

# Fundamental Management in the Tariqah Institution: A Preliminary Survey

Ahmad Rahimi Bin Ridzuan

Islamic Science Institute, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia

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## Abstract

Management is a process that involves individuals and groups working together to achieve specific goals within an organisation. In its early development, management was considered one of the disciplines within Islamic knowledge. This is evidenced by several verses in the Qur'an that address matters related to management, organisation, and administration. Over time, management evolved into various forms, including a distinct Islamic management framework. The institution of the *ṭarīqah* (Sufi order) is also regarded as an organisational entity with specific components that serve as key drivers of its growth and continuity. This study aims to explore the concept of Islamic management by focusing on the fundamental management elements practised within *ṭarīqah* institutions. This research adopts a qualitative approach, employing document analysis as the main method of data collection, by referring to primary and secondary sources. The findings indicate that the *ṭarīqah* functions as an organised institution with a well-structured management system, enabling it to sustain and expand continuously from its inception to the present day.

**Keywords:** Management, Islamic Management, Tariqah Institution, Organisational Structure, Sufi Order

## Introduction

The *ṭarīqah* institution represents one of the oldest and most enduring Islamic socio-religious organizations, especially across the Muslim world and Southeast Asia. Despite the emergence of modern educational and administrative systems, *ṭarīqah* institutions continue to serve as vital centres for spiritual development, community guidance, and the transmission of Islamic teachings (Wan Saleha, Mohd Hasrul & Wan Hishamudin, 2020). Their functions go beyond being mere places of worship—they also act as informal educational hubs and platforms for moral cultivation within Muslim societies.

However, while these institutions play a crucial role in shaping spiritual consciousness and communal ethics, their operational management, decision-making processes, and institutional sustainability have received limited scholarly attention from the perspective of modern management science (Rohmawati & Zulkifli, 2024). The lack of empirical studies in

this area has created a significant research gap, especially when considering how traditional Islamic values can be harmonised with contemporary principles of governance and administration.

In Malaysia, many *ṭarīqah* institutions function autonomously, outside of government-aligned religious structures, yet they maintain their relevance through strong spiritual lineages and structured teachings (Mahyuddin et al., 2013). While mainstream management theories have been widely developed, their applicability and adaptability to religious organizations—particularly those with hierarchical and charismatic structures like *ṭarīqah* institutions—remain underexplored (Azwan Abdullah et al., 2019). This raises fundamental questions about how such organizations govern themselves, sustain operations, and transmit authority across generations.

This study is significant as it provides insight into the intersection between faith-based leadership and institutional management. It aims to explore the fundamental management principles within a selected *ṭarīqah* institution, focusing on leadership structure, ethical operation, communication flow, and internal governance. The study is both timely and necessary, as it sheds light on the practical administration of spiritual institutions at a time when many face increasing demands for transparency, accountability, and modernization.

The findings of this research will be beneficial not only to scholars in Islamic studies and organizational management but also to policy makers, religious administrators, and spiritual leaders who seek to balance traditional religious authority with effective management practices. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the growing discourse on Islamic organizational governance and provide a model for further empirical and comparative analysis in managing faith-based institutions.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research design using the documentary analysis method. It is an exploratory study aimed at understanding the foundational components of management within *ṭarīqah* (Sufi order) institutions through the lens of both Islamic and conventional management perspectives. The primary method of data collection was through library research, which involved the systematic review and analysis of both primary sources, such as the Qur'an, Hadith, classical Sufi texts, and *ṭarīqah* lineage records, as well as secondary sources, including books, journal articles, and previous academic studies related to Islamic management and *ṭarīqah* institutions. This method was chosen to allow a thorough examination of the evolution, structure, and internal management mechanisms of *ṭarīqah* organisations, particularly focusing on the five essential components: the spiritual master (murshid), the disciple (sālik), spiritual practices, the *zawiyah* (Sufi lodge), and ethical conduct (adab). These components were analysed to explore how they collectively contribute to the unique and enduring organisational system of *ṭarīqah*. No empirical fieldwork, interviews, or surveys were conducted, as the study relied solely on textual and historical sources to derive its findings.

