

A Comparative Study of al-Ghazali's and Ibn Taymiyyah's Views on Sufism

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ABSTRACT

Sufism has generated from the ancient time a very staunch polemics among Muslim scholars. The controversy over sufism has attracted various comments and remarks over the unique and peculiar tenets of sufis. Among the Muslim scholars who have contributed to the discourse were al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah. This research aims to compare the views of these two scholars. Library research with analytic and comparative methodology was adopted. Findings show that both scholars are credited to have reformed some popular and conventional doctrines of the Sufis of their respective times. In addition, al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah agreed that some innovations and perversions have found their way into sufism. A major phenomenon in the views of the two scholars on sufism is that while al-Ghazali was to a very large extent influenced by some sufi superstitions, Ibn Taymiyyah strongly subjects sufism to the literal provisions of the Quran and Sunnah. It is the conclusion of this paper that while it is accurate to ascribe al-Ghazali to sufism, it is inaccurate to regard Ibn Taymiyyah as one despite some of his sympathetic views on some sufis.

Keywords: al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, salafism, Sufis, Sufism

Sufism has been a discourse and subject of deliberation and argument among Muslim scholars. The actual factors for its controversial status can be attributed to the peculiar terms and concepts adopted by the *sufis* in professing Islam. Of all scholars who contributed to the discourse, al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah are very conspicuous. Al-Ghazali was reputable for adding weight to the justifications for *sufi* practices through protracted personal and practical research into sufism and his publications which were geared towards advancing the scope of *sufi* methods of sanitating the evils of minds (al-Qaradawi 2004: 14). Hence, *sufis* hold al-Ghazali in high esteem for the contributions he had made in defending the tenets of sufism. In the same token, Ibn Taymiyyah was very famous for the harsh rejoinders and arguments against the dominating practices of Sufism, and also for his objective works on some of *sufi* doctrines and terminologies. Although, he condemned many of the *sufi* practices, yet according to some observers, he was not a total anti-*sufis* (Quadri 2013: 16).

This research aims at comparing the views of al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah on sufism. This comparative study and investigation are very vital and indispensable for correcting some misconceptions that are recently gathering momentum. A typical example for such misconceptions is apparent when a writer submits that Ibn Taymiyyah was not only a *sufi*, but a core member of Qadiriyyah Order (Yusuph 2013: 67). An investigative insight into the views of Ibn Taymiyyah on Sufism with comparison to that of al-Ghazali's can put things in proper perspective. Another instance for such misconceptions surrounding the perspective of the two scholars on Sufism is displayed by some writers who hold that al-Ghazali later denounced Sufism at the tail end of his life (Sarumi 2011: 6). A thorough investigation into the general views of al-

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Ghazali on sufism can expose the veracity of this allegation or otherwise. Hence, this research is envisaged to address some misconceptions that have visited the status and identity of these two scholars vis-à-vis sufism.

Short Biography of Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali

He is Muhammad bn Muhammad al-Tusi popularly nicknamed as Abu Hamid. Born at Tus in 405H. Tus was a small village under Khurasan which currently falls under eastern Iran. The father of al-Ghazali was a humble destitute with sowing as profession. Although, his father was not a scholar, but his piety and kindness were attested to by his contemporaries. His inclination to the gatherings of scholars endeared Islamic scholarship to him. Hence, he prayed Allah to endow him with children that would choose scholarship as career. It was the efficacy of his prayer that produced Abu Hamid and his brother, Ahmad, but his life was not spared to witness the outcome of his prayer. Unlike al-Ghazali's father, his mother witnessed the glittering star of her son (al-Sallabi 2007: 33).

