

The Sufi Tradition in Toronto

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The Sufi Tradition

All praise is for Allah, Lord of the worlds Who has no partner in His Kingdom, the only One to be worshipped, The Creator, The Nourisher, The Sustainer, The First without a beginning, and the Last without end, Whose *Nur* pervades and is All-Pervading, Who created the *Nur* of Muhammad-e-'Arabi, *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* from His own *Nur* and made him mercy for all the worlds, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him for ever and ever more, *Aameen*.

The *sufi* tradition is a tradition of pure monotheism, taught, exemplified and lived by our beloved Holy Prophet Sayyidina wa Maulana Muhammad Mustafa *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* himself; the *ahlul bayt* (his blessed Household), his *sahaba* (noble companions) *Radhy Allahu 'Anhum Ajma'een* and the *awliya* (sufi saints), *Rahmatullahi 'alaihim ajmaeen*.

To be in the *sufi* tradition is to attach oneself to a *sufi shaikh* (spiritual master). A *sufi shaikh* is someone who has adopted the *sunnah* (life-style) of the beloved Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* in its totality. His *suhbah* (companionship) automatically develops love for Allah, The Glorified and The Exalted, and for Rasulullah *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*, and purifies one's heart of evil and vice, as much as has been ordained by Allah. To have *ta'alluq* (association) with a *sufi shaikh* is to be on the spiritual path (*tariqa*), practicing *tasawwuf* (attempting to live according to *sunnah* both outwardly and inwardly, that is with sincerity and purity of heart) with the help of the *dua* (supplications) of our *shaikh*. If Allah so wills, this leads to spiritual progress and spiritual excellence (*ihsan*) after which Allah Ta'ala showers us with His *'inayah* (special spiritual favours).

Allah *Sub'hanahu wa Ta'ala* has blessed Muslims with such *mashayikh* (spiritual masters) throughout history in all parts of the world. They have drawn people to themselves through their exemplary life-styles and have spontaneously been identified as *'arifeen* (knowers of spiritual realities and mysteries). One such spiritual luminary was *Sayyidi wa Imami*

Muhyuddin Shaikh 'AbdulQadir Jilani *Rahmatullahi 'alaihi*. Those associated with him are said to be in the Qadiriyyah *tariqa*, after him. *Sayyidi wa Imami* al-Faqih al-Muqaddam Muhammad ibn 'Ali BaAlawi *Rahmatullahi 'alaihi* was another great *qutb-ul-gauth* (pillar of spiritual succour). Those associated with him are said to be in the 'Alawiyyah *tariqa*. These spiritual luminaries are as many as the stars in the firmament but some shine more distinctly than others, just as the north star does.

Islam is alive as long as the *sufi* saints breathe. Most of them prefer to be anonymous unless Allah Ta'ala in His *Hikmah* (Wisdom) wills otherwise. *Mungu awa weke*: may Allah Ta'ala keep them for ever in His *Rahmah* (Mercy), *Aameen*.

For anyone to claim to be a *sufi* (man of Allah) is really presumptuous. No one ever claims to be a *sufi*. The *shaikh* (*pir-o-murshid* in Urdu) is ever so humble to make any claim of any sort. But the *sufi saint* (man of Allah) is as evident as the broad daylight. Those who have *ta'alluq* (association) with a *sufi saint* are said to be in the *sufi* tradition. And it is in this sense alone that we talk about the activities of those associated with the *sufi* tradition in Toronto.

Shariah and Tariqah in Toronto

The *sufis* of Toronto are obviously in the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah* tradition -- that is, they follow *Shari'ah* (sacred Muslim law) according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, following any one of the four *madhahib* (schools of sacred Muslim law), codified by Imam ul A'zam Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Shafi'i, Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal *Rahmatullahi 'alaihim ajma'een*. They follow the *Aqeeda* (Muslim Creed) as given in the Qur'an Kareem and Hadith Shareef and as expounded by Imam Abu'l Hasan al-Ash'ari. They follow *tariqah* (sacred spiritual path leading to Allah Ta'ala) established by Gauth al A'zam Sayyidi wa Imami Shaikh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani, Sayyidi wa Imami al-Faqih al-Muqaddam Muhammad ibn 'Ali BaAlawi, Sayyid Ahmad Rifa'i Kabeer, Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti,, Imam Bahauddin

Naqshbandi, and Hadrat Pir Nuruddin al-Jerrahi, may Allah Ta'ala continue to let us benefit from their *baraka* (blessings), *Aameen*. The respective *tariqas* are Qadiriyyah, 'Alawiyyah, Rifa'iyyah, Chishtiyyah, Naqshbandiyyah and Jerrahiyyah, these being the more well-established *tariqas* in Toronto so far.

Muslims in other parts of the world will surely be very happy to learn that in a predominantly non-Muslim country such as Canada where neo-liberalism has almost destroyed Christianity, Muslims are exerting themselves to establish the *sufi* lifestyle of our beloved Prophet Muhammad Mustafa *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* and his *ashaab-us-Suffa*, *Radhy Allahu 'Anhum*.

The First and the Foremost

The first well-known *sufi* saint to bring *baraka* (blessings) to Canada was Maulana 'Abdul 'Aleem Siddiqui al-Qadiri *Rahmatullahi 'alaih*. He performed the opening ceremony of the first mosque to be built in Canada in Edmonton in 1939. He also visited Toronto, the largest metropolis in Canada, where he presented Islam as a gift to a largely non-Muslim gathering. A'la Hazrat Imam Ahmed Raza Khan *Rahmatullahi 'alaih* had sent him from India to spread Islam across the world. This he did admirably, converting people to Islam and establishing the *sufi* tradition in such far-off places as Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana, England and Kenya, to name only a few places. He passed away after performing Hajj and was laid to rest in Jannatul Baqi in Madinatul Munawwara.

