

## Bridging the Divine: The Construction of Sufism Thought by Akang Arfan Abdullah Syafi'i

Asep Lukman Hamid<sup>1\*</sup>, Che Zarrina Sa'ari<sup>2</sup>, Dendi Yuda<sup>3</sup>, Feriyanto<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. KH. EZ. Muttaqien Purwakarta, Indonesia; e-mail: amangasep99@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Universiti Malaya, Malaysia; e-mail: zarrina@um.edu.my

<sup>3</sup> Universitas Islam KH. Ruhiat Tasikmalaya, Indonesia; e-mail: dendy@unikcps.ac.id

<sup>4</sup> STID Sirnarasa Ciamis, Indonesia; e-mail: ferianto@stidsirnaras.ac.id

\* Correspondence

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**Abstract:** This study examines the influence of Akang Arfan Abdullah Syafi'i's interpretation of Sufism within the Judatul Uqba Pesantren in Sukabumi, West Java. The research focuses on how Syafi'i's Sufism has resonated with and attracted a significant following among the local community, encouraging them to engage deeply with Sufi practices in their daily lives. This phenomenon is evidenced by the extensive participation in Sufi recitations and the growth of the Yā Wakīl congregation across Indonesia. Employing a qualitative descriptive methodology, the study gathers data through observation, interviews, and documentary analysis. Central to Syafi'i's teaching is the concept of '*wushūl*'—a spiritual connection to Allah SWT, facilitated through '*dzikr*' (remembrance of Allah) and acts of charity. These practices are seen as dual pathways: '*dzikr*' connects an individual to Allah (*habl min Allah*), while charity fosters interpersonal bonds (*habl min an-Nās*). The balance between these spiritual and social dimensions is posited as crucial for the cultivation of Islamic virtues and the attainment of the '*insān kāmil*' or the perfect human being.

**Keywords:** Charity; Dzikr; Pesantren; Sufism; *Wushūl*.

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh interpretasi Sufisme oleh Akang Arfan Abdullah Syafi'i dalam Pesantren Judatul Uqba di Sukabumi, Jawa Barat. Fokus penelitian ini adalah bagaimana Sufisme Syafi'i telah menarik dan beresonansi dengan komunitas lokal, mendorong mereka untuk terlibat secara mendalam dengan praktik Sufi dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Fenomena ini dibuktikan dengan partisipasi luas dalam bacaan Sufi dan pertumbuhan jamaah Yā Wakīl di seluruh Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan metodologi deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen. Inti dari pengajaran Syafi'i adalah konsep '*wushūl*'—koneksi spiritual ke Allah SWT, yang difasilitasi melalui '*dzikr*' (mengingat Allah) dan tindakan amal. Praktik ini dilihat sebagai dua jalur yang saling terkait: '*dzikr*' menghubungkan individu dengan Allah (*habl min Allah*), sementara amal memperkuat ikatan interpersonal (*habl min an-Nās*). Keseimbangan antara dimensi spiritual dan sosial ini dianggap krusial untuk pengembangan kebajikan Islam dan pencapaian '*insān kāmil*' atau manusia sempurna.

**Kata Kunci:** Pesantren Judatul Uqba, Tasawuf, Pemikiran.

### 1. Introduction

The spiritual alienation experienced by modern society has changed people's views from apathy towards religion to enthusiasm. According to Martin van Bruinessen, this phenomenon in Indonesia is relatively new. Books related to religion, especially those that discuss spiritual issues and Sufism, are very popular in the market, recitations are busy being held and halaqah/zawiyah tasawwuf have also sprung up (Bruinessen, 1994). Religion with its spirituality has succeeded in captivating the hearts of its followers to return to their nature while competing to find their identity (John Naisbit & Patricia Aburdene, 1990). In the West, the tendency to return to nature is marked by the spread of fundamentalism and spiritual movements. This movement emerged as a reaction as well as a response

to the modern world that is devoid of values and overemphasizes material-profane things (Asmaran, 2012). Science and technology, which were originally expected to be the pillars of happiness in life, in fact, gave birth to psychological and spiritual emptiness (Haidar Baghir, 2017).

