

## **The Path to Baqa Billah (Sufism Concept of Abu Yazid Al-Busthami): Uniting Spirituality and Modernization to Achieve Balance**

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### **Abstract**

The current of modernization has a negative effect on modern society. One of them is to make people forget that they are servants of Allah Swt. and stay away from the spiritual life. One of the most important aspects of the formation of morality is spirituality. Recently, field facts show that the more advanced an era is, the more backward a religion is. This article discusses how modernization affects spiritual life and how important it is to maintain a balance between spirituality and modernization. Where modernization is considered the cause of modern society not having spirituality. The concept of Sufism by Abu Yazid Al-Busthami emerged as a solution. This article analyzes the main aspects of Sufism from the figure and at the same time emphasizes the role of Sufism in helping people find meaning in a life that is increasingly secular and distorted by spiritual values. This is a qualitative research based on the library approach. This study concludes that the concept of Sufism Abu Yazid Al-Busthami is needed by modern humans because mortals, baqa and ittihad are the best alternative solutions to fill the inner void of modern humans caused by human progress that causes humans to lose their existence.

**Keyword:** Abu Yazid Al-Busthami; Balance; Modernization

### **Introduction**

The world today is experiencing an increasingly rapid social shift, and this shift has almost penetrated various aspects of human life. The changes that have occurred in this global society are widespread. The Islamic view states that the Qur'an and hadith must be used to regulate all aspects of human life, including beliefs, worship, and relationships between humans (Asry, 2019). Islam has given freedom but not left wild, along with values of self-respect and honor that must be upheld and must not be degraded. This is in line with the word of Allah Swt in QS. al-Isra verse 70 which

means, "And indeed We have honored the children of Adam, We carry them, We have preferred them with perfect excellence over most of the creatures We have created."

On the one hand, the flow of globalization brings benefits to make life easier. But on the other hand, it has negative impacts. Among the negative consequences are that spiritual values and noble values of the nation become a scourge in life, religion is only for the afterlife, worldly affairs are not related to religion, and some people move away from socio-cultural values and even religion (Maragustam, 2021). Modern society experiences a moral shift that is fast or slow as a result of human involvement as a driver, this results in a different perspective on humans themselves, so that humans begin to lose their status as servants of Allah Swt. and tend to experience spiritual suffering. Therefore, the author wants to study and try to unite the concepts of spirituality and modernization to achieve balance.

Previous research, Zulfahani and Mukhlisin (2020), "The Teachings of Abu Yazid Al-Busthami's Sufism," *Journal of Islamic Studies*. In their research, they explained that asceticism in Islam, which originated from the ascetic lifestyle of the prophet and his companions, developed into Sufism that focused on morality and spiritual life. Although the early ascetics continued to work and hold positions, they did not let the worldly dominate their hearts. In the third century of Hijriah, asceticism began to shift to theoretical Sufism, with new concepts such as maqamat, hal, and tauhid. Abu Yazid al-Busthami became a key figure who introduced the teachings of fana (the disappearance of self-awareness) and baqa (the eternity of divine nature), which marked the transition from asceticism to Sufi mysticism. Fana is achieved through self-purification from despicable morals, which then leads the Sufi to baqa (Zulfahani & Mukhlisin, 2020). This study is different from previous studies. The study conducted by Zulfahani and Mukhlisin (2020) only discussed the main concepts in the Sufism teachings of Abu Yazid Al-Busthami. Therefore, this study will unite the concepts of the Sufism teachings of Abu Yazid Al-Busthami with modernization to create balance.

Husein Nasr in his book *Islam in the Plight of the Modern Man* said that because modern society focuses on science and technology, they move away from the center and lose their understanding of religion based on revelation, living in a secular state (Nurani, 2021). Such a society is a western society that is said to be a post-industrial society that has lost its divine vision. Such a society has lost its intellectual ability to see the reality of life and life.

