



## REACTUALIZING THE MEANING OF TASAWUF: AN INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** Sufism is often considered old-fashioned and not open to change, even though tasawuf also accepts new things so that reforms occur both in etymology and terminology. And the purpose of this study is to describe the essence of Sufism in terminology. The method used is qualitative with literature study techniques, then all relevant data is collected, analyzed, and finally concluded the relevant content. The results of the study show that the essence of Sufism in terms of definition depends on the point of view of each person. The principles used are the Qur'an and Assunnah and include a unique dimension to discuss how best to get closer to God so that the Divine appears, *Ilahi Anta Maqsudi wa ridhaka mathlubi*.

**Keywords:** Meaning, Reactualizing, Sufism, Education

**Abstrak:** Tasawuf sering kali dianggap kuno dan tidak terbuka pada perubahan, padahal tasawuf juga menerima hal baru sehingga terjadi reformasi baik secara etimologi maupun terminologi. Dan tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan terkait Hakekat Tasawuf Secara Terminologi. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan teknik studi pustaka, lalu dikumpulkan semua data relevan, di analisis kemudian terakhir disimpulkan isi yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa hakekat tasawuf secara terminologi definisinya tergantung pada sudut pandang masing-masing orang. Asas yang digunakan adalah Al-quran dan Assunnah serta mencakup dimensi khusus untuk membahas mengenai bagaimana cara terbaik mendekati diri kepada tuhan sehingga muncul *Ilahi anta maksudi wa ridhaka mathlubi*.

**Keywords:** Makna, Reakualisasi, Tasawuf, Pendidikan

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### Introduction

In understanding Sufism, Muslims are divided into three groups. The first group is a group that believes that Sufism is the cause of the decline of Muslims. (Akbarizan, 2008) . This is because there is an assumption that critical thinking always appears in the teachings of Sufism, especially regarding *zuhud*, *uzlah* (*khilwat*), *faqr*, and *wara*. which are the main *maqamat* in Sufism teachings. The discussion regarding this concerns the inaccuracy of the Sufism tradition in applying the verses of Allah SWT which tell us to have a work ethic in life, while the Sufism tradition avoids and abandons the world with its ascetic qualities and colors (Nurhuda, 2023c) According to them, Sufism is a passive,

weak and undeveloped teaching, and the fall of Islam into the hands of western imperialism was due to the rise of Sufism practices in Islam, even though previously when Islam was advanced it played a very important role in developing science, including Sufism. (Nurhuda, 2022b) .

The second group views that Sufism is very important for equipping a Muslim with good spiritual values, realizing spiritual balance, along with a materialistic life that seeks peace of mind by navigating the Sufi realm because the heart and soul have an important position in shaping a person's personality. ( Nurhuda , 2022c ) . Because Sufism is a teaching that is understood and inspired by the verses of the Koran and Sunnah and has spiritual messages. Meanwhile, the third group views that although Sufism has a negative side, it also makes a very significant contribution. Sufism is considered by this group as an effort to mediate between worldly life which is materialistic and life in the afterlife which is oriented towards peace and surrender (Putri & Nurhuda, 2023) .

*third* group recommends " *neo Sufism* " (new style of Sufism), as an effort to reform the traditions of Sufism which are considered deviant to return to true Sufi civilization. Because for them, however, Sufism is really needed and has been able to provide a style of civilization for the people. The weak point of the Sufi tradition which is considered wrong for this group is that Sufis always think negatively about the world and materialist life, so they leave that world and distance themselves from social interaction. Neo Sufism with its modern Sufism style emphasizes the need to be individually pious and socially pious, to be submissive and obedient and silent in worshipping one's Lord, but also to be active and involved in the social scene (Rahman, 1987) .

## Research methods

The method used is qualitative with a literature study approach, which means collecting various sources starting from books, journals, the internet, or other sources that can be accounted for reliable (Nurhuda, Ansori, et al., 2023) . After that, data processing is carried out by reducing and displaying the data to answer the problem accompanied by content analysis. And finally, descriptive conclusions are drawn.

