



## HERMENEUTICS OF HADITH IN THE SUFI TRADITION: ANALYSIS THE CONCEPT OF HADITH INTERPRETATION AMONG THE SUFIS

### HERMENEUTIKA HADIS DALAM TRADISI SUFI: ANALISIS KONSEP PENAFSIRAN HADIS DI KALANGAN KAUM SUFI

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#### Abstract

This research article aims to analyze the methods of Hadith interpretation employed within the Sufi tradition. This study examines various hermeneutical approaches applied by Sufis, including esoteric interpretation, the role of spiritual intuition (*kashf*), the use of analogy and metaphor, and the influence of Sufi order (*tariqa*) teachings and practices. The article also highlights figures such as Al-Qushayri, Al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Arabi, Al-Ghazali, Junayd al-Baghdadi, and Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, as well as major Sufi orders like Chishti and Qadiri. Through an analysis of examples of Hadith interpretations, this research demonstrates the significance and unique contribution of Sufi Hadith hermeneutics to the understanding of Islamic spirituality, while also identifying contemporary issues and academic debates related to these methods. The conclusion of this research underscores the richness and complexity of Hadith hermeneutics within the Sufi tradition, as well as its relevance in the broader context of Islamic studies.

**Keywords :** Hermeneutics of hadith, sufi Interpretation, sufism

#### Abstrak

Artikel penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis metode penafsiran hadist yang digunakan dalam tradisi Sufi. Penelitian ini mengkaji berbagai pendekatan hermeneutika yang diterapkan oleh kaum Sufi, termasuk penafsiran esoteris, peran intuisi spiritual (*kasyf*), penggunaan



analogi dan metafora, serta pengaruh ajaran dan praktik tarekat Sufi. Artikel ini juga menyoroti tokoh-tokoh seperti Al-Qusyairi, Al-Tirmidzi, Ibn Arabi, Al-Ghazali, Junayd al-Baghdadi, dan Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, serta aliran-aliran Sufi utama seperti Chishti dan Qadiri. Melalui analisis contoh-contoh penafsiran hadis, penelitian ini menunjukkan signifikansi dan kontribusi unik hermeneutika hadis sufi terhadap pemahaman spiritualitas Islam, sekaligus mengidentifikasi isu-isu kontemporer dan perdebatan akademik terkait metode ini. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini menyoroti kekayaan dan kompleksitas hermeneutika hadis dalam tradisi sufi, serta relevansinya dalam konteks studi Islam yang lebih luas.

**Kata Kunci :** Hermeneutika hadis, tafsir sufi, tasawuf

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As the second authoritative source in Islamic teachings after the Qur'an, Hadith occupies a fundamental position in constructing the theological understanding and ritual practices of the Muslim community. The accuracy of its interpretation is an imperative prerequisite to ensure the actualization of the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad PBUH in harmony with its normative and teleological contexts. In the dialectic of Islamic thought, the Sufi tradition presents itself as a manifestation of the esoteric dimension that offers an alternative hermeneutic to religious texts, including Hadith.

Sufism, intrinsically embedded as the spiritual heart of Islam, develops an epistemological paradigm that prioritizes the attainment of ontological proximity (*qurb*) and mystical experience through ascetic-spiritual practices. Sufis have developed a distinctive methodology in the appropriation of Hadith that often diverges from the verification framework of classical muhaddithin (Hadith scholars). The main characteristics of this approach include: (1) the application of *ta'wil batinī* (esoteric interpretation) which extracts symbolic meanings beyond textual literalism; (2) the validation of *kashf* (intuitive unveiling) as an alternative episteme; and (3) the utilization of the *matn* (text) of *dha'if* (weak) or *mawdhū'* (fabricated) hadiths within a spiritual pedagogical framework.

