



The Discourse Of Hunger In Ancient Sufi Narratives

Dr. Faiza Zitouni University Kasdi Merbah Ouargla (Algeria), E-mail: zitouni.faiza@univ-ouargla.dz

Dr. Nawal Krine University Kasdi Merbah Ouargla (Algeria), E-mail: krine.nawal@univ-ouargla.dz

Received: 09/2024, Published: 10/2024

Abstract

Sufism seeks to uncover the truth concealed inside the inner, spiritual dimension of Sharia, as opposed to its external manifestation. The approaches to attaining this enigmatic unknown were varied and unique. Sufi philosophy established a novel approach to knowledge and comprehension of life, highly esteemed by Sufi masters, particularly the early ones. This method was a logical consequence of their ascetic approach to earthly existence and their advocacy for Sufi isolation. Hunger and renunciation of worldly pleasures were crucial in the Sufi path to discipline the body, nerves, and the entirety of the student, aiming for the ultimate objective of Sufi devotion. In what manner did their leaders advocate this in their works, informed by their profound religious background? Did Sufi literature effectively portray this through numerous narratives highlighting the virtues of Sufi masters, particularly their emphasis on hunger and continuous fasting?

Keywords: Appetite; Satiety; Sufi discourse; Compensation techniques; Conflict; Ascetic practices.

Introduction

Hunger signifies the biological sensation resulting from food deprivation, and as literature mirrors societal concerns and afflictions, Sufi figures have articulated their deliberate and voluntary confrontation with hunger in their literary creations, encompassing poetry, prose, and narratives.

Hunger, in conjunction with thirst, is regarded by Sufis as a pragmatic measure in the pursuit of the Sufi path. The Sufi masters, particularly the early ones, emphasised this practice due to its organic emergence from their ascetic perspective on worldly existence and their advocacy for Sufi seclusion. Hunger and thirst are fundamental in the Sufi path to train the intestines, nerves, and the entire essence of the student, facilitating the attainment of the ultimate objective of Sufi worship, which is often conveyed through reference rather than direct expression by most Sufis.

The Quran references the term hunger in multiple verses, including:

Surat Al-Baqarah: "And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient," (2:155)

Surat An-Nahl: "And Allah presents an example: a city which was safe and secure, its provision coming to it in abundance from every location, but it denied the favors of Allah. So Allah made it taste the envelopment of hunger and fear for what they had been doing." (16:112)

- Surat Quraysh: "Who has fed them, [saving them] from hunger and made them safe, [saving them] from fear." (106:4)

From the pronouncements of the Companions against excess and corpulence:

A renowned adage by the caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab critiques overindulgence and excessive consumption: Mujahid ibn Jabr reported that Umar ibn al-Khattab stated:

"O individuals, exercise caution against excessive consumption, as it induces lethargy in prayer, deteriorates physical health, and results in illness. Allah disapproves of the corpulent scholar; therefore, practise moderation in your diet, as it aligns more closely with righteousness, distances you from extravagance, and enhances your capacity to serve Allah. No servant shall meet their demise until they prioritise their desires above their faith."

For the early Sufis, hunger was regarded as a gateway to the principles of the Sufi path and a noble station. A seeker must habituate themselves to hunger to attain mental clarity, bodily purification, and the bestowal of spiritual gifts and insights, culminating in spiritual revelation.

Prior to further exploration, it is essential to succinctly revisit the concept of Sufism.

The Notion of Sufism:

Sufism aims to uncover the truth concealed inside the esoteric dimensions of Islamic law, rather than solely in its external manifestations. The approaches to attain this enigmatic unknown are distinctive, as Sufi philosophy has forged a novel pathway to knowledge, comprehension, and existence, transcending the confines of rationality and its logical benchmarks, as well as sensory perception and its material standards. Sufis developed alternative methodologies and pathways grounded in: the perception of the heart, intuition, inspiration, spiritual currents, inherent purity of taste, enlightenment, and revelation... All must approach the divine essence, disengage from all else, and immerse themselves in the Divine. Sufism cultivated distinctive ways of expression and a distinct worldview, profoundly shaped by its historical background, socioeconomic structure, geographical environment, theological foundations, and psychological factors, all of which are essential for comprehensive understanding.

Sufism possesses a universal human component, as it is a phenomena not confined to any particular religion, civilisation, or temporal and spatial context. The experience, referred to by various names among Sufis, is comprehended in its unity of meaning and its transcendence above ordinary human awareness, thus surpassing the limits of language and intellect (Al-Samman, 2011, p. 20). Sufism embodies a universal cosmic perspective and a human phenomenon inherently connected to human nature, regardless of its location.

Sufism has been defined in several ways — as a road, a method, and as practitioners — although all interpretations concur that Sufism aims to uncover the truth, which resides not in the overt elements of jurisprudence and law but in their concealed, enigmatic facets. Consequently, the

techniques and approaches employed to access this obscure esoteric dimension inherently differ from those utilised to tackle overt legal issues.

