Naqshbandi Tariqa Rules

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October 31, 2018

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Publisher: Kazi Rezaul Haque Sufi Peace Mission Swamibag Khanqah-i Mujaddidi 43/18 Swamibag Dhaka 1203 BANGLADESH email: mim786@gmail.com

November 1, 2018

ISBN: 984-70239-0002-0

Dedication

I dedicate this book to my first sufi shaykh Muhammad Mamunur Rashid, and my second, and current shaykh Qazi Rezaul Haque, and my parents, for their nurturing of me.

About Our Shaykh

Kazi Rezaul Haque is the grandshaykh, of our tariqa. He is the chief khalifa of our past grandshaykh Muhammad Mamunur Rashid. Grandshaykh Reza has been teaching the Mujaddidi tariqa in Bangladesh, USA, UK, India and elsewhere.

About the Author

Irshad Alam is the author of this book—he chose, translated sections from the Maktubat, from the original Farsi and Arabic, and wrote the explanations. He has been translating the Maktubat and other books of the Mujaddid. Google "Irshad Alam pdf", and download. Sh. Muhammad Mamunur Rashid initially gave him *ijazat* to guide seekers on the tariqa in 1994. Sheikh Reza has continued it.

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Naqshbandi Tariqa: the Best

From which sufi tariqa should one learn? There are many tariqas and each one of them has their unique method for God-realization. However, as the Mujaddid says,

Know that the tariqa which is the nearest, foremost, most appropriate, strongest, most reliable, wisest, truest, most just, highest, greatest, most elevated, and most perfect (*aqrab*, *asbaq*, *awfaq*, *awthaq*, *aslam*, *ahkam*, *asdaq*, *adall*, *a'la*, *ajall*, *arfa'*, *akmal*) is the most distinguished Naqshbandi tariqa. May Allah (SWT) sanctify the spirits of its family-members and the secrets of its adherents! [A 1.290, 90.7-9]]¹

Why? The Mujaddid also explains the reason — following the sunna, and discarding deviations.

¹Amritsari, Nur Ahmed edited Maktubat-i Imam-i Rabbani, volume 1, maktub 290, page 90, lines 7-9

All the greatness of this tariqa and the high status of these masters result because this tariqa firmly follows the shining sunna (salam) and stays away from displeasing deviations (bid'at). They are those for whom the end has been inserted in the beginning, as[it happened] for the honored companions (dwad)! [A 1.290,190]

Naqshbandi Zikr: Method

What is the first zikr of the Naqshbandi tariqa? That is the zikr of the name of the person (*ism-i dhat*) i.e., "Allah...Allah...Allah..." And that is the first zikr that the Mujaddid learned from his guide Hazrat Baqibillah. The Mujaddid writes,

Brother! May Allah show you the straight path! When by the divine grace, I experienced a raving madness for this [sufi] path, he guided me to our shaykh, our Mawla, our Imam shaykh Muhammad al-Baqi who was a celebrated caliph of the family of the great Naqshbandi hazrats. He was the asylum of the friends [of Allah], one who is aware of the reality, (*walayat panah*, *haqiqat-i agah*), guide to the tariqa where the end has been inserted in the beginning and which connects one to the path towards the degrees of friendship [of Allah], the supporter [of the religion that leads one to] the goodpleasure of God (*hadi-i tariq-i indiraj-i nihayat fi'l bidayat wa ila al-sabil al-mawsil ila* darajat al-walayat, mu'ayyid al-ridan), [That exalted caliph] taught me the zikr of the name of the person of God (*dhikr-i ism-i dhat*). [A 1.290,190]

Yes! That is the initial zikr of this tariqa. It is the zikr of the name of the person of God, i.e. "Allah...Allah...Allah." It is not Haqq, Hayy, Qayyum or any other name.

The Mujaddid suggests that the Naqshbandi is doing zikr all the time, not only doing it for a few occasions. By implication, this zikr has to be a hidden internal zikr.

Know and be aware that your felicity (sa'adat), instead the felicity of every child of Adam, and success and salvation (durustagari) for everyone, lies in the zikr of his object of worship (ilahi) (SWT). As much as possible, you should keep yourself "drowned" in the zikr of God all the time; you should not permit yourself even one moment's heedlessness.