The integrity of Islamic teachings is beginning to be disturbed from a global world perspective (Mulyasana, 2020). Many Muslims have lost their Islamic spirit and principles. Abu Yazid Al-Busthami's Sufism, developed into a field of Islamic study with a focus on cleansing the spiritual aspects

of humans, which results in good morals. The Qur'an, which consists of many letters and verses, is also the main source of the concept or basic teachings of Sufism (Nurhasanah, 2017). The concept of fana, baqa, and ittihad is one of the concepts of Sufism of Abu Yazid Al-Busthami that can offer solutions for modern society. These three concepts are related to efforts to achieve a deeper understanding of spirituality, purify oneself, and get closer to Allah Swt.

The main problem in this study is the concept of Sufism of Abu Yazid Al-Busthami as a solution to the spiritualism of society in the era of modernization. In line with the main problem, the formulation of the problem of this study is the influence of modernization on spiritual life and the importance of balance between spirituality and modernization. So this study aims to discuss the things that have been mentioned. A scientific study usually has benefits and uses, both theoretical and practical.

Theoretically, this study is expected to have implications of benefits and uses as an initial study of the concept of Sufism of Abu Yazid Al-Busthami and the spiritualism of society in the era of modernization. Therefore, the concept of Sufism of Abu Yazid Al-Busthami is useful for many aspects of contemporary human life in addition to restoring spiritual values and getting closer to Allah Swt. Practically, it is hoped that this study will have positive and useful implications for the development of spiritualism of society in the era of modernization.

## **Research Methodology**

This research is a qualitative research and uses library research analysis through the collection of data sources from book and journal literature related to the concept of Sufism Abu Yazid Al-Busthami as a solution to the empty spirituality of modern society and the importance of maintaining a balance between spirituality and modernization. Sugiono said that library studies require theoretical studies and other references on values, culture, and norms that develop in the social situation being studied (Sugiono, 2008). According to Sugiyono (2008), library studies are also important because research cannot be separated from scientific literature. To obtain this data and information, relevant literature is studied and connected. This step serves as a theoretical basis and guide for analyzing problems.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **1. The Effect of Modernization on Spiritual Life**

Changes in society must occur, whether we realize it or not. However, sometimes these changes are not always striking or have a major impact on

general life. There are changes that occur rapidly and cover many aspects, and there are also those that occur very slowly. Basically, every nation and society in the world is involved in the process of modernization, although the speed and direction of change vary between societies (Manoppo, 2022). Talking about change, we imagine something that happens after a certain period of time, and we are dealing with the differences in conditions observed between before and after a certain period of time. To know the changes, we must know them carefully, even though they continue to change.

The emergence of this modernization was marked by the renaissance in the 17th century, not only having positive impacts but also having negative impacts. The positive side has been recognized and enjoyed by humans, such as rapid advances in science and technology. However, when humans enjoy this progress, they sometimes forget their true identity and unconsciously become enslaved by the modernity that increasingly surrounds and imprisons their souls (Afidah, 2021). This problem certainly erodes the values of humanity that have been embedded since ancient times (Achmadi, 2012), and gives birth to the age of anxiety. Because of the emptiness of meaning that occurs in the modern world, people begin to seek quenchers for their soul's thirst, which results in the emergence of the current wave of spirituality. In the midst of the modern current, the demand for spirituality is developing.

One of the main impacts of modernization is the shift of more traditional spiritual values towards a stronger focus on materialism, consumerism, and achievement oriented towards physical results or worldly success (Sabiq et al., 2022). Often, this obscures deeper elements of spirituality, such as inner peace, self-awareness, and connection with the transcendent dimension. Therefore, today's technological advances represent a more advanced human intellectual activity. Human intellectual activity has spurred the increase in knowledge both in systems and in methods. This spirit has resulted in drastic developments in systems in the fields of science and industrial technology (Fitrawati, 2021).

A new lifestyle that is very different from the old lifestyle was created by the modern era which is marked by advances in science, technology, and industrialization (Andriyani et al., 2023). here is even a verse of the Qur'an that indirectly discusses the concept of modernization, Allah Swt. says in QS Rum verse 41 which means, "Corruption has appeared on land and in the sea because of what the hands of men have earned, that Allah may make them taste a part of what they have done, in order that they may return (to the right path)." Although the verse does not directly discuss modernization, it teaches us to pay attention to what humans do to nature and the environment, shows how important it is to act wisely in using natural resources and to be aware of how human actions impact life. The

verse teaches the importance of thinking, reflecting, and remembering the creation of Allah Swt.

