

The Danger of Ghuluw: When Excessive Veneration of The Righteous Becomes a Path To Polytheism

Ahmad Muwaffaq¹⁾, Abdurrahman Hilmi²⁾, Agung Pranoto Kadiatmaja³⁾

^{1,2}STAI Ali Bin Abi Thalib Surabaya

^{1,2}Jl. Sidotopo Kidul 51 Surabaya - Indonesia

E-mail: muwaffaqahmad6@gmail.com¹⁾, timihilmi@gmail.com²⁾, agungpranotokadiatmaja@stai-ali.ac.id³⁾

Abstrak:

Penghormatan yang berlebihan terhadap individu-individu yang dianggap saleh, yang dikenal dengan istilah *ghuluw*, merupakan isu yang signifikan dalam kajian teologi Islam. Meskipun penghormatan terhadap tokoh agama merupakan praktik yang lazim dan dapat diterima, apabila dilakukan secara berlebihan, hal tersebut berpotensi menimbulkan penyimpangan dalam keyakinan dan bahkan dapat berujung pada perbuatan *syirik* (menyekutukan Allah). Artikel ini mengkaji akar permasalahan *ghuluw* dari perspektif teologis dan sosiokultural, serta mengungkap bagaimana tradisi dan budaya lokal turut membentuk persepsi masyarakat terhadap kesalehan. Kajian ini juga menyoroti urgensi pemahaman terhadap *aqidah* (akidah Islam) sebagai fondasi utama dalam menjaga kemurnian keyakinan umat. Dengan menggunakan metode studi pustaka yang mencakup sumber-sumber klasik dan kontemporer, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa *ghuluw* kerap kali muncul akibat kurangnya pemahaman terhadap konsep *tawhid* (keesaan Allah) yang murni. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya pendidikan teologis yang seimbang dan inklusif sebagai upaya preventif terhadap kecenderungan pemujaan yang berlebihan. Sebagai kesimpulan, pengendalian terhadap fenomena *ghuluw* merupakan langkah esensial dalam menjaga kemurnian *tawhid* dalam praktik kehidupan beragama umat Islam serta memastikan keterikatan terhadap ajaran Islam yang autentik

Kata kunci: Syirik, ghuluw, pengagungan

Abstract:

Excessive reverence toward pious individuals, known as ghuluw, represents a significant theological concern within Islamic discourse. While honoring religious figures is both customary and acceptable, when such veneration exceeds appropriate bounds, it can lead to doctrinal deviations and even acts of shirk (associating partners with God). This paper investigates the origins and manifestations of ghuluw from both theological and sociocultural perspectives, illustrating how local customs and cultural influences shape perceptions of piety. It underscores the critical role of aqidah (Islamic creed) in safeguarding the integrity of Islamic belief. Employing a literature review methodology that draws upon classical and contemporary sources,

the study reveals that ghuluw frequently stems from a deficient understanding of tawhid (pure monotheism). The findings highlight the urgent need for balanced and accessible theological education to prevent the emergence of excessive veneration. Ultimately, the paper argues that addressing ghuluw is essential for preserving the purity of tawhid in the daily religious life of Muslims and ensuring adherence to authentic Islamic teachings

Keywords: *Shirk, Extremism, Veneration.*

INTRODUCTION

Islam came with the message of Tawheed (monotheism), the belief in the oneness of Allah, liberating humankind from all forms of worship directed toward anything other than Him. This doctrine frees people from dependence on created beings, objects, or other powers, affirming that only Allah deserves to be worshipped, trusted, and obeyed. Through tawheed, humanity is released from the bondage of idolatry and the misguided traditions of ignorance (jahiliyyah).

