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ḤADĪTH OF SELF-KNOWING BETWEEN SUFIS AND ḤADĪTH SCHOLARS

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Abstract:

This paper examines the "Ḥadīth of Self-knowing," often quoted as "Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord," a saying that has profoundly influenced Islamic thought, particularly within Sufi and Ḥadīth scholarship. Tracing its origins through Takhrīj methodology, the study evaluates its authenticity, revealing a divergence between Sufi mystics and Ḥadīth scholars. While Sufis authenticate the narration through kashf (spiritual disclosure), dreams, and ilhām (divine inspiration), Ḥadīth scholars challenge its legitimacy based on classical methodologies. Despite these differences, both groups recognize the spiritual and ethical significance of the saying. The research also deals the interpretative approaches, highlighting Sufis' metaphysical and mystical readings that emphasize self-awareness as a pathway to Allah, contrasted with Ḥadīth scholars' focus on practical applications for broader Muslim society. This comparative analysis underscores the distinct methodologies and epistemologies shaping Islamic perspectives on self-knowledge and divine understanding.

Keywords: *Self-knowing, Ḥadīth authenticity, Sufi mysticism, kashf, ilhām, Takhrīj, form of Ḥadīth.*

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Indroduction

The ḥadīth maʿrifat al-nafs, often translated, as "He who knows himself, knows his Lord," is a frequently cited narration in the works of prominent Sufi shaykhs, attributed to the Prophet in varying forms and interpretations. This narration, central to the Sufi tradition, has become a subject of both mystical reflection and scholarly scrutiny. Sufi shaykhs often regard the Ḥadīth as authentic, asserting its legitimacy through kashf (divine disclosure), dreams, and ilhām (divine inspiration). This approach diverges from the traditional science of Ḥadīth, where scholars rely on chains of transmission (isnād) and corroborating evidence to determine authenticity.

This article explores the contrasting methodologies employed by Sufi shaykhs and Ḥadīth scholars concerning the transmission and validation of this narration. Sufi authorities claim that experiential insights can confirm a Ḥadīth's authenticity, even in the absence of conventional chains. Some Ḥadīth scholars, however, argue that without adherence to established methodologies, such narrations remain unreliable and cannot be accepted as prophetic sayings. Others adopt a more moderate perspective, suggesting that inspired insights may be acceptable if they align with sharīʿa (Islamic law) and do not contradict its legal principles. A further subset of scholars, however, maintains that kashf or dreams may indeed serve as a legitimate basis for deeming a Ḥadīth sound.

Conversely, Ḥadīth scholars, employing classical authentication criteria, generally classify this narration as mawḍūʿ (fabricated) or as a statement attributed to a companion (ṣaḥābī) or follower (tābiʿ). Their consensus holds that it cannot be definitively attributed to the Prophet. Despite this divergence, both Sufi and Ḥadīth scholars acknowledge the profound meaning embedded in the notion of self-knowing as a pathway to divine knowledge. Sufi perspectives emphasize the metaphysical and transformative implications of this idea, while Ḥadīth scholars approach it from a more practical standpoint, underscoring its relevance for individual self-reflection and moral growth.

Takhrīj of the Ḥadīth of Self-Knowing

In Sunni scholarship, Ḥadīth transmission is meticulously analysed through chains of narration (isnād) to determine authenticity. The

canonical collections, known as the six books (al-kutub al-sittah), alongside other primary texts like the Muwaṭṭaʾ of Mālik ibn Anas, are often used as benchmarks for the authenticity of Ḥadīths. However, the Ḥadīth of self-knowing does not appear in these foundational sources, raising questions about its origins and validity as a prophetic tradition. The earliest known source attributing a similar concept to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is Ṣaḥīḥ of Ibn Ḥibbān[1], where a Ḥadīth states that reciting Sūrah al-Kāfirūn in the first rakʿah of Fajr prayer signifies knowing Allah (Ibn Ḥibbān, 2012, p. 214). However, this does not directly correspond to the Ḥadīth of self-knowing. Furthermore, extensive searches in early sources from the first two centuries of Islam reveal no record of this specific narration in the canonical collections or in the works of early scholars like al-Bukhārī, Muslim, or Mālik ibn Anas.

The Ḥadīth of Self-Knowing in Early Sunni Sources

One of the earliest figures to articulate a similar statement was the Sufi and wise man, Yaḥyā ibn Muʿādh al-Rāzī (d. 257/871)[2], though not explicitly as a prophetic narration. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) highlights that Yaḥyā was known for his wisdom, and many of his sayings were collected by his followers (al-Baghdādī, 1997, p. 49), yet he did not attribute this particular statement to the Prophet. This form of the Ḥadīth likely circulated within early Sufi circles as wisdom rather than authenticated prophetic tradition.

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[1] Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī (d. 354/965), a prominent ḥadīth scholar of the late ʿAbbāsid era, is renowned for his meticulous classification of aḥādīth. His *Ṣaḥīḥ ibn Ḥibbān*, uniquely arranged according to legal categories, showcases his innovative methodology in ḥadīth sciences, while *Kitāb al-Thiqāt* serves as a biographical dictionary of reliable narrators, reflecting his critical insight into rijāl. He also authored *Rawḍat al-ʿUqalāʾ wa Nuzhat al-Fuḍalāʾ*, a seminal work on ethics and wisdom. Ibn Ḥibbān studied under al-Ḥasan ibn Sufyān al-Nasawī and was contemporaneous with scholars like al-Dāraquṭnī, who critiqued some of his methodological approaches, particularly his reliance on the principle of iṣṭilāḥ (standardization). His intellectual milieu reflects the consolidation of ḥadīth sciences within the larger framework of Islamic jurisprudence in the 4th/10th century.

[2] Abū Zakariya Yaḥyā bin Muʿādh ibn Ja'far al-Rāzi was a Sunni Muslim scholar, Sufi mystic, and preacher who lived in the 3rd century AH (9th century CE). He was born in Ray, Iran, and later moved to Balkh and Nishapur, where he died in 871 CE. He was known for his piety, wisdom, and eloquent sermons.

