

## **EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF SHARIA AND SUFISM IN IMĀM RABBĀNĪ AḤMAD SIRHINDĪ'S MAKTŪBĀT RABBĀNĪ: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

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**Abstract:** *This study critically examines the relationship between sufism (tasawwuf) and sharia, with a particular focus on the writings of Imām Rabbānī Aḥmad Sirhindī as articulated in Maktūbāt Rabbānī. While specific Islamic reformist movements posit a fundamental dichotomy between these two domains, Sirhindī contends that sufism and sharia are inseparable, with the former serving as an extension of the latter. This research seeks to analyze Sirhindī's reconciliation of Islam's mystical and legal dimensions, demonstrating that proper spiritual purification must occur within the framework of sharia rather than in opposition to it. Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing textual analysis of Maktūbāt Rabbānī, particularly its first three volumes—to explore Sirhindī's discourse on the necessity of legal adherence in the spiritual journey. The research also engages in comparative analysis with the works of Ibn al-Arabī, al-Ḥallāj, and al-Ghazālī to contextualize Sirhindī's position within broader sufi thought. The findings reveal that Sirhindī's model of tasawwuf is rooted in doctrinal orthodoxy, critiquing mystical deviations that detach spirituality from religious law. The study concludes that Sirhindī's work offers a systematic framework for understanding sufism within Islamic jurisprudence, challenging perspectives that perceive a dichotomy between mystical practice and legal adherence. By addressing contemporary misconceptions, this research contributes to ongoing debates on the role of spirituality in Islamic law, reaffirming Maktūbāt Rabbānī as a seminal text in the discourse on the harmonious integration of sharia and tasawwuf.*

**Keywords:** *Imām Rabbānī, Maktūbāt Rabbānī, Spiritual Journey in Islam, Tasawwuf.*

**Abstrak:** Studi ini secara kritis menelaah hubungan antara tasawuf dan syariat dengan fokus khusus pada tulisan Imām Rabbānī Aḥmad Sirhindī, sebagaimana diartikulasikan dalam *Maktūbāt Rabbānī*. Sementara beberapa gerakan reformis Islam berpendapat bahwa terdapat dikotomi mendasar antara kedua bidang ini, Sirhindī menegaskan bahwa tasawuf dan syariat tidak dapat dipisahkan, di mana tasawuf berfungsi sebagai

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perpanjangan dari syariat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana Sirhindī merekonsiliasi dimensi mistik dan hukum Islam, serta menegaskan bahwa pensucian spiritual yang sejati harus terjadi dalam kerangka syariat, bukan sebagai sesuatu yang bertentangan dengannya. Secara metodologis, studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis teks terhadap *Maktūbāt Rabbānī*—khususnya tiga jilid pertama—untuk mengeksplorasi diskursus Sirhindī tentang pentingnya kepatuhan hukum dalam perjalanan spiritual. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga melakukan analisis komparatif terhadap karya-karya Ibn al-‘Arabī, al-Ḥallāj, dan al-Ghazālī guna mengontekstualisasikan posisi Sirhindī dalam pemikiran tasawuf yang lebih luas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa model tasawuf Sirhindī berakar pada ortodoksi doktrinal, serta mengkritik penyimpangan mistik yang melepaskan spiritualitas dari hukum agama. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pemikiran Sirhindī menawarkan kerangka sistematis untuk memahami tasawuf dalam yurisprudensi Islam, serta menantang perspektif yang melihat adanya dikotomi antara praktik mistik dan kepatuhan hukum. Dengan menyoroti kesalahpahaman kontemporer, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada perdebatan akademik yang sedang berlangsung tentang peran spiritualitas dalam hukum Islam, sekaligus menegaskan *Maktūbāt Rabbānī* sebagai teks penting dalam wacana integrasi harmonis antara syariat dan tasawuf.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** *Imām Rabbānī, Maktūbāt Rabbānī, Perjalanan Spiritual dalam Islam, Syariat, Tasawuf.*

## Introduction

The intricate relationship between sufism (tasawwuf) and sharia has been a subject of scholarly discourse for centuries, with varying perspectives on their compatibility and integration. Imām Rabbānī Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624), a seminal figure in the Naqshbandī Sufi order, addresses this relationship comprehensively in his magnum opus, *Maktūbāt Rabbānī*. This collection of letters presents a doctrinally orthodox framework in which tasawwuf is not an independent or opposing discipline to sharia but rather its intrinsic complement. Sirhindī posits that genuine spiritual enlightenment and purification must occur within the parameters of Islamic law, challenging mystical trends and prioritizing esoteric experiences over legal and ethical discipline.

This study critically examines Sirhindī’s reconciliation of Islamic mysticism and jurisprudence through a qualitative textual analysis of *Maktūbāt Rabbānī*, primarily focusing on the first three volumes. Volume One conceptualizes *wilāyah* (sainthood) as the harmonious synthesis of legal adherence and inner spiritual refinement, addressing theological themes such as divine proximity, the nature of miracles (*karāmāt*), and the metaphysical connection between Allah and creation. Volume Two underscores the role of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions as the ideal paradigms for spiritual growth while critiquing interpretations of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the unity of being) deviating from doctrinal orthodoxy. Volume three elaborates on the practical integration of sharia and tasawwuf, emphasizing structured spiritual disciplines such as *dhikr* (remembrance of God), Qur’anic recitation, and self-purification

as essential elements of the mystical journey.

This research situates Sirhindī's contributions within the broader intellectual landscape of Islamic mysticism by engaging in a comparative analysis with significant sufi figures. The findings reveal that his vision of tasawwuf is deeply embedded in sharia, advocating a balanced approach that neither neglects Islamic jurisprudence nor indulges in excessive esotericism. In doing so, *Maktūbāt Rabbānī* emerges as a seminal text that reaffirms the centrality of sharia in authentic sufi practice while offering a structured paradigm for integrating mysticism with legal adherence.

This study contributes to contemporary debates on the relationship between spirituality and law in Islam, challenging modern misconceptions that depict sufism as detached from religious obligations. By highlighting Sirhindī's synthesis of these two dimensions, this research underscores the enduring relevance of his thought in shaping an Islamic spirituality that remains both theologically sound and spiritually profound.

The paper addresses the longstanding debate regarding sufism's relationship to Islam, highlighting differing perspectives among scholars and Muslims. This includes whether sufism is the essence of Islam or an independent spiritual path. The paper draws on historical analyses of sufism and its relationship with sharia, emphasizing that sufism's Islamic nature was rarely questioned before the modern period. This historical perspective is crucial for understanding contemporary debates about sufism and sharia.