Muhaddithin scholars have put forward systematic critiques of this model, particularly related to the loosening of *sanad-matn* (chain of narration-text) criticism standards and the instrumentalization of problematic narrations as a basis for doctrine. Some orthodox exponents identify this practice as a form of *bid'ah* (heretical innovation) because it is considered to ignore the established parameters of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Therefore, a comprehensive study of Sufi epistemology—which integrates elements of *gnosis* (*ma'rifah*) and transcendental experience—becomes an analytical prerequisite in unraveling the complexity of Hadith interpretation methodology within their tradition.

Research on Sufi hermeneutics has explored various aspects, including Qur'anic interpretation and the relationship between Sufism and Hadith. Annabel Keeler's work on Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī's Qur'anic exegesis (Keeler, 2009) highlights the Sufi approach to scriptural interpretation. A study by Maryam Musharraf (Musharraf, 2013) discusses the Sufi interpretation of the Qur'an and its relationship with modern hermeneutical theories. An article



by Mehmet Ayhan (Ayhan, 2019) analyzes Ibn Arabi's interpretation of Hadith. Although previous research has touched upon various aspects of Sufi hermeneutics, a comprehensive analysis of Hadith interpretation methods among Sufis, covering various approaches, key figures, concrete examples, contemporary issues, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of these methods systematically, still requires further attention.

This article is significant because it provides an in-depth analysis of Hadith interpretation methods within the Sufi tradition, which are often poorly understood or misinterpreted. This research has the potential to enrich the understanding of the diversity of interpretive methods in Islam and provide new insights into how Sufis understand and practice the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. The originality of this article lies in its effort to present a comprehensive and systematic analysis of Sufi Hadith hermeneutics, covering various aspects and supported by relevant literature review.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research used the research design as purposed by Sugiono (2011). This research employs a qualitative approach to analyze textual data from academic journals. The primary method used is a comprehensive literature review of relevant scholarly journals. Data will be collected from various academic journals and studies discussing the hermeneutics of Hadith within the Sufi tradition published in the last 10 years. The selected journals focus on Islamic studies, Sufism, Hadith, and hermeneutics. The collected data will be analyzed using content analysis to identify methods, key figures, and issues related to the hermeneutics of Sufi Hadith. Interpretative analysis will be utilized to understand the meaning and significance of the findings within the context of the Sufi tradition. Various findings from the literature will be synthesized to construct a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. The Concept of Hadith Interpretation in the Sufi Tradition

Within the epistemological framework of Sufism, the Sufi community developed an epistemic orientation that prioritizes the exploration of esoteric (*bātinī*) layers of meaning in Hadith, going beyond textual exotericism (*ẓāhirī*). Annemarie Schimmel also argues that Sufis did not simply discard religious forms or teachings; rather, they internalized them more deeply (interiorizing). (Annemarie Schimmel, 1975) This paradigm positions the Hadith text as a multidimensional entity requiring gnostic investigation through mechanisms such as *kashf* (intuitive unveiling) and *riyāḍah rūḥāniyyah* (spiritual training), which are believed to be capable of accessing hidden semantic layers beneath the linguistic structure. Symbolism in Sufistic hermeneutics functions as an interpretive catalyst, where Hadith narratives are transformed into a semiotic system representing metaphysical reality. For instance, concepts such as "*nūr*" (light) or "*qalb*" (heart) are not limited to their lexical denotations but are abstracted as ontological metaphors referring to the divine reality or psycho-spiritual conditions. This approach presupposes an analogical correspondence between the phenomenal



world (*ālam al-syahādah*) and the transcendent realm (*ālam al-ghaib*), where the Hadith text operates as a symbolic mediation between the two.

