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Q: 172 ? Title: My question is regarding sufism, i have all the love and respect for the science of tassawuf, but ive been a bit confused, i just want to know why do they whirl and dance and do other unusual things?? is this allowed?

Question

My question is regarding sufism, i have all the love and respect for the science of tassawuf, but ive been a bit confused, i just want to know why do they whirl and dance and do other unusual things?? is this allowed? and what is a tariqa?? and why do they have them? and what is a hadra? and are there any devienices in some sufi tariqa's? what about the naqshbandi?? and if one were to study tassawuf how would i know if what there doing devient? my biggest fear is doing something that puts me out of the fold of islam.

Answer

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Assalaamu `alaykum waRahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

Alhamdulillah, we are pleased to receive your question regarding *Tasawwuf* and delighted to

learn of your enthusiasm to learn about this blessed discipline. The word

Tar?qah

linguistically means 'manner' or 'method' and in reference to the field of

Tasawwuf

, it refers to a school or order, e.g. the

Chishti Tar?qah, Naqshbandi Tar?qah, Shadhili Tar?qah

etc.

Tariqah

in relation to

Tasawwuf

is analogous to the word

'madhhab'

in relation to the schools of

Fiqh.

The science of

Fiqh

concerns itself with the external injunctions and regulations pertaining to things such as

salah,

fasting, stealing, interest etc., and the science of

Tasawwuf

concerns itself with the internal injunctions and regulations pertaining to things such as

praiseworthy qualities, e.g. gratefulness, patience, sincerity etc. and reprehensible qualities, e.g.

pride, ostentation and greed etc.

In essence, the goal of all the *Tar?qahs* is one and the same, namely to cure spiritual maladies of the heart, elevate the spiritual status and ultimately gain closeness to Allah; the dissimilarities of the various *Tar?qahs* mainly revolve around the

difference of approach towards achieving this objective. Some

Tar?qahs

implement one set of spiritual exercises whilst other

Tar?qahs

implement a different set of exercises. Some differences in spiritual exercises stem from the

differences of the

Madhhib

of the

Shuyukh

of each

Tar?qah.

Considering the fact that the

Shuyukh

of

Tasawwuf

adhere strictly to the letter of the law, each

Tar?qah

will differ in exercises of

dhikr

as well. This will be discussed later. At present, it should suffice to understand that this science pertains to the abstract metaphysical internal element of the soul, thus there exists many seemingly unusual practices and exercises prescribed by the

Shuy?kh

to address such matters. These exercises were implemented to kindle the burning love of Allah in the heart cleansing it from the rust caused by the passions of the ephemeral

Dunya

and all that towards which the lower self calls.

Dhikr

is the nourishment and sustenance of the soul. Just as there are various types of food with varying nutritional benefits, similarly, the various types of

dhikr

prescribed by the

Shuy?kh

affect the spirit of a person in diverse ways. The field of

Tasawwuf

is usually likened to the field of medicine. Throughout history, man has discovered cures to various physical maladies, so to have the *Shuy?kh*, the spiritual doctors, discovered cures for spiritual maladies. Some of the practices and cures are mentioned in the Qur'?n, some in the *Ahad?th*, and others have been discovered through the institution of

tajrubah

(personal experience). Generation after generation, the

Shuy?kh

of

Tasawwuf

have dedicated their lives to this field, therefore, they know the effects of various

adhk?r

upon the heart and soul. To those unfamiliar with

Tasawwuf,

such exercises may seem extremely peculiar and unusual. It is understandable for people to feel uncomfortable and queasy during their first experience with such exercises. However, to repel this discomfort, one should bear in mind that the

Shuy?kh

don?t claim that these

adhk?r

and spiritual exercises are new forms of worship where it would be classified as an innovation (*bid?ah*)

in

D?n.

Only those bereft of the understanding of

Fiqh

and the subtleties of

D?n

make such professions. These spiritual prescriptions should be seen and regarded as a form of

treatment

(*tad?w?*)

for the sicknesses of the heart. Just as the physical body must be put through certain therapeutic exercises for the benefit and rejuvenation of the body, so to do the

Shuy?kh

put the spiritual patient under various exercises to strengthen and treat the soul.

To give you some examples of such exercises, the famous *Had?th* of Ras?lullah ??? ????? ???
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describes the various stages of a believer, from Islam, to

Im?n

to

Ihsan.

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Jibr?l (AS) asked Ras?lullah ??? ????? ????? ? ??? regarding *Ihs?n* to which Ras?lullah ??? ?
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replied, ?It is that you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him and if you are unable to see Him,
then (know well) that He is seeing you.?

From this *Had?th* we come to know that there is an extremely high spiritual position known as /
hs?n.

The question that arises is that how does a person reach such a status. The next question that
arises is to whom should one go in order to learn how to attain it. If a person goes to a

Muhaddith,

his field and preoccupation is to merely to tell the questioner whether the

Had?th

is
Sah?h, Hasan, Dha??f,
how many chains of narration exist for the
Had?th,
and which narrators transmitted the
Had?th
etc. In regards to the meaning of the
Had?th,
at best, they could offer only a literal translation. If a person goes to a
Faq?h,
he would only explain the various rulings that could be extracted from the
Had?th
as it pertains to the external injunctions of the
Shar??ah.
The
Faq?h
too could not advise the questioner how to attain such a status nor the reality of such a position
because such a question does not pertain to his field of expertise. If a person wants to learn the
reality of this spiritual position and experience it, he will have to go to a person who has himself
reached it. He will have to go to such a person who has dedicated his life in perfecting his
internal attributes and character. Only that person who has already reached the destination can
direct the lost seeker to it. To acquire this state, some of the
Shuy?kh
advise the
Mur?d
to sit in solitude and absolute silence with full concentration and in a state of
wudh?,
whilst closing his eyes, constantly repeating and deeply pondering over the verse,

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?Does he not know that Allah is watching?

