

Zuhud in the Perspective of Sufism: Its Concept, Implementation, And Relevance in Modern Life

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ABSTRACT: Zuhud is one of the fundamental concepts in Sufism that emphasizes moderation in worldly affairs and wholehearted devotion to Allah SWT. In the context of modern society, characterized by materialism, hedonism, and increasing psychological distress, the values embodied in zuhud offer a meaningful spiritual response. This study aims to examine the concept of zuhud from the perspective of Sufism, explore its implementation in the life of a sālik (spiritual seeker), and analyze its relevance to contemporary life. The study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design by analyzing classical Sufi texts and relevant contemporary literature. Data were collected through documentation techniques and analyzed using descriptive-analytical methods. The findings reveal that zuhud does not imply complete withdrawal from worldly life; rather, it involves placing worldly possessions and interests in their proper proportion while maintaining spiritual closeness to Allah SWT. Furthermore, the principles of zuhud remain highly relevant in modern life, as they encourage simplicity, self-restraint, inner peace, and spiritual awareness amid the pressures of contemporary society. Therefore, zuhud can be understood not only as an ascetic practice within Sufism but also as an ethical and spiritual framework for addressing the moral and existential challenges of the modern era.

KEYWORDS: Zuhud; Sufism; Spirituality; Seeker; Modern Life.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Islamic teachings, Sufism is one of the important dimensions that focuses on spiritual development, purification of the soul, and efforts to get closer to Allah SWT. In the Islamic scientific tradition, Sufism is not only understood as a ritual worship practice, but also as a process of moral formation and heart control so that humans are able to achieve inner peace and deeper spiritual awareness. A Muslim is instructed to cleanse himself of reprehensible traits through Sufism, then replace it with commendable traits such as sincerity, tawakal, patience, qana'ah, and zuhud. Therefore, to build a balance between the external life and the inner life of humans, an important role is needed from Sufism itself (Anwar, 2010).

To achieve closeness with Allah SWT, a salik must go through the spiritual journey of Sufism several levels (maqām) that must be passed. One of the maqām that has an important position in the spiritual journey of Sufism is zuhud. Globally, zuhud can be understood as an attitude of letting go of the attachment of the heart to worldly pleasures and being more oriented towards the hereafter. However, zuhud does not mean rejecting the world absolutely or abandoning all activities in the world. Zuhud itself emphasizes more on a person's ability to control himself over his love for the world so as not to neglect from remembering Allah SWT. Thus, a person can still do work, have property, and also have social activities like humans in general, but all of these things are not the main purpose of his life. This view shows that the essence of zuhud lies in the condition of the heart, not solely in appearance or materialism (Al-Qusyairi, 2007).

Zuhud has a strong basic concept in Islamic teachings, both from the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. One of the verses that is the basis of zuhud's behavior is found in Surah Al-Hadid verse 20 which means "know that the life of the world is only a game, carelessness, jewelry, and boasting among yourselves and competing in many treasures and descendants. (The parable is) like the rain whose crops are amazing to the farmers, then they dry up and you see them turn yellow, then they are destroyed. In the Hereafter there will be a harsh punishment and forgiveness from Allah and His pleasure. The life of the world (for the careless) is only a deceitful pleasure". This verse provides an understanding that the world is mortal so that humans should not make worldly pleasures the ultimate goal of their lives. In this context, zuhud is a means to organize life so that humans continue to prioritize the afterlife without neglecting their responsibilities in the world.

Imam Al-Ghazali in the book Ihya' Ulumuddin, divides zuhud into several levels according to one's spiritual qualities. The first level is the zuhud of ordinary people, which is to abandon the pleasures of the world for fear of the punishment of the

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hereafter. Then the second level, *zuhud* for special people, is to elevate the world in order to hope for the reward and enjoyment of the hereafter. The highest level is the *zuhud* of the *ma'rifat*, which is to leave everything other than Allah SWT because only Allah is the main purpose of his life (Al-Ghazali, 2011). Meanwhile, Ibn Arabi views *zuhud* as a form of spiritual awareness that all reality essentially comes from Allah SWT. Therefore, excessive attachment to the world is seen as a *hijab* that can hinder humans from achieving *ma'rifatullah* to Allah SWT (Arabi, 2004). This understanding shows that *zuhud* is not only a moral issue, but also related to the spiritual dimension and human inner consciousness.