The paper suggests that future research should delve deeper into the historical and contemporary relationships between sufism and sharia. This includes examining how different sufi groups interpret and engage with Islamic law, which could provide a richer understanding of sufi practices across diverse contexts.

This study primarily relies on *Maktūbāt Rabbānī*, the collection of letters by Imām Rabbānī Aḥmad Sirhindī, as its principal source. The textual analysis is the foundation of this research, focusing on the letters' linguistic, rhetorical, and thematic structures to explore Sirhindī's synthesis of sharia and tasawwuf. Key analytical aspects include the role of sharia as the framework for spiritual discipline, the complementary nature of sufism in ethical and mystical transformation, and Sirhindī's critiques of doctrines like *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Hermeneutical tools decode theological terminology, ensuring a precise interpretation of the primary text.

Historical contextualization provides a crucial framework, situating *Maktūbāt Rabbānī* within the religious and political landscape of Mughal India. This includes examining the rise of syncretic religious practices, intellectual debates on sufi orthodoxy, and the influence of Emperor Akbar's policies on Islamic thought. Primary and secondary historical sources on South Asian Islam and Mughal-era sufism supplement this

analysis.

To ensure linguistic accuracy, this study critically engages with translations by Tosun, Derin, and Yıldırım, cross-referencing them with the original Persian manuscripts. Recognizing the epistolary nature of *Maktūbāt Rabbānī*, letters are interpreted within their broader theological and historical contexts. Additionally, contemporary scholarship on the intersection of Islamic law and sufism is incorporated to assess the relevance of Sirhindī's thought in modern Islamic discourses.

By employing an interdisciplinary approach that integrates textual, historical, and comparative analysis, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Sirhindī's legal-mystical synthesis. The research contributes to broader discussions in Islamic studies by demonstrating the enduring significance of his thought in sharia, sufism, and South Asian religious history.

This study undertakes a comprehensive review of existing scholarship on the relationship between sufism and sharia, particularly emphasizing Aḥmad Sirhindī's contributions to this discourse. While numerous works explore the intersection of Islamic mysticism and law, a critical gap remains in addressing Sirhindī's perspective, particularly as articulated in his *Maktūbāt*.

Samer Dajani's *Sufis and Shari'a: The Forgotten School of Mercy* examines the legal thought of Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 1240), asserting that he developed a distinct *madhhab* grounded in mercy and legal adaptability. He highlights the contributions of figures like al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, al-Sha'rānī, and Aḥmad ibn Idrīs in preserving sharia's inherent flexibility. However, Dajani does not engage with Aḥmad Sirhindī's perspective, which contrasts with Ibn al-'Arabī's emphasis on legal leniency, advocating instead strict adherence to sharia as the foundation of authentic mysticism. A comparative analysis of these divergent approaches would provide a more nuanced understanding of sufism's legal dimensions (Dajani 2023).

Muhammad Abdul Haq, Ansari's *Sufism and Sharia: A Study of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī's Effort to Reform Sufism* offers an in-depth examination of Sirhindī's impact on the Naqshbandi order and his influence on later revivalist movements. The study discusses key theological debates, including *waḥdat al-wujūd* and Ibn Taymiyyah's stance on sufism. However, it does not fully engage with Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt*, which offers a detailed discourse on the inseparability of sharia and sufism, leaving room for further research into his legal-mystical synthesis (Ansari 1986).

Muhammad U. Faruque's *Sufism contra Shariah? Shāh Walī Allah's Metaphysics of Waḥdat al-Wujūd* explores *walī* Allah's nuanced understanding of mystical unity within the framework of sharia. While largely aligned with Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysical school, *walī* Allah attempts to clarify misconceptions surrounding *waḥdat al-wujūd*. However, this study does not critically engage with Aḥmad Sirhindī's alternative

perspective, particularly his emphasis on the theological and legal risks associated with misinterpreting divine unity (Faruque 2016).

William Rory Dickson's article, "*Sufism and Sharia: Contextualizing Contemporary Sufi Expressions*," introduces an analytical framework categorizing Sufi engagement with Sharia into juristic, supersessionist, and formless approaches. Dickson offers a broader historical perspective by shifting the debate from sufism's Islamic legitimacy to its legal relationship. However, his study does not consider Sirhindī's strict sharia-centered approach, which views tasawwuf as an extension of Islamic law rather than an autonomous mystical path (Dickson 2022).

Salim Farrar's work on Shaykh 'Abdullah bin Bayyah presents a modern perspective on sufi jurisprudence, emphasizing its role in countering extremism and fostering civic engagement. While it sheds light on the practical applications of sharia-based sufism in contemporary contexts, it does not address Sirhindī's foundational contributions to this paradigm (Farrar 2022).

Despite the extensive scholarship on sufism and sharia, a significant gap remains in examining these themes through the lens of Aḥmad Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt*. This study seeks to fill this academic void by comprehensively analyzing Sirhindī's synthesis of mysticism and legalism, contributing to a deeper understanding of sufism's jurisprudential dimensions.

## **Aḥmad Sirhindī: Life and Spiritual Orientation**

Aḥmad Sirhindī, known as the *Mujaddīd-i Alfi Thānī* (Reformer of the Second Millennium), was a prominent scholar and sufi of the 17th century who lived in India and advocated for the integration of tasawwuf within the framework of sharia. Aḥmad Sirhindī's father was a scholar and a sheikh authorized by the Chishtiyya and Qadiriyya Sufi orders. Aḥmad Sirhindī became his disciple, later assuming the role of a Sheikh himself. However, after his father's passing, Aḥmad Sirhindī felt a sense of incompleteness and chose not to continue his leadership as a sheikh. Instead, he set out for a pilgrimage (*ḥajj*), and upon reaching Delhi, he attended the gatherings of the Naqshbandi Sheikh Bāqī Billāh, eventually becoming his disciple (Chowdury and Gökteş 2021, 93–121).

In 1605, the Mughal Emperor Akbar Shāh attempted to establish a new religion called *Dīn-i Ilāhi*, a blend of Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism (Siddique 2011, 6). This syncretic religion, also referred to as *the synthesis of religions*, involved the abolition of prohibitions on usury, alcohol, and gambling, the establishment of sun-worship ceremonies, the creation of joint festivals, and changes to the educational system (Mehta 1966, 18–34). Aḥmad Sirhindī was one of the strongest critics of this movement. Akbar's son, Jahangir, eventually abolished *the Dīn-i Ilāhi*, and Aḥmad Sirhindī referred to him as the "Islamic Sultan." Aḥmad Sirhindī was also pleased with the death of the Sikh leader during the internal conflicts of

the time (Bilgin 1989).