Al-Ghazali received his basic Islamic education at his native town, Tus. Yusuf al-Nassaj was his first teacher. He later moved to al-Razakani to learn about basic Islamic Jurisprudence. He also benefited from other scholars of the time. Among al-Ghazali's teachers and tutors, the greatest tutor who had a far-reaching influence on him was Imam al-Haramayni al-Juwayni. Al-Ghazali travelled to Naysabur which was the main hub for Islamic scholarship after Baghdad to purposely learn from al-Juwayni. Imam al-Haramayni was the foremost Muslim scholar at that time. Being the Vice-Chancellor of al-Nizamiyyah which was then the biggest Islamic institution throughout the Muslim world, Al-Juwayni was able to showcase Abu Hamid's gift through the academic engagement to which the former subjected the latter. It is note-worthy that al-Jawayni was instrumental to the reputation accorded to al-Ghazali via the latter's appointment as a lecturer in al-Nizamiyyah. In those days, only the aged and old scholars were used to be teachers in al-Nizamiyyah, but al-Ghazali took exception to this in the sense that he was appointed at only 34 years.

The ten years' stay of al-Ghazali in al-Nizamiyyah was marked with total engagement in academic research. Most of his publications on various disciplines were authored at this particular time. His dedicated research into Islamic Mysticism lured him to later subscribe to seclusive characters. Thus, he left the institution for Sham where he sought to practicalize Islamic Mysticism. The outcome of this sojourn for al-Ghazali was extreme ascetism and total seclusion from mundane engagements. On his return, al-Ghazali personally retired from al-Nizamiyyah to pursue his mission at hometown, Tus. People now trooped to learn from him in his private home. He also gave much time principally for mystic engagement in his home.

As time went on, having noticed his point of weakness, al-Ghazali decided to study *Hadith*. He began to peruse the two Sahih al-Bukhari and Muslim and enrolled into the academic gathering of the "*Muhaddithun*". Unfortunately, death grabbed him before he could reap the fruit of studying *Hadith*. Al-Salabi (2007) is of the view that 'had it been his life was spared to conclude his study, he would have surpassed the *Muhaddithun*'. He died in 505H, having exhausted 55 years in spreading the course of Islam.

Generally, Abu Hamid is a great Muslim scholar, genius and encyclopedic jurist of Islam. His scholarship is multifaceted. He is a philosopher, logician, theologian, Jurist, exegete, mystic and linguistic. What endeared him to the students of Islamic students is his utilization of power of knowledge to defend the dignity of Islam. His refutation of philosophers who have arrogated to their intellects the superiority over textual provisions, is considered an unprecedented bombshell on philosophy. Al-Ghazali is a Muslim reformer. His reformative missions crossed across philosophy, mysticism and theology. According to al-Sayyuti, al-Ghazali being the reformer of the fifth century is indisputable (al-Qaradawi 2004). Al-Ghazali authored many works spread

across all disciplines in Islamic studies. Famous among them are: *Ihya 'Ulum al-Din*, *al-Basit*, *al-Wajiz*, *Tahafut al-Falasifah* and *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*.

Short Biography of Ibn Taymiyyah

He is Ahmad bn' Abdil Halim bn'Abdis-Salam ibn Taymiyyah. Born in 661 H/1263 CE at Hirran of Syria into a famous family of scholars and theologians. He was however only seven years when Hirran was attacked by the Mongols and had to run away to Damascus along with his parents. The origin of Ibn Taymiyyah's clan according to Khan (2007) is traceable to the Kurds. The Kurds were a sturdy and brave people who possessed great moral integrity and sharpness. Ibn Taymiyyah came from a scholarly family. His father Shihabud-Din was a noted teacher of *Hadith* and a renowned preacher in the Central Mosque of the city. His uncle Fakhr ad-Din was also a reputable scholar and writer. In the same direction, his grandfather was also a great scholar of jurisprudence.

From childhood, Ibn Taymiyyah dedicated the whole Quran into memory. He received basic and rudiment knowledge of Islam from his father and uncle. He had just completed his study when his father died in 682 H. A year later, he was appointed to the chair of Hadith which his father occupied in a number of leading *Madaris* in Damascus (ibn Abdul Hadi 1988:55). He soon began to teach and preach in the central (Umayyad) Mosque and attracted increasingly large audiences. Though Ibn Taymiyyah was educated in the Hanbali school of thought, he later reached a level of scholarship beyond the confines of that school. He was fully versed in the opinions of the four schools which helped lead him to the conclusion that blind adherence to one school would bring a Muslim into conflict with the letter and spirit of Quran and Sunnah. Similarly, he had acquired a deep understanding of philosophical and mystic terminologies. In particular, he focused on the works of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn al-'Arabi as epitome of philosophical and mystic deviations in Islam (Khan 2007).