Consequently, the Sufis pursue their objectives with resolute determination. Ibn Khaldun stated: "This discipline is a recently developed religious science. Its roots lie in the enduring path of the Sufis, which has been present among the early generations of this community, including the Companions and their successors, as a means of truth and guidance. Its foundation is the commitment to worship, detachment from worldly distractions and embellishments, renunciation of the pursuits of the masses, such as pleasure, wealth, and status, and seclusion for the purpose of wor

Sufism is a discipline that elucidates the journey towards truth, cleansing the inner self of vices and embellishing it with virtues. The inception is knowledge, the progression is activity, and the conclusion is a divine bestowal. Their methodology regarding Sufism encompasses: the purification of the soul and self-reflection, maintaining both inner and outer purity for the sake of Allah in all endeavours, adopting poverty and detachment from worldly affairs, enhancing the heart's condition through compassion and love, exemplifying virtuous character traits and observing religious decorum both externally and internally, emulating the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, combating personal desires, revering Allah, yielding to Him, cleansing the soul of impurities, and equipping it to perceive the divine presence. They categorise religion into external law, mandatory for the general populace, and inward truth, requisite for a select minority. Asceticism involves separation from the world to achieve afterlife rewards, but Sufism represents asceticism aimed at attaining Allah's pleasure, love, and proximity.

Imam Al-Ghazali, who devoted a whole chapter to this subject, fully articulated the merits of hunger while denouncing excessive consumption. He asserts: "The paramount destroyer of humanity is the craving for sustenance, for it was this desire that led to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from a state of dignity to one of degradation and destitution. They were prohibited from the tree, yet their appetites prevailed, resulting in their consumption of its fruit and the subsequent exposure of their nakedness. The stomach is, in essence, the origin of desires and the root of afflictions and misfortunes, as it incites the longing for intimacy and the intense yearning for relationships, which is followed by the pursuit of nourishment and status, ultimately culminating in the desire for wealth and prestige—means to further relationships and sustenance. This accumulation of wealth and status breeds arrogance, rivalry, and envy. All of this stems from the neglect of the stomach and the consequences of indulgence in food and excess." (Al-Ghazali, 2004, pp. 104-105).

Al-Ghazali enumerates the merits of hunger and the necessity of training the seeker to withstand it, despite its challenges and the suppression of the soul's desires: "If the servant disciplines his soul through hunger and constrains the avenues of temptation, it will yield to Allah's obedience, eschewing arrogance and rebellion, and will not succumb to worldly pleasures, favouring the ephemeral over the eternal, nor will it pursue the material with fervour. Given that the cravings of the stomach constitute a significant affliction, it is imperative to elucidate its perils and misfortunes, cautioning against them, while also delineating the path of resistance, thereby motivating individuals to embrace it" (Al-Ghazali, 2004, p. 105).

He continues by mentioning prophetic traditions encouraging hunger and condemning fullness: "Regarding the virtue of hunger and condemning fullness, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: 'Strive against yourselves with hunger and thirst, for the reward in that is like the reward of one who fights in the way of Allah, and there is no deed more beloved to Allah than hunger and thirst.' Ibn Abbas narrated that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: 'He who fills his stomach will not enter the kingdom of heaven.' When asked who is the best of people, he replied: 'The one who eats the least, laughs the least, and is content with what covers his private parts.' The Prophet also said: 'The best of deeds is hunger, and the garment of humility is wearing wool.' Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri reported that the Messenger of Allah said: 'Wear and eat and drink in moderation, for it is part of prophethood.' Hassan said: 'The Prophet said: "Contemplation is half of worship, and eating little is worship," and he also said: "The most honored among you on the Day of Judgment will be those who are the hungriest and most reflective upon Allah."' (Al-Ghazali, 2004, p. 106).

Al-Ghazali subsequently elucidates the stages of spiritual progression attained by the Sufi practitioner who embraces hunger as a discipline. In a chapter entitled "Explaining the Method of Spiritual Exercise in Overcoming the Desire of the Stomach," he asserts: "The pinnacle is to fast for three days or longer." Among the practitioners, some engaged in fasting without a predetermined duration, with individuals fasting for periods of thirty or forty days. This practice was observed by numerous scholars, including Muhammad ibn Amr Al-Qurni, Abdul Rahman ibn Ibrahim, Rahim, Ibrahim Al-Taimi, Hajjaj ibn Frafasa, Hafsa Al-Abid Al-Misri, Muslim ibn Saeed, Zuhair, Sulaiman Al-Khawwas, Sahl ibn Abdullah Al-Tustari, and Ibrahim ibn Ahmad Al-Khawwas. Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq observed a fast for six days, Abdullah ibn Al-Zubayr for seven days, and Abu Al-Jawza, a companion of Ibn Abbas, for seven days as well. Sufyan Al-Thawri and Ibrahim ibn Adham reportedly engaged in three-day fasts, employing hunger as a conduit to the hereafter" (Al-Ghazali, 2004, p. 107).

