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| Top of Form

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| **Tasawwuf — to approve or to desist?***6th November 2014***To oppose or to approve —— which Tasawwuf?**Tasawwuf is nothing separate from Islamic Shariah though we do not find its name and terminologies in earlier Islamic era. The example of nomenclature is such that you find Muslims today claiming that they follow Hanafi or Shafa'i or other Maslaks today though there were no permanent names for differences of opinions in earlier times. Later Sufi scholars put overemphasis on submission of a Mureed to his Sheikh belonging to a particular school of Tasawwuf in the same manner as later Fiq’h scholars overemphasised the need of sticking to one particular Maslak. Commenting on transgression of different Fiq’h Maslaks, Maulana Maudoodi has quoted Imam Shah Waliullah in one of his write-ups:*“Shah Sahib says in Izaalatul Khafa: Upto the end of Syrian Empire (The rule of Umavi rulers) no one called himself a Hanafi or Shafa’i. Instead, they only used to deduce from Shariah logic following the techniques of their own teachers and Imams. During Iraqi Empire (Abbasi rule), each one of them adopted a particular name of their own (group). This state assumed such dimension that unless one found a testimony from the bigwigs of their own group, he did not adopt evidences of Qur’an and Sunnah. Thus the differences of opinion emanating from the interpretations of Qur’an and Sunnah found rigid basis. Later when Arab Empire came to an end (in Turkish rule) and people scattered in different countries, they embraced as absolute original whatever every one of them had memorised from their Fiq’h school. What was originally based on inference, became a persistent practice.” (Maulana Maudoodi in Shah Waliullah Dehalvi Number of Al-Furqan, Bareilly, P.86.)***Tasawwuf is a part of Shariah**Fiq’h and Tasawwuf are like body and soul in Shariah. A body is a mere corpse without soul. Similarly Salat or Namaz is not merely a set of recitation and postures. Fiq’h deals with the rules of recitals and postures while Tasawwuf emphasizes upon the soul of Namaz, i.e. the mental state of being in the presence of Allah. Probably a few explanations from the reputed Islamic scholars might be more acceptable to those in doubt:*“Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Dehalvi, in Izalatul Khafa, writes: The subjects of ‘Ihsaan’ and ‘Yaqeen’ have come to be known as Tasawwuf these days...*         This tells us that Tasawwuf is not a Shariah nomenclature. The Shariah term is ‘Ihsaan’. Some Sufi scholars have called Tasawwuf a mode of ‘Taqwah’ and the term ‘Tazkiya-e-Naf’s’ (the purification of inner self), for Tasawwuf is so well known as the term Tasawwuf itself.” Any way, ‘Ihsaan’, ‘Yaqeen’ mode of Taqwah’ or Tazkiya-e-Naf’s are all expressions of that Tasawwuf whose foundation is based on Qur’an and Sunnah and which we can call as Islamic Tasawwuf. The basis of calling Tasawwuf as ‘Ihsaan” is that Hadith in which Jibriel had asked the Prophet (pbuh) some questions in the midst of the Companions about Deen and the Prophet (pbuh) had replied: Ihsaan is that you submit before Allah in such a way as if you are seeing Him. And if you are not (able to meditate upon) seeing Him then (meditate upon that) indeed He is seeing you. (Muslim)         No doubt that this Hadith is an important basis of Tasawwuf and all important works on Tasawwuf have referred to this Hadith. Tasawwuf, today is the name of a distinct field of knowledge and it has been defined as: *‘Tasawwuf is a science through which cleansing of inner selves, the purification of character, and beautification of apparent and inherent are known. Its purpose is the achievement of eternal decency.’ (Zakaria Ansari in Sharah Ar-Rasalah Qushairiya, Vol. I, P. 69 quoted by Syed Ahmad Urooj Qadri, Islami Tasawwuf, Markazi Maktaba Islami, P.24)*Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi writes:*“Men of knowledge do not consider that something else is also required other than ritualistic standing and sitting and it is essential too. For example, apparently stood and sat and Namaz was completed while in Qur’an wherein is stated that Successful indeed are the believers who are in their prayers...’, there also is the word ‘...humble’. When by the phrase, ‘from their prayers’, Namaz is taken obligatory then why not from ‘humble’, the humbleness is considered obligatory? Both the commands are binding.” (Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, Shariat Aur Tareeqat, P. 31)***Tasawwuf’s