

An Explanation of Tasawwuf and its Practices

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The perfect demonstration of the true religion and the way of life that the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) was sent to call the world towards was his very own holy being. This is why his way of life is the “true religion” (*dīn al-baqq*) and “straight path” (*al-sirāt al-mustaqīm*) that if trodden, a slave will be deserving of the pleasure and mercy of Allāh (Exalted is He), and will in fact, become His beloved. If his way of life and beautiful example is divided into its constituent parts, the following three branches will be discovered:

- Faith (*īmān*). Meaning, to accept as true all the unseen realities which the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) informed us about and described, such as the essence and attributes of Allāh (Exalted is He), revelation and messengership, angels, resurrection, heaven and hell, and to assent to them with the heart. This is the most important branch of true religion, and is the foundation and basis of the entire religion. This branch is the subject-matter of “the science of beliefs” (*‘ilm al-‘aqā'id*).
- Righteous Deeds (*a'māl salīhab*). Here, my intent is the practical portion of religion pertaining to the external limbs. Islāmic rituals, inviting [to Islām], jihād, dealings, etiquettes, social conduct and so on, are included in this. This branch is, as if, the entire structure of religion, and is the Islāmic practical system. Our “science of jurisprudence” (*‘ilm al-fiqh*) relates specifically to this branch.
- Attributes (*ṣifāt*) and states (*ḥayyiyāt*) of the soul and heart and purification of character traits. People who have made any study of the Book and Sunnah cannot be unaware of the fact that just as the revered Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) guided his *ummah* through education, guidance and practical demonstration in the issues of creed, beliefs, rituals, social etiquettes and transactions; in the same way, he also gave important guidance and left behind for the *ummah* the utmost and ideal example in relation to the attributes and states of the heart and soul, like love for Allāh (Exalted is He), fear of Him, certainty [in unseen realities], trust [in Allāh], generosity and sincerity, and reformation of character traits. In short, just like beliefs and righteous deeds, this is also an independent and important branch of religion. And it is the particular subject-matter of “Tasawwuf” and “Sulūk”.

The holy being of the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) combined these three branches in a holistic way, and to some degree this comprehensiveness was acquired by the senior Sahābah. However, in the later generations, the situation generally came to be that although the inheritors and representatives of the Messenger (Allāh bless him and grant him peace), in terms of their persons more or less carried and combined all three branches, they maintained a specific connection with the service of any one branch in accordance with their capabilities,

talents, temperaments or environments. And undoubtedly, thereafter, such a process became inescapable due to the degree to which the scope of religion expanded in those generations, and the circumstances that were created. This situation, and division of labour, created separate ranks within the elites of the *ummah*, of the imāms of beliefs, the jurists and the Sūfis.

Thus, just as the imāms of beliefs and the jurists specifically preserved, refined and elaborated the first two branches of religion, the revered Sūfis, in the same manner, served and preserved the third important branch, and they represented and deputised the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) in this field. This is why they have also rendered a great favour to the *ummah*, and the *ummah* is indebted to them and in need of their services in this complete branch of religion.

Thus, the original goal and objective of Sulūk and Tasawwuf, and the primary purpose of the efforts of the noble Sūfis, is in reality this third branch of religion – meaning, acquiring such attributes and states of the soul and heart as love for Allāh and fear [of Him], sincerity, *ih̄sān*, renunciation [of worldly pleasures] and reliance [on Allāh], and purification of [internal] character traits. However, since these qualities are not acquired, and in fact are not correctly conceived, by a mere study of books; and some understanding of this legacy is attained by means of observing its remnants by staying in the company and service of an inheritor and carrier of it; and moreover, since the general law of Allāh with respect to their acquisition is that the primary means to it is to find the company and the training of its bearers; this is why those people who did not find the opportunity to keep close proximity with, and accompany those, who carried this legacy, are, on the most part, deprived of this branch and are also deficient in their understanding of it.

In this time of ours, in which many new phenomena and new circumstances have arisen, one of these is that the expanse in the means of publishing and printing, and the great abundance of books, have created a large number of such people who acquire religion only from the pages of books and booklets. There is nothing wrong with this phenomenon *per se*, and it is, in fact, good from the perspective that in this manner, the scope of religious instruction and benefit has become very vast. However, since they never had the chance of seeing such a supreme example of religion that has specifically carried this third branch, from seeing whom one can recognise that his knowledge and practice [of religion] is imperfect and immature, and that his religious knowledge is incomplete; this is why, these people often suffer from the false notion that whatever we have in our possession and whatever we have acquired with understanding through the path of literature, that alone is the complete religion. And since the general religious teaching material nowadays is prepared mostly by such people of knowledge and wielders of the pen who themselves suffer from this illness, instead of taking their readers out of this illness, they make the illness even more rooted and severe. Something more sorrowful and unfortunate is that there are even many graduates that have studied at our ancient religious seminaries who share the condition of this bookish class, who despite having no reason to be unacquainted with this branch, suffer from this false notion,

which is why no incentive is generated in their hearts to seek and acquire this complete branch of religion.

And in this respect, the most astonishing and astounding thing is the attitude of some people who accept Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thāni (may Allāh have mercy on him), Hazrat Shāh Walī Allāh (may Allāh have mercy on him), Amīr al-Mu'minīn Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd (may Allāh have mercy on him) and Shāh Ismā'īl Shahīd (may Allāh have mercy on him) as the revivers of their respective times and those who brought to life the religion and Sunnah, and yet alongside this belief, they declare Tasawwuf a clear deviation. Whereas, anyone who has read the *Maktūbāt* of Hazrat Mujaddid (Allāh have mercy on him), the writings of Shāh Walī Allāh (Allāh have mercy on him), the '*Abaqāt* and *Mansab Imāmat* of Shāh Ismā'īl (Allāh have mercy on him) and the collection of the aphorisms (*malfūzāt*) of Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd (Allāh have mercy on him), *Sirāt e Mustaqīm*, will certainly be aware that these respected personalities were not merely proponents and carriers of Tasawwuf, but were elite callers and flag-bearers of this third branch of religion and imāms of Tarīqah, and in their education, training and interaction, these respected personalities gave special and great importance to Tasawwuf, and they have written that those who are deprived of this [legacy] have no share in the core of religion.

Thus, on the one hand to accept them as revivers – meaning, those who represented prophethood and messengership to an elevated degree in their respective times – and on the other hand to regard the manifest dimension of their lives and the *modus operandi* that filled their lives as clear deviation; and to mock the “khānqāhiyyat” and “pīri-murīdī” of the people in this fourteenth century who in following the footsteps of those imāms and revivers of the past centuries, consider the efforts of reformation and purification of the soul in accordance with their path as valid; what else can be submitted to them, that apart from not having sensed their religious responsibilities, this condition of theirs is one that falls below the level of academic seriousness?

My specific objective and hope in publishing this short book – which, in reality, is a collection of essays – is that by the assistance of Allāh, His servants will become aware of the true characteristic and beneficial nature of this complete branch of religion and the true position it holds in religion, and thus acquire the abundant good and great legacy that can be derived from this path, which hundreds of thousands of the servants of God have achieved; and that the doubts, reservations and misgivings about it that have crept into most minds today – due to ignorance of its reality – are dispelled.

Muhammad Manzūr Nu'mānī, may Allāh pardon him
Dhu l-Qa'dah, 1371 H (July, 1952 CE)

My Initial Deliberation and Experience of Tasawwuf

Towards the end of 1361 H or the beginning of 1362 H (i.e. 1942/1943 CE), I encountered such circumstances that I felt the need to spend a few days in a place where my heart and mind will remain safe from thoughts and troubles, and my heart will attain some stillness and serenity. For this purpose, my gaze of selection fell on the Khānqāh of a person of guidance (*sāhib al-irshād*), a respected elder of this time, which is located in a jungle isolated from the hustle and bustle of the city and city-dwellers, and the scenery too is lush and green. Anyhow, I reached that place.

It was probably the first day that after completing the Maghrib prayer, the respected elder entered the courtyard of the Khānqāh on a bed. Out of compassion and hospitality, he sat me down next to him. I recall that at that time there was no third person there. Close by, in the tranquility of the Khānqāh, a few reciters were doing *dhikr* of “negation and affirmation” (*naḥy wa ithbāt*)¹ and some of “the name of the essence” (*ism al-dhāt*)². They were all practising vigorous audible *dhikr*, and they were striking the heart in the specific way prescribed by the masters of Sulūk. At that time, not only was this method of audible *dhikr* of Allāh with striking (*darb*) unfamiliar to me, but was to some degree intolerable. Thus, I could not contain myself, and I submitted with etiquette and respect:

Hazrat! In my entire life, from all that I have read regarding religion and all that I have seen in books, I understand that the basic religion is only what Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) received from Allāh (Exalted is He), and that which he (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) taught the noble Sahābah (Allāh’s pleasure be upon them), and then that which the noble Sahābah (Allāh be pleased with them) taught those after them and that which has reached us from them by means of authentic transmission and narration.

However, as far as I know, the audible and rhythmic method in which these reciters are performing *dhikr*, neither did the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) teach the noble Sahābah (Allāh be pleased with them), nor did the noble Sahābah (Allāh be pleased with them) teach this method of *dhikr* to the Tābi‘īn, nor did the Tābi‘īn teach this method to those after them. This is why this method of *dhikr* has caused turbulence in me, and I hope that if this turbulence is due to some misunderstanding, it will be corrected.