The current phenomenon of modern life shows that humans are increasingly faced with a materialistic, consumptive, and competitive lifestyle. The rapid development of technology, social media, and economic growth often encourage humans to pursue wealth, popularity, and social recognition excessively. This condition indirectly gives birth to various psychological and spiritual problems, such as stress, anxiety, dissatisfaction, and inner emptiness. Many individuals look materially successful and successful, but at the same time experience anxiety and loss of meaning in life. In situations like this, the concept of *zuhud* becomes increasingly relevant because it offers the values of simplicity, self-control, and a balance between worldly needs and spiritual needs (Siregar, 2019).

On the other hand, the public's understanding of *zuhud* still often causes misunderstandings. Some people view *zuhud* as an anti-world attitude, staying away from work, or leaving social life. In fact, in the teachings of Sufism, *zuhud* does not aim to break human relations with the world, but to direct humans to be able to use the world proportionately and not make it the main goal of life. This misunderstanding causes the values of *zuhud* to sometimes be considered irrelevant to modern life which demands productivity and progress. In fact, if understood correctly, *zuhud* can actually be a spiritual guideline that helps humans face the pressures of modern life more wisely and in a balanced way (Hasyim, 2018).

Based on this description, it can be understood that *zuhud* is a concept of Sufism that not only has a theological and spiritual dimension, but is also relevant to answer the problems of human life in modern times today. Therefore, this study aims to examine the concept of *zuhud* from the perspective of Sufism explaining its implementation in the spiritual life of a *salik*, as well as analyzing the relevance of *zuhud* values in dealing with the crisis of materialism and psychological problems of modern society. With this study, it is hoped that the understanding of *zuhud* will no longer be perceived as an attitude of abandoning the world completely, but as an effort to place the world in a balanced manner within the framework of servitude to Allah SWT.

II. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design to explore the concept of *zuhud* within the perspective of Sufism, its implementation in the life of a *sālik* (spiritual seeker), and its relevance to contemporary society. Library research was considered appropriate because the discussion of *zuhud* is closely related to theological, philosophical, and spiritual concepts that have been extensively documented in classical and modern scholarly works. The data sources consisted of primary and secondary literature. Primary sources included classical Sufi texts discussing the concept and practice of *zuhud*, while secondary sources comprised books, journal articles, and contemporary academic studies related to Sufism, spirituality, and modern social issues.

Data were collected through documentation techniques by identifying, selecting, and reviewing relevant literature according to the objectives of the study. The collected data were then analyzed using descriptive-analytical methods. The analysis involved three stages: data reduction through the selection of literature relevant to the research focus, data organization based on thematic categories, and interpretation of findings to understand the meaning, implementation, and contemporary significance of *zuhud*. Through this process, the study sought to present a comprehensive understanding of *zuhud* not merely as an ascetic withdrawal from worldly affairs, but as a spiritual orientation that promotes moderation, self-control, and inner peace in responding to the challenges of modern life.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, the study employed source triangulation by comparing perspectives from various classical Sufi scholars and contemporary researchers. This approach enabled the researchers to identify both the continuity and the transformation of the concept of *zuhud* across different historical contexts, thereby providing a more nuanced explanation of its relevance as an ethical and spiritual response to materialism, hedonism, anxiety, and the moral challenges faced by modern society.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The Concept of Zuhud in Sufism

Zuhud is one of the important teachings in Sufism related to efforts to purify the heart from attachment to the life of the world. Etymologically, the word *zuhud* comes from the Arabic *zahida-yazhadu-zuhdan* which means abandoned, not attracted or not very fond of something. In the context of Sufism, *zuhud* is understood as an attitude of *bantın* that does not make the world the main goal of life, but as a means to get closer to Allah SWT. In other words, *zuhud* does not mean that a person has to live in poverty or abandon all worldly affairs, but rather emphasizes the ability to control the heart so as not to be enslaved by worldly pleasures (Anwar, 2010).

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In the view of the Sufis, the world is not something to be hated, because in essence the world is a creation of Allah SWT that can be used for good. However, excessive love for the world is considered to be able to distract people from the true purpose of life. Therefore, zuhud is present as a form of self-control so that humans are still able to maintain a balance between the needs of the world and the interests of the hereafter. Abdul Karim Al-Qusyairi explained that zuhud is an effort to abandon everything that can make the human heart turn away from Allah SWT (Al-Qusyairi, 2007). This view shows that the essence of zuhud lies in the cleanliness of the heart and the control of lust, not just abandoning material possessions or social life.

