

## Taqarrub in the perspective of sufi exegesis: a comparative study of haqā'iq al-tafsīr by abū 'abd al-raḥmān al-sulamī (d. 412 h) and laṭā'if al-isyrāt by abū al-qāsim al-qushayrī (d. 465 h)

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### ABSTRACT

This research examines the concept of taqarrub (spiritual proximity to God) from the perspective of Sufi exegesis through a comparative study of two monumental works: Haqā'iq al-Tafsīr by Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412 H) and Laṭā'if al-Isyrāt by Abū al-Qāsim al-Qusyairī (d. 465 H). Both texts represent the esoteric and spiritual dimension of Qur'anic interpretation, yet they differ in methodological approach and historical context. Al-Sulamī's work largely compiles fragmentary sayings of early Sufi masters, while al-Qusyairī offers a more systematic exegetical framework grounded in Ash'arite theology and early Shādhilī practices. Employing a qualitative, library-based method with thematic exegesis (tafsīr mawdhū'ī), this study identifies and analyzes Qur'anic verses related to taqarrub as interpreted by both exegetes. The findings indicate that al-Sulamī emphasizes the experiential and symbolic dimensions of Sufi thought, whereas al-Qusyairī integrates mystical insights with a coherent theological structure, reflecting the intellectual debates of his era. Despite criticism regarding their subjectivity and lack of isnād, both works demonstrate that Sufi exegesis is deeply rooted in Islamic scholarly tradition. The study highlights that these interpretations remain relevant for contemporary Muslims seeking spiritual depth amidst modern rationalism and materialism. By comparing the two tafsirs, this research contributes to bridging the gap between textual-rational exegesis and esoteric-spiritual readings of the Qur'an. Furthermore, it underscores the enduring significance of Sufi hermeneutics in providing inner tranquility, ethical refinement, and a holistic understanding of divine revelation.

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## Introduction

The Qur'an, as the primary source of Islamic teachings, possesses a vastness of meaning that can be understood not only through linguistic, legal, or historical approaches but also through a Sufi approach oriented toward the inner dimension (Nurhayati & Rosadi, 2022). Sufi exegesis emerges as an effort to unveil the depth of the revelation's meaning that is not visible in a literal sense, but rather through spiritual experience and symbolism, thereby enriching the religious understanding of Muslims. This approach is often considered unique because it does

not merely explain the text but also guides the reader in the process of taqarrub, or drawing closer to Allah SWT (Saifulloh, n.d.).

Two major works that mark the development of Sufi exegesis are *Haqā'iq al-Tafsīr* by Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (d. 412 H) and *Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt* by Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465 H). Al-Sulamī compiled his exegesis as a collection of the views of earlier Sufis, characterized by fragmentary interpretations, symbolic expressions, and spiritual allusions (Yasin, n.d.). Meanwhile, al-Qushayrī presented his tafsir with a more systematic structure, influenced by Ash'arī theology, and enriched with explanations that bridge the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of the Qur'an. According to Knysh, both exegetes played a significant role in introducing a model of Sufi hermeneutics that positioned spiritual experience as one of the epistemological tools of Qur'anic interpretation (Knysh, 1999).

A comparative study of these two works is crucial since each presents a different style of interpreting the concept of taqarrub. On one hand, al-Sulamī emphasized direct spiritual experiences and the sayings of Sufis that uncover the deepest meanings of Qur'anic verses (Zarkasyi, n.d.). On the other hand, al-Qushayrī offered a methodological approach that integrates theological and mystical frameworks. Previous studies have highlighted that Sufi exegesis is often considered subjective and difficult to verify academically (Rifai, 2021). Nevertheless, Sufi interpretation reveals a more holistic dimension of Islamic spirituality, complementing the gaps left by purely textual approaches. The presence of Sufi exegesis also carries high relevance in the modern context. The increasing influence of rationalism and materialism has often diverted the attention of Muslims from the inner dimension of religion. Yet, the need for spirituality remains a fundamental aspect of human life. In this regard, Sufi exegesis can function as a bridge that connects the sacred text with human existential experience, allowing the value of taqarrub to be actualized in daily life (Khairuddin, n.d.).

Therefore, this study aims to comparatively examine the interpretation of the concept of taqarrub in *Haqā'iq al-Tafsīr* and *Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt*. Using a qualitative approach based on library research and the thematic method (*tafsīr mawdhū'ī*), this research seeks to highlight the hermeneutical patterns of both exegetes while reaffirming the contribution of Sufi exegesis to the broader Islamic intellectual tradition. Thus, this study not only enriches academic scholarship but also provides an applicative perspective in addressing the spiritual needs of Muslims in the contemporary era (Husna, n.d.).

## Method

This research is a qualitative study employing a library research approach (Sugiyono, 2022). Library research was chosen because the objects of study are classical texts, namely *Haqā'iq al-Tafsīr* by Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī and *Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt* by Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī. Through a qualitative approach, this study seeks to understand the meanings contained in these texts, particularly with regard to the concept of taqarrub in the perspective of Sufi exegesis.

The data sources consist of: (1) Primary Sources: *Haqā'iq al-Tafsīr* by Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (d. 412 H) and *Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt* by Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465 H). (2) Secondary Sources: literature related to Sufi exegesis, Qur'anic hermeneutics, and contemporary academic works on Sufi interpretation, such as Nasr (2007), Knysh (2010), Rippin (2001), and recent journal articles. The technique of data collection was conducted through library documentation by: (1) Reading and identifying verses related to taqarrub in both tafsir works; (2) Analyzing the interpretations of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī regarding those verses; (3) Comparing their interpretations with reference to secondary literature as analytical support (Moleong, 2022).

The technique of data analysis was carried out using the thematic tafsir method (tafsir mawdhū'i), which involves collecting Qur'anic verses related to the theme of taqarrub and then analyzing them based on the interpretations of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī. A comparative analysis was subsequently conducted to identify similarities, differences, and the methodological characteristics employed by each exegete (Supratiknya, 2022). According to Creswell, qualitative analysis involves the processes of organizing data, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. In this study, these steps were adopted as follows: (1) Data Reduction: selecting interpretations relevant to the theme of taqarrub; (2) Data Display: presenting the exegetical findings of both scholars in descriptive narrative form; (3) Comparative Analysis: comparing their methods, styles, and interpretative orientations (Creswell, 2022).

To maintain data validity, this research employed source triangulation, namely by comparing the interpretations in the primary texts with credible secondary literature, including books, journals, and previous research. Thus, the results of this study rest on a strong academic foundation and avoid mere subjective interpretation (Emzir, 2022).

## Result

Sufi Exegesis as a Mode of Hermeneutics, This study affirms that Sufi exegesis represents a unique hermeneutical approach to the Qur'an. Al-Sulamī, in *Haqā'iq al-Tafsir*, presents interpretations grounded in spiritual experience that are closely tied to inner meanings. This aligns with al-Dhahabī, view that tafsir isyārī is often influenced by the maqāmāt and aḥwāl of Sufis, thereby emphasizing esoteric meanings rather than exoteric ones (Al-Dhahabi, 2020). Meanwhile, al-Qushayrī, through *Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt*, seeks to balance the dimensions of Sharī'a and ḥaqīqa, thus situating Sufi exegesis within a framework acceptable to jurists and theologians.