In the early period of his mission, Prophet Muhammad patiently instilled this creed in his followers. For many years, he focused his preaching solely on strengthening the belief in Tawheed before teaching other aspects of Islam.¹ Only a small number of people initially had the courage to abandon their ancestral traditions and embrace the truth of Islam, but from this small group emerged a generation of strong believers who transformed human civilization. Every prophet and messenger sent by Allah carried the same mission to call people to the worship of Allah alone and to avoid all forms of polytheism (*shirk*).²

Aqidah (*creed*) is the foundation of Islam, serving as the basis for all acts of worship and righteous deeds. Without sound aqidah, no act of worship has value in the sight of Allah. The Prophet's long period of da'wah in Makkah, devoted almost entirely to establishing the correct creed before the obligations of prayer, zakat, and other practices were revealed, clearly shows its fundamental importance. As Islamic scholars emphasize, aqidah is the root of the entire structure of Islam-without it, Islam cannot stand.

However, throughout history, the Muslim ummah has experienced divisions and deviations in matters of aqidah. Prophet Muhammad foretold that his followers

¹ "27+523-540," t.t.

² KITAB TAUHID. Hak Terbesar Allah atas Hamba, t.t.

would be divided into seventy-three sects, with only one remaining upon the truth. These divisions are not minor disputes but involve the core principles of faith (usul al-din). Many of these deviations stem from misinterpretations of Qur'anic and Prophetic texts, weak religious education, lack of authentic scholarly references, and blind adherence to inherited traditions without critical understanding. These challenges highlight the urgency of revitalizing Islamic education to restore the authentic understanding of aqidah based on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Tawheed, in its linguistic sense, means "to make one" or "to affirm oneness." In Islamic belief, it signifies that only Allah has the right to be worshipped, obeyed, and relied upon in all matters. Tawheed is not merely the acknowledgment of Allah's existence but complete submission and devotion to Him in every aspect of life in thought, speech, and action. A true believer in tawheed makes Allah the center of his existence, obeys His commands sincerely, and avoids His prohibitions wholeheartedly.³

In Islamic theology, tawheed is divided into three main categories:⁴

1. Tawheed al-Rububiyah, affirming that Allah alone is the Creator, Sustainer, and Controller of all affairs.
2. Tawheed al-Uluhiyyah, affirming that only Allah deserves to be worshipped in all acts of devotion and prayer.
3. Tawheed al-Asma' wa al-Sifat, affirming all the names and attributes of Allah as mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah without distortion or denial.

In Islam, the concept of tawheed, or the oneness of Allah, is explained through three interconnected parts. The first is Tawheed ar-Rububiyah, which is the belief that Allah alone is the Creator and the One who manages everything in the universe. Anything that happens life and death, sustenance, the alternation of day and night, all takes place under Allah's control and decree. No created being shares any role in these matters. The second part is Tawheed al-Uluhiyyah, which relates directly to worship. This means that all acts of worship such as prayer, prostration, hope, fear, trust, and sacrifice, must be directed only to Allah. This is the core message of all the prophets: calling people to worship Allah alone. Simply acknowledging that Allah is the Creator is not enough if a person still seeks help or protection from other beings in matters that only Allah can handle.

³ Muhammad bin Sâlih al-'Uthaimin dan Muḥammad Ṣâlih 'Uthaymîn, *Commentary on Shaikh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah's al-'Aqīdah al-Wāsiṭiyyah* = شرح العقيدة الواسطية, First edition (Darussalam, 2008).

⁴ Ibnu Taymiah Ahmad, *Majmu' Al-fatawa*, (2004)

The third is Tawheed al-Asma' wa as-Sifat, the belief that Allah has beautiful and perfect names and attributes as mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah. These names and attributes are accepted as they are, without equating Allah with His creation, without denying them, altering their meanings, or imagining their exact nature. Allah is All-Hearing and All-Seeing, but His hearing and sight are not comparable to those of His creation.

These three forms of tawheed work together as a complete foundation. By understanding that Allah alone governs the universe, alone deserves all worship, and alone possesses perfect names and attributes, a Muslim establishes a strong and sound creed in accordance with Islamic teachings.