Against expectation, and completely ignoring my question, the respected elder said in a bizarre way:

Mawlawī Sāhib! These poor people who come here [to stay] with me, it is not for any other work. It is only for this work, and they come for this reason. This is why I tell them [to do] this. The work that you do – meaning, serving the religion by lecturing and writing – is great work. You keep doing this, and do not get involved in this issue.

¹ That is, they were reading aloud *lā ilāha illAllāh* (there is no deity besides Allah)

² That is, they were reading aloud the proper name of God, *Allāh*

It is obvious that this was not an answer to my question. However, the respected elder stated only this in reply to my question, and without giving me the opportunity to make another submission and to bring back his attention towards my original question, he started a new conversation with respect to some communal issues of the Hindustani Muslims and their future which also interested me. Seeing this attitude of his, I did not think it was appropriate to raise my question again. The meeting terminated close to 'Ishā'.

The next day, after Maghrib, this again happened, that the reciters again began their respective *dhikrs* with that same vigour. Again, I could not contain myself, and again I reminded him of my question from the previous day. However, today too, the respected elder adopted the same attitude of the previous day, completely ignoring my statement, and starting a long conversation probably on the past and present condition of various movements of the Hindustani Muslims, and my question again remained [unanswered].

Seeing this attitude of the respected elder, all praise to Allāh, I did not suffer from the misunderstanding that the reason why he kept evading my question was because he had no answer to it. Instead, I felt that he probably did not regard my question as the question of a competent and truth-seeking person, but, thinking it to be the objection of one suffering from misunderstanding and arrogance, he kept ignoring it in this way; and as far as I can remember, there was no doubt that at that time my objective was not to be content with the answer, but my intention was something else.

Having finished 'Ishā' and other prayers, I came and lay down in the room of the Khānqāh in which arrangements were made for my sleep, and I began to mentally contemplate over these types of practices and *ashghāl* of Tasawwuf. In this contemplation and thought, I myself was the questioner and I myself, the answerer. I recall that in engaging in this mental exploration, for a long time, sleep did not come. I wanted my mind to be fully focused on this question; and if any error occurred in my thought process, it be corrected, and if my thought process was correct, I receive such certainty and satisfaction with respect to it, that I reject and condemn these things with full force, and I persist in invalidating the error of these matters in the manner of a sincere seeker of truth.

After a long time [passed] in this contemplation and submersion, at one point, my mind shifted towards [the thought] that if my understanding was correct, that the specific practices and *ashghāl* of Tasawwuf, like the specific methods of *dhikr* and *muraqabah* which were prescribed by the mashāyikh, and are not established in the Sunnah with their restrictions and forms, are bid'ah and incorrect, the implication of this would be that I would have to concede that Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thāni (may Allāh have mercy on him), Hazrat Shāh Walī Allāh (may Allāh have mercy on him), Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd and Hazrat Shāh Ismā'īl Shahīd and many respected personalities like them from before them, were not revivers or renovators, but preservers and propagators of bid'ah, because these respected personalities did not merely show complacency and turn a blind eye to these things due to an expediency or requirement of the time, but their books are full of these teachings, and throughout their lives, they took the seekers who came to them

through the stages of Sulūk by engaging them in these methods of *dhikr* and *shughl*. In fact, those who read their books and know their biographies are aware that no other aspect was as evident in the greater part of their lives to the extent to which this aspect was evident.

After my mind shifted towards [this thought], my heart quickly made the decision that someone short of understanding and deficient in knowledge like myself having made an error was far more likely and more in accordance with reason than [the likelihood] that error is ascribed to such elders of knowledge and religion as Imām Rabbāni Mujaddid Alf Thānī (may Allāh have mercy on him), Hazrat Shāh Walī Allāh and Shāh Ismā‘īl Shahīd, and that too in an issue which my connection to is merely observational, while those respected personalities maintained a profound practical connection with it throughout their lives.

The reason why my heart quickly and easily made this decision in opposition to my mind is that due to having read the books of those respected personalities, and having some awareness of their personal conditions and reformative and renovative services, I wholeheartedly accepted their rootedness in knowledge, deep understanding of religion and acceptance before Allāh, from before. My heart could not accept at all that these respected personalities, despite being masters in the secrets of religion and revivers of religion in their respective times, having considered certain bid‘ahs as means of divine nearness, became embroiled in them throughout their lives, and they also engaged thousands of Allāh’s slaves in them. Undoubtedly, a reviver is not infallible and a receiver of revelation like a prophet, but he certainly cannot be an inviter to, and propagator of, bid‘ahs. If in the branch of religion they were specifically more immersed in than any other branch, and of which they were elite callers, and by means of which they carried out the work of rectification and revival, they could not distinguish bid‘ah and so on [from true religion], then certainly they were a cause of greater corruption than rectification and a cause of greater misguidance than guidance.

Anyhow, these were some points of reflection, having reached which the irritation of my mind somewhat abated, and I accepted that there was probably some mistake on my part in understanding this issue. Now, I ought to make an effort to grasp and discern my error. Much of the night had passed. Having reached this conclusion, I terminated my contemplation and thoughts at that time, and I made an intention to fall sleep, and thus fell asleep.

It was the daily practice of the respected elder in whose Khanqāh this event took place to walk to and fro after the Fajr prayer. On that day, he took this helpless one with him, and I mentioned the conclusion of my mental investigation and analysis from the [previous] night, and submitted:

My heart and mind concedes that, till now, that which I have understood regarding these practices and *ashghāl* of Tasawwuf is probably incorrect, and I have some misunderstanding about them. However, I have not been able to

grasp that error yet. Since my student nature remains, I wish that this knot is opened, and the confusion that remains is removed.

Hearing this statement of mine, the abovementioned [respected elder] smiled and said:

Mawlawī Sāhib! You have the doubt that these things are bid‘ah? Tell me what is the definition of bid‘ah?

I submitted:

The noble scholars have defined bid‘ah in various ways. However, the one that is recognised to be the most refined and precise is the simple definition of adding such a thing to religion which has no evidence from the Sharī‘ah.

He said:

Yes, this is correct. However, tell me, if something in religion is an objective (*maqsūd*) and was commanded (*ma‘mur bihi*), and Allāh and the Messenger have decreed that its acquisition is necessary, but due to the circumstances having changed in some period of time, it cannot be attained using the methods in which it was attained in the time of the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) and the noble Sahābah (Allāh be pleased with them), and instead it became necessary to utilise some other means to acquire it, then will you consider the utilisation of this new means “an addition in the religion” and “bid‘ah”?

Then, in order to make his point clearer, he said:

For example, studying and teaching religion is necessary. And in religion this imperative is strongly emphasised, and you are aware that in the time of Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) and the noble Sahābah (may Allāh be pleased with them) mere companionship was sufficient for this. There was no separate arrangement for education. There were neither madrasahs, nor books. However, thereafter, the circumstances were such that companionship became insufficient for this objective. Rather, books and madrasahs became necessary. Thus, the slaves of Allāh (Exalted is He) wrote books and erected madrasahs, and thereafter, the entire system of teaching and studying occurred by means of them, and till today it is sustained by them. Can this change in the methods of teaching and studying be called “an addition in religion” and “bid‘ah”?

I submitted:

No! An addition in religion happens only when it is carried out while treating it as an objective and a matter of Sharī‘ah. However, if in order to acquire some religious objective, some new permissible path is adopted due to the old methods having become inadequate, then this cannot be termed an “addition” in religion, nor will it be a bid‘ah.

He said:

Done! Those practices and *ashghāl* of Sulūk regarding which you had the doubt of them being bid'ah are all from this category. None of them are practised with the belief that they are end-objectives. Rather, they are all practised in order to purify and adorn the self, which is an objective and command of religion. For example, it is recognised that the [internal] states of love for Allāh (Exalted is He) and having conscious awareness of Him and His pleasure at every moment, and never being inattentive of Him, are desired in religion and it is understood from the Qur'ān and hadīth that without them *īmān* and Islām are incomplete.

However, in the time of the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace), just like religious teaching and education, these *īmānī* states were also acquired by his companionship. By the effusion of the companionship of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and grant him peace), the company of the noble Sahābah also had this effect. However, because the environment later became increasingly corrupt and the capacities [of people] became deficient, companionship of the perfect [saints] was no longer adequate for this objective. Subsequently, for the acquisition of these [spiritual] states, the imāms of this branch of religion added, along with companionship, an excess of *dhikr* and contemplation. Based on experience, this prescription was sound and proven.

In this way, some mashāyikh, having experienced the states of the people of their time, prescribed specific types of exercises and struggles for the purpose of breaking their *nafs*, overcoming their passions and producing softness in their natures. In this way, to increase the effect of *dhikr*, and to create brittleness and togetherness in the [person's] nature, the method of striking (*darb*) was originated. Thus, none of these were considered end-objectives and commands. Instead, all of this was done in the form of treatment and design. This is why after achieving the goal, all these things are abandoned. This is why the imāms of Tariqah would reformulate and change these things in accordance with the circumstances of their respective times and their particular experiences, and they would make additions and subtractions, and they are still doing this. In fact, just one *shaykh* at times would prescribe separate practices and *ashghāl* to different seekers in accordance with their particular conditions and capacities. There were even some people of such high capacities, for whom there was no need to engage them in such forms of *dhikr* and *shughl*. Allāh (Exalted is He) granted them this [position]. From this, every person can gauge that all these things are done merely in the form of treatment and design, out of necessity.

