

Ethical and Spiritual Renewal in the Shadhili Tradition: A Reformist Perspective

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Abstract:

This study explores the Shadhili Sufi Order and its reformative methodology through three main sections. Initially, it investigates the concept of Islamic mysticism (Sufism) linguistically, terminologically, and historically, emphasizing various scholarly definitions and origins, including debates over its etymology, whether derived from purity, woolen garments, or ascetic lifestyles. Prominent Sufi thinkers like Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili and Abu al-Abbas al-Mursi provide profound insights, highlighting Sufism as an inward journey characterized by patience, sincerity, devotion, and humility. The primary goal of Sufism, according to these scholars, involves spiritual purification leading to divine realization, incorporating both outward practices (Sharia) and inward truths (Haqiqa).

The second section centers on Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili himself, outlining his life, lineage, and spiritual teachings, while scrutinizing various claims regarding his genealogical authenticity. His approach to Sufism uniquely harmonizes spiritual practice with worldly responsibilities, advocating neither excessive asceticism nor neglect of worldly affairs. Central to his teachings were balanced principles of remembrance (Dhikr), contemplation, humility, and love for God. This section further highlights al-Shadhili's rejection of superficial asceticism, stressing instead genuine gratitude towards divine blessings.

Lastly, the emergence and expansion of the Shadhili order are examined, detailing its widespread influence across Egypt and other regions. Unlike other Sufi orders, the Shadhili methodology explicitly rejects extreme philosophical mysticism and ostentation of spiritual powers (karamat), emphasizing ethical reform, personal discipline, and practical spirituality. It uniquely blends Sufism's contemplative aspects with an active engagement in societal responsibilities, combating superstitions and promoting a balanced, moderate understanding of spirituality deeply rooted in Quranic teachings and Prophetic traditions. The Shadhili approach successfully bridges gaps between the spiritual and the societal, influencing broad communities positively.

Keywords: Sufism, Shadhili Order, Reform, Mysticism, Spirituality.

Introduction:

Given that the Shadhili order is among the Sufi paths and a continuation of them, it is necessary, before addressing the Shadhili order and its reformative impact, to dedicate a section, even briefly, to defining Sufism linguistically and terminologically, and to discuss its origins, given the Shadhili order's connection to the Sufi paths.

First: The Concept of Islamic Sufism: Linguistic, Terminological Definitions, and Historical Origins

A- Linguistic Definition of Sufism

Scholars have offered hundreds of definitions for Sufism, making it challenging to include all within this scope; thus, we will mention a select few. Al-Kalabadhi (d. 380 AH) stated that the origin of "Sufism" relates to purity (Safa), implying Sufis were named for the purity of their secrets, the openness of their hearts, and the illumination of their spirits (Al-Kalabadhi, 10th century). However, Al-Qushayri argues that linguistically, such attribution is incorrect. He maintains that if purity were the root, the derived term would be "Safa'i," adding that purity of hearts and knowledge of the unseen are known only to God, making the Sufis' claim an inappropriate self-praise, contradicting the Qur'anic verse, "So do not claim yourselves to be pure; He is most knowing of who fears Him" (Quran, An-Najm:32). Zaki Mubarak commented similarly, criticizing the purity attribution as mere cleverness or peculiarity (Mubarak, 20th century).

Shibli (d. 334 AH) stated that the origins and derivations of the term "Sufi" have been debated without conclusive agreement.

Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili defined Sufism as seeing creation within one's inner being as mere dust in the air, non-existent and without precedence, existing only in the knowledge of the Creator (Al-Shadhili, n.d.). Abu Al-Abbas Al-Mursi, Al-Shadhili's student, described "Sufi" as composed of four Arabic letters symbolizing patience, sincerity, and purity, longing, adherence, and loyalty, deprivation, poverty, and annihilation, and finally, attribution to God upon the realization of these qualities.

