

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

‘O Allah, show us truth as truth and enable us to follow it, and show us falsehood as falsehood and enable us to turn away from it.’

All praise is due to Allah the Lord of all existence, and may prayers and peace be upon our master Muhammad, and upon his Family, Companions, and those who cling to his luminous path.

Dear Shaykh Ramzy, *al-Salam ‘alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu*. It is with much pain and regret that I write this to inform you that as of Ramadan I, 1440 AH, I have withdrawn my *bay’a* to Shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Haddad.

As you know, the relationship between the *murid* and shaykh of the spiritual path is founded upon love, reverence, *adab*, submission, and trust. It is a two-way street. The covenant (*ahd*) is binding on both parties—on the *murid* who takes it upon himself or herself to persevere in invoking with the transmitted *wird*, obey the Shaykh, and receive his *tarbiya*, and on the Shaykh who takes it upon himself to spiritually train the *murid*, look after them, and transmit the *wird* and other formulas of remembrance.

If the *murid* is to truly benefit from the Shaykh, he or she must trust and feel safe with him. The spiritual connection between the *murid* and the Shaykh—the *nisba*—is severed the moment the *murid* loses trust in the Shaykh, or feels it is no longer possible to benefit from him—whether that is based upon indisputable facts and experiences, or based upon conjecture.

The severing of the *nisba* can also be from the Shaykh, such as by him cutting the *nisba* due to the *murid*’s behavior (expelling the *murid* from the order), or him cutting it through violating the trust of the *murid* or engaging in behaviors that render it impossible for the *murid* to maintain a spiritual connection with him.

In Sha'ban of this year (1440 AH), someone reached out to me and asked what I knew about certain accusations that were being made against the Shaykh. After moving to the US, I have been completely out of the loop and had heard nothing about these accusations. I gave the individual permission to share my contact with one of the people making the accusations and gave my promise that I would at least hear them out.

One day later a sister in Egypt left me several detailed audio messages and text messages. As I am certain you are already aware, she described a few Egyptian sisters who were all touched inappropriately, kissed on different occasions (at least one on the mouth!). To add insult to injury, they were rebuked by the Shaykh when they asked about the appropriateness of these actions.

While we may be in the age of #metoo, I refrained from affirming these serious accusations without reaching out to others to get their take on what had occurred. The sister's descriptions of the incidents were detailed and painful to hear, but I suspended judgement until I could hear from some of the *Muqaddams*. I first reached out to Sidi Abdul Khafid. Abdul Khafid affirmed that these actions *did* take place, and that they were for the *tarbiya* of the sisters and for their purification; however, the sisters in question are "problematic" and ungrateful and causing issues.

To justify the Shaykh kissing these sisters, Abdul Khafid quoted a passage from al-Shaykh al-Akbar Ibn 'Arabi where he mentioned a *murid* seeing his Shaykh fornicate. Regardless of the merit and meaning of the passage, it is not analogous to the accusations made by the sisters in Egypt, since in the story the fornication was *consensual* and was not explained as a form of *tarbiya* administered to the woman whom the Shaykh supposedly slept with. (And

this is assuming that the act of fornication in this story was actual fornication and not fornication in *form* (*suratan*) only but not in reality.)

Around that time I also received an audio file of Ahmad Nazmi which he sent to different people. In it, he communicated on behalf of the Shaykh and conveyed clearly that the Shaykh **acknowledges** that he kissed the sisters. Regardless of the Shaykh's intentions, this audio message proves that what the sisters are saying is not a baseless allegation. It was a certainty for me, after hearing this message, that the Shaykh did exactly what these sisters were accusing him of.

I messaged Ahmad Nazmi and asked to speak to him about this issue but he instructed me to call Sidi Mohamed Mahmud. When Sidi Mohamed called me, he too acknowledged that this physical contact took place between the Shaykh and the sisters, and that it was "*ghayr shar'i*" (un-Islamic) *ruqya*. But unlike Abdul Khafid's interpretation, Sidi Mohamed acknowledged that it was un-Islamic; however, he added that it was a form of *ruqya* needed in that moment, an errant *ijtihad* of the Shaykh, and that some of the sisters involved "have father issues," that one of them owned or owns multiple dogs, that one was a smoker, and that the Shaykh employed what is similar to touch therapy.