## Results and discussion

### Understanding tasawuf in terminology

In terms of terminology, Sufism is interpreted very differently. This is due to differences in the way experts view the activities of the Sufis. Some of these definitions were formulated by Sufism experts as follows:

1. Ma'ruf al-Kharky, as quoted by as-Suhrawardi, said:

**التصوف الأخذ بالحقائق واليأس في أيدي الخلائق.**  
*"Tasawwuf is taking the essence and leaving what is in the hands of creatures"* (As-Suhrawardi, nd) .

This definition illustrates that Sufism seeks to seek the essence of truth by abandoning worldly pleasures. Worldly pleasures are not a concern and are even shunned because they can interfere with worship and relationship with Allah SWT.

2. Abu Bakr al-Kattani as quoted by Imam al-Ghazali, he said:

**التصوف خلق فمن زاد عليك بالخلق زاد عليك بالتصوف  
 فالعباد اجابت نفوسهم إلى الأعمال لأنهم يسلكون بنور  
 الإسلام والزهاد اجابت نفوسهم إلى بعض الأخلاق لكونهم سلكوا  
 بنور الإيمان: <sup>15</sup>**

*"Sufism is character, whoever provides you with character provisions means he has provided provisions for you in Sufism. So the servant whose soul receives (the command) to do good deeds, because in fact they do suluk with the guidance (nur) of Islam. And those who are ascetic whose souls receive (orders) to do some morals, because they have done suluk with the guidance (nur) of their faith"* (Al-Ghazali, nd) .

From this understanding it can be seen that Sufism concentrates on matters of commendable morals before entering the world of Sufism.

3. Muhammad Amin Kurdi said that Sufism is a science that is known about the good and bad things of the soul, how to cleanse it from the despicable and fill it with praiseworthy qualities, by doing suluk and journeying towards (the pleasure of) Allah SWT and leaving (prohibitions) towards the (order) (Kurdish, nd) .

From the definition above, it can be seen that Sufism focuses on activities to cleanse the soul, fill it with praiseworthy qualities in a suluk way and draw oneself closer to Allah SWT.

From the perspective of humans as limited creatures, Sufism is defined as an effort to purify the soul by distancing the influence of worldly life and focusing attention only on Allah SWT. And from the perspective of struggling humans, Sufism can be defined as an effort to beautify oneself with morals that originate from religious teachings in order to get closer to Allah SWT by doing various commendable things, especially those related to positive morals (Nurhuda, 2022a) . And from the perspective of humans as creatures who believe in God, Sufism can be defined as an awareness of nature (divinity) which can direct the soul to focus on activities that can connect humans with God (Nata, 2000) .

To define Sufism universally, it is necessary to start from existing definitions, so that complementary understandings can be found. So it needs to be grouped as follows:

*First* , al-Bidayah which means talking about experiences at the initial stage. Definitions that express the experience at this stage *of heresy* include:

- a. Sufism is taking the essence and breaking with what is in the hands of creatures, so whoever is not truly poor, then he is not truly Sufism.
- b. A Sufi is a person who has nothing to pollute his soul and can cleanse everything.
- c. Sufis are people who do not like to ask and do not feel troubled by nothing.
- d. A Sufi is a person who is free from turbidity and is full of a way of thinking that is focused on God and cuts ties with humans, and for him the same is true between gold and a baking dish (Jamil, 2007)

*Second* , al-Mujahadah, which talks about experiences involving seriousness and activity. This is seen from the point of view of the amaliyah carried out by Sufi experts, they start by adorning themselves with actions taught by religion and noble morals such as compassion, attention, justice, simplicity and other things (Nurhuda, 2021) .

*Third* , al-Mazaaqah which means a definition that discusses experiences in terms of feelings. Definitions included in this category include :

1. Al-Jujaidi al-Bagdadi said that Sufism is that you are with Allah SWT without any connection.
2. Abu Muhammad Ruwaim said that Sufism is leaving oneself with Allah SWT according to His will.
3. Abu Bakr al-Syibli said that Sufi people are little children in the bosom of God (Asmaran, 1996) .