Sheikh Abu Bakr Shatta summarized the science of Sufism in his introduction to "Al-Anwar Al-Qudsiyyah," describing it as knowledge of the inner sciences, heart, divine illumination, spiritual unveiling, hidden realities, and truths (Shatta, n.d.). He considered it the root of all sciences, dealing primarily with the soul and its conditions. Its pursuit is obligatory upon every believer, aiming ultimately at the purification of the heart and the attainment of divine proximity and eternal happiness.

Dr. Abdul Halim Mahmoud associates the term "Sufism" with wool (Suf) suggesting its earliest adherents wore wool garments as symbols of asceticism. Prominent proponents of this view include Mustafa Abd Al-Raziq, Zaki Mubarak, and orientalist Margoliouth. Despite the association with attire, Mahmoud emphasizes Sufism is fundamentally an internal state, not merely external appearance (Mahmoud, 1979).

The prevailing scholarly view aligns with wool as the root of the term, consistent with historical Islamic practices, notably among early ascetics who chose wool clothing as a sign of their detachment from worldly life.

B- Terminological Definition of Sufism

Junayd Ibn Muhammad defined Sufism as leaving every bad character and adopting every virtuous trait (Junayd, 9th century). Muhammad Ibn Khafif quoted Ruwaym, noting that while most people follow formalities, Sufis pursue inner truths and continuous sincerity (Ibn Khafif, 10th century).

Ibn Khaldun described Sufism as an Islamic spiritual discipline rooted in dedication to worship, isolation, renunciation of worldly allurements, and striving for spiritual purity, originating with the Prophet Muhammad's companions and their followers (Ibn Khaldun, 14th century).

C- Origins of Sufism

Scholarly opinions vary concerning the origins of Sufism. Some suggest its emergence in the second Islamic century, coinciding with increased materialism, prompting individuals towards asceticism and worship, which differed from prophetic teachings emphasizing balanced fear and hope in God (Quran, Al-Anbiya:90). Abu Hashim Al-Sufi, who died before mid-2nd century AH, is considered among the earliest known Sufis.

Ibn Taymiyyah, in "Al-Sufiyyah Wal-Fuqara," indicates that Sufism emerged in Basra, notably influenced by Abdul Wahid Ibn Zaid's intense ascetic practices (Ibn Taymiyyah, 13th century). Muhammad Ibn Sirin reported skepticism towards wool garments as imitation of Christian asceticism, contrasting it with Prophet Muhammad's preferred cotton attire (Ibn Sirin, 8th century).

The Shadhili perspective emphasizes Sufism's later development into a formal discipline, absent among companions and early generations due to the spiritual nourishment directly received from Prophet Muhammad. Although unnamed, the early companions embodied true Sufism. With time, spiritual sciences diversified, and Sufism formally emerged as a distinct discipline emphasizing spiritual excellence and inner purification (Shadhili tradition)

Second: Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili and His Reformatory Approach

A-Imam Al-Shadhili:

His full name is Ali Ibn Abdullah Ibn Abdul-Jabbar Ibn Tamim Ibn Hormuz Ibn Hatem Ibn Qusay Ibn Yusuf Ibn Yusha Ibn Ward Ibn Batal Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Issa Ibn Muhammad Ibn Al-Hasan Ibn Ali Ibn Abi Talib (Al-Sakandari, n.d.).

Ibn Ata Allah Al-Sakandari described Al-Shadhili as the Imam Sheikh, proof of the Sufis, leader of the guided, ornament of the Gnostics, instructor of the eminent, unique in his time in

divine knowledge and virtues, the knower of Allah, guide to Allah, the wellspring of secrets and source of lights, the comprehensive Pole and spiritual succor Taqi Al-Din Abu Al-Hasan Ali Ibn Abdullah Ibn Abdul-Jabbar Ibn Tamim Ibn Hormuz Ibn Hatem Ibn Qusay Ibn Yusuf Ibn Yusha Ibn Ward Ibn Abi Batal Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Issa Ibn Muhammad Ibn Al-Hasan Ibn Ali Ibn Abi Talib (Al-Sakandari, n.d.).

