

The Concept of *al-Ittihad*: Abu Yazid al-Busthami's Thought and Its Relevance in Sufism

Yogi Fery Hidayat¹

¹ Universitas Darunnajah, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Yogi Fery Hidayat, E-mail; yferyhidayat@darunnajah.ac.id

Received: Sep 16, 2024

Revised: Sep 18, 2024

Accepted: Oct 26, 2024

Online: Oct 26, 2024

ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the concept of *al-Ittihad* in the thought of Abu Yazid al-Busthami and its relevance within the tradition of Sufism, particularly in the context of Islamic spirituality. *Al-Ittihad* refers to the mystical union between human and God, where a Sufi feels a dissolution into the Divine during a profound spiritual experience. This concept is considered one of the central themes in Sufism but often sparks theological controversy among orthodox scholars, especially since it is perceived as violating the principle of *tauhid* (the oneness of God). Through *shathiyat* (mystical utterances) such as "Glory be to Me," Abu Yazid expressed his experiences in the states of *fana'* (annihilation of the self) and *baqa'* (subsistence in God), which form the core of his mystical journey towards *al-Ittihad*. This study employs a literature review method by analyzing classical Sufi texts and scholars' interpretations regarding this concept. Additionally, it explores the relevance of *al-Ittihad* in the modern context, where Sufism has seen a revival of interest among both Muslims and non-Muslims as a response to the spiritual quest in the face of modern challenges. The research findings indicate that although *al-Ittihad* is often misunderstood and debated, it remains a significant aspect of the spiritual journey in Sufism. The experience of *al-Ittihad* offers a way to deepen one's relationship with God through the dissolution of ego and worldly attachments, and it plays a crucial role in modern Sufi studies as a means of achieving profound spiritual intimacy.

Keywords: *al-Ittihad*, Abu Yazid al-Busthami, Sufism, *Fana'*, *Baqa'*

Journal Homepage <https://journal.ypidathu.or.id/index.php/ijnis>

This is an open access article under the CC BY SA license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

How to cite:

Hidayat, F. Y. (2024). The Concept of *al-Ittihad*: Abu Yazid al-Busthami's Thought and Its Relevance in Sufism. *Journal of Noesantara Islamic Studies*, 1(5), 266-279.

<https://doi.org/10.70177/ijnis.v1i5.1377>

Published by:

Yayasan Pendidikan Islam Daarut Thufulah

INTRODUCTION

Sufism is one of the spiritual dimensions in Islam that emphasizes mystical experiences and an intimate relationship with God. One of the prominent concepts in Sufi discourse is *al-Ittihad*, which in Arabic means "union" or "unity" between human and God (Awofeso et al., 2019; Hamza Al-Qasimi et al., 2024; Mohammed & Rashid, 2023). This concept has become controversial as it is considered to go beyond traditional theological

boundaries, where it is believed that humans can unite with God in profound spiritual experiences.

The most renowned Sufi figure associated with the concept of al-Ittihad is Abu Yazid al-Busthami, a 9th-century Sufi also known by the name Bayazid al-Bistami. His thoughts on al-Ittihad are often linked to his mystical utterances, which are deemed extreme by some scholars (Abaddi, 2025; Boéri & Fattah, 2020; Sahid et al., 2021; Tahat et al., 2024). In various *shathiyat* (utterances of spiritual ecstasy), Abu Yazid frequently used expressions like "Glory be to Me," which is considered a form of expression stemming from the experiences of *fana'* (self-annihilation) and *baqa'* (subsistence in God). These statements have sparked debate among scholars and Muslim communities as they are perceived to blur the boundaries between humans and God.

The concept of al-Ittihad is not only important in understanding classical Sufism but also holds relevance in the context of modern spirituality. Amid the resurgence of interest in Sufism, both among Muslims and non-Muslims, Abu Yazid's thoughts on mystical union are often revisited as a way to understand a deeper and more personal relationship between humans and God (Akbar et al., 2023; Al-Klibi & Al Abdily, 2024; Hamid et al., 2021). Therefore, this research aims to delve deeper into Abu Yazid al-Busthami's thoughts on al-Ittihad and trace its relevance in Sufism, both in historical and contemporary contexts.

This study will also explore how the concept of al-Ittihad has been received and criticized by other Muslim scholars and intellectuals, as well as its implications for modern Sufi studies. Thus, this research is expected to provide a significant contribution to the development of Sufi studies, particularly in understanding the dynamics of mystical experiences in Islam.