### *The Knowledge of Tasawwuf*

Islam is a comprehensive and complete religion. It encourages its followers to use reason and to reflect. As stated in the words of Allah SWT:

*“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, there are signs for people of understanding.”*

(Qur’an, Āli ‘Imrān 3:190)

This verse illustrates that Muslims are urged to contemplate the natural phenomena around them, such as the cycle of night and day, the movement of the moon and stars, and so forth. From the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Muslims were encouraged to think and seek knowledge. As a result, numerous branches of Islamic knowledge emerged, one of which is *tasawwuf* (Islamic spirituality or Sufism). According to al-Kurdi (1994), *tasawwuf* is also referred to as *ilm al-bāṭin* (inner knowledge), *ilm al-qulūb* (knowledge of the hearts), *ilm al-ikhhlāṣ* (knowledge of sincerity), *ilm al-īmān* (knowledge of faith), *ilm al-yaqīn* (knowledge of certainty), *ilm al-ḥāl* (knowledge of spiritual states), *ilm al-iḥsān* (knowledge of excellence), and *ilm al-ṭarīqah* (knowledge of the path) (‘Isa, 2001). Though these terms differ, they all essentially refer to the same discipline (Jahid Sidek, 1991).

Tasawwuf is a vital component of Islam. It is associated with the three foundations of the religion: *īmān* (faith), *islām* (submission), and *iḥsān* (excellence), all of which are emphasised in the Hadith of Jibril:

*“O Messenger of Allah, what is īmān (faith)?” He replied, “It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His messengers, meeting Him, and to believe in the resurrection.” He then asked, “What is islām (submission)?” The Prophet ﷺ answered, “To worship Allah without associating anything with Him, to establish prayer, pay the obligatory zakat, and fast during Ramadan.” Finally, he asked, “What is iḥsān?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “To worship Allah as if you see Him; and if you do not see Him, know that He sees you.”*

(al-Bukhari, 1987, Hadith No. 4499)

This hadith clearly illustrates that like other Islamic sciences, *tasawwuf* has its own distinct discipline, focusing particularly on the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah*). This was one of the missions entrusted to the Prophet ﷺ, as mentioned in the Qur’an:

*“Just as We have sent among you a Messenger from yourselves reciting to you Our verses, purifying you, and teaching you the Book and wisdom and teaching you that which you did not know.”*

(Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:151)

The concept of *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification) is a fundamental element in Islam. Allah has linked true success to those who purify their souls:

*“He has succeeded who purifies it.”*

(Qur’an, al-Shams 91:9)

In *tasawwuf*, Muslims who sincerely practise their worship can attain *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul). Among the core practices taught in this discipline are: repentance (*tawbah*), self-discipline (*mujāhadah*), seclusion (*khalwah*), scrupulousness (*wara’*), asceticism (*zuhd*), silence (*ṣamt*), fear of Allah (*khawf*), and remembrance (*dhikr*) (al-Qushayri, n.d.). *Tasawwuf* is also closely linked to *ṭarīqah* orders, which function as structured institutions that uphold and practise the principles of *tasawwuf* in their spiritual routines.

*The Emergence of Ṭarīqah*

Tasawwuf, as previously discussed, is one of the branches of Islamic knowledge. However, the definition and meaning of tasawwuf vary widely across different interpretations. Among them, al-Taftazānī (1985) stated that *ṣūf* means coarse wool. This implies that a person who wishes to enter the path of tasawwuf must replace luxurious garments with clothing made of coarse wool, symbolising simplicity, sincerity, and spiritual focus. Early Sufi masters taught that the foundation of tasawwuf lies in four key stages: *sharī'ah* (Islamic law), *ṭarīqah* (the spiritual path), *ḥaqīqah* (spiritual reality), and *ma'rifah* (gnosis). This is reflected in the words of al-'Ajlūnī in *Kashf al-Khafā*:

“*Sharī'ah* is my speech, *ṭarīqah* is my actions, *ḥaqīqah* is my inner state, and *ma'rifah* is my capital.”