Praise be to the Allah (SWT)! What a divine grant of good fortune! This perpetual zikr (dawam-i dhikr) is realized right in the beginning of the tariqa of the khwajegan hazrats. (qaf). [While this perpetual zikr is realized at the "end" of the other tariqas, it is realized in the "beginning" of this Mujaddidi-Naqshbandi tariqa] as "insertion of the end in the beginning." (indiraj al-nihayat fi-1 bidayat), [which is a uniquely distinguishing characteristic of this tariqa].

Therefore, the students should choose this 'most high tariqa', as it is the best and the most appropriate. Even more, it is obligatory and incumbent (*wajib va lazim*). So [now] you should turn your focus of attention (*qibla-i* tawajjuh) away from all [the other] directions and instead turn your face totally towards the exalted persons (*janab*) of these masters of the 'most high tariqa'. And beseech fervently [assistance for God-realization] from the inner realms (*batin*) of these great ones.

Loud Zikr: Forbidden

Now what is the proper method of zikr in this Mujaddidi-Naqshbandi tariqa? We know one thing for sure that the zikr of the Mujaddidi tariqa is always hidden. We need to know it so that we can easily detect if some shaykh is following a deviant practice or the unadulterated Mujaddidi-Naqshbandi practice. The Mujaddid explains how to do the zikr:

Some argue, "Loud zikr also used to be a Naqshbandi practice. Many shaykhs of this tariqa used to practice it in the past. So we are only re-introducing them. So why should it be blamed?" The answer is two-fold. First, is the case in which these masters are in the silsila of our tariqa but before the formation of the tariqa, that we have already discussed. Second, when it was indeed practiced after the formation of our tariqa, the answer is that the practice of the deviant branches of the tariqa should not be our model. Even in the *Maktubat*, Hazrat Mujaddid cautions many Naqshbandis who practiced loud zikr — and states that — they are the deviant branches of the tariqa unfit to be our role models. This also proves that loud zikr among Naqshbandis was rampant even at that time; it is not a new deviation, rather it is a very old and common deviation among the Naqshbandis. The argument that because others have done it or do, it is acceptable, is known to be false and countless examples can be given to illustrate the faulty logic of this justification. Furthermore, the Mujaddid guarantees that those who participate in deviant practices are in fact blocked from receiving any *faydh* or *baraka* of the tariqa. Neither do they reach any *hal* of the tariqa; any *hal* they may receive is really a deception that leads step-by-step to ruin (*istidraj*).

Some modern-day nontraditional Naqshbandi shaykhs argue, "While hidden zikr was appropriate in the past, with the change of time, the rules need to be changed. We feel that loud zikr is appropriate for the current time." In answer, we may remind ourselves why all these deviant practices, e.g., loud zikr, singing, dancing, and so forth, are forbidden in this tariqa. A fundamental rule of this tariqa is strict ('azimat) adherence to the sunna. Loud zikr is a deviation (bid'at) from the sunna, and that is why it is prohibited, in contrast to the rules of the other tariqas, which do not follow the sunna as "strictly." As the Mujaddid wrote,

Know! To attain the tariqa of the *khwaje-gan* hazrats, (qaf), you should believe in the beliefs of the mainstream Sunni community and observe the shining sunna of the Chosen One (on its owner [Prophet Muhammad] be salutations, peace and benediction!). And you should avoid the deviations [to the sunna or *bid'at*] and the caprices of the [instigating] soul. And you should practice "strictly" (*'az-imat*) as much as possible. And you should remain cautious of a relaxed (*rukhsat*) practice. [A 1.290, 95.7-10]

Yes! Loud zikr and singing may be allowed by some ulama

as a "relaxed" (*rukhsat*) practice. But the heart of the Mujaddidi-Naqshbandi tariqa is to "strictly" (*'azimat*) follow the sharia and sunna, and this is why these practices are banned in this tariqa. The Mujaddid explains the message of the Naqshbandi masters again,

Brother! The great ones of the Most High Naqshbandi tariqa (qaf) cling to the shining sunna and choose a "strict" (*'azimat*) practice [over a relaxed (*rukhsat*) practice]. Along with adhering to [the sunna] and choosing [a strict practice], if they are ennobled by states and raptures (*hal va mawajid*) then they consider it to be a tremendous bliss.