Throughout the history of Islamic thought, Sufism has become one of the important pillars offering a distinct approach to religion, emphasizing the path of *ma'rifah* (direct knowledge) and mystical experiences focused on the inward aspects. Abu Yazid al-Busthami was one of the early Sufi figures who made a significant contribution to this discourse, particularly through his experiences of *al-Ittihad* (Abdallah et al., 2024; Azwar, 2020; Bashkin, 2020). Through his teachings and spiritual experiences, he provided a unique perspective on how a Sufi could achieve unity with God. Unlike many other Sufis, Abu Yazid is known for his *shathiyat* (mystical utterances), which were often seen as unconventional and extreme by Islamic orthodoxy. This made him a controversial figure, yet a central focus in the study of Sufism.

In this research, it is important to understand that the concept of *al-Ittihad* has not always been universally accepted within Islamic circles. Traditional scholars generally hold a firm view regarding God's transcendence and the absolute separation between the Creator and creation. *Al-Ittihad*, with its implication that a servant can "unite" with God, is often seen as contradicting the doctrine of *tauhid*, which emphasizes God's oneness and uniqueness without any partners. Nonetheless, in the context of mystical experience, many Sufis interpret *al-Ittihad* as a spiritual experience involving the annihilation of the ego

(*fana'*) and subsistence in God (*baqa'*), which does not erase the ontological boundary between human and God but rather describes a profound spiritual closeness.

This study will also examine the impact and relevance of the concept of *al-Ittihad* in contemporary spiritual life, particularly in the context of the growing interest in Sufism in the modern world. In recent decades, Sufism has attracted attention from various circles, both in the Islamic world and the West, as a response to what is perceived as a spiritual void in the modern era. Abu Yazid's thought, with his radical views on union with God, can be seen as an attempt to bridge deep religious experiences with the broader existential search for meaning in modern society.

This research not only aims to elucidate and analyze Abu Yazid al-Busthami's thoughts on *al-Ittihad* but also to explore the extent to which this concept can be accepted and applied in the context of contemporary spirituality. This is important because Sufism, as a rich mystical tradition, continues to evolve and adapt to various cultural and intellectual contexts (Knysh, 2000). Thus, this introduction leads to a deeper understanding of the concept of *al-Ittihad* in Sufism, particularly in the thought of Abu Yazid al-Busthami. The research will focus on how his ideas developed, the controversies surrounding them, and their relevance to the study of modern spirituality.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs literature review as the primary method, analyzing both primary and secondary sources relevant to the teachings of Abu Yazid al-Busthami. The primary sources include classical Sufi texts such as *Kitab al-Luma'* by Abu Nasr al-Sarraj, as well as other Sufi writings that document Abu Yazid's *shathiyat* (al-Sarraj, 1914). In addition, this study will utilize secondary sources in the form of modern studies on Sufism, which further explore the thought of Abu Yazid and the concept of *al-Ittihad*, such as the works of Reynold A. Nicholson and Annemarie Schimmel (Schimmel, 1975). Moreover, the approach used in this research is a philosophical and theological approach. This approach is useful for examining the concept of *al-Ittihad* within the framework of Islamic philosophy, particularly concerning the doctrine of *tauhid* and the relationship between God and creation. In this regard, the theological analysis will highlight the controversial aspects of Abu Yazid's thought, especially from the perspective of orthodox scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah, who often questioned the validity of such mystical experiences within the framework of Islamic doctrine.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Biography of Abu Yazid al-Busthami

Abu Yazid al-Busthami, also known as Bayazid al-Bistami, was one of the prominent Sufi figures of the 9th century. He was born in Bustham, a small town in the region of Iran, around the year 804 CE (Arberry, 1950). Abu Yazid came from a family with a strong religious background. According to historical records, his family followed Zoroastrianism before converting to Islam. The piety of his family, especially through his

devout mother, laid an important foundation for his spiritual development from an early age.

From a young age, Abu Yazid showed a deep interest in religious teachings. He was known as a diligent child in worship and fasting. In his youth, Abu Yazid traveled to seek knowledge in several major cities that were intellectual centers of Islam at the time, including Baghdad. During his journeys, he studied *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *hadith* (Prophetic traditions) from renowned scholars, but eventually became more drawn to the esoteric dimension of Islam, namely Sufism. His spiritual development was greatly influenced by the Sufi masters in the regions of Persia and Iraq, which were then hubs of various Islamic mystical traditions.

The historical, social, and cultural context surrounding Abu Yazid's life greatly influenced the development of his Sufi thought. He lived during the transitional period of the flourishing Abbasid dynasty and the fragmentation of political power in the Islamic world. At that time, Muslim society became divided between intellectual groups focused on the *sharia* (Islamic law) and mystical groups emphasizing inner experiences and love for God. This environment propelled Abu Yazid to explore deeper mystical experiences, making him a pioneer of the teachings of *fana'* (annihilation of the ego) and *baqa'* (subsistence in God).