In Sufism books we still find a number of definitions of Sufism which vary greatly depending on the angle from which we define it. However, from the explanations above we can understand the meaning of Sufism, which contains teachings about spiritual life, cleanliness of the soul, ways to clean it from various heart diseases, temptations of lust, worldly life, and ways to get closer to Allah. SWT and mortal in His eternity so as to reach a deep heart's knowledge of Allah SWT (ma'rifah) (Jamil, 2007) .

### **Basics Of Tasawuf Teachings In The Al-Qur'an**

Along with the many criticisms of Sufism which have created tension in the world of Islamic thought, it seems that various arguments have begun to emerge about whether Sufism is truly an Islamic science or whether it is just the conversion of non-Islamic elements to Islam. This controversy of opinion began with the emergence of philosophical Sufism and became sharper later with the entry of orientalist opinion, which generally stated that Sufism originates from outside Islam (Siregar, 2002) .

In fact, the basics of Sufism have existed since the arrival of Islam in Arabia, this can be seen from the life of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, his way of life which was then emulated and continued by his friends because it was able to provide coolness and grace to the universe (Nurhuda, 2023b) . During the

Meccan period, the spiritual consciousness of Rasulullah SAW was based on clear and definite mystical experiences, as described in the Qur'an *surah an-Najm* [53]; 11-13 where Allah SWT says which means:

*"His heart did not deny what he had seen. So would the people (polytheists of Mecca) dispute with him what he had seen? and indeed Muhammad saw Gabriel (in his true form) at another time."*

Then the verses that concern aspects of morality and asceticism, as one of the problems in Sufism, Sufis refer to the Koran as the main foundation. Because humans have good and evil traits, as stated: Allah SWT *inspires (human souls) evil and good*, therefore it is necessary to eradicate the bad traits and develop the good traits. *Blessed indeed is the person who purifies his soul.*

Islamic teachings basically concentrate on spiritual life, getting closer to Allah SWT with various kinds of spiritual activities such as cleansing the heart, dhikr, and other acts of worship as well as getting closer to Allah SWT. Sufism also has its own identity, where people who practice it do not pay much attention to worldly life, and even cut ties with it. Apart from that, Sufism is also dominated by teachings such as *khauf and raja, at-taubah, zuhd, tawakkal, syukur, shabr, ridha*, and others whose ultimate goal is to be *mortal* or lose one's identity in eternity (*baqa'*) of God in achieving *ma' rifah* (deep heart knowledge of God).

Among the verses in the Qur'an that talk about Sufism include;

1. Al-Anbiya [21] verse 25  
*And We did not send any Messenger before you but We revealed to him: "That there is no (rightful) God but Me, so worship me all of you."*
2. Al-Anfal [8] verse 45, Allah SWT says about the command to recite dhikr.  
*"O ye who believe. If you are fighting an army (enemy), then be steadfast and mention (the name of) Allah SWT as much as possible so that you will be lucky."*
3. al-Ma'idah [5] verse 83 says Allah SWT About *khauf* (fear) and *raja* (hope)  
*"And when they listened to what was revealed to the Messenger (Muhammad), you saw their eyes shed tears because of the truth (the Koran) which they had known (from their own books); while saying: "O our Lord, we have believed, so record us with those who are witnesses (of the truth of the Koran and the prophethood of Muhammad SAW)."*
4. al-Isra' [17] verse 79 Regarding the command to worship in the silence of the night and its quantity  
*"And part of the evening you pray tabajud as an additional act of worship for you; May your Lord raise you to a place of praise."*
5. at-Tahrim [66] verse 8: about efforts to improve oneself (repentance)  
*"O you who believe, repent to Allah SWT with nasuba repentance (pure repentance). Hopefully your Rabb will cover your mistakes and admit you to Jannah beneath which rivers flow..."*

From the few examples above of the verses spoken by Allah SWT, there is enough reason to say that there is no longer any doubt about the source of Sufism, it is extracted from the Koran, a book that has always been valid in every era and was developed based on the life of the Prophet. Muhammad SAW and his friends (Nurhuda, Susanti, et al., 2023) . In certain elements there are similarities with the characteristics of mysticism in general, but this picture is not strong enough to be used as an argument that Sufism originates from outside Islam. This similarity and similarities occur because they are rooted in the universality of human nature itself (Hamka, 1978) .