Several later Sunni scholars, such as al-Wāḥidī [1] (d. 468/1075) in his al-Wasīṭ, and Sufis like Abū Bakr al-Warrāq (d. 240/854),[2] interpret the saying in terms of self-knowledge leading to recognition of divine attributes (al-Wāḥidī, 1994, p. 214). However, neither explicitly attribute it to the Prophet. In his seminal work, Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ, Abū Nuʿaym al-Asfahānī (d. 430/1039) includes a statement attributed to Sahl ibn ʿAbd Allāh (d. 283/896), as transmitted by Aḥmad ibn Masrūq[3] (d. 298/911). According to al-Asfahānī, Sahl (al-Tustarī) was asked to elaborate on his saying: "Whoever knows himself, indeed he has known his Lord." Sahl responded by clarifying, "Whoever recognizes himself in relation to his Lord has truly recognized their Lord within themselves." (al-Aṣfahānī, p. 189) Notably, al-Asfahānī does not attribute this saying to the Prophet Muḥammad, indicating that he considers it a statement of wisdom from Sahl rather than a prophetic tradition. Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (d. 502/1108) posits that self-knowledge is a crucial aspect of spiritual development. He cites a prophetic tradition, though without a specific chain of transmission, which states, "The eighth point: Whoever knows himself, knows God Almighty, for it is narrated that God did not reveal any book except that it contains: Know yourself, O human, and you will know your Lord." (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1983, p. 20)

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[1] Abū al-Ḥasan Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Alī al-Wāḥidī al-Naysābūrī al-Shafi'ī (d. 468 AH) was a scholar known for his expertise in Qurʾānic exegesis (*Tafsīr*), reasons for revelation (Asbāb al-Nuzūl), Arabic language, and history. He was also a poet whose work was praised as eloquent. His most notable works include "*Asbāb al-Nuzūl*" (Reasons for Revelation), and he authored three commentaries on the Qurʾān: *"Al-Basīṭ"*, *"Al-Wasīṭ"*, and *"Al-Wajīz"*.

[2] Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Umar al-Warrāq al-Tirmidhi, known as "al-Ḥakīm" (wise man), was one of the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamāʾah and a prominent Sunni Sufi in the 3rd century AH. He hailed from Tirmidh and resided in Balkh. He associated with Aḥmad ibn Khaḍrawayh, Muḥammad ibn Saʾd ibn Ibrīhīm al-Zāhid, and Muḥammad ibn Umar ibn Khushnām al-Balkhī. Al-Warrāq authored renowned works on Sufism, jurisprudence, and literature, and he was also a transmitter of Hadith. He passed away in the year 240 AH.

[3] Aḥmad b. Masrūq (d. 298/911), a pivotal ascetic and Sufi of the late ʿAbbāsid period, was deeply embedded in the spiritual milieu of Baghdad. A student of Sahl al-Tustarī, Aḥmad integrated asceticism (*zuhd*) with the nascent principles of Sufism. His oral teachings, rather than written works, significantly shaped Sufi praxis. His student, Abū Bakr al-Shiblī, carried forward his legacy. Aḥmad's contemporaries included luminaries like al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, with whom he shared a commitment to ethical purification and divine gnosis (*maʿrifa*).

The Ḥadīth of Self-Knowing in Later Sunni Sources

Prominent scholars like al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), in his works Kīmiyāʾ al-Saʿādah and Maʿārij al-Quds (al-Ghazālī, Maʿārij al-Quds fī Madārij Maʿrifat al-Nafs (The Ascent to the Divine through the Path of Self-knowing). Khuṭbah al-Kitāb, 1988, p. 32), Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī al-Maʿāfirī al-Ishbīlī(d.543/1148) in his Qānūn al-Taʾwīl (Ibn al-"Arabī, 1986, p. 467), Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) in his al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah[1] and al-Risālah al-Wujūdīyyah[2], Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), in his (great) exegesis of Qurʾān, under the commentary of 'Istiʿādhah (Al-Rāzī, 1981, p. 91) and Ibn ʿAṭā Allāh al-Iskandarī[3] (d. 709/1309) in his book "Laṭāʾif al-Minan", along with his teacher, Abu al-ʿAbbās al-Mursī[4] (d.686 /1286) incorporate the concept, attributing to the Prophet, within their writings. (al-Iskandarī, 2006, p. 52) However, their lack of isnād and reliance on general attribution suggest that they treated it as reflective wisdom rather than verified prophetic tradition.

These scholars ascribe the Ḥadīth of self-knowledge to the Prophet without providing a rigorous legal methodology or a chain of narration. Their attribution is often vague, relying on phrases such as "as the Prophet, peace be upon him, says" or "as it is mentioned in Ḥadīth that." This lack of a clear isnād, even a weak one, raises questions about the authenticity and reliability of the narration.

The following scholars have evaluated the authenticity of this Ḥadīth and analyzed whether it is an established Ḥadīth of the Prophet or a saying attributed to someone else; Abū Zakarīyyā al-Nawawī concludes that it is not established as a saying of the Prophet.

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[1] Ibn ʿArabī, al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyyah (Vol. 1). Dār Ṣādir (2004), v.1, p. 96.

[2] Ibn ʿArabī, Al-Risālat al-Wujūdīyah Fī Maʾna Qawlihi Man ʿArafa Nafsahu Fa-qad ʿArafa Rabbahu, Beirut (2004), p. 36.

[3] Tāj al-Dīn Abū'l-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn ʿAṭā Allāh al-Judhami al-Iskandarī al-Shādhilī was an Egyptian Malikite jurist, muḥaddith and the third murshid (spiritual "guide" or "master") of the Shādhilī Sufi order. Best known for his work "*Kitāb al-Ḥikam*" (Book of Wisdoms). He confronted Ibn Taymīyyah al-Ḥurrānī (d. 728/1328) along with 200 Sufis for his perceived excesses in attacking the Sufis.

