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SAMIHA AYVERDI'S UNDERSTANDING OF FUTUWWA

Dr.Prof.Cemalnur SARGUT (Turkey)

Abstract. The word futuwwa has been defined comprehensively in Sufi circles. According to Jafar as-Sadiq, futuwwa means preferably offering whatever comes to you to the benefit of others and thanking Allah for whatver is not coming to you. Abu Bakr al-Warraq states that futuwwa means one having no enemies; that is, being on good terms with everyone and not discriminating between believers and unbelievers when they both eat at one's table together Another meaning accorded by Sufis to the word futuwwa is the relationship between themselves and their egos. According to Qushayri, the fata is the brave one who can resist the exaggerated wishes of her/his ego. According to Ibn Arabi, futuwwa does not denote a specific group or a viewpoint in Sufism and religion. Futuwwa is the station of power and might.

Keywords: Sufism, tawhid, futuwwa, murshid, Samiha Ayverdi

“FUTUVVA” MƏFHUMU SAMİHA AYVERDİNİN ANLAMINDA

Prof.Cemalnur Sarqut

Xulasə. “Futuvva”nın mənası sufi dairələrində kifayət qədər çoxtərəfli və geniş anlamda təyin edilmişdir.

Cəfər əl-Sadiqə görə, “futuvva” sizə gələn nəyinsə başqasının xeyrinə könüllü olaraq verilməsi, ötürülməsi və buna görə Allaha Onun verdiyi nemətə görə şükranlıq edilməsidir. Əbu Bəkr əl-Varraq təsdiq edirdi ki, futuvva gəncliyin keyfiyyət göstəricisidir, yəni sənin heç bir düşmənin yoxdur; sən hamı ilə eyni münasibətdəsen; sən imanlı ilə dinsiz arasında fərq qoymadan onlarla bir masa arxasında yemək yeyə bilirsən.

Sufilərin “futuvva”ya verdikləri mənələrdən biri də insanla onun Eqosu arasında xüsusi əlaqənin olmasıdır. Kuşayranın fikrincə, “fata” elə bir bacarıqlı, dəliqanlı gəncdir ki, aşırı istək və arzularını boğaraq öz Eqosuna qarşı çıxma bilir. İbn Ərəbiyə görə, futuvva sufilikdə və dində hər hansı bir spesifik qrupu və ya nöqtəyi-nəzəri təmsil etmir, o, ruhun gücü və iradəsi pozisiyasıdır.

Açar sözlər: sufizm, tövhid, futuvva, mürşid, Eqo.

ФУТУВВА В ПОНИМАНИИ САПИХИ АЙВЕРДИ

Др. проф. Джемалнур Саргут

Резюме. Слово «футувва» обстоятельно определено в суфийских кругах. Согласно Джафару аль Садику, «футувва» означает «предпочтительно, передачу чего-либо приходящего Вам на благо другому и благодарность Аллаху за то что приходит Вам». Абу Бакр аль-Варраг утверждал, что «футувва» означает «качество молодости» и тех «у кого нет врагов; кто находится в хороших отношениях с каждым; кто не проводит различия между верующими и неверующими, принимая пищу за одним столом с ними». Другое значение, придаваемое суфистами слову «футувва» – это связь между самим человеком и его Эго. По мнению Кушайра, «фата»- это смельчак, молодец, юноша, который сопротивляется преувеличенным своим желанием и своему Эго. Согласно Ибн Араби, «футувва» не представляет специфическую группу или точку зрения в суфизме и религии. «Футувва» - это позиция силы и мощи.

