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A DISCOURSE ON SUFIS' APPROACH TO THE APPLICATION OF *ḤADĪTH*

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ABSTRACT

Ḥadīth, as the second primary source of Islam, is shrouded in many issues. Its application among the Sufis has attracted an array of attention. This is because they (Sufis) appear not to be in absolute compliance with the conventional methods of *ḥadīth* narration, authentication and application as put in place by *Muḥaddithūn* and widely used by scholars, especially the *Salafīyyah*. This study examines the Sufis' approach to the usage and application of *ḥadīth*, especially their adherence to the rules of *ḥadīth* authentication. The analytical method of research is adopted in this study. It avails the opportunity to analyse various texts and scholars' submissions on the science of *ḥadīth* as related to this study. It is, therefore, discovered that the Sufis, in most of their applications of *ḥadīth*, downplayed the rules as set by *Muḥaddithūn* due to their belief that the Prophet is still alive, even after his demise, and that direct link or connection with him is possible. So, they do not need stringent conditions to establish a report from the Prophet or act on it. It is also discovered that the bulk of narrations at the Sufis' disposal are considered to be of weak or fabricated status. However, *ḥadīth* of the weak category can still be applicable in the realm of meritorious acts (*faḍā'il*), according to majority of the scholars. It is also discovered that some Sufis hold that as long as a particular narration does not contradict the principles of Islam, ascribing such to the Prophet should be less controversial. This, therefore, concluded that Sufis flouted the rules of *ḥadīth* authentication with good intentions and attached importance to their propositions to make them gain wider acceptance from the people.

Introduction

Scholars like Al-Azami (1977, 3) define *ḥadīth* as the record of sayings, actions and reactions of the Prophet of Islam to issues, all of which can serve as a major source in Islam, second only to the Qur'ān (Philips, 2011, 6). As the second primary source of Islam, *ḥadīth* occupies an undisputable position in the Islamic discourse and it is indispensable. Its sciences had evolved for a long time, precisely, after the *Salaf* (the first three generations of Muslims) as a result of various rumbles that characterized the period, which started among the Muslims immediately after the demise of the Prophet but degenerated into political and theological tussles where each provided *ḥadīth* to support their stands (As-Sibāī, 1982, 90). Efforts were made by different scholars of different ages to review, re-examine and update the field of science of *ḥadīth* due to the continuous presence of traditions that are of questionable status. It is, therefore, noticed that one of the circles where such spurious traditions are not only prominent but also in use with great relish is the *Ṣūfī's* circle (Ibn Baz, 1992, 1/191). Scholars like Ibn Al-Jawzī (2001, 149) and Ibn Taymiyyah (1995, 10/551) have alleged that many *Ṣūfī* scholars' works are replete with *'aḥādīth* that are either classified as *ḍa'īf* (weak) or *mawḍū'c* (fabricated). It is based on this allegation that many *Salafīyyah* scholars like Ibn Baz (1992, 9/457), and Al-Uthaymin (1995, 4/250) among others condemn Sufis and Sufism as *bid'ah* (heretical innovation). It is believed that most of their (Sufis) doctrines and practices are baseless because they rely on traditions that are erroneously or falsely attributed to the Prophet. There is also the thought that unauthentic *'aḥādīth* are the sources of controversies, *bid'ah* (innovation), and unnecessary supererogatory acts that are capable of interpolating Islam and Islamic messages.

Several scholars have written on weak (*ḍa'īf*) and fabricated (*mawḍū'c*) *ḥadīths* to get Muslims acquainted with them and to be conscious of their proliferation among the Muslims. Ibrahim (2021) writes to examine the efforts of scholars of hadith in curbing the menace of fabricated reports which gave birth to the compilation and documentation of fabricated *ḥadīth*. He also accounted for how scholars developed various rules to identify hadiths that are falsely ascribed to the Prophet. In the same light, Ayub (2018) conducted a study on the role of *matn* (text) criticism in *ḥadīth* authentication. He argues that it is through text examination that hadiths of questionable categories are easily discovered. In his effort, Abdul (1986) presents a synopsis of the science of *ḥadīth*, including the discussions on birth weak and fabricated reports. He highlights the criteria for identification of each with the submission that scholars generally permit the usability of weak hadiths in non-legislative and creedal matters, but they do not accept fabricated reports in any matter. It is in the light of these efforts that this study seeks to examine the Sufis' approach to the science of *ḥadīth* to determine their understanding and their consciousness of it (the science of *ḥadīth*) in the application of *ḥadīth* in their works, doctrines and practices.

A Synopsis of Sufism

Sufism is otherwise referred to as Islamic mysticism. It is the English expression for *taṣawwuf* which simply connotes the process of purifying the soul (*tazkiyah*) from vices while promoting good qualities that are requisites for human perfection (Shahida, 2014, 55). In other words, the subject matter of Sufism is soul purification, and it aims to attain eternal felicity and blessedness. It is a name that is coined from the attitudes and dresses of its adherents (Sufis) who usually wore woollen materials to demonstrate their asceticism and austere lifestyle (Shahida). The emergence of Sufism as an independent practice in Islam, as could be inferred from the submission of Ibn Khalidun (1986, 281), could be traced back to the second century of

Islam, precisely during the period of Umayyad (41-132AH/661-750CE) when worldliness was the order of the day. It was later that the likes of Al-Ḥārith Al-Muḥāsibī (d.243AH/857CE), Junayd Al-Baghdadi (298AH/910CE), and Abū-Ṭālib Al-Makki (d.386AH/996CE) among other started to define the doctrines of Sufism (Ibn Al-Jawzī, 148).