[4] Abu al-`Abbās Aḥmad ibn `Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Mursī was a renowned Sufi saint born in 1219 CE in Murcia, Spain, and passed away in 1286 CE in Alexandria, Egypt. He was a prominent figure in the mystical tradition of Islam and a disciple of the famous Sufi master Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī. Al-Mursī played a significant role in the dissemination of Sufism in the Maghreb and Egypt. His teachings emphasized spiritual purification and devotion to God. He is the second master of the Shādhilī order.

(al-Nawawī A. Z.-ʿ.-D., 1996, p. 248) Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī [1] asserts that the Ḥadīth lacks any authentic basis. (al-Nawawī A. Z.-ʿ.-D., 1996, p. 248) Ibn Taymīyyah classifies it as a forged (mawḍūʿ) Ḥadīth. (al-Suyūṭī, Al-Qawl al-Ashbah, 2006, p. 412) Al-Ṣāghānī also identifies it as a forgery. (al-Saghānī, 1980, p. 35) Al-ʿAjlūnī affirms the views of al-Nawawī and Ibn Taymīyyah regarding its lack of authenticity. (al-ʿAjlūnī, p. 309) Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī echoes the opinions of al-Nawawī, al-Samʿānī, and Ibn Taymīyyah in considering it unauthentic. (al-Qārī, al-Asrār al-Marfūʿah fi al-Akhbār al-Mawḍūʿāh (al-Mawḍūʿāt al-Kubrā), 1986, p. 337)

These scholars collectively agree on the Ḥadīth's lack of authenticity, aligning their views with those who reject its attribution to the Prophet.

The Ḥadīth of Self-Knowing in Shīʿī Sources

In the Shīʿī tradition, the Ḥadīth of self-knowing is present but, like in the Sunni tradition, it is primarily found within ethical and spiritual contexts rather than canonical Ḥadīth compilations. Scholars such as al-Kulaynī [2] and al-Ṭūsī[3] reference similar concepts, particularly in relation to the importance of recognizing one's own limitations and dependence on Allah. (Koelberg, 1983, pp. 299-307)

Kitāb al-Kāfī by al-Kulāynī includes narrations from the Imāms emphasizing self-awareness as a mean to understanding Allah,

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[1] This Fatwā is mentioned in the marginalia Fatāwā al-Imām al-Nawawī under the Hadith of Self-knowing. The Muhashshī did not mention any source in which Ibn Ḥajar's Fatwā could be found. Neither the researcher could locate any authentic sources where the mentioned statement is cited.

[2] Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941), a central figure in early Twelver Shīʿī scholarship, compiled the monumental *Al-Kāfī fī ʿIlm al-Dīn*, regarded as one of the four foundational ḥadīth collections (*al-kutub al-arbaʿa*) in Twelver Islam. A student of ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, al-Kulaynī's work reflects the intellectual dynamism of the Būyid era. His methodology, emphasizing both isnād and matn criticism, was formative for subsequent Shīʿī scholars, such as Ibn Bābawayh (al-Ṣadūq).

[3] Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), a preeminent Shīʿī theologian and jurist, was instrumental in shaping Twelver Shīʿī jurisprudence (*fiqh*). His *Al-Istibṣār* and *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām* remain authoritative ḥadīth compilations. Additionally, his *Al-Khilāf* addressed comparative Islamic law, reflecting his engagement with Sunni legal frameworks. Al-Ṭūsī, a student of Shaykh al-Mufīd, also taught Ḥasan al-Ḥillī. His scholarly activity coincided with the patronage of the Būyid dynasty, which encouraged Shīʿī intellectual advancements.

though it does not directly attribute the phrase to the Prophet Muhammad. Biḥār al-Anwār by al-Majlisī[1], a comprehensive Shīʿī encyclopedia, also contains references to self-knowing within the context of spirituality and moral development but does not provide isnād linking it to the Prophet. (Koelberg, 1983, pp. 299-307)

Secondary Shīʿī Ḥadīth sources attribute the Ḥadīth of self-knowing to either the Prophet Muhammad or ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. In miṣbāḥ al-sharīʿa,the fifth chapter in under al-ʿilm (knowledge)al-Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq reports that The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord."Then he advised: "You must pursue the knowledge that is indispensable for correct practice, and that is sincerity." (al-Ṣādiq, 1980, p. 13);Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī reports his al-ʿawālī al-laʾālīunder the chapter "Ḥadīths Related to Knowledge, Its People, and Its Bearers" and attributes the narration to the Prophet (al-Aḥsāʾī, 1985, p. 102); al-Jāḥiẓ in his compilation of the sayings of ʿAlī (may Allah be pleased with him) namely maṭlūb kulli ṭālib narrates it as his sixth saying (al-Jāḥiẓ ʿ. b.-B.-K.-B., 1963, p. 5); al-ʾĀmidī in his ghurar al-ḥikam relates this narration to ʿAlī (may Allah be pleased with him) as well (al-ʿĀmidī, 1989, p. 352); al-Laythī al-Wāsiṭī in his ʿuyūn al-ḥikam wa al-mawāʿiẓ brings the same. (al-Wāsiṭī, 1948, p. 430)However, these attributions lack a reliable chain of narration (isnād). Consequently, the Ḥadīth's authenticity is questionable in both Sunni and Shīʿī Ḥadīth literature.

Sufis Understanding and Transmission of the Ḥadīth of Self-Knowing

In the early Islamic period, Ḥadīth scholars were often characterized by their ascetic lifestyles, closely aligned with the values of Sufism. Asceticism (zuhd) was seen as a way to purify the heart and bring the scholar closer to Allah, reflecting the foundational goals of both early Sufis and Ḥadīth scholars. As Ḥadīth authentication became more formalized, scholars devised rigorous standards to assess the chains of narration (isnād) and content (matn) of Ḥadīth, forming the basis of

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[1] Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1699), a prolific Safavid scholar, authored the encyclopedic *Biḥār al-Anwār*, comprising over 100 volumes, systematically collecting Shīʿī ḥadīth and doctrinal materials. His *Mirʾāt al-ʿUqūl* provides a commentary on *Al-Kāfī*, while *Ḥilyat al-Muttaqīn* explores Islamic ethics. A student of Mullā Ṣadrā, Al-Majlisī's works solidified Twelver Shīʿī scholarship in a period of Safavid consolidation and Sunni-Shīʿī polemics.

what is now referred to as Ḥadīth science. (Brown D. W., 2019, p. 266)

Prominent early Sufi figures were also distinguished Ḥadīth scholars, indicating an initial harmony between the fields. For instance, Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī [1] (d. 911–913) combined rigorous Ḥadīth scholarship with deep spiritual practice; Abū Saʿīd al-Aʿrābī [2] (d. 952) was both a Sufi and a celebrated Ḥadīth master; Abū Muḥammad al-Khuldī [3] (d. 959) and Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Rūdhbārī [4] (d. 980) were known as authorities in both Ḥadīth and Sufism. (Belal Abu al-Abbas, 2020, p. 70)

These figures demonstrate that many early Sufis maintained a dual commitment to both spiritual purification and strict adherence to traditional Ḥadīth methods.