However, Imam Al-Dhahabi mentioned in "Al-I'lam Biwafayat Al-A'lam" that the genealogy attributed to Al-Shadhili might be inaccurate due to discrepancies in the lineage details, suggesting caution in affirming his descent from Hasan Ibn Ali (Al-Dhahabi,1993).

B-Imam Al-Shadhili's Methodology in Constructing the Path:

Imam Al-Shadhili had two paths: one of blessings received from Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Harazem, and one of intent from Abu Muhammad Abdul Salam Ibn Mashish. His approach combined spiritual discipline, divine attraction, struggle, care, etiquette, closeness to God, and attention, encompassing both apparent and hidden knowledge and aligning fully with Islamic law and spiritual realities (Al-Fituri, n.d.).

Abdul Salam Al-Asmar Al-Fituri remarked that the Shadhili order is the closest and core path to God, reflecting the inner state of Prophet Muhammad's companions (Al-Fituri, 1964). Abu Al-Abbas Al-Mursi emphasized that their knowledge was of profound truth, often beyond ordinary comprehension (Al-Mursi, n.d.).

C-Principles of the Shadhili Path:

According to Ibn Ata Allah Al-Sakandari, the foundation of Al-Shadhili's method emphasized unity in God, solitude, continuous remembrance, and personalized guidance tailored to each disciple's circumstances. He encouraged unity in love, practical livelihood, and discretion regarding one's spiritual states. He advocated openness to other spiritual paths if they provided clearer spiritual refreshment (Al-Sakandari, n.d.).

The Shadhili masters were strongly committed to promoting craftsmanship and labor, indicating that one's occupation should accompany spiritual remembrance. Abu Al-Abbas Al-Mursi famously recommended making one's professional tools instruments of spiritual remembrance. Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili outlined four pillars for approaching God: remembrance paired with righteous deeds, reflection coupled with patience, poverty paired with gratitude, and love, each having unique spiritual fruits (Al-Sakandari, n.d.).

D-Encouraging Work and Knowledge:

The story of Ibn Ata Allah illustrates the Shadhili commitment to work and learning. Initially worried that Sufism might distract him from formal scholarship, Ibn Ata Allah realized from Al-Shadhili's advice that spiritual companionship did not require abandoning one's profession or scholarship. Instead, disciples continued their vocations, embodying piety and God-consciousness as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad with his companions (Al-Sakandari, n.d.).

E-Regulations for Joining the Shadhili Path:

The Shadhili order stipulated specific disciplines for aspirants, including silence, fasting, vigilance, seclusion, maintaining internal and external purity, continuous remembrance of God through the name given by their spiritual guide, elimination of distracting thoughts, and spiritual bonding with their mentor. These guidelines were extensively detailed in their instructions, emphasizing twenty etiquettes related to spiritual practices, occurring before, during, and after remembrance sessions (Shadhili teachings, n.d.).

Third: The Shadhili Order and Its Reformative and Renewing Influence

The Shadhili Order has significantly impacted society by fostering piety, righteousness, and avoiding extremism and deviation. Its centers spread throughout Egypt, especially in Cairo, attracting followers from all ages and regions, including many international students, providing them spiritual, moral, and physical nourishment. The Shadhili Order distinguishes itself from other Sufi traditions through various unique characteristics, contributing to its widespread influence both within and beyond Egypt.

Distinctive Features of the Shadhili Order:

Avoidance of Philosophical Sufism: The Shadhili Order refrains from philosophical mysticism, distinguishing itself from many Sufi paths influenced by previous altered celestial religions and philosophies such as Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Freemasonry. Some orientalist scholars, including Thoulk in the 19th century, argued that Islamic mysticism has Zoroastrian roots, citing significant numbers of Zoroastrians in Northern Iran who maintained their beliefs post-Islamic conquest and influenced early Sufi figures (Thoulk, 19th century).