A Muslim who understands and lives by these aspects of tawheed will build a strong spiritual foundation, find peace in faith, and remain steadfast through trials, relying solely on Allah. In contrast, shirk (polytheism) is the opposite of tawheed. It means associating partners with Allah in belief, worship, or dependence. Shirk is the gravest sin in Islam, one that Allah will not forgive unless the person repents sincerely, as stated in the Qur'an: *"Indeed, associating others with Allah is a great injustice."* (Surah Luqman: 13). Shirk destroys the purity of faith and renders one's good deeds worthless. Its forms vary from worshipping idols, believing in the power of objects, and seeking help from others besides Allah, to showing off (riya') in acts of worship.

One major cause of shirk is ghuluw (excessiveness) going to extremes in reverence toward righteous individuals. What begins as respect can evolve into veneration and ultimately into worship. This was the case with the people of Prophet Nuh (Noah), who initially honored pious figures but later turned them into objects of worship. Similar tendencies still exist today when people treat religious figures as intermediaries in prayer, sources of blessings, or beings with supernatural powers. Although such actions may stem from good intentions, they contradict the essence of tawheed and can lead to shirk.

Islam teaches its followers to maintain moderation (wasatiyyah) in all aspects of life belief, worship, conduct, and social relations. Allah says in the Qur'an:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا

"And thus We have made you a just and balanced nation so that you may be witnesses over mankind, and the Messenger may be a witness over you." (Surah Al-Baqarah: 143)

This verse emphasizes that Muslims must uphold balance and fairness, avoiding both extremes negligence and exaggeration. Such moderation preserves the purity of faith and enables Muslims to serve as a model community for all humanity

In conclusion, the aqidah of Tawheed is not merely a theological concept but the foundation of faith, morality, and character. A sound understanding of Tawheed guides a person toward true freedom : freedom from dependence on anything other than Allah, and leads to a life of sincere devotion, peace, and submission to Him alone.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method section in this journal serves to provide a foundational overview of the concepts of aqidah and tawheed, which form the theoretical basis of the study. In this section, each subchapter is arranged to explain the definition, scope, classification, and significance of aqidah and tawheed in Islamic teachings. Thus, readers can gain a clearer and more directed understanding of the conceptual framework used in this research.

1. Definition of Aqidah (Creed)

Linguistically, the term *aqidah* refers to something firmly bound or a conviction deeply rooted in the heart.⁵ In Islamic teachings, *aqidah* denotes the essential beliefs that every Muslim must hold, faith in Allah, His angels, His revealed books, His messengers, the Day of Judgment, and divine decree (*qadar*), both its good and its bad. These core beliefs not only shape a Muslim's understanding of life, but also guide their relationship with the Creator and with fellow human beings.

Aqidah serves as the foundation for all forms of worship and righteous deeds. Every act of devotion draws its meaning and value from the soundness of one's aqidah; without correct belief, acts of worship become empty and are not accepted by Allah. For this reason, aqidah is the central message conveyed by all prophets and messengers. They began their missions by correcting people's beliefs before introducing practical aspects of the religion. A strong aqidah nurtures inner peace, strengthens reliance on Allah, and fosters good character. With correct belief, a Muslim can remain firm in the face of trials, make wise decisions, and uphold moral integrity.

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⁵ "Al-'Aqīdah At-Tahawīyyah," t.t.

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2. Definition of Tawheed (Monotheism)

Linguistically, the term *tawheed* means “to make one” or “to declare something as singular.”⁶ In Islamic teachings, tawheed refers to the firm belief that Allah alone is worthy of worship, obedience, and devotion. This belief requires a Muslim to purify all forms of worship for Allah alone, whether in supplication, fear, hope, reliance, or any other act of devotion, without depending on any created being or making anything a mediator in worship.⁷

Scholars emphasize that tawheed is not merely a verbal affirmation but a commitment reflected in one's actions. Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab describes tawheed as the purification of worship for Allah alone: fulfilling His commands, avoiding His prohibitions, and directing one's entire purpose toward seeking His pleasure. This represents the true meaning of servitude and forms the core of Islamic teachings.

