

THE UNCOUTH AND THE PUGNACIOUS IN THE TARIQAH MOVEMENTS IN NIGERIA: A LOOK AT THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING IN SUFISM

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Abstract: *This paper explores the issue of manner/ethics (Adab) and the importance of learning in Sufism. With a focus on the work “The Spirit of Decency” (Ruhul Adab) by the Tijaniyyah master Sheikh Ibrahim Abdullah Niyass, the paper examines the centrality of the idea of ethics (Adab) in Sufism and how this helps the adherent to attain to Marifatullah (Knowledge of Allah). Going by this assertion, the paper submits that the uncouth and the pugnacious both of which seem to be the order of the day among those who practice Sufism in the contemporary time in Nigeria, are nothing but an antithesis of everything that Sufism stands for and are therefore alien to the spirit of Sufism. The paper starts by explaining the problem of the uncouth and the pugnacious in the Tariqah movements in Nigeria. It then explains the origin of Sufism by quoting the Quran and Hadith which serves as the basis of Sufism in Islam. Likewise, it examines the role of Sufism as it relates to building the manner/ethics (Adab) of an individual as well as explains the steps which a saleek/murid needs to pass through in order to obtain the knowledge of Allah (Marifatullah) and become His friend (Awliyahi Allah) – which is at the heart of Sufism and its essence. The paper concludes on the note that while the uncouth and the pugnacious are alien to Sufism, learning and good manner are at the heart of it.*

Keywords: *Sufism, Adab, Uncouth, Pugnacious, Learning, Marifah*

Introduction

In Nigeria religious sphere today, Islamic Sufism which is symbolized by the two major and popular Tariqah Movements, Qadiriyyah and Tijaniyyah, and their other affiliates such as Shazaliyyah, Naqshbandiyyah, Rufaiyyah, Jafariyyah and Hamawiyyah have been affected by the current ethical and moral corruption in the society. Today, the problem of moral corruption and despotic competition for adherents by some practitioners of Sufism are eroding its principles and practices which are centered on learning or *Adab* as defined in the Sunnah of the Prophet. Instead of the focus on learning or *Adab*, which is what Sufism is said to be all about,

what is obtained among some practitioners is uncouth behaviour and a pugnacious tendency to attack anyone that criticises them or dare to advise them when they are engaged in any untoward behaviour which stands in contrast to the teachings and principles of Islam. This uncouth behavior has become so rampant that people now question the Islamic nature of the Tariqah Movements (Sufism) and what it portends for a Muslim who wishes to follow and/or practice Sufism. It is not uncommon for one to hear of the immoralities that are now part of the lifestyle of some of these Sufi practitioners. Such immoralities include but are not limited to sexual misconduct, exploitation of the Saleek/Murid, consumption of alcoholic beverages, indulgence in extravagance lifestyle, love of pleasure and luxuries, fraud, involvement in fetish practices and others too numerous to mention here. Sadly, this misconduct is not limited to a particular Sufi Movement. Rather, it cut across all of them – that is, both in Qadiriyyah and Tijaniyyah and their affiliates mentioned above. It is a disease among some practitioners of these Tariqah orders and not necessarily a problem in a single Tariqah Movement. Added to this misconduct is the pugnacious behavior towards those who dare to criticise, query or advise against these immoralities. It is now commonplace for one to see some practitioners of Sufism engaging in brawls with their fellow Muslims and even attack them for having the courage to criticise their immoral ways. Thus, all these have led to a situation in which people have started to query the practices and authenticity of the Tariqa Movements and, by extension, Sufism.

It is in the light of the above that this paper intends to clarify the essence of Sufism and explain how it is all about learning (*Adab*), purification, asceticism, and gnosis which will show that it is actually an antithesis of the uncouth and the pugnacious which some people are currently engaged in and which they falsely attribute to the Tariqa Movements or Sufism.