Ключевые слова: суфизм, таухид, футувва, муршид (проводник), Сапиха Айверди

The root of the word *futuwwa* is *fata* in Arabic. One of the meanings of *fata* is the chivalrous one and *futuwwa* means chivalry.¹

According to Ibn Arabi, *futuwwa* does not denote a specific group or a viewpoint in Sufism and religion. *Futuwwa* is the station of power and might. “*Futuwwa* is something in which no weakness exists.”² Ibn Arabi also states in his *Fusus al-Hiqam* that, “The friend of Allah (*arif*) is the one who knows Allah with all parts.” In other words, as one’s faith becomes more abundant, that servant witnesses friendship with the entire heart, intellect, *nafs* and body, eventually becoming the Friend. The Friend serves each and every created being without discriminating between believers and unbelievers, or good and bad ones and attempts to maintain justice. At no time does s/he give the sense that s/he is the vessel for justice. The Friend is total mercy. Ibn Arabi’s words remind us of Kharaqani saying, “Allah Almighty bestowed such a thought on me that I saw all His creatures in Him. I remained with Him; day and night I was fully engaged with Him, and my thought transformed into innersight, insolence into affectionate love, majesty and dignity. With that thought I grasped His Oneness and attained such a level that thoughts transformed into wisdom, into a straight path and a state of affection towards the created. I have seen no one more affectionate to His creatures than myself.”

Here is what Kharaqani states about friendship, “Allah makes friends with a group of humans and due to this friendship asks them to give His servants their rights. He sends some of his friends to palaces and asks them to give His servants their rights. He sends some to plains and tells them, ‘Do not betray my servants!’ Allah says to some others, ‘Have a friend and behold Me!’ We know so many people as alive but in reality they are dead. And we think people are dead under the earth but some are actually alive. So one can see that the attribute of a friend is providing service to the created and being eternally and endlessly alive.”

Within the timeless and spaceless understanding of *futuwwa*, I know very closely someone that I can say is a true *fata*: Samiha Ayverdi. She was the answer to those saying *futuwwa* cannot be experienced in our time through the example of her life as a living Qur’an. She was the spiritual guide of my mother, Meshkure Sargut for 40 years, who says the following about Samiha Ayverdi: “She is a sincere human being in constant attempt to fulfill all the required tasks for the good of humanity and to lead the society towards advancement and maturation.”

In Surah Baqara, Allah tells us to keep our promises so that He keeps His. One of the greatest features of friendship and *futuwwa* is to show loyalty – can it be anything other than to show effort? The greats of the past have shown us that it is only possible to be a living *fata* by adopting the beautiful conduct (*ahlaq*) of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who is the real *fata*.

Let us turn back to the meaning of *futuwwa*. Similarly, Süleyman Uludağ explicitly places its meaning in terms of Sufi terminology and points out that its meaning alludes to the qualities of beautiful conduct in a Sufi such as sacrifice, altruism, goodness, help, love of humans, welcoming manner and curbing one’s *nafs*.³ These states are apparent in Samiha Ayverdi. All these have become possible probably due to her practicing the understanding of unity (*tawhid*) as expressed by the mother of her murshid Ken’an Rifai to her son, stating, “You must love humans. Your illuminated heart should be filled with the treasure of ever-lasting welcoming manner, forgiveness and love. Besides loving humans you should love all the created with the same ever-lasting love. You should not only love them but also be friends with them, be warmhearted and merciful to them. By putting yourself in others’ shoes, you should feel happy because of their success and feel sad because of their failure. You should become united with them in such a way that you feel pleased by their birth and upset by their death.” My teacher Samiha Ayverdi adopted this state which her teacher Ken’an Rifai

¹Uludağ, Süleyman (1996). *Fütüvvet*. Türkiye Diyanet Foundation Encyclopedia of Islam (DİA), 13, 259-261. Istanbul: ISAM, p.259.

²el-Hakim, Suad (2005). *İbn Arabî Sözlüğü*. Istanbul: Kalcı Publishing, p.207.

