4983 - Are the Sufi shaykhs really in contact with Allaah?

the question

What is the place of sufism in Islam? What truth is there in 'religious experiences', contacts with the Divine, etc.? Some people hold such phenomena in high regard, claiming the similarities between experiences of people from different religions and from opposite corners of the globe, to be proof. How should people who claim to be sufis or believers/followers of sufism be seen? Isn't prayer and remembrance also a form of contact with the Almighty, SWT?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The word Sufism was not known at the time of the Messenger or the Sahaabah or the Taabieen. It arose at the time when a group of ascetics who wore wool (soof) emerged, and this name was given to them. It was also said that the name was taken from the word soofiya (sophia) which means wisdom in Greek. The word is not derived from al-safa (purity) as some of them claim, because the adjective derived from safa is safaai, not soofi (sufi). The emergence of this new name and the group to whom it is applied exacerbated the divisions among Muslims. The early Sufis differed from the later Sufis who spread bidah (innovation) to a greater extent and made shirk in both minor and major forms commonplace among the people, as well as the innovations against which the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) warned us when he said, Beware of newly-invented things, for every newly-invented thing is an innovation and every innovation is a going-astray. (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, who said it is saheeh hasan).

The following is a comparison between the beliefs and rituals of Sufism and Islam which is based on the Quraan and Sunnah.

Sufism has numerous branches or tareeqahs, such as the Teejaniyyah, Qaadiriyyah,

Naqshbandiyyah, Shaadhiliyyah, Rifaaiyyah, etc., the followers of which all claim that their particular tareeqah is on the path of truth whilst the others are following falsehood. Islam forbids such sectarianism. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

and be not of al-mushrikoon (the disbelievers in the Oneness of Allaah, polytheists, idolaters, etc),

Of those who split up their religion (i.e., who left the true Islamic monotheism), and became sects, [i.e., they invented new things in the religion (bidah) and followed their vain desires], each sect rejoicing in that which is with it. [al-Room 30:31-32]

The Sufis worship others than Allaah, such as Prophets and awliya [saints], living or dead. They say, Yaa Jeelaani, Yaa Rifaai [calling on their awliya], or O Messenger of Allaah, help and save or O Messenger of Allaah, our dependence is on you, etc.

But Allaah forbids us to call on anyone except Him in matters that are beyond the person's capabilities. If a person does this, Allaah will count him as a mushrik, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

And invoke not, besides Allaah, any that will neither profit you, nor hurt you, but if (in case) you did so, you shall certainly be one of the zaalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers). [Yoonus 10:106]

The Sufis believe that there are abdaal, aqtaab and awliya (kinds of saints) to whom Allaah has given the power to run the affairs of the universe. Allaah tells us about the mushrikeen (interpretation of the meaning):

Say [O Muhammad]: And who disposes the affairs? They will say. Allaah. [Yoonus 10:31]

The mushrik Arabs knew more about Allaah than these Sufis!

The Sufis turn to other than Allaah when calamity strikes, but Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

And if Allaah touches you with harm, none can remove it but He, and if He touches you with good, then He is Able to do all things. [al-Anaam 6:17]

Some Sufis believe in wahdat al-wujood (unity of existence). They do not have the idea of a Creator and His creation, instead they say that everything is creation and everything is god.

The Sufis advocate extreme asceticism in this life and do not believe in taking the necessary means or in jihaad, but Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

But seek with that (wealth) which Allaah has bestowed on you, the home of the Hereafter, and forget not your portion of legal enjoyment in this world [al-Qasas 28:77]

And make ready against them all that you can of power [al-Anfaal 8:60]

The Sufis refer the idea of ihsaan to their shaykhs and tell their followers to have a picture of their shaykh in mind when they remember Allaah and even when they are praying. Some of them even put a picture of their shaykh in front of them when they are praying. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: Ihsaan is when you worship Allaah as if you can see Him, and although you cannot see Him, He can see you. (Reported by Muslim).

The Sufis allow dancing, drums and musical instruments, and raising the voice when making dhikr, but Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

The believers are only those who, when Allaah is mentioned, feel a fear in their hearts [al-Anfaal 8:2]

Moreover, you see some of them making dhikr by only pronouncing the Name of Allaah, saying, Allaah, Allaah, Allaah. This is bidah and has no meaning in Islam. They even go to the extreme of saying, Ah, ah or Hu, Hu. The Sunnah is for the Muslim to remember his Lord in words that have a true meaning for which he will be rewarded, such as saying Subhaan Allaah wa Alhamdulillah wa Laa ilaaha illa Allaah wa Allaahu akbar, and so on.