Prophet Muhammad like wise began his mission by calling people to tawheed before introducing other legal or ritual duties. This demonstrates that tawheed is the foundation of the entire structure of Islam, a foundation that strengthens a person's relationship with Allah, purifies the heart from dependence on anything besides Him, and guides a Muslim's life toward sincere and devoted worship. Through understanding and practicing tawheed, a believer establishes a solid spiritual grounding that helps them face life's challenges and protects them from deviations in belief.

3. Types of Tawheed

Scholars divide *tawheed* into three main categories:

1. Tawheed al-Rububiyah : Belief that Allah alone is the Creator, Owner, and Controller of the universe.

⁶Ibn Manẓur, *Lisanul Arab*, Dār Sader - 9789953136332 - - Anna's Archive

⁷Al-Fauzân, Syaikh Shâlih ibn Fauzân, *'Aqidah at-Tauhid*, Riyadh: Dar As-sunnah

2. Tawheed al-Uluhiyyah : Belief that only Allah deserves all forms of worship and devotion.
3. Tawheed al-Asma' wa al-Sifat : Belief in Allah's names and attributes as mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith, without distortion or denial.

Scholars explain that tawheed consists of three main components that are interconnected and cannot be separated from one another. The first is *Tawheed al-Rububiyyah*, which is the belief that Allah alone created the entire universe, owns everything in it, and controls all affairs. Nothing occurs except by His will and permission. This belief affirms that true power and authority belong only to Allah, not to humans, objects, or any other force.

The second component is *Tawheed al-Uluhiyyah*, which is the devotion of all acts of worship solely to Allah. This principle is the core message delivered by all prophets throughout history. A Muslim directs prayer, fear, hope, supplication, charity, sacrifice, and every form of worship exclusively to Allah. Even if someone believes that Allah is the Creator, yet still performs acts of worship for others besides Him, then their tawheed is not complete. This aspect emphasizes the consciousness of the heart that no one is deserving of worship except Allah.

The third component is *Tawheed al-Asma' wa al-Sifat*, which is the belief that Allah possesses the most beautiful names and the most perfect attributes, as described in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In understanding this, a Muslim must not distort the meanings, deny the attributes, or liken them to the qualities of creation. Allah's attributes befit His majesty, and nothing resembles Him. Understanding Allah's names and attributes deepens a Muslim's spiritual connection, cultivating love, tranquility, and sincerity in worship.

These three dimensions of tawheed cannot stand independently. Understanding only one aspect is not enough to form a complete belief. A person is considered to have true tawheed only when they believe that Allah is the sole Creator, the only One worthy of worship, and the One who possesses perfect names and attributes. By grasping all three harmoniously, a Muslim builds a strong foundation of faith and gains a clear guide for living daily life.

4. The Importance of Aqidah and Tawheed

Aqidah and tawheed serve as the foundation upon which the entire structure of Islam is built. Just as a building cannot stand firmly without a solid base, a Muslim's life cannot be properly shaped without sound belief. Aqidah determines how a person views the world, responds to challenges, and understands their

purpose.⁸ When tawheed is firmly embedded in the heart, a Muslim develops clarity, confidence, and serenity, because they know that everything occurs by Allah's will and wisdom.

The role of tawheed goes beyond the mere recitation of the shahadah. It influences a person's character, values, and daily decisions. A believer who truly understands tawheed will not rely on worldly power, status, or people; instead, they will trust Allah above all else. This trust nurtures emotional resilience: fear decreases, anxiety diminishes, and the heart becomes more stable when facing trials. The Prophet Muhammad emphasized the teaching of tawheed for thirteen years in Makkah before the laws of worship, transactions, family life, or criminal justice were revealed. This approach demonstrates that any religious practice without tawheed lacks spiritual value. Acts such as prayer or fasting become meaningful only when rooted in pure belief. Thus, tawheed is not only an essential doctrine but the spiritual engine that gives life to all other aspects of Islam.