Globalization, modernization, technology, and industrialization are inexplicable processes, with technology and science as the core, which have had a negative impact on human life. Life in the modern era is more individualistic and lustful, pursuing material things and idolizing material things and momentary tranquility, believing that material things are a symbol of success, dignity, and a prestigious life. As a result, all modern life becomes easier, because their goal is only worldly life, while their religion is not considered at all. Because humans no longer believe in the supernatural world, which is what is behind the material, their relationship with Allah Swt. (vertical) and with fellow humans (horizontal) does not run properly. There are two parts to a human being: the first is the body, or body, and the second is the soul, or spirit, or spiritual. If our physical part is given food and clothing, but the second part does not care about its existence, then there will be inequality (Fitrawati, 2021).

## **2. The Concept of Sufism Abu Yazid Al-Busthami**

In the world of Sufism (Sufism) there are several teaching concepts, each of which was pioneered by popular figures, such as Al-Gazali who is known for his al-Ma'rifah concept, Rabiyyatul Adawiyah with his concept Mahabbah, Abu Yazid Al-Busthami with his fana, baqa and ittihad teachings, and Husain Ibn Mansur Al-Hallaj with his Hulul teachings. As the bearer and disseminator of the teachings of fana, baqa, and ittihad in Sufism, Abu Yazid Al-Busthami is one of the figures who gave a new color to Sufism with bold statements, even though many parties opposed him. Not many scholars think that Abu Yazid Al-Busthami was too carried away by his fantasies without trying to control himself, even though his concept of Sufism is almost the same as the concept of Hulul.

Abu Yazid Al-Busthami, whose full name is Abu Yazid Thaifur bin 'Isa bin Surusyan Al-Busthami, was born in Bustam, Iran, in 874-947 AD. His childhood name was Taifur. His grandfather was named Surusyan, a Zoroastrian, then embraced Islam as his religion. his last in Bustam. Although Abu Yazid Al-Busthami's family was among the wealthy in his area, he chose to live a simple life (Abbas, 2004). It is said that Abu Yazid Al-Busthami had a disorder since he was born by his mother. His mother said that food whose halal status was in doubt would make him his mother vomited because Abu Yazid Al-Busthami would rebel when he was in her stomach (Junaidin, 2021). Sufi experts believe that in the third century of the Hijriah two groups of Sufism formed.

First, the Sufi school has a moderate view. Its Sufism always refers to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, or in other words, Sufism that refers to the Shari'a. Its Sufis are famous scholars and its Sufism is dominated by

common characteristics. Second, the Sufi school that is interested in mortal states often produces strange words called *syathahat*, which are strange utterances uttered by a Sufi when he is in a state of *ittihad*. They develop the idea that humans merge with God, known as *ittihad* or *hulul*, and the characteristics of this school tend to be metaphysical (Abbas, 2004).

Abu Yazid Al-Busthami is one of the Sufis who believes that humans can unite with Allah Swt. He is also considered the bearer of the concepts of *fana*, *baqa*, and *ittihad*. In terms of language, *fana* means to perish (Junaidin, 2021). While the word *fana* means something that is not visible, the word *facade* means to change into something new. According to Sufi experts, *fana* can mean the loss of personal awareness of oneself or of things that are usually used on oneself. In addition, the word *fana* can also mean the replacement of human traits with divine traits, and can also mean the loss of despicable traits (Junaidin, 2021).

According to Mustafa Zahri, *fana* means the disappearance of the senses or *sharia*, namely the nature of ordinary humans who like lust and lust (Nurdin, 2020). People who have been overwhelmed by the essence of divinity so that they no longer see the new world, the visual world and the material world are called mortals from the created world or the created world. Apart from that, mortal can also mean the loss of bad qualities physically and mentally. Because *fana* is *baqa*, which literally means eternal, and according to Sufis, *baqa* is the eternity of the praiseworthy qualities and characteristics of God in humans. Because human traits (*basyariah*) have disappeared, divine traits or characteristics (*ilahiyah*) remain (Abbas, 2004). Sufism experts believe that *fana* and *baqa* are related to each other, as stated in their statement, "When *nur* appears to *baqa*, then it is *fana* that is non-existent and *baqa* is eternal." They also say, "Sufism is that they are mortal from themselves and *baqa* with their Lord, because of their presence with Allah Swt." According to Abu Yazid Al-Busthami, humans are essentially of the same essence as Allah Swt., they can only be united with Him if He can merge into His existence as individuals so that they are not aware of themselves (Junaidin, 2021).