In order to achieve the task of this paper as outlined above, the paper first reviews a few literature that points to the fact that knowledge and learning are central to the practice of Sufism and its important place in Islam. Second, it defines Sufism and establishes the fact that it has its origin in the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. Then, third, it explains the process of learning in Sufism and what this learning is expected to do and achieve in the life of a Saleek/Murid. It also establishes the fact that Sufism is all about Adab (good moral conduct) that is in line with the Quran and Sunnah as practiced by the Prophet. Next, it talks about the uncouth and the pugnacious and how these two concepts are in opposite to Sufism. In other words, it establishes the fact that the uncouth and the pugnacious are both antithesis of the Tariqah Movements and by extension Sufism. Thus, it concludes that those who are using the Tariqah Movements to perpetrate immoralities are deviants and miscreants who operate under the cover of Sufism.

Literature on Sufism in Islam: A Brief Review

There are many works that have outlined the importance and dimension of Sufism in Islam. One of such work is the *Ideals and Realities of Islam* by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. While the book focuses on Islam generally, the author nonetheless devoted a chapter to Sufism as he explains the importance and centrality of Sufism in Islam. According to him, every religion has its inner dimension and in Islam, Sufism stands for that inner dimension of Islam – its esotericism. He pointed out the fact that Sufism has its root in the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet, while the *Tariqahs* provide the means for its realization in the Muslim societies. On the tension that sometimes exists between the Shariah and *Tariqah*, Nasr explains the importance of the Shariah to the Tariqah and the fact that *Tariqah* cannot be practiced in isolation of the Shariah.

Likewise, in his book entitled *Sufi Essays* which is based explicitly on Sufism, Seyyed Hossein Nasr highlights the perennial nature of the mystical quest and how Sufism stands for this quest in Islam. He explains how Sufism can help man to overcome the state of multiplicity in the world and thus attain to *Tawhid* as desired for him by The Creator. Through Sufism, Nasr says, man can learn and understand better the testimony of the Oneness of Allah implied in the *Shahadah – La ilaha illa Allah*. From here, Nasr discusses different issues as they concern Sufism. He speaks about the spiritual states in Sufism, Sufi masters and their contribution to knowledge, man and the society, what Sufism could offer man overcoming the ecological problem and others. In all, the importance of learning in Sufism was demonstrated in this book. In the same vein, Titus Burckhardt's book *Introduction to Sufi Doctrines* translated by D. M. Matheson sheds light on the nature of the doctrinal beliefs of the Sufis and how this is connected to the religion itself. He also explains that Sufism is the esoteric dimension of Islamic exotericism and therefore part and parcel of Islam. Most importantly, he highlights the importance of knowledge and love in Sufism and how these two are central to the practice of Sufism.

Osman Nuri Topbas book, *Sufism: A Path towards the Internalization of Faith (Ihsan)*, is also worth mentioning here. In this work, Topbas explains the origin of Sufism and its definition in depth. Like the scholars above, he asserts that Sufism has its root in the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet. He went on to discuss the subject matter of Sufism, its goal, necessity and its relation to other scholarly disciplines in Islam. This shows again that knowledge and learning are at the heart of Sufism. Finally, Topbas explains the concept of gnosis, marifatullah, and present some questions on Sufi practices and doctrines – all of which he provides answers for in the book.

Finally, to show how important Sufism is in Islam, in his explanation of the Islamic religion in his two books, *Islamic Life and Thought* and *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr explicitly shows that will be incomplete to talk about Islam without mentioning the role and place that Sufism occupies in it. Hence, he devoted some chapters to Sufism and explains the fact that it is central to the practice of the religion as it encompasses the esoteric dimension of the religion. It is the heartbeat of the religion occupying the spiritual virtue of *Al-Ihsan* which the Prophet described as the stage at which a Muslim worships Allah as if he/she is seeing Him. Thus, if this is the case, it means that Sufism must contain a higher order of knowledge and learning to be able to serve the purpose for which it is reserved for in the Islamic religion.