Tasawwuf teaches Muslims to purify themselves from negative traits and to adorn themselves with noble qualities. An individual must practise these spiritual disciplines to achieve purification of the soul and gain the pleasure of Allah. According to Abubakar (1993), *ṭarīqah* refers to practices based on the exemplary life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, which were inherited through generations by the Companions, the *Tābi'īn* (Successors), and later scholars. Asmaran As (1994) stated that the term *ṭarīqah* in tasawwuf carries two meanings. The first refers to spiritual education for individuals entering a Sufi lifestyle, as understood in the 1st and 2nd centuries Hijri. The second refers to its development from the 3rd century onwards, where *ṭarīqah* became a movement that offered both spiritual and physical training to the public through specific devotional practices.

In its development, *ṭarīqah* progressed through several phases across centuries until it became an established organisation. In the first phase, during the 1st and 2nd centuries Hijri, tasawwuf emerged from the concern of Islamic scholars and intellectuals about the changing mental state of the Muslim community at that time. Following the Prophet's era, the Muslim world underwent significant changes, particularly in terms of economic and social life (Rahmawati, 2014). As a result, the Muslim community was seen to neglect spiritual matters, focusing only on legal rulings (*sharī'ah*) and creed (*'aqīdah*) (Mulyati, 2004). Combined with modernisation and a culture of hedonism, this lifestyle was viewed by Sufis as excessive indulgence. Thus, the movement was initiated by the Prophet's Companions and their followers, who taught the essence of life and worshipped with simplicity and asceticism (*zuhd*) (Rahmawati, 2014).

The development of tasawwuf continued into the second phase, in the 3rd century Hijri. At this stage, tasawwuf no longer focused solely on morality and ethics. According to Hamka, during the 3rd and 4th centuries, tasawwuf expanded to encompass three main components: the soul, character, and metaphysics (unseen realities) (Rahmawati, 2014). In the third phase, there was a drastic shift due to the emergence of two schools of tasawwuf from the previous phase: philosophical tasawwuf (*tasawwuf falsafi*) and Sunni tasawwuf (*tasawwuf sunnī*). It was observed that Sunni tasawwuf developed more widely, while philosophical tasawwuf began to decline, usually surfacing when a Sufi had a background in philosophy (Asmaran As, 1994).

This phase also marked the beginning of *ṭarīqah* formation, around the 5th century Hijri, with the emergence of *dhikr* (remembrance) circles that were based on earlier Sufi

practices. However, the organisational activities of ṭarīqah during this phase were still limited (Rahmawati, 2014). In the fourth phase, philosophical tasawwuf reappeared through prominent figures such as Ibn 'Arabī, who expressed his thoughts in two influential works: *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. The development of tasawwuf during this period had a deep impact on the institutionalisation of ṭarīqah, to the extent that researchers concluded that the true emergence of formal ṭarīqah occurred in the 6th century Hijri (Ummu Kalsum, 2003).

From the above, it can be summarised that ṭarīqah began as individual practices among Sufis, which then evolved into organisational groups that eventually became established Sufi orders (Hidayat Siregar, 2009). Two prominent figures who pioneered and founded ṭarīqah orders were Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, who established the Qādiriyyah order, and Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī, who founded the Rifā'iyyah order. Both of them systematised dhikr and sulūk (spiritual path) practices, attracting a large number of followers, among whom was Imām al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī learned the methods of Sunni Sufi discipline from these two Sufi scholars, which later became the foundation of his own spiritual ideology (Yuslia, 2019).

Following this, more Sufi figures emerged and established new ṭarīqah orders that have endured to the present day. In the context of ṭarīqah development in Malaysia, according to Zakaria Stapa (2012), based on a study by al-Attas, by the early 1960s there were nine recognised ṭarīqah mu'tabarah (authoritative Sufi orders) still actively practised: Qādiriyyah, Naqshbandiyyah, Rifā'iyyah, Shādhiliyyah, Chishtiyyah, Shattariyyah, Ahmadiyyah, Tijaniyyah, and 'Alawiyyah.

### *Islamic Management*

The concept of Islamic management is generally well known and often perceived as simple to understand by most people. However, a deeper comprehension and practical application of the true meaning of Islamic management can be complex and challenging. Islamic management refers to the process of managing individuals and organisational groups by using the Qur'an and Sunnah as the guiding principles in achieving goals (Masitah et al., 2019). Ilhaamie (2001) argues that Islamic management is a system grounded in comprehensive Islamic philosophy and principles. According to Mohamed Branine & Pollard (2010), the foundation of this management approach is rooted in ontological and epistemological sources namely the Qur'an and Hadith. Al-Buraey (1990) similarly states that the sources of Islamic management and administration can be classified into two categories: primary and secondary, both derived from the Sharī'ah (Islamic law). Primary sources include the Qur'an and Hadith, which are considered definitive and authoritative. Secondary sources are drawn from ijtihād (independent reasoning by scholars), classical Islamic books, historical monuments (such as coinage), and the writings of Islamic scholars.