Moderation Regarding Miraculous Events (Karamat): Unlike many Sufi groups, the Shadhili Order does not focus primarily on miracles (karamat). They recognize two categories:

1-Sensory miracles: Supernatural phenomena like walking on water, flying, teleportation, etc. Ibn Ajeeba explains these sensory miracles as breaking normal physical laws. However, the Shadhili emphasize that such miracles do not exempt one from observing religious duties. Al-Mursi stated, "True achievement is not traveling instantly to distant places but overcoming one's inner faults to be close to God" (Al-Mursi, n.d.). Ibn Ata' Allah also noted, "Miracles may be granted even to those who have not perfected their righteousness" (Ibn Ata' Allah, 1987).

2-Spiritual miracles: Attributes like sincerity, reliance on God, awareness, fear, humility, repentance, strength, empowerment, trust in God, and continuous mindfulness. These spiritual qualities are considered divine gifts granted selectively.

Rejection of Superficial Asceticism: The Shadhili distinguish genuine asceticism from superficial practices, emphasizing internal spiritual reform that complements external behaviors. They assert true asceticism involves controlling worldly possessions without

allowing them to control one's heart, advocating enjoyment of permissible pleasures alongside gratitude (Al-Shadhili, n.d.; Ibn Ata' Allah, 1987.).

3-Integration of Sharia (Islamic Law) and Haqiqa (Inner Truth): Imam Al-Shadhili reconciled traditional jurisprudence and mystical truths, removing historical tensions between jurists and Sufis. He advocated that inner knowledge (associated with Khidr) and revealed knowledge (associated with Moses) do not conflict but complement each other (Al-Shadhili, n.d.).

4-Promotion of Human Freedom Through True Servitude: The Shadhili Order emphasizes genuine freedom realized through sincere servitude to God, freeing individuals from worldly desires and highlighting life's primary purpose—true worship and deep connection with God.

5-Transformation of Theological Concepts into Spiritual Realizations: Complex theological topics, such as human actions, transformed from abstract intellectual issues into personal mystical experiences with dedicated rituals, spaces, and practices attracting diverse followers.

- *Contributions to Islamic Preaching:* The Shadhili Order significantly spread Islam, particularly in East Africa, through scholars, preachers, educational institutions, mosques, remembrance circles, rituals, and distinctive spiritual recitations attracting hearts towards Islam.
- *Enthusiastic Promotion of the Order: Currently active,* the Shadhili Order operates numerous branches and media channels domestically and internationally, effectively engaging youth and encouraging adherence to its practices.
- *Foundation in Divine Love:* Central to Shadhili practices is profound love for God and the Prophet Muhammad, prioritizing heartfelt devotion over obligatory rituals performed out of fear or duty alone.
- *Sufi Practice Aligned with Sunnah:* Unlike ascetic and strict Sufi paths, Imam Al-Shadhili encouraged enjoying permissible comforts—fine clothing, delicious foods, and cold water—with gratitude, aligning with the practices of Imam Al-Ghazali (Al-Shadhili, n.d.).
- *Bridge Between Sunni and Philosophical Mysticism:* Although distanced from philosophical Sufism, the Shadhili Order maintained respect towards philosophical Sufi figures like Al-Hallaj and Ibn Arabi without endorsing controversial doctrines such as Unity of Being (Wahdat al-Wujud). Instead, it resonated more closely with moderate Sunni paths such as the Qadiriyya Order led by Abdul-Qadir Gilani, praised by figures like Ibn Taymiyya for emphasizing adherence to Sharia over mystical experience.
- *Encouragement of Self-Sufficiency and Work:* Imam Al-Shadhili strongly opposed begging and dependency, emphasizing honest labor and reliance on God, aligning with Quranic teachings and prophetic traditions advocating diligent and sincere work.
- *Balanced and Accessible Worship:* Shadhili teachings promote ease and moderation in worship, contrary to rigorous practices of some Sufi paths. Al-Shadhili famously stated, "A true spiritual guide leads you to comfort, not to hardship" (Al-Shadhili, n.d.).
- *Criticism and Internal Correction:* The Shadhili method includes correcting inflated self-perceptions stemming from spiritual experiences, discouraging followers from claims of extraordinary spiritual status or authority.