5. Deviations in Aqidah

Deviations from correct aqidah have occurred in various communities throughout history, often beginning with small, seemingly harmless practices. One major cause is *ghuluw*, or going to extremes in praising and honoring righteous individuals.⁹ Excessive admiration can slowly shift the focus from Allah to His creation, especially when the respected person is believed to possess powers or special privileges.

The story of the people of Prophet Nuh serves as a powerful example. They initially honored five righteous men: Wadd, Suwa', Yaghuth, Ya'uq, and Nasr, because of their piety. After these men passed away, people built statues as reminders of their goodness. Over generations, understanding faded, and the statues eventually became objects of worship. This gradual shift from respect to worship shows how easily deviation can occur when boundaries are not maintained (ibnu Abbas).¹⁰

Even today, similar practices exist in some communities. Certain individuals, religious leaders, spiritual guides, or historical figures, may be believed to possess supernatural abilities, control unseen forces, or act as intermediaries between humans and Allah. Others may seek blessings (*barakah*) by touching graves, offering gifts to

⁸ Al-jauziyyah Ibnul Qoyyim *Madârij Al-Sâlikîn*, (1996)

⁹ Ibn Abdul Halim, Ahmad, *Iqtidâ' al-şirâṭ al-mustaqīm*, Maṭba'at al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyah (1950).

¹⁰ Al-Bukhârî, Abû Abdillâh Muhammad ibn Ismâ'îl ibn Ibrâhîm ibn al-Mughîrah ibn al-Bardizbah al-Ju'fi. *Shohihul bukhari*, (2002).

spirits, or reciting prayers directed to someone already deceased. Although these practices often arise from good intentions, they conflict with the principle of tawheed and lead people away from pure worship of Allah.

By studying these deviations, Muslims are reminded to preserve their aqidah with caution and to ensure that their respect for scholars, saints, or leaders never exceeds the limits set by Islam.

6. The Danger of Shirk (Polytheism)

Shirk is the most severe sin in Islam¹¹ because it contradicts the very essence of tawheed. It involves giving worship, obedience, or trust to anyone besides Allah. Shirk can take many forms, ranging from obvious acts, such as praying to idols or invoking the dead to more subtle actions, such as believing that someone other than Allah can independently bring benefit or prevent harm.

Allah describes shirk as a tremendous injustice because it places created beings at a level that belongs only to the Creator. In Surah Luqman (13), Luqman advises his son: “Indeed, associating others with Allah is a great injustice.”

This verse highlights that shirk not only corrupts faith but also destroys the moral fabric of a person’s life by disconnecting them from the One who controls everything.¹²

Shirk also has serious consequences in the Hereafter. Allah clearly states that He will forgive any sin except shirk if a person dies without repentance. It nullifies all good deeds, regardless of how many acts of worship a person has performed. This is because the foundation of faith has been compromised. Even if someone prays, fasts, or gives charity, these actions lose their value if directed to other than Allah or performed while believing in partners beside Him.

Therefore, Muslims are urged to constantly safeguard their hearts from any form of shirk, whether major or minor. This includes avoiding practices like wearing amulets for protection, believing in charms, seeking help from jinn, or performing rituals that imitate shirk.¹³ By maintaining pure tawheed, a Muslim protects their faith and ensures that their deeds remain sincere and acceptable to Allah.

¹¹ Al-Bukhâri, Abû Abdillâh Muhammad ibn Ismâ‘îl ibn Ibrâhîm ibn al-Mughîrah ibn al-Bardizbah al-Ju‘fî. *Shohihul bukhari*, Beirut: Dar Ibnu katsir (2002)

¹² As-Sa‘diy, Syaikh Abdurrahmân ibn Nâshir, *Taisîr al-Karîm ar-Rahmân fî Tafsîr Kalâm al-Mannân*, Riyadh: Dâr as-Salâm li an-Nashr wa at-Tauzî‘, (2002).