After hearing the details provided by the Egyptian speakers and speaking with Sidi Mohamed, Ahmad Nazmi, and Abdul Khafid, I reached the conclusion that:

1. The kissing and inappropriate touching *did* take place, by the acknowledgement of the Shaykh, as conveyed by Ahmad Nazmi, Sidi Mohamed, and Abdul Khafid;
2. The kissing and inappropriate touching are being given a far-fetched *ta'wil* (interpretation) that is unacceptable;
3. For me and my family all of this creates a condition where it is not possible to trust or feel safe with having Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Haddad as our spiritual guide.

How can *haqiqa* justify kissing a vulnerable sister on the mouth—a young woman who puts her trust in him as her spiritual guide, resigning her will to him in confidence that he will sincerely guide her to Allah? According to the recording of Ahmad Nazmi, Shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Haddad apologized, but only after saying ‘By Allah, I did not intend anything evil, and by Allah, I did not experience any desires, and nothing sexual stirred within me.’ The presence or absence of desires is irrelevant in this issue—is it permitted in the Sacred Law of Sayyiduna Muhammad ﷺ for a man of any age to kiss women that are not related to him by marriage or kin?

Is this what we have been taught all these years? Is this the path of the spiritual masters? Isn’t the path one of Shariah and *Haqiqa*? Didn’t Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili say, ‘Do not draw near to a man who claims a state with Allah that absolves him of the prescriptions of the Sacred Law’?

There are multiple problems here. First, there is the inappropriate actions of the Shaykh, kissing multiple young women (some on their mouths!). Second, there is his justification through *haqiqa* (as one of the victims said that when she asked about the permissibility of this, he said to her, ‘You know nothing of *haqiqa*.’). Thirdly, the subsequent apology of the Shaykh to the sisters (it is unclear why one would need to apologize for the *haqiqa*). Fourthly, there is the disturbing justifications put forward by Abdul Khafid and Sidi Mohamed. Fifthly, when these sisters came forward with what happened to them, they were accused of being ‘problematic,’ people of *fitna*, troublemakers, etc. as if they were the problem. Classical victim blaming. And even if they were people of *fitna* and troublemakers, they did not ask for or deserve to be treated like they were.

The question for me early on in Ramadan was: are these isolated incidents or part of a larger pattern of inappropriate physical touch of women. Shortly after I told Maymuna about all of this, she was in a conversation with a sister in Toronto who shared with her that she too was touched inappropriately by the Shaykh. The sister said that the Shaykh said something very hurtful in a private meeting that disoriented her. Later in the meeting he asked her (in the presence of the translator) to come forward and put her head on his thigh. She placed her forehead on his right thigh and he began pressing

along her shoulders and down her spine. Unsolicited *ruqya* once again. She felt uncomfortable about the *ruqya* and wondered to herself if it was permissible, but she was so upset by what he had said before hand that she was in a disoriented state. How many other sisters are receiving these solicited or unsolicited *ruqyas* that involve putting their heads on his lap and getting back rubs (for some), and kissing for others?

These unsolicited *ruqyas* involving touch and kissing are not analogous to emergency medical procedures carried out by male doctors upon female patients. And even in the remote possibility that he felt they were cases of *darura*, the maxim goes: *al-darura tuqaddar bi qadariha*.

If *haqiqa* is the justification for kissing young women on the mouth and we are supposed to file these incidents under *husn al-zann* for the Shaykh and *taslim*, what if a sufi shaykh were to fondle a *murida*'s breasts? What if a sufi shaykh were to do more than that—all in the name of *haqiqa*? Where do we draw the line, and what is the *dabit* for it? Why is one acceptable as *haqiqa* (or *ruqya*) but not the other?

Sidi Ramzy, I never thought in my wildest imagination that a day would come where I would be writing you a letter like this. These are just some of the many questions swirling in my mind. If someone is able to swallow all of this and file them under *husn al-zann* and *taslim* to the Shaykh, *haqiqa*, etc., the next step is for them to consider anyone who objects to the Shaykh in these acts as a renegade, an outcast, a wretched person driven from the *suhba* of the Shaykh due to their unjustified *inkar* and objection. After that, they are to show their loyalty to their Shaykh by shunning the person doing the *inkar*.