- *Tolerance and Inclusivity*: The Shadhili do not hastily declare anyone an unbeliever and stress the equality of all Muslims based on sincerity in faith and practice. Sheikh Muhammad Zaki Ibrahim, a Shadhili leader, clarified that genuine adherence to Sunnah includes all believers to varying degrees, opposing narrow interpretations restricting Sunnah adherence to superficial characteristics (Ibrahim, 2014).
- *Emphasis on Inner Spiritual Reform*: Spiritual self-awareness and refinement are central, viewing personal reform as foundational to societal improvement. Ibn Ata' Allah described spiritual experiences requiring hearts free from worldly distractions, filled instead with divine secrets and illumination (Ibn Ata' Allah, 1987).

Fourth: The Emergence and Spread of the Shadhili Order

In Chapter One, I discussed the origins of Sufism, highlighting opinions widely accepted among scholars and rationally convincing viewpoints. Briefly, I mentioned the beginnings of the Sufi orders without extensive detail. In this chapter, I aim to elaborate more fully on the origins of Sufi orders, particularly focusing on the emergence and expansion of the Shadhili Order, which holds significant regard among Sufi traditions.

A-Definition of "Tariqah" (Sufi Path):

Linguistically, the term "tariqah" refers to conduct, method, or condition. It derives from "turuq" (plural of "tariq"), meaning paths, with connotations both physical (a road or street) and metaphorical (guidance or way). Thus, the term encompasses any course or way one might follow (Arabic Lexicon, n.d.).

In Sufi terminology, "tariqah" denotes the particular lifestyle or conduct specifically adhered to by mystics journeying toward God. The follower, known as "Salik" or "Murīd," travels along this path, progressing through stages. Conversely, a "Majdhub" is someone whose journey has been swiftly completed through divine grace (Sufi Teachings, n.d.).

From a mystical perspective, "tariqah" refers to mandatory divine commands and rulings exclusively associated with those spiritually journeying towards God, progressing through spiritual stages and states (Sufi Terminology, n.d.).

Qur'anic References to "Path":

The Qur'an uses the term "path" in various contexts:

As a metaphor for religion or way of life (Qur'an 4:169).

To denote similarity or equivalence (Qur'an 20:63).

Symbolizing intellect and wisdom (Qur'an 20:63).

Reflecting one's spiritual condition—whether righteous, faithful, or deviant (Qur'an 46:30).

Representing diverse opinions and beliefs (Qur'an 72:11).

The Qur'an extensively describes characteristics relevant to Sufi practitioners, including remembrance, contemplation, repentance, worship, love, trust, monotheism, faith, satisfaction, and hope. In later centuries, Sufi orders adopted these spiritual states as practical methodologies (Qur'anic Interpretations, n.d.).

B-Commitment in the Sufi Path:

Joining a Sufi path involves a covenant between a disciple and their spiritual guide, committing the disciple to perpetual repentance, purity, observance of religious rites, promoting good, preventing evil, constant remembrance of God, and ongoing spiritual growth (Sufi Commitments, n.d.).

"Tariqah" also signifies a quest to follow Islamic law (Shari'ah) and the Prophetic tradition (Sunnah). Further meanings include:

- Spiritual purification associated with a particular sheikh.
- Communities affiliated with specific spiritual leaders or educational mentors.
- Individualized spiritual approaches, as Sheikh Zarruq mentions, advocating self-realization through intrinsic guidance (Zarruq, n.d.).

