

# On The Question of the Role of Sufism among Tatars of the Late XIX - Early XX: Zainullah Rasulev's "Fawaid Al-Muhimma"

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**Abstract:** *The study of Tatar Muslim literature is an important part of studying the specifics of Islam in Russia. One of the books related to Islam and published in large numbers is "Fawaid al-muhimma" written by Zainullah Rasulev. This book, published in two editions, is a detailed description of the daily spiritual practices of the Sufi from Naqshbandiya-Khalidiya tariqah. The necessity of publishing a book twice in a large circulation allows us to assume certain features of the spread of Sufism in the Volga-Ural region in the late 19th - early 20th centuries. Analysis of the contents of the book allows us to suggest the following: sheikh Zainullah Rasulev's work "Al-fawaid al-muhimma li-l-muridin al-nakshbandiya wa avrad al-lisaniya wa al-salawat al-ma'asura" is a kind of educational and methodical guide for Muslims who entered the path of tariqa. The book contains detailed information about the daily spiritual practices of Sufi, and, perhaps, could act as a "virtual" murshid, allowing the salik (Muslim who entered the sufi path) to be outside the community of their sheikh and perform all the necessary sufi practices after personal initiation. Perhaps because of the increased popularity of Zainullah ishan there was a great demand for this kind of book, and therefore "Al-fawaid al-muhimma" became the first book published by Rasulev in print and large circulation.*

**Keywords:** *Zainullah Rasulev, Fawaid al-muhimma, tatar islam, muslims in Russia, muslims in the Volga-Ural region.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Against the background of the search for identity and an attempt to formulate a modern image of "traditional Islam" for various regions of Russia, Muslim leaders of the pre-revolutionary period regain their former importance. But even with an extensive list of works devoted to the study of the life and work of Tatar theologians, work in this direction is far from complete.

## II. METHODS

The lack of information is most felt in the philistine environment: the image of Islam that emerged during the period of the Soviet power was distorted beyond recognition in comparison with its historical reality. This is reflected, for example, in constant discussions in the media about the hijab, the headscarf of Muslim women, which is declared a foreign Arab element. Moreover, few ordinary people realize that one of the most popular forms of Islam in the Tatar community was Sufism, which has deep roots in the Volga-Ural region

and a great influence on the history and culture of Muslims in Russia. That is why one cannot speak of "traditional" Islam without taking Sufism into account. In this article we are trying to reveal one of the elements that make up the Muslim identity of the Tatars, namely Sufism and its place in the creed of the Tatars through the analysis of Rasulev's activities of and one of his writings.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the most outstanding representatives of Sufism of the early 20th century is Zainullah ishan Rasulev. His significance for the Tatars is confirmed by academician V.V. Bartold, who wrote on the occasion of Rasulev's death an article in the journal "The Muslim World" calling him "the spiritual king of his people".

Zainullah bin Habibullah bin Rasul bin Musa al-Nakshbandi was one of the most influential people of his time. According to the testimony of his contemporaries, Zainullah ishan Rasulev had tens of thousands of followers who lived in the territories of Siberia and Kazakhstan, the Urals and central regions of the Russian Empire. He was born in a small village in the southern Urals, and to the age of forty unknown ordinary person had received the degree of "perfect" sheikh (al-shaykh al-kamil) by well-known theologian and murshid of sufi order Naqshbandiyya-Halidiya Diya al-Din Gyumyushhanevi and gained never-before-seen popularity. After returning from exile to which he was sent on false charges of inciting to rebellion and anti-government activities, Rasulev moved in Troitsk, where he was invited to lead the fifth mosque in the new district of the Amur. Becoming the head of the parish in 1891, Rasulev was given a free hand to reform a madrasa opened at the mosque, which was later given the name "Rasuliya". And by the beginning of the XX century Rasulev begins his "publicistic" activity.

To date, the following Rasulev's works are known: Al-Fava'id al-muhimma li-l-muridin an-nakshbandiya va avrad al-lisaniya va as-salavat al-ma'asura (Divine truths, comprehension of which is necessary for Naqshbandiya murids, prayer and praise [to Allah]). Kazan, 1899. 22 p. (in Arabic, second edition. Kazan, 1908). Manakib-i Diya ad-din Gumushhanevi (Praiseworthy qualities [of shaykh] Diya ad-dina Gumushhanevi). Kazan: Sharaf publ. house, 1900. 160 p. (In Arabic). Makalat az-Zajniya (Zaynullah's articles and / or Beautiful articles). Kazan, 1908. 18 p. (In Arabic). Kaul anna al-Hidr hajja (About the fact that [the prophet] Hidr (Hizr) alive). Kazan: Newspaper typography "Bajanul'-hak",

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1908. 9 p. (In Arabic).