As Aḥmad Sirhindī sent disciples to various regions, Jahangir perceived him as a threat to his reign, leading to Aḥmad Sirhindī imprisonment, fearing that he might claim sovereignty. Some sources also suggest that Imām Rabbānī was imprisoned for a year because he did not perform the customary greeting prostration when visiting Jahangir (Bajwa 2025, 481–91).

### **Sharia and Tasawwuf in *Maktūbāt Rabbānī*: A Study of Convergence and Divergence**

The *Mektubat* (Letters) of Aḥmad Sirhindī consists of three volumes. The first volume, compiled in 1025 AH (1616 CE) by his disciple Yar Muḥammad Jadīd Bādakhshī Ṭāliqānī, contains 313 letters. The second volume, written between 1025 and 1028 AH, includes 99 letters. The third volume, compiled in 1031 AH by his disciple Muḥammad Hāshim Qāsim, consists of the letters from Aḥmad Sirhindī's later years. Aḥmad Sirhindī died in 1034 AH (1625 CE) (Chowdury and Gökteş 2021, 93–121).

*Maktūbāt Rabbānī* is a three-volume Persian work consisting of 536 letters Aḥmad Sirhindī wrote to his disciples and friends. During the Ottoman period, the work was translated into Ottoman Turkish by Mustakimzāde Sulaymān Şā'iddīn. It was also translated into Chagatai Turkish by Muḥammad Murād Kāzānī in Central Asia, and there are several modern Turkish translations as well (Buehler 2011).

The letters in *Maktūbāt* can be divided into two categories: The first group contains letters sent to the bureaucrats and scholars of the time, emphasizing the importance of adhering to Ahl al-Sunnah. The second group consists of letters to his teacher and disciples, dealing with advanced sufi topics such as *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of existence), *waḥdat al-shuhūd* (unity of witnessing), and *seyr-u sulūk* (the stages of the spiritual journey) (Cebeçoğlu 2013).

The letters in *Maktūbāt* are among the most essential texts in sufi literature, allowing the author to explore profound philosophical and mystical issues. Following Aḥmad Sirhindī, sufis like Muḥammad Ma'şūm 'Abdullāh Dihlavī and Sayyid 'Uthmān Ḥulūsī Efendī contributed to this tradition with their works of similar depth.

### **Key Themes in the First Volume of Aḥmad Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt***

The first volume of *Maktūbāt* by Aḥmad Sirhindī delves into diverse topics, reflecting his profound intellectual and spiritual insights. The following critical analysis examines these discussions, highlighting the central themes and their broader significance within Islamic thought and spirituality.

## 1. The Degrees of Saintliness (*Wilāyah*)

According to *Ahlullāh*, *fanā'* (annihilation in Allah) precedes *quds* (holiness), with Aḥmad Sirhindī highlighting that true spiritual perfection arises from immersion in the Divine presence. While most sufi sheikhs view the experience of *dhātī ḥuḍūr* (Divine presence) as momentary and *dhātī ḡhaybah* (annihilation) as prolonged, Naqshbandi masters consider *dhātī ḥuḍūr* a permanent state, minimizing *ḡhaybah*'s significance. Aḥmad Sirhindī asserts that the goal of the sufi path lies in the initial encounter with the perfected being (*kāmil dhāt*), exemplified by the prophet's companions' immediate attainment of high spiritual stations. He further stresses the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) superior *wilāyah* over other prophets, paralleling the Naqshbandi order's emphasis on *wilāyah* rooted in the path of Abu Bakr, encouraging adherence to its unique spiritual qualities (Rabbānī 2014, 39–40).

## 2. The Dangers of Following a Sheikh Who Has Not Reached Perfection

Aḥmad Sirhindī warns of the dangers of following a sheikh who has not yet attained spiritual perfection. He prays that he and the reader are saved from superficial words and knowledge devoid of action. If a person learns from a sheikh who is spiritually inadequate, their path will lead them to follow their desires and whims, resulting in more darkness upon darkness.

A *kāmil* (perfected) sheikh is one who, first and foremost, corrects the deficiencies and mistakes of the disciple and then, according to the disciple's capacity, helps them develop and progress on the spiritual path. Only such a guide can fulfil their role (Aslonovich 2024, 67–83).

## 3. The Formation of Divine Love (*Dhātī Muḡabbat*)

*Dhātī Muḡabbat*, the pure love for Allah simply because He is Allah, is the highest form of divine love. Aḥmad Sirhindī explains that true love in the heart can only be directed toward one object, and until the servant frees themselves from their ego's desires, they cannot fully align their will with Allah's (Rabbānī 2014, 43–44). This love leads to sincerity (*ikhhlās*) and the station of the *mukarrabīn* (those closest to Allah), who experience blessings and hardships from Allah equally. In contrast, the righteous (*al-abrār*) worship out of hope and fear, tied to their ego, and their rewards are lesser. Even within the *mukarrabīn*, after reaching the station of *baqā'*, some may return to worldly causes, worshipping with fear and hope, but no longer directed at their ego. However, those in complete divine absorption (*istighrāq*) cannot guide others and have no part in the perfection of the prophetic station of nubuwwa (Bisati 2001, 29–45).

#### 4. The State of *Shawq* and Its Place in the *al-Abrār* (Righteous) Station

Allah Almighty associates the state of *shawq* (longing or yearning) with the *al-abrār* (the righteous), as they have not yet attained union *wiṣāl* (meeting with Allah) with the Divine. There is no yearning in the *mukarrabīn* (the nearest to Allah) because their union has already been realized, and the loss of longing signifies their completion. The *al-abrār* refers to those at the beginning or middle stages of the spiritual journey but have not yet reached the highest station of direct closeness to Allah (Rabbānī 2014, 46–47).

#### 5. The Five Elements (*Jawāhir al-Khamsa*)

According to philosophers, the five elements (*cevher*) refer to the fundamental constituents of the world, and these elements are known through the soul, intellect, and sensory organs (Cebecioğlu, 2013). For sufis, however, the heart is the beginning of the realm of *amr* (the sphere of divine command). Above the heart is the *rūḥ* (spirit), above the spirit is the *sir* (secret), above the secret is the *khāfī* (hidden), and above the hidden is the *akhfā* (most hidden). For them, these are called the five elements (*jawāhir al-khamsa*) (Rabbānī 2014, 61–62).

#### 6. Praise of the Aliyyah Naqshbandi Order

A saying attributed to the significant figures of the *Aliyyah Naqshbandi* lineage states: “Our connection (our state) with Allah surpasses all other connections.” Here, *nisbah* refers to the state of spiritual awareness and presence. According to the Naqshbandi master Aḥmad Sirhindī, the presence (*ḥudūr*) is without *ghaybah* (absence). This state is called *yād-dasht* (continuous manifestation of the divine essence). It occurs after one has traversed both the path of attraction (*jadhbah*) and the path of the spiritual journey (*sulūk*) (Chowdury 2024a, 267–70).