This tendency has drawn criticism from textualists who argue that the reduction of the literal meaning potentially obscures the historical authenticity and the ethical-practical norms within the Sunnah. However, for Sufis, the symbolic dimension precisely serves as an epistemic instrument to achieve the highest goal of interpretation: the unification of understanding (*fahm*) with ultimate truth (*ḥaqīqah*), transcending the boundaries of legal formalism. For example, the concept of "love" in Hadith can be interpreted as divine love or the soul's longing for God. (Musharraf, 2013)

Intuition (*kashf*), meaning "unveiling," (Al-Qusyairi, 1989) is considered a valid source of knowledge in the Sufi tradition. (M. Kudhori, 2018) Sufis believe that through spiritual discipline and self-purification, they can reach a level of intuition that allows them to understand the meaning of Hadith directly, without solely relying on rational analysis or textual transmission. Mystical experience and *ma'rifah* (direct knowledge of God) are central aspects of Sufism. Sufis often interpret Hadith based on their personal spiritual experiences and the intuitive understanding they gain through *ma'rifah*.

Sufis often use analogies and metaphors to explain the profound meaning of Hadith and connect it to spiritual experience. For instance, the Hadith about the heart can be analogized to a mirror that needs to be cleaned to reflect the divine light. (Musharraf, 2013) In interpreting Hadith, Sufis use figurative language to point towards a deeper spiritual meaning. For example, "drinking from the Prophet's well" can be interpreted as gaining spiritual knowledge and blessings from the Prophet's teachings. Each Sufi order (*tarekat*) has distinct teachings and spiritual practices, which can influence how their followers understand and interpret Hadith. For example, an order that emphasizes *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) might interpret Hadith related to the virtues of *dhikr* in a deeply profound and practical way. As another example, the practice of *samā'* (listening to spiritual music and dance) in the Mevlevi order can influence their understanding of Hadith related to religious expression and emotion. Both of these orders equally respect Hadith as a source of Islamic teachings, but their emphasis and focus of interpretation may differ according to the unique characteristics of each order.

## B. Figures and Schools in Sufi Hadith Hermeneutics

Al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (d. 320 AH / 932 CE), a 3rd-century Hijri Sufi, emphasized the importance of deeply understanding the *matn* (text/content) of the Hadith, not just focusing on the *sanad* (chain of transmission). He utilized a Sufi (*ishārī*) perspective in interpreting Hadith to guide the *suluk* (spiritual path) towards closeness with Allah. Al-Tirmidhi's Sufi epistemology is based on the view that understanding Hadith is not limited to the literal meaning but also includes esoteric and spiritual understanding obtained through mystical experience.



Ibn Arabi (d. 638 AH / 1240 CE), a prominent Sufi figure, employed a combination of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), Hadith studies, and *tasawwuf* (Sufism) methodology in interpreting Hadith. He is also known for using dreams as a source of wisdom in his interpretations. (Ayhan, 2019) The concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud* (Unity of Existence) also influenced his interpretations, where he saw all existence as a manifestation of the One. (Zuherni, 2024; Ayhan, 2019) As an example, Ibn Arabi interpreted the Hadith about raising hands during prayer based on his understanding of *fiqh*, Hadith science, and his *tasawwuf* perspective. (Ayhan, 2019)

Al-Ghazali (d. 505 AH / 1111 CE), a great theologian and Sufi, made significant contributions to Sufi hermeneutics through his works such as *Jawahir al-Qur'an*. He emphasized the importance of balance between the *ẓāhir* (outer/literal) and *bātin* (inner/esoteric) meanings in understanding religious texts. (Zuherni, 2024) Al-Ghazali believed that the inner or esoteric meaning of the Qur'an and Hadith could be accessed through mystical intuition and spiritual experience, but it should not contradict the *ẓāhir* or literal meaning. (Zuherni, 2024)

Junayd al-Baghdadi (d. 298 AH / 850 CE), a Sufi figure from the 3rd century Hijri, is known for his "sober" or moderate approach to Sufism. He emphasized the importance of strictly following the Sharia while still appreciating the spiritual dimension of Islam. (Zainuddin et al., 2024) Junayd stressed the significance of *tawhid* (the oneness of Allah) in all aspects of a Sufi's life, including in understanding and practicing Hadith.

Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami (d. 74 AH / 694 CE) was a Sufi and Hadith scholar from the 4th century Hijri who authored many works on Sufism, including a compilation of 40 Hadith on Sufism. (Ayhan, 2019; Zainuddin et al., 2024) Al-Sulami sought to demonstrate that the principles of Sufism were supported by the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad, although some scholars criticized the authenticity of some Hadith he used. (Zainuddin et al., 2024)

The Chishti order is known for its emphasis on love, tolerance, and music (*samā'*) as a means to achieve spiritual ecstasy. Hadith interpretation within this order would likely emphasize the emotional and spiritual aspects that support these practices. Meanwhile, the Qadiri order, founded by Abdul Qadir Jilani, is known for its emphasis on spiritual power and service. Hadith interpretation in this order might focus more on aspects related to spiritual authority (*karamah*) and the obligation to follow a Shaykh. Both of these orders equally respect Hadith as a source of Islamic teachings, but their emphasis and focus of interpretation may differ according to the unique characteristics of each order.

### C. Analysis of Examples of Hadith Interpretation by Sufis

Sufis have made a significant contribution to the transmission and dissemination of Hadith Qudsi, which they perceive as a form of extra-Quranic divine revelation thematically focused on the esoteric-spiritual dimension. (William Graham, 1977) From a Sufi perspective, Hadith Qudsi does not merely function as a source of theological inspiration but also serves as





an epistemic foundation for the formulation of Sufi doctrines, such as the concepts of *mahabbah* (divine love) and *fanā'* (annihilation of the self).

A key characteristic of the Sufi appropriation of Hadith Qudsi lies in an approach oriented towards the substance of the *matn* (the content of the Hadith), often overlooking critical analysis of the *sanad* (chain of transmission). This tendency has resulted in many Hadith Qudsi narrations claimed by Sufis only reaching the status of *mursal* (lacking a complete chain of narrators) in the classification of Hadith science. The prioritization of the *matn* content—rather than *isnad* verification—demonstrates a Sufi epistemological paradigm that places the authenticity of inner experience above the formal criteria of textual authority. Although it has drawn criticism from Hadith scholars regarding its methodological weaknesses, this approach precisely reflects the unique dialectic between intuitive piety and traditional authority within the treasury of Islamic thought.

In the Hadith Qudsi, "*I was a hidden treasure, and I desired to be known, so I created the creation so that they would know Me,*" for instance, is often interpreted by Sufis as an indication of Allah's desire to be known, which is the primary reason for the creation of the universe. This interpretation is closely linked to the concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud* (Unity of Existence), which states that all that exists is a manifestation of Allah. (Ayhan, 2019)

Another example is the Hadith about the virtue of *ma'rifah* (knowledge of Allah). It is narrated from Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

أخبرنا عبد الرحمن بن محمد بن عبد الله العدل ، قال : حدثنا محمد بن القاسم العتكي ، قال : حدثني محمد بن أشرس ، قال : حدثنا سليمان بن عيسى الشجري عن عباد بن كثير ، عن حنظلة بن أبي سفيان ، عن القاسم بن محمد ، عن عائشة رضى الله عنها ، أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: إِنَّ دَعَامَةَ الْبَيْتِ أَسَاسُهُ، وَدَعَامَةُ الدِّينِ الْمَعْرِفَةُ بِاللَّهِ تَعَالَى وَالْيَقِينُ وَالْعَقْلُ الْقَامِعُ، فَقُلْتُ يَا أَبَي أَنْتَ وَأُمِّي مَا الْعَقْلُ الْقَامِعُ؟ قَالَ : الْكَفَّ عَنْ مَعَاصِي اللَّهِ، وَالْحِرْصُ عَلَى طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ<sup>1</sup>

"Indeed, the support (strength) of a house depends on its foundation, while the support of religion depends on one's *ma'rifah* (knowledge) of Allah, firm belief, and intellect which can subdue (vain desires). Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) asked: 'May my mother be ransomed for you, how can intellect subdue that?' He replied: 'By being able to refrain from disobeying Allah and constantly encouraging obedience to Him.'"