### **Basics Of Tasawuf Teachings In As-Sunnah**

Even though the text of the Qur'an is actually sufficient reason to say that Sufism originates from Islam, it will strengthen everyone's argument by adding the basics of Sufism from the Sunnah. In the hadith qudsi it is said that Rasulullah SAW said:

*"Whoever is hostile to My wali (loved servant), I will declare war on him. A person who draws near (to Me) is more beloved to Me than what I require of him. When I love him, then I become his listener for what he is hearing, my sight for what he is seeing, my hand for what he is holding, and my walker for the journey he takes. If he asks Me, I will give him, and if he asks Me for forgiveness, I will forgive him."* (HR. Bukhari Muslim).

Then the hadith of the Prophet reads as narrated by Imam Bukhari:

جاء رجل إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال يا نبي الله  
أوصني فقال عليك بتقوى الله فإنه جماع كل خير وعليك  
بالجهاد فإنه رهبانية المسلم وعليك بذكر الله فإنه نور لك  
(رواه البخاري)

*A man came to the Prophet SAW and said: O Prophet of Allah SWT bequeath me, the Prophet said: fear Allah SWT, because it is the collection of every good thing, strive for jihad because it is the life of a Muslim spirit, and make dhikr, because it is nur (light). ) for you. (HR. Muslim).*

Meanwhile, the text from as-Sunnah explains the foundation of the tarekat as follows:

وعن علي كرم الله وجهه : قلت يا رسول الله أي الطريقة أقرب إلى  
الله وأسهلها على عباد الله وأفضلها عند الله تعالى / فقال يا  
علي عليك بدوام ذكر الله فقال على كل الناس يذكرون الله فقال  
صلى الله عليه وسلم : يا علي لا تقوم الساعة حتى لا يبقى  
على وجه الأرض من يقول : الله الله فقال له على كيف أذكر يا  
رسول الله فقال صلى الله عليه وسلم : أغمض عينيك واسمع عني  
ثلاث مرات ثم قل مثلها وأنا اسمع . فقال صلى الله عليه وسلم " لا  
إله إلا الله ثلاث مرات مغمضا عينه ثم قالها على ذلك

*From Ali ra, he said: O RasulAllah SWT, which is the closest path to Allah SWT and the easiest for his servants and the most afdbal in the sight of Allah SWT?, then Rasulullab said: yes Ali, you must always remember Allah SWT (dhikr) to Him. Ali said: everyone makes dhikr of Allah SWT. The Apostle said again: Yes, Ali, there will be no apocalypse so that there will no longer be anyone on the surface of the earth who says "Allah SWT, Allah SWT". So Ali said to the Messenger of Allah, how do I make dhikr of Allah SWT? The Prophet said: Close your eyes and listen to me three times, then listen to me as you heard. So Rasulullab SAW said "la ilaha illa Allah SWT three times while his eyes were closed. Then Ali said something similar .*

The hadiths quoted above are only some of the many hadiths that might be used as a basis for Sufism, and things that express the spiritual life found in Sufism. A life dominated by fear, asceticism, surrender only to Allah SWT, gratitude, patience and willingness to accept Allah SWT's decisions and destiny. This kind of life was exemplified by Rasulullab SAW himself and his friends, especially those who were nicknamed ahl as-Shuffah, even though they were simple, they had a great love for continuing to learn and seek knowledge (Nurhuda, 2023a) .