Because of the blunt corruptions and deviations that had surrounded the pristine teachings of Islam which were all due to the intellectual products of theologians, Sufis, philosophers and jurists, Ibn Taymiyyah launched striking attacks on his contemporaries. The central theme of Ibn Taymiyyah's transformation agenda was the revival of the spirit of the age of Prophet Muhammad and his companions, when Islam was pure and had not been contaminated by strange ideas and heretic beliefs. In the course of pursuing this noble mission, Ibn Taymiyyah went against most of the venerated scholars of Islam. He showed special interest and concern for the Muslim philosophical speculations. Due to the strong negative influence of philosophers in corrupting the thoughts of the then Muslims, he launched a very striking blow on Ibn Sina (Avicenna), al-Kindi, Ibn Rushd, al-Razi, Ibn al-'Arabi and al-Ghazali. His arguments against each of these personalities portrayed him as a reformer who with every courage and zeal was set to defend sanctity and sacredness of pristine Islam against all theological and philosophical barriers.

Ibn Taymiyyah was subjected to the persecution of the leading scholars of that time who conspired with the government against him. Thus, he was a victim of imprisonment on several occasions. His troubles with government began when he went with a delegation of '*ulama*' to admonish the Khan of the Mongols in Iran to stop his attacks on Muslims. It is reported that none of the '*ulama*' dared to say a word before Khan except Ibn Taymiyyah (Khan 2007). When he was ultimately banned from having any book, paper and pen during the later stage of his final confinement, Ibn Taymiyyah devoted all his time to worshiping and reciting the Quran. He died in prison on 22nd of Zul Qa'idah, 728H. According to al-Bazzar (1998) who was an eyewitness of his funeral, Damascus which is the place of death of Ibn Taymiyyah witnessed an unprecedented crowd.

On a general note, Ibn Taymiyyah is an embodiment of various qualities. He is a great scholar of high repute. His scholarship pervades all aspects of disciplines namely: jurisprudence, theology, linguistics, exegesis, hadith, history, mathematics, logics, mysticism, philosophy and

law. In the same vein, he was known to have dedicated most of his time to worshipping and ritual activities. His ascetism is very conspicuous. Another quality that made Ibn Taymiyyah conspicuous in history is his courage and braveness in pursuing his mission. The combination of these qualities in a single personality is rare in history. Ibn Taymiyyah had many publications to his credit, among them are: *Iqtidahu as-Sirat al-Mustaqim*; *Al-Jawab al-Sahih li Man Baddala al-Din al-Masih*; *al-Radd 'ala al-Mantiqiyyin* and *Majmu'at al-Fatawa*.

Scholastic Polemics on Sufism

The word *Sufism* as regards to its etymologic root has polarized the view of Muslim scholars. Ibn Taymiyyah (2006) and Al-Ilori (2012) endeavored to collate the various views of scholars on this. According to them, a school is of the view that it is traceable to '*Sufah*' which was a group that existed before the birth of Prophet Muhammed and were reputed for spiritual dedication; another school holds that it is traceable to '*suffah*' which was a place purposely built by the Prophet beneath his mosque for the Muslim destitute who intended to have more dedication for '*Ibadah*'; some attribute the word to '*suf*' i.e. wool which was the type of dress code of the ascetics in the early days of Islam; some orientalists maintain that Sufism is a Latin word from '*Sophia*' i.e. wisdom. However, among the various arguments as regards to this issue, it is grammatically justifiable to link sufism to '*suf*' i.e. wool. This has been asserted by Ibn Taymiyyah (2006), Ibn Khaldun (2004) and Al-Ilori (2012). Thus, going by this assertion, the word '*sufiyyah*' does not have any religious significance because wearing a cloth made from wool does not attract the attention of Islamic textual provisions.