He concludes by articulating the spiritual revelations acquired through prolonged fasting: "Certain scholars asserted: 'Whoever fasts for forty days for Allah will experience a divine capability or receive spiritual secrets.' It is reported that a Sufi encountered a monk and engaged in dialogue regarding his condition, aspiring to convert him to Islam and dispel his misconceptions. Following an extensive discourse, the monk asserted that Christ fasted for forty days, claiming that such a miracle could only be accomplished by a prophet or a genuine believer. The Sufi enquired: 'If I observe a fast for fifty days, will you abandon your practices, accept Islam, and acknowledge the truth?' The monk consented, prompting the Sufi to fast for fifty days, which he subsequently extended to sixty. The monk, astonished, remarked, 'I never believed anyone could exceed Christ in this.' This occurrence resulted in the monk's conversion to Islam. This rank is exceptional and rarely achieved, representing a state of divine revelation in which the seeker becomes so engrossed in spiritual insight that he detaches from his earthly necessities, neglecting his hunger and cravings" (Al-Ghazali, 2004, pp. 108-109)

Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali delineated eleven advantages of hunger in his work, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of Religious Sciences):

1. The clarity of the heart, acuity of mind, and perceptive insight; for indulgence induces lethargy and obscures the heart.

2. The tenderness and innocence of the heart, which render an individual open to the delight of endurance and attuned to recollection.
3. Humility, submissiveness, and the eradication of arrogance and conceit, which are the sources of tyranny and disregard for God.
4. Recalling God's tribulations and retributions, while also considering those in distress, much to how the satiated overlook the famished and their own deprivation.
5. Subduing sinful inclinations and asserting dominance over the self predisposed to malevolence; because all transgressions stem from needs and passions, which are exacerbated by food, so diminishing consumption mitigates all cravings and impulses.
6. Reduced sleep and increased vigilance; for one who consumes copiously also imbibes excessively, and one who imbibes excessively sleeps extensively, with excessive sleep resulting in a squandering of life, neglect of nocturnal prayers, lethargy of disposition, and insensitivity of heart.
7. The frequent consumption of food hinders the ongoing practice of worship, as it diverts time away from engaging in acts of devotion.
8. Optimal health and illness prevention, as over consumption results in surplus fluids in the stomach and veins, whereas hunger mitigates this issue.

Alleviating financial burdens is easier for those accustomed to scant sustenance, while those used to abundance perpetually experience hunger.

10. Generosity and charity involve donating surplus food to orphans and the underprivileged, thereby securing one's protection under the auspices of their benevolence on the Day of Judgement.

Among the aphorisms of spiritual masters concerning the cultivation of hunger, the relentless battle against the wants of the self, and the renunciation of corporeal indulgence to attain spiritual enlightenment, are the following:

It is stated: "The hungry individual is cherished."

Yahya bin Mu'adh stated: "The hunger of seekers is a trial, the hunger of the repentant is a test, the hunger of the diligent is an honour, the hunger of worshippers is a discipline, and the hunger of ascetics is wisdom."

Yahya bin Mu'adh stated, "Hunger possesses ears that heed God, whereas satiation engenders arrogance that distances one from God." (Naysaburi, 2006, p. 145)

Abu Sulayman stated, "The key to this world is satiation, while the key to the afterlife is hunger."

He stated, "When the heart is famished and parched, it becomes lucid and tender; however, when it is satiated and content, it becomes oblivious and callous."

He stated, "Hunger constitutes the essence of worship, mastery over the tongue is paramount, and affection for this world is the origin of all sin."

He stated, "Embrace hunger, as it humbles the soul, softens the heart, and imparts divine wisdom."

Ka'b stated: "Maintain hunger in your stomachs, thirst in your livers, and exposure of your bodies, so that you may perceive your Lord with your inner selves."

Yahya bin Mu'adh stated: "If hunger were available for purchase in the market, an individual would be criticised for entering without acquiring anything else."

He additionally stated: "Hunger is God's sustenance on earth, nourishing the bodies of the seekers, while wisdom is God's force on earth, fortifying the bodies of the truthful." (Naysaburi, 2006, p. 145)

The most notable statements denouncing gluttony and emphasising the fulfilment of bodily appetites include:

Dhul-Nun stated: "Whenever I indulged excessively, I transgressed or contemplated transgression."

It is stated: "Those who overindulge in food suffer from six afflictions: the loss of the joy of worship, an inability to retain knowledge, a deficiency in compassion for others, challenges in worship, heightened desires, and a sense of alienation from mosques while others congregate around them."

Yahya bin Mu'adh stated, "No servant indulges in excessive eating without forfeiting something irretrievable."

Sahl bin Abdullah stated: "No individual's worship is complete, nor is their labour genuine, until they embrace four conditions: hunger, nakedness, humiliation, and poverty."

Ja'far bin Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated: "When the stomach is satiated, the body becomes insubordinate."

Fudayl bin Iyad stated: "Two factors that harden the heart are excessive sleep and overeating."

Some asserted: "An individual who indulges excessively in food cannot maintain a standing posture in prayer, and one who is unable to stand in prayer will be humiliated before the servants."

It is reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) stated: "Revitalise your hearts with modest laughter and cleanse them with hunger, so that they may become lucid and gentle." (Naysaburi, 2006, p. 146)

Sahl bin Abdullah stated, "Satiating is the origin of all misfortunes."

Dhul-Nun stated: "Physical well-being is achieved through minimal consumption, while spiritual well-being is attained by refraining from transgressions."

Hamdun al-Qassar stated, "The origin of every ailment is excessive consumption, and the misfortune of faith is excessive consumption." (Naysaburi, 2006, pp. 146-147)

These are among the aphorisms and accounts employed by spiritual leaders to extol hunger as a virtue for seekers and to denounce satiation as a snare for ascetics.