#### 7. The Sharia Ensures Both Worldly and Otherworldly Happiness

Aḥmad Sirhindī asserts that the sharia encompasses knowledge, sincerity, and actions. Without these elements, the pleasure of Allah cannot be attained (Cebecioğlu 1999, 29). The attraction and spiritual journey stages aim to reach the station of divine pleasure (*riḍā*). Only through adhering to the sharia can genuine sincerity (*ikhhlās*) be attained. Applying the sharia is far more critical than mystical experiences or divine inspirations (*ilhām*), and remaining committed to the Sunnah is crucial for spiritual progress (Ernst 2009, 149–65).

#### 8. The Essence of the Matter Lies in the Heart

The heart is the key to spiritual progress. If the heart harbors love for anything other than Allah, it is corrupt and unproductive. The heart cannot open through outward actions alone; however, without actions, the heart

cannot be purified. Therefore, external and internal practices must be strengthened and aligned to purify and elevate the heart (Rabbānī 2014, 68–69).

## 9. Tasawwuf Completes and Perfects the Sharia

The inward path (*bāṭin*) complements and perfects the outward law (*ẓāhir*). There is no disagreement between them, even in the slightest measure. For example, refraining from lying with the tongue is a sharia requirement, while purging the heart of deceit is part of the path of tasawwuf and truth (*ḥaqīqat*). If a person is forced to rid themselves of deceit, it is part of the sufi path, but if they do so without struggle, it is part of the realization of truth (Tosun 2005, 98).

Thus, when someone on the sufi path appears to act contrary to the sharia, they are spiritually intoxicated (*sakr*). The apparent contradiction with the sharia disappears if they overcome this and return to clarity. For example, some sufis in a state of spiritual intoxication have claimed that Allah's essence encompasses the entire universe, which is incorrect. Allah encompasses the universe with His knowledge, not His essence. To claim that Allah's essence pervades the world is contrary to the Sharia (Islam 2014, 118–25).

The station of *ṣiddiqiyyah* is the level where the inward sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-bāṭiniyyah*) align with the outward sciences of the sharia. This is the highest station of sainthood (*wilāyah*). Above it is the station of prophethood (*nubuwwah*). A key distinction between the two sciences is that revelation (*wahy*) conveys specific knowledge, while inspiration (*ilhām*) is uncertain (Ansari 1986, 76–84).

## 10. The Existence and Oneness of Allah

Aḥmad Sirhindī asserts that when the intellect is free from spiritual afflictions and worldly distractions, there is no need to prove the existence and oneness of Allah. Such proofs are only necessary when the heart is diseased. These truths become self-evident once the heart is purified and its veils are lifted. A blind person perceives two figures before them, but their blindness does not negate that only one person exists. Similarly, intellectual proofs are limited and rarely lead to certainty. One must purify the heart from spiritual sickness to attain a particular belief (*īmān*) (Rabbānī 2014, 80–81).

## 11. Respect for the Religious Scholar

Aḥmad Sirhindī emphasizes that scholars uphold the sharia, ensuring the Prophet's faith endures and that accountability on Judgment Day centers on sharia adherence rather than tasawwuf. While worldly attachment may affect some students, their knowledge benefits the community more than a detached sufi's spiritual state. A sufi who returns to guide others after realization joins the scholarly community, reflecting

prophetic example (Faruqi 1996, 87; Pagani 2014, 736–38).

### **12. The Harm of the *Nafs al-Ammārah* (The Commanding Self)**

A person dominated by the *nafs al-ammārah* loves leadership and position. They become arrogant, wanting others to be dependent on them while refusing to be dependent on anyone. This is the worst station. To free oneself from the *nafs al-ammārah*, one must fulfil the commandments of religion. The sufi path of self-discipline and struggle (*riyāḍah*) is valuable, but it must be aligned with the commands of the sharia to tame the ego (Rabbānī 2014, 88–90).

### **13. Avoiding Innovation (*Bid'ah*)**

Engaging innovators (*ahl al-bid'ah*) is more harmful than associating with disbelievers. Among the most harmful innovators are those who harbor anger against the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Aḥmad Sirhindī warns against criticizing figures like Caliph Uthman, who made immense contributions to Islam (Cebecioğlu 1999, 36). Criticism based on differing interpretations of Islamic law, as seen in the case of Ali, is acceptable, but it should not lead to hostility. However, figures like Yazid, who acted in ways contrary to the faith, are beyond reproach, as their actions are undeniably erroneous (Rabbānī 2014, 93–94).

### **14. When the Soul is Sick, Pain Feels Like Pleasure, and Pleasure Feels Like Pain**

Aḥmad Sirhindī teaches that the purpose of human creation is to acknowledge one's inability and humility before Allah. For Muslims and religious individuals, the world is seen as a prison, and seeking happiness in it is viewed as foolishness. Hence, there is no escape from hardship in life. The goal is to recognize that world suffering is part of the human condition, and the soul must be purified through struggle. One can achieve spiritual fulfilment only by embracing this understanding (Rabbānī 2014, 109–10).

### **15. This Path is the Path of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)**

Imām al-Ḥājj al-Naqshabandī once said: “We bring the end to the beginning and include it in the present.” This path is the path of the companions (*ṣaḥābah*). In their first meeting with the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), they reached a level where the righteous leaders of the Ummah could only catch a faint fragrance from this station in the final moments (Cebecioğlu, 1999, 51). This is why figures like Wahshī are considered superior to others, such as Uways al-Qaranī. The superiority of the Naqshbandi order over other sufi orders lies in its reverence for the era of the Sahabah, which is seen as superior to all other epochs. This view is supported by the fourth verse of Q.S. Al-Jumu'ah [62]: (4).

## 16. The Saved Sect (*Al-Firqa al-Nājiyah*)

Among the seventy-three sects, each claims to follow Islam and believes they will attain salvation. Based on the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): “Those who belong to this group are those who follow my path and that of my companions,” it is emphasized that following the Sunnah and emulating the *ṣaḥābah* is essential for salvation. Without adhering to the Prophet and his companions, one cannot attain salvation. This path is undeniably the path of Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l-Jama’ah.

## 17. Sharia and *Ḥaqīqat* Are the Same

Sharia and *ḥaqīqat* are inseparable, differing only in level—summary versus detail, rational evidence versus inner revelation, unseen versus witnessed, and effortful versus effortless action. Attainment of *ḥaqīqat* implies alignment with sharia sciences and certainty of truth (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*). Misalignment indicates spiritual intoxication (*sakr*) or incomplete realization. True *ḥaqīqat* requires complete adherence to sharia, rejecting any notion that sharia is merely external while *Ḥaqīqat* is its core (Rabbānī 2014, 145–47; Tosun 2020).

