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Epistemology of Sufism in Sufi Interpretation (Analysis of The Patterns of Theoretical (*Nazharî*) and Practical (*'Amalî*) Sufi Exegesis)

Yuyun Yuhanida¹; Zahro Nur Amalia²; Kerwanto³; Rizwanur Rahman⁴; Muhammad Yusril Muna⁵; Rahim Sabour⁶

Abstract

Sufi tafsir is a form of interpretation of verses from the Qur'an carried out by Sufis, with a focus on the dimensions of Sufism both in the practice of 'amalî and aspects of nazharî. This research reveals the history of Sufi interpretation and the essential differences between two styles of Sufi interpretation, namely nazharî and 'amalî Sufi interpretation by exploring the epistemology of Sufism in the interpretation process because the author highlights the inaccuracy of general understanding in detailing the fundamental differences between these two styles of Sufi interpretation. The aim of the research is to contribute to a deeper understanding of Sufi interpretation styles and help to detail fundamental differences in the context of Sufism epistemology. By using library research methods and a qualitative approach, the research results show that based on Sufism epistemology, the explanation of levels of meaning in Sufi interpretation is based on extracting meaning (the context of discovery) and explaining meaning (the context of justification). The distinction between the Sufi nazharî and 'amalî interpretation styles lies in the context of justification and the presence of esoteric and exoteric meanings. As for the context of discovery, both are based on mukâsyafah/sufi spiritual experience.

Keywords: *Sufi interpretation; History; Epistemology; Nazharî; 'Amalî*

¹ University of PTIQ Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia, Email: yuyunyuhanida9@gmail.com

² University of PTIQ Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia, Email: zahronuramalia22@gmail.com

³ University of PTIQ Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia, Corresponding Email: kerwanto@ptiq.ac.id

⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, Email: rrahman@mail.jnu.ac.in

⁵ Université Ez-Zitouna, Tunis. Email: muhammad.yusril.muna@isth.u-zitouna.tn

⁶ University of Religions and Denominations, Pardisan, Qom, Iran, Email: r.sabour@urd.ac.ir

Introduction

Understanding the verses of the Qur'an through interpretation is very important, because it can reflect developments and patterns of thought that exist in society. One style of interpretation of the Qur'an is Isyari interpretation (Sufi interpretation). Namely, interpreting the Koran with the meaning behind its literal meaning because there are hidden signs that are visible to some Sufis.

Sufi interpretations, when viewed from a historical perspective, reflect the spiritual seriousness of people who have a clean heart in understanding God's intentions in His words. Sufis believe that the Qur'an includes all types of knowledge, both previous and future⁷. Therefore, the development of interpretation among Sufis is an undeniable historical reality. In interpreting the Qur'an, Sufis do not only limit themselves to explaining the literal meaning of verses by focusing on language analysis, but also try to reveal the meaning of isyarah (instructions) hidden behind the outward meaning of verses.

Since its inception, Sufi interpretation has been the subject of debate due to differences in viewpoints between the two main groups. First, there are groups who respond with rejection, arguing that Sufi interpretation is not a valid form of interpretation. On the other hand, other groups expressed appreciation and provided the opportunity to conduct more in-depth and comprehensive research regarding Sufi interpretation⁸.

This research aims to reveal the history of Sufi interpretation and show the essential differences between the two main styles of Sufi interpretation, namely *nazharî* and *'amalî* Sufi interpretation, by deepening the epistemology of Sufism in the interpretation process. The importance of this research lies in highlighting the inaccuracy of common understanding in detailing the fundamental differences between the two styles of Sufi interpretation.

The importance of Sufism epistemology in the process of interpreting Sufi tafsir is the main focus of this research. Through this approach, the basis for Sufi thinking in interpreting the Qur'an will be found⁹. Explanation of levels of meaning in Sufi interpretation is rooted in extracting meaning (the context of

⁷ Udin Saprudin et al., "Limiting The Number Of Polygamies To Realize Economic Justice: A Hermeneutic Analysis Of Muhammad Syahrur," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 2, no. 3 (September 28, 2023): 347-68, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v2i3.2769>.

⁸ Eni Zulaiha, Muhammad Yahya, and Muhammad Ihsan, "Argumentasi Eksistensial Tafsir Sufi," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 2, no. 3 (2022): 305-12, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v2i3.18317>, P. 306.

⁹ Al Faiz Muhammad Rabbany Tarman, Arifah Cahyo Andini Suparmun, and Isral Naska, "Progressive Interpretation Of The Qur'an In Tafsir At-Tanwir: Muhammadiyah's Collective Identity On Environmental Issues," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 3, no. 2 (March 15, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v3i2.3717>.

discovery) and explaining meaning (the context of justification). The context of discovery in Sufi interpretation highlights spiritual experiences and hidden meanings, while the context of justification discusses the explanation of meaning and its practical implementation in everyday life.