From this explanation and elaboration of the respected elder, the mental turbulence of mine was eradicated. However, a new thirst was created to observe all that was said myself through experimentation, and to acquire satisfaction of the heart and greater certainty by means of personal experience. However, for this [purpose], there was no room in my circumstances and occupations to give any considerable or dedicated time for this experience. This is why without artificiality, and with clarity, I submitted:

If this *dhikr* and *shughl* is done for these goals, and by means of them, these things are acquired, then I too am in need of this. But I cannot give much time, because I do not wish to forego the other works of religion with which I have maintained a connection.

He said:

Mawlawī Sāhib! Tasawwuf is not for [the purpose of] forgoing work of religion. Rather, by means of it, strength comes in the work of religion and knowledge expands. But what can be said? It is Allāh's will. Those that Allāh has given the ability to work for religion do not put their attention here; whereas, if they were to give even a little attention here, they would see how much strength comes in their work. The services of religion rendered by Hazrat Khwājah Sāhib (may Allāh have mercy on him), Bāwā Sāhib (may Allāh have mercy on him) and, thereafter, Hazrat Mujaddid Sāhib, Hazrat Shāh Walī Allāh Sāhib (may Allāh have mercy on him) and Hazrat Sayyid Sāhib (may Allāh have mercy on him) in this country of ours, and all the feats they have demonstrated – which even hundreds and thousands of sections of our immense organisations and groups cannot do –, their sincerity and particular strength of heart had a special involvement in this, which was generated through the path of Tasawwuf. However, the situation now is that only those helpless ones turn their attention here whose only work is to say, “Allāh, Allāh.” You are aware that Allāh (Exalted is He) has given different capacities to His slaves. The man with deficient capacities cannot do the work of those with higher capacities.

Then in connection to this, he said:

God knows what people think of Tasawwuf! Tasawwuf is only a means to create sincerity and love, and the work that can be rendered through the strength of love and the blessing of sincerity, can never be achieved without them. Thus, in reality, Tasawwuf [itself] is not necessary, but creating love and sincerity is necessary. If anyone comes to know of a path that is easier and simpler for its acquisition, then congratulations to him! Let him acquire it through that path, and also inform us [of it]. We know of this path which thousands of Allāh's truthful servants have experienced for a great number of years, of whom thousands were those who were independent thinkers (*mujtabids*) in this branch of religion, and were also recipients of [divine] inspiration (*ilhām*).

I submitted:

The one who is connected to some religious activity from before, and he senses that he has not acquired this love and sincerity, should he forgo that work for some time until he first acquires them? Or is it possible that he keeps doing what he was doing, and alongside that, he makes an attempt to acquire them?

He said:

Yes, it can be done. However, some temperaments are such that it is necessary for them to become immersed in this direction with complete focus for some period of time.

I submitted:

Is it necessary to take bay‘ah for this?

He said:

No, absolutely not! Yes, love and companionship alongside desire and trust is necessary. Bay‘ah is only for the purpose of making the connection and reliance manifest. Otherwise, bay‘ah has no special involvement in the original objective.

I submitted:

Tell me something more.

He said:

Mawlawī Sāhib! It comes in hadīth, “The one asked for consultation has been handed a trust.”³ I think it is best for you to take recourse to So-and-So Sāhib or So-and-So Sāhib for this purpose. There is special grace of Allāh (Exalted is He) in these respected personalities, and I consider these respected personalities competent for such people of knowledge as yourself.

I submitted:

I had a high estimation of these two respected elders in my heart before too, and now from this advice of Hazrat, it has grown. However, since this desire was not created in me, this is why I think it best that I am led on this path by Hazrat himself.

Despite my full show of love and affection, the aforementioned [respected elder] referred me to the two respected elders one or two more times. But when I insisted on my view with etiquette, he accepted, and, giving full consideration to my commitments, he prescribed a very brief programme of *dhikr* etc. And I started doing [these].

After this, I remained there for probably another four or five days. When I was about to take permission to leave, he said with special concern:

You must go in the service of Hazrat Dihlawī (meaning, Hazrat Mawlānā Muhammad Ilyās, may Allāh have mercy on him), and stay with him for some time.

On this occasion, he also expressed some lavish words with respect to the aforementioned Mawlānā (may Allāh have mercy on him). The reality is that these lavish

³ Narrated on the authority of Abū Hurayrah by Abū Dāwūd (5128), al-Tirmidhī (2526, 2033) and Ibn Mājah (3745). Al-Tirmidhī said: “A *hasan sahib* hadith.”

words made me want to put this advice into practice. Just as I wrote in the late Mawlānā's *Malfūẓāt*, it was only after this that I realised something of the personality of the aforementioned Mawlānā (may Allāh have mercy on him), and after some time, I was also able to understand why he gave such importance to the advice of attending in the service of Mawlānā.

The truth is that my feeling that concern for religion and the zeal for its service – which I surmised to be the special legacy of the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) – is found to be lacking in these circles had a good deal of involvement in the detachment I had from Khānqāhiyyat and the occupations of Khānqāh and the people of Khānqāh. I think, sensing this feeling of mine, in order to rectify and alter it, the respected elder impressed on me to attend and stay in the service of Hazrat Mawlānā Muhammad Ilyās (may Allāh have mercy on him). It was as though he was making me observe the weighty concern for religion, and the burning desire and unease on this path, of a lover and slave possessing sincerity, and he was showing me that such are the people who are truly serving religion.

*Oh morning bird, learn the love of the moth,
It burnt and died, yet did not make a sound.*

This is an event from 8 or 9 years ago. I have written down whatever my memory has preserved. It is obvious that after such a long time it is not possible to have transmitted the exact words of the conversation that I have quoted between myself and the respected elder. This is why I expect all of this to be treated as “narration by meaning” (*riwāyah bi l-ma'nā*). In fact, there is also a strong possibility that some things in connection to this have been omitted, and some things have been written here which I heard on this subject from that respected elder later on in another session. Whatever the case, I am sure that the elaborations and explanations that have been written here, ascribed to the respected elder, are all his.

It is unfortunate that the intention that I made with respect to personally experiencing the practices and *ashghāl* of Tasawwuf, due to my lack of determination and carelessness, and because of the large number and particular nature of some of my other activities, I did not manage to experience it as it ought to have been. Nonetheless, from the deficient and nominal connection that I maintained for a few years in this field and its *ashghāl*, and due to which, the closeness I have attained with some seniors on this path, and the opportunity I received to observe their conditions and surroundings from close by, I gained some certainties, some of which are worth submitting in the service of the opponents and deniers of Tasawwuf, and some that are necessary to submit in the service of the upholders of Tasawwuf themselves.

In truth, it is strange that Tasawwuf has indeed been abused by its deniers and opponents, but some aspects of those who are its carriers and flag bearers were also a cause of it being abused.

Some of my Certainties Regarding Tasawwuf and its Practices and *Ashghāl*

- The objective and reality of Tasawwuf:

All praise to Allāh, no longer did any doubt and confusion remain [in my mind] of the reality that the original purpose of Tasawwuf and its practices and *ashghāl* is nothing besides the completion of religion and, specifically, the acquisition of those states and faculties which the Book and Sunnah have determined as necessary conditions for the completion of *īmān* and Islām. Since there are misgivings about this in the minds of many people, I will present all that I have understood in connection with this in some detail. Giving accordance [to what is right] is in [the hands of] Allāh.

It is realised from studying the Qur’ān and Sunnah that for the completion of *īmān* and religion, besides the correctness of beliefs and actions, it is also necessary for the heart and the inward of man to have some specific states.

For example, in one verse of Sūrah Baqarah, it mentions regarding love:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ

“And those who believe are most severe in [their] love of Allāh.” (Qur’ān, 2:165)

And it is mentioned in a *sahih* hadīth: “There are three [traits], which if in a person, he will experience thereby the sweetness of *īmān*: the one to whom Allāh and His Messenger are more beloved than all besides them; the one who loves a slave [of Allāh], loving him not but for the sake of Allāh; and the one who hates to turn back to disbelief after Allāh saved him from it just as he hates to be thrown in fire.”⁴

And in the first *rukū’* of Sūrah Anfāl:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

“They only are the (true) believers whose hearts feel fear when Allāh is mentioned, and when His verses are recited unto them they increase their faith, and they trust in their Lord.” (8:2)

And it is mentioned in Sūrah Mu’minūn in describing the pious and successful slaves of Allāh:

⁴ Narrated in *Sahih al-Bukhari* (16) and *Sahih Muslim* (67).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ

“Verily, those who for fear of their Lord are in awe, and those who believe in the verses of their Lord, and those who do not associate any partner to their Lord, and those who give what they give, while their hearts are full of fear that to their Lord they are to return.” (Qur’ān, 23:57-60)

And in Sūrah Zumar, it states:

تَشْعُرُ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

“The skins of those who fear their Lord tremble thereat; then their skins and their hearts do soften to Allāh’s remembrance.” (Qur’ān, 39:23)

And in Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān, it is mentioned:

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ

“Who remember Allāh standing and sitting, and (lying) on their sides” (Qur’ān, 3:191)

And in Sūrah Muzzammil, addressing the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace), it states:

وَاذْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا

“And remember the name of your Lord, and devote yourself to Him with exclusive devotion.” (Qur’ān, 72:8)

The qualities and states which these verses have identified as necessary for the people of *īmān*, and of which a demand was made from them, are the following:

1. Their love of Allāh is greater than all things.
2. Their hearts are in such a state that when Allāh is mentioned, the state of fear and tremulousness arises in them.
3. When divine verses are recited to them, their light of faith increases.
4. They keep trust and reliance in Allāh, and this trust and reliance on Allāh is the biggest support in their lives.
5. They remain fearful of the awe of Allāh with every breath.
6. The fear of Allāh has overcome them to the extent that even while doing good deeds, their hearts are fearful [with the thought] that I do not know whether this deed of mine is worthy of acceptance or not.
7. From reading the Glorious Qur’ān or hearing its verses, their bodies shiver, and their outward and inward soften towards Allāh and towards His remembrance.