Sufism is sometimes referred to as 'Ilmu 'l-Qulūb (science of hearts), 'Ilmu 's-Sulūk (science of spiritual journey), 'Ilmu 't-Tazkiyati 'n-Nafs (science of soul purification), 'Ilm 'l-Iḥsān (science of virtue) among other names. It should be pointed out that, each of these nomenclatures has its significance to *taṣawwuf*. It is, therefore, regarded as the science of hearts as could be inferred from this *ḥadīth* which reads:

عَنْ عَامِرٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النُّعْمَانَ بْنَ بَشِيرٍ
يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ... وَإِنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً إِذَا
صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ
الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ أَلَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ.

On the authority of 'Āmir who said he heard An-Nu'mān bin Bashīr saying that he heard the messenger of Allah, may the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him saying: ...Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body, if that piece is good, the whole body becomes good and if it gets spoilt, the whole body gets spoilt. That is the heart (Al- *Bukhārī*, 1/20).

Therefore, the above *ḥadīth* establishes the heart as the seat of spirituality that must be watched over at all times.

As a science, Sufism is a branch of Islamic Studies that deals with the science of spirituality or the spiritual aspect of Islam. This is because it concerns itself with the status of the human soul and how it can journey from the basement of the animalistic level to the height of spirituality that makes man live an angelic life. This is in line with the explanation of Hossein (1980,13) while expounding on Q.95:4-5. He submits that Allah created man perfectly (*aḥsān taqwīm*) but he fell into a terrestrial condition of

separation, which subsequently led to his withdrawal from the divine presence (*asfal sāfilīn*). He therefore needs to return to perfection and Sufism is the means through which he could attain his former status.

Therefore, Sufism is regarded as the science of spiritual journey. This is because there is a process that a *Sālik* must pass through before he can be said to have become a *Ṣūfī*. The journey from the basement of the soul to the peak of virtues entails both the stations (*Maqāmāt*) and states (*aḥwāl*), each of which must be traversed by a *Sālik* (wayfarer) with the sole objective of attaining perfection (Ansari, 1986, 201). This is said to be part of the teachings of the Prophet to his Companions. In the same light, Al-Bashir (2015) regards *taṣawwuf* as *Al-Fiqh 'l-Bāṭin* (esoteric jurisprudence). This is because it deals with soul purification as could be understood from Tahir ul-Qadir's exposition on Qur'an 2:151 where Allah says:

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِنْكُمْ يَتْلُو
عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا
تَعْلَمُونَ

Similarly, we have sent among you a messenger of your own, to recite to you Our verses (Qur'an) and to purify and teach you the book (the Qur'an) and Wisdom and to teach you that which you do not know.

Glossing over the above verse, Tahir ul-Qadri submits that four key sciences are singled out. These are sciences of recitation (*Tilāwah*), purification of the soul (*Tazkiyatu 'n-Nafs*) which is the root of *taṣawwuf*, exegesis (*Tafsīr*) and wisdom and jurisprudence (*ḥikmah wal fiqh*).

Equally, the science of virtues, as one of the names for which *tasawwuf* is known is based on the contents of a *ḥadīth* wherein Angel Jibril asked questions that led to the explanation of the three components of Islam. These are *Islam*, *Iman* (*faith*) and *Iḥsān* (virtue). The third, *Iḥsān*, according to the Sufis is the proper name for Islamic spirituality which is otherwise known as *taṣawwuf* (Yusuf, 2018, 97). It is pertinent to point out that scholars like Hussein Nasir in

recent time, due to different clamours over the appropriateness of the word Sufi as the name for Islamic mysticism suggests the adoption of either *ʿIlm ʿt-Tazkiyah* as contained in the Qurʾān or *ʿIlm ʿl-Ihsān* as pointed out in the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (Yusuf). Regardless of the above polemics, vis-a-vis the nomenclature, Sufism remains a practice with a strong basis in Islam.

Science of *Ḥadīth*: A Brief History

After the demise of the Prophet and the emergence of Abūbakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān and Ali as *Khulafāʾ*, there set in a series of controversies led to the formation of the Umayyad dynasty. The era was characterised by a series of irregularities and corruptions, especially at the hands of some Caliphs (As-Sayuti, 2004, 159, 195). There was also large-scale fraud which culminated in the dire need to document, compile, and scrutinise traditions of the Prophet frequently cited to justify any action. Ibn ʿAbbās and Ibn Sīrīn among others were noted by Imam Muslim in the introductory aspect of his *Ṣaḥīḥ* to have confirmed the high level of proliferation of spurious narrations in the early days of Islam and how conscious the companions were in accepting reports from the people. Imam Muslim quotes him (Ibn Sīrīn) saying:

عَنْ ابْنِ سِيرِينَ قَالَ لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَسْأَلُونَ عَنِ
الْإِسْنَادِ فَلَمَّا وَقَعَتِ الْفِتْنَةُ قَالُوا سَمُّوا لَنَا
رِجَالَكُمْ فَيَنْظُرُ إِلَى أَهْلِ السُّنَّةِ فَيُؤَخِّدُ
حَدِيثَهُمْ وَيَنْظُرُ إِلَى أَهْلِ الْبِدْعِ فَلَا يُؤَخِّدُ
حَدِيثَهُمْ

On the authority of Ibn Sīrīn who said (initially) there was no inquiry on the source of information. But when there occurred crises (in the Muslim Community), people started to demand sources of information by saying: Mention to us your men, i.e., informants. Then, the narrations from those who adhere to *Sunnah* were accepted, while those from the people of innovation (*bidʿah*) were rejected. (Muslim, 2000, 1/34)

This shows that weak and fabricated narration constituted a major problem for the *Ummah* shortly after the demise of the Prophet. The report of Ibn ʿAbbās indicates

that they do not accept reports except from trustworthy individuals (Muslim, 1/27).