This Hadith conveys the pillars of religion which form the core of the spiritual journey (*suluk*) in Sufism towards Allah. *Ma'rifatullah* (knowledge of Allah) is not merely theoretical knowledge, but an experience of the heart that awakens divine consciousness and brings the

<sup>1</sup> See Abu al-Qasim Abdul Karim Hawazin Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risa'lah Al-Qus{hayriyyah fi 'Ilm Al-Tas{awwuf*, Cairo: Dar Al Shu'ab, 1989, p. 510, the owner of Kanz said in Volume III, page 381, Hadith number 7047, extracted by Ad-Dailami and sourced from Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her).



servant closer to the Creator—this is the primary goal of the *sa>lik* (seekers of the spiritual path). *Yaqin* (certainty) is the steadfastness of heart that liberates one from doubt, strengthens faith like a mountain, and leads to the station of *ṭuma'nīnah* (true tranquility) desired by the *sa>liki>n*. (Al-Qusyairi, 1989)

As for '*aql qāmi*' (intellect that subdues vain desires), it is a symbol of the "jihad" against the lower self (*nafs*) and lustful whispers—the essence of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) in Sufism. Intellect here is not just logic, but a spiritual power that balances the steadfastness of *zuhd* (asceticism) and the tenderness of *mahabbah* (divine love). It restrains one from disobedience without extinguishing the longing for the Most Compassionate. This process requires *murāqabah* (watchfulness of the heart) and *muḥāsabah* (self-reckoning)—primary practices of the Sufis. (Al-Qusyairi, 1989) This interpretation reflects the Sufi worldview that emphasizes the Oneness of Allah and the intimate relationship between the Creator and the creation.

The interaction of Sayyidah Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) in this Hadith reflects a characteristic Sufi attitude, namely, a constant dissatisfaction with the *ẓāhir* (outer) understanding and a continuous striving to excavate the *bāṭin* (inner) wisdom. A true *salik* not only carries out commands but also delves into the depth of the Divine wisdom behind them. Thus, religion becomes a complete structure: its foundation is *ma'rifah* (experiencing divine light), its walls are *yaqin* (firmness in divine secrets), and its roof is '*aql qāmi*' (guarding the heart from everything that distances it from the true Beloved).

From the perspective of *tasawwuf*, religion is an inner life where the ego dissolves in the light of *tawhid* (divine oneness). Obedience is no longer merely an obligation but a spiritual encounter with Allah. Every act of obedience becomes gratitude for the blessing of being "present" in His presence, and every act of self-restraint from disobedience is reverence for the covenant (*wilāyah*) between the servant and their Lord.

Hadith that emphasize the virtue of *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), such as—

أخبرنا أبو الحسن علي بن شر بغداد قال : حدثنا أبو علي بن صفوان قال : ابن أبي الدنيا قال :  
حدثنا الهيثم بن خارجة قال : حدثنا إسماعيل ابن عياش ، عن عمر بن عبد الله : أن خالد بن عبد الله بن  
صفوان أخبره عن جابر بن عبد الله قال : خرج علينا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ، فقال  
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، ارْتَعُوا فِي رِيَاضِ الْجَنَّةِ، قُلْنَا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، مَا رِيَاضُ الْجَنَّةِ؟ قَالَ: مَجَالِسُ الذِّكْرِ. قَالَ:  
اغْدُوا وَرَوْحُوا وَادْكُرُوا مَنْ كَانَ يُحِبُّ أَنْ يَعْلَمَ مَنْزِلَتَهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى، فَلْيَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ مَنْزِلَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عِنْدَهُ،  
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يُنْزِلُ الْعَبْدَ حَيْثُ أَنْزَلَهُ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ<sup>2</sup>

"Abu al-Hasan Ali bin Syar al-Baghdadi informed us: Abu Ali bin Sufyan said: Ibn Abi al-Dunya said: we heard al-Haytham bin Kharijah say: we heard Ismail bin Ayyash, from Umar

<sup>2</sup> See Abu al-Qasim Abdul Karim Hawazin Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risa>lah Al-Qus{hayriyyah fi 'Ilm Al-Tas}awwuf*, Cairo: Dar Al Shu'ab, 1989, p. 384, a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah and extracted by At-Tirmidhi under number 3504 concerning "Supplications" chapter "*Asma' al-Husna*".