8. They maintain the remembrance of Allāh in every moment and every situation, and in no situation whatsoever are they inattentive of Him.
9. Their condition is detachment from all sides, while being attentive towards Allāh.

Besides the Glorious Qur’ān, such conditions and states are described with even more clarity and explicitness in the authoritative treasury of hadīth. For example, it is mentioned in one hadīth:

من أحب لله وأبغض لله وأعطى الله ومنع الله فقد استكمل الإيمان

“Whoever loves for Allāh, hates for Allāh, gives for Allāh and withholds for Allāh, has completed [his] *īmān*.”⁵

Similarly, the completion of *īmān* and Islām was described as “*ihsān*” in the famous hadīth of Jibrā’īl, and its reality was explained as follows:

أن تعبد الله كأنك تراه فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك

“That your worship Allāh as though you see Him, because although you do not see Him, indeed He sees you.”⁶

And in one narration [it is mentioned], “that your fear Allāh,” instead of “that your worship Allāh.” (*Fath al-Bārī*)

In the first hadīth, sincerity (*ikhlas*) is mentioned, and in the second hadīth “*ihsān*,” and both of these are amongst those states and conditions by which *īmān* is completed.

These conditions and states have such importance in the religion that the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) would make supplications to Allāh (Exalted is He) for their acquisition and for ascension in them. According to this helpless one, the following few supplications in this respect are particularly worthy of consideration and attention:

اللهم اجعل حبك أحب إلي من نفسي وأهلي ومن الماء البارد

“O Allāh! Make your love more beloved to me than myself, my family and cool water.”⁷

اللهم اجعل حبك أحب الأشياء إلي، واجعل خوفك أخوف الأشياء إلي، واقطع عني حاجات الدنيا بالشوق إلى لقاءك، وإذا أقررت أعين أهل الدنيا من دنياهم فأقر عيني من عبادتك

⁵ Narrated on the authority of Abū Umāmah in *Sunan Abī Dawūd* (4652)

⁶ Narrated in *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* (50) and *Sahīh Muslim* (1)

⁷ Narrated in *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī* (3490)

“O Allāh! Make your love the most beloved of all things to me, and make Your fear the most feared of things to me, and cut off from me the needs of the world by longing to meet You, and when You put coolness in the eyes of the people of the material world from their material world, then put coolness in my eyes from Your worship.”⁸

اللهم اجعلني أحشاك كأني أراك أبدا حتى ألقاك

“O Allāh! Make me fear You as though I am seeing you always until I meet You.”⁹

اللهم إني أسألك إيمانا يياشر قلبي ويقينا صادقا حتى أعلم أنه لا يصيبني إلا ما كتبت لي، ورضا بما قسمت لي

“O Allāh! Verily, I ask You for faith that envelops my heart and true certainty until I know that nothing will afflict me except what You have written for me; and [I ask You for] contentment with what You have apportioned for me.”¹⁰

اللهم إني أسألك التوفيق لمحابتك من الأعمال وصدق التوكل عليك وحسن الظن بك

“O Allāh! Verily, I ask You for accordance towards the deeds loved by You, and true reliance on You, and a good opinion of You.”¹¹

اللهم إني أسألك نفسا بك مطمئنة، تؤمن بلقائك، وترضى بقضائك، وتغتنع بعطائك

“O Allāh! Verily, I ask you for a self that is at peace with You, believes in meeting You, is satisfied with Your decree and content with Your provision.”¹²

اللهم افتح مسامع قلبي لذكرك

“O Allāh! Open the hearing places of my heart to Your remembrance.”¹³

اللهم إنا نسألك قلوبا أواهة مخبئة منيية في سبيلك

“O Allāh! Verily, we ask You for hearts, yearning, sincere and relenting, on Your path.”¹⁴

اللهم اجعل وساوس قلبي خشيتك وذكرك واجعل همتي وهواي فيما تحب وترضى

⁸ *Hilyat al-Awliyā'*, Dārul Fikr, 8:282

⁹ Narrated by al-Tabrānī in *Kitāb al-Du'a'* (1424)

¹⁰ Narrated by al-Tabrānī in *al-Mu'jam al-Ansat* (5974)

¹¹ *Hilyat al-Awliyā'*, Dārul Fikr, 8:224

¹² Narrated by al-Tabrānī in *Musnad al-Shāmiyyīn* (1598)

¹³ Narrated by al-Tabrānī in *Kitāb al-Du'a'* (1451)

¹⁴ Narrated by al-Bayhaqī in *al-Da'wāt al-Kabīr* (287)

“O Allāh! Make the whisperings of my heart Your fear and Your remembrance, and make my aspiration and my passion in that which You love and approve.”

اللهم اجعل في قلبي نورا...وأعطني نورا... واجعلني نورا

“O Allāh! Put light in my heart...and give me light...and make me a light.”¹⁵

All these supplications, and scores of supplications like them, are narrated in the books of hadīth from the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace). He would himself petition with these supplications to Allāh (Exalted is He) and he would also teach and dictate these supplications to his ummah.

The objects that are asked of Allāh (Exalted is He) in these supplications are all specific states of the inward and heart of man. For example: loving Allāh more than all things; fearing Allāh more than all things; being overcome by such longing to meet Allāh that the needs and pleasures of the world are forgotten or annihilated; finding coolness of the eyes and tranquility of the heart in ritual worship; fearing Allāh with every breath in such a way that it is as though He is in front of our vision in His magnificence and glory; true certainty; satisfaction with the decree [of Allāh]; trust in Allāh; having a good opinion of Allāh; the heart being satisfied and at ease with Allāh (Exalted is He) and being content with His provisions; the heart taking effect from the *dhikr* of Allāh; its being responsive, broken and downcast; the heart being connected to Allāh to the extent that the remembrance of Allāh (Exalted is He) and His fear replace the whisperings and stray thoughts [of the mind]; and the heart of the slave wishes only those things that are loved and liked by Allāh; and the heart is inhabited by light.

It is obvious that these things are neither related to the chapter of beliefs nor to the chapter of deeds. Rather, these are all conditions and states of the heart, and there is such importance attached to them in the religion that the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) would ask Allāh (Exalted is He) for them.

Thus, Tasawwuf, in essence, is a path to the acquisition of such things, and the nature of its specific practices and *ashghāl*, like keeping the company of a *shaykh* and making plenty of *dhikr* and contemplation, are nothing besides mechanisms to generate these states [in the heart]; which is confirmed by experience. And it is not difficult for people with a clear mind to make psychological and rational justifications for them.¹⁶

It will also probably be beneficial for readers, at this juncture, to submit that some of the states of the heart that are now known to be desired and to be objectives in the religion based on the aforementioned verses, hadīths and

¹⁵ These words can be found in supplications narrated in *Sabīh al-Bukhārī* (6316), *Sabīh Muslim* (763) and *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī* (3419)

¹⁶ For a rational justification, reading the first few pages of *al-Sirāt al-Mustaqīm*, composed by Ismā‘īl Shāhīd, will, if Allāh wills, be to some degree adequate. (Mawlānā Manzūr Nu‘mānī)

supplications, like love, certainty and the brittleness and plaintiveness of the heart, maintain the position of the foundation and basis [of these desired qualities], and the rest [of them], on the most part, are consequences and results of them. This is why an attempt is made by means of the practices and *ashghāl* of Tasawwuf to directly instil only such foundational states of the heart, after which the remaining things will self-generate. This is the principle theory on which Tasawwuf is based, and based on which it is regarded as a complete branch of religion.

This helpless one submits without any [false] modesty that because of my lack of determination and my carelessness and some special circumstances, and since I was not able to turn my full attention towards this experience, I, myself, am empty and deprived of these states. However, from the little and nominal attention I was able to give, and, on this path, the opportunity I gained in connection to this in terms of attending the service of some respected elders from time to time, all praise to Allāh, I received certainty and satisfaction that that which the respected elder said with respect to the end-goal and objective of Tasawwuf, its practices and *ashghāl* and the reality of them is correct.

- My heart and mind also accepted that the completion of religion and sweetness of faith is dependent on these states and faculties of the heart of which an attempt is made in Tasawwuf for their acquisition.
- I also received certainty that apart from completing *īmān* and Islām, Tasawwuf is also a means of generating a particular kind of spirit and strength, and if there is capability and natural affinity, it is possible to produce and increase by means of Tasawwuf such qualities as certainty and reliance, determination and resolve, patience and trust, and the absence of fear of anything besides Allāh, and these are the sources of strength. This is why Tasawwuf is extremely important for one's self development. According to me, those who have the most right to take benefit from this are the slaves of Allāh (Exalted is He) who are putting their efforts and energies towards creating some great reformatory transformation in the irreligiosity of this world on the path and method of the prophets (upon them peace) and who wish to overturn the domination of materialism with the domination of divine consciousness.
- In the period of being distant from Tasawwuf and unaware of it, I held the opinion that I should change the form of Tasawwuf, and while keeping its spirit intact, it should be transformed into a new form. However, afterwards, when I gained some nearness to Tasawwuf and its upholders, I realised that the operation of renovation and change in its form and appearance has been underway uninterruptedly, and in our own century, Hazrat Mawlānā Rashīd Ahmad Gangohī (may Allāh have mercy on him), Mawlānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī (may Allāh have mercy on him) and others introduced a great amount of renewal and renovation therein based on their experience and independent reasoning (*ijtihād*). According to the demands of the present age, they made it very concise

and scientific. Even today, this path is open. And undoubtedly, this process of renewal in Sulūk should always remain [open]. However, now I have come to have full certainty that this work can only be rendered by those respected people who are themselves imāms in this science and are themselves swimmers in this ocean. Otherwise, if such people undertake this task who, like myself, have neither reached perfection in this discipline, nor have they maintained a deep practical connection with it, then there is a great likelihood that, despite sincerity and intelligence, their rectification and renovation of Tasawwuf will, God-forbid, be like some traditional beldame renovating a royal falconer.

