

KNOW YOURSELF: DO YOU NEED A SHAIKH FOR TAZKIA-TUN-NAFS?

IS A SHAIKH NECESSARY IN YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY?



BY SHAIKH MIR ASEDULLAH QUADRI

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1. PREFACE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام
على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

It is important to have a clear picture of the three states of, being a Muslim, as established by the Prophet Mohammed (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم).

It is in Hadith - Abu Huraira (رضي الله تعالى عنه) narrated - One day while the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) was sitting in the company of some people, (angel) Jibreel (عليه السلام) came and sat, and asked, 'what is Iman?' Allah's Apostle (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) replied, 'Iman is to believe in Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), His angels, (the) meeting with Him (on the day of judgment), His Apostles, and to believe in Resurrection.' Then he asked, 'what is Islam?' Allah's Apostle (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) replied, 'to worship Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) alone and no one else, to offer prayers perfectly, to pay the compulsory charity 'Zakat' and to observe fasts during the month of Ramadan.' Then he asked, 'what is Ihsan?' Allah's Apostle (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) replied, 'to pray as if you see Him, and if you cannot see him then you must consider that He is looking at you.' - **(Bukhari - part of the Hadith).**

As per the above Hadith, there are three states of, being a Muslim.

- (a) The first state is that of being a believer, i.e., when a person recites the Islamic Shahada and with the rightful belief and conviction in his/her heart.
- (b) The second is that of being a Muslim, i.e., when a person, after reciting the Shahada, puts his/her words to action and starts to abide by the tenets of Islam.
- (c) The third is that, of being an Islamic Sufi or a person of Ihsan. An Islamic Sufi's action reflects the utmost sincerity in Iman. There is a clear sense of realization of the presence of God playing a part in his/her life.

A believer possesses Iman and a Muslim possesses Iman and Islam. An Islamic Sufi possesses Iman, Islam and Ihsan. Given below are the precise definitions of each.

(a) Iman is to Belief in Allah. A Muslim must believe in Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) as the creator of this Cosmos and only He can be worshiped. Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) is free from the considerations of body, form, shape, etc. Everything in this cosmos is His creation. Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) creations are appearing in the cosmos in specific shapes / forms / characteristics as per their facts. In addition, he must believe in Allah's angels, His prophets, in His books, the day of Judgment, in destiny and fate, and that all virtue and evil is from Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ).

(b) Islam is to worship Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) alone and none else, to offer 5 times prayers perfectly, to pay the compulsory charity 'Zakat' to observe fasts during the month of Ramadan and perform Hajj once in a lifetime (provided you have the means). Thus, Islam is related with the deeds.

(c) Ihsan is to realize the presence of Allah in our daily lives. The state of Ihsan is known as Islamic Sufism, and to walk on the **way of Ihsan** is known as '**Sulook**' (سُلُوك).

2. SUFI SHUYOOKH OF IHSAN

In observation of issues of Islamic Jurisprudence, Muslims follow certain teachers who are known as Imams, like (i) Abu Hanifa (699-767) CE, (ii) Malik (711-795) CE, (iii) Shafii, (767-820) CE (iv) and Ibn Hanbal (780-855) CE. (رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ) Their followers are known as Hanafi, Shafii, Maliki and Hanbali. These Imams have deduced the rulings of Islamic Jurisprudence (الفقه الإسلامي) as per their research, and it is consensus of all Muslims that if you follow any of these Imams, you are following the Islamic Sharia even though there are some differences in their opinions related to certain actions. However, there is no difference of opinion among these Imams as far as Islamic faith is concerned.

In a similar way, Muslims follow certain Sufi Shuyookh of Ihsan in matters of Ihsan, like (i) Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani (1077-1166) CE, (ii) Khwaja Moinuddin Chishtee (1136-1230) CE, (iii) Shaikh Abul Hasan Shadhili (1196-1258) CE, (iv) Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband (1318-1389) CE, and others in matters of related with Ihsan. The followers of these Shuyookh are known as Qadri, Chishtee, Shadhili, Naqshbandis, etc. These Shuyookh teach their followers specific ways of following the way of Ihsan (سُلُوك). The Shuyookh teach collectively (to all students) and individually (to each student) as per the capacity of their students' comprehension. When you join these Salasil by taking baya (بيعة) (initiation), they give you an admission document

known as 'Shajra' in which the names of the teachers of these Shuyookh is mentioned reaching to Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). What is 'Initiation' or 'Promise of Allegiance' (بيعة)? It means that you initiate or start walking on the way of Ihsan in the guidance of the Shaikh. Bay'a is a promise on the hand of a Shaikh for adhering to the laws of Shariah (A'maal-e Zaahiri) and Tareeqah (A'maal-e Baatini).