As the chaos grew and got compounded, scholars moved to arrest the situation. It was initially a private affair, as in the case of Imam Az-Zuhrī who was noted to have initiated the process as recorded by Imam Malik (Binkirani, 2004, 10), but was later taken over by the government under the headship of Umar Ibn ʿAbdul-Azīz as reported by Imam Al-Bukhārī (1980, 1/31) in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. The report holds that ʿUmar Ibn ʿAbdul-Azīz commissioned Abubakar Ibn Hazm to take charge of the department of *ḥadīth* authentication with a mandate to scrutinise every report from the Prophet and get them compiled. This was an effort to remove the chaff from the grain. In doing this, various mechanisms were put in place to collect and scrutinise *ʾaḥādīth* and several methods were developed therefrom. This exercise led to the conclusion that both the text and transmitter or reporter will be subjected to different kinds of tests to determine their genuineness and acceptability. They, therefore, came up with the science of authentication of *ḥadīth*. Kamali (2005, 4) explains that this exercise is given many names, such as *Muṣṭalahu ʾl-ḥadīth*, *ʿUlūm ʾl-ḥadīth*, *ʿUṣūl ʾl-ḥadīth* among others, as we have them today. This science, therefore, evolved as a means of distinguishing between authentic narrations and spurious or fabricated ones. The scholars of *ḥadīth* dealt with each *ḥadīth* as an independent case, subjecting both its *Isnād* and *Matn* to scrutiny according to the fundamental principles of this science (Philips, 34).

Allegations against the Sufis on *Ḥadīth*

The allegation of infiltration of Islamic scholarship with spurious traditions has been levelled against many Muslim groups, Sufi inclusive, since the early days of Islam. Imam Muslim in the preamble to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* reports how this came into being during the period of *Salaf*. He reports:

عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى بْنِ سَعِيدِ الْقَطَّانِ عَنْ
أَبِيهِ قَالَ لَمْ تَرَ الصَّالِحِينَ فِي شَيْءٍ أَكْذَبَ
مَنْهُمْ فِي الْحَدِيثِ قَالَ ابْنُ أَبِي عَتَّابٍ فَلَقِيتُ
أَنَا مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ يَحْيَى بْنِ سَعِيدِ الْقَطَّانِ فَسَأَلْتُهُ
عَنْهُ فَقَالَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ لَمْ تَرَ أَهْلَ الْخَيْرِ فِي

شَيْءٍ أَكْذَبَ مِنْهُمْ فِي الْحَدِيثِ قَالَ مُسْلِمٌ
يَقُولُ يَجْرِي الْكُذْبُ عَلَى لِسَانِهِمْ وَلَا
يَتَعَمَّدُونَ الْكُذْبَ

On the authority of Muhammad bin Yahya bin Sa'īd Al-Qaṭṭān who reported from his father who said that we have never seen the righteous people engrossed in falsehood in anything than they are in *ḥadīth*. Ibn Abī 'Attāb said When I met Muhammad bin Yahya bin Sa'īd Al-Qaṭṭānī, I asked him about the statement and he said he heard it from his father who said that you can never find the good people (righteous) guilty of anything than lying in *ḥadīth*. Imam Muslim then said, lie flouts on their tongues, though they did not utter it deliberately (Muslim, (1/34).

Explaining the above narration, As-Sibā'ī (1982, 231) among other scholars, submits that the word *Ṣāliḥūn* refers to devoted worshippers of Allah, which is one of the attributes of the Sufis. It should be pointed out that as of when the incident reported in this narration was happening, Sufi has not become a household name. The pious individuals who devoted themselves to worship were either referred to as *Zuhād* (ascetics) or *'Ubbād* (worshippers) as submitted by Ibn Al-Jawzī (145), but later metamorphosed to Sufism as it is today. The individuals focused on worship with little or no recourse to Islamic scholarship, especially the rules of *Sanad* of *ḥadīth*. They thereby attributed many of their statements, doctrines and practices to the Prophet, to enable them to have wider acceptance and importance (Affaf, 1994, 44).

In the same light, Jaunpuri (2010, n.p.), a prominent Sufi scholar who acknowledges the unprecedented presence of weak, rejected and fabricated traditions in the various works of the Sufis, adduces the possible reasons for the non-challant attitudes of the Sufis to the science of *ḥadīth* in the application of *ḥadīth* in their practice. He identified intense spiritual devotion (*'Ibādah*), which is the primary interest of the Sufis and *husnu niyyah* (good motive) as what prevented them from investigating and scrutinizing various reports before accepting or acting on them. Affaf (45)

corroborated this with the submissions from Ibn 'Arabī who opines that to the Sufi, anything that does not contradict the Qur'ānic provisions and can lead to the attainment of the objective of *Sharī'ah* can be attributed to the Prophet. This will later be examined in the light of the celebrated hadith that condemned deliberate lying against the Prophet is like assigning an abode to oneself in the hellfire (Al-Bukhari, 1/33).