The first well-known *sufi* saint to be resident in Toronto, who built the foundations of the *sufi* tradition here, was Dr. Qadeer Baig *Rahmatullahi 'alaih* in the Chishtiyyah *tariqah*. He was a professor at the University of Toronto, established the *sufi* Study Circle and the Canadian Society of Muslims and campaigned to establish Muslim personal law in Canada and to remove bias against Islam and Muslims from school textbooks. He also raised funds to establish the Jami Mosque in 1967-68, the first *masjid* in Toronto of which he was the first *Imam*. He was the first Muslim to bring Canadians into the fold of Islam in any large measure, proving yet again that it is the *sufi* saints who throughout history have converted people to Islam across the world. He passed away in 1988, a *Zindah Shah*, may Allah Ta'ala raise his *darajat* (stature) even further, *Aameen*. Syed

Mumtaz Ali sahib, his *khalifa* in the Chishtiyyah *tariqah*, continues his good work, *Al Hamdu Lillah*.

'Aabideen (Worshippers of Allah)

Having established the first mosque in Canada in Edmonton as well as in Toronto, Canada's largest city, those in the *sufi* tradition have gone on to build other *masajid* and establish *musalla* (prayer places) and *madaris* (Muslim religious schools) in Toronto. These devotees never tire of worshipping Allah Ta'ala. Besides the five times daily prayers, they yearn to pray the *sunnahs* of *tahajjud*, *ishraq*, *dhuhaa*, *awwabeen* and *taraweh* as well as *salatul Tasbeeh*. They take the Qur'an Kareem, the Hadith Shareef and the Asma u'l Husna to heart and they make sure they avoid *haram* (the forbidden), earn *halal* and eat *halal* (the permissible), and keep themselves *taahir* (ritually pure) with *wudhu* (ablution) at all times. And among the hidden devotees are those who observe *Sunnah* fast on the ninth and tenth of Muharram (*yaumul 'ashura*); *nisf Sha'ban* (15th of Sha'ban); six days of *Shawwal* (after 'Eid); *yaumul 'Arafah* (9th Dhul Hijjah); every 13th, 14th and 15th of the month (following the Muslim calendar); and every Thursday and Monday, the day our beloved Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* was born.

Zikr of Allah Ta'ala

The *tariqas* are fraternities of *zikr* (remembrance) of Allah Ta'ala. In the *Zikr* congregation, there is *khatm* Qur'an (recitation of the whole Qur'an) or recitation of Surah Yaa Seen.

This is followed by *astaghfaar* (begging forgiveness of Allah Ta'ala), *Kalima Tayyibah* (sincerely pure declaration), *Tashahhud* (Muslim testimony), *Asma Allah ul Husna* (Beautiful Names of Allah), and *salawaat* and *salaam* (invoking Allah's blessings and peace on the Holy Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*). The most popular *salawaat* are *As-Salaatu Ibrahimiyah*, *Salaat ut Taaj*, *Salaat Tunjina* and *As-Salaat ut Taaziyyah*.

Dua (supplication) is an important part of the *zikr*. Many of the *dua* are from the *Azkaar* (Supplications) compiled by Imam an-Nawawi, *Rahmatullahi 'alaih*. These are the *azkaar* (invocations) that Rasulullah *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* himself taught his

blessed household and companions, may Allah be pleased with them.

Munaajaat (hymns) are then recited, in praise of Allah Ta'ala and *madeeh* (eulogy) of the Holy Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*.

In most *ziker* groups, we have the recitation of the *shajarah* (family tree) of the *shaikh* linking him in lineage to our noble Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*. The recital of *Tawassul* is popular as well. This invokes Allah with the mediation of our beloved Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*, all the *anbiya* (prophets), peace be upon them, the *Ahl ul Bayt* (the blessed Household of the blessed Prophet), the *sahaba* (his companions), and all the *mashayikh* (spiritual masters) in that *tariqa*.

In most instances, the *ziker* session ends with *Taazeem-e Qiyam*, or standing ovation for the Holy Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*, in which *salaams* on him composed by Imam as-Sayyid Ja'far ibn Hasan al-Barzanji, Imam 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Habshi, or Allama Ishqee (in Arabic), A'la Hazrat Imam Ahmed Raza Khan, or al-'Allamah Akbar Warithi (in Urdu), al-'Allamah Suleman Chelebi Effendi (in Turkish), or Shaikh Syed Mubarik Ali Shah Qadiri (in English), *Rahmatullahi 'alaihim ajmaeen* are recited.

Food and refreshments are then served. This is called *tabarruk* in Arabic and *nyaz* in Urdu, and is prepared by the ladies in most instances, with befitting love, care, commitment and dedication to gain *thawab* (heavenly reward).

The Qadiriyyah, Chishtiyyah, Jerrahiyyah, 'Alawiyyah and Naqshbandiyyah recite *ziker* every Thursday or Friday night. The Qadiriyyah also recite *ziker* on the eleventh of each month of the Muslim calendar, especially the eleventh of Rabi-ul-Akhir, the day Shaikh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani *Rahmatullahi 'alaihim* left his earthly existence. This is called *Gyarween Shareef* in Urdu (the blessed eleventh night). The ladies organise separate *ziker* sessions of their own as well.

