

# **The Tariqa Tijaniyya: its Characteristics and Merits, Part I**

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Address at the Forum for the Followers of the Tijaniyya, Fes, Morocco, June 28, 2007.

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In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise is to Allah by whose Blessing and Majesty righteous deeds are realized, the One who said: "O believers! Fear Allah and seek the means to Him" (5:35). He also said: "And follow the path of the one who has turned towards Me" (31:15). And He has said: "And content yourself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening seeking His countenance" (18:28).

May the Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon our master Muhammad, owner of the banner of praise and of the praiseworthy station, who said: "The best of worship is that which is constant even if little." And peace on his family and companions, the guides and those guided. And may Allah be pleased with our Shaykh and Mawlana, Shaykh Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Tijani al-Hassani; and may He be pleased with the manifestations of this saintly sublimity, and with his inheritors by whom we seek access to the Divine Presence. Surely we have held fast with them to the unbreakable rope of Allah.

Your Excellency, the Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs; Your Excellencies, the distinguished descendants of the Hidden Pole and Renowned Isthmus (barzakh); Your Excellencies, representatives (khulafa') and teachers (muqadamin): peace be upon you and the mercy and blessing of Allah.

First and foremost, I express my sincere appreciation for the efforts of the Minister in putting together this conference under the directives of His Majesty, the Commander of the Believers, Muhammad VI, King of Morocco. May Allah strengthen, assist him and may Islam and the Muslims be helped through him. Surely organizing this kind of conference serves to affirm the love in the hearts of the Tijani brothers for the Kingdom of Morocco as it has existed for a long time now. It was this same noble Alawi kingdom who had a strong relationship with Shaykh Tijani and the sons of the Tariqa Tijaniyya from the time of Sultan Mawlay Muhammad bin Abd-Allah until today. Such was Shaykh Tijani's relationship with Mawlay Sulayman: a spiritual relationship established through mutual cooperation in piety and righteousness, a cooperation in strengthening the fundamentals of the Islamic Religion, spreading its teachings, and raising high the word of Truth. This conference therefore comes as a result of these singular efforts, which has born fruit in the reign of Mawlana, Amir al-Mu'minin, King Muhammad VI, may Allah help and strengthen him. And the taste (of this fruit) will come in his righteous reign if Allah wills.

We are indeed very glad to attend this brotherly gathering which is unique in its kind. Surely in such meetings there is abundant harvest. It has come from the (Sufi) people that, "Whoever has realized a (spiritual) state, it will not be lost on those in his presence." Among the precepts of the Tariqa Tijaniyya is gathering together: "The meeting of the beloveds is better than recitation of the litanies (awrad) and the remembrances (adhkar), for the remembrances can be made up if missed, but the meeting of beloveds cannot be made up."

Today, delegations of loved ones from different nations have come to this sacrosanct city, Fez, wherein lies the tomb of Shaykh Ahmad Tijani, caressed by Heavenly zephyrs and Divine effulgence. As has been related in Hadith: "Indeed among the days of your lifespan, there are

certain fragrant breezes belonging to Allah: would that you be touched by them, for if you should catch just one scent, you will be without complaint forever.”

There is no doubt that this conference is one of these fragrant breezes. Since its sunrise at the hand of our master, Abu Abbas Shaykh Ahmad Tijani (may Allah be pleased with him) up to this day of ours, the Tariqa has never ceased illuminating for mankind the path to Allah, and directing them to the way of guidance and righteousness, and guiding the aspirants to the best of paths by which they obtain the happiness of this world and the next. The Tijani brothers and sisters are a fraternity in Allah, and they are beloveds in Allah. It has been related from the Shaykh (RA) that the Prophet (SAW) said to him: “Tell your companions not to harm each other, for surely this harms me.” The Most High has said: “Those who hurt believing men and women without just cause, bear on themselves calumny and manifest sins” (33:5 😊).

If you find the Tariqa Tijaniyya actualizing the brotherhood of Islam, its success lies in rending apart the walls of the ego-selves, penetrating into its depths and illuminating its hidden recesses with beneficial Divine knowledge. In a similar way, this Tariqa has nullified the borders of nations and erased the differences between the servants of Allah.

So here we are in this conference hall meeting with representatives from all parts of Africa: west, central, and north. And here we have Americans from all different areas: New York, Chicago, Memphis, Atlanta, Detroit ... So they (these delegations) are one community, and what is between them is (only) love in Allah, and they have freed themselves of worshipping other than Allah so that by the Oneness of Allah, the veils have been lifted from them and they have been brought to extinction (fana‘) and substantiation (baqa‘) in Allah. They have refused to concern themselves with anything other than Allah. These are indeed true, vigorous Sufis, clothed in the Sunnah. Their secret thoughts have been made pure and their external selves have remained steadfast on the Book and the Sunnah. They have escaped from the frivolities of the ego-self and become immersed in Truth’s baptism: “the baptism of Allah - and who is better than Allah to baptize” (2:138)?