Historically, scholars are polarized over the actual time when sufism as a religious trend started in Islam. Al-Qaradawi (2004) has argued that Sufism is a uniform manifestation in virtually all religions. It had been in existence, according to him, even before Islam. It only resurfaced later in Islamic history. Also, Al-Ilori (2012) maintains that view. Ibn Khaldun (2004) opines that sufism which is the manifestation of seclusion towards mundane activities was inherent in the attitudes of the first generation of Muslims. According to Ibn Taymiyyah (2006), issues regarding sufism were only discussed after the expiration of the third generation of Muslim *Ummah*. Imam Ahmad and Imam Shafi'i only made mention of the word in a negative way. As for Ahmad, Ibn Kathir reports that he condemned *sufis* because of their extremist attitude in seclusion and also their anti-*Shari'ah* practices. Shafi'i was reported to have said that he witnessed in Baghdad manifestation of spiritual music innovated by the *sufis*. However, in some of Ibn Taymiyyah's literatures, it is apparent that the ascetic trend which dominated Basra was the starting point of sufism. Imam Al-Hasan Al-Basri according to some scholars should be regarded as one of the founding fathers of mysticism. Some others have gone extremely to assert that Prophet of Islam lived a *sufi* life, imparted it to his companions and advised others who wanted to learn about it should contact 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (Quadri 2013). This view needs a cogent proof before it can hold water. Drawing from various literature on the historical development of sufism, it is our humble submission that ascetism which is the starting point for sufism was in existence at the first centuries of Islam, but what is later and currently known as sufism with its peculiar way of professing Islam never existed in the first generation of Islam. It is also submitted that while other sects in Islam like Khawarij, Shi'ah and others have their historical account intact and unequivocal; sufism takes exception in the sense that all efforts to ascertain its starting point are futile.

The discussion over sufism is strongly instigated by some of the peculiar doctrines of the *sufis*. These doctrines and tenets, as they appear, are very strange to the conventional conception of Islam. The practices of *sufis* such as *al-fana'* (annihilation), *al-mahabbah* (love) *al-istighathah* (seeking assistance from the saints), *al-tawassul* (intercession), *wahdat al-wujud* (pantheism) and *al-hulul* (incarnation) are all subjects of controversy among Muslim scholars. It is obvious that

the aforementioned terminologies and others are the major factors for the controversy over sufism.

It is clear from the above that the various positive definitions given by the *sufis* for sufism such as holding that it is the purification of souls; or manifestation of ascetism, do not in any way create hullabaloo in the Islamic world, rather it are the peculiar doctrines that seem antithetical to the teachings of Islam which attract opposition of other Muslim scholars. Hence, sufism will ever remain controversial. Also, it is noticed that many great characters among the adherents of sufism as revealed by the Islamic history eventually ended up in committing sacrilege against Islam. Abu Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 309H), Muhyidin Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 560H), and Al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (d. 932 CE) were all symbols of sacrilege against Islam. Al-Hallaj was executed based on the unanimous verdict of the then scholars for declaring himself equal to Allah. (Yusuph 2013). Ibn al-'Arabi committed unprecedented disbelief and sacrilege against Islam in his *Futuh al-Makkiyyah* and this has propelled various scholars to declare him apostate (Ibn Taymiyyah 2006). A good example of Ibn al-'Arabi's sacrilege is when he released words of praise on idols and regarded them as Allah's manifestation. In spite of this, it is asserted that the aforementioned characters are still being held in high esteem by a large proportion of *sufis*. Many of them still believe that Al-Hallaj was executed as the result of ignorance of the masses. (Al-Baqa'i 2004:138). Al-Ilori (2012) maintains that *sufis* are divided over the status of Al-Hallaj. Al-Alusi, a great *sufi* scholar agrees to the fact that Ibn al-'Arabi is *Shaykh al-Akhyar* (The greatest master of the saints) (Yusuph 2013). It is due to the condoning of sacrilege against Islam in the guise of exercising esoteric trend of Islam that the majority of Muslim jurists and theologians launch attack on sufism and *sufis*. Hence, it is very worthy of note that Sufism is more than exercising ascetism, exercising extraordinary dedication to ritual activities and purifying the souls from diseases. It is also worthy of mention that proponents of Sufism often argue in favour of their trend with some Quranic verses which do not constitute bone of contention to their opponents. An example is (al-Quran 18:28) which provides:

And withhold yourself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening desiring his good will, and let not your eyes pass from them, desiring the beauties of this world's life; and do not follow him whose heart we have made unmindful to our remembrance, and he follows his low desires and his case is one in which due bounds are exceeded.

This verse is interpreted by the *sufis* as textual evidence for Sufism, restricting the phrase: "call on their Lord Morning and evening" to their *Ahzab* (fixed supplications) and *Lazimi* (compulsory daily prayer) (Al-Ilori 2012: 45). According to Ibn Taymiyyah (2006), this verse pervades all Muslims that pray constantly and not only the *sufis*. According to the report of Muslim, the immediate cause for the revelation of this verse was that the Prophet of Allah was about to heed to the agitation of the wealthy and rich men of Makkah who requested from the Prophet to discriminate them against the destitute Muslims. Thus, Allah directed the Prophet to prefer those destitute whose all times were being dedicated to the remembrance of Allah (Muslim 1998: no. 3846). Hence, this verse is applicable to all Muslims who dedicate much of their time to worshipping Allah in various forms. It is not restricted to the *sufis* only. In fact, most of the great exegetes like Sa'id bn al-Musayyib, Mujahid, al-Hasan al-Basri and Qatadah are all unanimous that the phrase: "who call on their lord morning and evening" means who observe obligatory prayers (Ibn Kathir 2006). Al-Quran, al-An'am, 6:52 also goes the same direction.

Conclusively, it is apparent that ascetism, purification of souls, dedication to worshipping acts and good morals are not peculiar to Sufism, rather it is open to all Muslims regardless of sect or group. Also, the aforementioned are not the bone of contention among proponents of Sufism and its opponents; the advancement of the aforementioned into ideologies and theories that

strongly need to be corroborated by the provisions of Quran and *Sunnah* is the mainly responsible factor for the controversy over Sufism.

Similarities in the Views of Al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah on Sufism

A casual observation shows that both scholars are similar in their views on some aspects of Sufism. Although, the two scholars are paradoxical as far as Sufism is concerned, but yet there are still areas where they both pronounced similar verdict. There may however be slight difference in the pronounced views and verdicts.

Going by the respective write-ups of al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah, it is apparent that they both acknowledge that various corruptions and ill ideologies have found their way into Sufism. For instance, *al-hulul* (incarnation) and *wahdat al-wujud* (Unity of Existence) are condemned by the two scholars. Al-Ghazali (2004) condemns the two concepts in the following quotation:

In a nutshell, the issue (practice of Sufism) often ends up in a spiritual affinity which might be misconceived by some groups as Incarnation; or unity of existence; or spiritual contact. All the aforementioned are misconception.

Similarly, Ibn Taymiyyah (2006) condemns *al-hulul* (incarnation) and *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of existence): "Anyone who believes in some statements that al-Hallaj believed which led to his execution has committed a disbelieving act and becomes apostate by the unanimity of Muslims. This is due to the fact that Muslims executed him only because of his invocation of incarnation and unity of existence".

Another area of condemnation in sufism as observed by the two scholars is deceit. According to al-Ghazali (2005), most of the *sufis* are being deceived by their dedications to worship and this has led many of them to deem that they have attained a position which placed them above being bound by the *shari'ah* regulations. According to Ibn Taymiyyah (2006), any of the *sufis* who places himself above being bound by the *shari'ah* has committed apostasy.