Taqarrub as the Core of Spiritual Journey. Regarding taqarrub as the essence of the spiritual path, the findings indicate that both al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī regard it as the central aspect of the spiritual journey toward Allah. In the Sufi tradition, taqarrub is understood not merely as ritual worship but as an inner transformation toward ma'rifatullāh (Nasr, 2007). This resonates with Ibn 'Arabī's theory that closeness to Allah is the result of self-purification, divine love, and fanā' (annihilation) in His presence. Hence, Sufi exegesis reveals the spiritual dimension of the Qur'an that transcends literal approaches.

Methodological Differences. The fundamental differences between al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī illustrate that Sufi exegesis is not monolithic. *Haqā'iq al-Tafsir* reflects a spontaneous, intuitive style rooted in Sufi reports, while *Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt* demonstrates a more systematic, analytical, and Sharī'a-conscious approach. These differences reveal a dialectic within Sufi tafsir: one leaning toward exclusivity for Sufi circles (al-Sulamī), and the other attempting to bridge Sufism with broader society (al-Qushayrī) (Zaini, n.d.).

Contemporary Relevance, In the modern era, the concept of taqarrub in Sufi exegesis remains highly relevant. Many contemporary studies show that Islamic spirituality through practices such as dhikr, murāqabah, and tazkiyat al-nafs contributes to mental health, inner peace, and life balance (Khalil, 2018). In a materialistic society, Sufi exegesis of taqarrub can serve as an alternative framework to revive the transcendent dimension of human existence.

Contribution to Tafsir Scholarship, This study demonstrates the significant contribution of Sufi exegesis in enriching Qur'anic interpretation. While tafsir fiqhī emphasizes legal aspects, and tafsir kalāmī stresses theological discourse, Sufi exegesis highlights the profound spiritual dimension. Thus, it constitutes an essential part of the broader exegetical

spectrum, capable of addressing the inner dimensions of humanity that are often neglected by exoteric interpretations (Khalid, 2020).

Academic and Practical Implications, Academically, this study emphasizes that Sufi exegesis should be placed within a more comprehensive Qur'anic hermeneutical framework, rather than being regarded as marginal. Practically, the understanding of taqarrub can be applied to Islamic education, spiritual guidance, and community moral development. Therefore, this research not only offers theoretical value but also practical relevance in nurturing the spiritual awareness of Muslims.

## Discussion

This research affirms that Sufi exegesis constitutes a unique hermeneutical approach to the Qur'an (MS, n.d.). Al-Sulamī, in *Haqā'iq al-Tafsīr*, presents interpretations grounded in spiritual experience that are more closely connected to inner meanings. This aligns with al-Dhahabī's view that *tafsīr isyārī* is often influenced by the *maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl* of the Sufis, thus emphasizing esoteric rather than exoteric meanings. Meanwhile, al-Qushayrī, through *Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt*, attempts to balance the dimensions of *Sharī'a* and *ḥaqīqa*, thereby situating Sufi exegesis within a framework acceptable to jurists and theologians.

### Identification of Qur'anic Verses on Taqarrub

The concept of taqarrub in Islam refers to the endeavor of drawing closer to Allah through various forms of worship and righteous deeds. In the Qur'an, there are a number of verses, both explicit and implicit, that invite humankind to engage in taqarrub or spiritual nearness to Allah through specific means such as prayer, almsgiving, fasting, supplication, and other virtuous acts. Identifying these verses is essential so that Muslims may comprehend the diverse spiritual paths available for attaining closeness to the Creator (Qushayri, 1999).

Within the framework of Islamic spirituality, the concept of taqarrub (drawing near to Allah) serves as a central pillar and the ultimate goal of all acts of worship and good deeds. It is not merely a theological theory but rather an inner journey that demands awareness, sincerity, and deep contemplation of the Divine message. The Qur'an, as a universal guide, not only contains legal rulings but is also filled with spiritual indications directing humankind toward the attainment of the *maqām* (station) of taqarrub.

The identification of verses that explicitly or implicitly allude to the concept of taqarrub is a crucial initial step in mapping the spiritual path toward closeness with the Creator. This study seeks to trace and classify such verses in order to reveal the diverse dimensions of taqarrub presented by the Qur'an. Through this exploration, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding of the essence of taqarrub will be achieved, inspiring every Muslim to make this inner journey the core of all aspects of life (Al-Asqalani & bin Hajar, 1984).

As an example, QS. al-Baqarah [2]:186 highlights the Divine response to the servant's supplication and His nearness.

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

Artinya : "And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me—indeed, I am near. I respond to the supplication of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be rightly guided." (Kementrian Agama, 2021)

This verse affirms that drawing near to Allah (SWT) can be realized through sincere and intense communication in the form of supplication (du‘ā’).

### **Analysis of the Verses of Taqarrub**

Surah al-Baqarah [2]:186 is one of the Qur’anic verses that conveys a profound message about Allah’s closeness to His servants, as well as the concept of taqarrub (drawing near to Allah) (Ri, 2020). Sufi exegetes such as Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412 H) and ‘Abd al-Qāsim al-Qusyairī (d. 465 H) offer distinctive interpretations, grounded in spiritual, esoteric, and experiential dimensions (Welle, 2021). This comparative analysis seeks to explore the similarities and differences in their exegesis of this verse, as well as its relevance for the development of Sufi Qur’anic hermeneutics and contemporary religious life.

The reason for the revelation of this verse is explained in various reports. It is narrated that a Bedouin once came to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and asked: “Is our Lord near, so that we may supplicate quietly, or far, so that we must call out loudly?” Then Allah revealed this verse. According to Qatādah and other scholars, the Companions asked the Prophet: “How should we pray to our Lord, O Prophet of Allah? Should we whisper or should we call out loudly?” Upon this, the verse was revealed. ‘Atā’ and other scholars mentioned that the Companions asked: “Where is our Lord?” Ibn ‘Abbās narrated that the Jews of Madinah asked the Prophet: “O Muhammad, how does your Lord hear prayers?” And then Allah revealed this verse.

Allah (SWT) is always near to His servants; therefore, one should ask of Him with sincerity. He is not distant, and because He is not far from you, there is no need to raise the voice as if Allah were distant, unable to hear, or neglectful of His servants’ calls. In reality, He is closer to you than your jugular vein. Moreover, His nearness negates the need for intermediaries. The Qur’an clearly declares: “Call upon Me; I will respond to you” (Qur’an 40:60), and “We are nearer to him than you are, but you do not see” (Qur’an 56:87) (Husein, 2020).