“Sufism,” said Shaykh Tijani (may Allah be pleased with him), “is carrying out the Divine command and avoiding the prohibitions, externally and internally, with regards to what pleases Him, not what pleases you.” And this cannot be realized except through compliance with the pure Shari‘a. The people of the Tariqa are the people of remembrance (dhikr), the people of prayer (salat), those who seek the forgiveness of Allah throughout the night and at both ends of the day. Incumbent upon them is offering prayer upon the greatest means of access (wasila), the Prophet, and obeying the command of Allah. With this they become enlightened. The Most High has said: “It is He who prays on you, along with the angels, in order to bring you forth from darkness into the light.” (33:43).

Thus our Tariqa is a Muhammadan Path (Tariqa Muhammadiyya); its companions are they who hold firmly to the Sunnah, extinguishing themselves in love for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. They are wedded to the emulation of him, in both his words and deeds, and they have molded themselves with his characteristics; for surely the bases of these characteristics are the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Within these two things is found the abode of the Tariqa, and outside the Qur’an and the Sunnah there is nothing called the Tijaniyya. Long ago, Imam Junayd (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “Surely all the paths (turuq) are choked off by the creation except those following the footsteps of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah upon him, those following his Sunnah and his Tariqa.”

Our Mawlana Shaykh Tijani, may Allah be pleased with him, has declared his innocence of

everything at variance with the pure Shari'a and demonstrated the orthodoxy of his Tariqa with the statement: "If you hear something from me, weigh it on the scale of the Shari'a. Whatever is in conformity, take it; whatever is at variance, leave it." So were all his actions and pure conduct based in the Book and the Sunnah. His disciple Sidi Muhammad bin Mishry (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

"Despite what you have heard of the miracles of this Shaykh of exalted rank, he was of extreme humility, and whoever did not know him could not distinguish him from his companions. Among his attributes was that he was an ascetic; one longing (for Allah); one who has obtained; one who has abandoned all injustice. He overlooked the (unclean) states of the people but worked ardently on his own self. And he was stern in following the Sunnah, nor would he indulge anyone in relaxing its observance except for those who would not obey his command. He (RA) was always urging us to pray in rank. If we traveled, he would say, 'Whoever does not pray with you in rank, do not keep him as your companion.' And he said, 'By guarding the straight line in prayer, Allah will avert from you most afflictions.'"

Among the things in which he persevered was the love for the Prophet's household (ahl al-bayt), and encouraging others to reverence and exalt them, for this itself is evidence of following the Prophet (SAW) and of enforcing the commandments of the Qur'an. The Most High has said: "Say (O Prophet): 'I do not ask any reward of you, except the love for the relatives (al-qurba).'" (42:23). The Shaykh also used to enjoin obedience to the teachers (muqadamin) with what they required in accordance with the truth. He said, "You must obey the teachers so long as they command you with the known religious obligations or work to reconcile the differences between you." And he warned them in this against being enamored of the worldly goods of their brethren, and to only see such possession as the bestowal of Allah, for it is He who gives, withholds, lowers and elevates. It was with this righteous method that the Shaykh trained his disciples, and it is this righteous manner that has been the inheritance of his successors (khulifa') generation after generation, for they have been keen to guard this foundation. In emphasizing the orthodoxy of the Tariqa Tijaniyya, Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse said:

You must hold firm to the rope of Allah,  
For a method which deviates from the Qur'anic Remembrance is a path of misery.

If you should ask, is this litany (wird) the method of Muhammad?  
I will say yes, my wird is for attaining purity.

The wird is nothing but the remembrance belonging to Allah, and He alone,  
(And) offering prayer on the chosen one, the best without comparison.

In it there is no mention of the Shaykh or any other  
My wird is the source of medicine for the servant's disease.

Tread lightly so as not to deny out of ignorance  
For injustice and enmity are the sources of estrangement.

The Shaykh of Islam of Tunis, Ibrahim Riyahi, made a similar statement as the above:

As for your thoughts about the organization of the wird;  
(Linked to) the hand of Prophecy, can it be without foundation?

What would you think of a method

Which secures for its practitioner safety from the fire and its turmoil?

The Tariqa is not an innovation from orthodox Sufism, which has been described in the *Kashif al-Ilbas* (of Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse) as follows: "(Sufism) is the expression of a knowledge flaring forth from the hearts of the saints until their hearts have obtained enlightenment through acting on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. And all who act in this way, for him will be kindled sciences, secrets and realities impossible for tongues to describe. This is analogous to what has been sparked in the scholars of the Shari'a with respect to their rulings until they come to know what they know in regards to the rulings of the Shari'a. And Sufism is surely the cream of the servant's work in accordance with the rulings of the Shari'a, so long as his work is free from defect and self-contentment, just as the science of meanings and explanations is the cream of the science of grammar. So who would classify Sufism as an independent science is correct; and who would classify it as the source of rulings for the Shari'a is also correct."