As Islamic scholarship developed, Sufis began to employ unique methods to ascertain the authenticity of Ḥadīth that extended beyond formal isnād analysis. They incorporated spiritual experiences, considering them a means of validating Ḥadīth content, while maintaining respect for the established legal methodology.

Certain Sufi scholars believed in verifying Ḥadīth through spiritual experiences, which they considered complementary to the traditional isnād. This spiritual insight, often referred to as "kashf" (spiritual disclosure), was seen as an instinctive, divinely inspired means of discerning authentic prophetic sayings. Sufis like al-Qushayrī [5] (d. 1072) and al-Sulamī [1] (d. 1034) are prime examples of

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[1] Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī (d. unknown), though less documented, contributed to early Sufi thought during the ʿAbbāsid period. His interactions with contemporaries like al-Junayd al-Baghdādī reflect the integration of Sufism into broader Islamic spiritual traditions.

[2] Abū Saʿīd al-Aʿrābī (d. 341/952), a Sufi biographer and historian, authored *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, which remains a primary source for early Sufi history. A disciple of al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, Abū Saʿīd transmitted spiritual teachings to figures like Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj. His work underscores Baghdad's centrality in early Sufi intellectual life.

[3] Abū Muḥammad al-Khuldī (d. 348/959), a Sufi ascetic of the ʿAbbāsid period, was a student of al-Junayd al-Baghdādī. Although his writings are not extant, his influence is evident in the transmission of early Sufi teachings.

[4] Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Rūdhbārī (d. 322/934), a mystic influenced by Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī, was renowned for his eloquent spiritual discourses, preserved in later biographical works. He bridged Egyptian and Iraqi Sufi traditions, emphasizing divine love (*maḥabba*).

[5] Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), an eminent Seljuk-era theologian and mystic, authored *Al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, a foundational exposition

those who utilized both traditional Ḥadīth methodologies and spiritual insight. (Brown D. W., 2019, p. 266)

In addition to standard methods, some Sufis viewed the Prophet as a living presence in their lives, manifesting in dreams or waking visions to confirm the authenticity of Ḥadīth. Through these spiritual encounters, they claimed to gain deeper knowledge and validation of prophetic sayings, asserting that the Prophet would sometimes inform them directly regarding the authenticity of certain narrations.

Many Sufis expressed their spiritual experiences in their writings, narrating Ḥadīth with phrases such as ḥaddathanī qalbī ʿan Allāh ("my heart narrated from Allah"). This unique approach reflects a belief that their spiritual knowledge, received through inspiration from Allah, could act as a form of divine validation. (Zuhār, 2008, p. 4)

One well-known incident involving Ibn al-Ḥājj[2] (d. 1336) illustrates this form of verification. After disregarding a Ḥadīth prohibiting cutting nails on Wednesday due to its weak isnād, he experienced a severe reaction (leprosy) and saw the Prophet in a dream. The Prophet reminded him of the prohibition, stating that the narration's weakness was immaterial since he, the Prophet, had uttered it. This incident led Ibn al-Ḥājj to repent and affirm the importance of this narration despite traditional isnād analysis. (Brown J. A., Ḥadīth: Muḥammad Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World (Foundations of Islam), p. 244)

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of Sufi doctrines. A student of Abū ʿAlī al-Daqqāq, he influenced scholars like Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. Al-Qushayrī's work reflects a harmonization of Sunni orthodoxy and Sufi spirituality.

[1] Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), a prominent Sufi scholar, compiled *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya* and *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tafsīr*, integrating Sufi perspectives into Qurʾānic exegesis. A disciple of Abū al-Qāsim al-Naṣrābādhī, he influenced subsequent Sufi scholarship, including al-Ghazālī.

[2] Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 737/1336), Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Yūsuf al-ʿAbdarī al-Fāsī al-Tilimsānī, a Mālikī jurist originally from Tilimsān, later based in Fez and Egypt. His most famous work, *al-Madkhal*, is a detailed treatise on acts of worship, warning against bidʿa (innovation) and urging adherence to the Sunnah. He also wrote *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*, a work on Sufi saints. His notable teachers included Ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ṣughayyir and Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥumaydī. He passed away in Cairo in 737/1336.

Despite the profound respect for spiritual experience within Sufism, the Sharia places clear limits on its legal validity. Personal spiritual experiences, including dreams or visions of the Prophet, cannot override or establish legal rulings within Islamic law. Sufis themselves, as well as traditionalists, acknowledge that experiences such as dreams are subjective and not binding upon the broader community.

This cautious approach reflects the view that the Qurʾān, the Sunnah, and established rulings serve as the unchanging foundation of Islamic law. Sufi scholars emphasize that while their experiences can confirm and illuminate aspects of faith, they must never contradict Sharia principles. Thus, while Sufi scholars valued their spiritual insights, they refrained from using these insights to establish new rulings or override existing legal norms.

