



**LAILATUL
BARAA'AT
15TH NIGHT
OF SHA'BAAN**

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LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

THE 15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN (Lailatul Baraa'ah) has been regarded as an auspicious occasion by the Ummah since the earliest times. Since the time of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) this Night has been considered a holy occasion to be spent in Ibaadat. Throughout the history of Islam, down to our present age, the 15th Night of Sha'baan has been accepted as an auspicious night. However, some persons in these times object to this Night being classified as among the Holy Nights of Islam. They brand as false the belief in the holiness of Lailatul Baraa'ah.

In substantiation of their claim they present the views of some authentic authorities of Islam while overlooking the authoritative views of other authorities as well as the general practice of the Ummah on this issue since the earliest times. By 'general practice of the Ummah' we do not refer to the many bid'aat (innovations) and fabricated practices which have been introduced and coupled to Lailatul Baraa'ah by people who have strayed from the Path of the Sunnah. The general practice of the Ummah in regard to the 15th Night of Sha'baan is:

- * To visit the qabrustaan individually on this Night, making dua for the dead as was done by Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam).
- * To spend part of the night in individual Ibaadat in the privacy of the home.
- * To fast on the 15th Day of Sha'baan.

Besides the above acts all other practices, customs and festivals associated with this auspicious occasion are bid'ah and unlawful, having neither origin nor sanction in the Sunnah.

It is conceded that there does exist difference of opinion among the authorities regarding the status and the significance

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

of the 15th Night and Day of Sha'baan. However, inspite of the existence of such difference of opinion, it is erroneous to claim that the 15th Night of Sha'baan has no origin and no substantiation in Islam. Unlike the bid'ah practices which are unanimously condemned and prohibited by all authorities of Islam, the auspiciousness of the 15th Night of Sha'baan is upheld by numerous illustrious personalities of Islam.

Those who reject the validity of the holiness of this Night do so on the basis that the narrations concerning the 15th Night of Sha'baan are 'Weak', hence should be discounted. It should, however, be remembered that the designation 'Dhaeef' (Weak) in the terminology of the Muhadditheen is a word of technical import. It does not mean that a 'Dhaeef' narration is fabricated and should be rejected in entirety. A Hadith which is designated 'Dhaeef' attains strength when its subject matter is narrated by different Chains of narrators. The abundance of Chains of Narrations of a 'Dhaeef' Hadith bestows to it the classification of 'Hasan Li ghairihi'. Such a Hadith is thus acceptable and can be acted on.

Furthermore, a Dhaeef Hadith is accepted by all authorities in regard to Fadhaail (significance, virtues, excellences). In this regard Mulla Ali Qaari states: "But, in regard to the virtues of deeds of righteousness, Dhaeef Hadith is acceptable by the consensus of the Ulama." While a Dhaeef Hadith will not constitute a basis for establishing Aqaa-id (Beliefs) and specific classes of Law (Ahkaam), nevertheless, such Ahadith may be acted on in regard to the Fadhaail (virtues) of Ibaadat.

On the basis of the aforementioned explanation it is clear that in view of the Dhaeef category of the narrations, Lailatul Baraa'at cannot be imposed on people nor can it be designated a Sunnat-e-Muakkadah. Nevertheless, it will be an act of merit and thawaab to spend this Night in Ibaadat and fast on the 15th Day on account of the number of Hadith narrations making mention of the auspiciousness of this Night and of the acts of

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

Ibaadat stated therein even though these Ahadith may be of the Dhaeef category.

The rejectors of the holiness of the 15th Night of Sha'baan further present their argument pertaining to the majority view on the Qur'aanic verse No. 3 of Surah Dukhaan which reads:

"Verily, We have revealed it (Qur'aan) in a gracious night."