Al-Qusyairi stated that *fana* means losing awareness of oneself and other creatures (Faruqi & Rohmah, 2023). This means that a person continues to exist, as do other beings, but he is no longer aware of himself and them. Sufis believe that people can unite with God, those who reach the level of *ma'rifah* can see God with their inner eyes. Al-Syathi said that when a Sufi reaches *fana al-nafs*, namely when the physical form no longer exists, the spiritual form that remains is the spiritual form. When the spiritual form is lost, a Sufi unites with God spiritually. According to various descriptions, what is meant by *fana* and *baqa* is to achieve spiritual and inner unity with God, so that all one is aware of is God within himself. So, the human material remains, not destroyed at all. Likewise with the natural

surroundings, what is lost or destroyed is only his awareness as a human being, who no longer feels his gross body.

If fana and baqa are achieved, then a Sufi is considered to have reached the level of ittihad or uniting with the One and Only (God) which Bayazid calls "Tajrid Fana' fi at-Tauhid" namely by uniting with God without being mediated by anything (Junaidin, 2021). In the teachings of ittihad, only one is seen, even though there are actually two, namely God and humans. Due to the fact that only one is seen and felt, the role played between humans and God can be seen in this ittihad. In a state like this, they feel united with God at the point where love and love become one, so that one calls the other, "O Me." In a state of fana, the Sufi speaks in the name of God because he no longer has consciousness.

Some analysis of Abu Yazid Al-Busthami's statements. Al-Busthami's statement, "I am Allah, there is no God but me, so worship me," for example, shows that Al-Busthami's statement can be considered deviating from religious principles if viewed carefully. In his mortal state, Al-Busthami literally claimed to be God. However, if we pay attention to his statement in an ordinary state (not in a mortal state), which said, "If you see someone who has great sacredness, even though he is able to fly in the air, then don't be fooled, until you see how he follows the commands of the Shari'a and stays away from the limits prohibited by the Shari'a." This shows that Al-Busthami in Sufism is not outside the lines of the Shari'a.

Although Al-Busthami said as if he were God, he did not actually say that. Rather, those words were the words of God uttered by Al-Busthami in the state of fana al-nafs. In fact, Abu Yazid did not claim to be God, but his statement produced various reactions. According to Al-Tusi, strange speech (al-Syaht) is an expression of the tongue that conveys the overflow of intuition that comes from the depths of his heart with a call. A Sufi in trance cannot control himself completely, which makes it difficult for him to control what is turbulent in his heart, which makes him express words that are difficult for his listeners to understand. Therefore, Al-Tusi stated that the fana of things related to him does not mean that a Sufi loses his basic qualities, because these qualities cannot disappear from a person (Abbas, 2004).

Sufism does not only focus on vertical rituals, but also moves forward as a social ritual. Sufism aims to change society. To enter a new social era, Sufism must be able to become an alternative way to solve social problems. This country is not only facing economic and political problems, but also moral and spiritual problems. This crisis is the result of a larger religious crisis. It is undeniable how important Sufism, or esotericism, is in Islam. The Qur'an says that this world is real, not virtual. Therefore, Sufism emerged as a solution to the problem of spirituality that is drowning in modern society. Due to the continuous tendency of modernity, spirituality has been

removed from human life, giving rise to a new problem of spiritual drought (Olivia et al., 2023). In other words, modern society is the result of the flow of modernity that causes a crisis of life, spiritual emptiness, and the elimination or shifting of the role of religion in human life.