After continual practice, the *M?r?d* will ultimately establish the understanding and perception
that Allah is watching him at all times, whether he is walking, talking, eating, praying etc. Only
after exercising great patience and perseverance in acting upon the prescription of his

Shaykh

and continuously informing the

Shaykh

of his conditions and states will he understand and experience the quality of
Ihs?n.

Other peculiar forms of spiritual exercises include making loud dhikr with bodily motion whether standing, as in the case of *hadrah* as performed by the *Shadhil?s*, or sitting, as performed by the *Chisht?s*. Other

exercises include certain breathing exercises like

p?s anf?s

as performed by the

Chisht?s

and various forms of

mur?qabah

(meditation) as done by the

Naqshband?s

etc.

The inherent permissibility or impermissibility of some of these exercises will rest upon the differences of the various *Madh?hib* since some of these practices cross the boundary of a mere internal metaphysical sphere to the externally physical; thus, falling under the jurisdiction of the *Fuqah??.* To present a brief example, the practice of *hadrah*,

a type of spiritual bodily movement similar to swaying that some refer to dancing coupled with loud

dhikr,

is permissible for the followers of the

Sh?fi?? Madhhab

since according to their ?

Ulam?

and

Madhhab

dancing is permissible with certain conditions.

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Consequently, it will be permissible for the *Shuy?kh* and *M?r?ds* who follow the *Sh?fi?? Madh*
hab to

participate in the
hadrah.

On the contrary, it will not be permissible for the
Shuy?kh
and

Mur?ds

of the

Hanaf?

Madhhab

to participate in the dancing or swaying of the
hadrah

since no form of dancing is permitted in the

Madhhab

unless one is overtaken by an uncontrollable state of ecstasy. It is for this reason that the
majority of

Shuy?kh

of the

Ahn?f

prescribe a different form of dhikr that produces the same result and effect as produced by the
hadra.

In the

Chishti Tar?qah,

the

Shuy?kh

prescribe loud

dhikr

of the

Kal?mah, La Il?ha illa Allah

where the

Mur?d

sits and focuses his concentration on his heart with his head turned towards the direction of his
heart. Then, with full devotion, absorption and zeal he recites

La ilaaha

(there is no deity) while moving his head towards the back and left intending thereby the
negation and purging of everything other than Allah from the heart. Thereafter, with full vigor
and force, he recites

illa

Allah

(except Allah) while meditating that the love of Allah is flooding his heart. The similar effect of the

hadra,

namely, that of purification of the heart and spiritual vigor is thus produced which are some of the main ingredients for reviving the diseased heart.

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It is important to bear in mind that unfortunately, there has always existed groups of self-centered, worldly motivated pseudo-Sufis who misrepresented *Tasawwuf* and used some of the practices of the

Sufis,

not to mention concocted some of their own, to suit their

nafs?n?

(selfish) desires. Some of them feign being

Sufis

in order to gain fame and popularity, others to engage in singing and dancing and others to earn money etc. It is from such people that deviances began to crop up in this pristine and praiseworthy science. Examples of their innovations include the

Qaw?li

where singing and music are rampant under the guise of

Dhikr,

grave-worship where people commit shirk by prostrating to the inmates of the grave,?

Sal?m?

where people stand up to offer salutations upon Ras?lullah

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with the belief that Ras?lullah

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visits the gathering and other similar practices that have no real connection with
Tasawwuf.

Because of the existence of such perfidious people and their impermissible practices, it has
become a daunting task for sincere people such as you to find a true

Shaykh

and

Tar?qah.

Every

Tar?qah

has these imposters in their midst preying upon the ignorant masses; therefore, one must be
cautious as to who one takes as a

Murshid

(guide). You should ensure that before taking formal

bay?ah

to any

Shaykh

or entering into any

Tar?qah,

that the

Shaykh

is a complete adherent of the

Shar??ah

and upholds its dictates. Anyone who intentionally and openly breaks a single commandment of
the

Shar??ah

is not worthy to be a

Shaykh.

A qualified

Shaykh

is he whose outward and inward appearance and actions conform to the

Sunnah

of Ras?lullah

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. A pious and righteous

Shaykh

is he in whose company a person feels the urge to act upon the dictates of the

Shar??ah

not disregard them. We advise you to continuously make
du??

to Allah Ta??l? to guide you to a pious and upright

Shaykh

who will guide you in the field of

Tasawwuf.

You should make

Mashwarah

with pious local

?Ulam?

if any for their views on finding a genuine

Shaykh.

It is also important to understand that aside from the

Shaykh

being firm upon the

Shar??ah,

it is imperative that one have some congeniality with the

Shaykh

so that one can gain spiritual benefit from him. Without the existence of this congeniality and amiability, it will be difficult to consult with one?s

Shaykh

and follow his advices. Once you have found such a

Shaykh

who is strict in adherence to the

Shar??ah

and the

Sunnah

and you have an amicable relationship with him, you should place all your trust in him and follow all of his instructions without any doubt.

Inshallah,

in this manner you will ascend the stages of

Tasawwuf

with relative ease and obtain your objective.

And Allah knows best

Wassalam u Alaikum

My question is regarding sufism, i have all the love and respect for the science of tassawuf, but ive been a

Darul Iftaa, Madrassah In'aamiyyah