Certainly, there are works on Sufism in Nigeria too which tend to explain its practices, social and educational roles in the society. One of such works is the article by Mohammed and Bakar (2014) entitled *The Role of Sufis in Nigerian Literacy*. It examines the role played by Sufism in the propagation of Islam in Nigeria and West Africa generally as well as how this spread was not just for the conversion of the people only but also for their educational advancement. It examines the establishment of Zawiyahs by the Sufis and how these Zawiyahs played a major role in the education of the people as well as their spiritual well-being. It focuses on the role of the Zawiyahs in the Bornu El-Kanemi Kingdom in Nigeria and how the Zawiyahs produced not just Muslim male scholars but females as well such as Nana Asmau.

Another work entitled *Sufism and Ifa: Ways of Knowing in Two West African Intellectual Tradition* by Oludamini Ogunnaike examines Sufi and Ifa epistemological system with a focus on the Tijaniyyah Tariqah and the Yoruba Ifa method of divination. Ogunnaike examines the way and manner by which knowledge is acquired in these two systems and how rituals practiced

in these two traditions helps the adherents to attain knowledge through self-help and efforts. He asserts that knowledge in these traditions is attained through discipline and self-control of the individual seeker and not necessarily through learning from the books. He confirms the fact that the transformation of the seeker through adherence to ritual practices – such as dhikr, prayer, reading the Quran, *Adab* in behaviour and so on in case of the Sufi – is fundamental to the attainment of knowledge in these traditions. This shows that the goal of both traditions is for the individual to attain knowledge – Marifatullah in Sufism – and to be a better person through it.

It is also important to mention the work of Jonathan N.C. Hill (2010) entitled *Sufism in Northern Nigeria: Force for Counter-Radicalization*. This work explains how the two major Tariqah Movements in Nigeria, Qadiriyyah and Tijaniyyah, could be harnessed in stemming the tide of radicalism among the youths in the nation, especially through education in the Sufi way of love and mercy to fellow creatures. According to Hill, the Qadiriyyah and Tijaniyyah movement could help stem the tide of extremism and radicalization among Muslims if they are given a helping hand in carrying out their programs which are tailored towards educating the people about Islam. He asserts that currently in the northern part of Nigeria which is a hotbed of radicalism and extremism, the Qadiriyyah and Tijaniyyah movements are already working to stop the youths and other Muslims from going to join terrorist groups such as Boko Haram by establishing and founding schools and institutions of learning where people are taught about Islam and Islamic heritage so that they could better understand the religion as a religion of peace, love and knowledge. He calls for a helping hand from the government and especially the US government whose interest he said could only be protected in Africa when there is a peaceful and progressive Nigeria.

All the above points to the fact that knowledge and learning are central to the idea of Sufism and this is cultivated by following the laid down disciplined system of learning that a Saleek/Murid is expected to follow and observe under the guidance of an able, competent and knowledgeable Master, Leader or Muqaddam.

Sufism: A Definition

Islam, defined as a way of life, encompasses all areas of life and as such contains different branches of knowledge which are derived from the holy book, The Quran, and teachings of the noble Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) called the Sunnah. Some of these branches of knowledge or what is usually called *ulum* (sciences) are *fiqh*, *hadith*, *Tafsir*, *Tajweed*, *Sirah* and so on. They are all derived from the Quran and Sunnah. Sufism or Tassawuf is also a branch of knowledge derived from the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. Nonetheless, it differs from other branches because it is not a science, otherwise people will learn it by means of conventional education, and it is not custom or tradition, otherwise, people will learn it by personal striving (Topbas, 2011: 32). Rather, it is a divine knowledge bestowed by Allah on those who have renounced attachment to this material world and devote themselves to the worship of Allah and the services of his creatures. Although, there are different opinions on the origin of Sufism (As-Saleh, 2005: 1 – 11), nonetheless, what is clear is that its major components such as its litanies, ethics, knowledge, and way of life are all derived from the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet.