### *Management In Tariqah Institutions*

According to Mulyati (2004), ṭarīqah represents the practical implementation of tasawwuf teachings that have evolved over time into formal Sufi orders. A ṭarīqah is viewed as a school within the discipline of tasawwuf, which adopts a particular Sufi worldview and provides a structured spiritual method for those who seek the path of Sufism towards attaining ma'rifatullāh (gnosis or direct knowledge of Allah) (Agus Riyadi, 2016).

Each ṭarīqah follows a unique approach based on the methodology employed by its murshid (spiritual guide). Therefore, it is evident that every ṭarīqah develops its own management system that aligns with its specific context, era, and environment.

Nevertheless, Huda (2008) outlines five core components that form the foundational framework of ṭarīqah management.

#### *The Ṭarīqah Master (Murshid/Guru)*

The ṭarīqah master, or shaykh al-murshid, plays a central and indispensable role in the existence of any ṭarīqah order. As stated by Faudzinain & Muhammad Khairi (2021), it is impossible for a ṭarīqah to exist without the presence of a spiritual guide or murshid. A shaykh or murshid must possess an unbroken chain of transmission (silsilah) that traces back to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. According to al-Kurdi (1994), anyone who lacks a valid silsilah that connects to the Prophet ﷺ will not attain true spiritual blessings or inherit the spiritual legacy of the Prophet. Therefore, the silsilah is a vital element in the legitimacy and spiritual efficacy of a ṭarīqah. In other words, the spiritual master holds a primary role within the ṭarīqah. Just as scholars are seen as the inheritors of the Prophet in teaching external religious sciences, Sufi masters or murshids are regarded as the inheritors of the Prophet in teaching inner and spiritual knowledge.

One of the fundamental functions of the murshid is to identify the spiritual diseases afflicting the hearts of their disciples (murīdīn) and to prescribe appropriate remedies. Thus, the role of the murshid is critical in providing spiritual guidance and mentorship to the seekers (sāliks) to ensure they progress along the path and reach the desired level of spiritual maturity (Abdul Hayei, 2004). Based on studies conducted by Hidayat Siregar (2011) and Abdul Manam et al. (2012), it is shown that in addition to overseeing the spiritual progress of the disciples, the murshid also acts as the driving force behind the activities carried out within the ṭarīqah institution. In other words, the murshid functions as the “leader” of the organisation, responsible for mobilising its members and internal resources to ensure that all planned objectives are successfully achieved.

#### *The Disciple (Murīd/ Sālik)*

A murīd or sālik—that is, a disciple or practitioner of a ṭarīqah—is one who has performed a pledge of allegiance (bay‘ah) with the ṭarīqah master (murshid). Within ṭarīqah tradition, the disciple must make a solemn vow before the murshid to carry out all prescribed spiritual practices with full commitment and sincerity (Huda, 2008).

The relationship between the master and the disciple is deeply intimate and characterised by unwavering loyalty and obedience. As such, the master must embody the highest moral standards and serve as a living example for the disciple to emulate. In addition to receiving spiritual guidance, a disciple also bears organisational responsibilities as an active member within the ṭarīqah institution, which is led by the murshid (Abdul Manam et al., 2012). Therefore, each disciple has a specific role in helping to achieve the mission and objectives of the ṭarīqah organisation.

For instance, some disciples may be granted permission by the murshid to serve as khalīfah—representatives or deputies—who act on behalf of the master during specific events or gatherings. A notable example is Haji Ishaq, shaykh of the Naqshbandiyyah

Khalidiyyah Ṭarīqah based in Dong, Raub, Pahang. He had disciples from diverse backgrounds, including among scholars and academics, which ultimately contributed to the widespread growth of the ṭarīqah. The teachings did not remain limited to rural communities but expanded into higher education institutions as well. This development was largely attributed to two of his appointed khalīfahs—Ustaz Mokhtar and Dr. Jahid Sidek—who played pivotal roles in disseminating the ṭarīqah within universities and academic circles (Abdul Manam et al., 2012).