The concept of zuhud has a strong basis in the Qur'an and hadith. One of the verses that is the main basis of zuhud is found in Surah Al-Hadid verse 20 which means "and the life of the world is nothing but a deceitful pleasure". (QS. Al-Hadid:20). The verse explains that the life of the world is temporary and not eternal, so humans should not make it the main goal of life, in the perspective of Sufism, the understanding of the transience of the world is the first step for a salik to cleanse the heart from greed, arrogance, and excessive love of the world.

Al-Ghazali divides zuhud into several levels according to one's spiritual qualities. The first level is the zuhud of ordinary people, which is to abandon the pleasures of the world because of fear of the punishment of the hereafter, the second level is the zuhud of special people, which is to leave the world in order to expect rewards and enjoyment in the hereafter, while the highest level is the zuhud of the ma'rifat, which is to elevate everything other than Allah SWT because only Allah is the main goal of his life (Al-Ghazali, 2011). This division shows that zuhud is a spiritual process that develops along with the increase in the quality of faith and one's closeness to Allah SWT.

In addition, in philosophical Sufism thought, Ibn Arabi views zuhud as a form of awareness that all realities essentially come from Allah SWT and will return to Him. Therefore, excessive attachment to the world is considered as a hijab that can hinder humans from achieving ma'rifatullah or spiritual recognition to Allah SWT (Nasution, 1995). Thus, zuhud in Sufism is not only related to outward behavior but also concerns the formation of inner awareness so that humans are able to live a more wise, simple, and oriented life towards spiritual values.

B. The Implementation of Zuhud in Salik Life

The implementation of zuhud in the life of a salik can be seen from the way a person lives his life in a simple, balanced, and not excessive way of loving the world. Zuhud does not require a person to leave his job, family, or social activities, but directs that all these activities be carried out with the intention of worship and not make the world the center of life. In practice, a person who is zuhud continues to work and tries to meet the needs of life, but his heart does not depend entirely on wealth, position, or human praise. This kind of attitude makes a person calmer and not easily disappointed when facing loss or failure (Anwar, 2010).

Zuhud is a form of living a simple life, and not exaggerating in meeting worldly needs. Simple does not mean deliberately living in poverty, but taking advantage of sustenance from Allah SWT at a reasonable level without pushing oneself beyond the limit. A simple lifestyle can protect a person from consumptive tendencies and greedy traits that can disturb his peace of mind. In simple everyday life, you can show simplicity in your lifestyle, because this is where most of us tend to dream big, but can follow the wise use of wealth and choose not to measure happiness with luxury.

Zuhud juga tidak hanya diimplementasikan pada kehidupan yang sederhana, zuhud juga dapat tercermin dalam sikap qa'naah, yakni menerima segala ketentuan yang Allah SWT tetapkan dengan penuh rasya sukur dan kerelaan. Sikap tersebut dapat membuat seseorang tidak mudah iri dengan apa yang orang lain miliki, dikarenakan seseorang yang bersikap qa'naah menyakini bahwa setiap rezeki sudah diatur oleh Allah SWT. Seseorang yang memiliki sikap tersebut akan lebih mudah merasakan ketenangan jiwa dan terhindar dari kecemasan akibat persaingan duniawi yang berlebihan (Mulyati, 2016).

The behavior of zuhud can be implemented through strengthening spiritual relationships and increasing worship to Allah SWT. A salik will try to increase dhikr, tafakur, read the Qur'an, and perform various sunnah worship as a means of getting closer to Allah SWT. In the tradition of the tarekat, the process of purification of the soul can be taken through important parts such as spiritual practices such as wirid, khalwat, muraqabah, and mujahadah al-nafs. This behavior has the purpose so that our hearts do not have excessive love for the world and as an effort to control the lust that exists in humans (Al-Qusyairi, 2007).

In addition, the implementation of zuhud can be seen from the side of a person's social morals, where a person has a high concern for others and also has a humble attitude or is not arrogant about what he has. This attitude was born because a person has the awareness that all the blessings felt in the world are only entrusted by Allah SWT. Therefore, zuhud not only has an impact on human spiritual relationships with Allah SWT, but also has an influence on social relationships between humans which will make life full of concern for others and also more harmonious.

C. The Relevance of Zuhud in Modern Life Today

The change in people's lifestyles today occurs due to the development of modern life, where the rapid advancement of technology, information that is so easily accessible without limits, and the fierce economic competition that encourages humans to continue to pursue worldly life such as material success and social recognition. Modern life today can be seen from various cases, such as a person's consumptive culture, hedonistic lifestyle, and also individualism attitudes that can make humans further away from the inner peace that exists in themselves. Not a few people feel anxiety, anxiety, and even lose the meaning of life, even

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though they are materially sufficient. This condition illustrates that material success does not always go hand in hand with spiritual happiness (Siregar, 2019).