The Tariqa is built on sincerity in the truthful attention to Allah, by expelling anything else in one's dealing with the Truth. This is not possible for him who secretly delights in his ego-self, plunging it into lusts and wicked desires. The Sufis are the true servants, they are the ascetics in every age. It has been related from Hassan al-Basri: "I saw a Sufi circumambulating the Ka'aba, and I gave him something; but he said, 'I have naught with me but four coins, but whatever Allah has placed with me is sufficient.'" This is simply pointing to the fact that the generation succeeding the companions of the Prophet was one of Sufi ascetics, for they were scholars in the sciences of the diseases and intrigues of the ego-self. Hassan al-Basri reports Sufyan al-Thawri as saying, "Had it not been for Abu Hisham al-Sufi, I would not have become aware of the subtle hypocrisies of the ego's subjectivity (riya')."

The shaykhs, as has been related from Shaykh Tijani, may Allah be pleased with him, are the ropes that Allah has extended to the creation, whoever holds fast to them will be saved. Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "Know that the purpose of the shaykhs is that they are links to the Prophet (SAW), who is the greatest means of access to Allah. Sidi Abdullah bin al-Hajj al-Alawi, may Allah be pleased with him, once said to me, 'What is desired of the Tijani litanies is to smell the fragrance of the Muhammadan Reality (Haqiqah Muhammadiyya), upon it blessings and peace.'"

It is worth mentioning that the people of the Tariqa, they, men and women, are the ones remembering Allah often. They sit for the remembrance in every place and in all states. Remembrance (dhikr) is the sacred means of emulating the Messenger of Allah (SAW): "Surely in the Messenger of Allah there is for you a beautiful example, for those who hope for Allah and the Last Day, and who remember Allah often" (33:21). The people of the Tariqa are the living example of this: they come together from diverse ethnicities, gathering for the love of Allah and His Messenger, extinguishing themselves in the pursuit and victory of the truth, with asceticism and humility in the emulation of the greatest means of access, Mawlana Shaykh Tijani, may Allah be pleased with him. Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse wrote in the *Risalat al-Tawba*: "Despite being absorbed and extinguished in Allah, the people of Tariqa have not abandoned the affairs of the creation nor their role as vicegerents on the earth. Rather they compete in every sphere of life and they are found in diverse professions and specialties, desiring to obtain what is lawful and to expose themselves to the zephyrs of the Lord, exalted is He. May Allah bless them, shield them from the schemes of their enemies and protect them with what He has protected His Wise Remembrance, and such is not difficult for Allah." So these are the scholars and the shaykhs and the leaders of people; and they are also business men, executives, engineers, doctors, journalists and professors ...

If it is understood that the purpose of the Tijani litanies is to smell the fragrance of the Haqiqa Muhammadiyya, such a fragrance leads one to act according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, both of which provide the capacity for security and the foundation of faith. The Prophet has said: "I am leaving with you two things, to which if you hold fast, you will never be misguided: the Book of Allah and my Sunnah." On this foundation this Tariqa has spread to all horizons, for it is a Tariqa of truth, and the truth prevails and is not prevailed upon. Shaykh Tijani, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "This seal (taaba') of ours will gain ascendancy over every other type of (Sufi) mark (taaba'), and none will gain ascendancy over us." This Tariqa thus has the capacity to spread without limit, since it is grounded in magnanimity and tolerance, nor is it contrary to the flawless natural disposition (al-fitra al-salim).

Shaykh Tijani was praised by many of the exalted scholars of his time. Among them by way of example was Sidi Hamdun bin al-Hajj, whose son wrote in his book, al-Ashraf, that his father had praised the Shaykh in both knowledge of the Islamic sciences and Divine gnosis. Shaykh Hamdun, who was of the consummate scholars, praised the Shaykh in one of his poems as follows:

I commend you to the resplendent, light-giving moon,  
Abu al-Abbas, I mean Ahmad at-Tijani.

The sun of sovereignty and the axis of the circle of guidance,  
The moon of felicity and star of spiritual excellence.

Sea of generosity, our elucidator of heavenly wisdom,  
Like rare gems in a necklace or crown (tījān).

The best of imams who has risen in ascension,  
In righteousness without lethargy.

In addition, numerous scholars apprenticed themselves to him, but mentioning them here all would take us too long. Needless to say, each is like the full moon. In every corner they are the leaders of men, in every time and place. Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse indicated this in one of his poems:

To him belong companions like moons,  
Possessors of illumination and secrets.

Of investiture and of gnosis,  
And each one a spring among springs.