



Tawassul through the Awliyā ¹

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Question:

I [have] read much about Tawassul through the Prophet ﷺ and using his name in *du`ā* on sunnipath.com, but all those things don't explain the following:

1. Why should we use [the] Awliyā and Sālihīn when we are able to use the Prophet ﷺ as a means. Isn't it better to say, for example "*Ob Allāh forgive me for your Prophet*" than to say "*Ob Allāh forgive me for Abdul Qādir Jilani*"? Why [are the] *Ahl al-Tasawwuf* using their Shuyūkh and not the Prophet ﷺ?

2. Even if the matter with using [their] names in *du`ā* is cleared [up], there [remains] another question. Which scholars accepted saying "*Yā `Abdul Qādir adriknī*" (O `Abdul Qādir look at me), or "*Yā Naqshbandī Madad*"? How can the Awliyā hear the words, when they are far away (in their graves or [at their] homes when they are alive)? Are their souls informed directly through Allāh or are the angels transmitting them? And what is the proof for this? And again, if this is acceptable, why not use the Prophet ﷺ instead of Awliyā. I do believe in "Madad". But some brothers of Ahlul Sunnah don't know how to handle with this matter and still have some doubts and raised the questions I wrote. I would be very happy if you could give me a detailed answer, since it is very hard to get detailed information on this topic in Germany from qualified scholars.

Answer:

The proper question is not why but whether to make Tawassul through the righteous and in what manner. The reply is that Allāh Most High ordered us in the Holy Qur'an to seek the means to Him (Qur'an 5:35) and the Prophet ﷺ showed us the manner with many *du`ās*. Among them, his saying, "*O Allāh, I ask You by the right of those who ask You (bi-haqqi al-sa'ilīna `alayk),*" which includes the righteous. The Hāfiz Ibn Hajar in his

¹ Adapted from what was originally posted on 'Sunna-Principles' under the title: '*Another Tawassul Question*'

lessons on Imām al-Nawawī's *Adhkar* said this is a fair narration and we documented it in full in the chapter on Imām Abī Hanifa in our forthcoming *Four Imāms*. Indeed, the mention of **“those whom You have favored”** in the Fātiha is the most oft-repeated Tawassul through the righteous in the Ummah, as indicated by al-Habīb `Umar ibn Hafīz. It is also established in the two *Sahībs* that our liegeland `Umar ﷺ made Tawassul through the Prophet's uncle, al-`Abbās and, perhaps more important than all of the above (because it is more explicit), the Consensus of the Ummah makes it clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that it is lawful and legitimate to make Tawassul through the righteous as stated by al-Habīb Zayn al-`Abidin ibn Sumayt in *“al-Ajwibāt al-Ghāliya”* when he said, among other statements to that effect: *“Seeking the intermediary of the Prophets and Awliyā' is a beloved act which is firmly established in the sound and other hadīths. The scholars concurred on seeking it and adduced proofs for it from matters that are too long to explain.”*

As for why the Sufis mention their Shuyūkh, it is from etiquette as students of such Shuyūkh since Allāh Most High said to *“enter the houses through their doors,”* and from their good opinion of such Shuyūkh as being Friends of Allāh Most High as well as, in many cases, grandsons of the Prophet ﷺ which increases the chances of such Tawassul to bear fruit. Ibn Hajar in *Fath al-Bārī* cited Imām al-Hākim al-Naysabūrī as narrating in *Tarīkh Naysabūr* that a group of Shuyūkh went out to Tūs (present-day Iran) to visit the grave of our liegeland `Alī al-Ridā, among them the great Imām of Hadīth, Ibn Khuzayma. When they reached the spot, the latter entered into such a state of emotion and plaintive supplication that, the narrator said, *“We were extremely puzzled; but when he [Ibn Khuzayma] was asked what was wrong he replied: ‘Leave me alone with what my soul feels toward `Alī al-Ridā.’”* Therefore it is apt that the Sufis, in turn, as long as they are doing something blessed and approved by the Law, would ask any would-be questioner to kindly leave them alone with what their souls experience and know of the high station of the Awliyā.

In the time of al-Nawawī, the Dar al-Hadīth school in Damascus had the Noble Sandal of the Prophet ﷺ in its possession. This Sandal was kept in a wooden box above the *Mibrāb* in its mosque. The Mālikī Faqīh, Hadīth Master, historian, and philologist, Imām Abū Hafs al-Fakihānī (d. 734) visited Damascus seeking its *barakā*. The *Muhaddīth* Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Hadīda al-Ansārī narrates:

“I was with him. When he saw the most honoured Sandal, he bared his head and began to kiss it and rub his face over it. His tears flowed. He recited:

*‘Fa-law qila lil-Majnūni: Layla wa-waslahā
turidu am al-dunya wa-mā fi tawayahā?
La-qāla: Ghuḥarun min turābi ni`alibā
ahabbu ilā nafsi wa-ashfā' li-balwahā’*

*If it were said to Layla's Madman: 'Is it Layla and her connection
you wish, or the world and all it contains?'
He would reply: 'Grime from the dust of her sandals
is dearer to my soul and more healing for its ills!'"*

As for the expressions mentioned, such as *“Yā `Abdul Qādir adrikenī”* (Yā `Abdul Qādir look at me) or *“Yā Naqshbandī Madad”*, the Ulemā differ about their appropriateness but the majority consider them harmless and say that such expressions boil down to asking those Awliyā for their *du`ā* and their *istighfār* on behalf of the supplicant, with the firm

understanding that the supplicant's supplication is ultimately directed to Allāh Most High. This was clarified by al-Habīb al-Zayn in the same source mentioned above.²

As for the questions “How can the Awliyā hear from afar,” and “are their souls informed directly or indirectly,” and what is the proof: these questions, strictly speaking, concern the modalities of the interlife (*barzakab*) which are of no concern to us. Proofs on the reality of their hearing and the fact that they are neither unaware nor uninformed abound in the books devoted to the life of the soul after death such as Ibn al-Qayyim's *al-Rūb* among others.

The question remains that the Prophet ﷺ and the Awliyā ﷺ should not be addressed in a way as to suggest to the unprepared witness that they are placed on an equal footing with Allāh Most High or that they are being supplicated instead of, or with Allāh Most High. Even if such is not the intention, a person making Tawassul must also avoid the appearance of such intention since that would create *fitna* or worse. Therefore, it is best to stick to the formulations used and taught by the people of learning, chief among all of them the form of dua taught by the Prophet ﷺ to the blind man, and this was the most preferable of all forms of Tawassul in the eyes of Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal ﷺ. We should also exert patience and ask Allāh *Most High* to increase our knowledge, which may take time, and keep us in the company of His righteous servants, not only so we can fulfil His command to **“be with those who are truthful”** but because our souls and hearts may spiritually suffocate and die otherwise. Finally we should be aware that the Sūfī Faqīh is rarer than the purest gold, not to mention the uneducated. *All success is from Allāh Most High.*



² This source is available in Arabic on the web [at <http://www.rifaieonline.com/shobhat.html#>]