This spiritual movement takes the form of teachings or beliefs that the center of the human self is transcendent, it is in soul consciousness, therefore is related to the appreciation of the meaning of life and the appreciation of cosmic consciousness. This awareness has brought a new appreciation that humans must "return to the Center" or in Frithjof Schuon's terms, man as such, man as he is, a man who is still in his nature (Shafwan, 2000). According to Deepak Chopra, humans must find a new method to find perfect faith, a path that he calls the spiritual path. For Chopra, the real crisis in faith is not about declining church attendance - a trend that has begun in Western Europe and the United States since the 1950s and continues today - the real crisis is about finding God who is considered important and trustworthy (Chopra, 2016).

One of the spiritual paths that seek to connect humans with God is being aware of death. This awareness makes humans always introspect (*muhāsabah*), do good and try to find the meaning of life (inner life). Piedmont argues that humans will make personal meaning in the context of life after death (eschatological) (Piedmont, 2001). This implies that humans are aware of mortality. Therefore, humans will try their best to build some understanding of the meaning and purpose of the life they are living.

One of the religious activities that examine the meaning of life is the recitation conducted by Akang Arfan Abdullah Syafi'i at Judatul Uqba pesantren in Sukabumi. Akang Pajada (Akang Arfan's nickname) is a simple, radiant and charismatic figure. By some of his santri and jama'ah he is considered a teacher (*murshid*) who can bring the walker (*sāirīn*) to reach (*wushūl*) to Allah SWT. According to him, the world and all its contents are nothing compared to a person in whose heart there is only Allah (*wushūl*). If he is *wushūl*, then what appears to him is Allah SWT is only the *dhahir* of the beauty, majesty and perfection of Allah SWT. Therefore, according to him, human success can be seen from "the return of man to Allah, both the beginning and the end" (Ajibah, 2013). This self-recognition of Allah indicates the inability of humans to carry out all their life activities and rely solely on Allah SWT.

As a *murshid*, Akang's Sufistic values can be seen from two sides: 1) the *sanad* (lineage) of his scholarship and 2) the books he read (*marāji'*). Concerning the *sanad* of his Sufistic knowledge, the first came from his father, Abuya Mahmud Cihamerang Purwakarta. After that Akang studied with *waliyullah* Sheikh Siddiq Abdullah Malang, from Sheikh Siddiq Abdullah the *sanad* connects to Sheikh Kholil Bangkalan Madura, Sheikh Abu Syamsudin, Muhammad Bahaudin Al-Uwaisi, Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani, Abu Yazid al-Busthami and Imam Al-Ghazali. From his scientific lineage, Akang Pajada follows the Sunni Sufism developed by Imam Al-Ghazali. According to Akang, Imam Al-Ghazali is a scholar who can explain the problem of *ma'rifatullah* clearly, clearly and rationally (easy to understand) (Syafi'i, 2022a). He is a noble person, as *ahlullāh*, very loved by Allah and the Prophet. Therefore, according to Akang, when people want to be close to Imam Al-Ghazali, the conditions are not difficult, only by loving Imam Al-Ghazali, then if people love him, they will almost certainly gather with him in the afterlife. *Insyā Allāh*.

Akang's books of reference are *Ihyā Ulūmuddin*, *Risalah Al-Hikam*, *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah*, *Minhāj Abidūn*, *Arbā'in fī Ushūluddīn*, *Qutul Al-Qulūb*, *Awarif al-Ma'ārif*, *Risālah Al-Qusyairiyah*, *Al-Ghunya*, *Adābun al-Murīd*, *Miftāhul Falāh*, *Madārij As-Sulūk ila Mālik al-Mulūk*, *al-Anwār Qudsiyyah fī Ma'arifat Qawā'id al-Shūfiyyah*, *Tanwir al-Qulūb* and so on. The books of Sufism were lined up on the bookshelves in the living room, so anyone who wanted to read them was allowed to do so.

The topic of recitation usually delivered by Akang is the science of Sufism. According to him, Sufism is a science that cannot be abandoned by anyone, it should be known and practised by every person who believes in Allah SWT and Rasulullah SAW. People can't be safe in the world, let alone in the hereafter. Without the science of *tasawwuf*. One's knowledge, practice, and depth of *tasawwuf*, then that is how close one is to Allah SWT. Sufism is a science that directly discusses a servant's relationship with Allah. The science of *tasawwuf* is the science that deals directly with the servant's relationship with Allah, his life is Allah, his breath is Allah, his sight is Allah, he dies from looking at himself, there is only Allah, He is Ad-Dzatul 'Aliyah (the Highest Essence) (Syafi'i, 2022b). The science

of tasawwuf is the science that trains the heart, trains the spirit and trains the passions so that they can be with Allah.

