

Inner Purification and Divine Love: The Spiritual Essence of Sufism

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the spiritual essence of Sufism through two central concepts: inner purification and divine love. The study addresses contemporary challenges characterized by a crisis of meaning, existential anxiety, materialism, and a decline in spiritual depth. Employing a qualitative approach based on literature review, the article analyzes both classical and contemporary Sufi sources to explore the relationship between *tazkiyat al-nafs* and *mahabbah ilahiyyah*. The findings indicate that inner purification constitutes a transformative process that cleanses the heart of egoism, arrogance, envy, and excessive worldly attachment. Meanwhile, divine love serves as the highest orientation, guiding individuals toward closeness to God, sincere worship, and the cultivation of virtuous character. The two concepts are interdependent: love for God necessitates a purified heart, while inner purification attains its deepest significance through divine love. The article underscores the continued relevance of Sufism for modern society, as it provides a spiritual pathway that integrates inner tranquility, moral awareness, and social responsibility in daily life. These findings contribute conceptually to the study of Islamic spirituality and reinforce the significance of Sufism as a paradigm for ethical, reflective, and transformative self-development within a meaningful and enduringly religious modern civilization.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Amid the acceleration of modernity, the development of digital technology, and the dominance of instrumental rationality in almost all spheres of life, spirituality has regained strong relevance as a space for humanity's search for deeper meaning. Material progress does not always correspond with inner tranquility, moral clarity, and existential depth [1], [2]. In this context, Sufism, as the esoteric dimension of Islam, offers an important perspective for consideration, as it understands the human

being not merely as a social and biological entity, but also as a spiritual subject who continually longs for closeness to God [3]. Within the Sufi tradition, the concepts of soul purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and divine love (*mahabbah ilahiyyah*) constitute two fundamental foundations that shape the essence of the spiritual journey of a *salik*. Inner purification is understood as a process of liberating oneself from egoistic impulses, excessive worldly desires, and diseases of the heart that obscure the conscience, whereas divine love serves as a transcendent energy

that moves human beings toward sincere servitude, noble character, and awareness of God's presence in everyday life [4], [5].

Therefore, studying Sufism within the framework of spirituality is not merely a matter of discussing religious doctrine, but also of examining an ethical, psychological, and existential system capable of responding to the anxieties of modern humanity [6]. This theme is significant not only for Islamic studies, but also for global discourses on spiritual well-being, self-transformation, and the development of a more humane civilization. Thus, the discussion of inner purification and divine love in Sufism possesses profound theoretical and practical significance.

The phenomena of contemporary life reveal an increasingly widening gap between external progress and human inner maturity. On the one hand, global society lives in an era of unlimited connectivity, broad access to knowledge, and ease in fulfilling material needs; on the other hand, symptoms of meaninglessness, existential anxiety, individualism, mental exhaustion, and crisis of life orientation are also increasing. Many individuals achieve high social and economic status, yet still experience alienation from themselves, from others, and even from God [7], [8], [9].

In the religious context, it is also common to find religious practices that emphasize formal, legal, and symbolic aspects more than the internalization of inner values, compassion, and moral transformation. As a result, religion risks being understood merely as an external identity rather than as a path for forming a peaceful and loving soul [10]. This phenomenon reveals a serious gap in human life: modern human beings long for tranquility and meaning, yet often seek their fulfillment in spaces that instead reinforce ego, competition, and consumerism [11], [12].

In such a situation, Sufism emerges as an alternative that affirms that the fundamental crisis of humanity is not merely structural or economic, but also a crisis of the heart and spiritual orientation. Soul purification and love for God are essential

because both function to restore balance between the outward and inward dimensions, between worldly activity and transcendent purpose. Therefore, reading Sufism as the spiritual core of Islam is highly relevant in responding to the needs of the age, particularly as human beings increasingly require a framework of life that can harmoniously unite depth of faith, inner well-being, and social responsibility.

Conceptually, Sufism is rooted in the internalization of Islamic teachings that emphasize moral refinement, discipline in worship, self-control, and the pursuit of *ma'rifah* of God through profound inner experience [13], [14]. In its early development, Sufism emerged as a response to tendencies toward luxurious living, religious formalism, and the weakening of spiritual sensitivity within Muslim society following the political expansion of Islam [15]. From this context arose an emphasis on *zuhd*, *wara'*, *muhasabah*, repentance, and *mujahadah* as the initial stages of inner purification [16].

