

*Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah:
A Selected Study of One of Islam's Earliest Treatises on Spirituality*

In this [four-lecture series](#), Shaykh Mohammed Amīn Kholwadia, Founder and President of [Darul Qasim](#) discusses Imām ‘Abd al-Karīm bin Hawāzin al-Qushayrī’s ﷺ *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*. Though this work was written almost one millennium ago, its message of contemplation upon the Creator ﷻ, adab (refinement) in our ‘ibādah (worship), and its academic analysis of Sufism and Taṣawwuf remain just as relevant in our current times as it was in the author’s era.

- Imām al-Qushayrī ﷺ was an erudite Shafi‘ī scholar, jurist and theologian of the 5th century (AH). He was a contemporary of Imām al-Juwaynī ﷺ (Imām al-Haramayn) and of the great muḥaddith, Imām al-Bayḥaqī ﷺ.
- His *Risālah* was the “blueprint” for Imām al-Ghazālī’s ﷺ *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*.
- His *Risālah* addressed a fringe group of individuals who believed their ascetic practices excused them from the need to follow sharī‘ah and the need to perform ‘ibādah.
- Imām al-Qushayrī ﷺ reiterated the timeless and universal message of becoming closer to Allah ﷻ by reflecting upon our relationship as creation with Allah ﷻ the Creator ﷻ. Through complete submission to the Creator ﷻ, we realize that ‘ibādah is a personal necessity.
- The Ṣufī focus is inward **and** outward.
- The inward focus is on tawḥīd, on recognition of the Worshipped ﷻ and to achieve iḥsān (excellence in all things) through enhancing behavior to be its best at a given moment.
- The outward focus is providing public service through acts of altruism and kindness to others, be they saints or sinners.
- Ṣufīs want to bring people closer to Allah ﷻ by cultivating ma‘rifah (recognition of Allah ﷻ), which leads to complete and total submission to Allah ﷻ, which, in turn, leads to the realization that ‘ibādah is a personal necessity, encouraging worshippers to continuously refine their ‘ibādah.
- Adab in the context of Taṣawwuf is refinement in seeking Allah ﷻ and in seeking Allah’s ﷻ pleasure; adab does not carry the same meaning in other Islamic sciences/disciplines.
- All the salient features of goodness come together in the adīb (decorous); being adīb is a lifelong task.
- A servant reaches Jannah through his/her obedience to Allah ﷻ; but through observing adab in his/her worship of Allah ﷻ, the servant reaches Allah ﷻ in Jannah.

- *Taṣawwuf is built on Allah's ﷻ shari'ah, the Prophet's ﷺ behavior, and adab (refinement).*
- *The role of Taṣawwuf is to correct/rectify, improve, and refine all aspects of the life of a Muslim.*
- *The words Ṣufī and Taṣawwuf have no stem word; they are non-derived words; they most likely originated from a title given to those who were more engaged in refining the different elements of worship.*
- *Current misunderstandings of what Sufism and Taṣawwuf represent are a result of not knowing the rich academic, intellectual history and status of Sufism.*
- *The lack of knowledge and understanding of what Sufism represents leads to a degree of antagonism toward Ṣufīs and Taṣawwuf.*
- *A Muslim is one from whose hands and tongue other Muslims are safe; 'there is no evil in the Muslim's portfolio.'*
- *As Muslims, we should all strive to represent Allah ﷻ and Islam with iḥsān; Muslims must maintain taḥsīn and adab if we are going to be ambassadors of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.*
- *The Muslim should maintain adab in his/her interactions with other individuals and treat people according to the rank that Allah ﷻ has bestowed upon them in this world, even if they are corrupt or unjust rulers.*
- *Maintaining the appropriate adab and protocol is an important Islamic civilizational value.*
- *To present Islam to non-Muslims, we must show beauty and excellence that is grounded in shari'ah; we must also be genuine in showing our interest to benefit all human beings through devoted worship of Allah ﷻ and service to all humankind.*
- *Though Imām al-Qushayrī's ﷺ Risālah was geared towards the scholars of his time, his masterful synchronization of Qur'ānic verses, Prophetic ḥadīth, scholarly quotes, and anecdotes provides Muslims of all backgrounds with a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the adab of the Prophets ﷺ and the awliyā' and amazing facts about our Islamic civilizational values.*
- *Shaykh Amin advises and reminds us to contemplate and reflect; to think about actualizing and realizing our relationship with Allah ﷻ as creation and Creator ﷻ, if only for a few minutes, as we engage in 'ibādah. Though the coronavirus pandemic has disrupted many aspects of our lives, we have more opportunities to engage in and reflect on 'ibādah during our time in lockdown.*