In the context of man’s relationship with the Divine, there is no need to rely on intermediaries or complex interpretations. The Almighty encompasses all creation, and His essence cannot be fully grasped. Spiritual practices such as those undertaken by the Sufis provide deeper insight into God’s nearness to humanity. What is most essential is to pray directly to Him, without intermediaries. If He Himself has declared His nearness, why should mankind still seek others as go-betweeners?

The continuation of this verse emphasizes Allah’s words: “I respond to the call of the supplicant when he calls upon Me.” This indicates that God has closed all other doors and commanded humanity to turn directly to Him. He makes clear that “to Me alone” your prayers should be directed and will be answered. Nowhere in this verse is there any indication that supplication must pass through the mediation of any shaykh or saint. The verse continues with even greater clarity: “So let them respond to Me and believe in Me that they may be rightly guided”(Sofiudin, 2020).

This verse is expressed with great clarity and without complexity in its meaning. First, Allah is near to His servants. Second, every request of His servants receives His full attention. Not a single supplication is like water lost in the sand ignored, unheard, or abandoned. Third, in order for supplications to gain divine attention, humanity must first respond to Allah’s call, guidance, and commands. Fourth, one must truly believe in Him with sincerity. Fifth, through responding to Allah’s call and placing complete faith in Him, human beings are granted wisdom, guidance, and a path to follow so that they do not fall into misguidance or despair (Zulaeha & Dikron, 2020).

In Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr, al-Sulamī interprets this verse through the sayings of Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283 H), drawing from the early Sufi tradition that emphasizes the esoteric dimension of the servant's relationship with God. From the Sufi perspective, as seen in Sahl al-Tustarī, taqarrub ilā Allāh (nearness to God) is not merely the result of outward acts of worship, but is primarily connected to the continuous awareness of the heart toward His presence. Sahl al-Tustarī, one of the great Sufi masters of the 3rd century AH, emphasized that ḥayā' (a sense of shame or reverent modesty before God) is both the initial stage and the highest form of spiritual consciousness in the journey of taqarrub (Sofiudin, 2021).

The Meaning of "The Nearest" in the Sufi Perspective, Although ḥayā' is described as "the lowest level," Sahl al-Tustarī considers it the very first indicator of authentic spiritual nearness. This implies that: nearness (qurb) to Allah occurs in stages, and ḥayā' is the gateway that marks the awareness of this closeness. In Sufism, ḥayā' is regarded as the fruit of ma'rifah (gnosis), because only those who are truly conscious of God's presence can experience genuine modesty before Him.

Sahl al-Tustarī's statement reinforces this by affirming that: 1) Awareness of Allah's nearness gives rise to a profound sense of modesty (ḥayā'). 2) Supplication (du'ā') is not merely a request, but an acknowledgment and presence that demonstrates an inner connection with God. 3) Modesty is the fruit of inwardly answered prayer, namely the realization of ḥuḍūr (the presence of the heart) before Allah SWT. Feeling modest before Allah is an indication that one's heart has become aware of the Divine presence (al-ḥuḍūr). Thus, when praying, one should consciously bring Allah into the heart, which in turn generates this sense of modesty—an indicator of taqarrub ilā Allāh (drawing near to Allah). Modesty becomes an inner response that arises from an experience of intimacy with God, not out of fear of punishment, but from love and reverence.

In al-Qusyairī's perspective, the nearness of Allah to His servants requires no intermediaries not even through the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in this specific context. This is because the closeness is direct between Allah and His servant. Therefore, unlike many other verses that begin with the formula "Qul" ("Say"), this verse opens with the direct divine declaration: "Fa-innī qarīb" ("Indeed, I am near"). In the Qur'an, the verses that speak of taqarrub (drawing near to Allah) do not only emphasize ritual acts of worship, but also pure spirituality. Surah al-Tawbah [9]:99 is one of the verses that links charity (infāq) with nearness to Allah. On a deeper level, however, it shows that such nearness is attained only by those who are sincere and humble.

The Sufi exegesis of Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412 H) and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qusyairī (d. 465 H) offers an esoteric dimension to this verse, stressing that taqarrub is not the result of human effort alone, but a divine gift granted to hearts purified from ego. In Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr, al-Sulamī underscores that taqarrub is the effect of sincerity of intention, not merely outward deeds. His interpretation includes the following points:

1. Charity as a form of spiritual sincerity. Al-Sulamī explains that giving wealth is not merely an act of material transfer, but an expression of servitude and a recognition of man's spiritual poverty before Allah.
2. The word "قُرْبَاتٍ" (qurbāt) refers to the language of the heart, not the body. Charity performed solely for Allah—without worldly or social motives—opens the path to ma'rifah (gnosis) and brings the servant nearer to His light.
3. Humility as a prerequisite of taqarrub. He emphasizes that nearness to Allah is not the product of deeds, but the fruit of divine grace bestowed upon a humble and purified soul. Those who humble themselves before Allah are the ones raised in rank.

Meanwhile, al-Qusyairī in *Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt* interprets Surah al-Tawbah [9]:99 as follows:

وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرْبًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَصَلَوَاتِ الرَّسُولِ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَهُمْ سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Artinya : “Among the Bedouins are those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and regard what they spend (in the way of Allah) as a means of nearness to Allah and as a means of obtaining the prayers of the Messenger. Surely it shall indeed be for them a means of nearness. Allah will soon admit them into His mercy (Paradise). Indeed, Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Kementrian Agama, 2022)

In *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, al-Qushayrī presents the psychological and symbolic dimensions of this verse:

1. Qurbah as proof of sincerity and maḥabbah (Divine love). He states that taqarrub is not merely the “result of deeds” but rather a “response of Divine mercy” to a servant who truly desires Him—those who are sincere in faith and humble in hope.
2. The Prophet’s prayer as a symbol of spiritual acceptance. According to al-Qushayrī, their request for the Prophet’s prayer is not simply a form of worldly expectation, but an indication of their recognition that everything depends upon the pleasure of Allah and His Messenger.
3. Allah determines whom He draws near. He concludes his interpretation of this verse by affirming that taqarrub is a form of tajallī (manifestation of Divine mercy), which is not granted to everyone but only to servants whose intentions are pure and whose hearts are submissive.

For Sufis such as Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī and ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, this verse is evidence that Allah not only oversees but also “encompasses” the existence of creation within His knowledge and care, which forms the foundation of the relationship of love and spiritual connectedness. In his *Ḥaḳā’iq al-Tafsīr*, al-Sulamī emphasizes that this verse demonstrates Allah’s closeness to His servants:

1. Divine, not physical, closeness. Al-Sulamī interprets “*Naḥnu aqrabu ilayhi min ḥabli al-warīd*” as a spiritual closeness (*ma’nawī*), namely Allah’s nearness to His creation through His knowledge, power, and will.
2. Closeness as a path to taqarrub. He stresses that a servant who realizes this closeness will experience an opening of the heart (*inshirāḥ al-ṣadr*) and accelerate the process of taqarrub through remembrance (*dhikr*) and vigilance (*murāqabah*).
3. Divine tajallī within the servant. Al-Sulamī states that Allah “manifests Himself” to the hearts of His servants through inner inspirations, illuminations, and spiritual awareness—a form of tajallī that is unique and transformative.