3. THE PROMISE OF ALLEGIANCE (بيعة)

All of us would like to fulfill religious imperatives (Faraa'ez) and be away from the prohibited things (Haraam) and would like to be steadfast at a very high standard. Therefore, we require a Murshid (religious teacher, the Shaikh of Ihsan) who cautions us on our day to day mistakes and purifies us from unlawful attractions.

It is important for every one of us to take bay 'a in our early youth when we are intelligent enough to distinguish between good and bad. There is an Arabic saying - من لا شيخ له فشيخه الشيطان [The one who does not have a Sufi Shaikh of Ihsan, his Shaikh is Satan]. It means that in the absence of a truthful Shaikh, there is every likely hood that you will fall victim to Satan or his associate deviants who mislead you in the name of Islam.

Let us understand this issue from an example. Two plus two, make four and if we divide 2 from 4, only 2 will remain. Mathematics is such a certain subject that any other subject could hardly come close to it. But from 1st standard till 10th, we learn mathematics from teachers, only then a student gets proficient in basic / elementary mathematics. When such a self-evident subject like Mathematics requires a teacher, then how come the study about Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) His attributes and His signs in the cosmos (known and Tasawwuf / Ihsan) be studied without the help of a Murshid (religious teacher)?

The fact is that, a person would not be able to know his mistake until somebody draws his attention towards it. Teacher points out the mistake of the pupil. The teacher always oversees the mistakes of the pupils and cautions them. This was the reason, those who tried to understand Quran and Ahadith by self-study made blunders in their lives. This is what happened to Ibn Taymiyyah, the founding Imam of Salafism. Famous Shaikh Subki said - QUOTE - He (Ibn Taymiyyah) memorized a lot (from the books) but did not discipline himself with a (Sufi) Shaikh - UNQUOTE

I have written a book titled 'An overview of the Promise of Allegiance' (بيعة). It is an **important** book. You can read or download it on this [link](#).

4. TAZKIA NAFS OF SAHABAH UNDER PROPHET MOHAMMAD (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم)

It is in Quran - لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ [Certainly did Allah confer (a great) favor upon the believers when He sent among them an Apostle from themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom, although they had been before in manifest error.] (Aal-i-Imran - 164)

As has been mentioned in the above verse, Tazkia-tun-Nafs requires three things, namely, **teaching, training and purification**. The Sahabah attained these three things as follows.

(i) Sahabah first accepted Islam on the hands of Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). They gave promise of allegiance (بيعة) by reciting Islamic testimony (كلمه طيبه).

It is in Quran - إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَن نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنكُثُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ [Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you, (O' Prophet ﷺ) they are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is over their hands. So, he who breaks his word only breaks it to the detriment of himself. And he who fulfills that which he has promised Allah - He will give him a great reward.] (Al-Fath - 10).

(ii) After the Sahabah accepted Islam, Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) taught them the Quran.

(iii) Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) then trained the Sahabah in their day to day living.

It is in Quran - لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ - وَالْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا [Indeed, in the Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) you have an excellent example to follow; for him who hopes in (the meeting with) Allah and the Last Day and does Zikr of Allah extensively.] (Al-Ahzaab - 21)

(iv) When Sahabah sat in the company of Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) their worldly thoughts and ordinary consideration got extinct from their minds and they became exceptionally pious. This aspect is referred in the above Quranic verse as Tazkia (يُزَكِّيهِمْ).

It is in Hadith - Hanzalah Al-Usayyidi (رضى الله تعالى عنه) said, "O Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), when we are in your company and are reminded of Hellfire and Paradise, we feel as if we are seeing them with our own eyes, but when we go away from you and attend to our wives, children and business, much of these things go out of our minds." Thereupon the Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) said, 'by Him in Whose Hand is my life, if your state of mind remains the same as it is in my presence and you are always busy in the Zikr of Allah, the angels will shake hands with you in your beds and on your roads.' (**Muslim** - part of the Hadith).

After Prophet Mohammad's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) left this world, the teaching, training and purification of the people was carried out by Khulafa-e-Rashideen, Sahabah, Aimmah and Shuyookh of Ihsan.

5. FOLLOWING THE WAY OF IHSAN (سُلُوك)

To be successful on the way of Ihsan, it is important that a person chooses a teacher who is Sahih-ul-Aqeedah Shaikh of Ihsan from **Swad-al-Azam** (سواد الاعظم).

It is in Hadith - Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) said : Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) will never let my Ummah agree upon misguidance and the hand of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) is over the group (Awliya Allah), so follow **Sawad al-Azam'** (سواد الاعظم) (the Pious Group of Awliya Allah) and whoever dissents from them departs to Hell". (**Tirmidhi 4/2167; Hakim 1/116 - Dhahabi agreed with him**)

The Arabic word '**Azam**' (اعظم) is used to describe '**the greatness / importance of a person or group**' rather than 'the group which has the large number of people. Like we say **Imam al-Azam** (امام الاعظم) or **Ghawth al-Azam** (غوث الاعظم), or **Wazir al-Azam** (وزير الاعظم). In this context, when we look at the wordings of the Hadith, it says '**Sawad al-Azam'** (سواد الاعظم); meaning the most important or prominent group.