Sufism is defined as a path of spirituality which consists of worship, virtue and ego training described in the Quran as “*tazkiyatul Nafs* (purification of the heart),” “*taqwa* (piety)” and

“*tabattul* (renouncement)”. According to the Quran, one of the Prophet’s duties was spiritual purification (Al-Jumua: 62:2). Allah gives the glad tidings to those who purify their souls that they will attain salvation (Al-Shams: 91: 6 -10). He also explains that stiff and warped hearts lead to evil and do not allow for the remembrance of Allah (Al-Zumar: 39:22). Likewise, he says that the heart which will be useful in the afterlife is the sound one (Al-Shuaraa: 26: 88-89). Indicating that whoever teaches the Quran must be devout (Al-Imran: 3:79), Allah says that it is necessary to turn to Him fully repeating His name (Al-Muzzammil: 73:8). The Quran indicates that people with faith love Allah very much (Al-Baqara: 2:165) and that this love is mutual; in other words, Allah loves His servants and His servants love Him (Al-Maida: 5:54) (Yilmaz, 2010).

On hadith of the Prophet, there are so many of them that talk about purification, taqwa, and renunciation – turning away from this materialistic world to the remembrance of Allah. However, the one that established the truth of Sufism is the one where the prophet talks about the different stages of the religion as follows:

Abdullah ibn Umar says: My father, Umar ibn al-Khattab, told me: One day we were sitting in the company of Allah’s Apostle (peace and blessings be upon him) when there appeared before us a man dressed in pure white clothes, his hair extraordinarily black. There were no signs of travel on him. None amongst us recognized him. At last, he sat with the Apostle (peace and blessings be upon him) He knelt before him placed his palms on his thighs and said: Muhammad, inform me about al-Islam. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: Al-Islam implies that you testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, and you establish prayer, pay Zakat, observe the fast of Ramadan, and perform pilgrimage to the (House) if you are solvent enough (to bear the expense of) the journey. He (the inquirer) said: You have told the truth. He (Umar ibn al-Khattab) said: It amazed us that he would put the question and then he would himself verify the truth. He (the inquirer) said: Inform me about Iman (faith). He (the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him) replied: That you affirm your faith in Allah, in His angels, in His Books, in His Apostles, in the Day of Judgment, and you affirm your faith in the Divine Decree about good and evil. He (the inquirer) said: You have told the truth. He (the inquirer) again said: Inform me about al-Ihsan (performance of good deeds). He (the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him) said: That you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, for though you don’t see Him, He, verily, sees you.... (Sahih Bukhari, hadith 47)

There is a consensus of opinion among scholars that the last stage of *Ihsan* is the stage of Sufism (Topbas, 2011: 27 & 32; Nasr, 1994: 134; Nasr, 2002: 62). That is, where one is expected to “worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, for though you don’t see Him, He, verily, sees you.” Seyyed Hossein Nasr says concerning this:

In fact, the Sufi masters have over the ages defined Sufism by the well-known *Hadith* of the Prophet who when asked about the definition of *ihsan* said: ‘*Ihsan* is to adore Allah as though thou didst see him, and if thou doest not see him he nonetheless sees thee. This definition is essentially also that of Sufism (Nasr, 1994: 134).

This definition of *Ihsan* is the definition of Sufism because:

...it is obvious that not everyone can worship God as if they saw Him. This is the station of the saintly, and *ihsan*, which means both “virtue” and “beauty,” is associated with the

spiritual path that leads to sanctity and is considered practically a definition of Sufism (Nasr, 2002: 62).

Moving on with the issue of the meaning of Sufism, again, in his work on Sufism, Osman Nuri Topbas defines it as “the effort to pursue a lifestyle that is harmonious with the essence of religion, by virtue of purifying oneself from material and moral defects, and embodying, in their place, a beauty of moral conduct” (Topbas, 2011: 31). And, the aim of Sufism according to him is to “impart the zest of morality onto the heart of a believer; a zest for mercy, affection, generosity, forgiveness, and gratitude” (Topbas, 2011: 52).