Modern interpretive approaches also identify that verses commanding the improvement of worship and moral conduct function not only as obligations but also as spiritual means of attaining nearness to Allah. Contemporary studies demonstrate that taqarrub is a dynamic concept encompassing ritual, moral, and social dimensions of Islam.

Furthermore, contemporary research in Islamic journals highlights the importance of a holistic understanding of taqarrub, integrating bodily and spiritual aspects in the process of drawing closer to Allah. This concept is described as a spiritual journey involving the heart, intellect, and action, as reflected in various verses of the Qur’an.

Thus, the identification of taqarrub verses in the Qur'an reveals a diversity of paths and methods for attaining nearness to Allah, ranging from ritual worship to social and ethical deeds. A profound understanding of these verses is crucial in building a balanced and holistic spiritual life for Muslims in the present age.

### **Analysis of the Verses of Taqarrub from al-Sulamī's Perspective**

Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī, one of the leading Sufi figures of the 4th century Hijri, offers a profound understanding of the Qur'anic verses on taqarrub (drawing near to Allah) that differs significantly from conventional exegetical approaches. In his works, particularly *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr*, al-Sulamī interprets these verses not merely from their outward dimension, but rather emphasizes the inner and spiritual meanings contained within them (Wahyudi, 2020).

According to al-Sulamī, taqarrub is the striving of the soul to dissolve the ego in order to attain closeness to Allah. He views verses such as Q.S. al-Mā'idah: 35 as a call to embark on an intensive spiritual journey filled with sacrifice, rather than simply performing formal rituals. For him, taqarrub requires mastery of the heart and complete submission to Allah, the Almighty. Al-Sulamī further interprets taqarrub through the processes of *mujāhadah* (spiritual struggle) and *riyāḍah* (spiritual discipline). Verses that command fasting, remembrance (*dhikr*), and supplication are, in his view, not merely obligations but means through which the servant may draw near to Allah and purify the heart from worldly impurities. This interpretation positions taqarrub as a path of inner refinement and purification.

In his exegesis, al-Sulamī also underscores the significance of *kashf* (inner unveiling or spiritual illumination) as a method for truly grasping the meaning of taqarrub. He affirms that only a soul which has reached a certain degree of purity can perceive the hidden secrets of such verses. Thus, taqarrub is not simply an external aspect of religion but an existential and transformative spiritual experience. Verses that mention supplication as a means of taqarrub, such as Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:186, are interpreted by al-Sulamī as symbols of direct communication between the servant and God not merely ordinary petitions. Supplication represents a pivotal moment that transcends material boundaries and touches the divine dimension, marking true nearness to Allah.

Furthermore, al-Sulamī connects taqarrub with the qualities of the pious as described in Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:112. He interprets acts such as fasting, remembrance, and righteous deeds as outward manifestations of inner closeness to Allah. His exegetical style demonstrates that taqarrub encompasses both inner and outward dimensions working in harmony. In his commentary, al-Sulamī does not restrict taqarrub to ritual observances alone but extends it to ethical and social dimensions. He interprets Q.S. Āl 'Imrān [3]:133–134 as a call to draw near to Allah through generosity and self-restraint, highlighting that one's relationship with God is also reflected in one's conduct toward fellow human beings.

One of the hallmarks of al-Sulamī's exegesis is his rejection of rigidly literal interpretations, preferring instead an approach that penetrates inner spiritual experience. This opens the way for personal and contemplative interpretations that guide the individual along the spiritual journey toward taqarrub. Al-Sulamī also emphasizes that taqarrub is dynamic rather than static. Nearness to Allah increases in proportion to the servant's spiritual progress, with Qur'anic verses functioning as a roadmap that directs each stage of the journey. Thus, his interpretation provides a continuous framework for spiritual seeking.

Al-Sulamī's perspective on the verses of taqarrub affirms that nearness to Allah is the ultimate purpose of human life, attainable only through purification of the heart, spiritual

discipline, and profound awareness. His exegesis not only enriches the heritage of Qur'anic interpretation but also offers a significant contribution to contemporary Sufi understanding of the relationship between humanity and God.

### **Analysis of the Verses of Taqarrub from the Perspective of Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī**

The concept of taqarrub in al-Qushayrī's thought is closely related to the spiritual journey (sulūk) aimed at attaining existential closeness to Allah through purification of the soul and sincerity in worship. Al-Qushayrī emphasizes that taqarrub is not merely the result of outward acts of worship, but rather the fruit of love for Allah and the inner presence of the heart in all spiritual activities.

In his interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:186 "I am near, I answer the supplication of the one who calls upon Me" al-Qushayrī states that Allah's nearness is inward and is only truly experienced by those whose hearts are purified from worldly desires. For al-Qushayrī, taqarrub is the outcome of tawakkul (reliance upon Allah), maḥabbah (divine love), and continuous dhikr (remembrance). Regarding Q.S. al-Muzzammil [73]:6, which discusses night worship, al-Qushayrī views the night as the most effective time for drawing near to Allah because its serenity allows the heart and soul to focus entirely on the Creator. In his commentary, he describes night prayer as the mi'rāj al-mu'minīn (the spiritual ascension of the believers).

In Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]:35, Allah commands His servants to be mindful of Him, to seek a means of nearness (wasīlah), and to strive in His cause. Al-Qushayrī interprets wasīlah as all forms of deeds performed sincerely and in accordance with the Sharī'ah, noting that the strongest wasīlah is love and total devotion to Allah. He also interprets Q.S. al-Ra'd [13]:28 "Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find tranquility" — as a central verse in the process of taqarrub. According to him, dhikr is not merely the utterance of the tongue, but continuous awareness of Allah's presence within the heart, which becomes the key to strengthening nearness to the Divine.

In Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt, al-Qushayrī distinguishes between general qurb (nearness) and special qurb (khusūs al-qurb). General nearness can be attained by all believers through obedience, while special nearness is reserved for those who achieve fanā' (annihilation of the self in Allah's will) and baqā' (subsistence with Allah). Al-Qushayrī often links taqarrub with maqāmāt (spiritual stations) such as repentance (tawbah), asceticism (zuhd), and patience (ṣabr). Each maqām represents a stage that brings the servant closer to Allah. He views the spiritual journey as an increasing existential awareness of the Divine presence, not only in worship but in all aspects of life.

In his interpretation of Q.S. al-Ḥadīd [57]:16, he criticizes hardened hearts as the main barrier to taqarrub. For him, a heart untouched by the Qur'an and dhikr is veiled, and only through muḥāsabah (self reckoning) and murāqabah (spiritual vigilance) can one overcome this veil and draw near to Allah. Al-Qushayrī's thought also highlights the importance of divine love (maḥabbah) as the highest form of taqarrub. He frequently refers to Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]:54 — "Allah loves them and they love Him" — as an expression of taqarrub born out of a reciprocal relationship of love between the servant and the Lord.