¹³ Abdul Wahhab Muhammad Bin, *Kitab At-Tauhid*, (2004).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Data were collected from various sources using the library research technique, which involves gathering information from a range of written materials, including books, scholarly journals, articles, and documents. The analysis was conducted in a descriptive and critical manner to uncover the relationship between the attitude of *ghuluw* (excessive veneration) and deviations in Islamic creed (*aqidah*).

DISCUSSION

Definition of *Ghuluw*

The term *ghuluw* comes from Arabic, meaning *to go beyond limits* or *to be excessive*.¹⁴ In Islamic context, *ghuluw* refers to an attitude that exceeds the boundaries set by the Shari'ah, whether in belief, understanding, or practice.¹⁵

Ghuluw can appear in many forms, such as:

- Over-glorifying religious figures to the point of believing they cannot make mistakes.
- Performing acts of worship not based on the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad.
- Rejecting differences of opinion and becoming rigid in religious matters.¹⁶

Islam never teaches extremism. The Qur'an warns believers not to go beyond the limits in practicing religion, as stated in *Surah An-Nisa'* verse 171. Likewise, the Prophet reminded that the destruction of previous nations was caused by their excessive behavior in religion.¹⁷

Therefore, moderation (*wasathiyyah*) is the hallmark of Islam.¹⁸ This principle teaches balance between worship and worldly life, between faith and reason, and between the rights of God and the rights of human beings. By maintaining this balance, Muslims can live their faith peacefully and avoid extremism that leads to deviation.

Causes of *Ghuluw*

¹⁴ Ibn Manẓur, *Lisanul Arab*, Dār Sader - 9789953136332 - - Anna's Archive.

¹⁵ Ibn Kathīr, Ismail ibn Umar *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azhīm*, Kairo: Dar Ath-thayyibah

¹⁶ Ibn abdul halim, Ahmad, *Iqtidā' al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, Maṭba'at al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyah (1950).

¹⁷ Bin Hanbal Ahmad, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal* Beirut: Muassasah ar-Risalah, cet. ke-2. (1999).

¹⁸ Al-Jauziyyah Ibnul Qoyyim *Madârij Al-Sâlikîn*, (1996)

The phenomenon of *ghuluw* does not arise suddenly; it is caused by several interrelated factors. The main causes include:

1. Lack of proper understanding of Islam.¹⁹ Many people interpret the Qur'an and Hadith only literally without considering their context and objectives. This narrow understanding can lead to rigid and extreme behavior.
2. Fanaticism toward certain figures or groups²⁰. Excessive fanaticism makes a person reject other opinions and believe that only their group is right, creating division within the Muslim community.
3. Personal ego and desire to appear most righteous. Some individuals want to look more pious or more faithful than others. However, in Islam, true piety is measured not by appearance but by sincerity and balance in actions.
4. Influence of social environment and media. Environments that promote harsh ideologies and media that spread extremist narratives can easily influence those with weak religious knowledge.
5. Lack of moderate role models. When society lacks figures who show a wise and balanced way of practicing Islam, people may turn to rigid groups, mistakenly thinking that strictness equals truth.

The attitude of *ghuluw* harms not only the individual but also tarnishes the image of Islam as a religion of peace and mercy. Therefore, Muslims must strengthen their knowledge, be open to differences, and uphold moderation as a principle of faith.

The Urgency of Learning *Aqidah*

Aqidah is the foundation of every Muslim's belief. Linguistically, it derives from '*aqada*–*ya'qidu*–*'aqdan*', meaning "a firm bond."²¹ In Islamic terms, *aqidah* refers to firm belief in the oneness of Allah, the existence of angels, the revealed books, the prophets, the Day of Judgment, and divine decree — both good and bad.