## 18. Staying Away from Heedlessness (*Ghaflah*)

The soul and body are harmonized through love, but when the soul forgets Allah, it falls into heedlessness (*ghaflah*) and ego-driven darkness. Prophets call the soul to divine awareness, promoting detachment from bodily desires and worldly concerns. Ultimately, spiritual maturity requires guiding others, which is integral to one’s station (Cebecioğlu 1999, 29).

## 19. The Exaltation of His Holiness the Sheikh

The Naqshbandi order emphasizes strict adherence to the Sunnah and rejects innovation (*bid’ah*). Spiritual states and ecstasies (*wajd*) must conform to sharia rulings, as spiritual insights serve Sharia sciences. Superficial or ecstatic experiences cannot replace sharia’s core teachings. Sufi wisdom should not override explicit scriptural texts (*naṣṣ*), exemplified by preferring *Futūḥāt Madaniyyah* over *Futūḥāt Makkiyyah* when both are available.

## 20. Nothing is Worth Seeking Except Allah

The world’s affairs are not worth troubling oneself over. The primary goal, whether easy or difficult, is to attain Allah’s pleasure. No being in existence is worthy of being sought or pursued other than Allah (Sabir 2023, 257–77).

## **Themes Explored in the Second Volume of Aḥmad Sirhindī's Works**

The second volume of *Maktūbāt* by Aḥmad Sirhindī encompasses diverse subjects, showcasing his deep intellectual and spiritual understanding. This critical analysis explores the key discussions within the volume, emphasizing their central themes and examining their broader relevance in Islamic theology, philosophy, and tasawwuf.

### **1. Five Stages Exclusive to the Prophets**

Aḥmad Sirhindī explores the three types of *dhātī muḥabbat* (divine love), which include *maḥbūbiyya* (being loved), *muḥibbiyya* (loving), and *muḥabbat* (love itself). The culmination of *dhātī muḥabbat* is attributed to the final Prophet, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The manifestation of *maḥbūbiyya* is observed in Prophet Musa (*kalimatullāh*), while *muḥabbat* is personified in Prophet Adam. The second and third stages of love are exemplified in Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Nuh, respectively. Aḥmad Sirhindī asserts that these stages are present in all prophets, with the highest station being the level of *riḍā* (divine pleasure), above *ḥubb* (love), and above that, the level of *dhātī muḥabbat* (Rabbānī 2014, 217–19).

### **2. Allah as the Light of the Heavens and the Earth**

Aḥmad Sirhindī asserts that the *insān al-kāmil* (perfect human), freed from worldly attachments and unified with the divine essence (*dhāt al-aḥadiyya*), transcends the perception of divine attributes as separate, experiencing direct and unique proximity to Allah's essence (Sabir 2023).

### **3. The Mention of the Names of the Rightly Guided Caliphs**

Aḥmad Sirhindī condemns the omission of the Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn's names in Eid al-Adha sermons, viewing it as a divisive innovation (*bid'ah*) contrary to Ahl al-Sunnah practice. He highlights its historical prevalence in the Indian subcontinent and prays against those fostering such discord (Rabbānī 2014, 227–29).

### **4. Can the Beauty of Allah be Seen in a Particle?**

Aḥmad Sirhindī explores the mystical concept of witnessing Allah's beauty in the smallest particles. He argues that what is perceived in particles is merely a shadow of Allah's infinite beauty. According to Aḥmad Sirhindī, the true path to understanding and experiencing Allah's beauty requires seeking Allah beyond the limitations of both the outer and inner realms (*āfāq* and *anfus*). This idea reinforces the need to transcend physical perceptions and attain a deeper spiritual connection (Friedmann 1966).

### **5. The Most Precious Capital is Sorrow**

Aḥmad Sirhindī emphasizes that hardships and sorrows are human beings' most valuable forms of wealth. Such trials only cause pain to those

overly attached to the material world. For spiritually attuned, misfortunes become a source of growth and understanding rather than suffering.

## 6. Love for Ahl al-Sunnah and Ahl al-Bayt

Aḥmad Sirhindī emphasizes that faithful Sunni Islam requires balanced love and respect for the Ahl al-Bayt and the Prophet's companions (*ṣaḥābah*). Neglecting this or adopting hostility aligns with extremist groups like the Khawarij and Rafidis. Sunni belief fundamentally honors the *ṣaḥābah*'s righteousness, including 'Alī's role in early disputes.

## 7. The Companions of the Right Hand, the Companions of the Left Hand, and the *Sābiqūn*

Aḥmad Sirhindī elaborates on the metaphysical categorization of the companions as depicted in the Quran. The *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* (the companions of the right hand) are enveloped in divine light, while the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl* (the companions of the left hand) are associated with darkness. The *sābiqūn* (those who precede others in righteousness) transcend these divisions, surpassing both types of veils. These individuals, including the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his closest companions, especially *Abū Bakr* and 'Umar, represent the highest spiritual station, where they no longer desire anything except Allah Himself (Rabbānī 2014, 280–82).

## 8. Understanding the Unity of Existence (*Waḥdat al-Wujūd*) Correctly

Aḥmad Sirhindī explains that the *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of existence) in tasawwuf does not imply fusion, imitation, or the descent of divinity into creation. Instead, it signifies the understanding that Allah's essence is beyond any change or alteration, unaffected by the phenomena of creation. Allah's existence is necessary and absolute, and creation exists as a reflection of His will. Aḥmad Sirhindī notes that although the world may appear to exist in a separate form, it is merely an illusion and the reflection of Allah's divine power. He compares this concept with the teachings of al-Ḥallāj (d. 922), who famously declared "*Anā al-Ḥaqq*" ("I am the Truth"), interpreted as the realization that the self does not exist independently but is subsumed in Allah's existence. Sufis assert that the external world is an illusion, but it still holds meaning as a manifestation of Allah's creative act (Rabbānī 2014, 288–92).

## 9. The Boundaries of Prophethood and *Wilāyah* (Saintship)

Aḥmad Sirhindī delineates the relationship between prophethood and *wilāyah*, asserting that the two are distinct but complementary. While prophethood is a divine station of conveying Allah's message, *wilāyah* involves attaining spiritual perfection and closeness to Allah. He explains that the foundational statement of the Islamic faith, *Lā ilāha illallāh* ("There is no Allah but Allah"), leads to the affirmation of the prophethood

of Muhammad (PBUH) as the Seal of the Prophets. This is the foundation for sharia, a path to spiritual perfection and achieving divine satisfaction in this world and the Hereafter.