Ikama al-burhan 'ala al-arbabi as-subul va-l-auham (Bringing evidence against the bearers of false opinions and thoughts). Kazan: typography of I.N. Kharitonov, 1908. 17 p. (In Arabic).

Ilava 'ala "Ikama al-burhan 'ala al-arbabi as-subul v-al-auham" (Supplement to "Ikama al-burhan 'ala al-arbabi as-subul v-al-auham"). Kazan: typography of I.N. Kharitonov, 1908. 3 p. (In Arabic).

Alifba hakynda (On the alphabet [On the method of correct pronunciation of the letters of the Arabic alphabet]). Orenburg, 1912. 13 p.

Also some of Rasulev's manuscripts are known, with rare exceptions these are ijazahs or fragments of personal correspondence with disciples and followers. It is worth mentioning the article written by Rasulev in co-authorship with the imams of Troitsk Akhmetkhazi Rahmankulov, Gataulla Maksudov and Muhammad Bikmatov "Troitskiy ulemasy wa usul-i jadida" ("Ulema of Troitsk and sound training method") was published in the newspaper "Vakyt" and was perceived by contemporaries as a fatwa.

Rasulev's very first of his published works is of particular interest. The "Al-fawaid al-muhimma" is a "desktop" book for those who have just entered upon the path of a Sufi ascetic. "Al-fawaid al-muhimma" consists of seven chapters. The first chapter contains information on the actions needed to be performed for those wishing to perform the dhikr of the Nakshbandiyah-Khalidiy tariqa. Rasulev cites nine points, among which he points out both the order of practical actions (aks tavarruk ila uturup) and the "spiritual" actions (tafakkur al-maut idep), which should prepare a sufi for the main part of the dhikr.

Despite the fact that the distinctive feature of dhikr from the ritual prayer-salyat is that it is possible to perform it in any place and at any time, nevertheless, dhikr also has a large number of desirable conditions for its fulfillment. Higher results can be achieved when these conditions are observed. The place where dhikr is performed should be clean; also such points as cleanliness of the body, the pose in which the dhikr is performed are important. Each brotherhood had its own requirements for the pose of the sufi at the time of the dhikr, but everyone attaches great importance to it. This is why Rasulev writes in his book that one should begin by sitting down in a secluded place on the right thigh, bending his right leg under the left shin and leaning with the fingers of the left foot to the floor so that they are directed towards the qiblah . Then Rasulev describes the stages of how you need to set your mind to the performance of dhikr. It is necessary to begin by saying the praises (salavat) to the Prophet Muhammad and prominent Muslim ascetics. Then you need to pass on "tafakkur maut": one need to feel like a corpse lying in a grave and try to realize their frailty.

Imagining yourself lonely in the grave, you should establish a spiritual connection with your sheikh, so that he could act as an assistant on the way to God. Preparation is completed with the purification of the heart in order to clear a space in it for God through the practice of "vukuf kalbi".

The second chapter explains the "subtle" substances of dhikr (lataif az-zikr). The author gives seven varieties of lataif: calb, ruh, sirr, hafi, ahfa, latifa nafs and latif jasad.

The tradition of the Tariqa Naqshbandiyya speaks of dhykrat lataif as some sensitive points on the body for concentration of the dhikr until the whole sufi being is transformed. Starting

with the "dhikr kalbi" concentrated in the left upper chest, the Sufi should attain the state of love and yearn; and ending with "zikr ahfa", concentrated in the very center of the chest, which is an indicator of self-destruction and dissolution of Sufi's "ego" in God. Further, dhikr from the thoracic region moves to the head region, extending to the brain and causing the state of complete satisfaction, eventually embracing the entire Sufi being, both soul and body. At this moment he attains a state of perfect holy utterance and tranquility, which is also called "sultan azkar", as Rasulev writes.

In the following chapters, Rasulev cites the 20 principles and prescriptions of dhikr, which are accepted by the Sheikhs of the Tariqata Naqshbandiyya-Halidiyya.

The first seven are external prescriptions (adab al-zahiriya), the next seven are secret, internal ones (adab batyna) and the last four are steps on the path to the Divine (abwab ilyahi).