The Concept of Hunger in Sufi Narrative Discourse

One of the most significant contributions of Sufis throughout the history of their creativity has been their shift from the authority of poetry to that of prose, and from a culture of spontaneity and improvisation to one of writing, reflection, and contemplation. This transition opened the door wide for Sufi prose, which drew from Arabic literature, philosophical and literary heritage, and foreign and translated cultures. Sufi prose flourished since the first three centuries, marked by a rich diversity that manifested in forms such as supplications, wisdom, exchanged admonitions between masters and their disciples, reflections, pleadings, tales of miracles and supernatural events, accounts of Sufi experiences, expressions of divine knowledge, religious sciences, spiritual states, and mystical stations. These forms often transcended philosophical terms and literary expressions in an attempt to capture the profound and abundant meanings of Sufi experiences and their unique beauty (Khawaldeh, 2015, pp. 61-65). Sufis justified their preference for prose by arguing that exchanging dialogue with God, for instance, "cannot be contained within the space of poetry or the nature of verse" (Khawaldeh, 2015, p. 59).

This methodology enabled them to communicate more efficiently with individuals while preserving the adaptability necessary to express their experiences. Sufis adeptly employed narrative discourse, which demonstrated significant potential for audience engagement. Similar to advocates of other discourse forms, Sufis aimed for their narratives to be effective, influential, and impactful, in order to reach the broadest audience possible. Although they professed to address a select few, they endeavoured to activate the communicative connection, utilising strategies that seemed deliberate, grounded in an understanding of the audience's intentions, and positioning themselves within shared frameworks centred on emotional resonance and the compelling nature of storytelling (Belali, 2002, p. 168).

Consequently, Sufi narratives emerged as the quintessential medium for all matters pertaining to the Sufi: "his life, appearance, actions, miracles, travels, and spiritual exercises" (Khawaldeh, 2015, p. 82). Sufis designated any account that chronicled their remarkable stories and enshrined their supernatural accomplishments as "karama" (miracle).

Karama is characterised as the manifestation of an extraordinary event executed by a saint, linked to obedience and acknowledgement without asserting prophecy. It signifies the saint's authenticity and virtue or the strength of his conviction or that of others. In Sunni doctrine, it is analogous to miracles, encompassing divine abilities, as articulated in the Quran and Hadith (Al-Manawi, p. 5). Karama, fundamentally a Sufi narrative, epitomises a prominent form of Sufi storytelling imbued with Sufi principles, thoughts, and concepts, particularly concerning the saint's extraordinary capabilities. These narratives are composed in a style rich in movement, action, dialogue, metaphor, imagination, and wonder, enhancing their widespread appeal among both the elite and the general populace, as they frequently intersect with popular tales.

While the general populace accepted the tradition of karama, it transcended folk traditions owing to the distinctive nature of Sufi language. Karama is an organic outcome of Sufi intellectual and behavioural contributions, and its proliferation signifies its success. It is

intricately connected to society, mirroring its evolution and circumstances; it cannot be considered in isolation from the geographical, historical, religious, cultural, intellectual, literary, philosophical, and behavioural contexts that influenced it. Karama provided a Sufi alternative to severe social conditions and oppressive political environments.

Consequently, karama signifies a deviation from established norms, bestowed upon the friends of God owing to their distinct spiritual endeavours and proximity to the Divine. This deviation manifested in various forms, particularly concerning hunger and sustenance (both in quantity and quality), as delineated by Imam Al-Nabhani (Al-Nabhani, 2005, p. 52):

- Tolerance for extended durations without sustenance or hydration.
- The capacity to ingest substantial quantities of food.
- Refraining from consuming prohibited food from diverse origins.

Numerous instances of this theme in ancient Sufi texts and Algerian Sufi ethical literature exemplify the prominence of hunger and food, classified by the nature of the associated miraculous aspects.

1. Provision in Times of Scarcity: For instance, during periods of famine and severe drought in a hot Maghreb society, the provision of food or water was regarded as a karama. An account recounts that during a year of famine, visitors from the Maghreb, upon discovering the absence of food, prompted the saint's wife to express her sorrow over their lack of provisions. The saint reassured her that sustenance would arrive, and shortly thereafter, a man appeared with wheat, butter, and a goat, proclaiming: "Here is your provision from God." (Al-Sharif, 1986, pp. 187-188).

2. Miraculous Feeding: Another account describes that when a saint was seated, a bird identified as a kite seized a piece of dried meat (qadeed) from him. He instructed the bird to cease, and it plummeted to the ground, rendered unable of flight, till it ultimately perished. (Ibn Maryam, 1986, p. 306).

Prolonged Fasting and Sleep as Phenomena:

One manifestation of Sufi miracles entails prolonged abstinence from nourishment, hydration, or slumber, akin to the miracle of the People of the Cave. An illustrative account is as follows: "He said to me, 'My brother, when you depart, close that door behind me because I wish to rest here for a while.' I exited and secured the door behind him. The mosque was disregarded as individuals were consumed by concerns of hunger. After an extended duration, when God alleviated the suffering of the populace, I returned to the mosque and reopened it. Upon my entry, I discovered Sidi Ahmed ibn Al-Hassan slumbering in the identical position in which I had left him. He awoke at my entrance, convinced he had merely slumbered for an hour or two. He rose and departed, and I recognised that God, in His benevolence, had protected him from the tribulations of hunger and the observation of the afflictions endured by the populace, akin to the People of the Cave. This was one of the great miracles" (Ibn Maryam, 1986, p. 33). In the same work, *The Orchard in Mentioning the Scholars and Saints of Tlemcen*, four analogous accounts underscore the remarkable capacity of these saints to withstand hunger and thirst.