On the other hand, if they realize those states and raptures but find themselves slackening in adhering to [the sunna] and choosing that [strict practice], then they do not like those states and do not want those raptures. Instead, they consider that slackening to be a sign of their own badness. [A 1.237, 37.12-15]

This above section is an especially relevant response to today's nontraditional Naqshbandi sufi shaykhs who say that these deviant practices are needed to attract people to the tariqa today. Yes! It is true that practices like loud zikr produce stronger *hal* (although only temporarily). And singing may attract people. But true Naqshbandis would not like that hal and attraction produced by those deviant practices; instead they would consider that slackening of the sunna to be a sign of their own weakness.

The Mujaddid again wrote on the importance of avoiding a "relaxed" practice of the sharia in this tariqa.

Therefore, as a choice, the tariqa that would be the most appropriate and best suited is the one which requires you to observe the sunna and which conforms to the injunctions of the sharia. That tariqa is the tariqa of the Naqshbandi masters. These great ones have included the sunna and left out deviations from this tariqa. As much as possible, they do not permit a "relaxed" (rukhsat) practice even when that appears to benefit the inner realm. On the other hand, they maintain a strict ('azimat) practice even when that appears to harm that inner realm. [A 1.243, 43.12-16]

Yes! Loud zikr indeed produces a stronger hal and so it appears to benefit the inner realm. And as a result, many tariqas do practice this. However, even so, the Naqshbandi masters prohibit those deviant practices. This also explains why so many Naqshbandi shaykhs do practice it—Its because then even incompetent shaykhs can produce a stronger *hal*, and attract people. Unfortunately, that stronger hal is merely temporary, it goes away soon. On the other hand, the hal of khafi zikr maybe weaker, but it is indeed longer-lasting.

Loud Zikr: Violates the Sunna

Still another maktub forbids loud zikr and all its deviations as being in violation of a core value of this tariqa, which is to observe the sunna. This maktub was written to Khwaja Muhammad Qasim, the son of Khwajegi Amkinagi . And Khwaja Amkinagi was the pir of Khwaja Baqibillah . It shows that these deviations have been creeping into this tariqa from a long time.

You may know that the Naqshbandi tariqa has attained superiority and has been elevated to a high rank because this tariqa firmly follows the sunna and meticulously avoids all deviations. It is for this reason, the great ones of this Most High tariqa have avoided loud (jahr) zikr and instead directed towards hidden (khafi) zikr. And they have forbidden songs, dances, ecstasies, and raptures (sama'va raqs va wajd va tawajud) that did not exist in the time of that Great Leader [Prophet Muhammad] (salam) or in the times of the well-instructed caliphs (dwad) Seclusion and forty-day retreats (*arba*'*in*) were not practiced in the time of the Great Master, instead they have chosen seclusion within congregation (*khalwat dar anjuman*).

Consequently, commitment [to the sunna] has yielded great results and avoidance [of deviations] has given them abundant rewards. It is for this reason that the end of other [tariqas] has been inserted in the beginning for these masters and their transmission (*nisbat*) is higher than all other transmissions. Their message is the medicine for the heart!

And their blessed gaze (nazar-i shan) is medicine for illness of the diseases of mental worriness (`ilal-i ma`nuya). And the face-turning of their noble presence (tawajjuh-i wajih) saves the seekers from the captivation of the two worlds [of creation, this world and the last world.]. Their power to elevate [others on the sufi path] (himmat-i rafi`) carries the seekers from the perigee of contingentness (imkan) to the apogee of Necessaryness (wujub).

> Naqshbandis are such amazing leaders of the caravan! They lead from the hidden path to the sanctuary of the caravan! The attraction (jadhdhba) that come from their companionship, from the heart of the wayfarer! Carries off any whispering of seclusion (khalwat) or thought

of chilla (forty-day retreats or arba'in)