Over time, Sufism developed into a more systematic discipline through concepts such as *maqamat* and *ahwal*, which explain the human spiritual journey from self-purification toward closeness to God [17]. Within this framework, inner purification does not merely mean refraining from wrongful actions, but also cleansing the heart from ostentation, arrogance, envy, excessive attachment to the world, and the domination of the lower self [18], [19]. Meanwhile, divine love is understood as the highest spiritual orientation, through which the human relationship with God is no longer driven merely by fear or the hope of reward, but by love, longing, surrender, and spiritual intimacy [20], [21].

Figures such as al-Hasan al-Basri, Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyah, al-Qushayri, al-Ghazali, Ibn 'Arabi, and Jalal al-Din Rumi demonstrate how Sufism evolved from moral asceticism toward broader metaphysical reflection and a spirituality of love. Thus, Sufism is not a static concept, but rather an intellectual and practical tradition that continues to develop in response to the

challenges of the age while preserving its core teachings on soul purification and love-oriented devotion to the Divine.

Although studies on Sufism have developed considerably, several research gaps still require more serious scholarly attention. Most previous studies have tended to examine Sufism through one of three dominant approaches: first, a historical approach that traces its origins and major figures [22]; second, a doctrinal approach that emphasizes technical terms, *maqamat*, and metaphysical teachings [23]; and third, an ethical approach that highlights Sufism's contribution to moral formation [14]. Namun demikian, relatif masih sedikit penelitian yang secara integratif menempatkan penyucian batin dan cinta Ilahi sebagai dua poros utama yang saling menjelaskan dan membentuk esensi spiritual tasawuf.

Nevertheless, relatively few studies have integratively positioned inner purification and divine love as two central axes that mutually explain and shape the spiritual essence of Sufism. In many writings, *tazkiyat al-nafs* is discussed as a moral-psychological discipline, whereas *mahabbah* is treated as an independent mystical experience. In the framework of Sufism, however, the two cannot be separated: divine love requires the process of inner purification, while inner purification attains its highest orientation through love for God [24], [25]. In addition, some modern studies tend to interpret Sufism merely as a form of personal spirituality detached from its social context, whereas inner transformation in the Sufi tradition in fact gives rise to moral conduct, compassion, and humanitarian responsibility [26]. This research gap demonstrates the need for a study that does not merely describe Sufi teachings, but also constructs the conceptual relationship among soul purification, divine love, and the formation of holistic spirituality. Accordingly, this study seeks to fill that gap through a more synthetic, analytical, and contextually relevant reading of the spiritual problems faced by contemporary human beings.

Based on the preceding discussion, the novelty of this study lies in its attempt to reformulate the spiritual essence of Sufism by positioning inner purification and divine love as interrelated core structures, rather than as partial themes discussed separately. This study proposes the perspective that Sufism can be understood more comprehensively when soul purification is viewed as an internal transformative process that prepares the inner space for the growth of divine love, while divine love itself functions as a transcendent orientation that directs, purifies, and perfects the entire process of purification.

Within this framework, the study does not stop at a normative description of classical concepts, but also affirms the epistemological and existential relevance of Sufism for modern life, which is increasingly marked by a crisis of meaning, spiritual alienation, and moral dryness. Another aspect of this study's novelty is its effort to bridge the conceptual heritage of classical Sufism with contemporary discourses on spirituality, thereby positioning Sufism not as an exclusive relic of the past, but as a dynamic, reflective, and transformative paradigm of life. Thus, this article contributes not only to the enrichment of Sufi studies within the academic field, but also to the development of a model of spiritual understanding that explains how human beings establish a relationship with God through the purification of the heart, the deepening of love, and the embodiment of moral virtues in lived experience. On this basis, this study is expected to offer a new contribution to Islamic spirituality studies by affirming that the true essence of Sufism lies in the journey from self-purification toward love that is fully directed to God.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on Sufism have been extensively discussed in both classical and contemporary Islamic literature as a spiritual path emphasizing the purification of the soul, the cultivation of ethical character, and the proximity of humans to God. Within the Sufi tradition, *tazkiyat al-nafs* is understood as the

process of cleansing the heart from reprehensible traits such as ostentation (*riya*), arrogance (*takabbur*), envy (*hasad*), excessive attachment to worldly life, and the domination of base desires [27]. Thinkers such as al-Ghazali, al-Qushayri, and other Sufi scholars regard the purification of the soul as a crucial stage in the spiritual journey toward *ma'rifah* (gnosis) and moral perfection. Thus, Sufism is not merely a repository of mystical teachings; it also encompasses an ethical and spiritual-psychological system aimed at cultivating individuals who are pure of heart, self-aware, and morally responsible.