## **10. Sharia is the Essence of All Spiritual Perfection**

Aḥmad Sirhindī emphasizes that sharia is the mother of all spiritual perfections and the basis of all divine guidance. The fruits of sharia are not limited to the material world but extend to eternal rewards in the Hereafter. Following the sharia means attaining spiritual and material success, leading to ultimate happiness in both worlds. Aḥmad Sirhindī stresses that the sharia is like a blessed tree whose fruits benefit believers in this world and the next, offering the key to eternal felicity (Rabbānī 2014, 302–8).

## **Principal Themes in the Third Volume of Aḥmad Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt***

In the third volume of *Maktūbāt Rabbānī*, Aḥmad Sirhindī explores the relationship between sharia and sufism, emphasizing spiritual growth through hardship, the importance of Qur'anic recitation and dhikr, and avoiding prohibited acts. He discusses key concepts such as divine proximity (*qurb*), self-nullification (*fanā' al-dhātī*), and annihilation (*maḥwiyyah*) and warns against mistaking allegorical truths for literal realities. Aḥmad Sirhindī stresses the value of service over personal gratification, the role of prayer in spiritual progression, and the necessity of maintaining proper etiquette in religious practices. He highlights the importance of companionship (*ṣuḥbah*), the guidance of divine friendship (*khalīliyyah*), and the significance of seclusion (*inzivā*) in the spiritual journey (Kılıç 2017, 55–98). Additionally, he addresses the balance between inner spiritual pursuits and outward sharia obligations, urging continuous engagement in dhikr and reflection on one's flaws. Aḥmad Sirhindī provides practical guidance for integrating Islamic law with mystical practices through these teachings.

### **1. Measure and Sharia**

According to Aḥmad Sirhindī, one must accept whatever is granted on this path with utmost respect and humility, constantly feeling indebted to the blessings of the spiritual leader. The seeker (*sālik*) should not be content with what has been attained but should continuously beseech Allah with utmost humility for higher spiritual states, following the Qur'anic expression "*hal min mazīd?*" (Is there any more?). At the same time, adhering strictly to the rulings of the sharia is of paramount importance. The sheikhs have stated that the authenticity and correctness of spiritual states are measured by one's upright adherence to the sharia.

The disciple (*murīd*) must attribute all spiritual blessings to their

sheikh, regardless of their apparent source. This is because the sheikh encompasses the disciple, and any spiritual training the disciple undergoes, irrespective of its external manifestation, is ultimately derived from the sheikh. This is a point where seekers often falter. Therefore, one must remain vigilant and guard against the deceptions of the accursed enemy, Satan. Remember the saying: “He who is in one place is everywhere, and he who is everywhere is nowhere.”

## 2. Special Provisions for Women in the Oath of Allegiance (*Bay'ah*)

Aḥmad Sirhindī highlights distinct conditions for women's *bay'ah*, as outlined in Q.S. Al-Mumtaḥanah [60]: 12 and practiced during the conquest of Mecca. Unlike men, women's *bay'ah* was verbal without physical contact and included six key obligations: affirming pure monotheism and rejecting polytheism (including reliance on others besides Allah), avoiding theft (e.g., misusing husband's wealth), abstaining from adultery, forbidding child killing, refraining from false accusations, and obeying the Prophet's commands, including avoiding immoral practices (Elmi, Baghestani, and Fathi 2015, 45–68).

## 3. The Trap of Confusing Metaphor with Reality

Aḥmad Sirhindī warns that metaphors, as shadows of reality, should not be mistaken for the ultimate truth. Understanding metaphors can guide one toward the essence of reality, but they remain distinct from the actual source, underscoring the importance of discerning symbolic representation from actual spiritual knowledge.

## 4. Miracles (*Karāmah*) and the Permissible

Aḥmad Sirhindī cautions that excessive engagement in permissible (*mubāḥ*) or questionable acts can hinder spiritual progress and diminish miraculous manifestations. He distinguishes miracles as a prophetic (*nubuwwah*) attribute, not a requirement for sainthood (*wilāyah*), which focuses on closeness to Allah rather than public display. Miracles do not determine a saint's rank or superiority (Rabbānī 2014, 422–23).

## 5. The Manifestation of Spiritual Attraction (*Jadhba*)

Aḥmad Sirhindī reflects on his spiritual evolution from experiencing joy in trials during a state of *sakr* (spiritual intoxication) to adopting *ṣahw* (spiritual sobriety), where emotional responses like sadness and happiness are recognized as transient human states, not true enlightenment. He emphasizes discerning metaphor from ultimate reality, warns against excessive indulgence in permissible acts that hinder growth, and highlights the importance of balance in spiritual awakening. His work critically addresses false versus genuine sufism, clarifies key spiritual stations—including *nuzūl maqām*, *ḥaqīqat al-qurb*, and *wilāyah*—and defines the perfect human (*insān al-kāmil*). *Maktūbāt*

*Rabbānī* integrates sharia and tasawwuf, stressing doctrinal purity, ethical reform, and spiritual discipline within Islamic theology (Mesbahi 2014).

### **Findings: Sharia and Tasawwuf in *Maktūbāt Rabbānī***

The examination of *Maktūbāt Rabbānī*, specifically its treatment of sharia and tasawwuf, reveals a complex synthesis of Islamic jurisprudence and spirituality that represents Aḥmad Sirhindī's distinct theological contributions. Through detailed analysis of the epistolary work, several key findings emerge, particularly in how Aḥmad Sirhindī integrates the outward obligations of sharia with the inward dimensions of sufi mysticism, creating a holistic framework for Islamic life that balances legal rigor with spiritual fulfilment.

#### **1. The Centrality of Sharia: The Foundation of Islamic Life**

Aḥmad Sirhindī's emphasis on sharia as the cornerstone of individual and communal Islamic life is evident throughout the *Maktūbāt Rabbānī*. The letters reflect his deep commitment to the fundamental principles of Islamic law, highlighting its dual role as both a social contract and a means of attaining spiritual purity. Key findings from this thematic focus include:

- a) **Sharia as a Spiritual Path:** Aḥmad Sirhindī rejects the dichotomy between external legal practice and internal spiritual experience, positioning sharia as an essential foundation for the mystical journey. He says spiritual enlightenment cannot be achieved without adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah commandments. In several letters, he underscores that a person's proximity to Allah depends on their mystical experiences and observance of religious duties such as prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. This integration of sharia and tasawwuf positions him as a key proponent of a balanced Islamic practice, where law and spirituality merge (Tosun 2020).
- b) **Sharia as the Vehicle for Social Order:** Aḥmad Sirhindī emphasizes that sharia is necessary for preserving social harmony and justice. In a political context marked by the influence of the Mughal Empire's religious pluralism, the letters stress the importance of adhering to divine laws to ensure individual righteousness and collective well-being. The social role of sharia is thus not confined to individual piety but extends to the governance of the muslim community. Aḥmad Sirhindī's writings illustrate a vision of Islamic governance where sharia is the backbone of personal behavior and state policy.