The 'Alawiyyah carry with them two Muslim flags for major *ziker* sessions and other important occasions. This revives the sunnah of the beloved Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* of showing the Muslim flag. One flag represents the 'Alawiyyah and the other the Qadiriyyah. These two flags have the seal of approval of Sayyidi wa Imami Shaikh 'AbdulQadir Jilani and Sayyidi wa Imami al-Habib Ahmad Mash-hur bin Taha Al-Haddad, may Allah make us benefit from

them, *Aameen*. By now, Muslims of Toronto are familiar with *ziker* sessions organised by the 'Alawiyyah that continue the whole night in Imdadul Islam Masjid and end with *Salatul Tasbeeh* and *Salatul Fajr, Al Hamdu Lillah*.

Azkaar and Awraad

The *azkaar* and *awraad* (regular voluntary invocations) most popular among the 'Alawiyyah are the *Ratib* and *Wird al-Latif* of Sayyidi wa Imami Maulana 'AbdAllah bin 'Alawi al-Haddad, the *Ratib* of Sayyidina Al-Habib 'Umar Bin 'Abdirrahman al-'Attas, and the *Wasila* of Sayyidina al-Habib Muhammad Bin Zain Bin Sumait, *Rahmatullahi 'alaihim ajma'een*. *Qasida Burda* of Imam al-Buseeri *Rahmatullahi 'alaihim*, is recited every month in congregation. All these bring *shafa'a* (healing) and *maghfira* (forgiveness). Among the Qadiriyyah, the *Tasbeehaat* to cleanse your heart are *Laa Ilaha Illallah*, (None is worthy of worship except Allah), *Illallah*, and *Allahu*, and these are recited in *halaqa* of *ziker* (circle of *ziker*) a hundred times each, while the supplications and *salawaat* of Shaikh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani *Rahmatullahi 'alaihim* in *The Manaqib* are also well-known. The *Ziker* among the Jerrahiyyah with simultaneous but different recitals by two or more reciters spiritually invigorates the *Zakireen*. *ZikerPaase Anfaas* (with abated breath) as well as *Dua Jameelah* are the hallmarks of the Naqshbandiyyah, while the most memorable *dua* (invocations) are recited among the Chishtiyyah in the *Khatme Khawajagaan*.

The *kutub* (books) of *salawaat* (invoking blessings of Allah on the noble Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*) that have gained the hearts of Muslims in Toronto are:

- ! Dalaail ul Khairaat (**Proofs of Good Deeds**) of Imam al-Jazuli,
- ! Jaaliya tul Akdaar (**A Community With Meagre Means**) of Maulana Dhiya ud Deen Khalid al-Baghdadi,
- ! Tanbeehil Anaam (**Exhorting Mankind**) of Shaikh 'Abdul Jalil Bin 'Azoom,
- ! Lataaif il 'Arshiyyah (**Mercies From Allah's Throne**) of Sayyidunal Imam 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Habshi,
- ! Majmu'a Salawaat ur Rasul (**Compilation of Invocations of Blessings**) of Khawaja 'Abdul Rahman Chohravi, and

! Mishkaat-us-Salawaat (**A Niche For Lit-Up Blessings**) of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Burney, *Rahmatullahi 'alaihim ajma'een*.

The *muredeen* (spiritual seekers) and *muhibbeen* (loving disciples) walk in Toronto with the *nur* (spiritual light) of the love of the Holy Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*.

Sallu 'alan Nabi.

Allahumma Salli wa Sallim 'alaih.

The Zikr by the Zakireen

The *Zakireen* of Toronto hold a joint *zikr* session every year. This is held a week before the blessed month of Ramadhan to welcome it. The *zikr* groups that have participated are:

! 'Alawiyyah
! Bazme Chirage Chishti
! Canadian Society of Muslims/

Society for Understanding the Finite and the Infinite (SUFI)

! Dar ul Qur'an
! Jerrahi Sufi Order of Canada
! International Muslims Organisation
! Madrasa-e-Tawheed
! Islamische Ummah Gemein Schaf
! Minhajul Qur'an
! Muslims of the Americas
! Qadiriyyah-Uwaisiyyah-Zaylaiyyah
! Silsila-e 'Aliyyah Qadiriyyah
! Spiritual Foundation
! World Islamic Mission

All the *zikr* groups participate as equals but one of the groups is chosen to take the lead in organising it each year. The first such session was held in 1415 A.H/1995 C.E. The *zikr* groups that have taken the lead so far in organising it are:

! 'Alawiyyah
! Canadian Society of Muslims /

Society for Understanding the Finite and the Infinite (SUFI)

! Minhaj ul Qur'an
! World Islamic Mission, and
! Bazme Chirage Chishti.

The program starts with the recitation of Surah Yaa

Seen Shareef. Each *zikr* group is then introduced and recites *zikr* for about 20 minutes. The program is brought to a close with *Taazim-e Qiyaam* (standing ovation) for the beloved of Allah, Muhammad Mustafa, *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*. The day-long program is spiritual nourishment to rejuvenate the *ruh* (spirit) so that it is ready to receive the *barakah* (spiritual blessings) of the month of Ramadhan.

Mawlid un-Nabi, Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam

The first organisation in Toronto to establish *halaqa* of *zikr* as well as the celebrations of *Mawlid un-Nabi Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* on a continuous and systematic basis was the Canadian Society of Muslims. Since then, *Mawlid un-Nabi Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* is celebrated by more than a dozen *masajid* and organisations as well as in hundreds of homes in Toronto. This has now gained momentum and the first international Milad-un-Nabi Conference was organised by the World Islamic Mission in 1993 which draws *'ulama* from across the world. This conference gave birth to the International Me'raj-un-Nabi Conference organised by the International Muslims Organisation in 1994 and the International Milad-un-Nabi Conference organised by the Naqshbandiyyah Foundation in Chicago, USA, in 1994. The baraka (blessing) is now spreading, Al Hamdu Lillah to all corners of Canada and the U.S.A.