### *Spiritual Practices*

One of the core practices that forms the backbone of a *ṭarīqah* is dhikr (remembrance of Allah). While every *ṭarīqah* incorporates the practice of dhikr, the form, quantity, and method of its recitation vary according to each *ṭarīqah*'s unique approach (Huda, 2008). It is widely accepted among scholars that any utterance that includes the name of Allah is considered dhikr, including phrases such as *tasbīḥ* (glorification), *tahmīd* (praise), and *tahlīl* (affirmation of divine oneness).

The *murshid* (spiritual master) of the *ṭarīqah* instructs each *sālik* or *murīd* (disciple) in a specific form of dhikr, which is practised according to the distinctive spiritual discipline of the respective *ṭarīqah*. According to Shaykh Amīn al-Kurdī, the ultimate purpose of engaging in dhikr is to attain taqwā (God-consciousness) at its highest and most complete level. Studies by previous researchers, such as Mustafa Kamil (2000) and Rohani (1990), have demonstrated that each *ṭarīqah* upholds its own set of disciplined practices. These unique methods of spiritual training serve as the primary source of vitality and growth for a *ṭarīqah*. This is because the spiritual management methods applied within these practices have proven effective in enhancing the spiritual development of individuals.

### *The Zawiyah (Sufi Lodge)*

A *zawiyah* is a dedicated space where *sāliks* (spiritual seekers) engage in *sulūk* (spiritual discipline), *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), and various other Sufi practices. The origin of the *zawiyah* can be traced back to early Sufi practitioners who frequently travelled from place to place, often detached from worldly attachments, in search of spiritual guidance (Huda, 2008). Because of this nomadic tendency, the *zawiyah*—also referred to as *ribat*—emerged as a central gathering place for disciples to participate in communal *dhikr* sessions and other spiritual assemblies.

According to Sodikin et al. (2021), it is common for a *ṭarīqah* master (*murshid*) to reside in the *zawiyah* and use it as a center for teaching and spiritual instruction attended by disciples. Hence, the *zawiyah* functions as a multi-purpose hub: a place of residence for the *murshid*, a learning institution for the disciples, and a central venue for the spread and development of the *ṭarīqah*. One example is the *Zawiyah Ihyā' al-Qulūb*, established by Haji Ishaq, which serves as both a center for *ṭarīqah* practice and a religious educational institution. This *zawiyah* has attracted numerous students from across Malaysia and even from abroad (Abdul Manam et al., 2012). It is therefore widely acknowledged that every *ṭarīqah* has its own *zawiyah* or *ribat*, which acts as the epicenter for its teachings and practices. Each *zawiyah* operates with distinct characteristics and organisational management, shaped according to the instructions and leadership style of its *murshid*, who serves as the “head” of the institution.

*Etiquette of the Sālik Towards the Ṭarīqah Master*

A ṭarīqah is an organisation that places great emphasis on the relationship between the disciple (murīd or sālik) and the spiritual master (murshid). Within the ṭarīqah structure, there are prescribed etiquettes (adab) or ethical guidelines that every disciple must follow in order to attain spiritual blessings and divine favour through their teacher (Huda, 2008). This principle applies across all ṭarīqah orders.

The importance of etiquette can be seen in the prophetic tradition (sīrah nabawiyah), particularly in how the Companions interacted with the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ—with deep respect and humility in their speech, meetings, and dealings. Similarly, the Prophet ﷺ himself displayed exemplary manners and kindness towards his Companions (Ahmad Sya'rani, 2016). In the Qur'an, Allah SWT also instructs believers on the proper etiquette when addressing the Prophet in Surah al-Ḥujurāt, verse 2: "O you who believe! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him as you speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds become void while you are unaware."