For a person to be with Allah, it requires earnest effort, I'tiqad and relentless striving to achieve togetherness and closeness to Allah. Therefore, the sāirin is required to do riyadhah continuously and repeatedly so that it becomes his character because everything that is done repeatedly will make him successful and successful in achieving his goals. As a result, the sāirin will be opened by Allah to inner and outer happiness, able to witness Allah's greatness, greatness and perfection, and will always be istiqamah in following the Prophet's laws (Syafi'i, 2022c).

Based on Akang's recitation which focuses on the issue of tasawwuf, where humans must be able to recognize themselves (read: knowing that they are lowly and weak) before Allah, desperately needing Allah, knowing Allah (ma'rifatullāh), and not being trapped in wealth. In the researcher's opinion, recitation is what is needed by modern humans who experience spiritual alienation, so every recitation conducted by akang is attended by thousands of jama'ah who come from various parts of the region. This enthusiasm was born spontaneously from the community because the studies/discussions he delivered were insightful, in-depth, spoken in simple language and easy to understand and Akang's appearance was radiant so that it could be an example for his congregation.

So far, discussions about Sufism in general have been studied by many scholars, such as Martin van Bruinessen who examines pesantren, kitab kuning, and tarekat (Bruinessen, 1995). Then Julia D Howell examined Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival (Howell, 2001). Furthermore, Rubaidi who examined the Mainstreaming of Sufism Values in Contemporary Indonesian Islamic Education. Besides that, Hadarah Rajab also examined the Akhlak Tasawuf Basis of Multicultural Education in Indonesia (Rajab, 2020).

However, studies on the construction of Akang Pajada's Sufism thought have never been mentioned at all. Even after the author looked carefully, by searching via Google Scholar with the keywords "Akang Pajada" and "Pondok Pesantren Jūdatul Uqbā Sukabumi Indonesia" did not find any similar research at all. Therefore, this study will fill the void in the treasures of Sufism in Indonesia. Apart from that, this study is very important for several reasons: first, the description or recitation of Sufism conducted by Akang succeeded in captivating the hearts of the congregation as evidenced by a large number of congregations present; second, currently the community needs therapy for spiritual alienation that plagues modern humans; third, here has been no research on the figure of Akang Pajada and his tasawwuf thoughts. For this reason, this article will reveal Akang Pajada's creativity in transforming the teachings of Sufism so that it is successful in providing an understanding of the urgency of Sufism for modern humans.

## 2. Method

This research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. This method aims to describe, understand, and reveal various phenomena that occur in the field. Thus, the purpose of the method is to find facts, circumstances, events, variables, and conditions that occur during research by displaying the effects as they are (Sugiyono, 2018). Data collection techniques in this study are observation, interviews and documentation. Observations were made at the Judatul Uqba pesantren in Sukabumi West Java as the object of research, Observations were carried out from July 2022 to April 2023 (before Akang left for the Holy Land, Mecca). Second, interviews were conducted with Akang Arfan, ustadz, and several Pajada congregations. Third, documentation, by making in the form of pictures, or files related to the recitation process in the pesantren.

Furthermore, the data were analyzed, using an interactive model analysis, namely data collection activities, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions/verification. The stages of analysis carried out after the data was collected were: First, data reduction and content are displayed summarized, classified, and focused on the main things that are important to find the main idea. Second, data display, then the reduced data is presented in an organized description supported by diagrams, numbers or graphs. Third, drawing conclusions and verification. This activity is the result that answers the research

focus based on data analysis. The findings presented in the research are descriptive objects based on the study (Matthew B. Miles & Huberman, 2013).

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### *Judatul Uqba Islamic Boarding School*

Judatul Uqba pesantren is located in Sukamekar Village, Sukaraja Subdistrict, Sukabumi City. This pesantren was established in 2017, standing on  $\pm$  7 hectares of land. This pesantren is better known by the community as Pajada Indonesia (hereinafter referred to as Pajada). According to Akang, the name Judatul Uqba has a meaning so that the students and congregation of Pajada have a good end of life. Because the end of life must be good then every moment or situation must always be good, not knowing when death picks up, so do good now, do not delay, he said (Interview with Akang Pajada at Pesantren Judatul Uqba Sukabumi, December 12, 2022).