Sufi scholars like al-Qushayrī and al-Sulamī exemplify this balance by adhering to the traditional methodologies of Ḥadīth authentication, even while engaging in spiritual practices. This demonstrates a "split-reconciliation hypothesis," where they managed to harmonize their spiritual insights with legalistic demands. (Brown D. W., 2019, p. 266)

Accepted Ḥadīth Transmission from Sufis

The rigorous standards set by Ḥadīth scholars for accepting the transmission of Ḥadīth apply equally to Sufi narrators. When Sufis transmit Ḥadīths in accordance with these traditional methods—ensuring reliable chains of narration (isnād), credible transmitters, and an unbroken sanad (chain of narrators)—their narrations are acknowledged as valid and sound. This adherence to formal methodology reflects the commitment of early Sufi figures to uphold the integrity of Ḥadīth transmission. Notable Sufi scholars such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, al-Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyaḍ [1], and Abū Ismāʿīl al-Anṣārī al-

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[1] Al-Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyaḍ (d. 187/803), originally a highway robber turned devout ascetic, became one of the most celebrated figures of early Sufism. Known for his intense spirituality and strict adherence to ascetic principles, al-Fuḍayl's transformation occurred after a life-altering encounter while in the midst of committing a robbery. He abandoned his former ways and devoted himself to a life of repentance (tawba) and worship, establishing himself as a sage in the cities of Merv and Mecca. His teachings emphasize sincerity (ikhlāṣ) and the rejection of worldly attachments, aligning with the central tenets of early Islamic asceticism. His most notable students included figures such as ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak and Bishr al-

Harawī [1] were respected for following these legalistic approaches, demonstrating their dedication to both spiritual discipline and scholarly rigor. (al-Jawnphūrī, p. 129)

Rejected Ḥadīth Transmission from Sufis

Conversely, Ḥadīth scholars have rejected transmissions from Sufis that fail to meet the rigorous criteria of isnād and sanad authentication. Such instances occur when a Sufi narrator omits the necessary elements of an authentic chain of narration, leading scholars to question the credibility of the Ḥadīth. Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī exemplifies this cautious approach in his work, Takhrīj Aḥādīth al-Iḥyāʾ, where he critically analyzed the Ḥadīths cited by al-Ghazālī in Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn. Al-Subkī found numerous narrations that lacked verifiable chains, thereby classifying them as unreliable according to traditional Ḥadīth standards. (al-Jawnphūrī, p. 130)

Despite these methodological limitations, Ḥadīth scholars have continued to respect Sufi scholars for their spiritual insights and their devotion to Allah. Sufis are often perceived as possessing knowledge inspired by divine illumination or direct prophetic influence. However, their spiritual narrations—be they derived from dreams, kashf (spiritual disclosure), or other mystical experiences—are accepted only when they align with the Qurʾān and established Ḥadīth. Transmissions lacking the traditional isnād are ultimately rejected by Ḥadīth scholars, as they do not meet the criteria of a sound Ḥadīth according to legal methodology. (al-Nawawī A. Z., 2001, p. 65)

Thus, the transmission of Ḥadīth by Sufis illustrates a dual approach to knowledge: while traditional Ḥadīth scholars strictly adhere to chains of transmission, Sufis contribute with spiritual

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Ḥāfī, both of whom perpetuated his ascetic ideals. Al-Fuḍayl's contemporaries included Sufyān al-Thawrī, with whom he shared strong views on renunciation, and Ibn ʿUyayna. His influence extended well into later Sufi thought, especially through his memorable sayings that reflect his disdain for hypocrisy and pretense in religious practice.

[1] Abū Ismāʿīl al-Harawī (d. 1089), a renowned Sufi mystic and theologian from Herat, was known for his staunch traditionalism and opposition to rationalist interpretations. His magnum opus, Manāzil al-Sāʾirīn, is a seminal work outlining the spiritual journey (maqāmāt) and influenced later figures like Ibn al-Qayyim. He also authored Ṣad Maydān, a Persian collection of mystical sayings. Critical of philosophical approaches, including those of contemporaries like al-Ghazālī, al-Harawī combined deep devotion with Sunni orthodoxy, leaving a profound impact on Sufi thought and Islamic spirituality.

perspectives that, while respected, remain supplementary unless corroborated by established Islamic sources.

Sufis' Methodology of Authenticating a Ḥadīth

In the Sufi tradition, the validation of Ḥadīth does not rely solely on the rigorous legal criteria used by Ḥadīth scholars; it often incorporates mystical and spiritual experiences. Sufis believe that divine encounters—such as kashf (spiritual disclosure), tajārib (personal experiences), and dreams in which the Prophet appears— can serve as reliable sources of Ḥadīth authentication. This dual approach is exemplified by the term "Lam yaṣiḥḥ min ṭarīq al-muḥaddithīn, wa-ṣaḥḥa min ṭarīq al-mashāʾikh" (meaning, "This Ḥadīth is not authenticated through the route of Ḥadīth scholars but is authenticated through the route of the Sufi masters")[1]. For Sufis, these spiritual experiences provide an internal confirmation of the Ḥadīth's authenticity, regardless of traditional chains of transmission.

From a Sufi perspective, if a Ḥadīth is confirmed as authentic through kashf or through the Prophet's own confirmation in a dream, there is no further need for isnād (chain of narration) or corroborative sources. Such confirmations are viewed as equally, if not more, authoritative than conventional methods because the Prophet himself is believed to have directly endorsed the Ḥadīth's authenticity. Sufis thus value personal spiritual insight as an avenue for Ḥadīth validation, diverging from the strict methodological framework upheld by Ḥadīth scholars.

These practices underscore a core distinction between Sufi and Ḥadīth methodologies: while Ḥadīth scholars prioritize documented chains of transmission, Sufis emphasize the significance of experiential knowledge as an equally legitimate means of accessing the Prophet's teachings. This perspective illustrates how Sufis balance respect for traditional Ḥadīth sciences with a belief in the validity of direct, mystical verification, expanding the interpretative frameworks of Islamic scholarship.