This research, thus, provides a richer understanding of the process of interpreting Sufi tafsir, explores the nuances of Sufism's epistemology, and identifies significant differences between *nazharî* and *'amalî* Sufi tafsir. It is hoped that this research can provide a valuable contribution in developing Islamic insight and a deeper understanding of the intellectual heritage of Sufism.

Research Methods

The research method used is library research and a qualitative approach based on Sufism epistemology. This research uses qualitative methods, with a historical-analytical approach and Sufism epistemology by referring to library research in the field of Sufism-style interpretation. By collecting library data from various sources, and analyzing, then processing research materials. Apart from the text of the Qur'an itself, researchers also use primary sources such as the works of Sufi figures, and secondary sources such as previous research on mystical/Sufi interpretations.

Result and Discussion

The meaning of Sufi interpretation

Tafsir has different meanings, but tafsir scholars have a uniform core in explaining the word tafsir. Etymologically, the term interpretation can be interpreted as follows:¹⁰

1. The word tafsir according to Ibn Faris, comes from Arabic, which is the gerund form (*masdar*) of the word *fassara* which means a clear state (real and clear) and providing an explanation¹¹.
2. According to al-Suyuthi, the word tafsir follows *wazan taf'îl* which comes from the word *al-fasru*, which means to explain and reveal¹².
3. Al-ALusi believes that the word tafsir follows *wazan taf'ilun* which is taken from the word *al-fasr* which means explanation and explanation.

¹⁰ Irwan Muhibudin, *Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sufistik (Studi Komparatif Antara Tafsir Al-Qusyairi Dan Tafsir Al-Jailani)* (UAI Press, 2018), p. 63.

¹¹ Azizah Romadhona, Muhamad Subhi Apriantoro, and Laila Muhammad Rasyid, "Exploring The Distinctive Features Of Indonesian Tafsir Al-Quran: A Study Of Sheikh Abdul Latif Syakur's Ad-Da'wah Wa Al-Irsyād Ilā Sabili Ar-Rasyād," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 3, no. 1 (December 16, 2023): 91-106, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v3i1.2912>.

¹² Jalaluddin Al-Suyuthi, *Al-Itqan Fi 'Ulum Al-Qur'an* (Libanon: Muassah al-Risalah Nasirun, 2008), P. 758.

4. Meanwhile, Manna al-Qatthan, the word tafsir follows *wazan taf'il*, which comes from the root word *al-fasr* which means to explain, reveal, reveal or explain abstract meaning.

Terminologically, tafsir according to al-Suyuthi is the science of the revelation of verses and their particulars, stories and the reasons for their revelation, orderly *makiyah* and *madaniyah*, *muhkam* and *mutasyabih*, *nasikh* and *mansukh*, *hash* and 'am, *mutlaq* and *muqayyad*, its linguistic meaning, its revelations and parables (*tamthil*)¹³.

Based on this definition, it can be concluded that tafsir is a scientific discipline that describes or explains the Koran comprehensively, and discusses its content based on human understanding¹⁴.

Etymologically, there are several opinions regarding the origins of Sufism¹⁵:

1. Sufi comes from Arabic, namely صوف - صوف - صاف apparently means the hair of a sheep, which means the hair that covers the sheep's skin. The mention of sheep's wool is related to spiritual practices at the beginning of the spread of Islam. People who wish to cleanse and purify their hearts will undergo a period of self-isolation (*'uzlah*), giving up all the attributes of luxury, and wearing simple clothing made of sheep's wool, which in Arabic is called shuuf. The use of fur clothing was interpreted as a symbol of simplicity at that time. Therefore, people who practice Sufism or Islamic spirituality are known as "shufi" because of their association with the use of clothing made from sheep's wool as a symbol of simplicity in their spiritual practices.
2. Sufi comes from the word *shafa*, meaning clean. He is called a Sufi because his heart is sincere and clean before his God¹⁶.
3. Sufi comes from the word *shaf*, meaning row, Sufi people are always in the first row when praying to receive the grace of Allah SWT.
4. Sufi comes from the word *Shuffah*, meaning a simple porch made of earth with a building slightly higher than the ground of the mosque. Sufi people were once a group of friends of the Prophet Muhammad Saw who loved to worship and they lived in the foyer of the Prophet's mosque.
5. Sufi comes from the city of Sophos. The word comes from Greek which means wisdom. At first glance, there is indeed a connection between Sufis and wisdom because Sufis discuss the issues they question based on philosophical discussions.