The outside community knows about Pajada through the figures, ustadz and kyai who study there. The reason they studied was that they wanted to have a teacher as well as a murshid and Akang Pajada was that figure. Apart from that, what makes the outside public aware of Pajada is because Akang usually gives recitations in several areas such as Jakarta, Bogor, Bekasi, Depok, Greater Bandung, Banten, Kuningan and Tasikmalaya. These two things are what make the outside community aware of Pajada, so that when there are big activities at Pajada such as Milad Pajada and Haul Imam Al-Ghazali, congregations from various regions fill the space at Pajada, the congregation that attends usually reaches 20 thousand to 40 thousand congregations.

In carrying out its boarding activities, Pajada tends to adopt conventional education (salaf). The recitation and study are more emphasized on mastering classical or yellow books, and deepening religious sciences, especially Sufism. Hence it is not surprising that in the living room, there are rows of kitab kuning and guests or anyone who wants to read them is welcome. In addition to the emphasis on mastering the yellow classical books, this pesantren also applies the sorogan recitation system. Sorogan comes from the word sorog (Javanese) which means thrusting or bringing the book to be studied before the kyai or his assistant (Saridjo, 2011). This sorogan recitation is conducted by a santri to a teacher. The position of the teacher here directly guides the student in terms of reading, translation, explanation and content in the book he is studying. This sorogan model is considered very effective in learning and is a hallmark of pesantren education (Rambe, Sabaruddin, & Maryam, 2022). Because a student is directly guided by a teacher, students can more easily understand the text and context.

The santri who stay at Pajada can be grouped into three groups, namely: 1. Book Students; 2. Serving Students; and 3. Riyadhah Students. Firstly, Islamic boarding school students are Islamic boarding school students in the general sense, namely people who study and deepen the Islamic religion at Islamic boarding schools. They study Islamic knowledge from an ustadz or kyai starting from studying nahwu, sharaf, fiqh, tafsir, and memorizing the Al-Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet. Second, Santri khidmat (ngahidmat, serving) are people who come to Pajada with the sole aim of worshipping or serving Akang and the Islamic boarding school. This type of santri is referred to as khodam (helper, serving). Among them there are those who cook, prepare and deliver food, wash dishes, clean mosques, houses and Islamic boarding schools and act as khodam Akang in carrying out their daily activities. Third, Riyadhah students are people who come to Pajada with specific goals such as wanting to pay off debts, be successful in business, have many students and achieve wushul to Allah SWT. For them, Akang recommends carrying out certain practices such as dhikr Ya Deputy 50,000 times a night, praying 300 raka'ats a night, reducing sleep and sunnah fasting. Even though there are three categories of students in Pajada, their position is the same in receiving Akang's attention, treatment and affection.

The students come from various parts of the country and some of them even come from abroad such as Singapore and Malaysia. The number of Pajada students to date is  $\pm$  700 people. As long as they study at Pajada, they are not charged a penny (free). Instead of paying tuition fees, Pajada students get

many benefits and blessings during their stay, for example: after the students finish studying Kitab Al-Hikam, as a form of gratitude Akang Pajada gives a gift in the form of cow slaughter.

In Pajada, akang also gave recitations specifically organized for Kyai, asatidz, habaib and other religious figures. The topic of study is Sufism and the books he discusses include Al-Hikam, Ihyā Ulūmuddīn, and At-Tanwīr fī Isqāthit Tadbīr. Jama'ah of this recitation come from various regions such as Sukabumi, Cianjur, Purwakarta, Bandung, West Bandung and Jabodetabek.

In addition, in this pesantren, there are unique things besides the simple forms of buildings-there is no luxury and splendour- that exist are small buildings provided for gathering, worship and dzikir. More precisely, these buildings are similar to *zawiyah* in the Sufi tradition (Sari, 2023). In this *zawiyah* there is a scene where everyone who is there always holds tasbih, with tasbih that they dhikr while submitting themselves completely to the presence of Allah SWT. Another thing that is no less interesting is that Pajada is visited daily by guests who come from various regions. The number of guests every day ± 300 people, their visits besides making pilgrimages to Akang also have certain intentions such as being in debt, sick, sharing knowledge, and wanting to achieve success in their business. In their view, Akang can help provide good solutions to the various problems they experience.