At such *maulid* celebrations, if you are lucky, you might get to hear *madeeh* (eulogy) in honour of the Holy Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* composed by Hazrat Hassaan bin Thabit *Radhy Allahu 'Anhu* and Hazrat Ka'b ibn Zuhair *Radhy Allahu 'Anhu*, two of the *sahabi* (companions) of the Holy Prophet; or by luminaries such as Shaikh Sa'adi Shirazi, Allamah 'AbdulRahman Jami, Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, Imam Buseeri, Maulana 'Abdallah ibn 'Alawi al-Haddad, Imam 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Habshi, and A'la Hazrat Imam Ahmed Raza Khan *Rahmatullahi 'alaihim ajma'een*.

Indeed Muslims of Toronto have by now become so much familiar with the *abyaat* (couplets) of Hazrat Hassaan bin Thabit *Radhy Allahu 'Anhu* in praise of the beloved of Allah, Muhammad ur Rasulullah *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*, that many of them know at least these couplets of his by heart.

*Wa ahsanu minka lam tara qattu 'aini
Wa ajmalu minka lam talidin nisaau
Khuliqta mubarra-an min kulli 'aybin
Ka-annaka qad khuliqta kamaa tashaau*

I have never seen anyone better than you
Now did any woman give birth to anyone more
beautiful than you
You have been created free from any faults
Just as you yourself wished to be created

Allahumma Salli wa Sallim wa Baarik 'alaih
**Toronto Houses the Blessed Hair of the Beloved
Prophet**
Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam

Would you believe it? Toronto houses the blessed hair of the beloved Prophet Muhammad Mustafa *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* and the one who has the *sharaf* (honour) of having the cherished possession of this invaluable treasure is Haji Ahmad Valli Nathalia saheb. His *shaikh*, Maulana Sayed Kamruddin Qadiri has in his possession in India some blessed hair of the Holy Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*. To spread *baraka* (blessings) in the West, he decided, in consultation with other *mashayikh*, to give one of these blessed hair to Haji Ahmad saheb who brought it from Karanta, India to his home in Toronto in 1992.

Since then, whenever he holds celebrations of Maulid un Nabi *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* in Rabi' ul Awwal, he invites all the devotees to catch a glimpse of that blessed hair. On this auspicious occasion, the case containing the hair is carried on his head with befitting love and reverence. And when the case is opened, Haji Saheb removes many veils of cloth, like so many veils in heaven before he reveals the actual case containing the hair. All this while, the muhibbeen (beloved disciples) recite *salawaat* and *salaams* on our beloved Prophet Muhammad Mustafa *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*. It is a spiritually enriching ceremony performed to perfection!
Remember that the *Ahl ul Bayt* (the beloved Prophet's blessed household) and the *sahaba* (his blessed companions) would keep his hair that had been cut as an invaluable treasure to be passed on from generation to generation as priceless inheritance. We learn of this from the following hadith.

Narrated Ibn Sirin: I said to Abida, "I have some hair of the Holy Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa*

Sallam which I got from Hazrat Anas, *Radhy Allahu 'Anhu* or from his family". Abida responded, "No doubt, if I had a single hair of that it would have been dearer to me than the whole world and whatever is in it". (Bukhari)

Some of this blessed hair has been preserved in Turkey as well. Of this, one hair has been brought to New York. From there, it is brought to the Turkish Mosque in Toronto for public view, at the end of the month of Ramadhan. That night, the mosque is packed to capacity. On such blessed occasions, the recitation of *Maulid un Nabi* is a must. This is from the *kitab* (book) composed by Al-'Allamah Suleman Chelebi Effendi *Rahmatullahi 'alaih* with hymns and eulogies in Turkish. The gathering is so emotionally filled and spiritually charged that you see tears roll down the eyes of the devout as they fulfil their life-long ambition to catch a glimpse of the blessed hair. As each person gets a chance to kiss the case containing the hair, the whole congregation recites this salaah in chorus.

*Allahumma Salli 'alaa Sayyidina
Muhammad-i-nin-Nabiyyi'l Ummiyyi
Wa 'alaa aalihi wa sahibi wa Sallim*

O Allah! Bestow blessings and peace on Sayyidina Muhammad, the Prophet not taught by any human (but directly by You, O Allah), as well as on his family and companions.

The *baraka* (blessings) of the hair of the Holy Prophet, *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* in terms of the *nur* (spiritual light) it spreads for the Muslims of Canada in general and for those who get to view it in particular are immense, immediate and visible. May Allah *Sub'hanahu wa Ta'ala* give us the love of the Holy Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* that will sustain us in this world as well as in the Hereafter, *Aameen Yaa Rabbal 'Aalameen*.

Masajid and Madaris

As mentioned earlier, the *mashayikh* (spiritual masters) and *mureedeen* (spiritual seekers) were the pioneers in establishing the Jami Mosque in Toronto. Since then, more than a dozen *masajid* and *madaris* have been established in Metro-Toronto but for the sake of brevity, I will only touch on those in the rich and vibrant Muslim Turkish and Eastern European

tradition. In this historic tradition, there are two Turkish mosques as well as the Albanian Mosque, the Croatian Mosque, the Bosnian Mosque and Masjid al-Husain. Some mosques are identified for ease of reference as Turkish mosques because Muslims of Turkish descent have taken the initiative in establishing them but the gathering is truly international as in most *masajid* in Toronto.

