

Sufism's Status as the Balance of Islamic Law

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Received: 2022-March-21

Rev. Req: 2022-May-19

Accepted: 2022-June-26



10.5758/ijls.2022.8

How to cite this paper: Alblezi, M., Che Noh, M.A., Ikhwan, A. & Anwar, S. (2022). Sufism's Status as the Balance of Islamic Law. *International Journal of Law and Society (IJLS)*, 1(2), 85-96.
<https://doi.org/10.5758/ijls.2022.8>

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ABSTRACT: *The primary desideratum of this paper is to ascertain whether the Sufis are a part of the formative paradigm of the Islamic sciences, respecting the scholars and laws, or is it a schism which is heterogenic to the Islamic sciences. The method used is library. Processing and analyzing data through the process of compiling, categorizing data, looking for content links from various data obtained from the writings, thoughts and opinions of figures or experts. The essential aspiration must be to construct an authentic evaluation of the traditions of the antecedent aficionados of the ideology without embellishing their educations. Moreover, this paper will present Sufism as a variant type of Islam compared to the typology established in the hermeneutics of the masses in the Occident. The people remain uninformed to the essence of spiritual Islam and consider the religion to be mundane and intolerant. This obliviousness is, of course, is to be expected as Muslims themselves have diverted from the path of esoteric knowledge, once ingrained in the Muslim heritage for over a millennium. While the names of Ghazali and Rumi are renowned, their creed and methodologies are not often evaluated or championed. For this purpose, a meticulous approach is necessitated, through which the reader will ascertain a more thorough and objective comprehension of the faith.*

Tujuan utama dari tulisan ini adalah untuk memastikan apakah para sufi merupakan bagian dari paradigma formatif ilmu-ilmu Islam, menghormati para ulama dan hukum, atau merupakan perpecahan yang heterogen dengan ilmu-ilmu Islam. Metode yang digunakan adalah perpustakaan. Mengolah dan menganalisis data melalui proses menyusun, mengkategorikan data, mencari tautan isi dari berbagai data yang diperoleh dari tulisan, pemikiran dan pendapat para tokoh atau ahli. Aspirasi esensial harus membangun evaluasi

otentik dari tradisi para penggemar ideologi sebelumnya tanpa membumbui pendidikan mereka. Lebih dari itu, tulisan ini akan menampilkan tasawuf sebagai varian tipe Islam dibandingkan dengan tipologi yang dibangun dalam hermeneutika massa di Barat. Orang-orang tetap tidak mengetahui esensi Islam spiritual dan menganggap agama itu duniawi dan tidak toleran. Ketidaktahuan ini, tentu saja, diharapkan karena umat Islam sendiri telah menyimpang dari jalan pengetahuan esoteris, yang pernah mendarah daging dalam warisan Muslim selama lebih dari satu milenium. Sementara nama Ghazali dan Rumi terkenal, keyakinan dan metodologi mereka tidak sering dievaluasi atau diperjuangkan. Untuk tujuan ini, diperlukan pendekatan yang cermat, yang melaluinya pembaca akan memastikan pemahaman iman yang lebih menyeluruh dan objektif.

Keywords: *Sufism, Islamic Law, Esoteric Knowledge.*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is imperative for one to decode the word "Sufism" before we dissect the nuances of the Sufi paradigm. There are mixed opinions about the etymological formation of the word "*Tasawwuf*" (Sufism). Amongst the typology of possible words from which the phrase *Tasawwuf* is derived from including the word *suf*, which refers to the woollen garments that the mystics wore in the formative periods of Islam. Another possible word from where Sufism was possibly extracted could be 'the first rank' (*saff-i awwal*). There are also possibilities that this word was deduced from the name given to a group of companions who were gnostics at the time of the Messenger Muhammad (blessings and salutations be upon him), known as the *sahab-i suffa*. Others attribute the word to the word *safw* which means purity, as this is what the Sufis want to achieve (A.U. Hujwiri, 2001, p.101). Abu Bakr al-Kalabadhi, in his famous manuscript *Kitab al-Ta'rruf li-Madhab ahl al-Tasawwuf* (Introducing the Doctrine of the Sufis), after mentioning similar origins of the word *Tasawwuf*, quotes a few renowned Sufis in relation to their hermeneutics of what the Sufis are and represent. He quotes Sari al-Saqati who described the gnostics as, "Their food is the food of the sick, their sleep is the sleep of the drowned, their speech is the speech of fools." (Arberry, 1935); (Islam, 2018).