Ibn Al-Banna Al-Saraqusti's work, "Original Investigations into the Principles of Sufism," uses the term "tariqah" to represent the science of mysticism and spiritual discipline (Al-Saraqusti, n.d.).

C-Origins of Sufi Orders:

Historically, the structured Sufi orders emerged neither during Prophet Muhammad's lifetime nor immediately afterward. Their formal methodologies developed from the second Hijri century onward as continuations of asceticism and spiritual discipline. The initial Sufi paths emphasized moral conduct and ethical practices adopted by Sufi groups. Al-Qushayri described "tariqah" as an ethical and psychological mentorship method, asserting the necessity of spiritual guidance from a master (Al-Qushayri, n.d.).

Through examining various definitions, "tariqah" underwent two distinct phases within Islamic mysticism:

- During the third and fourth Hijri centuries, it denoted practical ethical guidelines governing individual conduct.
- By the fifth Hijri century, "tariqah" evolved into collective spiritual and social practices. It involved ceremonial initiation and structured community living, marking transitions into established Sufi communities with clearly defined spiritual leadership roles (Historical Evolution, n.d.).

D-Contemporary Reflections on Sufism:

Current practices among some Sufi adherents may seem divergent from orthodox Islamic principles, often attributed to recent innovations. However, classical Sufi scholars like Imam Al-Tusi critiqued and categorized deviations among certain Sufi groups into three types:

- Groups erring fundamentally due to ignorance of Islamic law.
- Groups deviating in practical ethical conduct because of personal desires.
- Groups occasionally erring due to temporary lapses but subsequently returning to proper ethical standards and spiritual practices (Al-Tusi, n.d.).

Authentic Sufism and genuine spiritual paths focus on both external and internal purity, unlike practices involving superficial symbolism, excessive reliance on appearances, or seeking personal gain through spiritual affiliations. Criticism against authentic Sufi practitioners often arises from observing misguided actions by a minority, such as excessive veneration of tombs and superficial rituals, rather than engaging with the core principles of true spiritual cultivation and ethical reform advocated by classical Sufism (Critical Perspectives, n.d.).

Conclusion

the Shadhili Sufi Order stands out as a significant Islamic spiritual movement due to its balanced integration of spiritual inwardness and practical outwardness. The Shadhili method's reformative nature emerges clearly through its comprehensive focus on ethical living, spiritual sincerity, and active societal participation. Unlike other mystical paths that veer towards extremes of philosophical speculation or strict asceticism, the Shadhili tradition fosters moderation, pragmatism, and authentic adherence to Quranic and Prophetic guidance.

Its contribution to Islamic spirituality is notable through its profound rejection of superficial austerity, highlighting instead genuine inner transformation and gratitude for divine gifts. The Shadhili teachings advocate neither isolation from society nor immersion in worldly distractions; rather, they emphasize achieving spiritual purity while fulfilling worldly responsibilities. This dual commitment has ensured the Order's enduring appeal, resonating across diverse communities and cultures.

Moreover, the Shadhili approach, characterized by its moderation and practical wisdom, effectively bridges traditional Islamic jurisprudence (THE LAW) with spiritual enlightenment (TRUTH), mitigating historical tensions between religious scholars and mystics. This synthesis has contributed significantly to religious cohesion and community development, reflecting the Shadhili Order's foundational commitment to societal reform and spiritual growth.

The enduring legacy of the Shadhili Order also lies in its clear stance against superstition, passive spirituality, and uncritical acceptance of mystical claims. Its insistence on ethical rigor, practical engagement in community affairs, and rejection of passive reliance on supernatural events positions it distinctively within Islamic mysticism.

Ultimately, the Shadhili tradition demonstrates that genuine spirituality involves balanced living, rigorous self-improvement, and active contribution to society. By consistently aligning spiritual practice with ethical conduct and societal responsibility, the Shadhili Order provides a robust model for contemporary spiritual seekers, contributing positively to individual lives and broader societal welfare. This balanced methodology highlights the profound relevance of Shadhili teachings in fostering both spiritual fulfillment and communal harmony.