*bin Abdullah: indeed Khalid bin Abdullah bin Sufyan informed him from Jabir bin Abdullah, who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) came out and met us and said: 'O people, graze in the gardens of Paradise.' We asked: 'O Messenger of Allah, what are the gardens of Paradise?' He replied: 'Gatherings of dhikr. Graze in the morning (with dhikr), graze in the evening, and engage in dhikr. Whoever loves to know his standing with Allah, let him look at how Allah's standing is with him (in his heart). Indeed, Allah descends to the servant according to the servant's descent in His sight.'* (HR Abu Hurairah)

—are often interpreted by Sufis as a command to continuously remember Allah in all circumstances. This Hadith affirms that gatherings of *dhikr* are "gardens of Paradise" in the world, a place where the soul feels spiritual pleasure (*ladhdhāt al-īmān*) and tranquility (*sakīnah*). In Sufism, *dhikr* is not merely the repetition of phrases, but a process of purifying the heart (*tazkiyat al-qulūb*) to bring about Divine consciousness (*al-ḥudūr ma'a Allāh*) in every breath. (al-Qushayri, 1989) The Prophet's saying, "*Graze in the gardens of Paradise*," is a beautiful metaphor for how *dhikr* becomes "spiritual food" that satisfies the heart's hunger for meaning, while also being a remedy for the soul's barrenness.

The practice of *dhikr* becomes one of the main pillars in the Sufi spiritual life, helping them achieve tranquility of heart and closeness to God. Through continuous *dhikr*, a Sufi strives to attain the state of *fanā'* (annihilation of the self in God) and *baqā'* (eternal subsistence with God). (Musharraf, 2013)

Sufis place great emphasis on developing noble character (*akhlāq mulia*) and Islamic ethics, which they see as a reflection of divine attributes. They interpret Hadith on ethics as guidance for purifying oneself from negative traits and adorning oneself with praiseworthy qualities. For instance, the Hadith about the importance of being good to neighbors is interpreted by Sufis as a call to develop deep compassion and care for all beings.

#### D. Significance and Unique Contributions of Sufi Hadith Hermeneutics

Traditional methods of Hadith interpretation tend to focus more on the authenticity of the chain of transmission (*sanad*) and the literal meaning (*ẓāhir*) of the Hadith. (Khamdan, et al., 2012) Meanwhile, Sufi Hadith hermeneutics places greater emphasis on the esoteric (*bāṭin*) and spiritual meaning, as well as the role of intuition and personal experience. The main difference lies in the epistemology underlying these two approaches. Traditional Hadith scholars generally rely on rational and textual methods, while Sufis also incorporate intuition and spiritual experience as valid sources of knowledge. A comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of the Sufi method of Hadith interpretation can be seen in the following table:

| ASPECT                  | STRENGTHS                                  | WEAKNESSES  |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Focus of Interpretation | Deep spiritual and esoteric understanding. | Potential for subjectivity and lack of clear validity criteria. |





|             |   |   |
|-------------|---|---|
| Emphasis    | Internal dimension and personal experience in religious practice. | Criticism from Hadith scholars regarding authenticity and methodology.        |
| Orientation | Moral and spiritual development.                                  | Potential for interpretations that deviate from mainstream Islamic teachings. |

