occupies pride of place among them. These are some of the anecdotes which I have heard about him from his close relatives and many of those who met him.

This incident was narrated to me by Brother Kassam Ahmad Budhky. He told me that as a child, Osman Wali studied in Madrasa Muhammadiyyah which had been established by Al-Marhum Haji Mohamed Haji Kassam whose bookstore named Haji Mohamed and Sons operates to this day. Once, Osman Wali fell asleep in a corner of the Madrasa where no one noticed him. When he woke up, everyone had left. He saw a book on the table which was shining brightly. He wanted to recite this book. A voice told him that if he recited this book, he would no longer be part of this world. He fulfilled his urge and recited from the book which transformed his life. When you saw him, he appeared to be a man from another world, with a far-away look, totally immersed in the love of Allah سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ.

Like the well-known ancient sufi saint Hazrat Bishr al-Hafi رحمة الله عليه, he always walked bare-foot. He hardly moved. I saw him standing in one place and if I happened to return by the same road, I saw him at the same place, having perhaps advanced a few steps. He carried a stick which he hit on the ground before he either moved forward or continued to remain stationary.

He fulfilled the **Sunnah** (tradition) of the **Ashab-u's-Suffa** ﷺ, the Prophet's Companions ﷺ who were poor and who sat on a bench-like raised platform. In those days, people in Mombasa built permanent benches made of stone and cement which were attached to the houses outside. These benches are called "**baraza**". People would sit on them outside to relax. Mawlana Osman Wali used to sit on one of those "**barazas**" (benches). One day, Brother Kassam Ahmad Budhky saw that Mawlana Osman Wali had bought cooked potatoes and roasted mutton pieces. He ate the cooked potatoes himself and fed the roasted mutton pieces to the cat that sat in front of him, because the cat prefers mutton over potatoes! He was truly a unique person. **Al-Hamdu Lillah!**

All Praise is for Allah ﷻ for producing such unique personalities.

Brother Bashir Mamdani narrated to me an incident that happened with his father, al-Marhum Ahmad Muhammad of Kumi, Uganda, who gave Mawlana Osman Wali, who was his uncle, a new **sherwani** (long coat) as a gift for 'Eid. After a few moments, someone happened to pass by and Mawlana Osman Wali gave away the coat to him. Al-Marhum Ahmad Muhammad asked why he gave it away when he had specifically brought it for him. He replied that the man was in greater need of it. Many such instances have been narrated by different people that Mawlana Osman Wali gave away all the money that he had received as gifts. Once he gave a type of fruit to someone that he had never seen before. He was a **faqir**, needy before Allah ﷻ, not into **dunya** (this world).

He was a **dhakir (zakir)**. His tongue was always seen moving in **Dhikrullah** (remembrance of Allah ﷻ). When he was invited, he visited people and made **du'a** (supplication to Allah ﷻ) for them.

Once I asked al-Marhum uncle Abdul Rahman Bagha to tell me something about Mawlana Osman Wali. He told me that one day he went to him with an encyclopedia in English to ask him whether what was written in it was correct, although he had never gone to school to learn English. So Mawlana Osman Wali asked him to open a page and to read, which he did. He said that it was correct. He asked him to open another page and to read. This time, he said that it was incorrect. When a third page was read out to him, he said that it was correct.

He was an '**aalim** (learned scholar) in the Hanafi **madh-hab** (school of sacred Muslim law); and in the **Sufi** tradition, in **Tariqa al-Qadiriyyah**. He transcribed in his pearl-like beautiful handwriting the Mawlid al-Barzanji and **qasaid** (religious poems) in his Diwan (Collected Poems) in four languages: Arabic, Farsi, Urdu and Sindhi. He also knew Kiswahili and Gujarati.

The poems in his Diwan consist of **hamd** (Praise of Allah ﷻ); **qasaid**, including the last **fasl** (chapter) of Qasida al-Burda in praise of the Prophet ﷺ; and **manaqib (manqabats)** in Urdu

mourning the martyrs of the Battle of Kerbala رضي الله عنهم, and in praise of Muhyuddin Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani رضي الله عنه. He also transcribed some well-known couplets of the Salam of A‘la Hazrat Imam Ahmad Raza Khan رحمة الله عليه.

He composed some of the poems himself. For example, he composed a poem in Urdu in praise of Madrasa Muhammadiyyah. He also composed a **manqabat** in Urdu mourning Al-Hajj As-Sayyid Mawlana ‘Abdullah Shah رحمة الله عليه of Nairobi, a **shaykh** in **Tariqa Naqshbandiyyah**, when he passed ahead in 1372 A.H. He referred to him as his **murshid** (spiritual guide).