"This endurance signifies a deviation from the human standard of requiring sustenance and hydration. The Sufi miracle story underscores the saint's remarkable perseverance, depicting him as a distinctive figure with exceptional traits that distinguish him. This perseverance is a deliberate exercise of will, a prevalent characteristic of Sufi miracles throughout the Arab world, where poverty and food scarcity are rampant" (Badran, 2001, p. 126).

Some Sufi narratives reference the consumption of wine and its profound indulgence. For example, in the text *The Title of Understanding*, various miracles are documented, including the revelations of Sheikh Abu Al-Hasan ibn Ibrahim Al-Harali. When a woman expressed concern about her son's excessive drinking, he advised her, "Let him drink from large cups instead of small ones." The mother was astonished by the sheikh's response, as she had sought his prayers for her son's moderation rather than encouragement. Nevertheless, shortly thereafter, the young man repented and improved through the sheikh's blessing (Al-Ghabrini, 2007, p. 74).

The Sufi saint's life is marked by several miracles and repeating motifs that challenge existing conventions, revealing that Sufi miracles frequently serve as a counter-narrative to conventional Sufism. How was this counter-narrative developed?

Numerous miracles pertain to the transgression of dietary norms, particularly concerning the consumption of substantial quantities of food or the acquisition of out-of-season produce. One illustrative example is the account: "She desired apples... at a time when they were not in season... and he pulled an apple from his sleeve" (Al-Tlemsani, 2008, p. 235). The author proceeds to recount several analogous miracles: "We were told... of a similar instance involving a quince, and another with a watermelon, and the sheikh... with a type of fig known as shrayha, among many other such examples" (Al-Tlemsani, 2008, p. 236). Another miracle recounts: "He then called for food, and his servant brought a dish with food that none of us recognised, resembling rice but not quite." I had never experienced such cuisine before, nor anything so exquisite..." (Al-Tlemsani, 2008, p. 267). In another instance, "He remarked, 'I detect the fragrance of quince... yet this is not its season...' I turned and observed him holding a quince unlike any I had ever encountered in this world" (Al-Tlemsani, 2008, p. 286). Another miracle states: "Upon reaching him and approaching, I contemplated: it is widely recognised that if anyone seeks sustenance, of any variety, the sheikh will furnish it. I contemplated my desire for *mulukhiyah* with chicken, despite it being out of season. He sent his servant to procure my request, and it was fulfilled." (Al-Tlemsani, 2008, p. 262).

Certain miracles necessitated the provision of hot food, as though it had just been prepared: "...they were journeying through the wilderness and craved hot food, prompting the servant to retrieve from the pot hot dishes, including fried cheese and *zalabiya* (a type of sweet), too hot to consume as if freshly cooked..." (Al-Tlemsani, 2008, p. 263).

Another category of miracle is to the extraordinary recovery of lost or misplaced objects. For instance: "One day, Sheikh Sidi Al-Hasan received a bag of grapes that contained four gold dinars." I transferred its belongings into the sheikh's residence. Upon arriving home, I recalled the dinars intermingled with the grapes, prompting me to invert the bag; however, I discovered nothing, coming to the realisation that I had inadvertently discarded them alongside the fruit at the sheikh's residence. Feeling embarrassed to return and request them, I remained in

considerable distress and lamented not retaining them. Upon subsequent examination of the bag, I discovered the money remained intact, as it had been previously, leading me to conclude that the sheikh had reinstated it to the bag from his residence, so contravening established conventions" (Ibn Maryam, 1986, p. 81).

In the Sufi text *Anwan al-Diraya*, a miracle (karama) ascribed to the Sufi saint Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Ahmad ibn al-Hasan ibn Ibrahim al-Harali al-Tajibi illustrates a notable occurrence during a severe drought in Bejaia. The saint directed one of his disciples to supply water to the impoverished: "He commanded me, may God be pleased with him, to fetch water for the poor so they could drink." Nevertheless, Karima declined and reprimanded me. The sheikh, upon hearing her, instructed me: 'Inform her, O Karima, that by God, I shall drink rainwater immediately.' He stood in the Mosque of Imam al-Mahdi, gazed upward, offered supplication, and lifted his hands. The muezzin initiated the call to prayer, clouds amassed, and as he concluded with 'La ilaha illa Allah,' the rain cascaded down, soaking the congregation. I observed him raise his sanctified hands to the rain, imbibe, cleanse his visage, and proclaim, 'Welcome, rain lately sent by its Creator" (Al-Ghabrini, 2007, pp. 150-151).