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[1] One can find this in the books of Ibn ʿArabī and more than that al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Tijānī's *Takhrīj* of the *Aḥādīth* of *Jawāhir al-Maʿānī.*

Authentication of Ḥadīth by Kashf: The Role of Spiritual Disclosure in Sufi Tradition

In Sufi tradition, the process of authenticating Ḥadīth extends beyond conventional methodologies, encompassing experiences of spiritual disclosure or kashf (unveiling), which allows for an intuitive form of knowledge granted as an extraordinary gift from God, known as karāma. This unveiling may also be described as ilhām (inspiration) or firāsa (insight), distinguished from waḥy (revelation) granted solely to Prophets. While kashf, ilhām, and firāsaenable access to unique spiritual knowledge, they are understood to be less definitive than prophetic revelation and are generally viewed as reversible and subjective. The experiential knowledge attained through kashf can occur in a visionary state (mushāhada) or through an auditory experience (mukhāṭaba), and may happen in dreams (bil-ru'yā) or while awake (yaqaẓatan). In Sufi terminology, these revelations are also referred to as fatḥ (major opening), signalling a profound spiritual insight. (Haddad, Sunna Notes: Studies in Ḥadith and Doctrine, 2005, p. 141)

Scholars such as Ibn ʿArabī emphasized the efficacy of kashf in attaining certain types of knowledge, contrasting it with the probabilistic approach of Sunni Ḥadīth criticism, which relies heavily on isnād (chains of transmission). For Sufi masters like Ibn ʿArabī, kashf offers a direct, qualitative understanding of the divine, a stance echoed in al-Basṭāmī's [1] claim, "You take your knowledge dead from the dead, but I take my knowledge from the Living One who does not die." Thus, Sufis regard kashf as an alternative, experiential means of Ḥadīth verification, grounded in a conviction that authentic knowledge can be derived from direct, mystical encounters with the Divine. (Brown J. A., Ḥadīth: Muḥammad Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World (Foundations of Islam), p. 223)

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[1] Abū Yazīd al-Basṭāmī (d. 261/875), Ṭayfūr b. ʿĪsā b. Shurayk al-Basṭāmī, an early Persian mystic, known for his emphasis on annihilation of the self (fanāʾ) and union with God in Sufism. Though he did not write any books, his sayings were recorded by later Sufi writers in works such as *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya* by al-Sulamī. He is said to have been influenced by Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and the ascetic Ibrāhīm b. Adham. He died in Bisṭām in 261/875.

Differing Scholarly Perspectives on Kashf-Based Ḥadīth Authentication

Scholars vary in their acceptance of Ḥadīth authenticated through kashf. Some argue that such Ḥadīth may be valid, provided they align with the Qurʾān and established Sunnah; otherwise, they lack credibility. This perspective is bolstered by a narration in Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān: "If you hear a hadīth reported from me which your hearts recognize, at which your hair and skin become tender, and you feel that it is near to you: know that I am nearer to it than you. And if you hear a hadīth being reported from me of which your hearts disapprove, from which your hair and skin recoil, and you feel that it is far from you: know that I am even farther from it than you." (Ibn Ḥibbān, 2012, p. 263) Sufis often cite this Ḥadīth to validate the kashf-based authentication method, arguing that the Prophet's teachings resonate inherently with believers' hearts.

Nonetheless, scholars such as al-Nawawī and al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ [1]highlight limitations in the use of dreams and visions for authenticating Ḥadīth. Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ stresses that while dreams may confirm or emphasize a point, they cannot establish or alter a legal ruling, as dreams lack the precision required for legal credibility. The Prophet's statement, "Whoever sees me in a vision or dream sees me truly," reflects the authenticity of these visions but does not grant them authority over established laws. This viewpoint is shared by other Shāfiʿī scholars, who agree that for a Ḥadīth to be accepted as part of legal rulings, the transmitter must be awake and reliable; sleep does not meet these criteria. (al-Nawawī A. Z., 2001, p. 65)

Supporting Views on Kashf-Based Ḥadīth Transmission

Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī builds on al-Nawawī's stance by defending the use of kashf as a supplementary validation method in Ḥadīth. He cites examples of scholars, such as al-Suyūṭī, who supported dis-authentication through dreams when they aligned with previously

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[1] Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (d. 544/1149), ʿIyāḍ b. Mūsā b. ʿIyāḍ al-Yaḥṣubī, a distinguished Mālikī jurist and ḥadīth scholar from Ceuta. He is best known for his celebrated work *al-Shifāʾ bi-taʿrīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, a biography of the Prophet Muḥammad that discusses his virtues and legal standing in Islam. Another significant contribution is *Tartīb al-Madārik*, a biographical dictionary of Mālikī scholars. His teachers included Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Mazārī and Abū al-Walīd Ibn Rushd (the grandfather of the famous philosopher). He died in Marrakesh in 544/1149.

known weaknesses in Ḥadīth narrators. (al-Qārī, Encyclopedia of Ḥadīth Forgery, 2013, p. 427) Al-Suyūṭī's work in Taḥdhīr al-Khawāṣṣ recounts instances in which the Prophet appeared in dreams to warn against specific narrators, reinforcing doubts that had already existed about these figures. Such dreams are seen as reinforcing pre-existing knowledge rather than establishing new rulings. (al-Suyūṭī, Taḥdhīr al-Khawāṣṣ min Akādhīb al-Quṣṣāṣ, 1984, p. 191) However, al-Nawawī and al-Qārī agree that it remains impermissible to establish new legal rulings solely based on a dream.

Al-Qārī also references al-Suyūṭī's student, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Minnawfī, who indicates that it is acceptable to act upon personal dreams and inspirations as long as they do not create new legal rulings that contradict Islamic jurisprudence. Instead, kashf-based insights should serve as personal guidance without altering broader jurisprudential principles. (al-Qārī, Encyclopedia of Ḥadīth Forgery, 2013, p. 427)

The Limits and Validity of Kashf in Ḥadīth Authentication

The kashf in Ḥadīth authentication reflects the Sufi emphasis on mystical experiences as a source of knowledge. While Sufis consider kashf-based authentication a legitimate method, they adhere to a principle of moderation, ensuring that such experiences do not contradict established Qurʾānic and Sunnah teachings. Scholars generally concur that if a kashf-based transmission aligns with the Sharia and established Ḥadīth sciences, it may be accepted; however, it cannot override established laws or create new jurisprudential precedents. In essence, Sufi methods enrich the interpretative landscape of Ḥadīth studies while respecting the boundaries set by traditional legal frameworks.