In addition to inner purification, the concept of divine love, or *mahabbah ilahiyyah*, constitutes a central theme in the development of Sufi thought. Figures such as Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyah emphasized that love for God should not be motivated by fear of Hell or the desire for Paradise but should arise from a sincere devotion to God for His own majesty [4]. In al-Ghazali's framework, love for God is closely intertwined with spiritual knowledge; the deeper one's understanding of God, the stronger one's love for Him becomes [25]. Meanwhile, in the traditions of Rumi and Ibn 'Arabi, divine love is conceived as a transformative force that connects humans to God, to others, and to the cosmos [28].

Contemporary scholarship indicates that Sufism retains significant relevance for modern life. Modernity has brought material progress, technological advancement, and rationalization but has also generated crises of meaning, spiritual alienation, anxiety, and moral desiccation. In this context, Sufism offers an alternative path through practices such as *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *muhاسباب* (self-accountability), *mujahadah* (spiritual struggle), *tafakkur* (contemplation), and ethical cultivation. These practices assist individuals in regulating the ego, enhancing inner awareness, and fostering more harmonious relationships with God and fellow human beings [29]. Therefore, Sufism can be understood as a spiritual approach that does not reject modern life but provides ethical and transcendental guidance to ensure

that human beings do not lose meaning amid the advances of the age.

Based on this literature review, there exists a close relationship between inner purification and divine love. Inner purification serves as a means of preparing the heart to receive the light of God's love, while divine love constitutes both the aim and the motivating force guiding the purification process. The two are inseparable, as Sufism views spiritual transformation as a journey from self-purification toward intimacy and love for God [30]. This is the critical gap addressed in this article: the necessity of understanding inner purification and divine love as two principal axes that together constitute the holistic spiritual essence of Sufism.

3. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design using the literature review method. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study focuses on understanding the meanings, values, concepts, and spiritual experiences embedded in Sufi teachings, particularly concerning inner purification and divine love [31]. The literature review method is utilized to examine various relevant written sources, including classical and contemporary Sufi books, scholarly journal articles, works by prominent Sufi figures, and academic studies addressing Islamic spiritual dimensions. This study does not aim to measure phenomena numerically but seeks to explore the depth of thought and the essence of Sufi teachings through textual interpretation [32]. The primary focus of the research is on how concepts such as the purification of the soul, self-restraint, closeness to God, and divine love are articulated within the Sufi tradition. Accordingly, the research design is descriptive-analytical, aiming both to describe the main concepts of Sufism and to analyze the relationship between inner purification and the experience of love for God. The literature review enables the researcher to gain a broad and deep understanding of the research theme by

comparing various scholarly and spiritual perspectives [33]. Through this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive conceptual overview of the essence of Sufism as a spiritual path emphasizing inner transformation, moral strengthening, and the attainment of closeness to God..

Research ethics in this study were implemented by adhering to principles of academic honesty, respect for sources, and objectivity in interpreting data. Since this study is based on literature review and does not involve direct human respondents, ethical considerations are primarily focused on the responsible use of sources [34]. Every idea, quotation, or viewpoint derived from other authors' works must be clearly cited in accordance with academic writing standards. The researcher also avoids plagiarism, manipulation of textual meaning, and the use of sources that cannot be academically justified [35].

Data collection was conducted through the search and selection of literature related to the themes of inner purification, divine love, and the spiritual essence of Sufism. Primary data sources were drawn from Sufi books, journal articles, scientific proceedings, and other relevant academic documents. Data collection involved reading, noting, classifying, and summarizing important information from multiple sources. Selected literature had to demonstrate direct relevance to the research focus, academic credibility, and contributions to understanding Sufi concepts. Collected data were then categorized according to main themes, such as *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *mahabbah*, *ma'rifah*, asceticism (*zuhud*), and the spiritual journey toward closeness to God. In this manner, the data collection process was not only documentary but also interpretive, as the researcher sought to grasp the deeper meanings within the texts examined.