Aqidah serves as the core foundation of Islam. Without correct *aqidah*, a person's worship and deeds hold no real value. It is like a building: if the foundation is weak, the entire structure collapses.

A sound *aqidah* enables a Muslim to:

¹⁹ Al-Fauzân, Syaikh Shâlih ibn Fauzân, *Aqîdah at-Tauhîd*. Riyadh: Maktabah Dâr al-Minhâj, (2013).

²⁰ Ibn Abdul Halim, Ahmad, *Iqtidâ' al-Sirâṭ al-Mustaqîm*, Maṭba'at al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyah (1950).

²¹ Al-Jurjani Ali bin.Muhammad, *kitab Al-Tarifat* (1994).

- Know their Creator and the purpose of life,
- Have a clear direction in action and worship,
- Remain calm, patient, and steadfast,
- Resist the misleading influences of modern ideologies such as secularism and materialism.

In today's world, many people lose spiritual direction due to worldly distractions. Learning *aqidah* helps bring them back to the true purpose of life to worship Allah. Islamic education plays a vital role in instilling correct beliefs, nurturing moral character, and strengthening faith from an early age.

A person with strong *aqidah* can clearly distinguish right from wrong, what pleases Allah from what angers Him. This aligns with the saying of the Prophet Muhammad: "If you feel uneasy after committing a sin and feel happy when doing good, then you are a believer."²²

This hadith shows that true faith produces moral sensitivity, the heart of a believer is disturbed by sin and finds peace in obedience. Thus, genuine *aqidah* is not only a matter of belief in the heart but also manifests in one's behavior.²³

Causes of Aqidah Deviation

According to scholars such as **Shaykh Salih bin Fawzan al-Fawzan**, there are several key factors that lead to deviation in *aqidah*:²⁴

1. Ignorance of True Aqidah

Ignorance of *aqidah* is one of the most serious issues affecting the Muslim community today. *Aqidah* is the foundation upon which all acts of worship, ethics, and worldviews are built. When this foundation is weak, everything that stands upon it becomes unstable. Many Muslims grow up practicing rituals without ever learning the underlying principles of tawhid, the types of shirk, the names and attributes of Allah, or the basic principles that protect a person from ideological deviation.

This lack of knowledge often leads to confusion when individuals encounter new ideas, cultural influences, or modern forms of misguidance spread through media and the internet. Without proper grounding in *aqidah*, people find it difficult to

²² An-Naisâbûrî, 'Abdillâh Abû al-Husain Muslim ibn al-Hajjâj al-Qusyairî, *shohih muslim*, (2006)

²³ At-Tirmidzî, Abû 'Îsâ Muhammad ibn 'Îsâ ibn Saurah, *Al-Jâmi' ash-Shahîh Sunan at-Tirmidzî*, Kairo: Mathba'ah Musthafâ al-Bâbî (1978)

²⁴ Al-Fauzân, Syaikh Shâlih ibn Fauzân, *'Aqidah at-Tauhid*, (2013)

distinguish between authentic Islamic teachings and fabricated beliefs that merely “sound Islamic.”

Furthermore, ignorance of aqidah weakens the ability of a Muslim to maintain spiritual resilience. People become easily influenced by superstition, doubtful about their faith, or overly dependent on human beings rather than relying on Allah.

Example: A person who does not understand tawhid may believe that wearing a particular bracelet brings luck, prevents accidents, or attracts wealth. They may think this is harmless, yet such beliefs contradict Islamic monotheism because they attribute supernatural influence to objects that Allah never empowered.

2. Blind Adherence to Ancestral Traditions.

Cultural and familial traditions play a strong role in shaping community identity. While many traditions are positive, problems arise when people follow inherited practices without questioning whether they are consistent with Islamic teachings. The Qur'an repeatedly warns against obeying the ways of ancestors when those ways contradict divine revelation, one of the clearest warnings appears in Surah Al-Baqarah 2:170. This issue persists because many people equate “what we have always done” with “what Islam teaches,” even though the two are not always the same. Some communities mix pre-Islamic rituals with Islamic practices, creating a hybrid belief system that people assume is religious simply because it is old.