Likewise, etymologically, tafsir has the meaning of *al-'idhah wa al-tabyin* (explanation and disclosure). Here are some definitions of Sufi interpretation in terms of terminology:

¹³ Baharuddin Al-Zarkasyi, *Al-Burhan Fi 'Ulum Al-Qur'an* (Kairo: Dar al-Turath, n.d.), P. 65.

¹⁴ Abdurrahman Abulmajd, "What Is The Model Of Muslim Relations With The Kaaba From The Perspective Of The Qur'an," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 3, no. 1 (December 16, 2023): 107-45, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v3i1.3583>.

¹⁵ Muhibudin, *Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sufistik (Studi Komparatif Antara Tafsir Al-Qusyairi Dan Tafsir Al-Jailani)*, P. 66.

¹⁶ Harun Nasution, *Falsafat Dan Mistisme Dalam Islam* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1973), P. 57.

1. According to Al-Zarqani: Sufi interpretation is an effort to interpret the Qur'an differently from its dzahir, regarding hidden signs that are only visible to *Suluk* experts and Sufism experts, and allows for a combination of hidden meanings and visible meanings (*zhahir*).
2. According to Subhi Salih, Sufi interpretation is interpreting different verses of the the Qur'an with their zahir meaning and turning all meanings between the zahir and the hidden¹⁷.
3. According to Quraish Shihab: Sufi Tafsir is a commentary written by Sufi experts¹⁸.
Based on the several definitions above, it can be concluded that what is meant by Sufi interpretation is the interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an carried out by Sufis based on aspects of Sufism, both 'Amali Sufism and Nazhari Sufism.

History And Development of Sufi Interpretation

The development of Sufi interpretation came from the emergence of Sufism teachings, where this interpretation was seen by Hasan Hanafi as a form of antithesis or criticism of fiqh interpretation. This is because Sufi interpretation in the process uses instruments of the heart and an inner approach which is considered to surpass fiqh interpretation in understanding the word of Allah¹⁹. Sufism teachings related to the science of the Qur'an and interpretation explain that the Qur'an essentially has an inner dimension in its interpretation, the meaning of which cannot be separated from the text of the verse itself. Sufi tafsir emphasizes deep understanding and spiritual experience as the key to understanding the deeper meanings in the Qur'an, beyond a literal understanding of the text²⁰. Apart from that, Sufis also believe that interpreting the Qur'an using a linguistic approach alone is not enough because this is only the body of the faith, while Sufi interpretation is the spirit.

The development of Sufism in the Islamic world began with the practices of zuhud (asceticism) in the early generations of Islam since the emergence of political conflicts of interest after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. This practice of asceticism developed until later times, by certain circles this practice was theorized or looked for the basics of mystical theory. Since then, various mystical theories have emerged, including *khauf* (fear), *mahabbah* (love), *ma'rifah* (knowledge), *Hulul* (unity with God), and *wihdatul wujud* (unity of existence with God). Thus, Sufism developed in two main dimensions in the Islamic world. *First*, there are Sufism practitioners who emphasize the practical and

¹⁷ Shubhi Al-Shalih, *Mabahis Fi 'Ulum Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Ilmi li al-Malayin, n.d.), P. 29.

¹⁸ Quraish Shihab, *Sejarah & 'Ulum Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 2021), P. 180.

¹⁹ Yahya Fathur Rozy, Yohei Matsuyama, and Dina Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, "The Development Of Qur'an Commentators' Requirements: From The Affirmative Era To The Reformative Era," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 3, no. 1 (December 15, 2023): 75-90, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v3i1.2910>.

²⁰ Muhammad Maga Sule, "Response To Muslims Da'wah Activities' By Non-Muslims In Akwanga And Nassarawa Eggon Local Government Areas Of Nasarawa State, Nigeria," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 3, no. 1 (December 5, 2023): 23-39, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v3i1.3110>.

experiential aspects of approaching God through the practices of worship, meditation and self-control. *Second*, there are theosophists or Sufism thinkers who focus more on developing their mystical theories, which are philosophical-theoretical in nature²¹.

According to Goldziher, the first stage of interpretation will give birth to an ideological interpretation or flow of interpretation. In his view, not all individuals have the authority to interpret the Qur'an²². Therefore, tafsir scholars who are recognized as experts have legitimacy and they have formulated certain guidelines or rules for the process of interpreting the Qur'an.