Research steps were carried out systematically to ensure the study results were clear and accountable. The first stage involved determining the research focus, namely examining the relationship between inner purification and divine love as the core

of Sufi spirituality. The second stage consisted of formulating research questions regarding how Sufi teachings explain the process of soul purification and how love for God serves as the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey [36]. The third stage involved conducting literature searches from various relevant academic and Islamic sources [37]. Once data were gathered, sources were selected based on relevance, author authority, academic quality, and alignment with the research theme [38].

Data analysis employed the qualitative model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing [39]. In the data reduction stage, the researcher extracted significant information from the literature concerning the concepts of inner purification and divine love. During the data display stage, selected information was organized thematically to clearly illustrate the relationships among concepts. Finally, in the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher interpreted the analyzed data to gain a profound understanding of the spiritual essence of Sufism. The analysis process was iterative to ensure that interpretations captured the philosophical, theological, and spiritual dimensions of Sufi teachings.

The validity of data in this study was maintained through meticulous source selection, comparison of diverse viewpoints, and consistent interpretation. To enhance research credibility, the researcher employed source triangulation by comparing information from multiple literatures relevant to the study theme [40]. Additionally, attention was given to the consistency of meanings among key concepts such as *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *mahabbah*, *ma'rifah*, and *fana'*, ensuring that the analysis remained anchored within the framework of Islamic spirituality. Interpretive validity was further strengthened by critically reading sources and avoiding conclusions unsupported by literature data. In qualitative literature-based research, the researcher functions as the primary instrument, necessitating a reflective, cautious, and open approach to multiple possible meanings. Consequently, all data

were interpreted with attention to the historical, religious, and philosophical contexts of Sufi teachings. The study is expected to contribute to the development of Sufi scholarship, particularly in demonstrating that Sufism is not merely a set of ritual practices but a path of inner transformation guiding individuals toward purity of the soul, profound divine love, and elevated spiritual consciousness.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Reinterpretation of Inner Purification in Contemporary Context

The purification of the soul, known as *tazkiyah*, is a central concept in Sufism that focuses on cleansing the heart and mind from reprehensible traits and enhancing spiritual quality [4]. In Sufism, soul purification is not only metaphysical but also encompasses significant psychological and social dimensions. Sufi practices such as *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *mujahadah* (inner struggle), and moral cultivation are believed to cleanse the soul from spiritual ailments such as arrogance, envy, and hatred [41], [42].

The Sufi approach can guide individuals toward inner peace, a closer relationship with God, and improved social well-being. Moreover, this process introduces fundamental principles concerning the balance between spiritual and worldly dimensions, reflected in the application of moral and ethical values in daily life [43], [44], [45]. Thus, *tazkiyah* is not merely an internal effort but also entails integral social and emotional transformation conducive to character development.

In addition to the concept of *tazkiyah*, two other aspects significantly support spiritual development in Sufism: the cultivation of virtuous character (*akhlaq*) [46] and the deepening understanding of the self (*ma'rifah*) [47].

Soul purification is considered the initial step in the spiritual journey; however, both *akhlaq* and *ma'rifah* play equally vital roles. The cultivation of virtuous character encourages individuals to practice noble

values in daily social interactions, while *ma'rifah* facilitates a profound understanding of God and the self's existence [48]. This illustrates that Sufism offers a holistic approach that not only prioritizes inner purification but also emphasizes character development and the deepening of existential understanding [44]. Practices such as *dhikr* and contemplation serve as primary means in Sufism, playing a crucial role in fostering deeper comprehension of God and the universe. These practices produce tangible positive effects in practical life, both in social relationships and individual spirituality.

Tazkiyah, as the core of soul purification in Sufism, is closely related to concepts found in various spiritual traditions worldwide, albeit with different emphases and practices [4], [49]. In classical Sufi literature, such as the works of al-Ghazali, soul purification represents the first step on the spiritual path toward perfection and closeness to God [16]. This aligns with findings that indicate *tazkiyah* serves as a foundation for cultivating virtuous character and understanding the essence of God [50]. From a Sufi perspective, this parallels concepts in ancient Greek philosophy regarding the attainment of happiness through the purification of the soul, comparable to Plato's notion of *eudaimonia* (happiness achieved through virtuous living) [51]. Consequently, this underscores that Sufism, through *tazkiyah*, addresses not only religious self-purification but also encompasses a universal philosophical dimension, namely the pursuit of a meaningful and harmonious life.