One of Abu Yazid's distinctive characteristics was his simple and ascetic lifestyle. He rejected all forms of worldly luxury and chose a path of self-discipline and remembrance of God. His profound spiritual experiences led him to reach extraordinary states of ecstasy, where he often expressed *shathiyat* (mystical utterances) considered controversial by many. For example, his statement "Glory be to Me" was seen as the pinnacle expression of the experience of *al-Ittihad*, where a Sufi feels they have united with God.

Throughout his life, Abu Yazid al-Busthami was known for his humility, spending much of his time in solitude, engaged in worship. He passed away in 874 CE in his hometown of Bustham, but his teachings and influence continue to live on through various works and his disciples.

Abu Yazid al-Busthami is known as one of the Sufi figures who emphasized the importance of spiritual journey as a path to achieve *al-Ittihad*, or mystical union with God. His spiritual journey was filled with intense mystical experiences, which formed the basis of his thoughts on *al-Ittihad*. One of the key concepts in Abu Yazid's teachings is *fana'* (annihilation of the ego), where a Sufi must dissolve themselves, both physically and spiritually, until there is no longer any awareness of their own existence. According to Abu Yazid, this state of *fana'* is a prerequisite for achieving *al-Ittihad*, a mystical union in which the servant feels God's presence completely and merges with Him.

One of Abu Yazid's most well-known mystical experiences is his moment of ecstasy, which he often expressed in the form of *shathiyat* (spontaneous mystical utterances). For example, one of his most famous statements is, "Glory be to Me, how great is my majesty!". This declaration arose from a state of ecstasy in which he felt so close to God that he lost all sense of self. In this state, he expressed the feeling that

everything within him was a manifestation of God's presence. This experience is often seen as a reflection of the *al-Ittihad* concept, where one no longer distinguishes themselves from God.

In one account of his spiritual journey, Abu Yazid described how he sought to empty himself of everything except God. He said, "I left myself behind, I left the world, I left everything. I stood before God with nothing but Him". This illustrates his belief that the path to God requires the renunciation of all worldly things and the annihilation of the ego. For Abu Yazid, this self-emptying was the way to achieve true spiritual freedom, where one not only feels God's presence but also becomes united with Him.

Another important mystical experience that shaped his thinking on *al-Ittihad* was his journey through the *maqamat* (spiritual stations) and *ahwal* (mystical states). Like many other Sufis, Abu Yazid passed through various *maqam*, including repentance (*tawbah*), patience (*sabr*), and trust (*tawakkul*). Each of these stages brought him closer to the awareness of God's presence. However, he emphasized that the highest attainment is the state of *ma'rifah* (direct knowledge of God), which can only be achieved through *fana'*. This reinforced his belief that *al-Ittihad* is the result of a long process of continuous ego annihilation and deep mystical awareness.

Abu Yazid's experience of **al-Ittihad** was not limited to the individual aspect but also involved a sense of social and spiritual responsibility. He taught that the attainment of **al-Ittihad** is not the end of the spiritual journey, but rather the starting point for serving God and humanity with a pure heart. Thus, Abu Yazid viewed **al-Ittihad** not merely as a personal mystical experience, but also as the foundation for a life of devotion and service.

These mystical experiences, often expressed in metaphorical and symbolic language, provide a clear picture of how Abu Yazid understood the relationship between human beings and God. In *al-Ittihad*, according to him, there is no longer a clear boundary between the creature and the Creator; there is only the manifestation of God's love in the heart of the servant who has attained *fana'*. This teaching became one of the key pillars of Sufism, though it often sparked controversy among orthodox scholars.

Like most great Sufi figures, Abu Yazid al-Busthami undertook a long journey in acquiring knowledge, both in the fields of *fiqh*, *hadith*, and Sufism. His early education was shaped by his deeply religious family environment (Daneshgar, 2021; Faruqi, 2023; Kars, 2022; Malik & Hamid, 2022; Öztürk, 2024). His mother, who was very devout, played an important role in instilling values of piety and spirituality in him. However, his spiritual outlook was also shaped by interactions with various teachers he encountered throughout his life, particularly among Sufi figures.

After receiving basic education in his hometown of Bustham, Abu Yazid traveled to various intellectual centers of Islam at the time, including Baghdad and Kufah. In these places, he studied religious sciences, particularly *fiqh* and *hadith*, from several prominent scholars (Farda, 2019; Samson, 2022; Siddiqui, 2019). One figure believed to have had a significant influence on Abu Yazid's spiritual development was Ja'far al-Sadiq, a descendant of the Prophet's family who was also known as a Sufi and scholar. Although

there is no direct evidence that Abu Yazid studied with Ja'far al-Sadiq, his teachings on inner awareness and Islamic mysticism are thought to have greatly influenced Abu Yazid's thinking.