- After gaining nearness to Tasawwuf and the people of Tasawwuf, amongst the few certainties that I received, one worthy of mention is that any person, however much he has read and written, and however intelligent and perceptive he is, in order to acquire a proper acquaintance with Tasawwuf and in order to know what is for it and what is against it in an insightful manner, it is necessary for him to spend some time in the company and service of some personality that is a carrier of Tasawwuf, and to devote a few days of his life to acquiring practical experience of this discipline. Without this, it is not possible to understand and know Tasawwuf properly.

The respected elder and person of guidance, in whose Khānqāh the writer of these lines has recounted his attendance in the previous pages, expressed this reality on one occasion in reply to a question of mine in the following words:

Full knowledge of the things inside a house can only be acquired by entering the house.

In sum, through even the small amount of experience [I had of Tasawwuf], I came to know the truth of this famous statement of the masters of Sulūk and Tasawwuf:

من لم يذق لم يدرك

“The one who has not tasted does not know.”

It has been some days since I happened to read the letter of a friend who is a person of great knowledge, intelligent and a master of the pen, in which he expressed his thoughts on Tasawwuf. This worthless one had the feeling that some very intelligent child was expressing his thoughts on a subject on which he did not even have the opportunity to gain acquaintance of its basic premises (*mabādi*). But, even so, his intelligence was worthy of acclaim!

- From the closeness and connection [I maintained] with Tasawwuf and some of its circles for those few days, I also realised that, just as with other branches of religion, there are very few individuals that are capable who give attention to them. For example, it is observed that, nowadays, a great number of the seekers of religious knowledge and, likewise, those who turn their attention towards the

invitation and service of religion are those helpless ones that are at a very low standard in terms of capability. Exactly this, and in fact, perhaps even more regretful and worse from this perspective, is the condition of the discipline of Tasawwuf. Presently, the Khānqāhs which are in reality con-markets, where practices of *shirk* and bid'ah occur in the name of the friends (*awliya'*) of Allāh, are not under discussion. Nor are those unworthy hereditary administrators and "commercial" pīrs being discussed who do business in the name of Tasawwuf under the label of the respected elders. But it has been observed that those who come as seekers to true mashāyikh and people of guidance, excluding the rare and unusual cases, these helpless ones are generally in the lower class in terms of the capabilities of heart and mind. Although, due to their sincerity and honest pursuit and effort, many of them also definitely acquire some blessings of this discipline, it is nonetheless an obvious reality that these helpless ones cannot be regarded as models of the effusion and training of the Khānqāh whose conditions and speech in this age of ridiculing the Khānqāh and looking down on Tasawwuf and spirituality will drive people to accept the importance and beneficial nature of this branch of religion.

It is a principle reality that depending on how lofty, delicate and fragile an activity is, the ones who practise it should also be of that level. In the present age, the major cause of the failure and bad reputation of Tasawwuf is that those who are competent in it do not give it any attention, while the capabilities of those helpless ones who do give it attention are generally low. Yet, regarding them to be the fruits, the world establishes an opinion concerning the original tree.

- At this juncture, it is necessary to submit to the readers, without artificiality, something about the noble mashāyikh:

Just as you observe in the world that it is not necessary that one who is a successful lawyer is also an excellent doctor, and one who has extensive insight in philosophy is also skilled in politics or business, and one who is an expert in the field of engineering is also a brilliant man of letters and poet; exactly this is the condition of the various branches of religion. It is absolutely not necessary that the person who is an 'ālim with a breadth of knowledge and a muhaddith or a faqīh of high rank also has special knowledge of Tasawwuf; or the one who is a Sūfī master of the heart and a knower [of Allāh] is also an expert in Islāmic law and also has the diligent thinking and insight of those who come up with the correct solution from a religious standpoint with respect to the important issues of the present age.

Rather, the reality was such in most cases of the past, and in approximately ninety to ninety five cases in the present, that one who is skilled and knowledgeable in any one branch is generally weak in other branches. This is why, in this age, those people who want to take benefit from only one person who according to their supposed measure is perfect and complete in every way remain, on the most part, hopeless and deprived.

The writer of these lines recalls that while he was discussing this subject with his respected friend, at one point, he submitted:

You are certainly aware of numerous personalities from the past and present whose lives in your view are not good examples or worthy of imitation in piety and *taqwā*, and according to you, they maintain no special or general position specifically with respect to such lofty qualities and states of *īmān* as sincerity, *ih̄sān*, trust and submission. Yet, despite this, in your view, their knowledge, opinions and their God-given intelligence and insight are worth taking benefit from, and all of us take benefit from them in these things, and we regard the people who do not take advantage of their endeavours in academia and research only because they are not a prominent elder or a Sūfī type of person based on wishful thinking as being in error.

Similarly, we find such slaves of Allāh who put most attention in their lives towards Tasawwuf and Sulūk, and under the leadership and supervision of some complete *shaykh*, they expended the greatest part of their time and their strengths in acquiring and perfecting this branch, and this is why they acquired the rank of distinction and specialty in this. However, we observe that in some other branches, like knowledge and judgement, they received no particular distinction, and this is why, they don't properly appreciate some basics of religion which we consider very important, and they cannot offer any proper leadership in the problems of the religious community and the important communal questions; or it is possible that due to a lack of study, reflection and attention, they do not even understand correctly some of the most important issues of the day. Seeing these deficiencies, to negate even the perfection which he has actually acquired, and despite one's need in this discipline, to not take benefit from him, is similar to the ill-informed error of those people who we know to suffer from narrow-mindedness.

There is no doubt that my heart too desires, and every good and righteous person would want, that the one who is recognised as a *shaykh* of Khānqāh and a true knower [of Allāh] is also a *mufassir* and *mubaddith* of a high level and also a faqīh and mujtahid with extensive knowledge. Rather, together with this, he also has full capabilities to fulfil the responsibilities of leading the nation and government. And in this way, [we would wish that] the scholar of religion who has good insight and judgement, besides being skilled in Islāmic Sharī'ah and law, also has excellent capabilities of leading the nation and running the system of government and, moreover, from the perspective of his heart and inward, is also the Junayd and Bāyazīd of his time. However, this is only a desire of our hearts and a good hope. The world that we inhabit is not the world of hopes and desires, but is the world of realities and facts. And the pragmatist ought to choose his *modus operandi* keeping the realities before him.

I heard from the tongue of the respected elder, and person of Khānqāh, in whose service the writer of these lines has recounted his attendance in the previous pages, this wise saying several times:

This is not the time that all good products can be found in one market.
This is why whichever shop is found to have the best of a certain product, a person ought to go to that shop for that [product].

The writer was addressing the sincere critics and deniers of Tasawwuf in all that was submitted until now. Now I will submit some conclusions and some impressions based on my experience to the carriers and upholders of Tasawwuf.

- Although with praise to Allāh, I myself have no doubt about what I have submitted earlier with respect to the goal of Tasawwuf and its nature, that its basis is indeed this, there are a great many people amongst those who maintain a connection of devotion and trust with some true mashāyikh and their Khānqāhs whose minds are not clear about this and they suffer from various types of misunderstandings. For example, there are many people in the circles of Khānqāh who consider the practices and *ashghāl*, the nature of which is [in reality] nothing besides a means and a path to generating some [internal] states, as though the foundation of Sulūk. Likewise, many individuals who maintain a connection with our circles of Tasawwuf have become entangled in the pursuit of some of the effects of these practices, *ashghāl* and *adbkār*, like dreams and *kashf*, regarding which all the true mashāyikh have said: “They have no importance, but are a type of imagination and fantasy.”

Likewise, there are many other errors and confusions which the seekers of Khāqāhs often suffer. The reason for this is, probably, that some of our respected elders do not turn their full attention to cleansing the minds, even though this is extremely important. It is the view of this worthless one that those circles of Tasawwuf and Sulūk in which some deviations ever found a place, it is the result of this type of neglect from the respected elders, who, according to us, did not themselves suffer from these deviations. The set-up of Tasawwuf is such that if the mashāyikh are not completely on the look-out and do not have concern for rectifying the views and cleansing the minds of their seekers and those who have faith [in them], then the efforts of Shaytān that cause deviation can very easily become successful in these circles. Anyhow, we do not want our respected elders to be unmindful of these concerns, and we wish that the purification and rectification of minds and ideologies is seen to have priority over *dhikr* and *shughl*.

- The imāms of Tasawwuf, Imām Rabbāni (may Allāh have mercy on him), Hazrat Shāh Walī Allāh (may Allāh have mercy on him) and others strongly emphasised that the seeker should first correct the basic beliefs and acquire necessary knowledge of religion, and that it turns on the obligations of the *shaykh* to turn the attention of the disciple and seeker towards any shortcomings in this respect.