### *Sufism as a Path to Allah*

Etymologically, tasawwuf comes from the word *shūfī*. It has many equivalents such as Ahl al-Shuffah which means poor people who have nothing and live in the Prophet's Mosque; Shaff which is the first row in prayer; *Shūfī* (صوفي), *Shāfī* (صافي), and *shafi* (صفي) which means holy; and Shuf a cloth made of fur, namely coarse wool (Nasution, 1995). Of these words, the closest is shuf. It is associated with Sufis who wear hairy clothes and live in simplicity like the Shufanah tree (A. al-W. al-G. Al-Taftazani, 1997). Tasawwuf is a type of mysticism which in English is called Sufism (Siregar, 1999).

Tasawwuf is a form of appreciation of Islamic law that is oriented towards esoteric aspects, prioritizing religious experience, personal spiritual awareness, religious knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and the path (*thariqah*) to happiness (Madjid, 2000). Therefore, Roger Garaudy calls the teaching of tasawwuf a form of spirituality that is unique to Islam and is a balance between *jihad akbar* and *jihad asghar*. It aims to obtain a direct relationship and be as close as possible to God, which is why tasawwuf is a scientific discipline (Nasution, 1995).

Sufism grew logically from a careful study of the Qur'an following the beliefs of Muslims. Based on this study, it means that the teachings of Sufism have valid legitimacy from the source of Islamic teachings. However, this legitimacy does not necessarily deny external influences such as Christianity, Hinduism and philosophy, but the urgent thing is put it in its true proportions (A. A.-W. A.-G. Al-Taftazani, 1997). This is because Sufism is essentially a "taste" of experience and the universal soul. Therefore, an experience can be found to be the same even though there is no contact with each other. This fact proves the similarity of religious experience (experience of religion) although with different interpretations and expressions according to the culture concerned. This shows the openness of Islam to other cultures (Shihab, 2009).

This is where Sufism manifested itself in the process of developing Islam in Indonesia. It is undeniable that there is an agreement among historians, researchers, orientalis, and Indonesian Muslim scholars that Sufism is the most important factor in the wide spread of Islam in Southeast Asia. Alwi Shihab, p.56. So it is not an exaggeration to say that the wide spread of Islam in Indonesia is largely due to the services of Sufis (Solihin, 2001). The Sufis at that time succeeded in transforming the value of Sufism in society through various media and approaches. Some were through art, *da'wah*, trade and cultural acculturation. As a result, Islam was welcomed by the local community and became their ideology or belief.

If Sufism in the past could be accepted by the community, then in the modern era where people experience spiritual aridity, of course, Sufism is expected to be a solution to the various problems faced by modern humans. Therefore, Akang's presence with the construction of his Sufism thought is considered successful in carrying out his Sufistic transformation which is accepted by people from

various circles as well as is an indication that the true teachings of Sufism can be accepted and in accordance with the demands of modern humans.

Al-Ghazali in *al-Munqid min ad-Dlalal* states that Sufism is the best way for the Sufis in their journey to Allah SWT; their path is the most correct and their morals are the cleanest (Al-Ghazālī, 1967). This is because the teachings of Sufism are not just theories and formulas, but practices and experiences.

For Sufis to reach Khāliq, a serious and continuous effort is needed and there is no despair. This effort is called *riyādhah* which can be done through *dzikrullāh* (remembering Allah), fasting, staying away from crowds (*uzlah*) and not giving importance to the world. The process of travelling to Allah is quite heavy and winding. Starting from leaving work, family, and relatives. Salik goes to solitude and peace, his heart filled with longing for His Lord. Although now and then he breathes long while saying: "will God open His veil".

It is through this long *riyādhah* that the Sufi slowly realizes that God has begun to open His *hijāb*. He sees his existence, as actually a manifestation of God's *tajalli* (Ajibah, 2013). Dzunun al-Misri states: *Araftu Rabbi bi Rabbi walau la Rabbi lama araftu Rabbi* (I know my God because of my God, and had it not been for God, I would not have known my God). The knowledge of God (*ma'rifatullāh*) achieved by a Sufi is not merely the result of his efforts but is due to the grace (*fadhil*) that Allah bestows upon him.

According to Akang Pajada, one day when he was in his room with his father, his father gave him some advice: "know Allah because nothing is precious except Allah." At that moment, the father and son embraced while crying, pledging to achieve the knowledge of Allah. For Akang, if there is a belief in Allah in a person's heart, then it is more valuable than the world and its contents. The true servant of Allah is the highest in the sight of Allah. He further stated: As smart as a person is, if he chooses something other than Allah, he is not a smart person, because he is still far from the truth. An intelligent person cannot choose the low while he can choose the high.