Abu Yazid was also influenced by Sahl al-Tustari, a major Sufi known for his mystical views on the heart and the relationship between humans and God. In some sources, Abu Yazid is mentioned as having met with the disciples of Sahl al-Tustari, who significantly influenced Abu Yazid's approach to understanding the inner dimensions of Islam. Sahl al-Tustari's teachings on the importance of *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and deep contemplation as a path to God are reflected in Abu Yazid's practices, particularly in the concept of *fana'* (annihilation of the ego), which became central to his mystical teachings.

Another influence came from Abu al-Hasan al-Kharqani, a famous Sufi from Kharqan who is believed to have been a disciple of Abu Yazid al-Busthami. Although al-Kharqani is considered younger than Abu Yazid, there are some traditions that mention their teachings as complementary, particularly in the aspect of attaining mystical consciousness through union with God (Arikewuyo, 2019; Ellethy, 2020; Polat, 2019). Both emphasized the spiritual journey that requires one to relinquish the ego and subdue desires.

Additionally, Abu Yazid's journey brought him into contact with scholars involved in more formal theological discussions, such as Ahmad bin Hanbal and Abu Thawr. Although these scholars did not directly influence his mystical approach, the discussions with them gave Abu Yazid a deeper understanding of the boundaries of *sharia* and ethics in Islam, which he later integrated into his Sufi teachings.

Abu Yazid's education in Sufism was also gained through direct experiences and guidance from older contemporary Sufis. One spiritual teacher who had a profound influence on his thought development was Hamad ibn Ahmad al-Sufi, often referred to as one of Abu Yazid's primary teachers (al-Sarraj, 1914). Hamad provided guidance on how to achieve a deep state of ecstasy (*hal*) through intense spiritual practices, including prolonged *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and night prayers (*qiyam al-lail*). This guidance further deepened Abu Yazid's understanding of *fana'*, or self-annihilation and the obliteration of the ego, which became foundational to the concept of *al-Ittihad* that he later developed.

In the later part of his life, Abu Yazid al-Busthami became a teacher to many disciples, who then spread his teachings throughout the Islamic world. Through this network, his teachings and views on Sufism continued to grow and influence many great Sufis in later generations. Although Abu Yazid did not leave many written works, his teachings lived on through the stories told by his students and were preserved within the tradition of Sufism.

***Al-Ittihad* in Sufism**

Al-Ittihad is one of the most controversial and profound concepts in Sufism. Etymologically, *al-Ittihad* comes from the Arabic word meaning "union" or "unity." In the

context of Sufism, al-Ittihad refers to a mystical experience where a Sufi feels that they have united or merged with God. This concept describes a spiritual state achieved through a long and intense journey involving the annihilation of the ego (*fana'*) and full realization of God's presence (*baqa'*)

The concept of al-Ittihad is often associated with *fana'*, a state in which a Sufi feels that they have completely vanished or dissolved in the presence of God. *Fana'* does not merely signify the physical loss of self-awareness but also the annihilation of the ego or sense of self. In the state of *fana'*, a Sufi no longer perceives a distinction between themselves and God; there is only absolute awareness of God. At this stage, a Sufi has reached the highest point in their spiritual journey, where everything about them is no longer separate from God. However, al-Ittihad is not just *fana'*, but also involves the phase of *baqa'*, or subsistence, where a Sufi lives in full consciousness of God and returns to the world bearing that knowledge (Chittick, 1989).

The experience of al-Ittihad is often expressed by Sufis in the form of *shatahat*, which are mystical utterances that are frequently controversial. One of the most famous *shatahat* in Sufi tradition is the declaration by Abu Yazid al-Busthami, "Glory be to Me, how great is My majesty!". Although this statement may appear arrogant and in contradiction to the Islamic doctrine of God's oneness (*tauhid*), it actually reflects a mystical state where Abu Yazid felt that he had completely dissolved in God. This statement is not an expression of personal ego but a recognition that he no longer existed independently, and what remained was only God's presence within him.

Although al-Ittihad is often understood as the total union between a human and God, Sufis emphasize that this union is mystical, not ontological. In Islamic doctrine, God and creation are essentially distinct entities; there is no union in the physical or material sense (Artiran, 2019; Bozbuga, 2021; Khalid et al., 2021). Al-Ittihad in Sufism does not blur the ontological boundaries between God and creation but rather describes a spiritual experience where a Sufi intensely and fully feels God's presence within themselves. According to Sufis, this state does not mean that a human becomes God but that a Sufi has achieved a profound understanding of God's will and existence, living in full awareness of His presence.

In Sufi literature, the concept of *al-Ittihad* is often discussed in relation to the concept of *tauhid*, or the oneness of God. Sufis, including Abu Yazid al-Busthami, emphasize that true *tauhid* can only be achieved when a Sufi attains al-Ittihad, which occurs when they eliminate all forms of duality between themselves and God. In this context, al-Ittihad is regarded as the highest state of spiritual consciousness, where a Sufi no longer perceives themselves as an entity separate from God, but as a manifestation of God's will in the world.