Toronto is indeed a multicultural city where the majority are migrants from all over the world who have made Toronto their home and most of whose children have been born in Canada. You feel part of an international Muslim fraternity, those born in Canada, together with Muslim migrants from Turkey, the Arab countries, Pakistan, Albania, India, Bosnia, Somalia, Bangladesh, Kenya, Guyana, Mauritius, all worshipping Allah as one *ummah* (community) in Toronto. The *Imams* at these *masajid* wear the traditional *jubba* (cloak) as well as the *amamah* (turban). The walls are decked with beautiful frames containing the names that are engraved on the hearts of all Muslims: Allah (The Glorified and The Exalted), Sayyidina Muhammad Mustafa (Allah's blessings and peace be on him), Sayyidina Abubakr Siddiq, Sayyidina Umar Farooq, Sayyidina Uthman Dhun Nurain, Sayyidina Ali al-Murtadha, Sayyidatina Fatima, Sayyidina Imam Hasan and Sayyidina Imam Husain, *Radhy Allahu 'Anhum*. The *mimbar* (pulpit) is richly engraved with Muslim calligraphy while over the *mihrab* (prayer niche for the *Imam*) is the inscription from the Qur'an:

Fa walli waj-haka shatral Masjidi'l Haram
So turn your face towards the sacred mosque
 [Qur'an 2:144].

Women pray in a separate hall, all clad in the dignified traditional *hijab*. The melodious recitation of the *azan* sends a quiver through your heart. The *salah* (ritual prayer) is with full concentration. After the *salah*, the *dua* (invocation) is long and fervent. *Tasbeeh* (rosaries) with 100 beads are distributed to recite *Sub'hanallah*: Glory be to Allah (33 times), *Alhamdulillah*: All praise is for Allah (33 times), and *Allahu Akbar*: Allah is Great (34 times). After every congregational *salah*, and after every four raka'ah of Taraweh in the month of Ramadhan, there is congregational *salawaat* (invocation of blessings) on the beloved Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*. And after the congregational *dua*, you can obtain audio

cassettes on the life-histories of the *awliyaAllah* like Ibrahim ibn Ad'ham and Bishr al-Hafi, may Allah be pleased with them.

Many other *masajid* and *musallas* have been established in Toronto in the *Ahl us Sunnah wal Jama'ah* tradition among which are the Sunnatul Jamat Masjid, the Imdad ul Islam Masjid, the International Muslims Organisation Masjid, the Uthman Gauthi Masjid, Masjid Noorul Haram of the World Islamic Mission, as well as Islamic centres by Minhaj ul Qur'an, Dar ul Qur'an, Muslims of the Americas, and the Jerrahi Sufi Order of Canada, among others.

Salutations of all the Muslims are for the *khuddam* (voluntary caretakers) of these *masajid* for keeping them speck clean at all times.

Most of these organisations also run *madaris* (Muslim religious schools) and some students have already become *Hafiz-e-Qur'an*, those who know the whole Qur'an by heart, especially from Muslims of the Americas. Some students go to Dar ul 'Ulum overseas like the Hijaz University of the IMO in England to become '*alim*. Madrasa tul Hidayah organises Qur'an recitation, Hadith recitation and Qasida recitation programs among students. These days, the students have been trained to organise and conduct Madrasa Day Programs and to recite the whole of the *Maulid un Nabi* together with the *qasaid* and the *madeeh* (eulogies) all by themselves, Alhamdu Lillah!

The Visiting and Resident 'Ulama

Toronto has also been blessed by the visiting '*ulama-e-haqq* (scholars of truth). Among the most senior of these or representatives of their *tariqas* are:

- ! Imam Muhammad bin 'Alawi al-Maliki al-Hasani (from Makkah);
- ! Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani Siddiqui al-Qadiri and Maulana Nasrullah Khan al-Qadiri (from Pakistan);
- ! Maulana Na'eem Ashraf al-Qadiri and Sayed Mehboob Ali Shah Chishti (from India);
- ! Al-Marhum Maulana 'AbdulWahhab Siddiqi al-Naqshbandi, *Rahmatullahi 'alaih* and *Shaikh* Muhammad Abubakar BaShuaib (from U.K);
- ! Shaikh Mustafa Yucel al-Naqshbandi (from Germany);

! Shaikh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti, and
! Shaikh Salisu Shaban al-Tijani (from Ghana).

Faiz and *barakat* (blessings) have also been received from the visits of various other '*ulama* (whose names are given here in alphabetical order according to country of origin).

From India:

! Maulana Sayed Muhammad Madani Ashrafi,
! Maulana Sayed Kalim Ashrafi,
! Maulana Sayed Muhammad Hashmi Ashrafi,
! Maulana Sayed Muhammad Jilani Ashraf
Kachchochavi,
! Maulana Sayed Kamruddin Qadiri,
! Khawaja Khushhal Shah, and
! Sayed Abul Hasan Ashrafi;
!

From Netherlands:

! Hafiz Shaheed Siddiqui;
!

From Pakistan:

! Prof. Shah Faridul Haq,
! Maulana Ahsan Ilahi,
! Dr. Tahirul Qadiri,
! Maulana Qari Ghulam Rasul,
! Maulana Sayed Muhammad Taher Shah; and
! Maulana Ahmad Siddiqui;

From Trinidad:

! Maulana Siddiq Nasir;

From U.K.:

! Maulana Qamar uz Zaman Azmi,
! Maulana Qari Khadim Husain Chishti,
! Maulana Shahid Raza,
! Maulana Faizul Aqtab Siddiqi,
! Zainul Aqtab Siddiqi and
! Nurul Aqtab Siddiqi;

From U.S.A.:

! Shaikh Muhammad al-Akili,
! Dr. Hasan ud-Deen Hashmi,
! Maulana Husain Rizvi,
! Maulana Ghulam Yasin Qadiri Rizvi;

From Yemen:

! Sayyid Jufri al-'Alawi.

Muslims of Toronto have also benefited immensely from the visits of scholars from U.S.A whose hearts Allah Ta'ala has opened to Islam, scholars such as **Shaikh Nuh Ha Mim Keller** and **Shaikh Hamza Yousef**.

Muslim women have also been overjoyed with the visits of Dr. Farida Ahmad, an illustrious '*alimah* from Pakistan, the daughter of Maulana 'Abdul Aleem Siddiqi. *MaashaaAllah!*

These '*ulama* have drunk deep at the fount of *Tawheed* (Oneness of Allah) and when they go to preach to non-Muslims, they warn against *shirk* (polytheism) and expound on the blessings of Islam and when they address Muslims, they talk of the love of Allah Ta'ala and the love of the beloved Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*. They command great love and respect, as do the *sayyid saadaat* (descendants of the beloved Prophet *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*), and all elders in general.

The '*ulama* and *mashaayikh* are hosted by various Muslim fraternities, organisations and mosques. They deliver a *khutbah* (talk), establish a *halaqa* (circle) of *zikr* and *maulid*, and mobilise the *muredeen* and *muhibbeen* to greater *juhd* (exertion). They expound on sound '*aqida* (creed), *shari'a* (sacred Muslim law), *tariqa* (spiritual path), and *ma'rifa* (gnosis), that is, all the spiritual realities of Islam, and many of them draw huge crowds, especially among University students who eagerly await them to hear about the *Ihya'* of Imam al-Ghazali *Rahmatullahi 'alaih* or the Qasida tul Burda of Imam al-Buseeri *Rahmatullahi 'alaih*. From whichever part of the world they come, their language is the same, the language of *Tasawwuf*, the language of the inner spiritual dimension of Islam. Muslims of Toronto feel they are an international fraternity of *muhibbeen* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad al-Mustafa *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*, spiritually linked to him through the *baraka* (blessings) of their *shaikh*.

This feeling of international brotherhood has been strengthened with increasing access to the internet which links *sufi tariqas* across the world in the world wide web. *Zikr* groups that have developed web-sites are:

'Alawiyyah (Iqra Islamic Publications)
Canadian Society of Muslims
Jerrahi Sufi Order of Canada
which is affiliated with The Jerrahi Order of America
Minhaj ul Qur'an
The Sufi Study Circle of the University of Toronto
World Islamic Mission

Among the resident senior '*ulama, imams and mashayikh* are (in alphabetical order according to country of origin): Imam Hafiz 'AbdulHaleem 'Aleem (from Afghanistan), Imam Haji Shameer Khan and Imam Muhammad Yusuf (from Guyana), Syed Mumtaz Ali saheb (from India), Shaikh Yousef Bakhour and Imam Yusuf Chebli (from Labanon), Imam 'Abdulshakur Dulloo (from Mauritius), Maulana Qazi Bashiruddin Farooqui (from Pakistan), Shaikh Umar al-Qadiri (from Somalia), Shaikh Ahmad Talal (from Syria), and Imam Muzaffar Kosar (from Turkey). Recently, the Muslims of Toronto suffered a great loss when Shaikh Hamid Jabir, Imam of Tariq Masjid passed away after performing Hajj and was laid to rest in *Jannatul Baqi* in Madinatul Munawwah. He was Hafiz Qur'an and a *shaikh* with the 'Alawi background who used to recite Waseelatush Shafi and Tabaraka Dhul 'Ulaa after *Taraweh* prayers in the month of Ramadhan. May Allah Ta'ala raise his *daraja* (rank) in *Jannah, Aameen*.

Da'wa And Other Activities

Among the Qadriyyah are those in an organisation called the Muslims of the Americas who are also in the forefront in most of the activities mentioned, but they do more. They preach to the non-Muslims of Toronto as well as in prisons, bringing Canadians into the fold of Islam. They know the most effective way of presenting Islam as they themselves have been converted to Islam. These are brothers and sisters of African descent in the Qadriyyah *Tariqa* who cry out in loving agony from the bottom of their hearts when the Holy Prophet's name is mentioned. Their daily *wird* (regular voluntary recital) is *Qaseeda Ghauthiyya* of Shaikh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani *Rahmatullahi 'alaih*.

The Sufi Study Circle does *da'wa* work in the University of Toronto in a different setting. At these study sessions in a quiet study room in a campus building that houses the International Students Centre of the University, the beauty of the teachings of Islam

is shown through readings from classics of Muslim spirituality, followed by a question and answer session, and *dua*. If Allah so wills, the hearts of the non-Muslims who attend are opened to the *nur* (spiritual light) of Islam.

The Canadian Society of Muslims continues its struggle with the Government of Canada for the right of Muslims to be judged according to *shari'ah* (sacred Muslim law). In this respect, Canada lags behind other countries such as India, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, to name a few, which have separate courts for Muslims, with *Kadhis* (Muslim judges) who administer Muslim personal law. However, after years of effort, now there is a glimmer of hope. The Government of Ontario has begun to implement mandatory mediation across the province. To take advantage of this facility, an entirely new Islamic service has been launched in Canada called the "Muslim Marriage, Mediation And Arbitration Service".

The Canadian Society of Muslims, the Sufi Study Circle of the University of Toronto, and the Society For The Study of the Finite and the Infinite (SUFi) have more recently introduced live *qawwali* in Toronto which is a first for the whole of North America. This preserves the tradition of Maulana Mu'inuddin Chishti *Rahmatullahi 'alaih* who introduced *qawwali* in India to bring Indians into the fold of Islam. It is done with *adab* (respect and proper etiquette) under the supervision of the *shaikh* who explains that the main aim of the *qawwali* is to develop a yearning to be a good Muslim. The *qawwal* do not receive remuneration, no funds are raised, no fame is sought, only the love of Allah.

Then we have a one-hour *sehri* program on Radio Pakistan in Toronto, which wakes up Muslims for *Tahajjud* and *sehri* at around 4:30 a.m. every day in the month of Ramadhan. Muslims hear the *azan* on radio, recitation of Qur'an, *khutbah* (sermon), and *qaseedas* and *qawwalis*, which rejuvenate them to greater '*ibadah* (worship) in the month of Ramadhan. Since then, many similar programs have come up.

Not to be forgotten are the pioneering efforts of Nur-e-Islam Canada, the first to organise Muslim burial in a proper manner and have a separate burial place for Muslims in Toronto. This is another example which shows that the *Ahl us-Sunnah* lead and others

follow.

Another thing worthy of note is that those in the *sufi* tradition are truly united on the *sunnah* of sighting the moon: they start Ramadhan when the new moon is sighted and celebrate 'Eid on sighting the new moon.

Al-Fateha!

All Muslim organisations are also active in raising funds for the rehabilitation of refugees in Canada and for the oppressed Muslims in Bosnia, Kashmir, India, Palestine and other places. Among various other charitable projects is help for the homeless. May Allah Ta'ala protect all the Muslims and may He put the *nur* (light) of Islam into the hearts of non-Muslims, *Aameen Ya Rabbal 'Aalameen*.

Classics of Muslim Spirituality

The Qur'an Kareem, *kutub* (books) of Hadith Shareef and their translations have for long been generally available in Toronto. Now, the classics of Muslim spirituality written by *mashayikh* (spiritual masters) in the original as well as their translations, are gaining popularity, and are generally available in all Muslim bookstores. For the sake of brevity, I will mention just one classic each of some of the *mashayikh* to gain *baraka* (blessings).

Among the more ancient classics are:

- ! ***Hilyatul Awliya wa Tabaqatul Asfiya (The Adornment of the Saints and the Ranks of the Spiritual Elite)***, of Imam Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani;
- ! ***Al-Risala fi 'Ilm al-Tasawwuf (The Treatise About Knowledge Of The Sufi Lifestyle)***, of Imam Abu'l Qasim al-Qushayri;
- ! ***Kashf al-Mahjub (The Unveiling of the Mystery)***, of Hazrat Data Ganj Baksh Ali al-Hujwiri;
- ! ***Ihya' 'Ulum al-Deen (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)***, of Hujjatul Islam Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali;
- ! ***Ghunyat al-Talibeen (Wealth For Spiritual Seekers)***, of Gauth ul A'zam Muhyuddin Shaikh 'AbdulQadir Jilani,
- ! ***Awarif al-Ma'arif (The Gifts of Gnosis)***, of Imam Shihabuddin Suhrawardi;
- ! ***Azkaar (Supplications)***, of Muhyuddin Imam Yahya bin Sharaf an-Nawawi;
- ! ***Hizb ul A'zam (The Great Supplication)***, of Hazrat Mulla 'Ali Al-Qaari;

- ! ***Mathnawi (Rhyming Couplets)***, of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi;
- ! ***Champay Dhee Bootee (The Jasmine Plant)***, of Sultan Bahu;
- ! ***Maulid un Nabi Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam***, of Imam as-Sayyid Ja'far al-Barzanji
- ! ***Risalatul Mu'awanah (The Book of Assistance)***, of Sayyidi wa Imami Maulana 'Abdallah bin 'Alawi al-Haddad;

May Allah *Sub'hanahu wa Ta'ala* be pleased with them all, **Aameen**.

Among some of the more recent classics are:

- ! ***Simtud Durar (A Necklace of Pearls)***, of Sayyidunal Imam 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Habshi;
- ! ***Mukhul Ibadah (The Essence of Worship)***, anonymous;
- ! ***Fuyudhaatur Rabbaniyyah (Overflowing Abundance From The Lord)***, of al-Haj Isma'il ibn As-Sayyid Muhammad Sa'eed al-Qadiri;
- ! ***Hadaaiqi Bakhshish (Gardens of Gifts)***, of A'la Hazrat Imam Ahmad Raza Khan;
- ! ***Jawhar un Nafees (Precious Jewellery)*** of Shaikh Uways ibn Muhammad;
- ! ***Majmu'ah Mushtamilah (A Comprehensive Compilation)***, of Shaikh AbdulRahman bin Ahmad al-Zayla'yyi;
- ! ***Daleelil 'Ibaad Ilaa Sabil ir Rashad (Proof For People On The Right Path)***, of Shaikh al-Haaj Sufi;
- ! ***Irshad (Spiritual Guidance)*** of Shaikh Muzaffar Ozak al-Jerrahi;
- ! ***Anwaar ul Muhammadiyyah (The Muhammadan Lights)*** of Imam Yusuf ibn Isma'il an-Nabhaani;
- ! ***Zikr-e-Habib (The Remembrance of the Beloved Prophet, Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam)***, of Maulana 'Abdul 'Aleem Siddiqi;
- ! ***Faizaane Sunnat (The Blessings of the Beloved Prophet's Lifestyle)***, of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Attaar Qadiri;
- ! ***The Most Beautiful Names***, of Shaikh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti;
- ! ***Abwaab ul-Faraj (Doors of Comfort)*** of Imam Muhammad bin 'Alawi al-Maliki al-Hasani;
- ! ***Qutuf u'r Rabi' Fee Qasaid Mad'h***