Let us then get a flavor of this **manqabat** by reciting three of its couplets.

لاشِ اقدسِ جا رہی ہے اب مدینہ پاک میں
 ہوں گے جناتِ البقیع میں دفن از فضلِ خدا
 نور تیرا قبرِ اقدس پر ہو نازل تا ابد
 روضہ رضوان جیسی قبر ہو میرے خدا
 حجِّ بیت اللہ کی نعمت ملی چھبیس بار
 روضہ محبوب میں حاضر ہوئے صد مرتباً

His blessed body is now going to Madina the Pure
 He will be laid to rest in Jannaat u'l Baqi‘ with the Grace of God

May Your Light (O Allah!) forever descend on his blessed grave
 May his grave be like a garden of Paradise, O Allah

He was blessed with the Hajj of the House of Allah twenty six times
 He presented himself at the Garden of Paradise of the Beloved Prophet (in Masjid an-Nabawi)
 and was always welcomed

سبحان الله **SubhanAllah** (Glorified is Allah)!

Al-Marhum Hasan Haji Ebrahim Noorani informed me that Mawlana Osman Wali used to write out a **qasida** for him to go and recite at a gathering of **Mawlid un-Nabi** صلى الله عليه وسلم in Memon Villa,

the community centre. Some of these **qasaid** (poems) are so popular that they continue to be recited to this day.

I was blessed to obtain the Diwan of Mawlana Osman Wali. I was also blessed to obtain a copy of some of the **awraad** and **adhkaar** (regular voluntary invocations) of Mawlana Osman Wali from al-Marhuma Nurbai, wife of al-Marhum Hasham Haji Mohamed (of Haji Mohamed and Sons). These consist of **Asma' Allah** سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ, **Asma' un-Nabi** صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, **Salawaat** and **du'a**.

Rafiq A.A. Karim, the grandson of al-Marhum 'Abdul Qadir (who was the younger brother of Mawlana Osman Wali) informed me that 'Aalimah 'Aisha maa Khamisa (of Muhammadan Bakery) had once shown him some of the hand-written books of Mawlana Osman Wali. She informed him about some of the **masajid** such as Masjid Pangani in which Mawlana Osman Wali used to pray. She had called Rafiq A.A. Karim to tell him of a dream she had in which Mawlana Osman Wali told her to inform Rafiq that he would now have a son whom he should name Osman, which he did.

Rafiq A.A. Karim has the bed of Mawlana Osman Wali which he received as his blessed share of inheritance.

'Aalimah 'Aisha maa Khamisa told me that once when she came with her father, who was a **Khalifa** (deputy) in **Tariqa ar-Rifa'iyya**, to visit his friend Mawlana Osman Wali, he told him that his daughter understood everything they were talking about.

A Ugandan informed Rafiq A.A. Karim that once they came from Mombasa to Nairobi (which is 300 miles away) and they saw Mawlana Osman Wali in Masjid Pangani with no trace of travel on him.

Some people came from Nairobi and they asked for the whereabouts of Mawlana Osman Wali as they wanted to give him a lift to the shrine of Sayyid Bagh 'Ali Shah رحمته عليه in Mackinnon Road, a town 50 miles away from Mombasa. When they found him, they invited him to accompany them, so he told them, "you go and I am coming". When they reached there, they saw him there.

Al-Habib Ahmad Mash-hur bin Taha al-Haddad رحمته عليه has explained such a phenomenon in his **dars** (study session). He said that Allah سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ folds up the earth for the Awliya' Allah رحمته عليهم so that in one moment they are in one place, and a little while later they are in a far-away place.

This miracle of Mawlana Osman Wali which I report now has been narrated to me by different people with slightly different versions. Once, when someone completed his **Salah** (Prayer), and

turned his face to the right to say “**As-Salamu ‘alaykum wa Rahmatullah**” (Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah), he saw Mawlana Osman Wali to his right, and when he turned his face to the left to say “**As-Salamu ‘alaykum wa Rahmatullah**”, he saw Mawlana Osman Wali to his left.



Allahu Akbar (Allah is Supremely Great)!

Now we come to another miracle of Mawlana Osman Wali as narrated by Haji Hasan ‘Ali Admani. In the middle of the night, Mawlana Osman Wali would be seen going to the sea, from the place called Dhobini. So al-Marhum Ayyub Ahmad Noorani decided to follow him secretly. When he was about to reach the sea-shore, Mawlana Osman Wali told him, “Turn back if you want to avoid making a big mistake”. So he went away. His father asked him to go and beg forgiveness from Mawlana Osman Wali which he did.