In modern life, which is often characterized by pressure and stress, the purification of the soul as taught in Sufism can serve as a means to achieve mental and emotional well-being. This study indicates that the Sufi approach to soul purification can be integrated into various mental and psychological wellness practices, such as contemplative therapy and mindfulness. Furthermore, these findings offer insights for religious education and character development, where the principles of *tazkiyah*

can be employed to cultivate individuals with virtuous character, social sensitivity, and a commitment to justice. Therefore, the application of the principles of soul purification in Sufism is not only relevant for individuals on their spiritual journey but also for the wider society that seeks character formation and the enhancement of overall quality of life.

4.2 Divine Love as the Core of the Spiritual Journey

Divine Love constitutes the core of the spiritual journey because it serves as the primary driving force that directs human beings from egoistic consciousness toward transcendental awareness. In spiritual experience, Divine Love is not merely understood as a religious feeling, but as an inner energy that guides individuals to know God, purify the soul, refine moral character, and develop a deeper closeness to the Absolute [52]. The spiritual journey cannot be separated from the process of loving and being loved by God, as love forms the foundation of obedience, longing, sacrifice, and self-surrender [53]. Divine Love also functions as a bridge between the theological and existential dimensions of human life, since through love, a person not only practices religion formally but also experiences the deepest meaning of religiosity [30]. In this context, spirituality is understood not as an escape from worldly life, but as an inner transformation that enables human beings to perceive life with compassion, awareness, and responsibility [54], [55].

These findings affirm that the stronger one's experience of Divine Love, the greater one's ability to control desires, overcome suffering, forgive others, and live more sincerely. Divine Love also appears as a principle that integrates worship, ethics, and inner experience, ensuring that spiritual practice does not stop at outward compliance. It provides direction, depth, and warmth to the entire process of seeking God. Thus, Divine Love becomes the central spiritual orientation that shapes human relationships with God, the self, other human beings, and

the universe. At the same time, it demonstrates that closeness to God must be manifested in ethical sensitivity, not merely in private contemplative experience, but also in concrete everyday life.

The most important finding of this study indicates that Divine Love serves as a source of inner transformation that changes the orientation of human life from self-interest toward devotion to God. This love encourages individuals to place God at the center of their life's purpose, so that every action, act of worship, and social relationship is directed toward attaining His pleasure [30]. In this process, Divine Love also functions as a force for the purification of the soul, as love for God nurtures awareness to avoid reprehensible traits such as arrogance, envy, hatred, and excessive attachment to the world [4]. Moreover, Divine Love gives rise to patience, gratitude, trust in God, and sincerity in facing various circumstances of life. Through love, suffering is no longer viewed merely as a burden, but as a space for spiritual learning that deepens human closeness to God [56]. Divine Love also has social implications, as individuals who experience love for God tend to express it through compassion, care, justice, and service to others. Although not as dominant as the previous dimensions, Divine Love still plays an important role as a foundation for dialogue between classical spirituality and modern human needs for meaning, inner peace, and mental health [52], [57].

This study also shows that Divine Love strengthens spiritual consistency, as individuals are motivated to perform good deeds not merely because of rules, but because of their inner longing for God. Thus, the personal, moral, emotional, and social dimensions of Divine Love are interconnected in shaping a complete and sustainable spiritual journey. This positions love as the center of character formation, rather than merely an emotional theme in religious discourse or an expression of individual piety in daily spiritual practice.

The most significant finding, namely Divine Love as a source of inner

transformation, demonstrates that the spiritual journey is essentially a process of moving from the dominance of the ego toward awareness of God's presence [58]. This finding is strongly related to Sufi literature, which places *mahabbah* as one of the principal spiritual stations or states in drawing closer to Allah. In the view of Sufi figures such as Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah, love for God is not based on the hope of attaining paradise or the fear of hell, but arises from sincerity in loving God because of His majesty [59]. This understanding is consistent with the findings of this study, which show that Divine Love liberates human beings from transactional religious motivations and directs them toward pure devotion [60].

When compared with the thought of al-Ghazali, Divine Love is also related to knowledge of God, since the deeper one's knowledge of God, the stronger one's love for Him becomes [25], [61]. From the perspective of contemporary spiritual psychology, this finding can be compared with the concepts of meaning in life, transcendent connectedness, and inner healing. However, Divine Love has its own distinctive character because it emphasizes not only psychological well-being but also the ontological relationship between human beings and God [62], [63].