Yusuf (2013, 7) compiled names of different classical scholars who have underrated Sufism and Sufis for dignifying their works with traditions that are between weak and unfounded status. He mentions Ibn Ḥajar Al-'Asqalānī, Adh-Dhahabī, and Ad-Dimashqī among others in this regard. To Ibn Ḥajar, Sufis have no regard for *Sanad*, while Adh-Dhahabī alleges that Abū Sa'd Aṣ-Ṣūfī authored work on forty traditions without containing a single authentic *ḥadīth*. The *'ahādīth* are either weak or unfounded. Ibn Taymiyyah (10/551) also launched an attack on some works of the Sufis when he was asked about *Iḥyā' 'Ulūmi 'd-Dīn* of Al-Ghazālī and *Qūtu 'l-Qulūb* of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī. He acknowledged the usefulness and benefits of the works vis-à-vis spirituality but submitted that they were loaded with traditions either weak or unfounded.

Ibn Al-Jawzī (148) was another major scholar who launched an unprecedented attack against the Sufis vis-à-vis the science of *ḥadīth* and how they (Sufis) excessively used fabricated and weak traditions in their works. In his *Talbīsu Iblīs*, Ibn Al-Jawzī argues that the Sufis are being deceived by the devil. This is reflected in their fabrication of *ḥādīth*, as could be discovered in their works and most times, they act upon those fabricated narrations. He was particular in his mentioning of the names of prominent Sufi writers like Al-Muḥāsibī, Al-Ghazālī and his *Iḥyā'* and Abu-Na'īm who authored the famous *Ḥilyatul-Awliyā'*, a frequently cited and highly revered and referenced book across the Sufis' circle, and Abu Ṭālib Al-Makkī who wrote *Qūtu 'l-Qulūb* as responsible for the proliferation of Sufi circles with *'ahādīth* that lie between weak and fabricated status.

In another dimension, prominent *Salafiyyah* scholars like Ibn Bāz have equally accused the

Sufis of the same allegation of parading weak and fabricated traditions in their various works with great relish (Ibn Bāz, 1/191). The *Ihyā'* of Imam Al-Ghazālī is particularly noted and mentioned by most writers on Sufism and *ḥadīth*. The popular scholar of *ḥadīth*, Shaykh Muhammad Nasrudeen Al-Bānī was said to have been motivated to study *ḥadīth*, only after he read and digested *Al-Ihyā'* of Al-Ghazālī (Ash-Shaybani, 1987, 46).

The view of some Western scholars is represented by Nicholson when he remarks in one of his works:

The reader should be reminded that most, if not all, Mystical Traditions ascribed to Mohammed were forged and fathered upon him by the Sufis, who represent themselves as the true interpreters of his esoteric teaching (Nicholson, 1974, 53).

This therefore presupposes that Sufis are known, both in the classical and modern Islamic discourses, even among Western scholars, for their patronage of weak and unfounded reports to establish their doctrines and practices and to drive home their points. Affaf (44) equally quotes Ibn 'Arabī who acknowledges the fact that Sufis are guilty of *ḥadīth* forgeries, though out of a good intention to add value and importance to whatever they might have received from Allah through illumination or from the Prophet to make it gain wider acceptance.

Sufis and *Ḥadīth* Reportage

Generally, Sufis acknowledge the transmission and narration of traditions from one generation to the other as part of human existence and they believe the presence of such in the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet who was the flag bearer of Islam. They equally accept and work with the various collections of *'aḥādīth* of the Prophet which were compiled by different scholars. They however refuse to limit themselves to those narrations that are found in them and they pay little or no attention to their grading, either in their internal classifications as Sound, Fair and Weak or their external arrangement through which *Ṣaḥīḥ 'l-Bukhārī* is rated above others (Yusuf, 1).

The attitude of the Sufis to grading or classification of *ḥadīth* which is alleged to have engendered the prevalence of weak and fabricated narrations in their works may not be unconnected to the fact that early Sufis, as could be inferred from the first report of Imam Muslim above, were victims of the circumstance. As everybody was gripped with the *fitnah*, which led to the development of the science of authentication afterwards, their followers took little or no care about thorough investigation and scrutinization before accepting and establishing their tenets on those narrations. This was the intention of Algar (2014, n.p.) when he opines that "Sufism emerged as a distinct expression of Islamic religiosity during the same period that witnessed the compilation and sifting of *ḥadīth*". The second report of Imam Muslim above may not be too relevant in this regard. This is because the *fitnah* that the first report mentioned is largely related to political matters and not *'Ibādah* which the Sufis or the *Ṣāliḥūn* are largely noted for and based on which words were alleged to have been ascribed to the Prophet to prove their tenets and establish their practice.

