



**THE ISSUE OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PERSON AND SOCIETY
IN THE TEACHING OF SUFIS**

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Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive study of the relationship between the individual and society in the teachings of Tasawwuf (Sufism). It analyzes the concept of the self in Sufi tradition, the paths to spiritual perfection through the training of the nafs (soul), and the significance of this process in social life. Based on the views of prominent mystics such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Arabi, and Bahauddin Naqshband, the article highlights the social responsibility of the individual and their harmony with society. In a contemporary context, the role of Sufi values in the spiritual development of the individual and the sustainable progress of society is demonstrated. The research findings confirm that the teachings of Tasawwuf remain highly relevant for spiritual renewal and social stability today.

Introduction. Sufism is a direction that embodies the inner, spiritual and moral aspects of Islamic thought, the main goal of which is to cleanse a person from sensual vices and bring him closer to Allah. In this teaching, a person - as a person - is a being striving for a higher spiritual world, and his main task is to know his "I", purify his heart and become a perfect servant who benefits society. In the theory of Sufism, the moral perfection of a person, spiritual purity, social responsibility and culture of dealing with others are among the most important values. Sufism serves not only individual spiritual development, but also to increase the potential of the social environment. Historical sources show that individuals of the mystical direction - sheikhs, ascetics, Sufis - actively participated in the establishment of such high qualities in society as enlightenment, generosity, humanity, patience, justice and hard work. They educated the broad masses of the people through their exemplary lives, advice and practical activities. The individual and society, as interrelated social phenomena, are a complementary and formative force. The individual is educated, grows and matures in society; society, in turn, strengthens its moral, cultural and





religious criteria through individuals. In the teachings of Sufism, these interactions have a deep philosophical and practical content, emphasizing the moral responsibility of a person not only to himself, but also to society as a whole. It is worth noting that the spiritual and aesthetic aspects of Sufism - concepts such as remembrance, patience, gratitude, trust, love, and extinction - are not only a means of harmonizing individual spiritual states, but also a means of harmonizing social relations. They serve to establish values such as tolerance, mutual respect, solidarity, and peace among people.

This article analyzes the relationship between the individual and society in Sufism, its theoretical foundations and historical practice, based on the thoughts of prominent Sufis. Through this, the relevance of the idea of the unity of the individual and society, which lies in the deep layers of Islamic thought, is also revealed today.

The issue of the individual (man) occupies a central place in the philosophy of Sufism. Like other religious movements, Sufism sees man as the greatest being of God, but in addition to this, it places special emphasis on his inner spiritual world, the purity of his soul and spiritual development. The individual is studied in Sufism on a deeper, spiritual and moral level than the physical being. In Sufism, the concept of the individual is directly related to God, and it is emphasized that his soul can be filled with the light of God. From this point of view, a person needs to work not only with the external world, but also with his inner world - his soul and spirit. This inner world is considered by Sufis to be the most important area on the path to achieving truth. Al-Ghazali extensively explains his views on the individual in his work "Ihya Ulum ad-Din". He says:

"The greatest task of man is to purify his heart and fill it with the light of God. For when the heart is pure, he sees the true truth, understands his true essence, and lives truthfully in the world."¹

Therefore, in Sufism, self-knowledge, inner spiritual experiences, and purification of the soul are considered the highest goals of a person. This process is not limited to intellectual understanding, but is carried out through inner experience, sincere prayer, and the education of the soul. In Sufism, the greatest obstacle to the perfection of a person is the nafs. The nafs is described as a person's inner passions, worldly desires, ignorance, and pride. There are different stages of this nafs: nafs al-ammara (the one who incites evil), nafs al-lawwama (the one who criticizes errors), and nafs al-mutmainna (the one who has achieved peace). For every Sufi, conquering the nafs and purifying it is a vital task. Ibn Arabi writes in his work "Fusus al-Hikam":

¹ Imam Al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, Cairo: Darul Ma'rifa, 2005, Volume 2, pp. 130-132.





"The struggle with the self is the life and death of the human spirit. He who conquers the self achieves true freedom in the path of Allah."²

The process of purifying the soul is called "mujahad" - an internal struggle, and during this process, a person constantly analyzes himself, admits his mistakes, repents, is purified, and is directed towards the afterlife. Stages of Sharia, Tariqat, Truth, and Enlightenment In Sufi teachings, the path of a person's perfection is often described through four stages:

- **Sharia** is the fulfillment of external laws, rules, and prayers. At this stage, a person educates himself by following religious practices and moral norms.
- **Tariqat** is a spiritual path, a process of purification of the soul and approaching Allah through spiritual practices. At this stage, the individual enters into an internal struggle.
- **Truth** is understanding the truth, seeing the truth of God, achieving true divine knowledge.
- **Enlightenment** is a profound understanding and experience of divine knowledge, at which level a person feels as if they have met God face to face. Each stage is aimed at not only understanding the person, but also perfecting him. This process is continuous and ongoing, and continues until the end of a person's life.