³Uludağ, Süleyman (1996). *Fütüvvet*. Türkiye Diyanet Foundation Encyclopedia of Islam (DİA), 13, 259-261. Istanbul: ISAM, p.260.

lived. She expressed her gratitude for her teacher to Allah in the following, “If people say it wasn’t you, then from who else could I have learned how to go from one distant corner to another and to get dressed up and moulded from one color to another? Were it not you, from whom else could I have learned to mingle with 72 peoples and 70 sects; with dignity, chastity and calamity; with unity and multiplicity, and with longing, longing and longing...?”

The word *futuwwa* has been defined comprehensively in Sufi circles. According to Jafar as-Sadiq, *futuwwa* means preferably offering whatever comes to you to the benefit of others and thanking Allah for whatver is not coming to you. Abu Bakr al-Warraq states that *futuwwa* means one having no enemies; that is, being on good terms with everyone and not discriminating between believers and unbelievers when they both eat at one’s table together.⁴

Kharaqani stated, “Whoever comes to this abode, welcome them without questioning their religion or name; whoever is worthy of having a spirit in the lodge of Allah obviously deserves to eat bread at the table of Kharaqani.”

Sâmiha Ayverdi explains the meaning of this same statement in her book *Hancı* (Inn Keeper):

“They said, you are a fire worshipper.

I said, yes. I have the same wishes as the Salamander (the mythical lizard).

They said, you are a Zoroastrian.

I said, yes. I worship the fire in my illuminated heart.

There are also those who say that you are a pagan.

I said: What be in denial? I have been an infidel since my faith fell in love with you and escaped from me.

They say you cry while reading parts from the Book of David.

Ah, of course I cry. David also shed tears for me some time ago.

We heard them say that you always side with Moses.

I said, how can I not, when he consulted with me while resisting Pharaoh.

They say, there is no contradiction to this, you are a Christian.

I said: Yes, yes, I have been connected with Jesus since eternity.

They say, there are even some who consider you a Muslim.

Oh, that is exactly true. I am a unifier (muwahhid). What task do I have in this Universe other than to unify You my Allah.”⁵

In another explanation, Qushayri states that *futuwwa* is to not escape when one sees a beggar or those who seek help; being careful about not troubling people and offering abundantly.⁶

According to another definition from Sulami's book *Fütüvvet* (*Futuwwa*), one’s regard for the rights and interests of another as being the priority is through tolerating the ill will and deeds that are done upon them by others, ignoring mistakes, avoiding actions that will require apologies, knowing oneself to be lower and that others are more valuable, keeping one’s word, being loyal, and being true to oneself.⁷ The way Sâmiha Ayverdi lived her life explains Sulami’s words – she based her life on faith in Allah, a faith constructed on the beautiful conduct of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). She always stated, “The perfect point of beautiful conduct is to love creation.” This statement points to the truth that must be known by all: that creation is not separate from the Creator. Some think that creation is separate from the Creator. Some think the exact opposite. Those who can be considered lucky are those who are aware that they are in relation with Allah when they are dealing with people. In short, this group who loves Allah has no sadness or fear. In this way, they interact with all of creation compassionately, patiently, by forgiving, caring, and loving them.

Another meaning accorded by Sufis to the word *futuwwa* is the relationship between

⁴Kuşeyrî, Abdülkerîm (1999). *Kuşeyrî Risâlesi*. Istanbul: Maun Publishing, pp. 473-474.

⁵Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2007). *Hancı*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.10.

⁶Kuşeyrî, Abdülkerîm (1999). *Kuşeyrî Risâlesi*. Istanbul: Maun Publishing, p.474.

⁷es-Sülemî, Ebû Abdurrahmân (1977). *Tasavvufta Fütüvvet*. Süleyman Ateş (Editor), Ankara: Ankara University Faculty of Divinity Publishing, p.183, 436 vd.

themselves and their egos. According to Qushayri, the fata is the brave one who can resist the exaggerated wishes of her/his ego. It is stated that the “Fata breaks the ego idol.” The fata dominates her/his willpower, “For the Lord, s/he is the adversary of her/his ego.”⁸

In her book *Son Menzil* (Last Destination), Sâmiha Ayverdi explains her meaning in the following way: “The one who doesn’t heal her-his innerself is not a completed one no matter who they are, be they scholar, judge, artist, or whatever kind of clothes they wear; it doesn’t matter. The completed human is the one who has control over her/himself and owns her-his inner world’s order and willpower.”