According to Idri and Rohaizan (2017, 446), there are various means through which the Sufis source guidance from the Prophet. These methods or means are different from the conventional method as they transpired between the Prophet and his Companions. The identified means are *liqā' r-Rasūl* and *Tarīq 'l-Kashf*. The former presupposes that a Sufi, at the height of spirituality, can meet with the Prophet after his death, while sleeping (dreaming) or awake. *Kashf*, on the other hand, connotes that a Sufi can receive a revelation from behind the veil. So, whatever is received via these two mediums is accepted as a source of instruction which one can act upon, especially for ritual purposes (Idri and Rohaizan, 450). Many Sufis have claimed to have received several supplications and *Ṣalāwāt*, which are held in high esteem through these means. Many *awrād* (litanies) and supplications like *Ṣalātul-Fātiḥ*, *Jawharatul-Kamāl*, *Dalā'ilu Khayrāt* and *Qasidatu Burdah*, among others, were alleged to have either come to them or sanctioned by the Prophet through these mediums (Yusuf, 2018, 144).

Another one that can be added to the two above, as identified by Nicholson (23) is *Ilhām* (intuition). This is a manifestation that occurs to a Sufi with a high sense of piety. It is the instructions or information that the Sufis get via these means that are presented as a revelation from the Prophet. Affaf (245) submits that Ibn 'Arabī thought that those narrations were of the status of *Al-Khabar al-Ahad* (solitary report). As these reports kept saturating society, many of them found their way into classical works of the Sufis and beyond. Some have even been incorporated into classical *ḥadīth* works while many are still floating around. It is equally pertinent to state that Sufis hold tenaciously to these expressions, and it is based on this that many Sufis are condemned.

Generally, the Sufis continuous link with the Prophet is premised on the claim that the Prophet is still spiritually alive and can interact with some individuals, especially the pious ones as he did when he was physically alive. The *ḥadīth* of Imam Bukhārī, among others, is relied upon by the Sufis to establish this belief. It reads:

عَنْ الزُّهْرِيِّ حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو سَلَمَةَ أَنَّ أَبَا
هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ مَنْ رَأَى فِي الْمَنَامِ فَسَيَّرَانِي
فِي الْبَيْطَةِ وَلَا يَمْتَلُ الشَّيْطَانُ بِي

On the authority of Zuhri who said that Abū-Salamah informed him that, indeed Abū-Hurayrah said that he heard the Prophet, may the blessing and peace of Allah be with him saying: Whoever saw me in his dream will equally see me wakefully. Shaytān can never take my form...
(Al-Bukhārī, 9/33)

Dissecting the content of this report vis-à-vis the physical sighting or meeting of the Prophet, via dreaming or physically, especially after his demise or on the day of resurrection has generated polemics among the scholars (Yusuf, 217). The non-Sufi scholars, especially the *Salafiyūn*, submitted that the meeting or sighting of the Prophet as contained in this *ḥadīth* should be understood in two ways. Firstly, it provides a glad tiding to Muslims who were alive but lived outside Madinah where the Prophet lived, to have the

opportunity of meeting him as they dreamt about him. Secondly, it refers to a meeting or sighting of the Prophet on the day of resurrection (An-Nawawi, 1990, 15/26 and Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, 1999, 12/385). These submissions are watered down by the Sufis who, as stated by Ibn Arabi, are resolute on the possibility of meeting the Prophet via a dream and wakefully after his demise (Affaf, 61). A particular reference can be made to Shaykh Ahmad Tijānī (d.1815), the founder of the Tijāniyyah Sufi order, who claimed to have seen the Prophet wakefully and received some *awrād* from him (Al-Fāsī, 2001, 57).

Sufis' emphasis on the establishment of a communication link with the Prophet, especially through dreams, is further strengthened by another report from Imam Muslim (1/ 65). It reads:

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ مُسْهِرٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَنَا
وَحَمْرَةَ الزِّيَّاتُ مِنْ أَبَانَ بْنِ أَبِي عِيَّاشٍ
نَحْوًا مِنْ أَلْفِ حَدِيثٍ قَالَ عَلِيُّ فَلَقِيتُ
حَمْرَةَ فَأَخْبَرَنِي أَنَّهُ رَأَى النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي الْمَنَامِ فَعَرَضَ عَلَيْهِ مَا
سَمِعَ مِنْ أَبَانَ فَمَا عَرَفَ مِنْهَا إِلَّا سَبْعًا
يَسِيرًا خَمْسَةً أَوْ سِتَّةً

Ali bin Mushir said Hamza Az-Zayyat and I heard from Aban bin Abi 'Ayyāsh like a thousand *ḥadīth*. Ali said I met Hamza who informed me that he saw the Prophet, may the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, in his dream and he presented that *ḥadīth* from Abān to him (the Prophet). He confirmed, but few, like five or six narrations (from those one thousand).

Various scholars, including Imam An-Nawawi (115) and Ash-Shātībī (1992, 332), while explaining this *ḥadīth* acknowledged the possibility of sighting the Prophet in a dream and acceptability or admissibility of whatever instruction that is received from the Prophet during such dream, provided that it does not contradict the provisions of the existing Islamic beliefs or negate any established *Shari'ah* rule.