However, it has been observed that there is extreme neglect on the part of some mashāyikh in sensing this responsibility and giving it practical importance. Many simple and straightforward helpless slaves [of Allāh] come in their service to take bay‘ah, from whose speech and outward condition it is clearly observed that these helpless ones don’t even know the essential and fundamental matters of religion which every Muslim should know, and it is very obvious that they probably don’t even know how to read Salāh properly. Yet, it has sometimes been observed that the mashāyikh accept the bay‘ah of even such people after making them renew their *īmān* and repent and teaching them some *tasbehs* to read, according to the general methods. However, neither do they give any attention towards the objective of learning the religion to the necessary extent, nor do they make any arrangements for it. Yet, it is very easy for these respected elders to hold back such people who come to them for two to four days, and entrust their basic education – beliefs, rectification of prayer and so on – to some attendant (*khādīm*), just as was the procedure of the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) for those who just entered Islām.

It is possible that the reason for this neglect of the respected elders is that these respected personalities did not imagine that those that come to them are ignorant and unacquainted with the fundamentals of religion to this degree. Nonetheless, it is submitted that for these respected persons to not turn their attention towards this and not give due consideration to this issue is unbefitting of their lofty position of responsibility.

- It is not hidden to the people who have examined the history of Tasawwuf that certain deviances have crept into the ummah at various times through its route, and even today there are a large number of people who ascribe themselves to Tasawwuf and Sūfīs whose perceptions and deeds are closer to *kufr* and *shirk* than to Islām and Tawhīd. Those that Allāh has given acquaintance and insight know that such deviances develop in the circles of Khānqāh, on the most part, due to extremism in faith in, and devotion to, the elders and an excess in veneration. This is why it is an added obligation of the true mashāyikh who carry the Sharī‘ah and Sunnah and sense their religious obligations to always be attentive and fully alert, and never become complacent, in the matter of preventing the illness of excess and extremism in the devotion and practice of those who maintain a relationship with them and have love for them. The excellent example of the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) should always remain before our respected elders.

It is mentioned in hadīth that once [the following words] emerged from the tongue of a Sahābi:

ما شاء الله وشئت

“What Allāh wills, and you will.”

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) rebuked him strongly, saying:

أجعلتني مع الله عدلاً؟! بل ما شاء الله وحده

“You make me an equal with Allāh? Rather, [say:] What Allāh alone wills.”¹⁷

Similarly, on another occasion, while rebuking the Sahābah, the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) said:

لا يستهوينكم الشيطان أنا محمد بن عبد الله عبد الله ورسوله، ما أحب أن ترفعوني فوق منزلتي التي أنزلني الله

“Let not the Shaytān run with your desires! I am Muhammad, the son of ‘Abdullāh, the slave of Allāh and His Messenger. I do not like that you elevate me above my rank to which Allāh has brought me down.”¹⁸

In this respect, how meticulous the inspection of the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) was, and how careful he was! Consider this from the incident narrated in the authentic collections that on the day his son, Ibrāhīm – on his father and him blessing and peace –, passed away, by coincidence the sun was eclipsed, and he thought that people will suffer from the misunderstanding that the eclipse of the sun occurred because of this event in the prophetic household (peace and blessings be upon him). Thus, at that time, he (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) made an announcement to gather the people in the masjid, and after praising and glorifying Allāh, he declared:

إن الشمس والقمر آيتان من آيات الله لا ينكسفان لموت أحد ولا لحياته

“Verily, the sun and moon are signs from the signs of Allāh. They are not eclipsed for the death of anyone, nor his life.”

Meaning, rather, they occur according to the calculation determined by Allāh and by His order.

Since amongst the various groupings of the ummah, only the grouping of the mashāyikh is such that this type of extremism can and does happen in people’s reverence of them, it is therefore an added obligation of these respected individuals to always keep this duty and responsibility in mind.

¹⁷ Narrated in *Sharh Mushkīl al-Āthār* (235)

¹⁸ Narrated in *Musnad Ahmad* (12551)

Some Doubts about Tasawwuf and its Practices and *Ashghāl*

When all that has been written until now was published in the pages of al-Furqān, some questions on this issue were posed by some friends, and this helpless one answered them in al-Furqān itself. I felt it was appropriate to make these answers a part of this book.

- One person wrote: “If Tasawwuf really had the importance that is surmised from your article, why did the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) not give clear instructions with respect to this and with respect to its practices and *ashghāl*? I do not understand at all how the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) did not educate the ummah about something that has this much importance in religion, that the completion of *īmān* and Islām is dependent on it.”

I feel this person did not read my essay with full contemplation. The basic theme of all that I wrote is that the purpose of Tasawwuf and its end-goal and consequence, meaning, acquisition of such [internal] states as love for Allāh, fear, certainty, conscious awareness [of the presence of Allāh], sincerity and *ih̄sān*, do have importance in religion, and the completion of *īmān* and Islām is indeed dependent on them, and without doubt the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) taught and encouraged his *ummah* towards them with complete clarity and explicitness. The texts from the Book and Sunnah that have been written in connection to this are more than enough to substantiate this.

Its specific practices and *ashghāl*, like *adhb̄kār* and *muraqābāt* and so on, are yet [to be addressed]. I have written explicitly that these are merely a means and a path to them, and the demand of the Prophetic method of education and of the principles of legislation with respect to such means and paths is that they are not stated or specified, so that such permissible means and paths can be adopted in every period that are in accordance with the circumstances of that period. There is no distinction of Tasawwuf in this. Rather, the condition of the other branches of religion are exactly this.

Consider that teaching and studying religion is from the foundational obligations of religion, yet no methods have been specified for this in the Book and Sunnah.

Similarly, the preservation and propagation of the Majestic Qur’ān is an obligation of immense importance. Yet, the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) did not say with respect to this that you should adopt such-and-such methods for this, until when in the era of [Abū Bakr] al-Siddīq (may Allāh be pleased with him), four hundred memorisers of the Qur’ān from the Sahābah (may Allāh be pleased with them) were martyred in the battle of Yamāmah, Hazrat ‘Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him) first had the idea that apart from preserving the Qur’ān in the hearts, we should also make arrangements to preserve the Qur’ān in books, and in connection to this, one main copy should also be prepared with special attention and dutifulness. Thus, he presented this proposal to Hazrat Abū Bakr al-Siddīq (may Allāh be pleased with him). Initially, Hazrat Siddīq (may Allāh be pleased with him) hesitated in accepting this, and he said, how can we do something which the Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and grant him

peace) neither did himself, nor gave us instructions to do? However, eventually he became content with the evidences of Hazrat ‘Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him), and then this task was accomplished by his command under the special supervision of Hazrat Zayd ibn Thābit al-Ansāri (may Allāh be pleased with him).

Later, Hazrat ‘Uthmān (may Allāh be pleased with him) took a further step in connection to this by making copies of this *mushaf*, and circulating it throughout the lands of Islām under his special attention and supervision. From that time till now, how many steps have been taken in the process of the preservation, propagation, teaching, and spread of the Glorious Qur’ān and serving the Qur’ān by translation and exegesis?

Thus, the assumption that the means and paths of such things that are important in the religion should also be explained clearly and specified in the Book and Sunnah, and that we should expect to find detailed and particular counsels with respect to the religious needs of the ummah until Qiyāmah, with clarity and specification in the Book and Sunnah, is an extremely naïve mistake, and stems from not being aware of the method of education and the legislative principles of the prophets (upon them peace).

- One person asked: “Is there any indication in the Book and Sunnah that those practices and *ashghāl* of Tasawwuf that are emphasised in order to create the *īmānī* states of love and fear of Allāh, sincerity, *ihsān* and so on, like keeping the company of a *shaykh*, *adhbikār* and *murāqabāt* and so on, can generate those states?”

In answer to this, it is submitted that although the reality according to this helpless one is that the impact of companionship, *dhikr* and reflection on the heart is not only understood and substantiated in the Book and Sunnah by indication, but explicitly too¹⁹, but assuming that there was not even an allusion to them in the Book and Sunnah, it would still not affect the original claim at all. Since in the thirteen centuries of Islām’s history, hundreds of thousands of Allāh’s righteous slaves continue to report their experience that these states are generated by such righteous acts, we should accept their effectiveness and beneficial nature.

My friends who ask me this question have a lot of faith in reformation by means of sound literature, and I too do not deny this, but they should ponder: Did the question ever arise in their hearts, “Is there any indication found in the Book and Sunnah on the

¹⁹ It is mentioned in hadīth that Hazrat Hanzalah, a Sahābī, and Hazrat Abū Bakr al-Siddīq al-Akbar (may Allah be pleased with them) discovered that their condition was such that for as long as they were in the company and gathering of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and grant him peace), their hearts were in the state that for even a moment they would not become heedless, and it was as though the unseen became visible to them, but when they were in their homes, this state did not remain. (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī*) It is narrated from Hazrat Anas ibn Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him) that after burying the Prophet (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) in the grave, just as the dirt left their hands, they noticed their hearts changing. (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī*) Meaning, because of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and grant him peace) moving from this world to the intermediary realm (*barzakh*), they felt a difference in the condition of their hearts. That the state of the heart is affected by companionship is clearly realised from these two narrations. As for the effectiveness of *dhikr*, the verse of the Majestic Qur’an, “And verily the *dhikr* of Allah is greater,” (29:45) is a clear proof. The context in which this verse is mentioned should be reflected upon. Contemplation and meditation are also a particular, and more effective, form of *dhikr*. (Mawlānā Manzūr Nu‘mānī)

effectiveness of sound literature?” My feeling is that this question never even arose in their hearts because they are content with this based on their personal knowledge and experience and the experiences of many people like themselves. The strange thing is that this is our manner of behaving with respect to things and experiences that relate to us, but the consensual and unanimous experience of thousands of the slaves of God, like Hazrat Junayd Baghdādi (may Allāh be pleased with him), Sarī al-Saqatī (may Allāh be pleased with him), Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlāni, Khawājah Mu‘īn al-Din Chistī, Khawājah Shihāb al-Din Suhrawardī (may Allāh be pleased with him), Mujaddid Alf Thāni Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī (may Allāh be pleased with him), Shāh Walī Allāh, Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd (may Allāh be pleased with him), do not give us satisfaction!