Another Sufi, Hallaj al-Mansur, approaches the notion of futuwwa from the angle of perseverance and defines it as, “having a quest and not changing course no matter the cost.” According to Hallaj, even Shaytan (*devil*) is considered to have futuwwa because he never backed down from his word even at the cost of being damned. On this subject, Sâmiha Ayverdi says, “What kills a nation is not famine but purposelessness; when Islam’s purpose was to glorify Allah’s words, it didn’t have any trouble connecting continents through the web of oneness.” As per Uludağ,⁹ futuwwa became a fundamental word of tasawwuf since it symbolized beautiful conduct. The importance and scope of the word of futuwwa can be understood by the definition of Sulami, “Futuwwa is apologizing like Adam, being good like Noah, loyal like Abraham, honest like Ishmael, sincere like Moses, patient like Job (*Ayyub*), generous like David, compassionate like Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), benevolent like Abu Bakr, just like Omar, modest like Othman and knowledgeable like Ali.”¹⁰ According to Sulami, futuwwa is beautiful conduct and a *fata* is full of love for the Creator and creations. It is possible to see all the intricacies of beautiful conduct and well behavior arising from the love of Allah. They would not oppose their loved ones on things they like or dislike, they forgive their friends and do not scold them, hold positive presumptions and respect for the public.¹¹

As we can see ahl al-futuwwa is the one who has reached the station of the perfect man. The answer of Samiha Ayverdi to the question, “Who is the true spiritual teacher (*murshid*)?” is “It is not the one who deals with the philosophy of tasawwuf, it is the one who brings tasawwuf consciousness into action.” proves how she lived the beautiful conduct of the Prophet. In that sense she states: “Man of this century is in the misconception of seeing himself as just flesh, blood and bone thus serving just his flesh and bone. So, he doesn’t ask or search for the truth he holds and not even notices it. As a result this person who is a stranger even an enemy to himself has forgotten about love, is unaware of faith, sincerity, and ends up surrendering to his own egoism and challenging the world at its command. However, there are feelings in human nature which are confined to stay as slaves such as grudge, hatred, revenge and slander. When societies give these slaves freedom, the order of life in that society is bound to turn upside down. Positive and negative forces exist together in the dough of man. As long as negative forces are in the control of the positive energy. So, that the slave doesn’t sit in the master’s position. The whole world needs this realization not only us Turkish people.”¹²

As we understand fata is a real person who lived in all times just like Hazrat Ali who was under the gown of the Prophet, was carried on his shoulders and he gained this through the love of Allah. Mother Sâmiha expresses how her teacher Hazrat Ken’an Rifâi expresses the role of love in the understanding of futuwwa as: “My Lord first of all made me forget to want. If I have a slight thirst and drink some water, I feel the taste of love. Love rescues one from the restriction of bitter and sweet. Worship without love is useless. There is a difference between worship because it is the

⁸Kuşeyrî, Abdülkerîm (1999). *Kuşeyrî Risâlesi*. İstanbul: Maun Publishing, p.473.

⁹Uludağ, Süleyman (1996). *Fütüvvet*. Türkiye Diyanet Foundation Encyclopedia of Islam (DİA), 13, 259-261. İstanbul: ISAM, p.260.

¹⁰Uludağ, Süleyman (1996). *Fütüvvet*. Türkiye Diyanet Foundation Encyclopedia of Islam (DİA), 13, 259-261. İstanbul: ISAM, p.260.

¹¹es-Sülemî, Ebû Abdurrahmân (1977). *Tasavvufta Fütüvvet*. Süleyman Ateş (Editor), Ankara: Ankara University Faculty of Divinity Publishing, p.26, 49.