In Sufism, the goal of the individual is not only to develop himself spiritually, but also to be useful to society. The inner perfection of the individual serves the spiritual and cultural development of society. Therefore, Sufism encourages the individual to be socially active and responsible.

In Sufi thought, the relationship between the individual and society is built on the basis of mutual influence and responsibility. For Sufis, each person should not only purify his soul, but also be concerned about the problems of society. The concept of "service" is central in Sufism - it is not just worship, but also being useful to people, teaching them knowledge, setting a moral example. In this regard, the famous idea of Bahouddin Naqshband "Dil ba yoru, dast ba kor" - "The heart is in God, the hand is in work" - is of great importance. In his teachings, he said:

"Sufism is about serving the people, living with them, and benefiting them. One reaches God not through prayer alone, but through hard work, patience, and honesty."³

The Naqshbandi order prioritized not only spiritual purity, but also social and moral values such as hard work, honesty, and benefiting people. This idea also serves as a powerful source of motivation for reforming society and fighting against unrest,

² Ibn Arabi, *Futuhāt al-Makkiyya*, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 215–218.

³ "Rashahat al-Ayn al-Hayat", narrated by Nasiruddin Ubaydullah Ahrar, Tashkent: "Movarounnahr" Publishing House, 2003, pp. 57–58.





oppression, and injustice. In modern society, it is important for an individual to feel social responsibility, not to be indifferent to others, to live in the spirit of humanity, generosity, and service. Especially today, when spiritual crisis, isolation, and neglect are increasing, mystical values can be considered a powerful internal resource for renewing society. In the eyes of Sufis, the individual and society are interconnected, mutually shaping and complementary phenomena. When an individual strives for perfection, this leads to the elevation of society. Conversely, when society faces moral decline, individuals experience a spiritual crisis. For this reason, Sufis have taken on the task of awakening the hearts of every person in society and leading them to spiritual elevation. In this regard, the great Sufi Ibn Arabi writes in his work "Fusus al-Hikam":

"A servant's relationship with Allah determines how he will treat people. Only those who truly love Allah will not harm people, but rather benefit them."⁴

According to this idea, true love for God makes a person compassionate, forgiving, tolerant, and servant to others. Such individuals lead morally in society. They inspire others to change with their beautiful qualities and silent preaching. The idea of the "perfect person" in Sufism is aimed at educating leaders and exemplary individuals in society. A perfect person, with his life, patience, decency, and love, causes positive changes in society. In today's era of globalization, humanity finds itself on the verge of a moral and spiritual crisis. Individualism, worldly materialism, and spiritual emptiness are leading people to loneliness, aimlessness, and apathy. From this perspective, the teachings of Sufism can be an important source in restoring divine and human values to humanity.

The values of Sufism, such as patience, gratitude, honesty, love, service, and sincerity, serve as the basis not only for religious but also for social stability. By promoting these values in today's society, people can achieve self-realization, mutual understanding, and social cohesion. The famous Japanese Muslim thinker Toshihiko Izutsu said this:

"Sufi mysticism is not just a religious experience, but a culture of mutual responsibility with society, moral awareness, and inner harmony. It calls upon man to find a balance between his 'I' and social existence."⁵

In the modern era, in an environment of inter-sectarian conflicts, social injustice, family crises, and depression, mystical thinking can serve as a powerful spiritual resource for establishing tolerance, patience, compassion, and solidarity among people.

⁴ Ibn Arabi, *Futuhāt al-Makkiyya*, Beirut: Dar al-Sadr, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 347–349

⁵ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Analysis of Basic Philosophical Concepts*, University of California Press, 1972, pp. 112–115.





In conclusion, Sufism is a deep spiritual and moral layer of Islamic thought. It considers not only the individual, but also the social aspect to be important in understanding one's "I", educating the soul and striving for perfection. This article analyzes the relationship between the individual and society in Sufism, and the following main conclusions can be drawn: in Sufism, the individual understands himself not only as a physical being, but also as a spiritual being connected to Allah. Its main task is to purify the heart, draw closer to Allah, and sow the seeds of goodness in society. In this process, the individual strives to conquer his or her own self through a constant internal struggle - "jihad al-akbar". In Sufism, it is considered an advantage not to distance oneself from society, but rather to live within it, be useful to it, and provide spiritual guidance. The Naqshbandi idea of "Be among the people, but with Allah" is an important guideline in this regard. A person perfects himself or herself by serving society. In the teachings of Sufis - scholars such as Ghazali, Ibn Arabi, and Bahauddin Naqshband, the harmony of the individual and society is considered sacred. This harmony is expressed not only at the level of external behavior, but also through mental states. The idea that "a person who loves Allah does not harm his or her servants, but is kind to them" serves as the basis for this idea.

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