In these times, that transmission (nisbat) has become as rare as the phoenix! And some from this grade [of nontraditional Nagshbandi shavkhs] have not found that great treasure and have been deprived of this rare bliss. They have looked around everywhere for these jewels but of no avail. So finally they have become contented with pieces of broken earthenware, or like children, they have found comfort in walnuts and raisins. Many of them have been confused and perturbed and so they have left the method of their own [tariqa's] past masters. And some times, they try to find peace through loud zikr. Other times. they search for comfort in songs and dances (sama' va rags). Since they have failed to find seclusion in the congregation (khalwat dar anjuman), they have instituted forty-day retreats in seclusion (arba' in-i khalwat). It is even more surprising that they believe they are completing and perfecting this noble nisbat (transmission) with these newly-invented practices (bid'at). And they consider this destruction as renovation. May the Haqq (SWT) give them a sense of justice! And may He put a few of the perfections of the great ones of this tariga into the heads of the souls of these deviant Nagshbandis!] By the letters Nun and Saad [in the Koran]! For Your love for the prophet and his noble progeny (salam)!

At this time, these new practices (*muhdathat*) are being instituted. And even the original

tariqa of these great ones has been concealed. And both the commoners and the elite are practicing newly-instituted practices. And they are deviating from the original and ancient tariqa. So the idea came to my mind that I should inform the servants of your sublime court of all these matters ! And by that bring some of the pain in my heart out in the open! I do not know in which group these sufi comrades of your court belong? Which tribe?

> I can't sleep [at night] worrying on this In whose lap am I sleeping happily

My supplication to Allah (SWT) is that He saves you from this catastrophe! And He preserves your noble court from including these false practices!

Sir! Newly-instituted and invented practices (*ihdath va ibda'*) have become so prevalent in this tariqa that if those who are against this tariqa say that this is the tariqa that includes newly- invented practices (bid'at) and excludes sunna then they would have a point! [A 1.168, 52.6-53.12]

Yes! Practices like loud zikr, songs, dances, ecstasies and raptures may be allowed by many scholars, however; these practices do contravene the sunna and are new additions to Islam that emerged after the time of the prophet and the companions. And because the Naqshbandis "strictly" follow the sunna, they forbid these practices while other tariqas who maintain only a "relaxed" practice may still practice them.

Loud Zikr: Khwaja Naqshband Forbade It

The second imam of the tariqa the Mujaddid forbade loud zikr following his teacher Khwaja Baqibillah.

Once we were present in his [Khwaja Baqibillah's] service, in a gathering for meal. A devotee of our Hazrat Khwaja named Shaykh Kamal pronounced the name "Allah" aloud at the start of the meal. Hazrat [Baqibillah] was displeased to such an extent that he rebuked him [shaykh Kamal] strongly and told us to forbid him [shaykh Kamal] from coming to his meal gatherings.

Not only that, but the first imam of the tariqa Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband has directly forbidden loud zikr.

I [the Mujaddid] have heard from Hazrat [Khwaja Baqibillah] that once Hazrat Khwaja Naqshband gathered the ulama of Bukhara together and took them to the *khanqa* [or sufi cloister or center] of Hazrat Khwaja Sayyid Amir Kulal to forbid him from loud zikr. The ulama told Hazrat Amir Kulal, "Loud zikr is a deviation. Do not practice it!" In answer, he stated, "[All right!] I will not practice it [anymore]!". [A 1.266, 135.1-6; FR 100.4-12]

Loud Zikr: Ban is Permanent

This ban on loud zikr is not a temporary measure but permanent. Here the Mujaddid explains that zikr is an act of worship and so it must conform to the sunna. Else it would be a reprehensible deviation. Loud zikr is such a reprehensible deviation.

You have also asked, "You [the Mujaddid] forbid loud (*jahr*) zikr as it is a deviation (*bid'at*). However, it produces a taste and longing for God (*dhawq va shawq*). And you do not forbid other things that were not there in the time of that Great Leader [Prophet Muhammad] (salam), for example the [the outfit called] *fardi*, shawl and shalwar."

Sir! The acts of that Great Leader (salam) are of two types [the first type is performed as an act] of worship (*'ibadat*), [and the second type is performed as an act] of custom and habit (*'urf va 'ada*). The acts of worship, if you contravene them, then I consider it a reprehensible deviation (*bid'at-ha-i mankur*). And I proclaim that they are forbidden. Because "instituting a new practice" (*ihdath*) in religion is exceedingly wicked (*murud*).