All Kitaabs of Tafseer present two different views regarding the meaning of 'the gracious night'. One view, which is the Jamhooir (majority) view and the most authentic one, is that the 'gracious night' mentioned here is Lailatul Qadr. The other view is that it is Lailatul Baraa'at (15th Night of Sha'baan). Since the overwhelming majority of authorities have opined on the basis of clear and categoric proofs that the 'gracious night' mentioned in this aayat refers to Lailatul Qadr and not Lailatul Baraa'at, the rejectors of the 15th Night of Sha'baan have confused two separate issues, viz., the meaning of 'gracious night' mentioned in the aayat and the validity of the auspiciousness of the 15th Night of Sha'baan. These are different issues and should not be confused. While it is conceded that the view of the Jamhooir Ulama is that the 'gracious night' mentioned in aayat 3 of Surah Dukhaan is a reference to Lailatul Qadr, it does not follow therefrom that the 15th Night of Sha'baan is not an auspicious night. At most, it has to be accepted that the case of the Jamhooir regarding the tafseer of Al-lailatul Mubaarakah stated in this particular aayat is stronger and have greater reliability than the view of those Ulama who claim that the 'gracious night' stated in this aayat is the 15th Night of Sha'baan.

It is incorrect to argue that because the 'gracious night' mentioned in aayat 3 of Surah Dukhaan refers to Lailatul Qadr, the 15th Night of Sha'baan has no validity or significance of holiness. The auspiciousness of Lailatul Baraa'at is not based on this particular aayat. A number of other Hadith narrations collectively establish the significance of the 15th Night of

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

Sha'baan. All authorities cite these narrations and only a few have rejected them outright. We shall now proceed to cite the various authoritative Tafseer Kitaabs which present the validity of the 15th Night of Sha'baan.

The aayat under discussion is No. 3 of Surah Dukhaan: **"Verily We revealed it in a gracious night."**

Tafseer Mazhari states:

"It is Lailatul Qadr..... The hadith which has been narrated from Qaasim Bin Muhammad who narrates from his father or his uncle who narrates from his grandfather who narrated on the authority of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) that he said: 'Allah Jalle Shanauhu descends to the worldly heaven on the Night of the middle of Sha'baan. He then forgives all people except him who has malice in his heart or a mushrik with Allah.'" According to Baghawi does not indicate the revelation of the Qur'aan during that night (i.e. 15th Night of Sha'baan)."

While the difference of interpretation cited in the abovementioned Tafseer of the aayat pertains to the meaning of the 'gracious night', it does not negate the validity of the auspiciousness of Lailatul Baraa'at. It merely states that while according to one opinion (viz. the most authentic and authoritative) the aayat refers to Lailatul Qadr, another opinion, also of Islamic authorities, assert it to be Lailatul Baraa'at. Thus it is said quite clearly in Mazhari that according to Baghawi the narration regarding the 15th Night of Sha'baan does not indicate that the 'gracious night' stated in this specific aayat refers to Lailatul Baraa'at.

Tafseerul Khaazin states:

"It is Lailatul Qadr.... and it has been said it is the middle night of Sha'baan. It is narrated from Aishah (radhiallahu anha) that she said that Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: 'Verily, Allah Tabaraka wa Ta'ala descends to the Samaa-e-Dunya (the worldly heaven, i.e. the lowest heaven) during the

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

middle night of Sha'baan. He then forgives more (people) than the number of hairs on the sheep of the tribe of Bani Kalb (Tirmidhi)."

Tafseerul Khaazin further states:

"Baghawi has narrated with his Chain of Narrators (Sanad) that verily, Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said:

"The fates (of all things) are recorded from Sha'baan to Sha'baan even the marriage of a man and a child being born to him."

Tafseerul Khaazin also reports the following narration of Ibn Abbaas (radhiallahu anhu):

"Verily Allah decrees Decisions in the middle night of Sha'baan and then assigns (the execution) of these to their respective agents (the Malaaikeh) during Lailatul Qadr."

Tafseerul Baghawi states the following in regard to the 15th Night of Sha'baan:

"Abdul Waahid Mulaihi informed us(the Chain of Narrators then proceeds through the following names: Abu Mansoor Simaani, Abu Ja'far Rayyani, Humaid bin Zanjorbih, Isbagh Ibnul Farj, Ibn Wahab, Amar Bin Haarith Abdul Malik Bin Abdul Malik, Ibn Aqbi Thi'b, Qaasim Bin Muhammad from his father or his uncle that Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: "Allah Jalle Shanahu descends to the Samaa-e-Dunya in the middle night of Sha'baan and He then forgives everyone except a person who bears malice in his heart or one who commits shirk with Allah."