separation from Shariah and ignorant Sufis**In the Prophet’s (pbuh) time and after him, the seat of ruling and Imamat were combined in one. After the days of *Khilafat-e-Rashidah* (the just vicegerence), the rulers were no more considered worthy of leading in the matters of Deen and people started looking towards pious men for guidance in spiritual matters. Thus seats of Hukoomat (the sovereignty) and Imamat (the guidance in spiritual matters) were separated. Again after some more time, the essence of Ibadat (subservience to God) started paling and they became more and more ritual-like. The Ulema merely started preaching the apparent form of supplications while its soul, the pursuit and feel of presence of the Lord started obscuring. People in quest of the soul of Ibadats started leaning towards those saints where they found this quality. Those were the people who kept themselves away from the worldly comforts and wore the attire of *‘Soof’* (the crude woolen attire). The word Sufi, it is believed by many, was derived from Soof. It was again a tragic time when the seat of learning of Tareeqat or the soul of Shariah separated from the Shariah, leaving the later to be a synonym of Fiq’h only. See the above explanation in the words of some authentic and renowned Ulema:*“Shariah is the name of those commandments with which strive is associated. These includes acts apparent and inherent both. In the terminology of earlier scholars the word Fiq’h is considered a synonym of Shariah. Imam Abu Haneefa defined Fiq’h as the realisation of things of benefit and loss of inner self. Then in the terminology of later people Fiq’h became the name of the manifest part of the acts of Shariah and the other part pertaining to intrinsic acts was called Tasawwuf. The procedures of these intrinsic acts are called Tareeqat. Then with the restitution of these intrinsic acts the inner self is purified and the bondsman experiences some observations. These observations are called Haqeeqat and the process is called Ma’arifat. The observing person is called Aarif. All these things are related to Shariah. All the right principles of Tasawwuf are found in Qur’an and Hadith. Those who think that Tasawwuf is not in Qur’an and Hadith, are wrong. And the transgressing Sufis also imagine the same. ....They, the transgressing Sufis say that in Qur’an there are only manifest commandments while Tasawwuf is Ilm-e-Baatin (the knowledge of concealed). To them there is God forbid no need of Qur’an  and Hadith. Both these groups imagine Tasawwuf to be void of Qur’an and Hadith. Then according to their own understanding, one of them left the Tasawwuf and the other left Qur’an and Hadith.” (Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, Shariat and Tareeqat, P. 25)*“The renowned saint Sheikh Ali Hajveri (Daata Ganj Bakhsh) of 6th century AH writes in his famous work, Kashaful Mahjoob, the first in Persian on Tasawwuf:*“Abul Hasan Bushanjah says: In present day, Tasawwuf is merely a name with no reality while in earlier time it was a reality with no name.**It means that in the era of Sahaba (the holy Companions) and later pious predecessors, the word Sufi was indeed not there but its real qualities were there in each one of them. Today this name is there but its sense is not present." (Ali Hajveri, Urdu translation of Kashaful Mahjoob by Prof. M. Abdul Majeed, Sabri Book Depot Deoband, P.73)***Tasawwuf is obligatory**Hazrat Shah Waliullah says:*“Average Sufis declared that in man’s body, manifest and unmanifest powers are independent of each other. They had to divide the teaching of Islam also in two parts. To them Shariah has a definite course and Tasawwuf is different. With this they had to accept that Tasawwuf and Tareeqat was not there during the time of the Prophet (pbuh). They give the reason thereof that in that period there was no need of Tasawwuf for the purification of Baatin (innerself). We see in the viewpoint of these average Sufis a great discrepancy. If we accept their statement then it would mean that Islamic Shariah and Fiq’h is one thing and Tasawwuf is different from them. Islam is complete by acting upon Shariah (minus Tasawwuf). Now whoever wishes, he may learn Tasawwuf and whoever does not wills can have no concern with it. In other words, it means that Tasawwuf is unessential. ...this is our own observation and experience that the absolute conviction (Yaqeen) of the other life after death is accomplished only in the company of revered Sufis”. (Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, Shah Waliullah Aur Un Ka Falsafa, Sindh Sagar Academy Lahore, 