This event aligns with the essential Sufi tenet of asceticism, specifically regarding the renunciation of food and earthly indulgences as a form of self-discipline. Notably, there exists a Sufi sect established by Abu Sulayman al-Darani in Syria called "al-Ju'iyya" (The Hungerists) (Zidan, 1998, p. 60). Within this tradition, hunger is regarded as a characteristic of Sufis and a fundamental aspect of spiritual endeavour. Adherents of Sufism embraced hunger and food abstinence, uncovering profound insights within this state, as recounted in numerous narratives (Al-Qushayri, p. 66). This paper has previously examined how the esteemed Imam al-Ghazali, in his discourse "The Virtue of Hunger and the Condemnation of Satiety," cited various prophetic traditions highlighting the advantages of hunger for both the body and intellect. He concluded that "God never honoured anyone except through hunger; they never walked on water except by hunger, and the earth was never folded for them except by hunger; God did not favour them except through hunger" (Al-Ghazali, 2004, pp. 108-109).

Imam Abu Sa'd al-Naysaburi, in his work *Tahdhib al-Asrar fi Usul al-Tasawwuf* (Refinement of Secrets in the Principles of Sufism), allocated a chapter to the imperative of enduring hunger for the Sufi aspirant. This practice was thought to purify the soul, soften the temperament, and open the heart, as evidenced by the saying: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated: 'Satan circulates in the veins of the son of Adam as blood does, so constrict his pathways with hunger and thirst'" (Al-Naysaburi,

The prominence of food in Sufi miracles prompts an inquiry into its significance within numerous Sufi narratives. For example, certain miracles depict the sheikh distributing abundant wealth, as illustrated by the account: "During his time in Mecca, crowds would gather around him, and he would hand out bags of gold and silver coins..." (Ibn Marzuq, 2008, p. 263). Another instance involves the Sultan of Tlemcen imposing taxes on the townspeople, creating a substantial financial strain. The populace sought assistance from Sheikh Sidi Abdullah ibn Mansur, who approached the Sultan to plead for their forgiveness. Upon the Sultan's refusal, the sheikh prophesied that the Sultan would only encounter suffering as a consequence of his actions. Subsequently, the Sultan was afflicted with intense pain, prompting his ministers to

seek the sheikh, who alleviated the Sultan's distress with a touch to his abdomen, resulting in an immediate cure (Ibn Marzuq, 2008, p. 137).

The contradiction of a Sufi possessing substantial wealth, donning opulent attire, and residing in exquisite homes and gardens starkly contrasts with the conventional portrayal of Sufis as ascetics. For example, Sheikh Sidi al-Hasan was noted for his luxurious garments crafted from superior fabrics, often adorned in distinctive hues of green, yellow, and Indian shades. This representation conflicts with the traditional image of Sufis clad in coarse woollen garments, which is also the etymological root of the term "Sufi" (Ibn Marzuq, 2008, p. 224). How can a Sufi, whose emblem has consistently been poverty and humility, be depicted in such affluence and grandeur? According to Sufi doctrine, "Poverty is the badge of saints, the ornament of the pure, and the chosen condition of God's beloved" (Al-Qushayri, p. 122).

Another enigmatic category of Sufi miracle is to the sheikh's aversion to reading or referencing books: "He became so ascetic that he eschewed books entirely, possessing none, and did not require consultation of any for his teachings due to his comprehensive knowledge." All his writings were generated solely from his contemplation and focused vision" (Al-Ghabrini, 2007, pp. 71-72). This phenomenon appears to contradict the Sufi emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge, regarded as an act of worship and a fundamental aspect of the spiritual journey. Al-Ghazali emphasises this by stating, "Learning for God's sake is an act of reverence, seeking it is worship, studying it is glorification, and teaching it is charity" (Al-Ghazali, 2004, p. 23). The early Sufis were renowned for their commitment to acquiring knowledge, and it was believed that "increased knowledge brought greater tranquilly" (Al-Qushayri, p. 66).

These contradictions underscore that Sufi miracles were not solely narratives consistent with the ethical and religious tenets of Sufism but also developed into autonomous texts that frequently contradicted Sufi principles. Certain miracles contravene the foundational doctrines of Sufism and its original objectives. Nonetheless, these contradictions often aligned with the socio-historical context of the era. During times characterised by poverty and famine, when economic conditions in Muslim regions deteriorated and plagues and famines were prevalent, Sufi miracles embodied the collective aspiration for healing ailments, securing sustenance, and exhibiting miraculous capacities to endure adversity (Ziour, 1984, p. 61).

Simultaneously, these phenomena inundated the social sphere as a "deluge of irrationality and non-commitment, fostering profound patterns of dependency and delusions of effortless triumphs over the socio-psychological landscape" (Ziour, 1984, p. 99). These Sufi story writings presumably symbolically represented social class through the expressions of the conflictual structure between the centre and the margin. The political and cultural centre consistently employs strategies to marginalise others, thereby disrupting wealth distribution and concentrating resources among authorities and their affiliates, while the general populace struggles to secure basic necessities, leading to widespread hunger and excess among the ruler and his associates" (Al-Aboudi, 2013, p. 7). A notable expression was the food scarcity and the challenges in acquiring it, stemming from the severe poverty that afflicted civilisations during the ancient Middle Maghreb times. This scenario adversely affected society by permitting poverty and hunger to permeate societal structures, leading Arabic literary records to often articulate a yearning for sustenance and accessibility, aspiring to represent it artistically.