However, the concept of al-Ittihad has not always been universally accepted by orthodox scholars. Many traditional scholars criticize this concept, viewing it as contrary to the principle of *tauhid*, and suggesting that it creates the impression that humans can unite with God in an ontological sense. One of the strongest critiques of the concept of al-Ittihad comes from Ibn Taymiyyah, a prominent theologian who opposed the idea that

humans can achieve union with God. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, although a Sufi can attain spiritual closeness to God, true union between God and creation is impossible because God remains transcendent and distinct from His creation.

Despite this, many other Sufi figures, such as Ibn 'Arabi and al-Hallaj, continued to develop and uphold the concept of al-Ittihad. Ibn 'Arabi, for example, expanded on the idea of *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being), which essentially explains that all existence is a manifestation of God, even though the existence of creatures remains essentially distinct from God. As a result, the debate over the concept of al-Ittihad and its application in Sufism remains a dynamic part of the spiritual discourse in Islamic tradition.

In conclusion, al-Ittihad is a complex and profound concept in Sufism, involving a Sufi's spiritual journey towards *fana'* and *baqa'*, as well as the full realization of God's presence. While the concept is often understood mystically, rather than ontologically, the discussion surrounding the boundaries between God and creation continues to be a central focus in understanding al-Ittihad within the Sufi tradition.

Comparison of the Concepts of *al-Ittihad*, *al-Hulul*, and *Wahdat al-Wujud*

Al-Ittihad, which means "union" or "oneness" between humans and God, has become a central theme in Sufism, particularly among great Sufi figures such as Abu Yazid al-Busthami, Mansur al-Hallaj, and Ibn 'Arabi. Although these concepts share essential similarities, emphasizing deep mystical experiences, there are significant variations in how these three figures understand and articulate al-Ittihad in their works and teachings.

Al-Ittihad

For Abu Yazid, al-Ittihad is the highest mystical state in which a Sufi feels that they have completely merged with God. In his mystical statements (*syatahat*), Abu Yazid once said, "Glory be to Me, how great is my majesty!". This statement reflects an experience of *fana'* (the annihilation of the ego) so profound that he feels there is no longer any difference between himself and God. Abu Yazid emphasizes that al-Ittihad occurs when one fully eliminates the ego, individuality, and all worldly attachments, leaving only the awareness of God.

However, Abu Yazid's view of al-Ittihad does not refer to an ontological union (in a physical sense) between humans and God, but rather to a spiritual unity where the creature loses awareness of itself, with only the awareness of God remaining. This perspective has sparked debate, as some orthodox scholars see Abu Yazid's mystical statements as a deviation from the concept of *tauhid* (the oneness of God).

Al-Hulul

Mansur al-Hallaj, a renowned Persian Sufi who lived a few decades after Abu Yazid, proposed a view of al-Hulul that is similar to al-Ittihad but with a more extreme emphasis. Al-Hallaj is known for his controversial statement: "*Ana al-Haqq*" (I am the Truth or I am God). This statement has become one of the most famous expressions of the al-Hulul concept in Sufi tradition. In his understanding, al-Hallaj experienced a mystical union where he and God became one, and he no longer felt separate from God.

However, an important difference between al-Hallaj and Abu Yazid is that al-Hallaj openly claimed this experience of union in a more radical and direct form. While Abu Yazid spoke of merging with God through *fana'*, al-Hallaj claimed that he had become a manifestation of God Himself. Al-Hallaj's statement "Ana al-Haqq" had severe consequences; he was ultimately executed by the Abbasid authorities for what was deemed blasphemy. For al-Hallaj, *al-Hulul* was not merely a temporary state of *fana'*, but a full and eternal unity between God and His creatures, which could be verbally expressed in worldly life.

Wahdat al-Wujud

In contrast to Abu Yazid and al-Hallaj, Ibn 'Arabi, a prominent philosopher and Sufi from Andalusia, developed the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of being), which is also related to al-Ittihad but approaches it from a more metaphysical standpoint (Anoosheh & Jahromi, 2020; Keshavmurthy, 2023; Topsfield, 2022; Wieringa, 2019). According to Ibn 'Arabi, everything in the universe is essentially a manifestation of God's being. He does not speak of a literal or mystical union between humans and God; instead, he teaches that all existence is a reflection of God's being. In this view, *wahdat al-wujud* is not merely a temporary or personal spiritual experience but an ontological reality that always exists. All creatures exist within God, and their existence is simply a manifestation of the one absolute being, which is God.