Tafsir experts also expressed their opinions regarding the origins of the emergence of Sufi tafsir, one of whom was M. Quraish Shihab who argued that the Sufism movement emerged as a reaction to the tendencies of various parties regarding material, or as compensation for perceived weaknesses. It is estimated that the essence of the teachings of Sufism was born around the 2nd century of Hijri year where according to some people, Abu Hasyim al-Kufi as-Sufi (d. 150 H) was the person who was first referred to as a Sufi. According to Henry Corbin, the word Sufi was first applied to one of the Shiite mystical groups in Kufah named Abdakal-Sufy (d. 210 H)²³. In short, the Sufism movement was born gradually since the first generation of Islam after the death of the prophet.

Historically, the oldest book of interpretation of the Qur'an with a Sufistic style that can be read to this day is Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim by Imam Sahal ibn Abdillah al-Tustari (d. 283 H). However, some people consider this interpretation to be unsatisfactory because it does not fully appreciate the 30 juz of the Qur'an. The next book of Sufi commentary is Haqaiq al-Tafsir by Abu Abdurrahman al-Sulami (d. 412 H). However, this interpretation was also considered to contain many defects by Ibn Shalah and Adz-Dzahabi, and this book was even accused of containing many Shiite heresy and many *maudu'* (false) hadiths. After that, the interpretation of Ibn 'Arabi (560-638) appeared in the 5th century of Hijri year. This interpretation has been criticized by many scholars, including Muhammad Abduh²⁴. Muhammad Abduh believes that in *Tafsir Ibn 'Arabi* there are many claims to defend the teachings of *wahdatul wujud*. Furthermore, there are also the books 'Ara'is al-bayan fi Haqa'iq al-Qur'an by Abu Muhammad Rauzabihan Ibn Abu al-Nashr al-Buqla al-Syairazi (d. 660 H) and *Al-Tawilat al-Najmiyyah* by Najmudin Dayah (d. 654 H), and his book was perfected by 'Ala'ud Dawlah al-Samnani (d. 732 H)²⁵.

²¹ Abdul Mustaqim, *Dinamika Sejarah Tafsir Al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Abdul Mustaqim, 2014), P. 127.

²² Sule, "Response To Muslims Da'wah Activities' By Non-Muslims In Akwanga And Nassarawa Eggon Local Government Areas Of Nasarawa State, Nigeria."

²³ Zulaiha, Yahya, and Ihsan, "Argumentasi Eksistensial Tafsir Sufi.", P. 306

²⁴ Ismu Ridha et al., "The Qur'an's Statement About The Etiquette Of Dealing With The Holy Qur'an From Sayyid Qutb's Perspective In His Interpretation Of (Adh-Dhilal): An Analytical Study," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 3, no. 1 (December 13, 2023): 40-56, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v3i1.2874>.

²⁵ Mustaqim, *Dinamika Sejarah Tafsir Al-Qur'an*, P. 129-130.

However, among the books of Sufi interpretation which are quite recognized by the ulama, there is *Latha'if al-Isyarat* by Abdul Karim Ibn Hawazin Ibn Abdul Malik Ibn Thalhah Ibn Muhammad Qusyairi, who is also known as Zainul Islam or al-Qusyairi.

In the 3rd century Hijriyah, several prominent works in the field of Sufism appeared, including *Risaleh al-Qushayri* written by Imam al-Qushayri and *Tabaqat al-Sufiyyah* compiled by al-Sulami. At this time, Sufism was considered a spiritual practice that could guide humans closer to God. Apart from that, Sufism is also seen as a means to cleanse the soul and achieve deep knowledge of God through direct experience called *kashf* (opening the veil of divinity).

In essence, the concept of Sufism teaches liberation from worldly life, by only hoping for Allah's pleasure and eternal happiness in the afterlife. This kind of Sufism practice has been known and carried out since the early days of Islam, as explained by Muhammad Husain Adz-Dzahabi. This lifestyle is also known as Asceticism (*al-Zuhud*), which is represented by figures such as Abu Zarr al-Ghifary (d. 22 AH), Salman al-Farisi (d. 32 AH), and Hasan al-Basry (d. 110 H). This ascetic nature is also strengthened by Imam al-Ghazali's view, which is confirmed in his interpretation of Q.S. Al-Kahfi [18]: 17 which reads:

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَهَا لِنَبْلُوهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

"Behold, we have willed that all beauty on earth be a means by which We put men to a test, (showing) which of them are best in conduct"²⁶

In the 4th century of Hijri year, the ascetic movement in Islam began to center in Iraq, especially in Baghdad. Previously, this culture appeared in Medina and spread to Syria and Iran. After that, this tradition of asceticism was accepted by Muslims throughout the world²⁷. From a historical review of Sufism, it can be concluded that the first and greatest Sufi was the Prophet Muhammad Saw. History records that what the Prophet practiced and taught to Muslims was inseparable from the practices of asceticism²⁸.