In other words, Sufism is about the perfection of good morals (Akhlaq) and propriety/refinement (Adab). As the prophet said in his words “I have only been sent to perfect good moral character” (Musnad Ahmad) And “My Lord taught me and gave me the best manner” (*Addabani Rabbi, fa ahsana tadibi*). In this connection, Allah says concerning the moral character of the Prophet “And Indeed, you are of a great moral character.” (al-Qalam, 4). Sufism, therefore, is seeking to follow the path of the prophet by building one’s character in line with that of the prophet to the degree that is humanly possible as Allah says in the Quran “You have a good example in the Prophet of Allah for whoever hopes for Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah often (al-Azhab 21). Likewise, Abu’l Husayn an-Nuri says: “Sufism consists not of forms and sciences but of good moral qualities (akhlaq)... Sufism is to succeed in embodying the qualities of the Lord” (Topbas, 2011: 32). Another Poet says, Al-Tassawuf (Sufism), all of it is good manner (akhlaq). And whoever increases you in good manner (akhlaq) (that is, whoever taught you good manners) has increased you in Tassawuf (Sufism). In his work, *Ruhul Adab* (The Spirit of Decency), Sheikh Ibrahim Abdullah says: “And the seeking of knowledge of good conduct on you disciple (is compulsory) for indeed, it is the door for every disciple” (Abdullah, 1922). And specifically directing his words at the Murid of the Tijaniyyah Tariqah, he says: “You will not profit by taking this tariqa, except you continuously seek righteousness, fulfilling all prescribed conditions, exemplifying its ethical code” (Abdullah, 1922).

Having defined what Sufism is above, the rest of the paper focuses on the process of learning and practice in Sufism as well as discuss the meanings of the uncouth and the pugnacious and how they relate or do not relate to Sufism. The last part contains the conclusion reached at the end of the discussions.

Learning and Practices of Sufism

Those who seek to acquire the knowledge of Sufism in Islam are called Saleek, Murid or Disciple. The focus of this branch of knowledge in Islam, as explained above, is spirituality and the aim is to recognize and achieve closeness to Allah – to become Awliyahi Allah (a friend of Allah) – through purification of the soul, taqwa, and renunciation of the material world. The knowledge of Sufism commonly called Marifah (Gnosis) when acquired by the Saleek/Murid helps him/her to develop his/her spiritual faculties and realizes divine realities – the Truth – thus making him/her a friend of Allah.

However, for one who wants to be acquainted with the knowledge of Sufism, the first thing is to look for a Tariqah (path) and then, second, a leader (Sheikh, Muqaddam or Murshid) in the Tariqah who has knowledge of the path and has traveled it himself. The third thing is to take an

oath of allegiance to follow the teaching of the chosen leader and to adhere to the principles of the chosen Tariqah.

After the steps above, depending on the Tariqah, usually, the lesson of the Murid starts with first learning about the Quran with focus on Aqeedah (The Principles of Faith) and Shariah (The Islamic Law) and full adherence to the Shariah law in every aspect of his life. Second, the Murid learns about the Sunnah and observance of the Sunnah in his daily life (Zikr, 2017; Nasr, 1994 & Burckhardt, 1996).

Concerning the knowledge of Quran and Sunnah and the importance of adhering to them Rumi said:

“We are like compasses. Our stable foot stands firm on the Shariah, and with the other, we travel amid the seventy-two nations on earth. The Shariah is like a candle; it illuminates and shows the way. One cannot move forward only by taking the candle in one’s hand, but one cannot proceed without taking it in the hand either. Once you begin to progress under the light of the Shariah...it is this that which we call tariqah” (Topbas, 2011: 30).