It is not unlikely to have seen instances where *Shari'ah* legislations or instructions have been established based on dreams, especially

during the lifetime of the Prophet. An instance is that of Abdullah ibn Zayd and his call to prayer. In At-Tirmidhi, there is a report which reads:

عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ زَيْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، قَالَ: لَمَّا أَصْبَحْنَا أَتَيْنَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ بِالرُّؤْيَا، فَقَالَ: «إِنَّ هَذِهِ لَرُؤْيَا حَقٌّ، فَقُمْ مَعَ بِلَالٍ فَإِنَّهُ أُنْدَى وَأَمْدٌ صَوْتًا مِنْكَ، فَأَلَقَ عَلَيْهِ مَا قِيلَ لَكَ، وَلِيُنَادِيَ بِذَلِكَ»، قَالَ: فَلَمَّا سَمِعَ عَمْرُ بْنُ الْخَطَّابِ نِدَاءَ بِلَالٍ بِالصَّلَاةِ خَرَجَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، وَهُوَ يَجْرُ إِزَارَهُ، وَهُوَ يَقُولُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَالَّذِي بَعَثَكَ بِالْحَقِّ، لَقَدْ رَأَيْتُ مِثْلَ الَّذِي قَالَ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «فَلِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ، فَذَلِكَ أَتَيْتُ»

Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Zayd narrated that: When we woke up, we went to Allah's Messenger, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, to inform him of the dream. He said: Indeed, it is a true dream. So, get Bilal involved, because he has a better and louder voice than you. Inform him of what was said to you, so that he can call to prayer like that. He said that when Umar bin Al-Khatāb heard Bilal calling to prayer, he went to Allah's Messenger, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, dragging his cloth and saying: By the One who sent you with the truth! I dreamt the same as what he called. So Allah's messenger, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said: To Allah is the praise, so that confirms it. (At-Tirmidhi, 1/358).

What is established through the dream of two prominent companions of the Prophet is a call to prayer. Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah in his *Kitābu 'r-Ruh* (2002, 136) confirms the significance of the dreams of the pious Muslims, though the permissibility of establishing religious rules through the dream of pious and sane Muslims, especially those that do not contradict existing *Shari'ah* rule remains relative. Sufis, therefore, argue in the light of this report that, whenever a Muslim sees Prophet Muhammad, whether

sleeping or wakefully, he should believe that it is real and whatever transpired between them should be treated with every sense of importance, especially when the Prophet directs him during this vision to act, he should act by it, as it is one of the basic principles in Islam to be obedient to the Prophet at all time (Affaf, 62). This has accounted for the several reports at the disposal of the Sufis which are not found in the classical works of *hadith*.

That notwithstanding, Algar (2016, n.p) submitted that many of the earliest Sufi authors were scholars of *hadith*. He identified Al-Hārith Al-Muḥāsibī, Abu'l-Qāsim Junayd, Abu 'Abdi 'r-Raḥmān As-Sulamī, and Abu'l-Qāsim Al-Qushayrī among others to that effect. It should be stated that the above allegations against these scholars by Ibn Al-Jawzī, and Ibn Taymiyyah among others are not unconnected to the fact that the stringent rules of *hadith* authentication largely came after them. Also, it should be pointed out that there are Sufis who have distinguished themselves in the science of *hadith* and are renowned across the board. The likes of Imam Ismā'il Al-Ansarī Al-Harawī who authors *Kitāb 'l-Manāzil* and Abu Abdillahi Yunīnī were identified as prominent *hadith* scholars who doubled as eminent Sufis. Others are Abdur-Rahman al-Dawudī (d.467AH), who was said by Al-Hāfiz As-Sam^cānī to be one of the scholars of Imam *Bukhārī* among others. They were prominent Sufis but also scholars of *hadith* with repute (Jaunpuri, n.p.). In recent times, another eminent Sufi scholar, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawī (2010), has endeavoured to compile about three hundred (300) different authentic *'ahādīth* from different collections and on different Sufi topics. The work is a move to sanitise the Sufi circles from the proliferation of weak and fabricated narrations and for the Sufis to re-examine their doctrines and practices, some of which were alleged to have been based on weak and fabricated narrations.

Sufi Scholars and *Hadith 'l-Da'if* (Weak *Hadith*)

As it could be inferred from the various explanations, analyses and submissions above, it is clear that many of the *'ahādīth* relied upon by the Sufis which are

used to justify many of their doctrines and practices are generally classified or categorized as either weak or fabricated. A weak tradition, according to Al-Bayqūnī among other scholars of *ḥadīth*, as quoted by Al-Uthaymin (2003, 45), falls below the standards of *Ṣaḥīḥ* (sound) and *Ḥasan* (fair) category. In other words, a weak tradition meets neither the conditions stipulated for *Ṣaḥīḥ* nor *Ḥasan* status. This is basically because there lies a lacuna with at least one of the reporters or its manner of reportage among others.

In the technical understanding of these definitions, it is shown that a weak tradition may be said by the Prophet but the personality that reported it failed character and intellectual examinations or there is discontinuity in the *Isnad*. In this case, such a report remains unacceptable. An analogical explanation of the relationship between the weak tradition and the superior others (*Ṣaḥīḥ* and *Ḥasan*) could be likened to the results of an examination conducted for three persons in which one of them scored the total marks, the second person scored above average, while the third person's mark is below average. The one whose score is below average is technically said to be of weak intellectual capacity and the reliability of reports from such an individual will always be questionable. That, therefore, does not mean he was not part of the process. This is the general status of a weak tradition; hence, its usability always causes doubts, hence scholars call for caution in its acceptability and usability.