On the other hand, if you contravene the acts that are performed as customs and habits, then I do not consider it to be a reprehensible deviation. And I do not proclaim it to be prohibited, as it is not connected to the religion. [A 1.231, 22.2-8]

Yes! With the changed times, Naqshbandi shaykhs can make some changes in the practice. But that does not extend to a fundamental practice like loud zikr. That is forever forbidden for Naqshbandis, even though that practice may be highly effective in producing a "taste" and "longing" for God. Another prohibition on loud zikr follows,

Know that the tariqa of the *khwajegan* hazrats (qaf) is the nearest (aqrab) among the tariqas that connects one (mawsila) [to God]. And the end (nihayat) of others has been inserted in the beginning (bidayat) of these masters. And their transmission (nisbat) is above (fawqa) all other transmissions.

This tariqa has realized all these [excellences] because it clings to the sunna and discards deviations. As much as possible, they do not permit a "relaxed" (*rukhsat*) practice even when it seems to benefit the inner realm (*batin*). And they do not give up a "strict" practice (*'azimat*), even when they consider it to be

harmful to their journey (*sayrat*) [on the sufi path].

They place the "states and raptures" (ahwal va mawajid) below the rules of the sharia [in importance]. They consider [sufi experiences like] "longings" and the sufi ideas (adhwaq va ma'arif) to be servants of the science of the sharia. They do not exchange the precious jewels of the sharia for walnuts and raisins as children do, or ecstasies or deep states (*wajd* va hal-i ghaus) [as the deviant ones among the sufis do]. And they do not become deceived or charmed by false sufi expressions (*tarahat*). They do not leave the *nass* [the Koran and the hadith] to become engaged in the *fass*[the book Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi.]. And they do not revere the Futuhat-i Makkiya [or the Meccan Revelation of Ibn Arabi.] more than the Futuhat-i Madaniya [the Medinan Revelations, i.e., the hadith].

Their state (hal) is permanent (dawam) and their time (waqt) is perpetual. While the selfdisclosure of the person of God (tajalli-i dhati)that the others experience is [transient] like the flash of a lightning, what these masters experience is permanent. And these exalted ones do not even take into account that selfdisclosure which disappears the next moment after its appearance. Allah has said about them, They are such men whom trade and business cannot distract from the zikr of Allah. (Koran 37:24)

However, everyone cannot empathize with the "tastings" (dhawq) that these great ones ex-

perience. For this reason, many defective ones may deny many of the perfections of this most distinguished Naqshbandi tariqa .

If a defective one blames on this group a defect!

Allah forbid! I will bite my tongue from these complaints! [A 1.131, 9.4-10.15]

Yes! Many such "defective" nontraditional Naqshbandi shaykhs do make the claim that the traditional Naqshbandi practice of hidden zikr is ineffective. This is because those shaykhs are incompetent, not because the practice of this tariqa is ineffective. The Mujaddid continues his sermon,

See! Some of the later caliphs of this most distinguished Naqshbandi tariqa have instituted new practices (*ihdath*) into this tariqa and have lost the true method of these great ones [who preceded them in this Naqshbandi tariqa]. Many of the disciples [of these deviant Naqshbandi shaykhs] hold the belief that they [those deviant nontraditional Naqshbandi shaykhs] are making this tariqa perfect by these newlyinstituted practices.

God forbid! Never! It is an exceedingly arrogant claim that they are making! On the contrary, they are ruining and losing it [this Naqshbandi tariqa, by these newly-instituted practices.] [A 1.131, 9.4-10.15]

Loud Zikr: Not A Strict Practice

Loud zikr is forbidden in the Naqshbandi tariqa as a fundamental principle of this tariqa is to obey the sharia "strictly" but loud zikr is at most a "relaxed" practice. For it violates this principle.

According to the strict interpretations of the sharia, hidden zikr is the only acceptable form of zikr and loud zikr is forbidden. Yes! There are other sufi tariqas that practice loud zikr but they do not follow the sharia with as much strictness as the Naqshbandi tariqa requires.

Below the Mujaddid prohibits loud zikr, because it violates the strict interpretations of the sharia and the sunna.