According to Akang, Sufism is the *wushul* (meeting) of the soul towards Allah. In order to achieve this, *tarekat* is needed. The *Tarekat* (method) recommended by Akang Pajada for *sāirin* to quickly reach (*wushul*) to Allah SWT is twofold: *zikir* and generosity. First, *zikir*. *zikir* is always remembering Allah. In *dhikr*, the heart and mind must be fully focused and submit (*tawakal*) to Allah alone. Forget all problems such as debt, children, wife, family and workload. Through this *dhikr*, all the veils will be opened so that what appears is only the *dhahir* of Allah swt. Second, Generosity. Generosity (*as-Syakha*) is the second key to fast *wushul* to Allah. Akang Pajada has practised this generous nature in his daily life where 70% of the fortune he gets he gives to people who are entitled to receive it such as the poor, poor, orphans, those in debt and *ibnu sabil*. Wealth is temporary and will undoubtedly disappear because it will disappear, seek and reach for the Eternal, namely Allah SWT.

Table 1 Akang Pajada's Tasawwuf Construction

<b>The Sufism</b>	Knowledge to train the passions, heart and spirit to always be connected to Allah; Clean, clear and pure heart from other than Allah; His breath, his heart, his sight, his speech and his life are only Allah.
<b>The core of Sufism</b>	For the heart to connect and witness God
<b>Objects of Sufism</b>	<i>Dzātul 'aliyah</i> , namely Allah SWT.
<b>Encouragement of Sufism</b>	Tasawwuf must be possessed by everyone who believes in Allah and the Prophet. Without Sufism, a person cannot be saved in the hereafter. Even if there are people who hate Sufism, it is only the outside, while their hearts remain in Sufism.
<b>Reasons to do tasawwuf</b>	The fact is that nothing exists except Allah. The existence of mountains, oceans, earth and so on are a small part of the evidence for the existence of God

<b>Why the heart can meet God</b>	<p>In the creation of the earth and the sky there is a process/stage. The creation of the heart or spirit has no process but Allah blows directly into it. <i>Fa nafakhnā fihi min rūhī</i>.</p> <p>A clean, pure and clear heart will only be occupied by its true owner, Allah.</p> <p>It is like a house, if it is dirty, damaged, and unkempt, the occupants will be coolies or ordinary people. But if the house is beautiful, cool, neat and clean, of course the occupants are kings, presidents, or prime ministers.</p>
<b>Quick method to meet Allah</b>	<p>The <i>dhikr</i> is steady, continuous, until the state of fana, where there is nothing but Allah. Therefore, Pajada students are required to carry tasbih, as a means of reminding them to always dzikrullah.</p> <p><i>Sakhā</i> (generosity) is highly recommended by Akang so that the heart is not bound by the world. The reason is that the world is temporary and must be destroyed, it was created. While Allah is eternal and immortal. So it is a loss to hold on to that which is temporary and destroyed.</p>
<b>The peak of Akang Pajada's Tasawwuf achievements</b>	<p>The end of Akang Pajada's concept of Sufism is that the heart can only witness Allah, it is free (<i>al-hurriyah</i>) from other than Allah.</p>

### *Ma'rifatullāh*

A servant who knows himself, that he is weak, despicable, not powerful, so he needs help or fadhal from Allah is a characteristic that he is classified as a Ma'rifat expert. According to Akang Pajada, ma'rifatullāh is a person in whose heart there is nothing, not bound by anyone, except Allah. ma'rifat experts are people whose hearts are crowded with Allah, Qalbul mu'min 'arsyul Rahman (Interview with Akang Pajada, December 7, 2022).

One method for someone to achieve ma'rifat is by tafakur. Tafakur is a thinking activity aimed at further believing in the greatness of Allah through creatures (His creations), for example, humans can walk, can hear, and can see. Walking, hearing and seeing humans are not from humans themselves, but because of the power (Qudrah) is the source from Allah SWT. Tafakur performed by a servant is to further convince, bring closer, and witness the majesty of Allah which is spread in all creatures. In fact, according to the view of the ārifīn,

Whoever sees Allah in what he sees, or on him, or before him, or after him, that is the one who sees Allah. who is perfect and has received the Nur of Allah, which gives birth to various kinds of knowledge (Ahmad bin Atha'illah as-Sakandary, 2005).