- One person expressed his strong natural aversion to audible and rhythmic *dhikr*, and he expressed this thought: “There is doubt of ostentation in this, and nowadays most honest people consider it ostentation.”

Natural aversion to audible and rhythmic *dhikr* is something based on [personal] taste and temperament. This is why there is no need to say anything about this. Allāh (Exalted is He) has made the temperaments of people and their tastes very different. There are some temperaments that achieve peace and tranquility through audible and rhythmic *dhikr*. This is why the true mashāyikh take the aspect of the [differences in] temperaments and affinities into consideration when prescribing audible or silent *dhikr* or any other *ashghāl* for them.

However, the doubt of ostentation that emerges from loud *dhikr* is, in my opinion, based completely on a lack of reflection. In these times, since according to this individual an honest man considers audible *dhikr* ostentatious, the result is that no one who sees someone doing audible *dhikr* will trust him, but many people will consider him stupid or a conman or an ostentatious person. Thus, in such a condition, the possibility of ostentation in this period is extremely low. In fact, my experience is that in today’s environment, audible *dhikr* is more a means of eliminating ostentation. In terms of repelling stray thoughts and whisperings, the effect of audible *dhikr* is fully accepted by those of experience.

In this respect, it is worth further mentioning that the beneficial nature and impact of the methods of audibility and *darb* (striking) which are practised in some orders can very easily be appreciated in light of the science of medicine and psychology. This helpless one believes that with respect to most *ashghāl* these are all medical and psychological mechanisms designed to generate certain [internal] states and changes.

This is why giving them too much importance is not only incorrect, but also harmful to the original goal. Furthermore, it is also not necessary that the ability of every wayfarer is the same. In fact, I have heard from some respected elders that there are many slaves of Allāh who with the aid and assistance of Allāh (Exalted is He) ascend the path of Sulūk very quickly, and they acquire the original objective of Tasawwuf and Sulūk, and right till the very end they do not comprehend or experience any “*latifab*” (internal organ) or any “*maqām*” (spiritual state).

I discovered that all the respected elders of this time from whom this helpless one had the honour of doing Sulūk under were in agreement that, particularly in this time, this brief Sulūk is more appropriate, and the verifiers [from amongst them] have clearly stated that the Sulūk of the noble Sahābah was also brief.

- One person said: “I have observed many people, who despite having stayed in the Khānqāhs for many ears and having engaged in *dhikr* and *shughl*, the things for which Tasawwuf and Khānqāhiyyat have been described as being necessary are not instilled in them.”

Undoubtedly, this is true to a large extent. But, to be fair, this is not restricted to Khānqāhs. Rather, this is the condition of our religious seminaries and other religious and reformatory departments too in today’s time. From amongst many, ten to twenty problematic ones come out. So will bringing an end to all of them in one breath, deeming them all erroneous and superfluous, be correct to do? The right method in such circumstances is that every possible effort and mechanism is exploited to make every path and every institution more beneficial and more effective, and not waste a minute in this. However, having observed shortcomings and deficiencies in the results, they should not be totally eradicated based on the belief that they are superfluous. In these unfavourable circumstances, and this totally corrupt and utterly materialistic environment in which these religious institutes of ours have to operate, five to ten percent of them succeeding can never be a failure.

- One person said: “All that I have understood from the *modus operandi* of the Sūfīs is that Tasawwuf, in reality, is equivalent to monasticism and solitude, and supporting it is in reality incorporating monasticism into Islām.”

In my view, this too is a consequence of a lack of thought in the matter. The reality is that an incorrect meaning of Tasawwuf has settled in the hearts of people who make such statements, and based on this wrong understanding, they regard only people who desire monasticism and solitude as Sūfīs, and then based on this perception of theirs, they say that Tasawwuf is equivalent to monasticism and every Sūfī is a monk!

If these people did not themselves suffer from this misunderstanding, and they did not consider monasticism and solitude necessary for Tasawwuf, they will be able observe many slaves of God even in this age, who, by praise to Allāh, are true Sūfīs, as well as men of the field. But the truth is that due to their shortsightedness, these poor souls do not accept those who are not in solitude as Sūfīs. This can only be remedied by correcting their own knowledge and perception.

- Some respected people strongly insisted that I reveal the honourable name of the respected elder in whose service this helpless one attended and with whom a conversation related to Tasawwuf was recounted in the initial parts of the essay.

This is why I submit that this benefactor and master of mine is the respected elder, Shāh ‘Abd al-Qādir Sāhib Rāipūrī²⁰, may his shadow be lengthened.

Endnote: In the end, it is necessary to submit that this worthless one is only a proponent and defender of the Tasawwuf that has been described here, and this is the Tasawwuf of the upholders of truth. As for the activities of *shirk* and *bid‘ah* that are happening in countless other Khānqāhs in its name, the slaves of Allāh who He has given even the slightest portion of *īmān* insight will certainly be disgusted by them.

²⁰ Hazrat Mawlānā Shāh ‘Abdul Qādir Rāipūrī was born in the year 1295 H (1878 CE) in the Sargodha District of present-day Pakistan. He hailed from a religious family. He completed the memorisation of the Qur’ān at an early age and studied the works of the Dars e Nizāmī syllabus in different madāris of India. He faced many hardships and struggles during his student life. He was particularly gifted in the fields of logic and philosophy. During a brief stay in Delhi, he attended some of the hadīth lessons of ‘Allāmah Muhammad Anwarshāh al-Kashmīrī. Although he was engaged in teaching and academic pursuits for a short while, he felt more inclined towards Tasawwuf. He found an immediate connection with Mawlānā Shāh ‘Abdur Rahīm Rāipūrī (d. 1919 CE), a senior successor of Imām Rabbānī Mawlānā Rashīd Ahmad Gangohī. Despite being advised to make a spiritual connection with the latter who was alive at the time, he insisted that he felt a stronger bond with Mawlānā ‘Abdur Rahīm Rāipūrī. He spent his entire time in the remembrance of Allāh and the service of his shaykh. He was punctual and steadfast on his *dhikr* and *anrād*. Mawlānā ‘Abdur Rahīm chose Mawlānā ‘Abdul Qādir as his foremost successor. For approximately forty-five years after his demise, Mawlānā ‘Abdul Qādir was engaged in the spiritual rectification and guidance of thousands of disciples. People from all walks of life came to him for spiritual rectification. He was a very content, humble, self-effacing and simple person. He died in the year 1382 H (1962 H).

Some Preliminary Advices to the Seekers of Tasawwuf and Ihsān

When the first five essays of this book were published in the issues of al-Furqān, some people, having read them, insisted that it is necessary to give some preliminary advices to the slaves of Allāh (Exalted is He) in whose hearts, after reading them, the feeling of the necessity of this branch of religion and the desire for its acquisition developed, in the light and guidance of which, if they so wish, they may proceed on this journey without any delay; because experience has it that if the feet of practice is not immediately lifted on such feelings, they will eventually diminish and be neglected. This is why I felt it would be appropriate to offer some preliminary advices. May Allāh bring benefit to His slaves by means of them.

The slaves of Allāh in whose hearts the desire for this complete branch of religion, and the impulse for its acquisition, has been generated, ought to:

First of all, correct your intention. Meaning, make the goal the rectification of your soul and amending your relationship of slavehood with Allāh (Exalted is He) and the pleasure of Allāh (Exalted is He). The search for unveiling (*kashf*) and miracles (*karāmāt*), or the lust for attaining seniority and greatness, is a kind of *shirk*. Therefore, do not even let any recess of such an intention remain in the heart.

Then, after correcting the intention and will, refer to such pious persons and masters of guidance (*sahib al-irshād*) who are competent for leadership and guidance on this path, and with whom one has a natural affinity, and coming in whose service, and deriving benefit from whose company, are not all that difficult.

If due to being unacquainted with such respected persons, deciding and selecting [whom to refer to] is itself difficult, then it is best to take advice from the pious people who have understanding of, and insight into, religion. Attend in the service of the respected elders of the time to whom they refer you, and having stayed with each of them for a few days, observe them for yourself, and the one whose nature you feel a connection with, and the one for whom greater respect and love has been created in your heart, and the one from whom you hope for the most benefit, choose him for yourself. If your choice to refer to a certain elder has been established from the advices of sincere well-wishers, there is no harm in making a decision to refer to him. However, before making the final decision, and expressing your desire and intent to him, *istikhārah* should be done according to the Sunnah method, the procedure of which was mentioned as follows in hadith:

“When one of you is concerned with a matter, let him offer two rak‘ahs apart from the obligatory [prayers], and then he should say [in du‘ā’]:

اللهم إني أستخيرك بعلمك وأستقدرك بقدرتك وأسألك من فضلك العظيم فإنك تقدر ولا أقدر وتعلم ولا أعلم وأنت علام الغيوب، اللهم إن كنت تعلم أن هذا الأمر خير لي في ديني ومعاشي وعاقبة أمري فاقدره لي ويسره لي ثم بارك لي فيه، وإن كنت تعلم أن هذا الأمر شر لي في ديني ومعاشي وعاقبة أمري فاصرفه عني واصرفني عنه، واقدر لي الخير حيث كان ثم أرضني به

“O Allāh! Verily, I ask you for goodness by means of Your knowledge, and I ask You for ability through Your power, and I ask You of Your great grace, for verily, You have power and I have no power, and You have knowledge and I have no knowledge. And

You are Knower of Secrets. O Allāh! If You were to know that this matter²¹ is good for me in my religion, my livelihood and my end-state, destine it for me and make it easy for me. And if You were to know that this matter is evil for me in my religion, my livelihood and my end-state, avert it from me and avert me from it, and destine for me goodness wherever it may be, and then make me content with it.”²²

If after making istikhārah, the inclination of the heart remains as it was, or increases, then having hope in goodness and blessing from Allāh (Exalted is He), make the decision with God’s name to refer to that respected elder and establish an *islāhī* connection with him. And if after istikhārah, the heart becomes disinclined, then search for another.