The Sufis recite love poems mentioning the names of women and boys in their dhikr gatherings, and they repeat words such as love, passion, desire and so on, as if they are in a gathering where people dance and drink wine and clap and shout. All of this has to do with the customs and acts of worship of the mushrikeen. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

Their salaah (prayer) at the House (of Allaah, i.e., the Kabah at Makkah) was nothing but whistling and clapping of hands

[al-Anfaal 8:35]

Some Sufis pierce themselves with rods of iron, saying, O my grandfather! So the shayaateen come to them and help them, because they are seeking the help of someone other than Allaah . Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

And whosoever turns away (blinds himself) from the remembrance of the Most Beneficent (Allaah), We appoint for him a shaytaan (devil) to be a qareen (intimate companion) for him.

[al-Zukhruf 43:36]

The Sufis claim to have gnosis and knowledge of the unseen, but the Quraan shows them to be liars. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

Say: None in the heavens and the earth knows the ghayb (unseen) except Allaah [al-Naml 27:65]

The Sufis claim that Allaah created the world for the sake of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), but the Quraan shows them to be liars. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

And I (Allaah) created not the jinns and humans except they should worship Me (Alone). [al-Dhaariyaat 51:56]

Allaah, may He be glorified and exalted, addressed His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) with the words (interpretation of the meaning):

And worship your Lord until there comes unto the certainty (i.e., death). [al-Hijr 15:99]

The Sufis claim that they can see Allaah in this life, but the Quraan shows them to be liars. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

[Moosa said:] O my Lord! Show me (Yourself), that I may look upon You. Allaah said, You cannot see Me [al-Araaf 7:143]

The Sufis claim that they take knowledge directly from Allaah, without the mediation of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and in a conscious state (as opposed to dreams). So are they better than the Sahaabah??

The Sufis claim that they take knowledge directly from Allaah, without the mediation of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). They say, Haddathani qalbi an Rabbi (My heart told me from my Lord).

The Sufis celebrate Mawlid and hold gatherings for sending blessings on the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), but they go against his teachings by raising their voices in dhikr and anaasheed (religious songs) and qaseedahs (poems) that contain blatant shirk. Did the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) celebrate his birthday? Did Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali, the four imaams or anyone else celebrate his birthday? Who knows more and is more correct in worship, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and the Salaf, or the Sufis?

The Sufis travel to visit graves and seek blessings from their occupants or to make tawaaf (ritual circumambulation) around them or to make sacrifices at these sites, all of which goes against the teachings of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): Do not travel to visit any place but three mosques: al-Masjid al-Haraam [in Makkah], this mosque of mine [in Madeenah] and al-Masjid al-Aqsa [in Jerusalem]. (Agreed upon).

The Sufis are blindly loyal to their shaykhs, even when what they go against the words of Allaah and His Messenger. But Allaah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

O you who believe! Do not put (yourselves) forward before Allaah and His Messenger [al-Hujuraat 49:1]

The Sufis use talismans, letters and numbers for making decisions and for making amulets and

charms and so on.

The Sufis do not restrict themselves to the specific blessings on the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) that were narrated from him. They invented new formulas that involve seeking his blessings and other kinds of blatant shirk which are unacceptable to the one on whom they are sending blessings.

With regard to the question of the whether the Sufi shaykhs have some kind of contact, this is true, but their contact is with the shayaateen, not with Allaah, so they inspire one another with adorned speech as a delusion (or by way of deception), as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

And so We have appointed for every Prophet enemies shayaateen (devils) among mankind and jinns, inspiring one another with adorned speech as a delusion (or by way of deception). If your Lord had so willed, they would not have done it [al-Anaam 6:112]

And Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

And, certainly, the shayaateen (devils) do inspire their friends (from mankind) [al-Anaam 6:121]

Shall I inform you (O people!) upon whom the shayaateen (devils) descend?

They descend on every lying, sinful person. [al-Shuara 221-222]

This is the contact that is real, not the contact that they falsely claim to have with Allaah. Exalted be Allaah far above that.

(See Mujam al-Bida, 346 359).

When some of these Sufi shaykhs disappear suddenly from the sight of their followers, this is the result of their contact with the shayaateen, who may even carry them to a distant place and bring them back in the same day or night, to mislead their human followers.

So the important rule here is not to judge people by the extraordinary feats that they may do. We

should judge them by how closely or otherwise they adhere to the Quraan and Sunnah. The true friends of Allaah (awliya) are not necessarily known for performing astounding feats. On the contrary, they are the ones who worship Allaah in the manner that He has prescribed, and not by doing acts of bidah. The true awliya or friends of Allaah are those whom our Lord has described in the hadeeth qudsi narrated by al-Bukhaari in his Saheeh (5/2384) from Abu Hurayrah, who said:

The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: Allaah said, Whoever shows enmity towards a friend (wali) of Mine, I declare war against him. My slave does not draw close to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties that I have enjoined on him, and My slave continues to draw close to Me with supererogatory (naafil) acts, so that I will love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it.

And Allaah is the Source of Strength and the Guide to the Straight Path.