In today's life situation, the teachings of zuhud have very important relevance as a guideline for life that is able to balance the needs of the world and the inner needs of a person. Zuhud teaches a person not to put happiness solely on material matters only, but on inner peace and closeness of man to Allah SWT. Through the attitude of zuhud, a person will be better able to control himself and not easily trapped in the pressures that exist in modern life today, because his life does not depend on happiness whose aspects include temporal happiness that is temporary (Schimmel, 1975).

In addition to providing inner peace, zuhud also has relevance in building the social morals of modern society such as fostering an attitude of social concern, humility, and also fostering gratitude in the midst of modern life that tends to be competitive. A person who understands the teachings of zuhud will view wealth and position as a mandate that must be used for the good of human beings and not as a tool for boasting. Therefore, the values of zuhud are the basis for the formation of character that exists in human beings to be more humanistic and oriented to social interests (Anwar, 2010).

In the midst of the pressures of modern life, such as the increase in psychological problems such as stress, anxiety and depression, zuhud can also be understood as a form of spiritual therapy by reducing excessive attachment to the world which is only temporary. A person will more easily accept the circumstances that exist in his life and not feel a failure when he loses material possessions. This attitude helps to face various problems in life and builds mental and spiritual resilience in humans. Therefore, zuhud is not a teaching that hinders progress, but a spiritual concept that guides a person to live today's modern life in a more balanced manner, and wisely in handling a life problem for the ultimate purpose of life (Hasyim, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

Zuhud is one of the important maqām in Sufism that serves as a spiritual way to cleanse the heart from excessive attachment to the modern life of the world today which has developed so rapidly. The concept of zuhud is not interpreted as an anti-world attitude or abandoning all worldly activities or rejecting material possessions, zuhud itself is interpreted as self-control over the love of the world so as not to neglect humans from remembering Allah SWT. In the perspective of Sufism, the world is seen as a means to worship and get closer to Allah SWT, while the main purpose of life is still directed to eternal happiness, namely happiness in the hereafter and the achievement of His pleasure. This view shows that zuhud emphasizes more on one's inner condition and heart orientation than just outward appearance.

The discussion of the concept of zuhud shows that Sufism figures have complementary views. Al-Ghazali explained that the essence of zuhud lies in the loss of the heart's dependence on the world, while Abdul Karim al-Qusyairi emphasized the importance of abandoning everything that can make humans neglect to remember Allah SWT. As for Ibn Arabi, zuhud views zuhud as a form of spiritual awareness that all reality essentially comes from Allah SWT so that humans should not make the world the main goal in their lives. Thus, zuhud is not only understood as a moral teaching, but can also be part of the process of spiritual development that aims to direct humans towards ma'rifatullah.

In the practice of daily life, the implementation of zuhud can be realized through a simple attitude of living, qana'ah, increasing worship, and guarding oneself from excessive behavior. A simple attitude can help a person live proportionately without being trapped in a consumptive life, while qana'ah trains humans to accept all the provisions that Allah SWT sets with gratitude and open-mindedness. In addition, zuhud behavior can also be reflected in habits such as increasing dhikr, tafakur, and also worship as a means of approaching oneself to Allah SWT. In the tradition of the tarekat, the values of zuhud are strengthened through various spiritual practices such as wirid, khalwat, muraqabah, and mujahadah al-nafs which have the purpose of controlling lust and also purifying the human heart towards worldly life.

In the midst of the development of modern life that is closely related to materialism, social competition, and a hedonistic lifestyle, zuhud has a very important relevance. Technological and economic progress is often not accompanied by inner peace so that many people experience problems in their lives such as anxiety, excessive stress, and also inner emptiness. In these conditions, zuhud can be an alternative spiritual solution that helps humans build a balance between worldly needs and spiritual needs. The attitude of zuhud is able to foster peace of mind because a person will not depend solely on wealth, position, or social recognition. In addition, the value of zuhud can also form better social morals, such as humility, caring for others, and not being arrogant about the advantages they have.

Based on this discussion, it can be concluded that zuhud is a Sufism teaching that is still relevant applied to modern life today. These teachings are spiritual guidelines so that humans are able to live a balanced life and are full of awareness of the true purpose of life, and are wise in responding to the problems of world life, not as an obstacle to the progress of human productivity. By understanding and applying the values that exist in the teachings of zuhud correctly, humans are expected to be able to achieve inner peace, maintain harmonious social relationships, and also strengthen one's spirituality to get closer to Allah SWT.

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