This comparison shows that the concept of love in Islamic spirituality has a more comprehensive dimension, as it encompasses knowledge, feeling, will, and moral action. Therefore, the findings of this study reinforce classical literature while also extending it into the modern context, showing that Divine Love is not merely a theological concept but a spiritual experience that shapes human morality, identity, and life orientation. Accordingly, the theory of *mahabbah* remains relevant for understanding contemporary spiritual experience, particularly in the search for balance between inner depth, ethics, and meaningfulness amid the challenges of modern life.

Divine Love can serve as the foundation for the development of a deeper, more contextual, and more relevant spirituality for contemporary human life. In

the study of Sufism and spirituality, Divine Love affirms that the essence of the spiritual journey lies not only in ritual, religious knowledge, or moral discipline, but in the quality of love that connects human beings with God. Through this love, religious experience is able to shape inner transformation, strengthen character, and direct human life toward a higher meaning [24]. The value of Divine Love can be applied in religious education, moral formation, spiritual counseling, and the development of religious-value-based mental health approaches. Spiritual education that places Divine Love at its center helps individuals understand religion not merely as a burden of obligation, but as a path of love, closeness, and awareness of God [64], [65].

In social life, love for God also encourages the emergence of empathy, tolerance, justice, and concern for others, because a sincere relationship with God should be reflected in concrete actions. For modern society, which often faces emptiness of meaning, anxiety, and alienation, Divine Love offers a source of peace that does not depend entirely on material achievement. By placing love at the center of the spiritual journey, human beings can build a life that is more sincere, peaceful, and meaningful. Therefore, religious approaches need to place greater emphasis on emotional depth, sincerity, and loving relationships, rather than merely on formality. Ultimately, Divine Love becomes the foundation for a more ethical, harmonious, and transformative personal and social life, while also opening space for the development of educational, therapeutic, and spiritual formation models centered on the continuous experience of love for God.

4.3 The Relevance of Sufism to Modern Life

The main findings of this study indicate that Sufism remains relevant to modern life because it offers a path of inner formation amid crises of meaning, the pressures of materialism, and the acceleration of life that often alienates human beings from themselves. This relevance is evident in its

teachings on the purification of the heart, ego control, *dhikr*, Divine Love, and the awareness that life is not measured solely by economic or social success, but also by the depth of one's relationship with God, other human beings, and nature [42]. In the modern context, Sufism is not understood merely as a mystical tradition that withdraws from the world, but as a spiritual ethic that guides human beings to remain active, honest, humble, and compassionate in everyday life [14], [66].

This study finds that the process of inner purification helps individuals recognize spiritual maladies such as arrogance, envy, anxiety, and greed, and subsequently directs them toward serenity, sincerity, and moral responsibility [67]. Meanwhile, the concept of Divine Love serves as the foundation for tolerant, empathetic, and peaceful attitudes, enabling Sufism to function as a corrective to extreme individualism [52]. These findings also demonstrate that modern human beings require a spiritual depth that is not always provided by technology, entertainment, or external achievement. Sufism offers a reflective space for refining intentions, cultivating moral character, and developing the awareness that true happiness originates from a purified heart. Thus, the spiritual essence of Sufism makes an important contribution to shaping balanced modern individuals: rational yet not spiritually barren, productive yet not deprived of conscience, and open to progress without being disconnected from transcendental values. This makes Sufism not only normative but also applicable to the daily life of contemporary modern human beings.

This study first affirms that inner purification constitutes the core relevance of Sufism for modern humanity. Amid an instant culture and intense competition, human beings are often driven to pursue image, power, and pleasure, thereby neglecting the improvement of the heart's quality. Sufism places the purification of the soul as the foundation for developing tranquility and moral maturity [3]. The second finding concerns the importance of Divine Love as a spiritual energy that

transforms one's perception of life. Love for God does not end with personal experience but gives rise to compassion for others, respect for differences, and social sensitivity [69]. The third finding relates to the function of Sufi practices, particularly *dhikr*, *muhasabah*, and *riyadhah*, as means of self-control that can alleviate anxiety and strengthen ethical awareness [70]. The fourth finding shows that Sufism offers an alternative to forms of modern spirituality that are often superficial, consumptive, or oriented merely toward psychological comfort. Sufism demands character transformation, not merely temporary calmness [15]. The fifth finding concerns Sufism's ability to guide human beings in using technological progress more wisely, because a disciplined heart is not easily enslaved by information, popularity, and unlimited desire [71]. Through this sequence, the study shows that the strongest relevance of Sufism lies in inner formation, which then radiates into social relations and modern public life. This sequence is important because it demonstrates that healthy social change begins with the renewal of the heart and then develops into ethical behavior, solidarity, and collective responsibility in contemporary urban society.