For Ibn 'Arabi, the unity between God and creation does not mean that creation literally "becomes God," but rather that all reality is fundamentally an expression of God. In this sense, *wahdat al-wujud* is more cosmological and philosophical than the personal mystical experiences claimed by Abu Yazid and al-Hallaj. Ibn 'Arabi avoids mystical statements or excessive claims like "*Ana al-Haqq*", instead describing this unity in more nuanced intellectual and metaphysical terms.

Controversial Statements of Abu Yazid al-Busthami

One of the most famous and controversial mystical statements by Abu Yazid al-Busthami is the expression "Glory be to Me, how great is My glory!" (*subhani, ma a'zama sha'ni*). This statement arises in the context of *syatahat*, which refers to expressions of profound spiritual ecstasy when a Sufi feels they have achieved *fana'* (the annihilation of the ego) and al-Ittihad (mystical union with God). In the state of *fana'*, Abu Yazid felt that he had vanished, leaving only the awareness of God. The expression "Glory be to Me" is not a claim that Abu Yazid literally becomes God, but rather an expression of his realization that he no longer exists independently, but is merely a manifestation of the Divine presence. This statement is often associated with the concept of *al-Ittihad*, where a Sufi feels that there is no longer a distinction between themselves and God in their mystical experience.

In addition to the statement "Glory be to Me," Abu Yazid is also known for another statement in which he said, "I leave myself behind, I leave the world, I leave everything, and I stand before God with nothing but Him". This statement reflects a deeper experience of *fana'*, where Abu Yazid describes his spiritual process as the

annihilation of all worldly attachments, leaving only God. This saying, in its symbolic and philosophical interpretation, reflects the pinnacle of Sufi experience, where the ego and individuality vanish, and only God remains as the sole absolute reality. In the context of al-Ittihad, this statement illustrates a mystical experience that compels a Sufi to completely empty themselves in order to experience union with God.

Abu Yazid's views on al-Ittihad elicited numerous reactions from society and the scholarly community. Ibn Taymiyyah and other orthodox scholars criticized this perspective, believing that expressions like "Glory be to Me" and "*Ana al-Haqq*" (as stated by Mansur al-Hallaj) could potentially undermine the doctrine of *tauhid* (the oneness of God), as they seemed to imply that a human could claim to be God. For them, al-Ittihad was considered a form of heresy that blurred the distinction between the Creator and the creation.

However, many other Sufis supported Abu Yazid and interpreted his statements as valid and profound spiritual experiences. They argued that these mystical expressions represented a form of ecstasy (*hal*) that transcended ordinary language and could not be judged by rational or literal standards. Sufi figures such as Ibn 'Arabi viewed the experiences of *fana'* and al-Ittihad as legitimate spiritual conditions, where a Sufi does not truly claim to be God but rather witnesses God through themselves.

Relevance of the Concept of *al-Ittihad* in Contemporary Sufism

The concept of *al-Ittihad*, which emphasizes the mystical experience of unity between the servant and God, remains relevant in the spiritual lives of Muslims today, particularly among those seeking profound spiritual meaning. Although not all Muslims explicitly follow the path of Sufism, many Sufi communities around the world continue to practice mystical experiences related to *fana'* (annihilation of the self) and *baqa'* (eternity), which are prerequisites for al-Ittihad. Moreover, with the growing interest in spirituality in the modern era, including in the Western world, the concept of al-Ittihad is often viewed as a means to find inner unity with the Divine and as an alternative to formal ritualistic approaches in religion. This has led many individuals, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to seek peace and meaning through mystical experiences akin to the concept of al-Ittihad.

However, in the modern context, the concept of al-Ittihad also faces criticism. Many contemporary Muslim scholars argue that al-Ittihad can be misinterpreted as a form of pantheism, equating God with His creation, which could potentially contradict the teachings of *tauhid* (the oneness of God) in Islam. Modern Muslim thinkers, such as Fazlur Rahman and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, acknowledge the spiritual value of Sufism but emphasize the importance of maintaining the distinction between the Creator and the creation within Islamic teachings. On the other hand, some non-Muslim scholars view this concept as a reflection of universal spiritual experience that transcends religious boundaries, similar to the idea of "mystical unity" found in other mystical traditions such as Christianity or Hinduism.

In modern studies of Sufism and Islamic philosophy, the concept of al-Ittihad has been reinterpreted within a more metaphorical and philosophical framework. Ibn 'Arabi's

concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of being) often serves as a foundation for this reinterpretation. In a modern approach, al-Ittihad is not understood literally as a physical union between human beings and God but rather as an acknowledgment of the existential unity of all creation with God as the source of all existence. This approach allows for the integration of Sufism into modern philosophical discourse, where mystical experiences are viewed as forms of awareness of the profound relationship between humanity, the universe, and God as a transcendent reality that surpasses everything. This new approach helps maintain the relevance of al-Ittihad in the modern era, positioning it as a part of the ongoing study of spirituality and contemporary philosophy.