¹²Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2006). *Âbide Şahsiyetler*. İstanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.26.

command of Allah and worship by seeing the His beauty”.¹³ Sâmiha Ayverdi describes her own understanding of love as: “The burning of wood in the stove with its cracking sound and bright flames is very pleasant but if the wood stays as wood, nothing is obtained from that. That is, the room doesn’t get hot, whereas that is the real benefit just like the fact that we should be for the universe not for ourselves. It is pleasant when the wood becomes ember after the flames just as the soothing of the lover and giving himself to the service of people is the pleasure and the purpose.”¹⁴

It is understood that Sâmiha Ayverdi has learned the beautiful conduct of futuwwa which she practiced in her life from her spiritual teacher (*murshid*), Hazrat Ken’an Rifai. She describes this superior moral quality witnessed in her and the beauty that comes with it: “He has shown amazing fortitude and courage fighting in the line of society voluntarily not expecting anything from the world or hereafter and he is an idealist, is fond of forbearance and loves people. He unconditionally unites all the realm of creation in the pot of love. He is more compassionate than a mother, more tender than a forefather, more faithful than a friend. He is an understanding brother, comrade and mediator. He doesn’t hurt or get hurt. He has lavish grace and forgiveness, finds the ones who wait for it and even the ones who don’t. His all embracing love that discriminate between gender, nation, sect, and race as well as his faith in and understanding of every created particle made him a great person who was unconditionally loved.”¹⁵ just like Hazrat Haraqanî saying “If only I was called for all the people’s account so that nobody had to give an account for anything, if only I was punished for all people’s charges so that people didn’t have to see the hell.”

This situation reveals the secret of Urfi, “be so kind to the good and the bad that when you die, Muslims want to wash you with Zamzam and Hindus want to burn you in fire.” As a result, this great fata, Sâmiha Ayverdi is so together and one with everybody that she is the one who is ashamed of our sins. We repeat; she forgives and in a time when we forget about her and give her pain, it is her forgiving that deals with our sorrow. We are washed from our mistakes by her mercy.¹⁶

In his related work when Hazrat Sulemi explains this topic, he points out that ahl al-futuwwa never complains when trouble comes and welcomes it with a peace of heart. As Hazrat Haraqanî says; “Even when there is a wind that pulls off all the trees, tears down all the buildings, knocks down all the mountains and overflows all the seas, that wind can’t move a person hanged from the sky by a silk thread. It is then that person’s right to talk about annihilation in Allah (*fana*) and subsistence (*baqa*).” As seen among the ahl al-futuwwa, for Ken’an Rifai and Samiha Ayverdi the notions of right given by Allah (*haqq*) and patience (*sabr*) are like twins. This is the attribute which differentiates believer and unbeliever. The unbeliever also inevitably complies with faith and destiny, but is constantly tortured and keeps looking for reasons and blames others, stuck in an endless struggle and unable to be happy. The believer, on the other hand, has the ability to be content with what Allah gives. My teacher describes the notion of patience as follows: “patience is not a passive endurance, it is an active radiance (*nur*) coming off of ethical depth of Islam”.¹⁷ According to my teacher Samiha Ayverdi, the deplorable torment – that which gives the highest pain – is being away from Allah. Being away from Allah is to be in ignorance, unable to see Allah in incidents, looking for reasons, blaming others and remaining constantly in unrest. However, the one with Allah does not burn, die or rot. As Derdimend Husnu says:

“My teacher’s name is Abdal Musa.
Set afire, his body unburned”¹⁸

In a similar vein, my teacher would show us the bayleaf as a sample of what appears whether during grief or grace, and say: “The same fresh beauty whether in summer or winter... Here the

¹³ Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.231.

¹⁴ Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.232.

¹⁵ Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, pp.250-251.

¹⁶ Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.253.

¹⁷ Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.307.