## 2. The Role of Tasawwuf: Inward Purification and Divine Proximity

In contrast to his firm commitment to Sharia, Aḥmad Sirhindī's treatment of tasawwuf focuses on Islam's internal, transformative dimension. However, His approach to tasawwuf is not a mere mystical pursuit but a means to actualize the more profound truths of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Aḥmad Sirhindī's tasawwuf is an ethical and ontological path leading to divine knowledge and closeness. Key findings related to his integration of tasawwuf are as follows:

- a) **The Integration of Spirituality and Law:** Aḥmad Sirhindī is often regarded as a synthesizer of genuine mysticism. The letters illustrate his conviction that true sufi mastery cannot be separated from the observance of sharia. Unlike some of his contemporaries, who advocated for a more exclusive focus on mysticism and spiritual experiences, Aḥmad Sirhindī stresses that the heart of the sufi path must adhere to Islamic law. For Aḥmad Sirhindī, tasawwuf is the inner dimension of sharia, and both lead to the goal of nearness to Allah.
- b) **Tasawwuf as a Path of Divine Knowledge:** Aḥmad Sirhindī aligns tasawwuf with a journey of deepening knowledge of Allah (*ma'rifah*), where proper understanding transcends intellectual engagement with sacred texts and enters the realm of personal, experiential learning. He emphasizes the role of *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) and *murāqabah* (spiritual observation) in purifying the soul and deepening one's connection with the divine. This mystical knowledge, however, is framed within the bounds of sharia, preventing potential spiritual excesses that could lead to heresy or deviation from Islam.
- c) **Importance of Dhikr, Latā'if, Seyr-i Sulūk in Human life:** According to Aḥmad Sirhindī, *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) is not limited to the vocal recitation of divine names; righteous deeds (*'amal ṣāliḥ*) are also considered a form of *dhikr*. He emphasizes that reciting the *Asmā' al-Ḥusna* (the Most Beautiful Names of Allah) is particularly effective, as it nurtures love for Allah and strengthens the connection between the seeker and the Divine (Tosun 2020).

Aḥmad Sirhindī's teachings on *Latā'if* (subtle centers or spiritual faculties) describe the human being as composed of body and soul, divided into ten *latā'if*. These faculties are categorized into two realms:

- a) **The realm of Amr (Command):** These are the heart (*qalb*), spirit (*rūḥ*), secret (*sirr*), hidden (*khafī*), and the most hidden (*akhfā*).
- b) **The realm of Ḥalq (Creation):** These include the four elements—earth, air, water, fire (the *anāsir-i erba'a*), and the ego (*nafs*).

In Aḥmad Sirhindī's schema, the heart is located on the left side of the chest, the spirit on the right, and the *akhfā* at the centre, with the *sirr* and *khafī* situated on either side. The ego (*nafs*) is linked to the brain (*dimāgh*). Aḥmad Sirhindī is credited with being the first to describe the precise locations of the *latā'if* in the body within the context of sufi tradition.

For Aḥmad Sirhindī, *seyr-i sulūk* (the path of spiritual journey) refers to ascending from a lower level of knowledge and awareness to a higher one. It involves an individual's progression from superficial understanding to profound spiritual insight.

### **3. Rejection of Extremist Views on Mysticism: Defending Genuine Tasawwuf**

Aḥmad Sirhindī was a scholar and sufi who fought to purify religion and tasawwuf from superstitions in the Indian subcontinent. He was willing to endure imprisonment for the cause he believed in, demonstrating his commitment to spiritual and social reform.

A critical aspect of Aḥmad Sirhindī's correspondence is his defense of genuine tasawwuf against perceived heterodox tendencies within the broader sufi tradition. Several letters discuss his critiques of certain mystical schools, notably those that deviated from the mainstream teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. The findings related to these critiques include: critique of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of existence), Aḥmad Sirhindī critiques the philosophical concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, which asserts the identity of Allah with the entire universe. While recognizing the depth of Ibn al-'Arabī's metaphysical contributions, Aḥmad Sirhindī argues that the unqualified application of this concept can lead to pantheism, which he considers incompatible with Islamic theology. His critique is rooted in strict adherence to the transcendence of Allah and the necessity of distinguishing between the Creator and the creation (Afifi 1975).

He replaced the concept with *waḥdat al-shuhūd* to affirm the distinction between the Creator and the creation. Aḥmad Sirhindī's objections to Ibn al-'Arabī's philosophy, particularly the idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of existence), stem from several factors:

- a) Initially, Aḥmad Sirhindī accepted the notion of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. However, after hearing his teacher, Bāqī Billāh's remarks just a week before his passing, Aḥmad Sirhindī began reconsidering his stance. Bāqī Billāh's statement, "All that is seen, heard, and known is other than Allah. (It is distinct from Allah) and must be negated in truth with the reality of the word *Lā* (There is no...)," profoundly influenced Aḥmad Sirhindī, leading him to distance himself from the idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.
- b) During his spiritual journey (*seyr-u sulūk*) and through various mystical revelations, Aḥmad Sirhindī came to believe that *waḥ-*

*dat al-wujūd* was a lower station, which led him to break from the teachings of Ibn al-‘Arabī. al-Ḥallāj is primarily associated with *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of being) rather than *waḥdat al-shuhūd* (unity of witnessing). His mystical expressions, particularly his famous statement “*Anā al-Ḥaqq*” (I am the truth), reflect a deep sense of divine union, which aligns more closely with *waḥdat al-wujūd*—the idea that all existence is ultimately a manifestation of God’s essence. Ibn al-‘Arabī later systematized this concept, but Hallaj’s writings and poetry express a similar notion of divine immanence. Some scholars argue that al-Ghazālī’s mystical thought aligns more closely with *waḥdat al-shuhūd* since he stresses the importance of spiritual realization of divine presence without negating the ontological distinction between God and creation. His rejection of philosophical pantheism in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* indicates his caution against views that could imply monistic interpretations.

- c) At the time, some sufis in the Indian Subcontinent who adhered to *waḥdat al-wujūd* began to display attitudes that were non-compliant with religious norms and showed disregard for sharia. This behavior prompted Aḥmad Sirhindī to adopt a critical stance, leading him to critique both *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* as misinterpreted by these individuals (Yıldız 2020, 145).