For following a Group, all members of the group should be pious. Therefore, in '**Sawad al-Azam**' category only Awliya Allah qualify to be followed, because they are on the right path of Islam. Quran testifies Awliya Allah to be the Pious Great Group of Believers.

It is in Quran - أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ - الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ - لَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ [Behold the friends of Allah - عَزَّ وَجَلَّ! On them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve. These are they, who have believed in Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and are mindful of (close to) Him and (have consequently abstained from everything evil). To them tidings come (from Allah - عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) of a happy life both in this world and in Hereafter. The word of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) is never revoked. This is a great felicity"] (**Yunus - 62-64**).

We are not talking here about 'fake Sufi babas' and 'illiterate peers' who hunt needy people and run their 'spiritual shops' to make a fast buck.

Some people translate Arabic term 'Sawad al-Azam' (سواد الاعظم) as 'largest Group, or the group of large number of Muslims. This translation has contributed a lot of confusion in Muslim Ummah. Every Muslim sect claims that they are Ahle Sunnah wa al-Jama'a and Sawad al-Azam and Najji Group (those who will get salvation on the Day of Judgement). Even the Kharijis, Salafis, Ahle Hadith, Deobandis, and their likeminded groups claim that they are Ahle Sunnah and are on the right path of Islam.

Some people mislead by saying that there are only two groups among Muslims, (i) Ahle Sunnah wal Jama 'a, and (ii) Shia. And they include all Muslim sects like Wahhabis, Salafis, Ahle Hadith, Deobandis and others into Ahle Sunnah wal Jama 'a.

As all individuals of the largest group may not necessary be pious believers, then how can we follow a group which is a mix of (i) Absolute wrongdoers (*fasiqeen*), (ii) Average wrongdoers, (iii) Believers, and (iv) Deviants?

Some people may argue that some very famous Scholars of Islam have translated the Arabic term '**Sawad al-Azam**' (سواد الاعظم) as Ahle Sunnah Wal-Jama' a.

Indeed, the scholars and Imams were right in translating the term that way because the real Ahle Sunnah Wal-Jama' a are only the Awliya Allah and their sincere followers.

Sufi Shuyookh are the guides on the **way of Ihsan**. Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) provides them with vision and understanding with which they can see the facts of things. They are pious and knowledgeable. They help in purification of minds of the people (*tazkia nafs*), correct people's notions, educate them about the inner values and significance of Islam

and draw their attention towards Divine signs and secrets in the cosmos. They follow Prophet Mohammad's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) footsteps in propagation of Islamic teachings.

6. REPENTANCE UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF SHAIKH

When a servant wishes to walk on the path of Ihsan (راه سلوك), first he repents for his forgetfulness, infringement of divine imperatives and his disobedience to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). He seeks pardon from Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and turns completely towards Him with a firm resolution in heart and commitment by mouth that in future he will not disobey Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). If he has squandered the rights of other servants of Allah, he compensates them. The things which cannot be compensated, he seeks for their pardon.

Repentance should be done by every Muslim. It is preferable that repentance is done on the hand of a truthful Sufi Shaikh of Ihsan.

It is in Quran - “ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيمًا [Those who have committed oppression on themselves (by committing sins), if they had come to you (O' Prophet - صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) and pray for Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) pardon and the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) also prays for their forgiveness from Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), then they would have found Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) to be Merciful and most willing to accept their repentance]. (An-Nisa - 64).

It is evident from the above Quranic verse that, if you want to make sure that Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) has forgiven you for your past deeds, self-repentance alone may not be enough. It is advisable to take benediction from a person of illuminated heart (Sahih-ul-Aqeedah Shaikh of Ihsan). So far as the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) was alive, he himself used to pray for individuals' forgiveness from Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). And now, when he is hidden from the eyes of general people, his appointed Awliya Allah / Sufi Shuyookh will pray for the forgiveness which is expected to be granted by Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ).

It is in Quran - إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ [Certainly Allah likes those who repent.] (Al-Baqara - 222).

Repentance is an attribute of heart and it is turning towards Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ).

What is the effect of repentance?

From sincere repentance, all sins are pardoned by Allah and the person becomes sinless as he is just born.

It is in Quran - وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ [And it is He who accepts repentance from his servants and pardons misdeeds, and He knows what you do.] **(Ash-Shura - 25).**

It is important that everyone of us chooses a Sahih-ul-Aqeedah Ahle Sunnah Sufi Shaikh of Ihsan. If you falter in this respect, you will lose in this world and in Hereafter.