The most important finding of this study—that inner purification forms the basis of Sufism's relevance to modern life—is consistent with classical Sufi theory, which places *tazkiyat al-nafs* as the path toward closeness to Allah. In Sufi literature, such as al-Ghazali's thought on the diseases of the heart and Rumi's reflections on Divine Love, human beings are understood as creatures who cannot be sufficiently guided by reason and outward rules alone, but also require inner discipline in order to subdue the ego [72], [73]. When compared with modern psychological approaches that emphasize mindfulness, stress management, and self-awareness, Sufism shares a concern for the depth of inner experience [74]. However, Sufism differs in that its orientation is not limited to psychological well-being, but extends to spiritual transformation centered on God [4]. Therefore, the practices of *dhikr*

and *muhasabah* are not merely relaxation techniques, but forms of existential remembrance that human beings possess a transcendental purpose. This comparison demonstrates that Sufism can enrich modern discourse on human well-being, as it integrates psychological, ethical, and theological dimensions into a unified process of self-formation [75], [76].

The relationship between the findings of this study and the existing literature shows that Sufism can serve as a bridge between traditional spiritual needs and modern challenges. It does not reject science, technology, or social life, but provides moral direction so that all forms of progress do not lose their meaning. By restating this central finding, it can be affirmed that Sufism remains relevant because it addresses the root problem of modernity, namely an inner crisis that cannot always be resolved by material progress alone. Thus, Sufism does not stand in opposition to modernity; rather, it offers a depth of meaning that complements rationality, productivity, and the contemporary pursuit of happiness in a more holistic and humane way.

The implications of this study indicate that Sufism can be developed as a source of values for education [77], mental health [6], social life [78], and the formation of public ethics in the modern era [79]. In the field of education, the values of self-purification, honesty, inner discipline, and Divine Love can be integrated to shape learners who are not only intellectually competent but also morally and spiritually mature [80], [81]. In the field of mental health, Sufi practices such as *dhikr*, *tafakkur*, and *muhasabah* can serve as supportive approaches that help individuals find calmness, self-acceptance, and meaning in life, provided that the [82], [83].

In social life, the teachings of love, humility, and service to others encourage the formation of a more empathetic, inclusive, and peaceful society. Another implication can be seen in Sufism's critique of consumerist lifestyles; modern human beings are invited to reassess their needs, desires, and life goals

so that they are not enslaved by material things. For academic studies, this research opens space to view Sufism not as a static legacy of the past, but as a dynamic spiritual tradition capable of engaging in dialogue with contemporary issues. Practically, Sufi values can be applied in families, organizations, and public spaces through a culture of reflection, simplicity, justice, and care. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that strengthening the Sufi dimension in modern life can become one way to restore balance between outward progress and spiritual depth. This implication is important because modernity requires a spiritual orientation capable of controlling the ego, strengthening empathy, and protecting human beings from the growing emptiness of meaning in both personal and social life, thereby contributing sustainably to the future of a more peaceful civilization.

5. CONCLUSION

This article concludes that Sufism constitutes a spiritual path that places inner purification and Divine Love at the core of human transformation. Inner purification serves to cleanse the heart of reprehensible traits, control worldly desires, and cultivate a more virtuous moral character. Meanwhile, Divine Love becomes the highest orientation that guides human beings to worship sincerely, live with sincerity and acceptance, and establish a profound closeness with Allah.

The relationship between *tazkiyat al-nafs* and *mahabbah ilahiyyah* demonstrates that Sufism is concerned not only with individual mystical experience but also with moral formation and social responsibility. A purified heart gives rise to sincere love, while love for God encourages human beings to continuously purify themselves. In the modern context, Sufism remains relevant because it is able to respond to crises of meaning, inner anxiety, individualism, and spiritual dryness. Thus, Sufism can be understood as a spiritual paradigm that integrates depth of faith, tranquility of the

soul, noble character, and social concern in contemporary human life.

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