But what happens when the people of *inkar* are in the dozens? What happens when they become the majority? The Shaykh's acts toward the Egyptian sisters are not disputed, and dozens of people have already broken their *nisba* because of them. Meanwhile, there are other incidents coming to light that are not acknowledged (yet), showing that there is a pattern. What is going to happen once word spreads to the *fuqara'* in Toronto as a whole and not just select individuals? I pray that Allah guides you to do the right thing and assist you in this tremendous test for everyone.

I love you and the brethren for the sake of Allah and hope that great good comes out of all of this and that we are all brought nearer to Allah and enjoy His Divine Pleasure. All of this is written in a state of deep concern for the *fuqara'* and a desire for *haqq* over illusion, and Allah's pleasure over the pleasure of creation.

—Abdul Aziz Suraqah

6.24.2019

The Muhammadan Covenants

Covenant Eighty-one

Imam 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani

A general covenant has been taken from us by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that we never seclude ourselves with an unrelated woman with whom we fear falling into temptation (*fitna*), even if we are the most righteous of the righteous. This covenant is neglected by many of the naïve Sufis, especially those from the Ahmadi, Burhani, and Qadiri orders. They take the covenant (*ahd*) from a woman according the etiquettes of their spiritual order, but afterwards they will visit her privately in her husband's absence. This is a clear-cut example of delusion. And to any of the Sufis who say "All praise is due to Allah, we are protected from such things!" we say that one of two possible conditions apply to you. You are either naïve in heart, and if so, there is nothing that will prevent you from falling into what is forbidden. Or you are intelligent and comprehend matters.

If you are the former, Iblis has used a stratagem against you as he did against your forefather Adam, when he swore a solemn oath that he was of those who give sincere counsel. **And if you are the latter and can grasp the disrepute [that seclusion can result in], then you are from the Party of Iblis, and it is inevitable that you will fall into immoral acts.**

The Sacred Law's prohibition [of seclusion] is general and applies to all people; if someone claims a state that excludes him from the general prohibition we belie him, for Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He!) never forbids anything upon the blessed tongue of His Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) while secretly permitting any of his followers to do what contravenes the Sacred Law of His Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace). Know this and be on guard against that which Allah Most Exalted has warned you against.

Shaykh Abu Bakr al-Hadidi (may Allah benefit us through his blessings) once saw Shaykh Muhammad al-'Adl placing his hand on the stomach of a woman as he was reciting (*ruqya*) over her to treat an illness she had. Upon seeing this, Shaykh Abu Bakr yelled at the top of his lungs, "O our *Din!* O Muhammad! How dare you place your hand on the stomach of an unrelated woman! Are you divinely protected from error (*ma'sum*)?" Such was his response even though both were from the Friends of Allah (*Awliya*).

Beware, therefore, of secluding yourself with an unrelated woman. Beware! And should you forget this, send the woman away until she either brings another woman along with her or brings a *Mahram* [spouse or unmarried male kin]—"and Allah is All-Knowing, Wise."...

Dar al-Ifta' al-Misriyya

Question

Salam 'alaykum. I follow a Sufi order and have a Shaykh and a litany (*wird*). Sometimes I kiss my Shaykh's hand and head out of respect for him, but I don't know if that is correct or incorrect. This Shaykh also kissed my head, cheek, and even kissed me on the mouth. I know that this is unlawful (*haram*), but everything is so confusing to me. Is this Shaykh misguided? Is this Sufi order in error? Is it permissible for women to kiss the hands of scholars? Should I leave this Shaykh and the Sufi order?

Answer

What this man did, kissing you mouth and cheek, is unlawful (*haram*), and it is impermissible for you to touch him or kiss him, because he is an unrelated male with respect to you and he is behaving in a questionable manner. It is incumbent upon you to leave this Shaykh and complain to the relevant authorities such as al-Azhar or the Supreme Council of Sufi Orders...