Overall, al-Qushayrī's analysis of the verses of taqarrub is not merely normative or exoteric, but also profoundly spiritual (ishārī), guiding readers toward a deeper inner experience of God. His exegesis emphasizes that true taqarrub requires the total involvement of body, intellect, and soul in the spiritual dynamic of drawing near to Allah.

## **The Relevance of the Concept of Taqarrub in the Perspective of al-Sulamī in Modern Society**

The concept of taqarrub according to the perspective of Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī emphasizes spiritual closeness attained through purification of the heart, self-control, and spiritual discipline. In the context of modern society, which is full of pressures and noise, this concept holds high relevance as a solution to overcome the spiritual and psychological crises experienced by many individuals today.

Al-Sulamī stresses that taqarrub is not merely a formal ritual, but a process of inner transformation involving the struggle against carnal desires and attaining nearness to Allah through mystical experience. In a modern society characterized by instant gratification and materialism, this message is highly relevant as a reminder of the importance of spiritual depth as the foundation of a meaningful life (Yusofi, n.d.).

The pressures of modernity such as stress, anxiety, and social alienation make al-Sulamī’s approach to taqarrub an effective method to seek inner peace and balance. The contemplative practices and spiritual disciplines he advocates can serve as spiritual therapy that helps individuals face contemporary challenges with patience and mindfulness. Furthermore, the concept of taqarrub that emphasizes purification of the heart and self-control is highly relevant in addressing various modern social problems such as interpersonal conflict, extreme individualism, and moral crises. By cultivating empathy, compassion, and sincerity, taqarrub contributes to improving the quality of social relationships and fostering a harmonious society.

Al-Sulamī’s perspective also affirms the importance of continuous spiritual awareness (*murāqabah*) in daily life. In today’s digital era, filled with distractions, such awareness serves as a crucial foundation for self-regulation and maintaining focus on noble values and higher life purposes. The concept of taqarrub also supports the integration of spirituality with productive social activities. Al-Sulamī views closeness to Allah as something that must be reflected in acts of kindness toward fellow human beings. In modern society, this perspective invites individuals to implement spiritual values in social actions, preventing the total secularization of life.

In the context of globalization and pluralism, al-Sulamī’s concept of taqarrub can serve as a bridge for interfaith and intercultural dialogue, as it emphasizes the universal experience of closeness to God through purified hearts. This approach encourages tolerance and appreciation of the spiritual diversity present in modern societies. Another dimension of its relevance lies in the psychological aspect, where taqarrub can serve as a method of self-development and mental health enhancement. Through spiritual practices such as dhikr, prayer, and contemplation, individuals can reduce mental stress and increase psychological resilience in facing the challenges of changing times.

Nevertheless, the application of the concept of taqarrub in modern society must be adapted to contemporary contexts without losing its essence. An inclusive and adaptive approach is needed so that the values of taqarrub do not remain merely as ideals, but can be realized in everyday life. Overall, al-Sulamī’s concept of taqarrub provides an important contribution to shaping modern individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also spiritually and socially mature. Thus, this concept can serve as a foundation for building a modern society that is balanced, harmonious, and sustainable.

## **The Relevance of the Concept of Taqarrub in the Perspective of Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī in Modern Society**

In modern life, filled with distractions, hedonism, and mental pressures, the concept of taqarrub from Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī serves as a spiritual oasis offering a path back to inner balance. According to al-Qushayrī, taqarrub is not merely ritual worship but a process of soul purification and profound inner presence in one's relationship with God.

Al-Qushayrī emphasizes that closeness to Allah is not attained solely through outward deeds but through purity of heart, sincerity, and murāqabah (constant awareness of God's presence). In the modern context, these values are highly relevant in helping individuals face life's pressures with introspection and meaningful orientation.

A fast-paced lifestyle and digitalization cause many to lose depth in their spiritual relations. The concept of taqarrub in al-Qushayrī's works teaches the importance of silence, dhikr, and night worship, which, from a psychological perspective, have been shown to reduce stress levels and foster inner peace. The relevance of al-Qushayrī's taqarrub is also evident in the practice of muḥāsabah (continuous self-evaluation). In a society inclined toward competitiveness and materialism, this value helps balance worldly achievements with spiritual awareness, making individuals wiser and more conscious of their life purpose.

When modernity nurtures ego and individualism, the teaching of taqarrub offers a profound approach to self-emptying from the ego (*fanā'*) and self-realization within the Divine will (*baqā'*). This is relevant for shaping personalities that are humble yet oriented toward transcendent values.

In social life, taqarrub forms the ethics of human relations. Al-Qushayrī states that the closer a person is to Allah, the gentler they will be toward others, having eliminated spiritual diseases such as envy, hatred, and arrogance. This is crucial for improving social relations amidst increasing conflicts and polarization. Modern education, which often emphasizes cognitive and technical aspects, can benefit from the principles of taqarrub in character formation. Al-Qushayrī stresses the importance of intention, sincerity, and humility—all of which serve as the foundation for transformative moral education.

The concept of taqarrub is also highly relevant in the context of mental health. In modern psychology, mindfulness has become a trend, yet taqarrub in Sufism encompasses an even higher divine awareness. Dhikr and murāqabah can serve as spiritual therapy for those experiencing existential crises. In the workplace and professional life, taqarrub instills trustworthiness and integrity. Al-Qushayrī emphasizes that a person close to Allah regards their work as a form of worship and responsibility, not merely a worldly routine, thereby promoting ethical and high-quality productivity.

Thus, although al-Qushayrī lived in the 11th century, his teachings on taqarrub remain relevant across various aspects of modern life—from personal spirituality, social ethics, education, and mental health to work ethics. This concept serves as a bridge between the classical spiritual values of Islam and the challenges of contemporary society.

### **The Contribution of the Interpretation of Verses on Taqarrub from the Perspectives of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī to Modern Society**

a. QS. At-Tawbah [9]:99 affirms that some of the Bedouins spend their wealth as a means of drawing near (*qurbah*) to Allah and seeking the Prophet's prayers for them. Al-Sulamī, in *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr*, interprets this *qurbah* not merely as outward charity, but as an act carried out with sincerity of heart, love, and longing for Allah. Such deeds become a true means of taqarrub only when born from a purified soul and a sincere heart. He stresses that deeds lose their value as taqarrub if they are tainted by ostentation (*riyā'*) or worldly motives.