In the same vein, Sheikh Ibrahim Abdullah said concerning this matter while addressing the Tijaniyyah murids in *Ruhul Adab*: “A path of pure grace and satisfaction, founded and established upon the path of the Prophet and the Quran” (Abdullah, 1922). Furthermore, he says “It is inevitable to first and foremost seek knowledge and you must study the laws of Allah (Shariah) properly. [For] I swear by my life that knowledge is the leader of actions, as was transmitted from TA-HA [The Prophet], the best of all messengers” (Abdullah, 1922).

Thus, the knowledge of the Quran and Sunnah which correspond to the knowledge of Islam and the first stage of religion as seen above in the hadith quoted from Abdullah ibn Umar is the first pre-requisite for a Murid. This knowledge of Islam, as explained by the Prophet are to “testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, and you establish prayer, pay Zakat, observe the fast of Ramadan, and perform pilgrimage to the (House) if you are solvent enough (to bear the expense of) the journey.” The Murid is expected to practice and implement them all and likewise to understand their inner dimensions (Zikr, 2017 & Nasr, 1981: 191 – 198).

After having established these five commands above, the Murid grows in Moqam (station) Islam by further following these five elements of the Shariah and they are: Lawful Earnings, Abstinence from sins and unlawful acts, Following the Divine Command, Constant Recitation of the Holy Quran and Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil (Zikr, 2017 & Burckhardt, 1996). With the implementation of the above, the Murid grows in purifying himself and thus prepares to enter the next stage of Iman (Faith).

The Third thing that the Murid learns about is the Attributes of Allah and the remembrance of Allah using these Attributes. At this stage, he also learns about the beliefs that are commanded by Allah. This stage is the stage of Iman (Faith) and it is here that a lot of secrets about other beings and worlds start to be opened to the Murid. The Prophet said about this stage: “That you affirm your faith in Allah, in His angels, in His Books, in His Apostles, in the Day of Judgment, and you affirm your faith in the Divine Decree about good and evil” (Zikr, 2017 & Nasr, 1994). Here, apart from holding on to Iman, that is, holding by faith things that are hidden and unknown to us except as told to us by Allah and His Prophet, it is here that the Murid starts to

learn about Allah and His worship in the true sense. He also learns about the soul and its different states. The Murid learns to rely totally on Allah (Tawakkul) and to have total confidence in Allah and His decrees (Zikr, 2017 & Nasr, 1991: 73–82). In addition, the Murid constantly learn and practice the acts of repentance, virtue, endearment, fear and hope, renunciation of sensual desire, safeguard (by abstaining from suspicious things when he is not sure whether they are halal or haram), dedication, appeasement (seeking pleasure of the Sheikh), pleasant focus and total reliance on Allah (Zikr, 2017). Sheikh Ibrahim Abdullah says about this stage: “Obtain knowledge of four subjects, oh you traveler. The first of it is the knowledge of the Lord Possessor. And secondly is to know all that is involved in the worship of Allah, for that you will be certain. And thirdly is to learn the different states of the soul, from its treachery, deceptions, and plots. For the soul has its fault, and the heart its fault, and the spirit its fault, in these there is no doubt. And the seeking of knowledge of good conduct on you disciple (is the fourth) for indeed, it is the door for every disciple” (Abdullah, 1922).