¹⁸ Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.309.

sample which holds grief and grace equally.. I suppose we need to take that as an example”¹⁹

Therefore, the ahl al-futuwwa are both in peace with nature and society. They are not anxious, they do not resist aging, and are ready for death. While the temporary self is filled and overflows with pain and pleasure, the real self, free from pain or pleasures, is in highest contentment without judgement or comparison. For example, when they are hit, they resist but without destructive influence of neither winning nor losing. They live their personal lives as anyone but they have a life within life in them; they are very far away from the designations and desires of incidents. While getting married, they marry on the order of Allah ordered and the utterance of the Prophet. They maintain their lives by giving to people what they get from Allah. They are always dynamic and very energetic. They like struggles.²⁰

Ahl al-futuwwa know that surrender and consent come with effort. Their tongues, hearts, and states are always in a state of gratefulness. My teacher explains the topic by responding to the question: “What is Gratefulness?” by saying, “Being grateful by tongue is not complete gratefulness. Working, being in the service to one’s family, seeing the magnificence of Allah everywhere, not hearing anything that relates to evil or the illicit by ear, not holding anything without Allah’s consent by hand, and not heading to any place to which Allah has not given consent by feet. In sum, spending all the feelings and power at Allah’s consent is gratefulness. Accordingly, gratefulness is not being arrogant or vain, it is being patient, welcoming both joy and hardship.” When asked “What is the most significant sign of virtue and completion?” she states, “Not to see and tell anyone’s shame.”²¹ According to my teacher, another attribute of ahl al-futuwwa is working not to please people but to please Allah.

Ahl al-futuwwa believe that cleansing the heart is more important than worldly material cleansing. For example, the Imam al-Azam stated, “They heal a boil with ointment, medical dressing, medicine, but after a while, it comes out again somewhere else. They cannot fix it with medicine but can only displace it. Fully healing is by discharging the blood. Interim precautions; salaah, fasting, zakat, can cover bad morals only for certain extend. Morals (*ahlak*) are not corrected unless the heart is cleansed.”²²

Again my teacher says, “The ones who want to be in Heaven all the time do not bear grudges, do not threaten others, and in principle are those who know external and internal powers are with Allah; their actions are all for Allah.”²³ For this state, they blind their eyes that see imperfections, like the greatest *fata*, Ali. My teacher writes: “For example, you are in gossiping and you see another’s shame and imperfection, you commit double the sin. Seeing someone’s shame is to put on the armor of evil by then also contending that you are better.”²⁴ My teacher did not like cursing, saying that it was to be the object of Allah saying, “have you given up hope towards my mercy to my subjects?”²⁵ Again among ahl al-tasawwuf, justice is the course/direction. They are steady on the same path to Allah without going off. This is why it is stated, “direction (*istikamet*) is miracle”.

Ahl al-futuwwa are those close to Allah regardless of their gender from among the completed human beings. In this context, Necip Fazil describes Samiha Ayverdi as follows: “In Samiha Ayverdi’s lines, I have seen all the signs of the noble ordeal of ability. In contrast to grifters’ short term hold and fame hunters’ jazzy, catchy ordinary hocus pocus, she has a deep metaphysical understanding, an interest beyond what eyes see, a real human move to search the knots of events in the spirit and in the owner of all the work which shapes the mihrab of her pen’s weaving. Samiha Ayverdi is a brave soul in a world adjacent to the point where the material world is finished, incidents

¹⁹ Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.310.

²⁰ Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.311.

²¹ Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.333.

²² Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.359.

²³ Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.361.

²⁴ Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.367.

²⁵ Ayverdi, Sâmiha (2003). *Yirminci Yüzyılın Işığında Müslümanlık*. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Publishing, p.368.

over the skin are concluded, and external horizons are ended. She is the true human.²⁶

How delightful for those who live with them and try to emulate them...

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²⁶Sargut, Cemâlnur (2009). *Sırta Yolculuk*. İstanbul: Nefes Publishing, p.170-171.