The great ones of this most distinguished [Naqshbandi] tariqa make the states and raptures (hal va mawajid) subservient to the rules of the sharia. And make the longings and sufi ideas (adhwaq va ma'arif) subservient to the science of the religion. They do not act like children and so they do not exchange the priceless jewels of the sharia with walnuts and raisins [as children do] or ecstasies and states [as the deviant sufis do] (wajd va hal). And they are not deceived or charmed by the false sufi expressions (tarahat). They do not accept the states (ahwal) that are attained by practices that violate the sharia or contravene the shining sunna. Nor do they even want them. This attitude of theirs has even reached the point that they do not permit singing and dancing (sama' va raqs). Neither do they even approach loud zikr. [A 1.221, 7.18-8.2]

Here is still another writing on "strict" practice and deviant practices like loud zikr, singing, and dancing.

> Therefore, the "nearest" (aqrab) tariqa of all the tariqas is that tariqa in which the opposition to the [instigating] soul is the most. There is no doubt that opposing the [instigating] soul is more in the Most High Naqshbandi tariqa than in the other tariqas. That is why these masters have chosen a "strict" practice and discarded a "relaxed" practice. Everyone knows that a "strict" practice includes discarding both the forbidden [or haram] (*muharram*) and the superfluous (*fudul*). ¹ And this is in contrast to a "relaxed" practice that discards only the forbidden things.

If someone says that one may undertake "strict" practices even in the other tariqas, I would answer that most tariqas include singing and dancing (*sama' va raqs*), which may be considered at most "relaxed" practices only through

¹superflous practices mean those practices that are *mubah* in the sharia, i.e., a practice that is permitted but has neither any merit in it nor any bad consequence

much deceptive argumentation They [the other tariqas] cannot be called "strict" at all.

What the Mujaddid means by a "strict practice" is a practice that strictly follows the sunna. On the other hand, what the common people mean is a practice that is difficult and hard-to-so. According to the way the Mujaddid defines the term "strict,"- that is, following the sunna strictly ? those deviant tariqas cannot be at all called "strict." Now the Mujaddid reiterates that point.

Loud zikr is something that is just like that. It cannot be thought of as being anything more than a "relaxed" practice shaykhs of other silsilas [that are not Naqshbandi] have instituted new practices (*umur-i muhdath*) into their own tariqas [and they were only] intending to improve [their own tariqas.] Those [practices are really forbidden or haram according to the sharia and they] may [at most] be ruled "relaxed" [practices and even that] after a lot of rectification (*tashih*), [manipulative reasoning and stretching].

The masters of our most high [Naqshbandi] silsila are their antithesis. They do not permit even the slightest deviation (*mukhalifat*) from the sunna. And they do not support any newly instituted or invented practice (*ibda' va ihdath*). Consequently, opposition to the [instigating] soul is complete in this tariqa.

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Oppose Deviations in the Tariqa

Prohibitions of deviations like loud zikr, singing with musical instruments, etc. are so critically important that the Mujaddid repeats this point in another maktub sent to Khwaja Husamuddin Ahmad in the khanga of the sons of Khwaja Baqibillah. There he says that deviations in the tariga are just as bad as deviations in the sharia. He again stresses the prohibition on loud zikr as well as songs and dances as practices of the tariga. He even maintains that it is such a grave misdeed, that if the two sons of his teacher Khwaja Baqibillah persist in those anti-tariga and anti-sharia practices,; he will cut off all relations with them. Additionally, he forbids loud zikr in many other places as well and not as a temporary prohibition, but instead as a permanent ban, as it violates the very fundamentals of this tariqa, as well as the sharia, as he interprets it. He wrote,

Honored Sir! Instituting new practices (ih-dath) in the tariqa, I see as a '[blameworthy] deviation' (bid'at) and no lesser a deviation than inventing new practices in the religion

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(din). The blessings (barakat) of the tariqa will pour [onto the seekers via the transmission channel] until new practices are instituted therein. When new practices (amr-i muhdath) arei nstituted in the tariqa, then the channel of energy and blessings is blocked. So it is "the most important of the important matters" (ahammi-muhim) that we preserve [the traditions of] this tariqa and it is indispensable to desist from violating its [traditions] (ijtinab az mukhalafat-i tariqat).

Therefore, wherever, whomever you may see indulging [in acts that] violate [the traditions of] this tariqa, you should forbid him strongly and strengthen this tariqa. [A 1.267, 76.5-10]

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