



On Keeping Good Deeds Secret ¹

Imām Ibn ‘Aṭā’Allāh al-Sakandarī²

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Those people who are invited to adorned palaces will not wish to sit upon the garbage dump. Whatever good deeds you do for Allāh’s sake, do them in secret, such that nobody knows about them. Make this an investment, a treasure with Allāh which you will find [and be rewarded for] on Judgment day. This is because your ego (*nafs*) feels blissful when your good deeds are mentioned [in public.]

A great Shaykh fasted for forty years and people in his own household did not know about this. Do not waste your breath in things that are not in obedience to Allāh. Do not look at how short a breath is, but look at how many such breaths are there [wasted or worthwhile] and are granted by Allāh ta’ālā.

These breaths (*anfās*) are gems; have you seen anyone [sensible] scattering gems on a dunghill? Why do you remedy and decorate your outward and keep wrecking and dirtying your inward? Your example is like that of a leper who wears new clothes, but inside, they are smeared with pus and discharge from festering wounds.

¹ Excerpted from Tāj al-‘Arūs by Imām Ibn ‘Aṭā’Allāh al-Sakandarī

² Imām Tājuddīn Abūl Faḍl Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdul Karīm ibn ‘Abdul Raḥmān ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmed ibn ‘Īsā ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Aṭā’Allāh al-Sakandarī: Jidhāmī by descent, Mālikī in *fiqh*, Alexandrine by domicile and buried in Qurāfa - he was a Ṣūfī who followed the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa*.

Shaykh Zarrūq says that he was a master in many disciplines – *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, grammar, and the science of principles. He was a great spokesman of the Ṣūfīs, a great preacher whose speech was of immense benefit to a multitude, who then followed him in his path. This was foretold by his Shaykh Abūl ‘Abbās al-Mursī as he himself relates in *Laṭā’if al-Mīnār*: ‘The Shaykh told me: Be steadfast. By Allāh if you do so, you shall be a Muftī in both the *madhhabs* – that of Sharī‘ah the external and *ṭarīqa* the internal.’ It is also reported from him [Shaykh Abūl ‘Abbās] that he said: ‘By Allāh, this young man will not pass away before being a great sermonizer who invites people towards the path of Allāh’ He is also reported to have said: ‘By Allāh, you shall reach great heights, By Allāh, you shall have a great stature.’

He passed away - Allah's mercy upon him - in the month of Jamādī al-Ākhir, in the year 709 AH.

You mend and reform that which people see, but you do not care to mend your heart
which your Lord sees?