1944, P. 199)*Hazrat Shah Sahib further declares:*“He does not belong to us who did not ponder over the Book of Allah and did not accomplish cognition and insight in the Hadiths of the Prophet (pbuh). He is not from among us who has left the companionship of such Ulema who are Sufis and also have aptitude of Qur’an and Sunnah. He is not from among us who has restrained himself from such people of knowledge who are apt in Tasawwuf and does not sit in th company of such Hadith scholars who are Fiq’h scholars as well. He is not from among us who has left the company of such Fiq’h scholars who possess the knowledge of Hadith too. As for unenlightened Sufis and unlearned Ulema who refute the Tasawwuf, both of them are thieves and bandits. We must keep away from them”. (Ibid, P.210)***No blind following**Different orders of Tasawwuf can be compared with different schools of Fiq’h. Although there is no system of Bai’at (pledge) in Fiq’h groups it is usually specifically decreed by the Ulema that no one owing allegiance to one school is permitted to act according to the other. Tasawwuf is more on the spiritual side than physical and therefore a disciple, in addition to obeying commands of the mentor is required to develop a relation of reverence, adoration and affection for him. It is understandable and not against Deen. Our greatest mentor the holy Prophet (pbuh) told us that their Imaan could not be completed unless one loved him more than his own life and belonging. There is substance in the creation of an emotional bond with one’s spiritual guide. The only difference one should keep in mind and here is where the Mureeds transgress (on the instructions of the Sheikhs) that No one, I repeat absolutely no other human being other than the holy prophets, peace be upon them, can be without fault. Whether in matters of Fiq’h or spiritual training, one should never keep his eyes shut from the Qur’an and Sunnah. Within limitations of his own knowledge and capability, one must always be ready to discard the dictates of his teacher or mentor if proved by clear logic that the commands contradict the Book and Sunnah. If you find a Sheikh who has good knowledge of Qur’an and Sunnah and is a good Sufi, it is always good for your own sake to become his Mureed as a Sheikh considers it his moral duty to guide his Mureed in the matters of Deen. In some circles, undue exaggeration is expressed about the need of declaring allegiance to one of the prevalent chains of Tasawwuf to the extant that it is considered obligatory but no authentic Sufi having the knowledge of Qur’an and Sunnah ever proclaimed that. Owing allegiance to one of the chains is not obligatory while practicing Tasawwuf is indeed obligatory. They however argue with good logic behind it that a Sheikh is like a family doctor for his Mureed and he, more than any other mentor knows the weaknesses and capabilities and the right treatment for his Mureed.**The characteristics of Tasawwuf**The great Sufi Hazrat Junaid Baghdadi said, ***“Tasawwuf has eight characteristics. Generosity, submission, endurance, lack of speech, strangeness, woolen (simple and thick) attire, excursion and indigence”.*** Similarly different chains of Tasawwuf lay emphasis on creating and developing such faculties as correct intention (Niyat), the purity of purpose (Ikhlas), Expiation (Tauba), Endurance (Sab’r), gratefulness (Shuk’r), Contentment (Tawakkul), morality (Khulq), love of God and His creation (Muhabbat), fear of God’s disobedience (Khashiyyat), hope (Rija), Indigence (Faq’r), Indifference towards the worldly comforts (Zoh’d), deliberation (Tafakkur), meditation (Muraqiba), self introspection (Muhaasiba), Strife (Mujaahida), steadfastness (Istiqamat), prayer (Du’a) etc. No one can dispute the necessity of any one of the above and it is also beyond doubt that the above qualities can not be created through books but by embracing the company of those who possess them.**Sufism?**There have been and are the so-called Sufis who did not possess the above qualities. There were and there are people who claimed to be Sufis but disregarded Shariah. Whoever, despised the material comforts and took to seclusion, whoever became famous in treating all humanity as one howsoever he disregarded God’s other commandments and even those who disdained every one including God and humanity alike, were given the title of Sufi and saints by those who were ignorant of Tasawwuf. The word, Sufism, ironically represents today the philosophies of all such people as above who can be any thing but Sufis. |

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