From the observation of both Al-Ghazali and Ibn-Taymiyyah, it is apparent that they condemned the concept of *zuhd* (ascetism) in *sufi* perspective. This arises from the fact that explicit extremism and fundamentalism has visited this seemingly basic bedrock of sufism. After highlighting various ascetic trends among *sufis*, al-Ghazali (2004) submits:

The spared (among various ascetic groups) is the only group that threads the path of Allah's Apostle and his companions. And the Path is to not shun mundane completely, and not to cut off all worldly pleasures.

In the same vein, while castigating the extremist trend of *sufis* on ascetism, Ibn Taymiyyah (2006) gives the actual connotation of ascetism that is in consonance with pristine Islam as shunning all that is not beneficial in the day of resurrection. Generally speaking, both scholars endeavored to engender conspicuous transformation into sufism. Al-Ghazali was credited to have shifted Sufism from merely spiritual experience to an independently moral training discipline. He is considered as one of the propounders of what later metamorphosed into *suluk* (Moral Education) (al-Qaradawi 2004). Likewise, Ibn Taymiyyah also contributes a lot to this aspect i.e *suluk*. It is therefore safe to conclude that both scholars shared many things in common vis-à-vis sufism.

Dissimilarities in the Views of Al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah on Sufism

Although, both scholars are similar in some views on Sufism, it is very compelling to assert that the dissimilarities which polarized the duo abound. Firstly, from all indications, it seems that

beyond being a *sufi* scholar, al-Ghazali was being fascinated and addicted by some *sufi* superstitions. He strongly advocated for Sufism and proclaimed it as the best channel to the attainment of Allah's pleasure. Contrary to this, Ibn-Taymiyyah subjected Sufism in totality to the provisions of Quran and Sunnah. He strongly advocated for the *Ahl al-Sunnah* trend as the best way that leads to Allah's kingdom. According to al-Ghazali, after his academic adventure into various trends in Islamic scholarship, he later discovered Sufism as the best trend in Islam.

They (Sufis) are the only passers through the path of Allah and their way of life is the best of all lifestyles; their trend is the most correct of all trends and their conduct is the purest of all conducts. (Al-Ghazali 2004: 56).

Ibn Taymiyyah (2006, 3: 234) frowned at the previous declarations and responded as:

But he (Al-Ghazali) was not aware of the trend of disciples of Sunnah and Hadith. This was why he did not make mention of it. Perhaps it (the trend of Ahl-Sunnah) is the undiluted Muhammadan trend that supersedes all other trends.

It is clear from the foregoing that while Al-Ghazali advocates for Sufism, Ibn Taymiyyah advocates for *Ahl al-Hadith* and *Sunnah* trend. It thus follows that Al-Ghazali is a great *sufi* scholar while Ibn Taymiyyah is a great advocate of *Sunnah*. Based on this, Yusuph's submission that Ibn Taymiyyah is not only a *sufi*, but a member of Qadiriyyah *Sufi* Order is very fallacious (Yusuph 2013: 48). The bases for that submission are that Ibn Taymiyyah held Abdul-Qadir al-Jaylani in high esteem; run a commentary on the latter's publication and that Ibn Taymiyyah was buried in *Maqbarat al-Sufiyyah*. The foregoing bases can be enfeebled in the sense that not only Al-Jaylani enjoyed Ibn Taymiyyah's respect and commendation among the *Sufis*, others are Fudayl bn 'Iyyad (d. 187H), Ibn Adham (d. 161H), Al-Junayd (d. 298H), Shaykh 'Adiyy (d. 555H) and hosts of other *sufis*. Though, even with intensive search of this writer to come across the commentary of Ibn Taymiyyah on al-Jaylani's *Futuhat al-Ghayb* which ended in futility, such evidence cannot hold water because running commentary on a publication does not necessarily indicate that the commentator belongs to the school of the original author. Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751) had a commentary on al-Harawi's book and no one ever insinuated that he belonged to the *tariqah* of the latter. However, it is very superficial to conclude that Ibn Taymiyyah belonged to Sufism because he was buried in *sufiyyah* graveyard. That graveyard seemed to be the public cemetery for the then Muslims. Holding that Ibn Taymiyyah has become a *sufi* because of where he was buried is tantamount to holding that all graduates of Salafiyyah University in Pakistan are *Salafi* scholar. It is very worthy of note that all the primary biographers of Ibn Taymiyyah took a strong exception to Yusuph's submission. Ibn 'Abdil Hadi (d. 744H), al-Zahabi (d. 748H), Ibn Kathir (d. 765H) and al-Bazzar (d. 752H) all portrayed Ibn Taymiyyah as victim of persecution of the *sufis*. In fact, Ibn Abdil Hadi (1998) reports that at the last time of Ibn Taymiyyah, the *sufis* conspired with the constituted authority to imprison him.