Thus, it can be concluded that although the term "Sufism" was not yet known during the time of the Prophet, the teachings of Sufism were actually started and taught by the Prophet Muhammad SAW himself. However, this concept is given a different name.

²⁶ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (London: E. J. Brill, 1980).

²⁷ Nazar Fadli, "Contribution Of Acehnese Scholars To The Development Of Quranic Exegesis In Indonesia: A Study Of Tengku Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy And His Work 'Tafsir An-Nuur,'" *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 3, no. 1 (December 5, 2023): 1-22, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v3i1.3381>.

²⁸ Zulaiha, Yahya, and Ihsan, "Argumentasi Eksistensial Tafsir Sufi.", P. 306-307.

Sufi Types of Interpretation

The effort that must be mastered first before searching for various styles of Sufi interpretation is an important guideline in searching for meaning based on Sufi epistemology because of its identity in revealing the levels of meaning of the verses of the Qur'an. Understanding these guidelines is necessary because they are the main factor in the presence of various styles of Sufi interpretation which then present distinctive characteristics that differentiate them from other genres of interpretation. These epistemic guidelines are often overlooked by researchers of Sufi interpretation, so that the results of their research present a misreading of various Sufi styles. The main guidelines for expressing meaning are divided into two classifications as follows²⁹:

1. *The Context Of Discovery*

This guideline is used to reveal the primary meaning or core meaning in each verse of the Qur'an from the inner aspect. This episteme is a process of gaining spiritual experience. In Sufi interpretation, the disclosure of the main intention and intention of the inner meaning of the verse is only obtained through special spiritual experience (*mukâsyafah*). Procedurally, Sufis will explore the inner meaning of a verse only if the meaning is revealed by God through *mukâsyafah*. Consequently, not all verses will be interpreted by Sufis considering that not every verse has a revelation of inner meaning. This excavation is typical of Sufi interpretations which can only be accessed by Sufis³⁰. This will later be known as the main source of interpretation (*mashâdir al-tafsîr*) of Sufi interpretation, namely *bi al-isyârî* or *mukâsyafah*.

2. *The Context of Justification*

In this second stage, its presence is to justify the credibility of the main meaning or the essence of the inner meaning of the verse obtained from the guidelines for extracting meaning (through *mukâsyafah*) or it could be said to be the secondary meaning of the verse. The function of this guide is to complement, strengthen and perfect the meaning, so that the explanation of this meaning is identical to data from other texts of the Qur'an, hadith, aqli propositions and so on which are in line with the inner meaning of the related verses of the Qur'an³¹. Explanation of this meaning can also be obtained from various scientific data with a multidisciplinary approach to science, such as Sufi theories, philosophy, astronomy theory and so on. This stage is a process of theological analysis by Sufis. In general, researchers qualify the guidelines for the meaning of the Qur'an as only referring to the first guideline and seem to deny the second guideline, thus having real pros and cons implications for

²⁹ Ramli Cibro, "Epistemologi Tasawuf; Dari Context Of Discovery Ke Context Of Justification," *Bidayah* 12, no. 1 (2021), P. 27.

³⁰ Andri Nirwana, Syamsul Hidayat, and Suharjianto Suharjianto, "أصول التفسير وقواعده عند تفسير عيد," *Jurnal Online Studi Al-Qur'an* 16, no. 2 (July 30, 2020): 137-64, <https://doi.org/10.21009/JSQ.016.2.02>.

³¹ Andri Nirwana, "Ushul Tafsir And Qawaid Tafsir Nusantara: A Review Of Nawawi," *SYARIATI: Jurnal Studi Al Qur'an Dan Hukum* 8, no. 2 (2022): 151-62, <https://ojs.unsiq.ac.id/index.php/syariati/article/view/4249>.

these various features. In reality, by understanding the paradigm of the source of meaning of Sufi interpretation, in essence, this second guideline then gives birth to two styles of Sufi interpretation.

Based on important guidelines for disclosing the meaning of verses of the Qur'an, there are two types of Sufi interpretation as follows:

1. Theoretical/Nazharî

This pattern is known as *al-Tafsîr al-Shûfî al-Nazharî* or *al-Tafsîr al-Isyârî al-Nazharî*. In general, this pattern is defined as a pattern that expresses the inner meaning of a verse based on previous scientific knowledge possessed by a Sufi which is then used as a source of interpretation of the Qur'an as the basis and legitimacy of his Sufism attitude. The definition of terminology also comes from al-Dzahabi that the nazharî style of interpretation is a style that bases its teachings on philosophical and Sufi thought and analysis, looking at the inner meaning of the verses of the Qur'an from a Sufism perspective that is in accordance with philosophy, namely interpreting the Qur'an 'an through rational analytical thinking³².