### **3. Balance between Spirituality and Modernization**

Spirituality is increasingly valued in modern society, despite all its complexities. Spirituality appears as a foundation that provides meaning and balance in modern life full of technology, material progress, and busy life. Moral and spiritual crisis, according to Fredrich Schleiermacher, is one of the many problems that have emerged in the modern era today. The two crises are interrelated, making it difficult to distinguish between them. Considered as the main cause of the decline in social and religious life in modern society, the moral crisis is considered its source. However, there is an opinion that the moral crisis that occurs in the modern era, which covers almost all aspects of people's lives, actually originates and culminates in a spiritual crisis (Mannan, 2018).

Spirituality that seeks to remain in harmony or harmony with the outside world, struggling to answer and gain strength when faced with emotional stress, physical illness, or death. The spiritual dimension can also grow extraordinary strength. Spirituality has many dimensions, including existential and religious dimensions. The existential dimension focuses on the purpose and meaning of life, while the religious dimension focuses on one's relationship with God Almighty. Spirituality as a religious dimension has a two-dimensional concept. The vertical dimension is the relationship with God Almighty who guides one's life, while the horizontal dimension is one's relationship with oneself, with others and the environment, there is a continuous relationship between the two dimensions (Afidah, 2021).

Allah Swt. says in QS adz-Dzariyat verse 56 which means, "And I did not create jinn and humans except so that they would serve Me." In this verse it is emphasized that devoting oneself to Allah Swt. is the main purpose of human creation. This is an important foundation for spirituality and the relationship between humans and God. Spirituality also entails maintaining and restoring beliefs, fulfilling religious obligations, loving, and obtaining forgiveness or forgiveness.

The harmony created between aspects of spirituality and modernization shows the importance of balance between the two in human life. Spirituality provides direction and depth in the meaning of life when modernization brings rapid developments in technology, science and social change. One of the basics that gives meaning to human existence is spirituality. This helps in answering deep questions about the meaning of life, purpose, and our relationship with the universe, fellow humans, and



each other. Spirituality provides a foundation for emotional, mental, and even ethical balance in a world increasingly connected by technology.

If there is no balance, modernization may lead to self-alienation, loss of moral principles, and neglect of the non-material aspects of life. Conversely, focusing too much on spirituality without considering the evolution of the times can hinder growth and progress in finding solutions to real problems. A fruitful integration occurs when spirituality and modernization are balanced. Modernization opens up new opportunities to explore spirituality, facilitates access to knowledge, and allows for rich cultural exchange, as spirituality provides a strong moral foundation to guide innovation and technological progress in accordance with human values. There is an increase in self-awareness, an increase in diversity, and an opportunity to reach the full potential of humans when the two are integrated. The balance between spirituality and modernization is not about opposing one side for the other. Rather, it is about integrating the two wisely, creating a path for personal growth and sustainable general progress.

It turns out that modernization has had a major impact on the problems of society as a whole, especially the problem of religion. When various problems arise, such as a more hedonistic life, and a decline in morality and spirituality, the pattern of relationships between humans must be changed to meet the demands of the times. Abu Yazid Al-Busthami's concept of Sufism serves as a cure for the ills of modernization, despite its negative effects. There is an attempt to find balance even though the impact of modernization on spirituality may seem alarming. People often feel an existential emptiness as they develop. Spirituality provides a basis for finding meaning in everyday life. Spirituality should be a way out to free humans from their slump because modernity encourages them to be carried away by the current in it, which has an impact on their behavioral patterns both with fellow humans and with Allah Swt.

## **Conclusion**

This study shows that traditional spiritual values have changed as a result of modernization, and it is important to balance modernization and spirituality. This study uses a qualitative approach and literature study to analyze the concept of Sufism Abu Yazid Al-Busthami, which is considered a solution to fill the spiritual void that exists in modern society. The results show that modernization has had a negative impact on human life because modern society tends to be more individualistic and prioritizes material things. Therefore, it is very important to find a balance between spirituality and modernization, because both provide a moral foundation and meaning for one's life. The theory of fana and baqa from Sufism Abu Yazid Al-

Busthami can be used as a way to save humans from the decline caused by modernization. In Sufism, the terms *fana* and *baqa* refer to achieving spiritual and inner unity with God. *Fana* means losing awareness of oneself and other creatures, while *baqa* means eternal with God. This study is expected to provide an understanding to the public regarding Abu Yazid Al-Busthami's thoughts on spiritualism in the era of modernization.

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