Another aspect where Ibn Taymiyyah colluded with al-Ghazali is that while the latter buys to some of *sufi* superstitions, the former strongly launches attacks on them with clear provisions of Quran and *Sunnah*. A good attester to the fact that al-Ghazali was being influenced by some *sufi* superstitions is when he commended a *sufi* saint who because people had taken note of his saintship decided to steal cheap cloth at the public toilet. This was done in a bid to cast people's attention from his personality. After narrating this ridiculous story, al-Ghazali (2005) comments as:

The foregoing narration is an example for how they (sufis) used to training their soul to the extent that Allah will spare them from seeking human's attention.

While using the foregoing quotation as an example for *sufi* superstition, Ibn al-Jawzi (2004) was very aggressive to Al-Ghazali and left the following comment: "How does it sound reasonable for one to seek heart purification via committing sin (against Allah)?" Al-Qaradawi (2004) is also of the view that al-Ghazali could not positively contribute to sufism as he did in philosophy. He however links this to the fact that he (al-Ghazali) espoused sufism with submissive mind, rather than with critic mind. Ibn Taymiyyah (2006) in the same direction, accused al-Ghazali for repleting his *lhya`* with many superstitions of sufism which do not conform with the explicit teachings of Quran and *Sunnah*.

Another aspect of sufism that polarizes the views of the two scholars is *al-sama`* (Spiritual music). *Al-sama`* is a *sufi* manifestation whereby drums and songs are used to chant praise on Allah so that one acquires spiritual comfort and happiness. Ibn Taymiyyah (2006) strongly castigates some Sufis for this phenomenon when he stresses thus:

But as regards 'spiritual music' that comprises singing and drumming, all the scholars of Islam were unanimous that it is not part of what with which closeness and obedience to Allah can be attained.

Al-Ghazali (2005) in a sheer contrast does not only advocate for the permissibility of *al-sama`*, but also regards it as a mean of spiritual development. He said: 'there is neither textual evidence nor an analogy for the prohibition of *al-sama`* (Music)'. A casual perusal of al-Ghazali's *'lhya`* reveals that he mixed up common music with spiritual music. On the common music, the four schools of thought in Islam all agreed that it is forbidden, while a very few scholars permit it. But taking music as an act of *'Ibadah* is never a mean of spiritual development in Islam (al-Albani 1994: 5). In fact, Allah condemns the Christians for such act (al-Quran 8:35). In addition to this, the first generation of the *sufi* adherents never partook in *al-Sama`*. Al-Jaylani, it is very intriguing, strongly condemns it and portrayed the people practicing it as disbelievers (al-Jaylani n.d: 83). Dan Fodio (n.d) while enumerating the innovations that found their way into sufism regards music as one:

But listening to the forbidden music is a misconception from some ignorant (Sufis) who have transgressed (the bound) of Allah. Had it been such is part of religion (Islam) the apostle of lord of the Worlds would have explained it (to his *Ummah*).