Through the series of definitions above, the primary source for extracting the meaning (the context of discovery) of *nazharî* interpretation is Sufistic theories and philosophical discourse. As if this definition would blur the genre of Sufi interpretation which is synonymous with expressing the inner meaning of verses by intuition/inspiration by God and instead be more towards the genre of philosophical interpretation, therefore it needs to be cross-checked again. This understanding has the impact of being rejected by some scholars towards Sufi *nazharî* interpretations because they are considered to be playing with the interpretation of the Qur'an only to legitimize the Sufi theories offered by the Sufi³³. The interpretation of this style is considered to deviate from the standards of interpretation by commentators in general, the results of the interpretation are considered to be contrary to the correct content of the verse and language rules³⁴.

It should be understood that the emergence of this pattern has close relevance to the important guidelines above. The correct definition of theoretical Sufi interpretation is a style of Sufi interpretation which explains the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an using Sufistic and philosophical theories mastered by Sufis after exploring the inner meaning with *mukâsyafah*. Through this, the involvement of theories outside the text is only intended as a complementary meaning to strengthen the meaning revealed as

³² Muhammad Husein Al-Dzahabi, *Al-Tafsîr Wa Al-Mufasssîrûn* (Kairo: Wahbah, 2003), v. 1. p. 252.

³³ Andri Nirwana AN, "Qawaid Tafsir Dan Ushul Tafsir Siti Aisyah Dalam Kitab Sahih Muslim," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah* 18, no. 2 (November 19, 2021): 152, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jim.v18i2.11281>.

³⁴ Al-Dzahabi, v. 1, p. 252.

a result of the mukâsyafah, while the main source of interpretation is still returned to the existence of the Sufi interpretation itself. The Sufi theories include *Al-Mabda'* (Beginning), *Al-Ma'ad* (Place of Return), *Al-Anfus* (Soul) and *Al-Afaq* (Cosmos). Thus, this definition does not negate Sufi interpretations which are identical sources of interpretation (*mashâdir al-tafsîr*) in the form of sign (intuition) to reveal the inner meaning of verses from God (*bi al-isyârî*).

Misconceptions at the level of interpretation sources alone result in different patterns of interpretation mechanisms. If we use the definition from a general perspective, then the interpretation mechanism obtained is as follows:

Process of training and thought process > Sufistic theories (*al-Mabda'* / Beginning, *al-Ma'ad* / Place of Return, *al-Anfus* / Soul) and *al-Afaq* / Cosmos > Reading a verse of the Qur'an > Interpretation.

The correct mechanism for interpreting Sufi Nazharî is as follows:

Reading a verse > Contemplation of inner meaning (contemplation/*riyadhah*) > Spiritual inspiration/signs from God (inner witnessing) > Justification with Sufistic theories and philosophical discourse > Articulated in tafsir.

If you follow the mechanism with the previous misdefinition, then the exploration of the inner meaning will only start from the Sufistic theories offered by the Sufi without the need to go through mukâsyafah every time to reveal the inner meaning of the verse. Meanwhile, if it is through a precise definition, then this interpretation mechanism only presents Sufi and philosophical theories after obtaining the disclosure of inner meaning through *mukâsyafah* and its existence only as an explanation of primary meaning. Considering it is only an explanation of meaning, not every interpretation will be explained by Sufistic theories and philosophical discourse. The explanation of the meaning of the dominant verse is directly aimed at the inner or esoteric meaning of the verse, not through the literal meaning (*zhahir*) of the verse.

The Sufi figure who is classified as using this style of interpretation is Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abdullah Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi (d. 238 H) through his works *al-Futuhât al-Makiyyah*, *Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-Karîm*, *Fushûsh al-Hikâm* and others. One example of his interpretation in al-Rahmân/55: 19 – 20 is as follows:

مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَا يَبْغِيَانِ

“He has given freedom to the two great bodies of water, so that they might meet. [yet] between them is a barrier which they may not transgress”³⁵

Ibn 'Arabi interpreted the two oceans directly in esoteric meaning with the first ocean as a sea of physical matter as if it were salty salt water, while the second ocean as a sea of abstract spirits as if it were fresh fresh water. The two met in human form. Between the two there is a barrier that separates them. Ibn 'Arabi defines *barzakh* (separator) as an animal soul which is identified with an unclean soul. The two also do not defeat each other, where the spirit does not make the body abstract or the body makes the spirit physical material.³⁶