Blind adherence to tradition also prevents intellectual growth. When people refuse to evaluate inherited beliefs through the lens of the Qur'an and Sunnah, they close the door to learning and improvement. Islam came to correct falsehood, even if the falsehood was cherished by previous generations.

Example: In some regions, families perform rituals for deceased ancestors: offering food, leaving items at graves, or invoking the help of the dead. These practices are often justified as “custom” or “respect for our elders,” but they contradict Islamic teachings on worship and the role of the deceased.

3. Blind Imitation (Taqlid).

Taqlid, in the context of aqidah, refers to accepting beliefs without understanding their proofs or sources. Islam encourages following scholars, but this must be balanced with seeking knowledge and verifying that one's beliefs are

supported by the Qur'an and Sunnah. Blind imitation becomes dangerous when people rely on personalities rather than principles.

A person who practices taqlid in matters of belief may become attached to a particular teacher, group, or ideology, not because it is correct, but simply because they were taught to follow without questioning. Such individuals can easily fall into deviant beliefs if their teachers or leaders err. Blind imitation also weakens critical thinking and personal responsibility. Islam teaches that every individual will be accountable before Allah, not based on whom they followed, but based on whether they sought the truth. Imam al-Bukhari's statement, "Knowledge comes before speech and action," highlights the necessity of understanding before practicing.

Example: Someone may believe that a certain religious figure has the power to "open the doors of sustenance" or "protect them from calamities," simply because a respected elder said so. Without checking the evidence, this belief can lead them into practices that contradict tawhid, such as relying on intermediaries instead of turning directly to Allah.

4. Exaggeration in Venerating Righteous People.

Respecting pious individuals, scholars, and saints is part of Islamic etiquette. However, problems arise when admiration turns into exaggeration, attributing to them powers that belong only to Allah. This form of extremism was the earliest root of shirk throughout human history.

The story of Prophet Nuh's people illustrates this clearly. Initially, they loved certain righteous men: Wadd, Suwa', Yaghuth, Ya'uq, and Nasr. After those men died, people built statues to remember them. Over generations, their descendants began worshipping those statues, believing they could bring blessings or protection. What started as respect ended as idolatry.

This pattern repeats in many communities today. Over-veneration of saints can lead people to visit graves seeking miracles, make vows to the dead, or believe that scholars have independent control over the unseen. Islam teaches that even prophets do not have power except what Allah grants them.

Example: A person may visit the grave of a well-known wali and ask the deceased directly for healing, children, or success. Although the intention may be to seek barakah, the act itself crosses into shirk if the person believes the dead can influence events independently of Allah.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that ghuluw (excessiveness in religion) and aqidah (faith) deviation are two closely related issues that threaten the integrity of Islamic belief and practice. Ghuluw arises when individuals go beyond the boundaries established by the Shari'ah, while aqidah deviation occurs when one's understanding of faith becomes weak or distorted due to ignorance, blind imitation, or excessive admiration toward certain figures.

Islam firmly rejects all forms of extremism and calls for wasathiyah, a principle of moderation, balance, and justice in every aspect of life. This balanced approach helps Muslims to worship sincerely, think rationally, and interact harmoniously with others while remaining firmly grounded in the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Learning aqidah correctly is therefore essential, as it forms the foundation of one's faith and practice. A strong and sound aqidah shapes a Muslim's moral character, strengthens spiritual resilience, and prevents deviation caused by modern ideologies or social influences.

In conclusion, the solution to ghuluw and aqidah deviation lies in returning to authentic Islamic teachings, deepening religious knowledge, avoiding blind fanaticism, and practicing moderation in all matters. Through this, Muslims can maintain the purity of their faith, uphold unity within the ummah, and embody Islam as a religion of peace, wisdom, and mercy for all humanity.

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