Sufis' Understanding of the Ḥadīth of Self-Knowing

While various interpretations exist within Islamic thought, Sufi scholars uniquely focus on the mystical and metaphysical dimensions of this Ḥadīth. This study examines how notable Sufi figures have comprehended and interpreted this Ḥadīth, emphasizing the relationship between self-knowledge and divine knowledge. Abū Bakr al-Warrāq (d. 240/854), one of the early Sufi figures, provides a foundational interpretation of the Ḥadīth of self-knowing. When asked about its meaning, he responded that "whoever knows himself as a created being who is the provided one without any power or strength, knows his Lord as the Creator and the Provider who has

power and strength." This perspective emphasizes human dependence and humility, framing self-knowledge as the recognition of one's limitations. Al-Warrāq posits that by acknowledging one's own neediness and powerlessness, one can gain a profound understanding of Allah's attributes of power and provision, enhancing the believer's awareness of the Creator.

Sahl al-Tustarī[1], another key Sufi figure, offered a slightly different interpretation. He stated, "Whoever introduces himself to his Lord, his Lord introduces himself to him." Al-Tustarī's view suggests an interactive relationship between the seeker and Allah. (al-Wāḥidī, 1994, p. 214.) He uses an additional Ḥadīth to illustrate this dynamic: "And if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a cubit, and if he draws near to Me a cubit, I draw near to him a fathom. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed."[2] Al-Tustarī's interpretation underscores the idea that when the believer initiates the pursuit of divine knowledge, Allah reciprocates by revealing Himself, ultimately establishing a relationship built on mutual closeness and understanding.

Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī[3] renowned for his work on Sufi ethics, interprets the Ḥadīth in terms of self-awareness as a pathway to divine understanding. He explains, "The one who knows his Lord best is the one who knows himself best." According to al-Makkī, understanding one's own nature—such as recognizing limitations, weaknesses, and interactions with others—serves as a mirror to perceive divine attributes. For example, by realizing one's own neediness, the seeker gains insight into Allah's ultimate richness; by acknowledging personal incapacity, one appreciates Allah's omnipotence. In this

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[1] Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustarī, an early Sufi mystic and ascetic from Tustar (in present-day Iran). He is celebrated for his contributions to early Sufism, emphasizing spiritual insight and personal experience of the Divine. His sayings and teachings, which focus on the concepts of divine love and mystical union, are recorded in various Sufi collections such as *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā* by al-Sulamī. He was a contemporary of other prominent Sufi figures and is known for his influence on later Sufi thought. He died in Tustar in 283/896.

[2] Al-Bukhāri, Hadith no. 7405

[3] Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī b. ʿUmar al-Makkī, a prominent early Sufi scholar from Mecca. He is best known for his influential work *Qūt al-Qulūb* (The Nourishment of the Hearts), which outlines the stages of Sufi spiritual development and ethics. His writings contributed significantly to the development of Sufi thought and practice. He was a student of notable scholars like al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak. He passed away in 386/996 in Mecca.

framework, knowledge of the self becomes a reflective process that unveils attributes of the Creator. (al-Makkī, p. 248)

Rāghib al-Isfahānī, a noted Islamic philosopher, explores the concept of self-knowing extensively in his writings. In his book, under the chapter "In the Knowing of Human Himself," he elaborates that self-knowledge is directly tied to understanding Allah's existence. He offers three levels of interpretation:

1. **Indirect Pathway to Knowledge of Allah**: Just as understanding Arabic is essential for studying jurisprudence, knowledge of the self provides an access point to understanding Allah.

2. **Simultaneous Realization:** Similar to how sunlight immediately follows sunrise, realizing self-knowledge instantly brings awareness of Allah's presence.

3. **Fundamental Pathway to Divine Knowledge:** Knowledge of Allah is inseparable from knowledge of the self, with the created world reflecting the Creator. True understanding of self leads to the realization of Allah as fundamentally distinct from creation.

To emphasize this, al-Isfahānī cites the Qurʾānic verse, "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves" (Qurʾān 41:53), and relates sayings from prominent Islamic figures, such as Imam Ali, who stated, "The intellect is established to serve the duty of worship, not to comprehend the Lordship," and Abu Bakr al-Siddiq's proclamation, "O You, whose ultimate knowledge is the realization that He cannot be fully known." (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1983, p. 20) This perspective suggests that ignorance of Allah is intertwined with ignorance of oneself, indicating a deeply reciprocal relationship between self-knowledge and divine awareness.

Al-Juwaynī[1] takes a more theological approach, emphasizing the concept of contingency. He explains that attributes such as dependency and limitation in creation cannot be ascribed to Allah, as

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[1] Al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), Abū al-Maʿālī ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Juwaynī, a prominent Shāfiʿī jurist and theologian from Nishapur. He is renowned for his contributions to Islamic jurisprudence and theology, with his most famous work being *al-Shāmil* (The Comprehensive), a detailed exposition of Shāfiʿī fiqh. Another significant work is *Kitāb al-Irshād* (The Book of Guidance), which deals with Islamic beliefs and philosophical issues. He was a teacher of al-Ghazālī. He died in Nishapur in 478/1085.

He exists beyond such characteristics. By knowing the contingency and limitations of human attributes, one recognizes Allah's absolute independence and eternality. This, he suggests, is the essence of the Ḥadīth, directing individuals to affirm Allah's transcendence and to avoid anthropomorphic misconceptions. (al-Juwaynī, 1992, p. 131)

Al-Ghazālī approaches the Ḥadīth from a more introspective angle, emphasizing inner self-awareness. He urges a deep exploration of one's motivations, desires, and inner realities, suggesting that true knowledge of Allah comes from understanding the spiritual aspects that define human actions. In The Alchemy of Happiness, he expands on this, noting that self-awareness is vital for understanding the purpose of existence and aligning oneself with divine will. (al-Ghazālī, Juhūd al-Imām al-Ghazālī fī ʿIlm al-Tafsīr, al-Tafīr wa al-Tarjmāt, p. 675)

ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, although sceptical about the Ḥadīth's prophetic authenticity, uses its wisdom to highlight the struggle against the nafs al-ammārah (the commanding self). He regards the self as a deceptive enemy that leads one away from Allah if unchecked. True self-knowledge, in Jīlānī's view, involves recognizing the soul's weaknesses and overcoming them to align more closely with Allah's guidance. (al-Jīlānī, al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī wa al-Fayḍ al-Raḥmānī, 2007, p. 229) (al-Jīlānī, al-Ghunyah li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaq, 1996, p. 596)

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī offers a reflective interpretation of the Ḥadīth within the context of human dependency on Allah. Through recognizing human incapacity, he affirms Allah's omnipotence. This awareness nurtures a sense of humility, crucial for fostering a sincere connection with Allah, as self-awareness of limitations brings one to acknowledge the boundless power of Allah. (al-Rāzī, 1981, p. 91)

Ibn ʿArabī offers the most profound and metaphysical interpretation, where he teaches that the notion of "self" is ultimately an illusion. He suggests that true self-knowledge involves transcending the ego and recognizing that one's very existence is a reflection of the divine. (Ibn ʿArabī A. ʿ.-Ṭ.-Ḥ., 2022, p. 26) For Ibn ʿArabī, "knowing yourself" means understanding that you are not separate from Allah, that there is no distinction between the Creator and the creation at the deepest metaphysical level. (Ibn ʿArabī A. ʿ.-Ṭ.-Ḥ., 2004, p. 37) This leads to an understanding of unity with the divine essence, where the duality between the self and Allah dissolves. (Houedard, 2019, p. 16)

Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī offers two perspectives, each relevant to different stages of spiritual development:

1. **The first interpretation** emphasizes that knowing the self, particularly in terms of its limitations, leads to an understanding of Allah's majesty. This interpretation aligns with the path of the sālikīn (spiritual seekers), who must first come to terms with their own incapacity before comprehending the divine power and independence.

2. **The second interpretation** speaks to the more mystical experience of the majdhūbīn (those spiritually attracted), who, by knowing themselves, recognize their prior, innate knowledge of Allah. This suggests a deeper, almost preordained connection to the divine, where knowledge of the self serves as a sign of already existing proximity to Allah. (al-Iskandarī, 2006, p. 126)

The collective teachings of these scholars converge on the essential idea that self-knowledge is an indispensable means of knowing Allah. However, the emphasis varies: from the theological understanding of the divine attributes (al-Juwaynī), to the psychological and practical introspection of the soul (al-Ghazālī and al-Jīlānī), to the metaphysical unity with the divine (Ibn ʿArabī). Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's dual interpretations acknowledge both the gradual path of seekers and the more immediate spiritual realizations of those drawn to the divine.

Ḥadīth Scholars' Comprehension of the Ḥadīth of Self-Knowing

Ḥadīth scholars often aim to render the mystical implications of this Ḥadīth accessible to a broader audience, integrating its concepts into practical terms. Scholars such as al-Nawawī, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, and al-Suyūṭī provide similar interpretative frameworks, focusing on self-awareness as a means to understanding divine attributes. Al-Nawawī, for instance, explains, "The meaning of this Ḥadīth is that whoever knows himself—by recognizing his own weakness, dependence upon Allah, and servitude to Him—knows his Lord through understanding Allah's strength, Lordship, absolute perfection, and exalted attributes." (al-Nawawī A. Z.-ʿ.-D., 1996, p. 248)

This perspective is echoed by Ibn Taymīyyah, (Ibn Taymīyyah, 1961, p. 349) Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, and Al-Suyūṭī, although it highlights the interpretative distinctions between different

schools of thought. For these scholars, self-knowledge entails recognizing one's limitations, vulnerability, and reliance on divine support, which then guides one toward acknowledging Allah's omnipotence, sovereignty, and boundless perfection. (al-Suyūṭī, Al-Ḥāwī li al-Fatāwī, 2000, p. 24) This contrast between human dependency and divine self-sufficiency enhances one's comprehension of Allah's supreme qualities, encouraging a deeper, more profound appreciation.

Conclusion

Numerous Ḥadīth scholars concur that the so-called Ḥadīth of self-knowing does not meet the criteria to be classified as a Ḥadīth. According to them, a Ḥadīth must be supported by a verifiable chain of narration (isnād), which thi= narration lacks. Prominent scholars such as al-Nawawī, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Ibn Taymīyyah, al-Suyūṭī, and Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī categorize this narration as a fabricated report (mawḍūʿ), likely originating from a Tābiʿī and subsequently misattributed to the Prophet. Conversely, some Sufis, notably Ibn ʿArabī and al-Ghazālī, regard this narration as an authentic prophetic saying. Ibn ʿArabī asserts its authenticity through kashf (spiritual unveiling), famously stating: Lam yaṣiḥḥ min ṭarīq al-muḥaddithīn, wa-ṣaḥḥa min ṭarīq al-mashāʾikh ("It is not authenticated through the methodology of the Ḥadīth scholars, but it is authenticated through the spiritual insights of the Sufi masters").

        Ḥadīth scholars, such as al-Nawawī, al-Suyūṭī, and Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī, reject this approach, emphasizing adherence to the established methodologies of Ḥadīth authentication. They caution against elevating personal spiritual experiences to the level of evidence in religious discourse, asserting that such experiences are valid only insofar as they align with the Qurʾān and Sunna. Furthermore, they maintain that Sufi spiritual insights should remain a private matter, with no bearing on public practice or Shariah rulings.

        The divergence between these two perspectives extends to their interpretation of the narration. Sufis, focusing on the concepts of fanā (annihilation of the self) and baqā (subsistence in Allah), interpret the saying in a mystical and metaphysical framework. They emphasize the transformative role of self-knowledge in cultivating an ascetic and spiritually awakened life. By contrast, Ḥadīth scholars interpret the saying in a more pragmatic and accessible manner,

grounding it in common human experiences to provide guidance for the broader community.

Despite their differences, both groups recognize the profound significance of self-knowledge in understanding one's relationship with the Creator. While they diverge on issues of authentication and interpretation, their discourse reflects mutual acknowledgment of the spiritual value embedded in the concept, tempered by a respectful disagreement.

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