Commenting on the meaning of the 'gracious night' mentioned in Surah Dukhaan, Baghawi states in his Tafseer: "Hasan, Mujaahid and Qataadah said that during the Month of Ramadhaan in the Night of Qadr every death, act, birth, sustenance and whatever will occur during that year are

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

recorded. Ikramah said that it is the Middle Night of Sha'baan in which the affairs of the year are decided. . ."

In a pamphlet issued by the rejectors of Lailatul Baraa'at, the following statement is made: "Ibn Katheer writes that the night in which therein is decreed for every affair of Wisdom is the Lailatul Qadr. And whoever says it is in the month of Shabaan as said by Ekrama is a great lie."

In this atrociously phrased sentence an attempt has been made to denigrate the illustrious Mufassir, Hadhrat Ikramah (rahmatullah alayh). The claim has been made that Ibn Katheer has branded Hadhrat Ikramah as a 'liar' on account of the latter's view and contention that the 'gracious night' is Lailatul Baraa'at. However, Ibn Katheer does not proclaim Hadhrat Ikramah to be a liar. On the contrary he expresses surprise at the view of Ikramah and thus says: "He who said that it is the middle night of Sha'baan as has been narrated from Ikramah, verily, he is far from the grazing field."

By this, Ibn Katheer means that Ikramah's view is 'far-fetched'. He does not brand Ikramah a liar. Ikramah is among the great authorities of Islam. Difference of opinion and interpretation are natural and logical corollaries of Knowledge. Differences of opinion are to be found in numerous Ilmi issues. The view of a reliable authority cannot be summarily dismissed and branded as a fabrication, especially by non-entities such as those who are responsible for the pamphlet denying the validity of Lailatul Baraa'at. Hadhrat Ikramah

(rahmatullah alayh) was among the Taabieen. He was the Maula of Abdullah Ibn Abbaas (radhiallahu anhu). Hadhrat Abdullah Ibn Abbaas (radhiallahu anhu) was his Ustaadh. Ikramah was among the illustrious Fuqaha of Makkkah Mukarramah. He acquired the Knowledge of Hadith from Ibn Abbaas and many other Sahaabah of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). He was thus in direct contact with the Knowledge of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) through the solitary link of the Sahaabah whereas IbnKatheer was

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

nowhere on the scene when Ikramah was riding on the crest of the Wave of Ilm. When the illustrious Saeed Bin Jubair was asked: "Is there anyone with more knowledge than you?", he replied: "Ikramah." Among the Sahaabah from whom Ikramah acquired Hadith are Aishah, Abu Hurairah, Abu Saeed (radhiallahu anhum) and others. It is therefore dangerous to brand such a great authority of the Shariah as a 'liar' on account of some isolated claims.

Furthermore, Ibn Katheer, in the Tafseer of this ayat of Surah Dukhaan cites the following Hadith in favour of Lailatul Baraa'at:

"Abdullah Bin Saalih narrates from Laith who narrates from Aqeel who narrates from Zuhri who narrates from Uthmaan Bin Muhammad Ibnul Mugheerah Ibnul Akhnas who said: 'Verily, Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: All fate is decreed from Sha'baan to Sha'baan even to the extent that a man will marry and a child will be born to him...'"

Ibn Katheer classifies this Hadith as 'mursal' which is one of the classes of Hadith. While Ibn Katheer is quite correct in averring that a Mursal Hadith cannot be presented in opposition to a categoric Qur'aanic statement, the fact here is that this Mursal Hadith as well as other Dhaeef Ahadith are not tendered in conflict with the verse of Surah Dukhaan, viz., about the 'gracious night'. The combination of the various Mursal and Dhaeef Ahadith collectively elevates the narrations to the degree of acceptability on the basis of the Principles of the Muhadditheen. These narrations thus suffice to establish and substantiate the validity of the auspiciousness of the 15th Night of Sha'baan. The following ruling applies to Mursal Ahadith:

"According to Imaam Abu Hanifah and Imaam Maalik, the Mursal Hadith is accepted without any conditions. According to Imaam Shaafi if the Mursal is supported in some other way (by another narration), even if it be Dhaeef (Weak), will be

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

acceptable. Two versions have been attributed to Imaam Ahmad."