(Qur'an, al-Ḥujurāt 49:2)

In the ṭarīqah context, the murshid is the person responsible for monitoring the spiritual progress of the disciples. A teacher gives different advice and instructions tailored to each disciple, depending on their individual spiritual needs and condition. Therefore, every sālik must adhere to their murshid's guidance to successfully advance on their spiritual path. It is widely acknowledged that ethics and etiquette are crucial elements in any form of organisation. As Megat Ayop & Abd. Halim (2016) state, when an organisation has members who are ethical and uphold integrity, the quality and effectiveness of service delivery will increase. This is also true within ṭarīqah organisations: when a disciple demonstrates obedience and respect toward their teacher—who acts as the head of the organisation—every instruction and task carried out within the institution is more likely to proceed smoothly and effectively.

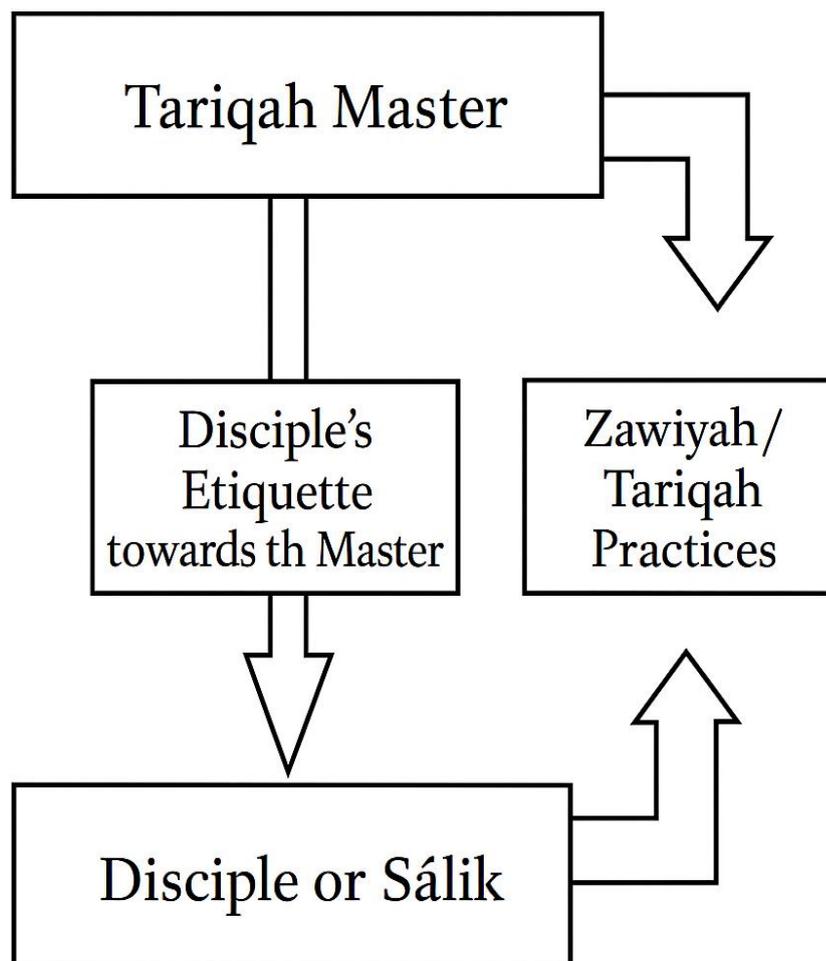


Figure 1: Organizational Management In Sufi Order

### Conclusion

The *ṭarīqah* is one of the branches of *tasawwuf* (Islamic mysticism), and it serves as the practical application of the theoretical principles taught within the discipline of *tasawwuf*. This is evident in the way *ṭarīqah* orders emerged—originating from Sufi scholars who translated their knowledge into structured spiritual practices. Through the dedicated efforts of these early Sufis, *ṭarīqah* institutions spread throughout the Islamic world.

Historical development shows that *ṭarīqah* is not merely a spiritual movement but an organised collective with its own institutional structure. In parallel, various Islamic organisations and associations have been established from past to present—each employing its own management system, whether conventional or Islamic. However, many of these entities have not sustained themselves as effectively as the *ṭarīqah* institutions, which have continued to grow and endure from the third century Hijrah until today.

This longevity can be attributed to the presence of five core components that form the foundation of *ṭarīqah* management: the spiritual master (*guru*), the disciple (*murīd*), the *zawiyah*, the spiritual practices, and the etiquette (*adab*). Each of these elements plays a

distinct and critical role within the organisational structure, making *ṭarīqah* a unique and systematically managed institution with an enduring legacy.

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