Meanwhile, al-Qushayrī in *Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt* expands the meaning of qurbah as a form of closeness that yields Divine mercy. He relates charity intended as qurbah to deep spiritual sincerity. Furthermore, the Prophet's prayers for them are regarded as a form of madad rūḥānīa spiritual support for servants who sincerely seek nearness to Allah. This interpretation is highly relevant to modern society, where social acts such as donations, philanthropy, or volunteering are often seen as public image-building or civic duty. The Sufi approach of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī reminds us that giving is essentially a path to taqarrub, not merely a social transaction. The spiritual value of charity lies in the orientation of the heart, not in the amount. This shapes a renewed awareness in modern society that philanthropy, when carried out with a pure heart, is truly a means of attaining Allah's mercy.

b. QS. Al-Isrā' [17]:57 states that those beings whom people take as objects of worship are themselves seeking a way to draw near to Allah through wasīlah, hoping for His mercy and fearing His punishment. Al-Sulamī interprets this verse as a warning against reliance on anything other than Allah. He explains that the true wasīlah lies in three fundamental spiritual attitudes: (1) love of Allah, (2) hope for His mercy, and (3) fear of His punishment. For him, taqarrub is not merely the outcome of physical acts but the fruit of a strong spiritual bond. Al-Qushayrī views this verse as a depiction of spiritual competition. In *Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt*, he emphasizes that saints, angels, and even the righteous are constantly striving to find the best wasīlah to draw nearer to Allah. This shows that taqarrub is dynamic and unending. He highlights that hope (rajāʾ) and fear (khawf) are the two wings by which a servant advances in closeness to Allah.

The relevance of this verse to modern life is profound. In an era when people often rely on worldly symbols—positions, power, or technology—this Sufi interpretation reminds us that true nearness to God is not attained through such intermediaries, but through righteous deeds and sincerity of heart. It also serves as an important corrective against extremism and misinterpretations of wasīlah. Modern society is reminded that closeness to Allah is not monopolized by anyone but is open to all who sincerely seek Him through deeds, prayer, and purity of soul.

c. QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:186 conveys the powerful spiritual message that Allah is near (qarīb) and answers the supplications of those who call upon Him. In *Ḥaḳāʾiq al-Tafsīr*, al-Sulamī interprets this nearness as a special closeness (al-qurb al-khāṣ) granted to sincere servants who pray and fill their lives with obedience. He stresses that taqarrub through supplication is not merely verbal, but an inner whisper arising from a heart humbled and longing for God. Allah's closeness is the fruit of a servant's humility and reliance on none but Him. Al-Qushayrī, in *Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt*, highlights that Allah's response to prayer does not always manifest in outward, tangible ways, but often in karāmah ma'nawīyyah (spiritual grace), such as tranquility of soul, openness of heart, and inner illumination. He emphasizes that God's response is itself a form of taqarrub to His servant, while a sincere prayer is proof of the servant's taqarrub to his Lord. Thus, the verse reflects a tender, two-way dialogue between Creator and creation.

This interpretation is highly relevant to modern spirituality, which often shifts toward formalism or ritualism. Al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī teach that taqarrub ilā Allāh can be achieved anytime, by anyone, through a pure heart and sincere supplication. This empowers modern people not to feel estranged from God amid worldly busyness. Prayer is not only a tool for asking but also a way of binding the heart to Allah and softening the soul amidst life's noise.

d. QS. Al-Mā'idah [5]:35 commands believers to fear Allah, seek a wasīlah to Him, and strive in His cause. Al-Sulamī interprets wasīlah as righteous deeds born of love and longing for Allah, not mere ritual habit. True taqarrub through wasīlah, he argues, requires mujāhadah

(striving of the soul), sacrifice of desires, and earnestness in leaving worldly attachments for Allah's pleasure. For him, *wasīlah* is not a worldly intermediary but a spiritual attitude and deed that elevate the servant's soul to Divine closeness. Al-Qushayrī gives a different nuance, seeing *wasīlah* as spiritual yearning for the Beloved (Allah), which drives the servant to struggle for closeness through love, knowledge, and sincere worship. He notes that *wasīlah* may take the form of consistent obedience, unceasing remembrance (*dhikr*), and profound spiritual awareness. For him, *taqarrub* is not merely the result of deeds but arises from acknowledging the servant's utter poverty before the Perfect God.

This interpretation is crucial for shaping modern religious consciousness. In a society often trapped in symbolic religiosity, their Sufi exegesis revives the meaning of *wasīlah* as total servitude and spiritual honesty. Many today seek peace through external powers, but true *taqarrub* is found through inner *wasīlah*: remembrance, worship, and admission of one's weakness. This teaches that even in an instant world, the path to God still requires inner discipline, perseverance, and true love.

e. QS. Az-Zumar [39]:3 critiques the idolaters who claimed to worship idols merely "to bring us nearer to Allah." Al-Sulamī interprets this as a warning that *taqarrub* must be pursued rightly, without distorted means such as aggrandizing created beings as intermediaries. True *taqarrub* lies only in pure monotheism (*tawḥīd*), obedience, and sincere worship of Allah free from *shirk*. For him, this verse is a reminder that the *wasīlah* must be legitimate (*shar'ī*), not deviant. Al-Qushayrī offers a more reflective approach, seeing the verse as a critique of corrupted intentions. Outward worship may appear correct, but if the intention is not solely for Allah or is tied to something else, the *taqarrub* becomes void. He stresses *ikhhlās* (sincerity) as the foundation of nearness, teaching that true closeness comes from purifying the heart of dependence on created beings.

In modern times, people often engage in spiritual quests mixed with worldly motives, popularity, or unsound mystical symbols. This Sufi exegesis redirects the focus to purity of intention and clarity of *tawḥīd*. Not all forms of *taqarrub* are valid—only those grounded in sincerity and monotheism lead to God's pleasure. In today's spiritually superficial yet symbol-heavy world, their insights guide believers to genuine and pure *taqarrub*.

f. QS. At-Tawbah [9]:99 (revisited) praises certain believing Bedouins who regard almsgiving as a means of *taqarrub* to Allah and as a way to receive the Prophet's prayers. For al-Sulamī, this shows that *taqarrub* is not only through inner worship but also through social acts like charity. Giving up wealth for Allah expresses sincerity and total dependence on Him. Al-Qushayrī adds that charity as *taqarrub* is an external form of inner purification. He interprets those who give for Allah's sake as spiritually elevated, since they see wealth not as private possession but as a Divine trust used to draw nearer to Him. He underscores the role of intention: if it is correct, the act becomes a vehicle to Allah.

This interpretation resonates strongly today, where *taqarrub* is often seen as individual ritual. Al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī broaden this view, showing that social contribution—charity, *zakat*, community care—done sincerely is also *taqarrub*. Amid modern inequality and individualism, this exegesis encourages Muslims to view charity as love for Allah and as building a more just and spiritual society.

g. QS. Al-Kahf [18]:110 states that whoever hopes to meet his Lord (*liqā' Rabbih*) must do righteous deeds and avoid associating partners in worship. Al-Sulamī, in *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr*, interprets *liqā'* as the peak of the seeker's journey, signifying *ma'rifah* and intense inner presence with God, attainable only through two conditions: sincere righteous deeds and pure monotheism. Al-Qushayrī emphasizes that only deeds free from ostentation and self-display

are accepted. True taqarrub, he says, is achieved when worship is done solely for Allah, not for praise or worldly reward. Sincerity is the foundation of deep spiritual closeness.