Anyhow, whatever is the inclination of the heart after istikhārah, whether it is through the guidance of a dream etc., or from your own side, consider this the result of the istikhārah, and practice should be in accordance with it.

And if after one occasion of performing istikhārah, there is no inclination, istikhārah should be done in this way several times. If Allāh (Exalted is He) wills, there will definitely be some preference, and the temperament will incline towards that in which there is goodness.

Anyhow, when the heart inclines towards any respected elder after istikhārah, then after making du‘ā’ to Allāh (Exalted is He) for goodness and felicity, explain your intention to him, and request him to guide you. The goal of bay‘ah, and the principle reality of discipleship (*irādah*), is only this.²³

Thereafter, whatever counsel and teaching the respected elder gives, and the advices he offers, give their application and observance more importance than the importance you attach to the observance of the medical advices of a healer, hakīm or doctor for your bodily ailments. For this, it is necessary that you must first observe a few things in the one you have selected to guide you on this path, so that the connection is based on complete contentment and reliance:

1. He is aware of religion and Sharī‘ah, and he displays utmost concern in following Sharī‘ah and Sunnah.
2. From his states, it is surmised that he is a sincere slave of Allāh, and the direction of his focus and desire is not towards material success or fame and wealth, but is towards Allāh and the afterlife.
3. He maintains such insight in Sulūk that he can guide and lead the seekers while observing their [particular] circumstances.

²¹ At this point, the activity or goal regarding which istikhārah is being done should be brought to mind. For example, if istikhārah is being done for referring to a certain *shaykh*, this goal should be conceived in the heart. (Mawlānā Manzūr Nu‘mānī)

²² These words of the du‘ā’ of istikhārah are from *Sabīh al-Bukhārī*. Its narrator, Hazrat Jābir (may Allah be pleased with him), said: “The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) would teach us istikhārah in affairs just as he would teach us a sūrah of the Qur’an.” (*Mishkāt al-Masābih* with reference to *Sabīh al-Bukhārī*) (Mawlānā Manzūr Nu‘mānī)

²³ My intent is that the “bay‘ah of training” which is being discussed here is done for this. Here the “bay‘ah of blessing” and “bay‘ah of repentance” are not being discussed. (Mawlānā Manzūr Nu‘mānī)

4. From his conduct, it is surmised that he has affection for seekers and those who maintain relationship with him, and he gives attention to, and endeavours towards, benevolence and benefaction.
5. He has acquired this branch of religion (Sulūk) through the guidance and supervision of some complete *shaykh*, and he stayed in his company, and that [*shaykh*] confirmed his competence in guidance and training.
6. People who maintain a relationship with him, and frequent his audience in connection with religion, acquire religious benefit and the concern of afterlife increases in them.

If after having observed these things, and after gaining contentment in your heart, you have established a relationship of taking benefit on the path of Sulūk from a slave of Allāh, and you have given yourself to his guidance, then if Allāh (Exalted is He) wills, you will never be deprived.

If the pursuit of this discipline, and the impulse to rectify one's soul, developed in a slave of God, but due to some reason, he could not select a *shaykh* for himself, it will be best for him, until he can refer to a *shaykh*, to commence his work in the name of God according to the following method:

First, with full attention, make wudū' properly. Then as far as possible, with complete humbleness and concentration, offer two rak'ahs of optional prayer. Thereafter, while having certainty of Allāh's presence and gaze, seek forgiveness for your sins from Him, and make a resolve and commitment in your heart to stay away from sins in the future and to proceed on the Sharī'ah, and seek assistance and aid from Allāh for this [purpose].

If in a previous life, any obligations of Allāh or the rights due to any slaves [of Allāh] have remained in your responsibility, put your thoughts towards fulfilling them, and if there is a need to learn the procedure for this, refer to a muftī and 'ālim of religion.

From amongst the obligations of Allāh (Exalted is He), Salāh has utmost importance. For religious ascension, Salāh is the greatest means. This is why, you should exert yourself fully to perform it in the best possible manner with concentration and humbleness, and spare no effort in this [objective].²⁴

Besides the obligatory prayers and the emphasised sunnahs, make a habit of offering optional prayers too. Particularly, make an effort to observe Tahajjud. If you do not have a habit of waking up at the end of the night, then until this becomes a habit, offer eight rak'ahs with the intention of Tahajjud in units of two after 'Ishā' Salāh and before the Witr prayer. If time is short, offer six, four or two rak'ahs.

...

Besides the *dhikr* of "negation and affirmation" (*lā ilāha illAllāh*), make it a habitual practice to recite the "Tasbīhāt Fātimīyyah," meaning *subhānAllāh* 33 times, *alhamdulillah* 33 times and *Allāhu akbar* 34 times after every Salāh.

²⁴ If Allāh wills, in this respect, adequate help can be found from the booklet of this helpless one, *Namāz ke Haqiqat* (The Reality of Prayer). Many of Allah's slaves have expressed that they benefited greatly from reading it. (Mawlānā Manzūr Nu'mānī)

Likewise, at the time of sleep, recite “Tasbīhāt Fātimīyah,” as well as *istighfār* and *durūd sharīf* a hundred times each.

Besides this, make it a habit to recite any phrase of *dhikr* or *du‘ā’* when coming and going, sitting and rising etc. For example *subhān Allāh wa bihamdih, lā ilāha ill Allāh*, the noble verse, *lā ilāha illā Anta subhānaka innī kuntu minazzālimin, astaghfirullāha Rabbī, yā Hayy yā Qayyūm bi rahmatika astaghīth* or any phrase like this. Anyhow, make it your habit that every so often, this word frequently comes on the tongue, even while engaging in your chores. By means of this, the remembrance of Allāh in the heart, and conscious awareness of Him, are constantly refreshed.

You should also set aside a specific time for recitation of the Glorious Qur’ān. If the time is short and cannot be long, then recite at least one or two *rukū’*s. Whether it is *dhikr* or recitation, they should as much as possible be done with attention and conscious awareness, and with the longing and love of the heart.

Furthermore, also set aside a few minutes each day in which, having emptied the heart and mind from all things, you meditate on death and the events that transpire after it. Meaning, reflect that one day I will certainly be lifted from this world, and then after bathing, shrouding and praying *Salāt al-Janāzah* over me, people will come to bury me in the grave. Then, in this fashion, there will be interrogation in the grave. Thereafter, I will have to stay alone in that grave, for hundreds or thousands of years. Then, at a certain time, the day of *Qiyāmah* will come. Then, resurrection and dispersion will take place. Judgement will take place, and my book of deeds will be brought before me, in which all my actions will be incorporated. The angels of Allāh will testify, and my own limbs, hands, feet and so on, will testify against me. At this time, what will be my condition before Allāh? Then my verdict will be announced, and I will be sent to the place where I will be recompensed. Anyhow, all these events that are yet to come should be brought in the mind in such a way that it is as though they are all transpiring [before you]. And then, full of fear and fright, ask forgiveness from Allāh and beg for His mercy and grace.

Together with observing these few advices, make the utmost effort to stay away from sins, and whenever you become involved in any sin, repent immediately.

Besides sins, also observe precaution specifically in two other things:

Firstly, leave the habit of eating more than necessary. Meaning, eat the amount from which you gain full strength and you do not become lazy, which often is a result of filling the stomach.

Secondly, speak only when necessary. Meaning, make only those comments which are necessary and beneficial from the perspective of religion and the world, and make it a habit to always think before speaking.

Another important matter in connection to this is that you think of yourself lower than others and consider others better and greater than yourself. In this way, make it a habit to hold a bad opinion of yourself, and to hold a good opinion of others.

Lastly, take account of yourself and be mindful of all these things with full attention. “Rather, man will be a witness against himself, even though he may offer his excuses” (Qur’ān, 75:14-5).

These few advices will, if Allāh wills, be fully adequate for every seeker to commence his work, and it is hoped from Allāh's mercy that guidance and support will continue from Allāh (Exalted is He) for the future.

“As for those who strive in Our way, We will certainly take them onto Our paths, and indeed Allāh is with those who are good in deeds.” (Qur’ān, 29:69)

Note:

With respect to these advices, the thought that there no longer remains any need to establish an *islāhī* connection with a master of guidance should never be entertained. Rather, the objective of writing them is only so that the people in whom the longing for this complete branch has developed by the guidance of Allāh, but due to his specific circumstances he cannot benefit from any master of guidance, he should commence his work in accordance with these advices, and when he selects some spiritual guide for himself, he should observe his guidance. The reality is that complete guidance on this path can only be acquired through some living entity.