In doing this tafakur, according to Akang, it is recommended while doing uzlah. Keeping away from attachment to creatures and feeling happy and happy with Khaliq. Someone who is uzlah must be able to come to the knowledge and feeling that in fact, this world seems to not exist. What is the reason? Because this world starts from nothing and ends with nothing. If so, what is the greatness of the world, and what is the excellence of the world? Is it worthy that nothing is called great, is it worth that nothing is pursued? If it is not worthy then do not say great about the world, do not say superior to the world, because the world and all creatures are from Allah, La ilaha illallah. That's why it's normal to deal with the world (Interview with Akang Pajada, February 18, 2023).

The characteristics of a ma'rifat person can be seen in how his love (mahabbah) for the Messenger of Allah and his love for the lovers (aulia) of Allah. The indication of that love according to Akang Pajada can be seen in two things, namely: love of dhikr and love of charity (as-Sakhā). It is not a ma'rifat person if he does not want to perform zikr and love the poor. The heart of an ārifīn is so filled with happiness and pleasure towards Allah that he is immersed in ubudiyah and fanuna 'anfusihim.

Concerning ma'rifatullāh, Akang Pajada stated that in the afterlife kings and great generals will emerge. They are the ones who can see Allah (ma'rifat expert). According to Akang, in this world, the

strongest is the body while the spirit is weak, while in the hereafter, the strongest is the spirit, the body is there but it is lacking or weak. For ma'rifat experts, there is nothing *zahir*, except Allah SWT.

#### *Al-Hurrah (Freedom)*

The peak of a servant's journey according to Akang is *al-Hurrah* (freedom). *Al-Hurrah* means that a servant is free from dependence on creatures. His heart is filled with Allah, so that on the day of judgment/afterlife they are not among those who regret. According to Akang, a person in whose heart there is nothing but Allah is a successful, successful, great and extraordinary person (Syafi'i, 2023). A free human being is a human being who has hands, ears, eyes and heart only to witness Allah. Therefore, a free human being is a human being who cannot be bullied, cannot be imprisoned, cannot be bewitched, cannot be killed, and cannot be burned because there is already Allah.

The freedom achieved by a servant is because he is immersed in *ubudiyah*, the more immersed in *ubudiyah* then that is the extent of his closeness to Allah, the closer to Allah then he is freer from dependence on other than Allah and that is the real freedom (*al-hurrah*). Ibn Hadrawaih states: "*fi al-hurriyyah tamam al-'ubudiyah wa fi tahqiqihatamam al-hurriyyah*" (in freedom there is the perfection of servitude and in realizing it the perfection of freedom) (Abu al-Siraj al-Tusi, n.d.). Therefore, the freedom of a servant can be achieved if he has fulfilled the rights of servitude to Allah in total (such as feeling lowly, weak and in desperate need of Allah). This meaning is in line with the meaning of freedom stated by Imam al-Qusyairi that the essence of freedom is the perfection of servitude (Abu al-Qasim 'Abd al-Karim al-Qushairi, 2001).

According to Akang, the freedom obtained by a servant is not only because the servant can do *ubudiyah*, but the freedom is achieved by the grace (*fadhil*) of Allah. Therefore, believe in Allah, and don't doubt. For the heart to believe in Allah, a servant must truly believe that he is weak, he is incapable, he is despicable and he is unlucky (Interview with Akang Pajada, January 11, 2023).

اني وعيالي ضاعفة و فاسمة و منافقة و مضطر

I and my family are weak, wicked, hypocrites and in dire need of Your help.

The happiness we feel in the form of wealth, position, popularity, and luxury is nothing compared to the testimony (*musyahadah*) of the *wushul* in looking at Allah, because when the *wushul* meaning look at Allah, they can see everything, everything is seen, and see it with their hearts. According to Akang, a *wushul* is someone who truly knows 'an takuna ma'a Allah when 'alaqah (with Allah without any ties) means without attachment to other than Allah.

A free person is someone who when he doesn't get anything it doesn't matter because he has enough with Allah, he is given nothing, has nothing, is ostracized, persecuted, slandered, burned and even killed even for him it doesn't matter, anything is nothing because he is with Allah and can only live with Allah (Interview with Akang Pajada, January 11, 2023).