It is therefore exclaiming how the great proportions of Qadiriyyah practiced *as-Sama`* in the name of what Abdul-Qadir al-Jaylani introduced as part and parcel of the Tariqa. This manifestation only lends credence to the assertions of al-Zahabi (1998), Al-Ilori (2012) and Muhammad al-Haji (n.d) that many fabrications were credited to al-Jaylani. It is very doubtful that the members of Qadiriyyah order are verifiably linkable to Abdul-Qadir. This is due to so many reasons, obviously among them is that al-Jaylani, as reported by all his biographers, and reflects in his *'Al-Ghunyah`* is of Imam Ahmad's school both in *'aqidah* (doctrine) and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) (Adh-Dhahabi 1998). *Aqidah* of Imam Ahmad which is now known as *Salafiyyah* doctrine entails that Allah resides on the top of *al-'Arsh* (throne) while his knowledge covers all places. It is intriguing that those professing Qadiriyyah order today are virtually *Ash'ariyyah* or *Maturidiyyah*. Thus, we subscribe to the conclusion of Muhammad al-Hajj (n.d) that there is a wide gulf and disconnection between al-Jaylani and those attributing themselves to him. It is however safe here to conclude that *al-sama`* (spiritual music) is another phenomenon that affirms that al-Ghazali is being enslaved by some *sufi* superstitions.

Another basic concept of Sufism in which the view of al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah differs is *al-Mukashafah* (spiritual revelation). It is apparent in the write-ups of al-Ghazali that he attaches much importance to spiritual revelation for the *'Murids`*. The stress of this concept in the write-ups of al-Ghazali got to the extent he narrated the statement of Sufis who held that the least

punishment for the one who denies this concept is that he would never experience it (al-Ghazali 2005). Al-Ghazali prefers *al-Mukashafah* as a branch of knowledge to other disciplines in Islam when he stated that 'the knowledge of "spiritual unveiling" is also (known as) esoteric knowledge is the peak of all forms of knowledge'.

However, Ibn Taymiyyah, though does not go against the veracity of spiritual revelation, but strongly subjects it to the provision of basic jurisprudence of Islam. According to him, spiritual revelation does not necessarily indicate that the one experiencing it is preferred to others (Ibn Taymiyyah 2006). Rather, preference in Islam is based on the level of piety that one attains regardless of experiencing revelation or not.

From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that both scholars belong to different schools of thought vis-à-vis sufism. However, there is a view that holds that al-Ghazali later renounced sufi trend. Ibn Taymiyyah (2006) stresses this point and subsequent scholars followed suit. The basis on which this view rests is that it is indisputably affirmed that al-Ghazali later resorted to studying Bukhari and Muslim collections of *Ahadith*. This phenomenon, according to this school, entails that al-Ghazali later summoned and espoused the trend of *Ahl al-Hadith* and *Sunnah*. This view is strongly buttressed by the fact that the last publication of al-Ghazali was geared towards refraining people from the way of the theologians and inviting them to the path of *salaf* (ancient Muslims). The sufis have sheerly rejected this insinuation. According to Abu Zaid (2015) if Imam Ghazali did make this dramatic change of opinion in his life, then it should have been well-known and noted down in the known texts of himself or others.

It is obvious from this study that the controversy attained by sufism is not owing to its being all about purification of hearts, moral trainings and extra-dedication to Allah's worships, rather it is due to some foreign ideologies that tend to dominate it; and also because some big authorities in sufism subsequently ended up in pantheism and Omni theism. It is the submission of this study that Sufism shall remain controversial in the face of influx of many superstitions that have temporarily superseded the basic positive sides of Sufism.

Drawing from the write-ups of al-Ghazali, it is apparent that he was a strong Sufi and big adherent of mysticism. In a sheer contrast, Ibn Taymiyyah has proven in his various write-ups that the perfect channel to Allah's pleasure is the way of Apostle of Allah as being articulated by his companions and first generation of Muslim *ummah* (*Salaf*). He only regards Sufism as human effort to attain Allah's pleasure and because of the fallibility nature of such effort should be subjugated to the provisions of Quran and *Sunnah*. Though, Ibn Taymiyyah held many *shuyukh* of sufism in high esteem because they tried to conduct themselves in line with Sunnatic regulation, he, however, is a sworn enemy to the major proportions of sufis. This is due to the fact that he (Ibn Taymiyyah) castigates the basic foundations and practices of the sufis.

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