There are differences of opinion on whether or not a weak tradition can be acceptable in meritorious acts (*fadā'il*), and encouragement (*targhib*) or deterrence (*tarhib*). Imam An-Nawawī and Ahmad Ibn Hanbali's submissions reflect their acceptability of a weak *ḥadīth* in this regard, especially in the absence of a superior one (Zarabozo, 2010, 10). It should not be forgotten that, in the introductory aspect of forty *ḥadīth* of An-Nawawī, the author, Imam An-Nawawī, demonstrates the permissibility of using a weak tradition in meritorious acts while justifying the basis for his decision to compile the work (An-Nawawī, 2009, 2). It should however be pointed out that the *ḥadīths* contained therein (Forty *Ḥadīth*) are mostly

authentic. Concretising the permissibility to use weak *ḥadīths*, he (Imam Nawawī) went further to list out different scholars of earlier times who have equally acted in the spirit of the same *ḥadīth* to compile works of forty *ḥadīth* s on certain subjects. This is therefore to indicate that he was neither the only one nor the first to do so (An-Nawawī, 3).

Espousing the submission of Imam An-Nawawī, Musa (2015, 50) argues that the issue of the quality of a particular report should attract serious attention when it comes to obligatory actions (*Farā'id*) or forbidden acts (*ḥaram*) where action or inaction may attract reward or punishment as the case may be. In voluntary matters, however, they are not necessary, since those actions are primarily meant to earn additional rewards. The position of Musa is not different from the reactions of various scholars who hold that weak tradition is tenable and acceptable in meritorious actions (Abdul, 45). It is therefore clear that a weak tradition should not be rejected in absolute terms but can still be useful in some Islamic matters.

However, scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah, argued that a weak tradition should be rejected in its entirety and should not be used for anything, either in creedal (*Aqā'id*), meritorious matter or any Islamic rites or legislations. In *Majmū' l-Fatāwā*, Ibn Taymiyyah writes:

وَلَا يَجُوزُ أَنْ يُعْتَمَدَ فِي الشَّرِيعَةِ عَلَى
الْأَحَادِيثِ الضَّعِيفَةِ الَّتِي لَيْسَتْ صَحِيحَةً
وَلَا حَسَنَةً ... وَلَمْ يَقُلْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْأَئِمَّةِ إِنَّهُ
يَجُوزُ أَنْ يُجْعَلَ الشَّيْءُ وَاجِبًا أَوْ مُسْتَحَبًّا
بِحَدِيثٍ ضَعِيفٍ وَمَنْ قَالَ هَذَا فَقَدْ خَالَفَ
الْإِجْمَاعَ

It is not appropriate to establish an act in *Sharī'ah* based on weak traditions that are not of sound or fair status...None of the scholars ever said that it is permissible to make something either compulsory or preferable based on a weak narration. Whoever said that has gone against the consensus of the scholars (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1/250).

Ibn Taymiyyah appears too rigid in this regard as he opines that reliance on *Ijtihād* is far better than working with a weak

narration. This is in sharp contradiction to the position of Abū Hanifah, Imam Malik, Shāfi'ī and Imam Ahmad, as quoted by Zarabozo (50). Each of them opined that, a weak tradition is more beloved to them than a personal opinion (*Ijtihad*). Reacting to Imam Ahmad's acceptability of a weak tradition along with others, Ibn Taymiyyah cautions and warns the *Hanābilah* against it, stating that, such should not be meant to establish the legality of any action that is based on a weak narration. Hence, it is tantamount to legislating in *Shari'ah* which Allah alone has such capacity.

The stand of Ibn Al-^cUthaymīn is in line with that of Ibn Taymiyyah. He emphasizes the necessity to reject weak tradition, especially in creedal, legislative, or meritorious matters (Al-Uthaymin, 46). He however lists out the reservations of scholars who allowed the use of it (weak tradition) either in meritorious deeds or for deterrence, that the following conditions must be fulfilled. Viz:

1. The *ḥadīth* must be on meritorious and deterrence matters;
2. It must not be excessively weak;
3. Such a narration must have a strong root in the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. For instance, a tradition that teaches kindness to parents or encourages the recitation of the Qur'ān and
4. It must be acknowledged as a weak *ḥadīth* (Al-Uthaymin, 47).

A proper understanding of these conditions will reveal a lacuna if the conditions are to be applied in the realm of the Sufis understanding, especially the third condition. This is because, as previously said, the Sufis are alleged to have used weak narrations, most especially for meritorious deeds. Many of the *'ahādīth* that are credited to them come under the zeal to encourage people to do certain acts or to make certain practices gain wider acceptance. In light of these, Algar observes that the contents of *'ahādīth* cited in Sufi works bear distinctive concerns of Sufis on ethical, self-improvement, modes of invocation of God (*dhikr*) and the behavioural norms (*ādāb*) that define their path (Algar, n.p.). Such is the case of many *awrād* of the Sufis as observed by Yusuph (144). If a weak tradition is acceptable to encourage meritorious deeds, rejection of some Sufis'

practices that are based on alleged weak narrations becomes illogical.

Sufi Scholars and *Ḥadīth 'l-Mawdū'* (Fabricated *Ḥadīth*)

Ḥadīth fabrication is another major point of attraction while discussing Sufi scholars or writers and *ḥadīth* usages. As pointed out earlier, many Sufi works are saturated with untraceable reports that were attributed to the Prophet. *Mawdū'* is a concocted lie that is falsely and deliberately put in the mouth of the Prophet as if he was the one who said it (Al-Uthaymin, 2003, 120). Fabrication can also be said where a particular report has no *sanad* (Yusuf, 10). Scholars have identified different factors for the fabrication of *ḥadīth*, despite the Prophetic categorical declaration against it. (Al-Bukhari, 1/33). These factors include the zeal to ignite doubt and confusion in Islam, tribalism, to drive home one's desire, kind exhortation, and differences of opinion on religious matters among others (Yusuf, 12). Sufi primarily engaged in fabrication due to the last three reasons.