Next, Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation of al-Fajr [89]: 29 – 30:

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

“Enter, then, together with My (other true) servants. Yea, enter thou My paradise !”³⁷

Ibn 'Arabi interpreted that delving into humans will bring an understanding of God, because God is actually part of humans themselves. Humans can recognize the existence of God within themselves by opening the curtain that covers human nature, namely human desires. If someone has experienced the beauty of His presence, then in essence he has delved into himself and realized that God is present within him³⁸. In other words, humans are not only servants, but also have the existence of God within themselves, they are God. That is the meaning of the pronunciation of *Jannah*³⁹. In this interpretation, it appears that Ibn 'Arabi attempted to justify the meaning with the theory of *wahdah al-wujûd* after obtaining the inner meaning from *mukâsyafah*.

2. Practical/Amali

Tafsir Sufi Amali is an effort to interpret the verses of the Qur'an by uncovering the inner meaning of the verses which originate from signals resulting from spiritual experience and soul cultivation (*riyâdhah*) without ignoring the meaning of the *zhâhir*⁴⁰. The basic interpretation of Al-Isyari's Sufi tafsir is "that the Qur'an includes outer (exoteric) and inner (esoteric) meaning,

³⁵ Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*.

³⁶ Ibn 'Arabi, *Tafsîr Al-Qur'ân Al-Karîm* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1971), p. 286.

³⁷ Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*.

³⁸ Andri Nirwana, “Da’wah In The Qur’an (Thematic Tafsir),” *Jurnal At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alqur’an Dan Tafsir* 4, No. 2 (December 16, 2019): 307–29, <https://doi.org/10.32505/At-Tibyan.V4i2.1350>.

³⁹ Al-Dzahabi, *Al-Tafsîr Wa Al-Mufasssîrûn*, v. 1, p. 342; Kautsar Azhari Noer, *Ibnu Arabi Dan Wahdah Al-Wujud Dalam Perdebatan* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2005), p. 345.

⁴⁰ Muh. Said, “Metodologi Penafsiran Sufistik: Perspektif Al-Gazali,” *Jurnal Diskursus Islam* 2, no. 1 (2014), p. 148.

the outer meaning (*zhahir*) of the Qur'an is the text of the verse, while the inner meaning is the meaning of the signal behind the outer meaning (*zhahir*).⁴¹ This pattern attempts to balance the presence of esoteric and exoteric meanings in each interpretation of the verse.

Based on the exploration of its meaning (the context of discovery), it is the same as the *nazharî* pattern, which is based on the *mukâsyafah* carried out by Sufis. The explanation of the inner meaning obtained from *mukâsyafah* is the text of the Qur'an and other hadiths as support and reinforcement of esoteric meaning without explanation from Sufistic and philosophical theories. Interpretation always begins with explaining the meaning of the verse before explaining the inner meaning. Other terms for this style are *al-Tafsîr al-Shûfî al-'Amalî*, *al-Tafsîr al-Isyârî al-Faidhî* and *al-Tafsîr al-Isyârî al-Syuhûdî*.

The mechanism for interpreting isyari is as follows:

Reading a verse > Contemplating the inner meaning (contemplation/*riyadhah*) > Spiritual inspiration/signs from Allah (inner witnessing) > Presenting the text of the Qur'an and supporting hadith > Explanation of the spiritual and inner meaning of the verse in interpretation.

In this mechanism, it is based on important guidelines for expressing meaning, so extracting meaning is obtained from *mukâsyafah*, while explanation of meaning is obtained from supporting arguments such as the Qur'an and hadith.

Mufasir figures and their works in this type of interpretation are as follows⁴²:

No.	Works	Mufassir
1.	<i>Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-'Azhîm</i>	Sahl bin Abdullah Al-Tustari (d. 283 H/896)
2.	<i>Haqâ'iq al-Tafsîr</i>	Abu Abdurrahman Muhammad ibn Husain ibn al-As'ad al-Sullami (d. 412 H/1034)
3.	<i>'Arâis al-Bayân fî Haqâ'iq al-Qur'ân</i>	Abu Muhammad Ruzbihan ibn Abi Nash al-Syairazi (d. 606 H)
4.	<i>Al-Ta`wîlât al-Najmiyyah</i>	Najmudin Dayah (d. 653 AH)
5.	<i>Garâ'ib al-Qur'ân wa Ragâ'ib al-Furqân</i>	Nizhamuddin al-Hasan Muhammad al-Naysaburi (d. 728 H)
6.	<i>Lathâ'if al-Isyârath</i>	'Abdul Karim ibn Hawazin al-Qusyairi (d. 1072)
7.	<i>Rûh al-Ma'ânî fî Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-'Azhîm wa al-Sab' al-Matsânî</i>	Abu al-Thana' Shihab al-Din al-Sayyid Mahmud Afandi al-Alusi al-Baghdadi (d. 1270)

⁴¹ Mahmud Basyuni Faudah, "Al-Tafsîr Wa Manâhijuhû Fî Dauî Al-Madzâhib Al-Islâmiyyah," n.d., p. 249-250.