Religious discourse significantly contributed to this phenomenon by diverting the impoverished from asserting their rights, which religion had legitimised, and encouraging them to find solace in the prospect of a greater reward in the Hereafter, while the affluent indulge in earthly pleasures (Al-Aboudi, 2013, p. 7). The disparity between miraculous texts and established Sufi truths, together with their divergence, creates a distinct narrative entity that is largely independent of external veracity or alignment with Sufi principles. This insurrection of the miraculous against the principles of truth and rationality finally resulted in a revolt against the foundational tenets of Sufism as a legitimate institution that shaped and guided its narrative discourse.

This prompted researcher Faraj bin Ramadan to extricate the miraculous from Sufi discourse and integrate it into the realm of literature, so facilitating its engagement with the methodologies of literary studies and its boundless potential (Bin Ramadan, p. 169). He recognises that this extraction was not solely forced but resulted from the internal disintegration of Sufi miracle discourse, which subverted the coherent Sufi ideology that first established and governed it.

Social realities, political conditions, natural calamities, and climate crises introduced aspects incongruent with their essence and origins, compelling them into behavioural trajectories, psychological constraints, and emotional patterns that early Sufism opposed. Consequently, we observe their thriving existence alongside concurrent trajectories within the social sphere, elucidating the persistence of the phenomenon and its capacity to adjust to the exigencies of each epoch. Its life journey persists, and its vital essence circulates despite all upheavals, crises, and advancements.

These ancient Sufi narratives frequently emulate the manner of Qur'anic legends and the accounts of prophets and messengers, intersecting with numerous sacred verses and details. This illustrates the Sufis' adherence to Qur'anic paradigms and their imitation of these, resulting in various Sufi exemplars that represent or embody these elevated religious archetypes. The Sufis followed Qur'anic paradigms, assimilating them to the extent of merging the hero with the Sufi identity, leading to total identification with the selected model. This resulted in mimicry—an embodiment and unity with the Qur'anic archetype by the Sufi hero, generating numerous metaphors, particularly the miracles revered in Sufi philosophy. They aimed to attain manifestation or perfection, endeavouring to eliminate distinctions between the Sufi and their ideal model by replicating their words and deeds (Ziour, 1984, p. 120). Consequently, this deliberate intertextuality demonstrates that "the miracle text is not isolated but instead depends on traditional texts remembered" (Badran, 2001, p. 86). The dichotomy of generating hunger and techniques for satiety became the principal impetus of the entire Sufi creative process.

Generally, it is asserted that these individuals refrained from wants and excessive consumption for the aforementioned benefits; nonetheless, moderation is essential in all aspects of ethics, as the optimal state resides in balance, with both extremes being reprehensible. The discussion over the merits of hunger may suggest that excess is advantageous, which is a misconception. The principles of Sharia assert that when nature inclines towards an extreme resulting in corruption, the law imposes a stringent prohibition that may appear to advocate for a course

contrary to natural inclinations, in order to restore equilibrium, as complete suppression of natural tendencies is unfeasible (Al-Ghazali, 2004, p. 124).

Individuals of moderate disposition should consume food that neither burdens the stomach nor induces hunger, preferably disregarding the sensation of satiety entirely. The objective of consumption is to preserve life and facilitate prayer, as a distended stomach hinders devotion, while hunger pangs divert the heart. The state furthest distant from extremes is moderation. Consequently, dietary behaviours among individuals on the spiritual journey may encompass either the enlightened or the misguided individual.

A Sufi teacher must withhold certain secrets from his disciple; he should extol hunger without advocating moderation, as this would likely impede the disciple's attainment of the desired objective. Therefore, the master should compel him to endure severe hunger, facilitating subsequent equilibrium.

Ibn Al-Qayyim encapsulated the dietary practices of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by stating: "Similarly, the Prophet advised against rejecting available sustenance or pursuing what is absent." He consumed all available healthful food without expressing any criticism. If he enjoyed it, he consumed it; otherwise, he abstained without constraint. He refrained from criticising food. If he wanted to consume it, he did; otherwise, he abstained, as with lizard meat, which he did not regularly eat but did not prohibit for the society. He consumed a variety of foods, such as meat, bread, and confections, without excess" (Ibn Al-Qayyim, 2013, p. 148).

Consequently, it is evident that legitimate hunger, rather than fasting, is predicated on moderation in consumption of food and beverages. Fasting is also regulated by moderation in consumption, with a specified time dictated by piety and adherence to divine commandments. This differs from Sufi hunger, which neither conforms to the prescribed period of fasting nor is predicated on moderation in consumption. Rather, it entails an excess and exaggeration of hunger and deprivation as a dedication to Sufi devotion.

The Sharia instructs us to read the Qur'an and to consume only what is permitted; all actions are dictated by the Sharia. Moderate indulgence without excess is acceptable, as affirmed by the words of Allah: Surah Al-A'raf: 31. He states: "O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess. ».

Conversely, acute hunger was not intended by God as a means of acquiring knowledge or wisdom. Rather, lawful fasting, as delineated by Islamic doctrine, functions as a method of spiritual education aimed at attaining piety. As Allah states: "O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous." [Al-Baqarah: 183]. Furthermore, He asserts: "Take, [O, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah's blessings] upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurance for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing." [At-Tawbah: 103].

Consequently, just as overconsumption adversely affects an individual in every dimension, so too does extreme and prolonged deprivation, which ravages the mind, spirit, and body. Both

gluttony and severe hunger inflict greater detriment than advantage. Although they may impart some knowledge or insight, they invariably lead to a multitude of ailments, ignorance, and even insanity.