Many controversial issues in Sufism are established through fabricated *ḥadīth*. Some of them are compiled by Yusuf (15) to include the creation of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) from light and that he was the first man to be created by Allah, Enjoyment of this life is forbidden for those who wish for the enjoyment of hereafter, sleeping of a knowledgeable man is better than the worship of an ignorant, seek intercession with my honour, the greatest form of *Jihad* is *Jihadun-Nafs* and he who knows himself, knows his Lord. Al-Faisal (1998) compiled about one hundred fabricated *ḥadīth* in a book in the English language in the recent past. Many of the *ḥadīth* contained therein a found among the Sufis. Also, many Sufi *awrād* (litanies), which are often loaded with special rewards for those who accepted them and punishment for those who refused, are connected to fabricated *ḥadīth*. They are sources of different innovative practices like *istighatha* (seeking assistance), and grave worshipping among others in Sufism.

The non-Sufi scholars are unanimous that fabricated *ḥadīth* should be rejected in its entirety. It (fabricated *ḥadīth*) is considered a lie, which attracts chastisement in Islam. The Qur'an in many places, rained curses on

whoever told a lie for whatever reason. It says the curse of Allah is on liars and that woe will be unto liars on the day of resurrection. The Prophet has on many occasions warned against lying against him. In *Sahih 'l-Bukhari* (1/33)and *Muslim* (1/10), he warned strongly the Muslims to desist from such acts, stating that whoever lied against him should choose his abode in hellfire. Reacting to the celebrated *ḥadīth*, Affaf quotes Ibn 'Arabī as submitting that, this is limited to the one who does it deliberately to lead people astray. Whoever fabricated a lie on what is in line to getting people to do what is right and ascribed it to the Prophet, in the view of Ibn 'Arabī should be exonerated from those who will take their abode from the hellfire (Affaf, 45).

In the like manner, Al-Istanbuli (1998, 3/548) narrates that a *Zahid* observes the abandonment of the Qur'an by the People and thinks of encouraging them. He thereby fabricated *aḥadīth* to achieve his aim. It was later discovered that his narrations were fabricated and the above *ḥadīth* of the Prophet was quoted to him. He replied that the *ḥadīth* applies to only those who lied against the Prophet, not those who lied to favour him. He explains further one who tells a lie against the Prophet is the one who intends to scuttle his mission or distort Islam, but not the one who does it to propagate Islam. He cites Izzu 'd-Din Abdus-Salam as stating that telling a lie is allowed once it is done with virtues and good intentions, especially where the truth might fail.

Al-Ghazali (3/225), despite the allegation that he filled up his *Ihya* with spurious and unfounded *ḥadīth*, argued in the spirit of this report from the Prophet to condemn the act of concocting *ḥadīth* and deliberately ascribed it to the Prophet under whatever guise, even if with good intension. This could be strengthened with another hadith which stated that lying against the Prophet cannot be compared with lying against anyone. The *ḥadīth* reads:

عَنِ الْمُغِيرَةِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ
النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: «إِنَّ
كَذْبًا عَلَيَّ لَيْسَ كَكَذِبِ عَلَى أَحَدٍ، مَنْ كَذَبَ
عَلَيَّ مُتَعَمِّدًا، فَلْيَتَّبِعُوا مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ»

On the authority of Al-Mughirah, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: I heard the Prophet saying: Ascribing falsehood to me is not like ascribing it to anyone else. Whoever tells a lie against me intentionally, then surely let him occupy his seat in hellfire (Al-Bukhari, 2/80, Muslim, 1/10).

The Prophet made such a declaration having understood the consequence of such a heinous act on his *Ummah*. This is because as he was the Islamic flag-bearer, whatever comes from him is tenaciously held onto by the Muslims. A fabricated report therefore can be responsible for the misguidance of the entire *Ummah*.

Conclusion

This study has discussed the approach of the Sufi to the application of *ḥadīth* as the second primary source of Islam, which is next to the Qur'ān. The Sufis have been alleged to have flouted the rules for *ḥadīth* authentication, hence their works are replete with traditions that have been rated as either weak or fabrications. This is largely because the Sufis did not consider the Prophet as dead spiritually. They hold tenaciously that, despite his departure from this world, he can still interact with the chosen ones among men and can give instructions that are of religious and spiritual importance. Another factor was that Sufis, out of good intention and excessive spiritual engagements, believe that once a statement does not contradict the principles of *Sharī'ah*, and can enhance the objective of Islam, the question of where such a statement is coming from does not arise. Despite this popular view of the Sufis, some distinguished scholars of *ḥadīth* were equally Sufi scholars as identified in the body of the study. Also, a weak report can be used in meritorious acts alone according to the majority of the scholars as pointed out in this study. This study therefore concluded that since the vast majority of scholars accepted the usability of weak reports on meritorious acts, and since Sufis' activities largely stemmed from them, arguments and condemnation of Sufism on that basis should not subsist. Also, Sufis should caution themselves from attributing every revelation to the prophet and presenting them as hadith. Since they cannot

be subjected to the rules of the science of Hadith, they should not be regarded as one and should not be used to establish religious rules.

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