Finally, Fourth, the Murid learn about Adab (ethics) of love and Discipline which, as quoted above from Sheikh Ibrahim Abdullah “...is the door for every disciple.” At this fourth stage, the Murid learn about the vertical and horizontal nature of Adab and Discipline. That is, how to establish a relationship with God, Adab to God (vertical nature of Adab), and the Discipline that comes with it. Likewise, how to establish a relationship with his fellow human beings and with everything in his environment – Adab to man and nature (horizontal nature of Adab) – and the Discipline that it requires. This knowledge of ethics and discipline is what will open the door, to the Murid, to the stage of *Ihsan* which the Prophet says is to “worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, for though you don’t see Him, He, verily, sees you.” Here too, there are two stages according to the words of the Prophet. The first stage is to “worship Allah as if you are seeing Him.” But if one is not yet capable of that first stage, then, one should worship Him knowing that He is present with one – “for though you don’t see Him, He, verily, sees you.” A poet says concerning this “Your Presence fills my eyes, Your remembrance is on my lips (fills my lips), and Your love is in my heart (fills my heart), how then are you absent?” (Zikr, 2017). In addition, with Marifa attained by the Murid at this stage, he is expected to be humble, kind, contented, steadfast, forgiving, gracious, enjoying divine pleasure, trustworthy, committed and be a source of advice and knowledge to people (Zikr, 2017). To quote again Sheikh Ibrahim Abdullah, he says: “Be God fearing, a man of humility, you will not by humbleness be in abasement..... Never be satisfied about yourself, nor hope or fear other than Allah, besides Him neglect! Never be arrogant oh my brother or be jealous, nor do eye service, but to your Lord heed! (Abdullah, 1922).

Furthermore, he admonishes: “Don’t harm a Muslim even if it appears that, he persistently harms, be forgiving. For indeed, all these creations are Allah’s servants, Do not harm, oh my brothers, the servants of Allah” (Abdullah, 1922).

From this stage onward, the speed at which the Murid grows in the Tariqah and Marifa depends on him and how well he is able to imbibe and practicalize these teachings especially by: (1) fervently adhering to the Shariah and Sunnah for the purification of his body and soul, (2) chanting the zikr with any of the names of Allah, as directed by his Sheikh, and meditating on them and the creation of Allah (see Quran...) and (3) how often he sits with and listen to the wisdom of his sheikh (Zikr, 2017). Sheikh Ibrahim Abdullah says: “however, it is with great efforts that their secrets are obtained [i.e. the knowledge of the Murshid/Sheikh – Marifa], Not by laxity or by playing on the intelligence of men..... Whosoever does not attain the knowledge of the Merciful (Allah) [“the knowledge” means Marifa], his life has been in ruin

for all time spent. . . . Don't lessen your effort in acquiring the knowledge of Allah, then you shall be astonished by the closeness of The Most Merciful. He is manifest in everything, upon everything, and by everything, before it and yet after it, forever" (Abdullah, 1922).

The above, then, are the processes of learning in Sufism and they confirm the fact that just as Islam is not a religion of the ignorant, Sufism is also not a path of the illiterate. Sufism and learning go hand in hand and the essence of Sufism itself is knowledge (MARIFA/GNOSIS) which leads to good moral behaviour (Adab) in worship and all aspects of one's life until one is testified to as the Prophet was testified to by Allah that "And Indeed, you are of a great moral character." (al-Qalam, 4).

The method of learning in Sufism described above is not absolute, it may differ depending on the Tariqah and the disposition of the Murshid/Sheikh, but, nonetheless, all of the above is a MUST for the Murid to learn and practicalize, though the way he learns it may differ.

The Uncouth

The lexical definition of the word "uncouth" is "lacking good manners, refinement or grace." Furthermore, its synonyms are uncivilized, uncultured, uncultivated, unrefined etc. The uncouth, therefore, means someone who is lacking in good manners, refinement or civilized behavior. It is a word which stands in direct opposite of the Arabic word Adab – which means good manners or refined moral behavior, respect and/or politeness. If this is the case, based on the explanation of learning in Sufism above, a person who is uncouth has no place in the Sufi circle because he is the opposite of what Sufism is all about.