CONCLUSION

Abu Yazid al-Busthami, a prominent Sufi of the 9th century, stands out in the Sufi tradition for his thoughts on *al-Ittihad*, the mystical union between humanity and God. His spiritual experiences, centered around *fana'* (annihilation of the self) and *baqa'* (eternity in God), illustrate a Sufi's journey toward unity with God through self-emptying and remembrance (*zikr*). His controversial mystical statements, such as "Glory be to Me", reflect an ecstatic experience where Abu Yazid felt he had dissolved into the presence of God. Although his teachings are often viewed as conflicting with the doctrine of *tauhid* (the oneness of God) by orthodox scholars, the concept of *al-Ittihad* remains relevant in the Sufi tradition to this day. His journey through *maqamat* (stations) and *ahwal* (states) emphasizes that the annihilation of the self is the key to a profound spiritual unity with God. Criticism from figures like Ibn Taymiyyah and acceptance by other Sufi luminaries such as Ibn 'Arabi highlight the dynamic theological debates regarding the boundaries between creation and the Creator. In the modern context, *al-Ittihad* continues to be an important concept, especially among contemporary Sufis and seekers of deep spirituality. While there are concerns that this concept may be misunderstood as pantheism, many contemporary Sufi scholars interpret it as an existential experience of unity that is more philosophical in nature.

REFERENCES

- Abaddi, S. (2025). Optimizing double glazing through time and work measurements and simulation. *Journal of Simulation*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17477778.2024.2446749>
- Abdallah, R., Abokhoza, R., & Aissani, R. (2024). The Use of Multimedia in Newspapers: A Study on the Websites of Emirati Newspapers. *Studies in Media and Communication*, 12(2), 241–252. <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v12i2.6645>
- Akbar, M. R., Mizar, A., Muladi, M., Ching, H.-Y., & Amin, M. A. (2023). Techno-Economical Analysis of Hybrid PV System for School Industry. *2023 IEEE 3rd International Conference in Power Engineering Applications: Shaping Sustainability Through Power Engineering Innovation, ICPEA 2023*, 191–196. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICPEA56918.2023.10093195>
- Al-Klibi, N. A. H. S., & Al Abdily, D. H. (2024). The Effect of the Agility Supply Chain in Enhancing the Value of the Organization Analytical Research at Al-Ittihad Food Industries Ltd. In W. A.G., A.-M. A.R.H., K. A.N., A.-H. D.M.H., I. A.K., A. D.H., H. B.J., F. M.D., J. H.A.G., A. A.M., M. A.S., & A.-M. T.J. (Eds.), *AIP Conference*

- Proceedings* (Vol. 3092, Issue 1). American Institute of Physics. <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0200470>
- Anoosheh, S. M., & Jahromi, M. K. (2020). A mystical reading of 's translation by Robert Bly and Leonard Lewisohn. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 10(2), 230–237. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1002.12>
- Arikewuyo, A. N. (2019). A comparative study of al-ghazali's and ibn taymiyyah's views on sufism. *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 17(1), 15–24. <https://doi.org/10.24035/IJIT.17.2020.166>
- Artiran, M. K. (2019). A cross-cultural redefinition of rational emotive and cognitive behavior therapy: From the west to the middle east. In *A Cross-Cultural Redefinition of Rational Emotive and Cognitive Behavior Therapy: From the West to the Middle East*. Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429276873>
- Awofeso, N., Al Imam, S., & Ahmed, A. (2019). Content analysis of media coverage of childhood obesity topics in UAE newspapers and popular social media platforms, 2014-2017. *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, 8(2), 81–89. <https://doi.org/10.15171/ijhpm.2018.100>
- Azwar, Z. (2020). The Role of Substantive Understanding Approach in the Changes of Fiqh. *Al-Adalah*, 17(1), 71–96. <https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v17i1.6031>
- Bashkin, O. (2020). UNFORGETTABLE RADICALISM: AL-ITTIHAD'S WORDS IN HEBREW NOVELS. In *The Arab Left: Histories and Legacies, 1950s-1970s* (pp. 18–38). Edinburgh University Press. <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85200554657&partnerID=40&md5=e91256128537bbc5ff9cd007deb189f2>
- Boéri, J., & Fattah, A. (2020). Manipulation of translation in hard news reporting on the Gulf crisis: combining narrative and appraisal. *Meta (Canada)*, 65(1), 73–99. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1073637AR>
- Bozbuga, Y. (2021). A Criticism of Sunbul Sinan Efendi's Work Risalah al-Tahqiqiyya: Ar-Rahs va'l-Vaks. *Islam Tetkikleri Dergisi*, 11(1), 167–208. <https://doi.org/10.26650/iuitd.2020.856972>
- Daneshgar, M. (2021). The Prophet Shaving: Persians and the Origin of the Malay Hikayat Nabi Bercukur. *Islam - Zeitschrift Fur Geschichte Und Kultur Des Islamischen Orients*, 98(2), 394–424. <https://doi.org/10.1515/islam-2021-0028>
- Ellethy, Y. (2020). A controversial orthodoxy: Al-Ghazali's revival of the religious sciences. *NTT Journal for Theology and the Study of Religion*, 74(4), 375–386. <https://doi.org/10.5117/NTT2020.4.005.ELLE>
- Farda, S. (2019). A brief look at the flow of mystical thoughts in Turkish literature and mention of the famous Sufis of this literature. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Scientific Studies*, 2(2), 13–17. <https://doi.org/10.53894/IJRSS.V2I2.15>
- Faruqi, D. (2023). 19th Century Moroccan Sufism and the 2011 Syrian Revolution: The Legacy of Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Mas'ūd al-Fāsī. *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies*, 8(1), 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.2979/jims.00002>
- Hamid, M. A., Basid, A., & Aulia, I. N. (2021). The reconstruction of Arab women role in media: a critical discourse analysis. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13278-021-00809-0>
- Hamza Al-Qasimi, R. H., Hasan, A. B., & Mohammad, W. A. (2024). Effect of Breed on Some Traits of Lamb Carcasses of Iraqi Local Sheep. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 1371(7). [277](https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