Therefore, after quoting a number of texts related to the teachings of Sufism and explaining them, Muhammad Abdullah asy Syarqawi said:

*" The beginnings of Islamic Sufism can be found in its spiritual spirit in the Koran, as can also be found in the words of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, both before and when he was sent as a Prophet. "The beginnings of Islamic Sufism can also be found in the time of the companions of the Prophet SAW and the generations after him (Tabi'in)" (Asy-Syarqawi, 2003) .*

Abu Nasr as-Siraj al-Thusi said that: *" The teachings of Sufism are basically derived from the Koran and as-Sunnah. Because the practices of the companions do not depart from the teachings of al- Qur'an and Sunnah. According to him, Sufis (people who are involved in Sufism) always form a personality (akhlak karimah), longing for the Khaliq and love for Him, Ma'rifah and Suluk and always train themselves spiritually so that the realization of an intimate life with Allah SWT is in accordance with the Qur'an. 'an and as-Sunnah" (As-Siraj, 1960) .*

### Scope Of Tasawuf Science

Sufism is another name for "Mysticism in Islam". Among Western orientalis it is known as "Sufism". The word " Sufism" is a special term for Islamic mysticism, so the word "Sufism" does not exist in the mysticism of other religions.

Sufism aims to obtain a special relationship directly from God. The relationship in question has the meaning of full awareness, that humans are in the presence of God. This awareness will lead to communication contact and dialogue between the human spirit and God. This can be obtained through self-isolation. Being close to God will take the form of "Ijtihad" (unity) with God. The above is the core of the problem of "Sophism" both in the Islamic religion and outside it. A full "psychic" movement is felt in order to truly think about the nature of contact that is capable of studying information from God.

Sufism or mysticism in Islam has the essence of life and development starting from a form of life of "zuhudan" (avoiding worldly luxury). The goal of Sufism is to be able to have a direct relationship with God. This means there is a feeling of truly being in the presence of God. Sufis believe that worship held in a formal way is not considered satisfactory because it does not fulfill the spiritual needs of Sufis.

Thus, it is clear that the scope of Sufism is matters relating to efforts/methods to get closer to God which aims to obtain a special relationship directly from God.

### **The Goals Of Tasawuf**

In general, the most important goal of Sufism is for the practitioner to be as close to Allah SWT as possible. Meanwhile, the characteristics of Sufism can be seen in three targets, namely ;

1. Sufism aims to develop moral aspects.

This aspect focuses on the goal of realizing balanced mental stability, mastery and control of desires so that a Sufi can be consistent and committed only to moral nobility. Sufism with aims like this is generally practical.

2. Sufism which aims to ma'rifatullah

Through direct disclosure or the al-Kasyf al-hijab method. This type of Sufism is theoretical in nature with a set of special provisions that are formulated in a systematic analysis.

3. Sufism discusses the system of recognizing and approaching Allah SWT in a philosophical mystical way, examining the line of human relationship with God and what it means to be close to Him.

There are three symbols of a servant's closeness to his God, which are the focus of this third goal. The three symbols of closeness include ;

- a. Close in the sense of seeing and feeling the presence of Allah SWT in the heart.
- b. Close means meeting Allah SWT so that dialogue occurs between humans and their Lord.
- c. The unification of humans with God so that what happens is helping humans who have united in God's presence (Siregar, 2002) .

From the above view regarding the general goals of a person's need to practice Sufism, it can be seen that there is a diversity of goals. However, it can be formulated that the ultimate goal of Sufism is pure ethics or pure psychology, or both simultaneously, namely;

*First* , complete surrender to God's absolute will, because He is the main mover of all natural events; *Second* , total abandonment of all personal desires and freeing oneself from bad qualities related to worldly life which is termed al-Fana. *Third*, eliminating self-awareness and focusing it on contemplating God alone, there is nothing to seek except Him. Divine anta means wa ridhaka mathlubi

### **Conclusion**

Based on the explanation above, it can be said that the essence and meaning of Sufism in the context of definitional terminology depends on each person's point of view and perspective, but what is certain is that Sufism has a fairly strong basis based on the Al-Quran and Assunnah and includes special dimensions to discuss how to best to get closer to God. Apart from that, it also has the aim of eliminating self-awareness and focusing it on contemplating God alone, there is nothing to seek except Him. Divine anta means wa ridhaka mathlubi.

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