Recommendations

First: We must differentiate between the people of true Sufism who built their way on the Qur'an and Sunnah and those who built their way on innovations and superstitions and attributed themselves to the people of virtue and miracles. The masters, the poles of Sufism, were the most fearful of God's creation, most drawn to Him, most fleeing from His disobedience, and most afraid of hypocrisy. Imam al-Shadhili used to say, "I saw myself circling the Kaaba and demanding sincerity from myself, and I was called: 'Come on, I am the All-Knowing, All-Aware. My knowledge suffices you from the knowledge of the first and the last, except for the knowledge of the Messenger and the Prophets.'" Al-Shadhili says, "Whoever calls to God with something other than what His Messenger called him with is an innovator." Indeed, Imam al-Shadhili explained in several places that the people of Sufism call for work and not idleness, and that what some of those affiliated with Sufism do in terms of loitering, not working, and living on the charity and vows given by some of the common people and the ignorant of religion is not commanded by the true religion, the noble Messenger, nor the people of true Sufism. Therefore, Imam al-Shadhili says regarding faith and work, "They are two comprehensive miracles." Two oceans:

Second: The honor of faith lies in greater perfection and witnessing, and the honor of action lies in emulation, following, avoiding claims and deception. Whoever is given these and then yearns for something else is a liar and mistaken in knowledge and in doing what is right. Ibn Ajibah says: "There is no doubt that God, the Exalted, has shown us the path to reach Him through the tongue of the Messenger, peace be upon him. He has shown us the signs of the Sharia, the markers of the way, and the lights of the truth. He left nothing that brings us closer to God without guiding us to it, nor anything that distances us from Him without warning us against it. He did not spare any effort in guiding the servants and showing them the path of righteousness. He did not depart to God until he left the people on the straight religion and the upright path."

Third: Students of knowledge must acquire their knowledge from virtuous people known for their knowledge, righteousness, and piety. A student of knowledge should take a mentor who is both a teacher and a guide. It is not sufficient to acquire knowledge solely through reading; it is essential to have a wise and trustworthy mentor. Students of knowledge should know that no matter how many books a learner reads or how many subjects they study, they will not achieve what they would from their mentor under whom they have studied. Abu al-Abbas al-Mursi said, "Anyone who does not have a mentor in the path should not be pleased with them, even if they are of sound mind and self-controlled. Limiting oneself to what a teaching mentor provides does not complete the perfection of one who follows the guiding mentor."

Forth: We must adhere to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger, and adhere to the praiseworthy qualities that the true Shari'ah called for, and that our noble Messenger commanded and that the leaders of Sufism, may Allah be pleased with them all, recommended. Among the advice of Sheikh Al-Shadhili, may Allah be pleased with him, was: "Adhere to these praiseworthy qualities and you will be blessed in both abodes: Do not take the infidels as allies, nor the believers as enemies. Travel with your provisions of piety in this world, and count yourself among the dead. Bear witness to Allah Almighty's Oneness and to the Messenger, peace be upon him, as a prophet. A good deed is sufficient for you, even if it is little. Say, 'I believe in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers, and in destiny, both good and bad.' Allah Almighty said: "The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers. We make no distinction between [those who associate others with Allah]." Amongst any of His messengers, they said, "We hear and we obey. Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the final destination." [Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 285] Whoever adheres to these praiseworthy qualities, Allah the Almighty will guarantee for him four things in this world: truthfulness in speech, sincerity in action, provision like rain, and protection from evil. And four things in the Hereafter: great forgiveness, closeness and proximity, entering the Paradise of Refuge, and reaching the highest degree. If you want truthfulness in speech, then constantly recite the words of Allah the Almighty: "Indeed, We sent the Qur'an down during the Night of Decree".

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