Technically, the word, Adab, in Islam stands for good manners in Ibadat and Muamalat. While Ibadats are acts of ritual worship such as prayer or fasting, Muamalats are acts involving interaction and exchange among people such as sales and sureties. It, therefore, follows that for someone to really practice Sufism, he must follow Adab Al-Islami – Islamic Ethics – which are embodied in the Shariah and Sunnah (Islam) as well as in Iman and Ihsan as explained above. This means that the uncouth is someone who has abandoned Adab Al-Islami and whoever has abandoned Adab Al-Islami has no place in Sufism because he has abandoned the foundation as pointed out by Sheikh Ibrahim Abdullah and Rumi above. Moreover, if Sufism is the perfection of good morals (Akhlāq) and propriety/refinement (Adab) and the Prophet has been quoted to have said "I have only been sent to perfect good moral character" and "My Lord taught me and gave me the best manner" (*Addabani Rabbi, fa ahsana tadibi*), then, whoever is uncouth has abandoned the way of the Prophet and gone against the words of Allah that we should follow the Prophet and his example. Say, (O Muhammad, to mankind): If ye love Allah, follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (Al-Imran 31) and "You have a good example in the Prophet of Allah for whoever hopes for Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah often (al-Azhab 21). Based on this, the uncouth person is on his own and if he claims to be a Sufi, he is a false claimant to the tradition of the Prophet and the saints whose method and way of life is that of the Prophet. Allah says: "If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah) never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good). How shall Allah guide those who reject Faith after they accepted it and bore witness that the Messenger was true and that clear signs had come unto them? But Allah guides not a people unjust (Al-Imran 85 – 86).

The Pugnacious

Lexically, pugnacious means eager or quick to argue, quarrel or fight. Some of its synonyms are combative, aggressive, antagonistic, belligerent etc. The pugnacious person, therefore, is one who easily picks a fight or quarrel with others. He is aggressive and antagonistic to others which shows a lack of good manners (Adab). Therefore, the pugnacious person is also an uncouth person. Based on what has been said before, this kind of person and his temperament does not suit that of the Sufi and cannot be described as such. Moreover, the Sufi is like a traveler or someone on pilgrimage. Some of the rules of pilgrimage according to the Quran are: “For Hajj are the months well known. If anyone undertakes that duty therein lets there be no obscenity nor wickedness nor wrangling in the Hajj. And whatever good ye do (be sure) Allah knoweth it. And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So fear Me, O ye that are wise.!” (Al-Baqarah 197). As with someone on hajj pilgrimage, the Sufi on his journey is expected to abstain from obscenity, wickedness, and quarrels which are the hallmarks of the uncouth and the pugnacious. Likewise, as Allah said, “the best of provisions” for someone on pilgrimage “is right conduct” (Adab, to put it in a larger context). This, therefore shows that the pugnacious has no place in Sufism and this conduct is neither the conduct of the Prophet nor of the saints of Sufism. Allah said concerning those who are on the path of Al-Rahman and “ilm Al-Rahman” (knowledge of the Merciful) as Sheikh Ibrahim Abdullah calls it: “And the servants of (Allah) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say "Peace!" Those who spend the night in adoration of their Lord prostrate and standing...” (Al-Furqan 63 – 64).

Conclusion

The discussion above shows that learning is an integral part of Sufism and that at the heart of Sufism is the concept of good manners (Adab) which helps to prepare the saleek/murid in attaining Marifatullah (knowledge of Allah). Based on this, therefore, the uncouth and the pugnacious have no place in Sufi practice as they are an antithesis of everything that Sufism stands for and epitomises. The major problem with religion generally in Nigeria, and Islam in particular, is the lack of regulation and a religious regulatory body that monitors how the practitioners of the religions in Nigeria operate. Unlike Malaysia for example which has a religious department that monitors and regulate the activities of religious groups (specifically Islam) and quickly calls out those who are moving in the wrong direction or exhibiting deviant tendencies, Nigeria does not have any governmental agency that regulates the activities of religion and this has led to a situation in which “everything goes” and people do as they wish thereby using religion as a cover for their immoral activities. There is, therefore, a need for proper regulation of religion in the nation so as to identify, name and shame those who use religion – especially Islam – for their selfish ends.

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