12932 - The truth about Shaykh al-Jilaani and Shaykh Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhaab

the question

What do you think of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani?
I have heard some really bad stories about Abdul Wahab and how he disgraced the religion of Islam? What is your opinion on this?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

When speaking about people, what we say must be based on knowledge and fairness. In the case of a man who has achieved a great deal in the way of religion, we must acknowledge his achievements, but that does not prevent us from pointing out his mistakes. This general principle is to be applied when speaking of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qaadir al-Jilaani and other Muslim scholars.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qaadir (may Allaah have mercy on him) is one of the imaams of Islam. He attained a position of leadership over the Muslims of his time, in knowledge, good deeds, issuing fatwas and other aspects of religion. He was one of the greatest shaykhs of his time, enjoining adherence to the sharee’ah, enjoining what is good, forbidding what is evil, and giving that precedence over all else. He was an ascetic (zaahid) and a preacher, in whose gatherings many people repented. Allaah caused him to be well-liked by people and his virtue became widely-known – may Allaah bestow abundant mercy upon him.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qaadir was a follower, not an innovator. He followed the way of the righteous salaf and in his books he encouraged people to follow the salaf; he also enjoined that upon his followers. He used to tell people not to follow innovations in religion, and he stated clearly that he was opposed to the ahl al-kalaam (“Islamic philosophers”) such as the Ash’aris and their ilk.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qaadir agreed with Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l-Jamaa’ah – the followers of truth – concerning all issues of ‘aqeedah (belief), namely Tawheed, faith, Prophethood, and the Last Day.

There are some minor mistakes and errors in his books, and some innovations which are relatively insignificant when compared with his achievements. To find out more about them, along with an explanation of where he went wrong, please see Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qaadir al-Jilaani wa Araa’uhu al-I’tidaaqiyyah wa’l-Soofiyyah, by Shaykh Dr. Sa’eed ibn Musfir al-Qahtaani, 440-476.

Moreover, it is not right to make one Muslim scholar, let alone anyone else, the sole source of what is true and correct, in the sense that one takes what he says as being true and what goes against that as being false – not Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qaadir and not anyone else. Rather the truth is that which is in accordance with the Qur’aan and Sunnah, no matter who says it, and what goes against the Qur’aan and Sunnah should be ignored and avoided, even if it is said by ‘Abd al-Qaadir al-Jilaani, Maalik, al-Shaafa’i, Ahmad or anyone else.

There is a point which we must make here, which is that praising Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qaadir does not mean praising everyone who claims to follow him. Not everyone who claims to follow a shaykh or a tareeqah or anything else is to be believed. How often has it happened that a person who is thought to be a true follower turned out to be the farthest removed from what was thought to be the case? How many misleading people don the cloak of asceticism and piety when they have nothing to do with either of them? Hence the Sufi tareeqah which is known nowadays as the Qaadiriyyah is not following the straight path which the Shaykh (may Allaah have mercy on him) followed, rather it is a deviant Sufi tareeqah which has deviated from the guidance of the Qur’aan and Sunnah; it exaggerates a great deal about Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qaadir and even attributes to him things that can only rightfully be attributed to Allaah. Some of them exaggerate concerning his grave, seeking help from it, and some of them exaggerate about his attributes and miracles (karaamah).

By comparing the actions of those who claim to follow the shaykh with what is narrated in the Qur’aan and Sunnah, what was narrated from the righteous salaf and even what was narrated from the Shaykh himself (may Allaah have mercy on him), we will clearly see that there is a huge gap between the two, and that the Qaadiri group has deviated from the path of its shaykh whom they claim to be following. That is because they have introduced so many innovations (bid’ahs)

into the religion of Allaah, that the Shaykh would never have approved of. It has been narrated from the respectable scholars that they regarded this group as extreme, for example what was said by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) in his refutation of al-Bakri concerning the issue of ziyaarah or visiting graves (1/228), and in the fatwas of Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem Aal al-Shaykh, indicates that they have committed some actions of shirk.

See: Fataawa Ibn Ibraaheem, 1/276, 109

Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah, 2/250-252

Al-Durar al-Sunniyyah, 1/74

With regard to the 'Abd al-Wahhaab mentioned in the question, perhaps what is meant is Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab (may Allaah have mercy on him). If we want to know more about him, we cannot find anyone who can describe the man better than himself, because when there is a man concerning whom people's opinions vary greatly, with some praising him and some condemning him, we should look at what he says in his writings and his books, and at what is correctly attributed to him, then weigh that against the Qur'aan and Sunnah. What Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab said, describing himself, was: "I tell you that– praise be to Allaah – my belief and my religion, according to which I worship Allaah, is the way of Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah, which was the way of the imaams of the Muslims, such as the four Imaams and their followers until the Day of Resurrection. But I explain to people that they must devote their worship sincerely to Allaah (ikhlaas). I forbid them to call upon the Prophets and the dead among the righteous and others, and from associating them with Allaah in any act of worship that should be done for Allaah alone, such as offering sacrifices, making vows, putting one's trust, prostrating and other actions which are due to Allaah and in which no one should be associated with Him, not any angel who is close to Him or any Prophet who was sent. This is the Message which was proclaimed by all the Messengers, from the first of them to the last of them, and this is the way of Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah. I hold a high position in my village and people listen to me. Some of the leaders denounced that because it goes against the customs they grew up with. I also obliged

those who are under me to perform regular prayer, pay zakaah and fulfil other Islamic duties, and I forbade them to deal with ribaa, drink intoxicants and other kinds of forbidden things. The leaders could not criticize that or find fault with it, because it is something that is liked by the common folk, so they directed their criticism and enmity against that which I enjoin of Tawheed and that which I forbid of shirk, and they confused the common folk by saying that this goes against what everyone is doing, and they caused a great deal of fitnah…" (al-Durar al-Sunniyyah, 1/64-65, 79-80)

Any fair-minded person who studies the books of this man will know that he is one of those who call people to Allaah with sure knowledge, and that he bore many difficulties and hardships in order to restore Islam to its pure form, when it had been altered a great deal at his time, and that was because of his opposition to the whims and desires of the leaders, who stirred up the ignorant masses of the common people against him, so that they could continue to enjoy their positions of worldly leadership and wealth.

I urge you not to be easily influenced by others with regard to what you listen to and believe. Rather you should be a seeker of truth, defending it no matter who is promoting it, and I urge you to avoid falsehood and error no matter who is promoting it. So if you look at any of the books by this shaykh – and I recommend you to read Kitaab al-Tawheed alladhi huwa haqq Allaah 'ala al-'Abeed [Kitaab al-Tawheed is available in English translation] – you will find out how great the Shaykh's knowledge was, and how important his call is, and the extent to which his words have been twisted and accusations have been made against him.

You can see some of the accusations made against the Shaykh and find out the response to them by clicking on the following link for information in English, And this link will give you the information in Arabic:

More importantly, I urge you to ponder the Qur'aan and Sunnah, to ask trustworthy scholars about matters concerning which you are confused. Beware of those who follow their whims and desires, and of shirk in all its forms. If you do that, then the question of whether Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab (may Allaah have mercy on him) was right or wrong becomes irrelevant.

Moreover you should realize that it is haraam to violate the honour and reputation of Muslims by saying things about them in such a manner as to undermine their position, even if what is said is true – so how about if it is false?

May Allaah help us and you to follow true guidance and the religion of truth, and to do that which pleases Him.

And Allaah knows best..