The aforementioned illustrates that the faction was strange in the eyes of many a scholar. The quote mentions their nourishment being that of the ailing populaces. This description is most likely because when one is sick, he eats very little, and also he eats simple food due to lack of taste. The spiritual group were known for their renunciation of luxuries, even shunning excessiveness in provisions. They did not conform to the *status quo* and adopted a modest and simple life. One also could find it strange that Kalabadhi equates their sleep to 'drowning'. This description could be as the Sufis often describe themselves as being drowned in love. It also seems as though the drowning occurs where one panics and is also a place where no individual wants to be. The Sufis wanted to stay awake and remember their Lord and slept little as they considered this time away from the remembrance of their Lord, who they loved dearly. The comment conflating speech with foolish utterances is slightly easier to comprehend as many of the laity would consider the actions of the mystics to be strange. The rejection of goods in this

materialistic world would seem ludicrous to most who continuously pursue the treasures of the world. To this end we find the description of Abu Huraiyra who described the godly men in the following way, "They faint of hunger so that bedouins suppose them to be mad." (Arberry, 1935);(Watkin, 2020).

In the assessment of some contemporary members of the intelligentsia, there is no absolute definition, as there an abundance of roots from which the word is possibly extracted (Schimmel, 1975 p. 3). While other academics are content to follow the general analysis of the pious predecessors. At this juncture, it becomes clear that even though much is recorded and debated about the etymological foundations of the word Sufism, the hermeneutics and methodologies adopted by this factions are considerably more important than names attributed to the group. It is their panoramic view of Islam that is impressive along with their introspective endeavours. Sufism is far more than a single science, it adopts an all-inclusive attitude and encompasses the whole Islamic spectrum. From the aspects of the Shari'ah which provide instructions for the corporeal world to the divine realms *vis-a-vis* the spiritual dominions, Sufism has a profound understanding of all these aspects (Al-Ghazali, 2001).

II. METHOD

This type of research is library research, namely research that seeks to obtain data using library sources. The data that is the center of this study is collected through variable data which is based on the writings, thoughts, and opinions of figures and experts who talk about the main theme of the research. Qualitative data that has been collected through the literature is analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis to see aspects of Islamic education, especially in the field of Sufism as Islamic law and in relation to its current application. Processing and analyzing data through the process of compiling, categorizing data, looking for content relationships from various data obtained from the writings, thoughts and opinions of figures and experts with a view to getting their meaning (Ikhwan, 2021).

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The acknowledgement of the scholars concerning the Sufis and the evidence that the Sufi movement was considered part of the traditional Islamic fraternity can be observed within the texts of the earliest Muslim scholars. These early scholars not only acknowledged their methodologies and creeds but championed their teachings to the masses. One must accentuate that by labelling these people as scholars there is no suggestion that they were spiritually deficient and only intellectually enegaged. These scholars are categorized as such because they are reputable in their individual sciences and are considered authorities in their respected fields. It is somewhat astounding that the principal scholars of the early Islamic doctrine are generally in consensus *vis-à-vis* the validity of the science of Sufism and in fact advocate their methodologies and actions, while in the present day the majority of scholars illustrate a propensity to unconcealed knowledge exclusively, and are reproachful towards such Gnostics.

Imam Malik (95-179 AH), one of the most famous Sunni scholars and the first to establish a school of jurisprudence, was an enthusiastic supporter of the path of *tasawwuf*. He considered the physical and spiritual knowledge to be binary and inseparable. According to Malik, adopting a single type of education could lead to misguidance or even disbelief. Both the physical and transcendent sciences must be incorporated into one's life to make one a perfected adherent of Islam. He said, whosoever studied Jurisprudence (*tafaqaha*) and did not study Sufism (*tasawwafa*) will be corrupted, and whoever studied Sufism and did not study jurisprudence will become a heretic, and whoever combined both will reach the truth.' (A. al-Adawi, p. 195) Sheikh Ahmed Zarruq commented about this in his manuscript *Kashib al-Ilbās 'an Faydat al-Khatm Abī al-'Abbās* in which he dissects why both groups who take the external or internal sciences are blameworthy.

"The infidelity of the first is due to the fact that he professes the doctrine of fatalism (jabr), which entails the negation of wisdom and legal rulings. The moral depravity of the second is due to the fact that his conduct is devoid of genuine dedication that prevents disobedience to Allah, and of the sincere devotion that is required in all actions." (I. N. Tijani, 1950, p 107).

Another well-known intellectual Imam Abu Hanifa (85-179 AH), the leader of the most enumerated Sunni school, from Iraq, is also unequivocal in his support for the Sufi practitioners. In particular, we see this in his comments regarding the Sufi teacher Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (83-148 AH). Imam Abu Hanifa is unambiguous in his declaration that if he had not attained the company of this sage, he would not have been on genuine guidance. Imam Abu Hanifa states that he entered the spiritual domain when he befriended this great mystic. "If it were not for two years I would have perished. Those were the two years I accompanied Sayyidna Ja'far as-Sadiq and acquired the spiritual knowledge that made me a mystic in the way." (M. A. Ibn Abidin, 1826, p. 43). The statement of Imam Abu Hanifa is noteworthy, as even though he is famous for his scholarship of the physical sciences, it seems that he is also classified amongst the spiritual people and the travellers of the path of Sufism. To this end, we can derive that there is more than merely championing of the mystic path but rather that the Imam experienced it personally.

Furthermore, another illustrious intellectual Imam Muhammad bin Idris Shafi'i (150-205 AH), spent much time with the exponents of *tasawwuf*. Imam Shafi'i was the third of the four Imams who established their school in Sunni jurisprudence. He saw many virtues within these people and recommended attending their gatherings. Amongst the merits of acquiring their company was the etiquettes which they instilled within their students. The foremost qualities which attracted the Imam to the ways of Sufism the way they spoke, the gentleness with which they would treat the masses, and the importance of possessing a soft heart. (I. M. Aljuni, Vol.1, 1739, p. 341).

The fourth school of Jurisprudence led by Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (164-241 AH), also endorsed the Sufi ideology and encouraged their followers to accompany the saints and pious. Imam Ahmad acknowledged that this faction also had wisdom and blessings which could not be enumerated by the limited mind, as we can see from the advice which he gave to his Son, "Oh, my son you have to sit with the people of Sufism because they are

like a fountain of knowledge and they keep the remembrance of Allah in their hearts. They are the ascetics, and they have the most spiritual power.” (M. A. al-Kurdi al-Arbuli, 2003, p. 405) There is further support for the ideological positions of the Sufis from later scholars such as Fakhr ad-Din al-Razi (544-606 AH). Razi also commends the methodologies of the mystic group and lists the qualities that are belonging to the groups who adhere to the path. Razi suggests that the way they achieve enlightenment is by disconnecting with the earthly life and engrossing themselves in the remembrance of God, in all their actions. (Maqasid at-Tawhid, 2001, p. 193) Imam Nawawi, the famous Shafi'i scholar, also supported the Sufi gatherings and provided the following criterion concerning the Sufis, in his text *al-Maqasid*, “The way of Sufism is based on five principles: 1. Being God-fearing both privately and publicly; 2. Living according to the Sunnah in word and deed; 3. Indifference to whether others accept or reject one; 4. Satisfaction with Allah Most High when in scarcity and when you have plenty; and 5. Returning to Allah in happiness or affliction.” (N. H. M. Keller, 2003, p.156).

The above illustrates that according to Imam Nawawi the Sufis are unquestionably a part of orthodox Islam and practitioners of the authentic teachings of Islam. The Imam elaborates that the Sufi path entailed many virtues and advocated the way of *Tasawwuf* as being based on sound principles. Imam Nawawi is a seeming advocate of the Sufis and suggests that the faction is a paragon of virtue. The above five qualities are such that every believer would like to master them and not consider any of them to be foreign entities to the classical Islamic paradigm.

Imam Ibn Taymiyya is often considered to be a scholar who is divisive in his views concerning the path of Islamic mysticism. The stance of Ibn Taymiyya is not clear as even though he has an apparent genealogy in the *Tariqa* (spiritual way) descending from Abdu al-Qadir al-Jilani, Ibn Taymiyya is well-known for criticising some Sufi advocates. In some statements, he expresses unequivocal support for the exponents of the Sufi schema, but in other places, he questions much of the Sufi narrative. We see the championing of Sufism in words such as the following;

“Tasawwuf is safeguarding the precious meanings and leaving behind the call to fame and vanity to reach the state of truthfulness because the best of humans after the Prophet are the *Siddiqeen* (truthful). Some people criticised *Sufiyya* and claimed that they were innovators, out of the Sunnah, but the truth is they are striving in Allah's obedience, as others of Allah's people strove in Allah's obedience. So from them, you will find the foremost in nearness by virtue of his striving.” (Ibn Taymiyya, 1320, Majmua Fatawa Ibn Taymiyya al-Kubra, Volume 11, Book of Tasawwuf).

While in some situations he seems to contradict these views and seem to approach the Sufi viewpoints condescendingly. One such example can be extrapolated from the dialogue which takes place between Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Ata' Allah Sikandari, a great Sufi scholar who taught predominantly in Egypt and Syria. There were certain issues of *istighasa* (calling intermediaries for help) and disputes regarding Sheikh Ibn Arabi and his explanations into the Sufi understandings, which he condemned. (Ibn `Ata Allah 1357, VII, pp. 17 18) The thing which is baffling is that even though both academics had

encyclopedic knowledge and are considered as apocalyptic scholars of their epoch, they had differences of opinion on some of the rudimentary principles of the Sufi path. Although both claimed to have Sufi teachers and do indeed have links to the Sufi orders, there is a distinct disagreement in understandings between the two scholars. In fact, the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya did give birth to an ideology which disputed the whole validity of *Tassawuf*, and called all adherents polytheists. To penetrate this subject it would be vital to traverse beyond the scope of our investigation, so at this juncture it suffices to say that the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya have been very influential mainly from the 18th century onwards through the rise of Wahhabism (See Appendix 3).

It is beyond doubt that the majority of early scholars were unanimous in the hermeneutics that the practitioners of Islamic mysticism were people of guidance. They were not only considered to be authentic, but endorsed by almost all. Indeed, these Gnostics were not only praised by the scholars, but many stated that they were also followers of their esoteric wisdom. The significance of this support of established people of knowledge is that there can be no way for subsequent generations to claim that the Sufis opposed studies or the people of the apparent sciences, as respect and honour was reciprocated in both echelons.

The Sufi schools also championed the scholarship of the Islamic schools of Fiqh (jurisprudence). All the sages were followers of at least one of the *Madhahib* (schools of law), some of which have subsequently transpired. The majority of the Sufis were followers of the four schools which currently exist. The Sufis were highly appreciative of the endeavours of the legal organisations and often did not hesitate to extract legal maxims from more than one institute. According to al- Kalabadhi, in the view of the Sufis every individual strives in righteousness is correct and every person who holds a given principle in law is sound. So as long as an individual possesses the pre-requisite knowledge, and his rulings are according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, they can be followed. This flexibility in implementing decrees is distinctly variant to most Islamic advocates of fiqh as they tend to support one particular school for adherence. (A.B. al- Kalabadhi, 1935, p. 72).

Moreover, if the *Ahl al-tasawwuf* (people who practised Sufism) showed enmity towards scholars, it would be unimaginable that the scholars would have been so praising of the Sufi teachings. It becomes abundantly clear that the men of exoteric knowledge revered the Sufis and vice versa. This deference illustrates that the germinal Islamic community accepted the Sufis as participants of conventional Islam and the Sufis encouraged the support of the schools of knowledge. We see to this end that Abd al-Qadir al Jilani associates the Sufi mystics to the beginning of creation itself. Jilani writes in his book *Sir min al-Asrar* (Secret of secrets) that the first thing that was created by God was the light of the Prophet Muhammad (blessings be upon him). This light was subsequently the basis for the creation of the divine throne which he states was made from the eye of the light of the Prophet. Jilani states that all subsequent formation was created from this Prophetic light, including the saintly personalities. These are chosen figures who are created through exceptional lights and selected amongst humanity to wear the 'robes of light'. According to Jilani, these are known as the sultan-souls, and they were also chosen in the world of souls for spiritual works and dressed in heaven with angelic robes. Then

God ordered these souls to descend to the earth of matter, where they became human souls (Al-Jilani & Al-Halveti, 2010).

As can be extrapolated from the beliefs of al-Jilani there exists a view amongst the Sufi intellectuals that they are linked to the Messenger Muhammad (blessings be upon him) in a spiritual manner which was ordained before they came into human form. Jilani suggests that these extraordinary individuals were the objects of divine selection and pre-ordained to descend to the earth to fulfil their God-given mission, namely to reunite the lost souls to the holy presence of their lord. This alludes to the fact that this group is unlike other assemblies which may be created by human whims and arrangement, but instead, the saints follow a pre-ordained spiritual map.

Still, the Sufi intellectuals did criticise the actions of the pseudo-Sufis and asked for reformation and adherence to the conventional rules of the Sufi way as were practised in the formative periods. The Sufi academics do not consider themselves to be *integer vitae* in regards to all accusations and indeed they do not suggest they are beyond reproach. As we will see many scholars from Rumi to Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani condemned those claiming to be Sufis while in practice did have nothing to do with their spiritual predecessors. Al-Jilani suggests that both the seeker of exclusive physical knowledge or the spiritual sciences is blameworthy. Pursuing one type of learning is erroneous as both are required to acquire the uncountable rewards from the divine realms. Therefore, the one chasing a solely spiritual path is endangering himself as is the one who follows only physical dimensions of the faith. Al-Jilani's comments seem to suggest there were Sufi claimants in his time who were ignorant of the religious sciences and advocated a rejectionist attitude towards the outward religious sciences (Al-Jilani & Al-Halveti, 2010).

Even though we have discussed the many criticisms of those who do not follow the Shari'ah and the basic instructions of established practitioners, it is not always straightforward to distinguish who are those who are part of the gnostic circle. We see in the writings of Idries Shah that there is no uniform way through which the people of Tassawuf can be identified. They have dissimilar methodologies and hermeneutics making it difficult to draw a precise paradigm as to who and where they are. Idries Shah quotes the saying of Sheikh Yahya Munir who addresses this concern. "There is no uniform behaviour amongst the Masters. One may eat and sleep well; another will fast and stay up all night. One may spend time with people; another holds himself aloof. One will be dressed in rags and another in linen of high quality. One will conceal his saintship; another will show it publicly." (I. Sha, 1982, p. 22).

So once we establish that the members of the spiritual echelons are numerous then how can the masses understand if they have found the Sufi Master or are misled by an imposter. Exponents seem to express the view that the measuring tool for whether or not you have discovered a true guide or a charlatan is the individual's sincerity and intention. Expressed in another manner, the spiritualists suggest if the seeker is worthy of finding an authentic Saint he will be led to the court of such a being, if not, the seeker has only his deviations to blame. "As to the problem of recognising a true Sufi, this is no problem to the true seeker. ...Sufis say that you will only be misled if something unworthy of yourself attracts you to an unworthy person. Like calls to like, truth to truth and deceit

to deceit. If you are not deceitful, you will not be deceived.” (I. Sha, 1982, p. 23) Still, Jalaluddin Rumi is very critical of those claiming to be spiritual masters while they have not attained the light, as the blind follow the blind, and those who are just claimants of the path, yet do not have any grasp of the astral wisdom. They are according to Rumi true imposters who will lead many astray as they have not penetrated the realms of heavenly secrets, yet have merely regurgitated what they have studied in texts or heard. “A disciple who is trained by a man of God will have a pure and purified spirit. But he who is trained by an imposter and a hypocrite and who learns theory from him will be just like him: despicable, weak, incapable, morose, without any exit of uncertainties, and deficient in all senses.” (J. Rumi, Vol. 2, p. 257).

Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani further describes the Qualities of the men of God and suggests that they are chosen in the process of divine selection. Al-Jilani states these people have polished hearts and are selected to guide others who are worthy of this spiritual light. In the following text, he also seems to allude to spiritual masters past and present, as he suggests that the spiritual teacher must be ‘esteemed’ by all. This guidance is, of course, a reference to chains of spiritual teachers which all Sufis claim leads them back to the court of the Messenger Muhammad (may salutations and blessings eternally be upon him). “To reach that state, to clean and shine that heart, one needs a teacher who is mature, who is union with Allah, and who is esteemed by all past and present. The teacher has to have reached a stage close to Allah and to have been sent back to this lower realm by Allah to perfect those who are worthy but lacking.” (Al-Jilani & Al-Halveti, 2010).

Imam Ghazali is another Sufi scholar who does not spare the transgressing Sufis. He reiterates that in his opinion the spiritual inheritor of knowledge has a far more significant station than the physical scholar, but many have diverted from the authentic course of the classical mystics. Al-Ghazali records that many Sufis have become distant from the essence of Sufism and are merely content with the luxuries of the titles and accolades. (A. H. al-Ghazali, Vol.1, p. 51) Sheikh Nazim also criticises those who do not champion knowledge as being deviant. Sheikh Nazim argues that religious education remains very important and is as valid today as it was when it was initially revealed. All Sufi claimants must take heed and follow Prophetic ways, or they face the possibility of going astray. “Don’t say his knowledge, knowledge known since fifteen centuries is unacceptable knowledge. No, you are wrong! They brought gold from the time of the pharaohs, but they did not say “This is old gold. We must throw it away.” What Prophets brought, that is a real pearl of knowledge. You must come and hear and listen and obey to be a perfect one in creation.” (N. A. al-Haqqani, 2013, p. 109).

The above advice from Sheikh Nazim seems to have a broad target audience. The words seemed to be aimed towards critics of religious sciences, such as the secularists and also those who may pursue the spiritual path without the pre-requisites of physical knowledge. Also, it is an indirect criticism of those who do not possess the knowledge, that is those Sufi congregations who claim only internal experience will suffice. Sheikh Nazim states that those who follow the teachings of the Prophets will naturally obey their laws and customs and not create their own paths that would lead to the creation of further schisms. (N. A. al-Haqqani, 2013, p. 111) It seems strange that previous

generations of Sufi scholars themselves were active critics of those who they recognised to be pseudo-Sufis. This objection may be forwarded since they are considered to be closer to the formative period of Islam and had a general and genuine hermeneutics of what Sufism entailed. Yet, they did not merely praise the Sufis but also were critical of those who strayed. To this end, we see Ali Hujwiri's criticism of those Sufis who question the issue of whether humans can possess any degree of knowledge. Al-Hujwiri denies this notion and considers this to be a conclusion derived from the ignorant.

"The same doctrine is held by a group of heretics who are connected with Sufism. They say in as much as nothing is knowable, their negation of knowledge is more correct than the affirmation of it. This statement proceeds from their folly and stupidity. The negation of knowledge must be the result either of knowledge or ignorance. Now it is impossible for knowledge to deny knowledge. Therefore knowledge cannot be denied except by their ignorance." (A. U. Al-Hujwiri, 2011, p. 84)

Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani also provides a typology of deviant groups who claim to follow the mystical path. In his work *Sir al-Asrar* (The secret of secrets), he lists more than half a dozen deviant crowds. Amongst the transgressors listed are the Hululiyya, Haliyya, Awliya'iyya, Shamuraniyya, Hubbiyya, Huriyya, Haliyya, Ibahiyya, Mutakasaliyya, Mutajahiliyya, Wafiqiyya, and the Ilhamiyya. These flocks diverted from ideologies to practices. Some of these groups had strange methods perhaps unique to themselves such as the Hululiyya, who claimed it a religious act to look at beautiful people regardless of whether it was lawful or not. Groups such as Hubiyya considered when people came close to the stages of love, acts of worship were no longer obligatory upon them. The Mutakasiliyya pretended to be lazy and adopted begging as a means of livelihood.

There are two factions from the list written by Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani of deviant mystics which are very interesting regarding the modern context in which we find ourselves. The first were those who sang, and danced freely mixing and ignored religious laws, namely the Haliyya, and the *Awliya'iyya*. There exist many such groups in our era, which is part of the reason many of the laity are cautious of the Sufis. The second groups which are relevant to the scope of our discussion are the *Wafiqiyya* and the *Ilhamiyya*. Both these groups renounce knowledge. The *Wafiqiyya* rejected studentship on the basis that only God could know God, so there was no need to educate oneself, and God could never really be comprehended. The *Ilhamiyya* counted solely on inspiration and abandoned all studies. They forbade the disciple from seeking knowledge of the Qur'an and said their poetry was their religious guide. They relinquished the Qur'an and prayers and taught poetry as a replacement. This criticism illustrates how mystic scholars of the past do not accept those who stigmatise knowledge or denounce intellectuals. It shows that the Sufis not only encouraged studies but considered opponents of education to be from the deviant sects. This clarification further begs the question what these spiritual titans would have deliberated over the actions of some Sufis of our time. Some factions clap hands, sing and free mix, not drawing lessons from the Shari'ah. These assemblies are detrimental to the reputation of the spiritual forefathers and are an affront to the descriptions of the Sufi path provided by preceding sages.

It seems to be a distinct feature in contemporary times that very few Sufi scholars who are willing to critique those who are affiliated to the mystical path. In the past scholars such as Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, Ahmad Zarruq and Ali Al-Hujwiri were prepared to launch scathing attacks on factions not adhering to the classical teachings of their gnostic forefathers. This lack of criticism is probably due to various reasons. One of them is that the path of Tasawwuf is already under attack from groups such as the Salafis, who have attained power in many countries in the Middle-East, and the conditions may not be conducive for further criticisms. Another factor could be that there are relatively few adherents to the Sufi path compared to earlier periods, and as people have a limited understanding of the way, it may be counter-productive to be overzealous in the denigration of those claiming to be Sufis. Moreover, there are very few recognised figures in the Islamic world are held in the same esteem as past scholars, and therefore, even if a scholar was to ask for reform, it is highly unlikely that those issues would be readdressed.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is ample evidence from our assessments of the Sufi writings to overwhelmingly suggest that the Sufis are a mystical group propagating religious sciences. We have analysed the sayings of these mystics and found nothing contrary to the classical Islamic paradigms practised in the germinal epochs of Islam. To the contrary, we have recognised that these spiritual exponents are advocates of knowledge and admire those who possess material mastery. To reciprocate the admiration of the mystics we have also found that many in the echelons of the apparent sciences also revere the men of luminous insight. Through our explorations, we have deduced the fact that the Sufis consider the knowledge of the *Shari'ah* to be indispensable. This importance is part of the reason they vigorously challenge the charlatans who attempt to negate the significance of the rational sciences. Many Sufis such as Ali-Hujwiri, consider the *Shari'ah* to be the measurement of success. Authorities such as Abdul Qadir al-Jilani consider those who thought themselves beyond the Islamic legislation to be deviant groups and alien to the principles of Sufism. On the other hand, they vehemently condemn those who criticise the numinous way and consider only somatic knowledge to be a requirement for guidance. The teachers of the esoteric knowledge council all teachers and students of *Shari'ah* not to ostracise the spiritual sciences, and pursue the spiritual way.

The Sufis scholars sanction knowledge of the Islamic Laws and *Shari'ah*, but what they prescribe are continuous introspection and self-assessment. They champion the seeking of spiritual expertise beyond the sensual sciences. This group admonish those who exclusively pursue physical or esoteric knowledge, without having any comprehension of the other. This lack of knowledge according to these Islamic mystics would lead to individuals lacking the fundamentals of the Islamic creed. Imam al-Ghazali, in his work, 'The Revival of the Islamic Sciences,' writes there is no inconsistency between the revealed sciences and the apparent knowledge. Any seeming contradiction is due to the incapacity of a student to comprehend the wisdom behind both prescriptions. In reality,

both the exoteric and esoteric disciplines are inseparable and should be utilised synonymously. For lacking in one cluster of studies will lead to a deficiency in religious hermeneutics. The problem according to al-Ghazali is that it is challenging for seekers to master both the overt and covert hermeneutics of Islam, and often leads to lack of appreciation of the whole paradigm. Most students invest their time in one type of knowledge, and this means that they often criticise the other without full comprehension. This exclusiveness, according to al-Ghazali needs to end and the religious tutors should articulate the full Islamic spectrum.

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