This verse is highly relevant in the age of social media and public recognition. The Sufi exegesis of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī teaches that taqarrub is not about external impressions but about the quality of the heart. They remind modern believers that true closeness to Allah is attained through consistent, sincere deeds free of worldly motives. This spirit is vital for shaping societies grounded in inner integrity and genuine spirituality, rather than mere outward achievement.

h. QS. Qāf [50]:16 proclaims that Allah is closer to man than his jugular vein. Al-Sulamī interprets this as Divine presence not only outwardly but within the deepest spiritual consciousness. He sees it as an *ishārah* (Divine sign) to strengthen *ḥuḍūr al-qalb* (presence of heart) in worship and remembrance. Nearness to Allah is not to be sought in distant places but realized in the immediacy of inner life. Al-Qushayrī explains it in terms of *murāqabah* (continuous awareness of Divine watchfulness). For him, this verse conveys both warning and hope: awareness of Allah's nearness drives honesty, sincerity of intention, and devotion. "Closer than the jugular vein" symbolizes an intimacy unrestricted by space or time, serving as the foundation of taqarrub.

For modern society, often marked by individualism and loss of spiritual direction, this verse reminds that Allah is always present. Their Sufi readings teach that taqarrub is not a physical journey but a living inner awareness. *Murāqabah* offers values essential for fostering honesty, integrity, and inward orientation in a world obsessed with outward success.

i. QS. Al-ʿAlaq [96]:19 commands: "Prostrate and draw near." Al-Sulamī interprets this as the pinnacle call to direct taqarrub *ilā Allāh* through humble prostration. He sees "prostration" not only as a physical act but as a symbol of humility and the annihilation of ego (*fanā*). The highest closeness is attained when the servant is at his lowest point *sujūd*. Al-Qushayrī describes *sujūd* as a noble *maqām*, where human lowliness meets Divine majesty. In prostration, worldly veils are torn away and the soul opens to Divine light. He interprets *waqtarib* as existential nearness, not mere ritual.

For modern people, this interpretation is deeply relevant. In a world that elevates ego, ambition, and image, this verse stresses that true nearness is achieved through humility and surrender. Prostration becomes not just a routine but a contemplative practice for cleansing pride, stress, and inner turmoil. It is highly relevant as spiritual therapy that nurtures the inner dimension amid life's speed and pressures.

From these discussions, it may be concluded that the contributions of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī's interpretations of taqarrub *ilā Allāh* provide profound spiritual dimensions that touch the innermost aspects of human life far beyond literal or legalistic understandings of worship. Both exegetes contribute greatly to transforming taqarrub from a mere ritual activity into a contemplative, personal, and transformative spiritual journey.

### **The Contribution of Sufi Exegesis of al-Sulamī and al-Qushayrī in the Development of Islamic Qur'anic Exegesis**

The Contribution of Sufi Exegesis of al-Sulamī in the Development of Islamic Qur'anic Exegesis. Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412 H) was one of the earliest figures to introduce a systematic approach to Sufi exegesis through his work *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tafsīr*. This work represents an important milestone in the history of Qur'anic exegesis as it presents the understanding of the Sufis regarding the verses of the Qur'an, not only from the literal aspect

(zāhir), but also from the deeper, inner dimension (bāṭin). This approach made a significant contribution in broadening the horizon of Qur'anic interpretation beyond formal textual dimensions (Yahya et al., 2022).

Al-Sulamī did not deny the importance of grammatical and contextual aspects in exegesis; however, he emphasized that the revealed text also contains spiritual indications that can only be understood by those who have reached a certain level of purity of heart. Thus, he positioned spiritual experience (dhawq) as an epistemological instrument in comprehending the bāṭin meanings of the Qur'an. This represents a deep integration between the outward and inward dimensions in understanding revelation.

One of the characteristics of al-Sulamī's exegesis is the presentation of the interpretations of earlier Sufi masters in a concise yet meaningful way. In *Ḥaḳā'iq al-Tafsīr*, he frequently quoted figures such as Junayd al-Baghdādī or al-Shiblī when explaining the meaning of a verse. For example, in his interpretation of QS al-Fātiḥah:5 ("iyyāka na'budu wa iyyāka nasta'īn"), he cited that only those who have annihilated their ego (fanā') can truly worship Allah SWT. Such interpretations highlight the existential dimension of the verse.

Through this approach, al-Sulamī positioned exegesis as a medium for spiritual transformation rather than merely intellectual information. He emphasized that every verse has symbolic and ethical dimensions that can guide a sālik (spiritual seeker) on the path toward God. Therefore, for him, exegesis was not only to be understood but also to be internalized and practiced spiritually. This made his exegesis highly relevant to the development of Sufism as an integrative science.

Another important contribution of al-Sulamī was his boldness in positioning spiritual intuition as a legitimate source of exegesis, which at that time was not commonly recognized within scholarly tradition. He did not hesitate to present interpretations based on ilhām (divine inspiration) and kashf (unveiling), as long as they did not contradict the principles of Islamic law. In this way, al-Sulamī opened the space for dialogue between Qur'anic exegesis and the dimension of spiritual experience in Islam. This made *Ḥaḳā'iq al-Tafsīr* a bridge between text and transcendence (Rahmawati, n.d.).

Al-Sulamī's Sufi exegesis also functioned as a form of critique against the legalistic tendencies in classical exegesis. While he did not reject legal exegesis, he sought to balance it with inner interpretations that were more oriented toward purification of the soul and cleansing of the heart. Thus, he emphasized that the essence of revelation is not only in commands and prohibitions but also in the attainment of ma'rifah (gnosis) of God (Nasution, 2023).

The influence of al-Sulamī's exegesis was widespread in later works of Sufi exegesis, such as *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* by al-Qushayrī and *Tafsīr al-Kāshānī*. The style of writing and symbolic method introduced by al-Sulamī became a central model for Sufi hermeneutics. Even in the modern context, al-Sulamī's work is considered the starting point for the formation of an alternative epistemology in Qur'anic interpretation (Ma'ruf, 2020).

One of the unique aspects of al-Sulamī's methodology was his avoidance of excessive and baseless allegorical interpretation. He limited ishārī (allusive) exegesis within a framework that remained aligned with Qur'anic values and did not contradict the objectives of the Shari'ah (maqāsid al-shari'ah). This demonstrates that he sought to preserve the validity of Sufi exegesis even in the eyes of non-Sufi scholars.

Historically, *Ḥaḳā'iq al-Tafsīr* served as a meeting point between two major currents in Islamic scholarship: the rationalism of kalām and the spirituality of Sufism. Al-Sulamī

succeeded in showing that the two could coexist and complement each other in understanding the divine message. This concept of integration is particularly significant in the contemporary era when Muslims face the challenge of fragmentation between science, law, and spirituality. Through all these contributions, al-Sulamī laid a strong methodological and epistemological foundation for the development of Sufi exegesis as an important branch of Qur'anic studies. His integrative approach not only enriched the understanding of the sacred text but also paved the way for the spiritual transformation of Muslims in their journey toward God.