External prescriptions mean actions that refer to the "physical" (tahara, khali makan, hamd al-ain, etc.). Internal prescriptions are "metaphysical adjustment" (rabita maut, rabita murshid, rabita hudur, etc.).

The chapter concludes with a description of the nine essential components of dhikr, seven of which have general agreement among the Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyah sheikhs ("concentrating the heart" – vukuf kalbi, breathing techniques – "habs nafs", etc.), and about two (dhikr Muhammad rasul Allah and bazgesht ) there is disagreement in their necessity.

The next part of the book is entitled "Tawassul nameh"; it is a rather long prayer in Arabic, with the list of the sheikhs of the Nakshbandiyah-Khalidiya tariqa from the "golden silsilya" . Silsilya begins with Ahmad Gümüshanevi and ends with the Prophet Muhammad. It is noteworthy that the chain of Sufi sheikhs in the book, going back to the Prophet Muhammad, passes through Abu Bakr al-Siddiq. It is believed that the Prophet Muhammad handed over the sacraments of silent dhikr Abu Bakr at a time when they were hiding in the cave together from the persecution of Quraysh. Whereas Ali bin Abu Talib was given a loud dhikr .

Then there are eight principles of the Sufi path, listed by Sheikh Abd al-Khalik al-Gijuvani (hush dar dam, nazar bar kadam, etc.), and separately three added by Baha ad-Din al-Naqshbandi.

In the next part there is the Silsilya, which goes directly to Rasulev. This time the chain begins from the Prophet Muhammad and goes back to Zaynullah ishan through Ahmad Gumushkhanevi. It is separately explained that sheikh Zaynullah also has a second silsilya, obtained from Abd al-Hakim al-Chardakly, which coincides with the above chain, beginning with sheikh Abdullah Ahrar.

The next chapter is called sheikh al-Ghazali. Perhaps this is a typographical error, because this chapter does not contain any information about the sheikh al-Ghazali. In this part of the work there are two more silsilyas belonging to Abu Ali al-Farmadi and Ma'aruf al-Qarhi. Both of these known ascetics are also in the chain mentioned above. But in this case their silsilyas go back to the Prophet Muhammad and pass through Ali bin Abu Talib, but not Abu Bakr, as in the first case.

Then the part, which could be entitled by the general name "prayer book", begins.

First prayer formulas come that need to be repeated daily (aurad lisaniya), all of them are mentioned in the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. In the first part sixteen different prayers-duas are cited, which conclude with a recommendation to pray an additional “tahadjud” prayer. The next chapter contains the dua prayer, which must be read after the completion of the tahadjud.

Then there is a series of prayers-duas, authorship of which is attributed to prominent Muslim ascetics, such as Abd al-Qadir Gilani, Ali bin Abu Talib, and others.

One of the last prayers-dua is the prayer “hatm khwadjagan” with a detailed description of the actions necessary for its fulfillment.

At the end of the book the genealogy of the prophet Muhammad is given, describing his appearance and character qualities. And also, there are ten “heptagons” - a sevenfold repetition of various passages from the Qur’an and prayers-duas, reading of which brings a large amount of reward (sawab) to the worshiper; and the prayers of Abd al-Qadir al-Ghiliyani “al-kibriyat al-akhmar”, which contain grace, the establishment of a connection with God.

A. Shimmel, researcher of the sufism, explains the purpose of dhikr by the following words: “Dhikr is the first step in the path of love; when someone loves someone else, he likes to repeat the name of his loved one and constantly remember him. Therefore, the heart of one who is inspired by the love of God becomes the seat of a permanent dhikr”.

#### IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing, we can say that sheikh Zainullah Rasulev’s work “Al-fawaid al-muhimma li-l-muridin al-nakshbandiya wa avrad al-lisaniya wa al-salawat al-ma’asura” is a kind of educational and methodical guide for Muslims who entered the path of tariqa. The book contains detailed information about the daily spiritual practices of Sufi, and, perhaps, could act as a “virtual” murshid, allowing the salik (Muslim who entered the sufi path) to be outside the community of their sheikh and perform all the necessary sufi practices. Of course, a person had to undergo initiation, having received permission to join the brotherhood from the sheikh personally. But after that the presence of “Al-fawaid al-muhimma” allowed the Sufi to leave the murshid and continue their education “in absentia”. Perhaps because of the increased popularity of Zainullah ishan there was a great demand for this kind of book, and therefore “Al-fawaid al-muhimma” became the first book published in print and large circulation, in addition the book was published twice before the revolution. [19-20-21-22]

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