Conclusion

The Sufi community employed diverse strategies to alleviate hunger and entertain themselves. Miraculous accounts from that era amplified conversations regarding sustenance, fulfilment, and affluence. This portrayal authentically reflects the realities of their circumstances, devoid of artistic embellishment, aesthetic opulence, or Sufi excess and religious fanaticism.

Their actions were simply a manifestation of their hunger and physical suffering. Genuine faith is attained by the believer through authenticity and compliance with divine law, prompting him to consume, abstain, and endure hunger in alignment with Islam, rather than engaging in Sufi practices, which are an extension of the ascetic traditions of Buddhism and Christianity.

Miracles, particularly among later Sufis, evolved concurrently with societal dynamics, aligning with social realities, political climates, natural calamities, environmental disasters, adverse conditions, and food scarcity. This evolution influenced their behavioural trajectories, cognitive constraints, emotional frameworks, and pedagogical doctrines, against which early Sufism revolted, rendering it more akin to popular literature connected to society.

This affirms that Sufi narrative has evolved into literary pieces that are independent of Sufism, progressively conflicting with it and its foundational principles.

References:

1. Ibn Khaldun: *The Muqaddimah*, edited by Darwish Al-Juwaydi, Al-Maktabah Al-Asriyah, Sidon - Beirut, 1425 AH – 2005.
2. Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali: *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, Vol. 3, edited by Sayyid Imran, Dar Al-Hadith for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, Cairo - Egypt, n.d., 1425 AH – 2004.
3. Abu Abbas Al-Ghubrini: *Title of Knowledge*, concerning those known among scholars in the seventh century in Bejaia, edited by Professor Muhammad bin Abi Shanab, Dar Al-Basair for Publishing and Distribution, Hussein Dey - Algeria, 1st edition, 2007.
4. Abu Al-Qasim Abdul Karim Al-Qushayri: *The Al-Qushayri Epistle on Sufism*, with notes from the explanation by Zakariya Al-Ansari, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, Beirut - Lebanon, n.d., n.d. edition.
5. Ibn Maryam Al-Sharif: *The Orchard in the Mention of Saints and Scholars in Tlemcen*, University Publications, Algeria, n.d., 1986.
6. Asma Khalidi: *The Humor in the Stories of the Miracles of Sufis, between Sanctification and Folly*, Studies in Sufism, Diffaf Publications, 1st edition, 1436 AH / 2015 CE.
7. Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyah: *Zad Al-Ma'ad in the Guidance of the Best of Servants*, Vol. 1, Al-Risalah Foundation, 2013.
8. Abu Saad Abdul Malik Al-Nisaburi: *Tahrir Al-Asrar in the Foundations of Sufism*, with an appendix of commonly used Sufi terms in the Book and the Sunnah, annotated by Imam

- Sayyid Muhammad Ali, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 1st edition, Beirut - Lebanon, 2006 - 1427 AH.
9. Amina Belali: Analysis of Sufi Discourse in Light of Contemporary Critical Approaches, Ikhtilaf Publications, Algeria, 1st edition, 2002.
 10. Hassan Al-Samman: Resonance and Sufi Discourse, A Theory of Universal Structure and Comprehensive Awareness, Vision for Publishing and Distribution, 1st edition, 2011.
 11. Zain Al-Din Muhammad Abdul Ra'uf Al-Manawi: The Stellar Planets, in the biographies of Sufi masters, the Great Classes, edited by Muhammad Adeeb Al-Jader, Part: 1, Section: 1, Dar Sader, Beirut.
 12. Muhammad Abu Al-Fadl Badran: Literature of Sufi Miracles, A Study in Form and Content, Publications of the Zayed Center for Heritage and History, United Arab Emirates - Al Ain, 1st edition, 1421 AH - 2001 CE.
 13. Abu Abdullah Muhammad Al-Tlemceni Ibn Marzouk: The Meritorious Merits, study and verification by Salwa Al-Zahri, Publications of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Casablanca - Morocco, 1st edition, 1429 AH / 2008.
 14. Ali Ziyour: Sufi Miracles, Myth, and Dream, the Unconscious Sector in the Arab Self, Series: Psychoanalysis and the Human Aspect of the Arab Self 2, Dar Al-Andalus for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, 2nd edition, January 1984.
 15. Imad Jughaym Owaid Al-Aboudi: The Poetry of Hunger in Arabic Literature, the Mamluk Era as a Model, Basra Research Journal, (College of Education and Humanities / University of Maysan), Volume: 38, Issue: 1, Year: 2013/
 16. Faraj bin Ramadan: The Literary Study of Sufi Miracles, its Foundations, Procedures, and Stakes, Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Sfax, Research Unit in Imagination, Part: 1, From Sufism to Literature, 2006 - 2007.
 17. Yusuf bin Ismail Al-Nabhani: The Collection of the Miracles of Saints, Vol. 1, edited by Samir Mustafa Rabab, Al-Maktabah Al-Asriyah, Sidon - Beirut, n.d., 1426 AH - 2005/
 18. Yusuf Zidan: The Sequences, A Study in Sufism, Egyptian Lebanese House, Cairo - Egypt, 1st edition, Ramadan 1418 AH - January 1998/