A person advised his sons that when he dies, they should bring Mawlana Osman Wali for his **ghusl**. So when he passed ahead, they came to Mawlana Osman Wali who told them to go and that he was coming. When they reached home after a little while, they were told that someone already came, and gave **ghusl** and left. He was a **khadim u’l-qawm** (servant of the community).

Haji ‘Abdul Ghani ‘Abdul Shakur Siddiq of Mombasa is a grandson of al-Marhum Siddiq, one of the brothers of Mawlana Osman Wali. Haji ‘Abdul Ghani is a faith-healer. He is well-known for reciting verses of the Holy Qur’an and **du‘a** to remove jinn from those possessed with jinn. He informed me that he had once removed a jinn from someone. That jinn informed him that he was a **Hafiz u’l-Qur’an** and it was Mawlana Osman Wali who had made him memorize the whole Qur’an. He fulfilled the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ of teaching the Holy Qur’an to the jinn.



Allahu Akbar (Allah is Supremely Great)!

Sister Khatijabai Aboo, daughter of al-Marhum ‘Abdul Rahman Kadernani narrated that before Mawlana Osman Wali moved to live with his brother ‘Abdul Qadir, he used to sleep in Madrasa Muhammadiyya where she studied as a child. As it was well-known that there were bad jinn there, she asked him whether he was scared to sleep there. He said he was not scared because he tied up the bad jinn.

When Mawlana Osman Wali was about to breathe his last, he said that a lady in the room who was his close relative should get aside as the **malak u’l-mawt** (angel of death) was about to enter. When she got aside, he breathed his last.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we shall return. (2:156)

From these incidents we learn that Mawlana Osman Wali could see the jinn and saw or felt the presence of at least one angel. Obviously, Allah ﷻ had given him some of the ‘ilm ul-ghayb (knowledge of the unseen). It is well-known that Allah ﷻ bestows some of the ‘ilm ul-ghayb to the sufi saints. So for those with **imaan** (Faith), it is easy to appreciate the sea-like ‘ilm ul-ghayb that Allah ﷻ gave to our Beloved Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ which has been very well documented.

It has been reported by those who were present at his **janazah** (funeral) that the coffin went so fast from hand to hand of those who carried him that only those who were fortunate enough, got an opportunity to touch it with their finger-tips.

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ **SubhanAllah** (Glorified is Allah)!

After he passed ahead, Mawlana Osman Wali was seen doing the **tawaf** of the Ka‘ba in Makkah al-Mukarramah by sister Khatijabai Aboo.

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ **Allahu Akbar** (Allah is Supremely Great)!

It was narrated to me by Haji ‘Abdul Ghani ‘Abdul Shakur Siddiq that he saw a stone with the name of Allah ﷻ engraved on it, lying on the grave of Mawlana Osman Wali. He decided to take this stone home for its blessings. When he had gone a few steps, he heard a voice say to him: “Give that which is in trust to the one it belongs to”. So he at once put it back. I saw this stone which is still there on the grave of Mawlana Osman Wali in the cemetery of Masjid Birikau in Bondeni, Mombasa. His is the only grave in the cemetery with a stone engraved with the name of Allah ﷻ.

While no trace remains of the graves of the 1950’s and the 1960’s as the sand of the graves has been washed away in rain, the grave of Mawlana Osman Wali remains as it is for all these years although it is just sand and a few stones, and not a permanently built structure.

When I visited Kenya five years ago, I kept my copy of Ratib al-‘Attas under a pile of copies of the Holy Qur’an on a shelf in Masjid Birikau. When I went to look for it after **Salah** (Prayer), it

was nowhere to be seen. The next day, when I went to the grave of Mawlana Osman Wali to recite **al-Fatiha**, I found it on his grave!

When Mawlana Osman Wali passed ahead, so many people came to narrate his miracles to his brother ‘Abdul Qadir that he told his daughter Hurbai he never knew his brother had so many miracles.

اللّٰهُمَّ نَفَعْنَا بِهِ **Naf’anAllahu bih** (may Allah ﷻ make us benefit from him). **Amin**.

May Allah ﷻ make us benefit from his **‘ulum** (knowledge), **barakaat** (blessings), and **asraar** (spiritual mysteries). **Amin. Yaa Rabb al-‘aalam** (O Lord of the worlds)!

Al-Fatiha!

Siddiq Osman Noormuhammad

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