The Sufi hermeneutical approach to Hadith contributes a unique epistemological dimension to the discourse of Islamic spirituality by constructing a framework of interpretation that integrates theosophical exploration (*hikmah*) and existential reflection. (Reflita, et al., 2020) This paradigm not only offers a profound existential-experiential approach but also functions as a transformative medium that facilitates the internalization of the *'irfānī* (gnostic) dimension within the Islamic tradition. Through the method of *ta'wīl rūḥānī* (spiritual interpretation), individuals are invited to move beyond a static doctrinal understanding towards the actualization of the experience of *ḥuḍūr ilāhī* (Divine presence) in daily life practice. The emphasis on the esoteric aspect (*bāṭin*) and intuitive epistemology—such as reliance on *kashf* (mystical unveiling) and *dhawq* (spiritual taste)—allows for hermeneutical transcendence from textual meaning towards the realization of *ma'nawī* (spiritual essence). This process does not merely enrich cognitive understanding but is rather a means for strengthening the connection with *al-Ḥaqq* (the Absolute Reality), which is manifested in the *sulūk* (spiritual journey) of a *salik* and *muḥāsabah al-naḥs* (self-reckoning).

The main impact of this methodology lies in its ability to bridge the gap between the formalism of *sharī'ah* and the essence of *tasawwuf*, thereby enabling the holistic internalization of Islamic theosophical values. Hadith critics may question the subjectivity of this approach, but its contribution in expanding the horizon of religious meaning—from mere ritual compliance towards the awareness of *wuṣūl* (spiritual union)—affirms its relevance as an antithesis to legalistic reductionism. Thus, Sufi hermeneutics is not only an instrument of interpretation but also a path of self-transformation that actualizes the principle of *al-dīn mu'āmalah* (religion as transcendental interaction).

### E. Contemporary Issues and Academic Debates

Hadith scholars often criticize Sufis for allegedly not adhering to strict Hadith authentication methods and for using weak or fabricated Hadith in their teachings. They also criticize Sufi interpretations that are considered too esoteric and deviate from the literal meaning of the Hadith. Some traditional and modern Islamic groups accuse Sufi practices of being *bid'ah* (innovation) because they are considered to lack a strong basis in authentic Islamic teachings. Amidst a modern world that is increasingly materialistic and secular, Sufi hermeneutics can offer a profound and relevant spiritual approach for individuals seeking meaning and inner peace. There is potential to integrate insights from Sufi hermeneutics with



modern hermeneutical approaches to develop a richer and more comprehensive understanding of religious texts. (Musharraf, 2013)

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that Hadith hermeneutics in the Sufi tradition is a rich and diverse field, characterized by a unique approach to interpretation that goes beyond the literal meaning and emphasizes the esoteric and spiritual dimensions. The main methods used by Sufis include esoteric and symbolic interpretation, the role of intuition (*kashf*) and spiritual experience, the use of analogies and metaphors, and approaches influenced by the teachings and practices of Sufi orders (*tareqats*). Key figures such as Al-Qushayri, Al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Arabi, Al-Ghazali, Junayd al-Baghdadi, and Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, as well as orders like the Chishti and Qadiri, have made significant contributions to the development of Sufi Hadith hermeneutics.

The analysis of examples, such as the interpretation of the Hadith Qudsi "Kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan" and Hadith on the virtue of *dhikr* and ethics, shows how Sufis apply their hermeneutical methods in understanding Islamic teachings. Sufi Hadith hermeneutics offers unique significance and contributions compared to traditional methods of Hadith interpretation, particularly in enriching the understanding of Islamic spirituality. However, this method also faces contemporary issues and academic debates, including criticism from the perspective of Hadith science regarding authenticity and methodology.

Nevertheless, Sufi Hadith hermeneutics possesses potential strengths in offering a deep spiritual understanding and emphasizing personal experience in religious practice, but also has weaknesses such as the potential for subjectivity and a lack of clear validity criteria. The findings of this research address the research problem by analyzing the methods of Hadith interpretation among Sufis and highlighting their unique contributions to Islamic studies. Further research can be conducted to explore in greater depth the influence of Sufi hermeneutics on contemporary religious practice and Islamic thought.

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