#### *Recitation Ya Wakil in Congregation (berjama'ah)*

One of the characteristics possessed by Akang Pajada's followers or congregation is the habit of *zikr*, the recitation of which is *Ya Wakil*. Because of the habit of *zikr* of *Ya Wakil*, it is called the *Ya Wakil Jama'ah*. *Ya Wakil* means that we hand over all affairs to those who can represent or who can carry them out. This submission is followed by the realization that:

O Allah, I can't, You are the One who can.

O Allah, I do not know, You are the All-Knowing.

O Allah, I am not able, You are the One who has the ability O Allah, I do not have, You are the One who has the most

O Allah, if You don't help me, who will help me, O Allah!

According to Akang, the *zikr* of *Ya Wakil*, if accepted, it will be clear (*dhahir*) that no one is closer to man than Allah. The proximity of human speech is still close to Allah, the proximity of human vision is still close to Allah, the proximity of human desire is still close to Allah, and even the affection of man



for himself is still the affection of Allah for man (Pajada, 2021). Because Allah is close to humans, we should not be veiled or limited that we cannot be close to Allah. Doesn't Allah love those who draw near to Him?

Recitation Ya Wakil in congregation is widely spread in several regions in Indonesia. One of them is in Pacet District, Bandung Regency. In Pacet there is JAWAPA (Jama'ah Ya Wakil Pacet), Jawapa has ± 5,000 members. Every 2 months Akang gives a recitation in Pacet, precisely at the Badrul Ulum Al-Islami Islamic Boarding School in Pacet Bandung. In his recitation, Akang always advised and reminded his followers or jama'ah to always be happy and happy with Allah. When you get profit or loss, happy or sad, you should still be happy with Allah, because profit and loss, happiness and sadness are actually from Allah (Interview with Akang Pajada, February 18, 2023). Akang's presence at Pondok Pesantren Badrul Ulum Pacet Bandung or in other places such as in Cihamerang Purwakarta, Telekung Malang, Ponpes Al-Istiqomah Cikampek, Cijenuk West Bandung, and Kuningan is in order to teach Sufism, especially in inviting the Ya Wakil in congregation to return to Allah. According to Akang, humans were created by Allah to know Allah (ma'rifatullah). Humans are given as many burdens as possible, given as weak as possible, given as much loss as possible, it is deliberately given by Allah as a sign of Allah's affection for humans. *Innallāha idā arāda abdan ibtalā fain shabara ijtabā*. The test is given to man so that man returns to Allah, the one who returns to Allah must be given help because it is impossible for the one who returns to Allah not to be given help by Allah.

Akang Pajada's routine recitation activities in various regions have received positive responses from various groups, such as from Islamic scholars, leaders of Islamic boarding schools, asatidz (teachers), habaib (god's lover), community leaders and other Ya Wakil congregations. This recitation is carried out in order to strengthen the bond of brotherhood between fellow congregations as well as to share knowledge, share experiences and motivate each other so that in returning to Allah, we do not feel bored, lazy and stagnant, instead, we must remain enthusiastic and believe that humans who return to Allah will certainly be fulfilled all their needs. In this way, Akang Pajada with his Sufism has succeeded in overcoming the spiritual anxiety experienced by his congregation and that is also what modern humans really need.

#### 4. Conclusion

The construction of Akang Arfan Abdullah Syafi'i's tasawwuf thought departs from an understanding that Sufism is the knowledge that must be possessed by every person. Human beings who believe in Allah and His messenger. Sufism is the submission of the wushul of the heart to Allah SWT. In order for the heart to quickly reach Allah, according to him, there are two methods that can be implemented, namely continuous dzikr and being generous (sakhā). Steady and continuous dzikr means humans have closeness to Allah (habl min Allah) while a generous attitude (likes to share) means humans have closeness to their environment (habl min an-Nās). These two attitudes should ideally be practiced by every Muslim in a balanced manner in order to develop Islamic character towards creating a perfect human being (insān kāmil).

The attitude of mindfulness that human beings a servant became the first pillar of Akang's tasawwuf. As a servant, of course, humans are weak, powerless, do not have and desperately need Allah's help. Therefore, humans must fully trust and mahabbah to Dzat al-'Aliyah who has created all creatures in this world. The existence of creatures should be a means of knowing Allah (ma'rifatullah) so that humans are not bound to other than Allah (al-Hurrah). Al-Hurrah (freedom) according to Akang is the end (ending) of the construction of his Sufism thought.

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