⁴² Kerwanto, *Metode Tafsir Esoeklektik: Pendekatan Integratif Untuk Memahami Kandungan Al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 2020), p. 30 ; Kerwanto, "Epistemology Of The Esoteric Interpretation Of The Qur'an (Study about Ta'wil Al-Qur'ân)" 4, no. 01 (2020): 102-23.

8.	<i>Rûh al-Bayân</i>	Ismail Haqqi al-Barwaswi (Sunni)
9.	<i>Tafsir Bayân al-Sa'âdah fi Maqâmat al-'Ibâdah</i>	Sulthan M. Janabadi (Shiah)

One example of the application of this style comes from the interpretation of al-Tustari in his book *Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-'Azhîm* as follows:

... فَلا تَجْعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ اَنْدَادًا وَّانْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

"... Do not, then, claim that there is any power that could rival God, when you know [that He is One].⁴³" (QS. al-Baqarah/2: 22)

Al-Tustary reveals the inner meaning behind the lafaz andâdâ, namely the bad lust of anger in addition to its eksoteris meaning as an ally, so that the meaning is, not only statues, demons or souls are allies for God, but also the passion of anger which is made into a god by humans, because humans always associate partners with God by always becoming slaves to their angry desires⁴⁴.

Distinguishment and Mapping Between *Nazharî* And '*Amalî*

From all the explanations of the Sufi interpretations of *Nazharî* and '*Amalî*, perhaps the differences between the two can be seen through the following mapping:

No.	Content	<i>Nadzari</i>	' <i>Amali</i>
1.	Sources of Interpretation		
	Exploring Meaning	Signals obtained from Allah through <i>mukâsyafah</i>	
2.	Explanation of Meaning	Sufistic theories and philosophical discourse	Explanatory arguments from the Qur'an, hadith and all related history
	Objective	Revealing the inner meaning behind the verses of the Qur'an	
3.	Characteristics⁴⁵	The symbolic meaning is so strong and far from	The symbolic meaning is closer to

⁴³ Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*.

⁴⁴ Sahl bin Abdullah Al-Tustari, *Tafsîr Al-Qur'ân Al-'Azhîm* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub, 2002), p. 27.

⁴⁵ Muhamad Firdaus and Hamka Hasan, "Tafsir Simbolis: Karakteristik Tafsir Sufi Nazarî Ibn 'Arabî Dan Tafsir Sufi Ishârî Al-Qushayrî," *Intizar* 27, no. 2 (2021): 87-95, <https://doi.org/10.19109/intizar.v27i2.9415>.

		exoteric meaning, that it is difficult to reach by reason and is sometimes not bound by linguistic rules.	the exoteric meaning, so it can still be achieved by reason and is in harmony with linguistic rules
4.	Exoteric meaning and Esoteric meaning	Dominant esoteric meaning over exoteric meaning	Balancing the presence of esoteric and exoteric meanings in each verse interpretation
5.	Systematics of Interpretation	The dominant presentation goes directly to the esoteric (inner meaning) of the verse without being preceded by the exoteric meaning.	Interpretation always begins with an explanation of the exoteric meaning of the verse, then continues with the esoteric (inner) meaning.

Conclusion

Tafsir Sufi (Sufi Exegesis) is the interpretation of the Qur'an verses carried out by Sufis based on aspects of Sufism, both *'amalî Sufism* and *Nazharî Sufism*. This tafsir aims to reveal the inner meaning behind the verses of the Qur'an with the source of interpretation from Sufi spiritual experience (*mukâsyafah*).

Based on Sufism epistemology in the form of exploring meaning (the context of discovery) and explaining meaning (the context of justification), there are two styles of Sufi interpretation, namely the *Nazharî* and *'amalî* Sufi interpretation styles with a distinction on the context of justification and the presence of esoteric and exoteric meanings.

Author Contributions

Kerwanto: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Yuyun Yuhanida:** Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation. **Zahro Nur Amalia:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation. **Rizwanur Rahman:** Review & editing, **Muhammad Yusril Muna:** Review & editing.

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Conflict of Interest

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