### **The Contribution of Sufi Exegesis of al-Qushayrī in the Development of Islamic Qur'anic Exegesis.**

Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465 H) was one of the great Sufi masters of the 5th century Hijrah who played a pivotal role in the development of Sufi exegesis. His most renowned work in this field is *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, a tafsīr that presents a symbolic and spiritual approach to the verses of the Qur'an (Zaini, n.d.). This exegesis is considered one of the earliest systematic forms of *ishārī* (allusive) exegesis, harmoniously combining both the *zāhir* (literal/textual) and *bāṭin* (spiritual) dimensions.

Unlike some Sufi figures who tended to neglect the literal meaning of the text, al-Qushayrī sought to maintain a balance between outward and inward meanings in his interpretation. He asserted that Sufi exegesis must not transgress the boundaries of the *Sharī'ah*. According to him, inner interpretations had to remain aligned with the outward meaning indicated by linguistic structures and grammatical rules. This marked a cautious and scholarly methodological approach (Walida, 2025).

Al-Qushayrī believed that the Qur'an possesses multiple layers of meaning, which can only be accessed by those who have attained a certain level of spiritual realization. In *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, he frequently presented interpretations of seemingly simple verses that revealed profound spiritual dimensions. For instance, when interpreting QS al-Nūr [19]:35 about "light upon light," he understood it as the stages of spiritual illumination of a *sālik* (seeker) on the path toward *ma'rifatullāh* (gnosis of God).

Al-Qushayrī's major contribution to Islamic Qur'anic exegesis was that he built an epistemology of exegesis that integrated *Sharī'ah* (law), *ṭarīqah* (spiritual path), and *ḥaqīqah* (ultimate truth) into a single framework of Qur'anic interpretation. He demonstrated that understanding revelation is not merely intellectual but also existential and transformational. In other words, reading the Qur'an is not only about acquiring knowledge but also about transforming the soul.

Al-Qushayrī's approach also had a major influence on the legitimacy of Sufi exegesis within the broader scholarly community. He explained that the inner knowledge employed in interpretation was not the result of speculation but the outcome of *mujāhadah* (spiritual struggle), *riyāḍah* (self-discipline), and *ilhām* (divine inspiration). Thus, he elevated spiritual authority as a valid source in comprehending the deeper meanings of the Qur'an.

*Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* is also important because it presented Sufi exegesis comprehensively from the beginning to the end of the Qur'an, unlike *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr* of al-Sulamī which contained selected passages. This made al-Qushayrī's work an integral and systematic reference in the field of Sufi exegesis. It demonstrated that spirituality is not limited to particular verses but represents a holistic approach to the entire sacred text. Moreover, al-Qushayrī showed that the language of the Qur'an contains divine symbols (*ishārāt*) that open human existential awareness. He interpreted key terms such as *hudā* (guidance), *nūr* (light), *raḥmah* (mercy), and *qalb* (heart) with deep symbolic meanings, providing guidance for the

spiritual journey. This illustrates that the Qur'an addresses both intellect and heart simultaneously.

Methodologically, al-Qushayrī also set important boundaries for ishārī exegesis. He stated that not everyone is entitled to interpret the Qur'an inwardly without the foundation of Sharī'ah knowledge and sound character. Thus, the Sufi approach is not absolute freedom in allegorical interpretation but the result of existential closeness to God and purification of the soul. In this way, he safeguarded Sufi exegesis from degenerating into pseudo-spiritualism. Al-Qushayrī's integration of *zāhir* and *bāṭin* was not only significant historically but also relevant in the contemporary context. Amidst the crisis of meaning and the secularization of religious understanding, the Sufi approach revives awareness that the Qur'an is a living scripture that speaks to the human heart and guides it toward truth. This shows that al-Qushayrī's Sufi exegesis remains highly relevant in addressing the spiritual needs of modern Muslims.

Thus, through *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, al-Qushayrī made a substantial contribution to enriching and balancing the paradigm of Islamic exegesis. He was not only a mufassir but also a spiritual guide who regarded the Qur'an as a mirror of the inner journey. His efforts to integrate the outward and inward dimensions of revelation made exegesis a path of holistic spiritual realization (Zaki, 2021).

## Conclusion

This research provides an in-depth and comparative study of two monumental works within the classical Sufi exegetical tradition, namely *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr* by Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī and *Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt* by Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī. The findings indicate that although both works are rooted in the tradition of *tafsīr isyārī* (symbolic-spiritual exegesis), they differ significantly in approach, methodology, and theological emphasis.

First, in terms of the authors' backgrounds, al-Sulamī was among the earliest generations of Sufis who emphasized compiling the spiritual heritage of his predecessors in a concise manner, often without extensive elaboration. By contrast, al-Qushayrī wrote within a more established academic environment of the madrasah, making his *tafsīr* more systematic, argumentative, and enriched with linguistic and juridical (*fiqh*) contexts.

Second, in the aspect of exegetical methodology, al-Sulamī tended to present Sufi interpretations directly in the form of brief citations, often layered with symbolic meaning. Conversely, al-Qushayrī integrated *tafsīr isyārī* with *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* and offered spiritual narratives supported by rational argument and Shar'ī foundations, rendering his work more moderate and acceptable within orthodox scholarly circles.

Third, in terms of spiritual content, *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr* focuses more on unveiling the Sufi *maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl*, including an emphasis on *fanā'*, *maḥabbah*, and *ma'rifah*, expressed in the aphoristic style characteristic of Sufism. On the other hand, *Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt* is more systematic in describing the spiritual journey (*sulūk*), employing extended metaphors and strengthening the connection between the Qur'anic text and the psychological-spiritual dimensions of the human being.

Fourth, in relation to the Qur'anic text itself, al-Sulamī employed a more selective and fragmentary approach, as not all verses were interpreted. In contrast, al-Qushayrī composed a more complete and consistent commentary on the entire Qur'an, albeit with a strong *isyārī* orientation. This made al-Qushayrī's work more closely aligned with the mainstream exegetical tradition.

Fifth, in contemporary relevance, al-Qushayrī's tafsīr is considered more applicable in modern academic studies due to its consistency in building spiritual arguments based on both the text and contextualized Sufi experience. Meanwhile, al-Sulamī's work is more appropriate as a primary source for tracing the authentic early legacy of Sufi exegesis, which is relatively free from the formal structures of later scholarship.

Sixth, in terms of theological and ethical content, both tafsīrs convey profound spiritual values such as sincerity (ikhlās), God-consciousness (murāqabah), divine love (maḥabbah), and closeness (taqarrub) to Allah. However, al-Qushayrī is more prominent in bridging exotericism and esotericism, thereby making his ethical messages more accessible to the wider community.

In conclusion, Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr and Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt represent two significant legacies within the corpus of Sufi exegesis, each contributing to the spiritual dimension of Islam from different directions: al-Sulamī through authentic Sufi spontaneity, and al-Qushayrī through intellectual and spiritual elaboration. This comparative study demonstrates that diversity in exegetical methods in fact enriches our understanding of the Qur'an, particularly in its profound and reflective inner dimensions.

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