Thus, the Mursal Ahadith on this issue cannot be described as fabrications nor can they be dismissed. Cognizance has all along been taken of such Ahadith, especially in the matter of Fadhaail and Ibaadat. Tafseer Baidhaawi states in the tafseer of this aayat of Surah Dukhaan: "(The gracious night) is Lailatul Qadr or Lailatul Baraa'at."

Tafseer Kabeer of Fakhrrur Raazi says: They (the authorities) differ regarding the (meaning of) the gracious night. The majority say that it is Lailatul Qadr. Ikramah and another group say that it is Lailatul Baraa'at and that is the middle night of Sha'baan."

While Fakhrrur Raazi disagrees with the view of Ikramah, the difference is confined to the meaning of the 'gracious night' mentioned in aayat 3 of Surah Dukhaan. He does not take up issue with the validity of the auspiciousness of Lailatul Baraa'at. He merely aligns himself with the Jamhoor view that the specific night mentioned in this aayat is Lailatul Qadr, not Lailatul Baraa'at. In this, there is no support for those who outrightly reject the greatness of the 15th Night of Sha'baan.

Tafseer Al-Kash-shaaf states:

"Lailatul Mubaarakah (the gracious night) is Lailatul Qadr. It has been said that it is the middle night of Sha'baan. For it (the 15th Night of Sha'baan) there are four names: Al-lailatul Mubaarakah, Lailatul Baraa'at, Lailatus Sikk and Lailatur Rahmah..... Rasulullah (sallallalayhi wasallam) said: 'Verily Allah Ta'ala forgives all Muslims during this Night excepting a fortune-teller, a magician, a habitual consumer of liquor, one disobedient to parents and a habitual perpetrator of fornication.

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

In Al-Kash-shaaf several different Chains Narrators are tendered for this narration.

Again the argument is confined to the meaning of the specific night mentioned in aayat 3 of Surah Dukhaan. The dispute does not centre around the validity of the holiness of Lailatul Baraa'at. While some – the majority – say that the 'gracious night' in this aayat is Lailatul Qadr, others (also reliable authorities) say it is Lailatul Baraa'at. But this dispute does not deny the fact that the 15th Night of Sha'baan is an auspicious night.

Tafseer Roohul Ma'aani states:

"It is Lailatul Qadr on the authority of what has been narrated from Ibn Abbaas, Qataadah, Ibn Jubair, Mujaahid, Ibn Zaid and Hasan. This is the view of the majority of the Mufasssireen and the Zawaahir (which was a Math-hab at that time) are with them. Ikramah and a Jamaa'at said that it is the middle night of Sha'baan..... "

Among the Ahadith pertaining to the 15th Night of Sha'baan, Roohul Ma'aan -i mentions the following:

"Ibn Jareer, Ibnul Munthir and Ibn Abi Haatim narrate from the Chain of Muhammad Ibn Sooqah who narrates on the authority of Ikramah who said in regard to this aayat: 'During the middle night of Sha'baan the affairs of the year are decided.' Ibn Jareer and Baihqī in Shu'bil Imaan narrate from Zuhri who narrates from Uthmaan Bin Muhammad Ibnul Mugheerah Ibnul Akhfash who said that Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: "Affairs are decreed from Sha'baan to Sha'baan even a man marrying and him having a child. . . "

Deenori narrates in Al-Majaalisah from Rashid Bin Sa'd that Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: 'During the middle night of Sha'baan, Allah reveals to Malakul Maut all souls which have to be taken away during that year.' There are many similar narrations. It is said 'Every affair of wisdom is recorded from

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

Al-Loohul Mahfooz during Lailatul Baraa'at and this task is accomplished by Lailatul Qadr. . . !

It has been narrated from Ibn Abbaas that all affairs are decreed during the middle night of Sha'baan and they are assigned to their respective agents (for execution) on the 27th Night of Ramadhaan."

Regarding the apparent conflict between the claim of Ikramah and the Qur'aanic statement in aayat 3 of Surah Dukhaan, Tafseer Roohul Ma'aani says:

"It is necessary to interpret (in order to reconcile the apparent conflict) that which rejects this (majority view). Therefore, reflect!"

Again the dispute and conflict pertain to the meaning of the 'gracious night' referred to in the aayat. The dispute does not apply to the validity of the holiness of the 15th Night of Sha'baan.

In the tafseer of Surah Qadr, Roohul Ma'aani presents an elaborate reconciliation between the conflicting views. The view of Ikramah and the many narrations pertaining to Lailatul Baraa'at are not summarily rejected and branded as false and fabrications. Rather, appropriate meanings are tendered so that one is saved from the calamity of wholesale dismissal of numerous Hadith narrations which the great and illustrious authorities have accepted in the sphere of Fadhaail and Ibaadat notwithstanding the Mursal and Dhaeef categories of the narrations. The technical arguments of the Muhadditheen cannot therefore be cited by non-entities and unqualified persons in refutation and negation of a practice which has existed in the Ummah from the earliest time. Again, we do not offer succour for the many bid'aat which have attached themselves to the 15th Night of Sha'baan. Such unfounded and evil practices are haraam and do not form part of Lailatul Baraa'at.

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

Tafseer Abis Saood states:

"It is the Night of Qadr, and it is said, the Night of Baraa'at. It has been said that the recording of affairs from Al-Loohul Mahfooz commences during Lailatul Baraa'at and is completed during Lailatul Qadr. Then the record of sustenance's (is handed to Meekaa'il; the record of wars is handed to Jibraeel as well as the record of natural calamities; the record of deeds is handed to Ismaeel, the Angel in charge of Samaa-e-Dunya, and he is a mighty Angel; the record of hardships is handed to Malakul Maut (Peace on them all)."

Undoubtedly, Ibnul Arabi in his Ahkaamul Qur'aan outrightly rejects the claim that the 15th Night of Sha'baan has any significance. He dismisses the narrations and avers that the claim for the auspiciousness of Lailatul Baraa'ah is baseless. In this regard it will suffice to say that the outright dismissal of the numerous narrations by Ibnul Arabi is not endorsed by the Jamhoor Mufasssireen. While the Jamhoor hold the view that Al-Lailatul Mubaarakah mentioned in Surah Dukhaan refers to Lailatul Qadr, they do not deny the auspiciousness of the 15th Night of Sha'baan. At most, it may be said that authentic difference of opinion prevails on this question. But, it is wrong and baseless to brand the view of Ikramah as false and bid'ah and it is wrong to deny the validity of the holiness of Lailatul Baraa'at on account of the Mursal and Dhaeef categories of Ahadith as explained earlier. These classes of Ahadith are governed by rules which make them acceptable and operable.

The same explanation given thus far applies to the question of fasting on the 15th Day of Sha'baan. It is permissible to fast on this Day and it is an act of merit, the merit stemming from the fact that mention of this fast is made in certain narrations, albeit of the Dhaeef category. But these narrations are not fabricated. It is therefore erroneous to claim that it is bid'ah to fast on the 15th Day of Sha'baan. Yes, if in any place fasting on this day is regarded as compulsory and those who do not fast are reprimanded, then undoubtedly, it will be said that fasting

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

on this day in that particular locality is bid'ah. But, the bid'ah is on account of the erroneous belief of people, not because people fast on this Day because they consider it meritorious on the bases of certain Ahadith.

Visiting the Qabrustaan on the 15th Night of Sha'baan is undoubtedly meritorious. But, if people in a locality or in a country have elevated such ziyaarat to the degree of wujoob (compulsion), then the practice will be a bid'ah. Visiting the Qabrustaan on this Night or on any other day or night should be without innovated acts. People should not go in groups, i.e. special organized groups to recite 'faatihah' collectively. They should go individually and make a silent dua alone.

The gatherings or special gatherings at Musaaqid and the delivery of wa'z (lecture) on this night are bid'ah. The serving of milk, sweetmeats, etc., are all bid'ah and baseless customs having absolutely no association with Lailatul Baraa'ah. It is a Night of silent, sincere and individual Ibaadat in the solitude of one's home. Those who do not uphold this night as an occasion for Ibaadat should not be reprimanded ' or vilified. In view of the difference of opinion among the authorities of Islam on this subject and in view of the lesser quality of the narrations on which the case for the 15th Night of Sha'baan is based, it cannot be said that this Night enjoys a similar status of proof as Lailatul Qadr nor can it be asserted that the bases for the fast of the 15th Day of Sha'baan is as strong as the basis for the fast of the Day of Aashuraa. All things should be held within the limits prescribed by the Shariah.

On the one extreme we have those who outrightly deny the validity of the suspiciousness of Lailatul Baraa'at and on the other extreme we have the perpetrators of bid'ah who have introduced many evil customs and practices for the occasion of Lailatul Baraa'at.

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

CONCLUSION

Since bid'ah is evil and directed at the very foundations of Islam, different rulings regarding this Night will apply in different places. Where bid'ah has taken a firm grip on society, it may be necessary to brand the whole observance of this Night as a bid'ah. This will be necessary to extricate the masses from the evil of bid'ah. However, even then, sensible persons can gain the benefit of this Night by their acts of Ibaadat rendered in the privacy of their homes. And, Allah knows best. We petition Him for Rectitude and Guidance.

BID'AH

(Hadhrat Mujaddid Alfe Thaani Sarhindi – rahmatullaahi alayhi)

...As long as man does not abstain from such 'bidah hasanah' which is in reality 'bidah sayyiah' (evil innovation), he will be deprived of fragrance of this wealth of Imaan. Today, the compensation of the truth has become most difficult because the entire world is drowned in the ocean of bid'ah. People are reclining and taking comfort in the darkness of bid'ah practices.

Who, today, has the ability to eliminate bid'ah and revive Sunnah? The majority of the Ulama of this age (i.e. the age in which Hadhrat Mujaddid lived – more than four centuries ago) are engaged in establishing bid'ah and eliminating Sunnah.

An accepted principle by the Ulama is the foregoing of even many benefits if the acquisition of the benefit entails the possibility of harm as well. On the basis of this accepted principle, if a practice revolves between bid'ah and Sunnah then abstention from bid'ah will be superior to practising the Sunnah because in bid'ah is the possibility of harm and in Sunnah, the hope of gain.

LAILATUL-BARAA'AT (15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN)

Deen consists of following Rasulullah sallallahu alayhi wasallam, obeying the elevated Sunnah, and abstention from bid'ah even though the bid'ah may seem (deceptively) as clear as the 'noor' of the early morning. In all truth, there is no 'noor' and no glitter in bid'ah. There is no cure for the diseased in bid'ah and no medicine for any sickness. How is it possible that bid'ah be a cure for the indisposed when it (bid'ah) is the eliminator of Sunnah? It either destroys Sunnah (at its worst) or (at its best) it refrains about speaking about Sunnah.

It is indeed among the greatest Boons of Allah Ta'ala that in this age of darkness - darkness of bid'ah - some fortunate person requests from Allah Ta'ala the ability to eradicate some bid'ah practice and to enliven some Sunnat. It appears in the authentic Hadith that he who revives a Sunnat practice after it was lost, will obtain the sawwaab of a hundred shuhadaa (martyrs).

Even some of the later mentors of this elevated Path of Naqshabandiyah have also introduced into this Path some bid'ah practices. Hence, they have lost the original way of the seniors of this Path (Naqshabandiyah). A group of mureedeen (disciples) of these later mentors entertain the belief that perfection of this Path could be realised by way of these bid'ah practices. Allah forbid! Never ever is this possible.

In this Path (of Naqshabandiyah) people have made customary, innovations and new practices. Therefore, there is justification for the opponents of this Path to claim that this Path condones the establishment of bid'ah and the abstention of Sunnah ... But Najaat (salvation), is in the following of the Shariah of Rasulullah sallallahu alayhi wasallam - obedience rendered both in belief (i'tiqaad) and practice (amal).