Aḥmad Sirhindī positioned himself between two extremes: on the one hand, scholars who regarded the world as a “true existence” and, on the other, sufis who viewed it as a mere “illusion” within the framework of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. He sought to bridge the gap between these two groups, describing the world as a “shadow” and positioning himself as a mediator, guiding both perspectives toward a shared understanding (Haksever 2015, 197–206).

Aḥmad Sirhindī’s view on *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of existence) and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* (unity of witnessing) reveals his nuanced approach to sufi metaphysics. He considers *waḥdat al-wujūd* a lower, preliminary station on the sufi path that must eventually be transcended. He offers a metaphor: Just as the stars become invisible when the sun rises, the believer who sees only the sun and believes that only it exists is in the station of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. This is the station of ‘*ilm al-yaqīn* (Knowledge with Certainty) (Chowdury 2024b, 375–412).

Aḥmad Sirhindī asserts this perception is an illusion, for the stars still exist, but the sun’s powerful light obscures them. The person who understands this and believes that the stars exist, though hidden, exemplifies the station of *waḥdat al-shuhūd*. This is the station of ‘*ayn al-yaqīn* (Sight with Certainty). As the seeker’s perception deepens and they can perceive both the sun and the stars distinctly, they ascend to the

higher station of *ḥaq al-yaqīn* (truth with certainty) (Firdaus and Sahib 2021, 209–24).

Some of the notable figures influenced by Aḥmad Sirhindī include Rāshid Aḥmad Gangūhī, Faḍl al-Raḥmān Ganj Murādābādī, Abū al-Kalām Āzād (20th century), Muḥammad Iqbāl, Abū al-A'lā al-Mawdūdī, Sa'īd Nūrsī, and Maḥmūd Sāmī Ramaḍānūghlū.

#### **4. The Role of Women in the Spiritual Community**

Aḥmad Sirhindī's views on women, particularly their participation in the spiritual and social spheres, represent a notable aspect of his thought. His letters address the roles and responsibilities of women in Islamic society, reflecting his concerns about the proper balance between spirituality and societal expectations. Key findings on this issue include:

- a) The Role of Women in Sharia and Mysticism:** Aḥmad Sirhindī stresses that while the same obligations of sharia bind women as men, their engagement in tasawwuf is equally vital to their spiritual journey. The letters offer guidance on how women can navigate their religious and social duties, emphasizing modesty, spiritual sincerity, and the importance of maintaining family obligations while pursuing spiritual growth.
- b) Critique of the *Bay'ah* (Oath of Allegiance) for Women:** The letters suggest that women's *bay'ah* was a symbolic act of spiritual commitment, distinct from the more physical form of allegiance given by men. Aḥmad Sirhindī underscores the need for women to maintain a sense of humility and devotion, rejecting any form of self-aggrandizement in their pursuit of spiritual advancement (Ziad, 2012, 188).

#### **5. Theological Synthesis: Sharia, Tasawwuf, and Divine Unity**

Aḥmad Sirhindī articulates a unified vision where sharia, tasawwuf, and *tawhīd* are interdependent, integrating legal adherence with mystical experience. He posits *tawhīd*—the absolute oneness of Allah—as the goal of both sharia and the sufi path, emphasizing that true monotheism is realized through combined spiritual practice and legal observance.

#### **6. Aḥmad Sirhindī's Legacy and Contemporary Relevance**

Aḥmad Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt Rabbānī* offers a profound insight into integrating sharia and tasawwuf, challenging simplistic dichotomies between legalism and spirituality (Schimmel 1973, 199–203). His thought provides a compelling model for understanding the symbiotic relationship between outward religious practice and inward spiritual transformation. The findings of this research affirm that Aḥmad Sirhindī's contributions to Islamic theology are not only historically significant but also offer crucial lessons for contemporary Islamic scholarship and practice. His holistic

approach to Islam provides a model for contemporary muslims seeking to reconcile their faith's legal and spiritual dimensions.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of this study effectively synthesizes the central arguments regarding Aḥmad Sirhindī's integration of sharia and tasawwuf, demonstrating his nuanced approach to reconciling Islamic law with spiritual praxis. However, while the discussion provides a comprehensive summary, certain aspects warrant further critical engagement.

First, the assertion that Aḥmad Sirhindī "harmonizes Islamic jurisprudence with spiritual practices" is well-founded but could benefit from a more precise delineation of how he differs from preceding scholars who engaged in similar reconciliatory efforts. For instance, al-Ghazālī's approach to balancing sharia and sufism could serve as a comparative framework highlighting Aḥmad Sirhindī's unique contributions.

Second, while the critique of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* is acknowledged, the conclusion could more explicitly examine the extent to which Aḥmad Sirhindī's perspective represents a reformist departure or a continuation of classical sufi metaphysics. Although he critiques Ibn al-'Arabī's ontology, does his interpretation of *waḥdat al-shuhūd* entirely reject the mystical worldview, or does it offer a modified understanding of divine immanence? Addressing this question would clarify his doctrinal positioning.

Moreover, discussing prophethood, sainthood, and metaphysical misconceptions is crucial, but their implications for Aḥmad Sirhindī's broader theological project could be elaborated further. His rejection of reincarnation (*tanāsukh*) is framed as a rational and theological stance. Yet, a comparative analysis with earlier Islamic philosophical discourses (e.g., Avicenna's or Suhrawardī's views on soul-body relations) might deepen the study of his epistemological commitments.

From a contemporary scholarly perspective, the conclusion rightly underscores the relevance of *Maktūbāt Rabbānī* for modern debates on legalism and spirituality. However, engaging with postmodern critiques of religious authenticity and the role of legalism in contemporary sufi practices could enrich the discussion. How does Aḥmad Sirhindī's framework respond to modern critiques of rigid jurisprudential structures in sufism? Does his model allow for adaptability in contemporary spiritual discourses? These questions remain open-ended and merit further exploration.

Finally, while the study convincingly argues that *Maktūbāt Rabbānī* serves as a bridge between doctrinal clarity and spiritual profundity, the assertion that it "inspires meaningful engagement with Islamic tradition in the modern era" could be contextualized with concrete examples of contemporary scholars or movements influenced by Aḥmad Sirhindī's

synthesis. Identifying such influences would substantiate the claim of the text's enduring intellectual legacy.

In summary, while the conclusion effectively consolidates the research findings, a deeper engagement with comparative frameworks, philosophical implications, and contemporary relevance could further enhance the critical depth of the study. This would solidify Aḥmad Sirhindī's intellectual contributions and position his thought within broader historical and modern discourses on the relationship between sharia and tasawwuf.

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