- [1315/1371/7/072014](https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etab076)
- Kars, A. (2022). A 'SUFİ' EPISTLE ON SPIRITUAL POVERTY, AND ITS AUTHORS: AUTHENTICITY, AUTHORITY, AND GENRE IN TEXTUAL REPRODUCTION. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 33(2), 203–229. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etab076>
- Keshavmurthy, P. (2023). A Novel Model of Mind in Bidel's Sinai of Enlightenment. *Journal of World Philosophies*, 8(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.2979/jourworlphil.8.1.01>
- Khalid, I., Gulzar, S., & Amin, M. (2021). A critical review of shamsuddin azeemi's "murāqabah" through the lens of the qur'ān and hadīth. *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 11(1), 301–317. <https://doi.org/10.32350/JITC.111.16>
- Malik, M. P. A., & Hamid, F. A. F. A. (2022). (17th Century Classical Islamic Malay Writing: A Discussion of Selected Books). *Journal of Al-Tamaddun*, 17(2), 181–192. <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol17no2.14>
- Mohammed, I. J., & Rashid, A. G. (2023). EFFECT OF THE AFFILIATION DIMENSION AT WORK ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AN APPLIED STUDY OF ETIHAD FOOD INDUSTRIES COMPANY LTDA. SUGAR AND OIL INDUSTRY / BABYLON GOVERNORATE. *International Journal of Professional Business Review*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i2.924>
- Öztürk, A. (2024). {-UbAn} SUFFIX IN KOKSHETAU COPY OF DÎVÂN-I HIKMET. *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektas Veli - Arastirma Dergisi*, 109, 311–326. <https://doi.org/10.60163/tkhcbva.1417717>
- Polat, M. (2019). A critical edition of the risāla fī raq̄s al-mutaşawwifa by hüsam Çelebi. *Islam Arastirmalari Dergisi*, 2019(41), 131–170. <https://doi.org/10.26570/isad.513168>
- Sahid, U., Wasliman, I., Muchtar, H. S., & Insan, H. S. (2021). Management of Student Characteristics Through Extracurricular Activities in The School Environment Based on Islamic Boarding Schools. *Munaddhomah*, 2(2), 116–125. <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v2i2.97>
- Samson, F. (2022). A Committed Sufi Intellectual Face to "Salafist Elitism". Interview with Souleymane Bachir Diagne. *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 248(4), 885–900. <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesafriaines.40312>
- Siddiqui, S. (2019). A brief survey of folk sufi poets of India. *IUP Journal of English Studies*, 14(1), 79–92. <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85064080222&partnerID=40&md5=bf0bc5be7db9667a8e9a93d37a427c64>
- Tahat, K., Mansoori, A., Tahat, D., & Habes, M. (2024). Examining opinion journalism in the United Arab Emirates national press: A comparative analysis. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 45(3), 351–369. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07395329241255159>
- Topsfield, A. (2022). A Note on Sufi Snakes and Ladders. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 32(4), 1016–1029. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186321000547>
- Wieringa, E. P. (2019). A nativist defence of Javanism in late 19th-century Java: The Suluk Gaṭoloco and its co-texts in the Sērat Suluk Panaraga compilation. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 47(139), 335–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2019.1652436>

Copyright Holder :

© Yogi Fery Hidayat. (2024).

First Publication Right :

© Journal of Noesantara Islamic Studies

This article is under:

