

Terminologically of Tasawuf : An Introduction

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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 special dimension to discuss how best to get closer to God so that the Divine appears, *Ilahi Anta Maqsudi wa ridhaka mathlubi*.

1. Introduction

In understanding Sufism, then Muslims divide into three groups. The first group is a group that views Sufism as the cause of the decline of Muslims [1]. This is because there is an assumption that critical thinking always emerges towards the teachings of Sufism, especially regarding zuhud, uzlah (khlawa), faqr, and wara. which are the main maqamat in tasawuf teachings. The discussion on this matter concerns the inaccuracy of the Sufism tradition in applying the verses of Allah SWT which instructs one to have a work ethic in life, while the Sufism tradition avoids and leaves the world with its ascetic qualities and colors [2]. According to them, Sufism is a teaching that is passive, old-fashioned, and undeveloped, and the fall of Islam into the hands of Western imperialism 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 the science of Sufism [3].

The second group views that Sufism is very important for arming a Muslim with the values of spiritual goodness, realizing a balance of the soul, along with a materialistic life that is sought by the peace of the soul by wading through the Sufi world because the heart and soul have an important position in shaping one's personality [4]. Because Sufism is a teaching that is understood and inspired by the verses of the Qur'an and as-Sunnah and has spiritual messages. Meanwhile, the third group views that Sufism has a negative side, but also makes a very significant contribution. Sufism is considered by this group as an attempt to mediate between the life of the world which is materialistic in nature and the afterlife which is oriented towards peace and submission [5].

The last third group recommends "neo Sufism" (a 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 very much needed and has been able to provide a pattern 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 of the world and materialist life, so they leave this world and distance themselves from social interaction. Neo-Sufism in the modern tasawwuf style emphasizes the need to be individually and socially pious, submissive and obedient, and silent in the worship of the Lord, but also active and involved in social events [6].

2. Materials and 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 [7]. 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.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Understanding of Tasawuf In Terminology

In terminology (terms), Sufism is interpreted very diverse. This is due to the different ways of viewing the experts on the activities of these Sufis. Some of these definitions are formulated by Sufism experts as follows:

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

التصوف الأخذ بالحقائق واليأس في أيدي الخلائق.

"Tasawwuf is taking nature and leaving what is in the hands of creatures" [8].

This definition illustrates that Sufism seeks to find the essence of truth by leaving 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.¹⁵

"Sufism is a character, whoever gives you morals, it means he gives you a provision for yourself in tasawuf. So, the servant whose soul accepts (commands) to do good deeds, because in fact, they do mysticism with the guidance (*nur*) of Islam. And those who are zuhud whose souls accept (command) to do some of the morals, because they have done mysticism with the guidance (*nur*) of their faith " [9].

From this understanding, it can be seen that Sufism concentrates on commendable moral issues before entering the world of Sufism.

3. Muhammad Amin Kurdi said that Sufism is a science that is known about the good and bad of the soul, how to cleanse it from what is reprehensible and fill it with praiseworthy qualities, by carrying out mysticism and traveling towards (the pleasure of) Allah SWT and leaving (prohibitions) towards (he ordered) [10].

From the above understanding, it can be seen that Sufism is focused on cleansing the soul, filling it with praiseworthy qualities by way of mysticism, and drawing closer to Allah SWT.

From the point of view of humans as limited beings, Sufism is defined as an effort to purify the soul by distancing the influence of worldly life and focusing only on Allah SWT. And from the point of view of humans who are struggling, Sufism can be defined as an effort to beautify oneself with morals originating from religious teachings to get closer to Allah SWT by doing various commendable things, especially those related to positive morals [11]. And from the point of view of humans as divine beings, Sufism can be defined as an awareness of fitrah (divinity) that can direct the soul to be focused on activities that can connect humans with their Lord [12].

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

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

- a. Sufism is taking nature and breaking up with what is in the hands of creatures, so whoever is not poor, then he is not truly tasawuf.
- b. Sufi is a person who has nothing to dirty his soul and can clean everything.
- c. Sufis are people who do not like to ask and do not feel troubled by anything.
- d. Sufis are people who are clean from turbidity and full of ways of thinking that are centered on God and cut ties with humans and for him the same between gold and a baking sheet [13].

Second, al-Mujahadah that is talking about experiences related to sincerity and activity. This is seen from the amaliyah point of view carried out by Sufi experts, they start by adorning themselves with an act taught by religion and noble morals such as compassion, attention, justice, simplicity, and so on [14].

Third, al-Mazaaqah which means the definition that talks about experience in terms of feelings. Definitions that fall into 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 the Sufis were little children in the bosom of God [15].

In the books of Sufism, there are still several definitions of Sufism that vary greatly depending on which angle defines it. However, the explanations above can already be understood as Sufism which contains teachings about spiritual life, cleanliness of the soul, ways to cleanse it from various heart ailments, temptations of lust, worldly life, and ways to get closer to God. SWT and mortal in His eternity so that it reaches the deep heart recognition of Allah SWT (*ma'rifah*) [13].

3.2 The Fundamentals of Tasawuf Teaching in The Qur'an

Along with the many criticisms of Sufism that have caused tension in the world of Islamic thought, it seems that various arguments have begun to emerge about whether Sufism is Islamic science or is it merely converting non-Islamic elements. The controversy over this opinion began with the emergence of philosophical tasawuf and became more acute with the entry of orientalist opinions, which generally say that tasawuf originates from outside Islam [16].

The basics of Sufism have existed since the arrival of Islam in Arab lands, this can be seen in the life of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, his way of life which was then followed by and continued by his companions because he was able to provide coolness and mercy to the universe [17]. During the Meccan period, the spiritual consciousness of Rasulullah SAW was based on clear and certain mystical experiences, as described in the Qur'an sura an-Najm [53]; 11-13 where Allah SWT says which means:

"His heart did not deny what he had seen. So would the people (of the Meccan polytheists) want to refute him about what he had seen? and Verily Muhammad saw Gabriel (in his true form) at another time."

Then the verses concerning aspects of morality and asceticism, as one of the problems in Sufism, the Sufis refer to the Qur'an as the main foundation. Because humans have both good and evil characteristics, as stated: Allah SWT inspires (the human soul) evil and good, it is necessary to eradicate bad qualities and develop good qualities. Blessed is the man who purifies his soul.

Islamic teachings concentrate on the spiritual life, getting closer to Allah SWT with various kinds of spiritual activities such as cleansing the heart, remembrance, and other worship as well as getting closer to Allah SWT. Sufism also has its own identity, in which those who practice it do not pay much attention to worldly life, and even cut ties with it. In addition, 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 to lose self-identity in eternity (*baqa'*) of God in achieving *ma'rifah* (deep knowledge of God).

As for the verses of the Qur'an that talk about this tasawuf, among others;

1. Al-Anbiya [21] verse 25
And We did not send any Messenger before you, but We revealed to him: "There is no God (the right) but Me, so worship all of you for me."
2. Al-Anfal [8] verse 45, Allah SWT says about the order of remembrance.
"O ye who believe. when you fight (enemy) troops, then be firm and say (name) Allah SWT as much as possible so that you will be lucky."
3. al-Ma'idah [5] verse 83 the word of Allah SWT About *khauf* (fear) and the *king* (hope)
"And when they listen to what was revealed to the Messenger (Muhammad), you see their eyes shedding tears because of the truth (the Koran) that they already know (from their books); while saying: "Our Lord, we have believed, so record us with those who are witnesses (to the truth of the Koran and the prophethood of Muhammad SAW)."
4. al-Isra' [17] verse 79 Concerning the order to worship in the silence of the night and its quantity
"And part of the night you pray tahajud as an additional worship for you; may your Lord raise you to a commendable place."
5. at-Tahrim [66] verse 8: about self-improvement efforts (repentance)
"O you who believe, repent to Allah SWT with nasuha repentance (pure repentance). Hopefully, your Lord will cover your mistakes and enter you into Jannah beneath which rivers flow....."

From the few examples above from the verses uttered by Allah SWT, there is sufficient reason to say, that there is no doubt about the source of Sufism, it was excavated from the Qur'an which is a book that has always been valid in every era and was developed based on the life of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his companions [18]. 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. These similarities and similarities occur because they are rooted in the universality of human nature itself [19].

3.3 The Fundamentals Of Tasawuf Teaching In As-Sunnah

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

"Who is hostile to my wali (lover's servant), then I will declare war on him. A person who draws closer (to Me) is more loved by Me than what I am obligated to him. When I love him, I become his listener of what he is hearing, his vision of what he is seeing, his hand of what he is holding, and his walker of the journey he takes. If he asks Me, I will give him, and if he asks My forgiveness, I will forgive him. (Narrated by Bukhari Muslim).

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

جاء رجل إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال يا نبي الله
أوصني فقال عليك بتقو 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 bequeathed to me, the Prophet said: fear Allah SWT, because it is the collection of every goodness, strive because it is the life of a Muslim spirit, and make dhikr because it is *nur* (light)) for you. (HR. Muslim).

While the texts from as-Sunnah which explain the basis of the tarekat are 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 علي 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 علي 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 Messenger of Allah SWT, where is the closest way to Allah SWT and the easiest for his servants and the most final in the sight of Allah SWT? Ali said: everyone makes remembrance of Allah SWT. The Apostle said again: O Ali, there will be no end of the world so that there are no more people on the surface of this earth who say "Allah SWT, Allah SWT". So, Ali said to the Messenger of Allah, how can I make dhikr to Allah SWT? The Prophet said: Try to close your eyes and hear from me three times, then listen to me as you hear. Then the Prophet said "la ilaha illa Allah SWT three times while his eyes were closed. Then Ali also said the same thing.

The hadiths quoted above are only a few of the many hadiths that might be used as the basis for tasawwuf and things that suggest spiritual life that are found in tasawuf. A life dominated by fear, asceticism, surrendering only to Allah SWT, and being grateful, patient, and willing to Allah SWT's decisions and destiny. This kind of life is exemplified by Rasulullah SAW himself and his companions, especially those who are called ahl as-Shuffah, even though they are simple, they have a high love to continue learning and studying [20].

Therefore, after quoting some texts related to the teachings of Sufism and explaining them, Muhammad Abdullah Asy Syarqawi said:

"The beginning of Islamic Sufism can be found in its spiritual spirit in the Qur'an, as can also be found in the words of the Prophet Muhammad, 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)" [21].

Abu Nasr as-Siraj al-Thusi said that: "The teachings of Sufism are excavated from the Qur'an and as-Sunnah. Because the practice of the Companions does not come out of the teachings of the Qur'an and as-Sunnah. According to him, the Sufis (those who cultivate tasawwuf) always form a personality (*akhlak Karima*), longing for the Khaliq and love for Him, *Ma'rifah*, and mysticism and always train their spirituality so that an intimate life with Allah SWT is realized according to the Qur'an. 'an and as-Sunnah" [22].

3.4 The Scope of The Science of Sufism

Sufism is another name for "Mysticism in Islam". Among Western orientalists, 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 meaning with 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. Its existence close to God will be in the form of "Ijtihad" (union) with God. The above is the essence of the problem of "Sophism" both in the Islamic religion and outside it. The full "spiritual" movement is felt to think properly about the nature of the contact that can examine information from its God.

Sufism or mysticism in Islam has the essence of life and develops starting from the form of "asceticism" (avoiding worldly luxuries). Sufism aims to be in direct contact with God. With this intention, there is a feeling of really being in the presence of God. The Sufis think that worship which is held formally is not considered satisfactory because it does not meet the spiritual needs of the Sufis.

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

3.5 Objectives of Sufism

Broadly speaking, the most important goal of tasawuf is so that the perpetrators can be as close as possible to Allah SWT. While the characteristics of Sufism can be seen in three targets, namely;

1. Sufism aims to foster the moral aspect.
This aspect focuses on the goal of realizing balanced mental stability, mastery, and control of passions so that a Sufi can be consistent and committed only to moral nobility, Sufism which aims like this are generally practical.
2. Sufism which aims to *ma'rifatullah*
Through direct disclosure or the *al-Kasyf al-hijab* method. This type of Sufism is already theoretical with a set of specific provisions formulated in a systematic analysis.
3. Sufism discusses the system of self-knowledge and self-approach to Allah SWT mystically and philosophically, studying 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 Lord, 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 in the sense of 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 will[16].

From the view above regarding the general purpose of the need for one to do tasawuf, it is clear that there is a diversity of these goals. But it can be formulated that, the ultimate goal of Sufism is pure ethics or pure psychology, and or both simultaneously, namely;

First, Complete self-surrender to God's absolute will, because He is the prime mover of all natural events; *Second*, the total abandonment of all personal desires and escape from the bad qualities associated with worldly life which is termed *al-Fana*. *Third*, eliminating self-awareness and focusing on the contemplation of God alone, there is nothing to seek except Him. Divine anta mean *wa ridhaka mathlubi*

4. Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it can be said that the nature and meaning of Sufism in the context of terminology depends on the perspective of each person, but what is certain is that Sufism has a fairly strong basis based on the principles of the Al-Quran and Assunnah and includes a special dimension to discuss how to best to get closer to God. Apart from that, it also has the goal of eliminating self-awareness and focusing on the contemplation of God alone, seeking nothing but Him. *Ilahi anta maqshudi wa ridhaka mathlubi.*

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