- Taahaa'sh Shafi' (The Harvest of Rabi' al-Awwal in the Eulogies of Taahaa The Intercessor)**, of Al-'Allamah Ustadh Muhammad Shareef Sa'eed al-Beidh;
- ! **Ad-Durrul Munaddad Fee Seerati Sayyidina Muhammad (A String of Pearls in the Life-History of Our Master Muhammad)**, of Shaikh Muhammad 'Abdallah Shaddad bin 'Umar Baa 'Umar;
- ! **Nahjul Burda Fee Mad'h Khairil Anaam (Following the Burda in Praising The Best of Mankind)**, of Shaikh Hasan Muhammad 'Abdallah Shaddad bin 'Umar Baa 'Umar; and
- ! **Miftah ul Jannah (The Key To Paradise)**, of Sayyidi wa Imami al-Habib Ahmad Mash-hur bin Taha al-Haddad;

May Allah *Sub'hanahu wa Ta'ala* be pleased with them all and make us benefit from them, *Aameen*. Of the classics just mentioned, the most widely read among both Muslims and non-Muslims in the U.S is the **Mathnawi (Rhyming Couplets)** of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, while the fastest selling book among the Muslims of U.K is **Miftahul Jannah (The Key to Paradise)** of Sayyidunal Imam al-Habib Ahmad Mash-hur bin Taha al-Haddad, Naf'an Allahu Bih.

The University of Toronto library houses most of these and many more in almost one whole floor of stacks and stacks of books on Islam. When you reference these, you are convinced once and for all that since the time of Rasulullah *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*, the *sufi* tradition in the *Ahl us Sunnah wal Jama'ah* has been the dominant tradition among Muslims. Various minor sects have come up as in all religions but they have been short-lived. The *nur* (spiritual light) generated by the love of the noble Prophet Muhammad-e-'Arabi *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam* automatically hands the torch of Islam to the *sufis* and their disciples to carry, and to spread Islam in all the corners of the globe.

As a result of the general availability of classics of Muslim spirituality, a spiritually-laden vocabulary is gaining ascendancy. Words and phrases like *adab* (spiritual courtesy and etiquette), *mureed* (spiritual seeker), *muhibb* (loving disciple), *Huququ'llah* (rights of Allah Ta'ala on us), *huququ'l 'ibaad* (the rights of servants of Allah on us), *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the ego/self), *tasfiyatul qalb* (cleansing of the

heart), *ikhlas* (sincerity), *ihsan* (spiritual excellence), *ilham* (inspiration), *fee Hubirrasul* (for the love of the Holy Prophet), *fana Fillah* (annihilation of one's ego for the sake of Allah), *'ainil haqeeqa* (the eye of the heart that sees spiritual realities), *tazkiratul awliya* (narrations about *sufi* saints), *'arifeen* (knowers by direct illumination), *siddiqeen* (true saints), *tawakkul* (total reliance on Allah), *Ridhallah* (for the Pleasure of Allah), and *husnul khatimah* (felicitous end) are beginning to be understood and appreciated.

Hawl, Ziyara and 'Urs Shareef

Maulid un Nabi celebrations and anniversary celebrations of Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Isma'il (peace be upon them) are well-known. More recently, the celebration of the 'Urs of the *awliya* (*sufi* saints) has gained momentum in Toronto. Muslims gather to celebrate the successful completion of the life of a *waliyAllah* (friend of Allah). Such a gathering is referred to as 'Urs among the Urdu speaking Muslims, and *hawl* or *ziyara*, among those who speak Arabic. *Khatme Gauthiyya Shareef* in honour of Muhyuddin Shaikh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani *Rahmatullahi 'alaih* is most popular. As well, among many such celebrations, we have the 'Urs *Shareef* (*hawl/ziyara*) of:

- ! Hazrat Khwaja Uthman Harwani, Hazrat Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti, Hazrat Khwaja Sabir Kalyari, and Dr. Qadeer Baig, (by the Canadian Society of Muslims in conjunction with the Sufi Study Circle of the University of Toronto);
- ! Khawaja 'Abdul Rahman Chohravi, Sayyid Ahmad Shah and Hazrat Tayyib Shah (by Silsila-e-'Aliyyah Qadiriyyah);
- ! A'la Hazrat Imam Ahmed Raza Khan and Maulana 'Abdul Aleem Siddiqi al-Qadiri (by the World Islamic Mission);
- ! Maulana 'Abdul Wahab Siddiqi (by the International Muslims Organisation among the Naqshbandiyyah), and
- ! Shaikh Uways bin Muhammad al-Barawi al-Qadiri, Shaikh al-Haaj Sufi, and Shaikh 'AbdulRahman az-Zayla'iy (among the Qadiriyyah);

Al-Habib Maulana 'Abdallah ibn 'Alawi al-Haddad, al-Habib Ahmad Mash-hur bin Taha al-Haddad, and al-Habib Imam 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Habshi (by the

'Alawiyyah); *Naf'anAllahu bihim, Aameen.*
May Allah, The Glorified and The Exalted make us benefit from them, *Aameen.* At such gatherings of devotees, there is *khatme* Qur'an Kareem or recitation of Surah Yaa Seen, *Zikr* of Allah Ta'ala, recitation of *qaseedas* and a talk on the life history of the *waliyAllah* (friend of Allah).

Al Hamdu Lillah, the *sufi* tradition in Toronto is in full flourish. The *dua* of Maulana 'Abdul 'Aleem Siddiqi *Rahmatullahi 'alaih* and the *juhd* (spiritual exertion) of Dr. Qadeer Baig *Rahmatullahi 'alaih* are bearing fruit. May Allah Ta'ala lead us all to strive more in His Path, may all the *shayaateen* be defeated and may only the love of Allah Ta'ala, of his Beloved Prophet Muhammad Mustafa *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam*, of the *Ahlul Bayt* (his blessed Household), of the *Sahaba* (his companions) and of the *awliya Allah* (Friends of Allah) remain, *Aameen, Yaa Rabbal Aalameen.*

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